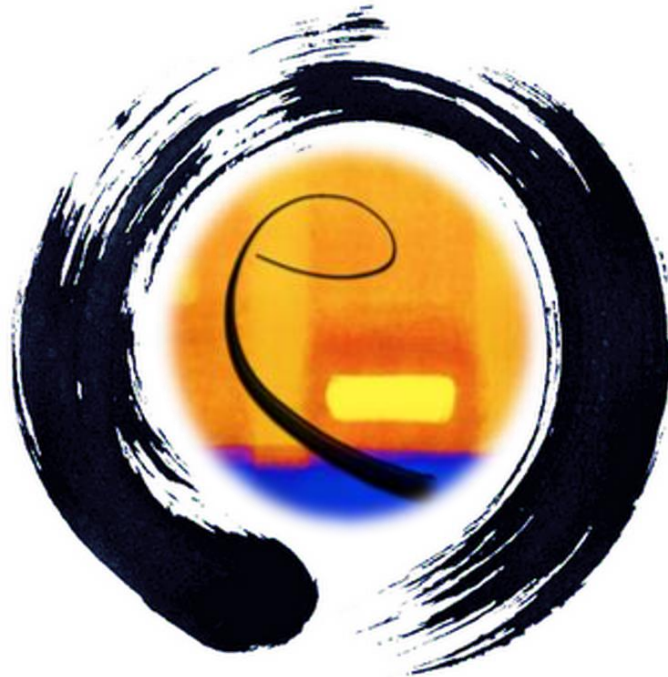




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Foreword

Translating Research across Cultures

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Welcome to our June 2016 issue of The Asian ESP Journal. We are happy to see a very varied range of authors from a variety of Asian locations presenting studies that are ‘translatable’ to other contexts. Our notion of translatability is well illustrated in our first paper from Vietnam with contributing co-authors from the UK, Thi Hong Le Vo, Mark Wyatt and Marie McCullagh identify an important gap between workplace communication needs and the approach to language teaching in their university context (*Exploring the gap between Vietnamese workplace communication in English and English language teaching at a university*). They acknowledge the context specificity of their study and findings but at the same time “recommend that similar research methods to those utilized here could be employed in other contexts and in other industries to assess whether communication needs in the workplace are being addressed.” It is possible of course that the findings may also be translatable to similar contexts beyond Vietnam, but what is translatable here is the research approach. Translatability does not mean that even the approach can be directly transferred. There is always a need to adapt and adjust to the local research setting. ‘Translating’ in research is a search for common ground while acknowledging diversity.

Similarly, in our second paper, *Opening the Door Wider to ESP in Corporate Japan and Beyond*, Jamie Lesley also takes us into the workplace, this time in Japan, but importantly he

also attempts to look beyond the immediate context. Leslie proposes one approach (shadowing clients) which clearly has a translatable potential to other contexts. Leslie's 'Open-Door Consultations' (ODCs) "are language training sessions that take place solely at the employee's discretion and can address any work matter of their choosing". Two different angles on a similar phenomenon – in this case from Vietnam and Japan – clearly in combination offer enormous potential for what we are terming 'translatability' – the ability to elucidate real experience in one context and adapt and adjust it to another.

Returning to Vietnam and tangentially related to the workplace theme of our preceding two articles, Pham Hoai Anh and Ta Thanh Binh consider pre-service training for ESP teachers. In their piece *Developing a Theoretical Framework for ESP Teacher Training in Vietnam*, the authors note the current lack of comprehensive ESP training programmes and the consequent shortage of specialist language teachers. This shortfall, they point out, is particularly acute in Vietnam, and local attempts to address the problem have themselves resulted in further problems. These are attributable to a lack of theoretical framework for specialist teacher training in Vietnam. The authors first present us with an overview of ESP instruction and teacher training in the world in general and Vietnam in particular. From this foundation, the paper develops a theoretical framework for ESP teacher training, applying this not only to their home country but translating it to other, similar, contexts.

In a *Case Study of the Effects of Autonomous Text Dictation on College-level Engineering-major EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension*, Dongbing Zhang and Jinfeng Ding investigate the effect of autonomous text dictation. Their study focuses on six engineering-major EFL learners who, despite having extensive English learning experience, still encounter serious difficulty in listening. These six participants were asked to do dictation on 4-6 texts per week for a period of 7-8 weeks. Post-study results revealed a generally positive outcome in students' accurate identification of word boundaries, *in tandem* with improved performance in spelling and grammar. The authors note, however, that over attention to detail during dictation compromised their participants' overall comprehension of the listening material.

With the article *Master's Theses Written by Vietnamese and International Writers: Rhetorical Structure Variations*, we return once more to Vietnam, to the master's degree, termed by authors Nguyen Thi Thuy Loan and Issra Pramoolsook "the summit of a student's academic

accomplishment.” They point out that research in the genre of Vietnamese Master’s theses written in English is all but non-existent. Their article outlines a study on the rhetorical structure of 24 master’s theses in TESOL from three universities in Vietnam. Employing a pre-existing framework, they found both similarities and differences in the moves and steps of theses written by Vietnamese and international writers, respectively. “These findings,” the authors conclude, “indicated...Vietnamese writers’ conformity to the rhetorical norms and their adaptation to suit their discourse community’s expectations.”

Jennifer Teeter explores research into abstract writing tutelage in *Potential Directions for EFL Scientific Writing Scholarship In Japan: Examining The Academic Abstract*, noting a lack of abstract writing strategies for Japanese learners. Her article presents an overview of current discussions of Japanese research and the use of English in the sciences, before focusing upon a more specific analysis of publication and academic writing in English in Japan. Taking established theoretical approaches to the teaching of academic writing as her departure point, Teeter offers suggestions for research on abstract writing and teaching that could serve Japanese scholars in the wider international academic context. She concludes that the strategies proposed might translate to other Asian contexts, as they prioritize a context-based approach to research and pedagogy.

Academic writing by non-native English-speaking students informs Mansourizadeh and Ahmad’s piece *An Investigation of Source Use Strategies in Published Research Articles and Graduate students’ Research Papers*. The authors posit that appropriate and effective integration of source material into their own written work poses a significant challenge for student writers. They suggest that fledgling academic writers might benefit from studying more experienced writers in their own field. Their article details an investigation of source-use strategies employed in six published research articles and an equal number of unpublished master’s in the field of chemical engineering. Findings demonstrated that in research articles, summaries and generalizations were the norm, while in student papers, paraphrases were more commonly used. Extensive citations were frequent in student papers, coupled with an over-dependency on the source texts. Interviews with the student writers revealed an inexact understanding of acceptable source use, while the more experienced writers credited their competence to practice, experience, and knowledge of the field.

Finally, we revisit Japan, with *Factors Influencing Learner Self-Confidence in a Japanese EAP Program* by Kota Ohata detailing a study into self-confidence in language learners. Drawing upon students in a college EAP program, the focus is on identifying factors which might influence the maintenance or development of student self-confidence. Ohata sets the prevailing Japanese cultural background against the individual's self-perception, with a particular emphasis on modes of reflection. The reported study is qualitative, employing in-depth interviews of varying length with a population of 15 first- and second-year college students. Respondents were asked to reflect on confidence and how they felt it related to their learning. Significant emergent factors included experiences of perceived success or failure, quality of feedback, comparison of self with others, context or task familiarity and personal and/or cultural influences. Suggestions for further research and consequent pedagogical implications are drawn from the findings.

Eight articles which, despite ostensible disparities in both milieu and focus, are all united by this edition's theme of the ways in which situation-specific research approaches might nonetheless translate across cultures.



Exploring the gap between Vietnamese workplace communication in English and English language teaching at a university

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Abstract

This study is set in the globalising context of international companies relocating their businesses to Vietnam in increasing numbers. Drawing on qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews, observations and post-observation discussions, it explores how a sample of fourteen information technology graduates communicate in English at the workplace and to what extent the English education provided at a university in Ho Chi Minh City that they had all recently graduated from meets such needs. Findings reveal a gap between the communication in English required at the Vietnamese workplace and the use of materials and methods for English language teaching at the Vietnamese university that the graduates had attended. This prompts a re-assessment of the extent to which English education at this university currently provides the support graduating students need. The study offers recommendations, in terms of both the design of materials and the professional development of teachers, to address the gap identified, so that information technology graduates in such contexts can enter the workplace with the English that will enable them to communicate more effectively.

Keywords: *globalization; Vietnam; workplace; communication; materials design, authentic, professional development.*

Introduction

With globalisation, increasing numbers of organisations conducting their businesses internationally are using English as a lingua franca, which creates a perceived worldwide need for communicative competence in English for business purposes (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). Such a need has been evident in Vietnam since the late 20th century for, with economic growth and expansion, the number of joint venture companies has been rising (Vietnamese Business Associate and Vietnam National University-HCM, 2004). However, various researchers (e.g. Ha, 2007) have reported that graduates have limited English proficiency, with communication skills and pronunciation often poor. This creates difficulties for employers with vacancies to fill. The Vietnamese authorities have recognized that English language education

at university should be prioritised to meet the needs of both learners and employers (Vietnam National University-HCM, 2008), an understanding which has implications for materials design and teaching methods. For example, if the argument that learners need to see evidence of how the English they learn can operate in the real-world (Dat, 2008) is accepted, this suggests that the use of authentic materials might be advantageous. Indeed, such materials might provide opportunities for learners to use English meaningfully to fulfil communicative purpose (Clarke, 1989; Trabelsi, 2010). Such a scenario seems more likely in a university context if the teachers themselves are able to design and use materials effectively, perhaps in line with principles that reflect a learner- and context-sensitive interpretation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or Task-Based Learning (e.g. Mangubhai, Marland, Dashwood & Son, 2004; Wyatt, 2011a), tempered by post-method pragmatism (Walsh & Wyatt, 2014).

However, despite annual reports emphasizing the real need within the Vietnamese workforce for communicative skills (e.g. Vietnam National University-HCM, 2008), there has been almost no research providing a picture of the communication skills in English that are required of employees if they are to become successful as users of English at the workplace. Such a picture could usefully stimulate an assessment of the extent to which English education at university provides the support learners need. This study aims to explore these issues. In particular, it looks at how graduates communicate in English at the workplace and the extent to which English education at a university of information technology (IT) appears to meet the learners' needs. Our assumption, on the basis that there has been so little research, is that there may be a gap, with needs not met particularly well, a hypothesis we will explore. First, though, we review the relevant literature and outline the research methodology employed. Afterwards, we present and discuss findings, and draw conclusions.

Review of the literature

Workplace discourse

In order to begin to understand the various issues, we first need to examine the kind of language required at the workplace. Although there has been a lack of relevant research in Vietnam, in the international context there is a growing understanding that there are different types of workplace discourse that new employees need to use. These types of workplace discourse include transactional and relational talk.

Transactional aspects of interaction are defined as “behaviours that (more or less explicitly) aim at getting [things] done and achieving outcomes” whereas relational aspects refer to “behaviours that aim at enhancing interpersonal relationships and creating a positive working atmosphere” (Schnurr, 2013, p. 9). Various authors (e.g. Handford, 2010; Koester, 2006) argue that relational talk can be seen as a means for identity negotiation at the workplace, supporting the achievement of transactional goals. For example, in analysing business meetings, Handford (2010) highlights the way relational talk (e.g. in conversations about football) often occurs at the beginning, establishing an environment in which transactional goals (e.g. encouraging the customer to continue purchasing) can be achieved. Investigating corpora (e.g. the Corpus of American and British Office Talk - ABOT), Koester (2010) similarly finds that small talk in which jokes are exchanged can build up relationships. Citing Benwell and Stokoe (2006), she points out that speakers often refer to identities apart from their institutional ones to support rapport-building, and provides an example of this: a plate maker jokily saying “I’m not really a plate supplier, I’m a joke supplier” (Koester, 2010, p. 102). Small talk can also be a useful way to deal with problematic situations when the institutional relationship is asymmetrical (e.g. manager-subordinate). By slipping into a more joking frame, managers can set themselves on a more equal footing with their employees, thus reducing their authoritarian identities, and probably mitigating any implicit face-threat.

The importance of engaging in such relational talk is increasingly being recognised across a range of business domains. However, practices within organizations can vary considerably. In the field of marketing, for instance, Handford (2010) reports, while some companies have a well-developed relational culture, involving practices such as spending time with individual customers and avoiding the use of automated answering machines, others do not, with likely negative consequences for the ensuing transactions. Employees, then, need to engage in relational as well as transactional talk if they are to communicate successfully at the workplace (Koester, 2010).

Amongst the types of transactional talk found in workplace discourse that new employees need to be able to follow and in certain contexts use are directives. These occur when “a discursively dominant speaker [tells] an addressee... *what* to do” (Koester, 2006, p.43). Studies of directives, such as Holmes and Stubbe (2003), show that directives can be realized in various ways, e.g. as imperatives, modals of obligation (*have to*, *need to*) and more indirect requests

(using modals, such as *would* and *could*). A wide variety of social, ethnic and cultural factors will influence how directives are used, with issues of politeness, adopted to achieve relational goals, significant in determining the choice of communication strategies (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003).

Adopting appropriate politeness strategies is important as otherwise the addressee may lose face. According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, there are two types of face: positive and negative. The former refers to "an individual's positive self-image and feeling of self-worth", while the latter concerns "self-determination and freedom of action" (p. 78). Any communicative act can threaten the "positive" or "negative" face of an interlocutor (Schnurr, 2013), and to avoid face-threatening acts in the workplace, communication strategies, including the avoidance of direct forms and the preference for more indirect or mitigated alternatives, might be employed (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). For example, in Koester's (2006) data, the modal *want to*, which expresses desire or inclination, was generally preferred to modals which imply a stronger sense of obligation, such as *need to* and *have to*. The frequent use of hedges (e.g. *just*, *like*) and vague language (e.g. *things*, *stuff* or *something*) was also a feature of such discourse.

Researchers in some Asian contexts, e.g. Scollon and Scollon (1995), suggest that two politeness systems can be seen: hierarchy and solidarity. Hierarchical politeness, as Scollon and Scollon put it, involves a system in which "the participants recognize and respect the social differences that place one in a superordinate position and the other in a subordinate position" (p. 45). Solidarity can be seen in contexts where participants intensify their interest and approval of each other (Holmes, 2000).

In summary, the research above provides some insights into the nature of communication at the workplace, highlighting important elements of workplace discourse with implications for the development of interpersonal skills. However, while these concepts have been used in various other international contexts, e.g. New Zealand (Schnurr, 2013), no study using this framework has been conducted in Vietnam. As established above, there is a need to look at how Vietnamese graduates are able to communicate in English to fulfil their work-related tasks. Vietnamese graduates, like others, are likely to need the ability to use relational and transactional talk (and directives and politeness strategies) in the workplace. Teaching materials used at their universities and designed to prepare them for such business contexts should aim,

therefore, not only at supporting transactional talk, but should also address relational aspects of communication. Unfortunately, relational talk is too often neglected in English for business educational settings, and awareness-raising of the importance of being able to handle this, together with transactional talk, is required (McCullagh, 2011). However, such graduates are also likely to need basic communicative competence for their workplace communication, which might require the effective use of learner- and context-sensitive CLT-based methodology at the university.

Communicative language teaching (CLT)

CLT, which covers a variety of approaches focused on “helping learners to communicate meaningfully in a target language” (Nunan, 1989, p. 303), is frequently associated with developing communicative competence (Hymes, 1972). Such competence includes linguistic and pragmatic (Bachman and Palmer, 1996), as well as discourse competence, which concerns conversation management (Gilmore, 2007). Strategies employed to develop communicative competence might include the use of “authentic texts”, i.e. those created for a genuine communicative purpose (Mishan, 2005, p. 1).

The use of authentic materials can support real-life language use by providing meaningful exposure to language as it is actually used. Employing such materials within a broad CLT approach can be engaging and motivating (Mishan, 2005; Gilmore, 2007; Tomlinson, 2012), and may, in fact, be particularly relevant in English-for-Specific-Purposes (ESP) contexts, such as ours, where learners need to communicate effectively in a specific work or study situation (Hall, 2011). However, such materials need careful and principled evaluation, so that their potential to stimulate learners’ engagement can be realized (McGrath, 2002, 2013; Tomlinson, 1998, 2003), and it is important that teachers as well as materials designers are aware of how to select, adapt and evaluate materials used in the classroom.

It is also important that teachers employ appropriate classroom methodology through which the benefits of using authentic materials within a broad CLT approach can be realized. So teachers’ use of groupwork (McDonough & Shaw, 1993), means of classroom management (Richards, 1998) and questioning techniques (Stubbs & Delamont, 1976; Nunan, 1991), for example, are all important. To date, though, while CLT methodology focused on developing communicative competence has been encouraged by educational authorities in many countries worldwide

(Butler, 2011; Walsh & Wyatt, 2014; Wedell, 2008), there are few studies available (e.g. Mangubhai et al., 2004; Sato & Kleinsasser, 1999; Wyatt, 2009) that have explored teachers' cognition and practices with regard to CLT.

Teacher cognition research, the study of “what teachers think, know and believe, and its relationship to teachers' classroom practice” (Borg, 2006, p. 3) suggests that there are sometimes noticeable differences between teachers' and researchers' conceptions of CLT e.g. in Sato and Kleinsasser (1999). Some studies, e.g. Karavas-Doukas (1996), have suggested that the communicative classroom is rare, for “while most teachers profess to be following a communicative approach, in practice they are following more traditional approaches” (p. 187). Sometimes tensions between beliefs and practices have been noted (e.g. Wyatt, 2009). Other studies have highlighted that teachers' practices are apparently being shaped by a blend of CLT and general educational principles not necessarily at odds with CLT (e.g. Mangubhai et al., 2004; Walsh & Wyatt, 2014).

In Vietnam, although CLT has been encouraged by the authorities, anyone wishing to implement such methodology might face some obstacles, with opportunities for genuine interaction in the language classroom potentially threatened by a number of factors. These include different underlying cultural values in Asia (Ellis, 1996; Lamb, 1995; Sullivan, 2000) and the provision of inauthentic materials (Dat, 2008; Tran, 1991). There is also a shortage of local teachers with appropriate training (Tran, 1991, Vu, 2004). However, despite these difficulties, some Vietnamese teachers have attempted to implement CLT in their teaching contexts (e.g. Hiep, 2007), motivated to do so perhaps by the perceived need for English skills in Vietnam, with the country joining the world of international business, and also by their own desire to learn how to teach learners how to communicate in English more effectively (Sullivan, 2000).

Nevertheless, there is yet a lack of research focused on whether the needs, in terms of English skills, of graduates entering the workplace are being met, supported by university teachers perhaps including some form of CLT in their teaching and incorporating the use of authentic materials. However, given all of the above, we believe there may be a gap in the Vietnamese context between the needs and the provision, which this study will explore.

Methodology

Our study addresses the overall research question:

Is there a gap between the communication in English required at the Vietnamese IT workplace and materials and methods employed for English language teaching at the university, and, if so, what is the nature of the gap?

This can be broken down into the following sub-questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the communication in English required of Vietnamese IT employees at the workplace?
2. To what extent does English education at university through materials and methods provide the support they need?

This is part of a larger study (Vo, 2015) in which after identifying a gap, I (the first author) tried to address it through action research. However, due to limitations of space, in this article we would like to focus on the gap, saving the action research dimension for another article.

Research design

Our approach was qualitative and interpretive, since the goal was “to explore new linkages and causal relationships, external and internal influences, and internal priorities inherent in a particular social context” (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 193). We drew on the following methods: observations recorded through field notes, interviews recorded on audio or video cassette and authentic documents (emails) that were evidence of communicative behaviour (Dörnyei, 2001). A narrative approach was chosen to illuminate the analysis of texts (e.g. email documents, transcripts of discussions, interviews) because it can support the processes through which such texts “depict reality” (Silverman, 2001, p. 128).

Ethical issues that I (the first author) had to consider included the following:

- In the university context, as an insider (since I had worked in the same university), I had to consider my dual roles of researcher and mentor. One concern was that teachers might consider the classroom observations of their work that would be integral to the

research design as a possible means of supporting future directive supervision, which may cause them to act defensively (Gebhard, 1990).

- While conducting research at companies, I was an outsider, and there was a concern that interviewees may not reveal information, worrying about how the data would be used (Myers & Newman, 2007). It was thus crucial that they joined the research programme voluntarily and with a complete assurance of confidentiality.
- In order to address such concerns, I read various authors (e.g. Holliday, 2002; Wyatt, 2008) and reflected on the possible motives for volunteering, and held induction sessions both at the university and at the companies to encourage positive orientation towards me (the researcher) and my research.

Participants

The company participants

With the aim of looking at how IT graduates communicate in English at the workplace, I approached joint-venture companies where English was used as a lingua franca between Vietnamese and foreign colleagues and, in some cases, for communication too among Vietnamese colleagues. Seven companies, all based in Ho Chi Minh City, agreed to take part. In each company, two managers (in total, 12 male and two female) and two employees (all male, which reflected the graduate pool) were selected. The latter were former students at the university where the second part of the study was carried out. Because the first graduation from this university had been just two years earlier, these engineers had been working for 1-2 years at their companies. The managers invited to participate were human resources managers, project managers and training heads. These employers managed recruitment, employee development, needs assessment and training, and were thus directly responsible for developing the capacity of the workforce to meet company goals.

The teacher participants

Five teachers working with different classes at the university participated in the study. All five were female non-native speakers of English holding a variety of English-as-a-second language qualifications, such as a Bachelor of Arts in English and Literature, or Master of Arts in English

and Applied Linguistics. Two of them can be classified as novices, after Tsui (2003), in that they had little teaching experience (two years) and no formal training. The other three can be classified as ‘experienced’ in that they had a minimum of 5 years teaching experience and held relevant MA degrees. Their classes ranged in size from 33 to 45 students, containing students at elementary levels (CEF A1 and CEF A2).

Research methods and procedure

There were two main stages of the research, with this first conducted at the companies and then at the university. Firstly, in order to determine what kind of English language competencies were required, there were interviews with 2 managers and 2 employees at each of the participating IT companies. Two one-hour interviews were conducted at each company, one with the managers and one with the employees, and sets of open-ended interview questions were designed accordingly. Though the researcher also kept notes, interviews were audio-recorded, except in one case where the company declined to be recorded, but provided more time for the researcher to take notes. Since the researcher shared the native language of the company participants, this first language (Vietnamese) was used for affective reasons (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and to obtain richer data (Fetterman, 1989).

Interviews with employees were preceded by observations of their workplace behaviour. There was a one hour observation of each employee participant at the workplace to see how they actually used English for communication. Though such communication included actual meetings in the workplace with other IT employees (mostly male, but including a few females – 3 in the 7 companies), and their employers, the communication observed was mainly through texting online or email, both internally and to partners overseas; after the observations, the companies generously allowed me to collect the emails I had observed being written for later analysis. The observational data were used to complement interview data to facilitate comparison between cognition and behaviour.

Research methods at the university included two (60-90 minute) classroom observations of each participant teacher, with an interval of two weeks in between. An open narrative record was kept of each lesson, focusing on participants, events, acts, and gestures within the setting (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), in the context of the achievement of learning goals, classroom interactions (i.e. teacher-student interactions and teacher-student interactions), and classroom

management (e.g. feedback, pair work and group work). Audio-recording was employed using a wireless cassette recorder with a clip-on microphone; this was attached to the teacher, recording all teacher-learner interaction, whether one-on-one, in small groups or whole class (Loewen, 2005). Immediately after the observations, I reviewed and expanded the notes, analysing the recordings to include further information and detail (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). After each observation, there was a 20-30 minute discussion with the teacher about the classroom activities observed, conducted in the shared first language (Vietnamese) to help put the teachers at ease and to save time. I tape-recorded all these discussions to transcribe and translate afterwards.

To summarize, the data I was working with were as follows: At the companies, I conducted 14 hours of observations, 14 hours of interviews, and collected 84 emails as evidence of the workplace discourse I had observed. At the university, I observed ten 60-90 minute classroom lessons (2 per teacher) that were followed by 20-30 minute post-lesson discussions. I now explain how these data were analysed.

Data analysis

The rounds of data collection mentioned above permitted methodological triangulation (Stake, 1995), i.e. a comparison between what the participants said and what they were observed to do to strengthen the trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the research. In approaching the data, I re-read my observation notes and compared them with notes made while listening to the audio-recordings. The audio-recordings of discussions were transcribed and translated to supplement the analysis of field notes. Sequential analysis of discourse (Silverman, 2005) was adopted; the transcripts of the two data resources (observations and interviews/ discussions) were analysed and integrated, split into segments and then made into themes. We now present the findings.

Findings

What are the characteristics of communication in English at the IT workplace?

Two types of workplace communication frequently observed were online texting and email (informal and formal); meetings were more occasional. The communicative genres most

frequently observed were directives and requests, which can be grouped under ‘transactional – work-oriented unidirectional discourse’ (Koester, 2010); some non-transactional genres, e.g. small talk or relational interaction, were also evident. We explain further below:

Communication strategies are used

In order to get the work done, communication strategies were adopted. These were used with requests for help (“I’m facing some issues relating to case, could you help me?”) and for explanations (“How can you reproduce it?”), negotiations (“take your time, thanks in advance”) and functional expressions (e.g. “hi” for greetings and “thanks” for expressing gratitude). These observational data agree with those collected from the interviews, from both employers and employees; they reported such strategies were often used in the employees’ daily conversations in English at the workplace.

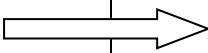
Directives and requests occurred frequently in conversations. The modal “can” and bald imperatives (e.g. in “Give me 5 minutes”; “Let me check”) were more frequently chosen by foreign colleagues (e.g. Indian or Japanese). In contrast, Vietnamese colleagues used “could” more, employing “Could you...” structures to make requests, even when the interaction was quite informal. This may be due to Vietnamese concepts of politeness.

However, poor pronunciation by Vietnamese employees often caused conversation breakdowns. Key words were mispronounced, with vowels indistinct or final sounds omitted. For example, they reported finding it difficult to make the distinction between “can” and “can’t” clear in their speech. Such miscommunications seemed to cause a lack of confidence, with Vietnamese employees reporting occasional reluctance to speak English to foreign colleagues, even though they knew the answers to their questions.

Relational conversations function as identity work

Relational talk was clearly important in their workplace discourse, leading into transactional talk, as is evident in Table 1.

Table 1: Examples of relational talk functioning as identity work in transactional talk

<i>Types of communication</i>	<i>Relational talk</i> 	<i>Transactional talk</i>
<i>Online texting</i>	- It's hot here and I also tell you hot news - Happy birthday	- I have solved our big issue. Can I send you by 5 pm today? - Thanks Jonathan :-). Have you seen the quote for Sienna from (name)?
<i>Informal email</i>	- It's seem so long that we haven't met again after that night ; -) We miss you so much especially as you promised about a party next month.	- Have you finished with the figures? Can you send to us by Thursday?
<i>Formal email</i>	- Dear all, how is your work today?	- I'm writing to collect your ideas about...
<i>Meetings</i>	- How are you?/ How's things going?	- Alright, I have sent you an email about the meeting today...

For example, when online texting was used, relational interactions preceded the discussion of work issues. In an example above, this relational talk involves the weather, with the Vietnamese colleague referring to this humorously: "It's hot here and I also bring hot news to you". Such use of humour is frequent in relational talk (Holmes, 2000; Holmes & Marra, 2002). In another example, one interlocutor (Vietnamese) asks the other (American) about his trip to Vietnam and the American then offers congratulations on his Vietnamese colleague's birthday.

Such interactions can be classified as off-task relational (Koester, 2010), but still serve important task goals, since they are useful means of introducing a colleague to a job at hand or dealing with a problematic situation. In the weather talk example, the 'hot news' related to a problem being solved. In the second example, the conversation moved on from birthdays to whether another delivery company that offered cheaper prices should be chosen. Observational data suggest there was a relaxed working environment among participants in these cases.

Just as in online texting, informal emails sometimes lack greetings. In one example (Table 1), the email interaction starts with relational talk about not having met for a long time and the need for a party. The conversation continues with the second speaker reporting his personal difficulties (e.g. he had just paid a large sum for a course he had failed in his MBA programme). However, the work in this instance is then accomplished quickly; he replies to the issue raised by his colleague, indicating that he hopes to send the figures on time.

Even when the language tends to be more transactional in formal emails, managers try to make the talk relational or skilfully combine transactional and relational elements. For example, a relational greeting, e.g. “How is your work today?” (Table 1) suggests two-way interaction rather than a one-way transfer of information, an impression confirmed by the transactional talk following, an eliciting of ideas regarding workplace issues. This makes the email less directive; indeed, the tone reflects the use of politeness strategies and good communication skills.

Similarly, though most language used in meetings is transactional (Handford, 2010), relational talk is often seen at the beginning, e.g. in expressions such as “How’s things going?” or “How are you?” Other expressions noted in the data, e.g. “How’s your new job?”, which occurred just before a meeting actually started, also demonstrate that this small talk sometime relates directly to the job. In interview, two employees explained that small talk puts them at ease, creating a ‘comfortable atmosphere’ to support the work to be done. They also reported that a simple question about how things were going could make them feel closer with others in the group, thus more open to working together. In contrast, if the talk was purely transactional, this could make them feel less at ease.

Cultural factors influence workplace communication

Cultural influences could be seen in many aspects of Vietnamese employees’ communication at the workplace (Table 2). In email interaction, the norms of communication observed can be interpreted as collectivism (one’s face represents the face of the group that one belongs to) for Vietnamese colleagues and individualism (the concept of the self being more important) for colleagues from other cultures (Scollon & Scollon, 1995). Vietnamese colleagues started their emails with expressions such as “Hello team”, while in-group identity markers such as “we” were frequently used. The modal “could” was used more by Vietnamese colleagues in speech act such as orders and requests, i.e. to reduce the threat to the addressee’s negative face

(Schnurr, 2013). In contrast, the foreigners were interacting with emphasized independence and autonomy in their words, employing language markers which have the effect of making the language seem more direct. For example, an expression such as “Let’s have it fixed by 12 am” cannot really be interpreted as a suggestion; it is clearly a firmly-worded request.

Table 2: Cultural factors that influence workplace communication

	<i>Vietnamese employees</i>	<i>Foreign employees</i>
<i>Collectivism vs. individualism</i>	<p>‘We’ or ‘we’ll’ indicating willingness to support:</p> <p>- “We’ll go and share with you...”</p>	<p>‘Let me’ or ‘Let’s’ as more of a request:</p> <p>- “Let’s keep up the work...”</p> <p>- “Let me have it fully fixed...”</p>
<i>Showing politeness</i>	<p>Avoidance of face-threatening:</p> <p>- “Could you...”, “Could you please...”</p> <p>- “I think... um...” (hedging devices)</p> <p>Use of <i>Superordinate and subordinate</i> to reflect the underlying values of Confucianism...</p> <p>- “Sir”, “Mr” or “Ms” (signs of respect)</p> <p>- “Yes... yeah” (back-channelling before expressing disapproval through: “Actually...”)</p> <p>Solidarity spirit - based on group thought</p> <p>Males may be more direct but seem to use humour more.</p>	<p>More direct:</p> <p>- “Give me 10 minutes...”</p> <p>- “Please give us...”</p> <p>- “Can I show you...”</p> <p>- “Hi ...” (using first name)</p>

The email interaction amongst Vietnamese members of the team also demonstrates cooperation. Responding to one member’s personal difficulties, for example, another offers to help with administrative work and costs, signalling this by saying “I think you should relax a bit”. The expressions ‘I think’ and ‘you should’ in this case function to benefit the hearer/receiver (Koester, 2010); they are not a feature of requests. In the same conversation, the pronoun ‘we’ is used in “we will” to convey a willingness to support and encourage this team member facing difficulties to continue. A cooperative spirit amongst such Vietnamese IT workers, as

interpreted from their email communications, could contribute to improved performance (Le & Truong, 2007).

In meetings observed, there was also evidence of Vietnamese politeness. Hedging devices (“I think”, “um...”) were used by two employees to signal uncertainty in replying to questions, but, more importantly, together with back-channelling (“yeah”, “yes”), they functioned as signs of attention and positive politeness. Through continually saying “yeah” to their group leader, the team members’ behaviour could be interpreted as wanting to make the addressee feel good and avoid threatening their positive face. They expressed the disapprovals through expressions such as “Actually, (name) will be responsible...” only after these back-channels.

Politeness seems to influence many aspects of Vietnamese employees’ communication at the workplace. One example of this in our data is the use of ‘sir’ as a sign of respect. In Vietnamese society, respect is a key factor in the value system. Differences in age separate people into two groups marked as ‘superordinate’ and ‘subordinate’. Older people enjoy high respect from those younger, regardless of wealth, education and social position; this is regarded as hierarchy politeness (Nguyen, 2012). Together with this, people in lower positions in the workplace often show their respect to their managers. In many cases observed in this study, Vietnamese employees showed their respect to their group leaders who were older and also had higher positions. It is likely that the managers enjoyed this respect; some of them also used Ms. and Mr. mentioning other people in the conversations, e.g. “Did Ms Trang tell you about it?”; “Hm... Mr Son Le is responsible for it.” Interestingly, the Vietnamese employees reported in the interviews that they also said “sir” to show their respect to their foreigner managers on the rare occasions they met them. A group leader who had worked more closely with English-speaking partners said he had used “sir” several times initially but then discovered it was not common to address English-speaking partners in this way.

As a cultural factor, gender also influences professional communication and leadership in a variety of different ways (Schnurr, 2013). This was evident in the way that face-threat appeared to be mitigated by the participants in our study. For example, though the males tended to be more direct and transactional than the few females we observed, the males also tended to use humour more, which is a strategy to avoid threatening face (Koester, 2010). The weather joke in the online text in Table 1 is typical of their use of such humour. In contrast, the females employed different strategies. For example, they seemed to be very careful to avoid face-

threatening language, e.g. through use of “Could you... please?” structures (Table 2). Also, the example of the indirect formal email provided in Table 1 was sent by one of the two female managers.

Summary

It is evident from the above that new IT employees entering the workplace need communicative competence in English, e.g. to help them make requests, issue and follow directives, and write business emails. Furthermore, using language that avoids threats to face in line with Vietnamese norms, they need to engage successfully in relational talk with partners from other countries in a way that facilitates an understanding of each other’s cultural behaviours, and allows a building up and maintaining of relationships that are necessary in business. However, in all seven participating companies, the employees and their team leaders reported that such communicative competence had only developed gradually out of necessity at work. They had not learnt it at the university, and had faced many challenges at first, including with aspects of English as a lingua franca (e.g. pronunciation issues encountered when speaking to users of other varieties of English). So, the next question relates to English education at the university. Is there a gap between that supplied through teaching and materials, and subsequent workplace needs? We now address this.

How is English taught at university?

Given the insights generated above from the employees, and in particular the awkwardness they reported having felt at first, due to poor pronunciation, uncertainty about how to engage in relational talk and unfamiliarity with the directives used by foreigners that could cause offence, a working hypothesis might be that English education at the university does not fully meet graduates’ workplace needs. This hypothesis is strengthened by a consideration of the literature. Indeed, given the lack of prior research in the Vietnamese context into workplace discourse, it seems unlikely that the teachers would know much about the language required of the graduates at the workplace. There has been more public discussion of pronunciation problems in general, though (e.g. Ha, 2005), and teachers may have some intuitive insights regarding these. My classroom observations and post-lesson discussions with the five participant teachers focusing on materials’ use and classroom methodology seemed to confirm these hypotheses, as I explain below.

Firstly, there were no materials available at the university that supported relational talk in business settings. Instead, the teachers used the general English textbooks provided, these containing largely inauthentic material. Tomlinson (2003) criticizes such material, arguing texts in EFL textbooks are “short, explicit, neutral, bland and non-provocative in a way that the texts we read in the real world never are” (p. 31).

The teachers did, however, appreciate the value of using supplementary material, particularly with pronunciation. Interviews revealed they recognised that improving the intelligibility of their speech was one of the biggest challenges faced by university students. There was little support for pronunciation in the textbooks, however, which were not designed for the context and featured British/American accents; the teachers occasionally supplemented their lessons with material from in-house pronunciation practice books that had been designed some years before. Generally, though, when working on pronunciation, their pedagogical practices recalled the audiolingual method (Richards & Rodgers, 1986); students were observed to repeat words or sentences from the textbook after the teacher, particularly when vocabulary was being introduced. For example, on the topic ‘restaurant and food’, words such as ‘waiter’, ‘waitress’ and ‘beef’ were drilled by the teacher, whole class and then individually. Such activities, though not very communicative, may have been beneficial to the learners (Thornbury & Watkins, 2007), but sometimes unfortunately, due to lack of time, teachers skipped this step. They said they would have appreciated having pronunciation activities better integrated into the syllabus by a curriculum manager.

Some features of a communicative approach, e.g. contextualization of the teaching material (Wyatt, 2009), were evident in the observed lessons. For example, the experienced teachers in the study often tried to create a learning context by personalizing the material and asking questions relating to students’ experiences. As indicated in discussions after classroom observations, they believed this could engage students, encouraging speaking. There was some evidence of contextual realisation (McGrath, 2002; McDonough & Shaw, 1993) in these experienced teachers’ classes. For example, in one class observed, after the teacher realized that her students could not do a listening task (which involved following someone paying at a supermarket), she modified her teaching behaviour, contextualizing the listening better, asking students what they had bought recently in the supermarket, where they paid, and whether they

had queued in line. The students then seemed to engage more actively. Being encouraged to reflect on their own experiences had seemed to help them.

However, there was little contextualization in classes taught by the two novice teachers. They seemed to rely on translation when introducing new lexis, gave instructions extensively in the learners' first language, thus reducing input for acquisition (McMillan & Turnbull, 2009; Imran & Wyatt, 2015), and followed the textbook strictly, so that students had little chance to use the language communicatively. Even when there was some contextualization, e.g. when the topic of relaxation was introduced in one lesson by questions about going swimming, the elicitation style unfortunately lacked cultural sensitivity; the teacher asked the class about whether they wore swimming suits and, in a culture where many go swimming fully dressed, this seemed to cause embarrassment. The student who was nominated by the teacher to respond in whole-class mode struggled to do so in front of her peers.

The main focus seemed to be on accuracy rather than extending communication practice, with notional rather than functional categories emphasized. 'Notions' are closely related to grammatical categories while 'functions' refer to practical uses of language, usually involving interaction with other people (Johnson, 1982). In most classes observed in the study (including those of the experienced teachers) grammar points were explained deductively without any context clues (as also observed in Sato and Kleinsasser [1999]) and were followed by exercises in the textbook. Furthermore, these exercises, including those that suggested a focus on functions to stimulate real life interaction (McDonough & Shaw, 1993), were under-exploited. Mastery of the formal grammatical system appeared to be the primary focus in the lessons observed.

Such an approach was reflected in a preponderance of display questions, typically asked when the meaning is clear and the teacher simply wishes to see if the student can answer, and relatively few referential questions (Brock, 1986), asked when there is a genuine information gap. While referential questions are needed to support meaningful communication in the classroom (Van Lier, 1996), observational studies, e.g. Long and Sato (1983), have often found such questions little in evidence.

When referential questions were asked in the classes I observed they did seem to support interaction. For example, in a lesson on the topic of game shows taught by one of the

experienced teachers, when there was a move from display to referential questions (e.g. from “Do you often watch T.V?” to “What do you often do in your free time? Play games online?”; “What happens?”), students became more spontaneous; they laughed and appeared to be having fun. However, unfortunately display questions were much more in evidence in the lessons observed, with all sorts of communicative possibilities missed. For example, when students volunteered information in response to wh-questions, follow-up questions were rare. Such wh-questions, e.g. “What else?”, were sometimes used to invite students to list, with teachers’ feedback tending to focus not on the meaning of the students’ answers, but on the form they took. Such feedback was also provided sometimes over-hastily, with teachers allowing insufficient wait-time. Tomlinson (2001, p. 28) argues that learners need privacy and silence to develop what he calls “an inner voice” before they participate in the lesson.

There was also little variety in classroom interaction, with group work, which can help teachers solve problems associated with large classes (e.g. Abdullah & Jacobs, 2004; Wyatt, 2010), under-exploited, particularly in the novice teachers’ lessons. While students were sometimes asked to work in pairs or groups, particularly towards the end of a lesson, activities were sometimes inappropriate for group work, e.g. with students focused on vocabulary memorization and having little to discuss. Alternatively, stronger students were observed to dominate, or tasks set for group work were divided up, with students working individually. The benefits of group work, including scaffolding (Lightbown & Spada, 1999), were thus not fully realized.

In summary, there was little evidence that communicative competence that would facilitate workplace discourse was being developed. Non-authentic materials that were rarely contextualized and did not relate in topic to the business world, and traditional methods and interaction patterns with the teacher focusing primarily on accuracy were the norm. The overall impression, therefore, was that, notwithstanding apparently positive attitudes amongst the teachers towards CLT approaches, this was not an environment necessarily conducive to supplying the workplace with suitably communicatively-competent graduates. We would emphasize that this was not the teachers’ fault in any way. However, in approaching any curriculum change designed to better meet learners’ needs, clearly they and the university department they worked in would benefit from support.

Discussion

We set out to address the overall research question: Is there a gap between the communication in English required at the Vietnamese IT workplace and materials and methods employed for English language teaching at the university, and, if so, what is the nature of the gap? There clearly is a gap, the nature of which is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: The nature of the gap

<i>The communicative needs of IT workers in the Vietnamese workplace</i>	<i>Implications for materials design and teaching methods at university, based on the Vietnamese IT workers' needs</i>	<i>The actual materials and methods employed in English language teaching at the Vietnamese university</i>
Communication strategies with requests, explanations, directives and negotiations	Opportunities to practise using communication strategies through meaningful task-based interaction	Lack of communicative purpose in most classroom talk, with communication strategies unsupported
Clearer pronunciation to avoid communication breakdowns	Communicative pronunciation activities integrated into the curriculum	Limited drilling of new lexis and some supplementary use of in-house pronunciation materials
Relational talk in business settings	Communicative role-plays in pairs and groups on appropriate business-related topics	Group work under-exploited, with tasks often not developing interactive speaking
Use of written and oral communication through texts, emails and meetings	Communicative practice utilizing different channels and modes	Writing limited to course book exercises
Awareness of cultural differences in politeness strategies when interacting with foreigners	Cultural training	No obvious cultural training
Awareness of English as a lingua franca and different varieties of English	Materials that provide exposure to different varieties of English	Materials that reflect standard norms of British and American English

As Table 3 suggests, there may be various ways of addressing the evident gap. Students need explicit support for communication strategies (Van Lier, 1996; Wyatt, 2009), with

socioculturally-appropriate politeness strategies clearly contextualized (Chan, 2009). They need opportunities to engage in meaningful task-based interaction (Ellis, 2003), with materials that both utilize the new technologies required for communication in the workplace (Chinnery, 2006) and also integrate pronunciation teaching (Harmer, 2007; Kenworthy, 1987), in the process introducing them to English as a lingua franca (Walker, 2010). They need explicit support for relational talk within business contexts (Handford, 2010; Koester, 2010; Schnurr, 2013) and materials tailored to their work-specific needs (McCullagh, 2011), in this case, in the context of a university of information technology, to support them to enter the IT industry.

Besides the various implications above for materials design, there are implications for teacher development, so that the suggested curriculum innovations can be realized. Teachers in this context are likely to require awareness-raising (Borg, 2006) through workshops that might adopt Tomlinson's (2003, 2012) text-driven approach, in which ideally an engaging written or spoken text, preferably authentic (Koester, 2010), drives a unit of materials. Ideally, these materials should be designed to successively "activate learners' minds... stimulate engagement... [and] invite exploration of [textual] features" (Tomlinson, 2012, p. 161). It is likely that the Vietnamese teachers in this context would benefit from such an approach, as well as support for reflecting deeply on their work (Malderez & Bodóczy, 1999) through mentoring that might utilize techniques such as video-stimulated recall (Wyatt & Arnold, 2012). It is likely that input on CLT-based approaches (Richards, 2005) and a discussion of how these might be realized in the Vietnamese context, considering sources such as Hiep (2007), would also be useful. Such processes of professional development could then support the encouragement of exploratory action research carried out by teachers in this context into their own practices to improve their learners' experiences, a strategy for teacher development that has been adopted elsewhere (Smith, Connelly & Rebolledo, 2014; Wyatt, 2011b). Through such means the gap between the communication in English required at the IT workplace and the materials and teaching methods employed for English language education at the university could be narrowed. To facilitate such a process of tailoring education more closely to needs, there is a need to maximize institutional support, since investment in both material design and teacher education is needed.

Concluding Remarks

This is a small-scale study set in one Vietnamese city that set out to explore both the workplace needs for communication in English of IT graduates employed in seven international businesses and how such needs are supported at the local university of information technology in the work of five English teachers; this was with a view to exploring any gap. While a gap was identified and is described above, we do need to acknowledge the context-specificity of these findings that might reduce their applicability to other contexts. Firstly, the workplace needs focused on are those in the IT industry and it is likely that workers in other industries may engage in other forms of discourse, with directives perhaps less prominent, for example. Secondly, it is possible that Vietnamese universities dedicated to providing English support in other industries such as tourism may be utilizing ESP materials more closely tailored to the workplace needs of their graduates. So, we would not wish to over-generalize. However, given regular high-level reports emphasizing the real need within the workforce for communication skills (e.g. Vietnam National University-HCM, 2008) and the relative lack of prior research in the Vietnamese context that seeks to describe any gap between the need and the provision, the current study can be seen as a small but important step in developing broader understandings. We would certainly recommend that similar research methods to those utilized here could be employed in other contexts and in other industries to assess whether communication needs in the workplace are being addressed.

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Opening the Door Wider to ESP in Corporate Japan and Beyond

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Abstract

This essay discusses the treatment of English language training at the Japan division of an American multinational IT corporation. Analysis is based on my experiences of training its staff over a four year period beginning January 2010, in flexibly scheduled, non-prescriptive sessions called ‘Open-Door Consultations’ or ODCs. These take place at the employee’s behest and may address any focus of their choice to help improve work performance using English. The paper begins with a literature review to highlight core concepts and developments in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Needs Analysis (NA). In light of these, it examines the ODC for its practicality in addressing the needs of attendees, its reliance on a ‘micro-needs analysis’, and its aim to secure performance gains for immediate work transfer. It concludes with two recommendations for how ODCs and other short-term trainings in similar contexts might improve, by arguing for greater access to be granted in two under-utilised areas of language training: shadowing clients in real-time work conditions; and the use of technology to document, monitor and review trainee performance both inside and outside the training room.

Keywords: *ESP; Japanese learners of English; needs analysis; short-term trainings*

Opening the Door Wider to ESP in Corporate Japan and Beyond

In an increasingly globalized age, English and instruction to develop its application in specific contexts feature in business and academic settings all over the world (Johns & Price, 2014). Japan is no exception, where government policies designed to internationalise all levels of education (Honna & Takeshita, 2005; Seargeant, 2009), particularly at a select, but growing number of universities (McKinley & Thompson, 2011; Mori, 2011), reflect a blossoming appreciation of the value a strong English proficiency may bring future generations of Japanese students and workforces. Evidence of shifts towards internationalization in education and business have been noted elsewhere, including India, Brazil, Colombia and South Korea (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Long, 2015), which may bode well for global enterprise. At the same time, research into professional communities, business discourse and intercultural communication is enlightening understanding of ever-evolving paradigms and practice (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson & Planken, 2007; Belcher, Johns & Paltridge, 2011), especially in regard to contexts where English serves its users as a lingua franca (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta, 2005; Planken & Nickerson, 2009).

With a strong emphasis on its export economy, Japan's international communication needs are considerable (Handford & Matous, 2011). Hence, measures taken to help prepare future workers for the rigours of English communication on the global corporate stage are encouraging. Indeed, even in the wake of the recession brought on by the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake, industry data shows that Japan's English language school market actually grew in the aftermath of the disaster, with demand for business English rising in the second half of the year (Yano Research Institute, 2011). The country has understandably faced sustained fiscal difficulties in the recovery since the earthquake, amid additional concerns about its ageing population, declining birth rate and shrinking labour pool (Japan Center for Economic Research, 2014). Despite these challenges, companies operating in and out of Japan are recognising the importance of effective communication for international business, and accordingly, are placing high value on investment in language training. As the established "working tongue of the global village" (Svartvik & Leech, 2006, p. 1), English skills are continuing to gain traction as the primary medium of intercultural interaction in corporate settings.

What follows is a consideration of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and the treatment of language training at the Japan division of an American multinational IT corporation, henceforth referred to as Company X. Analysis is based on my experiences of training staff in its Tokyo offices over a four year period beginning January, 2010. Within its wide range of technical IT workshops, skills-based seminars and management courses (conducted in Japanese, English or both), one type of training stands out, characterised by its flexible scheduling and non-prescribed content. These ‘Open-Door Consultations’ or ODCs, are language training sessions that take place solely at the employee’s discretion and can address any work matter of their choosing. Sessions are limited in time and number, and thus, the manner and degree by which instructors can appraise learning needs is restricted; some might say restrictive. ODCs are nonetheless a reality, and a popular, convenient avenue through which employees pursue improved work performance in English (and Chinese for those that require it).

This paper explores the ODC as an effective training practice for Japanese learners of English. It begins with a literature review detailing core concepts and developments in ESP and needs analysis. In light of these, it examines the practicality of ODCs for meeting the needs of its attendees, its reliance on what might appropriately be termed a ‘micro-needs analysis’, and its aim of achieving measurable gains each session for immediate work transfer. The paper concludes with recommendations for how ODCs and short term language trainings in similar contexts might be improved by increasing the access and use of technology afforded to language trainers by their clients, thereby facilitating greater documentation and analysis of specific contexts and tasks, and the communication needs that exist within them.

Literature Review

English for Specific Purposes is a broad area of language learning with distinct participants across an increasingly diverse range of academic, occupational and business categories (Belcher, 2004; DudleyEvans & St. John, 1998; Johns & Price, 2014). Despite being something of an ambiguous term, not easily fixed to a single classification or domain, across its wide range of branches, ESP practitioners are united in their efforts to first identify, and then address, clearly defined learning needs through evidence-based analysis, syllabus creation and instruction (Belcher, 2009a; Huhta, Vogt, Johnson, Tulkki, & Hall, 2013). A useful way of considering ESP was suggested in an early examination by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) who described it as “an approach to course design which starts with the question: ‘Why do these learners need to learn English?’” (p. 53). The operative word here is ‘need’, since ESP is more

acutely concerned with the particular motivations for language use and task completion within precise target situations, much more so than General English (GE) is (Long, 2005). Although needs certainly exist in GE (Graves, 2014), in-depth appraisals of individual learners, specific contexts and their respective needs are not typically taken into account in the creation of course content to the extent they are in ESP. In short, the concepts of *needs* and the systematic process through which they are identified, *needs analysis* (NA) are defining cornerstones that distinguish ESP from more general EFL or ESL fields (Belcher, 2006; Johns & Price, 2014).

Needs

Like ESP, *needs* is a far-reaching, complex concept that has rightly been referred to as an umbrella term (West, 1994). It may simultaneously apply to learner goals, backgrounds, language proficiencies, linguistic content, discourse requirements, genre features, learning processes or teaching preferences, as well as the physical, social and situational parameters within which these factors are housed. Generally, such information can be grouped into *necessities*, *lacks* and *wants* (Nation & Macalister, 2010), vis-à-vis *objective* and *subjective* needs (Brindley, 1984) that refer either to a particular context or individuals in it. Objective needs are ideally determined by independent outside parties collecting, analysing and appraising data. Brown (1995) detailed six NA instrument types for this purpose (*existing information*, *tests*, *observations*, *interviews*, *meetings*, and *questionnaires*). He also identified a further 24 procedures for data extraction, each of which placed the needs analyst either in the position of an outsider looking in (as in the first three instrument types) or in the role of a facilitator actively eliciting information from the context and its participants (as in the last three). In contrast to objective needs, subjective needs or *felt needs* as they have also been termed (Berwick, 1989; Long, 2015) are revealed only by canvassing learners directly for their personal desires and viewpoints. Hence, discovery of such subjective input as part of the NA process relies heavily on participants' willingness to impart the information (Kuramavadivelu, 2012).

At times, learners' perceived wants or desires can sit uncomfortably alongside "requirements of employers, institutions, or exam bodies, or the visions of government organizations acting for the wider society" (Hyland, 2003, p. 58). For example, in Company X, a trainee and their department head may have very different views on what that trainee's most pressing needs are, and how the ODC session time should be best spent addressing them. The trainee may perceive their conversational English skills to be sub-par as a result of awkward social experiences from

a recent business trip abroad, and as a consequence, may wish to practice those skills exclusively. However, the department head might deem the trainee's email requests to overseas personnel as unnecessarily indirect or imprecise, and wish for a more concise, assertive delivery to be developed through ODC training. Accordingly, value judgments can vary from one stakeholder to the next (Brown, 2006), and hence, create confusion or conflict amongst participants (Belcher, 2006). This may be further complicated if the perception of training quality or direction is questioned by any of the members involved (Holliday, 1995; Long, 2015). One important objective in the NA process, therefore, is to pre-empt potential difficulties by gathering sufficiently rich data from multiple sources (Nation & Macalister, 2010) to make informed decisions about all factors that may ultimately influence course content and approach (Huhta, et al., 2013).

Needs Analysis

The *needs analysis*, otherwise referred to as *needs assessment* (Brown, 1995; Graves, 2014), is a systematic means of data collection used in ESP course creation and syllabus design (Nunan, 1988a, 1988b). In the 1960s, it became popular in North America with the growing interest in 'behavioural objectives' and the rise of the ESP movement (Berwick, 1989). Its relevance grew again in the 1970s and 1980s through the Council of Europe's language planning policies (Richterich, 1972; Richterich & Chancerel, 1978), and contributions from Munby (1978), Widdowson (1981, 1983, 1987), and Hutchinson and Waters (1987). These provided a much-discussed NA framework in the case of Munby, and explorations into present and target situation analysis in the others, leading to examinations of wide vs narrow learning approaches, and reconsiderations of the role of the learner.

In *Communicative Syllabus Design* (1978) Munby proposed a *Communicative Needs Processor* (CNP), a model designed to profile learners and identify probable communicative language needs. It does this through a detailed series of questions regarding nine key parameters (*participant, purposive domain, setting, interaction, instrumentality, dialect, target level, communicative event, and communicative key*). While influential, the CNP has been widely criticized on a number of levels: for idealistically profiling individual learners (Holme & Chalauisaeng, 2006); for focusing on homogenous groups and ignoring inter-group influences (Coleman, 1988); for being blind to pedagogical, logistical and time constraints (Cowling, 2007; West, 1994); for its lack of learner-involvement (Nunan, 1988a); and for its reliance on subjective intuition rather than evidence-based findings (Brown, 1995; Coffey, 1984; Davies,

1981). Despite these not inconsiderable charges, Munby's CNP is valued for highlighting the "ultimate sterility of a language-centred approach to needs analysis" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 54) and for providing a useful framework of categorizing discourse needs in target situations (Brown, 1995). Inadvertently, the CNP may have also helped paved the way for simpler, more learner-centred and task-responsive NAs to emerge (Long, 2015).

Learner Involvement

Positive considerations of learner involvement and learner identities in NA and the creation of course content appear repeatedly in ESP and syllabus-related literature. Richards (1988) hailed the flexibility that an interactive NA affords. Nunan (1988a) praised the increased awareness "of what it is to be a learner" and the importance of "learning how to learn" (p. 53). Yalden (1987) like Belcher (2006) championed the presence of learner voices in content selection. Uvin (1996) noted the advantages of collaboration with learners in the selection of content, approach, and assessment. Giménez (1996) called for a renewable cycle of 'process assessment' by and for all participants, while Pitrowski (1982) and Edwards (2000) both favoured continuous two-way feedback between trainer and trainees. Edmundson and Fitzpatrick (2000) advocated routine syllabus-based negotiation with learners for increased commitment, motivation and self-reflection. Holme and Chalausaeng (2006) defended use of a negotiated syllabus for enhanced learner ownership and self-study. Echoing similar sentiments to Lin (2008), Belcher & Lukkarila (2011) argued that heightened learner investment and learning outcomes could be achieved if students were encouraged to engage with "who they are and want to become, and the contexts in which they can and will function as language users" (p. 75). Zhang (2013) called for use of narrative enquiry in NA to more fully appraise the complexity of evolving, multiple identities that learners hold in relation to professional and cultural contexts.

Present and Target Situations

Determining present and target situations of communication skills and language use is integral to how ESP needs analysis is framed. Widdowson (1981) offered two influential interpretations of needs as either 'goal-oriented' or 'process-oriented'. Arthur (1983) pointed to the former as a reference to a learner's "terminal behaviour" while the latter consisted of the "transitional behaviour" or "means of learning" required to reach a particular state (p. 167). Widdowson (1987) also posited that process-oriented approaches are preferable from a teaching standpoint given his belief that product-based courses lead to narrow competence; yet, this claim is not

supported by empirical findings. Like Widdowson, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) distinguished ‘target needs’ from ‘learning needs’ or “what the learner needs to do in the target situation” against “what the learner needs to do in order to learn” (p. 54). Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) also separated ‘present situation’ from ‘target situation’ analysis in much the same way. However, as with so much in language learning, disagreement in the literature evidently exists regarding how to confront and reduce the gaps in learners’ skill sets.

Williams (1978) and Widdowson (1983) called for a ‘wide-angle approach’ in NA and course design to address target skills through a broad range of focus points not necessarily sourced from trainees’ actual professional fields. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) agreed with this, viewing a narrow ‘subject-specific’ approach as superfluous and potentially demotivating. Ellis and Johnson (1994) concurred and used examples from a range of job sectors to illustrate the value of variation. However, Johns and Dudley-Evans (1991) rejected a wide-angle approach, challenging it on the grounds that diverse discourse communities have unique needs warranting uniquely specialised approaches. Belcher (2009a) made a similar claim, citing highly advanced studies, disciplines or work-immersion contexts in which a narrow ESP approach may be preferable. Genre analysis, corpus research, and ethnographic studies revealing culturally-determined, disciplinary specificity continue to add weight to the argument that variation should be attended to in narrowly-focused course constructions (Cheng, 2011; Hyland, 2011; Paltridge, 2009).

Despite being an advocate of specificity in course design, Hyland (2002) noted a demonstrable shift away from narrow-angle ESP approaches, citing cost, a dearth of knowledgeable specialists, difficulties in accommodating low-level learners, and a general trend towards generic discourse and general competencies as the causes. However, a more recent account has claimed that aspects taken from both approaches might be successfully incorporated together in what Huhta et al. (2013) called a “second generation needs analysis” (p.14). With an interest less in limiting dichotomies of *narrow* versus *wide* or *product* versus *process*, this focus centres squarely on *Language and Communication for Professional Purposes* (LCPP). According to the writers, whereas first generation NAs were language-centred, the second-generation is task-based, learner-centric, and informed by professional discourse activities and professional discourse communities. Here they argue that “specificity of ESP is more a question of context reliance than of occupation or profession” (p. 36). Huhta et al. therefore suggest the *CEF*

Professional Profile – a mixed methods approach to NA that seeks a ‘thick description’ of learners as professionals in precise discourse communities with specific contextualised needs.

Based heavily on the levels, domains and descriptions of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the *CEF Professional Profile* is broken into six parts of analysis and data collection: the target profession, occupational information, context information, the most frequent situations (of communication), the most demanding situations (of communication), and a ‘snapshot’ narrative of a typical working day. Together they provide scope for a detailed and thorough appraisal of a learner’s situational communication needs. It remains to be seen whether this specific nomenclature and mixed methods approach will gain the currency it aspires. However, it seems likely to become part of the ongoing discussion, as so many other areas of ESP and NA have before it.

Issues in Needs Analysis

Over time, writers have revisited and developed many NA themes. These include: categorizing needs into micro- (learner), meso- (work or educational context) and macro-levels (wider society) (Robinson, 1991); use of quantitative and qualitative methods to gather information (Brown, 1995; Long, 2005; Nation & Macalister, 2010); evaluating NA procedures for *reliability*, *validity* and *usability* or *practicality* (Brown, 1995; Nation & Macalister, 2010); use of multiple information sources and multiple perspectives (Brown, 2006; Graves, 2014; Huhta, 2010, Long, 2005), especially from domain experts (Long, 2015); that can be triangulated (Johns & Makalela, 2011; Kumaravadivelu (2013) to achieve a thick description of data (Watson-Gegeo, 1992) for a more complete and critical needs analysis (Huhta et al., 2013).

From the many examinations of NA in ESP, a degree of criticism has surfaced. One issue is that of neutrality, which some claim does not or cannot readily exist because ideological and political forces prevent objective NAs from taking place (Benesch, 1996, 2001; Robinson, 1991). Long (2015) acknowledged this same concern, along with a number of others, which he categorized into: beliefs in favour of general over technical English discourse, support for process syllabi (with content analysis coming *after* not *before* a course), concerns about learner heterogeneity making NA impractical, and claims that specialised language training or subject-specific materials that stem from NA result in restricted competencies hindered by “a linguistic straitjacket” (p. 96). However, Long summarily rejected these complaints. Instead, he insisted that NA with a distinctly task-based approach was precisely the right way to circumvent issues

affecting “traditional linguistically based analyses, in which insiders know about tasks, but not about language, and applied linguists know about language, but are usually ignorant about the content areas” (p. 116). As such, Long views the task as the perfect unit of needs analysis for both the learner and the teacher (or *trainer* as is preferred in some ESP contexts). Questions surrounding the issue of knowledge, and who possesses it, and to what degree, hold important implications in ESP.

The Role of the Trainer

The shift from ‘teacher’ to ‘trainer’ is significant in ESP, since the actions of each – teaching and training – are distinct, and have been viewed this way for quite some time. Leckey (1985) offered the useful explanation that teaching “focuses on the acquisition of knowledge with an expert in a particular subject imparting the information ... [while training is] characteristically concerned with making someone fit, qualified or proficient for a particular task” (para. 3). As several writers alluded to, ESP trainers often have no formal experience of the industries or subject matters they train others in (Hutchinson & Waters, 1981; Long, 2015; Pilbeam, 1990) although a certain level of understanding is desirable (Arthur, 1983). Such understanding may require substantial studying on the trainer’s part to bring themselves up to speed (Swales, 2000) since not doing so might raise suspicions about the trainer’s credibility (Piotrowski, 1982). Challenges facing instructor knowledge can be heightened by perceptions that trainers *should* know more than their trainees (Long, 2005), although in fact, anything beyond how language is used within ESP environment or business context is rarely expected or demanded (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Feak and Reinhart (2002) suggested that for a trainer to have comparable levels of knowledge in both applied linguistics and a learner’s professional domain is preferable. However, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect this in all but exceptional cases given the amount of self-investment, time and costly study this would likely entail.

It would be difficult to argue that industry knowledge and experience bring no advantage to ESP trainers, and it seems reasonable that having a degree of either should aid the trainer’s understanding of the target situation and communication dynamics. It might also facilitate their attempts to steer learners towards those targets more successfully (Bosher & Smalkoski, 2002). However, it is not uncommon for learners to possess far greater specialized knowledge than their trainer (Belcher, 2009a), who in turn is more likely to draw from their trainees’ experience and technical know-how than vice versa (Ellis & Johnson, 1994). Certainly in my own experience of over four years working at Company X, this was the case. Although, it was easier

to grasp certain aspects of their work as my tenure and my familiarity with in-house phraseology, customs and company culture grew as a result of learners' frequent references to them in our sessions together.

Despite potential knowledge gaps, there are ways and means to appeal to learners in a manner that helps maintain the trainer's credibility. For example if the trainer can trade the culture of the classroom for that of the boardroom, downplay pedagogical jargon in favour of industry-specific terminology and employ a more management-styled approach, they are increasingly likely to foster training conditions that learners are familiar with and more willing to engage with (Piotrowski, 1982). Combining this with appropriate practice encourages learners to function more effectively when using the English their target situations require. Training room approaches must therefore be mindful of learners' local conditions, previous learning experiences, training preferences, as well as stakeholders' various interests. Core training activities centre on contextualized instruction and authentic materials (Johns & Price, 2014) and a range of activities such as case studies (Piotrowski, 1982), communicative information-gap tasks (Edwards, 2000), role-plays with post-task reflective discussion (Bosher & Smalkoski, 2002; Long, 2015), video analysis of experienced professionals in target communication situations that learners discuss and then replicate in simulated practice (Belcher, 2009a), as well as problem-based learning (PBL) (Belcher, 2009b) . Taken together, these tasks are united in their aims to enhance performance skills, strategic communication and understanding, and they have all been utilised in ODCs at Company X. In the next section, ODCs will be presented in further detail.

Discussion

At Company X, developmental gains achieved through self-directed learning are not only held in high regard, but viewed as the norm. Expectations of trainee commitment, accountability, and active involvement are established and agreed upon from the outset of a session, especially if it is the first time a trainee is taking one. The needs analysis and feedback are by custom two-way, and self-reflection is routinely encouraged at all stages of the training process, and from one session to the next. Furthermore, given that the ODC has such a narrow window of opportunity within which to identify what exactly a learner needs to accomplish, learner involvement is essential if a path leading from their present state to the target situation is to be identified and in any way addressed.

Many workers at Company X use English to liaise with other regional offices across Asia, such as Singapore, Beijing and India, and to communicate with team leads at the company's headquarters in the USA. This communication takes the form of email, telephone and video-conferencing, as well as face-to-face meetings on a one-to-one or group basis. These interactions require Japanese staff to report results, outline strategies and negotiate sales targets or budget allocations. While the majority of employees in Tokyo are native Japanese, overseas directors frequently transfer in and out from North America, Europe and Oceania to work alongside them. As a result, some Japanese staff use English daily with senior colleagues sharing their immediate workspace. In the upper echelons of Company X, English is the dominant lingua franca. Hence, possessing good English skills is judged by many as a gatekeeper to climbing the internal corporate ladder. To this end, some employees are given yearly goals by their managers to raise their Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) scores by set amounts – a practice which appears to incentivise some, and burden others.

Examples of Training Content and Trainee Needs

ODCs allow trainees to practice English communication in a comfortable, risk-free environment, which accounts for their popularity. Motivations for attending are varied and learner needs stem from issues including assertiveness; making and resisting interruptions; listening for details and summarising; confirming and clarifying; expressing ideas logically; making small talk; using non-verbal communication; and dealing with cultural differences. In the Tokyo workspace, this translates to a range of training requests, one of which regards making presentations in English. Employees often book sessions to rehearse PowerPoint presentations, in which case, the trainer targets points of delivery that are weak or absent, such as logical structuring of ideas, clear transitions between sections, signposting of important information, as well as the quality and organizations of slides. If trainees handle questions ineffectively, practice might include reformulating enquiries and using strategies to delay or avoid giving answers in their presentations or meetings. Other trainees seek improved email clarity and bring recent correspondence to review and develop writing skills, while some people attend sessions remotely to replicate real-time conditions of telephone or video-conferencing, during which they focus on developing their listening and discussion skills, as well as meeting facilitation.

Spoken communication is often perceived by Japanese learners of English as presenting the biggest challenge (Cowling, 2007), particularly informal talk, which is at times spontaneous, unpredictable, and thus more difficult (Crosling & Ward, 2002). Consequently, a common ODC request is for informal conversation practice prior to business trips abroad. Mingling socially in English can be a source of anxiety for Company X employees in several ways: relations in domestic Japanese business settings are strictly disciplinarian (Chew, 2006 as cited in Bargiela-Chiappini, Chakorn, et al., 2007, p. 145-146); small talk in English is considerably less regulated by polite custom (Iwasaki, 2008); and the interaction patterns and sociopragmatic expectations between the L1 and L2 hold notable differences (Sato, 2007). As such, when social practices play out across the linguistic divide, assumptions about acceptable roles, language and behaviour collide (Boxer, 2002). Thankfully, training can help prepare learners to cope in such situations. For example, role-plays and simulations allow trainees to: practice ice-breakers that initiate dialogue; use smoother segues between topics; show interest while listening; ask appropriate follow-up questions to develop conversations more naturally; and display more open body language that lets others feel at ease. Through documented feedback (both formative and summative), trainees, trainers, and human resources management can chart measurable gains in learner performance.

Some trainees seek a quick confidence boost ahead of internal meetings with foreign colleagues, especially with those from India or China, whose forthright communication style is sometimes viewed as overbearing by Japanese staff. In extreme cases of second language anxiety, Japanese learners will deliberately avoid initiating discussions, introducing new topics, using clarification strategies or volunteering information (Burrows 2008). They can also struggle with turn-taking rules stemming from a lack of linguistic knowledge, confidence or a desire for more processing time (Harumi 2002; Morrow 2004). Such a lack of assertiveness typically has a negative impact on their ability to communicate effectively, which in turn can be problematic for work relations and productivity.

When speakers from different national, cultural and linguistic backgrounds interact, they are inevitably influenced by their “culture-bound views of how encounters should be conducted” (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005, p. 404) as language and culture are always and inextricably linked (O’Dowd 2003; Horibe 2008). This has important implications for Company X employees in shared work spaces with Chinese and Indian colleagues, since participants in joint meetings are prone to “incorporate their own, not necessarily shared, mother tongue patterns,

culture(s), and culturally determined conventions” (Planken & Nickerson, 2009, p. 116). Complications are exacerbated when L1 pragmatic conventions and L2 standards come into conflict (Murray 2012). To circumvent intercultural communication roadblocks when or before they arise, learners must learn to deal with pragmatic, linguistic and cultural variation (Horibe, 2008) and be mindful that “cross-cultural pragmatics is a two-way communication phenomenon with the burden of understanding falling on *both* sides” (Boxer, 2002, p. 160).

When speakers make carefully calculated adjustments to their output it can facilitate improved listener comprehension and cultivate smoother communication (Cook, 2003). For this reason, language training is beneficial when it incorporates critical thinking, consciousness-raising of difference and compensatory strategies to manage interactions (Belcher, 2004). For example, if a Company X employee feels frustrated at not being able to interrupt others to ask questions or contribute ideas during meetings, to the extent that they must send emails to other attendees afterwards to clarify the meeting’s content, they are encouraged to consider how their earlier inaction might have added to the collective workload. Understanding these implications is valuable, and hence, ODCs try to guide trainees towards becoming more cognizant of the impact their behaviour has on others. By providing opportunities in training to use language skills with greater strategic awareness, it is hoped that work communication thereafter will be more effective, and that ‘far transfer’ (Willingham, 2009) will enable trainees to apply new skills and awareness to other contexts and tasks they encounter.

ODCs can also serve as a disincentive to rely on old habits of passive or uncommunicative interaction, which unfortunately befalls some Japanese when speaking English (Yashima, 2002; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004). Patterns of non-engagement by Japanese learners of English can derive from a fear of failure or negative evaluation, excess modesty, low confidence or shyness. Unwillingness to communicate is often tied, rightly or wrongly, to their experiences of learning English through secondary (and tertiary) education (Kurihara, 2008; Lockley, 2010; McVeigh, 2001). One of the primary goals of the Japanese secondary education system is to prepare students to first take the *Senta Shiken*, the National Center Examination for University Admissions, and thereafter to sit the *Niji Shiken*, the specific examinations set by the respective institution to which each candidate applies. Such examinations heavily emphasise receptive over productive English language skills, and as a result, it has been claimed that exams have a negative washback effect on how English is taught, and how it is later used (Gorsuch, 1998; Ichige, 2006; Mori, 2002). However, the impact of washback has been

questioned by some as overinflated (Guest, 2008a, 2008b; Mulvey, 2001). Nevertheless, preferred learning/teaching styles and expectations of teacher/student roles are often shaped through these educational experiences. Inevitably, this can influence a learner's relationship with English as they move beyond university and embark on a career that requires its use.

Views on learning English can dictate the participation learners are willing to make in class or at work. This in turn can affect the quality and appropriacy of the communication produced, which may carry over into real-world exchanges in ways that are neither socially acceptable by L2 standards nor conducive to successful interaction. However, by encouraging risk-taking and critical thinking about cultural difference, and by developing learning and communication strategies (Woodrow, 2006; Saiko, 2011), ODCs can help reduce negative feelings about engaging in a second language and help support transitions between L1 to L2 norms (Biddle 2005). In doing so, it is hoped that trainees will boost their confidence, participate more actively in English, and strengthen their belief in the value of group cooperation, discussion and task-completion in the target language (Fushino 2010). If this is accompanied by greater understanding of sociocultural and sociopragmatic expectations, it should benefit future language application at work. But is this achievable under ODC conditions?

Reflections and Recommendations

One obvious disadvantage of the ODC format is a lack of time. The allotted 45 minutes per session is insufficient to conduct a thorough appraisal of needs; nor is it enough to cover every aspect of the target situation, establish all language proficiencies or identify relevant background information. Extended sessions would be preferable to maximize learner input, perform a longer NA, and afford greater scope for skills practice, feedback and reflection. However, there is the question of departmental costs to consider, trainee responsibilities outside of the training room, and the additional concern that if a longer or even fixed day, time or term were attached to these sessions, their charm might be diminished in the eyes of participants, since part of their appeal is that they are short and not compulsory. Nevertheless, some changes could perhaps improve overall session quality, learning outcomes and work transfer.

One way to enhance the effectiveness of ODCs could be for trainers to shadow employees in the actual performance of their duties as part of a triangulation of data for NA and ongoing monitoring of performance. This access would allow trainers to observe and experience learners' skill sets in real-time work conditions rather than being limited to just the inauthentic

confines of a training room. Encouragingly, successful work-shadowing and observations are documented in recent studies (Evans, 2010; Spence & Liu, 2013). Thus, if a Company X employee were tasked with facilitating regular regional teleconferences with other Asian offices, the trainer could witness their efforts first-hand either as part of the initial NA or as a means to gauge work transfer mid- or post-training. While this would need to be as unobtrusive as possible to minimize unwanted distractions or influence, it could afford valuable insights into the learner's *genuine* needs, progress and skills acquisition, and potentially uncover other aspects of performance that might otherwise remain hidden.

Unfortunately, while work-shadowing could be advantageous to trainee development, it faces strong opposition due to privacy and confidentiality concerns. Hence, it is currently not authorized by the human resources department at Company X. Huhta et al. (2013) highlighted the rich data and insight such access might offer in terms of illuminating texts, discourse types and communication situations. However, they counterbalanced these gains against the potentially overwhelming and time-consuming nature of this approach. As such, they recommended it only for isolated case studies. This is a reality that trainers and ESP practitioners must try to manage, which is frustrating given the valuable source of authentic spoken data it might provide, even if, as Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, et al. (2007) explain, it is “notoriously difficult for researchers to gain access to in business and organizational settings” (p. 119). Whether sufficient diffusion of innovation (Long, 2015) will reach a point where studies like Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005) (which benefited greatly from access to authentic data) will become more commonplace, is hard to ascertain. In theory however, work shadowing could be of tremendous benefit to the formal ODC training session in support of both NA and the appraisal of subsequent work transfer to target situations.

Another method to improve ODCs would be to use technologies to document workplace communication for analysis and review. Use of video technology has been reported in various language training contexts: in English for Medical Purposes (EMP) (Bosher & Smalkoski, 2002; Eggly, 2002; Hussin, 2002), in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Rylander, Clark & Derrah, 2013) and in English for Business Purposes (EBP) (Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2003). In the increasingly multidisciplinary, multifaceted work environment of a multinational corporation, the integrated skill sets needed to function effectively make purposeful training an on-going necessity (Franklin, 2007). The same is true of communicating successfully and interculturally with a diverse range of colleagues, customers, and clients. It seems possible that

just as tasks might be the perfect unit of NA (Long, 2015), technology might be a perfect medium through which to document and review target situation performance for use in short-term trainings like ODCs.

Disappointingly, just as Edwards (2000) was denied access to internal banking meetings to document authentic language use by trainees, the option to record employees in the course of their work at Company X is currently prohibited. However, with the evolution of telecommunication technologies, multipoint videoconferencing, web-conferencing, smart devices, applications and software, the platforms and practical capabilities to use authentic content more in NA and training certainly exist (Graves, 2014). A recently-reported long-term project conducted at the Swiss national broadcaster SRG SSR highlights what is possible when substantial access to real-time communication across multiple platforms and discourse environments is granted (Perrin, 2015). This five-year study revealed key instances of intercultural communication breakdown, and in time, of strategic resolution. Eventually, this discovery led to the creation of new forms of ‘best practice’ for the parties involved, and a valuable return for the client broadcaster. While the 45-minute ODC is a far cry from this longitudinal investigation, the principle of using technology to explore and improve communication paradigms remains relevant. In fact, one could make a strong case that given the complexities of today’s ‘New Work Order’ (Roberts, 2010, p. 216) of media and technology, and the greater depth to the business and communication skills employed (Vertovec, 2007), making use of the same technology for the purposes of NA and language training makes good business sense. The challenge is making the proposal to document staff communication one that companies will agree to. Discovering a new best practice is of course an attractive incentive; however, getting the proverbial foot in the door before that best practice can be found is difficult.

For the modest needs of ODC, and from an ESP practitioner or trainer’s perspective, I would argue that video technology would suffice in support of existing ODC NA and training. Ideally however, use of technology would target the full hybrid spectrum of multimodal written, spoken, visual and electronic communication acts that employees engage in (Kramsch 2006), especially in longer-term training courses. This is because modern communication tools have changed traditional discourse constructs of meetings, discussions and work correspondence. Staff no longer need to be in the same room, building or time zone to communicate directly with each other and with customers. Workers still engage in meetings and presentations, but use

a multitude of communication mediums to do so, including email, virtual message boards, blogs, instant messaging and social media networks (Kress, 1998). As Belcher (2004) explained, these are “situated somewhere between oracy and literacy yet also extending beyond those realms in their inclusion of visual and auditory “literacies” as well – via color, sound, graphics and video” (p. 177). A decade ago, when Belcher made her observation, these cybergenres were just emerging, whereas now they are very much established standards. This has led to new rules, expectations and business communication etiquette (Duff, 2008) made more complex by intercultural and sociopragmatic factors which are far easier to deconstruct and discuss in trainings if there are visual and audio records to access for analysis of authentic interaction. Arguably, there is just cause for incorporating technology into the NA and training process, provided the parameters of privacy and confidentiality are not breached. Again, this is a large proviso, and one that companies may not be easily convinced by. Nevertheless, use of technology is an area of ESP that could prove fruitful for learning and development outcomes, and thus, deserves greater consideration.

Conclusion

As in other countries around the world, English is a skill held in high regard in corporate Japan, and employees at Company X’s Tokyo offices have tangible needs for developing it. Time, observation and recording restrictions aside, they provide staff with a viable platform to develop task-specific language and work skills, with an emphasis on practical, strategic application, and immediate work transfer, and in this sense, ODC trainings are a success. They also help cement a heightened awareness of sociocultural and sociopragmatic difference, and accordingly, encourage employees to consider the impact their own use of language has on those they work with. Lastly, ODCs empower trainees to take proactive, autonomous steps in their professional development, which makes learning more effective and aids motivation. For these reasons, ODCs are a useful, albeit limited, short-term training format. If extended to include approved trainee-shadowing with options to record work performance before, during, and after training, some of those limitations might be removed, and the returns on language training investment raised for the better.

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Developing a Theoretical Framework for ESP Teacher Training in Vietnam

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Abstract

It is surprising that ESP teacher training has been neglected though there has been an increasing demand for courses in ESP. According to Mahapatra (2011), most countries do not have well-established pre-service training programs for prospective ESP teachers, and ESP is often found to be taught by teachers who may have started their career as General English (GE) teachers. The shortage of qualified ESP teachers is more serious in Vietnam because English language teaching came to Vietnam very late (in 1990s) due to some historical and political reasons. Recently, in order to provide a sufficient number of ESP teachers, a number of pre-service ESP teacher training programs have emerged in Vietnam. These programs have revealed a number of problems regarding training materials and approaches. These problems may be attributed to the fact that there has been no prior theoretical framework of ESP teacher training corresponding to the context of Vietnam. The present paper gives an overview of current issues in ESP instruction and ESP teacher training in the world and in Vietnam. Drawing on this review it aims to develop a theoretical framework of ESP teacher training which is applicable to Vietnam as well as similar contexts.

Key words: *ESP teacher training, theoretical framework, Vietnam's context*

Developing a Theoretical Framework for ESP Teacher Training in Vietnam

1. A demand for a theoretical framework of ESP teacher training in Vietnam

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) found its way into Vietnam in the 1990s and is increasingly gaining in popularity. The rising number of economic and cultural organizations in the country after the Open-door Policy issued by the Government in 1990 has created a demand for a resource of professionals who are able to use English to communicate in a professional environment. This social demand has led to a strong need for learning ESP in colleges, universities and vocational schools in Vietnam.

With the aim of providing sufficient ESP teachers for all of 369 higher education institutions in Vietnam and solving shortcomings in ESP instruction due to the lack of truly qualified ESP teachers (T.K.T. Nguyen, 2007; H.T. Nguyen, 2007), a number of ESP teacher training programs for undergraduates have emerged. Nevertheless, there has been no prior theoretical framework of ESP teacher training corresponding to the context of Vietnam. Conventional ESP teacher education programs, which focus on course design, genre analysis techniques, or theory-into-practice training models, are far from being effective to train well-qualified ESP practitioners owing to the lack of the context-specific principles (Huttner et al., 2009; Northcott, 1997, Boswood & Marriott, 1994). The current ESP teacher training programs in Vietnam were thus designed largely based on an EFL teacher training framework and experience and understanding of the teacher-designers and administrators (V. H. Pham, 2007).

Researchers have recently identified two main problems in ESP practice in Vietnam: out-of-date, unsystematic teaching materials and unqualified teachers who lack content knowledge of the discipline or ESP pedagogical competence or both (T.K.T. Nguyen, 2007; H.T. Nguyen, 2007; Do & Cai, 2010). Most of the ESP teachers did not receive any ESP teacher training and were transformed to ESP teachers from GE teachers mainly through self-training. Moreover, they are often assigned to teach more than one ESP course, due to the shortage of ESP teachers at Vietnamese universities. These are also problems in ESP practice in countries sharing the Vietnamese educational setting like Iran (Amirian & Tavakoli, 2009) and Turkey (Savas, 2009). According to these researchers, the major cause leading to such problems is the lack of systematic and effective ESP teacher training programs.

It is time for a framework of effective ESP teacher training, applicable to the Vietnamese context, to be developed. The present paper is a report of our literary research as a preliminary effort in our long-term goal of developing a pre-service ESP teacher training program in Vietnam. Drawing on a review of current issues in ESP instruction, a comparison of ESP instruction and GE instruction, and new insights from previous research in ESP teacher training, we aim to sketch out a theoretical framework of ESP teacher training.

In order to find out the context-specific principles that guide the translation of the above theoretical framework into practice, it is necessary to test this framework in specific contexts. Therefore, we planned to pilot the framework to develop an ESP teacher training program in a Vietnamese university. By publishing the present paper, we would also like to call for the framework to be adopted and contested by ESP practitioners and researchers in Asia. We hope the present article will serve as a ground for further discussion and development of ESP teacher training in Asia.

2. A review of current issues in ESP instruction

As a matter of fact, ESP combines subject matters and English language teaching. However, how to combine subject and language is always a matter of controversy in ESP teaching history. Related to content versus language, the following questions have been continuously raised in ESP literature.

2.1 Who should teach ESP?

There has been much discussion among ESP scholars and practitioners about who should teach ESP: “Whether the EFL teacher or the specialist in the field should teach ESP courses is the matter of controversy” (Maleki, 2008, p.2). Some people claim that GE teachers do not possess the necessary grasp of the subject matter; therefore, they may not be able to exchange ideas with students which more or less affect the learning outcomes. However, Sadeghi (2005) argues that the ESP teacher should have the same qualities of the GE teacher. The reason lies in the fact that ESP classes are more similar to GE classes rather than different.

Koné (2007) thinks that basic knowledge in business, science and technology is required for an ESP teacher. Maleki (2008) provides empirical evidence to “strongly recommend that ESP courses be taught by EFL teachers rather than specialists in the field” (p.16). In brief, GE teachers who possess a basic level of background subject knowledge are agreed to be qualified to teach ESP.

2.2 Should the focus of ESP classes be language or subject, real content or carrier content?

By and large, theorists agree that the focus of an ESP course should be on language rather than real content. “It is not the aim of the exercise [in ESP classes] to teach students about the ‘life cycle’, although certain lexical items, such as ‘fertilised’ or ‘decomposes’ may be useful” (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998, p.11). Supporting this point, Maleki (2008) comments that the meaning of the word ‘specific’ in the term ‘ESP’ does not mean ‘specialized’; and the aim of teaching ESP is not to teach technical terminology or jargon in a discipline. Clearly, these authors imply that teaching such technical concepts is not the purpose of ESP courses.

2.3 Should ESP materials be language-focused or content-focused?

Hutchinson and Waters hold that, “as many of us know to our cost, the mere presence of subject-related content in materials is no guarantee of motivation” (1983, p.112). The introduction of content into teaching materials may attract the learners. Nevertheless, a number of scholars agree that the discipline content is often only a ‘vehicle’ for language practice and the important thing is to integrate the subject matters in the ESP materials in the right way.

In sum, the scholars agree that ESP is a language course and thus ought to focus on developing language and be taught by language instructors who have basic discipline knowledge. They also note that a flexible approach and teaching strategies should be adopted to best fit with the local context of ESP teaching, because there is no one teaching methodology that is relevant to all ESP situations. ESP now accepts “many different approaches and a willingness to mix different types of material and methodologies” (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p.30).

3. A comparison of GE and ESP teacher training

ESP teacher training is often based on GE teacher training because GE and ESP practices share a lot of similarities. However, highlighting the differences between GE and ESP practices is the main focus of the present section because it is more helpful with regards to the task of developing an effective theoretical framework for ESP teacher training.

ESP classes are more similar to GE classes rather than different (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In fact, GE is the premier stage for ESP and ESP is the advanced stage of EFL teaching. Thus ESP teaching is part of an English language teacher's career. GE and ESP teacher training therefore share "theoretical constructs like English subject knowledge, pedagogic knowledge, teacher-learner autonomy, self-directed learning, etc." (Feng, 2010, p.198). Yet, ESP as a multi-disciplinary activity is designed for specific disciplines, which defines the particularity of ESP teacher training compared with GE teacher training.

It is agreed that ESP and GE merely differ from each other in their purpose of learning a foreign language. Hence "ESP concentrates more on language in context, than on teaching the grammar and language structures required for fluency in daily conversations in informal settings as EFL does" (Savaş, 2009, p.401). Moreover, ESP teachers have such responsibility as to keep context and comprehensibility foremost in their instruction to select and adapt authentic materials for use in class, to provide scaffolding for students' linguistic content learning, and to create learner-centred classrooms (Stryker & Leaver, 1997). Consequently, ESP teachers have to possess linguistic competency in specific areas but this cannot be regarded as adequate (Bell, 1996). It is necessary for them to possess a certain level of background knowledge in their students' academic subjects of ESP teaching in order to meet these challenges.

Additionally, the ESP teacher is expected to be an evaluator in the program (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), because the ESP practitioner is often involved in various types of evaluation to assess whether the learners have been able to make use of what they learned and to find out what they need to be taught. The ESP teacher also needs to be a course designer and material provider for the learners (Savaş, 2009). Due to the variation and continuous changes in the scientific world, it is rarely possible to use a particular textbook

without the need for supplementary materials and sometimes no really suitable published materials exist to meet student needs. Therefore, ESP practitioners often have to provide the material for the course. All of the roles of ESP instructors entail ESP pedagogical competence which can be achieved through an ESP methodology course.

ESP teacher training therefore should be designed to help teacher trainees obtain such qualifications to complete different responsibilities of the ESP teacher. The key differences between GE and ESP, which are reflected in teacher training and identified by the above authors, are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Contrasting GE Teacher Training and ESP Teacher Training

GE	ESP
Grammar and language structures required for fluency in daily conversations	Language in context for fluency in professional/academic conversations
↓	↓
Qualifications of GE teachers	Qualifications of ESP teachers
Communicative competence in social settings	Communicative competence in professional/academic settings
Ability to impart language knowledge	Ability to impart field-specific language knowledge
Ability to use ready-made syllabus or text books	Analyze learners' language needs
	Make special material preparation
	Design and evaluate a field-specific syllabus
	Understand subject concepts encoded in field-specific texts
↓	↓
GE Teacher Training	ESP Teacher Training
Linguistic competency	Field-specific linguistic competency
ELT pedagogic competence	ESP pedagogic competence
	Basic content knowledge

4. A review of previous research in ESP teacher training

Despite the currently increasing demand for ESP teachers, pre-service & in-service teacher education programs throughout the world have so far largely neglected this important area (Chen, 2000, Mahapatra, 2011). Master (1997) states that: "ESP teacher education in the

US today can thus be said to be minimal at best . . . In most cases, professional ESP practitioners train themselves, learning as they go” (as cited in Chen, 2000, p.389).

Traditional ESP teacher education programs conventionally focus on course design, genre analysis techniques, or theory-into-practice training models. Researchers; however, remark that such programs are not effective to train competent ESP practitioners (Huttner et al., 2009; Northcott, 1997; Boswood & Marriott, 1994). Recent scholars advocate various approaches to ESP teacher education. Northcott (1997) insists on trainees getting involved in actual ESP settings by incorporating a practice dimension into teacher training programs. Huttner et al. (2009) argue for the incorporation of the principles of teacher education, applied linguistics and language teaching methodology as a basis for ESP teacher training. The advantage of this model is its flexibility of application to diverse ESP settings, which proves to be effective among TESP (Teaching ESP) graduates at the University of Vienna (Feng, 2010).

In China - a similar ESP context to Vietnam, Li (2001), who explores the overall quality of ESP teachers and calls for the high-quality ESP teachers with multi-disciplinary subject knowledge and high English proficiency, proposes an ESP teacher education model of joint teaching between GE and subject teachers. This author highlights the essentials for the joint teaching to operate in practice. Some others suggest an ESP teacher training course which consists of two parts: language improvement and professional studies. Chen (2005) attempts to build up a theoretical framework on ESP teacher education by combining the language teacher learning theory with ESP teaching theory. Most recently, Koné (2007) has developed and successfully implemented a pre-service ESP teacher training program in Cote D’Ivoire, which includes both content-based and methodology learning.

5. A theoretical framework for Pre-service ESP Teacher Training (PETT)

The outcomes of the above studies serve as critical guidelines for our development of a theoretical framework for ESP teacher training in Vietnam. The framework described in this section is mainly based on the PETT framework in the context of a French-speaking country – Cote D’Ivoire (Koné, 2007). This framework was chosen because Cote D’Ivoire shares the linguistic context with Vietnam, where the national language (L1) is the language of

instruction for non-language subjects and L1 may be employed in foreign language classes. In addition, the PETT program in Cote D'Ivoire, which was sponsored by the British Council, has been successfully implemented for a number of years. Finally, the current PETT practices in Vietnam share a number of features with the PETT in this French-speaking country.

The PETT in Cote D'Ivoire was originally developed from Thomas's description of competence layers, which include Language Learning Competence (LLC), Language Teacher Competence (LTC) and Language Teacher Education Competence (LTEC) as illustrated in Figure 1.

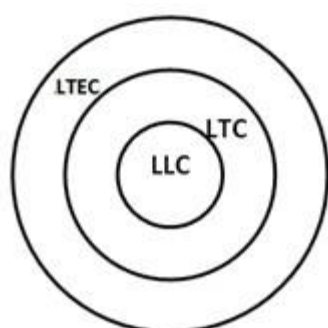


Figure 1 Competence Layers - LLC: LTC: LTEC

(Thomas, 1987, p.35)

Koné then added one extra layer that he called “ESP Teacher Competence - ETC” (2007, p.7) to form the theoretical framework for the PETT in Cote D'Ivoire. We replaced the LTEC layer in Thomas's figure with the ETC layer devised by Koné to build up a conceptual framework for PETT (see Figure 1). Accordingly, non-native ESL teachers must have the first two layers (LLC and LTC), and non-native ESP teachers should have the third layer (ETC) as well. PETT thus aims at providing ESP teacher trainees with ETC. Trainees for the PETT to be selected are those who gain a diploma confirming that they already have LLC and LTC.

Objectives of PETT

As previously discussed, teaching ESP requires additional skills and knowledge in comparison with GE teaching. Such skills and knowledge is termed ‘ESP teacher competence’ which is defined to consist of field-specific language competency, basic multi-disciplinary knowledge, and ESP pedagogic competence (Koné, 2007). The overall purpose of PETT is to provide prospective ESP teachers with such qualifications.

Components of PETT

To achieve the purpose, ESP teacher training should be both content-oriented and intended for learning methodology (Koné, 2007). PETT thus consists of two main components: *ESP Methodology* – to provide trainees with ESP pedagogic competence, and *ESP Acquisition* – to equip them with field-specific linguistic competency and basic multi-disciplinary knowledge.

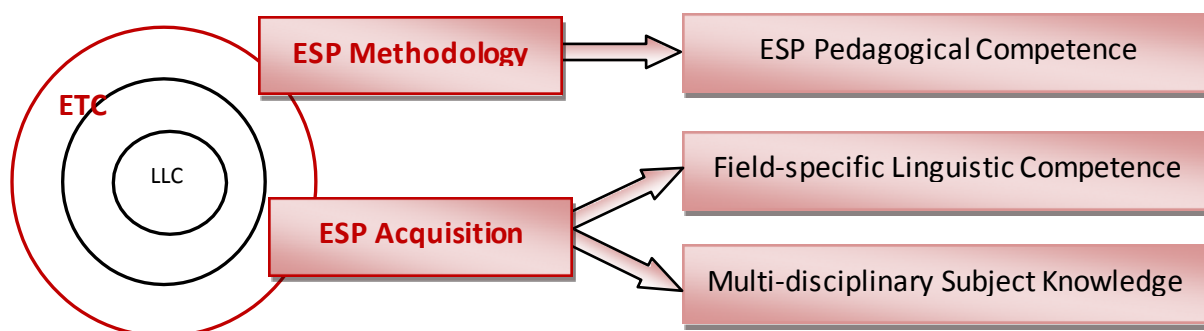


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework for ESP Teacher Training - LLC: LTC: ETC

Adapted from Thomas (1987) and Koné (2007)

ESP Methodology component

The specific objectives of this component are expressed in the following table.

Table 2: Objectives of ESP Methodology (Koné, 2007, p.17)

No.	Objectives
(i)	to provide trainees with some knowledge in Applied Linguistics;
(ii)	to provide trainees with theoretical and practical knowledge in ESP;
(iii)	to give trainees the opportunity to design teaching materials and evaluate them in their classrooms;
(iv)	to teach trainees how to evaluate teaching materials on the market;
(v)	to teach trainees how to assess the language needs of students in technical education and to teach them how to plan courses relevant to their needs.

These objectives of the Methodology course enable trainees to meet the above-mentioned requirements for ESP teachers, who are not only teachers in class but also material designers, learners' language needs analysts and course evaluators (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Savaş, 2009). The constructs of ESP Methodology are also advocated by above-mentioned researchers in ESP teacher education (Huttner et al., 2009; Northcott, 1997; and Feng, 2010).

ESP Acquisition component

The learners are ESP teacher trainees, who are language students and already have English proficiency but little subject knowledge. *ESP Acquisition* needs to provide trainees with both field-specific linguistic competency and basic content knowledge of different fields. Hence, ESP Acquisition is characterized by the following aspects.

- *Offering basic multi-disciplinary subject knowledge:*

Future ESP teachers should possess basic multi-disciplinary subject knowledge (Feng, 2010). Phillipson (1992) holds that basic knowledge in business and science and technology is essential because “English has a dominant position in science, technology, medicine, and computers; in research books, periodicals, and software; in transactional business, trade, shipping, and aviation, etc...” (as cited in Koné, 2007, p.15). For these reasons, several courses of EBE and EST should be offered for ESP teacher trainees.

- *CBI approach and dual purpose of ESP instruction:*

Koné (2007) recommends Content-based Instruction – CBI, which implies combining language and content learning, being adopted to ESP for future ESP teachers. Brinton, Snow & Wesche (1989) identify three models for CBI: theme-based, sheltered, and adjunct courses. The theme-based course is usually an ESL course with a content orientation whose goal is L2 competence within specific topic areas. In the theme-based course, the language instructor is responsible for both language and content. The *CBI theme-based model* is adopted for the framework because it best serves the purposes of ESP teacher training. Hereafter, CBI is used to refer to ‘theme-based CBI model’ for short.

- *Language instructors should teach ESP*

CBI approach allows the language teacher who has general subject knowledge to teach ESP courses (Koné, 2007).

- *Cross-disciplinary joint teaching:*

However, in case ESP teachers have difficulties dealing with both language and subject matters, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) recommend a joint-teaching model which is based on the cooperation among language teachers and subject teachers, as the most efficient way to develop ESP teaching and teacher education. Supporting this point of view, Savaş (2009, p.403) comments that “the best way of teaching ESP and training the future ESP teachers is to perform classroom activities collaboratively”.

- *Integration of four language skills:*

CBI approach allows the incorporation of all language skills within subject matter, as at higher levels language can be perfected through content (Kavaliauskiene, 2005). Concentration on one skill therefore is limiting (Chitravelu, 1980; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), especially in case of ESP for ESP teacher trainees.

- *ESP teaching materials with basic subject knowledge:*

Subject knowledge of ESP materials is at basic level (Koné, 2007), because ESP practising teachers are not specialists of the field and their trainees do not need to have specialized knowledge of the discipline.

- *The role of L1 in ESP class:*

Dudley-Evans, Shuttlesworth and Phillips (undated) comment on the role of native language in ESP class: “No harm is done, for example, by translating for medical students the names of the diseases; indeed a lot of time and effort is saved and it could well be that in this case there is no alternative” (as cited in Avand, 2009, p.49-50). Varzgar (1990) maintains that, “as translation should be a subsidiary activity in TEFL, it should be an essential activity in ESP” (p.77). The proper use of L1 can result in positive effects and facilitate the ESP learning and teaching process.

- *The importance of linguistic elements:*

Grammar, lexis, register, discourse and genres are linguistic elements that are centered in the ESP class (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). This argument is backed up by many scholars of the field. Swales (1983) states that the importance of vocabulary in ESP is now widely accepted. Regarding genre analysis, Basturkmen argues that “one central concern for [ESP] teaching is how best to help the learners acquire genres” (2006, p.59). Throughout ESP history, specialists have also been concerned with discourse analysis. Olsen & Huckin (1990) and Daoud (1991) recommend a teaching strategy, based on the characters of the subject community in which the discourse is found. ESP teachers are required to have discourse competence across community boundaries, thus “ESP Practitioner Training needs to address the intersecting modes of professional discourse which operate in a given ESP context” (Boswood & Marriott, 1994, p.90).

According to Bhatia (2008), linguistic genres have often been analyzed in isolation without taking into account the study of professional practices. Drawing on this, Bhatia argued for an integration of discursive and professional practices in ESP acquisition. Therefore, it is suggested that linguistic elements embedded in professional practices are indispensable in ESP for prospective ESP teachers who need to achieve profession-specific language proficiency through ESP courses.

Conclusion

The present paper is a preliminary attempt to respond to the need for a development of an effective theoretical framework for ESP teacher training in Vietnam. We conduct a review of literature in ESP instruction, contrast GE and ESP teacher training and draw on previous research in ESP teacher training to develop a pre-service ESP teacher training framework for the Vietnamese context. Our framework defines the objectives of pre-service ESP teacher training and sketches the components of a pre-service ESP teacher training program.

We argue that the overall purpose of PETT is to provide prospective ESP teachers with “ESP teacher competence”, which consists of field-specific language competency, basic multi-disciplinary knowledge, and ESP pedagogic competence. ESP teacher competence can be categorized into two main components: 1) *ESP Methodology* – to provide trainees with ESP

pedagogic competence can be developed in ESP Methodology course; and 2) *ESP Acquisition* – to equip them with field-specific linguistic competency and basic multi-disciplinary knowledge.

The objective of ESP Methodology component is to provide prospective teachers with knowledge in ESP, Applied Linguistics, knowledge and skills involving material design, material evaluation and needs analysis.

With regards to the ESP Acquisition component, it is suggested that a CBI approach with a dual purpose of ESP instruction should be adopted to offer prospective teachers with basic multi-disciplinary subject knowledge. Furthermore, the ESP instruction should integrate four language skills and be conducted mainly by language instructors. However, when necessary, it may require cross-disciplinary joint teaching. In addition, subject knowledge of ESP materials should be at a basic level. Regarding instruction language, a proper use of first language may bring about positive effects; hence, it does not need to be banned completely in the ESP class. Last but not least, the ESP Acquisition component should cover various linguistic elements such as grammar, lexis, register, discourse and genres. It is noted that these linguistic elements should be presented with a consideration of professional practices.

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Case Study of the Effects of Autonomous Text Dictation on College-level Engineering-major EFL Learners' Listening Comprehension

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Abstract

The study investigated the effect of autonomous text dictation on engineering-major EFL learners' listening comprehension. The six participants in this study are from China University of Mining and Technology (Beijing) and they have extensive English learning experience, yet have serious English listening difficulty. The participants did dictation on 4-6 texts per week for 7-8 weeks. The analysis of the results from the pretest and the posttest, the interview and the observation of the dictation process revealed a generally positive outcome in students' accurate identification of word boundaries, they improved performance in spelling and grammar and the identification of known words in the listening texts. The autonomous dictation is also perceived to have promoted participants' awareness of learning English and established a positive attitude and motivation towards English learning. However, due to the participants' overemphasis on details during dictation, negative effects of autonomous dictation on the understanding of general meaning in the listening text is also observed. The study suggests three-step in class dictation to be combined with autonomous outside-class dictation.

Keywords: *learner autonomy; text dictation; engineering-major EFL learners; listening comprehension*

Introduction

We didn't understand a word you said in class or anything the recording you played talked about. What are we going to do with our English listening? Our provinces don't have English listening test for the College Entrance Examination and we barely listened to any English before coming to this university.

The extract above is a complaint made by Liu, Yang and Chang (three of the participants of the present study) to one of us, their instructor, during their first class break in the College English class. Frustration in English listening has been commonly observed among L2 learners, especially among low-proficiency learners (Renandya & Farrell, 2010). Learners having problems in their listening face difficulties connecting the sound of a familiar word with its spelling and they lack the competence in identifying separate words in connected speeches of relatively normal speed (Kuo, 2010). The washback effect of the College Entrance Examination (CEE) in Mainland China worsens the problem for students who do not take listening as part of the CEE.

The students in the present study share another identity—they are majoring in engineering in a top engineering university in China. English classrooms in engineering universities in mainland China are characterized with silence (Luo & Zhang, 2009). In the past year, the students in our classrooms demonstrated a lack of interaction and a decreasing interest and marginalized attitude towards English (e.g. they play with mobile phones in classes; they seldom study English outside the class). The low English listening competence for students in China (especially engineering students) and the low motivation inside classrooms (in engineering universities in particular) negatively influence one another.

In order to solve the problem, we adopted partial dictations (Kuo, 2010) and three-step dictations (as in Jafarpur & Yamini, 1993; Kiany & Shiramiry, 2002; Rahimi, 2008) in our classrooms with materials of lower-intermediate level (e.g. the example parts of a series of programs in the podcast *The English We Speak* from the BBC Learning English). Since students were not responding well to the materials, the recordings were played many times, especially the parts where students had difficulty segmenting connected speech, which was time consuming and unrewarding for low proficiency students like Liu, Yang and Chang. We decided to conduct a case study so that we could observe the dictation process of individual students intensively in order to have a better understanding of the problems students face and of the way and the extent to which autonomous text dictation help low proficiency students improve their English listening competence.

Literature Review

Dictation has not always been accepted as an effective means for teaching and testing. During the past two centuries, the recognition of the role dictation plays in language teaching and testing has changed with main stream theories in language teaching (Stansfield, 1985). The validity of dictation as a testing device has been questioned widely in the 1960s (Brooks, 1960; Lado, 1961; Rivers, 1968; Harris, 1969) and gained much support in the 1970s and 1980s (Oller, 1971; Valette, 1977; Cohen, 1980; Morris, 1983).

In contrast, both early methodological considerations (Sweet, 1899; Joynes, 1899; Brooks, 1960; Rivers, 1968) and empirical studies (Brown, 1915; Valette, 1964) favored dictation as an efficient method of language teaching and learning. Recent decades witnessed a revival of empirical studies on dictation with positive results in the teaching and learning of English as

foreign / second language (Kiany & Shiramiry, 2002; Kuo, 2010; Li & Luo, 2004; Rahimi, 2008; Yang, 2009).

Though generally positive, the use of dictation as part of learning did not always yield positive results. Jafarpur and Yamini (1993) conducted a study with 44 English major students in an Iranian university with the experimental group doing dictation on sixty 55-156 word articles, ranging in terms of difficulty with various styles and content, over a course of 16 weeks in a conversation course. Each dictation took about 5 minutes and the review of the dictation for the previous week took about 4 minutes. The students listened to the texts in a normal speed during the first and the third listening and with pauses between chunks for the second listening (three-step dictation). The results in the posttest showed no statistically significant differences between the scores for the experimental group and the control group in terms of listening, grammar, vocabulary reading and cloze test. There was even no detected difference between the groups on the dictation tests. The lack of improvement was explained with respect to the amount of instructions given, the incubation hypothesis, and fossilization hypothesis.

In Rahimi (2008), the participants were 65 English major students doing dictation on 50 articles over a course of 17 weeks. The dictation for each session lasted for 10 minutes. Similar to Jafarpur and Yamini (1993), the length of the articles ranged from 50 to 150 words, increasing in terms of difficulty. Unlike Jafarpur and Yamini's study, the participants were given more time to review their previous dictation with discussions, guesses and also corresponding tutorials on pronunciation. The results of the study showed improvement on grammar, vocabulary, reading and listening for the participants in the experimental group, while only on vocabulary for the participants in the control group. The research also reported less improvement on listening and grammar, with more improvement on reading and vocabulary.

Studies specifically tackling listening comprehension also confirm positive effect of dictation practice on listening. Li and Luo (2004) reported better English material understanding ability for the students who received systematic dictation practice on British and American culture and VOA special English news. Two classes (39 students each) of freshman English major college students in a Chinese university participated in the study for one semester. The students in the experimental group showed great improvement in terms of their ability to identify the minimal pairs, liaisons, weak forms, explosives and assimilations. Statistical comparison of the listening test results showed better performance of the students in the experimental group on the dictation

test (three times reading), news summary, sentence identification, dialogue comprehension and text comprehension.

The positive effect of dictation was also reported on elementary and non-English major EFL learners (Kiany & Shiramiry, 2002; Kuo, 2010). In Kiany and Shiramiry (2002), eleven sessions of dictation of the materials in the course book yielded better performance of the adult primary EFL learners in the control group on the posttest. In the study of Kuo (2010), thirty one engineering students in Taiwan University were given partial dictation on a teaching program *Studio Classroom* over a course of eight weeks with guidance for the topics, pronunciation tutorials, aids of electronic dictionary and corresponding listening quizzes. In this research, the dictation practice effectively improved students' listening ability from the pretest to the posttest.

The results of the empirical studies reviewed above indicate a positive effect of dictation on students' listening comprehension. However, such results can be attributed to a number of factors or combination of factors. First, two of the aforementioned studies (Rahimi, 2008; Kuo, 2010) involve pronunciation tutorials and other forms of activities related to the dictation materials, such as discussions, word guesses, previews, quizzes, etc. Second, Li and Luo (2004) and Rahimi (2008) are concerned with English major students. English major students have more frequent contact with English materials and have higher motivation for learning English. The students in the experimental groups are also more inclined to listen to more English materials than the students in the control group besides the dictation texts. Third, Kiany and Shiramiry (2002) studied elementary school students; therefore, the result is not comparable to that of the other studies.

In other words, definitive influence of dictation *per se* on the improvement of the students' listening comprehension cannot be generalized based on these studies. The reason for the improvement could be a combination of the dictation practice with factors such as the pronunciation tutorials and the other relevant activities. Moreover, the concern with a special group of students (English major, engineering major, elementary students) and relatively small number of participants do not support a generalization for a positive effect of dictation on students' listening comprehension.

In order to solve the problem that lower-proficiency engineering major students face in their listening and the fact that they find it difficult to keep up with the dictations in class, our study examines the effectiveness of autonomous dictation practice outside the classroom setting.

Though not explicitly emphasized, Li and Luo's (2004) research represents well-planned autonomous dictation. However, unlike the English-major participants in their study, engineering-major students usually do not have the amount of exposure to English materials as English-major students do. Therefore, we aim to consider exclusively the effect of autonomous text dictation on engineering-major EFL learners' listening comprehension. In this study, we also include tutorials from the participants' instructor (one of the researchers) since students face frustration during the dictation process due to their incorrect pronunciation and / or a lack of knowledge of pronunciation.

The Study

Research Questions

The present research aims to answer the following questions:

1. To what degree does autonomous text dictation affect college level engineering-major EFL learners' listening comprehension?
2. How do the participants perceive the effect of the autonomous text dictation practice?

Participants

The participants in this case study are all engineering-major students from China University of Mining and Technology (Beijing), a top engineering university in Mainland China. A very important motivation for the students to learn English is to pass the College English Test Band 4 (CET4)¹, which is part of the requirements for obtaining a bachelor's degree. However, students do not give English much importance since they have about six opportunities to take the test. Their contact with English outside the class is mainly through music and TV shows, in which they heavily rely on the Chinese subtitles.

There were originally seven participants in this study, three of whom (mentioned in the introduction) came voluntarily to one of the researchers, their English instructor, for help, while the other four were selected from 108 students on the basis that 1) they have difficulty understanding listening materials in English; 2) They are motivated to improve their English listening. However, one of the students dropped out from the study because he was unable to

¹ The test is administered twice a year (June and December) nationwide by the National College English Testing Committee on behalf of the Higher Education Department, Ministry of Education, People's Republic of China.

meet with the researchers on a regular basis and failed to keep up with the amount of dictation he promised to do weekly. Therefore, the current research only considers the data collected from the remaining six cases (Feng, Lv, Tian, Liu, Yang, and Chang) as valid. The participants took part in this research during the second semester in their freshman year. They had been learning English for 7-11 years. However, interviews with the students showed that their teachers had not taught anything about listening since they do not take the listening test in their CEE. Even for the students who took listening test as part of their CEE, it was not given importance since the score will not be considered into the total score if the test takers do not study English as their major.

Research Process

The students were interviewed individually before taking part in this study. After their agreement they were asked to sign a written consent form explaining the research purpose, research process, privacy statement, expected outcome, terms for termination and the duties both the researchers and the participants need to fulfill. In the appendix of the consent form we outlined the dictation journal participants are expected to do. The tasks and the process of dictation (see Appendix 1) were explained to the participants in greater details. In the journal, the participants were required to indicate the changes they made to their dictation texts and they were also required to write a dictation reflection for each text. After signing the consent form, the participants were asked about their basic information in a face-to-face interview. The consent form was in two copies, one for the researchers and one for the participants.

Before starting the dictation, the participants were given a pretest using CET4 (Set 1, December, 2013) to test their English listening competence. After the pretest, the researchers played excerpts from *New Concept English 1* and *New Concept English 2* (Alexander & He, 1997a, 1997b) and asked participants to choose the material they thought was suitable to their English level. Two of the participants chose Book 1 and turned to Book 2 one week later.

The participants did dictation on 4-6 texts a week, lasting 7-8 weeks. The time they spent on each text averaged 24-34 minutes. The dictations were conducted by participants themselves and they were scheduled to meet the researchers on a weekly basis. Upon meeting, the researchers checked participants' dictations and gave short tutorials on the problems participants faced in their dictation (i.e. identifying minimal pairs, features of connected speech, contextual inferences etc.). To be noted, the pronunciation of single English sounds were

explained in the first semester in their English classes and tutorials on connected speech were also given in the middle of the dictation research to the classes the participants were attending. After the tutorials during the weekly meetings, the researchers also conducted occasional casual interviews with the students to examine their perception of the changes happening to their English listening.

After 7 (for Liu, Yang and Chang) to 8 (for Feng, Lv and Tian) weeks' dictation, the participants were asked to take a posttest using CET 4 (set 2, December, 2013) to determine any improvement in their English listening competence. After the posttest, a general interview concerning students' perception of the changes in their English listening competence, their attitude towards the materials and the dictation activity as a whole was conducted (see Appendix 2).

The participants were asked to continue with their dictation after the posttest and one week after the posttest they were asked to do the dictation in one of the researchers' office so that the process of the participants' dictation was observed. During the observation, a headset splitter was connected to a mini stereo to simulate students' usual dictation environment to ensure authentic observation results and ensure that the researchers were able to hear the recordings simultaneously with the participants. After the observation, the participants were informed of the termination of the research (mainly because of the upcoming final exam and the students were becoming too busy to do dictation) and were encouraged to go on with their dictation by themselves.

Students' performance in the pretest and the posttest were then analyzed using SPSS and the transcription of their interviews, journal reflections and observation data were also analyzed.

Dictation Materials

The dictation materials for this research are *New Concept English (New Edition) Book 1 (First Things First) and Book 2 (Practice & Progress)*, the first two books of a series of four books increasing in terms of the complexity of the text. The series has been well received in Mainland China since its publication in 1997 and is generally considered a classic textbook for Chinese learners to learn English as a foreign language.

The contents of Book 1 are relatively basic vocabulary and conversations. The conversations that two of the participants listened to for one week are about 100 words in length and one

minute long. In contrast, Book 2 is comparatively advanced in terms of vocabulary and content, consisting of 96 short stories, ranging from 99-163 words and the recording for the texts lasts for about one and a half minutes on average. Book 1 is written for beginners of English and Book 2 is written for “post-elementary adults or secondary students” (Alexander & He, 1997b, p.vi). Therefore, it is both suitable in terms of its length and content as dictation materials (Morris, 1983).

Instruments

The instruments for pretest and posttest in the present research are two sets of CET4 tests administered on the same day in October 2013 in Mainland China. Therefore, the two sets of tests are supposed to be similar in terms of their difficulty. Though there are criticisms about the CET4 due to its impact on college level English teaching as test-oriented, the CET4 is accepted in terms of its validity and reliability (Zheng & Cheng, 2008).

The listening part of the test consists of three sections. In section A (15%) students are required to listen to eight short one-round conversations and two long conversations of 5-8 rounds. There is one multiple-choice question for each short conversation and 3-4 multiple-choice questions for each long conversation. In section B (10%) students listen to 3 passages and answer 3-4 multiple-choice questions for each passage according to what they hear. In section A and section B, the questions are not written on the test paper; rather they are read after students listen to the conversations and the passages. In the final section (10%), students do a dictation. The text is read three times at the same speed and the students are required to fill in the blanks with words and phrases they hear. The materials are read in standard American or British accent with 130 words per minute (National College English Testing Committee, 2006, p.4)

Results

Statistical analysis of the participants' performance

Table 1 presents the scores of the pretest and the posttest. We used paired-samples *t* test to analyze the differences between the pretest and posttest.

Table 1: Statistical Analysis Results for the Scores of the Pretest and the Posttest

Test Sections	Pretest	Posttest	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean (<i>SD</i>)	Mean (<i>SD</i>)		
Short conversations	2.83 (2.32)	4.33 (1.21)	-1.77	0.137
Long conversations	3.50 (1.52)	3.17 (1.33)	1.00	0.363
Passages	3.83 (1.94)	4.33 (1.51)	-0.50	0.636
Dictation	3.00 (0.89)	5.83 (1.94)	-5.22	0.003
Sum	13.17 (4.17)	17.67 (2.34)	-2.50	0.055

Note: SD means standard deviation.

The statistical analysis revealed that the posttest sum score was *marginally* higher than the pretest sum score ($t_{(5)} = -2.50$, $p = 0.055$). And the dictation score of the posttest was significantly higher than that of the pretest ($t_{(5)} = -5.22$, $p = 0.003$). Except for the dictation, the scores of the other sections were not significantly different between the pretest and the posttest.

An analysis of the dictation section in the two tests showed significant improvement in the participants' accurate identification of words based on their pronunciation (characterized by less unfilled blanks), in their performance in spelling and grammar (e.g. pretest: *aviliable* for available, *quentity* for quantity, *In addtion* for In addition etc.) and most importantly their competence in correlating the spelling and the sound of a known word.

Observation of the dictation process

The participants' actual dictation process is in accord with the researchers' original requirement (listed in Appendix 1). We analyzed the first pauses the participants made in the second step of the dictation process to observe students' competence in identifying meaningful chunks in a piece of listening text.

The following is an exemplification of the dictation process of an extreme case. The pauses are shown in the following texts with a “/” and the inappropriate stops (stops not at the boundaries of meaningful chunks such as groups, phrases, clauses and clause complex²) are underlined.

Lesson 65 - Jumbo versus the police

Last Christmas, the circus owner, Jimmy Gates,/ decided to take some/ presents/ to a children's/ hospital/ Dressed up as Father Christmas/ and accompanied by/ a 'guard of honour' of/ six pretty girls/ he set off down/ the main street/ of the city riding a baby/ elephant/ called Jumbo./ He should have known that/ the police/ would never allow/ this sort of thing./ A policeman/ approached Jimmy/ and told him/ he ought to have gone/ along/ a side street/ as Jumbo was/ holding up the traffic./ Though Jimmy agreed/ to go/ at once, Jumbo/ refused to move./ Fifteen policemen had to/ push very hard/ to get him off/ the main street./ The police had a difficult time,/ but they were most/ amused./ 'Jumbo must weigh/ a few tons/ 'said a policeman afterwards,/ 'so it was fortunate/ that we/ didn't have to carry/ him./ Of course, we should arrest/ him./ but as he has a good record,/ we shall let him off this time.'

The inappropriate pauses the students made during their first listening of the texts are categorized in Table 2.

Table 2: Categories of Inappropriate Pauses in Participants' First Listening

Categories	Subcategories	Examples
Within class	nominal group	<i>my/husband</i>
	verbal group	<i>agreed/to go</i>
	prepositional group	<i>an expert at / opening the gate</i>
	adjectival group	<i>most/ amused</i>
	verbal group	Complement <i>/interested in/ sitting</i>

² Terms proposed in Halliday & Matthiessen (2004)

Categories	Subcategories	Examples
Functional expectancy	expectancy	
	Subject Finite (Predicate)	<i>/the police/ would never allow</i>
	expectancy in a short clause	

Analysis of the interviews

In this section, participants' perception of the effect autonomous text dictation has on their listening comprehension is reported.

1. Perceived improvement in comparison with the pretest

Comparing their performance on the posttest with that of the pretest, the participants reported general improvements in their listening comprehension. The participants reported an unclear listening experience for the pretest and a perceived improvement on the posttest.

Chang: *I feel that I have got everything that is said in the Dictation part. It's just I don't know how to spell some of the words. When I did the Dictation part for the first test, I couldn't understand what it was about even though I could identify the words.* [final interview]

During the interview, Chang also said that “*Before I only knew that the recording was in English and I could not identify the words. Now I can identify the simpler words.*” Similar remarks were also made by the other participants (Lv, Tian, Liu).

As for the participants' relatively low performance in the sections for long conversation and passage, they could only listen to the questions after listening to the whole text. Therefore, it was important for them to take notes, a skill not practiced during the present research.

Yang: *For the Long Conversation and the Passage section, there are too many things for me to take note on. When I look at the choices, I feel every choice has been talked about but I couldn't recall exactly which one.* [final interview]

2. Perceived effect on learning, motivation and attitude

The interviews also show that the dictation practice is generally perceived as helpful for students' English learning, their motivation and attitude towards listening, as well as their study of other subjects.

Firstly, considering the influence of the dictation practice on students' English learning, Chang claimed that his listening competence had improved and he also accumulated many words through the dictation. Furthermore, in the case of Yang, he held that the dictation process made English more familiar to him, not the strange language he used to hear in classrooms.

Corresponding to the comparison between the posttest and pretest performance, they also believed that the dictation process improved their ability to listen to an English text more clearly and they began to understand the simple connected speeches.

Secondly, the benefit of the autonomous dictation is also manifested in their improved awareness in learning English.

Feng: I think the dictation process made me understand that I should focus more on the study of pronunciation, because if you can't pronounce a word correctly it is difficult for you to identify the word in listening. [final interview]

Tian: Before the dictation, when I watched English movies or listened to radios, I would only know that they were speaking English and didn't know what to focus on. But now, I would try hard to understand the parts that I can identify and when I watch movies I am also consciously picking up phrase and words that might be useful to me [final interview].

Thirdly, Tian and Liu also reported an increase in the amount of English they were able to understand in the classroom.

Tian: When we do listening inside classroom, I think I understand more and more. [final interview]

In his occasional interview, Tian also said that,

Tian: I think I can understand my English teacher in class now. Before this, I always needed to ask Wang (one of the top students in class) what the teacher was

saying. But now, I can understand it when my teacher speaks English.
[9/May/2014]

Liu: For my first English class at college, I understood nothing. But now, I can understand almost everything, unless I encounter words that I don't know or the teacher speaks too fast. [final interview]

In addition, the dictation process also increased the participants' interest and motivation in learning English.

Lv: The dictation practice increased my interest in English. From the first day I learned English, I seldom listened to the language. But now I know what it is about. I think the dictation practice is laying some kind of basis for my English learning. [final interview]

A similar remark was also given by Tian during the occasional interview

Tian: Without being modest, I feel like I am finally getting started with the correct way of learning English. [9/May/2014]

Not only did the dictation process affect students' English learning, it also affected other parts of their learning.

Tian: I think when I do well in dictation, I feel confidence and encouragement and I would have the confidence to do everything well. But when I fail sometimes in the dictation, I would lose interest in doing other things as well. [final interview]

Tian also claimed a positive influence dictation had on his concentration.

Tian: When I go to study in the classroom every night, I would start with dictation, because it helps me with my concentration. I would be able to concentrate on my Advanced Math and Physics. [22/May/2014]

3. Participants' comments on doing dictation in class

Except for Lv, all the other participants claimed that it would not be much help to students' listening comprehension if such dictations were conducted during the class session. Even for

Lv, the reason he gave was that *“as long as you are listening, it is helpful”* (final interview) and was unable to give further remarks.

The reasons why the other participants thought that the dictation would not be much help was due to their perception of the classroom limitations. The teachers need to deal with the teaching materials so that the time spent on dictation is rather limited. As Chang and Yang pointed out, doing dictation for only 10-15 minutes is not helpful because they only have two English classes a week and dictation is a practice that needs long hours, which was also indicated by Feng, *“dictation is a long-term practice, you need to be persistent and do that everyday”* (final interview).

There were also worries about students’ idiosyncratic differences in one class. Since students are usually of different levels, it would be difficult for the instructor to select the appropriate dictation materials for students of different levels.

Tian also regarded dictation as a private process. He held that students should do dictation alone so that they can concentrate and decide the times of repetitions they need based on their own level. The idea was also shared by Liu.

Liu also considered the equipment in the classroom inadequate. Since their university does not provide earphones for each student in English classes, it would be hard for one to concentrate listening through the classroom amplifier.

Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

In this study, though students made significant improvement on the dictation section of the posttest, no statistically significant improvement is observed ($p = 0.05$) in general for the posttest. The improvement in the dictation section is probably due to students’ accurate identification of word boundaries, improved performance in spelling and grammar and the identification of known words in the listening texts, improvements that correspond to students’ perceptions. It is also possible that the pronunciation tutorials during weekly meetings played a decisive role. We need further empirical studies with the experimental group and the control group to confirm this interpretation.

The lack of overall significant improvement could be attributed to a number of reasons. First, there is a trend for a significant difference between the posttest and pretest (as reflected by the

marginal significance $p = 0.055$), though the result did not reach significance ($p = 0.05$), which could be due to the small sample size of the current study. Second, there is a gap between the difficulty of the dictation texts and that of the pretest and the posttest. Though students made progress in identifying word boundaries and matching sound and spelling, which are essential to their performance in the dictation section, the speed and vocabulary in the remaining sections, particularly the sections of long conversation and passages, probably still hinder their performance.

The participants perceived the dictation as helpful to their listening since they had clearer listening experience in the posttest and in the dictation practice. The perceptions correspond to the improvements students made in the identification of word boundaries and the correlation between the spelling and the sound of known words.

The dictation practice is also perceived by the participants to be beneficial in other areas of their English learning. The process is considered to have helped the participants accumulate more vocabulary, increase their awareness of learning (e.g. pronunciation), understand the classroom discourse better and promote their motivation and interest in learning. Furthermore, one of the participants also reported a positive influence on helping him to focus, corresponding to what Joynes (1899) described more than hundred years ago as “[appealing] strongly to the attention” (xxviii).

Pedagogically speaking, this study shows the benefit of autonomous text dictation for college-level engineering-major EFL learners. For students without much training in English listening before university, it is particularly important for their instructors to provide specific means to practice listening outside class since they usually lack the ability to identify word boundaries and correlate the sound and spelling of known words. Autonomous text dictation is one way of tackling such problems students face in their listening. However, for demotivated classrooms with a large proportion of students facing these problems in listening, autonomous text dictation does not suffice to solve the problem since students need their instructor to assist them with their pronunciation and explain knowledge in phonology and phonetics.

We are proposing to integrate autonomous text dictation with in-class dictation to maximize the benefits of dictation. As it is shown in the interview, hardly any of the participants in the present study consider dictation as a constructive method of promoting listening comprehension inside classrooms similar to the ones they are in (two 100-minute sections per week), for they

think the time spent on the dictation would be too limited to make any difference and the level of students' listening competence varies. Therefore, the proper steps and materials for dictations and the ensuing tutorials that neutralizes to the greatest extent the idiosyncratic differences between students need to be explored in further studies.

We need to integrate autonomous text dictation with in-class text dictation and tutorials rather than replace in-class text dictation altogether because of the striking problems some participants have in pausing at meaningful intervals. In this study, the participants paused inappropriately within groups (nominal, verbal, prepositional and adjectival) and within clauses where one functional component expects the other. As one of the participants pointed out, *“such dictation practice makes me automatically focus on the details, which causes the loss of the general ideas”* (Liu, final interview). The formation of such a habit could also explain why the students made less improvement on the long conversation and passage sections of the posttest, given that these two sections require students not only to identify the details but also to understand the general meaning.

Limitations and Suggestions for further Research

As in case studies, the present research is limited, firstly, in terms of the generalizability of the research findings. Therefore, this study could function as a pilot study for further large scale autonomous text dictation not only among engineering- major college level EFL learners but also among other types of students facing similar problems when listening to English (i.e. identification of word boundaries, corresponding spelling and sound).

As it is indicated both in the review of the previous studies and the discussion of the findings of this study, the precise factor responsible for the improvement in students' competence is not conclusive. We have to do further research to find out the role dictation related activities (e.g. pronunciation tutorials) play in improving students' listening comprehension.

Furthermore, it is also important to conduct empirical studies on the possible integration between autonomous text dictation and in-class dictation with activities and tutorials (as in Rahimi, 2008 and Kuo, 2010) to maximize the benefits of dictation.

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Appendix 1: Dictation Process

- (1) First listen: listen to the whole text non-stop to understand the main idea.
- (2) Dictation: stop at sentence intervals, try to think about what the sentence talked about and then try to write down the sentences you hear. If the sentence is too long, you may stop in the middle of a sentence (with conjunctions like and, or, but etc. or at the end of the dependent/independent clause).
- (3) If you do not understand the sentence, replay the sentence again and see if you can understand it. Repeat this process at least 5 times.
- (4) If you encounter unfamiliar words and unable to write it down, you may write an * mark and replace it with the actual word when you read the written text.
- (5) Listen to the whole text again and correct the errors.
- (6) Read the written text for the listening material and compare it with your dictation and correct the errors.
- (7) During the whole process, you need to show the changes you make on your dictation journal so that the teacher can see the process of dictation.
- (8) Listen to the whole text again while reading the dictation on your journal and listen repeatedly for the parts where you made mistakes to establish connection between the sound of the words and their written forms.

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

(About the test)

1. Do you see any difference in your performance for this test and the last one?

(About the listening material)

2. What do you think of the dictation material? Is the difficulty within your range?
3. What is your suggestion for the next step if we continue doing dictation?

(About the participants' awareness of the effect of dictation on their listening competence)

4. How do you think this period of dictation influenced your English learning?

(About the value of doing dictation inside classrooms)

5. Do you think it would help the students if we do such dictations in classes?

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**Master's Theses Written by Vietnamese and International Writers:
Rhetorical Structure Variations**

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Abstract

A master's thesis is a high stakes genre at the summit of a student's academic accomplishment, and writing a thesis in English is reported to pose difficulties for non-native English speaking students. Given the difficulty of writing master's theses and their importance in students' academic achievement, scarce or even non-existent research has been conducted on this specific genre written by Vietnamese students. This paper, therefore, presents the study on the rhetorical structure of 24 master's theses in TESOL produced at three universities in Vietnam. Employing Chen and Kuo's (2012) framework, the results revealed the similarities and differences in the moves and steps of each chapter in the theses written by Vietnamese and those by international writers from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database (ProQuest). Moreover, these findings indicated both these Vietnamese writers' conformity to the rhetorical norms and their adaptation to suit their discourse community's expectations.

Keywords: *Rhetorical structures; Master's thesis; Vietnamese writers; TESOL; Genre Analysis*

1. Introduction

Writing a thesis in English poses difficulties for non-native English speaking students (Dong, 1998; Paltridge, 2002b; Shaw, 1991). In Vietnam, as revealed in informal conversations with thesis writers, TESOL masters' (M.A.) students have no or little formal instruction on how to write each part of a thesis, but only guidelines. Despite their wording differences, the guidelines on thesis writing provided by each university generally suggest some skeletal structures around which their students assemble their theses. These students, therefore, have to rely on their university's guidelines, published books on thesis writing, or theses written by students in previous courses in their school library in order to format their own theses. However, Paltridge (2002b) states that guidelines and handbooks which focus on thesis writing do not show students the range of thesis options and provide the rationale for the various choices thesis writers make.

Given the difficulty of writing M.A. theses and their importance in students' academic achievement, the master thesis has not received as much attention as the Ph.D. dissertation (Chen & Kuo, 2012; Samraj, 2008). Indeed, few studies have focused on the overall structure of a M.A. thesis although a large number of studies on research articles (RAs) and some on Ph.D.

dissertations were conducted (Bunton, 2002, 2005; Dong, 1998; Kwan, 2006; Soler-Monreal, Carbonell-Olivares, & Gil-Salom, 2011; Thompson, 1999, 2001, 2005). Some studies of M.A. theses have explored the organization of certain sections of this genre, such as *Introduction* and *Discussion* sections (Dudley-Evans, 1986), *Conclusions* (Hewings, 1993) and *Acknowledgements* (Zhang, 2012) and the overall organization of the thesis with a focus on the structure of *Introductions* across disciplines (Paltridge, 2002b; Samraj, 2008). The only study of all the chapters of 20 M.A. theses in the field of Applied Linguistics taken from ProQuest was carried out by Chen and Kuo (2012). Their study shows the overall structures as well as some special characteristics of M.A. theses in Applied Linguistics. Although these studies have provided us with a preliminary understanding of the generic structure of M.A. theses, they have focused on the texts produced in some British, American, and Australian institutions and by international writers. What is apparent is the scarcity of studies on texts written by non-English writers and especially on the rhetorical structure of the whole M.A. theses written by Vietnamese students. With respect to these identified problems, this study aims to answer the question “To what extent are the move-step structures in theses written by Vietnamese graduate students different from or similar to those of international writers from ProQuest?”

2. Methods

The data consist of 24 electronic TESOL M.A. theses written during the years 2009-2012 by Vietnamese students. Only the theses produced during this period of time in the South of Vietnam were selected since generic structures are subject to variation across time and this selection of theses is expected to reflect the current practice of thesis writing by this group of M.A. students in this part of Vietnam. These theses were randomly obtained with the writers' consent from the libraries of all three universities providing the TESOL M.A. program (eight from each). After permissions were obtained from the heads of the English departments, the researchers contacted thesis writers for their permission to use the theses. After receiving the thesis writers' permission, the researchers informed the librarians or the program coordinators and the electronic theses were sent to the researchers.

To create a corpus, each thesis was randomly coded from T1-T24 for the ease of reference and the anonymity of the thesis writers. Each chapter of these theses was then copied and pasted onto a separate file and they were also randomly coded from 1 to 24 (for example, A1-A24 for

Abstracts and I1-I24 for Introductions). The resulting corpus of 24 theses consisted of 490,666 words (an average of 77 pages each).

Move identification in this present research was based on the model revised by Chen and Kuo (2012) for analyzing the whole thesis in Applied Linguistics. This revised framework is the complete move-step framework for analyzing each chapter of a thesis and it has a new independent move of *Referring to other studies* in each chapter, which is absent from all previous move-step studies. In addition to its completeness, this framework is the direct result of the investigation of the whole M.A. thesis in Applied Linguistics, which is very close to TESOL, the field under the focus of this study. Therefore, this framework is expected to be applicable for the move-step identification of the corpus of 24 TESOL M.A. theses in Vietnam.

Analyzing a genre in the ESP tradition, the researchers began by 1) identifying the moves and steps, either compulsory or optional, in relation to the overall communicative purpose, and 2) investigating how these moves and steps were ordered. After the moves and steps were identified, their frequency in each chapter of theses was recorded in order to verify the extent to which a particular move or step is used. The criteria suggested by Kanoksilapatham (2005) were employed for classifying the frequency of the moves and steps found in this thesis corpus. According to the criteria, if a particular move or step occurs in every thesis (100%), it is classified as “obligatory”. If a move or step is found below 60% in the corpus, it is regarded as “optional” and if the occurrence of a certain move or step ranges from 60-99%, it is “conventional”. It is possible to find new moves and steps; however, they are not considered as new move(s)-step(s) unless they are present in 50% of the corpus (Nwogu, 1997). Since move analysis involves a certain degree of subjectivity (Crookes, 1986), inter-raters were employed in this study in order to ensure the reliability of the findings. Two researchers, who hold a doctoral degree and specialize in corpus-based analysis, analyzed the texts in this corpus separately before checking their results against each other, yielding high inter-rater reliability rates (95%). Finally, the findings of moves and steps from this corpus were then compared with Chen and Kuo’s framework (2012) in order to see to what extent the moves and steps constructed by Vietnamese are different from or similar to those produced by international writers.

3. Findings

3.1 Findings on the Overall Structure of Theses

The preliminary findings on the text partitioning of theses revealed more differences than similarities to those in Chen and Kuo (2012) (Table 3.1). First, there is a wider range in the total number of running words in Chen and Kuo's theses than those in the current corpus. Moreover, while only 15 out of 20 theses in Chen and Kuo were organized in the conventional Introduction-Literature Review-Methods-Results-Discussion-Conclusion (ILrMRDC) pattern (Paltridge, 2002a; Swales, 2004), all 24 theses in the current corpus followed this pattern. Similarly, the headings were reported to be present in only 13 theses in Chen and Kuo while 24 theses in the present study had separate headings for each chapter and section. Furthermore, the Literature Review (LR) chapters in their corpus were found to be embedded in four out of 15 theses with an ILrMRDC pattern. In the TESOL thesis corpus, 13 out of these 24 theses had Results, Discussions and Conclusions as three separate chapters, resulting in a six-chapter thesis. These textual characteristics may be due to these Vietnamese writers' compliance to the university guidelines provided. It is also interesting to note that two thirds of Chen and Kuo's thesis corpus had a separate section for teaching recommendations in either Discussion or Conclusion chapters while all but one TESOL theses contained this section and all were in the Conclusion chapters. However, this communicative purpose was identified under different section headings (*Recommendations* and *Pedagogical Implications*, six and 17 theses, respectively). It is clear that although guidelines were provided, variations still exist in the surface structures of theses composed by this group of Vietnamese writers.

Table 3.1: Text divisions between Chen and Kuo's (2012) and TESOL M.A. theses

Corpus	Running words	Average	Range	ILrMRDC	Chapter & Section headings	Pedagogical implications
Chen & Kuo's (ProQuest)	374,289	24,953	7,627-44,775	15	13	10
TESOL theses (Vietnam)	490,666	20,444	8,118-33,466	24	24	23

3.2 Similarities

As can be seen in Table 3.2, Introduction and Method moves were found to be obligatory in Abstracts of both thesis corpora while Conclusion move is conventional. However, this

Conclusion move occurred with a higher percentage, 84.3% of the 24 TESOL M.A. theses while it was present in 53.3% of the 15 theses from ProQuest. Besides move structures, similar findings to those of Chen and Kuo's (2012) are a linear structure of Introduction-Method-Result-Conclusion and an infrequent occurrence of move cycling in the corpus of TESOL M.A. theses.

Table 3.2: Similarities between TESOL M.A. theses and those from ProQuest

Abstracts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ A linear structure of Introduction-Method-Result-Conclusion ✓ Scarcity of move cycling ✓ <i>Introduction & Method</i> Moves: obligatory ✓ <i>Conclusion</i> Move: conventional
Introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Move1 (T)-Move2 (N)-Move3 (O) ✓ <i>Topic generalization & background</i> (highest percentage) ✓ <i>Gap/Need indicating</i> (most frequent) ✓ No <i>Counter-claiming</i> ✓ <i>Referring to previous studies</i>
Literature Review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Thematic sections with Introduction-Body-Conclusion structures ✓ <i>Introductions</i> and <i>Conclusions</i>: conventional ✓ No headings for introduction texts ✓ CARS three moves structures in Body parts ✓ Predominance of <i>Non-related research reviewing</i> and <i>Research-related reviewing</i> (Move 1) ✓ Few instances of <i>Counter-claiming</i> ✓ Presence of <i>Concluding a part of literature review</i>
Methodology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Presence of all 5 moves ✓ A linear structure of the first four moves ✓ Moves 1-2: obligatory ✓ Move 4 occurring less frequently than the first three moves ✓ Indicating chapter/section introduction: obligatory ✓ Describing the sample: obligatory ✓ Absence of <i>Previewing Results</i>
Results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Moves 1-2: obligatory ✓ Move 3: conventional ✓ Move 4: optional
Discussions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Few instances of Moves 5-7 and <i>Referring to previous studies</i> ✓ Move 3: cyclical ✓ Most frequent cycles: <i>Reporting major findings-Interpreting</i>; <i>Reporting major findings-Interpreting-Accounting</i>; and <i>Reporting major findings-Comparing</i>
Conclusions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Prevalence of the first four Moves ✓ Moves 1, 3 and <i>Referring to other studies</i>: optional ✓ A linear structure of moves and steps ✓ Conventional steps: <i>Summarizing the study briefly</i>, <i>Indicating limitations</i>, <i>Recommending future research</i>, <i>Drawing pedagogical implications</i>

Regarding Introductions, twenty four chapters (100%) had all the three moves as suggested in Chen and Kuo's (2012) framework: *Establishing a Territory* (T), *Establishing a Niche* (N), and *Occupying the Niche* (O). This can be explained by the fact that these writers simply followed

the guidelines for thesis writing provided by their universities. In these guidelines, Move 1 is expected to be completed in the section headed “*Background to the study*”. “*Rationale of the study*” is where the niche for their current study is expected to be established while “*Statement of purpose, Research questions/Hypotheses, Significance of the study and Overview of thesis chapters*” are Move 3’s components. This conformity to the model is likely to reflect how Vietnamese have been trained at school where conforming to the norms, formula or patterns have been employed. Similar to Chen and Kuo (2012), *providing topic generalization/background* had the highest frequency (35 occurrences) in 22 Introductions, followed by *Referring to other studies*. Another common finding with Chen and Kuo’s (2012) found in the current thesis corpus was the frequent use of the steps *indicating a gap in previous research*, and *indicating a problem or need for research* for establishing the niche (Move 2) and no writers used *counter-claiming*. This similarity seems to indicate how these steps in Move 2 were employed by M.A. thesis writers. Finally, despite the presence of the independent move in 23 Introductions, these Vietnamese writers’ narrative writing styles in referencing to other previous works in their Introductions tend to reflect the characteristic of student writing. In fact, as indicated by Petrić (2007), M.A. students’ references to previous studies only help to show their familiarity with the knowledge of the topic in the literature while in published writing, any mention of sources is related to the writer’s own argumentation.

Except a new step (*Concluding a part of literature review and/or indicating transition to review of a different area*) in Move 2, the framework for the analysis of the rhetorical structure of LR chapters revised by Chen and Kuo (2012) is identical to the original one by Kwan (2006). In the current LR chapters, it is interesting to see the inclusion of an Introduction-Body-Conclusion structure and several thematic sections in the body part, as described in Chen and Kuo’s (2012) framework, with a high frequency although this information was not indicated in the guidelines provided by the universities. In addition, similar to Chen and Kuo’s (2012) finding, this study also found a short text at the beginning of 23 (out of 24) LR chapters which informs the reader of the purposes, structures, themes and justifications for the themes to be reviewed in the following sections, but 19 do not have the heading “*Introductions*”. Moreover, this study also identified the CARS three move structure as indicated by Kwan (2006) and found in Chen and Kuo (2012). Another similar finding in LR chapters between Chen and Kuo (2012) and the current corpus is the same pattern of the move frequency distribution identified in the body parts of these LR chapters. In particular, the most frequent occurrences of Move 1 with two

steps *Non-related research reviewing* and *Research-related reviewing*, about five times higher than those in Ph.D. dissertations by Kwan (2006) (13.56% and 2.36%, respectively), tends to show that these M.A. students are trying to display their familiarity with the knowledge in their field, without synthesizing or indicating the relevancy of the reviewed literature (Move 2) for establishing the niche and occupying the niche (Move 3). In addition to this, *Counter-claiming* was used the least in Move 2 of the LR chapters of these two thesis corpora while this strategy was the most frequently used in Kwan's (2006) Ph.D. LR chapters. This difference could be due to the different orientations and scopes between Ph.D. dissertations and M.A. theses. As indicated by Koutsantoni (2006), due to the awareness of M.A. students' inferior status to the examiners and previous scholars, their avoidance of claiming the weaknesses of previous studies is predictable. Furthermore, it is interesting to note here that although Strategy *Concluding a part of literature review and/or indicating transition to review of a different area* was newly identified and added by Chen and Kuo (2012), this strategy, which is just a few lines long, is the most frequently used strategy (34.88%) in Move 2 of the current LR chapters. The prominent presence of this concluding step and the introductory text given at the beginning of a new theme, tends to reflect the established practice of following an Introduction-Body-Conclusion pattern in composing an academic text by these Vietnamese students (Phan, 2011).

With regard to the Method chapters, it was found that these chapters included all the suggested elements in the guidelines provided by the universities. They had all five moves identified in the Method chapters of Applied Linguistics theses from ProQuest (Chen & Kuo, 2012) and the first four moves had a linear pattern while the independent move (*Referring to other studies*) was present in all these four moves. Moreover, the first two moves (*Introducing the Method chapter* and *Describing data collection method and procedure(s)*) and the independent move were obligatory while Moves 3 and 4 were conventional and optional, respectively. Move 1 (*Introducing the Method chapter*) and *Chapter summary*, which are not provided in the guidelines by these universities with a TESOL M.A. program, occurred in 100% and 79% of this Method chapter corpus, respectively. In fact, all Method chapters in this corpus started with an indication of the chapter structure (*Introducing the chapter structure*), an overview of the reported study (*Providing an overview of the study*) and the research design (*Indicating theory/approach*), and 19 ended with the summary of the chapter. Regarding the steps, *Describing methods and steps in data collection* and *Describing the sample* (Move 2) were found to be compulsory and this finding is in line with Chen and Kuo's (2012) who claim that Applied Linguistics writers of their thesis corpus tend to focus on the samples, the procedures

and methods of data collection. Another commonality between these two M.A. thesis corpora is the much-less-frequent occurrence of Move 4 as compared with the first three moves. Furthermore, there was a complete absence of *Previewing results* in the current Method chapter corpus. Although Chen and Kuo's (2012) account the absence of this step in their Method chapters for its inclusion in the Results chapters, the complete absence of *Previewing results* in those of TESOL M.A. theses could be due to the guidelines provided by the universities. In fact, according to the guidelines, a thesis Method chapter should tell readers "WHEN", "WHERE", and "HOW" the study was carried out, but not a brief review of findings.

In the Results chapters, the first two moves (*Introducing the Results chapter* and *Reporting results*) were obligatory in the current corpus of 13 Results chapters of TESOL M.A. theses in Vietnam. Moreover, while Move 3 (*Commenting on results*) and Move 4 (*Summarizing results*) were found in nine and five results chapters (69% and 38.5%, respectively), there tended to be a complete absence of Move 5 (*Evaluating the study*) and Move 6 (*Deductions from the study*) in the corpus. Although these findings are not in line with that of Yang and Allison (2003) which indicated that the Moves 2 and 3 of the Results sections of RAs are obligatory, they support Chen and Kuo's (2012), in which the first two moves were found to be present in all theses. This similarity could be accounted by the same target genre, i.e., master's thesis, between the two corpora while RAs are the target genre in Yang and Allison (2003).

Regarding the Discussion chapters, Move 3 (*Summarizing results*) and Move 4 (*Commenting on results*) were found in every chapter with a high frequency of occurrence. A closer look at these two moves revealed that interpretations, explanations, and/or evaluations were provided for each main result summarized, which makes these two moves cyclical. This finding on the move cycle confirmed that of Chen and Kuo (2012), which reported that Move 4 often accompanies Move 3 with a high frequency. Moreover, it was observed that all moves in these Discussion chapters followed the order of the moves in the framework, except the independent move of *Referring to other studies* because this move was found to be intertwined with Move 4 (*Commenting on results*). The analysis of sequence patterns of steps showed that *Making conclusions of results* was always followed by *Interpreting results*, and/or *Comparing results with literature/Accounting for results*, making the highest average occurrence per chapter. The highest frequency of these cycles identified in this corpus written by Vietnamese confirmed that of international writers (Chen & Kuo, 2012) and this commonality suggests that M.A. thesis

writers mainly interpret the reported findings through previous research references in their Discussions.

In the Conclusion chapters, Move 4 (*Deductions from the research study*) was identified as an obligatory move as each chapter contained at least one element of this move. The other moves were conventional and optional. Although the prevalent presence of the first four moves in the Conclusion chapters of the current corpus is in line with the finding of Chen and Kuo (2012), no obligatory moves were found in the M.A. theses written by international writers. However, the presence of Move 4 in all of these Conclusion chapters could be explained by the complete absence of this move in the previous concluding chapters; namely, Results and Discussions. It is likely that the Conclusion chapters are the only place where these thesis writers in Vietnam made recommendations and suggestions for students, teachers and administrators and for future work, based on the results of their studies. In terms of move cycles, similar to Chen and Kuo's (2012) and Yang and Allison's (2003), the results of this study revealed that these Conclusion chapters had a linear structure. In fact, while the majority of writers (83%) opened the last chapter of their theses with the chapter introduction (with and without section headings), four began their chapters with summaries of main findings. Following the chapter introductory section were summaries of main findings, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and recommendation for further study. They all ended the chapters with elements of Move 4 (*Deductions from the study*) and more than half of them (58%) closed with a chapter summary (with and without the headings) or a brief review of the whole study.

3.3 Differences

Table 3.3 summarizes the differences in the move-step structures of M.A. theses composed by Vietnamese students and those by international writers from ProQuest in order to completely answer the research question. As can be seen in the table, the differences found in each chapter of these two corpora are point by point presented.

Table 3.3: Differences between TESOL M.A. theses and those from ProQuest

TESOL M.A. (Vietnam)	Chen & Kuo's (ProQuest)
Abstracts	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Twice longer (265 words) ✓ <i>Result Move</i>: conventional ✓ Presence of <i>gap indicating, research questions and hypothesis, significance of the study and suggestions for future studies</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 164 words ✓ <i>Result Move</i>: obligatory ✓ Absence of these steps
Introductions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ T-N-O (45.8%) ✓ 19 steps ✓ Presence of <i>chapter introduction & summary</i> and <i>next chapter introduction</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ T-N-O (82%) ✓ 28 steps ✓ Absence of these steps
Literature Review	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All separate LR chapters ✓ Modular and nested structures ✓ Body: no obligatory moves. Moves 1-2: conventional; Move 3: optional ✓ Step 1A: optional ✓ Introductory texts at the beginning of Move 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 4 (out of 15) embedded LR chapters ✓ Modular structures ✓ Body: Move 1 (obligatory) ✓ Steps 1A-B: obligatory ✓ Absence of this step in Move 1
Methodology	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Generic section headings and subheadings ✓ <i>Chapter summary</i>: Newly-identified move with two conventional steps: <i>Summarizing the chapter</i> and <i>Introducing the next chapter content</i> ✓ Highest frequency step: <i>Describing the sample</i> ✓ High frequency of three-step sequence: <i>Instruments-Purposes-Justifications</i> ✓ <i>Describing methods and steps in data collection</i>: conventional ✓ <i>Justifying data collection procedure; Referring to other studies to provide background information</i>: optional ✓ Absence of step <i>Explaining variables and variable measurement</i> ✓ <i>Referring to other studies</i>: compulsory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No generic section headings and subheadings ✓ No <i>Chapter summary</i> ✓ Highest frequency step: <i>Describing methods and steps in data collection</i> ✓ Few instances of three-step sequences and justifications for the whole data collection procedures ✓ <i>Describing methods and steps in data collection</i>: obligatory ✓ <i>Justifying data collection procedure; Referring to other studies to provide support and justification; Referring to other studies to provide background information</i>: conventional ✓ Newly-added step <i>Explaining variables and variable measurement</i> ✓ <i>Referring to other studies</i>: conventional
Results	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Presence of <i>previous chapter summary, chapter summary</i> and <i>introduction of the next chapter content</i> ✓ Obligatory cycles: <i>Locating graphics-Reporting major findings</i> ✓ Highest frequency cycles: <i>Locating graphics-Reporting major findings</i> ✓ Newly-identified steps: <i>section introduction</i> and <i>each section summary</i> ✓ Only two three-step sequence patterns (<i>Methods-Graphics-Findings</i> and <i>Graphics-Findings-Interpreting</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Absence of these steps ✓ Obligatory cycles: <i>Reporting major findings-providing background or indicating how results are presented</i> ✓ Highest frequency cycles: <i>Reporting major findings-Interpreting results</i> ✓ Absence of these steps ✓ Presence of six three-step sequence patterns with high frequency (<i>Background-Findings-Interpreting; Graphics-Findings-Interpreting; Methods-Findings-Interpreting; Graphics-Findings-Methods; Findings-Interpreting-Comparing; Methods-Findings-Graphics</i> and <i>Methods-Graphics-Findings</i>)
Discussions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Moves 3-4: obligatory ✓ Compulsory step: <i>Making conclusions of results</i> (Move 3); <i>Interpreting results</i> ✓ Conventional steps: <i>Accounting for results; Providing background information and how discussions are presented</i> and <i>Referring to other studies for</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Move 2: obligatory ✓ Compulsory step: <i>Reporting major findings</i> ✓ Conventional steps: <i>Interpreting results; Accounting for results; Providing background information and how discussions are presented; Referring to other studies for</i>

<i>support/justification</i> ✓ Highest frequency cycles: <i>Making conclusions of results- Interpreting results</i> ✓ Few instances of three-step sequence patterns ✓ <i>Chapter summary</i> : A newly-identified move with two steps: <i>Summarizing the chapter</i> (conventional) and <i>Introducing the next chapter content</i> (optional) ✓ Presence of newly-identified steps, <i>section introduction</i> and <i>each section summary</i> ; but with low frequency	<i>support/justification</i> and <i>Making conclusions of results</i> ✓ Highest frequency cycles: <i>Reporting major findings- Interpreting results</i> ✓ A great number of three-step sequence patterns ✓ No <i>Chapter summary</i> ✓ Absence of these steps
Conclusions	
✓ Move 4: obligatory ✓ Moves 1-2: conventional ✓ Step <i>How the chapter is presented</i> : conventional ✓ <i>Chapter summary</i> : A newly identified move ✓ Presence of newly-identified steps, but with low frequency: <i>summarizing previous chapter</i> , <i>next section introduction</i> and <i>each section summary</i>	✓ No obligatory moves ✓ Moves 2-4: conventional ✓ Step <i>How the chapter is presented</i> : optional ✓ No <i>Chapter summary</i> ✓ Absence of these steps

As can be seen in Table 3.3, the Abstracts in TESOL M.A. corpus in Vietnam were almost twice longer than those from ProQuest. This is accounted for one-paragraph allocation for each move found in 15 theses in this corpus. This finding tends to reflect the disciplinary distinctiveness of the soft discipline that these TESOL M.A theses belong to, as indicated in Hyland (2000). Furthermore, different from Chen and Kuo's (2012) finding, the Results move was conventional in this current corpus because one abstract (A23) did not have this move. Moreover, it is interesting to find that six abstracts in the current corpus (25%) indicated the gap in Introduction move and this step was followed by the purpose step. Although gap-indicating is supposed to reflect the way skilled writers write, it tends to be absent in M.A. theses from ProQuest. This could be due to the fact that as Chen and Kuo (2012) reported the rhetorical structures of the whole M.A. theses, not all findings were presented in detail. Another interesting finding that tended to show these Vietnamese writers' inexperience in writing their abstracts is the presence of Hypothesis, Research Questions and Scope in three abstracts (12.5%). Given a limited number of words in an abstract as a synopsis (Bhatia, 1993) and an advance indicator of the content and structure of the accompanying text (Swales, 1990), the presence of these elements seems to be inappropriate.

While 82% of Chen and Kuo's thesis Introductions had a single progression of Move 1-Move 2-Move 3 (T-N-O), only 11 Introductions (45.8%) in the present corpus followed this move pattern, where the writers previewed previous research, and then pointed out gaps or problems, and finally went on to announce their own research in the following sections labeled *Statement of Purposes/Aims & Objectives of the study*, *Research questions/Hypotheses*, *Significance of the study* and *Overview of thesis chapters*". The sequence of moves T-N, followed by either T-O or

T-N-O was identified in the other 13 Introductions in the corpus. This practice of move cycles corresponds to the literature which states that the moves in the Introduction chapters are cyclical (Bunton, 2002; Crookes, 1986). In terms of steps, 19 out of 28 steps described in Chen and Kuo's (2012) framework for M.A. thesis Introductions were identified in this corpus. The highly frequently used steps (almost 100%) were those with the headings suggested in the guidelines by the universities and they were the obligatory steps in this corpus of M.A thesis Introduction chapters. *Chapter summary*, which is not included in Chen and Kuo's (2012), was found in two Introductions (I15 and I19). The presence of this new step in two Introductions, altogether with a text introducing the chapter (*Chapter structure*), may reflect the tendency for the three-part structure of an academic essay (Introduction-Body-Conclusion) that these writers used to follow at their university study. However, this step is not identified as a new step because it was found in only two Introductions.

Different from Chen and Kuo's (2012) finding that 11 out of 15 theses with an ILrMRDC pattern in their corpus separated the LR chapter from the Introduction, all TESOL M.A. theses in the current corpus had a separate LR chapter. The difference could be due to these writers' compliance to the guidelines for thesis writing provided by their universities. In fact, a TESOL M.A. thesis in Vietnam is required to have chapters separated, except for Discussions which can be either separate or combined with the Results or Conclusion chapters. Besides the difference in the overall structure of the LR chapters, the majority of the concluding texts (15 out of 19 LR chapters) in the current corpus were entitled with either "*Summary*" or "*Conclusion*" and the longest one occupies three whole pages. Although all of concluding texts in 19 LR chapters provided the chapter summary, 10 had at least one count of Move 3; namely, the gap, aim, and theoretical framework, and seven texts (almost one third) even provided an advance indicator of the next chapter (Example 1). The presence of Move 3 at some LR chapter endings in this thesis corpus suggests the presence of two modes of theme arrangements: "modular and nested move structures" in the LR chapters of theses written by Vietnamese (Kwan, 2006, p. 51).

(1) **"2.9. SUMMARY"**

To construct a base for the study, this chapter has discussed briefly the two basic notions: CLT and communicative competence.... The chapter then provides a model of CLT synthesized from the theories of Richards & Rodgers (2001) and Larsen-Freeman (2004). On that ground, the conceptual framework of the study has been refined.

A detailed discussion of the research instruments, the participants, the research methodology as well as data analysis methods, as employed in the study, are presented in the next chapter." (LR7)

Regarding the body texts, although the CARS three-move structure was found, none of these three moves are obligatory, but conventional (Moves 1 and 2) and optional (Move 3) in the current LR chapters while Move 1 was found to be obligatory in all 11 LR chapters with an ILrMRDC pattern in Chen and Kuo's (2012). Furthermore, the findings on the body parts of the LR chapters in the current corpus revealed interesting information. That is twenty two thematic units (18.64%) began their parts with an advance introduction of the subthemes and their organization (Example 2). This opening part at the beginning of these themes is similar to the introductory section at the very beginning of a LR chapter because it provided a justification and subthemes to be reviewed in the accompanying texts. This special feature in writing the body part of the LR chapters is likely to make these chapters recursive, but in sub-levels and it is not indicated by either Kwan (2006) or Chen and Kuo (2012).

(2) “2.3. *Reading strategies*

In order to see through the aspects of reading strategies as the fundamentals of the study, there are necessary considerations to be taken into account. In this section, therefore, the researcher mentions the definitions of reading strategies, reading strategies of high-proficiency and low-proficiency readers, the instruction of reading strategies, and the classification of reading strategies

2.3.1. *Definitions of reading strategies*” (LR17)

The Method chapters in the current thesis corpus were divided into sections or subsections with generic headings, which were not mentioned in Chen and Kuo's (2012). The employment of generic section headings and subheadings in these Method chapters written by Vietnamese tends to make it fairly easy for the moves and steps in the text to be identified. In fact, by reading the headings and subheadings used in these chapters, readers would understand the type of research approaches/methods or instruments used in the reported study. The sufficiently frequent use of these discourse and linguistic markers/clues in the Method chapters by these Vietnamese writers is similar to Indonesians who published their RAs in their national journals (Safnil, 2013). The limited readership could explain for their similarity in using the generic section headings and subheadings in the Method chapters/sections. Different from Chen and Kuo's (2012) framework, the presence of *Chapter summary* in this M.A. corpus is considered as a new move since it was identified in 19 theses. However, the presence of the steps *Summarizing the Method chapter* (79%) and *Introducing the content of the next chapter* (62.5%) in this last move (Example 3) suggests that they are conventional in this thesis corpus.

(3) “3.8. *SUMMARY*

This chapter has presented and evaluated the methodology used to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the theory of CLT, learners' attitudes towards the practice of CLT, and the application of CLT at FLC-USSH. A descriptive research design, including both qualitative and quantitative methods, was employed. Data were

collected from questionnaires, interviews and direct-classroom observation. The analysis of data collected are presented and discussed in the next chapter.” (T7)

Similar to the findings on the previous chapter analyses, the presence of both chapter introduction and chapter summary in the Method chapters of these theses reflects the distinctive practice of organizing each chapter in the TESOL discourse community in Vietnam. In *Describing the sample*, the detailed information about the location, the sample characteristics, and the time when the reported study was conducted was provided in the Method chapters of these TESOL M.A. theses. Besides the detailed description on the subjects, careful descriptions on the steps, purposes and justifications were given for each data collection method/instrument (Example 4), suggesting that the methods and steps in data collection in the current thesis corpus are likely to be more elaborate than those in Chen and Kuo (2012). In fact, the independent move of *Referring to other studies* with its predominant communicative purpose of *Providing support or justification* for the chosen methods of data collection and analysis was obligatory in the TESOL M.A. thesis corpus in Vietnam while it is conventional in Chen and Kuo (2012). This difference is explained by the fact that in Chen and Kuo’s, justifications were provided for the whole data collection procedure while only three theses (12.50%) in the current corpus contained this step.

(4) “3.4.1. Survey questionnaire to students

This study was designed to investigate metacognitive reading strategies. Since most reading strategies were unobservable, a questionnaire was developed as a major research instrument in order to elicit data from subjects. Anderson (1990) approved that the questionnaire had become one of the most useful means of collecting information. Thus, the data for this study were collected through a questionnaire adapted from the survey of reading strategies (SORS).” (T17)

The newly-added step *Explaining variables and variable measurement* by Chen and Kuo (2012) in their corpus was absent in the thesis corpus written by Vietnamese students. This could be due to the fact that the explanations, the item specifications in the questionnaire and methods of measuring data collected were previously presented in the step *Explaining specific method(s) of data analysis*.

All 13 separate Results chapters in TESOL M.A. theses started with the chapter introduction, which provided either some background information of the research topic/the Results chapter structure or/and methods/instruments or statistical procedures and four of which even had a section heading for this communicative purpose. This introduction section was followed by several cycles of the research findings, which was in turn followed by some instances of result comments (Move 3) and result summaries (Move 4). These several research-finding cycles

were identified in the corpus because these Vietnamese writers presented the findings according to their research questions or their employed research instruments. However, it is interesting to note the newly identified steps that preceded or followed these main-move cycles in this study. In fact, five of these 13 chapters (R4, R9, R14, R20 and R21) were found to begin with the previous chapter summary, and four (R9, R14, R20 and R21) ended with the chapter summary and an introduction of the next chapter content (R9 and R21). It is also worth mentioning here that when a chapter started with a brief summary of the previous chapter, it is likely that it would end with a summary of the chapter (except R4). This tendency could reflect the writers' intention in connecting all chapters in their theses together and this practice reflects the distinctive practice of organizing each chapter in the TESOL discourse community in Vietnam. Due to their average frequency of occurrences in these result chapters (38% and 31%, respectively), they are not recorded as new moves based on Nwogu (1997).

Regarding steps in these Results chapters, two steps in Move 2 (*Locating graphics* and *Reporting major findings*) occurred with the highest frequency in all 13 theses, making these two steps obligatory and have the highest cycle in these Results chapters. However, in comparison with the steps found in Chen and Kuo (2012), the cycle of *Reporting major findings* (Move 2)-*Interpreting results* (Move 3) accounted for the highest frequency of steps. This cyclical difference between these two groups of writers revealed that in the texts written by international writers, adequate interpretation was provided while a majority of findings reported by Vietnamese were preceded or followed by tables or graphs. Finally, three steps, which were not included in Chen and Kuo's (2012) framework, were newly identified in this Results chapter corpus. These steps were found at the beginning of Move 2 (*Reporting results*) which aims to present the structure of how a section (each main finding) was reported (*section introduction*), and after Move 3 (*Commenting on results*) when the writers summarized the section (*summary of each section*) and introduced the next section content (*next section introduction*). These three steps formed a sub-cycle in some Results chapters of the corpus as shown in Example 5. Despite the occurrence of "*next section introduction*" found in 23% of these 13 Results chapters, two steps "*section introduction*" and "*summary of each section*" occurred in more than 50% (53.8% and 76.9%). Therefore, these two steps are classified as new steps in the Results chapters of the current thesis corpus.

(5) **4.2. Results of the questionnaire to teacher respondents**

As shown in the earlier framework of analysis, the data provided from the questionnaire to teacher respondents was divided into three small sections for analysis. The results of the first section are presented as below. (**section introduction**)

Generally speaking, in the process of teaching vocabulary to elementary adult learners at this center, teachers could run into seven major difficulties originated from their learners. The most considerable difficulty was ... The second major problem reported was. ... The third problematic things Above all, ... (section summary)
In addition to the major difficulties derived from learners found in section A, section B of this questionnaire was also specially designed to find out possible difficulties that teachers might encounter from themselves. The data included in section B was analyzed and interpreted as follows. (next section introduction)

Section B - Difficulties arising from teachers. ... (R8)

Among 13 separately presented Discussion chapters, only three (T9, T20 and T21) had a separate heading (Discussions) while the rest was found under the combined headings of Results-Discussion and Discussion-Conclusions (eight and two, respectively). These combined headings could account for the complete absence of Move 2 (*Reporting results*) in these Discussion chapters while Move 3 (*Summarizing results*) and Move 4 (*Commenting on results*) occurred in every text, making them the obligatory moves in these chapters. This finding, however, is different from those of Chen and Kuo (2012) and Yang and Allison (2003), which find that the Discussion chapters not only summarize results, comment on results, and compare them with previous studies in the field but also report results. The absence of Move 2 in these Discussion chapters tends to reflect these writers' conscious choice in separating results from discussions although they were presented under the same heading in a majority of theses (61.5%). In terms of steps, two steps of Moves 3 and 4; namely, *Making conclusions of results* and *Interpreting results*, respectively, were obligatory. Moreover, while *Accounting for results* and *Providing background information and how discussions are presented* (Move 1) were conventional, *Comparing results with literature* was optional. Similar to the findings in the Results chapters, *Chapter summary* was found in nine out of 13 Discussion chapters, accounting for 69% of the theses with a separate Discussion chapter and two of these had a section heading for this communicative purpose. This newly identified text should be regarded as a new move because it was employed to summarize the content of the whole chapter, and four even introduced the content of the next chapter. According to move definitions by Swales (1981) and Holmes (1997), this text at the end of the chapter not only performs a specific communicative function of its own but also contributes to the overall communicative purpose of the genre. In fact, in relation to Move 1, which aims to open the Discussion chapter as stated by Chen and Kuo's (2012), this newly identified move, *Chapter summary*, was employed to close the chapter. Besides *Chapter summary*, another two new steps; namely, *Section introduction* and *Section summary*, were found in two and five Discussion chapters, respectively, and they were not considered as new steps in these Discussion chapters.

Finally, Move 4 (*Deductions from the study*) was found to be present in every Conclusion chapter of the current thesis corpus. Besides future research recommendations, its main communicative purposes were seen to provide meticulous descriptions for teachers, students and administrators to improve the practice of learning and teaching English of their schools as each research topic was required to be an experimental or descriptive investigation into practical problems that teachers and students were having. Frequency analysis of steps revealed that *How the chapter is presented* was the most frequent step with a high percentage, making it conventional in this Conclusion chapter corpus. However, this finding is not in line with that in Chen and Kuo (2012). The prominent occurrence of this step at the beginning of the chapter tends to reflect the Vietnamese writing pattern, which follows the three-part structure of “Introduction-Body-Conclusion” despite the fact that it is not included in the guidelines. Furthermore, due to its presence in more than 50% of the Conclusion chapter corpus, “*Chapter summary*” was classified as a new move as suggested by Nwogu (1997).

4. Conclusions

This study attempted to make a comparison on the rhetorical structures of the whole M.A. theses written by Vietnamese and international writers from ProQuest. Employing Chen and Kuo’s (2012) framework for analyzing each chapter of 24 TESOL M.A. theses, the results of the study revealed both similarities and differences between these two thesis corpora. Regarding the overall structure of theses, all 24 theses in the current corpus followed the conventional ILrMRDC structure while three quarters of Chen and Kuo’s (2012) employed this pattern. The guidelines provided by their universities could explain for this difference. Besides the difference in the overall structures, theses in these two corpora shared the commonalities in having a separate section for pedagogical implications, which reflects the distinctive feature of applied linguistics (Yang & Allison, 2003). With respect to the chapters, the similarities identified tend to reflect the characteristics of theses composed by M.A. students. In particular, there tends to be a linear structure of moves-steps employed in achieving the communicative purposes of each chapter. Moreover, it is likely to indicate that M.A. theses are less elaborate as compared to doctoral dissertations due to the absence of *Counter-claiming* in Introductions and predominance of *Non-related research reviewing* and *Research-related reviewing* in LRs. Although it is argued that M.A. students are aware of the inferiority in avoiding criticizing previous researchers (Koutsantoni, 2006) and that displaying their familiarity with the literature is sufficient for M.A. thesis writers (Petric, 2007), they should also be made aware of other

strategies that can be used to make their theses more convincing. With respect to differences, the prominent disparity between these two M.A. thesis corpora is the frequent presence of the cycle “*chapter/section introduction-chapter/section summary-next chapter/section introduction*”. This move/step sequence not only reflects the three-part structures of Vietnamese written discourse (Phan, 2011) but also the conventional practice in this TESOL discourse community. Furthermore, the length of abstracts, the inclusion of research questions/hypotheses in abstracts, the infrequency of T-N-O sequence in Introductions and few instances of comments on findings in the Results chapters are likely to indicate these Vietnamese writers’ inexperience in composing each thesis chapter. Besides these, the presence of *Deduction from the study* (Move 4) in all 24 Conclusion chapters also indicates the nature of theses produced in the TESOL discourse community in Vietnam.

Despite the small scale and local scope of the study and lack of follow-up interviews with thesis writers and thesis supervisors, our findings, to a certain extent, can provide a comprehensive picture of how Vietnamese students compose their M.A. theses in English. Moreover, this study also responds to the need for more studies and investigation on the texts generated by students (Dudley-Evans, 1999; Thompson, 1999), especially on those produced by non-native English writers. As writing a thesis in English is challenging for non-native English speaking students (Dong, 1998; Paltridge, 2002b; Shaw, 1991), this group of Vietnamese writers should be formally instructed on how to compose it. As stated by previous scholars (Bhatia, 1993; Huang, 2014; Hyland, 2000, 2007; Swales, 1990), explicit genre instruction on rhetorical moves and linguistic features helps shape novice non-native English writers’ knowledge of writing for scientific papers.

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Potential Directions for EFL Scientific Writing Scholarship in Japan: Examining The Academic Abstract

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Abstract:

Despite the importance of the English research article abstract in ensuring international circulation of research results, there is a lack of investigation of effective abstract writing teaching strategies for learners of English in Japan. This article explores research into abstract writing tutelage in order to pinpoint future directions for the development and study of pedagogical tools for teaching the writing of English abstracts amidst the growing implementation of academic English writing courses in universities in Japan. This article first begins with an overview of current discussions of the impact of Japanese research internationally and the use of English in the sciences. It then turns to more specific analysis of publication and academic writing in English in the Japanese context. Drawing upon established theoretical approaches to the teaching of academic writing, suggestions are made for the pursuit of research on abstract writing and teaching in Japan that could help scholars navigate the international academic stage more effectively. These strategies can also be adapted to other Asian contexts as they prioritize a context-based, rather than generalized approach to research and pedagogy.

Keywords: *abstracts; impact factor; academic writing; Japan; ESP; EAP*

Introduction

The abstract is a fundamental aspect of publication and the advancement of knowledge. Nonetheless, abstract writing is often overlooked in academic writing tutelage in English for Specific Purposes classes despite it being key to reaching international English-speaking audiences. Given the decreasing number of Japanese academic publications and below average global scientific impact (Adams, King, Miyairi, & Pendlebury, 2010), scholars writing in both Japanese and English could increase visibility of their work if pedagogical tools on composing effective abstracts were developed.

This article will explore some potential future directions for research and teaching material development in the context of heightened pressure for scholars to publish in English. It will first provide an overview of the importance of the abstract and the current state of Japan's international scientific impact. While acknowledging the array of factors that contribute to calculations of impact factor, it will then discuss current strategies being undertaken by universities and institutions to increase the visibility of Japanese research in the future. Finally, the author will make suggestions for developing abstract writing teaching materials specific based on established theoretical approaches and previous research, while suggesting further studies of abstract writing corpora and experiences of established and novice Japanese scholars writing abstracts in second languages.

The importance of the abstract

Abstracts are the most visible part of an academic paper and often the only part of a paper to be found in electronic databases and conference proceedings. Whether researchers read an article or conference organizers and journals reject or accept manuscripts highly depends on the quality of the abstract.

With the growth of scientific knowledge comes increases in the amount of literature available making it impossible for scholars to survey every publication available in their fields. The abstract serves the role of helping scholars sort through the immense and ever growing amount of documentation. Cross and Oppenheim (2006) detail the crucial role in information retrieval that English abstracts play both before and after an article is read. They help a reader decide whether to read the full-text document; assist the spread of knowledge written in other languages by providing key points of an article; accustom the reader to language (i.e. "key words and ideas") that is specific to the article; facilitating a full comprehension of the

arguments of an article; bring new concepts to light; and assist readers in ensuring a complete understanding of the author's arguments post-reading. However, detailed analysis of scientific abstracts has found that many abstracts suffer from being "misleading", "uninformative", and lacking a well-organized structure (Salager-Meyer, 1990, p. 356). This points to a need for the teaching of abstract writing techniques for native and non-native speakers alike.

The abstract genre has been analyzed and researched extensively. From a discourse analysis perspective, collective knowledge of abstracts has grown significantly since the initial studies by Graetz (1985) and Swales (1990). Studies have consistently shown various findings across discipline (Hyland, 2000) and abstract type (Hartley, 2004) ((i.e. structured, research abstract, conference abstract, et cetera), while also pointing to a need for rhetorical preservation in translations of abstracts. Comparative work between English and other languages (German, Norwegian, Portuguese, French, Arabic, and Spanish) is also growing (refer to Perales-Escudero and Swales, 2011), yet to the author's knowledge, comparative studies of the Japanese language abstracts conducted are non-existent.

These studies make it is clear that abstract writing is not as straightforward as one might assume. Nonetheless, what Martín (2003) points out over a decade ago still holds true today—very few studies exist that focus on developing abstract writing skills of speakers of English as a second language in general. Several studies have analyzed student composed abstracts to international journal articles (see Cortes, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Upton & Connor, 2001) and one study has utilized comparative analysis of abstracts to develop teaching materials (Hsieh & Liou, 2008). Chan and Foo (2004) have also suggested that pedagogy be developed through collaboration with information professionals who understand the process of information retrieval. Since the abstract is reported to be one of the most difficult aspects of scientific writing for learners of English (Lee & Tajino, 2008) and experienced English-native scholars alike (Swales & Feak, 2009; Salager-Meyers, 2014), it is necessary to further develop and research the effectiveness of abstract writing materials for non-native speakers.

Comparative corpus studies, like those mentioned above, can help determine rhetorical preferences for Japanese writers and thus difficulties students may face in writing scientific abstracts. Nonetheless, research on English academic writing in Japan in general, is also scant (Matsuno, 2014; Teeter, 2014), and research on pedagogical tools for developing student competence in abstract writing in the Japanese context is scarce. The author has only encountered two studies, one of her own. Shi and Cross (2014) utilized genre analysis to devise

a move checklist which students' used to guide peer evaluation/cooperation while drafting and revising abstracts. While their approach influenced gains in organizational structure, grammar and cohesion improvements were not seen. The study of task-based language teaching approaches to abstract writing in Japan by Teeter (2014) found that through the writing of abstracts with specific tasks pinpointing purpose, structure, and discourse, students' abstract writing significantly improved in terms of word-choice, inclusion of moves, structure, cohesion, and grammar. Students also reported that they sensed improvements in their own academic writing in general. The tasks helped students notice the importance of word choice, and how structure helps frame an argument. Nonetheless, focusing primarily on a task-based approach proved cumbersome to students due to the large number of tasks.

Since abstracts are essential to enhancing visibility of research, more work needs to be done to develop materials for teaching abstract writing in EAP classes. The next section will discuss Japan's current global scientific impact and how abstracts play a critical role.

Improving Japan's international impact

Eugene Garfield and Irving H. Sher originally developed impact factor calculations, which are now published by Thompson Reuters in the Journal Citation Report (JCR), to estimate—article citation frequency for academic journals in order to facilitate the evaluation of the quality of articles amidst the ever-increasing amount of publications (Garfield, 2005). However, the proportion of Japanese contributions to international scientific literature does not correlate with Japan's overwhelming spending per capita on scientific research and reputation as a global scientific innovator.

Japan is one of the top spenders on research and development in the world. Japan contributed 3.25% of GDP on R&D in 2011 (UNESCO IS, 2014). According to the OECD measurements of an "economy's relative degree of investment in generating new knowledge" based on R&D expenditures as a percentage of GDP, Japan ranks second with an R&D intensity of 15.4% compared to the global average of 2.3% (OECD, June 2011). Given the funding allocated to the sciences, one might expect Japan to maintain a relatively high scientific global impact factor.

Japan's annual world scientific literature has also been on the decline. Analysis points to a decrease from 9.45% (2000) to 6.75% in 2009 (Adams et al., 2010, p. 4). In addition to the decreasing number of publications, the citation of papers produced in Japan is the lowest of all Global-7 countries. With the U.S. and U.K. leading in percent of highly cited papers of overall

production (1.8%), followed Canada (1.4%) and Germany at (1.4%), France (1.2%) and Italy (1.1%), Japan (0.7%) has much room for improvement (Adams et al., 2010, p. 8).

Notwithstanding, the proportion of scientific literature produced in Japan is relatively high compared to other fields. Based on figures from the Directory of Academic Societies in Japan (*Gakkai Meikan*), the only directory of its kind at the time of writing, it can be seen that 71% of 510,839 publications in Japan were in the sciences (life sciences, physical sciences, and engineering) (refer to Appendix 1). Nonetheless, it is clear that Japanese scientific findings are not reaching international audiences at competitive rates, prompting discussions in the Keizaisangyōshō (Ministry of Economy, Transportation, and Industry) on how to make Japanese research more accessible (refer to METI, 2014). Another factor contributing to the decreasing Japanese publication rate is reduced amount of time that researchers can dedicate to researching (Kanda & Kuwahara, 2011). In this context, an effective English-language abstract is paramount to global dissemination of research results. The next section will outline how the emphasis on the English language in the sciences may play a role in Japan's low impact factor.

English as the lingua franca of the sciences: implications for Japan

Assumptions by the largest journals search engines, such as the Web of Science (WOS) produced by Thompson Reuters, that English is the “universal language of sciences” (Testa, 2012, p. para 13), could be one explanation for Japan's low scientific impact. At a bare-minimum the WOS requires that journals it includes in its database have at least titles, abstracts, and keywords in the English-language. References must also be romanized (Testa, 2012). Although stressing the importance of international diversity, WOS makes a contradictory assumption that research articles highly relevant on the international stage will be entirely in English (Testa, 2012).

The WOS is not the only international journal search database supporting the primacy of English as the global language of the sciences. Meho and Yang's revealing (2007) analysis of the most prominent scientific article search engines found that a mere 6.94% of Google Scholar citations were from languages other than English, while this was true for only 1.14% for the WOS and 0.70% for Scopus (p. 2119). With English composing 98.86% of all citations in the WOS, Japanese articles comprise only 0.15% of the total search results (Meho & Yang, 2007, p. 2122). While this appears to lend evidence to an assumption that Google Scholar has greater acknowledgement of Japanese-medium scientific literature, the opposite also holds true. The

aforementioned authors uncovered that Scopus actually performs worse in terms of providing Japanese search results than WOS with only 0.13%, and Google Scholar even worse with .02% (Meho and Yang, 2007, p. 2122). These figures suggest that English can be projected to dominate world scientific literature for years to come regardless of whether English-dominance is appropriate or not.

Table 1: Search Result Percentages on Major Databases

	Google Scholar	Scopus	Web of Science
<i>English</i>	93.06	99.3	98.86
<i>Other than English</i>	6.94	1.14	0.7
<i>Japanese</i>	0.02	0.13	0.1

Sources: Information compiled from Meho, L. I., & Yang, K. (2007)

The emphasis on English language publication in international journals points to a bias towards English in the calculation of impact factors. Statistical analysis over the years supports conclusions that English language preference has a significant influence on impact factor derivations (Liang, Rousseau, & Zhong, 2013; Ramin & Sarraf Shirazi, 2012; Sato, Nagai, Koga, Misumi, & Itsumura, 1996; Th N. Van Leeuwen, Moed, Tijssen, Visser, & Van Raan, 2000; T. N. Van Leeuwen, Moed, Tussen, Visser, & Van Raan, 2001; Winkmann, Schlutius, & Schweim, 2002). While Japan's overall impact factor is below average, the impact factors of several journals based in Japan have been increasing over the years. Eleven out of sixteen Japan-based journals in the medical sciences published by Wiley-Blackwell saw an increase in impact factor in 2011 (Wairī Herusu Saiensu Kafē (Wiley Health Science Cafē), 2012). The caveat— all of these journals are English-medium journals.

Nonetheless, ignoring impact factors because they are English-language biased is becoming less of an option due to their increasing influence. Japanese academic institutions are increasingly using impact factor to evaluate the work of candidates for jobs and its existing scholars, despite the unclear correlation between impact factor and the quality of research (Itsumura & Yasui, 2006). The homepage for the Gifu University School of Medicine, for instance, displays the amalgamated impact factor of each student enrolled in its Graduate School for Radiology (Gifudaigaku hōshasenka (Gifu University Department of Radiology), 2012). Furthermore, the rising importance of the impact factor to Japanese institutions is evidenced by efforts by the

Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry to “improve” databases by making impact factor information easy to access (see METI, 2014).

In addition to the increasing usage of impact factors, the pressure for scientists to publish in English will not abate in the foreseeable future. In part due to the globalization of English (Crystal, 2012; Hyland, 2009), and thus the increasing use of English as the working language of scientific organizations in English-speaking countries and non-English speaking countries alike (Lewkowicz, 2012), scientists around the world who wish to advance in their careers are pressured to conduct and report research in English. Publication in international academic journals in English is often seen as essential to establishing a career in the sciences (Curry & Lillis, 2004; Ferguson, Pérez-Llantada, & Plo, 2011) while these scientists are also required to write in their own native languages. This is also the case in Japan where the discourse of English as *the* international language permeates second language education rhetoric (Matsuno, 2014; Oda, 2007; Toh, 2013). Since scientists from non-English speaking countries need to be able to both function in scientific English and “translate this knowledge into a national context” (Meneghini & Packer, 2007, p. 112), they end up facing a double burden that native speakers of English do not necessarily encounter.

This English-language burden is not limited to Japan as other societies with a prominent history in contributing extensively to international sciences also face this dilemma. Medical researcher Gerd Antes in his joint paper resigns himself to the need for Germany to develop stronger competence in English. Comparing Germany to a developing country in terms of ability to communicate internationally, he expresses regret that it will take more than a generation for English to be the language of international scientific communication in Germany (Ofori-Adjei, Antes, Tharyan, Slade, & Tamber, 2006).

Certainly, arguments can be made, however, that a focus on scientific writing in English can be detrimental to the development of scholarly writing in native languages other than English. Furthermore, some researchers have suggested that journals work to become multilingual and inclusive of languages other than English to create a more balanced playing field (Meneghini & Packer, 2007). Keeping this in mind, some organizations are working to increase the language visibility of languages other than English to address the imbalance. One successful example is how Le Cirad, a French research center, is making French-medium agricultural journals accessible free to access for those working on development in French-speaking regions (Deboin, 2013). Nonetheless, Meneghini and Pacer (2007) of the World Health Organization,

emphasize that important scientific contributions may risk being overlooked or considered worthless if they are published in languages other than English.

Undeniably, the international scientific community benefits from being able to access groundbreaking work in a common language. At the same time, an over-emphasis on English could prevent the transmission of significant findings reported in other languages and the development of scholarly competence of those who choose not to use English in their research reporting.

While several reports discuss the difficulty of Japanese scientists to write effectively and efficiently in English (Matsuno, 2014; Weisburd, 2004), English-language proficiency levels are not the only potential factor in Japan's relatively low scientific impact. Another possible explanation could be the reported average 11.4% decrease in time faculty members across all disciplines are able to dedicate to research from nearly half at 47.5% in 2002 to 36.1% in 2008 (Kanda & Kuwahara, 2011, pp. 1, 16). Complications surrounding the access of international resources and making connections may also play a role in difficulty in writing and publishing (Flowerdew, 1999, 2000; Okamura, 2005 in Okamura, 2006). However, several positive examples of non-native English speakers developing coping strategies and finding success in English scientific publishing exist (see Kubota, 2003; Okamura, 2006; Sasaki, 2003 for examples of Japanese scholars).

Developing contextualized abstract writing materials in Japan

In order to address escalating pressure for Japanese scholars to contribute more to the international scientific community, Japanese universities are increasingly incorporating English academic purposes classes (EAP) into curriculum (Dalsky & Tajino, 2007; Hyland, 2000). Since journal search engines require at a bare minimum abstracts, titles, and keywords in English, emphasis on these skills in classes could help to increase future scientists' ability to navigate the international scholarly community. Even if scholars choose to only write their articles in Japanese, with an English abstract provided and available internationally, scholars can at least be aware of the type of research being conducted in Japan (should they not be familiar with the Japanese language). International interest in their research might encourage these scholars to write full papers in English, as well. Furthermore, as Teeter's 2014 study illustrated above, a focus on the abstract helps students improve academic writing skills overall;

due to the comparative brevity of an academic abstract to a whole paper, writers can hone in on the fine details of writing concisely without being overwhelmed.

Corpus studies

In order to help form a foundation for developing abstract writing teaching materials, corpus studies specific to Japan are needed. Discourse analysis techniques can be applied to understand rhetorical divergence and convergence across languages and cultures. Studies can also be conducted from a structural-functional theory perspective to reveal and make authors and instructors aware of socio-cultural systems in Japanese society. Furthermore, in all of the cases in which corpus studies of abstracts are conducted, only accepted abstracts are analyzed. A study of rejected abstracts could provide further insights in tendencies and troubles learners have in producing abstracts that could be accepted in a target culture or discourse community. Rejected abstracts can also be analyzed utilizing a contrastive rhetoric approach. Combining these types of corpus studies without other theoretical and analytical approaches can help pinpoint potential areas of difficulty or ease in abstract writing.

Theoretical approaches to materials

Abstract writing teaching materials developed taking into consideration a variety of theoretical approaches and complemented by corpus studies are necessary. As research shows, the structures of abstracts of published scholars do not match available abstract-writing manuals (Dos Santos, 1996; Maricic & Pecarori, 2013) despite decades of study of the abstract genre.

When developing materials, a critical pedagogy approach can help students and instructors understand how to maneuver through the academic publishing world, and thus help with the abstract writing process. Analysis of the needs and rights of students is necessary as it is generally recognized that contextualized, “situated” (Freire, 1970, p. 77) development of pedagogy is critical for students to make connections between their own life experiences, studies, and lived experiences. If curricula and teaching is tailored to students, rather than generalized, and based on educational tools made for people in other cultural contexts, students can potentially grow even more in their writing ability because they can have a deeper interaction with the concepts that frame writing and abstract writing. Therefore, instructors must also draw upon a variety of theories when developing and adapting materials to their students. It is important for teachers to meet their students halfway. This approach can help rectify imbalances in scientific literature that often place non-native speakers at a disadvantage,

while contributing to linguistic and cultural diversity and the potential evolution of genres so that they are more inclusive of non-native speakers.

Experiences of researchers

In understanding students' perspectives, it is also critical to remember that the students are the researchers of the future. Past research in English scientific writing in Japan primarily focuses on the classroom and neglects to take into consideration the experiences of Japanese scholars (Matsuno, 2014). While Godsen (1996) has explored the overall writing practices of young Japanese doctoral students, and Okamura (2006) has explored general difficulties and coping strategies of junior, mid-rank and senior Japanese scholars regarding publishing in English-medium journals by scholars as well, specific aspects of the writing process have been neglected. To the author's knowledge, mention of abstract writing is either scarce, or practically non-existent. The interview data found in the footnotes of Godsen (1996), however, does point to issues that Japanese scholars face when they are not in control of writing abstracts for their own papers in English. The scholar explains how Japanese scientists can feel intimidated at suggesting revisions to professional translations of their work, even if the translation results in the research being reported inaccurately. This statement reveals that scientists risk having their research being misrepresented if they are not in control or feel they cannot control of the abstract writing process. Understanding how novice and established scholars successfully navigate the English abstract writing process could guide the development of materials while motivating learners.

Some suggestions for building upon previous pedagogical studies

Utilizing corpus studies, analyzing experiences of scholars in writing abstracts, and encouraging awareness of instructors and students of ever-evolving discourse-communities can provide a solid foundation for the development of abstract teaching materials. Much work can be done to build upon the two studies of abstract writing materials in Japan. Shi and Cross's (2014) study primarily focuses on the move structure. These materials can further be enhanced by helping students develop awareness of the purposes of abstracts and the nature of information retrieval, as suggested by Chan and Foo (2004). Teeter's (2014) study points to students seeing overall improvements in their academic writing skills and grammar after experiencing a task-based approach to abstract writing. Since tasks developed based on a genre analysis approach, it would be fruitful to expand upon making these abstract writing tasks more accessible to

students in terms of task difficulty and complexity. Furthermore, since this was a short-term finding over the period of one semester, more longitudinal studies can be conducted to assess and measure writing performance.

Conclusions

The limited amount of research on academic writing in the Japanese context goes hand in hand with the even more limited development of teaching methods and learning materials for writing English academic abstracts for an international audience. Given the fundamental role that abstracts play in not promoting research findings, pedagogical tools that facilitate students of English and established researchers alike in producing effective abstracts should be the focus of more attention. Valuable tools can be developed through interdisciplinary work in the fields of education, corpus linguistics and information science. Comparative rhetorical analysis studies of Japanese abstract corpuses and interviews of scholars on their experiences with abstracts could provide insights into ways to approach teaching methodology. These types of tools can facilitate not only scholars who choose to write up their scientific findings in English, but those who write in Japanese, as well. By providing this type of information, more knowledge of the important findings of Japanese scholars can be transmitted to the wider international audience of scholars hopefully paving the way to a more equal access to international research opportunities and recognition. Finally, these kinds of approaches can also be applied to other Asian approaches. These potential research methods have broader implications for the Asian context as they value the situatedness of students in their cultural and social environment and can provide insights that could facilitate the spread of Asian-based and -produced knowledge, expertise and research.

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Appendix 1

Number of Journals and articles published in Japan by field

Life Sciences			Physical Science and Engineering		
	Journals	Articles		Journals	Articles
Basic biology	83	29032	Ecology and Environmental Science	35	16759
Applied biology	15	7166	Mathematical Sciences	24	7155
Agriculture	136	68706	Physics	23	23034
Food science	14	8883	Earth and Planetary Science	70	35273
Basic Medicine	106	58146	Informatics	45	17614
Clinical Medicine	346	217906	Chemistry	50	42875
Health/Human life science	107	41607	Comprehensive Synthetic Engineering	83	73966
Dentistry	63	29443	Mechanical Engineering	40	30179
Pharmaceutical Science	32	23691	Electrical and Electronic Engineering	37	38667
Totals	902	484580	Civil Engineering / Architecture	29	24683
			Materials Engineering	32	35311
<i>Interdisciplinary areas</i>	59	18102	Totals	468	345516

Humanities and Social Sciences		
	Journals	Articles
Language / Literature	101	18249
Philosophy	66	13436
Psychology / Education	161	37469
Sociology / Social Welfare	55	11305
History / Archaeology	97	23186
Area Studies / Human Geography / Anthropology	47	8699

Law	36	9659
Political Science / Public Policy	9	2704
Economics	50	10969
Business Administration	46	11545
Totals	668	147221

Science-related articles	363618
Total articles	510839
Percent science	71.2

Sources: Compiled by author from data on Gakkai Meikan (2015) Homepage provided by the Science Council of Japan, Japan Science Support Foundation, and Japan Science and Technology Agency with data mainly collected from 2007-2009, but also including updates.



An Investigation of Source Use Strategies in Published Research Articles and Graduate students' Research Papers

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Abstract

Integrating source texts appropriately and effectively from various sources into one's own writing poses significant challenges for student writers as it demands sophisticated advanced academic skills. Beginning writers could benefit from studying strategies employed by more established writers from the same field. This paper reports the results of an investigation of source use strategies employed in 6 published research articles and 6 unpublished master's student papers from the field of chemical engineering. Different source use strategies were categorized as paraphrase, summary, generalization and exact copying. The findings demonstrated that while in research articles, summaries and generalizations were frequently employed, in students' papers, paraphrases were used the most. The results also showed that the frequency of extensive citations was much higher in students' papers and in many instances the student writers were too dependent on the source texts. Interviews with the student writers revealed gaps in their knowledge of acceptable source use while the expert informants credited their competence to practice, experience, and knowledge of the field.

Keywords: Academic writing; Research papers; Source use; Textual borrowing; Second language writers

1. Introduction

Academic writers rhetorically claim and defend their new findings via strategically positioning their new knowledge claims against older and already accepted facts made by previous scholars in the field. Academic authors in general must display sufficient familiarity with existing prior texts (see Bakhtin, 1981; Kristeva, 1986 on the notion of intertextuality) which often takes the form of literature review in academic papers. As Swales (2014, p.119) says "citation is the most overt and most immediately obvious indication that a text is indeed academic". Citing various texts and blending them together to create a new text demands sophisticated advanced academic skills. Various studies have documented the struggles of beginning writers in this regard: Johns & Mayes (1990), for instance, showed that condensing ideas from source texts is very challenging for students. Currie (1998) has documented difficulties students have comprehending technical materials required for writing tasks while Abasi and Graves (2008) have shown how graduate students' unfamiliarity with academic rhetoric has contributed to inappropriate textual borrowing.

Incorporating outside sources in academic writing is doubly challenging for non-native academic writers especially when their language proficiency is limited (see Campbell, 1990; Keck, 2006; Shi, 2004; Thompson, Morton & Storch, 2013; Morrison, 2014). Pennycook (1996) discusses the demanding challenges for L2 student writers to be original, creative and conversant with a specific set of knowledge and terminology of their field and, as shown by Abasi and Akbari (2008) and Chandrasoma, Thompson, and Pennycook (2004), when students are tasked with writing demands that were beyond their linguistic ability, they resort to various inappropriate textual borrowing practices termed as ‘transgressive intertextuality’ (Chandrasoma et al., 2004) and ‘patchwriting’ (Howard, 1992; 1995) in the literature. Many inexperienced writers, when faced with complex writing tasks, become linguistically dependent on the source texts and this makes them fall into the traps of involuntary plagiarism (see also Pecorari, 2003, 2006; Shi, 2004, 2010; McCullough and Holmberg, 2005; Yeo, 2007; Selwyn, 2008; Ahmad, Mansourizadeh and Ai, 2012; Vieyra, Strickland, and Timmerman, 2013).

At the advanced level, the literacy skills required are more than just being able to read and write—advanced students must possess the ability to understand, evaluate, and synthesize contents of their chosen area and reformulate them as new texts according to appropriate disciplinary conventions (see Braine, 2002; Tardy, 2005; Young & Leinhardt, 1998). As academic writing is a literacy practice shaped by specific disciplinary conventions, different academic communities show different preference for citation practices (Bazerman, 1988; Hyland, 1999). Many of these practices are not immediately obvious to newcomers in the field (Mansourizadeh and Ahmad, 2011). While there are several useful academic writing handbooks aimed solely at helping advanced academic writers, particularly non-native speakers (e.g., Bailey, 2010; Hamp-Lyons & Heasley, 2006; Swales & Feak, 2004), many disciplinary practices and rhetorical conventions preferred in a specific academic community remain hidden from newcomers.

Moreover, in many non-native contexts where advanced language support programs for research writers are thin on the ground, research students are often expected to discover the ‘art’ of disciplinary writing on their own. In this respect, Flowerdew and Li (2007), for instance, have documented how novice scientific writers relied on writing samples of the experts in their field as models, resulting in inappropriate language re-use from the source texts, which could be labeled as plagiarism. Flowerdew and Li (2007) found that the novice writers in their research often attributed their language re-use to formulaicity in scientific writing. These novice writers also assumed that as long as their scientific content was original, the language could be re-used

from the source texts. Thus, they were more concerned about the originality of the work than about the language used. How scientific expressions in the scientific texts are re-used from source texts without copying the exact sentences and style of writing of the cited authors needs more focused analysis. Scholars (e.g., Campbell, 1990; Flowerdew and Li, 2007; Keck, 2006; Petrić, 2012; Shi, 2012) have thus recommended investigating the textual practices of academicians in order to capture their actual practices in the interest of facilitating new writers' acquisition of academic disciplinary conventions. Recent studies have also shown that students could be benefitted from studying texts written by established writers in their own discipline (see Nunn et al, 2015, on argumentation in academic writing).

The literature shows that while there is an informative line of research on citation analysis in published papers (e.g. Salager-Meyer, 1999; Harwood, 2009; Mansourizadeh and Ahmad, 2011; Samraj, 2013; for more references see White, 2004), these studies do not show how established writers had integrated the cited texts from the sources into their own writing. An analysis of source integration of established writers can inform EAP courses to facilitate graduate students' source use while writing their research papers. The aim is not to set a strict structure for students to blindly follow which may result in hindering their critical writing (see Nunn, 2010), but to raise their knowledge of appropriate source use in their own discipline. Therefore, the rationale for this study was to investigate the source use strategies employed by beginning writers in their draft research papers and by more established writers in the published research articles from the same scientific discipline. The study also documents the source of difficulties faced by the beginning writers as well as advice from the established writers, as extracted from the semi-structured interviews. As accepted academic practices are common among established members of the community, the findings could benefit disciplinary novice writers regardless of their local context.

2. Method

2.1 The Corpus

The corpus consists of 6 research papers written by master's students and 6 published research articles in the field of Chemical Engineering. The students' papers were draft versions of their papers written with the aim of publication. The published research articles (RAs), on the other hand, were extracted from the major journals of the field (*Separation and Purification Technology*, *Journal of Membrane Science*, *Materials Science and Engineering A*, *Applied*

Surface Science, Journal of Catalysis). The RAs were in the same research area as the students' papers. As commonly found in the engineering fields, all the RAs were multi-authored. All the authors are non-native speakers of English and shared the same institutional affiliation (a major university in Malaysia) except for one of the RAs which included an outside author, a very senior researcher, who was a visiting professor at the university. All the RAs also included one or two very established authors in the field; it is assumed that the articles had benefited from these scholars' expert knowledge and experience.

All the student writers are native speakers of Malay who use English extensively as a second language. They had received their first degrees in the same field locally where English is the medium of instruction. The student writers were final-year Master's research degree students who were working on draft versions of their papers, aimed to be sent for publication. Students are normally given six semesters to complete their master's degree. They had already finished their experiments and were in the process of writing their theses and papers for publications. At the university, students of research degree programs are required to publish as a part of the graduation requirement. They were an "opportunistic sample" (see Flowerdew & Li 2007, p. 446) as they all belonged to the same research group and worked in the same laboratory at a major research university in Malaysia. The first author has known this group long before starting this research since one of her acquaintances was a member of the laboratory. She had met the group several times during different occasions. At the time of the research, when she explained the aims of her study to the group, they willingly emailed their draft research papers to her.

As appropriacy of source integration is a social practice and it is context-dependent (Valentine 2006), a junior faculty member from the same field of study was engaged as the specialist informant of the study during the whole process of the data analysis. The informant was a recent PhD graduate of the same discipline who also belonged to the same research group. He had published several research papers within the same area of research. All the paraphrases, summaries, and generalizations which were identified for analysis and all the excerpts which were chosen from the source texts were checked by this informant for technical confirmation. The subject specialist confirmation was important to ensure accurate interpretation as the texts were highly technical. Moreover, in some instances, especially in case of research articles, due to the technical nature of the papers where it was difficult to decide how the writers had come

up for example with a summary, the specialist informant helped to identify the excerpts of the source texts based on which the citation had been made.

The research paper was selected as the written genre in focus in this study as it is a genre common between established and student writers. Moreover, similar to open task assignments (Petric & Harwood, 2013), in research papers, students select the sources themselves. This can provide us with a practical picture of students' actual source use practices in real situations. In order to better understand the student writers' actual textual borrowing strategies and source use practices in real situations with no controlled conditions or limitations, the papers which were chosen had not yet been submitted to the research supervisors and had not received any language editing help. Apart from the occasional research writing and publication workshops, research student writers at the university received no regular, formal instruction on regular advanced academic writing tuition. Table 1 provides an overview of the corpus involved in this study including the length of the papers and the density of the citations.

Table 1: Summary of corpus description

Student papers	Length (words)	No. of citations	Research articles	year of publication	Length (words)	No. of citations
St.1	2982	26	RA1	2008	2791	28
St.2	3507	28	RA2	2003	3679	30
St.3	2607	11	RA3	2006	4294	29
St.4	4547	25	RA4	2004	3657	52
St.5	4250	30	RA5	2006	3611	41
St.6	3254	35	RA6	2003	4004	24
Total	21147	155			22036	204
Ave. cit. per 1000 words	7.33		Ave. cit. per 1000 words	9.26		

*Length of text does not include abstracts, tables, and figures

2.2 The Interviews

It is needed to acknowledge that only a few interviews have been conducted since only four out of six student writers were available at the campus at the time of the interview and agreed to be interviewed about their writing difficulties in general and the challenges they faced in writing

the drafts. Two expert writers who were among the authors of the RAs and were available at the university also responded to our request for an interview. Both authors have published more than a hundred papers in the field and are very highly cited by their peers. They are local and their native language is Malay. The interviews were of a semi-structured nature (see also Harwood & Petrić, 2012; Petrić, 2012). Two sets of questions were designed for the student and established writers; however, the interviewees were allowed to elaborate on their responses and they were given freedom to discuss any points. Similar to Petrić (2012), the interviews were not designed in a way to focus on all individual instances of source use; however, some instances were brought into conversation during discussion by the interviewer or the interviewees themselves. The interviews with the student writers mainly focused on their challenges with using source texts in their writing while the interviews with the two expert writers mainly focused on disciplinary practices and their experience in writing. All the interviews were conducted in English, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. The core interview questions are provided in the Appendix.

2.3 Data Coding and Analysis

Each paper included four sections: an introduction which presented the background literature, an experimental section which introduced the materials and methods, the results and discussions which discussed the findings, and a conclusion which was the last section concisely presenting the concluding points. Citations were never used in the conclusion section of the papers, rarely used in the experimental section (13 in RAs and 9 in students' papers), mostly used in the introduction (87 in RAs and 92 in students' papers) and results and discussion (104 in RAs and 56 in students' papers) sections. Similar to previous research, to study the source use strategies employed by the writers, we looked at the citations and references used in the introduction segment of the papers in which previous works of other scholars are densely reviewed and cited (see also Pecorari, 2003). All papers included in this study used the numerical format of citation where numbers of the references were provided in brackets mainly at the end of sentences. Each instance of source use which had cited one or more sources in a bracket was counted as one citation (see also Bloch & Chi, 1995). In the data set, the abbreviation RA is used to refer to the published research articles and St. is used to refer to students' papers. For example, RA 1, Cit.2, means citation 2 (the second instance of source use) in research article number 1 as in the following example:

In addition to these techniques, PAN precursor fibers are also fabricated using dry–wet spinning to improve the mechanical properties [2].(RA 1, Cit.2)

To analyze how the authors actually incorporated texts of others into their own writing, we adopted the “comparative reading approach” (see also Flowerdew & Li 2007, p.447), where the citations used by the writers were juxtaposed and matched with the excerpts from the source texts. The source texts were determined based on the reference lists of the papers, and they were either retrieved on-line or referred to from the collection of the university library. All the citations were also checked on-line using the Google search engine to see if they matched with any sources that were not cited or included in the reference list. However, we acknowledge that this method has its own limitations since some sources may not appear in Google. Table 2 illustrates the length of the Introduction section of the papers, the total number of citations, and the number of the analyzed citations based on the availability of the sources. As can be seen from the table, a total of 138 citations out of 179 or 77.1% of the total number of citations were analyzed. The remaining citations were sourced from texts which were not available for comparison and therefore were excluded from this study.

Table 2: No. of citations analyzed

	Length of Intro. (words)	Total no. of Cit. in Intro.	Density Per 1000 words	No. of analyzed Cit.	Percentage of analyzed Cit.
Research articles	3761	87	23.13	55	63.22
Student papers	4789	92	19.21	83	90.22
Total		179		138	77.1

The categorization of the source use strategies employed by the writers was theory and empirically-driven. We started off with Hyland’s (1999) three main strategies of incorporating other researchers’ findings and ideas in one’s own writing: quotation where the words of other authors are directly used; summaries where the information is drawn from a single source, and generalization where the cited information is attributed to more than one source. However, based on the close reading of our corpus, we added paraphrasing as another category. Paraphrasing, although based on one source, is different from summarizing (Johns & Mayes, 1990; Veit & Gould, 2007) given that a paraphrase is used when a specific part of the text needs to be exactly described (see Veit & Gould, 2007). Therefore, a paraphrase includes the details and expresses all ideas from a specific part of the source text and corresponds to a few adjacent

sentences from the source text. In contrast, a summary is applied to extract only the main ideas or the “gist of information” (see Campbell 1990, p.216) which is the most important information from the text that is relevant to one’s own study. The length of a summary depends on the purpose of the writer (Swales & Feak, 2004) while a paraphrase is about the same length as the relevant passage from the original source (Veit & Gould, 2007). Therefore, a long passage might be summarized to a few sentences or even reduced to a few words, and, unlike a paraphrase, a summary does not correspond to contiguous sentences in the source. Therefore, in our corpus, if a citation corresponded to a specific part of the source text, it was categorized as a paraphrase; otherwise, it was categorized as a summary which could be based on different parts of the source text or could be generated from the text as a whole.

Hyland (1999) reported that quotations were never used in engineering and science research articles. Similar to Hyland’s (1999) study, quotations were not used by our expert writers when incorporating texts of others into their writing and therefore eliminated from our categories. However, in the case of the novice writers, some citations were taken verbatim from a specific part of the original source text without any syntactic or lexical changes. We categorized this type of citation as *exact copying*. Following Keck (2006) in categorizing ‘attempted paraphrases’, if a minimal change of one-word level was made, we categorized it as a paraphrase, not exact copying. Figure 1 provides a detailed description of each source use category as employed by our writers in this study.

Exact copy	The cited text matches exactly a specific excerpt of the source text without any change in the vocabulary or the sentence structure.
Example:	<p>The cross-linking modification tends to increase chain packing and inhibits the intra-segmental and inter-segmental mobility, resulting in higher gas selectivity [6]. (St. 1, cit. 4)</p> <p>Source [6], p. 255</p> <p>The crosslinking modification tends to increase chain packing and inhibits the intra-segmental and inter-segmental mobility, resulting in higher gas selectivity.</p>
Paraphrase	The cited text corresponds to one or more contiguous sentences from the source text with lexical or syntactic changes and gives reference to only one source.

Example:	<p>Besides, an increase in the dope solid slightly increased the density of PAN fibers [9]. (RA1, Cit.11)</p> <p>Source [9], p. 237</p> <p>The changes in dope concentration influence the density of the fiber produced, although the change is small.</p>
Summary	<p>The cited text condenses a longer excerpt or different parts of the source text, or represents the focus or method of the study in a few words and gives reference to only one source.</p>
Example:	<p>Krol et al. [7] have observed that the propylene plasticization of polyimide Matrimid® 5218 may cause the continuous increase of pressure-normalized fluxes. (RA2, Cit.6)</p> <p>Source [7], p. 285</p> <p>Defect-free hollow fiber gas separation membranes were prepared from the polyimide Matrimid® 5218. By adjusting the polymer concentration and the acetone concentration in the spinning dope, fibers were produced with an effective top layer thickness in the range of 0.3–0.4mm. The fibers were characterized by propane and propylene permeation. It was found that the propylene permeance[pressure-normalized fluxes] continuously increased with increasing feed pressure above 1 bar, indicating that propylene plasticized the membrane material.</p>
Generalization	<p>The cited text synthesizes information from source texts and gives references to multiple sources.</p>
Example:	<p><i>The excellent properties of CNTs and CNFs make them ideal candidates for a wide range of applications such as field emission [1, 2]. (St. 4, Cit. 1)</i></p> <p>Source [1], p. 233</p> <p><i>CNTs are known as a good emitter for field emission display due to their low operating voltage and high aspect ratio which leads to a larger emitting current than other field emission devices.</i></p> <p>Source [2], p. 849</p> <p><i>CNTs and CNFs are among the most promising materials used as cold cathodes for electron field emission applications.</i></p>

Figure1: A summary of the textual source use categories

In this study we also made a further analysis of comparing the use of “extensive citations” and “short citations” Swales (1986, p.50) in both sets of papers. As described by Swales (1986), “short citations are sentential or less, extensive citations encompass more than one sentence” (p.50). Therefore, a short citation could consist of a phrase, a clause, or one complete sentence. Extensive citations, on the other hand, contain two or more sentences (examples are provided in Table 3). The results of the analyses are presented in the following section.

3. Results & Discussion

In this section, we present the results of our textual analysis of both students’ papers and research articles. In the first segment, the frequency of each source use category in both sub-corpora is presented, in the second segment, an investigation of the application of *paraphrases* in students’ papers and research articles are demonstrated followed by summaries and *generalizations* in the following two segments. In the last segment of this section, the results of *extensive* and *short citations* are presented. The textual analyses are complemented with excerpts from the interviews to further clarify the points. Points for discussion arise from the problems identified in the textual analysis or points arose in the interviews.

3.1 The frequency of application of each source use category

Figure 2 shows the frequency and percentage of each source use category in both sub-corpora.

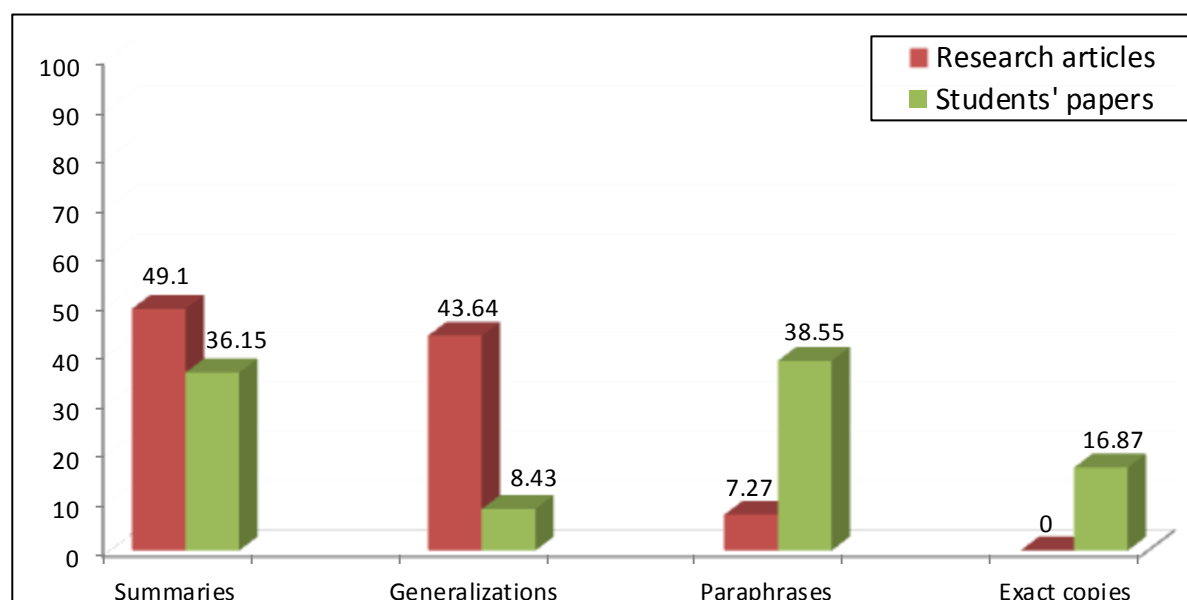


Figure2: The relative percentage of each source use category in published research articles and students’ papers

As shown in Figure 2, in the published research articles, summaries are mainly used followed by generalizations. This finding corroborates those in Hyland's (1999) study, in which it was found that scholars used mainly summaries and generalization to condense, synthesize and integrate various sources succinctly into their own writing. Figure 2 also shows that the authors of the research articles only used paraphrases sparingly when citing others. The student writers, on the other hand, made far greater use of paraphrases (38.55% vs. 7.27%) and they preferred to paraphrase in their attempts to incorporate source texts as compared to their use of summary and generalization. The student writers, were also found to use exact copying in an attempt to integrate source texts in their writing. From Figure 2, 16.87% of the total number of citations in the student writers' sub-corpus was exact copying from the source texts; the sentences were copied verbatim without using quotation marks.

As shown above, paraphrasing was the most common source use strategy used by the student writers followed by summarizing and generalizations, whereas, summarizing and generalizations were used most frequently in the published research articles. To analyze the writers' paraphrases, summaries, and generalizations, citations from both sub-corpora are juxtaposed with the excerpts from the source texts. The results are discussed in the following segments.

3.2 Paraphrases

As pointed out earlier, paraphrasing was the most frequent strategy adopted by inexperienced writers when citing works of others. However, in many instances examined, the students only made very minor lexical or syntactic changes to the source texts—similar to what Howard (1992) termed as patchwriting. The following examples illustrate this phenomenon [the identical parts are underlined]:

Example 1

For the practical application of CNFs, a method of synthesis at low temperature is essential to allow the direct deposition of CNFs on various substrates involving materials with low melting points [12]. (St. 4, Cit.10)

Source [12], p. 678

For the practical application of CNTs/CNFs, a method of synthesis at low temperature is essential to allow the direct deposition of CNTs/CNFs on various substrates made of materials with low melting points.

Example 2

On the other hand, the extremely high aspect ratio (>1000) of the CNT, intrinsic smoothness of hydrophobic graphite walls and nanoscale inner diameters of CNT also contribute to the unique phenomenon of ultra-efficient transport of gas through the nanotubes [37]. (St.6, Cit.24)

Source [37], p. 22

Extremely high aspect ratios, molecularly smooth hydrophobic graphitic walls, and nanoscale inner diameters of carbon nanotubes give rise to the unique phenomenon of ultra-efficient transport of water and gas through these ultra-narrow molecular pipes.

Both examples above typically represent varying attempts of paraphrasing made by our student writers: Example 1 liberally ‘borrowed’ chunks of the original sentence without making any changes (underlined), while in Example 2, the student writer made more attempts of paraphrasing by making changes such as “intrinsic smoothness of hydrophobic” instead of “molecularly smooth hydrophobic” and “contribute to” instead of “give rise to”.

When the problems with the paraphrases were discussed with the students during the interviews, it was revealed that the problems are more complex and far-reaching than simply accusing the students of plagiarism. The novice writers generally resorted to adopting inappropriate strategies of incorporating source texts into their own writing largely due to the lack of knowledge of acceptable source use. When we probed the student writers about the necessity to make changes in the language of the source texts cited, St.4 commented:

Sometimes I change, but sometimes what you want to say and what they show is similar, what you want to cite from them, the meaning is similar, so sometime I just take it like that... sometimes you just take it, because it's there. The language is same as you[rs]. If different you have to change and rewrite it. (Interview, St.4)

According to St.4's understanding, if what was documented in the source text is similar with what he intended to express in his paper, he could borrow the words verbatim, provided that he attributed the citation to the author in the references. Similar to previous studies done by Pecorari (2003) and Shi (2010), students borrowed text and used citations based on their own (sometimes inappropriate) understandings. St.6 also admitted the difficulty she faced when writing:

It's very hard to do that [paraphrase]. My solution is [to] ask my friend or ask someone that [is] expert in my field, ask for their help to teach me how to write the sentence with the same meaning but different structure. (St. 6, Interview)

When she was asked if she gets enough help, the answer was "not much". St.6 explained her helplessness with her writing situation:

I just change a few word, I mean that the last word I put in the front and then, but still same meaning. I just, okay, honestly I just take that sentence from that paper and put it in my paper, but change a little bit, I mean that change a word, I mean the structure, If I have no choice and then, that's what I choose. (St. 6, Interview)

All the student writers interviewed were well aware of the dangers of plagiarism in academic writing. However, left to their own devices, they struggled to understand the more complex need for developing authorial presence and for asserting their own voices in their own paper (see Abasi, Akbari, & Graves, 2006; Ivanič, 1998). As pointed out earlier, Flowerdew and Li (2007) have shown how young scientists imitated their seniors when writing their own papers; nonetheless, Mansourizadeh & Ahmad (2011) in their study of citation practices, claim that leaving students to learn via imitating the experts may not be adequate since many practices inferred by expert writers may not be immediately apparent to the uninitiated (Biber & Gray, 2010). The inappropriate strategies adopted by the novice writers in this study then are symptomatic of their academic literacy skills—not only do they lack the linguistic ability to rearticulate their understanding in their own language but they also are not aware of the established and acceptable text borrowing norms in their field, in particular.

As mentioned earlier, paraphrases were sparingly used in the research article sub-corpus. However, in contrast with the majority of the students' paraphrases, when the experienced

writers paraphrased their sources, they changed both wording and structure as can be seen in Example 3:

Example 3

It [PAN homopolymer] is also generally not favorable for spinning purposes compared to its copolymers which are more soluble in solvents and easier to handle for preparation and storage [2]. (RA 1, Cit. 4)

Source [2], p. 773

Polyacrylonitrile (PAN) homopolymer is generally not used for fiber spinning because its copolymers are more soluble and make the preparation and storage of the spinning dope much easier.

Example 3 is an instance of paraphrasing which is almost the same length as the original text. The authors changed some phrases such as *not used for fiber spinning* into *not favorable for spinning purposes* or the following part of the source sentence *because its copolymers are more soluble* which was changed into *compared to its copolymers which are more soluble in solvents*. The last part of the sentence was also paraphrased by modifying the structure of the sentence. The phrase *and make the preparation and storage of the spinning dope much easier* was changed to *and easier to handle for preparation and storage*. This example shows that when paraphrasing technical text, the authors made changes in the vocabulary, the syntax or the structure of the sentence while retaining the original meaning, and including the details. Sometimes strings of three words were kept such as *are more soluble*; however, the structure of the sentence in which these phrases were used was completely changed.

Exp1 concurred that textual source use skills are acquired through extensive practice, and argued that the students' inappropriate practices are developmental in nature and that the proper skills could be attained through experience and writing practices.

This needs the creativity of the writer and practice, some people cannot do that. The reason, I think is lack of skills, how to develop skills? Practice, lots of reading and writing, practice and practice, if you do not write how come you get good results, it's like driving, it needs practice (Exp 1, Interview).

The novice writers struggled to construct a literature review that they could call their own; their inexperience as well as their limited skills made them too dependent on the source texts which resulted in various textual borrowing problems. The expert writer highlighted that *lots of reading* can help the writers with better writing skills. This is some useful advice that in particular can benefit student writers.

3.3 Summaries

Summarizing also posed another challenge to novice writers. Our novice writers once again succumbed to inappropriate borrowing techniques in many of the summaries in the write up of their papers. Typically, the student writers made patches of minor changes, deleted some of the original sentences and copied strings of phrases/sentences in their attempt to summarize source texts. Example 4 illustrates this (the sentences are numbered for clarity):

Example 4

¹*Moreover, this method possesses the advantages of high speed of formation, high concentration of dope and high degree of jet stretch.* ²*Baojun et al. stated that this technique has been successfully applied to the formation of the high performance fiber Kevlar.* ³*In dry-jet wet spinning of acrylic fibers lie in the fact that small streams of dope extruded from the die are allowed to pass first through a short distance of air gap before entering the spinning bath for full coagulation [16] (St. 3, Cit.9).*

Source [16], p. 509

¹*The technological characteristics of the dry-jet wet spinning of acrylic fibers lie in the fact that small streams of dope extruded from the die are allowed to pass first through a short distance of air gap before entering the spinning bath for full coagulation.* ²*This process of forming fibers cleverly combines the advantages of dry spinning with that of wet spinning; i.e., it possesses the advantages of high speed of formation, high concentration of dope, and high degree of jet stretch that usually characterize....*

³*In literature there were already a number of reports concerning the effects of spinning variables...* ⁴*As to dry-jet wet spinning, relatively few papers can be*

found.^{8,9} Dry-jet wet spinning is a process of technical importance. ⁵It has been successfully applied to the formation of the high performance fiber Kelvar; it can also be used in the spinning of other fibers, like acrylic yarn of low filament denier and with very little void content.

Example 4 shows a summary made based on two adjacent paragraphs in the source text. In her attempt to summarize the information in the two rather long paragraphs, the novice writer had deleted some sentences, copied and reshuffled other sentences—the first sentence in the summary was copied from sentence 2 in the source text, the second sentence in the summary was copied from sentence 5 in the source text, the third sentence in the summary was copied from sentence 1 in the source text, and the remaining sentences were deleted. As can be seen, the novice writer liberally copied from different parts of the excerpts in the source text and tied them together. She made some minor changes such as substituting the subject *it* with the noun *this method* in the first sentence of her summary.

St.3 admitted her difficulties with comprehending her source texts. She argued that taking chunks of text from the source is the safest way out, especially when the source materials are difficult for her to comprehend:

Right now I still have that problem. I do not understand what the article says. Is it like this or is it like that. Sometimes if I could not understand it, I just put it like that, just like that, because I do not want to [cause] misunderstanding [about] what he [the author] said .(St. 3, Interview)

The problem of understanding the source text made it difficult for the novice writer to identify the key points and condense the ideas in her own words. As a result she resorted to patchwriting in an attempt to summarize the excerpts from the source text (see Example 4). This finding resonates with the findings from previous studies on task-based writing where student writers face similar difficulties with their paraphrases (Roig, 1999; Walker, 2008) and summaries (Campbell, 1990; Johns & Mayes, 1990; Keck, 2006; Shi, 2004). The findings are also consistent with previous findings on the use of patchwriting in theses (Pecorari, 2003, 2006) and in research papers (Flowerdew & Li, 2007).

Example 5 is another instance of summarizing in students' papers. In an attempt to provide an overview of the study, St. 5 constructed the summary from patches taken (underlined) from the abstract of the original source.

Example 5

Moaddeb and Koros [11] studied the gas transport properties of thin polyimide in the presence of silica particles. The presence of silica is found to improve the gas separation properties of polyimide layers, particularly for O2 and N2 gases.
(St. 2, Cit. 14)

Source [11], p. 143 (abstract)

The fundamental gas transport properties of thin films of six high performance polymers were evaluated in the presence of silicon dioxide particles. The silica particles were brought in close contact with the polymer inside the 200 Å.... The presence of silica improves the gas separation properties of the permselective layer, particularly for oxygen and nitrogen.

In contrast, complex understanding of the materials enable the authors of the research article in Example 6 below to condense a source text into one single sentence and incorporate it in their own text (the key information is underlined in the extract from the source text):

Example 6

Krol et al. [7] have observed that the propylene plasticization of polyimide Matrimid® 5218 may cause the continuous increase of pressure-normalized fluxes. (RA 2, Cit. 6)

Source [7], p. 285

Defect-free hollow fiber gas separation membranes were prepared from the polyimide Matrimid® 5218. By adjusting the polymer concentration and the acetone concentration in the spinning dope, fibers were produced with an effective top layer thickness in the range of 0.3–0.4mm. The fibers were characterized by propane and propylene permeation. It was found that the propylene permeance [pressure-normalized fluxes] continuously increased with

increasing feed pressure above 1 bar, indicating that propylene plasticized the membrane material.

In the above example, the authors synthesized the key information: the material used (*polyimide Matrimid® 5218*), the focus of the study (*propylene plasticization*), and the main finding (*the continuous increase of pressure-normalized fluxes*). Further examination of the research articles' sub-corpus also showed how the authors summarized information from longer excerpts of the source text.

Example 7

Further, it is reported that the Cu/CeO₂ catalyst was capable of eliminating NO_x below 623 K when n-butane was used as reductant [13]. (RA 4, Cit. 7)

Source [13], p. 41

Oxidation of hydrocarbon on 5% Cu/CeO₂ by NO is an important reaction that was also investigated here. First, cooking gas (INDANE) was used as a source of hydrocarbon that contains over 90% n-butane. In Fig. 9, mass spectra of NO and hydrocarbon at 60±C (curve a) and products N₂, H₂O, and CO₂ at 350±C (curve b) are presented. The mass peaks at m=eD29, m=eD43, and m=eD57 correspond to n-butane fragments. At 350±C NO as well as hydrocarbon appear to be fully utilized...

Example 7 summarizes an excerpt from the source text in a brief sentence where the gist of information is presented. The first sentence from the source describes the oxidation process of NO where Cu/CeO₂ was used as the catalyst in presence of hydrocarbon which refers to n-butane (consulted with the informant of the study). The following sentences describe the details and results of the process and explain that hydrocarbon appeared to be fully utilized and NO was converted to different products. Based on this information, the authors concluded that Cu/CeO₂ catalyst was capable of eliminating NO_x. As it can be seen from this summary, the authors condensed the information into a very short length only including the key points. Although keeping the technical terms unchanged, the style of writing is completely different from the source text. Instead of following the same flow of the source text and only changing a few words as a strategy that sometimes the novices resort to, the more established writers used a sentence with different words and structure from the source text and made the text their own.

When Exp 2 was asked about her strategies of incorporating texts of others in her writing, she explained:

It is not easy because of plagiarism. You need practice. My strategy is that first I read the paper, then I put the original paper aside and try to construct my own sentence. It is not easy at all; it needs many many tries, maybe first time it's not good enough, it's not one time you do it and find a good sentence, it needs many tries, you come back to it again and again.(Exp 2, Interview)

Both expert writers referred to experience and practice as the key factors in successful source use. Exp 2 also highlighted some helpful summarizing strategies that can benefit student writers. The first is her strategy of putting the article aside and writing from memory and the second is the importance of drafting sentences a number of times.

3.4 Generalizations

The third way of incorporating source texts in one's own writing is *generalization* where the writer synthesizes information from various source texts with similar argument, focus, or findings. Unlike paraphrasing and summarizing which are based on only one source text, generalization is drawn from two or more sources. Generalization allows the writer to put more emphasis on the point and to provide more support for the claim made (Hyland, 1999). In our corpus, it was found that generalizations were used considerably less frequently by the student writers when compared to the published research articles (8.43 percent versus 43.64, see Figure 2). Generalizations are also more cognitively demanding—making a generalization demands tacit knowledge and global understanding of the content area. It is therefore not surprising that we found that our novice writers had difficulties when attempting to generalize. Example 8 illustrates the unsuccessful attempt of one of the student writers to combine her sources into one:

Example 8

In response to that, considerably [sic] amounts of research have been performed to incorporate zeolite particles into the polymer matrices with respect to gas separation [6-13]. (St. 6, Cit. 6)

Source [6], P. 340

There have been numerous attempts to incorporate zeolite particles in polymer matrices with respect to GS [gas separation].

In the example above, in an attempt to generalize information from sources 6-13, the student writer had copied a long string of words directly from source [6] and used in her citation. Although the attribution might be correct, the text is partly borrowed from one of the cited sources. St. 6 expressed her challenge in generalizing information:

It is very hard because I have to understand the papers one by one not just briefly read the abstract and introduction...is it ...ok...what this researcher do in his work...and is it this researcher get same results with this researcher and then I have to summarize them in one sentence..., it's not easy (St.6, Interview)

Apart from patchwriting as shown above, the student writers, in some instances, improperly used sources of similar content from which the original citation is based without giving credit to the citing author, as typified in Example 9.

Example 9

A humic substance is the predominant species of natural organic matter (NOM) and generally is divided into humic acid (HA), fulvic acid (FA) and humin [2-3].
(St. 5, Cit. 2)

Source [5], p. 214

A humic substance is the predominant fraction of NOM and generally is divided into three categories: humic acid (HA), fulvic acids (FA) and humin.

This is a sample of generalization where the sentence seems to be drawn from source [5], though source [5] is not given credit for this citation. The citation is attributed to sources [2-3] which are of similar content; all the sources including source [5] discuss the same topic of natural organic matter in filtration (also checked with the informant of the study). Even though the attribution might be correct, the student's sentence, however, was taken from source [5] without being credited. Although St. 5 was not available for interview, it is possible that what St. 4 explains below also describes St. 5's behavior.

Normally I take the similar sentence from one of the papers then I refer back to other journals. Do they put same sentence, if they put same sentence, then I can cite all of them. (St.4, Interview)

Examples 8 and 9 show the challenges faced by beginning writers trying to incorporate massive amount of literature and condensing them into an all-encompassing generalization and when this failed, they resorted to some inappropriate textual borrowing strategies.

In contrast, the authors below showed how they synthesized information from different source texts of similar argument in Example 10 and incorporated findings or focus of other studies in Example 11 successfully.

Example 10

It was reported that separation processes using asymmetric membranes assist in the reduction of CO₂ concentration for upgrading low-quality natural gas [1, 2]. (RA 2, Cit. 1)

Source [1], p. 209

The objective of this study is to assess the economics of some membrane separation processes for the removal of CO₂ from crude ('sour') natural gas so as to obtain pipeline quality gas.

Source [1], p. 210

An effective method of separating acid gases [CO₂ and H₂S] from crude natural gas is by selective permeation of its components through nanoporous polymer membranes [asymmetric membranes]...

Source [2], p. 239

The general objective of the present investigation was to enlarge the information available in the open literature on the performance and economics of membrane processes for the removal of acid gasses (CO₂ and H₂S) from "crude" natural gas.

Source [2], p. 240

The use of asymmetric cellulose acetate (CA) membranes was assumed initially...It should be noted that membranes made from CA and many other polymers are more permeable to CO₂ and H₂S than to CH₄...

In Example 10, the authors generalized information from two sources with similar statements (underlined). Based on sources [1] and [2] which were written by the same authors, it was reported that asymmetric or nanoporous polymer membranes were used for *removal of CO₂ from crude natural gas* with the objective of obtaining *quality gas*. It was further argued that this method was *effective* and the membrane was *more permeable to CO₂*. Based on these excerpts, the authors (of RA2) generalized that *asymmetric membranes assist in the reduction of CO₂ concentration for upgrading low-quality natural gas*.

Example 11 below shows how findings of previous studies were generalized (similar findings are underlined).

Many studies have proven that cellulose acetate is highly comparable to other synthetic polymer materials as well as effective in hemodialysis process [23–27].

(RA 5, Cit. 14)

Source [23], p. 85

The interdialytic elimination of beta 2-m was studied using a newly developed high-flux cellulose acetate (CA) membrane. The results show that high-flux CA dialyzers offer better biocompatibility than classical Cuprophan or high-flux Cuprophan devices, with regard to leukopenia,...

Source [24], p. 39

Cellulose membranes are still widely used for hemodialysis... Experimental data were obtained for solute clearance and sieving through asymmetric polysulfone membranes and homogeneous cellulose triacetate hollow fiber membranes. The clearance of urea and the large molecular weight dextrans were greater for the cellulose triacetate membrane compared to the polysulfone,

Source [25], p. 224

we compared the outcome of ARF [acute renal failure] patients dialysed either with cellulose diacetate or with a synthetic polysulfone membrane...Dialysis using modified cellulose membranes is just as effective as dialysis using synthetic polysulfone membranes, but at a lower cost...

Source [26], p. 965

The solute removal characteristics and haemocompatibility of low-flux dialysers containing CuprophaneA, cellulose acetate, polymethylmeth-Gambrane) membranes were compared in a multicentre cross-over clinical trial...all four dialysers provided comparable removal of urea and creatinine,...

Source [27], p. 497

The present study was designed to evaluate the influence of two haemodialysis membranes of different biocompatibility on red blood cell function. Twelve patients were studied in two consecutive dialyses, with cuprophane and cellulose acetate. Osmotic fragility improved with both membranes, but this improvement was more marked with cellulose acetate...This phenomenon could be related to a better biocompatibility.

As evidenced in Example 11, generalization could only be made when the writer has a comprehensive understanding of the materials. As shown above, the authors based their generalization by comparing one or more synthetic polymer materials to cellulose acetate in hemodialysis process which has proven to be equally effective. Undoubtedly, this breadth of understanding can only come from the wealth of the authors' knowledge and experience researching the area for a long time. When the expert writers were asked about generalization, Exp 1 made the following comment:

We have to read each paper carefully and understand the message. This also shows the experience of the writer, for example here I cited three papers [referring to a citation in his paper], shows that I have gone through all the papers and found the idea to be similar. So we do not need to cite each and everyone [separately], we gather all the ideas in one sentence. (Exp 1, Interview)

Many researchers have rightfully argued that academic literacy at advanced level is far more complex than good reading and writing skills (e.g., Braine, 2002; Tardy, 2005). A competent research student, ideally, must be able to demonstrate full understanding of the disciplinary content through his/her ability of evaluating and synthesizing knowledge gained from multiple readings and this competency usually takes substantial time to develop.

3.5 Short versus Extensive Citations

Even though the majority of the paraphrases, summaries and generalizations in the student papers' sub-corpus showed inappropriate textual borrowing strategies, there were also successful instances of textual borrowing attempts. The successful citations were mainly instances of short citations (see p. 10 for a description of short and extensive citations). The student writers showed less dependency on the source text when it involves shorter citation with some general information. But with extensive citations containing two or more sentences involving more specific information, they relied on the language of the source texts much more (as shown in Example 4). When we looked at the differences in the length of citation used in the introduction section between the two sub-corpora (see Table3), we found that the authors of research articles made less extensive citations (3.64%) compared to the student writers who employed more extensive citations (23.71%) while reviewing the literature.

Table 3: Length of the analyzed citations in the two sub-corpora

Length of Cit.	Experts	Novices
A phrase or clause	15 (27.27%)	19 (22.89%)
Example:		
<i>Furthermore, cellulose acetate polymers are very convincing, with characteristics such as good toughness [19], biocompatibility [8,20], good desalting, high flux [21] and relatively low cost [22]] (RA5, Cit.10-13).</i>		
One sentence	38 (69.09%)	43 (51.81%)
Example:		
<i>The PFA-g-PS-SO₃H membranes were found to have a good combination of physico-chemical, structural and thermal properties [27–29] (RA6, Cit.9).</i>		
Two or more sentences	2 (3.64 %)	21 (25.3%)
Example:		
<i>Baojun et al. stated that this technique has been successfully applied to the formation of the high performance fiber Kevlar. In dry-jet wet spinning of acrylic fibers lie in the fact that small streams of dope extruded from the die are allowed to pass first through a short distance of air gap before entering the spinning bath for full coagulation [16] (St. 3, Cit.9).</i>		
Total	55	83

This finding is in accordance with Pickard's (1995) study that showed academic writers preferred short citations over extensive citations. The experienced writers were able to compress their citations and made references to multiple, related texts while the beginning writers felt compelled to elaborate their points through making extensive citation based on a single source. When asked about the length of citations Exp 1 explained:

An experienced writer only portrays the main idea of those papers they read. An inexperienced writer may elaborate and re-elaborate and it may end up in a very boring paper to read. But having said that, there are sometimes specific points of particular importance you need to emphasize which need longer citations, but we rarely do that, not very often (Exp 1, Interview).

This practice of the expert writers is also in line with previous research (Biber and Gray, 2010) which documented that scholarly writing, mainly research articles, are 'compressed' rather than 'elaborated'.

While transitivity was not a focus of analysis in this paper, it is worth mentioning that the use of non-integral citations (where the name of the cited author was not included in the cited text) was much greater than integral citations (where the name of the cited author was included in the cited text) in both sets of papers showing an "emphasis on the message itself rather than the researcher" and "objectivity and impersonality of scientific experiments" (Mansourizadeh and Ahmad, 2011, p.157). However, the expert writers used a higher percentage of non-integral citations (84.8% vs.74.2%) and a lower percentage of integral citations (15.2% vs. 25.8%) compared to the student writers. (For a detailed discussion on transitivity see Nunn, 2010).

Such expert practices, mentioned above, are not always evident to the novice writers. Furthermore, conversations with the student writers revealed that in general, they had received very little writing practice in their content area during their undergraduate careers. This is a problem that is widely found in many engineering degree programs (see Cooper & Bikowski, 2007) across the globe. It is thus not surprising to find that students who went on to enrol in graduate research programs were shocked to find that they were inadequately prepared for the writing demands at postgraduate level. In the interviews, the two expert writers, on the other hand, referred to training in writing classes as one of the key factors in their writing success. They emphasized the need for technical writing classes for novice scientific writers.

4. Concluding Thoughts

In conclusion, although this study is based on a limited corpus in the engineering field, we believe the scenario resonates with various other advanced second-language writing environments as well. The mismatch between the sophisticated writing demands of graduate school and the inadequate levels of language preparation of students has revealed various inappropriate text-borrowing strategies adopted by the student writers, perhaps more as means for academic survival. Clearly, emerging second language research writers need to be pedagogically supported linguistically in acquiring the advanced academic writing skills to enable them to optimize their graduate research and learning experience.

The findings shown above have clearly demonstrated various problems novice student writers faced when integrating different source texts in their writing, a rhetorically crucial element in positioning one's research. The students' excessive use of paraphrase and the over-dependency on the language of the source texts by no means show that they have committed purposive textual transgression (see also Chandrasoma et al., 2004; Pecorari, 2003); rather, they are indicative of their status as novices and their developmental writing stage, and we could safely surmise that these problems are commonplace in non-native EAP contexts around the globe (see Abasi et al., 2006; Howard, 1995; Keck, 2006; Shi, 2004, 2010). As it happens, at least at our own institution, beginning research students are often expected to dive headlong into their research program, it was also expected that they would improve their literacy skills simultaneously. We believe, however, their learning could be enriched and their acquisition of academic literacy skills accelerated through advanced EAP courses where students could be made aware of the style and rhetorical convention of academic communications, such as the acceptable methods and strategies of source use in their field of study.

Our textual analysis of the research articles corpus has also proven that many of the disciplinary conventions practiced by the experienced scholars are not necessarily transparent to the uninitiated. It is interesting to note that even though our novice student writers had many model papers to work with many of the advanced academic skills needed in producing papers of acceptable quality, as proofs of their research output, they do not automatically get transferred and remain hidden, beyond their grasp. The literature shows that student writers have sometimes attributed their language re-use of the source texts to formulaicity in scientific writing (see Flowerdew and Li, 2007). A small contribution that this study made to the previous research is that the results of this study showed that the established scientific writers were not

only concerned about the originality of the work but also the language as well since they did not adopt exact copying or patchwriting as a source use strategy. Therefore, the concept of originality in both language and work need to be clarified for the beginning scientific research writers (see Turner, 2004). The findings also indicate that appropriate textual borrowing strategies are skills which are not much dependent on the culture as both the expert and the novice writers in this study were from the same culture and context of study. The novice writers have adopted these strategies either due to lack of skills in paraphrasing, summarizing, and generalizing information from disciplinary texts or due to their low levels of academic literacy, of not being aware of established and acceptable academic practices.

As this study has shown, through our exploration on the nature of specific disciplinary discourse, and understanding of the difficulties faced by aspiring L2 research writers, EAP instructors would be better prepared to propose, design and deliver an accurate and relevant language support program. Based on the findings of this study, we believe that pedagogical support for beginning writers could benefit them better if they are interwoven with discipline-specific material. This aim could be achieved by involving the students in the analysis of published articles in their own field of study. Students need to be made aware of the rhetorical moves and be educated on appropriate source use strategies in their own field relying on corpus based pedagogy. Many excerpts from the sample paraphrases, summaries, and generalizations of established writers' papers analysed in this study could be used in academic writing courses to show how sources are safely and appropriately incorporated in scientific writing. In this study, the analysis of published research articles has revealed that the authors used more generalization and summaries rather than paraphrases. They also used more short citations rather than extensive citations. In the interviews, the expert writers explained that generalizations allow them to make their claims stronger and summaries help them to save space. Short citations also resulted in less dependency on the source texts. Students need to be made aware of such rhetorical moves in academic writing classes.

In conclusion, we acknowledge that the group does not represent the whole field of chemical engineering, nor the engineering fields in general. However, we get a glimpse of challenges novice researchers have to face in learning how to write in their discipline. Future research will do well to include more samples and analyze citations in a larger corpus which can enhance the generalizability of the findings. The findings could also be examined and compared between science/engineering fields and the humanities to find out how established and novice writers'

source use practices are different across disciplines. Longitudinal studies on students' progress over two or three years would also be valuable. In this study, the student writers were master's students. Future research will do well by examining and following the source use strategies of PhD students in their writing to find out how their source use practices develop over more than a two or three year period.

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Appendix

Interview questions for the student writers:

- What semester are you in? Is it your final semester?
- Have you ever written a paper before? Have you published any?
- When you cite, do you change the words of the source text? How do you make changes?
- Do you have problems in terms of language, not knowing how to express the ideas or what words to use? In these cases what do you do?
- When you want to cite several sources to generalize information, how do you do that?
- Have you taken any courses on writing during your post-graduate or under-graduate studies?
- What kind of writing did you do during those courses? What basically did they teach you?
- What do you wish to learn in writing classes?

Interview questions for the expert writers:

- What are the important factors you consider when you want to cite a source text?
- How long do you think citations need to be? (Long citations consisting of several sentences or short citations consisting of one sentence or less) why?
- When do you decide to reference multiple sources in one citation rather than one single source? Which aspects (information) do you decide to generalize from different sources?
- What are your strategies/methods in generalizing information from various source texts?
- What are your strategies in summarizing information from a source article?
- What are your strategies in paraphrasing? How do you construct your sentence not to be the same as the source article?
- Do you think writing courses need to be based on disciplinary content?



Factors Influencing Learner Self-Confidence in a Japanese EAP Program

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Abstract

This paper reports on a preliminary study into college EFL learners' perspectives on their self-confidence as language learners. Focusing on Japanese EFL learners in an intensive college English for academic purposes (EAP) program, emphasis was placed on identifying factors that might influence the maintenance or development of their self-confidence. This study also examines how the cultural background of the Japanese learners influences their self-perceptions as language learners, especially in terms of how they view their own learning self-reflectively. To gain an understanding into the nature of self-confidence, this study employed qualitative, in-depth interviews of 60 to 90 minutes. A total of 15 first- and second-year college students were asked to reflect on what self-confidence means to them and how they felt it related to their learning. Based on a thematic analysis of the interview data, some of the salient factors which emerged were: 1) experiences of perceived success or failure, 2) positive or negative feedback, 3) comparison of self with others or some standard, 4) familiarity with the learning context or task, and 5) personality and cultural influences, especially self-deprecation in Japanese culture. Suggestions for further research will be presented along with pedagogical implications drawn from the findings.

Keywords: *self-confidence; affect; EAP, motivation; Japanese culture*

Introduction

The language classroom setting can present itself as an anxiety-provoking situation to some learners, as it often involves constant evaluations from others as well as from the learner him/herself. In such an environment, chances of being evaluated might serve as a reminder of the learner's current L2 competence in comparison to others' or idealized images of him/herself as a successful language learner (Ehrman, 1996). As Horwitz et al. (1986) note, "[A]ny performance in the L2 is likely to challenge an individual's self-concept as a competent communicator and lead to reticence, self-consciousness, fear, or even panic" (p. 128).

Given the fact that language anxiety is a widespread phenomenon in various contexts of second language learning and involves a great deal of vulnerability on the part of language learners trying to express themselves before others in a shaky linguistic vehicle (Arnold & Brown, 1999), how can the learners manage or learn to live with such emotional turmoil? How can they stay motivated to make their learning sustainable? One of the key issues particularly relevant to the questions above is the issue of L2 self-confidence or the learner's personal beliefs of efficacy in their language learning. In recent SLA research, the learner's self-confidence has often been discussed as a set of specific self-constructs, such as self-efficacy, L2 linguistic confidence, or positive self-concept, in relation to the research on L2 motivation and its development: that is, L2 self-confidence seems to underlie various manifestations of L2 motivation both within and among learners, according to the learners' individually unique perceptions and experiences in the process of learning a second language.

However, this area of research has not yet been fully explored, and as Moyer (2006) argues, L2 self-confidence in particular "is poorly understood as a construct, and has received little empirical validation up to now. How a learner actually gains confidence in L2 in general is similarly uncharted territory researchwise" (p. 267). In other words, language learners' beliefs regarding their self-efficacy or self-confidence in their language learning seem worthy of investigation for a deeper understanding the nature of learner motivation and its underlying sources.

This study, thus, is an attempt to explore L2 learner confidence as one of the underlying sources of learner motivation, with the assumption that further understanding of the former (i.e., how

the learners believe they can develop/grow as language learners) will greatly contribute to that of the latter (i.e., how they can sustain their motivational drive and willingness to act upon such beliefs and engage in tackling further challenges to come).

As is often the case with other psychological constructs, one's sense of confidence largely depends on individual differences and variations in the setting each individual is placed in (Ehrman, 1996; Skehan, 1989). That is, an individually unique frame of reference, whether be culturally or personally rooted, would play an important role in shaping one's sense of confidence or efficacy in reaction to particular situations or contexts (Bandura, 1986; Pekrun, 1992). With this general understanding of human psychological functioning, this study also attempts to capture the potential impact of one's cultural background on the way of conceptualizing one's sense of confidence in second language learning. By focusing on Japanese learners of English in an EAP educational setting, this study examines their perspectives on the notion of self-confidence in L2 learning, especially in terms of how they view and evaluate their own learning in a self-reflective manner, so that it can provide alternative insights into potential sources or factors that might influence or contribute to the development of their L2 self-confidence.

Review of Relevant Literature

The learner's sense of self-confidence in L2 learning has been discussed in recent research in terms of self-perceptions of L2 competence or efficacy (Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Leaver, Ehrman, & Shekhtman, 2005). Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory defines perceived self-efficacy as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). That is, perceptions of self-efficacy are based on one's personal judgment of what one believes may be accomplished with the abilities that one possesses. Bandura (1993) also notes the existence of domain-specific perceptions of self-efficacy, which are different in nature from a more general form of self-efficacy or self-confidence. For example, one may not necessarily have a strong sense of self-efficacy in specific situations or tasks (e.g., a language classroom or physics exam), but in general one may possess self-confidence.

Although there is a good possibility that a sense of effectiveness in one or more specific areas of competence will overflow into one's general feelings of self-worth or self-esteem (Ehrman,

1996, p. 137), self-efficacy beliefs imply that there exists some degree of control or “locus of control” within oneself. Locus of control, as Williams and Burden (1999, p. 194) note, “relates to whether individuals see the events that happen in their lives as lying within their control or outside of it” (Wang, 1983 as cited in Williams & Burden, 1999). Beliefs of personal efficacy, thus, naturally influence one’s choices of behavioral situations or settings where he or she can feel in control (Bandura, 1993, 1997), based on the individual’s appraisals of a certain situation as being threatening or not: that is, if the situation is perceived as potentially threatening to the extent that it is far beyond one’s ability to deal with that threat positively, anxiety results as a natural consequence. In other words, the ways in which individuals experience anxiety are largely dependent on their feelings of self-efficacy or whether they can perceive themselves as effective mediators of the particular situations or contexts (Pappamihel, 2002).

Consequently, perceptions of self-efficacy generally contribute to maintenance or even enhancement of motivation as they “determine the goals individuals set, the effort they expended to achieve these goals, and their willingness to persist in the face of failure” (Bandura, 1986, as cited in Wong, 2005, p. 248). On the other hand, however, a lack of self-efficacy or an anticipatory sense of failure is likely to involve anxiety, which often leads to reduced motivation as a consequence. Such a connection to anxiety arousal within an individual clearly indicates that positive self-constructs such as self-efficacy and self-esteem are interrelated with negative counterparts at the same time (i.e., feelings of self-deprecating thoughts).

The question of how psychological constructs such as self-confidence, or more specifically self-efficacy and self-esteem, are related to specific educational contexts and second language learning in particular is an issue that demands further research. As Graham (2004) notes, the construct of self-efficacy has been “applied widely in general educational contexts” (p. 173), especially in relation to academic achievements or outcomes (Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Schunk, 1991) but “to a lesser extent in the study of language learning motivation” (Graham, 2004, p. 173).

As noted earlier, the relevance of self-efficacy beliefs to language learning is quite apparent and naturally being incorporated into the studies of second language learning motivation (Clément, Dörnyei & Noels, 1994; Clément, Gardner, & Smythe, 1980; Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997; Wong, 2005). Tremblay and Gardner (1995), for instance, noted that the learner’s self-

efficacy is “an important antecedent to motivational behavior in language learning (e.g., persistence)” (as cited in Graham, 2004, p. 173), defining it as “an individual’s beliefs that he or she has the capacity to reach a certain level of performance or achievement” (p. 507). A series of studies by Eccles *et al.* and Wigfield (e.g., Eccles, Adler & Meece, 1984; Wigfield, 1994; Wigfield & Eccles, 1992) also implied that “motivation is based on how much students expect to succeed at a task and how much they value that success” (Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003, p. 321): that is, if students are given intrinsically motivating tasks which are interesting yet challenging, they can gain a sense of enjoyment, accompanied by a feeling of competence (self-efficacy) in doing the tasks as a sort of reward (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

As somewhat different from the task-specific type of self-efficacy described above, L2 self-confidence or “linguistic self-confidence” proposed by Clément *et al.* (1980, 1985, 1994) describes the learner’s overall belief in one’s competence in the L2 use. According to MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998, p. 551), L2 self-confidence is comprised of two componential factors: 1) self-evaluation of L2 skills as the cognitive component and 2) anxiety as the affective component (Clément & Kruidenier, 1985). The cognitive aspect corresponds to the learner’s “perceived competence” (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996) or “a judgment made by the speaker about the degree of mastery achieved in the L2” (MacIntyre *et al.*, 1998, p. 551).

The second component corresponds to “language anxiety, especially the discomfort experienced when using a L2” (MacIntyre *et al.*, p. 551). According to Clément’s model of L2 acquisition (Clément, 1978, 1980, 1984, 1986; Clément & Kruidenier, 1985), L2 self-confidence, defined as “self-perceptions of communicative competence and concomitant low levels of anxiety in using the second language” (Noels *et al.*, 1996, p. 255), serves as “the most important determinant of attitude and effort expended toward L2 learning” (Clément *et al.*, 1994, p. 422). Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) defined language anxiety as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors...arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 28).

Language anxiety, as often instantiated in the form of performance anxiety, such as communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, or test anxiety (Horwitz, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991), is also known to be highly related to student motivation. Ehrman (2003, p. 323) notes that overly anxious learners “are less motivated to perform in ways that

bring active attention to themselves in the classroom or in natural language-use settings". Thus in general, the concepts of anxiety and self-perceived competence or efficacy beliefs are closely linked to motivation: that is, anxiety serves as both a source and effect of self-efficacy beliefs, which in turn play a central role in regulating anxiety arousal (Mills, Pajare, & Heron, 2006).

In terms of its relationship with L2 motivation, language anxiety has also been claimed to be negatively associated not just with L2 learning motivation in general (Gardner et al., 1997; Hashimoto, 2002), but more specifically with other variables such as *Willingness to Communicate* (WTC) (MacIntyre et al., 2002), which are positively correlated with L2 motivation. Thus, as Clement and others (1994) note, language anxiety is a central factor in determining learner self-confidence and a lack of anxiety is thereby an important attribute of motivated learners (Papi, 2010). In light of the fact that the essential components of language anxiety include various forms of performance anxiety (i.e., communication apprehension), L2 self-confidence is also considered a key determinant of learners' willingness and readiness to participate in communicative activities in language classrooms (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004).

According to MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model of variables that influence the construct of WTC in the L2, there are two aspects of self-confidence; that is, one is characterized as rather transient and situational and described as *state communicative self-confidence*, while the other more stable and enduring form is L2 self-confidence. This differentiation of aspects of self-confidence roughly corresponds to Bandura's (1993) conceptualization of domain specific perceptions of self-efficacy on the one hand and a more general form of self-efficacy beliefs on the other. Under the overarching construct of WTC, MacIntyre et al. (1998) propose that overall L2 self-confidence can be built up over time in various communicative situations (e.g., intergroup and social communicative settings), where several other affective elements such as social and individual motivational ones interact with one another to influence state or situational-level self-confidence, facilitating the process of learners' willingness/readiness to communicate.

In fact, a series of Yashima *et al.*'s (2002, 2004) studies confirmed that L2 motivation has a significant impact on learner self-confidence in L2 communication, which in turn would help facilitate the level of L2 WTC among Japanese EFL college and high-school students. In particular, those learners who have a high level of 'international posture,' were found to be more motivated and willing to communicate in the L2. According to Yashima et al. (2004), the

construct of *international posture* refers to the kind of motivational attitudes that learners of predominantly mono-cultural backgrounds (e.g., Japanese EFL learners), tend to possess as an alternative to Gardner's (1985) integrative motivation. As Edwards and Roger (2015) point out, thus, L2 self-confidence, WTC, and L2 communicative competence can be developed as a cyclical process, and given the studies by Yashima and others (2002, 2004), which incorporate the social and cultural aspects of learner motivation as in the proposed *international posture*, it is apparent that there exists a complex network of factors influencing the ways L2 self-confidence would develop within individual learners.

Rationale for the Study

The issue of learner self-confidence in L2 learning has been widely recognized and discussed, but the real nature of the phenomenon has not been fully described yet, especially in the ways that are particularly relevant to the L2 learning contexts. Certainly L2 self-confidence and its related constructs (e.g., self-efficacy, self-concept, self-esteem, or locus of control) have been investigated in recent studies on language learning motivation (Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994), but much of the research in this area has been largely quantitative or correlational in nature, aiming to find a measurable impact of a particular construct on achievement or proficiency, without fully addressing the fundamental questions on the nature of the phenomenon (Spielmann & Radnofsky, 2001). In response to the inconclusiveness of research on learner factors, Gan, Humphreys, and Hamp-Lyons (2004) argue that "the qualitative investigative approach may add a vital dimension to the complexities of language learning and effects" (p. 231). Ushioda (2001) also noted the potential value of a qualitative approach to "cast a different light on the phenomenon under investigation and to raise a different set of issues" (as cited in Gan et al. 2004, p. 231).

In reaction to the relative paucity of research that examines the nature of L2 self-confidence in a descriptive manner, this study employs a qualitative approach as a way of providing a more holistic picture of the phenomenon. This study, thus, is an attempt to explore the phenomenon of L2 self-confidence from the perspectives of L2 learners, especially in terms of how they make personal sense of their own learning experiences as particularly relevant to their developing self-conceptions as language learners.

In addition, by focusing on Japanese learners of English, this study also examines how their cultural background influences their self-perceptions as language learners, especially in terms of how they view and evaluate their own learning in a self-reflective manner. From a socio-cultural viewpoint, L2 learners' cultural frames of reference, including their own personal beliefs and values acquired through their early socialization processes, may have a significant impact on how they perceive and interpret their own L2 learning experiences. As Markus and Kitayama (1991, p. 224) have pointed out, construal of self and others, represented in different cultural perceptions of reality, "can influence, and in many cases determine, the very nature of individual experiences, including cognition, emotion, and motivation." Arguably, identifying the factors that individual learners perceive as influencing or contributing to their self-confidence is a key step toward understanding the development of this psychological construct, and the role it plays in the process of second language learning experienced by individuals in various cultural and educational settings.

Methodology

Given that the primary goal of this study is to explore the phenomenon of L2 self-confidence from the perspective of L2 learners, especially in terms of how they make personal sense of their own learning experiences as particularly relevant to their developing self-conceptions as language learners, this study employed qualitative in-depth interviews to address the research questions posed earlier. The rationale behind the use of interviews as a research instrument is twofold. First, since the construct of self-confidence in EAP language learning for Japanese learners has never been fully described, open-ended qualitative methods seemed appropriate for allowing the subjective conceptualizations of the participants to emerge freely without forcing them into pre-determined categories (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Second, although several qualitative methods such as journals or open-ended questionnaires could also have been used, subjective perceptions of one's own psychological state can potentially be accessed more deeply and fully in interpersonal dialogue than through other less interactive methods such as questionnaires or journals (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Merriam, 1998; Silverman, 2004). As Dörnyei (2001 p.49) points out, "[I]nterpretive techniques such as in-depth interviews or case studies are in many ways better suited to explore the internal dynamics" of multi-leveled constructs such as motivation, and "the richness of qualitative data may also provide new slants on old questions."

As Seidman (1998) clearly notes, “at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p.3). Thus, the process of interviewing provides participants with opportunities to select, reconstruct, and reflect upon details of their experience within the specific context of their lives.

The Context

The interviews for this qualitative study were held at a four-year private liberal arts university located in the suburbs of Tokyo, Japan. The university requires its first- and second-year students to take an intensive English language program focusing on English for academic purposes (EAP). Upon admission in April, students are streamed by TOEFL scores and oral interview, into four different levels, with the average TOEFL ITP scores being approximately 450 (low-intermediate), 500 (intermediate), 550 (high-intermediate), and 600 (advanced). Classes focus on skills for critically reading and analyzing academic English texts, discussing and presenting opinions on issues, and writing academic research papers. Student motivation to improve English skills is quite high in general, and the program applies a high level of pressure on students to achieve a level of academic English sufficient for participation in English-medium university courses at the university.

The Participants

Participants of the study were drawn from the first-year students enrolled in the EAP program, where they were also attending courses taught in English which aimed to develop their academic reading skills and strategies. Using a purposive sampling technique for “quality assurance” (Creswell, 1998, p. 119), a total of 15 Japanese students were recruited on a voluntary basis after completion of the EAP courses, and this recruitment procedure was intended as a way of increasing the opportunity for the researcher to identify the recurring themes relevant to the research questions.

In response to a request for volunteers emailed by the researchers or made in person to several classes at low-intermediate (average TOEFL ITP 450 at the time of college entrance), intermediate (average TOEFL ITP 500 at the time of college entrance), and upper-intermediate level (average TOEFL 550 at the time of college entrance), a number of students indicated their

willingness to participate in the study. Though their participation was voluntary in nature, all of the 15 participants are considered representatives of Japanese EFL students enrolled in the program: 6 from the low-intermediate, 5 from the intermediate, and 4 from the upper-intermediate classes. Students in the advanced classes were excluded from the study, since they were mostly returnees from overseas and not considered typical EFL learners in Japan.

At the time of volunteering, students were not informed of the details of the interview, however, and were only requested to volunteer for a 60-90 minute interview to reflect on their past year of study in the program. All students who volunteered were familiar with the researcher due to having been in his classes during the academic year; however, at the time of volunteering (late February 2010), no students were enrolled in classes taught by the researcher, and all grading for previous courses was completed. Interviews were conducted during spring break (March 2010) at the convenience of the participants.

Data Collection & Analysis

In total, 15 interviews were conducted in an informal setting in Japanese, which is the participants' most comfortable language, and tape-recorded with their consent. Each interview, which lasted for 60-90 minutes, was transcribed verbatim in Japanese. All the interview data were then content-analyzed according to several thematic categories that emerged through the entire research process (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Although the general research aims and purposes had already been defined in the form of research questions, no specific thematic units and categories were determined at the time of data coding. The reason for this was to let thematic units and categories emerge through the process of data analysis (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), minimizing the imposition of predetermined categories or preconceptions on the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For all interviews, care was taken to allow flexibility for the participants to elaborate on and clarify feelings and episodes that they mentioned in the interview. For example, if an interviewee said that she had felt confident about her grammar ability prior to entering the university, the researcher encouraged the interviewee to explore the idea with questions such as "Why did you feel that way?" or "What do you mean by that?"

Findings

A variety of themes or factors were identified in the individual data analyses, but the sections

that follow are devoted to presenting several common themes that emerged through content-analysis across 15 interviews, especially in relation to the research questions posed earlier. In order to illuminate the common themes, selected quotations from the interviews are given. All the selected quotations from the interviews are translations by the researcher, preceded by a pseudonym to mark the identity of the participants. The excerpts are summarized at times so the themes are to be highlighted, while care was taken to render the original meaning of the participants' words in as literal a translation as possible.

From the wealth of reflections and narratives that emerged, the main episodes and concepts that students noted as having influenced their self-confidence were sorted into the following five main categories of factors:

- 1) experiences of perceived success or failure,
- 2) positive or negative feedback,
- 3) comparison of self with others or some standard,
- 4) familiarity with the learning context or task, and
- 5) personality and cultural influences, especially self-deprecation in Japanese culture.

Experiences of Success or Failure

The most common factor mentioned by the interviewees as having influenced their self-confidence was some type of episode of perceived success or failure in their language learning or communication. Generally, as can be expected, the learners saw successful experiences as contributing to stronger self-confidence, while episodes of failure were connected to feelings of weaker self-confidence.

For example, Haruki, a reserved, studious student, related at length how her experience studying abroad during the summer break for six weeks was a mix of failures and successes that had a great impact on her self-perception as a language learner.

Haruki: When I studied abroad in Canada last summer, I had classmates from other Asian countries who were very good at speaking. At first, I completely lost confidence because I couldn't keep up with them and couldn't say anything in discussions.

But towards the end of the term, I found that I could talk with them about

pop culture topics. I felt like, wow, I can really speak in English. I remember feeling “high” (euphoric) when our conversation was flowing.

For her, despite the difficulty and loss of confidence she experienced during the first few weeks of her study abroad, the fact that she was able to experience successful communication before she went back to Japan led to a sense of self-confidence as an English user and learner. She elaborated on her feelings about the connection between a sense of self-confidence and ultimately attaining success in communication after persisting in efforts to improve her skills:

Haruki: I really think the most important factor in building confidence is having experiences of communicating with native speakers and other advanced speakers. I don’t mean like in the classroom, but like using English in real life...with people who speak fast. Confidence especially comes, I think, from the experience of not being able to do it at first, but then being able to communicate somehow more and more.

It is interesting to note that a loss of confidence, as shown in the case of Haruki at the beginning of her study abroad, can occur not only as a result of an experience of failure or difficulty like her inability to speak in discussions, but also as a result of the lack of successful experiences in recent memory. This was explained by Yosuke, who went on a similar six-week study abroad program:

Yosuke: In my summer study abroad program, I really felt a strong sense of improvement in my speaking. But in the fall term, I did not have any classes for oral practice and I lost my confidence in speaking. By winter term, confidence in my spoken English was like a distant memory.

Like Haruki and Yosuke, several other students mentioned communication failures or successes in study abroad programs as a major influence on their self-confidence as a language learner and user. In addition to study abroad, of course, other types of successes or failures were mentioned as well, including small episodes of good or poor grades on assignments as well as larger events such as the completion of the first year EAP program. Kyoko, who did not study abroad during the summer, noted the importance of her increase in confidence as not only a language learner and user, but even as a person, as a result of successfully finishing the first

year component of the university's intensive EAP program.

Kyoko: As a student in the lowest placement level in terms of entry TOEFL scores, the mere fact that I was able to finish the 1st year of the program is a source of confidence...as a person and as a learner. The program was very tough, but I did it, and I have a very strong sense of self-satisfaction and accomplishment.

Thus, experiencing success in communication or some accomplishment of a milestone as a language learner was considered a key factor in self-confidence by the interviewees.

Feedback and Comments from Others

Positive feedback, negative feedback, and lack of feedback were all mentioned by several students as factors that influenced their L2 self-confidence. Risa talked about her experience with positive feedback as follows, emphasizing her perception that positive comments can boost self-confidence:

Risa: Receiving positive comments or evaluations from teachers makes a big difference because we need to have an environment which helps us feel that we have succeeded. If we can feel that our English is working, we can have more confidence.

On the other hand, Haruki discussed an episode where she received what she perceived as negative feedback and felt a loss of motivation. In her reflective accounts, motivation and confidence are differentiated but closely related, as shown below:

Haruki: In the fall, I completely lost my motivation (*yaruki*) when a teacher used one part of my essay as an example of a problem. He didn't mention my name, but I knew it was mine. I felt terrible about that and started hating the class. But then, a week or so later, I had a chance to talk with him directly in a tutorial and realized he had a positive evaluation of my writing. In my final assignment, I received a very positive evaluation, and that helped me regain my confidence.

In Yosuke's case, a negative evaluation in the form of a lower-than-expected final grade directly

led to a weakening of his self-confidence.

Yosuke: In my fall writing class, I thought I was doing pretty well, but when I got my final grade, it was a C-minus. I couldn't believe it. My confidence level really fell.

Finally, in addition to the factors of positive and negative feedback, Satoko's episode below sheds light on the possibility that the absence of feedback may be a factor that affects levels of L2 self-confidence as well.

Satoko: In one of my writing classes, I almost never received any feedback on my writing from my teacher. I guess we were supposed to give peer feedback to each other, but we were all so busy with our own writing and deadlines that we really had no time to help each other. In the end, I had no idea whether my writing was better or not. I just got a grade.

The above episodes and perceptions of the interviewees suggest that positive or negative evaluative comments from others, or a lack of feedback altogether on language performance can have an impact on the development of L2 self-confidence.

Comparison of Self with Others or Some Standard

Another common theme that emerged from the interview data was concerned with how the learners perceived themselves in comparison to other students or some other standard they were sensitive to. For example, Kyoko felt that she could not state outright that she was confident in her English ability because many students at her university had higher levels than her, and students at her university were generally perceived in Japanese society to have very high English language levels.

Kyoko: I have a certain amount of confidence in my reading and writing skills now, but compared to students in the highest level of the program, there is no way I can say I have confidence. I think most people outside this university think all students here are like those near native students!

Nao's comment below, on the other hand, illustrates how a Japanese student can feel anxiety or lack of self-confidence when comparing her own competence to other students and considering the possible loss of face in a classroom learning. In her case, she is also comparing her "less than confident" self in the EAP program to the proud and confident student she used to be in her high school context.

Nao: My sense of pride was virtually shattered when I found myself being hesitant and incompetent in class discussions. Even if I had an opinion to express, I'd often become hesitant for fear of losing face as a competent and successful language learner. No wonder I cannot possibly build up my confidence with such a negative attitude! Thus, in addition to successes or failures and feedback from others, L2 self-confidence seems to be affected by how the learners perceive themselves in comparison to certain significant standards such as classmates or expectations of others.

Familiarity with Learning Contexts or Tasks

Another key issue that many interviewees noted as influencing the formation of their self-confidence was how they had to deal with a major transition to a new learning context. The transition was from the mostly grammar-based EFL contexts they had in their high schools to a new and unfamiliar academic and content-based learning context involving new types of tasks and expectations such as research essays and critical thinking. This major change influenced not only their perception of English language learning, but also their perceptions of themselves as language learners, with many of the students struggling to adapt and form new inner criteria for excellence and success within the new learning environment. Kaai illustrated the point as follows:

Kaai: In high school, English was one of my favorite subjects, and I always got excellent grades in translation exercises and grammar and reading tests as well. So I think I maintained a certain level of confidence as one of the best students in class then. But now what? English as a tool!? In the spring term, I was dumbfounded to know the fact that we're expected not just to study English but rather to use it for academic purposes. I was so used to studying English as one of the subjects in a sort of receptive manner that I was literally at a loss in a totally

new learning environment. It's like losing the well-established inner criteria for my confidence!

In particular, the importance of feeling familiar with how to do a task was mentioned especially in relation to writing essays and engaging in discussions. Academic argumentative essays and group discussions about readings were new to almost all of the interviewees when they entered the university and triggered feelings of anxiety at first. Tomoaki, Naoya, and Kyoko explained their reactions to new tasks that faced them:

Tomoaki: I had a certain amount of confidence in my writing skills because I was good at doing Japanese to English translation problems for the Kyoto university college exam. However, in this EAP program we have to write essays using our own ideas and I had no idea where to begin or what to write.

Naoya: Am I more confident about my English writing? I would say yes, in the sense that I don't have resistance to it any more. I mean, we did a huge amount of writing, right. Now I feel I can do it because I know there is a certain way to write essays and I've mastered it to a certain extent.

Kyoko: I did a lot of listening comprehension practice at my cram school, so I had a certain degree of confidence in my ability, at least for tests. However, I had done almost no speaking practice at all in high school, so I had absolutely no confidence. Also, another new and difficult thing was that we had to make our own discussion questions based on our reading texts. I had never done anything like that.

As the students adapted to the new context and tasks, their level of L2 confidence seems to have developed both in a general sense as an effective user and learner of English, and also in various specific aspects for writing essays and other tasks during their year-long intensive program.

Personality and Cultural Influences

L2 learners' personal traits have been known to have a tremendous impact on their general attitudes toward a variety of L2 activities, but as many of the participants noted in the

interviews, such personal traits are often closely connected to or influenced by their Japanese cultural norms, assumptions, or beliefs acquired through their early socialization processes. Of particular interest here is their cultural construal of “self” in terms of how one is supposed to behave in any social settings, and it certainly seems to influence their personal conceptions of self-confidence in the highly social process of L2 learning accordingly. Toshiko’s account illustrates this point:

Toshiko: Looking back on my first-year EAP experiences, I often found myself being quite critical about anything I would do, no matter how favorable the feedback or positive evaluation I got was. In a way, I wouldn’t want to allow myself to be content with what I’ve done, because otherwise I would get easily carried away and stop improving myself. Well, that’s exactly how I was raised since my childhood, and maybe you might think such an extremely self-disciplinary attitude will become more of a hindrance than any help to your confidence build-up, but to me it’s a very important part of my motivation to study even harder!

Nao and Mio also commented on their perfectionist attitudes toward themselves.

Nao: I often find myself being stuck with the idea that “I need to get things done perfectly!” Such a thought certainly motivates me to bring the given tasks to perfection, but often ends up in vain, along with the feelings of self-shame and self-condemnation. So I do not want others to see me confident unless I myself feel that way!

Mio: Many of my classmates might think I’m quite a perfectionist, because I always respond to their praises by saying “No, No, that’s just nothing, really!” Maybe it’s a typical Japanese sense of modesty or humbleness toward one’s ability or accomplishment, but I just don’t want to appear overly confident in the eyes of others as well as my own. To me, such an arrogant stance toward oneself is a true reflection of how little one knows about him/herself.

The influence of personality traits is difficult to separate from culture, but it is clear that both individual traits and cultural norms and expectations work together with factors in the learning environment to shape L2 learner self-confidence.

Discussion

As illustrated in the finding above, the Japanese perspective of *jishin*, or self-confidence, in second language learning seems to be composed of a variety of social, cultural, and personal factors.

In general, the participants' accounts of what self-confidence means to them as L2 learners largely corresponds to the currently held notions of self-efficacy, or one's personal judgment or beliefs that he or she can "organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). In fact, many of the participants noted that their personal beliefs of efficacy in L2 learning are not necessarily dependent on their actual abilities or skills already attained but rather on what they believe can be accomplished with their "perceived competence" (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998) or skill sets.

In terms of the domain-specific nature of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993, 1997), however, most of the participants seemed to distinguish a situational or task-specific type of self-efficacy from a more general form of self-efficacy (i.e., self-confidence), especially in relation to a major change in learning contexts from traditional grammar-based EFL settings in high school to more content-based and semi-ESL environment in college. As many of them claimed, they had a sense of self-confidence as a language learner in high school, but not in college EAP settings, where they were often required to use English as a tool for a variety of communicative and academic purposes. Such a transition in learning contexts, thus, may have had a tremendous impact on their perspectives on L2 self-confidence, as well as their beliefs on language learning in general. Indeed they acknowledged a sense of self-confidence in given tasks (i.e., task-specific self-efficacy) back in high-school EFL contexts, but as they went through the first year EAP program, they may have come to recognize the need to change their inner criteria for excellence not just as a language learner, but also as a language user.

In fact, some of the participants often alluded to more general types of self-efficacy, similar to the sense of self-esteem. To Mio and Takafumi, for instance, temporary feelings of efficacy toward particular tasks or skills in L2 learning, though sometimes motivating, do not necessarily lead to their overall confidence, but rather they thought it more important to maintain their sense of self-worth or positive self-concepts than to suffer the fluctuating feelings of hope

and despair depending on a particular situation or task. Such an account, shared among the Japanese participants, also seems to reflect their cultural perspective on self-confidence (*jishin*) and self-esteem (*jisonshin*). As Markus and Kitayama (1991) note, one's confidence in Japanese should not be declared to others at the expenses of damaging harmony within the given social community and rather be expressed in an extremely humble or sometimes self-deprecating manner.

It should be noted, however, that verbal or non-verbal expression of a lack of confidence by Japanese learners does not always demonstrate a lack of ~~internal~~ inner confidence, as the self-deprecation may only be a gesture of modesty. According to Brown (2005), one of the probable reasons for such a self-deprecating thought patterns among the Japanese is that “they do not care about feeling good about themselves or being better than others but rather care about more closely approximating cultural ideas and this form of ‘self-criticism’ better serves that purpose” (p. 2). Unlike the notion of self-esteem that entails highly positive connotations for a large number of North Americans (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001), Japanese sense of self-esteem or “*jisonshon*” connotes “‘pride’ and ‘vanity’ and expressions of *jisonshin* can be read as indications of deficient *kenson* (humility) and *hikaeme* (the quality of being reserved), both of which are expressed in respectable adults and schoolchildren beyond a certain age” (Brown, 2005, p. 3). Brown further argues that many Japanese could find it quite childish or less mature and self-reflective to boldly assert their qualities or abilities in comparison to others’. In this regard, many of the negative responses from the participants to the question “Are you confident in English?” seems to suggest the impact of Japanese cultural perceptions on the ways in which they would interpret the notion of self-confidence and self-esteem as well.

In light of the fact that daily second language use is a norm in the EAP program the participants are in, whatever they say and do in their second language is no longer excused as part of their language practices but rather can be readily communicated to others as a legitimate representation of themselves or who they are, whether they like it or not (Clarke, 1976). That is, as they come to be more aware of the discrepancies between what they believe they really are and what they perceive they actually are, as represented in the second language, they might feel more in doubt on themselves, constantly questioning what they have cherished or taken for granted for many years as part of themselves (Guiora, 1984; Brown, 1994). Their sense of self-esteem, which derives from being who they are, might be threatened, to the extent that they need to reframe or reconstruct their own cultural as well as personal frame of reference

(Bennett, 1998).

In addition, the semi-ESL settings naturally presents itself as an anxiety-provoking situation to some learners, as it often involves constant evaluations from others as well as from the learner him/herself. In such an environment, chances of being evaluated might serve as a reminder of the learner's current L2 competence in comparison to others' or idealized images of him/herself as a successful language learner (Ehrman, 1996; Dörnyei, 2009). Thus, the issue of anxiety seems to be closely related to the learner's self-identity or self-concept in the very sense that anxiety serves as both a source and effect of the learner's self-efficacy beliefs and L2 self-confidence (Mills, Pajares & Heron, 2006; Papi, 2010). Moreover, considering the fact that the essential components of language anxiety include various forms of performance anxiety (i.e., communication apprehension), L2 self-confidence is also considered a key determinant of learners' willingness/readiness to participate in L2 communicative activities in the classrooms (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004).

Pedagogical Implications

Based on the insights gained from the findings, the following classroom implications can be drawn, especially as to 1) how to foster perceptions of success and 2) how to empower students to manage their own psychology of learning.

Fostering Perceptions of Success

First, since perceived experiences of success seem to be significant for developing learner self-confidence, instructors may benefit from viewing their classes as a series of confidence-building episodes. A positive cycle of success, confidence, and the subsequent motivation that follows can help learners overcome various obstacles in their learning such as a fear of mistakes, despair, and possible abandonment of learning. For example, by keeping tasks “just right” for each student, anxiety can be reduced and a sense of efficacy in the L2 learning process can be developed (Dörnyei, 2001). Requiring tasks that are beyond the ability of the student to successfully complete most likely would have the opposite effect. This implies the need for some degree of individualization of tasks so that the difficulty level is matched appropriately to the capability of the student (Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford, 2003).

Feedback, another key factor mentioned by the participants, is also an area that can be improved

by instructors in order to help students build perceptions of success and self-confidence (Williams & Burden, 1999). How an instructor provides comments that highlight success, yet lays out the need for further improvement is an important challenge for a confidence-building classroom. In peer feedback tasks as well, students should be aware of the important role of feedback in building the learner self-confidence of their classmates. Peers may have to be trained in order to be able to provide comments to classmates in a way that emphasizes the positive aspects of the work being critiqued prior to discussing areas of difficulty that may need to be improved. Instructors should share with the whole class the role of feedback in maintaining or building self-confidence in second language learning, and provide model phrases such as “The strongest aspect of your essay is...” or “I really like how you developed the part about...” to the classmates so that they provide effective constructive feedback to their peers.

Empowering Students to Manage Their Psychology of Learning

One of the key findings in this study was that students tend to see their self-confidence as affected by comparison with other students, various standards they hold themselves to, or cultural or personal variables. Although the instructor is responsible for designing instruction that builds experiences of success and providing positive feedback for the learner, ultimately, the responsibility for developing a positive perception of self as a language learner is in the hands of the learner. One of the ways that facilitate such self-directed attitude among students would be to help them become capable of constructive self-reflection, where they can set their realistic personal goals and a comfortable image of one's L2 self (Gabillon, 2005; Wang, 1983; Wenden, 1998). This insight also seems to correspond to the core idea of Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) theory of *L2 self-system* or ‘possible selves,’ in which learners tend to struggle with and try to diminish the gaps between “the ideal self, representing the person one would like to become, and the ought-to self that a person believes one ought to become” (Yashima, 2013, p. 36). As learners envision imagined selves using an L2 in a particular community where he/she would like to participate, they are naturally motivated and thus they engage in the process of negotiating one's identities to acquire a new L2-mediated self.

Students who lack self-confidence in their language learning or language performance may possess unrealistic goals or unrealistic perceptions of how successful they should be in relation to more successful advanced learners or even native speakers. Perhaps some are excessive

perfectionists. A comfortable sense of self must be fostered in terms of fluency, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy and the pace of improvement. In other words, as Edwards and Roger (2015, p. 3) note, “Increased linguistic self-confidence therefore often helps to improve language proficiency. In turn, improved linguistic competence will often result in higher self-confidence in the language.” Thus, students who have overly-perfectionistic tendencies may need to learn to manage their self-perceptions to tolerate mistakes and frustrations that are innate to any process of second language learning (Ehrman, 1996).

In relation to this, an understanding of the student’s own cultural tendencies is also important. In the case of Japanese L2 learners, as the study findings suggest, a strong sense of humility and hesitation to stand out within the group may inhibit their ability to take the risks that are needed in order to practice and improve in a foreign language (Tsui, 1995). It would be highly beneficial for the learners to openly discuss their own cultural characteristics as a group, and attempt to come to a consensus with the instructor and other classmates as to how such cultural characteristics should be dealt with in the classroom (Ford & Lerner, 1992). Ideally, some balance of accepting the value of such characteristics while avoiding any negative effects they may have on the learning atmosphere of the group should be struck.

In this respect, it is more crucial for teachers to assume the role of facilitator rather than just as caring teachers, in terms of helping students learn more about themselves as second language learners by incorporating some awareness-raising activities in their teaching.

Conclusion

This qualitative study attempted to develop a better understanding of the construct of self-confidence in second language learning, based on interviews of Japanese learners in the context of an EAP program. The five main factors of 1) experiences of success or failure, 2) feedback and comments from others, 3) comparison of self with others or some standard, 4) familiarity with the learning context or task, and 5) personality and cultural influences, emerged from the data as being the most prominent in the perceptions of the students in terms of affecting their self-confidence in L2 learning.

Certainly, recent studies on L2 motivation have incorporated a variety of learner affective variables (e.g., *willingness to communicate* (WTC) by MacIntyre et al., 1998, 2002;

ideal/ought-to self by Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; *international posture* by Yashima, 2002, and Yashima *et al.*, 2004), but the potentially intricate connection between motivation and other learner variables including self-confidence in language learning has not been fully investigated, especially from a truly descriptive and interpretive point of view. In other words, the pertinence of each self-construct such as self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-esteem still remains to be fully established yet, especially in terms of particular relevance to specific L2 learning contexts. As Dörnyei (2001) point outs, more qualitative and interpretive approaches (e.g., in-depth-interviews or case studies) need to be employed to further understand and explore “the internal dynamics of the intricate and multilevel construct of student motivation” (p. 49), and they can also provide a more holistic picture of closely related constructs of learner self (e.g., learner self-confidence, self-concept, self-esteem, or self-identity).

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