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September 2015 Foreword

by Aradhna Malik

The current issue of AEFL Journal contains six articles that explore various aspects of classroom experiences of English as a Foreign Language learning in different contexts.

The study by Sarah V. Harrison is intended to stimulate further research in the area of word association in Korea. Harrison brings to light the role of “feelings, attitudes, and memories” in word association in addition to syntagmatic and paradigmatic associations. A detailed insight into how students perceive new words and link them with what they already know in order to store them in their memories and use them as part of their linguistic repertoire, becomes essential in understanding how teachers of English (or any other language) as a language other than the first, can design and deliver their programs in conjunction with the association and learning styles of their students.

The paper by Lee and Lin focuses on the strategies that can be used to motivate L2 learners of the English language in a class on Business English, and discusses the challenges in doing so. Their paper highlights the challenges in a Business English classroom in terms of development and delivery of course material that will really help the students. The paper also highlights how essential it is to create a positive, supportive learning and mentoring environment in the classroom for a Business English course to be effective. This paper is likely to be of immense value to instructors in the area of English for Specific Purposes.

The paper by Petraki and Gunawardena describes the effectiveness of English grammar teaching in EFL classrooms in high schools in Sri Lanka. This paper makes a unique contribution in terms of analysis of the utility of EFL teaching from the perspective of the students. An insight into how students perceive the value of what they learn in the class can help teachers immensely with designing and delivering programs that are of use to students. The insights provided by this paper are also likely to help teachers understand how they can engage their students better.

The paper by Wang and Fan discusses listening as a significant aspect of L2 learning. An oft neglected area, listening is one of the most important elements in attention, perception, and eventually learning of information transmitted orally (in this case, a foreign language). As teachers we try our best to design programs that we feel can help our students most. However, most of us may not be aware that a student who comes to class and sits through the entire class may also not be grasping what we teach. This paper discusses the problems that Chinese students face in listening in classrooms where English is taught as a foreign language. An awareness of the challenges students face while listening to their teachers is a significant step towards enhancing our receptivity to the needs of our students in EFL classrooms.

The paper by Diane H. Nagatomo uses narrative inquiry to describe how one EFL teacher situates her identity as a native speaker of English in the working environment in Japan. The study echoes the concerns of many EFL teachers who have chosen to teach English outside their home countries, and provides detailed comparison of two distinct work environments of the respondent. Excerpts of interviews with the sole respondent help the reader develop a connection with the narrative and understand the context in which the incidents took place. In addition to providing service to our students, we educators are also living, thinking, feeling human beings. Prof. Nagatomo's study taps into the human side of the work lives of EFL teachers living abroad and highlights a need to study the factors that can influence their productivity and satisfaction with their jobs.

Action research often paves a way for retrospective inquiry into real practices in the field. Even when these practices evolve as solutions to problems a result of insight and not explicit historical inquiry, they tend to be very effective in specific contexts at specific times, and are worthy of analysis. The paper by Qi Li describes strategies used to motivate undergraduate EFL learners in China. A study of the strategies described in this paper opens another avenue to inquiry into actual hands on EFL teaching in the classroom. A comparative analysis of the strategies used in the classroom helps readers understand where to start digging next.

Two books that can be used as ready references in the EFL classroom are reviewed in this issue. Yaman discusses the features of a book that can be used to teach English in the classroom. Vijayakumar reviews the latest edition of New Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic English.

This issue of the AEFL journal showcases a collection of articles that use various methods of analysis including a single respondent narrative inquiry and action research. In accordance with the mission of this journal, the voices and writing styles of the authors have been preserved as far as possible.

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Word Association: Exploring the L2 Mental Lexicon of Korean EFL Learners

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Biodata

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Abstract

Word association tests (WATs) provide insight into how language users store and organise words in their mental lexicons. Associative tendencies are believed to be culture-specific (Kruse et al., 1987), yet despite a large body of research into the lexicons of first language (L1) and second language (L2) learners there is a paucity of research in the Korean context. This study aims to explore the Korean L2 mental lexicon through the administration of a WAT to fifty-one Korean EFL college students. Questions investigated include: 1) How do Korean EFL learners make connections between English words they have learned?, 2) Do different WAT stimuli elicit different results?, and 3) Is there a relationship between gender and word association behaviour? The results suggest a tendency for Korean learners to store and retrieve words in syntactic strings rather than hierarchal classifications and reveal the Korean L2 lexicon to be less heavily form-driven than that of other L2 learners. Word class was found to significantly influence the connections between words, with nouns found to be the most salient lexical class in the Korean L2 lexicon. The implications these findings have for vocabulary teaching and testing as well as future WAT research are far reaching.

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Keywords: word association, word association tests, Korean mental lexicon, L2 organization of the mental lexicon, L2 lexical connections

Introduction

Derived from the Greek word for *dictionary*, the mental lexicon is 'a person's mental store of words, their meanings and associations' (Richards & Schmidt, 2010, p. 359) and is, itself, a metaphor which describes how words are believed to be stored and retrieved in the human mind. Research to date has largely attempted to reveal the nature of the first language (L1) mental lexicon (e.g., Deese, 1965; Entwisle, 1966; Ervin, 1961; Galton, 1879). However, interest in how second language (L2) learners store words in their minds has grown in recent decades (e.g., Meara, 1978; Wolter, 2001; Zareva, 2007), with particular attention being paid to associations L2 learners make between words they have learned using a well-known technique for probing into the mental lexicon, a word-association test (WAT). In a typical WAT (e.g., Meara, 1978), lexical stimuli are presented to participants, who are asked to respond with the first word that comes to mind upon hearing or reading the stimulus word. The resulting associations are believed to exemplify the way in which words are stored and linked in the lexicon, and it is postulated (e.g., Nation, 2001; Sökmen 1993) that knowledge of these connections can be exploited to assist in the development of more focused vocabulary instruction and testing techniques.

WATs enjoy favour in lexical research due to their simplicity and ease of administration. Both quantitative and qualitative measures have traditionally been used in the analysis of word association (WA) data. Measures including the number of responses; strength of the primary response; and commonality, heterogeneity, and idiosyncrasy of responses have served as indicators of the lexicon's quantitative characteristics, while classification of the responses into form (e.g., paradigmatic, syntagmatic) and semantic (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, meronyms) taxonomies have been used to describe the qualitative characteristics of the WA domain (Zareva, 2007).

Once postulated to be universal (Rosenzweig, 1961), associative tendencies are believed to be culture-specific (Kruse, Pankhurst, & Sharwood Smith, 1987). Yet despite a large body of research into the lexicons of L1 speakers (e.g., Deese, 1965; Entwisle, 1966; Ervin, 1961) and L2 learners of different languages (e.g., Kruse et al., 1987; Politzer, 1978; Wolter, 2001), there is a paucity of research in the Korean context with only two studies published in English (J.T. Kim, 2011; Sökmen, 1993) having investigated the Korean L2 lexicon. Moreover, what little research in the Korean context does exist seems to diverge from the findings of other WA studies, reporting a Korean predisposition toward syntagmatic associations in contrast to a general tendency toward paradigmatic associations in L1 and other English as a foreign language (EFL) learners.

As an assistant professor at a college in Korea, the primary motivation behind this study was to pursue this line of inquiry by exploring the L2 mental lexicon of Korean EFL learners through the administration of a WAT to a group of 51 Korean college students to uncover how learners store and organise the words they have learned in their minds, which may, in turn, lead to the development of more focused classroom vocabulary instruction and testing techniques. Based on WA research literature, this study investigated the following research questions:

1. How do elementary-level Korean college EFL learners make connections between English words they have learned?
2. Do different stimuli (function /content words) elicit proportionately different results?
3. Is there a relationship between gender and word association behaviour?

This study begins with a review of the findings from past L1 and L2 WA research, including those specifically pertaining to the Korean context. Next, I present the methodology and results of the current study, wherein the research questions that frame its basis are discussed with respect to the WA behaviour of Korean college EFL learners. Finally, I conclude with a summary of the study's findings, including a look at the implications for future WAT research and vocabulary instruction and testing.

Previous Word Association Research

Association Types

Researchers have traditionally grouped WA responses into three types of predetermined categories: *paradigmatic*, *syntagmatic*, and *phonological/orthographical* or *clang* responses (e.g., Meara, 1983; Politzer, 1978; Wolter, 2001). Paradigmatic and syntagmatic responses are semantically-related, meaning-based links, while clang responses are form-based. The assumption is that these responses mirror the links between words in the mental lexicon, and thus, the number of responses made in a particular category can provide information about the organisation and salient features of words in the mind.

The imprecise nature of responses can make it difficult to devise 'categories that are both limited enough to ensure accuracy yet broad enough to account for all meaningful responses' (Wolter, 2001, p. 52). For this reason, some researchers have proposed novel analytical categories and frameworks to expand and refine the traditional paradigmatic-syntagmatic-clang paradigm. Sökmen (1993), for example, devised a *nonsense* category for inexplicable associations (e.g., *butter-long, salt-people*), a *word forms* category for associations belonging to the same word family as the stimulus (e.g., *deep-depth, sickness-sick*), and an *affective* category for associations presenting a visual image, an opinion, an emotional response, or a personal past experience (e.g., *dark-scared, table-study*). Similarly to Sökmen's affective class, McCarthy (1990) has introduced a category for *encyclopaedic* associations, which he defines as idiosyncratic responses related to one's personal knowledge and experience.

Fitzpatrick (2007, p. 322), citing a need for more 'user-friendly' categorisations, devised a taxonomy based on Nation's (2001) word knowledge criteria in which she divided responses into four broad groupings; *meaning-based* (paradigmatic), *position-based* (syntagmatic), *form-based* (clang), and *erratic*, each further divided into 17 subcategories. Fitzpatrick and Izura (2011, p. 377) subsequently extended the framework to include two additional categories, *form and meaning* and *meaning and collocation*, to account for ambiguous, 'dual-link', responses associated to the stimulus word (SW) by more than one associative connection.

Review of L1 Word Association Research

WA research concerning native speakers (NSs) has traditionally reported two central findings. The first is a tendency for NS adults to respond paradigmatically to stimuli, that is, with words from the same grammatical class (Aitchison, 2003; Carter, 1998; McCarthy, 1990). Adult NSs presented with the stimulus *cat*, for example, are likely to respond with words like *dog* or *animal*, as opposed to words such as *black* or *hairy*. NS children often exhibit a preponderance of clang (i.e. phonologically-based) or syntagmatically-related (i.e. position-based) associations; however, there is a clear shift toward more paradigmatic responses beginning around the ages of six to eight (Entwisle, 1966). This finding led to the accepted notion of a *syntagmatic-paradigmatic shift* in L1 WA behaviour. The second finding commonly reported in L1 WA literature is a tendency across different groups of NSs to 'respond in consistent ways' (McCarthy, 1990, p. 39), exhibiting a high degree of response homogeneity and predictability. This predisposition toward paradigmatic association and response commonality extends to L1 speakers of a variety of languages including French, German (Rosenzweig, 1961), and Navaho (Ervin & Landar, 1963).

Some researchers, however, have challenged the notions of NS response commonality and a syntagmatic-paradigmatic shift. Fitzpatrick (2006, 2007) reported NSs were far from homogenous and varied considerably in their responses; many producing more position-based (syntagmatic) responses when presented with low-frequency stimuli. Nissen and Henriksen (2006), moreover, reported their NS participants demonstrated an overall syntagmatic response preference, leading them to question the validity of the notion of a syntagmatic-paradigmatic shift.

The theoretical background, research methodologies, and findings of L1 WA studies have largely underpinned the development of L2 WA research.

Review of L2 Word Association Research

In the 1980s, Meara (1983, 1984) undertook a number of studies which found non-native speaker (NNS) responses were much less stable and more diverse than those of NSs'. These findings corroborated earlier conclusions (e.g., Riegel & Zivian, 1972) that there are significant structural differences between the L1 and L2 lexicons. According to Meara (1983), 'in extreme cases, it is possible to find instances of stimulus words for which the list of native speaker and learner responses share practically no words in common' (p. 30). Meara also suggested the L2 lexicon is heavily form-driven; reporting a strong tendency in NNS respondents toward clang associations.

Subsequent L2 WA studies predominately focused on a general response type 'shift' from syntagmatic to paradigmatic corresponding to respondents' degree of English proficiency (e.g., Kruse et al., 1987; Söderman, 1993; Wolter 2001). The assumption that NNS responses become more native-like with increased proficiency pervades much of the L2 WA literature. Söderman's (1993) study of intermediate and advanced Swedish EFL learners, for instance, reports a higher proportion of syntagmatic responses in lower level than more advanced learners reminiscent of the shift toward paradigmatic associations found in NS children. This is supported by other studies (e.g., Piper & Leicester, 1980; Zareva, 2007) which found no significant differences in the lexico-syntactic patterns of NSs and NNSs of advanced proficiency. Recent work by Zareva and Wolter (2012) corroborates a NNS tendency to produce a higher proportion of paradigmatic to syntagmatic associations with increased proficiency. They argue, however, that this substantiates a change in the saliency of the links, but should not be interpreted as evidence of a 'developmental shift' (p. 63) or restructuring from a syntagmatically to paradigmatically-organised lexicon where one type of associative connectivity is replaced by another. Not all L2 WAT studies, however, have yielded consistent results. Nissen and Henriksen's (2006) study of L1 and L2 associations of Danish EFL learners reported a preponderance of syntagmatic responses in both the Danish and English data.

In addition to proficiency, a small number of other L2 studies have set out to investigate the effect of background variables on WA behaviour related to participants' age, education, and gender. Sökmen (1993), for instance, reports women respond with more adjectives than men, while men are more likely to respond with verbs than women.

Review of L1 and L2 Word Association Research in the Korean Context

While a large body of research into the lexicons of NSs and NNSs of many languages exists, there is a paucity of research in the Korean context. What little research into the Korean L1 and L2 lexicons does exist seems to diverge somewhat from the aforementioned general tendency toward paradigmatic associations.

Charging that large-scale Korean WA norms databases 'have been seriously inadequate' (Jung, Na, & Akama, 2010, p. 28), Jung et al. recently investigated the WA of Korean NS college students. The findings indicate a tendency for Korean NS to respond to nouns with paradigmatic associations, but with more syntagmatic associations to verbs and adjectives. A similar study conducted by Yoneoka (2001) points to a Korean disposition toward syntagmatic association (76%) regardless of word class, comparable to that observed in Japanese respondents (Yoneoka, 1987, 2000). Yoneoka posits cultural and linguistic factors as potential reasons for the so-called 'anomaly' observed in Korean and Japanese WA behaviour, though no definite conclusions are drawn.

The syntagmatic patterning of Korean NSs also seems to extend to Korean EFL learners. In a study comprised of university students from a variety of backgrounds including 18 Korean respondents, Sökmen (1993) observed the majority of responses were affective (i.e. syntagmatic). The study also reported very low instances of superordinate and verb responses from Korean (and Japanese) respondents.

Most recently, in a study investigating the relationship between Korean university EFL learners' WA association behaviour and L2 proficiency, J.T. Kim (2011) reported a negligible occurrence of clang associations (0.28% on average), and an overall higher number of paradigmatic to syntagmatic responses. It was, however, observed that while the NS control group showed a strong predisposition toward paradigmatic over syntagmatic association (66%

vs. 34%), the proportion of paradigmatic to syntagmatic associations was markedly less for the Korean respondents regardless of proficiency (56% vs. 44% for the intermediate group and 58% vs. 42% for the advanced group).

Methodology

Participants

This study was carried out in the first week of the spring semester at a private technical college located in a suburb of Seoul, Korea. 51 first-year Environmental Health majors, 31 males and 20 females aged 18-24 (M = 19.3, SD = 1.59) voluntarily participated in this study (see Appendices A & B). As a result of the volunteer sampling strategy employed, it is acknowledged that the overall findings of this study are somewhat narrow in scope and may not be generalisable across Korean language learners of varying proficiencies and characteristics (see Implications and Conclusion). At the time of the experiment, they were studying in a requisite English conversation class taught by me, the researcher. All had received formal English instruction in their pre-tertiary education; self-reported mean length of English study was 7.5 years. Most students, however, have little exposure to English outside of the classroom and only modest control of the language likely owing to the prevalence of traditional, rote-memorisation techniques employed at the pre-tertiary level (Choi, 2008). Students' overall English proficiency level is subjectively best described as 'elementary' or 'basic user' as per Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) guidelines[1] (Council of Europe, 2001). The majority of students (78%) also self-reported their proficiency level as 'elementary', with the remaining students reporting 'beginner' (18%) and 'intermediate' (4%) ability. All students stated they had never taken a formal English proficiency test, and none had ever lived or studied abroad.

Pilot Testing

A pilot aural-written WAT was conducted using eight SWs from a variety of word classes and frequency bands (three nouns, two verbs, one adjective, one adverb, and one conjunction) with two groups of Korean EFL learners; six elementary and six advanced-level participants in all. In follow-up, participants completed a self-report questionnaire detailing their personal and educational background and perceived reasons for their WAT responses.

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[1] The CEFR is a guideline used to describe achievements of EFL learners across Europe and elsewhere.

This precursory test raised several issues that informed the WAT design in the present study. First, the oral presentation of stimuli was time-consuming and led to hearing difficulties with several participants necessitating the repetition of many words. The present study, thus, employs a written-written format to increase efficiency and mitigate the risk of aural cues being misunderstood. Second, difficulty caused by a participant providing a miscellaneous response for fear of leaving a blank answer when no immediate association came to mind prompted amended instructions in the present WAT asking participants to skip any words they do not know or for which no immediate response comes to mind.

Stimulus Word Selection

The WAT instrument employed in this study consisted of ten SWs selected for lexical class and frequency of occurrence including six content words (three nouns, two verbs, one adjective) and four grammatical words (one article, one determiner, one preposition, one conjunction). Though not a particularly large corpus, such a modest-sized selection of SWs is not uncommon in WAT studies (e.g., J. T. Kim, 2011; Racine, 2008) and the resulting associations may still be thought to exemplify the way in which words are stored and linked in the lexicon A mix of words was chosen in order to investigate what impact, if any, lexical class has on response behaviour. Moreover, following Racine (2011), this particular ratio of content to function words (roughly 60% to 40%) was selected to approximate that appearing in a typical English text (Nation, 2001) under the presumption that such a balanced mixture of SWs would appear more natural on the written page and elicit more natural responses.

Because SW familiarity plays a large part in the type of associations generated (Stolz & Tiffany, 1972), stimuli were selected from West's (1953) General Service List (GSL)[2] so as to present learners with high-frequency words they would know despite their limited proficiency. Following Meara and Fitzpatrick (2000), only SWs whose most frequent response as reported by the Edinburgh Associative Thesaurus (EAT)[3] is no more than 20% of the total reported responses were selected. This was done to avoid selecting stimuli which typically elicit a very narrow range of responses (i.e., are known to have a single, dominant primary response in L1 respondents). In this way, it was hoped the selected SWs would

[2] The General Service List is a list of the 2000 most frequent words in English taken from a corpus of written English published by Michael West (1953).
[3] EAT is an online database of WA norms showing the counts of WA as collected from 100 L1 English speakers [http://www.eat.rl.ac.uk].

provide participants reasonable opportunity to generate a wide variety of different responses, thus revealing a thorough picture of the Korean L2 mental lexicon.

The WAT

Participants were given a list of ten SWs and instructed to write down the first English WA that came to mind in response to each word as quickly as possible. As the present study is an investigation into the lexico-syntactic patterns of learners' associative organisation, a single response format was adopted as opposed to the multiple response format commonly employed in L2 language proficiency and lexical development studies (e.g., J.T. Kim, 2011; Kruse et al., 1987; Zareva, 2007;). Apart from being unnecessary, it was felt that the learners' low proficiency may prevent them from being able to produce multiple associations. Participants were told not to be concerned with notions of correctness or spelling and to skip any unfamiliar SWs or stimuli for which no immediate response came to mind. Speed was encouraged to ensure students recorded their primary responses (Cramer, 1968, as cited in Sökmen, 1993); however, no set time limit was imposed in an effort to avoid erratic responses caused by anxiety (Clark, 1970). SWs were presented alphabetically 'to avoid noticeable clusters of [S]Ws from the same lexical class' (Zareva, 2010, p. 8), and polysemous words belonging to more than one lexical class were primed with the lexical category written next to them to avoid ambiguity (e.g., *sleep [v.]*). To facilitate comprehension in such low-proficiency participants, instructions were translated into Korean. To ensure its validity, the WAT was translated simultaneously by two translators in accordance with the translation guidelines set forth by Harkness, Van de Vijver, and Mohler (2003) (see Appendices C & D).

Immediately following the WAT, participants completed a retrospective questionnaire (see Appendices E & F) detailing their perceived reasons for their WA responses. This provided input to clarify some of the more ambiguous responses, thereby reducing potential subjectivity in coding the data. Though the validity and reliability of such retrospective protocols has recently been questioned by some researchers (e.g., Wharton, 2010; Wilks, 2009) who claim that such post ad hoc reflections cannot provide a complete picture of what veritably motivates association behaviour, Fitzpatrick (2006) maintains retrospective protocols are necessarily the best way to accurately categorise the true mental connections of learner responses. In light of concerns that prolonged intervals between the WAT and post-test protocol may 'cloud already fuzzy associations' (Wharton, 2010, p. 733), the questionnaire was jointly distributed with the WAT as a second page attachment, thereby decreasing any unnecessary lag time and capturing participants' most reliable and unblemished recollections.

Participants were encouraged to use English to explain the reasons behind their responses, but permitted to write in Korean if English explication proved too difficult. As with the WAT, the questionnaire was presented to participants in Korean to facilitate comprehension and underwent the same simultaneous translation technique used to translate the WAT.

Data Coding and Analysis

The WAT generated a total of 510 responses, including one L1 and one third language (L3) response, which were not included for analysis. Two responses to the SW *write* were also excluded from analysis when it became clear that the respondents had confused *write* with its homonym *right*. Thus, an adjusted total of 506 WA responses were collated using Meara's (2008) WA_Sorter[4]. Responses were then individually coded and classified into one of four categories: i) paradigmatic, ii) syntagmatic, iii) clang, and iv) null responses, dependent upon their lexico-syntactic relationship to the SW. More novel classification frameworks (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2006, 2007) not widely in use were rejected in favour of the more common classification system to allow the results of the present study to be compared with findings of other studies using similar criteria.

In general, associations sharing the same lexical class with the SW were classified as paradigmatic (e.g., *car* [SW] – *bus* [WA]), while associations belonging to a different lexical class or which could form a sequential syntactic link with the SW despite sharing the same lexical class were classified as syntagmatic (e.g., *blue* [SW] – *sky* [WA]). The COBUILD/Birmingham Bank of English corpus (BoE) was utilized, using the whole corpora and T-scores, to determine whether a syntactic link exists. A response was considered a collocate (syntagmatic) if it occurred within a 9-word span (four words on either side) of the node word. Paradigmatic and syntagmatic responses were further divided, resulting in nine subcategories (antonymy, collocation, coordination, holonymy, meronymy, multiword item, subordination, superordination, and synonymy), to allow for more precise identification. Responses void of clear semantic links based solely on sound or spelling similarities were coded as clang responses. A fourth 'null' category was included for non-response. In the case of misspelled words, which were not uncommon and to be expected given the learners' level

[4] WA_Sorter is an online program developed by Paul Meara (2008) that sorts and collates WA data into a standardised report format. [http://www.lognostics.co.uk/tools/WA_Sorter/]

of proficiency, the intended response was subjectively inferred (e.g., *uggly* [*ugly*] in response to *pretty*; *flawor* [*flower*] in response to *tree*).

To ensure reliability, the WA coding specifications were delineated in advance and consistently applied to the data to eliminate subjective judgments and inconsistencies in the classification procedure. Adapted in part from Zareva and Wolter (2012), the following criteria were systematically applied:

1. A response was classified as paradigmatic when it shared the same lexical class as the SW (e.g., *car* [SW] – *bus* [WA]).
2. A response was classified as syntagmatic when it belonged to a different lexical class than the SW (e.g., *the* [SW] – *king* [WA]) or could form a sequential syntactic link with the SW despite sharing the same lexical class (e.g., *blue* [SW] – *sky* [WA]).
3. Multiword responses (e.g., *my* <u>*home*</u>, <u>*wake up*</u>, etc.) were classified as either syntagmatic or paradigmatic, depending on the relationship between the SW and the lexical class of the head word of the phrase as reported in the Collins English Dictionary (Collins) (2013).
4. When the SW was repeated in the WA response (e.g., *of* [SW] – *of course* [WA]), the response was counted as syntagmatic (because it is assumed to demonstrate knowledge of collocation rather than anomalous association behaviour, see Piper & Leicester, 1980).
5. Responses were classified as clang when they were related to a SW only in phonological or orthographical terms (e.g., *blue* [SW] – *glue* [WA]).
6. Polysemous responses belonging to more than one part of speech were classified as either syntagmatic or paradigmatic, depending on their primary word class as reported in the Collins (2013).
7. When participants were unable to respond, a null response was recorded.

Difficulty encountered in post-hoc data analysis led to the creation of a fifth 'encyclopaedic' category to account for affective responses that did not seem to fit the other categories (e.g., *blue* [SW] – *Big Bang* [WA]).

Results and Discussion

Problems in Classifying the Results

Despite the careful delineation of coding specifications, and as noted by other researchers (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2006, 2007; Sökmen, 1993; Wolter, 2001), a number of challenges were encountered in classifying some of the responses as a result of the imprecise nature of associations.

Idiosyncratic responses. A significant number of anomalous associations instigated the creation of a fifth ‘encyclopaedic’ category to account for affective responses derived from emotional reaction or personal experience that did not fit one of the predefined categories. Examples of anomalous encyclopaedic associations include: *blue* [SW] – *Big Bang* [WA], *but* [SW] – *triangle* [WA], *what* [SW] – *stun* [WA]. McCarthy (1990) defines encyclopaedic associations as related to one’s personal knowledge and experience, yet some of the anomalous responses categorised as encyclopaedic in the present study are arguably not derivative of experiential knowledge, but instead stem from participant’s limited English proficiency. An example of this is the response *stand up* to the stimulus *sleep*(v.). Though belonging to the same lexical class, *stand up* was deemed neither an antonym, nor coordinate, nor synonym of *sleep*; nor is it a recognised collocate in the BoE. Thus, it was categorised as encyclopaedic. It is, however, possible the process underlying the response was, in fact, paradigmatic (e.g., *wake up*, *get up*), but the participant’s limited English proficiency resulted in retrieval of *stand up*; stored together with other congruous phrasal verbs in the learners’ mental lexicon and in keeping with McCarthy’s (1990) belief that words sharing similar spelling patterns are linked or stored together. An ‘insufficient lexical resource’ or ‘nonsense’ category may, however, be a more accurate reflection of the underlying association at work.

Dual-link responses. Each response was classified into discrete categories to facilitate analysis, however, the sense relation in operation was not always clear; a number of responses did not always fit into just one category or could be the result of multiple links. In this regard, information obtained from the follow-up questionnaire regarding participants’ responses proved invaluable. Four participants, for example, responded *one* to the stimulus *the*. This was initially coded as a syntagmatic association (e.g., *that is <u>the one</u> I want*). To the contrary, the participants’ questionnaire comments revealed ‘The One’ is the name of a revered Korean singer and, thus, the response clearly affective in nature and coded accordingly. Further examples of dual-link associations found in the present data include: *car* [SW] – *speed* [WA], *what* [SW] – *that* [WA], *tree* [SW] – *Christmas* [WA]. Where a response could be the result of more than one type of associative connection, the participants’ follow-up response was used to determine the underlying cognitive link. In cases where no explanation was provided subjective judgement was used following the criteria set forth in the coding specifications.

Korean WA Behaviour: Summary of Overall Results

In order to answer the first research question to reveal how elementary-level Korean college EFL learners make connections between English words they have learned, each WA response was categorised dependent upon its lexico-syntactic relationship to the SW. The different associations given by respondents as a whole were categorised into one of five categories: i) paradigmatic, ii) syntagmatic, iii) clang, iv) encyclopaedic, and v) null responses. Syntagmatic associations accounted for the majority of the total 506 responses, followed by paradigmatic, null, encyclopaedic, and clang responses respectively.

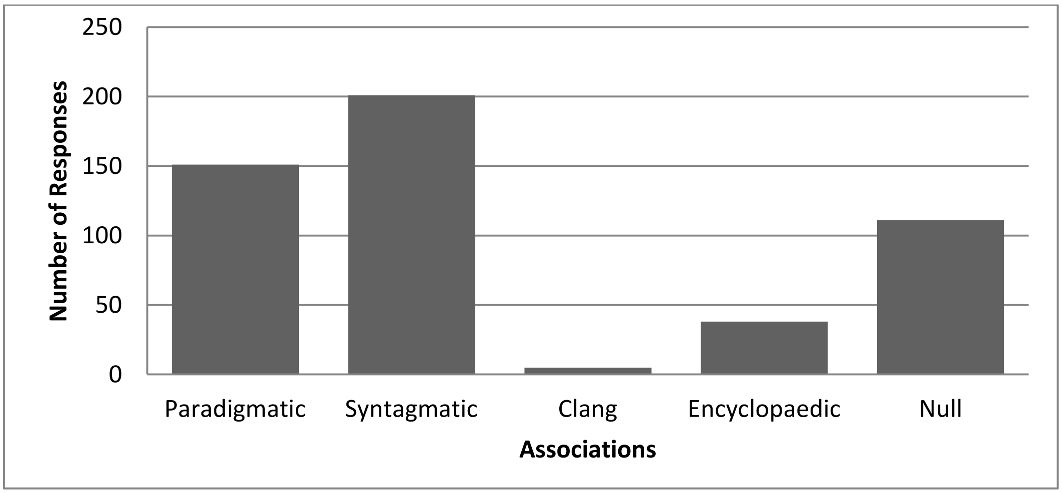

Figure 1. Overall summary of associations

This preliminary analysis of the types of associations made by low-proficiency Korean participants provides insight into how Korean learners make connections between words they have learned.

Korean WA behaviour: Null response. Somewhat surprisingly, Figure 1 above shows null responses accounted for 111 of the total 506 responses (21.9%). This proportion is larger than expected given the principled selection of high-frequency SW from the GSL to ensure participants' familiarity with the SWs. Despite careful SW selection measures, no association readily came to mind for learners just over one-fifth of the time. This inability to produce a response may be testament to the participants' low-proficiency or attributable to the inclusion of grammatical SW, which are relatively meaningless in isolation and do not necessarily lend themselves well to associations (Racine, 2008).

The hypothesis put forth by Wilks and Meara (2007) that WAT administration procedures may interfere with learners' ability to spontaneously respond to stimuli is another plausible explanation for the relatively common incidence of non-response. Despite being assured that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, students may have been wary of providing an answer for fear it would be deemed inadequate by me, their teacher and WAT invigilator. The notion that learner attitude can impact WAT response may be viewed as having particular relevance in the Korean context, where accuracy-based, highly competitive test-driven classrooms are the norm. Consequently, 'Korean students tend to be extremely nervous and afraid of… making mistakes' (Finch, 2008, p. 213). Though beyond the scope of the present study, it would be interesting to see if having a third-party administer the test elicits a significantly different proportion of null responses. A post ad hoc survey of participants' perceived anxiety levels might also prove useful in assessing the degree to which learner attitude affects response type.

Korean WA behaviour: Clang associations. Also somewhat unexpected is the paucity of clang responses (5 of the total 506 responses, or 1.0%) shown in Figure 1 above; *blue* [SW] – *glue* [WA], *but* [SW] – *bee* [WA], *of* [SW] - *hof* [WA], *sleep* [SW] – *sheep* [WA], *write* [SW] – *white* [WA]. Though the form-based similarity between *but* and *bee* is not as strikingly apparent as that between the other clang responses, in the participant's own words (elucidated in the post-test questionnaire): '…*bee* figure resemble *but* figure'. And, indeed, both the stimulus and response are single-syllable three-letter words beginning with the letter 'b'.

The small number of clang associations found within the present data does not lend support to claims that the L2 lexicon is heavily form-driven or that lower-level learners tend to make phonological/orthographical associations more frequently than other proficiency levels (Meara, 1983; Racine, 2008). The low incidence of clang responses is, conversely, in keeping with the findings of J.T. Kim (2011), who reports negligible occurrences of clang associations (less than 1%) in Korean learners, and Yoneoka (1987), who reports a similar finding among Japanese learners, whose language and culture is decidedly similar to that of Korea's. There is some evidence, then, to suggest that Korean EFL learners are less predisposed toward clang associations than other L2 learners. This is corroborated by K.Y. Kim (2001), who, in an investigation into the language learning strategies of Korean undergraduate learners in the United States and Korea, reported Korean learners use a limited number of cognitive-memory strategies; the least popular of which was memorizing words by using rhymes. My own experience teaching Korean EFL learners for the past 12 years, moreover, leads me to question whether English words with the same general shape are stored together in the mental lexicon of Korean learners, who often struggle in class to recognise and produce English rhyming pairs. From a linguistic perspective, the fact that Korean EFL learners make meaning-based rather than form-based associations may be attributable to the difference in syllable structure between the Korean and English languages; most Korean syllables have a consonant-vowel structure, whereas a consonant-vowel-consonant structure is typical of English (Yoon & Derwing, 2001). Unlike English, the Korean language does not have a rhyming poetic tradition, for it is the syllable, rather than rhyming elements, that is used as a counting metric (ibid). The results of the present study may be interpreted, thus, to mean that phonological similarities are a less salient type of connection between words for Korean EFL learners.

Korean WA behaviour: Encyclopaedic associations. Encyclopaedic associations account for a moderate number of responses (38 of the total 506 responses, or 7.5%, shown in Figure 1 above). Despite a paucity of information in the literature on encyclopaedic knowledge, such associations are presumably derived from personal experience or a lack of lexical resource. Lower-level learners such as those in the present study may be compelled to turn to their direct experience of a word in the absence of a readily-accessible store of L1 vocabulary (e.g., collocations, synonyms). Though not abounding, the modest number of encyclopaedic associations in the present study is testament to the significant influence experience can have on the organisation of words in the mental lexicon and suggests that, for at least some learners, WAs derive from feelings, attitudes, and memories.

Korean WA behaviour: Syntagmatic associations. Most notably, a preponderance of syntagmatic associations (201 of the total 506 responses, or 39.7%, shown in Figure 1 above) supports both the general consensus in the literature that syntagmatic responses are the most salient type of link in lower-proficiency NNS learners (e.g., Piper & Leicester, 1980; Söderman, 1993; Zareva & Wolter, 2012) and the notion of an overall Korean tendency toward syntagmatic association (Sökmen, 1993; Yoneoka, 2001). These results are, however, in contrast to the findings of J.T. Kim (2011), who reported an overall higher number of paradigmatic responses in Korean learners. If the notion of a syntagmatic-paradigmatic 'shift' and the assumption that NNS responses become more native-like with increased proficiency are to be believed, this discrepancy between the results of the present study with those of J.T. Kim might be explained by the fact that Kim's study concerned intermediate & advanced learners in contrast to the elementary learners who took part in the present study.

Syntagmatic associations made by respondents as a whole were categorised into one of two subcategories: i) collocation, and ii) multiword item, evidencing a prevalence of 'looser' collocates over fixed multiword expressions.

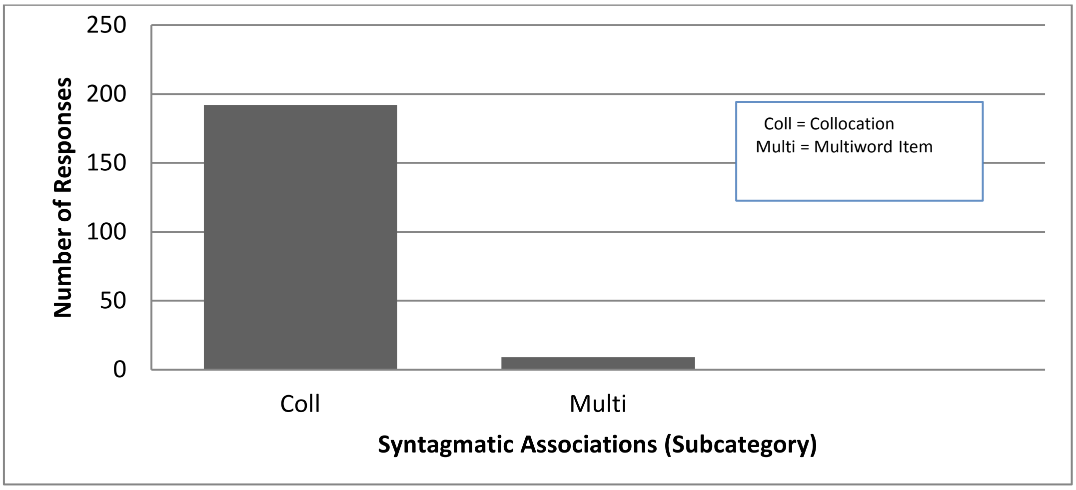

Figure 2. Syntagmatic associations by subcategory

Only 9 of the total 201 syntagmatic responses were deemed to be a strict, sequential sequence of words and classified as multiword items: *smart* in response to *car*; *course, of course, League of Legends*, and *Lord of the Rings* in response to *of*; and *'s wrong* and *what the XXX* in response to *what*. It is worth noting that the classification of many multi-word items is not straightforward and oftentimes, as in the present study, dependent upon the individual researcher (Moon, 1997). The remaining 192 syntagmatic associations (e.g., *tree* [SW] – *tall* [WA], *write* [SW] – *test* [WA]) constituted words that regularly co-occur, but did not necessarily function as a single lexical item. Overall, the predominance of syntagmatic associations, be they collocation or multiword items, highlights the importance of chain relations between words in the mental lexicon and reinforces the powerful and enduring connections of words which naturally go together.

Korean WA behaviour: Paradigmatic associations. Paradigmatic associations were the second most common link between words, accounting for 151 of the total 506 responses, or 29.8%. Coordination (including antonymy) was the most common type of paradigmatic association, followed by synonymy and hyponymy.

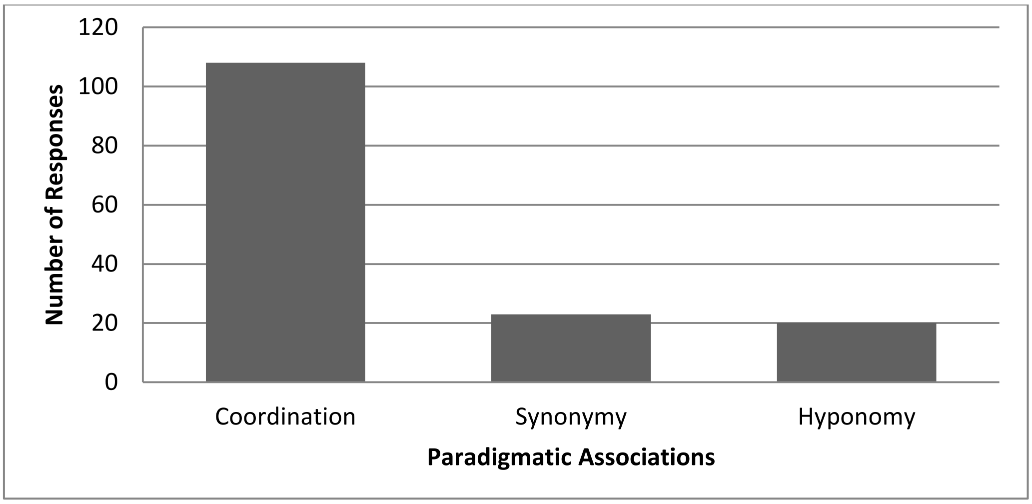

Figure 3. Paradigmatic associations

Paradigmatic associations made by respondents as a whole were categorised into one of seven subcategories: i) antonymy, ii) coordination, iii) holonymy, iv) meronymy, v) subordination, vi) superordination, and vii) synonymy.

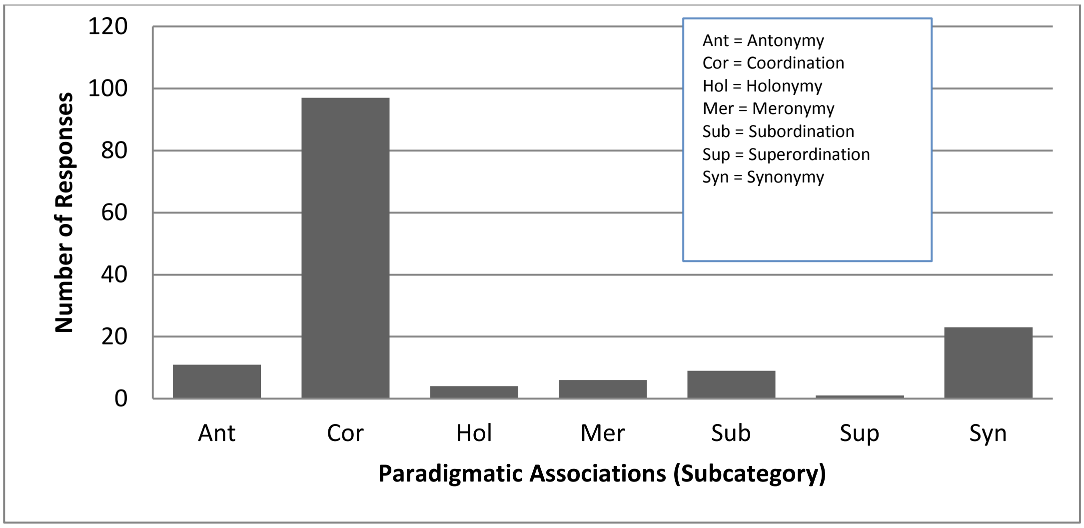

Figure 4. Paradigmatic associations by subcategory

Coordination accounted for the majority (64.2%) of the total 151 paradigmatic responses, followed by synonymy, antonymy, subordination, meronymy, holonymy, and superordination. These results are somewhat in line with findings of previous L1 studies, which suggest coordination is the most common link between words for NSs (Aitchison, 2003; Wolter, 2001). While not the most common link overall, coordination is the most common type of paradigmatic link; second overall in the present study. In contrast to L1 WAT literature citing superordination as the third most common link between words for NSs (Aitchison, 2003), only one superordinate response (*blue* [SW] – *color* [WA]) was found in the present data. This paucity of superordinate responses is, however, in keeping with Sökmen's (1993) finding of very low instances of superordinates among Korean respondents. The prevalence of coordinate, antonym, and synonym responses and infrequency of subordinate, superordinate, meronym, and holonym responses in the present data, thus, seems to suggest that low-proficiency Korean EFL learners mentally organise the words they have learned together in categories rather than taxonomies. That is, words are organised according to their meaning (i.e., opposite or similar) or level of detail as opposed to their hierarchical relationship to one another.

The Effect of Word Class on Korean WA

To allow for a more detailed examination of the data and answer the second research question to determine whether different stimuli elicit proportionately different results, the WA responses given to content and function SW were analysed separately.

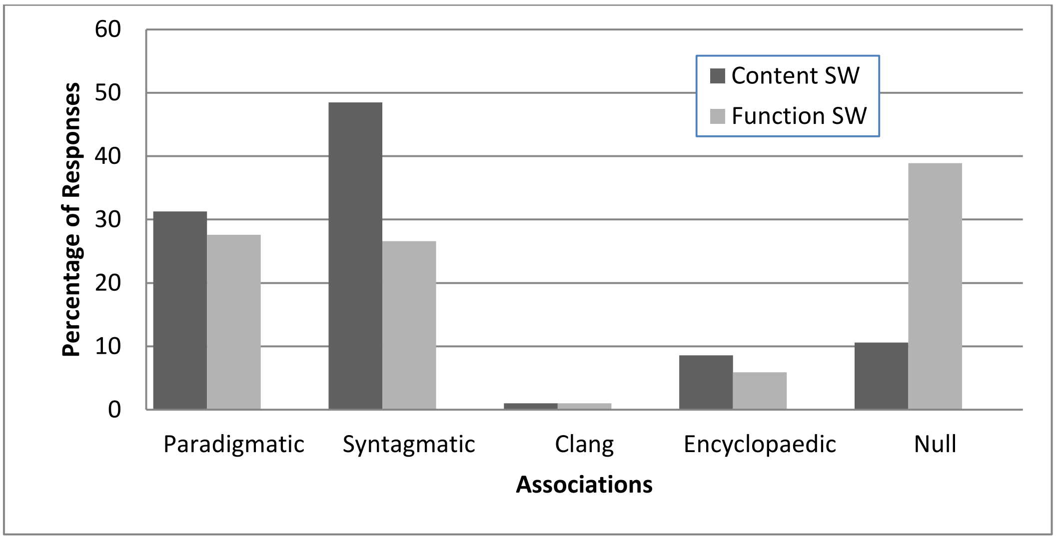

Figure 5. Percentage of responses to content and function word stimuli

It is clear that the response pattern to content words noticeably deviates from that of function words. Syntagmatic associations accounted for the majority of responses generated by content word stimuli (48.5%), followed by paradigmatic (31.3%), null (10.6%), encyclopaedic (8.6%), and clang associations (1%), respectively. In contrast, null response occurred most frequently to function word stimuli (38.9%), followed in turn by paradigmatic (27.6%), syntagmatic

(26.6%), encyclopaedic (5.9%), and clang associations (1%). A Chi-square test conducted to test for statistical significance demonstrated statistically significant differences ($\chi^2 = 60.98$, $p < .001$, $df = 4$) in the response types given for content and grammatical word stimuli. In other words, a significant relationship was found to exist between the lexical class of the WAT stimuli and the type of WA generated, lending support to existing evidence of the influence of word class on the way L2 users organise the connections among words in their mental lexicons (e.g., Racine, 2008; Wolter, 2001).

Following the rule of thumb that an absolute value of a standardised residual (R) greater than 2.00 indicates a major influence on a significant Chi-square test statistic, it can be concluded that the greatest effect observed is in the low proportion of null responses to content words (R = 4.2) and conversely high percentage of null responses generated by function words (R = 5.2). The low proportion of syntagmatic responses (R = 3.0) elicited from function words and high percentage of syntagmatic responses (R = 2.4) elicited from content words was also shown to be of significant effect, however, lexical class was found to have a marginal but insignificant impact on the amount of paradigmatic and encyclopaedic responses given (R < 2.00). No difference was found in the proportion of clang responses generated to content or function word stimuli.

Despite an evident relationship between word class and WA, it is difficult to determine the precise impetus behind an associative response. One possible explanation for the preponderance of null responses given to grammatical word stimuli is the relative meaninglessness of function words in isolation, which presumably made it difficult for the low-level learners in the present study to link a known word [SW] with another word in their limited mental store [WA]. Zareva (2007), for example, found that smaller vocabularies are characterised by fewer connections among words. That participants were able to generate a significantly greater number of associations to content words than to grammatical stimuli seems to imply that Korean learners' retrieval of associative connections for content words is significantly better or easier than for function words. This, in turn, might suggest that content words more fully integrate into learners' developing lexical networks forming stronger links with other words than do grammatical words.

The finding of a high proportion of syntagmatic responses to content word stimuli underscores the importance of chain relations between words in the L2 mental lexicon and supports the claim that collocational (syntagmatic) knowledge is a fundamental component of L2 learners' language knowledge (Fitzpatrick, 2006). In contrast to the paradigmatic preference of NSs shown in previous studies (e.g., Aitchison, 2003), the syntagmatic preference of the Korean L2 learners may be attributable to the influence of participants' mother tongue (Yoneoka, 2001). To investigate this further, the WAT content word stimuli were categorised into noun (*blue, car, tree*), verb (*sleep, write*), and adjective (*pretty*) classifications and their proportionate responses analysed.

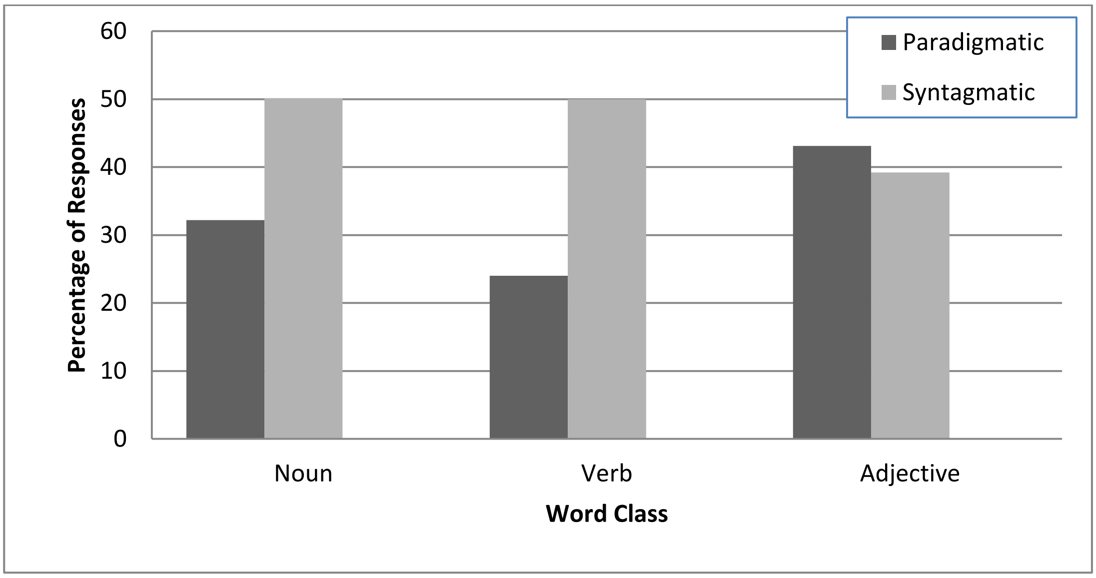

Figure 6. Percentage of paradigmatic versus syntagmatic associations to content word stimuli

Both nouns and verbs elicited proportionately more syntagmatic responses than did adjectives, which evoked a marginally greater percentage of paradigmatic responses. These results are not wholly in line with findings of Jung et al. (2010), who reported Korean NSs respond to nouns with paradigmatic associations, but with more syntagmatic associations to verbs and adjectives. Thus, the tentative conclusion can be drawn that the Korean propensity for syntagmatic associations to L2 content word stimuli demonstrated in the present study is not influenced by the response pattern of participants' Korean L1, warranting further investigation.

Looking at the response patterns generated by SW of different lexical classes another way, it can be seen that unlike L1 speakers, who tend to respond using words in the same lexical class (Aitchison, 2003), Korean L2 speakers associate words of different lexical classes together.

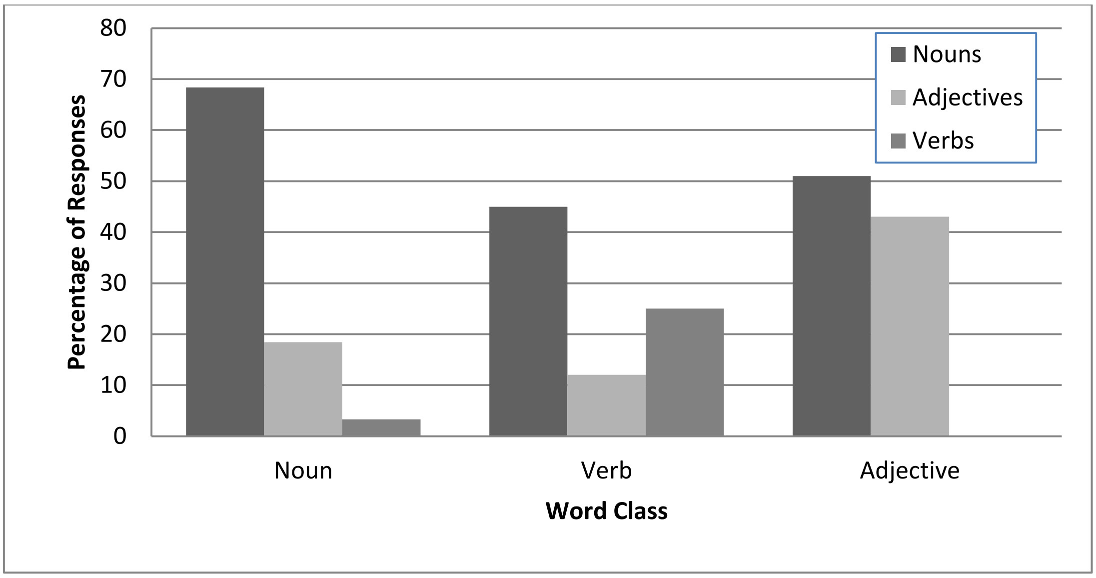

Figure 7. Percentage of noun, adjective, and verb responses to content word stimuli

Of note is a noticeable preference for noun responses for all stimuli regardless of lexical class. This is in keeping with Yoneoka's (2001) finding of a Korean tendency toward noun-class responses regardless of the word class of the stimulus. A possible explanation for this is the hypothesis that the lexical organisation of nouns is more structured and richly interconnected than the organisation of other parts of speech such as verbs and adjectives (Kweon, 2005). Kweon suggests that nouns are a more prevalent type of input than verbs in the L2 learning process and, thus, more salient as a result of learners' high-frequency exposure and practice with them. In the present study, nouns elicited other nouns 68.4% of the time, adjectives 18.4%, and verbs 3.3% of the time; verbs evoked nouns 45% of the time, other verbs 25%, and adjectives 12% of the time; and adjectives generated nouns 51% of the time, other adjectives 43% of the time, and no verbs. These findings are somewhat proportionately similar to those of previous L1 studies (e.g., Deese, 1965), which report nouns elicit other nouns 80% of the time, whereas adjectives and verbs elicit other adjectives and verbs less often, about 50% of the time. Also of note is the low incidence of overall verb responses in line with Sökmen's (1993) report of few verb responses made by Korean participants. These findings seem to indicate nouns and adjectives are of greater saliency than verbs in the lexicons of Korean learners.

The Effect of Gender on Korean WA

In order to further analyse the results and answer the third research question to examine the effect of gender on WA, participants were divided into two groups: i) male and ii) female, and their responses analysed.

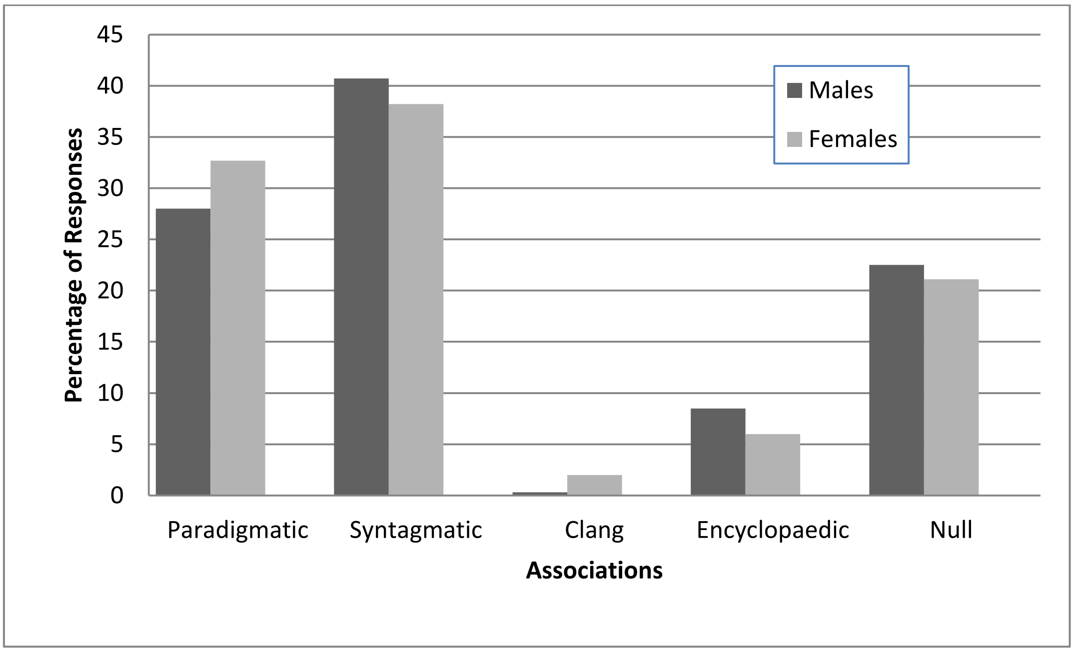

Figure 8. Percentage of overall associations by gender

In general, the two groups responded in a similar pattern, with syntagmatic associations accounting for the majority of both male and female responses, followed by paradigmatic, null, encyclopaedic, and clang responses. The WA behaviour of both groups is in line with the overall response pattern of respondents as a whole, discussed in §4.2. A high percentage of syntagmatic and paradigmatic responses indicates strong semantic links between words for both males and females. While females responded with paradigmatic and clang associations slightly more often than males, males provided syntagmatic, encyclopaedic, and null responses marginally more often than females; however, a Chi-square test conducted to test the significance of these differences indicated no significant association between gender and WA response type ($\chi2 = 5.59$, $p > .05$, *df* 4).

To address Sökmen's (1993) finding that women are more likely to make adjective responses than men, and men more likely to respond with verbs than women, WA responses were divided by gender and placed into five categories based on lexical class: i) noun, ii) verb, iii) adjective, iv) adverb, and v) function word. Males and females responded in a similar pattern, providing more noun responses than any other word class, followed by function words, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs, respectively.

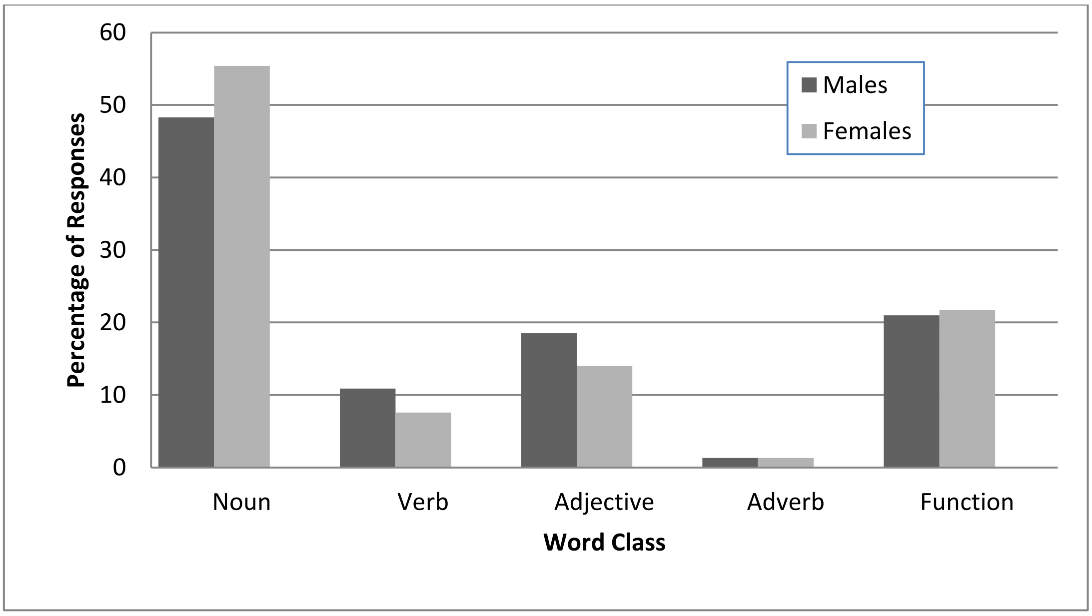

Figure 9. Percentage of word class responses by gender

It is clear that the proportion of adverb responses was equally low and the percentage of function word responses equally moderate for both genders. Women, however, provided moderately more (7%) noun responses than men, while men responded with slightly more verb (3%) and adjective (4%) responses than women. These results corroborate Sökmen's (ibid) findings that men respond with verbs more frequently than women. There is no support, however, for the claim that women make more adjective responses than men. Most importantly, a Chi-square test to test the significance of these differences demonstrated no significant association between gender and word class ($\chi 2 = 3.14$, $p > .05$, *df* 4). Despite an abundance of literature concerning sociological differences between gender and language use (e.g., Coates & Pichler, 2011; Lakoff, 1975), it can be tentatively concluded that gender is not a significant variable on the organisation of words in the Korean L2 lexicon.

Implications and Conclusion

Summary of the Main Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the L2 mental lexicon of elementary-level Korean EFL college learners through the administration of a WAT to investigate how Korean learners make connections between English words they have learned. The overall findings point to a general tendency for Koreans to respond with syntagmatic associations, suggesting Korean learners store and retrieve words in syntactic strings rather than hierarchal classifications. Paradigmatic associations were the second most common type of response, followed respectively by null, encyclopaedic, and clang associations. Coordination (including antonymy) was found to be the most frequently occurring type of paradigmatic link, while superordination was rare. A paucity of superordinate responses, in line with Sökmen (1993), and prevalence of coordinate responses again points to the seemingly categorical rather than hierarchical organisation of the Korean L2 mental lexicon. An unexpectedly high number of null responses bears testament to the learners' low proficiency. Their inability to readily produce associations may also be attributed to the inclusion of grammatical word stimuli, which do not naturally lend themselves well to associations, or to learners' fear of making a mistake by providing the 'wrong' answer. Finally, a paucity of clang responses supports previous findings (e.g., J.T. Kim, 2011) that the Korean L2 lexicon is not as heavily form-driven as that of other L2 language groups, possibly owing to the disparate syllable structure of Korean and Indo-European languages such as English.

In addition to the overall organisation of the lexicon, the present study also investigated whether different stimuli elicit different WA responses, and whether there is a relationship between gender and association behaviour. Word class was found to influence the connections between words in the Korean L2 lexicon, with statistically significant differences found between the response types evoked by content and grammatical word stimuli. In particular, content words were found to elicit a very small proportion of null responses and high percentage of syntagmatic associations, while function words were more likely to evoke very high proportions of null responses and low percentages of syntagmatic associations. Lending support to the contention that Koreans tend toward noun-class responses (Yoneoka, 2001), nouns were found to be the most common type of response irrespective of the lexical class of the stimuli, indicating them to be the most salient word class in the Korean L2 lexicon. Lastly, no significant difference between gender and WA behaviour was found, with male and female associative responses found to follow a similar pattern.

Implications for WAT Research, Vocabulary Instruction and Testing

The findings of this study point to methodological implications for WAT research as well as to pedagogical implications for vocabulary teaching and testing. First, evidence that different stimuli elicit proportionately different results underscores the importance of principled SW selection. Selecting only nouns as SWs, for example, would likely result in associative data regarding the structure of the L2 mental lexicon markedly different from findings gathered based on a mix of noun, verb, and grammatical word stimuli.

A number of pedagogical implications for promoting vocabulary acquisition and learning also seem to be supported by this study. First, the high number of null responses signalling learners' difficulty in making connections between words suggests a need for heightening students' awareness of the importance of building connections among words in their mental resource. Lexical organisation and lexical access/retrieval are interdependent (Carroll, 2007), thus learners with strongly interconnected lexical networks will be more efficient users of words, that is, better communicators. Grammatical words, in particular, elicited the highest proportion of null responses, indicating they are less integrated into the lexicon than other classes of words and suggesting more attention and practice on grammatical words is needed in classroom settings to help students better integrate them into their lexicons. Though Wolter (personal communication, November 8, 2012) cautions against extrapolating too much from associations to teaching practice, many researchers (e.g., Meara, 2009; Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2000; Sökmen, 1993) support the facilitation of vocabulary learning and, it follows, more proficient communication skills, by explicitly establishing connections between words. '[A]lthough teachers cannot teach all the links in the mental lexicon, they could strive for the most common types in their presentations of vocabulary' (Sökmen, 1993, p. 138). Therefore, based upon the findings of this study, the use of collocation and coordinates in classroom vocabulary presentations and practice tasks may prove more beneficial for helping Korean students to store and retrieve English words than providing synonyms and word forms. Learners demonstrated a natural preference for syntagmatic connections, associating words of one lexical category with those of another, thus, it may be beneficial, for example, for students to be taught nouns and verbs in connection to other lexical words. Sökmen (1993, 1997) suggests a variety of association-based vocabulary building activities including semantic mapping to stimulate students to explore the relationships between new and known words and communicative activities such as a vocabulary scavenger hunt to help students develop strong memories of a word. Network building, however, is a slow and gradual 'tortoise-like' process (Aitchison, 2003, p. 198). A great deal of time is required to help L2 learners develop their lexical connections.

Finally, the finding that the English L1 and Korean L2 mental lexicons are organised differently holds potential implications for language testing. The EFL testing market in Korea is a 100 billion won (USD$100,000,000) industry. Millions of Koreans annually take English proficiency tests such as the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) and

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in order to secure acceptance into tertiary-level education or gain employment (Choi, 2008). These and other tests commonly employ multiple choice formats which require test-takers to identify synonyms and differentiate between word forms; that is, to make paradigmatic connections. As the Korean lexicon has been found in this and other studies (e.g., Sökmen, 1993; Yoneoka, 2001) to be organised along syntagmatic lines, it may be more suitable to use alternative test formats which exploit syntagmatic connections. The participants in this study are low-proficiency college students studying at the same college in Korea, thus the results may not be indicative of the lexical organisation of all Korean learners sharing different characteristics, such as children or advanced-proficiency adults. However, since the learners came from different high schools across the country, the present results may cautiously be applied to other Korean learners and contexts. Future research to investigate the WAs of Korean children and adults of varying ages and English proficiency would be useful for developing a better understanding of the Korean L2 mental lexicon. Moreover, despite careful measures taken to refer to established norms and delineate the classification categories in advance, unexpected difficulty arose in dealing with misspelled, idiosyncratic, and dual-link responses. Having two researchers independently categorise the responses may serve to increase reliability and reduce the effects of subjectivity.

Though our understanding of the mental lexicon and, in particular, the Korean mental lexicon, is far from complete, it is hoped that this study has shed some light on researchers' understanding of how Korean EFL learners store and link words in their mental lexicon, and on issues surrounding WA testing in general.

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A Preliminary Study of the Use of L2 Motivational Strategies in a Business English Course

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Abstract

Although teachers' use of second language (L2) motivational strategies has drawn more attention in recent literature, researchers have yet to validate the findings in the context of business English (BE) teaching, and teachers' perspectives have rarely been examined in detail. In the present study, 21 Hong Kong tertiary teachers of BE were asked to rate 10 macrostrategies in terms of frequency of use. Half of them, in semi-structured interviews, also expressed their concerns about the adoption of certain strategies in BE classes. The overall results showed that (1) a number of strategies were preferred by the BE teachers, (2) the BE teachers' motivational behaviour was similar to that exhibited by general English teachers worldwide,

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and (3) there were concerns unique to BE teaching. These results provide evidence that BE teachers have to shoulder additional responsibilities, and a new line of research focusing on L2 motivational practice in BE teaching is urgently needed.

Keywords: Business English, English as a second language, motivation, motivational strategies

Introduction

One of the challenges language teachers face constantly is to arouse, enhance, and protect students' second language (L2) motivation. What these teachers need is not only recommendations of theoretically sound L2 motivational strategies but also research findings on their effectiveness and feasibility. To respond to this need, a substantial number of empirical studies of L2 motivational strategies have been conducted in the last two decades (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Guilloteaux, 2013; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2011; Sugita & Takeuchi, 2010). Within this field of research, the central concern has often been the perceived frequency and importance of various motivational strategies, and questionnaires have been employed as the main instrument. A review of the literature demonstrates that there is a lack of qualitative inquiries which look into how teachers' background and perspectives affect their motivational pedagogy (Cowie & Sakui, 2011, 2012). What's more, although some L2 motivational strategies are proven to be equally endorsed across cultural and ethnolinguistic contexts, much remains to be done to determine their transferability to the teaching of English of different purposes, such as academic English, business English (BE), and English for information technology professionals.

The aim of this paper is to present the reported frequency of use of 10 macrostrategies throughout one semester of BE teaching at a university in Hong Kong, together with the BE teachers' considerations in using those strategies. The present study implemented both quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews, and it followed previous studies (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998) in the categorization of L2 motivational strategies. BE teaching was chosen as the target context of this study because BE is a specialized field which is vitally important for institutes and organizations over the world (Bhatia & Bremner, 2012), yet data on BE students' and teachers' motivational behaviour is severely limited.

Literature Review

It is widely acknowledged that motivation is one of the keys to sustainable and successful learning of a L2. As Ushioda (2008) put it, “good language learners are motivated” and “high achievers of this world have motivation” (p. 19). This has driven considerable research into the nature of L2 motivation from different angles, and some clear shifts in paradigm can be observed.

The modern field of L2 motivation research originated in the 1950s, when Gardner and Lambert (1959) first brought up the dichotomy between integrative orientation and instrumental orientation. Despite the widespread influence and intuitive appeal of their social psychological model, it has also drawn much debate, and there have been calls for new theories that are more relevant to educational contexts and breakthroughs in cognitive psychology research (Brown, 1990; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Skehan, 1989). Examples that reflect such a change in the 1990s include Dörnyei’s (1994) three-level framework and Williams and Burden’s (1997) social constructivist model. The former puts various motivational influences into language, learner, and learning situation levels, and the latter uses learner-internal and -external factors as anchors. At the same time, other researchers (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Ushioda, 1998) were more interested in the fluidity in L2 motivation during a sustained learning process, and their works focused on the distinction between motivation for engagement and motivation during engagement. In recent years, there has been yet another attempt to reformulate the concept of L2 motivation, in which more emphasis is put on the uniqueness of different language learners, in particular their possible selves. One of the prominent proposals is Dörnyei’s (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System, and several quantitative studies (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009) have confirmed its high compatibility with previous models.

As findings of L2 motivation research increased, a question that naturally emerged was how this body of knowledge could be used to motivate L2 learners, and the primary concern of this new line of inquiry has been teachers’ use of L2 motivational strategies. Dörnyei and Csizér (1998), based on the data from Hungarian teachers of English, presented a distilled set of strategies for improving student motivation: the Ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners. This marked the beginning of a series of empirical studies of L2 motivational strategies over the globe. In Taiwan, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) conducted a follow-up study, which showed patterns highly similar to Dörnyei and Csizér’s findings: Strategies such as displaying motivating teacher behavior, promoting self-confidence, and presenting tasks properly were highly valued. Bernaus and Gardner (2008), in Spain, compared teachers' and students' perceptions of L2 motivational strategies, and they found that only students' perceptions were related to their attitudes and motivation. In Japan, Sugita and Takeuchi (2010) looked into the relation between the frequency of L2 motivational strategies and the strength of motivation elicited. Results indicated that the effectiveness of certain strategies depended on the students' English proficiency level. In Iran, Papi and Abdollahzadeh (2011) incorporated Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System into their study, and they concluded that while L2 motivational practice did lead to higher motivation, the students' motivated behaviour did not seem to be related to their ideal L2 selves.

One common feature of the majority of L2 motivation studies is that English was the target language to be acquired. Considering how predominant English has been as a lingua franca, this phenomenon is hardly a startling one. The unparalleled dominance of English and the ongoing process of globalization imply that more and more everyday communication has to be done in English, in non-native contexts. The pressing need to acquire English, coupled with new perspectives in educational psychology, has given rise to the teaching and learning of English for specific purposes (ESP). According to Sarani and Sahebi (2012), ESP is different from general English teaching because it is designed to meet the learners' specific needs, related to particular disciplines and occupations in content, and centred on language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics, and so forth. Hutchinson and Waters (2002) made a similar remark, stating that ESP is an approach to language learning based on learner needs, but not any particular kind of language or methodology.

Although what is essential and what is optional in ESP is open to debate, researchers (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Ellis & Johnson, 2002; Pickett, 1989; Robinson, 1991) seem to agree that there are various branches of ESP, and that Business English (BE) can be regarded as one of them. Zhang (2007) defined BE as follows:

> "Business English involves the teaching of the system of strategic communication in the social and economic domain of international business in which participants, adopting/ adapting business conventions and procedures, make selective use of lexico-grammatical resources of English as well as visual and audio semiotic resources to achieve their communicative goals via the writing modality, speaking modality, and/ or multi-modality." (p. 406)

Nowadays, an increasing number of higher education institutes worldwide are offering BE courses due to its importance in the competitive business community (Forey & Nunan, 2002; Trinder & Herles, 2013). In fact, good BE skills are so keenly pursued that a large number of working adults are enrolled in BE classes in private schools, and companies are also running in-house BE courses for their employees (Forey, 2004). As regards its content, BE "is often a mix of specific content (relating to a particular job area or industry), and general content (relating to general ability to communicate more effectively, especially in the business situations)" (Ellis & Johnson, 2002, p. 3). In other words, there is bound to be some overlapping between BE and general English, and this has caused teachers, course designers, and researchers to handle BE in different ways. Some pay more attention to a specialist BE vocabulary (Mascull, 2010); some plan the course entirely for writing business correspondences (Zagan-Zelter & Zagan-Zelter, 2010); and some prefer to provide more training in presentation and other oral communication skills (Ellis & Johnson, 2002; Kassim & Ali, 2010). In a bid to reconceptualize BE teaching, Zhang (2007) proposed that BE courses should incorporate three fields – subject knowledge, business practice, and language skills – so that students will be familiar with the linguistic features of business language and then relate them to interpersonal relationships and achieve communicative goals.

Regardless of the approaches or skills chosen, teachers of BE, as other teachers do, play a crucial role in developing and supporting students' motivation. One important caveat, however, is that what is effective for teaching general English may not be so for BE. As pointed out by Zhu and Liao (2008), BE teaching differs from general English teaching in terms of teachers' role, course design, teaching models, and teaching skills. Unfortunately, even with all the efforts to better understand L2 motivation, research that links L2 motivational strategies with BE teaching is inadequate. This poses a tough challenge to teachers of BE, as they may often need to resort to intuition or introspection when trying to motivate their students. Inspired by this pedagogical concern, the current research aims to fill the gap by answering the following two research questions:

1. What L2 motivational strategies do teachers of BE use regularly?
2. What course-specific considerations do teachers of BE make when they apply those L2 motivational strategies?

Research Method

Participants

The participants of this study were 21 English teachers from a university in Hong Kong, recruited through snowball sampling. The authors first met a few teachers and invited them to participate, and once they agreed, the researcher asked them to introduce other teachers as potential participants. The 15 female and 6 male participants' teaching experience ranged from 3 to 14 years, and they were all teaching the course English for Business Communication when data was collected. Their students, with no or little business experience, were reading for different two-year sub-degree programmes. Table 1 provides a description of the 21 participants, and Table 2 is a summary of the BE course offered by the university and the textbook used.

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Data

* Participated in the interviews

Name	Gender	Teaching Experience	Highest Qualification
Participant 1*	Female	5 years	Master of Philosophy
Participant 2	Male	4 years	Master of Arts
Participant 3*	Female	7 years	Master of Education
Participant 4*	Female	10 years	Doctor of Education
Participant 5	Female	6 years	Doctor of Philosophy
Participant 6*	Female	7 years	Doctor of Philosophy
Participant 7	Female	6 years	Master of Philosophy
Participant 8*	Female	11 years	Master of Philosophy
Participant 9*	Male	8 years	Doctor of Philosophy
Participant 10	Female	7 years	Master of Arts
Participant 11*	Male	14 years	Master of Arts
Participant 12	Female	4 years	Master of Arts
Participant 13*	Female	7 years	Doctor of Education
Participant 14	Female	3 years	Master of Arts
Participant 15	Male	4 years	Master of Arts
Participant 16	Female	9 years	Master of Philosophy
Participant 17*	Female	7 years	Doctor of Education
Participant 18*	Female	5 years	Master of Arts
Participant 19	Male	10 years	Doctor of Philosophy
Participant 20	Female	5 years	Master of Philosophy
Participant 21*	Male	6 years	Doctor of Philosophy

Table 2. Summary of English for Business Communication

Class Size	20-30 students
Duration	14 weeks
Contact Time	3 hours per week
Key Topics	Giving oral presentations Nonverbal communication skills Telephone skills Writing negative messages Writing persuasive messages Writing routine and goodwill messages Writing résumés and cover letters Interviewing skills
Assessment Methods	Coursework Writing tasks Group oral presentations Examination
Textbook	Guffey, M. E. & Loewy, D. (2010). *Essentials of business communication* (8^{th} ed.). Mason, OH: South-Western/ Cengage Learning.

Procedure

The 21 participating teachers completed a questionnaire designed to gauge their use of L2 motivational strategies in the aforementioned BE course. The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) covered 10 macrostrategies suggested by Dörnyei (2001), such as creating a pleasant classroom climate, presenting tasks properly, and promoting learner autonomy. This ensured that results of the present study would be comparable with those of previous studies, since very similar categorizations have been used as the basis of investigation (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; He, 2009; Hsu, 2009; Moskovsky, Alrabai, Paolini, & Ratcheva, 2012). For each macrostrategy the teachers rated the frequency of use on a scale from 1 (never) to 6 (frequently). They were also asked to complete the same questionnaire three times (once in every month) throughout the semester, so as to give a more thorough picture of their L2 motivational strategy use. Following the collection of all questionnaires, the researchers compiled descriptive statistics and ranked the macrostrategies by frequency of use.

The other method used in the study was interviewing, which would yield data for answering Research Question 2. Among the 21 teachers, 11 agreed to take part in the interviews. The individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted at the end of the semester, when all partaking teachers had completed the questionnaire three times. In the interviews, the participants were first free to describe their strategy use and relate it to issues such as previous education and training, student performance, teaching experience, understanding of L2 motivation, and so forth. After that, the researchers raised questions focusing on BE-specific issues and the discrepancies between trends reported by previous research and the interviewees' preferences, as unveiled by the questionnaires. The interviews, which lasted 30-40 minutes, were taped, transcribed, and returned for verification as required by standard procedures. As regards data analysis, inductive analysis (Holliday, 2002) and member checking (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) were employed. Specifically, the authors, without any pre-established hypotheses, read and categorized the data individually, compared their results, and discussed if new topics for recoding were needed. The coding was data driven, so the authors developed codes while reading the transcriptions. Themes which were not related to the teaching of BE were excluded as they were not the foci of the present study.

Results

Frequency of Use of L2 Motivational Strategies

Table 3 shows, in descending order, the average frequency of use of each L2 motivational strategy by the 21 participants over one semester of BE teaching. The majority of the macrostrategies under investigation were employed fairly regularly by the teachers, with mean frequencies over 4.50. Among the 10 macrostrategies, what the teachers used the most frequently was presenting tasks properly. They also put great emphasis on showing proper teacher behaviour and creating a pleasant classroom climate. In comparison, the macrostrategies which were relatively underused were promoting group cohesiveness and group norms, familiarizing learners with L2-related values, and promoting learner autonomy.

Table 3. Means and SDs of L2 motivational strategies (N=21)

*Ranked in descending order of frequency

Strategy*	**Mean**	**SD**
1. Present tasks properly	5.41	0.42
2. Show proper teacher behaviour	5.33	0.53
3. Create a pleasant classroom climate	5.20	0.39
4. Make the learning tasks stimulating	5.01	0.64
5. Increase learners' goal-orientedness	4.83	0.54
6. Promote learners' self-confidence	4.79	0.81
7. Recognize students' effort	4.66	0.75
8. Promote group cohesiveness and group norms	4.21	0.90
9. Familiarize learners with L2-related values	4.04	0.43
10. Promote learner autonomy	3.89	0.46

Teachers' Course-Specific Concerns about L2 Motivational Strategies

This section looks into what the participating teachers would consider when they applied different L2 motivational strategies to BE classes, according to the data from the interviews. As space does not permit a full review of the considerations, only those reported by five or more teachers are covered here. The findings are divided into the following three sub-sections: students' cohesion and group norms, students' preference for non-L2-specific positive feedback, and teachers' limited knowledge of business administration.

Students' Cohesion and Group Norm

Each of the BE classes taught by the participants was composed of 20-30 students doing various business-related sub-degree programmes, such as Accounting, Human Resources Management, International Business, and Marketing. Despite their diverse English proficiency levels, the high similarity of their career interests and expertise made it easier for the teachers to set goals which would be shared by the whole classes. As a result, increasing learners' goal-orientedness was a strategy frequently used by the teachers to raise and maintain their students' motivation. As one of the teachers put it in [Extract 1].

[Extract 1]

> It is not difficult to understand my students' needs. They need to know how to make their clients feel respected and valued. They need good presentation skills.

> They need to write polite and informative business correspondences…I keep telling them how important these skills will be in their future career, and they agree with me. At the same time, I think these are all attainable goals for them, given their satisfactory English proficiency.

The students' similar major areas also meant that the BE classes were not the only contact time for them. On the contrary, they took a substantial number of discipline-specific subjects together, as well as doing numerous group tasks in those subjects. One implication of this phenomenon was that the students were well acquainted with each other before coming to the BE classes, and they were aware of the group norms and their roles irrespective of the class they were attending. The teachers might find it unnecessary, or even counterproductive, to fiddle with the existing but often unspoken norms, as long as there was no discipline issue. One participant commented on the promotion of group cohesiveness and group norms in [Extract 2] as follows:

> [Extract 2]
>
> I don't have to restate the class rules all the time because they are almost identical everywhere. And they are always well behaved…They know each other much better than I know them, so I better let them divide the task and choose what to do themselves. They have different strengths and personalities, which I am not very familiar with…I don't intervene much and everything is fine.

Another teacher explained why it was futile to promote group cohesiveness when teaching BE in [Extract 3].

> [Extract 3]
>
> Half of my students are doing Tourism and the other half Logistics…Although the two groups are not hostile to each other, when there is any group work or task, the Tourism students will only work with their Tourism classmates, and the same for Logistics…No matter how hard I encourage them to share their works and experiences with everybody, the grouping is always the same, and there is little interaction between the two halves…Now I no longer insist on doing so.

Students' Preference for Non-L2-Specific Positive Feedback

One phenomenon almost all of the participants (10 out of 11) were cognizant of was the students' desire to be treated as mature, well-prepared businesspeople. The students also appeared to carry an expectation that they should have abundant opportunities to display their business skills in a supportive atmosphere. Unsurprisingly, the participating teachers' positive feedback and appreciation for hard work were usually well received by the students, and as an outcome these motivational strategies were adopted frequently. Below two quotations of [Extract 4] and [Extract 5] are typical of the teachers' responses.

[Extract 4]

> Even the quieter students look very excited and serious when they are reporting or presenting to the whole class, and they show a lot of satisfaction when I say things like "You must have rehearsed it many times", "I appreciate your thorough research and preparation", "You have improved a lot as a team", and so on.

[Extract 5]

> They all dress up like business executives, and they prepare well-planned handouts for everyone. It's like they take on another identity when they are presenting…Everybody claps hands in the end and it feels like a big achievement…I wrap up a class by saying "I am so proud of you all" many times and it works wonders with them.

Upon further investigation, however, it became evident that such appreciation and encouragement were often non-L2-specific. The teachers attributed the infrequent use of L2-specific feedback as a motivational practice to an observed circumstance: Their students were more concerned about acquiring businesspeople behaviour and character, rather than sharpening their already respectable English language skills. As one participant described, it was the difference between "learning how to do business in English" and "improving English in order to do business better". By reason of this divergence, remarks on aspects like grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary were not always heeded by the students. A clear example of this issue was given in [Extract 6].

[Extract 6]

> When I comment on how they have handled questions tactfully, or how they have done the transitions smoothly, they all pay close attention. But when I switch the focus to word choices, tenses, prepositions, etc., they look uninterested…If it is a reminder instead of a praise, they become even more indifferent.

In other cases, the teachers avoided giving L2-specific feedback openly because it might be mistaken for disapproval of the students' English proficiency. This suggested that feedback on language aspects could be demotivating on some occasions. One teacher shared an experience in [Extract 7] as follows:

[Extract 7]

> A minute ago they were all smiling and nodding heads, but once I began to talk about pronunciation and the use of modal verbs, their faces grew long. The atmosphere got very awkward…Perhaps they thought I was not happy with their English level…My comments were not in any way negative…That class didn't end in a pleasant way.

Teachers' Limited Knowledge of Business Administration

The participants' homogeneous background, like the students', had an impact on their L2 motivational behaviour. In brief, all the teachers under investigation possessed qualifications in education, English, or linguistics from various universities, and after graduation they had been working in the field of education. They were not equipped with either the expertise in any specific business professions, or some of the broad-based knowledge required in the current business world. As revealed by the interviews, the majority of the teachers (9 out of 11) were conscious of how their meagre knowledge of business administration might hamper their ability to teach BE and use certain L2 motivational strategies. Several teachers discussed the difficulty in facilitating students' BE learning and promoting learner autonomy as below from [Extract 8] to [Extract 10].

[Extract 8]

> I really wanted to give my students authentic tasks and materials, so that our classes would resemble the situations businesspeople face daily. But what exactly do I know about those professions? I have never been involved in any business-related field after all.

[Extract 9]

> We all know that the so-called business scenarios we do in class are so basic and contrived. But I really don't know what other materials I can recommend my students to consult after school. If I simply look for resources online or at the library using the key words 'business English', how can I tell whether they are helpful or not? And I think my students can do such a search themselves.

[Extract 10]

> Of course I encourage my students to give feedback to each other, but I have never let them do peer assessment, I mean, grade their classmates' works…They may incorporate criteria used in their major courses, which have nothing to do with the improvement of English…I am not familiar with them anyway…I fear that may add further complication to assessment methods.

It was clear that the teachers' scarce exposure to business knowledge made it hard for them to move away from teacher-centred styles of teaching. Another reported repercussion of their unfamiliarity with business administration was higher reliance on the teaching materials provided by the university, in particular the BE textbook. Though the textbook offered good support to the teachers in many ways, the absence of some content would render the adoption of the corresponding L2 motivational strategies impossible. [Extract 11] and [Extract 12] gave some insights into how the textbook restricted the teachers incorporation of L2-related values into the BE course.

[Extract 11]

> When I was teaching general English elsewhere in the past, I talked about how British English and American English are different in terms of spelling, pronunciation, wording, and so on, and my students found it useful…The textbook I use does not say anything about which country or cultural group it is targeting, nor does it cover any issue of cultural differences in the business world…Obviously I am not well informed on this matter.

[Extract 12]

> The visual materials included by the textbook are quite useful…Sometimes my students want to know where that scene takes place, is it Canada, America, or Australia, and what businesspeople there expect, in terms of politeness, body language, and so on. Unfortunately the textbook does not provide any information in these areas.

Discussion

The quantitative data that emerged in this study revealed that the BE teachers preferred some L2 motivational strategies to the others. The 21 participants reported frequent use of strategies including presenting tasks properly, showing proper teacher behaviour, and creating a pleasant classroom atmosphere. In contrast, strategies like familiarizing learners with L2-related values and promoting learner autonomy were underutilized. The preference pattern, as demonstrated in Table 4, has some resemblance to those reported by similar studies in Taiwan (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; He, 2009) and the US (Hsu, 2009). This suggests that some L2 motivational strategies can transcend not only ethnolinguistic contexts but also dissimilar types of English to be taught.

Table 4. Comparison of Rank Orders of L2 Motivational Strategies Obtained by Recent Studies

* Conducted by Cheng & Dörnyei (2007)

** Conducted by He (2009)

*** Conducted by Hsu (2009)

Current Study	**Taiwan 1***	**Taiwan 2****	**US*****
1. Present tasks properly	5	3	2
2. Show proper teacher behavior	1	1	1
3. Create a pleasant classroom climate	4	2	5
4. Make the learning tasks stimulating	7	4	8
5. Increase learners' goal-orientedness	6	8	7
6. Promote learners' self-confidence	3	6	3
7. Recognize students' effort	2	5	4
8. Promote group cohesiveness and group norms	9	9	6
9. Familiarize learners with L2-related values	8	7	9
10. Promote learner autonomy	10	10	10

In spite of the similarity in number, the subsequent qualitative inquiry uncovered considerations which were not identical to those proposed by previous studies. The biggest hurdle to promoting learning autonomy in BE classes is probably the teachers' insecurity caused by insufficient business knowledge, rather than "a history of obedience to authority" (Warden & Lin, p. 536) or the perception that autonomy is a prerequisite for L2 motivation among tertiary students (Cowie & Sakui, 2011). BE teachers' proactive recognition of diligence and effort appears to pertain to the students' fledging identity of businesspeople, more than to any Asian or Confucian values on hard work (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Grant & Dweck, 2001). These instances serve as a reminder that findings from integrated English classes in mainstream educational contexts may not be applicable to BE teaching, and what is optional to teachers of general English may be a key requirement of BE teachers. For example, to prepare students for the fast-changing, unforgiving business world, BE teachers need to have a more outgoing personality and be reasonably knowledgeable about different aspects of business, so that they can readily relate to the students' questions (Zhu & Liao, 2008).

In the semi-structured interviews, the participants were invited to comment on all factors that shaped their L2 motivational preferences. Whilst factors such as previous training and current teaching environments were far from negligible, the most prominent influence was their observation in class. The analysis indicated that the participating teachers placed great emphasis on witnessing students' L2 motivational behaviour, and this universally endorsed value was also reported in Cowie and Sakui's (2011) study. The BE teachers' ability to associate classroom observation with teaching practice, along with the desire to continuously better their teaching skills, is indeed encouraging. A sharp contrast to this, nonetheless, is how rarely the teachers mentioned research on L2 motivational strategies. The participants displayed little familiarity with any theories of L2 motivational strategies, the leading categorizations, or recent findings worldwide. It is regrettable that the BE teachers' graduate and postgraduate qualifications did not guarantee adequate knowledge of how to motivate L2 learners. One possibility is that advances in motivational strategy research have not yet permeated English teacher education in Hong Kong, and there is an alarming need for curriculum reform in that sector.

Some of the concerns warrant fundamental changes in student and teacher recruitment, and they are beyond the scope of the present article. Still, a number of recommendations can be drawn from the findings. In class, it is advisable that teachers of BE accentuate the importance of both business knowledge and language skills from the outset, so that students will be less likely to focus exclusively on communicative competence at the expense of language accuracy. The teaching plan, available to every student, should list out concrete, progressive, and L2-specific expected learning outcomes. A written diagnostic test in the first class can let students discover their language weaknesses and inform BE teachers of how to adjust the teaching accordingly. During class preparation, BE teachers who are aware of their meagre knowledge of business contexts should take the opportunity to collaborate with major teachers by means of material sharing, workshops and seminars, and so on. On the syllabus level, BE teachers who are familiar with the students' needs and standards ought to be involved in the selection of the teaching materials. After all, there is no typical BE textbook that can cater for all language and motivational needs, no matter how many words are packed into it. For instance, students who are interested in Western cultures may prefer more Eurocentric materials, whereas students doing Hospitality Management and Tourism may expect more listening and speaking materials. Unfortunately, as reported by Rosen and Rosen (2010), many current BE textbooks fail to present business concepts and language structures in a unified and coherent way. Choosing the right BE textbook and supplementing it with other resources will take coordinated and dedicated effort from teachers.

Conclusion

The present research was one of the early endeavors to link L2 motivational practice with the teaching of BE, and there are certain limitations to it. The data might not be representative since it was collected from a single institute in Hong Kong for one semester only, and the number of participants was comparatively small. Future research, conceivably in the form of collective case studies (Stake, 1995), could investigate teachers from several tertiary institutes for a substantial period to identify further considerations in the use of L2 motivational strategies. Apart from the issue of sample size and time, the questionnaire adopted in this study, which was centred on 10 macrostrategies, reflected only a general preference pattern but not the exact strategies used by the participating teachers. Documenting the actual motivational behaviour requires a classroom observation component, as done by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008), together with instruments covering a significantly larger number of detailed strategies. Another limitation is the reliability of self-reported data and the potential priming effects resulting from the repeated administration of the same questionnaire. This limitation can be partly overcome by reminding participating teachers that most teaching outcomes can be achieved by using a personalized selection of motivational strategies consistently, so teachers need not strive to be "supermotivators" who apply all of the recommended strategies (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 136). Future studies could also consider incorporating students' oral and written feedback as a means to achieve triangulation.

Notwithstanding the limitations, the study is successful in reinforcing what has been found previously with new discoveries from a BE course. The authors found that the participating BE teachers were in favor of a few L2 motivational strategies over others, and the rankings of the frequency of use were comparable with those generated by similar studies. It is quite possible that some strategies can be transferred across diverse types of English taught. On the other hand, the BE teachers expressed concerns which were seldom reported in previous research. Examples include the grouping of students and the role of the BE textbook. Such discrepancies confirm that not all recommendations for motivating integrated English classes are valid for learners of BE. The question of how BE teachers motivate their students, therefore, merits a body of research of its own. It is hoped that the present study would serve as a starting point for more investigation that can further our understanding of the dynamics of L2 motivational strategies in BE classes.

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Appendix 1

L2 Motivational Strategy Questionnaire for Teachers

Please write how often you have used the following motivational strategies recently. Indicate the frequency of each strategy on the six-point scale given.

Motivational Strategy	**1 (Never) <> 6 (Frequently)**					
1. Create a pleasant classroom climate Create a supportive atmosphere, promote risk-taking, use humour, avoid comparison	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Familiarize learners with L2-related values Use more English in class, familiarize students with the cultural background, use authentic cultural materials	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Increase learners' goal-orientedness Find out students' needs, help students set realistic goals	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Make the learning tasks stimulating Introduce interesting topics, present auditory and visual aids, make the tasks challenging	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Promote group cohesiveness and group norms Explain class rules, allow students to know each other, encourage students to share experiences and thoughts	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Promote learner autonomy Be a facilitator, encourage peer teaching and assessment, teach self-motivating strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Promote learners' self-confidence Provide students with positive feedback, teach effective learning techniques	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Recognize students' effort Recognize effort and achievement, promote effort attributions, monitor students' progress	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Show proper teacher behaviour Care about students, teach enthusiastically, know the subject and prepare well	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Present tasks properly Give clear instructions, demonstrate, explain why the tasks are meaningful	1	2	3	4	5	6

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The Key Ingredients of an Effective Grammar Lesson: Perceptions From High School ESL Students

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Abstract

The history of grammar teaching is fraught with tensions especially in terms of the effectiveness of grammar teaching to students' language development. Recently, there has been a growth in research on learner involvement in language learning and learner beliefs. Within this paradigm, this research examined students' beliefs about grammar instruction methods in the Sri Lankan secondary ESL classrooms. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were conducted with students about their attitudes to grammar teaching methods and their opinions about effective grammar lessons. The results showed students' positive attitude to explicit grammar teaching. The lessons were judged not only in terms of the engagement of activities employed, but also in terms of the teachers' creative presentation and the usefulness of the

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grammar item in extending the students' English language repertoire. The findings have implications for language pedagogy and language teacher education in general. The study supports the idea of integration of explicit instruction in grammar teaching with authentic real life examples to increase students' awareness of the importance of grammar.

Keywords: grammar pedagogy, focus on form, learner beliefs, learner preferences, deductive grammar, inductive grammar

Introduction

The position of grammar underwent many fluctuations in the field of language teaching, as well as in the reflecting of the developments and trends in language teaching theory and methodology. However recent research has confirmed the importance of focus on form and linguistic awareness in language learning. The plethora of methods and techniques for teaching grammar emerging in more recent years has generated much debate in different contexts (Ellis, 2006). Ellis (2008) advocates a contextual approach to grammar teaching driven by a close understanding of teachers and students and analysis of sociocultural constraints.

Despite the numerous studies in teachers' beliefs on grammar teaching (Borg, 2006; Borg & Burns, 2008), insufficient research studies consult students' opinions about the importance and the effectiveness of learning and teaching grammar. Research into learners' beliefs have recently attracted the researchers' attention due to their contribution to teachers' decision making, student motivation and their impact on the effectiveness of language pedagogy (Schulz, 1996; 2006). Given the dynamic nature of language learner beliefs and their influence by contextual and cultural factors, this paper reports on a research study which examined learner beliefs about grammar teaching methods in the Sri Lankan ESL context.

Sri Lanka is a developing country where English has been the 'Lingua Franca' for decades. In the era of globalization, English is seen as an asset to academic and professional achievement. Thus, the government has invested a significant amount of money and resources in reviewing and updating the English language education policy in public schools. English education is a concern for both parents and students in both rural and suburban areas, as students' exposure to English is fairly limited. A series of reforms have been introduced in the English educational system in the last 30 years without any consultation with the teachers and students or appropriate evaluation procedures. In a reform in 2007, the Sri Lankan Ministry of Education introduced a new set of pedagogical principles and teaching and learning materials to strengthen the ESL skills in the secondary schools; the new curriculum and the material were based on western trends in language education. However, the quality of English language teaching is reported to be declining and the role of grammar is considered as one of the culprits (Fernando, 2008). These challenges combined with the lack of research in the Sri Lankan ESL context provided the starting point for this research. The findings of this research offer novel insights in the field of grammar instruction, which can inform teachers' decision making.

This paper begins with a brief introduction to literature in grammar teaching and the importance of learner cognition in this domain. We then provide a description of the research design and data analysis. The results are then presented and discussed with reference to current research on grammar teaching and implications for grammar pedagogy.

Controversies on the role of grammar in ELT

The teaching of grammar dates back to the Ancient Greeks who regarded grammar as the foundation of writing but also thinking skills, as it was paired up with logic. Ever since, the questions of whether to teach grammar, how and when to teach grammar were a major preoccupation for teachers and researchers (Ellis, 2006).The domain of language teaching experienced a boom in teaching methods and approaches which resulted in new techniques for grammar teaching. Instead of making the task easier, it made the issue complicated in numerous ways.

The role of grammar was embraced in earlier approaches but got marginalized with the advent of communicative language teaching and the functional approaches to language teaching (Harmer, 2001). Research on the importance of grammar learning has resurfaced and there are conflicting opinions about how grammar should be taught in ESL (Derewianka, 1998; Doughty & Williams, 1998; Ur, 1988, 1996). Swan (2002) claims that people around the world teach too much grammar for many bad reasons, but he emphasizes that grammar should be taught (not too much) in order to help students with comprehensibility and accuracy. Early research distinguished between two major methods: implicit (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Swain & Lopkin, 1982) and explicit grammar teaching (Ellis, 1990; Sharwood-Smith, 1981). Implicit grammar teaching was embraced in the task based approaches (Ellis, 2003; Fotos, 1998). However, recently there has been some agreement that explicit instruction is also useful particularly in acquisition poor contexts (Ellis, 2006; Hinkel & Fotos, 2002; Nunan, 1998).

A large number of methods and techniques emerged over the years as a response to the ongoing discussion of grammar pedagogy. Some authors use the terms 'method' and 'approach' as equivalent terms, while others (Harmer, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2001) distinguish them. Generically, an 'approach' includes the description of the nature of language and the nature of language learning. The term method is an umbrella term for specifications and interrelations of theory while 'practice' or 'technique' (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 16) is the practical realization of an approach (Harmer, 2001, p. 78). For the purposes of this paper, we will use the term method to refer to the general direction in grammar teaching which can be implemented using a range of techniques and specific procedures.

The literature is rife with a range of categorizations and classifications of grammar methods. In order to provide sufficient context, we will review the most popular methods of teaching grammar, but it is important to acknowledge wide variation in terminology used among researchers. Ellis argues that these differences are influenced by the nature of the research, i.e. whether the research is theoretically or pedagogically driven or whether the terms are used in SLA research or retrospective research (Ellis, 2001a, 2001b). The first distinction which has been prevalent throughout the literature and has been a preoccupation for teachers and researchers is deductive vs. inductive grammar instruction. In the deductive method to grammar teaching, the rules are introduced to the learners first before they become engaged in classroom tasks. In contrast, in the inductive method of grammar teaching, the learners have to discover rules from the given examples. The aim of inductive instruction is to acquire rules implicitly without students being aware of the target form (DeKeyser, 1994). Alongside the development of communicative language teaching, the field of grammar teaching saw the emergence of the term 'Focus on Form Instruction' (Ellis, 2001b, 2006). Focus on Form Instruction is a term that has been developed to describe grammar teaching in recent years and is the preferred term in second language acquisition literature (Ellis, 2001a, 2006). It refers to "any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form" (Ellis, 2001a, p. 1). Later this definition led to the distinction between focus on forms vs. focus on form. The former indicates a situation when one grammar component is presented explicitly followed by extensive practice while the latter, is a term that designates attention to linguistic items in communicative activities with emphasis on meaning (Ellis, 2001b, 2006). Focus on Form includes a range of techniques which aim to focus students' attention to the form implicitly and explicitly.

Focus on form is often discussed as grammar in integration in pedagogical circles (Borg & Burns, 2008). This involves grammar being embedded in meaning oriented activities and tasks and familiarizing students with the communicative purposes of grammar which give immediate opportunities for practice and use (Mitchell, 2000). An array of approaches has been introduced which offer different techniques of grammar integration into language learning: lexical approaches, the use of corpus concordancing, task based approaches and functional systemic approaches (Borg & Burns, 2008; Ellis, 2006, 2008).

Recent research studies have shifted their attention from examining whether grammar instruction is important to exploring the effectiveness of different teaching methods and appropriateness of methods in different contexts (Borg & Burns, 2008; Ellis, 2006; Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). This direction is consistent with the shift towards employing an eclectic approach to language teaching. Bax (2003) Harmer (2003) and Kumaravadivelu (2003) discuss the importance of a contextual approach to language teaching, relying on students and teachers' needs and beliefs. This raises the need for investigation of contextual characteristics when designing appropriate language and grammar pedagogy. Kumaravadivelu (2003) proposes three parameters of teaching: particularity, practicality and possibility. This proposal emphasizes the teachers' need for knowing the context (particularity), identifying the methods suitable for the context (practicality) that can be unique in relation to culture and practices (possibility). Hence, Kumaravadivelu (2003) suggests that teachers need to be adaptable so that they are able to identify what works for their students. This view highlights the importance of needs analysis and a thorough investigation of the context as conditions for effective implementation of grammar pedagogy. This constitutes the starting point of this paper as it aims to examine students' preferences and beliefs about grammar teaching in the Sri Lankan context.

Student beliefs about learning grammar

Learner needs are a significant consideration for any kind of pedagogical intervention, and it is important to examine the learners' belief systems and how they affect the teaching and learning processes. Graves (2008) discusses the need for research into learners' views on curriculum changes to enable them to provide input into the curriculum and pedagogy to pursue their language goals and maximize their language practice. Mercer (2008) argued for the importance of learners' self-beliefs and suggested that investigation into learner beliefs and constructs would help in developing a 'sound FL teaching approach in general' (p. 183). Lima & Fontana's (2007) study on learner beliefs found that there is a gap between what learners want and what they receive in the secondary school education in Brazil. Hawkey (2006) in his study on the Languages 2000 project in Italian EFL classrooms revealed that there is a striking disparity between learner perceptions and teacher perceptions in some activities in the FL classroom. He specifically revealed that both learners and teachers agreed on the value of the communicative approach, but there was disagreement about the appropriateness of pedagogical grammar practices and use of pair work. Hawkey concluded that these mismatches need to be considered in planning activities for language teaching classrooms and that further research needs to be conducted to understand this disparity.

Despite the researchers' consensus that learner beliefs exert a major influence in language learning, research on learner beliefs and attitudes has not been prolific. Schulz's research (1996, 2001), is among the few key studies investigating FL teachers' and students' attitudes to explicit grammar instruction and corrective feedback in USA and Colombia. Using a questionnaire to elicit learner and teacher beliefs, he revealed major discrepancies between teachers' and students' views to learning grammar in both contexts. Both groups of students in both countries agreed with the role of explicit grammar instruction towards success in FL, and expected corrective feedback from their teachers. With regards to teachers' responses, while they generally agreed with the contribution of grammar instruction, there was less consistency and more mixed responses. A similar survey research was conducted with 26 EFL students studying at a Turkish university and revealed students' agreement about the importance of grammar and error correction (Incecay & Dollar, 2011). However students expressed their preference for grammar to be taught communicatively.

In a study conducted in Brunei Darussalam, Shak and Gardner (2008) found that primary school language learners held positive attitudes to form focused instruction in ESL teaching. They specifically examined young students' attitudes and preference to a series of form-focused tasks which were implemented in the classroom. They concluded that task familiarity can enhance enjoyment, and student motivation and that learner difficulty is an individual factor that is variable across learners. They also unveiled the students' preference for group work which provides appropriate scaffolding and support and their attraction to simple and less cognitively demanding tasks.

A similar study was conducted by with 754 foreign and second language learners enrolled in different language courses at Michigan state university (Loewen et al., 2009). The study employed the use of a survey questionnaire to investigate learner beliefs about grammar instruction and error correction and differences in perceptions between foreign and second language groups. All participants underlined the importance of grammar in language learning and its contribution in enhancing their writing and generally academic success at the university level. A number of participants however expressed negative statements about grammar and described it as ‘monotonous’ and ‘boring’. Participants shared the learners’ views in previous studies by Schultz (1996, 2001) and Incecay and Dollar (2011) in that they favored the teaching of grammar embedded in real world practice and real life activities. However, the study revealed differences in perceptions between English as a second language and other foreign language students. ESL learners appreciated the need for error correction while FL learners opposed it; another difference was that very few ESL learners reported liking practice or speaking in grammar instruction, while this speaking practice was mentioned frequently in foreign language learners’ responses. The study concluded with the limitation in the use of questionnaire and the need to examine the background context of students in interpreting the survey results.

Canagarajah’s research on Tamil ESL learners in Jaffna peninsula, Sri Lanka (1993) is one of the few studies in the Sri Lankan context. It unveiled students’ lack of motivation and suggested the need for teachers to adopt a strategic approach in eliminating inhibitive beliefs. Unequivocally, learners’ beliefs provide insight into teaching practice, and need to be accommodated and considered alongside teachers’ beliefs.

Compared to the abundant research on teachers’ beliefs, research in learner cognition has been limited. Most studies on learner beliefs on grammar teaching have been conducted with adult learners and have in their majority employed survey questionnaires as data collection methods (Incecay & Dollar, 2011; Loewen et al., 2009; Schulz, 1996, 2001). This study is important as it employs a mixed methods design and sheds light into high school learner beliefs about the grammar teaching methods and student preferences. It also expands the rich literature on grammar teaching and provides new insights into the controversies around the grammar in English foreign language teaching. This research can be viewed as a significant contribution, in that it is the first of its kind, to the authors’ knowledge, a form of ‘bottom up’ evaluation of EFL pedagogy in the Sri Lankan context. The findings can offer new insights into the teaching of grammar, specifically based on students’ perceptions which can be used as a guide for teachers’ integration of focus on form. It is important to say that the application of the research findings extend beyond the Sri Lankan context, to other EFL situations that face similar dilemmas.

Research questions

The research aimed to explore learner beliefs about grammar teaching by asking the following research questions:

- What are the Sri Lankan secondary school students' beliefs about the effectiveness of English grammar methods?
- What are the Sri Lankan secondary school students' preferences in English grammar teaching?

Research design

Mixed-methods design

Pajares (1992) and more recently Ellis (2008) caution about the limitations of the research on beliefs relying on belief inventories and both suggest that for richer and more in depth analysis, qualitative data need to be collected. In line with the limitations of the survey design identified in previous research on student beliefs (Loewen et al., 2009; Schulz, 1996, 2001), the research employed a mixed methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) in the data collection combining quantitative and qualitative data: a survey with 96 students and 30 semi-structured interviews with students. One of the key benefits of mixed methods research is that the research problem and questions can be explored in more depth with the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods than either one alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The qualitative component was given larger weighting than the quantitative component in this mixed methods design, given the limitations of previous studies.

Questionnaires were developed and adapted from other research (Borg & Burns, 2008; Schulz, 2001), to enhance the validity of the instrument. This was further validated with the pilot study conducted with five Sri Lankan students to gain feedback on the formulation and understanding of the questions. Interviews and questionnaires were subjected to revision after the pilot study participants' feedback. This contributed to enhancing the reliability and validity of the responses.

Interviews were semi-structured and conducted face to face by one of the researchers. The semi structured interview was chosen as the second instrument of data collection. It is the most favored research instrument in cognition research (Borg, 2006) and was the most appropriate type of interview as it uses a set of question to direct students and has the potential to yield elaborate responses while the researcher is able to monitor the direction of the interview. A set of interview questions was prepared and was used as prompts to elicit participants' experiences in relation to the teaching and learning of grammar.

The data collection followed ethics approval from the University ethics committee and approval from the school principals, and the Sri Lankan education department. Participants were asked to read the information letters and were asked to sign only when they had read and understood the process. In this study, students could participate in the research either by filling in the questionnaire or/and by facing an interview with the researcher. Questionnaires were distributed to different classes with the teachers' permission and interviews were conducted outside class hours to avoid classroom disruption.

The interview (see Appendix 2) and questionnaire (see Appendix 1) were divided into two parts: the first part enquired about students' beliefs about grammar teaching methods and the second about their attitude towards the teaching material. In the interviews students expressed their views mostly in English or sometimes in Sinhalese, if they preferred; interviews were translated and transcribed in English.

The questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Likert scale and multiple choice questions were entered into Excel program and frequencies and relative frequencies were calculated. In order to make sense of the raw data obtained from the interviews (responses against the questions), qualitative data were explored for frequency of themes. Themes were developed based on coding from the two researchers to improve inter-rater reliability (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). Qualitative and quantitative data were then merged, compared and triangulated for further validation of findings. The analysis followed analysis of specific statements and themes, grouping of themes to identify possible meanings through the method of induction (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). The themes and respective quotes relating to the themes were presented at various conferences for additional validation, and are presented below in the Results section.

Research participants

The students were recruited in this study on a voluntary basis and interviews and questionnaires were scheduled according to their school timetables. The students were drawn from a selection of both urban and semi-urban schools within a specific district, due to the researcher's easy access to them through public transport. The school infrastructure facilities were of a minimal standard compared to schools in developed countries. The study followed purposeful sampling (Patton, 2001) as it sought students who had experienced grammar teaching in their secondary education.

Altogether, 54 male students and 72 female students took part in the survey and the interviews. Thirty students were interviewed by one of the researchers. The students were English language learners who had been learning English as a second language for about ten years and between the ages 15 and 16. They had obtained credit or above for their Ordinary Level English examination held in 2007. Therefore, their English competence was better than the students who had failed the same examination, and who constitute the majority according to the statistics of the examination department in Sri Lanka. This decision to recruit such students with higher linguistic proficiency was made to improve consistency in the findings. Unsuccessful students were excluded to avoid the influence of other intervening factors, such as students' lack of motivation and their engagement in job seeking, poor attendance which contributed to the students' lack of success. Students who succeed in such examinations are students with good academic performance in general and good attendance records. Successful students were chosen due to their awareness and experience with the school system and their exposure to both formal and informal instruction in the English language.

The following section will present the major findings of this study, organized by themes emerging from the responses. The findings section combines questionnaire and interview responses for richer analysis. The qualitative data assisted in the interpretation and explanation of the quantitative findings (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011).

Results of students' beliefs about learning grammar

The survey results revealed students' views about grammar learning and their likes and dislikes of grammar teaching methods.

Table 1. Students' reported beliefs about grammar teaching and learning

Item	*Strongly agree*	*Agree*	*Undecided*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*	*No response*
10. Learning grammar is useful	*90%*	*8%*	-	*1%*	-	*1%*
13. I learn grammar in isolation	*13%*	*41%*	*35%*	*7%*	*2%*	*2%*
14.Grammar should be taught in context	*35%*	*41%*	*21%*	-	-	*3%*

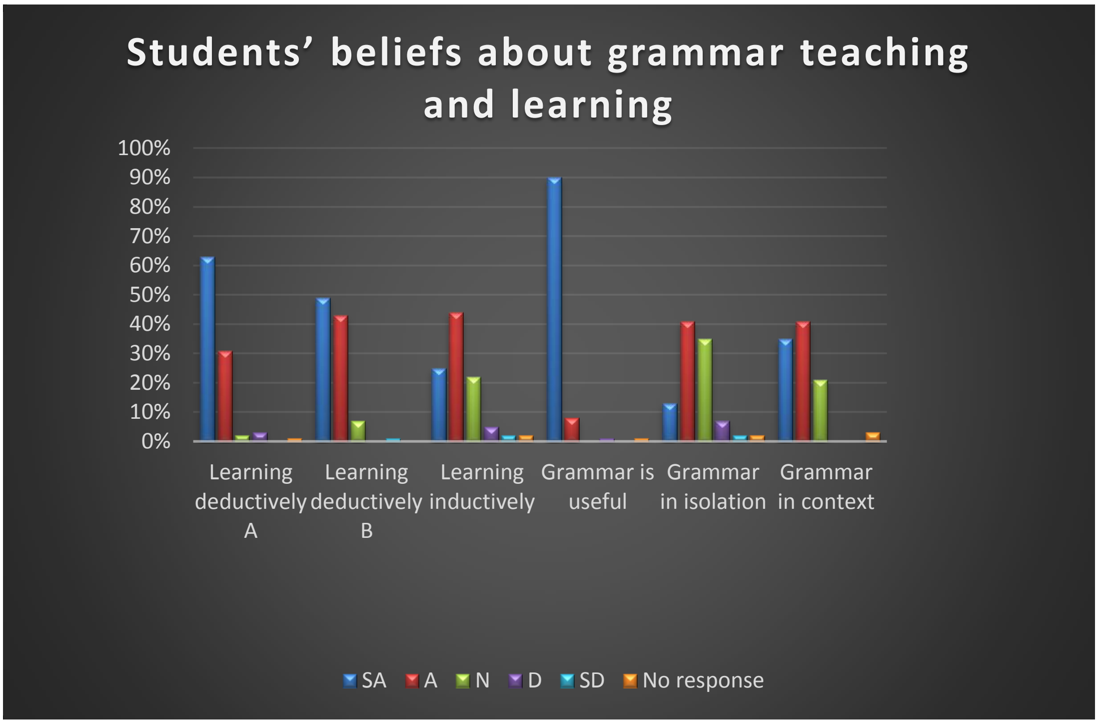

Figure 1: Students' beliefs about grammar teaching and learning

The survey results (as seen in Table 1 and Figure 1 above) showed that almost 98% of students believed that grammar learning was beneficial to their learning. The questionnaire results also showed that the majority preferred learning grammar in context. In fact, 76% of students believed that teaching grammar in context is useful, whereas only 54% of students agreed with the usefulness of learning grammar in isolation. This was supported in the interview when all the participants generally agreed with the contribution of grammatical knowledge to improving their English competency. The interviewees expressed their belief that English was an important language in the modern world, and therefore, they wanted to learn English for their own progress and betterment. The students' extrinsic motivation could be seen as a factor which contributed significantly to their positive view of learning grammar and English. For example, S7 insisted that without English it was difficult to do anything in Sri Lanka. He said:

> "English is an international language and it is important: we can't do anything without it. The knowledge we get from teachers is very good."

Additionally, students provided various reasons supporting their beliefs about the usefulness of learning English grammar. The most frequently mentioned reasons in the interviews were:

1. Grammar knowledge helps to develop accuracy both in writing and speaking

2. Grammar helps to monitor their language mistakes and develop learning autonomy
3. Grammar helps to understand the meaning of language
4. Grammar helps to pass examinations

Approximately 50% of the students in the study pointed out that grammar was important in achieving accuracy both in speaking and writing. The majority of the students said that grammar was very helpful for improving their writing skills. For example, S17 specifically admits to the contribution of grammar in achieving coherence and clarity in writing.

> "Just knowing English is beneficial but if we know grammar it'll be more beneficial. For example, if I'm going to write an article I need grammar. If we have only the language we can't produce good writing. So learning grammar is beneficial, and I'm trying to learn my grammar."

Many of these students pointed out the importance of grammar to improving their speaking accuracy. For example, S7 argued:

> "Grammar is beneficial because you can't speak wrong English; it is very useful. When you learn English, it should be grammatically correct; therefore, the grammar lessons are beneficial."

Alongside many other students, S7 also was critical of people speaking 'broken English' due to lack of understanding of grammar. He was adamant that these students would benefit from grammar instruction. These students held strong opinions about the importance of 'correct English' and their aversion to making mistakes, which could be due to their motivation and their good academic records and possibly due to the learning culture which emphasizes accuracy.

About 18% of students interviewed pointed out that grammatical knowledge helped them to monitor their mistakes and develop autonomy. They explained that being grammatically oriented assisted them to be more conscious of their mistakes and helped them correct their speech. For example, S7 said he monitored his own language mistakes with the support of his existing grammatical knowledge. This knowledge also enabled him to continuously advance and improve his English proficiency.

A few students in the study indicated the importance of grammar to their understanding and accuracy of meaning. They said that grammar is part of the language and they questioned how students can understand the meaning of language without grammatical knowledge. S6 explains this below:

"Because when we're reading something- if we don't know grammar we can't understand the right meaning of it- if we know it, we can get the right meaning of the text and when we're speaking we can give the right ideas effectively."

She considered grammar to be an integral part of language learning and it had to be taught. This was shared by other students who expressed surprise and puzzlement with the question about the usefulness of grammar instruction as they could not think of language learning without grammar. The reason for this attitude was perhaps the fact that they were instructed learners (Ellis, 1990). In other words, all of them had little exposure to a natural environment: they had received instruction throughout.

The last and least popular reason for learning grammar was the presence of grammar in their exams. Examinations like Ordinary Level and Advanced Level include test items about grammar. Students need some knowledge of grammar in order to successfully answer these questions. However, only two students in this study emphasized the importance of grammar knowledge to pass their examinations which are national examinations and English Language test papers including items on grammar testing. Two students, S1 and S2, pointed out that it was difficult to pass examinations without understanding English grammar. In sum, students provided various reasons for their positive attitudes to the role of grammar instruction.

With regards to their views about the grammar teaching methods, the results in the questionnaire demonstrated that the students had experienced both deductive and inductive methods in their classrooms.

Table 2. Students' beliefs about deductive and inductive grammar instruction

Item	*Strongly agree*	*Agree*	*Undecided*	*Disagree*	*Strongly disagree*	*No response*
1.Deductive *I learn when teachers explain the grammar rules*	*63%*	*31%*	*2%*	*3%*	*0*	*1%*
***11.Deductive**:* *I learn when rules are explained first, followed by practice*	*47%*	*41%*	*7%*	*0*	*1%*	*0*
12.Inductive *I learn when examples are presented first and students are asked to infer, discover rules from examples*	*25%*	*44%*	*22%*	*5%*	*2%*	*2%*

Two items in the questionnaire were associated with deductive teaching. Based on items 1 and 11 items which aimed to investigate students' benefit from deductive instruction, (Figure 1 and Table 2) 94% and 88% of students respectively reported that they learn grammar through deductive teaching, through teachers' explanation of rules. Interestingly, sixty nine percent of students reported learning grammar inductively while 22% of students were unsure about whether they were learning inductively.

The interviews reported similar findings with respect to deductive grammar teaching. The majority of students (77%) reported that deductive grammar teaching was helpful as it could leave to their improvement of their English knowledge, and therefore they wanted their teachers to teach them grammatical aspects of the language explicitly; all students mentioned that they enjoyed such lessons and never felt they were boring and uninteresting. This contrasts with the perceptions held by University students in Lowen et al's study (2009) who frequently reported such descriptions about grammar instruction. These students did not really criticize their teachers for teaching and explaining rules but highly appreciated what was being done. These responses indicate that participants were not critical of deductive grammar if it was used creatively.

A small percentage of interviewees, 17% of students, were not favorable to doing deductive grammar lessons. They were not critical of the usefulness of grammar, but expressed concern and dissatisfaction with the classroom practices and teaching methods. They believed that the methods of teaching grammar should be changed, and wanted their teachers to teach grammar more creatively. For example, S8 pointed out that English is a language and not a subject to be learned in classrooms by listening to teachers' explanations. He said:

> "I actually don't like when they teach us grammar with explanation: English is not like Science or Mathematics. It's not a subject. It's just a language: we‘ve to practice it and get the feeling that it's a language and we have to use it."

Moreover, 6% of students reported their neutral position towards deductive grammar lessons. They did not particularly dislike grammar lessons, but they believed that they learned English naturally as it was the language used by their parents. They confirmed that these lessons did not have a great impact on their language improvement. The use of interviews added validity to the questionnaire findings as they supported students' preference for deductive grammar instruction and provided additional insights into the students' understanding of these lessons.

When students were inquired about the benefits and experiences in ‘inductive teaching’ (IQs 5 and 6) students were unaware of the term ‘inductive’ and what inductive grammar lessons are like. Therefore, they were provided with an explanation and were asked to provide examples of experiences focusing on the discovery aspect of grammar learning, with less instruction from the teacher. As can be seen in the table 2 above, 69% in the survey agreed that they learn grammar inductively. In the interviews, the answer given by the majority was positive and most of them said they used the inductive method ‘sometimes’ and emphasized that this was also a useful technique for teaching. However, students did not cite many clear examples of inductive teaching. Instead many of them mentioned the difficulty of discovering rules and patterns in lessons, thus indicating a preference for teachers’ instruction and intervention in teaching grammatical forms (the deductive method). The reasons students provided was their lack of natural exposure to language, their limited linguistic skills and the traditional way of teaching, which were significant obstacles in the discovery and inductive type of teaching. They said they preferred when teachers assisted them in identifying rules. A small minority, 10% of students argued that inductive teaching triggered their ability to memorize the rules. The students’ engagement in the discovery and identification of the rules contributed to reinforcing and highlighting these rules. Some said that when rules were identified by the students themselves they would remember them well. Overall, in the interviews the students did not provide many and varied experiences of inductive learning, perhaps because they were less exposed to this kind of teaching in their classrooms. Students did not have any strong opposition towards inductive learning but acknowledged their preference for receiving explanations followed by practice and the deductive method.

The remaining questionnaire items (2-9 and 15-17) were generally supportive of grammar teaching and the range of grammar teaching techniques. Students also showed a preference for using spoken and written activities to practice grammar items which explains their preferences for interactive lessons as discussed in the interview findings below.

To validate the student’s preferences and attitudes to grammar methods, the interview included an open ended question asking students to narrate their most memorable experiences of learning grammar. Twenty seven percent (27%) of students mentioned they had enjoyed all grammar lessons taught in their classrooms. They could not describe a particular experience and their answers to this question were short and they were reluctant to recall one specific lesson. However, 70% of students described their grammar learning experiences with enthusiasm. All the lessons the students described were deductive grammar lessons. This was determined from the way the students described how teachers conducted the lessons. These preferences led support to the students' reserved responses about inductive grammar lessons in the interviews. Surprisingly, some students could remember the grammar lessons that they had learnt in their previous grades. Further analysis of their narratives showed that the students were attracted to lessons which displayed the following features:

Useful content

1. Lesson's usefulness to their speaking
2. The knowledge which was obtained in these lessons was applicable in writing. For example, S29 found the grammar lesson very useful because he came to know about L2 tenses in English, with which he could use to convey the right time in English.

Delivery techniques

1. Clear and simple explanation: the majority was attracted by the clear and simple explanations given by their teachers.
2. The use of tables and examples used in lessons to teach and break up important content.
3. The nature of engagement in the lessons. For example, S18 liked the project on grammar that her teacher asked her to do.
4. The interactive nature of the lessons. This included pair work, group work and speaking opportunities in class.

The results demonstrated that students' opinions of lessons are influenced by their awareness of the usefulness of input knowledge and the degree of engagement of the delivery and techniques. Therefore, grammar lessons can be memorable if teachers include useful content and employ engaging and interactive techniques, with clear explanations of grammatical rules. Engaging delivery and clear context seem to be interconnected factors and are linked to teaching effectiveness. Students' narratives of useful lessons confirmed that explicit instructions had an important contribution to their learning.

Apart from the positive responses, students were asked to narrate their less favorable experiences of learning grammar to enhance the validity of the interpretations. Only two students out of 30 (6%) mentioned they did not like any of the grammar lessons they had experienced and thought that these lessons were boring. 33% of students said 'nothing' clarifying they had enjoyed all grammar lessons. The remaining 61% of students had bad grammar lessons to describe. Their reasons were summarized in the following points:

Content

1. Complexity level of those lessons: some students mentioned that some grammar lessons were complex and difficult.
2. Usefulness or relevance: some students found the lessons were not useful. For example, some found that lessons were not directly relevant to real-life speaking.
3. Not sufficiently challenging: some students mentioned that the lessons were not challenging. Therefore, they got bored in these lessons.

Teachers and their delivery techniques

1. Teachers' personal characteristics: some students mentioned that they did not like teachers who were not fluent in English or unfriendly.
2. Lack of engaging content or interactive activities.

The results mirror the responses students offered in the questions about the characteristics of ineffective lessons. This suggests that students have consistent views of the factors that contribute to effective grammar lessons. Students judge their lessons by the content and the teaching methods. Students' awareness of the usefulness of the lesson content and adjustment of the level of complexity to suit students are principal elements in an effective grammar lesson. The second important factor relates to the nature of the delivery techniques, teachers' personality and language proficiency. It can be noted that students did not show any preference to either deductive or inductive methods in grammar teaching, but regarded the usefulness of content and creative presentation as chief contributors to effective grammar teaching.

Discussion

Students' beliefs about grammar teaching offer useful suggestions for language teachers and curriculum designers. This study extended the literature on student beliefs by investigating students' attitudes and preferences to grammar teaching methods. While some of the results were consistent with previous research (Hawkey, 2006; Loewen et al., 2009; Schulz, 1996; 2001; Shak & Gardner, 2008), this research unveiled some novel and pedagogically valuable findings.

Similar to previous research, students in this context acknowledge the contribution of grammar in their language learning but have specific preferences in grammar teaching methods. It is necessary to point out here that these students' views perhaps have resulted in and were possibly influenced by their achievement and success in English language learning and their extrinsic motivation. The majority of students admitted to feelings of embarrassment and shame if they did not learn grammar and would end up learning 'broken English'. This result shows that students are interested in language accuracy which is given little attention in most communicative and task based approaches. It is evident that the Sri Lankan ESL students may not necessarily be happy with an approach which focuses solely on creative language use. This finding is consistent with Ellis's (2006) argument, who suggests that research needs to investigate how to embed grammar teaching within communicative approaches to address students' grammatical needs.

The majority of students believed that explicit instruction of grammar was an integral aspect of language learning and it helped them to develop their accuracy in both writing and speaking and further enhanced their autonomy. This study also revealed that the majority were exposed to more deductive teaching methods but appreciated it. Only few students did not favor the deductive method in grammar teaching and suggested that their teachers make grammar lessons more engaging and enjoyable. This contrasts findings reported by Loewen et al. (2009) amongst university students who often described grammar lessons as dry, monotonous and boring. This could be explained by the fact that the students of this study are high school students studying in an ESL country with limited English language exposure and therefore grammar instruction is invaluable to their academic literacy.

The Sri Lankan high school students were not very familiar with the term 'inductive method' but when it was explained to them, they mentioned that they were exposed to it less frequently. However, while many students acknowledge the contribution of inductive teaching, the majority thought it was difficult and time consuming while a few thought it was very effective and good for their memory as they engage in their own learning. This echoes Shak and Gardner's (2008) finding about the students' preference for lessons with lower cognitive load. Similarly, the students in this study expressed lack of interest in using strictly communicative or task based activities which solely focus on negotiating meaning. They valued the role of explicit instruction in making them aware of the rules and structure of language which assist them in developing language accuracy. This supports the findings of previous studies (Loewen et al., 2009; Schulz, 1996, 2001) which also found that ESL learners held positive attitude towards grammar instruction. Students' opinions about deductive grammar teaching could be explained with their lack of consistent exposure to other methods, such as purely inductive or consciousness raising activities (Nassaji and Fotos, 2011). What is remarkable however is the students' overwhelming agreement on the importance of explicit grammar teaching and its benefits.

In an era in which grammar has a dubious role in language teaching, the students' opinions are categorical and confident about its importance. These students value learning the form possibly because they are autonomous, aware of the importance of English language and willing to extend their learning by themselves. The teaching of grammar will assist those students in improving their language competence and confidence in speaking correctly. This finding concurs with the recommendations that explicit instruction is necessary to promote higher levels of accuracy even when communicative opportunities are abundant (Fotos, 2002; Nasaji & Fotos, 2011). Even though the communicative language teaching approach and the task based approaches have contributed to the marginalization of grammar in language teaching, it is important to consider students' views when making decisions about whether to incorporate grammar in the learning classroom. Teachers need to be aware of student beliefs so as to be able to adjust the classroom activities and enhance student motivation and maximize their language learning.

One of the most notable and novel findings in this study was students' opinions about the characteristics of a successful grammar lesson. Most students liked the lesson when they understood its usefulness in their language learning. This implies that grammar lessons may not be attractive to the students unless teachers point out the usefulness of the grammatical aspect to their students' learning: this may not happen through teachers merely telling them verbally about it, but it has to be well integrated through activities that allow students to understand the usefulness of what they learn. This supports the need for teaching grammar in context while integrating grammar with communicative activities (Borg & Burns, 2008). The usefulness of grammar is congruent with some students' preference for learning grammar through interactive and communicative activities, such as projects and group learning. The preference for communicative and real life activities is consistent with other students in previous studies (Loewen et al., 2009). Integration is important in realizing the communicative purpose of language learning (Petraki & Hill, 2011). If teachers incorporate grammar lessons in communicative activities the students will perceive the immediacy and usefulness in their learning. It is also important to note that the relevance and usefulness of grammar could be context based, thus, the teachers need to be explorers (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) that is they need to identify the usefulness of the lessons as the students may not know what they want to learn with regard to grammar. Thus, Kumaravadivelu's concepts of particularity, practicality and possibility are useful. As every classroom situation is unique, the content of a syllabus and the suitable pedagogy may vary from context to context. This conforms to the developing role of teachers as classroom managers and change agents entrusted with the responsibilities of adapting the range of materials according to the sociocultural context (Graves, 2008).

Another important characteristic of a memorable lesson is that the content should be appropriate and at the right level. This supports Krashen's (1982; 1985) *input hypothesis,* which suggests that teachers should select comprehensible input in the ESL classroom, and his i+ 1 formula for teaching suggests that the input should be neither too challenging nor too simple. The above result adds one more feature to Krashen's hypothesis: the input should be useful to the students. Thus, teachers should use their judgment about the usefulness of the lessons suggested in the syllabus. There may be a range of contextual factors teachers need to consider when adjusting and adapting their classroom activities. This also suggests that teachers need to involve students in learning by making them aware of the purpose of learning grammar. It is possible, with sufficient motivation from teachers, that students can increase their learning and enthusiasm for English. It is important to say that students appreciate their involvement in decision making, as they are mature and motivated students.

Finally, delivery techniques play an important role in triggering student motivation. Students prefer interactive activities that maintain their interest and engagement with the material and assist their language practice. These preferences are shared by students in previous studies by Loewen et al. (2009) and Incecay & Dollar (2011). Most importantly, the students' message is loud and clear: It is not the deductive or inductive teaching approach that matters in this context, but the clarity of the explanations that are given to students. Students do not seem to dislike teachers' instructions as long as they are clear. The use of substitution tables, translations, sentence composition and drilling were mentioned as suggestions for enhancing grammatical clarity and practice and these are supported in the questionnaire items. These findings also strengthen the usefulness of explanations as supported in Woodward (2001). He mentions some students like it when things are explained, whereas other students enjoy discovery learning. Generically, teachers' explanation that occurs in the classrooms is supported by asking students questions, and thus they can interact with the teachers (Woodward, 2001). In other words, teachers get their students to be involved in the discussion by asking questions. Moreover, the results also showed that students value useful knowledge or content. This finding confirms to research which advocates the usefulness of needs analysis in curriculum planning to decide on what students need (Nunan & Lamb, 1986; Richards, 2001). Needs analysis, continuous evaluation of students' needs and interests, can improve language learning.

It is important to remember that these students are successful students (successful in Ordinary Level examinations in grade 11). The gifted and motivated learners are autonomous and have the potential to learn even from the focus on form activities because they find their own time to extend their learning by exposing themselves to real life activities, by reading novels, and watching films (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). However, some students are more teacher-dependent and they want their teachers to expose them to opportunities. For that reason teachers need to use a variety of engaging and interactive techniques to increase motivation in class.

Conclusion

The insights from this research can have significant implications not only for the Sri Lankan education but other 'target language removed contexts' with similar dilemmas (Graves, 2008). The investigation into the students' beliefs about grammar teaching methods can be an enlightening tool for teachers' decision making. The study has pointed out that students value the contribution made by their learning of grammar. Students are concerned with the usefulness of what they learn more than the methods the teachers use. Hence, ESL teachers need to highlight the importance of grammar lessons to students by organizing their grammar lessons in such a way that students understand the usefulness of learning a particular grammatical component. This may not be explicit explanation of what they learn but through meaningful and communicative tasks that enable them to understand the purpose of learning grammar. The students need to be provided with the opportunity to apply what they learn in real life contexts which will assist their transfer and learner autonomy.

The study also endorsed the significant role of the teachers in the decision making process and in curriculum design. Teachers need to actively engage in understanding student needs and adapt materials and teaching techniques accordingly. The findings have important implications for the design and development of teacher training. Awareness of a variety of techniques, the teachers' reflection on of the role of grammar in different contexts should play a central role in teacher education.

One of the limitations of this research was the purposive sampling which included good language learners for consistency purposes. Future research could focus on examining not only competent and successful language learners but the weaker language learners so as to gain a detailed understanding of the Sri Lankan teaching context. Another important avenue for research is the understanding of how teachers and students can contribute to the negotiation of curriculum design to maximize student learning opportunities.

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Appendix 1
Students' Questionnaire

Background

1. Sex: □Male □ Female (please circle)

Age: ………………………….

2. Do you speak English at home? (Please circle)
   a. often b. rarely c. never
3. How do you assess your English language competency?
   Please circle the appropriate box

Reading			Writing			Listening			Speaking		
Very good	Good	Poor	Very good	Good	Poor	Very good	Good	Poor	Very good	Good	Poor

Section 1: Your preferences about and attitude to grammar teaching
Please circle the appropriate box
Strongly agree:5, Agree:4, Undecided:3, Disagree:2, Strongly disagree:1

1	I learn when teachers explain the grammar rules	5	4	3	2	1
2	I learn when we practise rules in written activities	5	4	3	2	1
3	I learn language rules (myself) when I engage in classroom activities	5	4	3	2	1
4	I extend my learning by thinking about grammar rules	5	4	3	2	1
5	I learn when the teacher asks us to repeat sentences in the classroom	5	4	3	2	1
6	I learn when the teacher translates English sentences into Singhalese /Tamil	5	4	3	2	1
7	I find it useful to compare the English grammar with my Singhalese /Tamil	5	4	3	2	1
8	I like it when teachers ask us to write our own sentences	5	4	3	2	1
9	I like it when I engage in spoken activities and games to practise grammar rules	5	4	3	2	1
10	Grammar lessons are very useful for learning English	5	4	3	2	1
11	I learn when grammar rules are presented and explained first, followed by examples and practice	5	4	3	2	1
12	I learn when examples are presented first and students are asked to infer, discover rules from examples	5	4	3	2	1
13	I learn when I see rules in isolated sentences	5	4	3	2	1
14	I learn when rules are associated with examples from contexts they are used	5	4	3	2	1

What activities do you find useful in your grammar learning?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

Section 2: Your views about grammar materials and lessons
Strongly agree:5, Agree:4, Undecided:3, Disagree:2, Strongly disagree:1

15	The textbook grammar lessons are easy to understand	5	4	3	2	1
16	The textbook grammar activities are useful	5	4	3	2	1
17	The textbook grammar activities do not offer real life learning opportunities	5	4	3	2	1

Do you like the grammar activities in the textbooks? Why/ why not?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

Appendix 2

Interview questions

Learning grammar and teaching materials

1. Do you like the English grammar you learn at school?
2. Do you think grammar lessons are beneficial? Why? Why not? What do you think of teaching grammar separately as lessons?
3. Do teachers explain grammar rules? What do you think of this activity?
4. What do you think of the usefulness of following techniques?
   a. Translating English sentences to Sinhalese / Tamil
   b. Repeating sentences
   c. Giving examples
   d. Using substitution tables
5. Do your teachers ask you to discover rules without explaining them?
6. Do you get opportunities to use grammar in class?
7. Can you remember a lesson which was useful to you? What did you do in that lesson?
8. Can you remember a lesson which was not useful to you? What did you do in that lesson?
9. Do you learn English in your tuition class? What is your opinion about those lessons?
10. What do you think of the grammar lessons in the present textbooks?
11. Do you use other materials other than textbooks? If so, what are they? Are they useful?

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Listening Difficulties of Low-Proficiency EFL learners: A Comparison of Teacher and Learner Perspectives

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Abstract

Motivated by the dearth of studies investigating language learners' listening difficulties in EFL context, this study examined and compared teacher and learner perceptions regarding the sources of listening difficulties experienced by low-proficiency Chinese learners of English. A 38-item questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were employed to elicit the participants' beliefs. Findings show that in general the teachers and learners share the view that text- and processing-related variables have potentially the greatest impact on L2 listeners' comprehension, indicating the importance of giving priority to developing weak listeners' bottom-up perception abilities before higher-level processing skills should be attempted. Discrepancy in perceptions is also identified with respect to the challenges posed by different listening task types, opening up an important area where immediate pedagogical and research efforts are needed to bring the gap to closure.

Key words: Chinese EFL learners; L2 listening difficulties; teacher and learner perceptions

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Introduction

Once regarded as a solely passive activity, L2 listening was rarely seen as worthy of serious research or pedagogical attention (Berne, 2004). Despite the recognition that listening is an important facet in both language learning and communication, it “remains the least researched of all four language skills” (Vandergrift, 2007, p.191).

Among the relatively small amount of work done on L2 listening, different views have been voiced regarding two important process types involved in this skill, namely bottom-up processing and top-down processing, in terms of their role in successful listening comprehension and the relevant importance attached to them in the teaching of L2 listening. *Bottom-up processing* involves “perceiving and parsing the speech stream at increasingly larger levels beginning with auditory-phonetic, phonemic, syllabic, lexical, syntactic, semantic, propositional, pragmatic and interpretive” (Field, 2003, p.326). *Top-down processing* is often interpreted in opposition to bottom-up processing (Lynch & Mendelsohn, 2002), which mainly concerns L2 listeners’ ability to infer meaning from contextual clues (Hedge, 2003).

A number of studies have been conducted to investigate the association between processing types and learner listening proficiency, yet mixed findings have been put forward: Whilst some studies report that less-skilled listeners are deficient in top-down processing skills (e.g., Sadighi & Zare, 2006; Shohamy & Inbar, 1991), others contradict this view, citing evidence that what less-skilled listeners lack most is bottom-up processing capacity (e.g., Long, 1990; Macaro, Graham, & Vanderplank, 2007). Concurrently, divergent opinions are raised with respect to whether a bottom-up approach or a top-down approach to teaching listening would be prioritized to help weak L2 listeners enhance their comprehension abilities (e.g., Cross, 2009; Renandya & Farrell, 2011). In spite of these differing stands, however, one established view concerning weak L2 listeners is that they tend to favor a bottom-up approach to listening (Field, 2004). This assumption, together with the widely held belief that teaching top-down processing skills would compensate for the decoding problems faced by poor listeners, has led to the current trend of teaching listening in favor of “the development of top-down processes at the expense of developing bottom-up processes” (Vandergrift, 2004, p. 5). One major strand of research reflecting a top-down approach of teaching L2 listening during the past two decades is strategy-based instruction, guided by the underlying belief that transplanting what high proficiency learners are doing to poorer ones can make the latter better listeners (Macaro *et al.,* 2007).

Recently, however, the effectiveness of strategy-based instruction in enhancing weak listeners' comprehension competence has been increasingly questioned, given the rather limited empirical evidence documenting the success of strategy-based instruction, especially where low-proficiency learners are concerned, and the heavy burden strategy training places on teachers (e.g., Renandya & Farrell, 2011; Ridgway, 2000). From a pedagogical perspective, Swan (2008) and Wilson (2003) in particular cautioned against the tendency to undervalue the importance of promoting students' bottom-up skills in that the aim of L2 teaching is to help learners rely *less* on contextual guesswork and more on capturing the aural input.

In light of the existing controversies in the academia, more investigations into the potential factors affecting listening comprehension outcomes are apparently needed since a good and thorough understanding of L2 learners' listening comprehension problems is the prerequisite for determining which approach pedagogically works more effectively for L2 listeners (Goh, 1999, 2000). Different from previous studies which explored this issue solely from the learner perspective, the current study, taking into consideration classroom teachers' uniquely intimate understanding of their students' L2 listening problems, is carried out to examine and compare the perceptions held by teachers and learners. It is hoped that by examining the potential mismatches in teacher and student beliefs, which usually affect L2 students' satisfaction with the language class (Kern, 1995), the study will not only contribute to a better understanding of the difficulties experienced by low-proficiency listeners, but also shed additional light on a more effective approach to teaching L2 listening.

Literature review

L2 listening constitutes a highly complex process, in which the listener must draw upon a wide variety of knowledge sources, linguistic and non-linguistic, to interpret rapidly incoming data (Buck, 2001). Given this complexity and perhaps because the process is largely unobservable, researchers in L2 listening usually resort to L2 learners' self-reports of their difficulties encountered in listening, applying procedures such as listening diaries, interviews, think-aloud protocols and questionnaires. Focusing on either the cognitive or the socio-cultural dimension of listening, earlier studies have shown that L2 listening comprehension could be affected by both listener-internal and listener-external factors, ranging from speech rate (e.g., Derwing, 1990), phonological features (e.g., Bilbow, 1989), syntactical difficulty (e.g., Chiang & Dunkel, 1992), background knowledge (e.g., Long, 1990), the presence/absence of visuals (e.g., Coniam, 2001), task types (e.g., Liu, 2003) to anxiety (e.g., Elkhafaifi, 2005). Their respective foci whatsoever, these factors basically fall within five broad categories identified by Rubin (1994), namely text characteristics (e.g., text type), interlocutor characteristics (e.g., perceived speaker expertness), task characteristics (e.g., task type), listener characteristics (e.g., affect), and process characteristics (e.g., listening strategies).

There is no denying that previous studies have provided valuable insights into the nature of L2 listening in general, and the unique challenges faced by language learners to comprehend L2 spoken texts in particular. However, most of them were conducted in Western contexts, either on groups of mixed nationalities studying English as a second/foreign language or on native speakers of English learning a foreign language (Graham, 2006). Obviously, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issue in question, more research efforts should be made in EFL contexts, such as China, where learners are noted for their poor L2 listening competence as they have limited access to authentic language use and mainly learn the target language in formal instructed circumstances (Zhang, 2008).

To date, only a few studies (e.g., Goh, 1999, 2000) have been conducted to explore the listening problems experienced by Chinese EFL learners. One issue worth noting is that most of these studies did not treat learner proficiency as a variable, which probably accounts for the fact that mixed findings were reported: While some emphasized on decoding problems such as word recognition, others highlighted comprehension problems such as understanding the words but not the message. One exception was Goh (1999), which compared the sources of listening difficulties reported by learners at different proficiency levels by adopting Flavell's (1987) framework of metacognitive knowledge. The findings showed that in comparison to the high-ability learners who were more aware of their difficulties, the low-ability ones cited only four sources of their listening difficulty (i.e. vocabulary, speech rate, type of input, prior knowledge), most of which had to do with text-based variables. Employing Anderson's (1995) three-phase model of perceptual processing, parsing and utilization, a subsequent study (Goh, 2000) was conducted by means of learner diaries, small group interviews, and immediate retrospective verbalization to investigate the real-time processing problems experienced by the same group of students. The result lent further evidence that less proficient listeners experienced greater difficulty in low-level processing such as word recognition and sound discrimination.

It should be noted that although the participants in Goh's (1999, 2000) studies were Chinese learners of English, they had been living and studying in an ESL context for some time. In addition, the participants mainly used English during the interview sessions, although they were allowed to shift to their mother tongue when encountering difficulties in expressing themselves. These factors probably had certain impact on the findings, which would render them less generalizable to learners studying in Chinese EFL context. In light of the size of English learners in China, more studies on Chinese EFL learners' listening problems, especially the less proficient ones who usually count on instructional assistance to progress, are obviously needed (Wang & Renandya, 2012). Besides, to the best of our knowledge, the focus of earlier studies concerning L2 listeners' comprehension difficulties has been almost exclusively on the learners. No systematic study has ever been conducted to examine the classroom practitioners' perception on this issue, let alone the point of intersection between teachers' and students' beliefs. Given the pivotal role that teachers play in the enterprise of teaching and learning (Freeman & Richards, 1996), this gap deserves immediate research attention. The current study is hence conducted to address the following question:

To what extent do teacher and learner perceptions correspond with respect to the sources of listening difficulties experienced by Chinese EFL learners with low listening proficiency?

The study

The study reported in this paper forms part of a larger study examining L2 listening comprehension difficulties faced by high- and low-proficiency learners (Wang, 2010). Altogether 301 students from three universities in Xi'an, Shaanxi, a city located in the mid-western part of China participated in the survey. These learners were divided into two proficiency groups on the basis of their reported scores on the listening section of CET-4 —a high-stakes English language test administered to Chinese university students at the national level. Specifically, 50% percentile in the listening score was adopted as the cut-off point[1] between high- and low-proficiency students, resulting in 131 students being sorted into the low-proficiency group. As the current study is intended to find out the listening difficulties experienced by weak L2 listeners, the following discussion will be focused on this particular sub-group of learners.

Methodology

Participants

Of the 131 participants in the low-proficiency group, 49% (n=64) were male and 51% (n=67) were female, ranging in age from 19 to 22. They had similar educational backgrounds and had received at least six years of formal English instruction in primary and secondary school. After the survey, ten students were selected for the interview session with four of them majoring in Social Sports, two in Finance, two in Management of Urban and Rural Planning, and the other two in Accounting and International Politics respectively.

In addition, 30 teachers took part in the survey. With the majority (n=24) of them being female, the teacher respondents had on average six years of English teaching experience, and twenty of them had over five years' experience in teaching listening. Among the 30 teacher participants, ten of them also accepted our follow-up interviews. Six of these teachers had a Master's degree in either English literature or applied linguistics and had two to ten years' experience in teaching English listening at Chinese universities. Half of them had roughly one-year overseas training experience.

Instruments

One questionnaire, with both student and teacher versions[2], was developed to elicit participants' beliefs on L2 listening difficulties. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the participant's profile and 38 items on 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree"). The first part collected the respondents' demographic data while the second part elicited their perception regarding the sources of L2 learners' listening difficulties. Readers are referred to Tables 2-7 for the content of the 38 items[3].

This questionnaire was developed on the basis of a comprehensive review of L2 listening literature (e.g., Goh 1999, 2000; Graham, 2006; Hasan, 2000; Rubin, 1994) , Anderson's (1995) language comprehension model and the result of a pilot study conducted three months before the main study. A host of variables were identified, which were then lumped into the following six conceptual categories:

1) General-language text variables (8 items): concerning difficulties related to the textual features of the listening input irrespective of its mode of presentation, such as lexical difficulty and syntactical complications;
2) Listening-specific text variables (7 items): concerning difficulties related to the textual features of the listening material that are unique to the aural mode of comprehension, such as speed and speaker accent;
3) Processing variables (12 items): concerning difficulties associated with processing the ephemeral listening input, such as word recognition;
4) Listener variables (7 items): concerning factors associated with learner characteristics such as anxiety;
5) Task variables (2 items): concerning factors associated with the type of questions that listeners are supposed to answer, such as multiple-choice questions;

6) External environment variables (2 items): concerning factors related to the EFL learning environment such as the amount of listening materials available to students.

The student questionnaire was piloted among 58 learners similar to the target population and corresponding changes were made to improve its clarity and appropriateness. The teacher version went through similar process of refinement.

An interview guide was also developed on the basis of the questionnaire to explore more in-depth the nature of the listening difficulties experienced by Chinese EFL learners. Specifically, student participants were encouraged to reflect on their listening experiences and recall the difficulties that they had encountered in whatever contexts. The teacher interviewees responded to questions that probed into their teaching contexts and their perception of the major listening difficulties faced by low-proficiency students.

Data collection

The student questionnaire was immediately administered after the respondents' completion of one of their listening lessons. All the participants handed in their completed questionnaires in approximately 25 minutes. Of the 320 questionnaires administered, 301 were returned to the researcher. As has been mentioned earlier, the learners were divided into two proficiency groups according to their reported scores on the listening section of CET-4, which yielded 131 questionnaires completed by low-proficiency listeners. Thirty teachers responded to the teacher-version of the questionnaire in either print or electronic form. The response rate was 100%.

Right after the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit participants' (10 students and 10 teachers) opinions of the learners' listening problems. Based on individual responses, follow-up questions were asked, prompting participants to clarify or support their comments with specific examples. Each interview was conducted in Chinese and audio-taped with the participants' permission. A typical interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, but some lasted up to 50 minutes.

Data analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were performed to analyze the questionnaire data using SPSS 17.0. Descriptive statistics were calculated at item level for both groups. Independent-samples *t*-tests were then run to compare the differences between the two groups. When performing item-based analysis, a Bonferroni adjustment procedure was applied wherein the traditional alpha level of .05 was divided by 38, giving an adjusted alpha level of .0013. This meant that difference in perceptions at the item level would not be considered statistically significant unless $p < .0013$.

The interview data were examined by means of analytic induction (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) and constant comparison (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Two coders were involved in the coding process and the coding would only be regarded as valid if our code-recode agreement was more than 80%. Disagreements were resolved through discussion. As an additional check, member validation (Richards, 2003) was adopted. The themes emerged from data coding were summarized and emailed to the participants to ensure valid interpretation of their responses and comments. Apart from two teachers who made small revisions of the wording, all interviewees confirmed the correct interpretation of their opinions.

Results

Results obtained from the student questionnaires (n=131) and teacher questionnaires (n=30) were first of all analyzed for reliability. The reliability estimate Cronbach's alpha was .88 for the student version and .93 for the teacher version, both suggesting satisfactory internal consistency. As has been stated earlier, the 38 items in the questionnaire were grouped into six conceptual categories to facilitate a more fine-grained examination of the extent to which different types of listening difficulties might affect L2 listening. A detailed account of the participants' responses to each item is presented below at category level.

General-language text variables

Scrutiny at the individual items in the category of General-language text variables (see Table 1) revealed that unfamiliar lexical expressions (items 3, 22 and 32), syntactically complicated sentences (item 24), lack of background knowledge (item 27) and news broadcast (item 38) constituted important sources of students' listening difficulties.

Despite the fact that the students gave quite high ratings to these items, striking differences still occurred between learner responses and those of the practitioners. The difference found on item 9 in particular reached statistical significance. Interview data provided a context in which the teachers elaborated on why insufficient linguistic knowledge could hinder L2 students' understanding of L2 listening materials. An important point highlighted by the teachers was that low proficiency students' problem with unknown words was not only caused by their small vocabulary size but also their inability to correctly infer the meaning of unknown words from the context. The following remarks are representative of such an opinion:

- These students' vocabulary is very small…Their listening vocabulary is even smaller as they cannot recognize the sounds of the known words. (Yuchen-T[4])

- As their vocabulary is very small, they do not have a foundation to guess the meaning of the unknown words...They often tried to link the few words that they happened to hear…and there was no guarantee whether the words were the key words of the passage or whether the students caught the spoken words correctly. So they often make wrong guesses. (Xiahong-T)

Table 1. T-test results on perceived listening difficulties: General-language text variables

Statements	**Group**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t**	***p***
24. The listening passage is difficult when the sentences are complex.	Student	3.99	.76		
	Teacher	4.33	.99	-1.76	.086
38. I feel it difficult for me to understand English news broadcast.	Student	3.87	.90		
	Teacher	4.17	1.05	-1.58	.117
9. The listening passage is difficult when the sentences are long.	Student	3.67	.99		
	Teacher	4.33	.84	-3.39	.001*
22. The listening passage is difficult because there are many new words.	Student	3.49	1.03		
	Teacher	3.81	1.18	-1.78	.078
27. The listening materials are difficult because I don't know the background.	Student	3.44	.90		
	Teacher	3.83	.99	-2.11	.036
32. I am not able to recognize the meaning of set collocations in the speech.	Student	3.44	.83		
	Teacher	3.97	.93	-3.04	.003
3. The listening materials are difficult to understand because of many idioms.	Student	3.37	.99		
	Teacher	3.77	1.25	-1.60	.116
4. It's hard for me to understand English conversations.	Student	2.49	.89		
	Teacher	2.90	.86	-2.29	.023

Note: Statements are arranged according to their mean values on the students' questionnaire in descending order; Student No=131; Teacher No=30; *Significant at a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .0013 to avoid Type I error.

Items 9 (S Mean = 3.67, T Mean = 4.33) and 24 (S Mean = 3.99, T Mean = 4.33) concerning the effect of syntactical complication on L2 listening comprehension were rated the highest by both the students and the teachers, indicating a shared belief that, among all the general-language text variables, the syntactical components in spoken texts could exert the greatest impact on learner listening comprehension. The interview data suggested two reasons accounting for students' problem in this aspect. The first one was related to the cognitive demands placed by understanding syntactically complicated sentences in L2 aural format. The other reason specially attributed to the low-proficiency students had to do with their weak linguistic proficiency. As was pointed out by the teacher interviewees, these learners would still have difficulty comprehending the spoken text when it was presented in written form which allowed for backtracking. The following observation is indicative of this problem:

> The students may have difficulty understanding even if they read the transcript of the listening passages…There are many new words and some complex sentences which are long and involve one or more subordinate clause…these students cannot make a distinction between the main clause and subordinate clauses and thus are likely to get confused with the pieces of information. (Guorui-T)

Overall, the findings highlight the crucial role played by linguistic knowledge in successful L2 listening comprehension, suggesting that as far as weak L2 listeners are concerned, building up substantial linguistic knowledge is a prerequisite for any tangible improvement in the listening skill to occur.

Listening-specific text variables

Table 2 displays the participants' mean responses to the items seeking their opinions about the text difficulties that were uniquely associated with listening comprehension as opposed to reading comprehension. Both the teachers and students gave their lowest rating to Item 37 (S Mean = 2.53, T Mean = 3.17), indicating that the presence or absence of visual cues did not affect their listening comprehension much. This result is somewhat expected in that one-way listening constitutes the major type of listening that these EFL learners are exposed to. In fact, many EFL learners have already been found to have a preference to audio-only listening materials over video ones because visual cues are often viewed as a distraction preventing them from concentrating on the aural message (Coniam, 2001).

Item 30 was rated the highest by the students (Mean = 3.76). In the interviews, many students alluded to unfamiliar speaker accent as an important source of their listening comprehension problems:

> I like American English because I watched many American movies. I was totally at a loss when our teacher played Indian English for us. (Congyu-S)

Table 2. T-test results on perceived listening difficulties: Listening-specific text variables

Statements	Group	Mean	SD	t	*p*
30. The listening material is difficult when the speaker speaks with accent.	Student	3.76	.87		
	Teacher	4.03	1.10	-1.46	.146
12. The listening passage is difficult because of the fast speed.	Student	3.56	1.01		
	Teacher	4.27	.98	-3.49	.001*
35. The spoken text is difficult because of the background noise.	Student	3.55	1.04		
	Teacher	3.93	.83	-2.18	.034
1. Listening materials are difficult because the speaker speaks fast.	Student	3.41	.91		
	Teacher	3.73	1.17	-1.65	.102
25. The listening passage is difficult because of the poor quality of the tape.	Student	2.96	1.23		
	Teacher	3.57	1.28	-2.43	.016
15. I find it difficult to understand speech which is full of hesitation and pauses.	Student	2.71	.96		
	Teacher	3.37	.89	-3.43	.001*
37. The listening text is difficult because I cannot see the speakers' body language.	Student	2.53	.92		
	Teacher	3.17	1.15	-3.23	.002

Note: See Table 1.

However, despite the learners' perceived difficulty with unfamiliar speaker accent, they did not seem to favor the suggestion of receiving more pedagogical efforts in helping them cope with this problem. Some were afraid that their English might be negatively influenced by the "non-standard" English varieties whereas others did not see any utilitarian value in enhancing their ability in this aspect. These views are reflected in the following remarks, with the latter being echoed by the teacher interviewees:

- If I listen to a lot of nonstandard pronunciation, I might take up such sounds in my own pronunciation. That would be terrible. (Chunliu-S)
- Only American English and British English will be tested in exams. Listening to the other varieties would be a waste of time for me. (Guorui-S)
- My students are non-English majors…many students will never use English after graduation, let alone meeting people with different accents. (Qinzhen-T)

The teachers gave their highest rating to item 12 (T Mean = 4.27), which also received the second highest rating from the learners (Mean = 3.56). The interview data provided a more detailed picture regarding how learner L2 comprehension could be seriously impaired by fast speech rate:

- Sometimes, the speed is too fast. For instance, when I was trying to figure out the meaning of the first sentence, the second sentence flashed away, then I had to struggle with the third sentence as I missed some information in the middle. (Mingxu-S)
- Low-proficiency students are more likely to be affected by speed. The faster the speed is, the bigger their problems are. (Leixia-T)

Apart from showing concern to the deleterious effect of fast speech rate on low-proficiency students' comprehension of any specific spoken passages, some teachers were also wary of its negative influence on students' motivation and self-efficacy. For instance, Xiahong made the following remark:

> If the speed is fast, the low-proficiency students tend to be nervous and are likely to give up listening…I suggest that they listen to VOA Special News. Otherwise, their confidence would be ruined. (Xiahong-T)

This view was echoed by the student interviewees who perceived fast speed as a crucial factor determining whether they would give up the listening activity or not:

- Sometimes I listened to VOA or BBC news on the internet, but they spoke very fast…sometimes it made me feel sleepy and low-spirited. (Congyu-S)

- When I listened to the VOA standard news, I felt the speed was too fast. I then lost confidence and started surfing online for entertainment. (Mingsan-S)

Processing variables

According to Table 3, all the items included in the processing category except Item 13 were given very high ratings by the teachers (above 3.5), indicating their belief that students had serious problems processing the aural information. As a result, although processing-related variables were rated the highest by the students among the six categories, the students' mean scores given to most of the items in this category were still considerably lower than those provided by the teachers.

Nonetheless, the highest ratings given by both the teachers and the students were found on Item 6 (S Mean = 4.07, T Mean = 4.05) and Item 19 (S Mean = 3.98, T Mean = 4.33), indicating a shared belief that perception problems constituted the biggest block for weak listeners to comprehend L2 aural discourse. By contrast, the two items given the lowest ratings by the students and the teachers alike were both related to learner strategy knowledge (Item 13: S Mean = 3.31, T Mean = 2.97; Item 33: S Mean = 3.20, T Mean = 3.63). Another convergence of opinions found between the students and the teachers was that catching detailed information (Item 23: S Mean = 3.65, T Mean = 3.80) was more difficult than getting the gist of the spoken texts (Item 29: S Mean = 3.08, T Mean = 3.67). From the students' perspective, the teachers seemed to have underestimated their ability to grasp the gist of the listening passage since a very large mean difference (-0.59) was found between the two groups' responses to Item 29.

Table 3. T-test results on perceived listening difficulties: Processing variables

Statements	Group	Mean	SD	t	*p*
6. I'm unable to recognize phonetic variations.	Student	4.05	.94		
	Teacher	4.00	1.08	.27	.785
19. I often miss the upcoming information when trying to get the previous words.	Student	3.98	1.02		
	Teacher	4.33	.71	-1.80	.071
29. I feel it is difficult for me to catch the details of the listening passage.	Student	3.65	.89		
	Teacher	3.80	.85	-.84	.400
5. I quickly forget what I heard.	Student	3.56	1.09		
	Teacher	3.67	.96	-.51	.613
7. I have difficulty grouping the words I heard into meaningful units.	Student	3.48	.84		
	Teacher	3.93	1.06	-2.57	.011
14. Although I know the words, I'm not able to recognize them in listening.	Student	3.46	1.10		
	Teacher	4.07	.79	-3.52	.001*
26. Listening materials are difficult since I can't use rhythmical features.	Student	3.45	.95		
	Teacher	3.93	1.08	-2.45	.015
13. Listening materials are difficulty since I am not taught listening strategies.	Student	3.31	1.18		
	Teacher	2.97	1.30	1.43	.156
18. I can recognize the words but I can't understand the deeper meaning of the text.	Student	3.27	.99		
	Teacher	3.87	.86	-3.04	.003
33. I have difficulty understanding the materials because of poor strategy use.	Student	3.20	.96		
	Teacher	3.63	1.16	-2.14	.034
23. I feel it is difficult for me to figure out the main idea of the listening passage.	Student	3.08	1.02		
	Teacher	3.67	.96	-2.89	.004

Note: See Table 1.

The largest mean gap, which reached statistical significance in this category, occurred on Item 14 (S Mean = 3.46, T Mean = 4.07). Although this quantitative finding demonstrated less learner awareness of the problems caused by inadequate word recognition skills, inability to recognize words in the L2 aural input quickly was highlighted by both the teacher and the student participants during the interviews. Below are some typical statements:

- Sometimes I heard a word that sounded very familiar…when I checked against the transcript, I often wondered how come I couldn't recognize such a simple word. (Congyu-S)
- If you give them the written form, they can recognize the words, but when listening to them, they cannot recognize these words. (Guorui-T)

Listener variables

The students' and the teachers' responses to the listener-related items are displayed in Table 4. According to Table 4, the students and the teachers held similar views to most of the items in this category and significant difference was only found on Item 2.

Table 4. T-test results on perceived listening difficulties: Listener variables

Statements	Group	Mean	SD	t	*p*
16. Listening passages are difficult because I do not often practice listening.	Student	3.70	.94		
	Teacher	3.70	1.15	.012	.991
20. I often get frustrated when listening to English.	Student	3.50	1.04		
	Teacher	3.93	.98	-2.10	.038
36. L2 comprehension is difficult because I was not taught how to take notes.	Student	3.49	1.15		
	Teacher	3.17	1.23	1.36	.175
8. I have difficulty understanding spoken texts because of lack of practice.	Student	3.30	1.25		
	Teacher	3.63	1.16	-1.34	.181
34. I have difficulty in L2 listening because I get distracted easily.	Student	3.30	1.13		
	Teacher	3.73	.98	-1.95	.053
11. The spoken text is difficult when I am not interested in the topic.	Student	3.23	1.06		
	Teacher	3.73	.98	-2.39	.018
2. I often get nervous when listening to English.	Student	2.97	1.07		
	Teacher	3.73	1.14	3.47	.001*
17. The listening materials are difficult because of my pronunciation problems.	Student	2.96	1.14		
	Teacher	3.43	1.07	-2.07	.040

Note: See Table 1.

Lack of practice in listening was believed by the students to be the most important source of their listening comprehension problems among the seven variables examined in this category as Item 6 was given the highest mean score (Mean = 3.70). Interestingly, the teachers gave exactly the same high rating to this item, suggesting an agreement among them that students needed to engage in more listening activities to enhance their listening comprehension ability. During the interviews, the participants dwelled on the reasons why the learners did not often listen to English:

- I seldom practice listening. Maybe I am influenced by the environment. When all the other students don't do this, I don't do it either. (Beidai-S)

- English is just one of the many courses that my students need to take…they seldom do listening practice after class. (Qinzhen-T)

In terms of the three items related to the affective dimensions of listening (i.e., Items 2, 11 and 20), the teacher respondents ascribed higher scores to them than the students did, with the biggest difference found on Item 2 (S Mean = 2.97, T Mean = 3.73). This mismatch could result in the teachers' overestimation on an area that the students did not have much problem with. The following comments collected from the interview data exemplified the conflicting teacher-learner opinions.

- I didn't feel nervous. I just tended to get impatient when I felt the listening text difficult to understand. (Chunliu-S)

- For low-proficiency students, I think they have more psychological problems. They tend to be nervous and worried when listening to English. (Lingcai-T)

The teachers' and the students' opinions also differed considerably towards Item 17 (S Mean = 2.96; T Mean = 3.43). In fact, this item was rated the lowest by the students, suggesting that from the teachers' perspective, the students should make more efforts in tackling their pronunciation problems. The interview data confirmed the quantitative findings, showing that weak listeners were usually unaware of their pronunciation problems until some consciousness-raising instructions were made:

> I often assumed that my pronunciation was correct until my teacher pointed out the problem for me. (Mingsan-S)

Task variables

Table 5 presents the mean scores of participants' responses to the two items included in the category, where different views were revealed.

Table 5. T-test results on perceived listening difficulties: Task variables

Statements	**Group**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t**	***p***
21. I feel it is difficult to answer questions in multiple-choice form.	Student	3.50	.96		
	Teacher	2.57	1.17	4.61	.000*
10. I feel it is difficult to answer blank-filling questions.	Student	3.15	1.11		
	Teacher	3.80	.10	-2.93	.004

Note: See Table 1.

Specifically, the students believed that answering blank-filling questions (S Mean= 3.15, T Mean= 3.80) was much easier than answering multiple-choice questions (S Mean= 3.50, T Mean= 2.57) whereas the teachers held exactly the opposite opinion. Mismatch regarding the participants' opinion towards multiple-choice question, in particular, reached statistical significance. Apparently, the teachers considerably underestimated the challenges posed by multiple-choice questions from the student perspective.

The interview data provided illustration for such differing views:

- Multiple-choice question is easier than blank filling question, as the former requires only recognition while the latter requires retrieval and production. (Jiegeng-T)

- Multiple-choice questions are easier as they usually provide four options for students to choose from. Statements in these options at times can even facilitate students' understanding of the listening passage. (Mindong-T)
- Sometimes I could not understand what the statements in the four options

meant… Sometimes two options appeared to have similar meanings, so although I understood the passage, I could not tell which option was the correct answer. (Jingjing-S)

External environment variables

Of the two items in the category of external environment variables presented in Table 6, Item 31 received moderately high ratings from both groups (S Mean = 3.16, T Mean = 3.03), suggesting the need to offer more formal instruction to help these weak listeners. Interestingly, difference in perceptions also emerged from the interviews.

Table 6. T-test results on perceived listening difficulties: External environment variables

Statements	**Group**	**Mean**	**SD**	**t**	***p***
31. L2 listening is difficult because we don't have enough listening lessons.	Student	3.16	1.10		
	Teacher	3.03	1.16	.56	.573
28. L2 listening is difficult because I have limited access to listening resources.	Student	2.87	1.14		
	Teacher	2.63	1.45	.85	.400

Note: Statements are arranged according to their mean values on the students' questionnaire in descending order; Student No = 131; Teacher No = 30.

Below are two representative observations:

- Although I often made up my mind to practice, I usually ended up doing something else... I think we should have more listening lessons, maybe two in a week. (Mingxu-S)

- In our country, teaching time allocated for listening is very limited, two hours a week is not enough…they need to do more practice after class. (Yuchen-T)

Discussion and pedagogical implications

Comparison between the teacher and learner perceptions regarding the variables in the six categories under examination is summarized as follows.

a) General-language text variables

Items included in the category of general-language text variables, such as lexical terms and syntactical complexity are believed by the students and the teachers to be important sources that affect L2 listening comprehension. The qualitative data especially highlight the teachers' emphasis on the importance of sufficient lexical knowledge, and their concern over the low-proficiency students' ability to correctly infer meaning of unknown words from the context. The practitioners' perception, though largely built upon intuition, is actually supported by a number of studies which explored the relationship between lexical knowledge and L2 listening comprehension (e.g., Kaivanpanah & Alavi, 2008; Stæhr, 2009). For instance, Stæhr (2009) found that a lexical coverage of at least 95% of the text would be required for smooth and fluent comprehension of the L2 spoken texts. More stringent figure was reported in studies investigating how lexical knowledge might affect the other receptive skill – reading. For example, Nation (2006) found out that correct inference of word meaning from the context requires L2 readers to know 19 out of 20 words (95%) of a text and even if learners do know 95% of the words of a given text, there is no guarantee of correct and successful guessing. Considering the real-time nature of L2 listening which does not allow for backtracking, the task of guessing for L2 listeners could be an even more daunting task especially for low-proficiency students, who are linguistically impoverished.

b) Listening-specific text variables

With regard to listening-specific text variables, the item on speaker accent is given the highest rating. In the interview sessions, both groups allude to the prevalence of two inner-circle English varieties, namely GA (General American) and RP (Received Pronunciation), in the L2 spoken texts that students are often exposed to. As a result, when encountering the other varieties of English, the students are usually at a loss. Interestingly, in spite of a clear recognition of the listening difficulties caused by speaker accents, both the learners and the teachers do not seem to favor the suggestion of making more instructional effort to address this variable. Reasons underlying such a belief is largely attributed to the inclusion of GA/RP-only materials in the listening textbooks and high-stakes tests, reflecting an implicit pedagogical norm of privileging the inner circle models (Kachru, 1990) at the expense of familiarizing students with an adequate range of world Englishes. Such a practice is highly problematic in that the inner-circle orientation to L2 listening only benefits a very tiny proportion of English learners in China today, who study the language merely for the purpose of communicating with native speakers (He & Zhang, 2010). Obviously, concrete curricular reforms are desired to promote the notion of World Englishes in areas such as L2 listening assessment practices, instructional materials development as well as teacher education (Snow et al., 2006) to address the real linguistic needs of the vast majority of Chinese EFL listeners, who will be operating in an environment increasingly shaped by the precipitate growth of English an international language (EIL) or lingua franca (ELF) (e.g., Kachru, 2005; Jenkins, 2006). Once acquainted with the complex sociolinguistic reality of English use, students will not only become more effective communicators, but also develop a better understanding of the role they are playing in redefining and creating changes in the language, forming thereafter a more positive attitude toward their own English (Matsuda, 2003).

c) Processing variables

Processing variables are also emphasized by the participants, as they are rated the highest by both groups. The teachers' and the students' perceptions in particular converged by giving the highest ratings to items associated with speech perception skills (i.e., Items 14, 6, 19, 26), indicating the participants' awareness of the importance of being able to decode the spoken text before capturing the intended message. Actually, the importance of fostering automatic word recognition ability to achieve successful comprehension has long been emphasized in the literature of L2 listening comprehension (e.g., Buck, 2001; Field, 2009). Field (2009, p. 14), for instance, pointed out that "a disturbingly large number of larger-scale problems of understanding actually have their origins in small-scale errors of word recognition." This indicates that for low-proficiency listeners, a considerable amount of intense and deliberate practice is needed to help them transfer declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge and thus attain the level of automaticity in word recognition (DeKeyser, 2007).

Another interesting convergence found between teacher and learner perceptions is that catching the details in the listening passage is believed to be more challenging than grasping the gist of the text. In addition, items associated with strategy knowledge are rated the lowest among the items in this category by all the participants. This finding suggests that for the weak L2 listeners, more efforts should be made to enhance their bottom-up perception abilities before attempting higher-level processing skills.

d) Listener variables

Of all the listener-related variables, the teachers' and the students' perceptions differ greatly with regard to the anxiety level of L2 listeners when they are exposed to English spoken texts. On the whole, the instructors envisage higher levels of listening anxiety than the students themselves perceive. Earlier studies have provided rather mixed findings concerning the association between listening anxiety and language competence. Many researchers (e.g., Elkhafaifi, 2005; Liu, 2006), for instance, claimed that low-proficiency students tend to be more nervous than their high-proficiency counterparts. This view, however, has recently been challenged by Chang (2008), which examined the underlying reasons that could affect L2 listening anxiety. Chang found that weak EFL listeners who considered English listening skill as having no practical value in life, and who acknowledged that they were "doomed losers" in English listening, did not demonstrate much anxiety in listening, even in a test situation. Findings in the current study also suggest that anxiety might be more idiosyncratic than indicative of proficiency levels, highlighting therefore the importance of orienting pedagogical efforts towards promoting students' listening proficiency and enhancing their motivation levels, rather than focusing on dealing superficially with students' listening anxiety.

Students' pronunciation inaccuracies constitute another issue where divergent opinions are voiced by the two groups. Specifically, the students tend to be unaware of their pronunciation problems. This finding concurs with that of Liu (2003), which reported that weak L2 listeners seldom doubted their word knowledge especially with respect to the pronunciation of what they perceived to be familiar words. When they were not able to match the sound they stored for a word with the sound uttered by the speaker, they would think that they had heard an unfamiliar word or that the speaker's English sounded alien. Actually, in recognition of the critical role played by pronunciation skills in successful L2 listening performance, many scholars have advanced approaches to helping listeners decode L2 speech through phonetic training, under the belief that when the sounds are better modeled, the messages will be better perceived (e.g., Cauldwell, 2002; Field, 2003; Setter & Jenkins, 2005). Field (2003), for instance, demonstrated how L2 listening difficulties caused by lexical segmentation of connected speeches could be classified, diagnosed and predicted by employing basic phonetic knowledge, such as assimilation and reduction. Given the fact that pronunciation teaching is marginalized for non-English majors in Chinese universities (Luo & Zhang, 2002), more consciousness-raising activities in the listening classroom are necessary to sensitize Chinese EFL learners to the sound system of the English language, "not from the perspective of pronunciation practice but through the ears of the listeners" (Field, 2003, p. 327). Besides, as different sound features have different effects on understanding (Dauer, 2005; Jenkins, 2000), instruction should focus on the ones that are most helpful for understanding, in addition to the phonological processes which constantly cause obstacles to L2 comprehension.

e) Task variables

The most striking difference is found in terms of the teachers' and the students' opinions towards task-related variables. Specifically, the difficulty level of two question types are examined in this study: blank-filling questions, which require the learners to fill in the exact words in the question items, and multiple-choice questions, which typically offer four options for students to choose from. Curiously, the teachers and the students in the current study perceive the difficulty level of the two types of task in exactly the opposite manner: the teachers believe that the students face more difficulties when answering blank-filling questions than answering multiple-choice questions, whereas the students hold the contrary view.

Students' perception of multiple-choice questions identified here is consistent with Wu (1998), which examined the effect of multiple-choice format on a group of Chinese EFL learners' performance by means of immediate retrospection. Wu found that a) misinterpretation of the options could result in selection of wrong answers due to, for instance, unknown words, uninformed guessing through only partial linguistic processing and through the lure of the options; b) the format allowed for uninformed guessing which was often a result of too much dependence on non-linguistic knowledge activated; and c) uninformed guessing sometimes led to the selection of the right answer for the wrong reasons. Since multiple-choice questions are constantly employed in listening exercises, classroom practitioners obviously need to ascertain whether students have interpreted the message correctly, and to identify whether students have provided the correct answers for the right reasons. This can be achieved by asking students to justify how they have arrived at certain answers (Field, 2008); in addition, during this process, more attention should be steered to the weak listeners - in most cases the less spoken ones, whose problems are often go unnoticed in the listening classrooms.

f) External environment variables

Variables in the category mainly elicit participants' views on the usefulness of instructional help. The finding shows that low-proficiency students largely rely upon listening lessons to help them improve. By contrast, although the teachers acknowledge the importance of listening lessons, they stress the need for low-proficiency students to carry out extensive listening activities after class in that the limited instructional time cannot bring about substantial development on the part of the learners. In light of the curricular arrangement which usually affords only two-hour listening lesson per week in most Chinese universities, seeking ways of promoting independent learning such as establishing listening centers might be a feasible solution to this problem (Field, 2008).

Conclusion and areas for future research

A clear pattern has emerged from the current study that text and processing related variables are believed by both the teachers and the students to be the most important sources of low-proficiency Chinese EFL listeners' difficulties, suggesting that as far as weak L2 listeners are concerned, building up substantial linguistic knowledge is a prerequisite for any tangible improvement in the listening skill to occur. Pedagogical instruction should hence focus, first and foremost, on helping this group of learners overcome their bottom-up processing difficulties such as decoding and word recognition before encouraging them to use more top-down processing strategies. Further research exploring the effectiveness of specific activities in enhancing learner word recognition and discrimination ability, such as the teaching of pronunciation skills, will probably yield more illuminating findings concerning how the effectiveness of L2 listening lessons can be maximally boosted.

This study also reveals that different varieties of English other than the native speaker versions of English are underrepresented in the teaching, learning and assessment of L2 listening in the Chinese tertiary context. Since this exclusive focus on inner-circle English models might simply be a result of the policy-makers' obsession with standards and correctness (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002) or a lack of opportunity for the involved parties (e.g., learners, teachers, the general public) to access updated information on World Englishes (He & Zhang, 2010), it would be of great interest for future studies to investigate stakeholders' beliefs and attitudes towards incorporating multiple varieties of English in formal instructional contexts. The question of when and to what extent low proficiency listeners should be introduced to NNS accents, in particular, constitutes an important area of research.

The most striking difference is found in terms of the teachers' and students' opinions towards the task variables. The teachers believe that the students face more difficulties when answering blank-filling questions than answering multiple-choice questions whereas the students hold the opposite view. This finding has significant implications for classroom practitioners, material writers as well as language test developers in that multiple-choice question is arguably the most common form of question type employed in the listening classrooms and tests (Buck, 2001). Given the importance of making informed decisions about the choice and sequence of tasks in either pedagogical or assessment contexts, more empirical research employing different research methods is needed to examine stakeholders' perceptions of the other listening task types, especially the ones frequently adopted in high-stakes tests, such as dictation, short answer questions, etc.

To sum up, this study has contributed to a better understanding of the problematic areas that are likely to impede L2 listening comprehension from the teachers' and students' perspectives, an area that has so far received little research attention. Although this study focuses on Chinese students and teachers, its findings have implications for wider EFL learning contexts, where students mainly learn a language through formal instruction.

Note

1. The total score for the listening section of CET4 is 249. The cut-off point set here is 170, a person at which level is equal to or better than 47% of the test-takers.
2. The student and teacher questionnaires were identical except for the reference of persons. In addition, the response category in the teacher questionnaire consisted of two separate columns under the headings of "Higher-proficiency students" and "Lower-proficiency students" respectively.
3. Due to space limitation, a slightly adapted version of the questionnaire is presented in the study. Interested readers can contact the corresponding author for the original form of the instrument.
4. To protect participants' privacy, pseudonyms were used in this study; T= Teacher; S=Student.

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ASIAN EFL JOURNAL
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How Being an “Insider” or an “Outsider” Shapes EFL Teachers’ Professional Identity: One Teacher’s Story From Japan

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Biodata

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Abstract

This article explores teachers’ identity formation through a narrative inquiry of the professional identity of one EFL teacher, “Andrea,” at a high school in Japan. Data were extracted from four 90-minute open-ended life history interviews and qualitatively examined using Wenger’s (1998) social theory of identity formation. It was found that the shifts in her professional identity were related to the changes in her personal life, which in turn influenced her colleagues’ perceptions of her. Andrea’s story showcases how transient the career of English language teaching in Japan for foreigners may be and that teachers should be prepared to undergo identity shifts as relationships with colleagues and/or institutional policies change.

Keywords: EFL, professional identity, Japan, communities of practice, gender

Introduction

Foreign EFL teachers in Japan teach in informal contexts, such as *eikaiwa* (English conversation) schools, businesses, or homes, as well as in formal contexts such as in primary, secondary, and tertiary education. There is a hierarchy in EFL in Japan in terms of salary, prestige, and respect, with *Eikaiwa*

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Japan

teaching toward the bottom and university teaching toward the top. At the lower end, minimal academic qualifications are necessary. A bachelor's degree in any subject is usually sufficient to obtain a working visa. Teachers in the *eikaiwa* industry and those working for secondary schools are generally native English speakers and recent college graduates with little or no linguistic training. At the top, advanced degrees and research publications are required.

University teaching provides greater status, but it is also hierarchical with three tiers: *part-time* and *contracted full-time*, which are considered nonstandard employment with little or no social welfare benefits, and *tenured*, which is considered standard employment with all social welfare benefits. Part-time university teachers may supplement income earned from full-time and tenured positions (or even non-teaching related work), or they may support themselves solely through part-time work by piecing together numerous classes at several universities. Contracted positions offer full-time work, but they are generally considered unstable because of term limitations. Tenured positions are the most desirable because they include the same security and social welfare benefits offered to Japanese teachers, but they are relatively few and difficult to obtain (e.g. Bailey, 2006, 2007; Fraser, 2011; Hayes, 2013; Hicks, 2013; Murray, 2013; Nagatomo, 2012, 2015; Rivers, 2013; Whitsed & Wright, 2011).

Many at the top of the EFL hierarchy in Japan who began their careers in *eikaiwa* or secondary schools decided to remain in Japan and to make EFL teaching their career. They enrolled in graduate programs and joined professional organizations to obtain university employment. What seems to be a commonality among these people is marriage to a Japanese national[1]. Although it is unclear how many foreign spouses engage in language teaching, evidence suggests the majority engaged in language education in Japan may be Western men. Statistics provided by MEXT (2006) for 2005, for example, show 76% of the 5,652 foreign full-time and tenured university teachers were male, many of whom are likely to be English teachers. In addition, the largest professional EFL organization in Japan, JALT (Japan Association of Language Teachers) is also predominately comprised of male members (Appleby, 2014).

Under such circumstances, how do the foreign women in Japan with Japanese spouses fare in carving out a career in English language teaching? These women are subject to the same employment practices as foreign men (e.g. Hayes, 2013; Hicks, 2013), but they must

[1]Although 78% of interracial marriages in Japan are between Japanese men and Asian women, with the majority being Filipinas, among those involving a western spouse, 90% are between Western men and Japanese women (Yamamoto, 2010)

also adapt to Japanese gendered attitudes that primarily view women as wives and mothers (Liddle & Nakajima, 2000). In most instances, the burden of housework and childcare fall upon women's shoulders, which creates difficulties in maintaining a work-life balance. Foreign men enjoy privilege in Japan's male-dominant society, and whereas marriage for them signals respect and stability, marriage for women (Japanese and foreign), or even the *possibility of marriage*, raises concerns about their professional capabilities because many Japanese employers, as well as male colleagues, often believe that women work temporarily until marriage and do not strive for careers. These beliefs can hinder women's advancement opportunities (e.g. Appleby, 2012, 2013, 2014; Hicks, 2013; Nagatomo, 2015; Simon-Maeda, 2004).

Previous studies have also shown that foreign female teachers (as well as Japanese female teachers) have different personal and professional experiences from their male counterparts that ultimately influence their careers. Women may not have access to, or may be excluded from, business and social situations that foster networking in the workplace (e.g. Hicks, 2013; Nagatomo, 2015; Poole, 2010), which of course is not unique to Japan (e.g. Belcher, 2007; Lillis & Curry, 2010). Such networking provides essential information about jobs, especially part-time jobs in universities, which are often passed around via word-of-mouth between already employed same-sexed friends (Hicks, 2013). Japanese gendered attitudes also seem to be adopted by some foreign men, who presume that wives work not from necessity but for personal enjoyment, and thus are somehow snatching up classes that should presumably go to "real" breadwinners (Nagatomo, 2015). Successful foreign female teachers are often seen to hold some kind of gendered advantage over foreign male teachers, despite being obviously outnumbered in the workplace (Hicks, 2013).

Another difference shaping men and women's professional experiences in Japan is related to gendered ideologies that romanticize English study as an entry into an idealized Western world. Institutional policies capitalize on such ideologies to attract female students to study with Western male teachers, and such policies, especially present in language schools, implicitly encourage flirtation between teachers and students (e.g. Bailey, 2006, 2007; Kelsky, 2001; Takahashi, 2012). This has led to sexual harassment complaints being filed at the General Union by female teachers of some conversation schools where male students grope or make sexually inappropriate comments during a private lesson (see www.generalunion.org). At the university level, flirtation between teachers and students is of course not encouraged, but there often is, nonetheless, a sexualized atmosphere that causes tension in the classroom. Some foreign male teachers openly flirt with sexy students in class and make inappropriate comments about them in teachers' rooms (Hicks, 2013). A reputable English language column even devoted an article directed toward male teachers on how to handle their feelings in class when students wear short skirts in an article entitled "How to talk to Japanese women—EFL style" (Guest, 2011).

Given the issues discussed above, how do foreign female teachers in Japan develop their professional identity while navigating such gendered waters? In recent decades, there has been an increasing understanding that language learning and language teaching involves much more than teachers applying an appropriate methodology in the classroom (e.g. Nunan, 1988), and what teachers think, believe, and know influence every aspect of classroom teaching (e.g. Borg, 2003; Golembek, 1998; Woods, 1996). The complexity of teachers' lives, and how they identify as teachers, shape their instructional practices in numerous ways (e.g. Borg, 2003). Varghese et al. (2005, p. 35) have identified four prominent areas in teacher identity research: 1) marginalization; 2) the position of non-native speaker teachers; 3) the status of language teaching as a profession; and 4) the teacher-student relationship. For this paper, the first and the third are of particular importance.

One useful framework for examining teacher identity is Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger's (1998) conceptualization of identity, which says that people's identity evolves through day-to-day experiences of participation in groups called "communities of practice" (CoP). These CoPs can be officially organized (such as being a member of an English department) or they can be informal and unnamed (such as a group of employees who always have lunch together). CoP members are implicitly aware of the degree of involvement, or "modes of belonging" (Wenger, 1998) that determine acceptance or marginalization in the groups to which they belong. In other words, identity forms amid the "tension between our investments in various forms of belonging and our ability to negotiate the meanings that matter in those contexts" (p. 188). In studies of language teacher identity, CoP has been used as a useful theoretical framework to investigate the process of identity development (e.g. Morita, 2004; Nagatomo, 2012; Simon-Maeda et al. 2006; Tsui, 2007). These studies have mainly focused on Wengers' (1998) three modes of belonging that influence identification and negotiation in groups, and a brief description of this aspect of the theory of CoP follows.

Wenger says that identity forms through a duel process of *identification* and *negotiation.* Identification is a physical process that occurs while participating in a community with other members of that community. Negotiation determines the degree to which members have a voice within their communities and how they are positioned among other members. I focused on Wenger's three modes of belonging under the categories of identification and negotiation -

engagement, imagination, and *alignment.*

Identity formed under *engagement* involves "doing" things that are typical and accepted for that community. *Imagination* is people's internal picture of their role within a community and can range from marginalization to affinity. *Alignment*, related to power, determines the degree of allegiance given toward a community. Wenger also argues that people's experiences in their CoPs depend upon various trajectories: *peripheral trajectories,* where people will not have full-participation; *inbound trajectories* where newcomers may eventually have full participation; *insider trajectories,* where full members negotiate their identities; *boundary trajectories* where members to one CoP are linked to another CoP, and *outbound trajectories* where members leave one CoP for another.

This study is part of my greater research that investigates the lives of foreign female teachers in Japan. Like many of their foreign male counterparts, they have put down roots in Japan and intend to live there permanently, and their contribution to English language education is ongoing and fluid. In this paper, I explore the professional identity development of just one woman undergoing a significant identity shift while teaching at a public high school and consider her newly-found identity as a university English teacher. My question guiding this paper concerns how she mobilizes and manages her multiple identities as a wife, mother, teacher, colleague, and researcher while securing her position as a professional EFL educator in Japan.

Methodology

The participant

The participant in my study is "Andrea"[2], a 38-year-old American woman, who first came to Japan in 1992 as a high school exchange student. She returned to Japan with a BA in 2002 as the wife of her Japanese high school sweetheart. In 2003 she began teaching English at "Central City High School" (CCHS), the public school she had attended before as an exchange student, replacing the foreign teacher who had been there for 14 years. After the school obtained recognition as a specialist English high school, more native speakers were hired, and all but one (who is an ALT) have limited-term three-year teaching licenses issued through the city board of education, enabling them to teach without Japanese teachers present. Andrea worked at CCHS for 11 years, during which time she gave birth to two children and obtained an MA in TESOL through a distance course. In April 2014, she obtained a contracted university position and resigned from CCHS. At the time of the current study,

[2] The names of all people and places in this paper are pseudonyms.

Andrea had just completed her first semester as a university instructor.

Data Collection

I adopt a narrative study approach in that I examine the sociocultural, historical, and social influences behind Andrea's stories (Pavlenko, 2002) to analyze her beliefs, knowledge, practice, and identity (e.g. Clandinin & Connelly 2000). Data were collected through four 90-minute interviews, follow-up emails, and the research diary she wrote for one of her graduate classes. The first three interviews, which occurred several weeks apart in 2012, followed Seidman's (2006) model for in-depth interviews designed to obtain meaningful data to study teachers' lives. The fourth interview, conducted 1.5 years later in 2014, was to examine Andrea's life after changing jobs. Prior to the interviews, I had prepared a detailed interview guide to generate "specific concrete life stories" (Chase, 2002, p. 84), but the unpredicted flow of the talk and the participant's relaxed manner during the interviews indicated a certain amount of trust and rapport (Arksey & Knight, 1999) existed between us, reflecting a collaborative interviewer-interviewee relationship (Josselson, 2007).

All interviews were transcribed and then organized chronologically to establish Andrea's life history. Because I am more interested in *what* my participant said rather than *how* she said it, I did not follow standard transcription methods used in conversation analysis that attends to both linguistic and nonlinguistic features of language that include length of pauses, false starts, intonation, overlapping utterances and so on (Gee, 2005). Instead, I focused on examining thematic issues that rose from the interviews and therefore I tidied up the transcripts by eliminating false starts and hesitant language fillers to make them be more like a written text than a spoken one (Elliot, 2005). Then the data were uploaded to a qualitative data analysis software called Hyper Research (See http://www.researchware.com/products/hyperresearch.html) and coded to determine recurring themes. Finally, I had the participant check for chronological accuracy of earlier drafts of this paper, and I received her approval of it in its final form.

My position within the study

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to acknowledge my own insider position within this study and my relationship with the participant. I am also a foreign woman married to a Japanese man, so I understand firsthand the difficulty in balancing work and family while forging a career in Japan, because most childrearing and household responsibilities lie upon women whether they work or not. I have been teaching English in Japan since 1979 and I have also climbed the EFL ladder by beginning my career in an *eikaiwa* school as an inexperienced English language teacher and then moving into higher education—first as a part-time teacher in 1984 and after that with tenure in 1988. I began teaching with a BA but eventually obtained a PhD.

Andrea was an acquaintance from the Association of Foreign Wives of Japanese (AFWJ) whom I had known for a few years. I asked her to be a part of my research project because of her employment status as a secondary school teacher. In the past several years, I had also been acting as a mentor to Andrea while she studied for her MA through a distance course, and I was aware of many issues surrounding her personal and professional life. This knowledge may have colored not only my interpretation of the data, but also the interviewee—researcher relationship. It is also important to acknowledge the possibility that Andrea's identity transformation might be due to her ongoing relationship with me as well as how she considered herself and her position through the process of the interviews.

While it is true that insider researchers must be careful about subjectivity, their positions as insiders may create more trust and acceptance among their participants because of shared commonalities. Therefore, their position as insiders may result in more honest data than if they were outsiders (e.g. Dwyer, 2009; Green, 2014). Therefore, I do not view my status as an insider researcher or my relationship with Andrea to be a hindrance. Instead, I see it as an enhancement that enabled me to have deeper understanding of the data, the participant, and of the social context in which we both live and work.

Andrea's Story

In this section, using "thick description" (Geertz, 1973), I tell Andrea's story by constructing a brief chronological description of her professional life over a period of 14 years.

From being an insider to becoming an outsider

Andrea joined CCHS in 2003 after having only one year of EFL employment at an *eikaiwa* school. She felt welcomed despite her inexperience, and through trial and error, she helped create and coordinate communicative courses with her foreign and Japanese colleagues. She was proud to be *the* native teacher behind the Intercultural Course (IC) program, which was well known throughout the city, and she was thought of as a competent and popular English teacher who "organized and managed everything…. and they [colleagues] were quite respectful."

When Andrea left for a yearlong maternity leave in 2007, she said her colleagues worried how they would cope when she was gone and they gave her such a hearty welcome upon her return she felt that this job was "her calling in life." Unfortunately, being a working mother was not easy, especially since she was the main caregiver. It was difficult balancing housework, childcare, and a full-time job. Andrea also began to feel that a newly hired foreign male teacher ("Mike") was vying for her position, which was permanent and not related to the availability of grant monies like the other foreign teachers' positions were. Her fear increased when she unexpectedly became pregnant within months after returning from her pregnancy leave. Distraught, she concealed her pregnancy at first and when she finally revealed her pregnancy to the head of the English department, she cried and begged her not to let Mike take over while she was gone. Despite being reassured that her position as the IC teacher was secure, Andrea felt uneasy during her second maternity leave.

She was not met with the same enthusiasm when returning to work as before, and she felt that eyes were on her and that people were wondering how she could "take care of children while working." She also realized her fears concerning Mike were not unfounded. While away, a powerful Japanese teacher named "Jiro" "took him under his wing and had asked him to be his assistant teacher for his students going through the IC course. For Andrea, that was a sharp blow:

> That's MY job [points to her chest]. I'M supposed to do that. That is what I DO. For every teacher in the IC [voice becomes tearful]. Up until that point that is what I did. All of a sudden, Mike was doing it for him. And I thought maybe it is just a one-time thing you know, but I felt like all of a sudden my job was being dissipated.

Work that had fallen under Andrea's domain was now being turned over to Mike and to other teachers. She was told:

> You can do this and this, but you can't do this because that's Mike's thing…. It was like, well, you're no longer going to just do the IC. You have to do other stuff, too…. At first it was very difficult for me to let that go. I really took a lot of pride in what I did. And then it was kind of slowly taken away from me.

A final blow was the elimination of a popular drama course Andrea had developed which culminated in a performance by third-year students for the other students and faculty. Jiro had decided the course was frivolous and replaced it with a discussion course with "serious topics" to be taught by Mike.

Going to graduate school

Andrea realized that her long history with the school could no longer maintain her status; many of the teachers who knew her from before had been transferred and incoming teachers only saw her as "just one of the foreign teachers." Rather than relying on her history, she decided to become a teacher with pedagogical and linguistic knowledge instead. She applied for graduate school, believing that a graduate degree would raise and protect her status at the school.

Andrea and another foreign female teacher ("Mary") announced their acceptance into graduate school at a faculty party, but it was met first with "stunned silence," and then Jiro and Mike "heckled" them with questions such as "How are you going to manage grad school and coach the debate team next year? You're not going to be able to handle both! You have to work, you can't study all the time! You have to actually work and stuff!" Disheartened by their colleagues' lack of enthusiasm for what they believed to be exciting news for everyone, Andrea and Mary left the party early. Later, another foreign male colleague contacted Andrea telling her that after they had left, Jiro and Mike mocked them by saying, "Those fucking bitches, who do they think they are?"

Only one month after beginning graduate school, Andrea was informed by a Japanese ally in the English department that the vice-principal had been investigating complaints lodged against her. After questioning the head of the English department, she learned that the complaints were trivial, but he also warned her that she was being scrutinized by teachers who were "really upset" about her graduate study and that that she must separate her study from work. He said:

> In order to not make them upset, you should never talk about graduate school while you are at work and you should NEVER work on anything related to graduate school while you are at your desk. You should keep it very quiet… If you want to talk about it with Mary you should leave the room or talk about it after work because you don't want to upset them.

Andrea believed that Jiro had been waiting for the opportunity to find any reason to complain about her. Reluctantly, she followed the advice given by the head of the department, even though she felt it to be unfair that she could not engage in study that enhanced her work when she had time to do so. Instead, she studied in the early mornings or late at night.

Deciding to leave

Although Andrea had always known she was hired and worked under different conditions from Japanese teachers, limitations and regulations for foreign teachers at that school were becoming more stringent. For example, they were no longer allowed to travel with students on day excursions outside of the city, and the number of non-teaching duties, for example the proctoring of numerous exams for all subjects, was increased. She also discovered what little voice she had at the school. The principal had asked for recommendations in hiring a new foreign teacher. She introduced a friend with much teaching experience and with an MA, but the principal selected a relatively inexperienced candidate without a graduate degree instead. When she asked the principal why, he told her that "he had looked at all the resumes and he is the MOST qualified candidate." Andrea was convinced that he had never examined the resumes, but had selected the person the powerful teachers wanted.

This incident was a turning point, and Andrea began to envision a life for herself outside of the school. She decided to quit after completing her MA, so she physically and mentally distanced herself from the IC course. Mary and Andrea moved to a different English department office, which was considered an "undesirable" place by the "powerful teachers" with "unwanted" teachers such as "newbies" and/or "scapegoats." They were warned that if they moved offices, they would be unable to return, but they were determined to distance themselves from what was increasingly becoming an unwelcome atmosphere. They found they enjoyed working with the new teachers and Andrea relinquished many of her IC classes and began teaching more for the General Course (GC) program as well. Such moves enabled Andrea to reestablish her identity as a valuable and knowledgeable teacher with different colleagues, and she found she enjoyed teaching in the GC as well. Nevertheless, this transition was still somewhat painful:

> So it took a long time for me to let go of it and to be OK with it. I don't think I'm still really OK with it, but I found that spreading myself out and working in the general course more that I really enjoy working with the general course students. I guess if I didn't enjoy it I would be really upset. But because I enjoy it so much I don't mind any more.

In the fall of 2013, Andrea completed her thesis and was awarded her masters' degree, and several months later she was hired as a contracted full-time language teacher at a private coeducational university, "Yama University" (YU), so she resigned from the high school[3].

[3] Mary, who had completed her MA in a different graduate program earlier that year, had also found university work and resigned from CCHS at the same time.

At the University: Being treated like a professional

I interviewed Andrea again at the end of her first semester at YU. Although it is too early to determine how her identity as a university teacher will develop over time, three areas of change are worth noting: her identity as an employee of an institution, her identity in relationship to her colleagues, and her identity in relationship to her students.

Not surprisingly, there are great differences between the two teaching contexts, and one of the greatest differences is the freedom offered to university teachers in enabling them to determine how and where to work. YU trusts teachers by not regulating their daily schedules beyond their specific classes to be taught, their conversation lounge duties, and occasional meetings. Even though Andrea had the most seniority at CHSS in terms of years of employment and education, she felt deprofessionalized by always being under the watchful eyes of colleagues, bosses and/or administrators. Now, even though she is "starting at the bottom of the heap" she feels that it "might be a fairer playing ground" because she believes she will be judged by professional standards rather than personal ones. Her comment below indicates how optimistic she feels at the end of the semester, because not only does she feel like a more valued employee of the university, but also her family life has improved:

> I just feel so happy to have that kind of trust relationship and I feel like I have a lot more freedom. I'm practically bouncing in my shoes. I can go home now. I know I'm going to go home and work but I can work at home and I don't have to feel guilty. At CCHS I always felt really guilty because I did a lot of work at home on weekends and mornings, but people just assumed that 'oh she's leaving at 4:30—that means she's going to a party or something'. Of course I wasn't!

Work no longer conflicts with Andrea's family life. She says that working at CCHS was difficult because the prevailing attitude was unless *all* teachers devoted an extraordinary amount of time outside teaching classes and regular office hours, they were perceived to be shirking their duties. Now, she is much happier without watchful eyes checking if she studies at her desk or if she leaves the university early to pick up her children at daycare. The biggest difference is she feels the university is assuming that she *is doing her job properly* as a teacher rather than her former colleagues assuming *that she was not.*

Collaboration and camaraderie

There are some adjustments for Andrea to make while she navigates these new university waters, particularly in terms of collegial collaboration. At the high school, teaching was largely a group effort, and teachers bounced ideas off each other and decisions concerning curriculum, materials development, and student assessment were often made in pairs or in groups. At YU, however, teachers teach whatever they like as long as they follow minimal guidelines. Andrea mainly teaches required speaking classes for first-year students, and she is expected to develop her own teaching materials based on topics covered in the listening textbook used by all students. In addition, she is expected to give an exam at the end of the semester. In the beginning, she anticipated that there would be collaboration, or at least *discussion* among the teachers in attempt to develop some kind of standardized teaching. Instead, she was left alone to devise her own class, and she came to realize that university teachers' dependence is not only related to self-scheduling, but also in determining what to teach. She says:

> Everyone is trusted to just do what they need to do and you don't have to tell people what you are doing and ask them what they think, because they don't care. They are not going to take the time to talk to you really, because they are busy with their own stuff.

Independence in the workplace has created a lonely atmosphere for Andrea however, because she was used to the camaraderie and social banter from spending many hours working together with other teachers. Now, she usually works alone in her office because of her officemates' different schedules. Furthermore, unlike at CCHS where teaching materials were developed together and shared freely, teachers at YU seem guarded about what and with whom to share. This implies that ownership of the teaching materials lies with the individual teachers rather than with the school for the benefit of the students. Andrea feels one reason for this might be that some teachers might have taken advantage of pooled resources in the past by not reciprocating in return, and therefore the teachers have become hesitant about collaborating or sharing materials. This surprised Andrea because before she left the high school she compiled all of her materials into paper and digital files for current and future teachers. This is not to say, however, that no collaboration exists between colleagues at YU, but that it seems to be based on trust relationships, rather than based on workplace proximity. At first, Andrea was baffled by the system and unsure about how to proceed. But now, after her first semester, she feels that she has established good trust relationships with a few colleagues and she is optimistic that the second semester will be easier.

The students

One reason why Andrea had difficulties with developing appropriate teaching materials her first semester was because of the differences in students' academic ability. Although she knew that the YU students would have lower English skills than those at CCHS, she was unprepared for exactly how low that would be. Her former students were "expected to be more autonomous" in carrying out tasks and assignments. They knew they would attend high-level universities, and they were capable of discussions and making presentations in English. Now she teaches basic sentence level grammar:

> They have very little vocabulary, very little grammar. They can't even…I don't think they ever listened for the last six years they were in junior and senior high schools. So basically, I'm starting from scratch. The dialogs we are doing are like, 'Do you like movies? Yeah, I like movies. Do you like sports? No, I hate sports.'

These students who are more accustomed to academic failure "require constant attention, direction, and praise" and she feels like she "is holding the students' hands just to get them through a 90-min class." She can no longer occupy the front of the room as a lecturer but must move around the classroom. She found that constancy is important and they appreciate routines that she established—one of which involves opening every class with a dictation exercise. This not only "settles down" the class but also provides the material to be covered for the rest of the lesson. She also prepared the students carefully for the speaking exam at the end of the semester, hoping that they would experience success in her classroom. She wants these students to discover their potential communicating in English, even if it is at a basic level.

Some teachers might feel that they have taken a step downwards when moving from capable and motivated students to low-level and demotivated students. However, Andrea has chosen to see this as a "challenge" and "something new" that takes her out of the "rut" she had been in, and she says, "Now I am actually using my brain again and trying to think of ways to teach them and ways to engage them and ways to think of classroom management strategies. So it's good for me."

Discussion

The previous section detailed Andrea's identity transformation as a teacher, and it shows, like many studies of language teacher identity development, how this identity constantly shifts and changes (e.g. Kanno & Stewart, 2011; Simon-Maeda, 2004; Tsui, 2007).

By applying Wenger's (1998) theory of identity as an analytical tool, we can see how Andrea's imagination and alignment guided her while she engaged in her work at the high school and how her identity as a member of that CoP shifted over time.

Andrea began teaching at CC high school with little prior experience, but she developed pedagogical expertise through trial and error and through the encouragement of her colleagues. Andrea was, of course, aware of her peripheral trajectory as a foreign teacher in relation to Japanese teachers who are hired and work under different conditions. However, she did not feel marginalized because of the "mutual engagement in shared activities", the "accumulation of a history of shared experiences", and the "development of interpersonal relationships" (Wenger, p. 184). Her sense of value as a teacher was reified when teachers from other departments and from other schools came to observe her classes; when students in lower grades looked forward to doing the drama projects she had established as a tradition for third grade students; and by her students doing well in city-wide debate contests.

Her voice was heard and she had fully developed an identity of participation, despite being on a permanent peripheral trajectory as a non-Japanese teacher. She gained expertise and experience while she *did her job*, and she *invested herself in her relations with her colleagues*, which are two necessary conditions to develop identity through engagement (Wenger, 1998). Imagination enabled Andrea to adopt an identity as a competent teacher and as an inside member of CHSS. This alignment toward her school was also an essential part of her identity. However, when her position within the school shifted, her identities of participation shifted to identities of non-participation (Wenger, 1998), and she experienced a great sense of loss.

The shift from being an insider to being an outsider was related to the ongoing changing interpersonal dynamics due to personnel changes. Japanese teachers transferred in from other schools to replace those who were transferring out, and foreign English teachers quit and new ones were hired. When Andrea returned from her second maternity leave, many of her old allies—those who knew her when she was "at her prime" were gone and she "didn't know who they were and they didn't know who she was either." She felt more and more marginalized when the work she believed was *hers* was being allocated to others. Her ideas were no longer adopted, and she developed an identity of non-participation.

Andrea attempted to renegotiate her identity at CCHS by increasing her educational capital through obtaining an M.A. She imagined that by doing this she would be able her to realign herself as a valued insider at CCHS, but this did not happen. The pedagogical and theoretical expertise acquired through her studies was unrecognized by those holding power, and contrary to her expectations, it did not give her a greater voice. Instead, it marginalized her further. She became even more aware of the asymmetrical power relationships within the school, which lead to feelings of “marginality, disengagement, and nonparticipation”, much like Mingfang, the teacher in Tsui’s (2007, p. 678) study.

Then Andrea began to move her alignment away from the school and see a future for herself as a member of the wider EFL community instead. Such negotiability, as Wenger (1998) argues, enables people to “take responsibility for, and shape the meanings that matter within a social configuration” (p. 197). By distancing herself from the IC course (and those who made her feel marginalized) and by aligning herself with the GC, Andrea was able to reestablish herself as a knowledgeable teacher and gain the respect and of the new teachers, some of who had transferred in after “the whole graduate thing blew up.” The theoretical knowledge obtained from her MA course empowered her, because it enabled her to “theorize [her] personal practical knowledge” and “gain confidence in [her] own pedagogical approaches (Tsui, 2007, p. 644). She began giving presentations at conferences and was making connections with teachers outside the school. Although Andrea’s initial motivation for obtaining the MA was to reestablish her insider position at the school, when it was not possible to do so, she voluntarily placed herself on an outbound trajectory, which ultimately led to her current employment in a university.

As a contracted full-time teacher at a university, Andrea is once again on a peripheral trajectory of the university in which she is employed. This time, however, the boundaries of the trajectory are clearly laid out in the time frame of her contract. At this moment, she does not feel marginalized by her position at the university because of the freedom and trust given to her, which enables her to see herself as a professional teacher. This is in stark contrast to her final years at CCHS. Now, Andrea’s modes of belonging are not completely aligned with the university itself, but with the students that she teaches there and with the wider profession of university EFL teachers in Japan.

Conclusion

Is Andrea better off as a university teacher? For now, the freedom and trust she has is welcome, the teaching is challenging, and she enjoys her students. She seems to be constructing a teacher identity that is based on her own internal criteria through her newly acquired academic knowledge and through her interaction with students. Only four months have passed since Andrea left CCHS, and she is optimistic about the future. She is also aware that she must use her time well for the duration of her contract. She is *becoming* a university teacher in that she is also adding research to her work life and hopes to develop her academic skills by publishing in her university's journal and by presenting at conferences. This will not only enhance her professional standing at the school, it will boost her resume when she must look for her next job.

Although this particular case study is limited in scope, it illustrates how one EFL teacher in Japan who intends to reside there permanently, is climbing the hierarchical EFL teaching ladder, which may not result in *better* conditions all around. In Andrea's case, the teaching may be less fulfilling at YU than it was at CCHS, but the employment conditions are, thus far, better. Many foreign teachers are on peripheral trajectories in their work places, even those who believe that they are full members of their community. This may not matter much if teachers have a voice and if they feel respected. However, as Andrea's story shows, degrees of identification and alignment with a workplace can change. In Andrea's case, she moved from being an insider alumnus at CCHS, to being in charge of the IC, to being a marginalized working mother and then a further marginalized graduate student. Now she is navigating new waters as a university teacher and will likely undergo identity shifts in this context as well.

Andrea's stories show that the degree of alignment in a CoP is relational to other members of that community, and maintaining a fixed identity in a workplace may be difficult, or even impossible, particularly for those who only hold peripheral membership to begin with. Although Andrea's former colleague Mike may be doing the work that she had previously done in the IC program at CCHS, his position is certainly no more stable than Andrea's was; he too will be subject to identity shifts as personnel changes occur within the school that will result in different dynamics within the community.

What helped Andrea recover from losing her identity as the teacher most associated with the IC program, was her willingness to adapt and to take on a new identity. By obtaining a graduate degree she has greatly enhanced her employability, and she found a job that enables her to balance her work and family life better. By being able to control when and where she works, she has more time to spend with her children. She can pick them up from daycare at an earlier hour and take them to the various extracurricular cultural enrichment lessons (such as dance) that Japanese children usually attend. Dinner is no longer a rushed affair and family life is more relaxed.

Even though it may be difficult to obtain a permanent position, Andrea is no longer limited to teaching in *eikaiwa* schools or secondary schools as she would have been had she not gone to graduate school. She now has the necessary minimum qualifications to teach at university, where even contracted positions command more respect and offer greater benefits

(Fraser, 2011), despite dangers of eventual "burnout" (Murray, 2014). Unfortunately, not all teachers are willing to invest in the necessary time and money to obtain a higher degree, or to spend time conducting research and publishing articles to raise their employability (Nagatomo, 2015). Unfortunately, these teachers might find themselves squeezed out of their positions by younger, fresher, and more energetic teachers in similar ways that Andrea felt squeezed out of hers.

Although this is a small-scale study, with only one participant, Andrea's story clearly illustrates that professional identity is complex, and it is negotiated and renegotiated through relationships with colleagues. Identity development is also shaped by power relations that are formed in local educational contexts, but also shaped by broader sociopolitical influences (Tsui, 2007). Awareness of these issues may help empower EFL teachers as they develop teaching careers.

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An Intervention Study on the Effectiveness of Motivational Strategy Training in a Chinese EFL Context

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Bio Data

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Abstract

This article reports on an intervention study that focused on providing motivational strategy training for Chinese EFL learners. The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of motivational strategy training. The participants consisted of 10 Chinese EFL learners, who were second year, non-English major university students. They were randomly allocated to the two groups: five in the intervention group and five in the control group. The five learners in the intervention group received the motivational strategy training. Due to the context and scope of this study, the motivational strategy training focused on two specific motivational strategies: setting specific learner goals and promoting self-motivating learner strategies. In this study qualitative data collection and analysis methods were used. The data were collected by means of learner diaries, follow-up interviews, and semi-structured interviews. The results showed that the 10 EFL learners belonged to four learner types in terms of their motivational profiles. The effect of the motivational strategy training on Chinese EFL learners' motivation differed according to their motivation types. This suggests that further research needs to explore which motivational strategies are appropriate for which types of learners in terms of their motivational profiles.

Keywords: diary study; EFL learners; intervention; motivation; motivational strategies; training

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the 1990s, there has been a growing interest in the situation-specific and process-oriented aspects of L2 motivation. Researchers have paid increasing attention to classroom-based motivation. Some of them have attempted to consider the educational implications of L2 motivation research by proposing motivational strategies (e.g., Dörnyei, 1994; Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Williams & Burden, 1997). Dörnyei (2001, p. 28) defined motivational strategies as "techniques that promote the individual's goal-related behaviour" and "those motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect." Motivational strategies can thus be employed consciously by teachers in the classroom to generate, maintain, and protect students' motivation; or by students themselves to control their own motivational state, especially in the face of various personal and/or environmental distractions and competing action tendencies (e.g., self-motivating strategies).

The various motivational strategies proposed to date, however, can only be considered as hypotheses until their effectiveness is tested empirically (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994). Consequently, some researchers have conducted empirical studies of the use of motivational strategies (e.g., Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Ruesch, Bown, & Dewey, 2012). Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) conducted an empirical investigation into the motivational strategies employed by two hundred Hungarian teachers of English. Based on these teachers' responses to two questions, namely, how important they considered 51 motivational strategies (selected from a list proposed by Dörnyei, 1994) and how frequently they used these strategies in their teaching practice, they compiled a set of 10 motivational macrostrategies, called the 10 commandments for motivating language learners. In order to examine the culture-specificity of motivational strategies, Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) conducted a large-scale empirical survey in Taiwan, involving 387 Taiwanese teachers of English. They found some differences in the preference pattern of motivational macrostrategies between the Taiwanese and Hungarian teachers and thus proposed that some motivational strategies may be culture-dependent. Both of these empirical studies, however, used questionnaires to find out how important the teachers considered certain strategies and how frequently they used them. They did not actually investigate the effect of the use of motivational strategies on students' motivation and learning behaviour.

In fact, only a few empirical studies have really investigated the effect of the use of motivational strategies on students' motivation. For example, Guilloteaux (2007) and Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) conducted a large-scale classroom-oriented investigation in

South Korea to examine how the EFL teachers' use of motivational strategies and their overall motivational teaching practice affected their students' L2 motivation and motivated classroom behaviour. The findings indicated that the language teachers' use of motivational strategies was directly related to increased levels of the students' motivated learning behaviour and their motivational state in the classroom. However, since the study only examined how motivational teaching practice as a whole related to students' current motivational state and motivated classroom behaviour, the effectiveness of specific motivational strategies was not clear. Moreover, even within a single course, the motivation of most students ebbs and flows daily, so without a longitudinal study, it is difficult to determine whether attempts to motivate students actually lead to an increase in their overall motivation. Sugita and Takeuchi (2010, 2014) investigated the effectiveness of specific motivational strategies used by teachers in the EFL classrooms. They found that the effectiveness of motivational strategies varied according to students' English proficiency levels and their original motivational intensity levels and only some of the motivational strategies showed a significant correlation (positive or negative) with students' motivation. In both studies, the strength of motivation was assessed by the students on a Likert scale ranging from "well motivated by the strategy" to "never motivated by the strategy." The researchers did not investigate the actual changes in the students' motivation and learning behaviour produced by the motivational strategies.

So far, the focus of the existing research into the effect of the use of motivational strategies has been on how teachers use these strategies to motivate students in the classroom and what effect they have on students' motivation. Given that levels of motivation are bound to fluctuate throughout the process of L2 learning, which takes considerable time, effort and commitment, and that learning also needs to be sustained outside the classroom, developing students' own motivation and self-regulatory strategies is as important as motivating them in the classroom (Ushioda, 2008). According to Dörnyei (2005), the self-regulatory strategies include three categories: language-learning, goal-setting, and self-motivating strategies. L2 learners can use the self-regulatory strategies to scaffold, protect, and enhance their L2 motivation, especially when there exists task conflict, competing action tendencies, other distracting influences, and availability of action alternatives. It is thus assumed that providing L2 learners with some self-regulatory strategy training can assist them in controlling their motivational state (Dörnyei, 2001). Ushioda (2003) also proposed that we should consider how to create the conditions for developing students' motivation from within and how to help them sustain this motivation. However, little research has been done to examine how to help students develop and apply motivational strategies to motivate themselves, or to investigate what effect these motivational strategies have on their motivation. In order to fill this gap, I conducted a motivational intervention study in a Chinese EFL context that aimed to explore how to help students develop and sustain their own motivation by training them to use specific motivational strategies and then examining the effect of the motivational strategy training on their motivation and learning behaviour. The following research question was formulated: What effect does motivational strategy training have on Chinese EFL learners' motivation?

Theoretical foundation for designing the motivational intervention

Based on Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998) process-oriented model of L2 motivation, Dörnyei (2001) designed a comprehensive framework of motivational strategies that reflected the different phases of the motivational process. The framework consists of four main dimensions: (1) creating the basic motivational conditions, (2) generating initial motivation, (3) maintaining and protecting motivation, and (4) encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation. There are 35 macrostrategies deriving from the four main components (see Dörnyei, 2001, for details). Due to the context and scope of this study, the motivational strategy training in this study focused on two specific motivational strategies: setting specific learner goals and promoting self-motivating learner strategies, which are related to the self-regulatory strategies and can be used by students to motivate themselves. They are basically targeted at maintaining and protecting motivation (Dörnyei, 2001). In the following, the two motivational strategies are reviewed in detail as they served as the theoretical foundation for designing the motivational intervention in the present study.

Setting specific learner goals

According to Dörnyei (2001), specific and short-term goals are very important for L2 learners to maintain their original motivation for learning. They are "not only outcomes to shoot for but also standards by which students can evaluate their own performance and which mark their progress" (p. 82). Although goal-setting can play a key role in stimulating L2 motivation, it is "basically a simple planning process that can be learned relatively easily" (p. 83). McCombs and Pope (1994) provided a template for students to set specific goals. The seven steps in it are:

(1) Define your goal clearly.
(2) List steps to take to reach this goal.

(3) Think of problems that might come up that would interfere.
(4) Think of solutions to these problems.
(5) Set a timeline for reaching the goal.
(6) Evaluate your progress.
(7) Reward yourself for accomplishments (p. 68).

Dörnyei (2001) also pointed out that goals should be clear, specific, measurable, realistic, challenging and difficult.

Promoting self-motivating learner strategies

Self-motivating strategies can enable L2 learners to take personal control of their own motivational disposition. Promoting self-motivating strategies involves raising learners' awareness about the various mental reinforcements that they can apply to save the action especially when the initial motivation is decreasing (Dörnyei, 2005). Most investigations into self-motivating strategies are based on Kuhl's (1985) action control strategies. Dörnyei's (2001) work is not an exception. Based on Corno and Kanfer's (1993) and Kuhl's (1987) taxonomies, Dörnyei (2001) proposed a set of self-motivating strategies consisting of five main classes: (1) commitment control strategies, (2) metacognitive control strategies, (3) satiation control strategies, (4) emotion control strategies, and (5) environmental control strategies. Altogether Dörnyei (2001) listed 27 concrete strategies and techniques, which were used in the motivational intervention in this study.

Design of the study

This intervention study involved a longitudinal diary study to track the learners over time in their naturalistic environment in order to capture any changes in their L2 motivation, resulting from the motivational strategy training. Ushioda (2001) argued that a more qualitative research approach should be adopted to investigate the dynamic and temporal dimensions of L2 motivation. Crookes and Schmidt (1991) suggested that longitudinal diary studies offer a better way to explore the dynamics of motivation and provide interesting insights from the learners themselves. In this study qualitative data collection and analysis methods were used. 10 Chinese EFL learners kept a diary of their English learning for a period of six months. After keeping their diary for three months, they were randomly allocated to the two groups: five in the intervention group and five in the control group. In order to test the effectiveness of motivational strategy training and the effect of the use of motivational strategies on students' motivation, I (as an independent researcher) provided the intervention group with motivational strategy training outside the classroom from the fourth month to the six month. The control group did not receive any treatment. Differences in the L2 motivation of the two groups were examined.

Method

Participants

The research reported in this article is part of a multiple-method study investigating the motivation of Chinese learners of English. The participants in the research were 10 Chinese EFL learners (five males, five females) who were second year, non-English major university students and taking a compulsory English course at a university in China. In general, they did not have much exposure to English outside the classroom. They were randomly selected from a group of 132 Chinese EFL learners who took part in a motivation survey of the multiple-method study. All participants agreed to take part in the present research by filling out and signing a consent form. Table 1 summarizes the personal background information of the participants. All the participants' names were changed to preserve anonymity.

Table 1. 10 EFL Learners' Personal Background Information

Name	Age	Gender	Years of learning English	Group
Ting	21	F	11	Intervention
Liu	21	F	8	Intervention
Fang	20	M	10	Intervention
Zhong	19	M	8	Intervention
Xin	20	M	10	Intervention
Judy	19	F	8	Control
Jiao	20	F	7	Control
Tian	21	M	11	Control
Bing	20	M	7	Control
Meng	21	F	9	Control

Instruments and procedures

Instruments and procedures for motivational strategy training

Semi-structured interviews. There was a relatively fixed interview schedule, but the interview questions were couched in open-ended terms, allowing and encouraging the participants to elaborate on the issues from their own point of view. The interviews could be partly treated as goal-setting conferences (Dörnyei, 2001) with each participant because an important aim of the interviews was to help the participants set monthly English learning goals. Interviews were conducted in four stages over a three month period, each separated by about one month. The first interview was conducted at the beginning of the fourth month (i.e., after they had kept a diary for three months). Its first purpose was to explore the participants' own conceptions of long-term and short-term goals, discuss the importance of setting short-term goals and how to set short-term goals, and help them set their first month goals. Its second purpose was to investigate their perceptions of their own motivation to learn English and their self-motivating strategies, raise their awareness of the importance of self-motivation, and encourage them to adopt, develop, and apply new self-motivating strategies. The second and third interviews were conducted at the beginning of the fifth and sixth month. Their purpose was to encourage the participants to evaluate to what extent they had achieved the goals they had set for themselves in the previous month, help them set the goals for the next month, and examine the self-motivating strategies that they had used to keep up their goal commitment in the previous month. The fourth interview was conducted at the end of the sixth month. Its purpose was to encourage the participants to evaluate to what extent they had achieved the goals they had set for themselves in the past month, the self-motivating strategies that they had used to keep up their goal commitment in the past month, and the present state of their motivation to learn English. All the interviews were conducted in Chinese, and each took approximately 30 – 45 minutes.

Self-motivating strategy questionnaire. I administered a self-motivating strategy questionnaire to the five learners in the intervention group before the first interview. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out which self-motivating strategies they already used and how they evaluated their own self-motivating strategies. The self-motivating strategy questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section One was an open questionnaire and contained four open questions, which aimed to investigate the participants' knowledge and use of motivational strategies. Section Two was a closed questionnaire. In the questionnaire, the participants were given a list of 27 self-motivating strategies (Dörnyei, 2001) on which they rated themselves by marking one of the five responses ranging from *quite often use* to *never use* on a five-point rating scale. I kept their answers and used them for further discussion in the interviews. The participants were given a copy of the list of self-motivating strategies for reference.

Monthly goal-setting logbook. The monthly goal-setting logbook was based on Alderman's (1999) work. After five participants were assigned to the intervention group, they were asked to keep a monthly goal-setting logbook for the following three months. In the monthly goal-setting logbook, the participants were required to record their specific goals for each month, actions or steps they would take to accomplish the goals, how they would evaluate the accomplishment of their goals, possible difficulties in accomplishing the goals, how they planned to overcome these possible difficulties, their evaluation of their progress in accomplishing the last month goals, and how they would reward themselves for accomplishments.

Responses to the diary entries. In the responses to the diary entries of the participants in the intervention group, I took every opportunity to remind them of their goal choice and goal commitment that they had set in their logbook and to encourage them to adopt, develop, and apply self-motivating strategies to keep up their goal commitment.

Instruments and procedures for data collection

Learner diaries and follow-up interviews. Learner diaries were employed to collect qualitative data in this study. 10 EFL learners kept a diary over a six month period to record their experiences and perceptions of learning English, especially their reflections on their motivation, attitudes, and beliefs in learning English. At the beginning, they were given a set of instructions about how to keep their diaries and what to write (see Appendix A). The instructions were designed by referring to previous diary studies (Bailey, 1990; Carter, 2006; Chen, 2009). In the instructions, they were given some loose guidelines about possible topics for their diary entries, in the hope that they would feel free to note items that they considered important. They were encouraged to use Chinese to write their entries, with a minimum requirement of one entry per week. Their entries were collected weekly.

Follow-up interviews were the supplement to learner diaries. Loosely structured interviews were conducted with four participants (Jiao, Meng, Bing and Xin) individually because there were some unclear items in their diary entries. The follow-up interviews, which were like informal conversations with the participants, were conducted in Chinese. The questions were constructed on the basis of the content of their diary entries and used to encourage them to explain and clarify some items in their diary entries in more depth. Each interview took approximately 15 – 30 minutes. All the follow-up interviews were audio-recorded with a digital recorder and broadly transcribed after each interview.

Semi-structured interviews. The first and last interviews for the motivational strategy training were also employed to collect qualitative data (as the supplement to learner diaries). They were audio-recorded with a digital recorder and broadly transcribed for analysis.

Analysis

The qualitative data collected from diaries and interviews were analyzed by following the typical sequence of a qualitative analysis: coding for themes – looking for patterns – making interpretations – building theory (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005). Finally, four categories related to these learners' motivation were identified: (1) Ideal L2 self, (2) Ought-to L2 self, (3) L2 learning experiences, (4) Motivated learning behaviour. According to Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) *L2 Motivational Self System*, *Ideal L2 Self* refers to the L2-specific facet of one's ideal self. Traditional integrative and internalized instrumental motives typically belong to this component. *Ought-to L2 Self* refers to the attributes that L2 learners believe they ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes. This dimension corresponds to the less internalized types of instrumental motives. *L2 Learning Experience* refers to situated, executive motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g., the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success). They are the three dimensions of L2 Motivational Self System.

For the sake of analysis, the diary entries and interview transcripts of the 10 learners were subdivided into two stages delimited by the date of starting the motivational intervention (i.e., motivational strategy training). The data collected in the first three months (i.e., before the intervention) were analyzed to identify the 10 learners' motivational profiles and then categorize them into different learner types according to their motivational profiles. In each of the learner types, where possible, the learners from the intervention group and from the control group were matched in terms of their motivation to learn English at the start of the intervention. The data collected in the second three months (i.e., during the period of the intervention) were analyzed to identify any differences in the motivational state between the two groups after the intervention and thus to examine the effect of the motivational strategy training on the Chinese EFL learners' motivation.

Results

The qualitative analysis of the data collected in the first three months identified four learner types which the 10 EFL learners belonged to in terms of their motivational profiles (see Table 2). Type 1, 2 and 3 included learners from both groups, so in each of these three learner types, the learners from the intervention group and from the control group were matched in terms of their motivation to learn English at the start of the intervention. Type 4 included only one learner from the intervention group. Based on the analysis of the data collected in the second three months, I compared the learner(s) from the intervention group with the learner(s) from the control group in Type 1, 2 and 3, with a view to identifying any differences between the two groups after the intervention. Since Type 4 included only Xin from the intervention group, I also considered changes in Xin's motivation after the intervention.

Table 2. Four Learner Types and Motivational Profile of Each Learner in Both Groups

	Type 1 (an ideal and ought-to L2 self, positive L2 learning experiences)	Type 2 (an ideal and ought-to L2 self, negative L2 learning experiences)	Type 3 (an ought-to L2 self, no ideal L2 self, negative L2 learning experiences)	Type 4 (no ideal or ought-to L2 self, positive L2 learning experiences)
Intervention group	Zhong	Ting	Fang, Liu	Xin
Control group	Judy	Bing, Tian	Jiao, Meng	

Type 1

Zhong and Judy belonged to the first learner type; that is, they had an ideal L2 self, an ought-to L2 self, and positive L2 learning experiences before the motivational strategy training. Zhong not only mentioned that he studied English for the sake of academic or professional advancement and accomplishment, general future need, and knowledge orientation, but also showed positive attitudes towards members of the English-speaking community and interest in English and its culture. He had internalized the promotional instrumentality and thus had incorporated it into his ideal self. Judy also had a salient ideal L2 self because she not only wanted to appear professionally successful but also personally agreeable (Dörnyei, 2005). She commented, "I wanted to learn English in order to communicate with foreigners. […] Moreover, due to the importance of English in our society, I want to learn it well in order to find a good job in the future" (Judy: dC20/09/08). Besides an ideal L2 self, they both had an ought-to L2 self in that they indicated that they studied English in order to avoid failure or negative outcomes, such as to pass CET4 and not to fall behind their classmates. In addition, they always showed positive attitudes to their English courses and teachers and enjoyed the process of learning English. Obviously, they had positive

English learning experiences. They always put a lot of effort into learning English and were able to maintain their overall motivation to learn English.

During the period of the intervention, Zhong, in general, took the motivational strategy training seriously in that he seriously set monthly English learning goals, made detailed plans to accomplish his goals, evaluated his progress and solved possible problems and difficulties in accomplishing his goals. However, there was no difference in the motivational state between Zhong and Judy after the intervention. Neither of them showed any change in their motivation.

Type 2

Ting, Bing, and Tian belonged to the second learner type; that is, they had an ideal L2 self, an ought-to L2 self, but negative L2 learning experiences before the motivational strategy training. Although they did not always have favourable English learning experiences, they still put and intended to put much effort into learning English and were able to sustain their involvement in learning English. A possible explanation is that their clear goals and future perspectives for learning English contributed significantly to their motivation to learn English.

During the period of the intervention, Ting seriously kept a monthly goal-setting logbook. She applied some self-motivating strategies to overcome possible distractions and difficulties in accomplishing her goals and evaluated the effectiveness of the newly introduced strategies. It appears that Ting really involved herself in the motivational strategy training. She continued to manifest an ideal L2 self and the degree of elaborateness and vividness of her ideal L2 self did not change. She also demonstrated an ought-to L2 self as she did before. She frequently mentioned: “Although CET4 is not connected with our degrees now, everybody still wants to pass it, maybe because it is the threshold of finding a good job. I just go with the stream and don’t want to fall behind others” (Ting: dC24/12/08). Moreover, her English learning experiences remained as negative as before. For example, she still showed negative attitudes to her English course: “I don’t like attending English class because it was always tedious and boring” (Ting: dC29/12/08). The result of comparing Ting with Bing and Tian showed that there was no difference between them after the intervention. None of them showed any change in their motivational state.

Type 3

Fang, Liu, Jiao, and Meng belonged to the third learner type; that is, they had an ought-to L2 self, but no ideal L2 self, and negative L2 learning experiences before the motivational strategy training. They did not put or want to put effort into learning English unless before exams. That is, they were not able to maintain their overall motivation.

In general, Fang took the motivational strategy training seriously. All the monthly goals he set were related to the final term exam and CET4. He frequently reflected on his goals in his diary. In contrast, Liu did not respond positively to the motivational intervention. Although she kept a monthly goal-setting logbook, she seldom did as she had planned. During the period of the intervention, Fang and Liu did not develop an ideal L2 self. They did not internalize the instrumentality to the extent that it became part of their ideal self or have a sense of English as part of their ideal self. For example, Fang commented:

> In order to find a good job after graduation, I have to have a good knowledge of English or, to be exact, have some English proficiency certificates, which many university students strive to obtain nowadays, because English is a must in the job market and employing units always use it to judge a university graduate. If I don't have, I may fall behind my peers and thus lose opportunities. (Fang: iC18/03/09)

They continued to demonstrate an ought-to L2 self in that they maintained strong preventional instrumental motives, such as studying English in order to take responsibility for their families, to pass an English course or exam, and not to fall behind their peers. Moreover, their English learning experiences still remained negative. However, although his motivational profile did not change, Fang put more effort into learning English than before. He wrote:

> But this winter vocation is unusual and I am doing something different. I have taken my English reference books home and also bought some new ones. Almost every day except the Spring Festival, I saved some time to study English. (Fang: dC12/02/09)

He tried his best to carry out his plans and used self-motivating strategies, even in class:

> In order to push me to concentrate on what the teacher said, I sat in the first row, switched off my cell phone, and only took the English textbook and notebook to the classroom. Although I was occasionally absent-minded and thought about other things in class, I think I was much better than before. (Fang: dC11/03/09)

The result of comparing Fang and Liu with Jiao and Meng showed that there was no difference in their motivational state among Liu, Jiao and Meng, but there were a few differences between Fang and the other three after the intervention. That is, the amount of effort Fang put into learning English increased, while the other three did not show any change.

Type 4

Only one learner, Xin, belonged to the fourth learner type; that is, he had positive L2 learning experiences, but no ideal or ought-to L2 self before the motivational strategy training. Xin did not mention any clear goals or future perspectives for learning English. However, he indicated that he enjoyed learning English in his own way, such as through watching English movies and TV programs. Since he did not care much about test scores or passing CET4, he did not spend as much effort or time studying his textbooks, memorizing words, doing test training exercises, or taking practice tests as many university students normally did. He commented that he only learned what he liked to learn:

> "If I don't like memorizing words in the textbooks, I just don't do it. I am keen on English movies, so I watch them, through which I think I can still enlarge my vocabulary" (Xin: dC09/12/08).

Since he liked his way of learning English, in this sense, he had positive English learning experiences. However, he also indicated that he sometimes skipped class if he was not interested in it. It seems that because he studied English only for pleasure, he did not really make much effort to learn English.

Since Xin was from the intervention group, I also considered changes in his motivation after the intervention. He generally responded positively to the intervention in that he seriously kept a monthly goal-setting logbook and often reflected on the monthly goals that he had set. During the period of the intervention, Xin did not develop an ideal L2 self. He did not have any internalized instrumental motives or a sense of English as part of his ideal self. However, he commented that since he was asked to keep a monthly goal-setting logbook, he started to consider what his short-term goals for learning English were, which he had never thought about for a long time. He wrote:

> "Wow, so many classmates passed the CET4. Do I need to put CET4 on my agenda?" (Xin: dC03/03/09).

It seems that he started to form an ought-to L2 self. In addition, his English learning experiences still remained as positive as before because he indicated that he enjoyed learning English in his own way as he had mentioned before. Moreover, he mentioned that he spared more time to study his textbook in order to achieve his first month goal. It appears that he put more effort into learning English than before. In conclusion, Xin's overall motivational profile changed in that he started to form an ought-to L2 self and his overall motivation also increased during the period of the intervention.

Discussion

Overall the learners belonging to Type 1 and 2 were the more motivated learners because they were able to maintain or increase their overall motivation over time before the intervention; the learners in Type 3 and 4 were the less motivated learners because they were not able to maintain their overall motivation before the intervention.

For the more motivated learners (i.e., Zhong and Ting), the motivational strategy training had no obvious effect on their motivational profiles and motivated learning behaviour. The elaborateness and vividness of their ideal L2 selves did not change as a result of the motivational strategy training. One possible reason is that their idealized self images as competent users of English already had a sufficient degree of elaborateness and vividness to be effective in motivating them to learn English before they received the motivational strategy training. Therefore, the motivational strategy training had no real effect on their ideal L2 selves as they still manifested an effective ideal L2 self and could maintain their goal commitment during the period of the intervention. Another possible reason is that the motivational strategy training was not appropriate for the more motivated learners. It seems that they had already frequently used these strategies to sustain and strengthen their vision as competent users of English before the intervention. For example, when answering the self-motivating strategy questionnaire just before the intervention, both Zhong and Ting indicated that they quite often used the strategy "keeping in mind favourable expectancies or positive incentives and rewards", one of the commitment control strategies that could help to maintain or enhance their original goal commitment (Dörnyei, 2001). Therefore, the motivational strategy training did not alter their ideal L2 selves.

They always thought that they ought to learn English in order to avoid failure or negative outcomes and to meet others' expectations, and moreover, these goals for learning English were deeply rooted in their minds as a result of outside pressures, not only before the intervention but also during it. Their ought-to L2 selves, which were always strong and stable, were external to the learners, so they were not influenced by any motivational intervention given that the learners' learning contexts remained unchanged. Moreover, by and large, the motivational strategy training had no effect on their L2 learning experiences. That is, if the learners had positive L2 learning experiences before the intervention, they still remained positive during the period of the intervention; if the learners had negative L2 learning experiences before the intervention, they still remained negative during the period of the intervention. A possible reason is that their learning context did not change. By definition, the motivational dimension L2 learning experience refers to “situated, ‘executive’ motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g., the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success)” (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). Since their immediate learning context remained unchanged, it cannot be expected that their attitudes to this learning context (e.g., attitudes to their English course, English teacher, fellow students in class) would change over a short period of three months as a result of the intervention.

For the less motivated learners in Type 3 and 4 (i.e., Fang, Liu and Xin), the motivational strategy training might have had some effect on their motivational profile in that it might have made them form an ought-to L2 self if they had not had it before the intervention. Xin was the only one who did not have any clear goals or future perspectives for learning English before the intervention. The strategy “setting specific learner goals” might have helped him to set short-term English learning goals during the period of the intervention. For example, the first month goal that he set was to get a satisfactory score in the forthcoming final term exam because he thought that this goal was achievable. According to Dörnyei (2009), a motivational factor labelled short-term instrumental motivation, focusing on getting good grades, which was proposed by Kyriacou and Benmansour (1997), parallels the preventional instrumentality relating to the ought-to L2 self in his L2 Motivational Self System. Moreover, the fact that near the end of the intervention, he started to think about studying for CET4 in order not to fall behind his classmates also indicated that he might have started to form an ought-to L2 self due to the effect of the motivational strategy training. However, since no one in the control group was matched with him before the intervention, the motivational strategy training may not have been the only factor that made him form an ought-to L2 self.

Although the motivational strategy training might have helped the less motivated learners to form an ought-to L2 self, it did not help them to develop an ideal L2 self. A possible reason can be attributed to the design of the training. Before the intervention, they did not have an ideal L2 self, so “the first step in a motivational intervention following the self approach is to help learners to construct their Ideal L2 Self, that is, to create their vision” (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 33). However, as discussed above, the motivational strategies used for the training were basically targeted at maintaining and protecting motivation. If fitted into the self framework, they were mainly aimed at elaborating the learners' ideal L2 selves (i.e., strengthening their vision) rather than constructing their ideal L2 selves (i.e., creating their vision).

Similar to the more motivated learners, the motivational strategy training had no obvious effect on L2 learning experiences of the less motivated learners. However, although their attitudes to their English learning context could not be changed by the three-month intervention, the extent to which they were involved in learning might change as a result of the intervention. Both Fang and Xin put more effort into learning English during the period of the intervention. This suggested that the motivational strategy training positively influenced the effort they put into learning English and increased their overall motivation. The findings support Alison's (1993) claim that goal-setting techniques can be used effectively with demotivated and reluctant students (Dörnyei, 2001).

Conclusion

This intervention study involved a longitudinal diary study, which provided a number of interesting insights and comments from the learners themselves on how the Chinese EFL learners saw their own experiences and processes of learning English. The in-depth analysis of the EFL learners' inner voices identified their motivational profiles and captured the ongoing changes in their L2 motivation over time, resulting from the motivational strategy training. Methodologically this study points to the value of the longitudinal diary approach to investigating dynamic changes in L2 motivation.

The findings of this study revealed that the 10 Chinese EFL learners belonged to four learner types in terms of their motivational profiles and that the effect of the motivational strategy training on the EFL learners' motivation differed according to their motivation types. For the more motivated learners in the first and second learner types, the motivational strategy training had no obvious effect on their motivational profiles. They maintained their overall motivation irrespective of whether they received the motivational strategy training or not. For the less motivated learners in the third and fourth learner types, the motivational strategy training appeared to have had some effect on their motivational profiles in that it helped them form an ought-to L2 self if they had not had it before the intervention. Moreover, the motivational strategy training positively influenced the effort they put into learning English and helped to increase their overall motivation irrespective of whether it had an effect on their motivational profiles or not. It seems that the motivational strategy training was more effective for the less motivated learners than for the more motivated learners. This suggests that this particular type of motivational intervention I designed was not well suited to all the types of learners; and thus when conducting motivational interventions, there is a need to take account of the learner motivational type.

The findings of this study have important practical implications for EFL students, teachers and educators. This study helped to shed light on the usefulness of specific motivational strategies for different EFL students in their current learning context. Therefore, identifying the motivational profiles of different EFL students may help EFL teachers to effectively motivate their students or train their students to motivate themselves in that they can design and apply specific motivational strategies targeting at individual students in different learner types. It is believed that teachers can provide students with training in the use of self-regulatory strategies such as self-motivating strategies, which can help to keep their learning experiences positive. However, the findings of this study revealed that the EFL learners who had negative English learning experiences always showed negative attitudes to their English class. For these EFL learners, only providing them with training in the use of the kind of self-regulatory strategies selected for training in this study did not enable them to show any change in their English learning experiences because their immediate learning context remained unchanged. In short, it cannot be expected that their attitudes to their learning context (e.g., attitudes to their English course) will change unless there is a change in the instruction they receive. This suggests that teachers also need to improve their teaching methods and make the classroom environment more conductive to learning. It is essential that the content of English education, including curriculum, textbooks, learning activities and tasks, enable students to find it personally meaningful to learn English.

The main limitation of this study is that there was perhaps a lack of a theoretical basis for the choice of the motivational strategies in the intervention study. Without a theoretical framework for the choice of the motivational strategies, the motivational strategies used in the intervention study were not ideal for inducing change in the underlying structure of the learners' motivation (i.e., effecting change in their L2 Motivational Self System). Moreover, although the qualitative findings of this study are not generalizable, they may be transferable to other EFL learners with the similar experiences in different learning contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This intervention study should thus be viewed as exploratory - it serves as the basis for further motivational intervention studies. Future motivational intervention research can be conducted based on the L2 Motivational Self System, for example by investigating training in the motivational strategies directed at effective motivational future self-guides and improvement of the immediate learning environment and experience. It is also important to explore which motivational strategies are appropriate for which types of learners in terms of their motivational profiles in different learning contexts.

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Appendix A. Instructions for keeping a learner diary

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. I would like to ask you to help me by keeping a learner diary in which you will reflect on your English learning over the following six months. In your diaries, please record your experiences and perceptions of learning English, especially your reflections on your motivation, attitudes and beliefs in learning English.

Here are some guidelines for keeping your diary:

1. If you feel at a loss about what to write at anytime, here are some areas that you might explore:
    a) What is the main reason you are learning English?
    b) Have your reasons for learning English changed so far?
    c) How much effort do you presently make to improve your English proficiency?
    d) How much effort do you want to make to improve your English proficiency in the future?
    e) How successful are you now in improving your English proficiency?
    f) What do you think of your progress in improving your English proficiency?
    g) What is the effect of your evaluation of your progress on your decision about how much effort you would make to learn English in the future?
    h) Do you presently enjoy or not enjoy studying English?
    i) Why do you presently enjoy or not enjoy studying English?
    j) Has anything happened to you that has influenced the way you feel about studying English?
    k) What do you like or dislike about your present English learning situation?
    l) Do you feel confident or anxious when communicating in English?
2. Make entries on a regular basis. Spend about five minutes each day to record anything (activities, events, details, feelings, etc.) related to your English learning both in and outside the classroom. Record as much as you could and write in as much detail as possible. Whatever is notable to you in your English learning experiences is of interest to me.

3. If you are unable to write something each day, try to write at least one longer entry per week.
4. There is no stipulated length for each entry, but try to make each one at least 6 sentences long.
5. I will collect your entries weekly. Please email me your entries.
6. You are encouraged to write in Chinese. However, if you feel you can express your thoughts clearly in English, you may write in English or a mixture of the two languages.
7. I will email you a response after I receive your entry.

PROVIDING QUALITY ELT SERVICES IN ENGLISH-POOR ENVIRONMENTS: A LESSON LEARNED FROM INDONESIA

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This article discusses a success story in providing quality English teaching services to limitedly-trained and poorly-motivated teachers and learners in rural areas of Indonesia conducted under two-nationally funded projects in 2011 and 2012. The 2011 project identified schools with the highest and the lowest English scores in three successive national examinations. This study made use of documents, distributed questionnaire to teachers and students, observed them in classes, and tested their competence in various subject matters. The study found major areas of problems and the factors contributed to them. The 2012 project solved the problems by training teachers with language and pedagogic skills and the students with motivation and achievement strategies. The paper will discuss how the training was conducted, what impact it brought to teachers and students, and what follow-up activities were implemented.

Key words: teacher training, motivation, learning strategies,

A. Introduction

Recently, national examination, university entry selection and other types of examination have been enormously fearsome to Indonesian students. Most of the time, computerization system has been blamed for failures but careful analysis indicates that the problem is more substantial than technical. Believing that the failures are due to students' unfamiliarity with computerized testing system, schools and teachers have tried out laboriously-intensive extra reinforcement and enrichment classes. In fact, most schools will not allow the final-grade students to return home before following the compulsory extra classes in the afternoon. These appear not to be sufficient and teachers prepare for individual tutoring at their private residencies. Some students have to laboriously learn at various learning centers in town. They spare no time for rest but preparing their best for the fearful national examination system. All components of the schools have to be optimally used (including cheating) in order for the students and the schools to obtain the best score and the highest average scores of all.

Nonetheless, not all schools have equally obtained satisfactory results. In the Dompu and Bima areas of West Nusa Tenggara, for example, some schools have consistently excelled over others due to comparative advantages that they have. Yusra *et al* (2011) have comprehensively identified the effective and the less effective schools.

Report of the case relevant with English has been presented in Yusra (2012). It is suffice to summarize here that the ineffective schools have consistently failed 15 out of 20 competencies tested over the years. The study has also comparatively identified six main causes of this failure. First, teachers fail to teach materials related with the test. Second, teaching processes are boring and dominant with fill-in-the-blank activities. Third, mastery learning has not been totally implemented and teachers have always blindly increased the student's scores to fulfill the passing grades.

Next, most, if not all, teachers have been poorly-trained and a test of English competence indicates that their competence level is pre-intermediate. In fact, when the items from the national exam were re-administered to the English teachers at the ineffective schools, the majority (i.e. 86.35%) could not answer them even when they were presented to them for discussion. Then, there is a problem of management. The headmasters and the English teacher supervisors have not supervised the English teachers although most of them believe they need supervision as their teaching experience is mostly below 3 years. Even when they did, the feedback has not satisfactorily helped teachers with their pedagogic problems. Finally, there is a problem of evaluation: tests at the ineffective schools have always been teacher-made and unrelated with the national exam.

In order to solve the problems the study offered an intensive UN Preparation Workshops for teachers (63 hours) and students (44 hours) implemented in the second semester of 2012 and the result of the activity is reported in Yusra *et al* (2012). The workshops trained teachers and students with skills in (a) identifying failure factors in the national examination, (b) identifying successful strategies for the exam, (c) predicting the structure of up-coming national examination, and (d) successful strategies to answer exam items. While the trained teachers and students have shown improvement, the subsequent results of UN tests prove that the training was not as effective as it was first thought. Besides, the project covered all the subjects in the UN test and the impact of the program on English language teaching has not been sufficiently examined. As a result, the findings need to be reexamined in carefully and in more details.

Other UN related studies (e.g. Musaddat, 2010) have actually indicated that the scores in the national exam result from various factors. The first factor is technical resulting from poor quality of pencil and answer sheet. Secondly, there is a burdening psychological factor on the part of the students due to unfamiliarity with the test formality and pressure. Thirdly, the students might not be psychologically tensed but inappropriate strategies used to respond to the test items might lead them to incorrect answers. Finally and most importantly, there is a problem in the student's mastery of the tested items.

These findings might suggest that we need to look closely at the student factors in order to solve the problems and examine what they believe to be the solutions to their learning problems. This is the main aim of the current project, reevaluating what Yusra *et al* (2011) and Yusra *et al* (2012) have suggested as the solution to the problems by re-examining variables related with English. The project revisited data collected in the two studies above, but reasons of space, only teacher and student factors are talked about in the article.

B. Theoretical Framework

Rubin (2008: 12) has rightly argued that while there are various ranges of variables to consider in language learning there is a question urgently in need of comprehensive answer regarding the factors contributing to success in language learning. In fact, as Rubin (2008:12-13) has implied, teachers need to assist their students to manage their own learning but, in her view, the pedagogic knowledge to do so is not available to them. Even if they are personally and intellectually able to do so, other factors can complicate the matter: for example, the school might see the effort as a waste of the limited instructional time, the students may be reluctant to participate in the efforts, and teachers are too busy for extra student-teacher consultation time. Teachers who are willing to provide extra help to their students, Rubin argues, need further training but such supports are not readily accessible to them.

Weiner (2000) describes learning motivation as intrapersonal as well as inter-personal. Motivation is intrapersonal when the driving force is within the students themselves. Students might have fear of performing badly at schools, and, consequently, they direct their thoughts and efforts to avoid that to happen. By the same token, bad performances at schools bring about bad judgment on the individual students from classmates and might result in loss of membership in the school networks. The students consequently direct their thoughts and emotions on better performances. Pintrich (2003) mentions with some empirical evidence that goal-oriented activities such as teacher and student preparation for national examination can increase the participant's efficiency, adaptability, and direction of learning and this leads to a better intrapersonal motivation.

Oxford (1990; 2003) has rightly highlighted two factors affecting language learning: styles and strategies. She defines styles and strategies respectively as individual students' methods and approaches to language learning and as their thoughts, behaviors, and personal characteristics in order to enhance learning output. She also classifies learning styles based on input sensory processing preferences, personal characteristics, level of content generality and specificity, and bio-cultural way of thinking. She also classifies learning strategic dimensions into cognitive, meta-cognitive, memory-related, compensatory, affective, and social strategies.

Sadler-Smith (1996) argues that successful application of learning styles and strategies can be evaluated on the learners' reaction to the learning processes, the attainment of new knowledge, competencies and desired attitudes, and the learners' ability to apply the acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes to new situations. He also highlights that successful application of the styles and strategies is measured on its impact on the institution.

C. **The Study**

The study involved 12 schools purposively selected as the samples of the 2011 and the 2012 projects. The study revisited the data from the projects particularly in relation to teacher competencies and student learning motivation and strategies. Note that these factors have not been discussed in Yusra *et al* (2011) and Yusra *et al* (2012) due to space limit and English was only one of the 9 subjects investigated in the studies. Data analysis was manual except in the use of the electronic apparatus below.

D. Findings and Discussion

As the study revisits the 2011 and the 2012 data, discussion of prospects and challenges will be based on the projects.

1. The 2011 Project

The 2011 project evaluated student's performances in order to identify 12 samples of schools from the areas: 6 schools with the highest ('successful') and 6 lowest ('unsuccessful') UN average scores in each area were selected as samples. The data were collected from *PPMP 2.4 Tahun 2011* distributed by the ministry of education. From this software, student's attainment in tested standard competencies is identified. Observation, testing, interviews and focused group discussion involving headmasters, teachers, students and community members were used to identify factors contributing the failure in attaining the minimum standard performances.

The study selected 6 successful schools and 6 unsuccessful schools. These schools were also selected based on the average UN scores, geographical location (urban or rural) and status (public or private). The study, as shown in Table 1, has also identified the most prominent areas of difficulties in each area: discussion, exposition, narrative, report, recount, and descriptive texts, letter, and short functional texts.

Interviews and focused group discussion involving headmasters, teachers, students and community members suggest that lack of student's motivation and learning habits is the primary cause. While this is true as indicated in our data (see Table 2), our observation of teachers teaching the problematical texts suggests teacher's lack of English competence, pedagogic skills, and experience were more likely to cause the problems. Most of the teachers in the unsuccessful schools have been locally educated with teaching experience of no more than 3 years and without further professional trainings. In fact, our informal test with simple placement test (i.e. C4) indicates that all of the English teachers of the unsuccessful schools were classifiable into pre-intermediate category of English competence and they were therefore not intellectually ready for enjoyable and interactive pedagogic endeavors. The majority of class sessions were spent either for dominant teacher talk or with students answering one-way tasks and questions from textbooks.

The study found that the students from the 'unsuccessful' schools differ from the 'successful' ones in terms of learning motivation. While the students from the successful schools actively learn and relearn materials for the purpose of becoming better persons (internally-motivated) so that others might see them positively (inter-personally motivated), those from the unsuccessful schools perceive learning as not essential, their school success depends on the teacher, and excellent school performances do not guarantee better life. To 88.84 % of them English is not their favorite subject and it is indeed one of the difficult subjects (see Table 3). Strangely, 76.34% of them reported to have rarely relearned its materials at home even when they have time to do so. On the contrary, to 84.89 % of those in the successful schools, English is also difficult but it is learnable (see Table 4) and, in fact, 91.47 % of them repeat the materials at home before or after schools. One possible excuse for these habits is that the teaching and learning processes to 86.6 % of them are boring while, to 50.78% of those in the success schools, the processes are enjoyable. These data are challenging to teachers and ELT researchers because as Wong and Nunan (2011: 154) have rightly argued that success in language learning is "attitudinal" in that "[t]he more effective learners … were more active and more prepared to take control of their own learning."

Our interviews to teachers and observation of classes indicate that various factors are responsible for the problems: (a) poor quality of learning materials, (b) dominantly reading-based teaching strategies, and (c) dominantly one-way learning processes. These happen due to teacher's limited English competence as mentioned above and the most dominant strategy is to enforce the students with translation of reading texts and memorization of related words. Consequently, the majority (93.75%) of the students in the fail schools used word memorization as the main learning strategy.

In order to overcome these challenges, in the 2012 project, the teachers were trained, with language skills, pedagogic skills, and professional skills and the students with motivation and strategy-related materials.

2. The 2012 Project

In the 2012 project, the teachers and the students at the unsuccessful schools were trained with the problem texts. The teacher language and pedagogic workshops were conducted in November 2012 and this was followed on by intensive on-the-job and off-the-job observation and training of the teachers and the students. The student motivation and achievement training was conducted in December 2012. Both were tested, interviewed and observed in order to examine the impact of the project on their performances.

The contents of the first teacher workshop included identification of competencies relevant to each type of text and identification of generic structure and linguistic features. This workshop at the same time equip the teachers with necessary language skills and they did so by actively discussing them with the more able and experienced colleagues from the successful schools. The second workshop involved identification of interactive and communicative teaching strategies, development of materials for learning, interaction and evaluation, development of lesson plan, and designing instrument and rubric for assessment. This workshop was followed by on the job training in which each trainee had to teach their own classes and other supervised them. After the observation, a brief discussion of what went right and wrong during the teaching process was discussed and solved. Evaluation of the workshops indicated that the trainees were very happy with them and expected to have more in the near future.

Individual trainee teachers went to real teaching of their classes and the students were given post test. Nonetheless, the improvement in the student's competence in each problem text types cannot be objectively measured: for one thing, the data in Table 1 above are based on UN scores in 2008, 2009, and 2010 and to obtain similarly valid data, UN-like English test is required and, for another, the students in the current study are different from those in the 2011 project. Thus, data in Table 1 and Table 7 are compatible for comparative purposes. But, given that they are from similar communities, studying at the same schools, and taught by the same teachers, the data in the tables can be interpreted with cautions. Note that the results were also obtained from text-related UN items designed and administered for pre-test and post-test purposes. While the study showed a significant increase in the student's language competence, but, the result needs further careful scrutiny with more reliable experimental designs and statistical measures.

Given that the success and the failure rates in previous national exams as shown in Table 2 above are 27.56% and 72.4%, the increase of success rate to 42.1 % and the decrease of failure rate to 58.8 % as shown in Table 8 are experimentally significant, although the project fails to fulfill the minimum percentage of passing students in each school.

The project has also succeeded in introducing more fun and enjoyable English lessons to the teachers and the students. This is indicated by changes in their motivation to learn and their view of English. Prior to the project a great majority (89.29%) of the students showed negative motivation to the class but after the project 69.3% of them reported to be interested in it. The number of students viewing English as a difficult subject is reduced to 56.48% and they positively see English as difficult but learnable (see Table 9). As shown in Table 10, 72.77% of them began to look at the subject and learn it in their spare time. 72.77% of the student positively evaluated the activities were also positive and 46.88% of them reported to have tried to communicate with peers and tourists in the language.

After intensive in-service training and on the job supervision of the teacher trainees and the students, the study found that the student's motivation and learning attainment can be significantly increased: (a) the majority of students (56.70%) see English positively as 'difficult but learnable', (b) 72.77% have reported to have reviewed the learning materials at home, (c) 72.77 % students were surprised that ELT activities could be fun and enjoyable, and (d) 46.88% students moved away from word memorization to communication with peers and tourists.

E. Conclusion

The study has shown that through careful identification and intervention, the teacher's and the student's knowledge, skills, motivation and teaching-learning strategies can be improved. The 2011 project has identified that various types of texts (discussion, exposition, narrative, report, recount, descriptive, short functional texts, letter writing) are the major areas of difficulties. There are several major causes of the problems: teacher's language skill, student's motivation, learning strategies and activities, and student's negative perception of English. These also result from other problems: limited learning materials, reading-based teaching strategies, and the use of teacher-centered approach and word memorization.

The 2012 project with intensive teacher and student trainings has increased the teacher's and the student's language skills. The teacher's language and pedagogic skills have been improved from pre-intermediate to lower intermediate with interactive and communicative language teaching skills. The student's competencies, motivation, strategies, and perception of English have also been improved to a more preferable condition although the minimum passing grade at school level has not been successfully passed. To attain this, longer and more intensive trainings are required.

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Table 1: Text Types and Percentages of Passing Students Based on UN Scores

TEXT TYPES	DOMPU		KOTA BIMA		BIMA		AVERAGE
	IPA	IPS	IPA	IPS	IPA	IPS	
Discussion	30.35	34.55	6.13	6.15	28.59	34.69	23.41
Exposition	40.17	37.14	5.3	9.7	22.5	28.69	23.92
Narrative	52.6	49.56	9.87	3.23	*	43.75	26.00
Letter	30.35	43.16	6.13	6.15	28.59	42.33	26.12
Report	34.54	29.11	9.87	7.76	50.21	42.99	29.08
Recount	42.48	47.18	6.28	5.68	36.08	48.09	30.96
Descriptive	57.23	29.07	6.28	5.28	37.81	46.77	30.41
SFT	32.12	39.16	23.95	29.06	42.05	40.73	34.51
News Item	51.44	38.02	*	*	*	*	*

Note: * all students have passed the minimum passing grade of 60.

Table 2: Student's Motivation

CATEGORY	SUCCESSFUL		UNSUCCESSFUL		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Intra-personally Motivated	139	28.84*	11	2.28	150	31.12
Inter-personally Motivated	101	20.95*	13	2.70	114	23.65
Not Motivated at All	18	3.73	200	41.49*	218	45.23
Total	**258**	**53.53**	**224**	**46.47**	**482**	**100**

Table 3: Student View of English

CATEGORY	SUCCESSFUL			UNSUCCESSFUL			TOTAL	
	F	%		F	%		F	%
Very Difficult	16	3.32	6.20	48	9.96	21.43	64	13.28
Difficult	23	4.77	8.91	151	31.33	67.41	174	36.10
Average	129	26.76	50.00	25	5.19	11.16	154	31.95
Easy	60	12.45	23.26	0	0	0	60	12.45
Very Easy	30	6.22	11.63	0	0	0	30	6.22
TOTAL	**258**	**53.53**	**100**	**224**	**46.47**	**100**	**482**	**100**

Table 4: Review Activities at Home

C	SUCCESSFUL					UNSUCCESSFUL					Total		
	F	%				F	%				F	%	
Always	34	7.05		13.18		8	1.66		3.57		42	8.71	
Often	13	27.	**48.**	51.9	(91.	15	3.1	10.	6.7	23.	14	30.	90.

	4	80	**96**	4	47)		1	99	0	66	9	91	96
Sometimes	68	14.11		26.36		30	6.22		13.39		98	20.33	
Seldom	16	3.32	4.57	6.20	8.53	31	6.43	**35.48**	13.84	*(76.34)*	47	9.75	40.04
Never	6	1.25		2.33		140	29.05		62.5		146	30.29	
TOTAL	258	53.53		100		224	46.47		100		482	100	

Table 5: Student's View of Teaching and Learning Processes

CATEGORY	SUCCESSFUL			UNSUCCESSFUL			Total	
	f	%		f	%		f	%
Very interesting	43	8.92	16.67	7	1.45	3.13	50	10.37
Interesting	88	18.26	34.11	11	2.28	4.91	99	20.54
Average	83	17.22	32.17	12	2.49	5.36	95	19.11
Boring	34	7.05	13.18	181	37.55	80.80	215	44.61
Very Boring	10	2.08	3.86	13	2.70	5.80	23	4.77
TOTAL	**258**	**53.53**	**100**	**224**	**46.47**	**100**	**482**	**100**

Table 6: Student's Learning Strategy.

CATEGORY	SUCCESSFUL			UNSUCCESSFUL			TOTAL	
	F	%		f	%		F	%
Talking to Tourists	37	7.68	14.34	0	0	0	37	7.68
Talking to Friends	104	21.58	40.31*	1	0.21	0.45	105	21.78
Reading from Printed Materials	95	19.71	36.82	6	1.24	2.68	101	20.95
Sentence Memorization	11	2.28	4.26	7	1.45	3.13	18	3.73
Word Memorization	11	2.28	4.26	210	43.57	93.75*	221	45.85
TOTAL	**258**	**53.53**	**100**	**224**	**46.47**	**100**	**482**	**100**

Table 7: Rate of Success and Failure in the Project

Text Type	**Pass**		**Fail**	
	f	%	f	%
Discussion Texts	96	42.9	128	57.2
Exposition Texts	87	38.8	137	61.2
Report Texts	96	42.9	128	57.1
Recount Texts	94	42	130	58
Descriptive Texts	88	39.3	136	60.7

Table 8: Student's Motivation

Motivation	Intra-personal	Interpersonal	Not at all
Before	4.91	5.8	89.29
After	32.59	35.71	31.7

Table 9: Student's View of English

Category	Before		After	
	F	%	F	%
Very Difficult	48	21.43	24	10.71
Difficult	151	67.41	58	25.89
Average	25	11.16	127	56.70
Easy	0	0	15	6.70
Very Easy	0	0	0	0
Total	224			

Table 10: Review Activities at Home

CATEGORY	F	%
Always	28	12.5
Often	54	24.11
Sometimes	81	36.16
Seldom	51	22.77
Never	10	4.46
Total	224	

Table 11: Learning Strategy

CATEGORY	f	%
Talking to Tourists	34	15.18
Talking to Friends	71	31.70
Reading from Printed Materials	67	29.91
Sentence Memorization	45	20.09
Word Memorization	7	3.13
TOTAL	224	

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Lecture Ready 1: Strategies for Academic Listening and Speaking (Second Edition)

Peg Sarosy and Kathy Sherak. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xii + 131.

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Listening and speaking constitute the backbone of any language learning process, be it native, second, or foreign. It is all but impossible to hold an adequate command of a language with poor listening and speaking skills. As a matter of fact, the natural cycle of language development in human beings starts with the receptive listening skill and then goes on with the productive speaking skill. Reading and writing come afterwards. However, it is not so smooth and easy to prioritize listening and speaking in EFL settings due to the natural lack of authentic opportunities around. EFL teachers, therefore, undertake a demanding task to enable their students to have active involvement in authentic listening and speaking tasks. It is a highly challenging process to motivate many students to speak in English as they do not regard it meaningful in a non-English speaking environment. To this end, teachers can employ well-prepared authentic resources and materials as an invaluable aid to help learners get motivated and develop their skills.

Lecture Ready 1 is a course-book aiming to help EFL and ESL learners to improve their listening and speaking skills. It is the first of a three-book series by the same authors. Taking its target group as low-intermediate students, the book introduces listening and speaking skills in an integrated way to enable learners improve these skills. Throughout the book, the listening part is divided into listening strategies and note-taking strategies and the speaking part is categorized under academic discussion strategies and presentation strategies. The book is composed of five units and ten chapters. Each unit is focused on a specific theme and the two chapters included in each unit follow the same general topic.

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Lecture Ready 1 has a lot of important strengths one of which is the balance in the coverage of listening and speaking skills. The book introduces "the complete academic process" composed of five inter-tangled phases for learners to help them enhance listening and speaking skills: (1) listen and apply new strategies, (2) take notes, (3) discuss the lecture, (4) present knowledge, (5) assess knowledge. This cycle repeats in each chapter. In Chapter 6 titled "Communication Revolutions", for example, the topic is introduced with a passage titled "A Look at the Beginnings of Mass Communication"; and after laying the infrastructure about the subject with follow-up vocabulary and comprehension exercises, the listening strategy "recognize lecture language that signals a definition" is introduced. Then the students listen to a professional lecture about the topic and practice the newly-learned listening strategy. In the second step, the note-taking strategy "using abbreviations instead of full words" is introduced and the students are asked to practice this strategy by taking notes while listening to the lecture once again. Following the first two phases, the academic discussion strategy "asking for more information" is introduced and the students are then oriented to discuss four questions provided in relation with the lecture. In the fourth step, the presentation strategy "opening the floor to questions" is introduced; and upon the display of sample student presentation videos the students are asked to develop and deliver their own oral presentations. Finally, the assessment stage which is quite important for almost all learning processes is carried out with the help of the book's online assessment tools integrating both listening and speaking skills. The sheer balance of listening and speaking skills in the book is consolidated with the strategy-based coverage. Strategies foster learner autonomy and this holds particular importance concerning the development of listening and speaking skills. The next plus for the book is the effective integration of audio and video content. Each chapter presents authentic lectures and videos delivered by different professionals, which constitutes a high-potential resource in view of listening and speaking. Another positive side of the book is the coverage of up-to-date real-life topics. The contents of both the introductory reading passages and the video lectures are based on the current realities and statistics of the recent years.

Alongside its many strong points, Lecture Ready 1 is not totally exempt from criticisms. First, the part of "expand your vocabulary" following each reading passage is structured too simplistically as two-option questions. It might not be demanding enough for many learners, thus leaving the teacher in hesitation whether to skip this part or not. Here is an example from the follow-up vocabulary exercise after the reading passage "Global Brands" in Chapter 4: "A <u>statistic</u> is a <u>number/person</u> that represents facts or measurements." As it is apparent in the example, the correct answer ‘number’ shows itself quite explicitly. As a solution, this section can be rendered a bit more worthwhile by simply adding more options. Second, the book does not contain any topic directly related to culture. At least one of the five units (Psychology, Business, Media Studies, Science, Humanities) should have been based on a culture-related theme since culture is a relatively motivating and interest-arousing topic especially in terms of speaking tasks. This holds extra importance considering the book’s pioneering and introductory role in the Lecture Ready series. The only observable link with culture is established slightly through the title of the 8^{th} chapter, ‘The Influence of Geography on Culture’. Nevertheless, the chapter introduces the topic within the specific context of geographical business and economy only. Despite these two shortcomings, the pros of Lecture Ready 1 far outweigh its cons and it holds a strong potential for EFL listening and speaking classes. With the book’s broad range of topics and rich and authentic audio-video content, it can be employed by English language teachers as an effective resource in enhancing the students’ listening and speaking skills in an integrated manner.

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New Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic English

Oxford University Press, 2014. ISBN 13 - 978-0194333504. 1023 pages

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The need to understand the functional value of words and phrases that frequently occur in academics is necessitated both by the need to produce quality academic texts and to address the vocabulary and writing requirements of non-native learners. Studies in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) have shown that the language of academics is distinctly different from magazines, novels and other genres. While the vocabulary requirements of other genres are sufficiently codified in the general advanced learner's dictionaries, special attention is demanded in the case of academic vocabulary as it is highly context sensitive. Moreover, apart from being polysemous, academic vocabulary exhibits a consistent tendency in terms of phraseology and collocations. Hence, codifying the contextual preferences of academic words for 'form, meaning and use' is a necessity. The publication of Learner's Dictionary of Academic English (OLDAE) by Oxford is a significant move in that direction.

The dictionary is available in paperback and "includes a 48 page Oxford Academic Writing Tutor and interactive Oxford Academic iWritter on CD-ROM" (Lea, 2014). Informed by the 85-million-word Oxford Corpus of Academic English, the dictionary primarily shows how the selected "general English words are used in different ways across academic subject areas such as humanities and physical, life, and social sciences (Introduction: v)." Believed to be the first of its kind, this dictionary owes its gratitude to the long tradition of dictionary making, especially to Oxford University Press. As mentioned, it particularly aims to bridge the gap "between learner resources focussed on general English and academic resources that do not address the specific needs of foreign learners (p. v)."

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Codified in a similar way as the latest OALD, the entries in OLDAE are distinct in terms of the selection of words and their organization. For instance, OLDAE presents some of the most frequent collocates of the head word that occur on either side of the node. The structure of a typical entry is as follows: The head word followed by its pronunciation and its grammatical information—primarily number and variant forms followed by meanings and usage. The definitions for each head word are arranged according to their usability: the frequent ones being at the beginning of the entry to the less frequent ones at the end of the entry. Every definition is supplemented by a couple of examples taken from the academic corpus, while a long list of examples are given in the CD-ROM. Separate space is allocated to the patterns in which the word co-occurs. It appears to be the case that Mutual Information (MI) values of the strong collocates are considered in the selection of collocates and their patterns.

How different is OLDAE from the OALD? The major difference is the purpose itself. The words encoded in the dictionary are meant to help students with their academic needs. Hence words such as *broadly, challenge, classical, debate, disease, example, hypothesis, importance, proportional, record, research…* are discussed at length. These words are sub-technical in their nature and can affect the learner's performance in academics. According to Averil Coxhead these words constitute at least 10% of academic language apart from the 75% of general words the students encounter. The second major difference is the selection of examples: every instance selected is taken from the 85 million word academic database and is representative of the ways the words are used in academics across the four broad subject areas: humanities and physical, life, and social sciences. The third and the most important feature is its CD-ROM.

John M Swales research on academic research genres is now being applied in language pedagogy across the world (Swales, 1990). Recent studies on academic genres have been able to identify the rhetorical organization of texts according to their social contexts and purposes. The CD-ROM while providing users with organized entries, both for words and their examples, takes care of the users' writing requirements. The aspects being illustrated here include the major academic genres such as writing essays, critical evaluation of cases, reflective writing, and above all writing research proposals and thesis. Each separate colourful page explains, both at macro and micro levels, the key aspects of the move structures of different academic genres and the micro conventions such as the grammar of academics. The publishers have duly acknowledged the contribution of Swales & Feak (2004) for their effective frameworks.

The new OLDAE is a trustworthy contribution to the field of academics. It is a useful tool for those who suffer academic hiccups such as using the appropriate collocates and identifying the rhetorical progression of academic texts. However, it is not free from its limitations. The dictionary limits its scope, for the moment, to only those words that generally occur in academics, and does not include *all* the frequent words the four subject areas make use of. Moreover, the extended support provided to words such as *hypothesis* and *research* is not consistent across all words. The focus in this regard appears to be on the key words of academic language that the learners are found to have committed mistakes with. This dictionary is surely an invaluable source for writers, but may not fully assist learners with all their academic reading needs. In a way it is more of a writer's dictionary than a readers'. Finally, the collocates included do not go beyond the immediate and frequent ones providing distant collocates of academic relevance.

All said, the attempt is noteworthy and the entries are trustworthy. This publication to a large extent continues to be a reference point for researchers to study and explore the academic language further.

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