



# TESOL International Journal

---

*Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*

Volume 11 Issue 2 2016

ISSN 2094-3938



# **TESOL INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL**

Volume 11 Issue 2, 2016

Chief Editor

Xinghua Liu

Published by the TESOL International Journal

<http://www.tesol-international-journal.com>

© English Language Education Publishing Brisbane  
Australia

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of English Language Education Publishing.

**No unauthorized photocopying**

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of English Language Education Publishing.

Chief Editor: Dr. Xinghua Liu

**ISSN. 2094-3938**

# TESOL International Journal

## Chief Editor

Xinghua Liu

*Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China*

## Associate Editors

Hanh thi Nguyen

*Hawaii Pacific University, USA*

Reza Dashtestani

*University of Tehran, Iran*

Fan-Wei Kung

*Queen's University Belfast, UK*

Dean Jorgensen

*Gachon University, South Korea*

Joseph P. Vitta

*Queen's University Belfast, UK*

Khadijeh Jafari

*Islamic Azad University of Gorgan, Iran*

## Editorial Board

Flora Debora Floris, *Petra Christian University, Indonesia*

Tim Anderson, *University of British Columbia, Canada*

Maria Martinez Witte, *Auburn University, USA*

Marina Dodigovic, *Xi'an-Jiaotong Liverpool University, China*

Chili Li, *Hubei University of Technology, China*

Rabia Hos, *Zirve University, Turkey*

Mark B. Ulla, *Mindanao State University, Philippines*

Yaser Khajavi, *Shiraz university, Iran*

Sook Hee (Susan) LEE, *Charles Sturt University, Australia*

Behnam Behfrouz, *University of Buraimi, Oman*

Ali Derakhshan, *Golestan University, Iran*

Ta, Thanh Binh, *Monash University, Australia*

Pino Cutrone, *Nagasaki University, Japan*

Edsoulla Chung, *University of Cambridge, UK*

Shahin Sultana, *B.S.Abdur Rahman University, India*

Chiu-hui Wu, *Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, Taiwan*

Xuan Jiang, *St. Thomas University, USA*

Xiaoling Ji, *Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China*

Diane Judith Rozells, *Sookmyung Women's University, S. Korea*

Khanh-Linh Tran-Dang, *Monash University, Australia*

Jayoung Choi, *Georgia State University, USA*

Lynda O'Brien, *University of Nottingham Ningbo, China*

Mohammad Amini Farsani, *Kharazmi University, Iran*

Yutthasak Chuenchaichon, *Naresuan University, Thailand*

Haiyang Ai, *University of Cincinnati, USA*

Zhongbao Zhao, *Hunan Institute of Science and Technology, China*

Yanxia Yan, *Xinhua University, China*

Hitomi Kambara, *University of Oklahoma, USA*

Bill Batziakas, *Queen Mary University of London, UK*

İsmail ÇAKIR, *Erciyes University, Turkey*

Ma Joji Breña – Tan, *University of the Philippines, Philippines*

Ali Arabmofrad, *Golestan University, Iran*

Rouhollah Askari Bigdeli, *Yasouj University, Iran*

Yu-Chih Lo, *National Chin-Yi University of Technology, Taiwan*

Yiying Li, *Wenzao Ursuline University, Taiwan*

Ashraf Atta Mohamed Safein Salem, *Sadat Academy for Management Sciences, Egypt*

Liang Li, *Jilin Normal University, China*

Jiying Yu, *Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China*

Ha Thi Nguyen, *Monash University, Australia*

Trang Thi Doan Dang, *Monash University, Australia*

Tzu-shan Chang, *Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, Taiwan*

## Contents

Foreword from the Editor

*Xinghua Liu*

The Cognitive Interface: Cross-linguistic Influence between SiSwati and English

*Patrick Mthethwa*

1

The Effects of Watching Videos in Pre-reading on EFL Learners'  
Reading Comprehension and Attitudes

*Mahnaz Saeidi*

*Heidar Ahmadi*

15

Beliefs and Practices Regarding Intercultural Competence among Chinese Teachers of English:  
A Case Study

*Jie Tian*

45

Recontextualizing Writing Proficiency:  
An Investigation of Model Argumentation Texts for IELTS Preparation

*Yongming Shi*

*Xinghua Liu*

57

Filipino ESL Learners' Attitudes Toward Cooperative Learning  
and Their Relationship to Reading Comprehension

*Wilkinson Daniel Wong Gonzales*

*Patrishia Lliane O. Torres*

70

QSAT: The Web-Based mC-Test as an Alternative English Proficiency Test

*Somsak Boonsathorn*

*Chayaporn Kaoropthai*

91

Foreign Language Teachers' Attitudes Toward Written Recall Protocol as a Practice of Reading  
Comprehension Assessment

*Kenneth J. Boyte*

108

## Foreword from the Editor

Xinghua Liu

---

This second issue of Volume 11 of *TESOL International Journal* contains seven papers. In the first paper, **Patrick Mthethwa** studied the linguistic errors in 60 English compositions produced by 30 grade four ESL learners, attending a primary school in Swaziland. The author found lexical, syntactic, and structural errors and suggests that there is cross-linguistic interference from the participants' first language, SiSwati, to English. **Mahnaz Saeidi** and **Heidar Ahmadi** conducted a quasi-experimental study on the effects of watching videos during a pre-reading stage on the reading comprehension of Iranian EFL students. The study found that the experimental group outperformed the control group, and the surveyed participants had an overall positive attitude towards watching videos during the pre-reading stage. In the third paper, by investigating 11 Chinese EFL teachers' perceptions of intercultural competence, **Jie Tian** found that the surveyed teachers had only a vague perception of intercultural competence and mostly addressed it in terms of knowledge and attitudes. The classroom observations revealed that cultural learning was not a regular focus in the classroom and generally centered around cultural information sharing rather than critical reflection.

Drawing on analytical tools based on Systemic Functional Linguistics, in the fourth paper **Yongming Shi** and **Xinghua Liu** examined the lexicogrammatical resources pertaining to the realization of interpersonal meanings in 15 model essays taken from commercial IELTS practice books. They argued that the valued linguistic choices in the model texts may help students achieve high scores on high-stakes language tests, but that they cannot empower students to use language effectively in wider contexts. In the fifth paper, **Wilkinson Daniel Wong Gonzales** and **Patrisha Lliane O. Torres** investigated Grade 8 students' attitudes towards cooperative learning CIRC activities and the relationship between students' attitudes and reading comprehension. It was found that overall students favored the cooperative learning approach and there was a moderate correlation between attitudes towards cooperative learning and reading comprehension. In the sixth paper, **Somsak Boonsathorn** reported a validation project for a web-based modified C-Test (WB mC-Test). It was found that the reliability and validity of the WB mC-Test was overall satisfactory and thus the author suggested that it can be used as an alternative practical preliminary self-assessment test for university students. In the last paper, **Kenneth Boyte** investigated the beliefs and assessment practices of foreign language teachers regarding their use of traditional item types and immediate written recall protocols. It was found that teachers regarded immediate written recall protocols as superior to traditional item types.

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding our publication, please feel free to contact me. If you are actively engaged in research or have done research related to English language education, please do not hesitate to contact us about the possibility of publishing with *TESOL International Journal*. Additionally, if you would like to gain some reviewing experience, I would like to invite you to consider joining us as a reviewer.

In 2016 we have seen the continued success of the journal as we are attracting an increasing number of high-quality submissions; this year the journal has also been included by internationally prestigious indexes, and is being considered for inclusion by others. This achievement would not have been possible without the constant support and help from our editorial board members; as always, I want to say thank you to all of you.

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

# The Cognitive Interface: Cross-linguistic Influence between SiSwati and English

**Patrick Mthethwa**

*University of Swaziland, Swaziland*

## Abstract

This study reports evidence of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) that surfaced from English compositions of SiSwati learners of English in Swaziland, where English is a second language. Although CLI has been studied widely in other languages, it has not been studied in SiSwati and English, and its implications for instruction are not known. Specifically, this study examined cases of negative transfer from the former to the latter, by identifying the cognitive influence participants' knowledge of their first language (L1) exerted on the structural acquisition of their second language (L2); how the knowledge and command of their L1 thwarts the process of learning L2, and the overall implications of this phenomenon on teaching practices. A total of sixty (60) narrative compositions from thirty (30) participants were collected, transcribed, and analyzed using contrastive rhetoric and categorical aggregation methods to establish consistency of the structural patterns in L2 learners' performance. In order to construct a psycholinguistic path that learners of English in Swaziland traverse during the acquisition of an L2, a weak version of contrastive analysis (CA) was used. The results revealed errors in the use of verbs and subject-verb agreement (SVO); however, a lot of errors were a function of lexical and structural transfer. Overall, this study is useful in improving language instruction in Swaziland and other similar ESL contexts.

**Keywords:** CLI, bilingualism, SiSwati, transfer, interference, interlanguage

## Introduction

Cross-linguistic influence (CLI) is one of the main linguistic areas that has been studied and debated extensively in second language acquisition. Several scholars (e.g., Dechert & Raupach, 1989; Ellis, 2006; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Jarvis, 1998; Odlin, 1989; Schwartz & Sprouse, 1994, 1996) have contributed significantly to this area of research by providing a landscape for CLI. Within the generative study of L2 acquisition, the study of CLI initially focused largely on syntactic phenomena, with researchers debating whether the entire syntactic system of the L1 is transferred to an L2 (i.e., Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis) or if only certain parts of the syntactic structures are subject to transfer (i.e., the Minimal Trees Hypothesis) (Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996). However, despite the debates on language transfer, there is a consensus that, to a certain extent, ESL learners compare the syntactic structures of their L1 with their L2, using approximative systems (Nemser, 1971b), and consequently create interlanguage grammars.

Studies on transfer have been viewed in phonology, syntax, semantics, and morphology. In phonology, grammars have been discussed in terms of segmental phonology, markedness, syllable structure, and stress. While in syntax, focus has been on universal grammar and universal principles. In semantics, transfer studies have looked closely at the transfer of meaning, while in morphology studies have looked at the transfer of units of meaning (O'-Grady, Archibald, Aronoff, & Rees-Miller, 2005). Earlier studies such as Corder (1976), James (1980), and Tarone (1981) shed light on the importance of transfer errors, while later studies such as Gass and

\*Email: [pmthethwa@uniswa.sz](mailto:pmthethwa@uniswa.sz). Tel: +01 (268) 25170433. Address: Faculty of Education, P/B.No. 4, Kwaluseni, Swaziland.

Selinker (2008), Grabe and Kaplan (1989), and Lennon (1991) extended the discussion of the importance of error analysis in language acquisition, emphasizing how errors can be used productively to enhance language learning. To this end, there is general consensus that errors should not be seen as learners' failure to achieve L2 proficiency, but as a window displaying the psycholinguistic terrain learners traverse as they learn an L2. Error analysis is therefore important from an instructional point of view, especially in ESL contexts, where learners have already mastered their L1 syntax.

Connectionism is one of the theories that have been used by many studies to explain the consequences of CLI. Even though connectionism could be traced back to Thorndike (1931), who proposed the law of Readiness, the law of Identical Elements and the law of Exercise (Tracey & Morrow, 2006), it is only recently that connectionists approaches within second language contexts have begun to be used (Gass & Selinker, 2008). The law of identical elements stresses that "the more elements of one situation are identical to the elements of the second situation, the greater the transfer, and thus the easier the learning in the second situation" (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 35). The reverse is also true; elements not identical between the first and second situation cause inhibition on learning in the second situation. Connectionism recognizes learning as a network, strengthened by regularity and identical patterns (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Gass and Selinker (2008) posit that learners make associations between what they know to what they don't know by "extracting regular patterns from the input, creating associations between larger units until complex networks are formed" (p. 221). Therefore, in terms of theoretical perspectives, the study used connectionism to establish a linguistic confluence between SiSwati and English.

### **SiSwati and English in Swaziland**

The functional linguistic landscape between SiSwati and English in Swaziland is dual, with each language dominant in its own use. From a sociolinguistic perspective, Swaziland is a homogeneous language society, and SiSwati is a native language spoken by almost everyone. Typologically, SiSwati can be classified under Nguni languages such as Zulu, Xhosa, and Ndebele; all are largely agglutinative languages spoken in Southern Africa. They are characterized by rich morphosyntactic structures and mutual intelligibility. It is estimated that at least three (3) million people, both in Swaziland and South Africa, speak SiSwati. English, on the other hand, is used as a second language and medium of instruction in all schools (Mthethwa, 2014). Furthermore, English in Swaziland still maintains its linguistic prestige that dates back to colonial times. In schools, for quite a long time, students were expected to speak English, and those who spoke vernacular (SiSwati) were punished. The purpose for enforcing the use of English was arguably to strengthen students' speaking skills, as it is one of the most important skills of language learning (Brown, 2007; Richards & Renandya, 2009). However, later, this undocumented policy in which students were required to speak English during school hours faced criticism and was consequently marginalized. The counter-argument was that it was improper to punish students for speaking their own languages. Currently, inasmuch as schools enforce the speaking of English during school hours, students are not normally punished for speaking vernacular in most schools.

English in Swaziland has not only remained a language of power and prestige, it is also a subject that must be passed in schools. In primary, secondary, and senior secondary schools, students' progress from one grade to the other is determined by their performance in English; they have to pass English, together with other subjects, to proceed to the next grade. If they do not pass English, they are required to repeat the grade. A grade of D or better is preferred, while anything less than this is considered a fail. However, according to the Examination Council of Swaziland's external examination reports, getting the minimum grade is still a challenge for most students. In almost every report the Examination Council of Swaziland releases, examiners complain about the glaring override that students' knowledge of their L1 exerts on their L2 structural output, resulting in interlanguage grammars. Overall, students are not performing well in English; hence, the need to examine the interface between English and SiSwati for purposes of improving instruction.



### **The Role of L1 in the Acquisition of L2**

There is no area of second language acquisition that has received more attention than the role of L1 in the acquisition of L2, or L1 and L2 in the acquisition of L3 (Jarvis, 1998; DeAngelis & Selinker, 2001). The interrelationship between L1 and L2 has been an issue stimulating extensive discussion in applied linguistics, mainly in second language acquisition (Cenoz, 2003; Gass & Selinker, 2008). Discussions in the past focused on the role of L1 in the acquisition of L2, and research on transfer reveals that L1 plays a role in the acquisition of L2 (Cortés, 2006; Dechert & Raupach, 1989; Ellis, 2006; Gass & Selinker, 1992, 2008; Jarvis, 1998; Odlin, 1989; Schwartz & Sprouse, 1994, 1996). Traditionally, L1 transfer has been discussed in two main areas: negative transfer (i.e., when L1 interferes with the acquisition of L2), and positive transfer (i.e., when L1 assists the acquisition of L2) (Ellis, 1997; Gass & Selinker, 2008; Odlin, 1989). A majority of studies on transfer have used contrastive analysis (CA), contrastive rhetoric (CR), creative construction (CC), and constructive underlying proficiency (CUP) to explain the transfer phenomena. Earlier studies used contrastive analysis to predict the potential areas of difficulty between L1 and L2 (Gass & Selinker, 2008; James, 1980; Lado, 1957). This approach however has changed over time. Now, there are new ways of conducting contrastive analysis (Hulk & Müller, 2000; Lardier, 2009; Müller & Hulk, 2001; Sorace & Serratrice, 2009). A functional approach based on studying patterns exhibited in languages worldwide has become a focus for L1 and L2. This approach focuses on the study of how languages function; using typological universals in which linguists attempt to discover the similarities and differences between languages (Gass & Selinker, 2008).

However, learners subconsciously compare languages using the contrastive analysis hypothesis, especially in ESL contexts, where students have already grasped their L1. For instance, Lardier, (2009) notes that “the notion of ‘patterns’ is a holdover from behaviorist psychology and makes little sense from a theoretical linguist’s point of view (although, perhaps it might not be such a far-fetched notion from a learner’s perspective)” (p. 190). Lardier’s observation tends to put learners at the center of the periphery and emphasizes that, more often, learners intuitively compare the syntax of the languages they learn, by framing the target language within the confines of the L1 parameter, without realizing the syntactic constraints on both languages. Such a claim by Lardier is fully observed in ESL classes where students’ written discourses encase the notion of transfer, resulting in the formation of interlanguage structures.

### **How SiSwati Compares to English**

To shed light on the learners’ psycholinguistic path, I begin by constructing a linguistic description of the learners’ first language (L1) by using a weak version of contrastive analysis to provide a synopsis of how SiSwati and English morph-syntactic structure compares. Laying this foundation is essential in exemplifying how CLI between SiSwati and English may occur. This inventory is not prescriptive; it only serves as a premise for understanding the origins of some of the errors that surface from learners’ discourses, and how learners use their L1 experiences to support the learning of L2. This study does not emphasize the contrastive analysis hypothesis based on the work of Lado (1957), *per se*. Instead, the study focuses on what constitutes a logical comparison of the L1 and L2 from the learners’ point of view and not that of a theoretical linguist.

### **Linguistic Typology**

The categorical classification of languages into different linguistic typologies has made it easier to group languages in terms of their various functional categories such as subject-verb-object (SVO), pro-drop, topic prominence, genitive, and other classifications (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Regarding these linguistic typologies, as stated earlier in this paper, SiSwati is classified as an agglutinative language, with a rich morph-syntactic structure. Like English, SiSwati follows the SVO parameter, but technically differs in the way it dispatches its functional morphological segments within a sentence, particularly the verb; as a result, the verb in SiSwati conjugates differently from that of English.

Like in English, example 1 captures stable conditions such as habitual events not limited by time. However, the subject-verb-agreement in SiSwati is expressed in prefixes rather than suffixes. In the given example, for instance, the subject-verb-agreement is forged by the prefix morpheme, /u-/ for first person singular, while its English counterpart expresses agreement using a suffix, /-s/. Therefore, there is a difference in the position of affixes in SiSwati verbs with respect to how the verb dispatches its agreement. Also, while SiSwati verbs inflect prefixes for plural subjects, its English counterpart does not inflect anything.

Example 1.

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Verb</i>	<i>Object</i>
Siphephelo	<b>u</b> tsandza	sinkhwa
Siphephelo	likes	bread

Example 2 shows how the inflection of the morpheme /ba/ to the verb /tsandza/ forges agreement between the verb and the plural subject marked by the proper nouns *Litany* and *Siphephelo*.

Example 2.

Litany na Sphephelo	<i>batsandza</i> sinkhwa	(verb prefix marks a plural subject)
Litany and Sphephelo	<i>like</i> bread	(Ø verb affix)

### Null Subject

SiSwati is a pro-drop language with rich agreement. The subject can be null in both oral and written expressive forms, without mitigating grammar, precision, and clarity of the sentence. Null subjects in SiSwati are used with interrogative and declarative sentences when common knowledge about the subject is shared.

In example 3, while English requires the use of either the proper noun or pronoun as the subject, SiSwati allows the omission of proper nouns functioning as subjects of sentences. Such omission in SiSwati does not compromise the grammar and semantics of the sentences.

Example 3.

Question	Where is Snovuyo?	
Response	Snovuyo went to school. Snovuyo uye esikolweni. ...uye esikolweni.	(SiSwati licenses covert and overt subjects)
(Ø Subject)	...went to school.	(unacceptable in English)

### Verb Tense

Tense in SiSwati is marked both lexically and morphologically. Lexical tense markers such as adverbs of time occupy nominal or final positions in sentences. Such as in example 4, the position of the adverb of time whether it is nominal or final does not matter in SiSwati.

Example 4.

<i>Lamuhla</i> , Litany uyahamba.	
<i>Today</i> , Litany is leaving.	(nominative adverb)
Litany uhamba <i>lamuhla</i>	(final adverb)
Litany leaves <i>today</i> .	

However, there is a huge difference between SiSwati and the English verb on morphological inflections. SiSwati has complicated agglutinative verbs, which express multiple linguistic functions, depending on the context. As a

result, verbs in SiSwati conjugate for a number of reasons such as agreement, number, tense, and complementizer. That is, the verb is capable of imbedding a number of morphological segments to express different linguistic functions. In example 5, /hamba/ 'leave' is in simple present form. The first prefix /u-/ forges agreement with the first person singular subject, while the second infix /-tawu-/ 'will' marks the future tense. The final vowel /-a/ on the verb /hamb**a**/ 'leave' agrees with either the present or future tense. For the past tense, with a plural subject, the verb conjugates differently.

Example 5.

Sphephelo *utawuhamba* lamuhla.  
Sphephelo *will leave* today

In example 6, the suffix /-a/ on the verb /hamb**a**/ 'leave' becomes /-e/ and functions as a past tense complementizer of the adverb of time /itolo/ 'yesterday'. The prefix agreement marker /u-/ in singular subjects becomes /ba-/ in plural subjects. On the other hand, the English verb does not imbed morphological segments like SiSwati.

Example 6.

Sphephelo na Litany *bahambe* itolo (affixed verb)  
Sphephelo and Litany left yesterday (Ø affixed verb)

### Topic Prominence

Like most topic prominent languages, SiSwati organizes its syntax around the topic comment structure, while English does not license topic prominence. For instance, while English uses 'I' as a subject of a sentence, and 'me' as an object, SiSwati uses both 'I' and 'me' in the subject position, resulting in emphatic subjects. In example 7, the personal pronoun /mine/ and the prefix /a/ are co-referential and emphatic. Emphatic subjects in SiSwati are used mainly to emphasize the grammatical agent in a sentence. Thus, it is used more often in declarative sentences.

Example 7.

(*Mine*) *a-ngi-tsandzi* kuya esikolweni ngilambile.  
(*Me*) *I* don't like going to school hungry.

Overall, this comparative analysis is not exhaustive in as far as depicting the linguistic landscape between SiSwati and English is concerned; it only provides a very basic illustration of how these languages compare, and what is likely to surface in students' written discourses in the event of CLI.

### Negative Transfer

The observation by Ellis (2006) that negative transfer occurs when L1 influences the acquisition of L2 is a plausible explanation for the syntactic "borrowing" that surfaces in some L2 learners' production, where the most dominant language 'forces' the learner to use it as a crutch for learning the less dominant language, causing errors to the latter. Studies on negative transfer have been discussed in terms of phonology, syntax, semantics, and morphology. In phonology, emphasis has been on segmental phonology, markedness, syllable structure, and stress; while in syntax, focus has been on universal grammar and universal principles (O' Grady, Archibald, Aronoff, Rees-Miller, 2005). On syntax, for instance, Chan's (2004) study presents evidence of syntactic transfer from Chinese to English. The study focused on ESL errors resulting from incorrect placement of adverbs, lack of control of the copula, inability to use the 'there be' structure for expressing the existential or presentative function, failure to use the relative clause, and confusion in verb transitivity. The study reported that many Chinese ESL learners tended to "think" in Chinese first before they wrote in English. As a result, the surface structures of

many of their interlanguage strings were identical or very similar to the usual or normative sentence structures of the Chinese. The study also reported that the extent of syntactic transfer was particularly large for complex target structures among learners at lower proficiency levels.

On a similar note, Alhaysony's (2012) study presents an elaborate account of the types of errors that were produced by Saudi female EFL learners on the use of articles. In this study, written samples of first-year female learners were analyzed to determine the magnitude of L1 transfer errors. The study reports that 57% of the errors were interlingual, indicating the influence of the first language; there were also intralingual article errors, which accounted for 42.56%. The study also reports that L1 interference strongly influenced the process of second language acquisition of articles, leading to a negative effect in learning the second language. In order to understand the magnitude of negative transfer Alhaysony's study can be viewed together with that of Haznedar (2010) who investigated whether the discourse conditions on subject drop were vulnerable to CLI in bilingualism. The study was longitudinal; it examined the overt and the null subject of a bilingual Turkish–English child the ages of two and four. The study reports that the overt use of subject in the Turkish of the bilingual child was twice as high as in that of a monolingual child (Haznedar, 2010). These findings resonate with the idea that the function of L1 is more than just being a first language; it also buttresses the acquisition of L2, especially for learners whose proficiency levels are low.

Therefore, to some extent, a learners' L1 serves as a 'referent language' from which they draw an approximation of an L2's underlying forms. Researchers in SLA such as Doughty (1991) and Spada (1997) reveal that mitigating L1 transfer errors by using form focused instruction (FFI) improves L2 acquisition. That is, making learners aware of the potential cross-linguistic areas of difficulty in their L2 improves the acquisition of the target language. The use of FFI essentially draws the problematic target structures to the learners' attention. For instance, Sersen (2011) reports a study in which participants were made aware of the CLI areas in their target language. The study reports that, by making participants aware of their cross-lingual errors, their writing improved.

Teachers who are bilingual or multilingual, by understanding the linguistic systems of L1 and L2, and using the weak version of contrastive analysis, can trace the origins of learners' discourse errors because they know the languages in interaction, and they can identify their underlying form in the learners' output. Brown (2007) emphasizes that "production data is publicly observable and is presumably reflective of a learners underlying competence—production competence" (p. 216). Therefore, in order to understand the psycholinguistic path ESL learners' traverse when learning an L2, information could be derived from their performances. Teachers can also determine useful teaching strategies by analyzing the learners' production errors (Noor, 1996).

## **Research Questions**

There is scarcity of studies that have examined the linguistic differences between SiSwati and English in an attempt to inform teaching practice and curriculum development. In view of this gap in empirical research, the study investigated the following research questions: First, what types of errors are surfacing from English compositions of SiSwati learners of English? Second, to what extent are the errors explained by cross-lingual influence? Third, what are the error's implications for pedagogy and teaching practice in Swaziland?

## **Methodology**

### **Design**

This was a case study, drawing from the interpretivist philosophy. Choices about research paradigm, designs, research questions, topics, participants, site for data collection, conceptual framework, and the role of the researcher affect the data we collect; and the "researcher's expectations when analyzing data are preceded by what the researcher expects to find" (Hays & Singh, 2012., p. 307). In this study, for instance, based on the CLI

literature, I expected to find cross-linguistic errors from the data because of evidence in the literature demonstrating that L2 learners, who already know their L1, use an L1 to buttress the learning of L2. This means as a researcher, I had predetermined ideas about what to find from the study, with regard to the types of errors likely to surface. Therefore, pre-existing codes such as tense, use of regular and irregular verbs, use of conjunctions, subject-verb agreement, lexical, and structural transfer were considered as pre-codes for data analysis. However, I was receptive of other codes that emerged during data analysis.

### **Participants**

Participants in this study were thirty (30) ESL learners, attending Grade 4 in a semi-urban school in Swaziland. English, as stated earlier on, is a medium of instruction in Swaziland schools. The school was ideal for this study because the majority of learners speak SiSwati as an L1 and English as an L2; as opposed to urban schools that are largely multicultural and some learners do not speak SiSwati as an L1. The school's grade levels range from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Only the 4<sup>th</sup> graders were asked to participate in the study. They were appropriate because at the fourth grade learners are expected to have grasped most of the basic L2 syntactic structures such as simple/compound sentences, even though they may still be struggling with more complex grammar. Overall, there were 19 girls and 11 boys. Their ages ranged between 9 and 12 years. All participants spoke SiSwati as L1 and English as L2.

### **Data Collection**

Participants were given the topics *My Friend* and *My First Day at School* to write about. The first topic was descriptive while the second was largely narrative. Participants wrote about each of the topics outside regular class time; they were given an hour to complete both compositions. Because the topics were free-response, participants were not guided on how to write each topic. Thus, each participant chose and developed their own writing path and style. Overall, a total of sixty compositions, which were all legible, were eventually collected from the participants.

### **Analytical Procedure**

Analytic induction and categorical aggregation were the main overarching data analysis procedures (Hays & Singh, 2012). Overall, data analysis involved four steps which were as follows: transcription, analytic induction, categorical aggregation, and linguistic extrapolation.

#### ***Step 1 (Transcription)***

First of all, the compositions were grouped according to the topics *My Friend* and *My First Day at School*. Since they were hand-written, the next step was to transcribe them carefully, ensuring that the transcription and the original manuscript were identical. That is, misspelled words, word order, and other errors were not corrected during the transcription. The transcription ensured that the data was readable and also easier to identify an overarching pattern of errors across the data.

#### ***Step 2 (Analytic Induction)***

This was an iterative process which allowed in-depth engagement with the data in a search for the learners' errors and evidence of the CLI phenomenon. At this step, every error identified was analyzed in terms of its relevance to the pre-existing codes such as tense, use of regular and irregular verbs, use of conjunctions, subject-verb-agreement, lexical, and structural transfer that had been developed prior to the analysis. However, these codes were not exclusive; there was room for other emergent codes arising from the data analysis, which did not emerge.

### Step 3 (Categorical Aggregation)

This step involved analyzing the categories further, looking for meaning and overlaps, examining the overall frequency of the errors in each category, counting and computing percentages. Some of the pre-existing codes such as *use of conjunctions* were later collapsed; there were no errors found in relation to the *use of conjunctions* from the data. Therefore, all the codes that were not supported by the data were collapsed.

### Step 4 (Linguistic Extrapolation)

Linguistic extrapolation involved classifying the final categories to major linguistic domains such as syntax, morphology, and semantics. For instance, errors that pertained to the arrangement of words and phrases and created ill-formed sentences were classified under syntax. Errors that pertained to the logical aspects of meaning were classified under semantics, and lastly errors that pertained to the placement of units of meaning in a word were classified under morphology.

## Results

Figure 1 shows the summary of the frequency of errors in each category. Although only a few examples are selected for discussion from each category, the percentages reflect the overall proportion of the errors in each category.

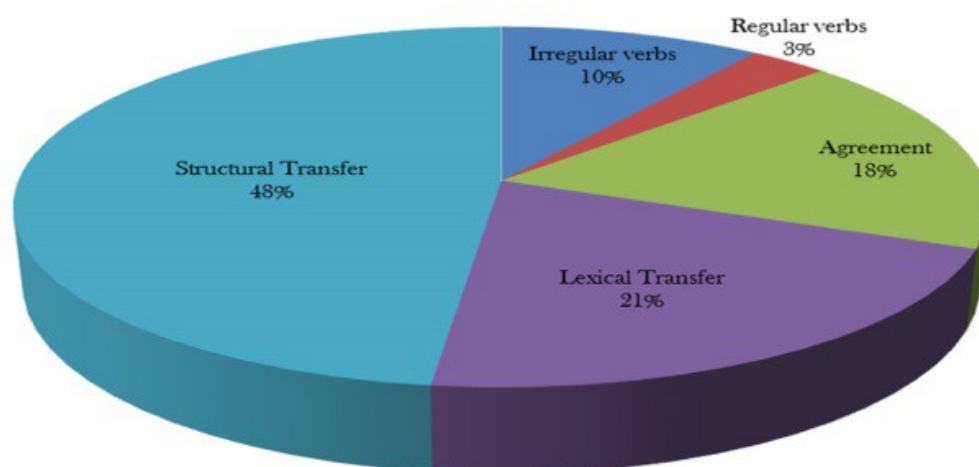


Figure 1. Proportion of Errors

A very small proportion of errors accounting for 3% of the total errors were found in relation to the use of verb tenses. These errors were found in all the data; however, the errors were not as prominent as the other errors discussed herein. About 10% of the errors were associated with the use of irregular verbs, while 18% were a result of non-agreement between the subject and the verb. For instance, in some cases, participants could not use either the main verb or an auxiliary verb that agreed with the subject, leading to both grammatical and semantic discord. Twenty-one (21%) of the errors were a result of lexical transfer, while 48% were structural errors. Each category of errors is presented with examples below.

### Use of Regular Verbs (3%)

There were errors caused by inconsistency of the tenses within sentences, where the main verbs did not agree with the corresponding auxiliary verbs. That is, some participants had difficulties sustaining complementing



tenses across their discourses. Although example 8 (use of verb tense) was not a prominent problem, participants showed that they did not understand the operation of both the regular and irregular verb tense in English. Example 8, for example, shows that participants were cognizant of the grammatical rules governing the use of tense in English, i.e., that the English verb inflects the morpheme /-es/ to mark the present tense; however, they did not understand how to complement the simple present tense with the auxiliary verbs.

Example 8.

My mother *washes* my trouser because it *was* dirty.  
My mother *washed* my trouser because it was dirty.

### Use of Irregular Verbs and Tense (10%)

Also, there were errors associated with the use of irregular verbs. In example 9, participants did not realize that irregular verbs do not take inflectional morphemes to mark the past tense; as a result, they inflected /-ed/ to an irregular verb. Apparently, the problems of tense did not seem to originate from the learner's L1; instead, they were part of the overgeneralization of the grammatical rules of English, such as assuming that all verbs inflect /-d/ or /-ed/ to conform to the past tense, and this is explained by the principles of universal grammar.

Example 9.

The bus was late. It *taked* an hour to come to school.  
The bus was late. It *took* an hour to arrive at school.

### Use of Agreement (SVO) (18%)

There were a number of errors on agreement illustrated by example 10. In this example, participants did not understand how to connect the subjects of the sentences with the verbs to forge agreement within the sentences. In most of the participants' compositions, for instance, there was incongruence either between a singular and a plural subject, or between the main verb and its auxiliary. The majority of participants showed that they were still struggling to maintain congruence between the subjects of sentences and the verbs. However, there was no evidence from the data to suggest that the errors were caused by CLI.

Example 10.

I *walks* to school if there is no bus.  
I *walk* to school if there is no bus.

As illustrated earlier in examples 5 and 6, the SiSwati verb uses prefixes for agreement for both singular and plural subjects. However, in all the data, participants did not use prefixes to mark agreement on the English verb, which showed they understood how prefixing the main verb works differently in the two languages. For instance, they understood that English verbs as opposed to SiSwati verbs do not inflect prefixes but suffixes to mark the SVO for singular subjects, even though they did not understand when to inflect these grammatical morphemes to mark agreement.

### Lexical Transfer (21%)

Some participants used cultural loan words. The words were 'borrowed' from their L1 to complete sentences in the L2. That is, when participants lacked the target language vocabulary, they used L1 words to fill the void in their L2. Example 11 shows evidence of lexical transfer from L1 to L2 in which participants 'borrowed' words from L1 in order to complete L2 sentence structures. Apparently, the participants did not know or could not retrieve L2 equivalent words from the target language to refer to *sweet potato* and *jugo beans*; hence, they reverted to lexical loans. According to Bella (1999) when ESL learners experience gaps in their L2 syntactic structures, they adjust their L2 writing by using items that are available from their L1. In this case too, participants used available

vocabulary from their L1 to support their L2 writing. Apparently, it does not appear that participants did not know that the loan words were not English; instead, they used these nouns to meet the syntactic requirements of the target language structure. Since both SiSwati and English are SVO, they understood that there should be an object after the verb of the target structure, but were deficient of appropriate nouns in English that expressed a similar concept. Probably, the nouns *jugo beans* and *sweet potato* are not frequent vocabulary words in their learning experiences; as a result, these words were not in their vocabulary inventory.

Example 11.

- \*...but I do not like *bhatata* and *tindlubu*.
- ...but I do not like *sweet potatoes* and *jugo beans*.

Also, some participants transferred L1 conceptual word meanings to L2; thus, creating a vague meaning in the target language. Example 12 shows CLI of L1 vocabulary extensions to L2. ESL learners begin by assuming that every word in their L1 has a single translation equivalent in an L2. In this context, the idea of single translation equivalents between L1 and L2 influenced learners to assume languages fit like hand and glove with regard to the expression of equivalent concepts. Thus, participants did not conceive that English has rich vocabulary and can use different words for different concepts, while SiSwati relies on limited vocabulary, rich in semantic elasticity. For instance, the conceptual meaning of the verb ‘*see*’ in SiSwati is semantically elastic; it can be stretched and used in other linguistic contexts; where English would use a different verb. Specifically, in SiSwati the verb ‘*see*’ and ‘*recognize*’ have similar connotations. Therefore, this explains why the participants used ‘*see*’ in the context of ‘*recognize*’ in their target language structures.

Example 12.

- \*My friend was dressed well and I did not *see* her.
- My friend was dressed well and I did not *recognize* her.

### Structural Transfer (48%)

Structural and topic comment errors formed a big portion of CLI. Overall, these errors were salient in most of the language structures participants constructed. Apparently, the majority of participants used L1 syntax to determine the organization and arrangement of the L2 syntax. Example 13 (a) and (b) reflect the differences between SiSwati and English in terms of how each language organizes its syntax. Although SiSwati is SVO, it is not a genitive language. Therefore, the use of nouns to modify other nouns does not occur. Thus, the word order in *baby of my mom* for *umntfwanamake* is acceptable and grammatically correct. However, since SiSwati does not use genitives, the learners were not aware of precise ways to express the same idea using genitives such as *my mom's baby* or *baby's clothes*. The differences in the typologies between SiSwati and English explain why participants maintained the L1 modifying matrix as a rule to extrapolate their L2 structures.

Example 13.

- (a)
  - \*...after that I washed the *baby of my mom*.
  - ...after that I bathed my *mom's baby*.
- (b)
  - ...she was in the river to wash the *clothes of the baby*.
  - ...she was in the river to wash the *baby's clothes*.



### Topic-Comment

There were also cases in which participants transferred topic comments from SiSwati to English, and this error was common in most of the data. In example 14, participants transferred the linguistic properties of their L1 to L2, and generated L2 sentences with emphatic subjects. This behavior was caused by the fact that SiSwati licenses emphatic subjects in sentences, while English does not. In English, for instance, *I* and *me* serve different grammatical functions. *I* functions as a subject of a sentence, while *me* functions as an object of the same (Morenberg, 2002). Because of the presence of emphatic subjects in the participants' L1, the participants extended that linguistic feature from L1 to L2, resulting in emphatic subjects in English, where the pronoun *I* functioning as the subjects of sentences and the pronoun *me* functioning as an object were used in the subject position. These cases of structural transfer and topic comment were common in the learners' discourses, and it showed how the learners' L1 influenced their L2 writing.

Example 14.

- (a) *(Me)* I go to school at...  
I go to school at...
- (b) *(Me)*, I don't bring money to school.  
I don't bring money to school.

### Discussion

#### Summary

This study revealed evidence supporting the existence of CLI between SiSwati and English, mainly that of negative transfer, which inhibits learning of the latter. Apparently, the errors of negative transfer in this study constituted a large proportion of all the errors that surfaced from the learners' discourses. Therefore, these errors cannot be ignored, if proficiency and grammatical correctness are the fundamental goals for English language instruction in Swaziland and other similar linguistic contexts. As seen in previous studies, such as Alhaysony (2012) and Chan (2004), most of the learners' L2 production errors in writing are a function of their continuous approximation of the target language's underlying systems. That is, ESL learners, by relying on their L1 syntactic forms, commit systematic errors that largely deviate from the norms of the target language. The observation by Ellis (2006) that negative transfer occurs when L1 influences the acquisition of L2 is a plausible explanation for what surfaced in this study between SiSwati and English, regarding CLI. Moreover, most of the literature discussed earlier support the notion that learners supplement their L2 deficiencies by using L1 linguistic structures, which are often not compatible with the target language structures. Apparently, even in this study, there is evidence of interference, including lexical borrowing. In this case, SiSwati, which is a dominant language "forced" its way to the learners' L2 structures, causing considerable amount of errors to the latter. Overall, such errors should not be seen as learners' failure to attain proficiency in the target language, but as a window through which to view their thinking pathways within their interlanguage continuum.

#### Implications for Instruction

This study has implications for teaching. Using form focused instruction (FFI) in which L2 learners' attention is drawn explicitly to problematic target language structures is a useful approach to help mitigate ESL learners' performance errors. The use of grammar consciousness raising (Ellis, 1997) is beneficial, especially at levels where L2 learners understand discrete points of metalinguistic explanations. Therefore, moving beyond learning the target language to learning about the target language resolves some of the complexities in second language acquisition. Researchers such as Brown (2007) suggest that FFI is effective when incorporated into a learner-centered curriculum. For instance, as seen in Sersen's (2011) study, when teachers made learners aware of their errors through direct instruction, the acquisition of their L2 improved. Perhaps, in the case of SiSwati and

English, the use of the functionalist approach by teachers, focusing on language awareness and FFI can mitigate the consequences of CLI.

Since no studies were found that investigated CLI between SiSwati and English, there is no evidence that the English language curriculum in Swaziland is informed by local research. There is also no evidence that teachers' classroom activities in English language learning are informed by action research. The role of a well-coordinated action research in the classroom, involving teachers in the analysis of the learners' errors, can successfully mitigate errors of CLI, and further guide the development of a research-informed curriculum, responsive to the learners' language needs. However, as noted by Brown (2007), teachers and researchers should not be blinded by just looking for errors, but they should also reinforce correct language forms resulting from positive transfer, so that these forms are fossilized in the learners' L2 inventory, while, on the other hand, ill-formed structures receive instructional attention.

### Conclusion

While this study revealed something unknown about CLI between SiSwati and English, it is important to highlight that one common difficulty, also acknowledged by most researchers, is that understanding learners' approximation systems cannot be observed directly, but they can be inferred (Brown, 2007). Also, these approximation systems often change, resulting in unpredictable variations on learners' language output; thus, making it difficult to distinguish whether the output is a representation of an *error* or *mistake*. In consideration of this observation, this study used frequency, syntactic similarity, and the systemacity of the errors across the vast majority of all the data to overrule the possibility that learners were just making *mistakes*. The frequency, syntactic similarity, and systemacity of the errors across the data were evidence to support the presence of CLI between these two languages. However, more research in areas of phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax, using connectionist's models, still needs to be conducted in order to ascertain the cognitive levels of CLI between SiSwati and English.

### References

- Alhaysony, M. (2012). An analysis of article errors among Saudi female EFL learners: A case study. *Asian Social Science*, 8, (12), 55-66.
- Bhela, B. (1999). First language interference in learning a second language: Exploratory case of first language interference with target language usage. *International Education Journal*, 1, 22-31.
- Brown, D. (2007). *Teaching by Principle: An Interactive Approach*. New York, NY: Pearson Longman.
- Cenoz, J. (2003). The additive effect of bilingualism on third language acquisition: A review. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 7, (1), 71-87.
- Corder, S.P. (1976). Idiosyncratic dialects and error analysis. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 9, 147-159.
- Chan, W.Y. (2004). Syntactic transfer: Evidence from the interlanguage of Hong Kong Chinese ESL Learners. *The Modern Language Journal*, 88, 56-74.
- Cortés, N.C. (2006). Negative language transfer when learning Spanish as a foreign language. *Interlingüística*, 16, 1-11.
- De Angelis, G., & Selinker, L. (2001). Interlanguage transfer and competing linguistic systems in the multilingual mind. *Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 42-58.
- Dechert, H. W., & Raupach, M. (Eds.) (1989). *Interlingual processes*. Gunter: Narr Verlag.
- Doughty, C. (1991). Second language instruction does make a difference: Evidence from an empirical study of SL relativization. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 13, 431-469.
- Ellis, R. (1997). *SLA research and language teaching*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

- Ellis, N. C. (2006). Selective attention and transfer phenomena in L2 acquisition: Contingency, cue competition, salience, interference, overshadowing, blocking, and perceptual learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 27 (2), 164-194.
- Gass, S., & Selinker, L. (2008). *Second language acquisition*, New York, N.Y: Routledge.
- Grabe, W., & Kaplan, R. (1989). Writing in a second language: Contrastive rhetoric. In D. Johnson & D. Roen (Eds.), *Richness in writing* (pp. 263-283). New York, N.Y: Longman.
- Hays, D.G., & Singh, A. A. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in clinical and educational settings*, New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Haznedar, B. (2010). Transfer at the syntax pragmatics interface: Prominal subjects in bilingual Turkish, *Second Language Research*, 26, (3), 355-378.
- Hulk, A., & Müller, N. (2000). Bilingual first language acquisition at the interface between syntax and pragmatics. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 3 (3), 227-244.
- James, C. (1980). *Contrastive analysis*. New York, N.Y: Longman.
- Jarvis, S. (1998). Methodology rigor in the study of transfer: Identifying L1 interference in the interlanguage lexicon, *Language Learning*, 50 (2), 245-309.
- Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistics across cultures* [M]. Arm Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Lardierie, D. (2009). *Ultimate attainment in second language acquisition: A case of study*: Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Lennon, P. (1991). Error: Some problems of definition, identification, and distinction. *Applied Linguistics*, 12, 180-196.
- Morenberg, M. (2002). *Doing Grammar*. New York, NY: Oxford University.
- Müller, N., & Hulk, A. (2001). Cross-linguistic influence in bilingual language acquisition: Italian and French as recipient languages. *Bilingualism: Language and cognition*, 4 (1), 1-21.
- Mthethwa, P. (2014). Examining the impact and cognition of technology on pre-service teachers of English in Swaziland. *The Journal of Technology Studies*, 40 (1), 26-39.
- Nemser, W. (1971b). Approximative systems of foreign learners. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 9, 115-124.
- Noor, H. (1996). English syntax errors by Arabic speaking learners. The fourth international symposium of language and linguistics. Thailand. *Institute of Language and Rural Development*, Mahidol University.
- Odlin, T. (1989). *Language transfer: Cross-linguistic influence in language learning*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- O' Grady, W., Archibald, J., Aronoff, M., & Rees- Miller, J. (2005). *Contemporary linguistics*. New York, NY: Bedford.
- Richards, J.C. & Renandya, W. A., (2002). *Methodology in language - An Anthology of Current Research Practice*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Sersen, W.J. (2011). Improving writing skills of Thai EFL learners by recognition of and compensation for factors of L1 to L2 negative transfer, *US - China Education Review* 3, 339-345.
- Sorace, A., & Serratrice, L. (2009). Internal and external interfaces in bilingual language development: Beyond structural overlap. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 13 (2), 195-210.
- Schwartz, B. D., & Sprouse, R. (1994). Word order and nominative case in nonnative language acquisition: a longitudinal study of (L1 Turkish) German interlanguage. *Language Acquisition Studies in Generative Grammar* 8, 317-368.
- Schwartz, B.D. & Sprouse, R.A. (1996). L2 cognitive states and the Full Transfer/Full Access model. *Second Language Research* 12, 40-72.
- Spada, N. (1997). Form-focused instruction and second language acquisition: A review of classroom and laboratory research. *Language Teaching*, 30, 73-87.

- Tarone, E. (1981). Some thoughts on the notion of communicative strategy. *TESOL Quarterly* 15, 285-295.
- Thorndike, E. L. (1931). *Human learning*. New York, NY: Century.
- Tracy, D. & Morrow, M. (2006). *Lenses on reading: An introduction to theories and models*. New York, NY: Guilford.

---

**About the author:**

Patrick Mthethwa is a lecturer at the University of Swaziland, Faculty of Education. He has taught for many years in high schools, colleges, and universities in Swaziland and United States. He has published papers in English language education, with focus on ESL and use of technology in language teaching.

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Phetsile Sibandze and the reviewers for their invaluable contribution to this paper.

# The Effects of Watching Videos in Pre-reading on EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension and Attitudes

**Mahnaz Saeidi**

*Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran*

**Heidar Ahmadi\***

*Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran*

## Abstract

Schema theory explains how readers use their prior knowledge to comprehend passages. Viewing video clips in pre-reading appears to be a useful way to help students prepare for learning by providing audio-visual images of different topics. The present study investigated the effects of watching videos during a pre-reading stage on the reading comprehension of EFL students. This experimental study was carried out on two intact groups with 32 male students in each group over three months. The experimental group watched videos during the pre-reading stage followed by reading comprehension passages while the control group was taught conventionally. Two achievement tests were used as pre-test and post-test to investigate the effects of the treatment on the experimental group. An independent-samples T-test and paired samples T-test were applied to compare the results of the two groups and a questionnaire was used to check the students' attitudes toward the effectiveness of watching videos before reading. The results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group ( $p < .05$ ) and also indicated that the participants had a positive attitude towards watching videos during the pre-reading stage. The results of the study suggest that watching videos as a pre-reading technique can be utilized by teachers in activating learners' background knowledge and by curriculum developers in planning and designing appropriate textbooks with related videos and films to improve learners' reading comprehension skills.

**Keywords:** Schema theory, pre-reading, reading comprehension, videos, attitudes

## Introduction

As video projectors and smart boards are available in some schools, teachers are encouraged to utilize them in their teaching to be more effective in instructing their students by providing audio-visual materials. Once, films and videos were considered unimportant and time-consuming in the classroom and were just used for entertainment. It is evident that modern technology had almost no place in Iranian education settings in the past. At the same time, English teachers in Iranian high schools have generally had difficulties engaging students in reading activities; the reading comprehension passages that are in many of the required textbooks do not seem to be interesting to learners since they often have less background knowledge about the reading passages. This makes reading classes boring to them and they do not feel motivated to read. In contrast, videos are an enjoyable source of entertainment and language learning.

With this practical concern and informed by schema theory, which states that comprehension of a text is the result of an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text (An, 2013), this study was conducted to shed light on how watching reading related video clips during the pre-reading stage can activate EFL learners' background knowledge to help boost their reading comprehension skills. Since efficient

*\*Email: heidarahmadi2012@gmail.com. Tel.: 09143914216. Address: Department of English Language and literature, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran.*

comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to one's own knowledge and the goals of a pre-reading stage are to activate students' knowledge of a subject, provide any language preparation that might be needed for coping with the passage, and motivating learners to want to read the text (Celce-Murcia, 1991), videos can be used to activate their schemata because of involving their auditory and visual senses. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of watching videos that are related to the reading passages in the students' textbook in pre-reading stage on reading comprehension. In other words, we investigate whether watching videos in pre-reading can help students perform significantly better than students who do not engage in pre-reading exercises or pre-read with a textbook. Further, we investigate students' attitudes so as to solve some of the existing problems in Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension skill. In the following sections, we will first review the effects of using video materials in language teaching and the importance of pre-reading activities.

### **Video Materials in Language Teaching**

So far, there has been considerable research on the effects of movies and films on the listening comprehension of EFL learners (Chung, 1999; Ginther, 2002; Gruba, 2006; Haghverdi & Vaezi, (n.d.); Latifi, Tavakoli, & Alipour, 2013; Ockey, 2007; Suvorov, 2008). Dehghani and Jowkar (2012) conducted a study on the impact of video projectors on EFL learners' listening comprehension and indicated that the use of video texts allows listeners to utilize the non-verbal components of communication that can assist them in processing and comprehending aural input. In this vein, Herron and Seay (1991) provided evidence that supports the feasibility of video-based, strategy-driven instruction in listening comprehension; in their research, the experimental group performed significantly better on the final tests of listening comprehension with both the video and the audio than did the control group in which no strategy training occurred. M. L. Chen's (2012) paper focused on the effects of integrating children's literature and DVD films into a college EFL class; it revealed that viewing films and discussing a children's fantasy novel significantly increased the scores of the experimental group on reading comprehension subtests over the control group with exposure to the textbook. The effect of video-based instruction on ESL/EFL students' language skills was investigated by Han (1994) and the results revealed that video-based instruction improves their communicative competence and their listening comprehension.

Mekheimer (2011) stated that videos contain interesting and contextual uses of language and they can be relevant to specific text types and textbooks. They can have their activating role in pre-reading stage in reading comprehension classes. In addition, Yang, Chen, and Jeng (2010) explained that viewing videos can relieve students from the boredom of traditional class language drills by the dynamics of various information such as the authentic setting, accents, posture, gestures, etc. of native speakers. Others have concluded that:

Video is lauded for contextualizing language (i.e., linking language form to meaning) and depicting the foreign culture more effectively than other instructional materials. Videotapes permit students to hear native speakers interacting in everyday conversational situations and to practice important linguistic structures. Unlike audiocassettes, video's visual dimension is thought to reduce ambiguities present in native speaker voices and to motivate students to want to learn the foreign language. (Herron, Cole, York, & Linden, 1998, p. 775)

Teaching with films and videos is recognized as a powerful communications medium by some educators (Golden, 2001; Moreira & Nejmeddine, 2015; Stoller, 1988). They can be combined with other learning resources and instructional strategies to perform a vital role in modern language teaching and learning contexts. Pre-reading is a useful strategy which prepares students to learn effectively in class because it makes them ready and motivated to comprehend the reading passages (Zhang, 2001).

Dikilitas and Duvenci (2009) stated that using computers in classrooms helps teachers to add multisensory elements like image, text, sound, video, and animation. Butler-Pascoe and Wiburg (2003) described video or image as the three-dimensional text. Today, many classrooms have monitors and video players available for teachers to utilize and incorporate into their lesson planning, and student feedback because the use of video clips



and films in language classrooms seems to be very positive (Brooke, 2003). However, the use of videos should be well integrated into classroom activities rather than be used as a time filler (Stoller, 1988). To achieve this goal, the focus should be on their activating role by applying them during a pre-reading stage to set the scene to learn language skills. There have been several studies conducted regarding using videos in English language teaching (ELT) classes (Golden, 2001; Hendershot, 2007; Houston, 2000; Kusumarasdyati, 2006; Moreira & Nejmeddine, 2015; Sherman, 2003), while very few studies have been done on their use in enhancing reading comprehension. For example, some researchers showed that videos can be used to enhance students' reading and communication skills at the university level in EFL classrooms (Ismaili, 2013; Mirvan, 2013; Weyers, 1999). Additionally, Marzban (2010) and Ponce, Lopez, and Mayer (2012) have demonstrated that the use of computer assisted educational techniques can help improve students' reading comprehension.

Rowland (2007) started using closed-caption videos to assist children with learning to read and concluded that video topics rich with the history and culture of the target language provide a meaningful context for language learning. Video technology plays a major role as a motivator for language development and helps students in acquiring language skills (Dorshomal, Gorjian, & Pazhakh, 2013). With the sheer volume of digital media available via the Internet, videos have been increasingly used to serve the needs of EFL learners (Jeng, Wang, & Huang, 2009).

### **The importance of Pre-reading Activities**

In the pre-reading stage, students and teachers establish the purpose for reading and activate the students' prior knowledge of the topic. Teachers also try to create a context for learning. Generally, they use some teaching techniques in pre-reading to do so. However, research studies on literature review about pre-reading shows that very few studies have concentrated on the pre-reading stage with the watching video technique and how this mechanism affects reading comprehension. In an experimental study, P. S. Chen (2008) investigated the effect of pre-reading (studying or reading the learning materials before class) on understanding the lectures in class. The results revealed that this kind of pre-reading was beneficial to learners in order to comprehend key points and difficult concepts during the lectures since they had the required background knowledge.

The schemata, as stated by Rumelhart (1980), can represent knowledge at all levels-from ideologies and cultural truths to knowledge about the meaning of a word, to knowledge about what patterns of excitations are associated with what letters of the alphabet. To relate schema theory to reading comprehension, he further explains that readers use their schematic knowledge to comprehend passages. That is, the importance of schema theory to reading comprehension lies in how the reader uses schemata. Meanwhile, An (2013) also emphasized that the roles of Schema theory in comprehension cannot be ignored. Yousofi and Seidi (2015) stated that reading comprehension is what allows a reader to interact with a text in a meaningful way. Reading comprehension is the result of effective reading. In addition, King (2002) explains that effective reading is grounded in strong cognitive skills such as attention, auditory analysis, sound blending, sound segmenting, memory, processing speed, and visualization. Consequently, the key to improving weak reading comprehension is to confront and correct weak mental skills in these cognitive areas (Hoque, 2013). It can be achieved by using video clips which are important tools to activate students' prior knowledge and make students utilize their cognitive strategies in understanding reading comprehension.

Watching videos in pre-reading stage can activate learners' background knowledge about the reading passages, so it seems necessary to refer to schema theory as the theoretical background of this study. Various definitions has been given for schema theory by different scholars. For example, for Rumelhart (1980) it was an explanation of how readers use prior knowledge to comprehend and learn from text, whereas Barlett (1932) put it another way as "an active organization of past reactions or experiences" (p.201). It has been utilized in diverse fields in the history, for instance, Rumelhalt (1980) and Carrell (1988) introduced it in reading by discussing the important role of background knowledge in reading comprehension. Specially, it can be applied through pre-reading activities to activate learners' schemata. According to Urquhart and Weir (1998), schemata can be classified as: formal schemata, content schemata, linguistic schemata, and cultural schemata. Applying schema

theory to watching videos can be rationalized because it provides learners with content, linguistic, and cultural schemata.

Schema theory and the theory of computer assisted language learning (CALL) can better support the theoretical position of this study. According to Stockwell (2014), the theory of CALL consists of distributed cognition, situated action and a theory of language learning. That is, the theory of CALL originates from the role that technology plays in language learning and the theories of second language learning. The underlying idea behind situated action is that people will behave differently depending on the situation and the options available (Suchman, 2006). The concept of distributed cognition was first conceived by Hutchins (1995a) as a means of examining the real-world flow of representations in cooperative work settings. Since then, the concept has been expanded to include the way in which cognition occurs as a process that combines both internal and external memory and processing functions (Stockwell, 2014). Hutchins's view emphasized the external nature of human cognition, and he argued that, "...a complete theory of individual human memory would not be sufficient to understand that which we wish to understand because so much of the memory function takes place outside the individual" (1995b, p.286). That is to say, in many of the activities that happen in our daily lives, a large proportion of them take place as a combination of processes that take place within individuals and the tools that are used to facilitate these activities (Stockwell, 2014).

Viewing video clips in pre-reading seems to build students' background knowledge and can help them comprehend texts by providing visual images for unusual topics. Besides, visualization has been characterized as a very important prerequisite for a good reader to improve his reading comprehension skill (Draper, 2012). Meaningful pre-reading refers to being prepared before learning takes place, while trying to relate new learning material to previous knowledge (Zhang, 2001). King (2002) expresses that using videos can compensate for some of the shortcomings in the EFL learning experience because they have different features like being realistic, motivating, interesting, and context-based. Therefore, by concentrating on these features, watching videos before reading may be helpful in mastering learners' reading comprehension. Other research results revealed that the use of computer assisted educational techniques can improve students' reading comprehension (Marzban, 2010; Ponce, Lopez, & Mayer, 2012).

In this modern digital era, videos can be helpful in learner-centered language learning or even in minimally scaffolded learning such as the use of YouTube video segments for learning foreign languages (Mekheimer, 2011). Chiu and Lee (2009) studied the relationship between the pre-class video viewing of the lecture content and image processing. The results of their study showed that a pre-class video viewing of the lecture content and hands on activities in class enhanced the learning of high-school students' basic image processing. Kusumarasdyati (2004) and Luo (2004) both found that videos catch learners' interest and can positively affect their motivation to learn. As stated in Xue and Pan (2012), through the unique form of dynamic pictures, films can display different kinds of information vividly to audiences, and can effectively provide students with an intercultural experience without the time and financial costs of visiting other countries and cultures. Films can provide students with information and language, which may help facilitate their reading comprehension. Unlike the studies mentioned, this study aims to examine the role that watching reading passages related videos during the pre-reading stage has in enhancing students' reading comprehension skills in EFL contexts, specifically at the high school level.

### **Research Questions**

In light of the literature and practical needs in English teaching in Iran, this study addressed the following two research questions:

1. Does watching videos during the pre-reading stage of a reading comprehension activity affect EFL learners' reading comprehension skills?
2. Do students have a positive attitude towards watching video clips during the pre-reading stage?

### **Method**



## Design

The design in this research was experimental, including two intact groups with a pre-test and post-test for each group. Two sets of scores were compared regarding the two groups of students. An independent-sample t-test was applied to check the generalizability of the results and to show that the observed variations were significant and that the two groups were homogeneous in their English language proficiency. A paired-samples T-test was used to compare the scores of the pre-test and post-test of both groups.

## Participants

The participants of the study were 64 intermediate level pre-university male students from Allameh Jafari High school, which is a school for talented students. Their ages ranged from 16 to 18. They had all entered this school by taking the entrance examination of schools for talented students. This study was conducted with two intact groups, which were assigned to two classes with 32 students by the school authorities. That is, the students were divided in accordance with their average level. In other words, equal number of students with high, mid, and low averages were placed in these two classes. The study was carried out over a period of three months. It had an experimental group exposed to videos during the pre-reading stage followed by the reading comprehension passages and a control group that was taught traditionally.

## Instruments

As this study had a control group and an experimental group to meet the purpose of the study, the following instruments were used during the research. In this study, four reading passages, “*Global warming, global concern*,” “*How to give a good speech*,” “*Earthquakes and how to survive them*,” and “*Why exercise is important*?” were chosen and used in reading class for both groups (see Appendix D). Two standardized achievement tests were used in this research study. The first (Appendix B) was an achievement test with three parts: vocabulary, reading comprehension, and cloze passage regarding the four selected passages from their textbook. The test had 15 items of vocabulary, 15 items of reading comprehension passages, and 10 items of cloze passages. The total test items were 40. The format for the second standardized achievement test (Appendix C) was the same as the first one. The achievement tests were taken from the universities entrance examination in Iran.

At the end of the treatment period both groups were given a questionnaire to check students’ attitudes and ideas towards the effectiveness of watching videos before reading in increasing their reading comprehension skills. The questionnaire for students adapted from Hsieh et al. (2010) included 15 questions (Appendix A).

SPSS software was used to analyze the questionnaire and test score data. The videos that were shown for the students as treatment in the pre-reading stage were all downloaded from YouTube (Appendix E) and were related to the selected reading passages regarding content and themes.

## Procedure

A pre-test (an achievement test) was administered to both groups to check the homogeneity of the subjects. The experimental group then received the treatment. That is, the experimental group watched videos in pre-reading stage as the treatment. At the end of the study, a post-test (another achievement test) was administered; the data was then collected and analyzed.

For both groups, at the beginning of the class, students were given a short list of vocabulary and phrases used in the book to prepare them for better understanding the reading passages. The control group reading class began with a picture (Appendix D) and the title for discussion, thus activating their previous knowledge, and preparing learners for reading. At this stage students were given pre-reading questions and agree/disagree questions (Appendix D) as a brainstorming activity. At the end of the study the students were given post-reading questions to check comprehension. For the experimental group, the videos introduced the core theme. The classroom procedures and teaching methods were the same for both groups, except in that the experimental group watched related videos of these four readings in pre-reading stage. The students in experimental group watched videos for 30 minutes. As students watched the videos, the teacher stopped occasionally to check comprehension. During this time, the teacher asked oral “while-watching” questions to check comprehension

and at the same time to encourage students to better concentrate on the videos. Most of the words, phrases, clauses and sentences in the videos are similar to the content of the reading comprehension passages in the textbooks. That is, the theme and topics of the videos are related to those of the reading passages.

In Iran, where the researchers implemented this teaching technique, one lesson lasts for 90 minutes. Presenting full-length movies in a classroom was time consuming, thus the researchers used videos that lasted less than 20 minutes, so they did not pose a significant time obstacle. The rest of class time was devoted to reading comprehension and doing the relevant exercises in the experimental group. After the experimental group watched the videos, students received a questionnaire aimed at eliciting their feedback regarding using or not using videos in the classroom. After the instruction period, students in both groups were given post-tests. Post-tests consisted of multiple choice reading comprehension questions, cloze passages, and vocabulary questions. The collected data from the questionnaire, pre-test, and posttest were then compared using SPSS. Finally, the results were analyzed and discussed.

## Results

### Effects of Pre-reading Videos on Reading Comprehension

An independent-samples t-test was carried out to compare the mean pre-test scores of both the control and experimental groups to be sure about whether or not there were any differences between the two prior to treatment. The results are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

*Group Statistics on Pre-test of the Control and Experimental Groups*

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error mean
Pre-test Control	32	30.78	2.87	.507
Pre-test experimental	32	31.00	3.20	.566

Table 2

*Independent Samples T-test on Pre-Test of the Control and Experimental Groups*

		Levene's Test For Equality of Variances		t- test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig.*	Mean difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
Pre	Equal variances assumed	.455	.503	-.288	62	.775	-.218	.760	-1.738 1.301
	Equal variances not assumed			-.288	61.27	.755	-.218	.760	-1.738 1.301

Note. \*Two-tailed

Table 1 reveals no significant differences between the control (M=30.78, SD=2.87) and experimental (M=31.00, SD=3.20) groups; Table 2 illustrates a difference of 0.775 which was larger than 0.05 (T= -.288;

df=62;  $p>.05$ ). This indicates that there were no significant differences between the control and experimental groups before instruction and they were homogeneous. A paired-samples T-test was used to compare the mean scores of the pre- and post-tests in the control group as shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3

*Paired-Samples Statistics on Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Control Group*

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error mean
Pre-test Control	32	30.78	2.87	.507
Post-test control	32	32.12	2.82	.499

Table 4

*Paired Samples T-Test on Pre-test and Post-test of the Control Group*

		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig.*
		Mean difference	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre-test control - post-test control	-1.34	2.22	.393	-2.14	-.542	-3.41	31	.002

*Note.* \*Two-tailed

The results of the paired-samples t-test used to compare the two sets of scores obtained from the control group show that the mean difference between the pre- and post-tests was 1.34. Table 4 shows a difference of 0.002 which is smaller than 0.05 ( $M=-1.34$ ;  $SD=2.22$ ;  $df=31$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). This indicates the effect of traditional instruction on participants' reading comprehension skills. Table 5 shows that the mean score of the experimental group on the pre- and post-tests was 31 and 33.68, respectively.

Table 5

*Paired Samples Statistics on Pre-test and Post-test of the Experimental Group*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error mean
Pair 2	Pre-Test experimental	32	31.00	3.20	.566
	Post-Test experimental	32	33.68	1.97	.349

As shown in Table 6, the mean difference is 2.68. There is a significant difference between the mean scores of pre-test and post-test of experimental group ( $M=-2.68$ ;  $SD= 2.11$ ;  $t= -7.18$ ;  $df=31$ ;  $p=0.000<0.05$ ). This difference (2.68) indicates the effect of watching videos during the pre-reading stage on the reading comprehension skills of the participants in the experimental group. To find out whether the difference between the post-test scores of the control and experimental groups was significant or not, another independent samples T-test was used as shown in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 6

*Paired Samples T- test on Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Experimental Group*

		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig.*
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 2	Pre-Test Experimental - Post-Test Experimental	-2.68	2.11	.374	-3.45	-1.92	-7.18	31	.000

Note. \*Two-tailed.

Table 7

*Group Statistics on Post-tests of the Control and Experimental Group*

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error mean
Post-test Control	32	32.12	2.82	.499
Post-test experimental	32	33.68	1.97	.349

Table 8

*Independent Samples T-test on Post-tests of the Control and Experimental Groups*

		Levene's Test For Equality of Variances		t- test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig.*	Mean difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
Pre	Equal variances assumed	4.14	.046	-2.56	62	.013	-1.56	.609	-2.78 -.344
					55.44	.013	-1.56	.609	-2.78 -.341
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.56					

Note. \*Two-tailed

Table 7 reveals the difference between the mean scores of the post-tests of the control (M=32.12) and experimental (M=33.68) groups. The mean difference is 1.56. Table 8 illustrates that the difference (0.013) was significant and was smaller than 0.05 (T= -2.56; df=62; p<.05). This difference is because the treatment the experimental group received (i.e., watching videos during the pre-reading stage), increased the reading comprehension scores of the EFL learners.

### Students' Attitudes toward Watching Pre-Reading Videos

A one sample T-test with a fixed test value of 3 was used to show EFL students' attitudes towards watching videos during the pre-reading stage. The results of the analysis, shown in Tables 9 and 10, demonstrate that the average was 3.826 and its significance was 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05. This reveals that students have a positive attitude towards watching videos and they think that it is beneficial to help improve their reading comprehension skills ( $p=0.000<0.05$ ).

Table 9

*One-Sample T-Test Statistics*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attitude towards watching videos	32	3.82	.809	.143

Table 10

*One-Sample T-Test*

Test Value = 3						
	T	Df	Sig.	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
EFL learners' Attitudes towards watching videos	5.77	31	.000	.826	.534	1.118

Note. \*Two-tailed

Table 11

*Percentage and Frequency of Questionnaire Items for the Experimental Group*

Q	Questionnaire items for EG										Total	Total %
	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree			
	Fre.	Per.	Fre.	Per.	Fre.	Per.	Fre.	Per.	Fre.	Per.		
Q 1	Question 1 was movie preference which has not been included in this table.											
Q 2	13	40.63	14	43.75	2	6.25	1	3.12	2	6.25	32	100
Q 3	9	28.12	10	31.25	7	21.87	3	9.37	3	9.37	32	100
Q 4	10	31.25	11	34.38	6	18.75	3	9.37	2	6.25	32	100
Q 5	16	50	7	21.87	5	15.62	3	9.37	1	3.12	32	100
Q 6	11	34.38	11	34.38	5	15.62	4	12.5	1	3.12	32	100
Q 7	14	43.75	13	40.63	2	6.25	2	6.25	1	3.12	32	100
Q 8	16	50	11	34.38	3	9.37	1	3.12	1	3.12	32	100
Q 9	8	25	14	43.75	5	15.62	3	9.37	2	6.25	32	100
Q 10	7	21.87	5	15.62	11	34.38	6	18.75	3	9.37	32	100
Q 11	20	62.5	7	21.87	5	15.62	0	0	0	0	32	100
Q 12	19	59.38	10	31.25	3	9.37	0	0	0	0	32	100
Q 13	3	9.37	7	21.87	7	21.87	7	21.87	8	25	32	100
Q 14	2	6.25	5	15.62	6	18.75	12	37.5	7	21.87	32	100
Q 15	15	46.87	14	43.75	1	3.12	1	3.12	1	3.12	32	100

Table 12  
*Percentage and Frequency of Questionnaire Items for the Control Group*

Questions	Questionnaire items for CG										Total	Total %
	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree			
	Fre.	Per.	Fre.	Per.	Fre.	Per.	Fre.	Per.	Fre.	Per.		
Q. 1	Question 1 was movie preference which has not been included in this table.											
Q. 2	11	34.38	13	40.63	5	15.62	0	0	3	9.37	32	100
Q. 3	6	18.75	11	34.38	5	15.62	6	18.75	4	12.5	32	100
Q. 4	10	31.25	14	43.75	5	15.62	1	3.12	2	6.25	32	100
Q. 5	14	43.75	9	28.12	2	6.25	4	12.5	3	9.37	32	100
Q. 6	10	31.25	7	21.87	5	15.62	6	18.75	4	12.5	32	100
Q. 7	11	34.38	13	40.63	3	9.37	3	9.37	2	6.25	32	100
Q. 8	14	43.75	11	34.38	3	9.37	1	3.12	3	9.37	32	100
Q. 9	6	18.75	4	12.5	15	46.87	5	15.62	2	6.25	32	100
Q. 10	4	12.5	6	18.75	14	43.75	6	18.75	2	6.25	32	100
Q. 11	18	56.25	9	28.12	5	15.62	0	0	0	0	32	100
Q. 12	13	40.63	11	34.38	3	9.37	3	9.37	2	6.25	32	100
Q. 13	2	6.25	2	6.25	4	12.5	12	37.5	12	37.5	32	100
Q. 14	7	21.87	7	21.87	7	21.87	6	18.75	5	15.62	32	100
Q. 15	11	34.38	12	37.5	5	15.62	2	6.25	2	6.25	32	100

Tables 11 and 12 present the frequency and percentage of questionnaire items for the experimental and control groups, respectively.

### Discussion

The results of this study showed a significant difference on the mean scores of the experimental group on pre- and post-tests ( $M=-2.68$ ;  $SD= 2.11$ ;  $t= -7.18$ ;  $df=31$ ;  $p=0.000<0.05$ ). This indicates that watching videos during a pre-reading stage has affected the EFL learners' reading comprehension. That is, the experimental group outperformed the control group in reading comprehension scores. The treatment has increased the mean scores of the experimental group in reading comprehension and this indicates the positive answer for the first research question; watching reading related videos in pre-reading stage can affect EFL students' reading comprehension abilities to better apprehend the reading passages of their textbooks. The experimental group participants also had positive attitudes and thoughts towards watching videos during a pre-reading stage ( $M= 3.82$ ;  $SD= .809$ ;  $t=5.77$ ;  $df=31$ ;  $p=0.000<0.05$ ). From an analysis of the questionnaire results as shown in Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12, the following can be concluded:

1. Generally, learners thought that they were motivated to watch videos and it was beneficial to improve their English knowledge.
2. Learners had neutral ideas about the effect of movie preference on their reading comprehension.
3. Learners thought of watching videos as a pleasant and interesting experience as a teaching method and they were also interested in watching video during the pre-reading stage with captions.
4. Vocabulary review helps learners understand the story of videos and leads to a greater understanding of reading comprehension passages.

5. Learners generally agreed with watching videos during the pre-reading stage rather than after reading.
6. Videos were helpful and motivating to the learners and they also increased confidence, interest and positive feeling in learners so that they could expand their reading comprehension skills.
7. Learners were not sure about the use of video dialogs in their daily lives and had problems in finding reading related videos.

These results confirm participants' positive attitudes towards watching videos as a pre-reading activity. This provides the answer to the second research question; students have a positive attitude towards watching videos before reading and they think it can be beneficial for them to learn better.

The findings of this study confirm those of Kusumarasdy (2004) and Lue (2004) in that videos catch learners' interest and can positively increase their attitude towards better language leaning. The results are in line with the studies carried out by Mirvan (2013) and Ismaili (2013) regarding the general effect of watching films on reading comprehension and learning in EFL classrooms. Meanwhile, the findings are also in accordance with the findings of the studies carried out by Marzban (2010) and Ponce et al. (2012) about using computer assisted educational techniques to improve students' reading comprehension; however, this study was methodologically different and demonstrated that watching video was useful as a pre-reading technique in improving EFL learners' reading comprehension skills.

This research project along with some other studies (Dorshomal, Gorjian & Pazhakh, 2013; Rowland, 2007; Mekheimer, 2011), in fact, found that the use of videos in EFL classrooms has positive effects in improving learners' reading comprehension skill. The results indicate that videos activate learners' background knowledge and make them interested so as to be actively involved in reading comprehension process. Then, as educational media videos are very important in current and future language education.

Reluctant and unmotivated readers may have little background knowledge because they are less confident. They may confront problems in reading and understanding the text (Guthrie & Davis, 2003; Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998). As the results revealed, watching reading related videos as a technique during the pre-reading stage can supply necessary and additional information for these kinds of readers and activate their schema to help improve these EFL learners' reading comprehension skills.

### **Conclusion**

This experimental study was carried out to show the effects of watching videos during a pre-reading stage on EFL learners' reading comprehension and their attitudes towards watching videos. The results showed that watching videos helped improve participants' reading skills. That is, the findings provided a positive answer to the first research question. Students also demonstrated positive attitudes and thoughts towards watching the videos; they also thought it was beneficial to watch them during the pre-reading stage. The findings of this study may be helpful for EFL learners who have problems in understanding passages for which they do not have the necessary background knowledge. Watching reading related videos has the potential to activate learners' schematic knowledge and can help generate interest in reading texts and as well as making sense of them.

Based on the findings of this study, students and teachers can utilize the video watching technique in EFL classrooms. Besides, curriculum developers should take the findings into account to plan and design appropriate textbooks with related videos and films, so they can be beneficial in mastering and learning all language skills in general and reading comprehension in particular. Additionally, teachers and practitioners should consider using technology to help revise teaching aids, techniques, and strategies. This can facilitate language learning process and solve some of the problems in language teaching and learning in EFL setting specially in reading comprehension as an important language area.

The use of authentic videos is challenging as they often do not provide the best means of explaining complex concepts or for practicing specific grammar points or writing skills (Johnston, 1999). It takes time, thought, and careful planning on the part of the teacher to prepare learners to watch and discuss videos (Gareis, 1997). It took time to preview and select authentic videos and then to prepare activities for learners. As the



language use and context of authentic videos cannot be controlled, in some cases, the researchers needed to take time to explain them. Authentic videos may contain language, content, or themes that are controversial, or even inappropriate for a particular classroom context. One of the problems of this study was finding and selecting appropriate videos that were related to the students' textbook. Validation of the teacher-made tests seems to be another shortcoming that was solved by using standardized tests (i.e., the Konkur entrance exam test). Further research can be done on the application of this technique during the reading stage and on its effects on vocabulary acquisition. Finally, the effects of watching videos before discussions in speaking classes is another area of potential research.

### References

- An, S. (2013). Schema theory in reading. *Theory and practice in language studies*, 3(1), 130-134. doi:10.4304/tpls.3.1.130-134
- Barlett, F. C. (1932). *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*. London: New Psychological Linguistics. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Education Publication.
- Brooke, S. (2003). Video production in the foreign language classroom: Some practical ideas. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 9(10). Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Brooke-Video.html>
- Butler-Pascoe, M. E., & Wiburg, K. M. (2003). *Technology and teaching English language learners: Using technology to teach oral communication skills*. London: Pearson.
- Carrell, P. L. (1988). Schema interference in ESL reading. In P.L. Carrell, J. Devine, & D.E. Eskey (Eds.), *Interactive approaches to second language reading* (pp. 128-142). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (1991). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle publishers.
- Chen, M. L. (2012). Effects of integrating children's literature and DVD films into a college EFL class. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 11(4), 88-98.
- Chen, P. S. (2008). The application and combination of fore exercise and reading guidance, peer assessment, and interactive response system-taking the class instruction of school administration for example. *School administrators research association*, 58, 150-180.
- Chiu, C. F., & Lee, G. C. (2009). A video lecture and lab-based approach for learning of image processing concepts. *Computers & Education*, 52 (2), 313-323.
- Chung, J. (1999). The effects of using video texts supported with advance organizers and captions on Chinese college students' listening comprehension: An empirical study. *Foreign Language Annals*, 32, 295-308.
- Dehghani, A. P., & Jowkar, M. (2012). The impact of computer-video projector on EFL learners' listening comprehension. *Academic Research International*, 3(1), 106-112.
- Dikilitas, K., & Duvenci, A. (2009). Using popular movies in teaching oral skill. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1(1), 168-172. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2009.01.031
- Dorshomal, N., Gorjian, B., & Pazhakh, A. (2013). The role of pedagogical films in developing Iranian pre-intermediate EFL Learners' speaking skill: The case of motivation. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World*, 4 (4), 254-268.
- Draper, D. (2012). Comprehension strategies. Visualizing & visual literacy. *DECS Curriculum Consultant*, Northern Adelaide. Retrieved from [www.vln.school.nz/resources/download/930445](http://www.vln.school.nz/resources/download/930445)
- Garcis, E. (1997). Movies in the language classroom: Dealing with problematic content. *TESOL Journal*, 6(4), 20-23.
- Ginther, A. (2002). Context and content visuals and performance on listening comprehension stimuli. *Language Testing*, 19(2), 133-167.
- Golden, J. (2001). *Reading in the dark: Using film as a tool in the English classroom*. The National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois.
- Gruba, P. (2006). Playing the videotext: A media literacy perspective on video-mediated L2 listening. *Language learning and technology*, 10 (2), 77-92.



- Guthrie, T. J., & Davis, M. H. (2003). Motivating struggling readers in middle school through an engagement model of classroom practice. *Reading and writing Quarterly*, 19(1), 59-85.
- Haghverdi, H. R., & Vaezi, M. N. (n.d.). *The impact of English and Persian subtitle on the listening comprehension of Iranian EFL learners*. Unpublished manuscript. Retrieved from [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
- Han, H. (1994). Implementing the video-based instruction in the college-level ESL classroom based on second language acquisition & communicative competences theories. Ed. D., North Carolina State University.
- Hendershot, M. R. (2007). *A study of the impact of children's book-based blockbuster movies on library circulation* (Master's thesis). Chapel Hill, North Carolina University. Retrieved from <https://ils.unc.edu/MSPapers/3261.pdf>
- Herron, C., Cole, S. P., York, H., & Linden, P. (1998). A comparison of student retention of foreign language video: Declarative versus interrogative advance organizer. *Modern Language Journal*, 82, 775-795.
- Herron, C., & Seay, I. (1991). The effect of authentic aural texts on students' listening comprehension in the foreign language classroom. *Foreign language Annals*, 24, 487-495.
- Hoque, M. S. (2013). Dilemma and dimensions of children's reading comprehension skills. *Philosophy and Progress*, 53(54), 85-112. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3329/pp.v53i1-2.21949>
- Houston, C. (2000). Video usage and active learning strategies among community college faculty members. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 24, 341-357.
- Hsieh, H. L., Wu, J. Y., Lai, P., Chang, S. K., Chen, T. Y., & Kao, W. J. (2010). *The effect of movie viewing on learning English as a foreign language*. Retrieved from [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
- Hutchins, E. (1995a). *Cognition in the wild*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hutchins, E. (1995b). How a cockpit remembers its speeds. *Cognitive Science*, 19, 265-288.
- Ismaili, M. (2013). The effectiveness of using movies in the EFL classroom: A study conducted at South East European University. *Academic journal of interdisciplinary studies*, 2(4), 121-132.
- Jeng, Y., Wang, K., & Huang, Y. (2009). Retrieving video features for language acquisition. *Expert systems with applications*, 36(1), 5673-5683.
- Johnston, J. (1999). Enhancing adult literacy instruction with video. Unpublished manuscript, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor.
- King, J. (2002). Using DVD feature films in the EFL classroom: *The weekly column, Article 88*. Retrieved from <http://www.eltnnewsletter.com/back/February2002/art882002.htm>
- Kusumarasdyati, R. (2004). Listening, viewing and imagination: Films in EFL Classes. Paper presented at the international conference on imagination and education, Vancouver, Canada. Retrieved from <https://coicinecadiz2011.wikispaces.com/file/view/movies+in+efl+classes.pdf>
- Kusumarasdyati, R. (2006). Subtitled movie DVDs in foreign language classes. Paper presented at AARE Annual Conference, Adelaide, Monash University. Retrieved from [www.aare.edu.au/publications/subtitled-movie-dvds-in-foreign-language-classes](http://www.aare.edu.au/publications/subtitled-movie-dvds-in-foreign-language-classes)
- Latifi, M., Tavakoli, M., & Alipour, J. (2013). Investigating the effect of video materials on testing foreign language learners' listening performance. *Middle-East journal of scientific research*, 13 (9), 1197-1201. doi:10.5829/idosi.mejsr.2013.13.9.891
- Luo, J. J. (2004). *Using DVD films to enhance college freshmen's English listening comprehension and motivation*. Unpublished Master thesis, National Tsing Hua University, Hsinchu. Taiwan.
- Marzban, A. (2010). Improvement of reading comprehension through computer-assisted language learning in Iranian intermediate EFL students. *Procedia Computer Science*, 3, 3-10.
- Mekheimer, M. A. A. G. (2011). The impact of using videos on whole language learning in EFL contexts. *Arab World English Journal*, 2(2), 5-39.
- Mirvan, X. (2013). The advantages of using films to enhance student's reading skills in the EFL classroom. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 4, 62-66.
- Moreira, J. A., & Nejmeddine, F. (2015). A pedagogical model to deconstruct videos in virtual learning environments. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 3, (7), 881-885. doi:10.12691/education-3-7-11
- Ponce, H. R., Lopez, M. J., & Mayer, R. E. (2012). Instructional effectiveness of a computer-supported program for teaching reading comprehension strategies. *Computers & Education*, 59, 1170-1183.

- Rowland, J. L. (2007). Closed-captioned video and the ESL classroom: A multi-Sensory approach, *MPAEA Journal of Adult Education*, 36 (2).
- Rumelhart, D. E. (1980). Schemata: The building blocks of cognition. In R. J. Spiro, B. C. Bruce, & W. F. Brewer (Eds.), *Theoretical issues in reading comprehension* (pp. 77-85). Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associations.
- Sherman, J. (2003). *Using authentic video in the language classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stockwell, G. (2014). Exploring theory in computer- assisted language learning. *Bridging research and pedagogy, CELC Symposium*, 25-30. Retrieved from [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
- Stoller, F. (1988). *Films and videotapes in the ESL/EFL Classroom*. Paper presented at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Chicago. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED299835.pdf>
- Suchman, L. (2006). *Human-machine reconfigurations: Plans and situated actions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Suvorov, R. S. (2008). *Context visuals in L2 listening text. The effectiveness of photographs and videos vs. audio-only format* (Master's thesis). Iowa State University, Iowa. Retrieved from [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
- Weyers, J. (1999). The effect of authentic video on communicative competence. *Modern Language Journal*, 83 (3), 339-349.
- Ockey, G. J. (2007). Construct implications of including still image or video in computer-based listening tests. *Language Testing*, 24 (4), 517-537.
- Urquhart, S., & Weir, C. (1998). *Reading in a second language: Process, product and practice*. London: Longman.
- Wigfield, A., Eccles, J. S., & Rodriguez, D. (1998). The development of children's motivation in school contexts. *Review of Research in Education*, 23, 73-118.
- Xue, J., & Pan, Q. (2012). The effects of film appreciation on improving the students' intercultural communication competence. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2 (8), 1741-1745. doi:10.4304/tpls.2.8.1741-1745
- Yang, J., Chen, C., & Jeng, M. (2010). Integrating video-capture virtual reality technology into a physically interactive learning environment for English learning. *Computers & Education*, 55 (1), 1346-1356.
- Yousofi, N., & Seidi, N. (2015). The impact of concept mapping technique on EFL reading comprehension: A case study. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World (IJLLALW)*, 8 (1), 163-172.
- Zhang, C. X. (2001). *Educational psychology*. Taiwan, Taipei: Tunghua.

### Appendix A

#### Questionnaire

Hi dear students, we want to know your opinions on learning English through watching videos in pre-reading stage. We would appreciate it if you can fill up the questionnaire.

Questions 1								
1. What kinds of English movies do you like? (You can choose more than one.)								
Thriller		Comedy		Science Fiction	educational movies			
Romance		War movies		Action movie	reading passage related videos			
Suspensor		Documentary		Animated movie				
Questions 2-15				Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. Do you think watching English movies has a beneficial effect on learning English?								
3. Do you think your movie preferences will affect your reading comprehension?								
4. Do you think English captions are good in learning English?								
5. I am interested in learning English if the teacher uses English videos as teaching materials.								
6. Does vocabulary preview help understand the story line of a video and lead to understanding reading comprehension?								
7. Do you think watching videos before reading motivate you to learn English?								
8. Do you think watching these videos in pre-reading are useful in improving your reading comprehension skill?								
9. Do you agree you have learned some English by watching the videos?								
10. Do you think the dialogs in the videos can be used in daily life?								
11. Do you agree with watching videos in pre-reading stage?								
12. Do think that you have problems in finding and availability of reading related useful videos?								
13. Do you agree that it is better to watch reading related videos after reading comprehension?								
14. Do you agree with watching educational movies that are not related to reading comprehension passages to learn it?								
15. Do you think watching videos in pre-reading gives you confidence, motivation and interest to continue reading the text?								
Additional Comments:								

## Appendix B Pre-Test

### Part A: Vocabulary

*Directions: Questions 1-15 are incomplete sentences. Beneath each sentence you will see four words or phrases, marked (1), (2), (3), and (4). Choose the one word or phrase that best completes the sentence. Then mark your answer sheet.*

- 1- Our plans are very ....., so we can meet you either on Wednesday or on Thursday.  
1) private                      2) flexible                      3) actual                      4) immediate
- 2- Many children have become ----- disturbed as a result of the damage they have suffered.  
1) emotionally                      2) actively                      3) powerfully                      4) necessarily
- 3- I felt quite ----- during the marriage ceremony.  
1) economical                      2) emotional                      3) artificial                      4) physical
- 4- I have very complete ----- in her. She will be perfect for the job.  
1) exploration                      2) involvement                      3) confidence                      4) experience
- 5- They have ----- a number of circumstances to the agreement.  
1) combined                      2) restated                      3) arranged                      4) attached
- 6- Experts ----- that, on average, the world loses a language every two weeks.  
1) annoy                      2) explore                      3) estimate                      4) measure
- 7- Machines can now perform many ----- tasks in the home.  
1) irrelevant                      2) surrounding                      3) anxious                      4) repetitive
- 8- Don't talk. You may ----- the driver's attention from the road.  
1) distract                      2) damage                      3) stretch                      4) recognize
- 9- Something is really worrying me, but I can't ----- exactly what it is.  
1) locate                      2) devote                      3) define                      4) handle
- 10- We were waiting ----- for my father coming back from Mecca.  
1) smoothly                      2) anxiously                      3) personally                      4) necessarily
- 11- The terrible mistake I made in class was an unexpected one; it really ----- me at the time.  
1) embarrassed                      2) informed                      3) suffered                      4) prevented
- 12- Don't forget to ----- the cupboard when you go out.  
1) pass on                      2) turn on                      3) lock up                      4) pick up
- 13- Population experts ----- the total number of people living on the earth as about seven billions.  
1) evaluate                      2) predict                      3) estimate                      4) express
- 14- We need a secretary who is really ----- in managing the office and making it run well.  
1) voluntary                      2) efficient                      3) reflected                      4) self-employed
- 15- For a long time after the accident my sister had no ----- in her right leg.  
1) expectation                      2) movement                      3) stretch                      4) mood

### Part B: Cloze Test

*Directions: Questions 16- 25 are related to the following passage. Read the passage and decide which choice (1), (2), (3), or (4) best fits each space. Then mark your answer sheet.*

The Romans spoke of health in a proverb: "A healthy mind in a healthy body." In addition to physical health, an/a (16) ----- of mental health is important. Too much mental stress can have a bad (17) ----- on one's physical well-being. The human body is much more (18) ----- than any machine. Yet it needs less day-to-day care (19) ----- any machine. No machine can do all the things the body can do. No machine will work for 70 years or more, day and night, requiring only air, water, food, and only (20) ----- simple rules. No machine has been made which can adjust to so many different conditions as the human body.

- 16- 1) summarizing                      2) succeeding                      3) separating                      4) understanding
- 17- 1) device                      2) effect                      3) stance                      4) phase

- |                 |            |                |               |
|-----------------|------------|----------------|---------------|
| 18- 1) private  | 2) certain | 3) complicated | 4) repetitive |
| 19- 1) than     | 2) from    | 3) with        | 4) of         |
| 20- 1) a little | 2) little  | 3) a few       | 4) few        |

The passage of heat from one place to another by the movement of liquid or gas is called convection, and it takes place when the (21) ----- of one part of liquid or gas is different (22) ----- that of another part. When a liquid is heated it expands (23) ----- so that the hot liquid is lighter than the (24) ----- colder liquid and therefore rises. In an electric kettle the wavy currents for hot water can be seen (25) ----- from the element when the electricity has just been switched on. A radiator or hot water tank is always hotter at the top than at the bottom for this reason.

- |                    |               |                 |                |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 21- 1) weight      | 2) formation  | 3) sort         | 4) temperature |
| 22- 1) from        | 2) than       | 3) of           | 4) with        |
| 23- 1) comfortably | 2) slightly   | 3) possibly     | 4) commonly    |
| 24- 1) missing     | 2) organizing | 3) surrounding  | 4) growing     |
| 25- 1) rising      | 2) crossing   | 3) transferring | 4) removing    |

### Part C: Reading Comprehension

*Directions: In this part of the test, you will read two passages. Each passage is followed by five questions. Answer the questions by choosing the best choice (1), (2), (3), or (4). Then mark your answer sheet.*

#### PASSAGE 1:

The game is played for four quarters of 15 minutes each or two halves of 20 minutes each. Playing time may be shortened for schools or for a series of matches played in one day. Two referees control the game, keep the score, and keep time except in internationals.

To start the game, one of the centers passes the ball from the small center circle. This is called a center pass and is also used for restarting the game after a goal. One of the attacking teams (the team taking the center pass) must touch or receive the center pass within the center third. After that the ball is thrown from player to player until goal shooter or goal attack receives the ball in the shooting circle and tries to score.

The players may not walk or run while the ball is in their possession, or hold it for more than three seconds. The ball may be thrown or bounced to another player but not rolled or kicked. A player may bounce or bat the ball once before catching it. The ball may be caught while it is in the air but a player may not take the ball out of another player's hands or contact (touch) her in any way. A player standing the correct distance away may block the movement of a player or the flight of the ball. The ball may not be thrown over a complete third of the court. If a player of one team sends the ball out of court, it is thrown in by one of the other team. When a rule is broken, either a free pass or a penalty pass is given to the other team.

26- The passage is primarily written to -----.

- |                          |                                    |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1) explain some rules    | 2) advertise something             |
| 3) make some suggestions | 4) describe the function of a game |

27- When one of the centers passes the ball from the small center circle -----.

- |                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1) the game actually begins     | 2) the game has to be repeated      |
| 3) an attack has been prevented | 4) the referee should stop the game |

28- Which of the following is forbidden?

- 1) The ball thrown to another player but not kicked
- 2) A player running with the ball in his hands.
- 3) The ball thrown from player to player in the shooting circle.
- 4) The team in the center pass touching the center pass within the center third

29- How long are the players on the court playing the game?

- |               |               |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1) 55 minutes | 2) 35 minutes | 3) 80 minutes | 4) 60 minutes |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|

30- What happens after a goal is scored?



- 1) A player may send the ball out of court.
- 2) The ball is bounced to the goal shooter.
- 3) The ball is passed from the small center circle.
- 4) The team taking the center pass receives the center pass within the center third.

#### PASSAGE 2:

Eye contact is a nonverbal technique that helps the speaker "sell" his or her ideas to an audience. Eye contact also helps hold listener interest. A successful speaker must try to have eye contact with an audience. To have a good relationship with listeners, a speaker should make direct eye contact for at least 75 percent of the time. Some speakers focus only on their notes. Others gaze over the heads of their listeners. Both are likely to lose audience interest and respect. People who make eye contact while speaking, whether from a podium or from across the table, are "considered not only as exceptionally good at speaking by their target but also as more believable and serious."

To show the power of eye contact in daily life, we have only to consider how people behave when they happen to look at each other on the street. At one extreme are those people who feel forced to smile when they make eye contact. At the other extreme are those who feel not relaxed and immediately look away. To make eye contact, it seems, is to make a certain link with someone.

31. What is the main idea of the passage?
  - a. How to Make Eye Contact
  - b. When and Where to Avoid Eye Contact
  - c. Eye Contact as a Means of Communication
  - d. Effect of Eye Contact on People's Daily Behavior
32. What does the author imply eye contact can do when he says, "... helps the speaker 'sell' his or her ideas to an audience" (lines 1-2)?
  - a. It can help the speaker become famous and make money as a result.
  - b. It involves messages not included in the language used by the speaker.
  - c. It can make an audience ready to buy whatever the speaker offers for sale.
  - d. It can increase the possibility of people's accepting the speaker's opinions.
- 33- According to the passage, who is more likely to be more respected by an audience?
  - a. A speaker who gazes over the heads of the people to whom he is talking.
  - b. A speaker who looks away when feeling bad if people on the street look at him.
  - c. A speaker who has notes and looks at his notes most of the time while speaking.
  - d. A speaker making eye contact with the audience during most of his speech.
- 34 Which one of the following could be put in place of the word "target" in line 7 without a change in meaning?
  - a. Technique
  - b. Audience
  - c. Eye contact
  - d. Interest and respect
35. The writer of the passage tries to prove his main point in paragraph 2 by.....
  - a. providing an example
  - b. reporting an event that happened in his own life
  - c. saying that people who dislike eye contact are few in number
  - d. mentioning the various advantages of eye contact in ordinary people's

#### PASSAGE 3:

Several general changes occur in the human body as it ages: hearing and vision becomes weak, muscle strength becomes less, soft tissues such as skin and blood vessels become less flexible, and there is a general decrease in body power.

Most of the body's organs perform less efficiently with advancing age. For example, the average amount of blood pumped by the heart drops from about 6.9 liters (7.3 quarts) per minute at age 20 to only 3.5 liters (3.7 quarts) pumped per minute at age 85. For this same age range, the average amount of blood flowing through the kidneys drops from about 0.6 liters (0.6 quarts) per minute to 0.3 liters (0.3 quarts). Not all people experience decreased organ function to the same degree—some individuals have healthier hearts and kidneys at age 85 than others do at age 50.

The immune system also changes with age. A healthy immune system protects the body against bacteria, viruses, and other harmful agents by producing disease-fighting proteins known as antibodies. A healthy immune system also prevents the growth of abnormal cells, which can become cancerous. With advancing age, the ability of the immune system to perform these protective functions is decreased—the rate of antibody production may

decrease by as much as 80 percent between age 20 and age 85. This less-effective immune system explains why an attack of influenza, which may make a young adult sick for a few days, can be deadly for an old person. Thus, it is as good for an older person to be vaccinated against the flu and pneumonia as it is for young people to be vaccinated against childhood diseases.

36- What does the passage mainly discuss?

- 1) The way to slow down this process of aging
- 2) What organs in the human body are more affected by old age
- 3) The relationship between age and some changes in the human body
- 4) What makes the human body less able to protect itself against disease

37- What is discussed as an example in paragraph 2 is true for -----.

- 1) the majority of people
- 2) everyone that becomes old
- 3) people between 50 to 85 years of age
- 4) people who are not lucky enough to remain healthy despite old age

38- Which one of the following is true about paragraph 3?

- 1) It provides further evidence to support the main point of the passage.
- 2) It mentions a reason to explain the problems referred to in paragraph 2.
- 3) It somehow modifies the general idea of the passage by including new facts.
- 4) It brings in new facts, raising doubts about the main point supported by the first two paragraphs.

39- The word "others" in paragraph 2 refers to -----.

- 1) organs
- 2) kidneys
- 3) individuals
- 4) both hearts and kidneys

40- The last sentence of the passage, "Thus, it is as --- diseases," includes all of the following EXCEPT-----.

- 1) a comparison
- 2) some advice
- 3) disease
- 4) a change

## Appendix C

### Post-Test

#### Part A: Vocabulary

*Directions: Questions 1-15 are incomplete sentences. Beneath each sentence you will see four words or phrases, marked (1), (2), (3), and (4). Choose the one word or phrase that best completes the sentence. Then mark your answer sheet.*

- 1- He goes to the gym regularly to be able to ----- his health condition.  
1) prepare                      2) survive                      3) arrange                      4) enhance
- 2- To get yourself ready for a test of the type you are going to take ----- hard work.  
1) considers                      2) performs                      3) involves                      4) predicts
- 3- Facial ----- communicate important messages, and can sometimes be more powerful than words.  
1) formations                      2) instructions                      3) explanations                      4) expressions
- 4- I worry about the ----- effect that violent films may have on children.  
1) destructive                      2) repetitive                      3) irrelevant                      4) nervous
- 5- No one in class wants Ted to be a member of their group because he almost always avoids ----- what is assigned to him as his responsibility.  
1) exercising                      2) including                      3) encouraging                      4) performing
- 6- As he is not satisfied with his ----- on the final test, he thinks he would most probably need to repeat the course.  
1) function                      2) labor                      3) performance                      4) summary
- 7- We humans get our ----- from what we eat; plants get theirs from the soil.  
1) matter                      2) nutrients                      3) sources                      4) wildlife
- 8- The pilot of the airplane had to make a/an ----- landing because of the very bad weather.  
1) mystery                      2) emergency                      3) strategy                      4) density
- 9- I find his habit of opening windows all the time really most annoying, ----- when the temperature is minus 10.  
1) exactly                      2) perfectly                      3) constantly                      4) particularly
- 10- Exercise and weight ----- can help lower your blood pressure and help you feel more energetic.  
1) pace                      2) task                      3) loss                      4) choice
- 11- He didn't pay as much ----- as he had to when the store owner was describing the product, so he later realized what he had bought was of little use to him.  
1) amount                      2) income                      3) increase                      4) attention
- 12- You really ----- me when you mentioned my mistakes in the presence of my classmates.  
1) compared                      2) introduced                      3) generalized                      4) embarrassed
- 13- What is of ----- to me is that you are not getting enough work done.  
1) concern                      2) inaction                      3) pressure                      4) reference
- 14- The pilot ----- mainly on flying and spoke very little.  
1) concentrated                      2) transferred                      3) distracted                      4) experienced
- 15- There are many species of plants and animals in danger of -----.  
1) pollution                      2) vehicle                      3) extinction                      4) climate

#### Part B: Cloze Test

*Directions: Questions 16- 25 are related to the following passage. Read the passage and decide which choice (1), (2), (3), or (4) best fits each space. Then mark your answer sheet.*

"I stood up to speak and my (16) ----- went blank". Has this ever happened to you? You may be nervous in front of an audience. You may be worried that you didn't prepare enough. You (17) ----- some of your facts. What can you do? Sometimes people prepare too much and become (18) ----- if they can't remember the words they practiced. It is a good idea to bring some notes to help you (19) -----, but don't memorize your speech. If you "go blank," begin by explaining the (20) ----- of your speech, and the rest will probably follow.

16- 1) humor                      2) presentation                      3) mind                      4) impression



- |                      |                |                          |                       |
|----------------------|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 17- 1) should forget | 2) must forget | 3) should have forgotten | 4) may have forgotten |
| 18- 1) surprising    | 2) frightened  | 3) destructive           | 4) emotionless        |
| 19- 1) organize      | 2) support     | 3) prevent               | 4) define             |
| 20- 1) issue         | 2) aspect      | 3) purpose               | 4) posture            |

Earthquakes are probably one of the most frightening and destructive happenings of nature that man experiences. The effects of an earthquake are often (21) ----- . Earthquakes have (22) ----- the death of many human beings, much suffering, and great (23) ----- . Today, the study of earthquakes has grown (24) ----- as scientists all over the world study the causes of earthquakes. These records were the first scientific (25) ----- to write down the effects of an earthquake.

- |                      |              |               |             |
|----------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| 21- 1) chemical      | 2) superior  | 3) terrible   | 4) formal   |
| 22- 1) provided      | 2) caused    | 3) required   | 4) designed |
| 23- 1) damage        | 2) source    | 3) impression | 4) variety  |
| 24- 1) destructively | 2) distantly | 3) smoothly   | 4) greatly  |
| 25- 1) steps         | 2) stances   | 3) degrees    | 4) scenes   |

### Part C: Reading Comprehension

*Directions: In this part of the test, you will read two passages. Each passage is followed by four questions. Answer the questions by choosing the best choice (1), (2), (3), or (4). Then mark your answer sheet.*

#### PASSAGE 1:

Although all forms of communication have a *language*, the word usually refers to the use of written or spoken words.

Human language is the most complicated form of expression available to us. Simply to understand what you are reading at this very moment involves much intelligence and skill. An adult speaks on average 30,000 words a day, and a total of 600 million words in an average lifetime. Language has a profound effect on all our lives.

We learn language from childhood; we learn how to make sounds which can be formed into words, and discover that we have to apply certain rules of grammar if we are to be understood. We learn to say "*He saw me*", but "*I saw him*". The ways of joining words together into grammatically acceptable sentences are enormous. If you were to speak aloud all the 20-word sentences that would make sense in the English language, it would take you ten million years to do so.

When we use words, we are using symbols; the word "elephant" should refer to a large grey animal with thick skin because speakers of the English language have agreed that this word should be the symbol for that particular animal.

Sometimes there is disagreement about the meanings of words. Usually these words refer to ideas or concepts, rather than to things. For instance, not everyone agrees upon the exact meaning of words such as "freedom", "love", "justice", or "peace". If the sender and the receiver disagree upon these meanings, communication breaks down. The study of the relationship between language and meaning is called *semantics*.

26- The passage is basically intended to offer -----.

- 1) a definition of spoken communication
- 2) a description of language
- 3) a comparison between written and spoken language
- 4) an explanation of different forms of communication

27- Which of the following is true, according to paragraph 2?

- 1) Every individual uses at least 30,000 word per day.
- 2) Intelligence and skill are two parts of human language.
- 3) The total number of words in most human languages is about 600 million.
- 4) Far from being simple, what humans use to communicate is so complex.

28- The last sentence in paragraph 3 "If you were to speak ... ten million years to do so," is intended to

prove that -----.

- 1) language took a long time to develop into a complicated form
- 2) language has the potential to produce so many sentences
- 3) one can say different things through the same words
- 4) if one uses 20-word-long sentences all the time one would fail to communicate

29- The writer refers to all of the following words about whose meaning there may sometimes be disagreement EXCEPT -----.

- 1) peace
- 2) justice
- 3) freedom
- 4) elephant

30- With which of the following conclusions does the writer seem more likely to agree?

- 1) We need to make human language more simple.
- 2) Overuse of words may lead to communication failure.
- 3) There is not necessarily a natural relationship between words and meanings.
- 4) People should study semantics if they want their sentences to be grammatically correct.

#### PASSAGE 2:

Perhaps you remember being in an earthquake – the ground rumbles, lamps begin to move back and forth, shelves begin to rattle or spill their contents, the floor and walls shake. Even if you do not remember seeing or feeling an earthquake, you have probably lived through thousands of tiny earthquakes during your lifetime. The earth is constantly creating earthquakes.

An earthquake is the shaking of the earth caused by pieces of the crust of the Earth that suddenly move. The crust, the thin outer layer, is mostly cold and breakable rock compared to the hot rock deeper inside. This crust is full of large and small cracks called faults. Although these faults can be hundreds of miles long, usually you cannot see them because they are buried deep underground and because the pieces of crust are compared (pressed) together very firmly. The powerful forces that compress these crustal pieces also cause them to move very slowly. When two pieces that are next to each other get pushed in different directions, They will stick together for a long time ( many years), but finally the forces pushing on them will force them to break apart and move. This sudden change in the rock shakes all of the rock around it. These vibrations, called seismic waves, travel outward in all directions and are called an earthquake. The underground location where the rock first broke apart or moved is called the focus of the earthquake.

31. In the first sentence of the passage, the writer.....

- a. gives a definition of an earthquake
- b. explains how an earthquake happens
- c. explains why earthquake are frightening
- d. gives examples of the common happenings during an earthquake

32. Which statement is NOT correct? .....

- a. Not all earthquakes cause serious results.
- b. We don't feel most of the earthquakes.
- c. Earthquakes are very common happenings on the Earth.
- d. Some parts of the Earth are free of earthquakes.

33. The main purpose of paragraph 2 is to explain.....

- a. what Earth is made up of
- b. how an earthquake happens
- c. what the focus of the earthquake is
- d. why earthquakes are not predictable

34. From the context, the word "buried" (in paragraph 2, line 4) is closest in meaning to.....

- a. protected
- b. covered
- c. replaced
- d. shaped

35. An earthquake happens when.....

- a. two crustal pieces are stuck together for a long time
- b. two compressed pieces of the crust are broken apart
- c. the pieces of the crust are compressed together very firmly
- d. two pieces that next to each other get pushed in different directions

## PASSAGE 3:

Exercises that require total body involvement improve and maintain fitness most effectively — for example, jogging, running, swimming, cycling, and fast walking. Organized games and sports that have long rest periods within the play design have only a little influence on fitness. Programs especially planned to help individuals become fit are offered in different places: schools and gyms, private clubs and studios, and special, professionally organized clinics that pay attention to people with problems related to the heart or lungs. The individual must be careful in choosing an exercise program and should make sure it is staffed by experts in physical education or medicine.

Normal, healthy individuals may plan their own exercise programs. The general rule is to exercise only until you feel very tired—that is, until breathing becomes labored, circulation seems not enough, or tiredness influences performance. People with health problems caused by heart attacks, strokes, and illness should see a doctor before choosing an exercise program.

36 - According to the information in the passage, if you participate in a sport that makes you have long rest periods, you -----.

- 1) cannot expect your fitness to improve much
- 2) should do your best to avoid total body involvement
- 3) need to exercise in different places in order to improve your fitness
- 4) had better do running, fast walking etc. during the rest period to keep your body warm and fit

37- According to the passage, if you have a heart problem, you are advised to -----.

- 1) exercise in places that design activities clinically appropriate for you
- 2) play organized games so that others can take care of you if you face any trouble
- 3) often see a doctor to measure the amount of the progress you have made in fitness
- 4) engage in activities that require total body involvement so that all the pressure would not be on your heart

38- It can be said that paragraph 1 is mainly written to -----.

- 1) advise
- 2) correct a wrong idea
- 3) mention the benefits of games
- 4) compare daily exercise with organized sports

39- The word "labored" in paragraph 2 is closest in meaning to -----.

- 1) deep
- 2) difficult
- 3) dangerous
- 4) regular

40- The general rule given in paragraph 2 is for those who -----.


- 1) need to see a doctor
- 2) exercise professionally
- 3) have no health problems
- 4) cannot plan their own exercise programs

**Appendix D**  
**Reading Passages**

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH

**LESSON 1** *Why Exercise Is Important*

Before You Read



As you know, doing exercise keeps you healthy. But how? In this lesson, you will read how exercise is important to your mind and body.

*Lesson 1*

**1**

**1** Answer the following questions.

1. How much do you weigh?
2. Do you have to lose some weight? Why/Why not?
3. Do you exercise? How often?
4. What sports do you do/play?
5. How do you feel after an exercise/ playing a game?



*Now ask your partner the same questions.*

**2** Read the following statements. Do you agree or disagree? Put a check mark (✓).  
Add two more statements of your own.

statement	agree	disagree
You do not need to exercise if you are active in your daily life.		
Without exercise, we won't feel happy.		
Those who exercise look stronger.		
Exercise can help you keep in shape.		
Those who exercise live longer.		

*Discuss your ideas with a partner.*



## Why Exercise Is Important!\*

**1** You know what exercise is, but do you know why exercise is important? It is important because it keeps people's bodies and minds healthy. Without it, we would not be feeling or looking very good. Actually, there are so many reasons why exercise is good for you. It is time to get right into it and see why it is good to be fit!

### Exercise Makes Your Heart Happy

**2** Your heart is one hardworking part of your body, pumping blood every day of your life. The heart is a muscle, and it is the strongest muscle in your body, but it can always become stronger! Since it cannot lift weights to get stronger, it **relies** on you to do aerobic exercise.

**relies:**  
depends

**3** Aerobics is a word for needing oxygen, and aerobic exercise is any kind of activity that makes your muscles use oxygen. Aerobic exercise is repetitive, meaning it is an activity that you do over and over, to keep bringing fresh oxygen to all of your muscles. When you do aerobic exercise and bring in that oxygen, your heart becomes stronger and even a bit bigger! The number of blood cells in your blood increases, so the blood can carry even more oxygen. The blood in your body even moves more easily through the blood vessels. All these things mean that your body works **more efficiently** to keep you healthy, and you can do a lot of exercise without getting tired.

**more  
efficiently:**  
better

### Exercise Makes Muscles Stronger

**4** All the muscles in your body do a fine job when you use them for easy things, like picking up a book or walking down the stairs. But what about using them for harder activities, like taking long bike rides or climbing a tree? That is where exercise comes in: it makes your muscles stronger and sometimes

\* adapted from <http://kidshealth.org/kids/stay-healthy/fit/work-it-out.html>



larger. As your muscles get stronger, you can do more active things for longer periods of time. Strong muscles also help **protect** you from **injuries** when you exercise, because they give better support to your **joints**.

### Exercise Makes You Flexible

**5** Can you touch your toes easily? Most children are **flexible**, which means that they can **bend** and **stretch** their bodies without too much trouble. But as people get older, they usually get less flexible; that is why it is important to exercise when you are still young to stay flexible. In addition, when you are flexible, you can be more active.

### Exercise Keeps You at a Healthy Weight

**6** Every time you eat food, your body does the same thing: it uses some of the **nutrients** in the food as **fuel**. It burns these nutrients to give us energy or calories. You need calories for all of your body's functions, whether it is things you think about doing, like brushing your teeth, or things you never think about doing, like breathing. But if the body is not able to use all the calories that are coming from food, it **stores** them as **fat**. Exercise helps keep you at a weight that is right for your height, by burning up extra calories. When you exercise, your body uses that extra fuel to keep you strong.

### Exercise Makes You Feel Good

**7** Exercising is an **excellent** way to feel happy, whether you are exercising on your own or with a group. If you have had a hard day at school, or just feel unhappy, exercising can help you feel better. That is because when you exercise, your body can **release** endorphins, chemicals that create a happy feeling. In addition, when you are breathing deeply during exercise and bringing more air into your lungs, your brain enjoys the extra oxygen. And when you are active and running around, sometimes it is hard to think about what was bothering you.

**8** Exercise can make you feel proud, too. In other words, when you are stronger and you are able to do things better, you can feel better about yourself.

**protect:** keep safe

**injuries:** physical harm to the body

**joint:** part of the body where two bones meet

**flexible:** able to change without breaking

**bend:** move (part of) the body so that it is not straight any more

**stretch:** put arms and legs out straight

**nutrients:** things needed to keep a living thing alive and to help it grow

**fuel:** material burnt to produce energy

**stores:** keeps

**fat:** a white/yellow material under the skin

**excellent:** very good

**release:** let a chemical come out



## After You Read

### Comprehension Check

**1** Check your understanding. Are these statements True (T) or False (F)? If they are not mentioned in the passage, write (N).

- .....1. Aerobic exercise does not change the size of your heart.
- .....2. Exercise keeps us safe from some injuries.
- .....3. Children get less injuries than older people.
- .....4. Fat people do not usually use all the calories that are coming from food.
- .....5. Happiness has no chemical basis.

*Compare your answers with a partner's.*

**2** A) In paragraph 3, the writer explains how aerobic exercise helps your body work better to keep you healthy. Choose the sentence that best summarizes the explanation.

- Aerobic exercise .....
- a) helps you feel no tiredness
  - b) helps the heart to send more oxygen to the muscles
  - c) makes your muscles use less oxygen
  - d) increases your blood.

*Tell the class why the other sentences are wrong.*

B) Complete the following sentence to show how exercise keeps you at a healthy weight. Then compare your sentence with a partner's.

Exercise helps you ..... the extra ..... that is stored in the body.

C) Exercise does three things to make you feel good. What are they?

- 1. ....
- 2. ....
- 3. ....

*Compare your answers with a partner's.*

## Lesson 1

### 3 Discuss the following questions in class.

1. Why is exercise important?
2. How can exercise keep you at a healthy weight?
3. Why do people who exercise feel good about themselves?
4. How do we know what kind of exercise is good for us?

#### LESSON 2 Before You Read

### How to Give a Good Speech



The number one fear of most people is speaking in public. This lesson introduces some ways to improve your speaking ability, as well as to overcome the fear of speaking to a group.

Lesson 2

11

## Appendix E

### Link to Videos

Most of the words, phrases, clauses and sentences in the videos are similar to the content of the reading comprehension passages in the textbooks. That is, the theme and topics of the videos are related to those of the reading passages.

### Links to videos related to “Global warming, global concern”

1. <https://youtu.be/oJAbATJCugs>
2. <https://youtu.be/tCWI-2aISoc>
3. <https://youtu.be/ab6jV4VBWZE>
4. <https://youtu.be/T-sy6rPJBj4>
5. <https://youtu.be/vddc0eWFDVs>

### Links to videos related to “Earthquakes and how to survive them”

1. [https://youtu.be/\\_Udr0hfjVHM](https://youtu.be/_Udr0hfjVHM)
2. <https://youtu.be/67ffnuOrqDs>
3. <https://youtu.be/PPQIdwoYo8M>
4. <https://youtu.be/-zNyVPsj8zc>
5. <https://youtu.be/7wj6nrte9Ow>

### Links to videos related to “How to give a good speech”

1. [https://youtu.be/oGdO\\_3jIVas](https://youtu.be/oGdO_3jIVas)
2. <https://youtu.be/6RDnl3NFgsY>
3. <https://youtu.be/Z9N-JRx9Ifw>
4. <https://youtu.be/r2wlyFIYSuc>
5. <https://youtu.be/-jQ-Q06qlc>
6. [https://youtu.be/tShavGuo0\\_E](https://youtu.be/tShavGuo0_E)
7. <https://youtu.be/zJkMZwAXWbY>
8. <https://youtu.be/zJkMZwAXWbY>

Links to videos related to “*Why exercise is important?*”

1. <https://youtu.be/aE8HyN0zJcw>
2. <https://youtu.be/SFBBjynBpSw>
3. <https://youtu.be/O8ttt3M8qZM>
4. <https://youtu.be/Ovk5qEQ9vmw>
5. <https://youtu.be/ep9j7YaTfMg>

---

#### **About the authors:**

Mahnaz Saeidi, Associate professor of English language at Islamic Azad University, Tabriz Branch, holds Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics. She is the member of University Publication Committee and the editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Applied Linguistics*. She has published books and articles and presented papers in national and international conferences. Her research interests are multiple intelligences, feedback, writing and genre analysis.

Heidar Ahmadi, English language teacher at Marand education department and visiting professor of English language at Payam-E-Noor University, Marand Branch, is a PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics. He has published articles and presented papers in national and international conferences. His research interests are critical discourse analysis, formative assessment, forensic linguistics and reading comprehension.

# Beliefs and Practices Regarding Intercultural Competence among Chinese Teachers of English: A Case Study

**Jie Tian\***

*Donghua University, China*

## Abstract

This study aims to increase the understanding of how Chinese EFL teachers view intercultural competence (IC) and how their beliefs might influence their teaching practices. Qualitative methodology was employed to examine the class observation and interview data collected from a sample of 11 teachers working at a large public university in eastern China. The findings of this study suggest that the participating teachers' perceived IC as involving behavioral, cognitive, affective, and symbolic aspects. Although most of the teachers recognize the importance of IC in their teaching, the intercultural dimensions of teaching have not yet become a regular focus in their actual classes.

**Keywords:** Intercultural competence, Chinese EFL teaching, teachers' beliefs and practices, case study

## Introduction

The importance of intercultural competence (IC) development has been widely recognized and documented in foreign language (FL) education in Europe, Australia, and North America since the late 1980s (Byram & Zarate, 1994; Garrido & Alvarez, 2006; Liddicoat, 2008; Lo Bianco, Liddicoat, & Crozet, 1999; Sercu, 2006). Even though many countries' national curricula for language teaching have been following the intercultural shift in theory (Sercu, 2006), several researchers (e.g., Garrido & Alvarez, 2006; Larzen-Ostermark, 2008; Sercu, 2006) argue that teaching for IC has not yet yielded desired outcomes.

In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in China, many teachers and researchers have realized the important role that culture has in English language learning and some have addressed the need to integrate cultural teaching into EFL classes (Han, 2002; Pan, 2001; Xiao, 2007). However, cultural teaching mostly refers to helping students learn cultural knowledge and cultural teaching strategies accordingly revolve around teaching cultural knowledge (Zhong & Zhao, 2000). Chinese scholars have begun to identify the goal of FL learning as a means of achieving successful intercultural communication and some teaching pedagogies have been proposed for this purpose (Chen, 2001; Hu & Gao, 1997). Though a large body of literature has discussed IC from a theoretical and pedagogical perspective in China, the teaching and learning of IC have not been sufficiently researched through empirical studies (Li & Wang, 2007). Are Chinese EFL teachers aware of the development of IC in their teaching practice? How do they perceive the concept of IC in EFL teaching? Do they incorporate this concept in their classroom practices? If they do, then how? Are the ideas of IC developed mostly in the western context, also applicable to the Chinese context, more specifically, the Chinese EFL teachers? Unfortunately, limited empirical research has been found to answer these questions. This study aims to fill this gap in the literature. Before reporting on the present study, I will first review research on teacher cognition and teacher behavior and research on the components and dimensions of IC.

\*Email: [jtian@dhu.edu.cn](mailto:jtian@dhu.edu.cn). Telephone number: 86-21-67792446. Address: Foreign Languages College, Donghua University, 2999 N. Renmin Rd, Songjiang Distr. Shanghai, 201620, PRC.

### Teacher Cognition and Teacher Behavior

Teacher cognition is considered a critical impetus for teacher improvement and an intrinsic factor of teacher behavior. Teacher cognition refers to the “unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching – what teachers know, believe, and think” (Borg, 2003, p.81) and the relationships between these mental constructs and what teachers do in a language classroom. It further refers to teachers’ beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, knowledge, and principles relating to teaching, as well as judgments and reflections on teaching practice. The most frequently used methods in data collection in teacher cognition studies have been self-report, oral commentary, observation, and reflective writing (Borg, 2003).

The body of research on teachers’ conceptions suggests that these conceptions shape teachers’ instructional behavior to a considerable degree and a direct relationship has been found to exist between these and the way teachers teach (Prosser & Trigwell 1999; Williams & Burden 1997). Thus, insights on teachers’ conceptions are crucial for understanding the ways in which teachers integrate IC development in FL education and the reasons underlying their actual practices.

However, research into Chinese teachers’ perceptions of IC is still inadequate (Liu, 2010). For example, Xu (2000) has indicated that in Chinese universities, most of the FL teachers have only vague perceptions of IC, of the relationship between IC and FL teaching, and of the content and methods of IC education. This study therefore intends to increase the understanding of how Chinese EFL teachers view IC and how their beliefs might influence their teaching practices.

### Intercultural Competence Dimensions

Studies conducted within the last several decades have just begun to flesh out the components of IC and how to better understand, measure, and apply it within the social sciences and other domains. Literature suggests that IC might be characterized according to three dimensions: 1) the *behavioral* dimension, or culturally appropriate behavior in intercultural encounters; 2) the *cognitive* dimension, or the ability to perceive and understand cultural knowledge and viewpoints; and 3) the *affective* dimension, or positive attitudes towards different cultures (Bennett, 1993; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Cui & Van den Berg, 1991; Sercu, 2004; Spitzberg, 1991).

Kramsch (2011) has argued for adding a *symbolic* dimension to the concept of IC. While communicative competence development focused on the negotiation of intended meanings in authentic contexts of language use, IC dealt with the circulation of values and identities across cultures (Kramsch, 2011). Culture in this view was understood through investigating people’s beliefs, values, and reasoning systems. The symbolic dimension of IC is, in fact, not a brand-new concept in language education. For example, Jokikokko (2005) argued that IC should include “an ethical orientation in which certain morally right ways of being, thinking and acting are emphasized” (p. 79). Jokikokko’s finding was echoed by Parmenter (2006), who compared the European and East Asian approaches of teaching and learning. Parmenter found that in East Asia, the relationship between teacher and learner was more important than content. It was the teacher’s responsibility to support the moral and humanistic development of the students, which was not always acknowledged in the European context. This area of research, which came up in the first decade of the 21st century, has not been furthered in the IC domain.

This study will highlight the above four dimensions of IC, namely, the behavioral, cognitive, affective, and symbolic dimensions. With respect to the cognitive and affective dimensions, I will examine the intercultural mindsets and attitudes respectively among Chinese teachers in their teaching of English in China. Regarding the behavioral components, I will explore whether English teachers in China are able to act upon their intercultural mindsets and attitudes. Finally, for the symbolic dimension, given the Chinese context, I will focus on Chinese perspectives on IC in English teaching.

### Research Questions

This paper investigates how Chinese EFL teachers in a Chinese university interpret the ideas of IC, how they specify their IC objectives, and how they try to achieve these objectives. The following two research questions inform this study:

- How do Chinese EFL teachers in China perceive IC in their teaching?
- How do their IC beliefs inform their choices in teaching culture in their classes?

### Method

Since this study aimed to provide a contextual analysis of IC perceptions and practices, it employed a qualitative methodology to examine the class observation and interview data collected from a sample of 11 teachers in a large public university in eastern China. To ensure that the participants maximally represented their respective groups, varying factors such as age, gender, educational backgrounds, teaching experiences, overseas experiences, and years in teaching were taken into consideration. As shown in Appendix A, among the 11 interviewed participants, seven were female and four male. Two teachers were in their 20s, three in their 30s, four in their 40s, and two above the age of 50. Regarding educational levels, two teachers held a PhD, eight a master's degree, and one a bachelor's degree. Additionally, five had over one-year of overseas experience in an English speaking environment, three were abroad for less than one year, and three had never been overseas. Their teaching experience ranged from two to 35 years.

Data were collected from two principle data sources: class observations and one-on-one interviews. Data collected during observations were in the form of memos. The observation memos aimed to describe the appearance of the classroom, the activities that the students were asked to complete, the cultural topics discussed by the teacher and the students, and the interactions that took place between the teacher and the students.

The interviews with the 11 teachers aimed to probe for additional aspects of personal and educational experiences that might be influencing the teachers' beliefs and practices regarding IC in English teaching in China. The interviews were approximately 30-minutes long and audio-recorded. Though the interview prompts in the "Teacher Interview Guide" (Appendix B) were in English, the interviewees were able to respond in Chinese after the prompt was provided because it was anticipated that allowing the participants to speak in their native language during the interview would invite fuller responses, as well as ease their anxiety, especially when they were trying to explain complicated ideas, values and opinions.

In addition to the interviews, seven teachers' classes were observed, ranging from College English classes (level one to four) for non-English majors, English Reading classes for English majors, and an English Writing class for English majors. The average time allocated for culture-related topics and activities ranged from five to ten minutes per 50-minute class period. After the observation field notes were coded and the codes interconnected, four themes emerged regarding the instructional features for IC development among the teachers.

Qualitative analysis of the data included coding the evidence of IC beliefs for emergent themes and practices, and interconnecting these themes to display the thought processes of the Chinese teachers (Maxwell, 2005).

### Findings and Discussion

#### The Teachers' Perceptions about IC

When asked about how they would define IC during the interviews, rather than providing a direct response to the question, all participants addressed the question in a more indirect manner through statements of teaching goals or objectives. Their statements appeared to revolve around cultural practices and products, and the meanings attached to these practices and products, as well as cultural perspectives in terms of how language learners view the world. Four teachers referred to IC as the fostering of cultural empathy through cultural comparison. For example, Mr. Ge stated that "by learning English, the students should be able to see a new

world, to compare this new world with their own Chinese-speaking world, and to cross over the two worlds freely” (Interview, September 25, 2012). Ms. Liao also indicated that “if the students were able to think in others’ shoes, they would be less surprised to see things happening in other countries” (Interview, September 27, 2012). Another three teachers described IC as an in-depth understanding of perspectives, thoughts, and ideas behind the foreign language. Ms. Zhao rejected discussing IC merely in terms of knowledge and behavior: “if we just stay at the surface level of discussing intercultural competence, it’s like scratching an itch with boots on. I hope the language study could be integrated with more profound study of literature, history, and philosophy so that the students can grow multiple perspectives in their thinking” (Interview, October 10, 2012). Ms. Gong provided an alternative interpretation that focused on how the nature and structure of a language could provide insights into a culture: “language and culture are interconnected. Why Chinese text is reader responsible and English text is writer responsible? This could be the start of my introduction of different thought patterns to the students” (Interview, October 9, 2012).

## Classroom Practices Related to IC

### Cultural Content Covered

**Language first, culture second.** The development of language proficiency was given priority in the observed classes; culture was rarely specifically mentioned or discussed. During the classes, 80 percent of the questions the teachers asked were: *What is the meaning of this word?*, *What is the difference between this word and that word?*, and *Can you explain this phrase/sentence?* The teachers had a keen interest in an exact understanding of every word, a low tolerance of ambiguity, and a focus on discrete grammar points and specific syntactical constructions. As a result, about 80% of classroom time was spent on the elaborate explanation of language points, with the students listening or taking notes. In addition, translation from either English to Chinese or Chinese to English was used about 30% of the time in the classroom and seen as a reliable way of testing and measuring the students’ mastery of the language and understanding of the text.

The data also suggest that cultural topics appeared at an average of five times in a 50-minute class period and were included as part of a class as more of a *seize-the-opportunity* or a *by-the-way* insert than a purposeful design. When a cultural topic came up in the text, the teachers would seize the opportunity. Their comments were prompted by textual information in the textbook which usually took the form of a definition, a quick comparison, or a translation. The following excerpt from the field notes illustrates Mr. Deng’s *seize-the-opportunity* way of introducing the use of personal checks in the United States:

The title of the text was Children and Money. Mr. Deng read the first sentence “Parents who decide that the time has come to teach their children about money usually begin by opening savings accounts.” He paused, looked at the students, and asked “what’s the meaning of ‘opening savings accounts?’” Several students whispered the Chinese translation of the phrase, *kai zhanghu*. ... Looking back at the textbook, he read the next sentence “To a kid, a saving account is just a black hole that swallows birthday checks.” Facing the students, Mr. Deng made a brief remark “in China, we give *shengrihongbao* (Chinese, meaning birthday gift money in cash sealed in a red envelop); but in the U.S., they use checks often. Here they give the kids birthday checks so that the kids can deposit them in hope of getting interest. (Field notes, October 17, 2012)

The *by-the-way* style of inserting cultural comments occurred more spontaneously and sometimes ended up with a digression on the topic. For example, when Mr. Yao was explaining the new word in the text *lobby*, the discussion was extended to the word *gate*, then to *water gate*, next to a discussion of President Nixon and his contribution to the Sino-US relationship, and finally to an anecdote on the research site related to Nixon’s first visit to China.

**Culture as facts.** Culture was taught in the observed classes about 90% of the time as factual information for learners to remember. The main body of cultural content was composed of cultural products,



practices, and perspectives. Teachers used questioning as a primary teaching technique for at least five times in a class. The questions were both of a factual and inferential nature with the factual questions dominating. Questions served primarily two purposes: checking students' knowledge or understanding and soliciting students' opinions. Seventy percent of the questions fell into the first category and generally led into either a cultural discussion or cultural comparison. The teachers then provided additional explanation for why people in another culture would do or view things in a certain way. For example, the following exchange took place when Ms. Zai was explaining an article in the textbook on American table manners for eating spaghetti.

- Z: The author is talking about the “socially respectable way of eating spaghetti”. Who knows how to eat spaghetti?  
 Ss: (Smile; show in body language how to eat spaghetti).  
 Z: you know how to eat it?  
 Ss: (explain how to eat spaghetti in Chinese).  
 Z: (Nod; smile.) You put the fork into spaghetti, wind it up, and then put it into your mouth. Do you think the Chinese table manners are the same as the American's?  
 Ss: No.  
 Z: Give an example.  
 S1: Chinese people like to talk loudly at dinner table.  
 S2: Chinese people slurp the soup.  
 S3: The arrangement of the seats. In China, *miannanweizun* (Chinese, meaning *prestigious guest should sit facing south*).  
 Z: Yes, in China, talking loudly at dinner shows the host's hospitality, and slurping the soup shows how much the guests appreciate the food. However, usually you don't talk with a full mouth no matter in China or in the United States. (Field notes, October 10, 2012)

This example of cultural content also demonstrated another important feature regarding teaching culture in the Chinese EFL classroom—teachers used a cultural comparison approach to show differences and similarities between the target culture and the Chinese culture, which will be discussed in the next section.

**Cultural comparisons.** In the classroom, when a cultural discussion opportunity arose, seven out of ten times the teachers would ask learners to recall their own culture and compare different cultures. However, observation data suggested that the cultural comparisons were used more from a cultural stance as definitions or conclusions than from an intercultural stance as an opportunity for mediating between different cultures. Fifty percent of cultural comparison was associated with English-Chinese translation. According to Xiao (2007), translation was widely used in Chinese EFL classrooms as an instructional strategy to help learners comprehend, remember, and produce the language. It also served to help students make cultural comparisons. One such example was found in the class observation field notes excerpt on Mr. Yao's explanation of how to translate personal leave and business leave.

- Mr. Yao started the class with a roll call. A student named Li Jia was absent and her classmate answered for her:  
 S: *Binjia* (Chinese, meaning *sick leave*).  
 Y: She is on sick leave. *Shijia ne?* (Chinese, meaning *how to say personal leave*).  
 Ss: Business leave. (*Shijia* is business leave when translated word-for-word).  
 Y: It's personal leave. Business leave is *chuchai*. Due to the collectivist culture in China, there is actually no Chinese equivalent of personal leave, but a more general word *shijia* (literally meant business leave) to refer to personal leave. (Field notes, October 15, 2012)

The teachers' comparative approach also addressed cultural practices, as demonstrated in the above table manners example. When comparisons were drawn at the level of practices, the approach was primarily declarative and the typical form was: *the Americans do this, we Chinese do that*. Comparisons at the level of perspectives were found to be mainly inferred from behaviors, such as the way Ms. Zai explained the Chinese perspectives on talking loudly at the dinner table or slurping soup.

**Teacher-directed cultural instruction.** All the classes the researcher observed tended to be 90% teacher-directed in terms of content and instructional delivery. Teachers appeared in the classroom mainly as knowledge providers. Consistent with the *seize-the-opportunity* or *by-the-way* comment insertion mentioned above, the cultural content that teachers provided mainly comprised of cultural topics in the textbooks and a wide range of topics and issues potentially of interest and relevance to the students. In no instances did teachers provide *experiential* opportunities for cultural learning, such as a role play or guided discovery which might have led towards more critical reflection on the cultural topics.

During the discussion of these cultural topics, the teachers controlled the pace and flow of communication. It appeared that they spent at least 80% of the cultural discussion time introduced, told, or informed students about cultural knowledge and provided their own understandings and interpretation of cultural issues. The main strategies of teaching culture were either commenting or elaborating on cultural topics. They asked questions, but the questions were generally meant to find out whether students understood and what they knew. Occasionally, some teachers engaged students in pair work or group activities to exchange ideas on certain cultural topics, but these activities were usually very brief.

This finding from the observations seemed to echo what teachers said during their interviews about students' low engagement in the classroom. Mr. Yao described their concerns of student participation in the classroom: "I want to let the students be the teacher teaching their peers. I think it's the best way to learn. ... They are not able to do it (teach their peers); their linguistic competence is just too low" (Interview, October 15, 2012). Ms. Liao also said: "The biggest problem is language proficiency. They (students) are not able to say clearly what they are doing, not to mention anything deep about culture" (Interview, September 27, 2012).

### ***The Teachers' Approaches to Teaching IC***

By connecting the class observations and interviews, the researcher identified three major patterns of teaching practices regarding IC development that embodied teachers' diversified IC beliefs. These patterns were labeled as *the utilitarian pattern*, *the traditional pattern*, and *the humanist pattern*. The discussion of each pattern will start with a quote from a representative teacher of this pattern.

#### **The Utilitarian Approach.**

The students spent too much time on the book knowledge, but the book knowledge was so detached from the real life. ...What we discussed in the classroom as 'culture' was detached from the 'culture' in real life in the foreign countries. It's a waste of time. (Mr. Yao, Interview, October 15, 2012)

The term *utilitarian* is used to reflect the instrumentality of language and culture presented in Mr. Yao's class. Viewing both language and culture as tools, Mr. Yao seemed to care less about implementing a structured approach to teaching. When teaching, the emphasis was on the connections of language and culture with real life. Students were asked to "connect what you are learning with something you already know" (field notes, October 15, 2012). Therefore, students were taught how to say certain Chinese buzzwords in English; how to use the words in students' disciplines; and how to describe local, national, and international points of interest, such as the Shanghai Pudong Convention Center, Yangzi River, Mount Tai, Pearl Harbor, Darling Harbor, etc., in his sample sentences. Among the classes observed, such connections with life appeared mainly in the classes of teachers in their 20s or 30s; this aspect was not observed in the classes of teachers in the higher age groups.

The primary activity in Mr. Yao's class was Chinese-English translation. The students were given words, phrases, or short sentences in Chinese and asked to put them immediately into English using the new words and

expressions they just learned. In Mr. Yao's opinion, the use of native language in the translation exercise not only increases the instructional pace and, as a result, excites the learners, but it also helps students make effective cross-lingual and cross-cultural comparisons. When making cultural comparisons, Mr. Yao adopted an approach that seemed to flash by without addressing much of the contrastive thought patterns behind such differences. The reason might be that the teacher wanted to maintain a level of complexity that would hold students' interest.

### **The Traditional Approach.**

As a responsible teacher, you should help the students pass the exams. Only after meeting this basic requirement, you can start considering the practical side of language teaching, such as how to improve the students' communicative competence. (Mr. Deng, Interview, October 17, 2012)

The term *traditional* was assigned to Mr. Deng's class because of its reliance on the textbook, focus on the in-depth analysis of literary texts, exam-oriented practices, and grammar-translation method. Mr. Deng's classroom focused on language learning with very few forays into culture. The textbook supplied most culture learning opportunities. The teacher's comments, prompted by textual information in the textbook, usually took the form of a translation, a definition, or a quick comparison. For example, when the words *Salvation Army* appeared in the text, the teacher first provided the translation as *jiushijun* and then a definition of it as *a charitable organization*. Perhaps because of the perceived obstacles for going beyond the textbook, the teacher appeared to struggle with the introduction of more cultural topics in the class. Also, in the *Salvation Army* example, after providing a translation and definition, the teacher simply asked the students to Google additional information on their own if interested without further explanation or discussion.

During the interview, Mr. Deng associated IC development primarily with foreign cultural experiences. Based on his anecdotal experience in the UK, he believed that learners could not fully understand foreign cultural norms until experiencing them in another country. This belief functioned as a limitation to what could be done in the classroom. In addition, Mr. Deng shared an opinion in the interview that only when culture and IC were reflected in various English tests in China would it be more likely for the English teachers in the traditional category to integrate culture into their classroom teaching.

### **The Humanist Approach.**

Our textbooks only offer limited topics and shallow social understandings. The teachers should integrate frontier social issues and their own thoughts on these issues into the classroom discussions so that the students could develop extensive interests and be proactive in exploring these social issues. (Ms. Zhao, Interview, October 10, 2012)

Ms. Zhao emphasized the inclusion of humanism in language education. During the interview, she talked about her care of the value of education, aiming at cultivating young minds at a deeper level, and producing better citizens instead of mere linguistic brokers. In her teaching practices, she tried to open the door to the values that she held as important and encouraged examination of these values. She took more of a social constructivist view of IC that emphasized the role that individual perspectives played in IC development (i.e., Byram, 2008). For example, in her class, students were encouraged to explore the viability of various perspectives on east-west cultural conflicts, rather than searching for a definite and correct answer.

Though also practicing direct instruction most of the time, she modeled the language by conducting the class entirely in English and engaging students with the target language, rather than merely telling them to do exercises or repeat phrases out of context. Her view of culture went beyond the traditional *Big C* that refers to history, geography, artifacts, technology, literature, art, music, and ways of life, and the *Little c* that refers to the culturally influenced beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors, such as customs, habits, dress, foods, leisure, and so forth (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993). Instead, she focused more on the ideological view of culture that refers to how culture can be understood through investigating people's beliefs, values, and reasoning systems, which the symbolic dimension of intercultural competence aims to examine.

### Conclusion and Implications

The present study investigated the beliefs of Chinese EFL teachers regarding IC development in their FL education classes and to explore the extent to which they incorporate their beliefs into their classroom practices.

The Chinese EFL teachers in this case study addressed the concept of IC in tentative ways and mostly through statements of goals rather than direct definitions, which supports Xu's (2000) argument on the vague perceptions of IC among Chinese teachers. Interview and class observation results suggested both congruence and incongruence between teacher cognition and behavior, or beliefs and practices. As for the dimensions of IC, the teachers perceived IC both in terms of knowledge and attitude and in consideration of perspectives, values, and beliefs.

The most commonly shared goal of IC in EFL teaching among these teachers was to promote the acquisition of a body of cultural knowledge. While some teachers stressed the need to foster students' abilities to understand target cultures and interpret cultural difference between home and target culture, others recognized students' needs to understand culturally determined values and behaviors. These different foci of cultural teaching were demonstrated in their teaching practices. Another important goal that the Chinese teachers of English articulated regarding IC development was to develop students' curiosity, understanding, and open attitudes towards foreign cultures. However, in the classroom, they generally chose to arouse the students' interest in and positive attitudes towards cultural learning by exposing students to cultural information rather than engaging students in seeking out cultural information from various sources and reflecting critically on it, which is the same as Sercu's (2006) findings in her study involving European foreign language teachers. Teachers in this study also viewed the goal of IC from the perspective of developing their students as social beings, which could be considered as an important addition to the symbolic dimension of IC as elaborated upon in the literature review (i.e., Jokikokko, 2005; Parmenter, 2006). Therefore, these teachers took it as their responsibility to prepare students for life by teaching good values, moral standards, and worldviews.

Teachers' beliefs regarding IC were found mostly transferred to their classroom practices. Three distinctive patterns emerged among the teachers which the researcher labeled as *a utilitarian approach*, *a traditional approach*, and *a humanist approach*. These three approaches were representative of the different foci of cultural knowledge teaching that the teachers reported during the interviews: understanding cultural products (how people in other cultures behave), understanding cultural facts (what people in other cultures do), and understanding culturally determined values and behaviors (what people in other cultures think).

In addition, the IC practices observed in this study also exhibited features that seemed to contradict the teachers' perceived goals of teaching cultural knowledge and fostering intercultural awareness and attitudes. First, language learning dominated instruction in the form of vocabulary learning, grammar explanations, and English-Chinese translation. Second, although the teachers talked about fostering students' intercultural awareness and attitudes, they tended to over-generalize cultures and transmit to their students observable and surface features of culture.

This study has several limitations, such as limited data sample, reliance on field notes instead of class recording, and possible researcher bias in interview translation, data coding, and data interpretation. To minimize the influence of these limitations, I practiced Greene's (2007) ideas of "appropriate balance of participant and observer roles, lengthy time on site, keen perceptive acuity, and reporting of observations in rich, descriptive contextualized detail" (p. 167) to the best of my ability. I also employed member checks to obtain feedback from participants about the data I collected and the conclusions I drew from them, and used respondents' words as often as possible to demonstrate findings. In addition, I sought member checking for accuracy and credibility of translation.

Nonetheless, the study has provided insight into how Chinese EFL teachers at a large public university in China perceive the intercultural dimension of English teaching and how they are incorporating their perceptions into their practices. It has contributed new understanding and insights about the complex concept of IC in the Chinese context. As indicated in Sercu's (2005) study, teachers' IC practices are shaped and influenced by "the social, psychological and environmental realities of the school and classroom" (p. 174).

Future research questions could be: how might factors such as university culture influence the Chinese EFL teachers' practices regarding IC development? How might Chinese EFL teachers differentiate intercultural teaching when facing students with various backgrounds? How might the teachers' intercultural thinking and teaching change over time?

### References

- Bennett, J. M. (1993). Toward ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience* (pp. 21-71). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural.
- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do, *Language Teaching*, 36, 81-109.
- Byram, M., & Zarate, G. (1994). *Definitions, objectives and assessment of socio-cultural competence*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Chen, S. (2001). *Strategic study of language and culture teaching*. Beijing: Beijing Language and Culture University press.
- Cui, G., & van den Berg, S. (1991). Testing the construct validity of intercultural effectiveness. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 15, 227-241.
- Garrido, C., & Alvarez, I. (2006). Language teacher education for intercultural understanding. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 29(2), 163-179.
- Greene, J. C. (2007). *Mixed methods in social inquiry*. CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hammer, M.R., Bennett, M.J., & Wiseman, R. (2003). The Intercultural Development Inventory: A measure of intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27, 421-443.
- Han, H. (2002). Cross-cultural concept of foreign language teaching in globalized context. *Foreign Language Research*, 1, 105-111.
- Hu, W. Z., & Gao, Y. H. (1997). *Foreign language teaching and culture*. Changsha, Hunan: Hunan Education Publishing House.
- Jokikokko, K. (2005). Interculturally trained Finnish teachers' conceptions of diversity and intercultural competence. *Journal of Intercultural Education*, 16 (2), 69-83.
- Kramsch, C. (2011). The symbolic dimensions of the intercultural. *Language teaching*, 44(3). 354-367. doi: 10.1017/S0261444810000431
- Larzen-Ostermark, E. (2008). The intercultural dimension in EFL-teaching: A Study of conceptions among Finland-Swedish comprehensive school teachers. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 52 (5), 527-547.
- Li, L. C., & Wang, H.P. (2007). Research on cultural teaching in college English and its variables. *Research in Teaching*, 30 (5), 441-445.
- Liddicoat, A.J. (2008). Pedagogical practice for integrating the intercultural in language teaching and learning. *Japanese Studies*, 28(3), 277-290.
- Liu, S. (2010). Teaching English in China: Conflicts and expectations. *Language Society and Culture*, 31, 90-97.
- Lo Bianco, J., Liddicoat, A. J., & Crozet, C. (Eds.) (1999). *Striving for the third place: Intercultural competence through language education*. Melbourne: Language Australia.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Pan, Z. X. (2001). Contents and principles of cultural teaching in ELT. *Journal of Zhejiang Normal University*, 26 (2), 68-71.
- Parmenter, L. (2006). Describing and defining intercultural communicative competence – international perspectives. In M. Byram (Ed.) *Intercultural competence* (pp. 119- 148). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Prosser, M. & Trigwell, K. (1999). *Understanding learning and teaching. The experience in higher education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Sercu, L. (2004). Assessing intercultural competence: A framework for systemic test development in foreign language education and beyond. *Intercultural Education*, 15, 73-89.

- Sercu, L. (2005). *Foreign language teachers and intercultural competence: An international investigation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters LTD.
- Sercu, L. (2006). The foreign language and intercultural competence teacher: the acquisition of a new professional identity. *Intercultural Education*, 17(1), 2006, 55-72.
- Spitzberg, B. H. (1991). An examination of trait measures of interpersonal competence. *Communication Reports*, 4, 22-30.
- Williams, M., & Burden, R.L. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Xiao, S. Y. (2007). Cultural teaching in twenty years: Reflection and thinking. *Academic Forum*, 4, 197-201.
- Xu, L. S. (2000). Discussion of the issue of communicative competence in relation to intercultural communication. *Foreign Languages and Their Teaching*, 7, 17-21.
- Zhong, L. P., & Zhao, Y. (2000). The methods and principles of cultural teaching in college English education. *Foreign Language Learning: Theory and Practice*, 2, 42-43.

**Appendix A**  
**Participants' Profiles**

N	Name (pseudo nyms)	Age	Gender	Degree	Years of Teaching	Title	Experience Abroad	Class Observation
1	Yang	27	F	Master	2	Assistant Lecturer	Never	No
2	Liu	29	F	PhD	2	Lecturer	Never	No
3	Ye	34	F	Master	8	Lecturer	1 mon	Yes
4	Yao	35	M	Master	13	Lecturer	4 mon	Yes
5	Zhu	37	F	Master	12	Lecturer	1 yr	Yes
6	Liao	42	F	Master	17	Lecturer	1 yr	No
7	Ge	42	M	PhD	20	Associate Professor	Never	Yes
8	Gong	46	F	Master	24	Associate Professor	2 yrs	Yes
9	Zai	46	F	Master	24	Associate Professor	1 mon	Yes
10	Deng	59	M	Bachelor	38	Associate Professor	1 yr	Yes
11	Zhuang	69	M	Master	40	Professor (Retired)	1 yr	No



**Appendix B**  
**Teacher Interview Guide**

1. Can you tell me how you were prepared to be an EFL teacher? How do you think these experiences have influenced your teaching?
2. Can you tell me your experiences of EFL teaching? How do you think these experiences have influenced your teaching?
3. What are your main goals in EFL teaching?
4. How do you think about “intercultural competence” as a goal?
5. What do you want your students to know or be able to do in terms of intercultural competence?
6. Please share two different activities that you use for developing students’ intercultural competence in your classroom. Why do you use these activities with your students?
7. Please share two different assessments that you use to evaluate students’ intercultural competence. Why do you use these assessments with your students?
8. Is there anything else related to intercultural competence that I should have asked you about or that you want to add?

---

**About the Author:**

Jie Tian is an English lecturer in Donghua University, PRC. She received her PhD in Education from George Mason University, USA in 2013. Her fields of study include intercultural communication and EFL teaching and teacher education.

# Recontextualizing Writing Proficiency: An Investigation of Model Argumentation Texts for IELTS Preparation

**Yongming Shi\***

*Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hongkong*

**Xinghua Liu**

*Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China*

## Abstract

In China, memorizing model texts from various sources including textbooks and other reference books is usually considered a legitimate learning practice by both teachers and students, especially when the students are preparing for high-stakes language tests, such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System). However, very little linguistic research has been done on the pedagogical values of these model texts. This study, therefore, aims to address this gap by investigating 15 model essays collected from three commercial exam preparation books for IELTS in mainland China. Drawing on analytical tools based on Systemic Functional Linguistics, a linguistic analysis is conducted to examine the lexicogrammatical resources pertaining to the realization of interpersonal meanings, such as *Engagement* resources in the texts. Results suggest that the *Engagement* resources valued in the model essays reflect the local rhetorical style in constructing an English argumentative text and it is argued that, while the texts may be effective in helping students acquire higher scores on a language test, namely the IELTS writing component, they do not provide enough access to the linguistic resources that are valued beyond the context of language testing.

**Keywords:** Argumentative writing, Chinese EFL learners, IELTS, appraisal framework, systemic functional linguistics

## Introduction

This paper is concerned with the culture of learning in East-Asian countries, such as China, Japan, and Korea. As far as the conception of knowledge is concerned, these East-Asian countries share a similar cultural orientation, the so called “Confucian-Heritage Culture” (Biggs, 1996, p. 46) (CHC). CHC respects the value of knowledge, and anything that can be included in a book is traditionally considered to be true (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2012; You, 2012). This tradition has led to the reverence for written texts by famous scholars, and therefore, students are usually trained to imitate and memorize, instead of challenging, scholarly texts. Even today, memorizing words from teaching materials is considered as a legitimate learning practice for academic subjects in China, even at university level (Hu, 2002; Scollon, 1999). As to the instruction of English writing in China, it is also common for teachers to ask students to memorize paragraphs of texts from either textbooks or other reference books, especially when they are preparing for high-stakes tests, such as CET (College English Testing) and NMET (National Matriculation English Test) (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; You, 2012). Despite their importance in language teaching and learning in China, few academic studies are conducted on the pedagogical values of these teaching materials.

*\*Email: [15903098r@connect.polyu.hk](mailto:15903098r@connect.polyu.hk). Tel.: (852)2766 2062. Address: The Hong Kong Polytechnic University Hung Hom, Kowloon, Hong Kong*

Against this background, this study aims to investigate the model texts written by Chinese ELT (English Language Teaching) educators for IELTS (International English Language Test System) test preparation. IELTS is an internationally recognised English language test designed for assessing students' linguistic capacity to successfully undertake study at an English-medium university. According to Wray and Pegg (2009), Chinese IELTS candidates tend to prepare for IELTS, especially the writing component, by means of memorizing those sample texts that are considered native-like and legitimate for IELTS. Such practice is understandable, considering Hoey's (2005) lexical priming theory that people usually learn the lexical knowledge of a word such as its collocations, colligations, and semantic associations by being frequently exposed to its usage in speech and writing. In a social context where English is a foreign language, such as China, it is, therefore, argued that language teaching materials, including model essays contained in textbooks and other reference books, play an important role in creating a mini-context of language priming, where the lexicogrammatical knowledge is usually expected to be picked up by students through text memorization and imitation (Ding, 2007; Wray, 2002). While the writers of these model essays usually claim the effectiveness of studying and memorising the model essays in helping Chinese English learners to improve their performance in the writing component of IELTS in a short amount of time (Gu, 2008; Liu, 2011), it is necessary to raise the empirical questions from a linguistic perspective about these sample essays, pertaining to the type of linguistic resources valued in them, and whether these valued linguistic resources provide sufficient preparation for Chinese students' uses of English language in globally-oriented contexts, such as studying at an English-medium university overseas.

In order to address these questions, this study investigates the linguistic features of the model texts in response to IELTS' Writing Task 2, which requires candidates to construct a short argumentative text. Since argumentation texts tend to be of dialogic nature and are often associated with a high level of interaction (Thompson, 2001), this study examines how linguistic resources dealing with dialogic aspects of argumentation are realized in the model texts, drawing on Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Specifically, SFL considers the text as the object of linguistic analysis, since a text is defined as a selection and actualization of the meaning potential of its social context, which is further realized in specific choices of lexicogrammar (Martin & Rose, 2008). In this process, texts also realize the three types of meanings within a particular situation, including ideational, interpersonal and textual (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Ideational meanings construe human experience, including external material world and the internal mental world of human being; interpersonal meanings enact personal and social relationships with people around us; and textual meanings compose ideational and interpersonal meanings into a coherent textual unity. The focus of this study, therefore, is to examine the linguistic resources realizing interpersonal meanings in argumentation texts. Specifically, the study adopts the *Engagement* analysis, based on Appraisal theory developed within the SFL tradition, since it is suggested that the Engagement resources play an instrumental role in creating a high quality argumentation text (Coffin & Hewings, 2004; Thompson, 2001).

### **Engagement Analysis of Interpersonal Meanings**

The Appraisal framework, mainly developed by Martin and White (2005), consists of three sub-systems: *Attitude*, *Graduation*, and *Engagement*. *Attitude* deals with people's feelings towards things or behaviours; *Graduation* refers to the resources for fine-tuning the scale of attitudinal meanings; and *Engagement* refers to the linguistic resources "by which speakers/writers adopt a stance towards the value positions being referenced by the text and with respect to those they address" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 92). It is suggested, that for the argumentation genre, *Engagement* resources are critical in terms of building effective arguments by managing writer-reader interaction (Ho, 2011; Swain, 2007). Since the focus of the study is to investigate the linguistic resources dealing with the dialogic aspects of an argumentative text, the *Engagement* system was chosen as the analytical focus for this investigation.

In the *Engagement* system, a text contains propositions, which are referred to as "something that can be argued, but argued in a particular way" (Eggins, 2005, p. 172). Drawing from Bakhtin's (1981) work on dialogism, Martin and White (2005) classify two types of propositions, namely "*monoglossic*" and "*heteroglossic*" (p. 100). A *monoglossic* utterance is characterised as being factual and objective, which does not acknowledge the

existence of alternative positions or viewpoints, such as in extract (a) below, while a *heteroglossic* utterance invokes or allows for alternatives, indicating the proposition is only one view against many other possible ones, as in extract (b):

- (a) One of the most conspicuous trends in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a closer connection between countries, in both economic and cultural aspects. [B3T1]
- (b) It seems that in some countries, the locals have become more accustomed to exotic cultures. [B3T1]

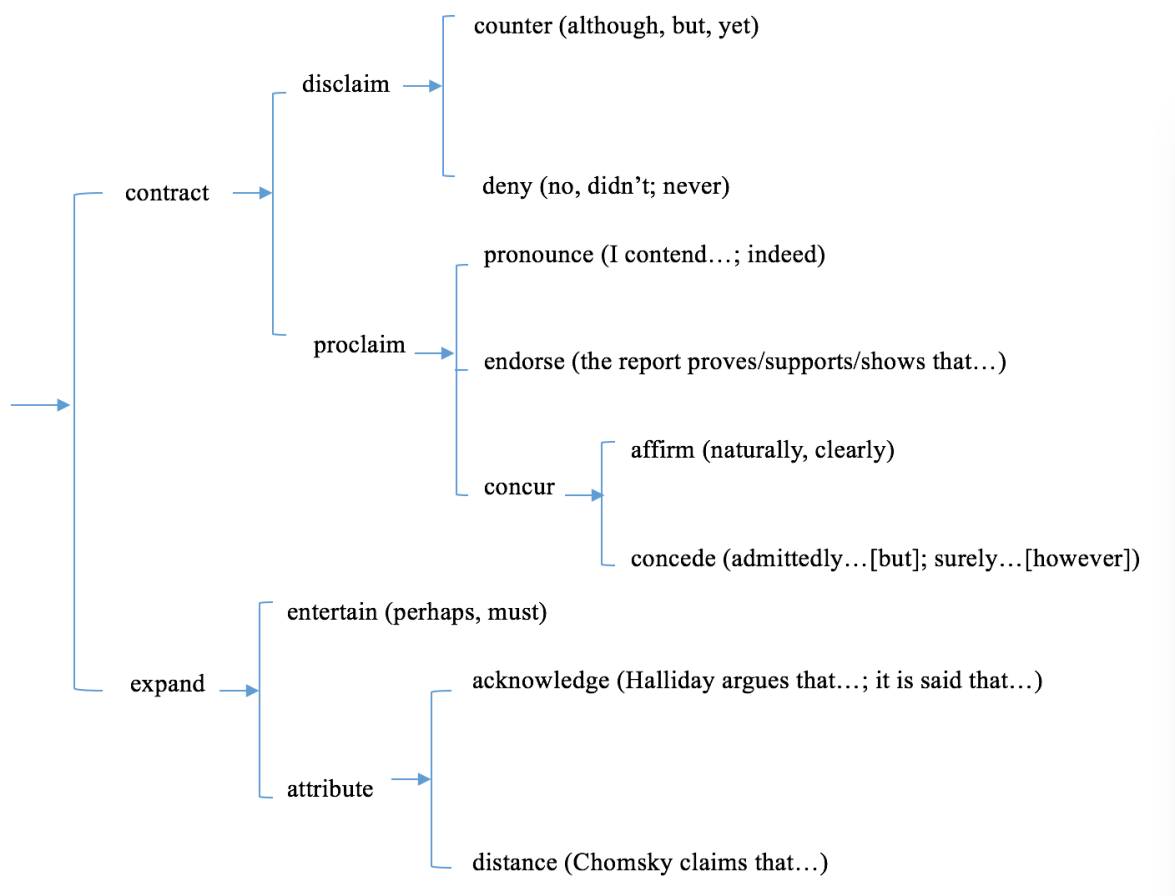


Figure 1. Engagement System (c.f. Martin & White, 2005, p. 134)

The heteroglossic propositions can be further classified into two broad categories, namely, “dialogic expansion” and “dialogic contraction,” depending on whether the propositions actively allow for or fend off the alternative voices (Martin & White, 2005). Both categories contain several options: “Disclaim,” “Proclaim,” “Entertain,” and “Attribute.” “Disclaim” and “Proclaim” construe the meanings which dialogically restrict or even deny the possibilities of alternative views, while “Entertain” and “Attribute” refer to the wordings by which the dialogic space is expanded. In Figure 1, all the semantic choices of Engagement are listed, with some linguistic examples in brackets.

It is noted that many of the Engagement resources, such as “it proves that...”, “however”, “admittedly... [but]” and “it is said that...”, have been investigated in various traditions. In corpus linguistics, for example, they are labelled as the collocational frameworks (Greaves & Martin, 2010), or linking adverbials (Leedham & Cai, 2013). In addition, studies suggest that the uses of such linguistic resources constitute a key area of difference

between EFL users and native users of English language in writing English argumentation texts (Ho, 2011; Lee, 2008; Leedham & Cai, 2013). Leedham and Cai (2013) suggest that the practice of memorizing model examination texts in the final year of secondary schooling in China may lead to Chinese students' misuse, over-use and under-use of linking adverbials, such as "therefore", "however", and "besides", in writing academic essays, when they study in UK universities. As far as IELTS writing is concerned, the impact of memorizing chunks of text can also be identified in their responses to the IELTS writing task (Wray & Pegg, 2009). Against this background, it is necessary to examine what linguistic resources are highlighted in the sample essays collected in test preparation books, especially in terms of the *Engagement* resources that could have potential impacts on students' future language use.

### Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What are the *Engagement* resources employed to enact interpersonal meanings in the IELTS model essays?
2. What linguistic resources pertaining to the realization of *Engagement* resources are most frequently used in the IELTS model essays?

### Methodology

#### Data

Data was compiled from three test preparation books for IELTS, including:

1. Liu's (2011) "A detailed answer for the latest authentic Cambridge IELTS—writing (Academic) (second edition)" [Jianqiao yasi zuixin zhentitiyuan xiangjie—xiezuo (xueshulei) (di er ban)]
2. The New Oriental School's (2006) "IELTS Writing" [Ya Si Xie Zuo Sheng Jing], and
3. Gu's (2008) "Analyzing IELTS writing patterns and collections of writing samples" [Ya Si Xie Zuo Tao Lu Pou Xi Yu Fan Li Da Quan].

Herein these books will be referred to as Book One (B1) Book Two (B2), and Book Three (B3), respectively. According to the prefaces of the books, all three are designed as reference texts for IELTS candidates who need guidance on the writing component of the exam. Book One mainly collects model essays written by Chinese ELT teachers in response to the latest exam questions, while the other two are specifically written for pedagogical purposes, where various exercises are designed to help candidates memorize and imitate certain patterns of language use, such as the "it is + adjective" structure. In addition, it is noted that Book Three stresses the importance of getting rid of Chinese-style English and thus suggests the model essays contained in the book are acceptable to the native users of English language.

All three texts contain a large collection of model essays on topics that frequently appear on an IELTS test, as suggested in the prefaces of each book, many Chinese ELT teachers were involved in writing the model texts for Book One and Book Two, while the texts in Book Three were all written by the author of the book. Each of the books contains model texts for both Task 1 and Task 2 of IELTS writing, whereas this study only used the chapters providing Task 2 model texts.

To create the data set, three sets of essays were collected from the relevant chapters of the three books. In total, 57 texts were collected from book One, 40 from book Two, and 114 from book Three. Then, for each book, the selected texts were numbered and a random number (e.g., between 1 and 57) was generated using the website Random.org, the essay corresponding to that number was selected. Through this process, five essays were chosen from each book. The fifteen texts, accordingly, constitute the data of the study. The texts in each book will be referred to as B1 T1, B2 T2, B3 T4, etc. The topics of the model essays were not controlled, since the topic of an IELTS essay is less relevant to the realization of its interpersonal meanings (Nakamura, 2009). It is also necessary to point out that the purpose of this study was not to judge which text was written better, but to

examine the similarities and differences of the writers' lexicogrammatical choices in relation to the *Engagement* system.

### Analytical Procedure

Drawing on the works of Coffin and Hewings (2004), Eggins (2005), Ho (2011), and Lee (2008), additional analysis is conducted, in terms of the *monoglossic* propositions and *Entertain* resources. The analysis of the *monoglossic* propositions adopts Ho's (2011) detailed categorizing scheme of *monoglossic* propositions to examine the specific patterns of the employment of *monoglossic* resources in argumentative texts. According to Ho (2011), *monoglossic* propositions can be divided into the three categories of "*Intra-textual*", "*Inter-textual*", and "*Narrative*". *Inter-textual* propositions refer to the statements which are the "bare assertions" made without any evidence in the text. These statements are made based on the presuppositions shared between the writer and the readers as common knowledge or a belief, which is exemplified in extract (a) below. Meanwhile, *Intra-textual* propositions are assertions based on the supporting evidence available somewhere within the text, such as in extract (b). Lastly, *Narrative* propositions refer to the cases where the writer deploys a narrative style in constructing their argument, which is illustrated in extract (c). The sentences in extract (c) describe a situation in China without explicit argumentation:

- (a) One of the most conspicuous trends in the 21st century is a closer connection between countries, in both economic and cultural aspects. [M: Inter]
- (b) Culture is not a disgrace to but an asset of a country [M: Intra]. An indigenous culture can distinguish one country from others, attracting foreign visitors and yielding high income.
- (c) For example, two decades ago, sex was a taboo subject in China, and most Chinese people felt embarrassed to talk openly about it. Over time the Western culture has permeated into the Chinese lifestyle, and the Chinese people have broken many of their time-honoured traditions. [M: Nar] (All are extracted from B3T1)

In addition, this study also further specifies the analysis of *Entertain* resources, which include evidence-based postulations and modality, drawing on the works of Coffin and Hewings (2004) and Ho (2011). This analysis may shed some light on the rhetorical strategies by which a writer stresses their voice and subjective opinions (Coffin & Hewings, 2004).

As far as the analytical units are concerned, a model essay is firstly divided into units based on the traditional notion of a "sentence," which consists of either one single clause (simplex) or a series of related clauses (clause complexes) (Halliday, 1992). The analysis first identified whether the proposition was *monoglossic* or *heteroglossic*, and then both the *monoglossic* and *heteroglossic* propositions were annotated according to their respective sub-categories. The results in each text were calculated using basic statistical techniques to investigate the frequency of instances and proportion of relevant features in a text. In order to ensure the reliability of the analysis, two coders are included. The first time coding was conducted by the first author of the paper, and the result was checked by another colleague who is familiar with *Engagement* analysis. When an indecisive instance emerges, a third SFL expert (e.g. an associate professor in English department), who is more experienced in *Engagement* analysis, was consulted.

### Findings

This section reports the findings pertaining to the patterns of the linguistic realization of *Engagement* resources, including *monoglossic* and *heteroglossic* elements, in the data.



### Monoglossic and Heteroglossic Resources

In argumentation texts, *monoglossic* propositions are usually presented as facts, since they only include the writer's voice, making no reference to other positions, while *heteroglossic* propositions are presented in a manner which suggests the existence of other possible views (Martin & White, 2005; Swain, 2007). Our findings suggest that, while all the texts tend to employ a greater number of *heteroglossic* resources than *monoglossic* ones, *monoglossic* proposition is identified as playing an important role in advancing arguments in the texts. This is especially evident in the texts from B1 and B3 (see Table 1). In these texts, the employment of *Intra-textual* and *Inter-textual* propositions indicate that the writers of these texts are more likely to impose their opinions on readers, which is most obvious in the use of *Inter-textual* propositions as factual information to support writers' viewpoints. Therefore, these texts assume a certain degree of "same-mindedness" between writers and readers. Interestingly, although the aim of B3 is to encourage the norms of native English language users in writing argumentative texts, the writers of B3 seem comfortable with constructing arguments by means of monoglossic resources, which are rarely employed in the argumentation written by native English language users (Ho, 2011; Wang, 2008).

Table 1  
*Overview of Monoglossic and Heteroglossic Resources*

Textbook	Monogloss instances	Heterogloss instances	Total Engagement instances
Book One	32 (30%)	75 (70%)	107
Book Two	19 (16%)	103 (84%)	122
Book Three	46 (38%)	76 (63%)	122

### Monoglossic Resources

Table 2 presents the distribution of *monoglossic* resources among the three sub-types, including *Inter-textual*, *Intra-textual*, and *Narrative*. While ENL writers tend to incorporate a piece of narrative into an argumentative text to increase its persuasiveness (Ho, 2011), *Narrative* propositions, compared with the other two types of *monoglossic* resources, are rarely used in the texts of the three groups, accounting for only 4.35% in B3, 5% in B2, and 6.2% in B3. In contrast, texts from B1 differ significantly from those of B2 and B3 in the employment of *Intra-textual* and *Inter-textual* propositions. In B1, writers used more *Inter-textual* (59.4%) propositions than *Intra-textual* ones (34.4%). A reverse tendency is seen in the texts of B2 and B3, where more *Intra-textual* propositions (54.35% in B3, 53% in B2) were used than *Inter-textual* ones (41.3% in B3 and 40% in B2).

Table 2  
*Distribution of Monoglossic Resources*

Textbook	Inter-textual	Intra-textual	Narrative	Total Monogloss instances
Book One	19 (59.4%)	11 (34.4%)	2 (6.2%)	32 (100%)
Book Two	8 (42%)	10 (53%)	1 (5%)	19 (100%)
Book Three	19 (41.3%)	25 (54.35%)	2 (4.35)	46 (100%)

A close examination suggests that the *Intra-textual* and *Inter-textual* propositions are employed to fulfil different discursive purposes. The *Intra-textual* proposition, the assertion that is supported by the evidence presented somewhere in the text, tends to be employed in the opening paragraph as the first sentence to introduce the essay topic, or as the last sentence to indicate a writer's opinion on the topic. In many cases, *Intra-textual* propositions are used as the topic sentences of a paragraph, such as in extract (a) below. Sometimes *Intra-textual* propositions are immediately supported by *Inter-textual* ones, such as in extract (b). In these extractions, readers are expected to make implicit connections between the assertion and the supporting evidence provided, and it is assumed by the writer that the supporting evidence can justify the assertion. For example, in extract (b),



the *Inter-textual* proposition is employed as a fact to support the *Intra-textual* proposition that practical courses are needed. In this instance, readers are expected to extract the implicit logical connection between the topic sentence and the evidence provided:

- (a) In the second place, happiness lies in the struggle to be happy. [M:Intra] People sometimes go to extremes and frantically pursue money, power, high social status, etc., which are all symbols of success—but never of happiness. Perhaps if they shifted their life’s goal from ultimate success to unswerving efforts and to a confidence that they will be successful one day they’d be a great deal happier. [B2T4]
- (b) In the first place, emphasis on practical courses is demanded by our ever-developing society. [M:Intra] As society has entered the information age and commercialization is sweeping across the world, computer and business courses are geared to the social demand. [M:Inter] [B2T2]

An *Inter-textual* proposition, on the other hand, refers to the statement that is not supported by the evidence accessible through the text. Such statements are called “bare assertions” (Martin & White 2005, p. 98), which assume that readers will take them for granted since they are obviously true. In many cases, *Inter-textual* propositions are used as the supporting evidence for a writer’s claim. In extract (a) below, an *Inter-textual* proposition (as underlined text) is used to further elaborate the reason why high school graduates may not be as successful as university graduates. The extract, however, closes down the dialogic space for the alternative possibilities that the knowledge acquired in university may not necessarily bring success in people’s lives. To some extent, the writer expects a certain amount of “same-mindedness” between themselves and readers. In other words, the use of *Inter-textual* propositions usually suggests the writer’s assumption that readers share the background knowledge necessary to legitimize the assertions, such as the underlined text in extract (b):

- (a) For example, a high-school level person commonly may not succeed to the extent of a person who has received a university education. This is not only because of the greater breadth of knowledge acquired, but also due to a more critical and focused way of thinking that is imparted and refined during one’s senior education. [B2T1]
- (b) Kids have to spend most of their time in schools, together with many teachers in various disciplines. Their major period at home is their holidays, which is quite negligible compared with their normal school life. [M:Inter] [B1T1]

## Heteroglossic Resources

Table 3  
Distribution of Heteroglossic Resources

Textbook	Disclaim		Proclaim			Entertain		Attribute	
	Deny	Coun	Con	Pron	End	Pos	Mod	Ack	Dis
Book One	14 (47%)	9 (30%)	2 (7%)	5 (16%)	0 (0%)	11 (24%)	29 (64%)	5 (12%)	0 (0%)
Book Two	9 (26%)	12 (34%)	11 (31%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)	14 (21%)	42 (62%)	12 (17%)	0 (0%)
Book Three	20 (54%)	12 (32%)	4 (11%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	5 (13%)	30 (77%)	4 (10%)	0 (0%)

*Heteroglossic* resources are broadly divided into two categories, namely *Expand* and *Contract* resources. *Expand* resources are used to actively allow for dialogically alternative positions, while *Contract* resources are employed to fend off such alternative positions (Martin & White, 2005). The findings suggest all the texts in B1 and B2 use more *Expand* resources, while the texts in B3 employ almost the same number of instances of *Expand* and *Contract* elements (see Table 1). Formulations of *Entertain* are the most valued *heteroglossic* resources in all the texts, which

are usually realized through the subsystems of *Modality*, and *Postulation*. In contrast, fewer instances of *Acknowledge*, and no formulations of *Distance* and *Endorsement* are employed (see Table 3). Such linguistic preference suggests that the texts rely more on personal opinions, instead of external voices to advance their viewpoints. The following qualitative examination focuses on the prominent patterns found in the employment of *heteroglossic* resources.

### Contract Resources

*Contract* resources include two subsystems, *Disclaim* and *Proclaim* elements. Table 4 suggests that the texts in all three books prefer to use *Disclaim* resources much more than *Proclaim* resources, although there are some extreme cases, such as B1T3, where no *Contract* resources are used. This may signal writers' rhetorical preferences to directly exclude or overrule alternative viewpoints, instead of limiting the dialogic space of such alternatives. There are two sub-types of *Disclaim* resources, including *Deny* and *Counter*. *Deny* elements are employed to directly exclude or reject alternative views, such as the extractions in (a) below, whereas *Counter* elements are used to propose opposing evidence to overrule alternative views, which is illustrated in the extraction seen in (b):

- (a) Not [H:Ctr:Dis:Deny] all genius will inevitably be successful, and similarly not [H:Ctr:Dis:Deny] all great men are genius in their childhood. [B2T1]
- (b) As for me [H:Exp:Ent:Pos], however [H:Ctr:Dis:Coun], countries can [H:Exp:Ent:Mod] pursue sustainable advancement while focusing on environmental issues. [B1T4]

Table 4

*Distribution of Contract Resources*

Textbook	Disclaim			Proclaim	
	Deny	Coun	Con	Pron	End
Book One	14 (47%)	9 (30%)	2 (7%)	5 (16%)	0 (0%)
Book Two	9 (26%)	12 (34%)	11 (31%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)
Book Three	20 (54%)	12 (32%)	4 (11%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)

In terms of *Proclaim* resources, only *Concur* and *Pronounce* formulations are identified in the data. This pattern suggests that, when contracting the scope of dialogistic alternatives, external sources are rarely used in these texts. In extraction (a) below, for example, the formulation of *Concur*, “we all know,” construes the proposition as common sense knowledge shared between the writer and the readers. In some cases, *Pronounce* resources are employed to indicate authorial emphases or explicit interventions (Martin & White, 2005). Meanwhile, the usage of many *Proclaim* elements in these texts indicates a mixing of informal and formal language features. For example, the uses of “we all know” in extract (a) and “no one can deny” in extract (c) carry the flavor of informal language, while the pronouncement is realized by means of objective or impersonalized formulations in extract (b), where the writer's subjective role in making the argument is obscured:

- (a) We all know [H:Ctr:Proc:Con] people who have a relatively easy and comfortable life, and yet are essentially unhappy. [B2T4]
- (b) There is no denying the fact that [H:Ctr:Proc:Pron] the students better equipped with practical knowledge are more competitive in job hunting, while those majoring in history, geography and the like have few job opportunities. [B2T2]
- (c) Man and woman have the physical and mental difference, which no one can deny [H:Ctr:Proc:Pron]. [B1T5]

## Expand Resources

*Expand* resources fall into two general categories: *Entertain* and *Attribute*. *Entertain* refers to the formulations that are used by the writer to overtly indicate that their viewpoint is simply one of many possibilities, while *Attribute* is concerned with those lexicogrammatical resources that are used by the writer to disassociate themselves from the proposition by attributing it to external sources (Martin & White, 2005). Table 3 indicates that in the analyzed texts, *Entertain* resources tend to be used much more than *Attribute* ones. Such preference suggests that, compared with referring to external materials, the writers of the three books are more likely to construct arguments by means of their own intuitions or subjective views. Specifically, the employment of *Postulation* resources, a subsystem of *Entertain*, suggests writers' different linguistic preferences in the manner of argument support.

Table 5  
*Realizations of Postulation*

Textbook	Subjective opinions	Objective opinions
Book One	8 (73%)	3 (27%)
Book Two	6 (43%)	8 (57%)
Book Three	2 (40%)	3 (60%)

As can be seen from Table 5, *Postulation* resources tend to be used more in the texts of B1 and B2 (11 and 14 instances respectively) than in texts of B3 (only 5 instances). This pattern suggests that the texts in B1 and B2 tend to rely on writers' subjective opinions to advance an argument, such as in extraction (a) below. In contrast, the texts in B3 tend to rhetorically highlight the objective observations as the foundation of *Postulation*, which is demonstrated in extractions (b) and (c):

- (a) My view is that [H:Exp:Ent:Pos], when nations try to develop their economies and become increasingly flourishing in the process, there is still [H:Ctr:Dis:Coun] a lot they can do to create a more livable environment. [B1T4]
- (b) By contrast, it seems that [H:Exp:Ent:Pos] traditional courses are out of date. [B2T2]
- (c) It seems that [H: Exp:Ext:Pos] in some countries, the locals have become more accustomed to exotic cultures. [B3T1]

An interesting observation is that there are fixed wordings frequently employed for realizing the *Engagement* system. This is exemplified by the employment of *Acknowledge* and *Pronounce* resources. For example, in extractions (a) and (b) below, the *Pronounce* formulation, "There is no denying that," is used repeatedly, while the *Acknowledge* formulation, "Some people believe that," can be identified repeatedly in extractions (c) and (d). Such formulaic expressions arguably reflect the local purposes of the texts, which is to be discussed further in the discussion section:

- (a) There is no denying the fact that [H:Ctr:Proc:Pron] the students better equipped with practical knowledge are more competitive in job hunting, while those majoring in history, geography and the like have few job opportunities. [B2T2]
- (b) There is no denying that [H:Ctr:Proc:Pron] some old buildings are of aesthetic, archaeological or architectural values. [B3T3]
- (c) Some opponents of this strategy argue that [H:Exp:Attr:Ack] special students suffer socially, in a misguided belief that students would seldom [H:Ctr:Dis:Deny] talk to each other in an air of professional jealousy. [B3T2]
- (d) Some people are of the opinion that [H:Exp:Attr:Ack] doing job at home is a retrogression, while there are also quite a few people who are strongly opposed to their opinion. [B1T2]

### Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that there are linguistic preferences pertaining to the employment of *Engagement* resources across the model texts collected in three books. For example, much more *heteroglossic* resources are used than *monoglossic* ones, and the modality resources, such as modal verbs and modal adjuncts, also can be frequently identified in most of the texts. These patterns can be associated with the argumentative functions of these texts. In other words, as is suggested by SFL scholars (Hood, 2010; Martin, 1984; Martin & Rose, 2008), if texts belong to a same genre, these texts are very likely to share a pool of linguistic resources. Therefore, the employment of more heteroglossic resources in the texts can be explained by the characteristic of an argumentative genre which requires the writer to adopt a stance in relation to the issues discussed in a text and other alternative views on these issues (Martin & White, 2005; Thompson, 2001). The uses of modality resources, in addition, may be related to the functions of modality in the argumentation genre, as it usually indicates the arguability of propositions (Eggins, 2005).

However, the analysis suggests that some linguistic choices in the model texts may not be acceptable, especially since many IELTS candidates need to use English for educational purposes at English-medium universities (Wray & Pegg, 2009). This is demonstrated by the preference shown for advancing arguments by means of *Monoglossic* formulations in the different texts of the three books; for example, the employment of *Inter-textual* propositions as supporting evidence for the writers' viewpoints, which suggests that a certain degree of "same-mindedness" is assumed between writers and readers. Such a rhetorical style is also identified by many scholars in various text types, such as the English narratives written by Chinese writers (Lee, 2004), expositions by East-Asian undergraduate students (Lee, 2008), and the English argumentative essays by Chinese students (You, 2012). These studies suggest that the rhetorical style of assuming same-mindedness between readers and writers may be attributed to the involuntary transference of students' mother tongue, such as Chinese language (Lee, 2004). In addition, the employment of opinion-offering resources, especially *Pronouncement* and *Acknowledge*, such as "it is necessary that" and "we all believe that," appears to indicate a certain degree of register confusion (Gilquin & Paquot, 2007), namely, the coexistence of the characteristics of spoken and written language. These rhetorical styles, however, are arguably in stark contrast with the type of academic argumentation required at an English-medium university.

It is, therefore, argued that these model essays legitimize some linguistic patterns, which are recontextualized as the knowledge that could help readers to achieve a satisfactory score in IELTS task-2 writing. For example, the use of formulaic sequences identified in the analysis, such as "in my opinion," "there is no denying that," "it seems that," and "it is +adjective +that/to," constitute a set of fixed templates of expression, or the "lexical bundles" (Biber, Conrad, & Cortes, 2004) pertaining to the genre of argumentation. According to Hyland (2012), lexical bundles provide ready-made language frameworks which facilitate the efficient use of language in a particular genre, without having to generate every word. To some extent, these lexical bundles are formulated as semiotic commodities considering the ways they are presented in these books (Park & Wee, 2012). In other words, since Chinese culture tends to consider anything worthy of inclusion in a book to be true knowledge (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2012; You, 2012), these lexical bundles or text templates are arguably construed as the "knowledge" required for writing the IELTS task-2, which readers, in turn, are expected to pick up by memorizing or imitating the essays. The frequently used wordings, therefore, construe the so called "test strategies or tips," which according to the books will help readers to achieve a good score on the IELTS writing test (Gu, 2008; Liu, 2011; New Oriental School, 2006). On the other hand, such rhetorical beliefs vary between writers, which could partly explain the lexicogrammatical differences of each text within one group.

As suggested by Mahboob (2015), an important purpose underlying English language education in general is to empower students in such ways that they are able to use the language effectively in a wider context so as to make a positive change in their lives. Therefore, it is argued that imitating or even memorizing the model texts identified in this study may actually constrain Chinese EFL learners' access to the globalized ways of using language for knowledge production. To illustrate, the employment of the academic lexical bundles (Hyland, 2008) such as "on the other hand," "it is +adjective +that/to," and "it seems that" signals writers' common

belief that the IELTS task 2 writing is a type of academic writing, while the IELTS task 2 writing actually has more in common with some non-academic genres, such as newspaper editorials (Moore & Morton, 1999). In other words, for Chinese EFL learners the model texts do not provide enough cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), namely the linguistic knowledge and skills which would enable them to have an access to educational resources in the new context, such as studying in an English-medium university overseas.

### Conclusion

This paper reports the findings of a linguistic analysis of the model essays written for IELTS test preparation in China. The findings suggest the preferred linguistic resources in realizing interpersonal meanings in the model IELTS essays. By examining the employment of *Engagement* resources in constructing an English argumentative text, the analysis suggests the model essays reflect different rhetorical traditions of constructing argumentation genres. Since language teaching materials, such as test preparation books, constitute an important resource for language priming (Hoey, 2005), by studying with these learning materials, Chinese EFL students are exposed to linguistic resources that might not be helpful in developing their competence for using the English language beyond the context of language testing.

This study, therefore, calls for a large-scale investigation of the English teaching materials used for IELTS test preparation, especially their pedagogical impacts on students, including how the materials are used in language classrooms by students and teachers. In addition, it is necessary to further investigate the impacts of high-stakes English tests, such as IELTS and TOEFL, on the learning and teaching of English in China; it is hypothesized that their impact can be identified not only in the teaching and learning of English language within an institutional context, but also on the Chinese students' language performance in real-life situations.

### References

- Biber, D., Conrad, S., & Cortes, V. (2004). "If you look at...": Lexical bundles in university teaching and textbooks. *Applied Linguistics*, 25(3), 371-405.
- Biggs, J. (1996). Western misperceptions of the Confucian-heritage learning culture. In D.A. Watkins & J. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese learner: Cultural psychological and contextual influences*: CERC (Comparative Education Research Center) and ACER (The Australian Council for Educational Research).
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. New York: Greenwood.
- Coffin, C. & Hewings, A. (2004). IELTS as preparation for tertiary writing: Distinctive interpersonal and textual strategies. In L. Ravelli & R. Ellis (Eds.), *Analysing academic writing: Contextualising frameworks* (pp. 153-171). London: Continuum.
- Ding, Y. (2007). Text memorization and imitation: The practices of successful Chinese learners of English. *System*, 35, 271-280.
- Eggins, S. (2005). *Introduction to systemic functional linguistics* (2nd edition ed.). London: Continuum.
- Gilquin, G., & Paquot, M. (2007). *Spoken features in learner academic writing: Identification, explanation and solution*. Paper presented at the 4th corpus linguistic conference, Birmingham, UK.
- Greaves, C., & Martin, W. (2010). What can a corpus tell us about multi-word units? In A. O'Keeffe & M. McCarthy (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of corpus linguistics*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Gu, J. (2008). *IELTS writing*. Beijing: Qunyan Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). Language as social semiotic. In M. A. K. Halliday (Ed.), *Language as social semiotic: The social interpretation of language and meaning* (pp. 108-126). London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1992). Some lexicogrammatical features of the zero population growth text. In W. C. Mann & S. A. Thompson (Eds.), *Discourse description: Diverse linguistic analyses of a fund-raising text* (pp. 372-358). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar* (3rd ed.). London: Arnold.



- Ho, V. (2011). *Non-native argumentative writing by Vietnamese learners of English: A contrastive study*. Phd Thesis. Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Georgetown University.
- Hoey, M. (2005). *Lexical priming*. New York: Routledge.
- Hood, S. (2010). *Appraising research: Evaluation in academic writing*. London: Palgrave.
- Hu, G. (2002). Potential cultural resistance to pedagogical imports: The case of communicative language teaching in China. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 15(2), 93-105.
- Hyland, K. (2008). As can be seen: Lexical bundles and disciplinary variation. *English for Specific Purposes*, 27, 4-21.
- Hyland, K. (2012). Bundles in academic discourse. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 32, 150-169.
- Jin, L., & Cortazzi, M. (2006). Changing practices in Chinese cultures of learning. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 19(1), 5-20.
- Kirkpatrick, A., & Xu, Z. (2012). *Chinese rhetoric and writing: An introduction for language teachers*. Fort Collins, Colorado: The WAC Clearinghouse and Parlor Press.
- Lee, M. (2004). Rhetoric in English narratives of native speakers and second-language learners. In N. Kassabgy, Z. Ibrahim & S. Aydelott (Eds.), *Contrastive rhetoric: Issues, insights, and pedagogy* (pp. 47-60). Cairo, New York: American University in Cairo Press.
- Lee, S. H. (2008). *The use of interpersonal resources in argumentative/persuasive essays: Cross-cultural and grade-based differences in academic essays by East-Asian ESL and Australian tertiary students*. Berlin: VDM Verlag.
- Leedham, M., & Cai, G. (2013). *Besides...on the other hand: Using a corpus approach to explore the influence of teaching materials on Chinese students' use of linking adverbials*. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 22, 374-389.
- Liu, M. (2011). *Comprehensive analysis of IELTS Tests*. Beijing: China Renmin University Press.
- Mahboob, A. (2015). Identity management, language variation, and English language textbooks. In D. Djenar, A. Mahboob & K. Cruickshank (Eds.), *Language and identity across modes of communication*. Boston: Walter de Gruyter.
- Martin, J. R. (1984). Language, register and genre. In F. Christie (Ed.), *Children writing: A reader*. Geelong, Victoria: Deakin University.
- Martin, J., & Rose, D. (2008). *Genre relations: Mapping culture*. London: Equinox.
- Martin, J., & White, P. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Moore, T. & Morton, J. (1999). Authenticity in the IELTS academic module writing test. In R. Tulloch (Ed.), *IELTS research reports* (Vol. 2, pp. 64-106). Canberra.
- Nakamura, A. (2009). *Construction of evaluative meanings in the IELTS writing: An intersubjective and intertextual perspective*. PhD thesis. Faculty of Education. University of Wollongong.
- New Oriental School. (2006). *雅思写作胜经*. Beijing: Qunyan Press.
- Park, J. S.-Y., & Wee, L. (2012). *Markets of English: Linguistic capital and language policy in a globalizing world*. New York: Routledge.
- Scollon, S. (1999). Not to waste words or students: Confucian and Socratic discourse in the tertiary classroom. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Culture in second language teaching and learning*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Swain, E. (2007). Constructing an effective "voice" in academic discussion writing: An appraisal theory perspective. In A. McCabe, M. O'Donnell & R. Whittaker (Eds.), *Advances in language and education* (pp. 166-184). London: Continuum.
- Thompson, G. (2001). Interaction in academic writing: Learning to argue with the reader. *Applied Linguistics*, 22(1), 58-78.
- Wang, W. (2008). Newspaper commentaries on terrorism in China and Australia: A contrastive genre study. In U. Connor, E. Nagelhout & W. V. Rozycki (Eds.), *Contrastive rhetoric: Reaching to intercultural rhetoric* (pp. 169-191). Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Wray, A. (2002). *Formulaic language and the lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wray, A., & Pegg, C. (2009). The effect of memorized learning on the writing scores of Chinese IELTS test takers. *IELTS Report*, 9, 191-216.

You, X. (2012). *Writing in the devil's tongue: A history of English composition in China*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

---

**About the authors:**

Shi Yongming was graduated from the University of Nottingham, and now is a PhD candidate in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His research interests include Systemic Functional Linguistics, second language writing, multimodality, and English for specific purposes. Currently, he is working on a multimodal description of Chinese picture book stories.

Liu Xinghua (PhD) is a lecturer of English at Shanghai Jiao Tong University (China). His research interests include cognitive processes in written production, relation between L1 and L2, written discourse analysis, and teaching and learning of writing for normally developing students and at-risk students.

Email: [liuxinghua@sjtu.edu.cn](mailto:liuxinghua@sjtu.edu.cn).



# Filipino ESL Learners' Attitudes Toward Cooperative Learning and Their Relationship to Reading Comprehension

**Wilkinson Daniel Wong Gonzales\***

*National University of Singapore, Singapore*

**Patrisha Lliane O. Torres**

*Colegio San Agustin – Makati, The Philippines*

## Abstract

Departing from Gonzales and Torres' (2015) quantitative quasi-experimental study on the effectiveness of cooperative learning (CL) on Grade 8 students in a private school in Manila, the present study attempts to uncover possible findings in the affective dimension through a 25-item survey questionnaire that quantitatively gauges the Grade 8 Filipino ESL learners' attitudes towards CL. The effectiveness of the approach was further assessed by correlating the attitudes with reading comprehension test scores in Gonzales and Torres' (2015) study. Adopting both quantitative and qualitative approaches, it was discovered that, despite certain reservations, the Grade 8 learners had positive attitudes towards CL. In addition, findings indicate a very weak positive relationship between learner CL attitudes and reading comprehension. The current study has implications not only limited to Philippine ESL classrooms, but also to ESL classrooms around the world.

**Keywords:** attitude, reading comprehension, cooperative learning, correlation, Filipino, ESL

## Introduction

Relatively recently, the image of a good teacher is associated with the ability to facilitate learning instead of merely lecturing, manifested by the emergence of literature related to cooperation and group work. In some way, being able to employ cooperative learning approaches in the classroom then perceptibly indicates a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom as a result of increased student performance (Gonzales & Torres, 2015). However, whether or not the learners' view of cooperative learning affects their performance after the cooperative learning activities still remains a question at least in certain ESL contexts. This paper attempts to answer this question in the Philippine context. Before we present our study, we will review the literature on cooperative learning and reading comprehension.

## Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning (CL) is based on Wittrock's *Generative Learning Theory* and Vygotsky's notion of the *Zone of Proximal Development* (Gonzales & Torres, 2015; McLeish, 2009; Pan & Wu, 2013). It requires students to work together and help each other in achieving specific and attainable learning goals. It is more than just simply grouping the students and assigning them tasks (Macpherson, 2015). Instead, it requires the cooperation of students as well as their dependence on each other in relation to classroom goals, tasks, and reward structures (Miller & Peterson, 2002).

\* Email: [wdwgonzales@gmail.com](mailto:wdwgonzales@gmail.com). Tel.: 6516-3917. Address: Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore, Block AS5, 7 Arts Link Singapore 11757

CL comes in many forms. Kluge (1999) identified five of the most common models of CL: (1) *The Structural Approach*, which is based on the use of various distinct sequences of classroom behaviors; (2) *Group Investigation*, which incorporates four basic features: investigation, interaction, interpretation, and intrinsic motivation; (3) *Student Team Investigation*, where students work together towards a common goal and to structure interdependence; (4) *Curriculum Packages*, which involve sets of cooperative learning material that are usually specific to a subject and age level, and (5) *Learning Together*, which basically emphasizes the teaching and practicing of the social skills required to work together. These models are distinct on their own as they have unique qualities and different learning goals. However, these models do have common elements that identify them under CL. These elements are *positive interdependence*, where the learner's success is dependent on other learners' successes; *individual accountability*, where each team member is accountable and responsible for their contributions; *promotive interaction*, where each team member is encouraged to interact through problem-solving, supporting, and encouraging one another; *interpersonal skills*, where learners have opportunities to communicate ideas and express them to the group, and lastly, *group processing*, where learners develop their group dynamics (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998) (see Figure 1).

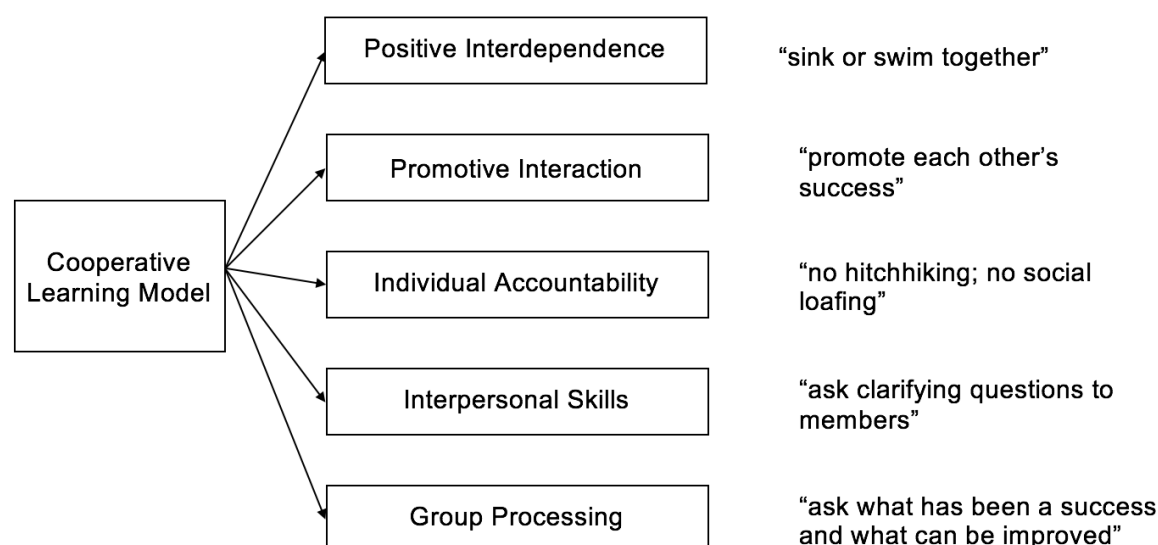


Figure 1. Johnson, Johnson, and Smith's (1998) *Five Elements of Cooperative Learning* (Neo et al., 2012)

### Cooperative Learning and Reading Comprehension

Several studies have highlighted the relationship between CL and reading comprehension. In Bolukbas, Keskin, and Polat's (2011) study, a significant improvement in reading comprehension was observed in a Turkish class of 40 learners who were taught using the *Ask Together - Learn Together* technique. In the EFL setting, Jalilifar (2010) and Zarei and Keshavarz's (2011) studies both involved Iranian EFL students; however, Jalilifar's (2010) study focused on increasing reading comprehension through *Student Team Achievement Divisions* (STAD) and GI while Zarei and Keshavarz's (2011) study focused on the STAD and *Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition* (CIRC) techniques in CL. Both studies underscored the importance of CL, as reading comprehension scores improved significantly from the control groups. In a study by Wichadee (2005), Thai EFL students were taught using the STAD technique and also had significantly higher reading comprehension scores than those in the control group.

Pan and Wu's (2013) study, on the other hand, focused on the effects of reciprocal CL instruction on the reading comprehension of 79 Taiwanese EFL students.

Moreover, Gonzales and Torres' (2015) mixed-method quasi-experimental research study, which forms the foundation of this investigation, focused on the effects of CL on the reading comprehension of 127 Grade 8 Filipino ESL students. Despite insignificant improvement in general, the results of their study showed that after the students were exposed to CL, improvement in higher-order thinking skills, particularly the evaluate sub-skill that involves one to distinguish fact from opinion, was significant since it provided avenues for explanation, logical inference, debates, etc.

### **Learners' Attitudes Toward Cooperative Learning**

Among the studies examining the attitudes of learners toward CL, most generally shared the same findings — that learners exhibited positive attitudes toward learning with their peers. Farzaneh and Nejadansari's (2014) study conducted with Iranian EFL students revealed that participants generally held a positive view of CL because they were able to feel that they could depend on each other, which increases confidence to solve problems and the enjoyment of learning. A similar positive outlook towards CL can be seen in Er and Aksu Ataç's (2014) study involving Turkish students, which revealed that 66.9% of them are skewed towards CL while 31.1% preferred to work alone. Pakistani students in Akhtar et al.'s (2012) study shows similar results when it comes to learning in groups rather than individually. They also believed that CL enhances learning and socialization while not compromising enjoyment.

In the Southeast Asian context, one notable study regarding learner attitudes toward CL is Tuan's (2010), which found that the reason Vietnamese learners favored CL was because it improved their understanding of the topic. In the Philippine context, some studies (Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001; Valdez, Lomoljo, Dumrang, & Didatar, 2015) also show similar results to the aforementioned study. Valdez et al. (2015) discovered that Filipino learners preferred lessons utilizing the cooperative approach because they became more engaged in their learning and were more independent when it comes to pace and participation. Moreover, their study revealed that CL methods motivated learners to become critical thinkers and helped them to connect individual fragmented ideas. This was affirmed by Schmidt and Watanabe's (2001) study, which showed that Filipino learners approve of innovative approaches like the cooperative approach and scored the highest on a CL scale administered to five other ethnic groups. Based on the same study, it should also be noted that these Filipinos use social learning strategies more often than learners of other languages.

Although most of the learners had a positive outlook towards CL, some had certain reservations towards working collaboratively. McLeish's (2009) study conducted with Jamaican students showed that 50% of the respondents were uncomfortable in CL classes. The study pointed out that learners may prefer to work on their own rather than within a group due to the fear of low grades and conflicts of interest. Despite the reservations of some learners towards CL, it can be said that most learners around the world generally favor CL because it enhances learning, hones social skills, and increases engagement within the group (Farzaneh & Nejadansari, 2014).

### **Effect of CL Attitudes on Reading Comprehension**

According to Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) *Theory of Reasoned Action*, one factor of learner performance is attitude. Based on this theory, the act of believing that one can perform a task can result in a positive outcome. In other words, a positive attitude can result in better performance because once attitude is formed, it can shape the way learners think, feel, understand, and behave. So, for example, if learners believe that CL will have a significant effect on reading comprehension, then it will be to their benefit. Burns, Roe, and Ross (1999) and Downing (1982) support this theory by underscoring the importance of the affective aspect in reading achievement.

Some researchers have already explored CL as a methodology for motivation (Farzaneh & Nejadansari, 2014). There are also some studies that show how CL pedagogies can increase reading comprehension (Gonzales & Torres, 2015); however, it seems that there are only a limited number of published studies that demonstrate the

direct relationship of CL attitudes to learners' reading comprehension, especially in the Philippine context. Ghaith and Bouzeineddine's (2003) study showed that while learners with positive attitudes towards reading comprehend texts better, the learners' attitudes towards CL have no relation to reading achievement.

### Research Questions

The literature review signals the need for a study that investigates the attitudes of learners towards CL in the Philippine classroom is evident. A study that directly links learners' attitudes towards CL to reading comprehension could also contribute to English language classrooms in general.

Typically, English teachers in the Philippines, as well as some Southeast Asian countries, may tend to have problems such as a lack of resources, a scarcity of quality teaching strategies, time deficiencies, and possibly an unfamiliarity with authentic assessment (Gonzales & Flores, 2016), which may impede the utilization of learner-centered approaches, which includes CL. Although there are signs of Filipino learners being receptive towards CL, some teachers still use traditional (e.g., teacher centered methods), for example, in literature classes (Gonzales & Flores, 2016; Valdez et al, 2015). By providing teachers with insights regarding the attitudes of students towards CL and its relationship to reading comprehension, this study may encourage them to consider using CL and other related approaches for the long run. This type of research can provide teachers with theory-backed options and strategies for teaching reading and the English language in general. Departing from Gonzales and Torres' (2015) study, the researchers would like to answer the following questions:

1. What are learners' attitudes towards cooperative learning?
2. What is the relationship between the identified cooperative learning attitudes and reading comprehension?

### Method

#### Participants

This study's 68 respondents were selected through purposive sampling of Grade 8 students from Holy Spirit School (pseudonym).<sup>1</sup> The respondents were from two sections: one with 36 students and another with 32. Thirty-four of them were male (50.00%) and 34 were female (50.00%) — with ages ranging between 12-15 years old. All the respondents were enrolled in English classes that focus on language and Afro-Asian literature for 50 minutes a day; all respondents gave their permission for the researchers to analyze their responses (Appendix 3).

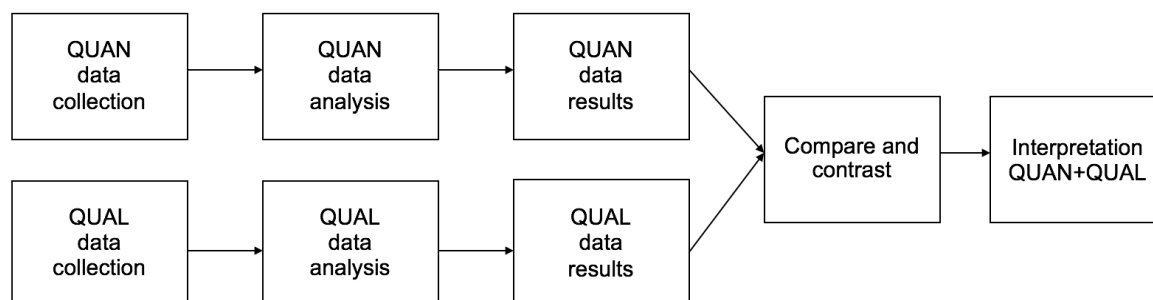


Figure 2. Convergence Model (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011)

## Research Design

The researchers adopted a descriptive mixed approach design for their study. Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) *Convergence Model* was used, its primary feature is the convergence of both quantitative and qualitative data (see Figure 2). The model was used to address the research questions as well as to give a more accurate and reliable picture of the results. Qualitative data for this study comes from the interviews while quantitative data was compiled from the survey results.

## Instruments

To answer the research questions, the researchers primarily utilized the following instruments: (1) interview protocol and (2) survey questionnaire.

The *interview protocol* generally aimed to elicit oral responses from learners exposed to the CL approach. Specifically, the interviews with students aimed to assess learners with regard to their impressions as well as preferences for pedagogy, group size, and suitability of the CL approach. One student for each class was randomly chosen for the interview, which had eight questions. The researchers composed the majority of the questions based on McLeish's (2009) study.

The 25-item *survey questionnaire*, adapted from Neo et al. (2012) was divided into five sections, each section pertaining to one of the five core principles of CL: (1) positive interdependence, (2) individual and group accountability, (3) face-to-face promotive interaction, (4) interpersonal skills, and (5) group processing (see Appendix 1). Under each section, there are five items that are related to the principle. This instrument was used to assess the attitudes of learners towards the CL-based CIRC activities and adopted a *4-point Likert scale* to quantify the data. The respondents answered the survey by placing a check mark on the box that corresponded to their answers for each item. The options were as follows: strongly disagree (SD), 1 point; disagree (D), 2 points; agree (A), 3 points; and strongly agree (SA), 4 points. According to George and Mallery (2003), this 25-item survey questionnaire has a reported Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.932, which means that the survey has excellent reliability. The survey questionnaire was administered to 68 Grade 8 students.

Reading Comprehension Tests made by Gonzales and Torres (2015) were administered to the students before this study; they were tested for validity with the help of experienced teachers and have also been tested for reliability. Each test had fifteen items and focused on a certain literary text (e.g., *The Pheasant's Bell*, etc.) that is to be answered within 12 minutes. The items in the test were constructed to test the following comprehension subskills: (a) recalling details, (b) summarizing, (c) identifying the main idea, (d) making inferences, and (e) determining fact versus opinion (Gonzales & Torres, 2015).

## Procedure

1. The students read the reading selection for 30 minutes, after which it was collected by the researchers.
2. The students then answered the reading comprehension test within 12 minutes. How the scores are computed are detailed in Gonzales and Torres' (2015) study.
3. The researchers distributed the 25-item survey questionnaire to the students after two sessions, with each session lasting an hour, conducted with CL; students were given 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. It should be noted that permission forms were signed by the students before they answered the questionnaire.
4. The researchers collected the 25-item survey questionnaire. During their recess period/break time, the researchers randomly chose one student from each Grade 8 class for a short interview due to time limitations.

## Analytical Procedure

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and frequency percentage) was utilized for the quantitative data, particularly data from the survey questionnaire and the comprehension tests. The scores for the reading comprehension test were gathered from the number of correct items for each test while the scores for the

survey were collected from the Likert-scale-based points. The researchers manually encoded the individual scores onto an Excel spreadsheet, after which, the mean and other quantitative statistics were obtained using the same software. Manifest-level content analysis was utilized by the researchers for the qualitative data, particularly the interviews, to determine the attitudes of the learners towards CL. A descriptive account of the data is detailed in the results, while a higher level or latent analysis of the data is elaborated in the discussion.

Furthermore, to address the second research question and determine the relationship between the reading comprehension scores and the attitudes of students towards CL, mean scores of the reading comprehension test results by Gonzales and Torres (2015) and the survey questionnaire results of the CL group were correlated using SPSS v. 22 for the Macintosh by subjecting both comprehension test and survey scores to a bivariate Pearson correlation test.

## Findings

What follows are the researchers' findings after the analysis. These findings are outlined by the two research questions, that is, to (1) identify learners' attitudes towards CL and (2) identify the relationship between these and reading comprehension. Thus, to facilitate easier reading, it has been divided into two main parts, reflecting the research questions.

### What are the learners' attitudes towards cooperative learning?

#### *Responses to Interviews*

This section focuses on the findings from the interview. The transcript of the interview has been translated to English from Taglish, a variety of Tagalog with English words, i.e., a mixed language involving Tagalog and English (not a local variety of English) (Bautista, 2004), for the purposes of this study. The original transcript can be found in Appendix 2. For organization, the student interview section has been divided into two parts: lecture group and CL group.

Interview excerpts:

#### *1. What was your impression of the CL-based CIRC sessions?*

Student 1: I think we learned on how to cooperate with our classmates better.

Student 2: It requires us to do a lot of work but it's worth it.

#### *2. Do you prefer group activities or interactive lecture?*

Student 1: I prefer group activities because there is more interaction with my classmates with the task given.

Student 2: The group activities because almost everyone can participate.

#### *3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of cooperative group work?*

Student 1: In cooperative group work, one advantage is that we are more involved in the lesson. A disadvantage would be the chaos. It could be quite noisy.

Student 2: One of the advantages is that there is no overshadowing of students because since it is a cooperative group work, everyone is considered equal. As for the disadvantages, I couldn't think of any.

4. *Do you prefer working in large (7 or more persons) or small (4 or less persons) groups? Why?*

Student 1: I prefer smaller groups because it is easier to handle.

Student 2: Small group because the tension of having more competitors is there.

5. *Do you prefer to work on your own rather than in a group? If so, why?*

Student 1: I prefer cooperative group work because there are more of us thinking and sharing ideas.

Student 2: In a group because there are a lot of opinions in which you can base your answers from.

6. *What did the CL activity help you overcome?*

Student 1: I have more confidence to share what I have to say about others.

Student 2: None that I could think of.

7. *What difficulties did you encounter in the CL activity? What did you find hard to do or understand during the activities?*

Student 1: It is kind of hard because there are certain group members that are hard to work and cooperate with.

Student 2: Some members are not participating.

8. *Would you prefer if your teachers used more group activities/assignments? Why?*

Student 1: Yes, because when we work as one, we learn more.

Student 2: Yes, so the class will be active.

The transcript reveals that the interviewed students perceived the CL approach to require them to do more work compared to their usual class activities but it was considered worth it since they learned how to better cooperate with their classmates. Respondents also highlighted the fact that participation and interaction with their classmates can be maximized during cooperative group work. Additionally, the interviewees from the CL group think that the CIRC method can be advantageous because they are more involved in the lesson and no one gets left behind because every member of the group is treated equally. One respondent felt that the chaos and noise that comes with this method is a disadvantage.

The thought of working in small groups also appealed more to the students because it is easier to handle and having smaller groups would entail having more competitors. One student also mentioned that the CL activities helped them gain more confidence when sharing about what they think with the group. The students also mentioned some of the difficulties they encountered during the CL activity implementation, including having to encourage some of their group members to participate and cooperate during the activity. Despite these drawbacks, the two interviewees from the CL group said that they would still prefer if their teachers would use more group activities because it helps them become more active and working together helps them learn more.

### ***Responses to 25-item survey questionnaire***

The following section shows the descriptive and inferential results of the 25-item survey questionnaire administered to the CL group after the CIRC activities. For organization purposes, the researchers divided the results into two major parts: (1) descriptive statistics, which shows the frequency, mean, and standard deviation, and (2) inferential statistics, which shows the correlation. The descriptive statistics part of this section was further divided into five parts, to represent the five pillars of cooperative learning, as mentioned by Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1998). The results for this section help answer research questions one and two.



Positive Interdependence							
No.	Survey	SD <i>f</i> (%)	D <i>f</i> (%)	A <i>f</i> (%)	SA <i>f</i> (%)	Mean (M)	Std dev
1	I felt happy about the success of the group as a whole.	0 (0.0)	2 (2.94)	35 (51.47)	31 (45.59)	3.43	0.555
2	We assisted each other while solving problems during the session.	0 (0.0)	1 (1.47)	47 (69.12)	20 (29.41)	3.28	0.484
3	I was able to share the load of the work with my group members.	0 (0.0)	4 (5.88)	42 (61.76)	22 (32.35)	3.26	0.563
4	I managed to depend on my members as they depend on me.	2 (2.94)	9 (13.24)	43 (63.24)	14 (20.59)	3.01	0.680
5	I was able to value the contributions of the other members of the group.	0 (0.0)	8 (11.76)	24 (35.29)	36 (52.94)	3.41	0.696

Note. 1- Strongly Disagree (SD), 2- Disagree (D), 3- Agree (A), and 4- Strongly Agree (SA)

Figure 3A. Descriptive Statistics for the CL Group in their Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Regarding Positive Interdependence

Figure 3A summarizes the results for the *positive interdependence* part of the 25-item survey questionnaire. Based on the data, most respondents found CL favorable in terms of *positive interdependence* since it allowed them to assist each other in addressing problems. It also helped them delegate work and work together interdependently, making them appreciative of the contributions of their group members. One notable thing is that almost all of the learners were happy about the success of the group (M=3.43). Thus, based on these results, it could be said that the learners had a positive outlook and response towards the idea of *positive interdependence* in CL.

Individual and Group Accountability							
No.	Survey	SD <i>f</i> (%)	D <i>f</i> (%)	A <i>f</i> (%)	SA <i>f</i> (%)	Mean (M)	Std dev
1	I made positive contributions of the other members of the group.	0 (0.0)	2 (2.94)	34 (50.00)	32 (47.06)	3.44	0.557
2	I was able to find working cooperatively very motivating.	0 (0.0)	7 (10.29)	37 (54.41)	24 (35.29)	3.25	0.632
3	I managed to contribute my knowledge to the team.	0 (0.0)	3 (4.41)	37 (54.41)	28 (41.18)	3.37	0.571
4	I was able to share my knowledge, and take into account the knowledge of the other group members.	1 (1.47)	4 (5.88)	34 (50.00)	29 (42.65)	3.34	0.660
5	I was aware exactly of what my part in the group was.	0 (0.0)	2 (2.94)	30 (44.12)	36 (52.94)	3.50	0.560

Note. 1- Strongly Disagree (SD), 2- Disagree (D), 3- Agree (A), and 4- Strongly Agree (SA)

Figure 3B. Descriptive Statistics for the CL Group in their Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Regarding Individual and Group Accountability

Figure 3B shows the attitude of the CL group toward individual and group accountability in CL statistically. According to the figure, most of the students favor the CL-based CIRC activities because it allowed the

individual members of the group to make positive contributions, contribute knowledge, and listen to other members' opinions. Apart from being very motivated, almost all the students in the CL group were aware of their roles in the group ( $M=3.50$ ). From this, one could say that the learners responded positively towards CL when it comes to *individual and group accountability*.

Face-to-face Promotive Interaction							
No.	Survey	SD <i>f</i> (%)	D <i>f</i> (%)	A <i>f</i> (%)	SA <i>f</i> (%)	Mean (M)	Std dev
1	Cooperating in a group promoted better understanding of the subject.	1 (1.47)	2 (2.94)	32 (47.06)	33 (48.53)	3.43	0.630
2	By raising questions among group members help improved the understanding of the lesson.	0 (0.0)	8 (11.76)	38 (55.88)	22 (32.35)	3.21	0.636
3	The interaction with my peers helped improve my performance.	0 (0.0)	11 (16.18)	30 (44.12)	27 (39.71)	3.24	0.715
4	Interaction among group members helped me to obtain a deeper understanding of the subject.	0 (0.0)	4 (5.88)	39 (57.35)	25 (36.76)	3.31	0.580
5	We made effective decisions together as a group.	0 (0.0)	5 (7.35)	26 (38.24)	37 (54.41)	3.47	0.634

Note. 1- Strongly Disagree (SD), 2- Disagree (D), 3- Agree (A), and 4- Strongly Agree (SA)

Figure 3C. Descriptive Statistics for the CL Group in their Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Regarding Face-to-Face Promotive Interaction

Figure 3C statistically reveals the attitudes of the learners towards CL when it comes to face-to-face promotive interaction. As shown in Figure 3C, most of the learners had a favorable response to CL regarding face-to-face promotive interaction since it helped them understand the subject and lesson better as well as improving their performance. According to Figure 3C, it is clear that almost all of the students also claimed to make effective decisions while in the group ( $M=3.47$ ). Generally, the results indicate that learners exhibited a positive response towards CL in the *face-to-face promotive interaction* aspect.

Interpersonal Skills							
No.	Survey	SD <i>f</i> (%)	D <i>f</i> (%)	A <i>f</i> (%)	SA <i>f</i> (%)	Mean (M)	Std dev
1	I was able to listen to and respect the ideas of others.	1 (1.47)	2 (2.94)	26 (38.24)	39 (57.35)	3.51	0.635
2	Working cooperatively with my group is less stressful.	0 (0.0)	4 (5.88)	35 (51.47)	29 (42.65)	3.37	0.596
3	Through working cooperatively in a group helped improve my communication skills.	1 (1.47)	4 (5.88)	35 (51.47)	28 (41.18)	3.32	0.657
4	I was able to share my ideas, personality, workload, and so on with the rest of my group members.	1 (1.47)	3 (4.41)	33 (48.53)	31 (45.59)	3.38	0.647
5	I had the opportunity to communicate with my group members.	1 (1.47)	3 (4.41)	27 (39.71)	37 (54.41)	3.47	0.657

Note. 1- Strongly Disagree (SD), 2- Disagree (D), 3- Agree (A), and 4- Strongly Agree (SA)

Figure 3D. Descriptive Statistics for the CL Group in their Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Regarding Interpersonal skills

Figure 3D statistically illustrates the attitudes of the learners in the CL group towards CL with regard to *interpersonal skills*. From the figure, one can see that most of the students favored the CL-based CIRC approach because they could share ideas as well as the workload with the rest of the group and improve their communication skills with little stress. Moreover, almost all the learners had the opportunity to communicate while being respectful and attentive to the ideas of others ( $M=3.51$ ). Given the results, it could be said that the learners in the CL group had a generally positive response towards CL in terms of *interpersonal skills*.

Group Processing							
No.	Survey	SD f (%)	D f (%)	A f (%)	SA f (%)	Mean (M)	Std dev
1	My group managed to achieve our group goals.	0 (0.0)	3 (4.41)	32 (47.06)	33 (48.53)	3.44	0.583
2	Working in group help enhanced cooperation among the group members.	0 (0.0)	3 (4.41)	28 (41.18)	35 (51.47)	3.44	0.632
3	I enjoyed working with my group members as a team.	0 (0.0)	5 (7.35)	32 (47.06)	31 (45.59)	3.38	0.624
4	Working cooperatively helped to reduce my misconceptions about the topic.	0 (0.0)	2 (2.94)	35 (51.47)	31 (45.59)	3.43	0.555
5	I was able to learn through my mistake and be tolerant with my group members.	0 (0.0)	2 (2.94)	35 (51.47)	31 (45.59)	3.43	0.555

Note. 1- Strongly Disagree (SD), 2- Disagree (D), 3- Agree (A), and 4- Strongly Agree (SA)

Figure 3E. Descriptive Statistics for the CL Group in their Attitude towards Cooperative Learning Regarding Group Processing Skills

Figure 3E summarizes the survey scores of the CL group when it comes to *group processing*. The data makes it clear that the learners favor the CL approach since their group fostered cooperation among members, achieved goals, and enjoyed working as a team. Furthermore, it is evident that the intervention helped reduce misconceptions and promoted tolerance among the members of the team. It could be gathered from the data that the learners showed a positive response towards the CL-based CIRC activities regarding *group processing*.

### What is the relationship between the identified Cooperative Learning attitudes and reading comprehension?

Figure 4 shows the correlation coefficients and the significance values between the CL survey scores and the reading comprehension test scores of the CL group ( $n=68$ ). Furthermore, Figure 5 illustrates this correlation through a scatter plot. There is a less than weak correlation between the CL attitude and the reading comprehension skills of the CL group ( $p=0.029$ ).

		Cooperative Learning Survey Scores	Reading Comprehension Test Scores (Experimental)
Cooperative Learning Survey Scores	Pearson Correlation	1	0.265*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.029
	N	68	68
Reading Comprehension Test Scores (Experimental)	Pearson Correlation	0.265*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.029	
	N	68	68

\*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Figure 4. Results of the Pearson R Correlation Analysis (CL Survey Scores vs. Reading Comprehension Test scores for the CL group)

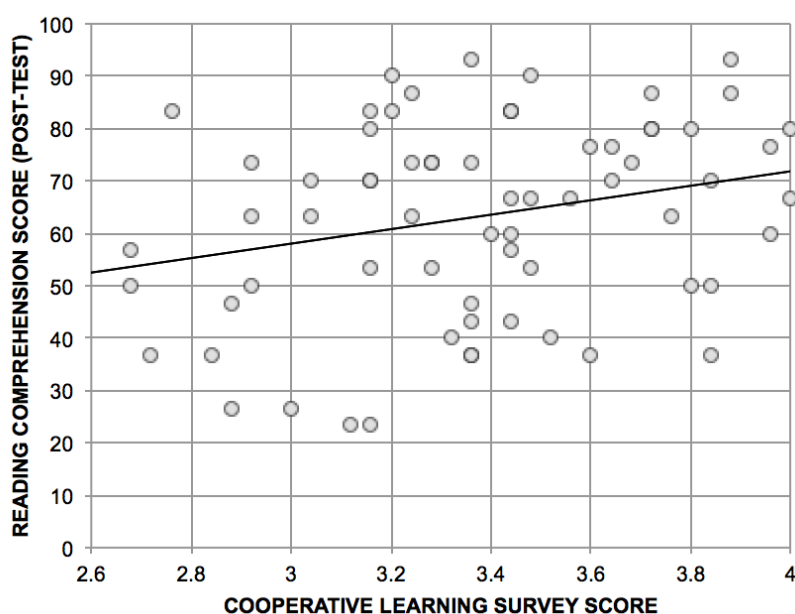


Figure 5. Scatterplot of Correlation between Survey Scores And Reading Comprehension Test Scores for the CL Group

## Discussion

### What are the learners' attitudes towards cooperative learning?

Our first inquiry regarding the attitudes of the learners toward CL was answered by the findings of the survey and interview protocol. When it comes to their attitudes, they seem to prefer group activities over the conventional lecture due to the increased quantity of interaction and input. The same is observable between

group activities and individual work. These could probably be best explained by the impact of peer interaction, a distinct feature of CIRC, on the learners' interest and motivation. Several studies support this claim by showing that interacting with peers can increase engagement and motivation (Box & Little, 2003; Dufresne, Gerace, Leonard, Mestre, & Wenk, 1996; Lei, 2010; Palmer, 2007; Tinto, 1987). Considering learners' preference for group activities, it was further discovered that learners in the CL group preferred small groups over large groups because they were more manageable for the respondents. Similar studies also advocate small groups over big groups, especially when it comes to CL (Stanford University Newsletter on Teaching, 1999; Ward, 1987). Wheelan (2009) supports this study's finding in their discovery that the smaller the group size, the higher the productivity of the learners. The researchers believe that a possible reason for this may have something to do with group identification and dynamics. Their belief is affirmed by Cummings, Kiesler, Zadeh, and Balakrishnan (2013) who pointed out that being in a smaller group would be more beneficial because the group members do not need to spend a lot of time and energy in coordinating and motivating each other, a potential challenge for larger groups.

Aside from their preferences for group activities and small groups, learners in the CL group favored CL because it made them more attentive, which is in contrast to learners in the lecture group. A possible factor could be the method adopted by the teacher. Prince (2004) showed that the attention span of learners in a traditional lecture lasts roughly 15 minutes. Moreover, Hartley and Davies (1978) found that students remembered 70% of the provided information for the first ten minutes of a traditional lecture and only 20% of the information in the last 10 minutes. Based on these studies, it would appear that the lecture method may not be very effective in retaining the attention of the students for the long term. However, in active learning, the same may not be said. Using clickers to measure attention decline, Bunce, Flens, and Nieves (2010) recorded fewer attention lapses during student-engaging activities as opposed to a traditional lecture, where teacher discourse is given significant attention. Their study suggests that active learning methods can increase student attention, which could explain why the learners in this study were able to be attentive during the CL activities.

Based on the results of this study, the learners of the CL group also favored CL because it encouraged them to be more participative, involved, and confident throughout the sessions; this is similar to Valdez' (2015) study which found that CL appealed to learners because it can help make them more engaged and participative. According to Krashen's (1982) *Affective Filter Hypothesis*, a safe and anxiety-free environment can encourage learners to produce more language, a step towards better performance. In other words, learners perform better if they feel that they are able to express their ideas without being judged. Another possible reason why the participants were more involved and confident is because CL can promote mutual respect, responsibility, tolerance, and, most importantly, self-confidence (Zakaria, Solfitri, Daud, & Abidin, 2013); this may explain why the respondents mentioned that they felt more confident, involved, and participative in sharing with their peers in small groups.

From the results, it was also discovered that CL appealed to the learners because it improved their performance. More specifically, results indicated that learners favored CL because it reduced their misconceptions and helped their comprehension of topic. These findings were affirmed by Tuan' (2010) study, which demonstrated that CL was favorable to Vietnamese learners because it improved their understanding. The effectiveness of CL in comprehension could possibly explain this. Several studies have been done with a wide variety of learners around the world and many of them have found similar results—an increase in reading comprehension (Bolukbas, Keskin, & Polat, 2011; Jalilifar, 2010; Pan & Wu, 2013; Wichadee, 2005).

Apart from enhanced performance, learners favored CL because it made them more tolerant and sensitive to others in the group. In addition, it helped them to be more appreciative of one another's contributions and to make more effective decisions. The findings of the study also showed that the learners' favorable attitudes towards CL can be attributed to its ability to help them achieve more as a group while having fun. Similar results are evident in Neo et al.'s (2012) study, which showed that Malaysian learners also favored CL because it helped them become more tolerant, make more effective decisions, and to achieve more as a group; *Action Regulation Theory*, which states that an individual's behavior in the group is regulated by cognitive processes such as goal

development, planning, and feedback processing could explain these results (Zacher & Frese, 2015). In other words, being aware and sensitive of the contributions and feedback of others influences how learners make decisions, behave in groups, and perceive CL.

Although most of the learners had a positive attitude towards CL, some learners still have certain reservations towards the approach. The researchers discovered that learners somehow disapproved of CL with regard to hitch-hiking, or the act of taking credit not rightfully earned, which could have resulted in their preference for working alone more than in a group. Er and Aksu Ataç (2014) and McLeish (2009) studies show similar results when it comes to learners' preferences for working individually rather than in a group. *Expectancy-Value Theory*, which holds that performance is dependent on the value individuals attach to an outcome, plays a crucial role in these findings. Based on the results of this study, learners were also not in favor of CL because it requires more effort and work. However, despite reservations, the learners generally had positive attitudes towards CL.

### **What is the relationship between the identified Cooperative Learning attitudes and reading comprehension?**

The researchers' second inquiry sought to identify a relationship between reading comprehension scores and the attitudes of students towards CL. A very weak positive correlation between both was identified by the researchers, evidenced by Pearson correlation value of 0.265, manifested in an almost horizontal trend apart from the relatively dispersed plot points. Put differently, a positive attitude towards CL appears to have little to no effect on reading comprehension scores. Interestingly, this is reflective of what Ghaith and Bouzineddine (2003) discovered: that there is no relationship between CL attitude and reading achievement, which could possibly be explained by the differences in gender, aptitude, and strategies. The researchers also speculate that one of the reasons that may have affected the findings is the nature of the reading comprehension test in Gonzales and Torres (2015). Although the comprehension tests were, at the least, encompassing of the comprehension subskills focused here, it is not only through paper-based multiple-choice type assessment that one gauges reading comprehension, so the tests might not fully reflect the students' performance, particularly in the higher-order cognitive skills such as evaluation. Perhaps more tests that effectively gauges comprehension such as performance-based authentic assessment would yield a different result. Furthermore, the researchers also hypothesize that implementation time may have influenced the findings. Since the study was conducted in a short span of time, it is possible that the results of the test are not fully indicative of the students' performance as opposed to if it were to be conducted longitudinally.

### **Conclusion**

The researchers implemented the cooperative learning CIRC strategy activities over two teaching sessions over three weeks. Utilizing a mixed-approach research design, the researchers discovered that participants exhibited favorable attitudes towards the CL approach with certain reservations, which tends to affirm the effectiveness of CL. The students favored CL due to the small group size, ability of the activity to grab their attention and make them participate, and the potential of the activity to help them better understand the lesson. Not only did CL appeal to the learners because of the high-level participation and interaction, it also encouraged the learners to be more sensitive to one another, make more effective decisions, and achieve more as a group. The researchers, however, identified a very weak relationship between attitudes towards CL and reading comprehension, which suggests that a better attitude towards CL does not equate to, or rather necessitate, better reading comprehension performance of ESL learners.

Nevertheless, considering both the qualitative and quantitative findings of this study as well as the potential value of CL if all the aforementioned issues were addressed, the researchers still recommend that teachers utilize the CL approach since learners responded favorably to the approach. Educators may opt to utilize resources from the Internet to aid them in their CL activities and to consult with other teachers to lessen the burden of CL.

lesson development. Furthermore, the researchers recommend the CL approach in teaching reading comprehension because it allows learners to thoroughly process the information instead of just recalling the details and also encourages learners to express their ideas, which was evidenced during observation.

The researchers see the potential of the CL approach in other ESL classrooms in the Philippines and some other Southeast Asian countries; more observations be done in different classrooms across the country to improve the reliability of the study. Since certain limitations such as time made this research short-term, it might be helpful to consider widening the scope and doing a longitudinal study in different contexts.

### References

- Ajzen, M., & Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behaviour*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Akhtar, K., Perveen, Q., Kiran, S., Rashid, M., & Satti, A. (2012). A study of students' attitudes towards cooperative learning. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(11), 141-147.
- Bautista, M. L. S. (2004). Tagalog-English code switching as a mode of discourse. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 5(2), 226-233.
- Bolukbas, F., Keskin, F., & Polat, M. (2011). The effectiveness of cooperative learning on the reading comprehension skills in Turkish as a foreign language. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 10(4), 330-336.
- Box, J., & Little, D. (2003). Cooperative small-group instruction combined with advanced organizers and their relationship to self-concept and social studies achievement of elementary school students. *Journal of Instruction Psychology*, 30(4), 285-287.
- Bunce, D., Flens, E., & Niles, K. (2010). How long can students pay attention in class? A study of students attention decline using clickers. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 87(12), 1438-1443.
- Burns, P., Roe, B., & Ross, E. (1999). *Teaching reading in today's elementary school*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Creswell, J., & Plano Clark, V. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Cummings, J., Kiesler, S., Zadeh, R., & Balakrishnan, A. (2013). Group heterogeneity increases the risks of large group size: A longitudinal study of productivity in research groups. *Psychological Science*, 24(6), 880-890.
- Downing, J. (1982). Reading—skill or skills? *The Reading Teacher*, 35, 534-537.
- Dufresne, R., Gerace, W., Leonard, W., Mestre, J., & Wenk, L. (1996). Classtalk: a classroom communication system for active learning. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 7, 3-47.
- Er, S., & Aksu Ataç, B. (2014). Cooperative learning in ELT classes: The attitudes of students towards cooperative learning in ELT classes. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching*, 2(1), 109-122.
- Farzaneh, N., & Najadansari, D. (2014). Students' attitudes towards using cooperative learning for teaching reading comprehension. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(2), 287-292.
- George, D., & Mallery, P. (2003). *SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and reference. 11.0 update* (4th Edition ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Ghaith, G., & Bouzeineddine, A. (2003). Relationship between reading attitudes, achievement, and learners' perceptions of their Jigsaw II Cooperative Learning experience. *Reading Psychology*, 24, 105-121.
- Gonzales, W. D. W., & Flores, E. (2016). Stylistics in the Southeast Asian ESL or EFL classroom: A collection of potential teaching activities. *TESOL International Journal*, 11(1), 96-107.
- Gonzales, W. D. W., & Torres, P. (2015). Looking at CIRC through quantitative lenses: Can it improve the reading comprehension of Filipino ESL learners? *Philippine ESL Journal*, 15, 67-98.
- Hartley, J., & Davies, I. (1978). Note taking: A critical review. *Programmed Learning and Educational Technology*, 15, 207-224.
- Jalilifar, A. (2010). The effect of cooperative learning techniques on college students' reading comprehension. *System*, 38, 96-108.



- Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Smith, K. (1998). *Active learning: Cooperation in the college classroom*. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.
- Kluge, D. (1999). A Brief Introduction to Cooperative Learning. In D. Kluge, S. McGuire, D. Johnson, & R. Johnson (Eds.), *Cooperative Learning: JALT Applied Materials* (pp. 16-22). Tokyo: Japan Association for Language Teaching.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in Second Language Acquisition*. California: Pergamon Press Inc.
- Lei, S. (2010). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: Evaluating benefits and drawbacks from college instructors' perspectives. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 153-160.
- Macpherson, A. (2015). *Cooperative Learning group activities for college courses*. Surrey, BC Canada: Kwantlen Polytechnic University.
- McLeish, K. (2009). Attitude of students toward cooperative learning methods at knox community college: a descriptive study. *Unpublished Master Thesis. University of Technology, Jamaica*.
- Miller, C., & Peterson, R. (2002). *Safe & responsive schools*. Retrieved from Indiana University: [http://www.indiana.edu/~safeschl/cooperative\\_learning.pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~safeschl/cooperative_learning.pdf)
- Neo, T., Neo, M., Kwok, W., Tan, Y., Lai, C., & Zarina, C. (2012). MICE 2.0: Designing multimedia content to foster active learning in a Malaysian classroom. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 28(5), 857-880.
- Palmer, D. (2007). What is the best way to motivate students in Science? *Teaching Science- The Journal of the Australian Science Teachers Association*, 53(1), 38-42.
- Pan, C.-Y., & Wu, H.-Y. (2013). The Cooperative Learning effects on English reading comprehension and learning motivation of EFL Freshmen. *English Language Teaching*, 6(5), 13-27.
- Prince, M. (2004). Does active learning work? A review of the research. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 93(3), 223-231.
- Schmidt, R., & Watanabe, Y. (2001). Motivation, strategy use, and pedagogical preferences in foreign language learning. In Z. Dörnyei, & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation and second language acquisition* (pp. 313-259). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center.
- Stanford University Newsletter on Teaching. (1999). Cooperative learning: students working in small groups. *Speaking of Teaching*, 10(2), 1-4.
- Tinto, V. (1987). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Tuan, L. (2010). Infusing cooperative learning into an EFL classroom. *English Language Teaching*, 3(2), 64-77.
- Tunde-Awe, B. (2014). Relationship between reading attitudes and reading comprehension performance of secondary school students in Kwara state, Nigeria. *Review of Arts and Humanities*, 3(2), 203-215.
- Valdez, A., Lomoljo, A., Dumrang, S., & Didatar, M. (2015). Developing critical thinking through activity-based and Cooperative Learning Approach in teaching high school chemistry. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 5(1), 139-141.
- Ward, B. (1987). Instructional grouping in the Classroom. *School Improvement Research Series*.
- Wheelan, S. (2009). Group size, group development, and group productivity. *Small Group Research*, 40(2), 247-262.
- Wichadee, S. (2005). The effects of Cooperative Learning on English reading skills and attitudes of the first-year students at Bangkok University. *BU Academic Review*, 4(2), 169-180.
- Zacher, H., & Frese, M. (2015). *The SAGE handbook of industrial, work, & organizational psychology*. New York, NY: SAGE.
- Zakaria, E., Solfitri, T., Daud, Y., & Abidin, Z. (2013). Effects of cooperative learning on secondary school students' mathematics achievement. *Creative Education*, 4(2), 98-100.

**Appendix 1**  
**25-item survey questionnaire based on Neo et al. (2012)**

<b>A. Positive Interdependence</b>	<b>1</b> Strongly Disagree	<b>2</b> Disagree	<b>3</b> Agree	<b>4</b> Strongly Agree
1. I felt happy about the success of the group as a whole.				
2. We assisted each other while solving problems during the session.				
3. I was able to share the load of the work with my group members.				
4. I managed to depend on my members as they depend on me.				
5. I was able to value the contributions of the other members of the group.				

<b>B. Individual and Group Accountability</b>	<b>1</b> Strongly Disagree	<b>2</b> Disagree	<b>3</b> Agree	<b>4</b> Strongly Agree
1. I made positive contributions to the group.				
2. I was able to find working cooperatively very motivating.				
3. I managed to contribute my knowledge to the team.				
4. I was able to share my knowledge, and take into account the knowledge of the other group members.				
5. I was aware exactly of what my part in the group was.				

<b>C. Face-to-face Promotive Interaction</b>	<b>1</b> Strongly Disagree	<b>2</b> Disagree	<b>3</b> Agree	<b>4</b> Strongly Agree
1. Cooperating in a group promoted better understanding of the subject.				
2. By raising questions among group members help improved the understanding of the lesson.				
3. The interaction with my peers helped improve my performance.				
4. Interaction among group members helped me to obtain a deeper understanding of the subject.				
5. We made effective decisions together as a group.				

<b>D. Interpersonal Skills</b>	<b>1</b> Strongly Disagree	<b>2</b> Disagree	<b>3</b> Agree	<b>4</b> Strongly Agree
1. I was able to listen to and respect the ideas of others.				
2. Working cooperatively with my group is less stressful.				
3. Through working cooperatively in a group helped improve my communication skills.				
4. I was able to share my ideas, personality, workload, and so on with the rest of my group members.				
5. I had the opportunity to communicate with my group members.				

<b>E. Group Processing</b>	<b>1</b> Strongly Disagree	<b>2</b> Disagree	<b>3</b> Agree	<b>4</b> Strongly Agree
1. My group managed to achieve our group goals.				
2. Working in group help enhanced cooperation among the group members.				
3. I enjoyed working with my group members as a team.				
4. Working cooperatively helped to reduce my misconceptions about the topic.				
5. I was able to learn through my mistake and be tolerant with my group members.				

**Appendix 2**  
**Original interview transcript**

	<b>Student 1</b>	<b>Student 2</b>
Do you prefer group activities or interactive lecture?	"I prefer group activities because I can learn. Kasi ano, mas naeenjoy ko and naiintindihan ko pag alam ko kung ano po yung mga point of view ng mga kaklase ko."	"Cooperative group work... Um.. sa sarili kong perspective na-eeenjoy ko kasi mas natututo ako pag nageenjoy ako. Mas nageenjoy ako pag kasama ko friends ko."
Would you prefer if your teachers used more group activities/assignments? Why?	"Maybe. Because minsan kasi sa group activities yung ibang kagrupo mo hindi gumagawa kaya minsan mas gusto ko sarili ko nalang."	"Group activities kasi mas nakakawork po with friends."
Do you prefer to work on your own rather than in a group? If so, why?	"Sometimes I like to work individually kasi minsan talaga sa group activities, konti nalang po yung maaasahan mo kaya minsan naaako ko na rin lahat."	"Individual. Kapag pinaghirapan ko mas worth it pag nakakuha ako ng mataas na points."
Aside from lectures, how do they want to learn?	"Gusto ko po yung may mga games para hands on."	"Ako laro miss, games."

**CL Group**

	<b>Student 3</b>	<b>Student 4</b>
What is your impression on the CIRC sessions?	"I think we learned more on how to cooperate with our classmates."	"Matrabaho po pero worth it naman."
Do you prefer group activities or interactive lecture?	"Prefer ko po yung group activities kasi po mas nakakapaginteract po kami sa mga classmates naming tska sa mismong gagawin."	"Yung group activities po kasi parang halos lahat nakakasali."
What are the advantages and disadvantages of cooperative group work?	"Kapag cooperative group work po, involved po kami dun sa mismong lesson at disadvantages po medyo magulo rin minsan, medyo maingay, ganun."	"Yung advantages parang walang naoovershadow na estudyante, parang lahat pantay pantay kasi cooperative group work. Tapos sa disadvantages, parang wala naman po."

Do you prefer working in large (7 or more persons) or small (4 or less persons) groups? Why?	"I prefer smaller groups po kasi mas madali pong i-.. parang contain po, ganun."	"Small group kasi parang may tension, madami kang ka-kompetensya na group."
Do you prefer to work on your own rather than in a group? If so, why?	"I prefer cooperative group work po kasi since marami po kami mas marami pong ideas na masshare."	"In a group kasi marami yung opinions na pwede mo pagbasehan ng mga sagot."
What did the CL activity help you overcome?	"Mas confident na po ako mag share ng kung anong naiisip ko sa iba."	"Wala naman po."
What difficulties did you encounter in the CL activity? What did you find hard to do or understand during the activities?	"Medyo mahirap po if meron kaming group member na nahihirapan makipag cooperate samin."	"Yung mga members po na hindi nagpaparticipate."
Would you prefer if your teachers used more group activities/assignments? Why?	"Opo. Kasi nga po kapag gumagalaw po kami as one, mas natututo po kami."	"Opo para active yung class."

### Appendix 3 Permission Form Template

Greetings in St. La Salle!

We are students of De La Salle University – Manila taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education, Major in English. For our Action Research (TH2SEAL) class, we will be conducting a survey on Grade 8 students of Holy Spirit School<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of this survey is to discover your attitudes toward the CIRC activities that we have implemented for the last few meetings.

This 25-item survey is divided into five parts. It is based on Neo et al.'s (2012) survey questionnaire for cooperative learning. It was slightly modified for the purposes of the study.

Please answer the survey as honestly as possible. We assure you that your information will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study. By signing this survey, you are allowing us to subject your responses for analysis. Thank you for taking time to answer. Your response is highly appreciated.

Wilkinson Daniel Wong Gonzales  
Patrishia Lliane Torres

#### PERSONAL PROFILE

<i>Surname</i>		<i>Given Name</i>		<i>M.I.</i>
<i>Sex (Male or Female)</i>	<i>Age</i>		<i>Nationality</i>	
<i>Section</i>			<i>Date Completed</i>	

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

---

**About the authors:**

Wilkinson Daniel Wong Gonzales is currently a graduate student at the National University of Singapore and is also affiliated with the Linguistic Society of the Philippines (LSP). Generally, he works on contact and historical linguistics and has keen interest on World Englishes, Philippine Hokkien, Hokaglish, and English Language Teaching (ELT).

Patrisha Lliane O. Torres is a secondary teacher at the Colegio San Agustin – Makati, the Philippines. She is interested in English Language Teaching and English linguistics.



## QSAT: The Web-Based mC-Test as an Alternative English Proficiency Test

**Somsak Boonsathorn\***

*Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand*

**Chayaporn Kaoropthai**

*Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand*

### Abstract

Reversing the original C-Test (Raatz & Klein-Braley, 1981), the modified C-Test (mC-Test) deletes the *first* half (instead of the second half) of every second word (Boonsathorn, 1987). It is also known as the X-Test (Cleary, 1988; Prapphal, 1994, 1996). This web-based version was explored to investigate its reliability, face validity, criterion-related validity, and concordance with the Quick Placement Test (QPT). The participants were 585 undergraduate students studying varying academic areas, in a government university in northern Thailand during the 2010 academic year; all the students were volunteers. The instruments used included: (1) the Quick Placement Test (QPT), (2) the Web-Based mC-Test (WB mC-Test), and (3) a questionnaire concerning the face validity of the WB mC-Test. The findings revealed that the WB mC-Test had high reliability and high face validity. The Pearson correlation between the WB mC-Test and the QPT was significant at a medium level. Using a statistical model, it was found that the WB mC-Test could differentiate subjects into 4 levels based on the ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe): Level 0 Beginner to Level 3 Upper Intermediate. The WB mC-Test is supported to be a practical preliminary self-assessment test for EFL university students.

**Keywords:** C-Tests, X-Tests, English proficiency tests, self-assessment tests, web-based testing

### Introduction

English proficiency is important when studying at the tertiary level in Thailand especially in a university where English is a medium of instruction. Students admitted into academic programs are generally well-prepared for their academic disciplines. Students' English proficiency has often been a major factor in failure, since the minimum requirement of their O-NET (Ordinary National Educational Test) score in English is only 35%. Mae Fah Luang University, established in 1998, has been the only autonomous state-affiliated university in Thailand which uses English as a medium of instruction in all subject areas except law, students' English proficiency has always been a major factor affecting their academic success or failure. The Self-Access Language Learning Center (SALLC) at Mae Fah Luang has provided necessary facilities and equipment to help further develop students' English proficiency. The problem to date is that many students do not know where to start with in the SALLC. Students often do not know their level of English proficiency, presenting an urgent need for a practical instrument to help students estimate their English proficiency levels. In this study, the QSAT (Quick Self-Assessment Test) was proposed using the Web-Based mC-Test as a preliminary self-assessment test of general English proficiency. The purpose of the present study was to develop and validate a web-based modified C-Test (WB mC-Test) to use as a quick self-assessment test of general English proficiency. To evaluate the proposed WB mC-test, five major aspects of test qualities for this were focused on: reliability, difficulty suitability, criterion-related validity, concordance with the Quick Placement Test score, and face validity.

\* Email: [somsakb89@yahoo.com](mailto:somsakb89@yahoo.com). Tel.: 66-818-05-8282. Address: Mae Fah Luang University, 333 Moo1, Thasud, Muang, Chiang Rai, 57100, Thailand.

### The C-Test

Alderson's (1979, 1980) and Klein-Braley's (1981) critical studies of the systematic every  $n^{\text{th}}$  word deletion cloze test revealed many significant points of criticism. Some of the major points were about rates and starting points of deletion that affected the difficulty, reliability, and validity of the tests. For example, the use of only one or two cloze passages could be the cause of content bias. There was also a problem with scoring procedures. In addition, the fact that educated native speakers could rarely obtain a perfect score created doubts about acceptability judgments in scoring.

In order to resolve the shortcomings facing the cloze test, Klein-Braley (1984) proposed six criteria for the new format of a reduced redundancy test, the C-Test:

1. The C-Test should use several different texts.
2. It should have at least 100 deletions (items).
3. Adult native speakers should obtain nearly perfect scores.
4. The deletions should affect a representative sample of the text.
5. Only exact-word scoring should be possible.
6. The test should have high reliability and validity. (p.136)

The C-Test is normally comprised of four to six short texts constructed according to what Klein-Braley and Raatz (1984) called *The Rule of 2*. The deletion in each text begins in the second sentence by deleting the second half of every second word until the required number of mutilations is reached, while the rest of the text continues to the end of the paragraph. The following is an example of a C-Test passage from Klein-Braley and Raatz (1984).

#### The C-Test

There are usually five men in the crew of a fire engine. One o\_ them dri\_ \_ \_ the eng\_ \_ \_ . The lea\_ \_ \_ sits bes\_ \_ \_ the dri\_ \_ \_ . The ot\_ \_ \_ firemen s\_ \_ inside t\_ \_ cab o\_ the fi\_ \_ engine. T\_ \_ leader h\_ \_ usually be\_ \_ in t\_ \_ Fire Serv\_ \_ \_ \_ for ma\_ \_ years. H\_ will kn\_ \_ how t\_ fight diff\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ sorts o\_ fires. S\_ , when t\_ \_ firemen arr\_ \_ \_ at a fire, it is always the leader who decides how to fight a fire. He tells each fireman what to do. [25 items] (p.136)

Since its initiation by Raatz and Klein-Braley in 1981, the C-Test could be considered the best in the family of tests of reduced redundancy. Many research studies have supported the notion that the C-Tests are theoretically and empirically valid and reliable tests of overall language proficiency (Babaii & Ansary, 2001; Cohen, Segal, & Bar-Siman-To, 1984; Connelly, 1997; Dörnyei & Katona, 1992; Klein-Braley, 1997; Klein-Braley & Stevenson, 1981; Raatz & Klein-Braley, 1981; Rouhani, 2008).

Despite the increasing literature supporting C-Tests, some research studies have questioned the effectiveness C-Tests (Bradshaw, 1990; Cleary, 1988; Weir, 1990). Most of these studies found that the C-Tests were not automatically valid and reliable tests of overall language proficiency. They were often too easy and lacked face validity.

Relating to face validity, Nevo (1985), in a critical study of face validity, concluded that there are two basic viewpoints about face validity. The first one is to separate face validity from other types of validity, while the second considers face validity "an important feature of any psychological or educational test intended for practical use" (p. 287). According to the latter viewpoint, a test of high face validity may have an advantage over others in terms of test takers' motivation, interest, and satisfaction; it can convince users to implement it, and it can also help improve public relations.

The theoretical framework for the C-Test is literally an adoption of every  $n^{\text{th}}$  word deletion cloze framework. Taylor (1953), the initiator of the cloze test, appeared to be inspired by Gestalt psychology and

information theory as theoretical bases for the cloze procedure. The closure principle in Gestalt psychology contends that individuals can perceive objects such as shapes, letters, pictures, etc., as being whole when they are not complete. Specifically, when parts of a whole picture are missing, our perceptions fill in the visual gap. A familiar example of this concept is our ability to see a broken circle or rectangle as whole by mentally closing the gaps. According to Gestalt psychologists, the process of learning consists of global comprehension first to be followed later by the comprehension of detail (Stansfield & Hansen, 1983). The reason test takers are able to restore mutilated texts can also be supported by information theory, particularly by the concept of redundancy. According to Spolsky (1971), natural language contains redundancy to safeguard a message against noise which may interfere with the message. As Spolsky noted, “messages in normal language can be understood even though a good proportion of them is omitted or masked” (p.167). This concept of reduced redundancy is also known as *expectancy grammar*, as coined by Oller (1976, 1979). Adopting the same theoretical framework with the cloze test, the C-Test is therefore based on Gestalt’s closure principle and the reduced redundancy principle (RRP) (Klein-Braley, 1981).

The theoretical rationale for using the C-Test to measure reading comprehension can be explained by psycholinguistic theories of the reading process. One of the most widely accepted reading models to describe the reading strategies used by readers is that of Goodman (1967). Goodman proposed that readers use graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic information as they engage in the reading act, and that the best readers use the least amount of text information available. Smith (2012) argued that reading as an activity involves two forms of information: the visual (what is on the printed page), and the nonvisual (the reader’s language competence and their background experiences). The reader uses these two forms of information to understand what the author is describing. Therefore, the more nonvisual information one has, the less they need to rely on visual information. Although Goodman and Smith used different explanations, they essentially agreed that an efficient reader usually uses a minimum amount of text or visual information.

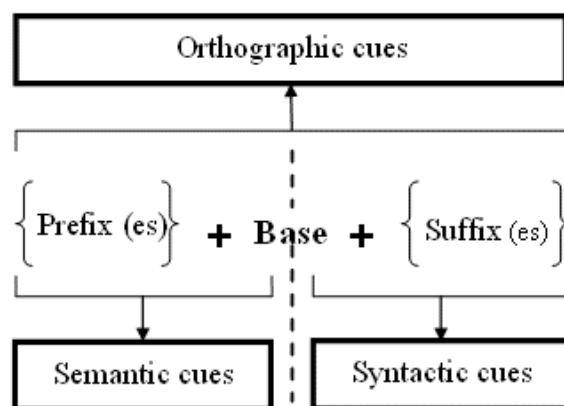


Figure 1. English Word Formation Based on Goodman’s Reading Model (1967).

### The mC-Test

Based on the Goodman Model, when the second half of every second word is deleted in the C-Test, some graphophonic/orthographic cues are still present in each item. Removing half of the word leaves the reader with a fair amount of information even if the deletion occurs in every second word. A challenging question was then, between the semantic cues (present in the first half of a word) and the syntactic cues (present in the second half of a word), which type of cues would prove to require more of the reading strategies used in normal reading? Relating to the English word formation above, the theoretical framework for proposing the mC-Test can be outlined diagrammatically as follows:

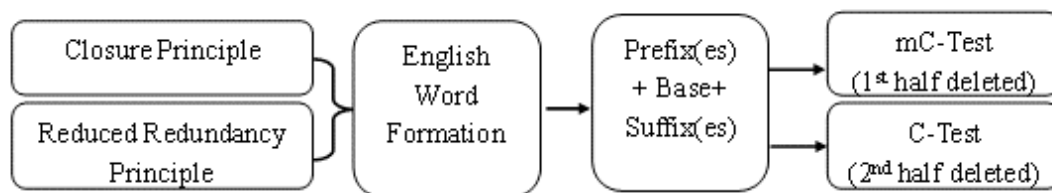


Figure 2. Theoretical Framework of the C-Test and mC-Test

Figure 2 clearly depicts the difference between the main aspect of an mC-Test item and a C-Test item. While the semantic cues are present in the C-Test item, only syntactic cues are normally available in the mC-Test item. Consequently, the mC-Test will be more difficult and necessitate readers to employ more language skills and strategies to figure out the word than those required for the C-Test.

The author (Boonsathorn, 1987) initiated this new format, the mC-Test, to resolve the problems facing the conventional C-Test. In the mC-Test, the first half, instead of the second half, of every second word is deleted. The results revealed that the C-Tests and the mC-Tests were highly reliable and valid as overall language proficiency tests for both native and non-native learners and the mC-Test was shown to be more difficult and had better discrimination power than the C-Test. Cleary (1988) used the same procedure of *left-hand deletions* and coined the term *X-Test*. Some research studies (Prapphal, 1994, 1996; Sigott & Kobrel, 1993) as well as the author's student researchers were able to demonstrate that the mC-Tests or X-Tests are valid and reliable overall language proficiency tests which are more difficult than the C-Tests. The following is an example of the mC-Test constructed from the same text used in the sample C-Test.

#### The mC-Test

There are usually five men in the crew of a fire engine. One \_f them \_ \_ \_ves the \_ \_  
\_ ine. The \_ \_ \_ der sits \_ \_ \_ ide the \_ \_ \_ ver. The \_ \_ \_ er firemen \_ \_ t inside \_ \_ \_e cab \_ f  
the \_ \_ re engine. \_ \_ e leader \_ \_ s usually \_ \_ en in \_ \_ e Fire \_ \_ \_ vices for \_ \_ ny years. \_ e  
will \_ \_ ow how \_ o fight \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ rent sorts \_ f fires. \_ o, when \_ \_ e firemen \_ \_ \_ ive at a  
fire, it is always the leader who decides how to fight a fire. He tells each fireman what to do. [25  
items]

Since there have not been any research studies about the mC-Tests that are web-based the author decided to investigate the possibility of using the Web-Based mC-Test as a quick self-assessment test of general English proficiency.

#### Research Questions

This study aims to address five research questions about the WB mC-Test:

- RQ 1: How high is the reliability of the WB mC-Test?
- RQ 2: What is the difficulty level of the WB mC-Test?
- RQ 3: How high is the criterion-related validity against the QPT?
- RQ 4: What is the concordance between the WB mC-Test and the QPT?
- RQ 5: How high is the face validity of the WB mC-Test?

## Methodology

### Participants

Since many participants were necessary, the researcher decided to use a voluntary sample, using 585 undergraduate students who were invited to participate in the study by their English course instructors. The students were aware that their grades would not be affected by their decision to or not to participate in the study. The study was approved by the university research ethics committee. The students who were interested to participate were asked to read and sign the informed consent. Each participant was given 100 Thai baht (approximately US\$ 3) as an incentive. These students were first- to third-year students from all majors, enrolled at Mae Fah Luang University in the first semester of academic year 2010.

### Instruments

The instruments for this study included two tests and a questionnaire:

1. The Quick Placement Test (QPT), Paper and Pen Test Version 2: A standardized test by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (Syndicate, 2001). The QPT consists of two parts: 40 questions in Part 1 and 20 questions in Part 2; the total possible score for the whole is 60.
2. The Web-Based Modified C-Test (WB mC-Test): An mC-Test using the software program <http://clozeonline.us/minindex1.html> on the Internet. The WB mC-Test consisted of five short texts with 20 mutilated words in each, totaling 100 items, 100 points. The test was designed in the mC-Test format, where the first half (instead of the second half) of every second word is deleted (see Appendix).
3. The Questionnaire: A closed-ended, Likert-Type questionnaire regarding the participants' opinions about the WB mC-Test. There were three parts in the questionnaire:
  - Part 1 asked what the participants thought of "the WB mC-Test measures" and consisted of six items.
  - Part 2 asked whether the participants thought "the WB mC-Test is an efficient test of general English proficiency" and consisted of one item.
  - Part 3 was an open-ended question that asked the participants to make comments and suggestions.

### Data Collection Procedure

Since it was necessary to have a sufficient number of participants to ensure the reliability and validity of the test, test administrations were conducted three times to obtain data from 585 participants. In all three test administrations, the same procedures were adopted. The participants started by practicing the *sample* WB mC-Test for 10 minutes before doing the *official* WB mC-Test and completing the questionnaire within 35 minutes. After a five-minute break, the participants took the QPT, which lasted 30 minutes.

### Analytical Procedure

The data collected were processed through statistical procedures to arrive at answers to the above research questions. A pilot study was conducted to assess the readability suitability of test texts, using the Microsoft Word program to obtain Flesch-Kincaid readability grade levels. To answer the first research question, Cronbach's alpha reliability was performed. The mean scores and percentage points were calculated to answer RQ2. To answer RQ3, Pearson's correlation coefficient and overlapping variance were used to establish the criterion-related validity. To propose a concordance chart, answering RQ4, a test of regression was employed to investigate the degree of prediction of the WB mC-Test compared to the QPT so as to obtain a formula to predict the QPT scores. Finally, the data from a four-point Likert's scale questionnaire were analyzed, using means and percentage, to answer RQ5.

### Pilot study

The pilot study of the WB mC-Test was conducted with 35 undergraduate students at Mae Fah Luang University at the beginning of the first semester of academic year 2010. The purpose of the pilot study was to assess the readability suitability and the readability level of the test texts chosen. Microsoft Word was employed to calculate Flesch-Kincaid readability grade levels. Flesch-Kincaid readability grade levels are generally used to determine the difficulty level of text appropriate for each school grade level of English native students. For example, readability grade 9 will be appropriate for 9 graders and readability grade 13 for first-year university students. The results revealed that one of the texts was inappropriate because its grade level was 6.7, which was too easy for the target sample; the texts chosen for the main study were as follows:

Table 1

*Texts Used in the WB mC-Test Main Study*

<u>Topic</u>	<u>No. of words</u>	<u>Readability</u>
Car	86	7.8
Diet	83	8.7
Blood	101	9.2
Behavior	110	9.4
Computer	90	12.8
Mean ( $N=5$ )	94	9.6

Table 1 shows that the texts used for the main study ranged from 83 to 110 words long and their readability grade levels were between 7.8 to 12.8, averaging 9.6. The results reflect that the text is suitable for Grade 10 (English native students) and should be appropriate for EFL first-year university students. For testing purposes, texts with varied readability levels were used.

### Results

#### **RQ 1: How high is the reliability of the WB mC-Test?**

Table 2

*Reliability*

	<u>No. of items</u>	<u>Alpha</u>
Text 1	20	.85
Text 2	20	.72
Text 3	20	.81
Text 4	20	.64
Text 5	20	.69
Total	100	.89

The statistics in Table 2 show Cronbach's alpha reliability of the mC-Test. Although the Alphas for Texts 4 and 5 are not very high, the overall reliability is .89, which is considered high (Lazaraton&Hatch, 1991).

#### **RQ 2: What is the difficulty level of the WB mC-Test?**

The descriptive statistics in Table 3 shows that the mean of all 585 participants for the QPT is 24.412 (out of the total 60, or 40.687 %) and the WB mC-Test as 52.015 (out of the total 100, or 52.015%). The standard deviation reveals that there are moderate variances in both test scores. Since the mean score of the WB mC-Test is around 50%, it is likely not too difficult nor too easy for this target sample, thus the difficulty level is considered

appropriate. This result implies that the readability grade level of the texts used for the WB mC-Test can range distributively from readability grade levels 8 to 13 approximately (see Table 1).

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics of the QPT and the WB mC-Test Results*

	<u>N</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D</u>
QPT	585	9.0	44.0	24.412	5.505
Web	585	2.0	86.0	52.015	15.199

### **RQ 3: How high is the criterion-related validity against the QPT?**

Table 4

*Paired Mean Scores of the WB mC-Test and the QPT (adjusted)*

	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Std. Error</u> <u>Mean</u>	<u>t value</u>	<u>Sig.(2-</u> <u>tailed)</u>
Web	585	52.015	15.198	.628	19.844	.000***
QPTadj	585	40.687	9.175	.379		

\*\*\* p< .001

Table 4 displays the paired mean scores of the two tests, using the adjusted QPT mean score out of the total, 100. The mean scores of the two tests are significantly different at the .001 level. Although the QPT is more difficult than the WB mC-Test, the mean scores of 40.687 and 52.015 are still in the range of  $\pm 50$ , which is appropriate for this target group.

Table 5

*Correlation between the WB mC-Test and the QPT*

	<u>Web</u>	<u>QPTadj</u>	<u>Sig.(2-tailed)</u>
Web	1	.446***	.000***
QPTadj	.446***	1	

\*\*\* p< .001

Table 5 shows that there is a significant correlation between the WB mC-Test and the QPT. The correlation coefficient (r) value is .446 ( $p < .001$ ), which is considered to be moderate. The overlapping variance ( $r^2$ ) value of .199 reveals that the two tests are measuring different areas of students' language skills, with only a 19.9% overlap (Bailey, 1998). The criterion-related validity of the WB mC-test is thus rather low.

### **RQ 4: What is the concordance between the WB mC-Test and the QPT?**

Table 6 displays the concordance between the WB mC-test scores and the QPT scores. The concordance test helps estimate the relationship of the two test score. Since the maximum QPT scores of participants was only 44 (see Table 3), the WB mC-Test could probably predict up to the Upper Intermediate level for those who score 90 or more. The scatterplot in Figure 3 depicts the relationship between the WB mC-Test scores and the QPT scores based on the regression equation used.



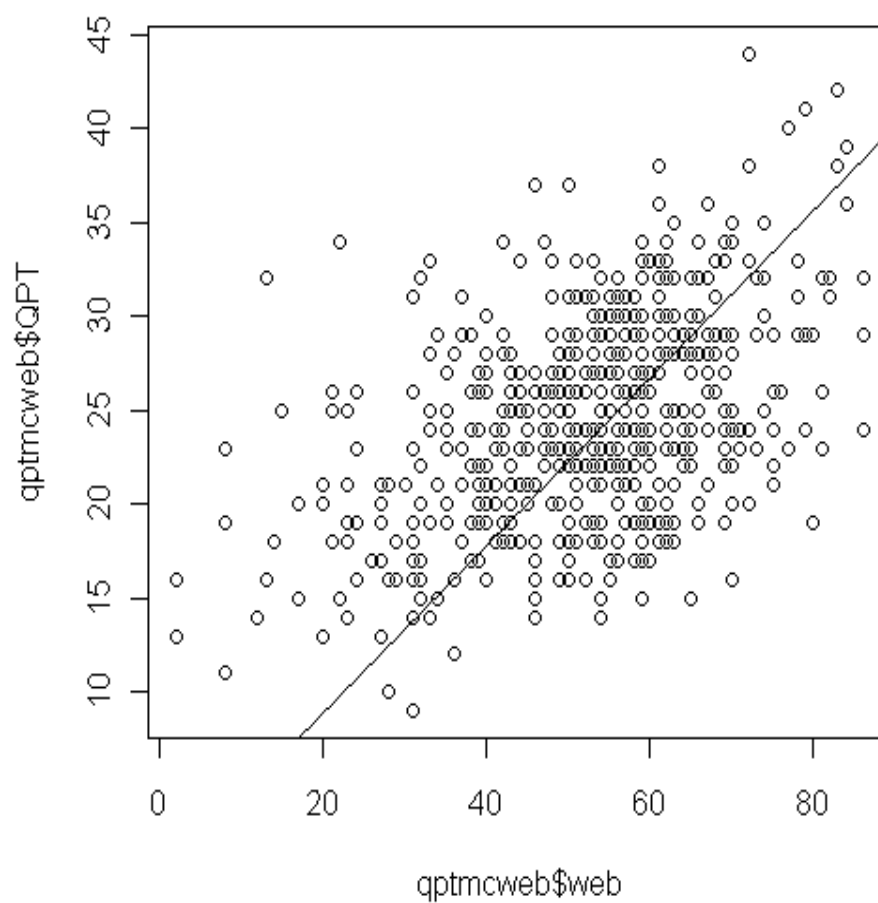


Figure 3. Scatterplot of Predicted QPT Scores Versus WB mC-Test Scores

Table 6  
*WB mC-Test and Predicted QPT Scores*

Parameter Estimates Dependent Variable: QPT						
Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
web	0.4452	0.0051	87.5527	0.0000	0.4352	0.4551
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
#0 -17 Beginner	0	17		-	38.19	max 100
#18-29 Elementary	18	29		40.43	65.14	
#30 - 39 Lower Intermediate	30	39		67.39	87.61	
#40 - 47 Upper Intermediate	40	47		89.85	105.58	
#48 - 54 Advanced	48	54		107.83	121.30	
#55 - 60 Very Advanced	55	60		123.55	134.78	

Table 7  
*Concordance Chart*

	QPT		WB MC-Test	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
#0 -17 Beginner	0	17	0	38.19
#18-29 Elementary	18	29	40.43	65.14
#30-39 Lower Intermediate	30	39	67.39	87.61
#40-47 Upper Intermediate	40	47	89.85	100.00
#48-54 Advanced	48	54		
#55-60 Very Advanced	55	60		

Based on a predictive statistical model (see Table 6 & Figure 3), it was found that the WB mC-Test can differentiate participants into four levels of the ALTE (Syndicate, 2001), from Beginner to Upper Intermediate. There were no participants advanced enough to reach a QPT score appropriate for the Advanced or Very Advanced level.

Table 8  
*Number of Participants in ALTE levels*  
 qptcat \* webnointcat Crosstabulation  
 Count

		<u>webnointcat</u>			<u>Total</u>
		Beginner	Elementary	lower intermediate	
qptcat	Beginner	33	22	1	56
	Elementary	87	294	50	431
	lower intermediate	10	59	24	93
	Upper intermediate	0	0	5	5
TOTAL		130	375	80	585

Table 8 reveals that based on the concordance chart in Table 7, most participants (431) were at the Elementary level, with a WB mC-Test score between 40 and 65. Fifty-six participants were at Level 0, Beginner; while 93 were at Level 2, Lower Intermediate; and only five were at Level 3, Upper Intermediate.

#### **RQ 5: How high is the face validity of the WB mC-Test?**

Table 9  
*Face Validity of the WB mC-Test*

<u>Questionnaire</u>						
1. The Web - Based mC-Test measures:	N	4	3	2	1	M
1.1 Vocabulary and Spelling	589	147 (25.0%)	387 (65.7%)	47 (8.0%)	8 (1.4%)	3.14
1.2 Grammar	588	126 (21.4%)	378 (64.3%)	77 (13.1%)	7 (1.2%)	3.06
1.3 Analytical Ability	585	128 (21.9%)	363 (62.1%)	84 (14.3%)	10 (1.7%)	3.04
1.4 Background Knowledge	588	123 (20.9%)	338 (57.5%)	117 (19.9%)	10 (1.7%)	2.98
1.5 Reading Comprehension	584	139 (23.8%)	364 (62.3%)	75 (12.9%)	6 (1.0%)	3.09
1.6 General English Knowledge	584	150 (25.7%)	357 (61.1%)	70 (12.0%)	7 (1.2%)	3.11
2. The Web - Based mC-Test is an efficient test of general English proficiency.	552	130 (23.6%)	342 (61.9%)	70 (12.7%)	10 (1.8%)	3.07

*Note.* 4 = strongly agree; 3 = agree; 2 = disagree; 1 = strongly disagree

To determine the degree of agreement and disagreement, the following intervals of mean scores were adopted.

1.00-1.50	=	strongly disagree/very low
1.51-2.50	=	disagree/low
2.51-3.50	=	agree/high
3.51-4.00	=	strongly agree/very high

The data from the questionnaire indicated that the mean scores concerning the characteristics of the WB mC-Test ranged from 2.98 to 3.14. These mean scores could be interpreted as participants agreeing that the WB mC-Test had all of those aspects or attributes. The data revealed that the highest mean score was on Vocabulary and Spelling (3.14), while the lowest was on Background Knowledge (2.98).

From the mean scores, it can be concluded that the participants agreed that “The WB mC-Test measures, Vocabulary and Spelling, General English Knowledge, Reading Comprehension, Grammar, Analytical Ability, and Background Knowledge,” respectively. They also agreed (with the test) that “The WB mC-Test is an efficient test of general English proficiency” ( $M=3.07$ ). Statistically, 85.5% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that “The Web-Based mC-Test is an efficient test of general English proficiency.”

In order to investigate the perceptions of expert participants, six English instructors (five Thais and one native speaker of English) with a minimum of five-years of EFL teaching experience at the tertiary level, were also asked to do the mC-Test and complete the questionnaire. All six participants rated either *agree* or *strongly agree* for four of the six aspects: 1.1 *Vocabulary and Spelling*, 1.3 *Analytical Ability*, 1.5 *Reading Comprehension*, and 1.6 *General English Knowledge*. For 1.2 *Grammar* and 1.4 *Background Knowledge*, five participants rated either *agree* or *strongly agree*, while one rated *disagree* on each. Interestingly, four participants agreed (3 *agree* and 1 *strongly agree*) that “*The mC-test is an efficient test of general English proficiency*,” whereas two chose *disagree*; both of these participants, however, agreed that the mC-Test measures various aspects of the language. The one native speaker of English disagreed because “it tests advanced levels of English proficiency, not general English proficiency”; thus, it might depend on how one defines the scope of general English proficiency.

### Conclusion and Discussions

Evidence from statistical analyses supported the notion that overall the WB mC-Test has high reliability, which is an important quality for test usefulness (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). The overall Cronbach’s alpha was .89, which was consistent with previous studies about mC-Tests (Boonsathorn, 1987; Prapphal, 1994, 1996; Rungruangthum, 2005; Wonghiransombat, 2013). The mean score of the WB mC-Test was 52.015%, which supported the argument that readability grade levels between 7.8 and 12.8 were suitable for Mae Fah Luang University undergraduate students. The results were in line with Kammasorn’s (2008) study, which found that for relatively low proficiency undergraduate students, the readability grade levels between 5.6 and 11.3 were appropriate for their Web-Based C-Test.

The correlation between the WB mC-Test and the QPT was .446 ( $r^2 = .199$ ). The correlation was significant at the .001 level, but not very high. The criterion-related validity of the WB mC-test against the QPT is thus rather low. Kammasorn’s (2008) findings also yielded a significant but not high correlation between the web-based C-Test and the QPT ( $r = .340$ ;  $r^2 = .116$ ). The moderate correlation may imply that both the C-Test and the mC-Test focus on different areas within English from the QPT. Even though the two types of test purport to be general English proficiency tests, they differ in certain aspects. The QPT, like most standardized proficiency tests, assesses three specific areas of English—reading, vocabulary, and grammar. The C-test and the mC-Test, on the other hand, are integrative tests, requiring test-takers to incorporate different skills or abilities in completing the test. The QPT consists of two parts: Part 1 is taken by all students and Part 2 is for higher ability students only (Syndicate, 2001). The C-Test and mC-Test usually consist of four to six short passages, assessing test-takers’ overall abilities. The QPT is a multiple-choice test, whereas the C-Test and mC-Test require test-takers to fill in the missing parts of words. For these reasons, it can be concluded that the Web-Based mC-Test does not conclusively measure the same types of abilities as the QPT.

The findings reveal that the WB mC-Test could differentiate students into four levels of ALTE, from Level 0 (Beginner) to Level 3 (Upper Intermediate). The Concordance Chart shows that there were no participants advanced enough to reach a high QPT score and only five participants were at the Upper Intermediate level. Kammasorn (2008) had a similar problem in their study because the subjects’ QPT scores were between Level 0 (Beginner) and Level 1 (Elementary), enabling the Web-Based C-Test to differentiate into only two levels.

In terms of face validity, the WB mC-Test appears to be quite high, with a mean score from 2.98 to 3.14, which is the *agree* level. To be precise, 85.5% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the WB mC-Test is an efficient test of general English proficiency. The results were consistent with the researcher's (Boonsathorn, 1987, 2000, 2007; Boonsathorn, Getkham, & Boonsathorn, 2007) studies and Kammasorn's (2008) study, while scholars such as Weir (1990) and Bradshaw (1990) found that the C-Test had low face validity.

Interestingly, Oller and Conrad (1971) pointed out that in Taylor's (1953) pioneering cloze study with the aim of measuring L1 subjects' reading comprehension, it was found that cloze scores also correlated with other attributes including vocabulary knowledge and IQ. In their experimental study, Oller and Conrad (1971) found that their cloze test discriminated well between beginning, intermediate, and advanced ESL students as well as English L1 speaking TEFL graduates. In addition, the study revealed a high multiple correlation of .88 with the UCLA ESLPE test and considerable correlations with the subtests: Grammar (.58), Vocabulary (.59), Reading (.80), and Dictation (.82). Oller and Conrad concluded that "with further experimentation and refinement, the cloze method may play an extremely useful role in the placement of non-native speakers of English and in the diagnosis of their special language problems" (p. 192).

The findings of the present study regarding face validity appear to lend support to the above mentioned empirical studies. Specifically, vocabulary and spelling were rated the highest rank of attributes ( $M = 3.14$ ), followed by general English knowledge ( $M = 3.06$ ), analytical ability ( $M = 3.04$ ), and background knowledge ( $M = 2.98$ ), respectively. These mean scores are considered high and were all at the level of *agree*. The students' and experts' judgment data appear to support that the test takers agreed that the WB mC-Test measured all these attributes. For the question, as to whether The Web-Based mC-Test is an efficient test of general English proficiency, the majority of students (85.5%) either agreed or strongly agreed that it was ( $M = 3.07$ ).

Although it may not be able to lend theoretical support to the construct validity of the test, face validity is a characteristic of tests that can be measured (Nevo, 1985). Therefore, students' and experts' judgment data can partially support other characteristics of the test, especially practicality.

Despite some limitations, this study has supported the promise of the WB mC-Test as a possible alternative English proficiency test—a practical preliminary self-assessment tool for university students; test takers can receive instant score reports as soon as they complete the test. For future research, an investigation of washback, the effects on teaching and learning, of the WB mC-Test should be performed. Another recommendation, which is important, but has not been investigated here, is validating the WB mC-Test empirically by correlating it with other specific attributes of language proficiency to help confirm their connections.

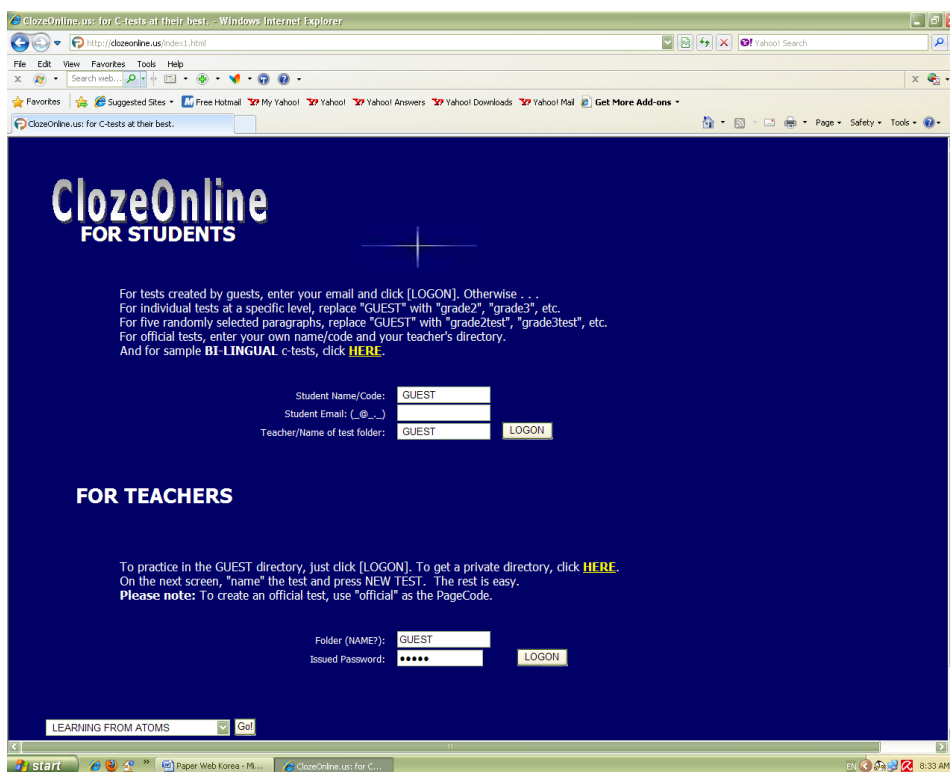
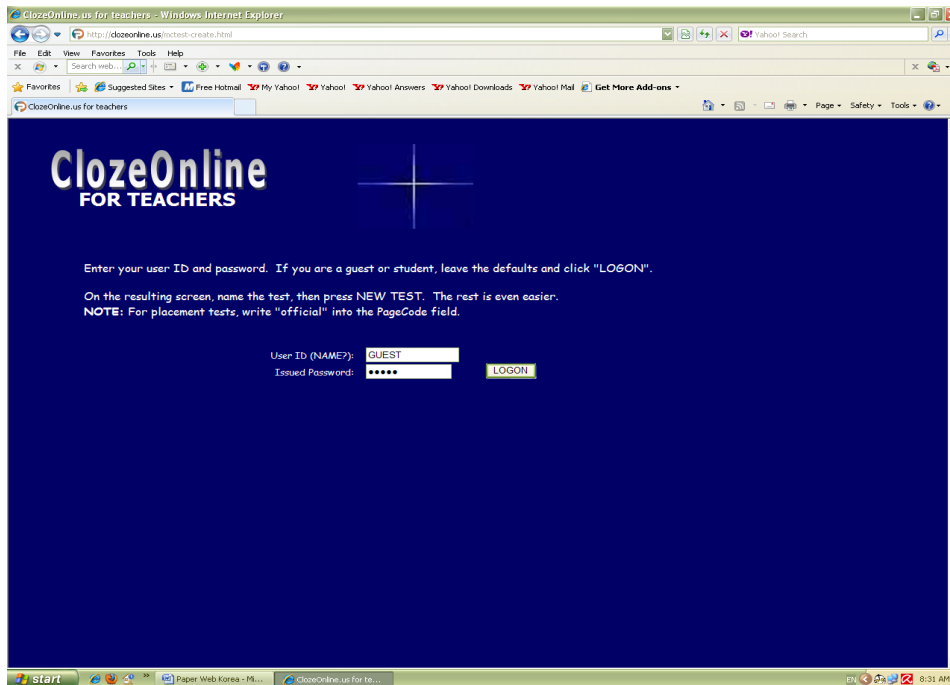
## References

- Alderson, J. C. (1979). The Cloze Procedure and Proficiency in English as a Foreign Language. *TESOL Quarterly*, 13(2), 219-227. doi:10.2307/3586211
- Alderson, J. C. (1980). Native and Nonnative Speaker Performance on Cloze Test 1. *Language Learning*, 30(1), 59-76. doi:10.1111/j.1467-1770.1980.tb00151.x
- Babaii, E., & Ansary, H. (2001). The C-test: a valid operationalization of reduced redundancy principle? *System*, 29(2), 209-219. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(01)00012-4
- Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests*. Oxford: OUP.
- Bailey, K.M. (1998). *Learning about language assessment: Dilemmas, decisions, and directions*. Cambridge, MA: Heinle&Heinle.
- Boonsathorn, S. (1987). *C-Tests, proficiency, and reading strategies in ESL*: National Library of Canada.
- Boonsathorn, S. (2000). S-Tests: A rational C-Test for advanced students. *Thai Journal of Development Administration*, 40(1), 65-74.
- Boonsathorn, S. (2007). *C-Test revisited: A validation of Semantic/Syntactic Tests (S-Tests) for advanced students*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Frankfurt.
- Boonsathorn, S., Getkham, K., & Boonsathorn, W. (2007). *Development of NIDA Test of English Competence (N-TEC)*. Research Report, The National Institute of Development Administration, Bangkok, Thailand.

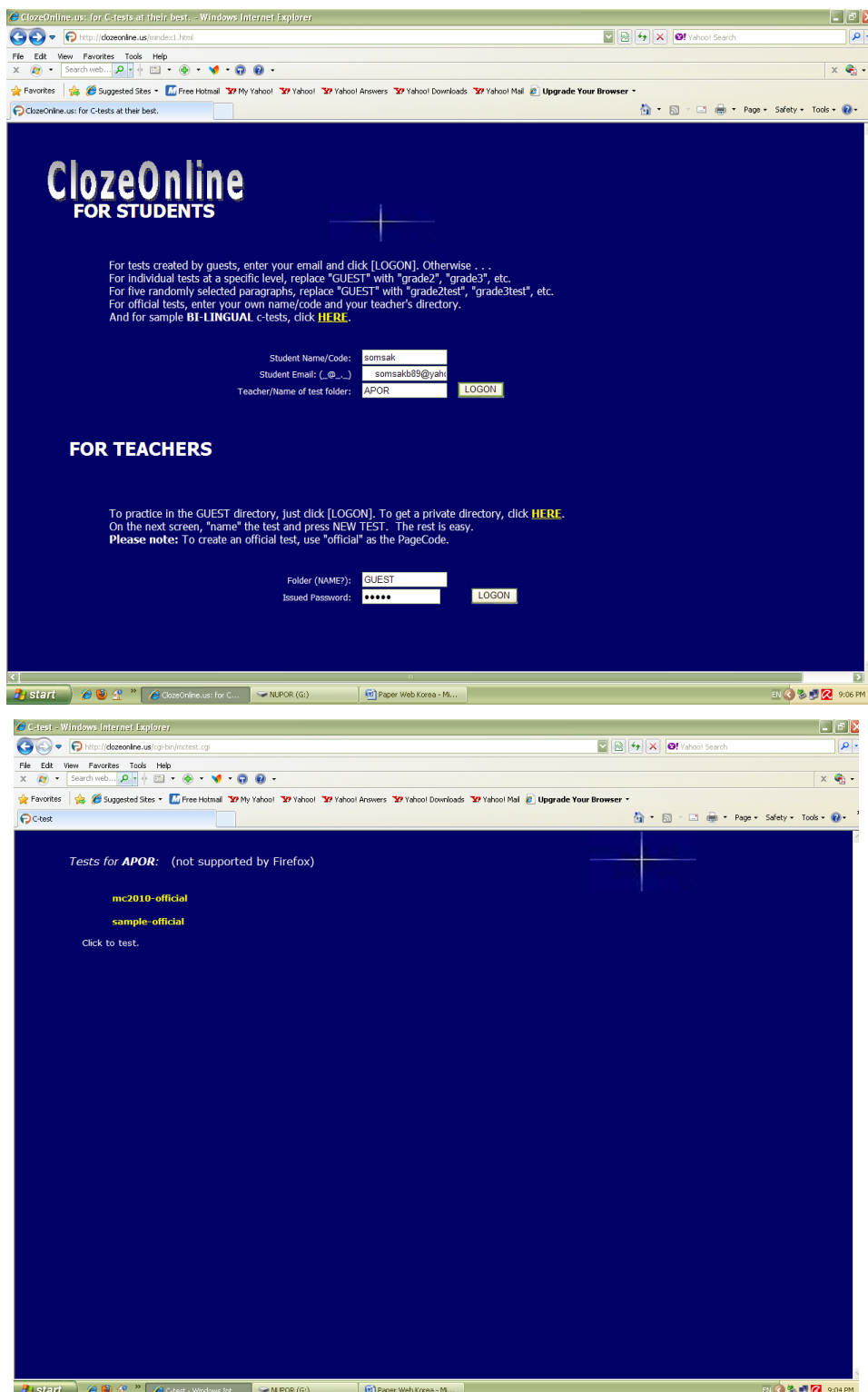
- Bradshaw, J. (1990). Test-takers' reactions to a placement test. *Language Testing*, 7(1), 13-30.  
doi:10.1177/026553229000700103
- Cleary, C. (1988). The C-Test in English: left-hand deletions. *RELC Journal*, 19(2), 26-35.  
doi:10.1177/003368828801900203
- Cohen, A. D., Segal, M., & Bar-Siman-To, R. (1984). The C-Test in Hebrew. *Language Testing*, 1(2), 221-225.  
doi:10.1177/026553228400100206
- Connelly, M. (1997). Using C-tests in English with post-graduate students. *English for Specific Purposes*, 16(2), 139-150.  
doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(96)00018-X
- Dörnyei, Z., & Katona, L. (1992). Validation of the C-test amongst Hungarian EFL learners. *Language Testing*, 9(2), 187-206. doi:10.1177/026553229200900206
- Goodman, K. S. (1967). Reading: A psycholinguistic guessing game. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 6(4), 126-135.
- Kammasorn, N. (2008). *The use of the web-based C-test (WBCT) as an English placement test for Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-Ok and an investigation of test-takers strategies*. Thesis (PhD) --Chulalongkorn University, 2008.
- Klein-Braley, C. (1981). Empirical investigations of cloze tests. *Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Duisburg*.
- Klein-Braley, C. (1997). C-Tests in the context of reduced redundancy testing: An appraisal. *Language Testing*, 14(1), 47-84.
- Klein-Braley, C., & Raatz, U. (1984). A survey of research on the C-Test1. *Language Testing*, 1(2), 134-146.  
doi:10.1177/026553228400100202
- Klein-Braley, C., & Stevenson, D. K. (1981). *Practice and problems in language testing*: Peter D. Lang.
- Lazaraton, A., & Hatch, E. M. (1991). *The research manual: Design and statistics for applied linguistics*. New York: Newbury House.
- Nevo, B. (1985). Face validity revisited. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 22(4), 287-293.
- Oller, J. W. (1976). Evidence for a general language proficiency factor: An expectancy grammar. *Die neueren sprachen*, 75(2), 165-174.
- Oller, J. W. (1979). *Language tests at school: A pragmatic approach*: Addison-Wesley Longman Ltd.
- Oller, J. W., & Conrad, C. A. (1971). The cloze technique and ESL proficiency. *Language Learning*, 21(2), 183-194.
- Prapphal, K. (1994). A study of the C-Test and the X-Test performed by firstyear science-oriented university students. *PASAA*, 24, 16-23.
- Prapphal, K. (1996). An investigation of the general and academic English X-Tests in measuring grammatical competence of Thai science students. *PASAA*, 26, 73-79.
- Raatz, U., & Klein-Braley, C. (1981). The C-Test--A Modification of the Cloze Procedure.
- Rouhani, M. (2008). Another look at the c-test: A validation study with Iranian EFL learners. *The Asian EFL Journal Quarterly* 10 (1), 154-180.
- Rungruangthum, M. (2005). *A comparative study between the C-Test and the NC-Test and between MC-Test and NMC-Test, using identical texts*. Mahidol University.
- Sigott, G., & Kobrel, J. (1993). Validating the X-test. *Language Testing Update*, 14, 53-58.
- Smith, F. (2012). *Understanding Reading: A Psycholinguistic Analysis of Reading and Learning to Read, Sixth Edition*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Spolsky, B. (1971). Reduced redundancy as a language testing tool. In G. E. Perren & J. L. M. Trim (Eds.), *Applications of Linguistics: Selected Papers of the Second International Congress of Applied Linguistics (Cambridge 8-2 September 1969)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stansfield, C., & Hansen, J. (1983). Field Dependence-Independence as a Variable in Second Language Cloze Test Performance\*. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17(1), 29-38. doi:10.2307/3586422
- Syndicate, U. o. C. L. E. (2001). *Quick Placement Test*: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, W. L. (1953). "Cloze procedure": a new tool for measuring readability. *Journalism quarterly*.
- Weir, C. J. (1990). *Communicative language testing*: Prentice Hall.
- Wonghiransombat, P. (2013). The Cloze Test and the C-Test. *Thammasat Journal*, 31(2).

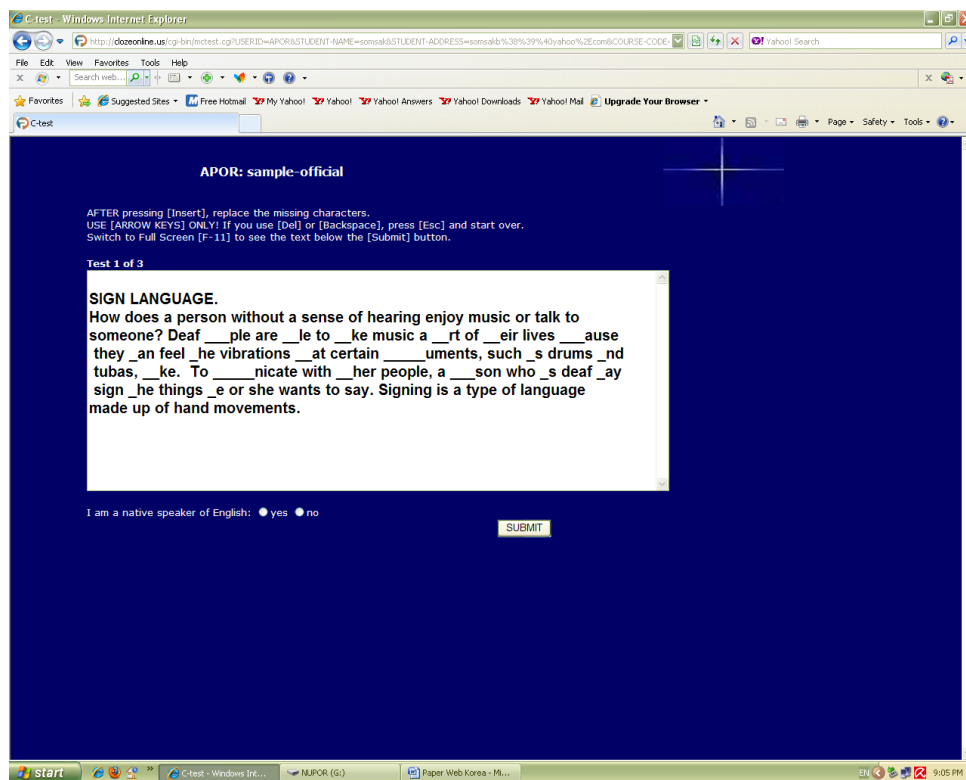
## Appendix

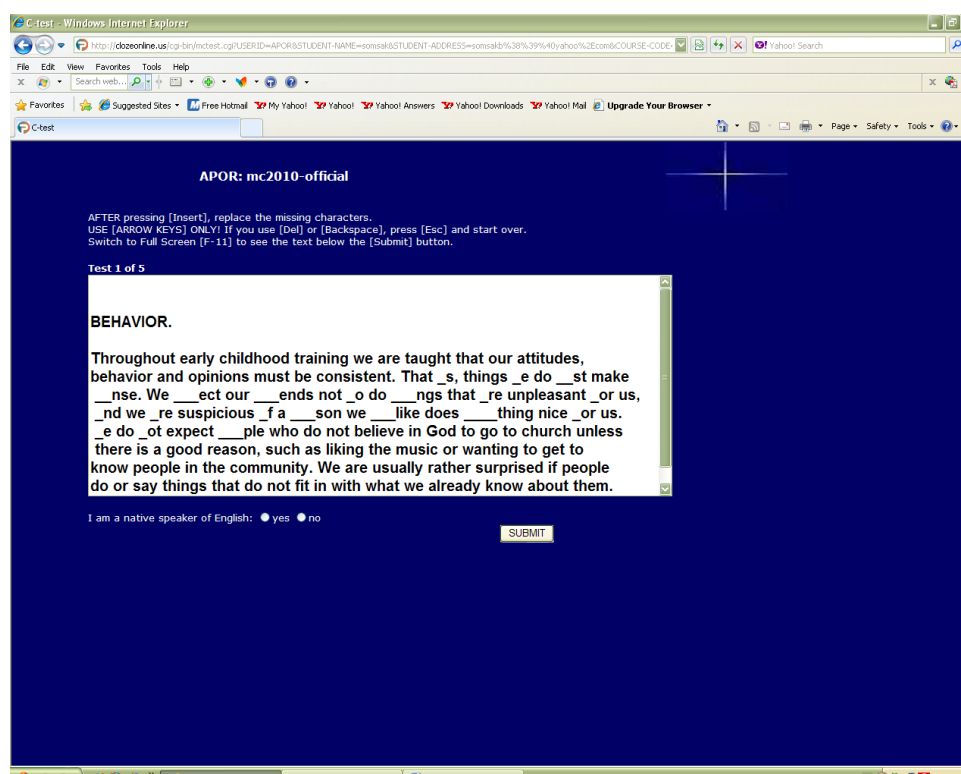
### Sample Test Access Screens











## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Mae Fah Luang University for their financial support of the original project on the Web-based mC-Test and Dr. Arthur Dryver and Dr. Richard Lynch for their invaluable comments and feedback. They are also grateful to all anonymous reviewers and Dean Jorgensen for their insightful comments and suggestions.

## About the Authors:

Somsak Boonsathorn received his PhD in TESL from The University of Alberta, Canada. He is now an assistant professor at Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand, in the Graduate Program of English for Professional Development. He initiated the mC-Test and developed the S-Test. Email: somsak.boo@mfu.ac.th.

Chayaporn Kaoropthai earned her M.A. (ELT) from King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Bangkok, Thailand, and is presently a PhD candidate in Educational Technology and Communications. Her research interests include innovations in education and language assessment. She is now with the School of Liberal Arts at Mae Fah Luang University. Email: Chayaporn.kao@mfu.ac.th.

## Foreign Language Teachers' Attitudes Toward Written Recall Protocol as a Practice of Reading Comprehension Assessment

**Kenneth J. Boyte\***

*Cabrillo College, Middlebury Institute of International Studies*

### Abstract

As part of an international effort to develop theory and best practices for teaching languages, the U.S. military has, since the American Revolution, been a leading supporter of literacy education to improve the job performance of soldiers. One important aspect of literacy education today—which continues to be a priority for government agencies, private industry, and public school teachers—involves the development of tools to more accurately measure reading skills. This study highlights an alternative assessment framework known as immediate written recall protocols, currently being used by at least one U.S. government facility dedicated to training military linguists and known for implementing pedagogical innovations. The study explored the beliefs and assessment practices of foreign language teachers at this school regarding their use of traditional item types and immediate written recall protocols, which require students to produce written responses to summarize main ideas and to identify details in texts immediately after reading. Using a questionnaire and a follow-up procedure, this mixed-methods study found that properly trained foreign language instructors believe that immediate written recall protocols are superior to traditional item types because the alternative assessment framework can provide insight into comprehension breakdowns and thus more directly inform corrective instruction.

**Keywords:** Reading comprehension, immediate written recall protocols, diagnostic assessment

### Introduction

Immediate written recall protocols, a diagnostic assessment grounded in the cognitive theory of constructivism (Bartlett, 1932; Spiro, 1980; Spivey, 1989), provide an alternative to traditional measurements of reading comprehension, which have often included multiple-choice, true-false, and cloze-completion item types (Fletcher, 2006; Kamil, 1984; Oller, 1979). Unlike such item types popular in the psychometric tradition of discrete-point tests (Galton, 1879; Goodman, 1968, 1988; Smith, 1971), immediate written recall protocols require students to produce written language to summarize the main ideas and to identify the details of texts immediately following reading. These written responses then can be analyzed to identify information gaps and communication breakdowns, which in turn informs corrective instruction (Bernhardt, 1983, 1991, 2000, 2011). The procedures for using immediate written recall protocols are similar to those used in the first recorded test of reading comprehension reported in 1884. In that experiment of psychology, “Adults read a 10-line paragraph during a fixed time period, after which they wrote down everything they could remember” (Venezsky, 1984, p. 13).

Although defining the unobservable psychological trait of reading comprehension has been difficult and remains elusive today (Perfetti, Landi, & Oakhill, 2005; RAND, 2002; Sterziik & Fraser, 2012), determining best practices for accurately assessing reading skills continues to be a priority for educators (National Reading Panel, 2000), private industry (Lindhour & Ale, 2009), and government agencies (RAND, 2002). For military linguists

\* Email: kenboyte@gmail.com. Tel.: 831-402-8480. Address: 12765 Via Linda, Castroville, CA 95012 U.S.A.

on the battlefield, national security is at stake (Kincaid, Fishbourne, Rogers, & Chissom, 1975). In terms of the strategic military importance of literacy education and reading comprehension, DuBay (2004) reported, “General George Washington first addressed concerns about the reading skills of fighters during the Revolutionary War... Since then, the U.S. armed services have invested more in studying workplace literacy than any other organization” (p. 3).

Because misunderstanding texts could result in severe consequences in military operations, reading comprehension should be taken very seriously in the foreign language classrooms that prepare military personnel for their jobs. Responding to this concern, the U.S. Department of Education instructed the RAND Reading Study Group to investigate best practices for teaching and assessing reading comprehension. Consistent with the recommendations of the RAND report published in 2002, the assessment framework known as immediate written recall protocols has been proposed to address government concerns about inadequate literacy education and best practices for measuring reading skills. However, implementation of the alternative assessment framework has not been widespread, likely resulting from a lack of knowledge about immediate written recall protocols and the general ideas held by foreign language teachers about best practices for assessing reading comprehension (Bernhardt, 1991, 2011).

The purpose of this study is to explore the beliefs and practices of foreign language teachers regarding their use of immediate written recall protocols and traditional item types for assessing reading comprehension. In the study, I will demonstrate that the assessment practices and attitudes of respondents regarding immediate written recall protocols and traditional item types are similar to those of foreign language teachers reported in the literature. Further, I show that participation in the research inquiry had an “awareness-raising” impact on some respondents, who reported changes in their beliefs about immediate written recall protocols. The next section of the paper presents a literature review of research on reading comprehension, which began at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the birth of the field of psychology and continued to the present, driven in part by the expanding technological demands of education, industry, and national security (DuBay, 2004).

### Reading Comprehension

In 1879 Sir Francis Galton of England introduced and defined the term *psychometrics* as “the art of imposing measurement and number upon operations of the mind” (Barrett, 2003). That same year, the scientific study of reading began when Wilhelm Wundt established the world’s first laboratory of experimental psychology in Leipzig, Germany (Venezsky, 1984). In the first recorded study of reading comprehension reported in 1884, “Adults read a 10-line paragraph during a fixed period, after which they wrote down everything they could remember” (Venezsky, 1984, p. 13). Later, the British psychologist Sir Frederic Bartlett (1932) reported using written recall protocols during 20 years of investigations into the role of memory in reading comprehension. This work provided the foundation for the development of a constructivist theory of learning and reading comprehension, which gained popularity in the 1970s (Spivey, 1989). Prior to this time, multiple-choice items, a favorite item type of the Audio-Lingual method (Aitken, 1976), were initially introduced by the U.S. military during World War I to rapidly and objectively process and classify large numbers of people. In addition to supporting mass standardized testing procedures, the response format of the item type “lends itself to quantification” (Wigdor & Green, 1991, p. 19). Multiple-choice items can also be characterized as selected-response (Downing, 2006), compared to constructed-response items—often a single word, sentence, or paragraph—to assess writing (Livingston, 2009). One type of constructed-response item, the cloze item, introduced by Taylor (1953, 1956), requires readers to restore words that have been either systematically or randomly deleted from texts. Although debate has persisted about the constructs measured by cloze items, the item type remains popular with teachers because of its “ease of construction, administration, and scoring” (McKamey, 2006, p. 115).

Nevertheless, despite popularity with teachers and test administrators, because the processes involved in reading comprehension are invisible and cannot be directly measured, multiple-choice, cloze, and other

traditional test items generally only serve as indirect measurements, from which inferences about reading comprehension are made (Wolf, 1993); particularly problematic for educators, these inferences have often been misleading (RAND, 2002). Michell (2000) explained the following:

The attributes that psychometricians aspire to measure are not directly observable (i.e., claims made about them can only [at present] be tested by first observing something else and making inferences). What psychometricians observe are the responses made to test items. Intellectual abilities, personality traits, and social attitudes are theoretical attributes proposed to explain such responses, amongst other things. Typically, test scores are frequencies of some kind, and the hypothesized relations between these theoretical attributes and test scores are taken to be quantitative relations. (p. 648)

In addition to this assumption that reading comprehension and other unobservable psychological constructs can be quantified and measured, the field of psychometrics has been closely associated with a tradition of discrete-point tests, which itself has been based on the false assumption that students who can answer a discrete set of test items can demonstrate language proficiency (Bernhardt, 2011). Aitken (1976) reported, “The essence of discrete point fallacy ... is the incorrect assumption that a test of many isolated and separate points of grammar or lexicon is a test of language in any realistic sense” (p. 9). A related issue is that test scores do not have inherent meanings but must be interpreted in relation to the scores of a group of test-takers or a defined assessment standard (Wigdor & Green, 1991). Thus, the lack of correlation, between statistically inflated and/or deflated test scores and the demonstrated language skills of students, has been an underlying source of false inferences about language proficiency derived from traditional assessments (RAND, 2002). The societal consequences of such false assumptions and inferences, and the subsequent misdiagnosis of comprehension skills, are far-reaching (National Reading Panel, 2000; RAND, 2002). Industrial workers who cannot read manuals or warning signs may get hurt (Lindhour & Ale, 2009); likewise, military linguists who make translation errors or are otherwise linguistically unperceptive may be a threat to national security (Kincaid et al., 1975).

Complicating this measurement dilemma, defining reading comprehension has also been difficult; the construct has been described as “multidimensional” (Carlson, Seipel, & McMaster, 2014), “sociocultural” (Roebuck, 1998), and “psycholinguistic” (Goodman, 1968, 1988); it involves bottom-up (Gough, 1972), top-down (Goodman, 1968, 1988), and integrative processes (Glynn, 1983; Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978; Rumelhart, 1990) occurring “as the reader builds one or more mental representations of a text message” (Perfetti & Adlof, 2012, p. 1). Duke and Carlisle (2011) defined *comprehension* as “the act of constructing meaning with oral or written text” (p. 200).

Similarly, cognitive models of the reading process that became popular in the 1970s described reading “as mediated via processes in working memory, a capacity system limited both in terms of quantity of ideas stored and the duration of storage” (Fraser, 2007, p. 373). For example, LeBerge and Samuels’ (1974) study presented a model of reading comprehension based on information processing theory, which described the workings of the mind as dependent upon the limited capacity of memory. According to this model, which views the mind as functioning like a computer, reading comprehension is believed to include two main processes: decoding and comprehending (Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Pikulski & Chard, 2003). In contrast to automatic processes of reading, which “are carried out rapidly, effortlessly, and accurately demanding little attention and cognitive resources,” controlled processes such as decoding are believed to be slower, more deliberate, and more resource-intensive (Fraser, 2007, p. 372).

Alternatively, the model of reading comprehension advanced by schema theory (Bartlett, 1932) explained comprehension as the relating of “textual material to one’s own knowledge,” which has been described as the mapping of inputs onto existing concepts via both bottom-up and top-down processes, where “schemata are hierarchically organized, from most general at the top to most specific at the bottom” (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983, pp. 356-357). The lack of experience or prior knowledge, conceptualized as content schemata, has been

one source of difficulty for L2 readers, particularly relating to unfamiliarity with cultural and historical information (Fisher & Frey, no date; Reisman & Wineburg, 2008; Stahl et al., 1991). Referring to the construction of meaning arising from an interaction between schemata and text, Clarke and Silberstein (1977) reported, “More information is contributed by the reader than by the print on the page” (pp. 136-137). For example, Carlson et al., (2014) reported that the product of reading comprehension, which is believed to involve the tracking of causal relationships presented in text, is “what the reader learned or stored in memory from the text after reading” (p. 41). Sterzik and Fraser (2012) explained, “Overall, text-based comprehension requires students to remember propositions (i.e., ideas) and to attach them to new propositions as they read” (p. 108). Of the five basic structures in expository texts identified by Meyer and Freedle (1984), the most difficult for readers appears to be cause/effect, compared to description, sequence, problem/solution, and compare/contrast. Since the 1970s, the assessment of such aspects of reading comprehension has involved determining learners’ abilities to identify main ideas and details in texts using multiple-choice, cloze, and other traditional item types, as well as recall protocols (Akhondi & Malayeri, 2011), which Bachman and Palmer (1996) described as “an extended production response... [ranging] from two sentences or utterances to virtually free writing...” (p. 54).

### Written Recall Protocols

Since the 1980s, Bernhardt (1983, 1991, 2000, 2011) and other scholars (e.g., Bernhardt & Deville, 1991; Bintz, 2000; Chang, 2006; Gass & Mackey, 2000; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Johnston, 1983; Leaver, 2013; Miller & Kintsch, 1980; Wells, 1986) have proposed the use of immediate written recall protocols as an alternative to item types generally used in the psychometric tradition of discrete-point tests (Galton, 1879; Goodman, 1968, 1988; Smith, 1971). Criticisms of multiple-choice and other traditional item types have included that “being able to complete the conventional comprehension tasks does not always mean that the students ‘understand’ a passage” (Bernhardt, 2011, p. 103). Also critical of discrete-point tests, the RAND Reading Study Group (2002) identified false inferences based on traditional item types as the major problem in assessing language competence generally and reading comprehension specifically.

One purported advantage of immediate written recall protocols over traditional item types is that the alternative assessment framework does not interfere with the processes involved in reading comprehension because no leading questions are asked. Wilkinson and Son (2011) reported that the simple act of asking a question changes meaning and alters comprehension. In addition to being less intrusive, immediate written recall protocols are believed to provide a more accurate framework for the assessment of comprehension skills because they can “show where a lack of grammar is interfering with the communication between text and reader, while not focusing a reader’s attention on linguistic elements in texts” (Bernhardt, 1991, p. 200). Hayes and Flower (1980) also observed that immediate written recall protocols provide insight into readers’ analytical processes, and Johnston (1983) characterized immediate written recall protocols as “the most straightforward assessment of the result of the text-reader interaction” (p. 54).

Grounded in constructivism (Bartlett, 1932), a theory that postulates that readers build “a mental representation from textual cues by organizing, selecting, and connecting content” (Spivey, 1989), immediate written recall protocols may also help researchers study some of the cognitive processes involved in reading, which is viewed as an active process that involves an integration of bottom-up and top-down processing (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978; Rumelhart, 1990; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). Proponents of the theory point to the modifications, regroupings, and simplifications of texts produced by students during the recall process as evidence of the productive nature of reading. Constructivist theory also postulates a strong relationship between reading and writing (Spivey, 1989).

Immediate written recall protocols may also support learning resulting from the cognitive connections believed to be made while summarizing texts and otherwise responding. Although not endorsing immediate written recall protocols specifically, Fisher, Frey, and Lapp (2009) reported that “[s]ummarizing improves students’ reading comprehension of fiction and nonfiction alike as it helps the reader construct an overall



understanding of a text” (p. 24). Citing Aebersold and Field (1997), Hedgcock and Ferris (2009) also noted that “[s]ummary-writing is a good review and comprehension check tool” (p. 105). A current example of an immediate written recall protocol developed by Bernhardt and Leaver (no date) to assess students’ reading comprehension skills includes the following procedure: “Student reads target language text until they feel comfortable. Then text is removed and student writes down in complete English sentences everything they recall.” Describing the procedures involved in immediate written recall protocols, Brantmeier (2006) also reported, “In the written recall task students are asked to read a text, and, without looking back at the text, write down everything they can remember” (p. 2). The productive nature of the task, which integrates reading and writing, is consistent with the theory of constructivism that began with Bartlett (1932) and became popular in the 1970s (Miller, 1973; Spiro, 1980; Spivey, 1989). Although other researchers had used written recall protocols before, Bartlett (1932) is generally credited with first advocating a constructivist explanation for the modifications, regroupings, and simplifications of texts that occur during recall (Spivey, 1989). Other practical and theoretical strengths of immediate written recall protocols over traditional item types can be inferred from Spivey (1989), who reported, “Current reading comprehension tests, typically composed of passages to read and multiple-choice questions to be answered, are clearly inadequate when one examines the task and the texts from a constructivist perspective.”

Despite purported benefits, immediate written recall protocols have not been widely used in North America (Bernhardt, 1991, 2011), where language teachers have been generally unaware of the alternative assessment frameworks proposed in the 1970s by Rumelhart (1990) and Kintsch (1974). Even among the language teachers in the United States familiar with the assessment framework, immediate recall protocols have been perceived to involve time-consuming procedures for setting up and scoring (Alderson, 2000; Deville & Chalhoub-Deville, 1993). Even Bernhardt (2011) reported that the matrices for qualitatively and quantitatively scoring “can take many hours to construct” (p. 104). The procedure involves pasting propositions (i.e., ideas) identified in the text into an Excel spreadsheet and ranking each proposition on a scale of 1-4 in terms of importance (least to most important) in relation to the text’s meaning. After students have responded, scoring follows, which involves matching the reader’s recall to a rubric of propositions (Bernhardt, 2011). Regarding the time-consuming scoring procedures, Bernhardt (2011) noted that research is underway to develop a valid and reliable framework for scoring student responses holistically, rather “than by counting all propositions” (p. 106). Another criticism of immediate written recall protocols has been that the assessment framework relies too much on memory. For example, Koda (2005) reported that “with its strong reliance on memory, free recall makes it difficult to distinguish recalled elements in the text from those retrieved from knowledge bases” (p. 257). This criticism, however, has been challenged by a growing consensus among researchers that memory is essential in reading comprehension (Clark & Silberstein, 1977; Fraser, 2007; Lutz & Huitt, 2003).

To the extent that immediate written recall protocols may be a valuable assessment framework, in view of criticism, some researchers (e.g., Young, 1999) have reported using the alternative assessment framework along with traditional item types to assess various aspects of reading comprehension. Many studies conducted by social scientists also have reported using recall protocols to investigate cognitive processes and the mental constructions of texts (Frederiksen, 1975). Other studies have focused on the effects of discourse types on recall (Meyer & Freedle, 1984), the effects of readability levels on recall (Miller & Kintsch, 1980), compared recall protocols to summary tasks (Riley & Lee, 1996), and compared traditional item types (Wolf, 1993). Although written recall protocols have been widely used in social science research as a measure of comprehension, less attention has been given to the assessment practices and attitudes of foreign language teachers regarding the use of immediate written recall protocols and traditional item types for assessing reading skills (Riley & Lee, 1996). However, related attitudinal studies have reported on general educational trends in Southern Asia (Renandya, Lim, Leung, & Jacobs, 1999), as well as the beliefs and practices of teachers and learners regarding various aspects of education, such as the effectiveness of communicative language teaching (Ngoe & Iwashita, 2012). Specifically focused on the beliefs and practices of foreign language teachers regarding their use of immediate written recall protocols and traditional item types, the present mixed-methods study follows Wubshet and Menuta (2015), who

used an informant interview to gather data in a qualitative analysis of the assessment practices of foreign language teachers. To the extent that the team leader who helped recruit participants and distributed/collected data can be considered an informant, this study differed from Wubshet and Menuta (2013) in its research focus, research methodology, and use of data-collection instruments (e.g., a questionnaire and follow-up inquiry).

### Research Questions

In light of the literature and to understand language teaching practices, the present study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What procedures do foreign language teachers prefer to use in assessing students' reading comprehension?
- (2) Are foreign language teachers using immediate written recall protocols to assess students' reading comprehension? Why or why not?

These research questions are meaningful in view of the important relationship between literacy education and reading comprehension skills needed for education (National Reading Panel, 2000), industry (Lindhour & Ale, 2009), and national security (Kincaid et al., 1975). Describing reading comprehension research unguided by a unified theoretical foundation as "a problem of great social importance," Kintsch and Miller (1984) argue that, "For our society to function, people have to be able to understand what they read" (p. 200). Understanding teachers' practices in assessing language learners' reading comprehension is a step toward enhancing reading instruction.

### Methodology

#### Participants

Of the 28 respondents in the study (Appendix A), 20 were Korean foreign language teachers, whose L1 is Korean, employed at a U.S. government facility where the leadership, since 2013, has recommended the use of immediate written recall protocols to support the teaching and assessment of reading comprehension. In terms of educational background, 11 of the 20 Korean language instructors have master's degrees in TESOL, Applied Linguistics, or Education. The other eight respondents, one of whose L1 is Korean, were graduate students in a local MATESOL program. One of the English-speaking graduate students reported that their L1 is Spanish.

#### Instruments

The study utilized a questionnaire (Appendix B), defined as "any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react..." (Brown, 2001, p. 6), consisting of selected-response Likert-scale items paired with constructed-response items to gather information about each item type analyzed. The study also utilized a follow-up procedure (Table 11) consisting of one written question to which respondents provided written responses.

#### Data Collection and Analysis

A Korean foreign language instructor and team leader at the U.S. government facility helped distribute/collect questionnaires and follow-up data to/from team members and colleagues. Prior to the start of this research project, the proposed study was submitted for IRB approval and exempted from IRB review.

To obtain the widest breadth of data possible about the assessment practices and attitudes of the foreign language teachers regarding each item type analyzed, the questionnaire utilized paired items consisting of both a constructed-response item and a nine-point Likert-scale (Busch, 1995) selected-response item. Both qualitative

(Berkemeyer, 1989; Lazaraton, 1995; Richards, 2003) and quantitative (Turner, 2014) methods were used to analyze the qualitative and quantitative data. Because a Likert scale was used for some items, this data was treated as “interval-like” and statistically measured (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991). Thus, the study can be characterized as “mixed method” (Nunan & Bailey, 2009) using both non-intervening and intervening measurement procedures (van Lier, 1988). This method is consistent with a framework articulated by Allwright and Bailey (1991), who also favor such a combined method because it allows for a broader collection and analysis of data. In terms of Grotjan’s (1987) framework, the research design can be characterized as non-experimental or “exploratory.”

Because foreign language was not the focus of this study, it was not treated as a control variable to exclude teachers based on L1 or foreign language(s) taught. However, the questionnaire was used to collect information about the specific foreign language(s) taught by each instructor. The questionnaire also collected demographic data about the respondents’ academic backgrounds and total years of experience teaching foreign language(s). However, information that could identify the respondents was not collected. Although some of the respondents who provided data for the follow-up inquiry also completed the questionnaire, the anonymous data from the questionnaire and the follow-up inquiry cannot be linked.

For the follow-up procedure, the Korean team leader noted above, who at the time of the study managed a team of four foreign language teachers, asked team members and colleagues to provide written responses to the written question: “How do you usually assess reading comprehension in your classes?” A change in the methodology relaxed screening requirements to allow one respondent with less than two years of professional teaching experience to participate in the study.

## Findings

### Immediate Written Recall Protocols

In response to the question, “Have you ever used immediate written recall protocols to assess reading comprehension?”, nine of the 28 respondents (32%) reported “yes,” 16 (57%) reported “no,” and three (11%) reported “don’t know.” Paired with this selected-response item was the constructed-response item “Why or why not?” Consistent with the generally purported benefits about immediate written recall protocols reported in the literature (Bernhardt, 1983, 1991, 2000, 2011; Bernhardt & Deville, 1991; Bintz, 2000; Chang, 2006; Gass & Mackey, 2000; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Johnston, 1983; Leaver, 2013; Miller & Kintsch, 1980; Wells, 1986), three of the respondents in the present study (11%) reported that they have used immediate written recall protocols to diagnose “students’ weaknesses.” Others reported using the assessment framework to diagnose “students’ needs” and to diagnose students’ problems with grammar.

Some criticisms of immediate written recall protocols reported in the literature (Bernhardt, 1983, 1991, 2000, 2011; Bernhardt & Deville, 1991; Bintz, 2000; Chang, 2006; Gass & Mackey, 2000; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Johnston, 1983; Leaver, 2013; Miller & Kintsch, 1980; Wells, 1986) were also expressed by a few of the foreign language teachers in this study. Four (14%) reported that the use of immediate written recall protocols is either time-consuming or requires a considerable amount of time for development, test administration, and grading (Alderson, 2000; Bernhardt, 2011; Deville & Chalhoub-Deville, 1993). Only one respondent reported that the assessment framework is not effective. Another reported being unfamiliar with immediate written recall protocols before participating in this study. More interestingly, as a result of participating in the study and learning about immediate written recall protocols, some respondents’ beliefs about the assessment framework appear to be changing. One respondent reported, “Was not interested. Thought it would take too much time. Now I feel it may be useful.” Regarding their changes in attitudes and willingness to try using immediate written recall protocols, others reported, “I haven’t had the opportunity. But I’m eager to apply that method,” “I’d be open to it.”

### Multiple-Choice Items

Tables 1 and 2 present the response data for the nine-point Likert-scale item related to disagreement or agreement with the statement: “Multiple-Choice items provide a very good measure of reading comprehension.” This selected-response item was paired with the constructed-response item “Please explain your response.”

Table 1  
*Response Data for Question on Multiple-Choice Items*

Question	Number of Responses (Disagree—Agree)								
Multiple-Choice items provide a very good measure of reading comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	1	1	3	4	8	3	8	0	0

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics of Responses to Question on Multiple-Choice Items*

Mean	5.231
Median	5.0

Similar to opinions about the item type reported in the literature (Aitken, 1976; Downing, 2006; Oller, 1979; RAND, 2002; Wigdor & Green, 1991), many respondents were critical of multiple-choice items. With a mean of 5.23/9.0 and a median of 5.0/9.0, an analysis of the Likert-scale data revealed that the overall teacher attitudes were somewhat moderate about this item type. Only one respondent indicated strongly disagreeing that multiple-choice items provide a very good measure of reading comprehension (Likert score=1/9), but eight indicated some degree of agreement (Likert score=7/9). Twelve (43%) reported problems with multiple-choice items resulting from poor quality test questions and poor quality distractors. One respondent reported that multiple-choice items “may provide inflated scores of reading comprehension due to background information,” and four (14%) reported that students can often guess the correct answer to multiple-choice items. Other respondents also reported that such item types are “limited” in terms of assessing reading comprehension, and that there are “better ways to assess students’ overall understanding.” Only one respondent reported that multiple-choice items are “objective.” However, depending on the quality of the item, one respondent reported that multiple-choice items do a very good job of assessing reading comprehension “because it makes students think.” Another reported that such an item type “could be more effective for assessing higher levels of nuance.” Multiple-choice items also may support test administration and scoring, according to one respondent.

### Written Summaries

To gather data about this item type, respondents were asked to indicate their disagreement or agreement on a nine-point Likert scale with the statement: “Grading students’ summaries of written texts is too time-consuming.” The constructed-response item, “Please explain your response,” was paired with the Likert-scale item; the response data is presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3  
*Response Data for Question on Written Summaries*

Question	Number of Responses (Disagree—Agree)								
Grading students’ summaries of written texts is too time-consuming.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	1	0	7	2	3	3	9	0	3

Table 4  
*Descriptive Statistics of Responses to Question on Written Summaries*

Mean	5.519
Median	6.0
Standard Deviation	2.190

Consistent with the literature (Alderson, 2000; Bernhardt, 2011; Deville & Chalhoub-Deville, 1993), five of the 28 respondents (18%) reported that grading written summaries is time-consuming (mean 5.52/9.0, median 6.0/9.0). Three reported strong agreement (Likert score=9/9), and nine reported some degree of agreement (Likert score=7/9), with only one reporting strong disagreement (Likert score=1/9). Similarly, one respondent reported that using written summaries is pedagogically “necessary at the stage of foundation.” Another reported, “In order to summarize texts, students need to get essential elementary information (Livingston, 2009; RAND, 2002; Riley & Lee, 1996). So, students’ summaries would give teachers an idea about how much students comprehend texts.” Whether written summaries provide a very good measure of reading comprehension depends on the quality of the rubrics developed for scoring the items (reported by three respondents) and the systematicity and objectivity of the grading process (reported by three other respondents). Four of the respondents (14%) reported that grading and providing feedback to students’ written summaries can be difficult because of issues related to handwriting and readability.

### True-False Items

Information about the foreign language teachers’ attitudes toward true-false test items was obtained by analyzing responses to the statement: “True-False items provide a very good measure of reading comprehension.” The response data for the nine-point Likert scale item is presented in Tables 5 and 6. Paired with this item was the constructed-response item, “Please explain your response.”

Table 5  
*Response Data for Question on True-False Items*

Question	Number of Responses (Disagree—Agree)								
True-False items provide a very good measure of reading comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	4	1	3	4	10	2	4	0	0

Table 6  
*Descriptive Statistics of Responses to Question on True-False Items*

Mean	4.444
Median	5.0
Standard Deviation	1.783

Based on an analysis of the data (e.g., mean 4.4/9.0, median 5.0/9.0), true-false items are believed to be the least effective item type investigated in this study. Consistent with the literature (Aitken, 1976; Downing, 2006; Oller, 1979; RAND, 2002; Wigdor & Green, 1991), six of the 28 respondents (21%) reported problems with true-false items related to guessing (e.g., “It’s a 50/50 chance to select the correct answer”). Other foreign language teachers reported that the effectiveness of true-false items for assessing reading comprehension depends on the quality of the item, the context of the item, and the specific questions. Although criticized as “very low level” assessment tools, some respondents reported that true-false items do have some assessment value: “They can help to see initial logic/comprehension of a text but don’t give a good measure of reading comprehension,” and “I don’t know if they measure ‘very good,’ but I think true-false test items can still measure reading comprehension to a certain extent.”

### Fill-in-the-Blank Items

Tables 7 and 8 present the response data for the nine-point Likert scale item related to the statement: “Fill-in-the-Blank items provide a very good measure of reading comprehension.” Paired with this selected-response item was the constructed-response item, “Please explain your response.”

Table 7

*Response Data for Question on Fill-in-the-Blank Items*

Question	Number of Responses								
Fill-in-the-Blank items provide a very good measure of reading comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	0	2	3	3	5	5	9	1	0

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics of Responses to Question on Fill-in-the-Blank Items*

Mean	5.286
Median	5.50
Standard Deviation	1.696

Beliefs about fill-in-the-blank items reported in this study also reflected those of other foreign language teachers reported in the literature (Aitken, 1976; Downing, 2006; Oller, 1979; RAND, 2002; Wigdor & Green, 1991). Overall, the item type is thought to be more effective than true-false items for assessing reading comprehension although the teachers’ reported beliefs are somewhat moderate (e.g., mean 5.28/9.0, median 5.5/9.0). Based on an analysis of this data, two of the respondents (7%) reported that the effectiveness of fill-in-the-blank items for assessing reading comprehension depends on the quality and focus of the test items. For such items to be effective, two respondents reported that a clear answer key is needed. The placement of blanks is also important, according to two respondents. Although fill-in-the-blank items are criticized for being “low level” and focused only on “surface-level understanding,” the item type may have some assessment value. One respondent reported, “Sometimes fill-in-the-blank items are useful to check comprehension because they narrow in on reading for details.” Another respondent reported that the item type focuses students’ attention on grammatical forms. The usefulness of the item type was further articulated by another respondent, who reported that fill-in-the-blank items require more local thinking and problem-solving.

### Cloze Items

Tables 9 and 10 present the response data for the nine-point Likert-scale item related to the statement: “Cloze items provide a very good measure of reading comprehension,” which was paired with the constructed-response item, “Please explain your response.”

Table 9

*Response Data for Question on Cloze Items*

Question	Number of Responses								
Cloze items provide a very good measure of reading comprehension.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	1	1	4	1	5	5	8	2	1



Table 10

*Descriptive Statistics of Responses to Question on Cloze Items*

Mean	5.481
Median	6.0
Standard Deviation	1.987

Of all the traditional item types analyzed in this study and compared on the basis of Likert-scale data, cloze items (mean 5.48/9.0, median 6.0/9.0) are believed to be the most effective item type for assessing reading comprehension. In terms of the strengths and weaknesses of cloze items, akin to the beliefs of foreign language teachers reported in the literature (Aitken, 1975; McKamey, 2006; Taylor, 1953, 1956; Williams, 1974), three respondents (11%) reported that cloze items may provide a good measure of comprehension if properly constructed. One respondent reported that an accurate and comprehensive answer key is required for the item type to be effective. Two respondents also reported that cloze items are good for assessing grammar. Others reported that cloze items “might be a good way to test students’ understanding in the context of vocabulary,” and that cloze items support critical thinking (e.g., “They make students think, evaluate the context of a text”). Respondents also reported that cloze items are good for beginning-level students, and for focusing on “students’ accuracy in foreign language learning.” Critical of the item type, respondents in the present study reported that only a “limited amount of understanding can be measured” by cloze items and that they “just don’t like cloze items.” Similarly, Williams (1974) has criticized cloze items on the basis that the item type does not measure the primary processes involved in reading comprehension (e.g., decoding written symbols) but only assesses production (encoding). Alderson (2000), Bachman (1982, 1985), and Shanahan, Kamil, and Tobin (1982) also criticize cloze items for not being able to measure macro-level and higher-order thinking skills.

**Follow-Up Inquiry**

Table 11 presents the written responses that four foreign language teachers provided to the question: “How do you usually assess reading comprehension in your classes?” Two of the four instructors questioned in the follow-up inquiry appear to be using a form of immediate written recall protocols to assess reading comprehension. For example, respondent two reported, “I ask students to read a text and direct them to write the summary/gist of the reading passage both in Korean and English depending on their level.” Respondent four also reported using a similar procedure. Although respondent one reported using a procedure somewhat different from immediate written recall protocols (e.g., focusing on training students to identify the main subject and verbs in complex sentences), respondent one did not report using traditional item types. In fact, only respondent three reported using “comprehend questions” for assessing reading comprehension.

Table 11

*Response Data for Follow-Up Inquiry*

Respondent	Response
1	I ask students to identify sentence structures (main subject and verbs) from complex sentences. And I ask ... whether they know the meaning of key words/basic words in texts.
2	I ask students to read a text and then direct them to write a summary/gist of the reading passage both in Korean and English, depending on their level.
3	I provide comprehend questions for students and have them answer the questions.
4	(a) I ask students to read a target-language text until they feel comfortable with the material. I then remove the text and ask students to write down in complete English sentences everything they can remember; (b) I collect and analyze the data; (c) I incorporate instructional activities/strategies accordingly.



## Discussion

### Interpretation of Data

This study has attempted to answer the research questions: (1) What procedures do foreign language teachers prefer to use in assessing students' reading comprehension? and (2) Are foreign language teachers using immediate written recall protocols to assess students' reading comprehension? Why or why not? The results indicate that nine of the 28 respondents (32%) had previously used immediate written recall protocols to assess reading comprehension, which was expected based on trends reported in the literature (Bernhardt, 1991, 2011). In a study by Wubshet and Menuta (2015), none of the foreign language teachers confirmed using any type of alternative assessment, which are reportedly believed to be time-consuming to administer and grade (Alderson, 2000; Bernhardt, 2011; Deville & Chalhoub-Deville, 1993). Respondents in the present study had similar criticisms about immediate written recall protocols. Reflecting other criticism reported in the literature (e.g., Alderson, 2000; Oller, 1979; RAND, 2002), many respondents in the present study additionally doubted the validity of multiple-choice and other traditional item types. Among the main criticisms reported by respondents in the present study were that the correct answers to multiple-choice and true-false items can be guessed without reading related texts, and that traditional item types do not assess higher-order thinking skills. Table 12 presents a ranking of the traditional item types reported by respondents to be the most effective measures of reading comprehension.

Table 12

*Perceived "Best" Measurements of Reading Comprehension*

Item Type	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
<i>Cloze</i>	5.481	6.0	1.987
<i>Fill-in-the-Blank</i>	5.286	5.5	1.696
<i>Multiple Choice</i>	5.231	5.0	1.607
<i>True-False</i>	4.444	5.0	1.783

Notice that, like immediate written recall protocols, the top two traditional item types (cloze and fill-in-the-blank items) involve the productive process of writing. Although an overall analysis of the data revealed that most respondents had moderate opinions about immediate written recall protocols and traditional item types (the mean and median of the Likert-scale items included in the questionnaire hovered around 5.0/9.0), looking only at the mathematical averages masks the fact that some teachers hold polarizing opinions about item types. Attempting to understand these differing opinions about item types, an analysis of the demographic data also revealed that the nine respondents who reported using immediate written recall protocols have masters' degrees in TESOL or a related field, indicating to this author the impact of foreign language education on their pedagogical beliefs and assessment practices. The positive effect of educational training also can be inferred from the fact that the nine respondents who reported using immediate written recall protocols all work for a U.S. government facility that has been providing training for foreign language teachers to promote the usage of the alternative assessment framework.

The study additionally revealed that participation in the research had an "awareness-raising" impact on some respondents who reported changes in their beliefs about immediate written recall protocols, which was expected by this author in view of what McCambridge, Witter, and Elbourne (2014) have reported about the 'Hawthorne Effect' (e.g., participating in a research study changes the behaviors of those being studied). Although 16 of the 28 respondents reported never using immediate written recalls, an analysis of the response data revealed that their attitudes and assessment practices can probably be attributed to negatively held opinions about the alternative assessment framework or a general lack of knowledge about immediate written recall protocols (Bernhardt, 1991, 2011). Given that the beliefs and practices of other foreign language teachers may be affected by participating in and learning from a similar research inquiry and assuming that administrators and

policymakers would like more teachers to use immediate written recall protocols in their classrooms, it is the recommendation of this author that this study should be replicated and expanded upon.

### **Limitations**

Although 40 respondents were initially sought for the study, only 28 returned a completed questionnaire. The low rate of participation may have been impacted by the paper format of the questionnaire. A misalignment in the design of the questionnaire, discovered by the author while reviewing the collected data, required the use of a follow-up question to determine the procedures foreign language teachers use in their classrooms to assess students' reading comprehension. Still, because a Likert-scale item was mistakenly not included to collect information about the perceived effectiveness of summary-writing tasks, teachers' attitudes about the item type cannot be directly compared with teachers' attitudes about other item types reflected in the Likert-scale data.

Despite a proofreading error in the questionnaire, which also may have contaminated some of the Likert-scale data, a rich source of confirmation for the reported numerical data was provided by respondents' written explanations to paired questionnaire items, and by hand-written notations on some items. A follow-up question posed to four of the 28 respondents further triangulated the reported interpretation of what was learned about the attitudes and assessment practices of foreign language teachers regarding immediate written recall protocols and traditional test item types. For future research, the author hopes to work more closely with colleagues and an oversight committee, prior to beginning the study, to more carefully review questionnaires, surveys, and other data-collection instruments and to more closely align research instruments with the research questions they are designed to measure.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

In terms of classroom applications, although the actual nature of reading comprehension remains disputed (Carlson et al., 2014; Duke & Carlisle, 2011; Goodman, 1968, 1988; Roebuck, 1998), this study brings attention to the important cognitive processes involved in reading comprehension, as well as the roles that memory, prior experience, and cultural knowledge contribute to reading comprehension (Fisher & Frey, no date; Reisman & Wineburg, 2008; Stahl, et al., 1991). Thus, foreign language teachers can utilize this insight to design lesson plans and curricula that help students build cultural background knowledge, as well as vocabulary and grammar knowledge, through the use of a variety of activities that address the major cognitive processes involved in reading comprehension: decoding and comprehending (Fraser, 2007; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Pikulski & Chard, 2003) and bottom-up (text-driven) and top-down (knowledge-driven) processes (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978; Rumelhart, 1990; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). Exposing students to a diverse array of texts is one way to build up top-down cultural knowledge. An example of tasks targeting bottom-up processes could involve vocabulary-building activities focused on word knowledge (Stahl et al., 1991).

Despite criticisms that recall protocols are not valid measures of reading comprehension due to the influence of memory (Koda, 2005), a growing pedagogical consensus that memory is an important component of reading comprehension has been emerging (Clark & Silberstein, 1977; Fraser, 2007; Lutz & Huitt, 2003). Based on this insight, foreign language teachers should help students develop their memories, which in turn may strengthen reading comprehension skills in the same way that summary tasks reportedly support the comprehension of text (Aebbersold & Field, 1997; Fisher et al., 2009). Thus, like the assessment practices reported in this study, teachers should provide students with practice in summarizing texts. Similarly, teachers can also help students to track causal relationships by providing classroom activities and homework that focuses on identifying relationships between nouns and verbs (Carlson et al., 2014; Meyer & Freedle, 1984). From the perspective of constructivist theory (Bartlett, 1932; Spivey, 1989), because of the integrative nature of reading comprehension (Riley & Lee, 1996), teachers should also plan learning activities that are integrative and combine both reading and writing tasks (Spivey, 1989). A focus on grammar in a writing activity may reveal relational problems with determining causality that can be addressed with further targeted instruction.

Of all the pedagogical issues associated with immediate written recall protocols, perhaps the most

important concerns scoring procedures, which Wells (1986) reported will continue to limit the deployment of the alternative assessment framework until commercially produced products are available: “At present, in the absence of professionally prepared test passages, analyses, and scoring instruments, it is unreasonable to expect the classroom teacher to use the recall procedure as a large-scale classroom evaluation tool” (p. 178). Although not directly challenging the validity of the item type, many respondents in the present study also complained that scoring procedures are time-consuming (Alderson, 2000; Bernhardt, 2011; Deville & Chalhoub-Deville, 1993). Other concerns about scoring reported by respondents in the present study were related to the validity of poorly constructed test items and scoring instruments, such as rubrics and answer keys. In fact, 12 respondents (43%) reported problems with multiple-choice items regarding poorly constructed distractors and overall item quality. Criticisms about written summaries related to the quality of rubrics and the systematicity and objectivity of scoring. True-False items were criticized on the basis of item quality, item context, and specific test question. Similarly, problems with item quality, answer keys, item focus, and the placement of blanks were reported about fill-in-the-blank items. Respondents additionally reported that cloze items can be problematic depending on the construction of test items and a clear, accurate, and comprehensive answer key. With these findings in mind, it is the recommendation of this author that foreign language teachers should focus their awareness on the related variables identified in this study when developing, administering, scoring, and/or evaluating reading comprehension tests.

### Conclusion

Continuing an international conversation about best practices for education and testing dating back to the ancient Greeks (Barrett, 2003; Michell, 1999, 2000), this study has attempted to provide insight into teachers’ perceptions of the alternative assessment known as immediate written recall protocols, which proponents believe offers a better measure of reading comprehension than traditional item types (Bernhardt, 1983, 1991, 2000, 2011; Bernhardt & Deville, 1991; Bintz, 2000; Chang, 2006; Gass & Mackey, 2000; Hayes & Flower, 1980; Johnston, 1983; Leaver, 2013; Miller & Kintsch, 1980; Wells, 1986).

With regard to the psychological operations involved in language teaching generally and reading comprehension specifically, this study focused on the assessment practices and attitudes of foreign language instructors at one U.S. military foreign language school that has been using immediate written recall protocols in an attempt to more accurately measure reading comprehension skills. Beyond a report on teachers’ assessment practices, this study seemed to have created some positive impact on the teachers themselves. Three of the respondents in this study reported positive changes in their beliefs about the alternative assessment framework as a result of participating in the study. However, prior training provided by the employer, as well as other prior experience studying the subject and prior exposure to reading material about immediate written recall protocols, also may have been part of the ‘learning’ process leading up to the attitudinal changes reported in this study. Nevertheless, considering that the beliefs and practices of other foreign language teachers could change as a consequence of participating in and learning from a similar research inquiry, this author recommends that this study be replicated and expanded upon. Although classroom teachers in North America have not widely used immediate written recall protocols to assess reading comprehension, this situation could change with education and training—bringing to public attention the importance of reading comprehension and raising awareness about the assessment benefits that immediate written recall protocols may provide beyond the limitations of discrete-point tests and the psychometric model.

In view of the ongoing public debate about best practices for education generally, it is the further opinion of this author that the Pythagorean tradition of using mathematics as the primary tool for discovering and understanding the underlying principles of the natural world should be reconsidered (Barrett, 2003). Whether psychometrics deserves its current prestige or should be considered “a pathology of science” (Michell, 2000), the continuing study of theories of the mind generally and theories of reading comprehension specifically will remain important because research models can impact fundamental aspects of modern life (Rust & Golombok,

2009). As relevant theory and research methodologies continue to develop, I hope that a proper balance can be found between convenience for test administration/ scoring and the utilization of integrative response formats that elicit richer data sources that can be both qualitatively and quantitatively scored to more directly inform instruction. Perhaps such an assessment framework will include a combination of immediate written recall protocols and traditional item types, as well as the ongoing observations of instructors throughout the pedagogical process. More grounded in constructivist theories of the mind and learning, immediate written recall protocols may already be contributing to a shift in educational paradigms, bringing methodologies for assessing reading comprehension back in line with those used in the first scientific experiments in psychology.

### References

- Aebbersold, J. A., & Field (1997). *From reader to reading teacher: Issues and strategies for second Language classrooms*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Aitken, K. G. (1975). Problems in cloze testing re-examined. *TESL Reporter*, 9, 16-18. Retrieved from: <https://ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/TESL/article/viewFile/2796/2579>
- Aitken, K. G. (1976). Discrete structure point testing: Problems and alternatives. *TESL Reporter*, 7-20. Retrieved from: <https://ojs.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/TESL/article/download/.../2644>
- Akhondi, M., & Malayeri, F. A. (2011). Assessing reading comprehension of expository text across different response formats. *Iranian Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 3(1), 1-26. Retrieved from: [http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fijals2.usb.ac.ir%2Fpdf%2F76\\_d1d9b0119eb069f45ffa322ab0b19f4e.html&ei=SHhVLqHPM\\_coATv9oLgAg&usg=AFQjCNGii1Nl1XBpmAOpHGLK2JPOVC93sw&sig2=5dEIsvRuGjZY4XS371VjUg&bvm=bv.85970519,d.cGU](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CB4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fijals2.usb.ac.ir%2Fpdf%2F76_d1d9b0119eb069f45ffa322ab0b19f4e.html&ei=SHhVLqHPM_coATv9oLgAg&usg=AFQjCNGii1Nl1XBpmAOpHGLK2JPOVC93sw&sig2=5dEIsvRuGjZY4XS371VjUg&bvm=bv.85970519,d.cGU)
- Alderson, J. C. (2000). *Assessing reading comprehension*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Allwright, D., & Bailey, K. M. (1991). *Focus on the classroom: An introduction to classroom research for language teachers*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bachman, L. F. (1982). The trait structure of cloze test scores. *TESOL Quarterly*, 16(1), 61-70.
- Bachman, L. F. (1985). Performance on cloze tests with fixed-ratio and rational deletions. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19(3), 535-555.
- Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language testing in practice*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Barrett, P. T. (2003). Beyond psychometrics: Measurement, non-quantitative structure, and applied numeric. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 3(18), 421-439. Retrieved from: [http://www.pbarrett.net/publications/Barrett\\_Beyond\\_Psychometrics\\_2003\\_Augmented.pdf](http://www.pbarrett.net/publications/Barrett_Beyond_Psychometrics_2003_Augmented.pdf)
- Bartlett, F. (1932). *Remembering*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Berkemeyer, V. C. (1989). Qualitative analysis of immediate recall protocol data: Some classroom implications. *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German* 22(2), 131-137.
- Bernhardt, E. B. (1983). Testing foreign language reading comprehension: The immediate recall protocol. *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German* 16(10), 27-33. Retrieved from: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED285420.pdf>
- Bernhardt, E. B. (1991). *Reading development in a second language*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Bernhardt, E. B. (2000). Second language reading as a case study of reading scholarship in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research, Vol. III* (pp. 791-811). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Bernhardt, E. B. (2011). *Understanding advanced second language reading*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bernhardt, E. B., & DeVille, C. (1991). Testing in foreign language programs and testing programs in foreign language departments. In R. V. Teschner (Ed.), *Issues in language program direction: Assessing foreign language proficiency of undergraduates* (pp. 43-59). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

- Bernhardt, E. B., & Leaver, B. L. (no date). Recall protocol for diagnosing listening and reading comprehension. Faculty Development Division. Monterey, CA: U.S. Army Defense Language Institute.
- Bintz, W. P. (2000). Using free writing to assess reading comprehension. *Reading Horizons*, 40(3), 205-223. Retrieved from: [http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1220&context=reading\\_horizons](http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1220&context=reading_horizons)
- Brantmeier, C. (2006). The effects of language assessment and L2 reading proficiency on advanced readers' recall. *The Reading Matrix*, 6(1), 1-16. Retrieved from: <http://www.readingmatrix.com/articles/brantmeier/article5.pdf>
- Brown, J. D. (2001). *Using surveys in language programs*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Busch, M. (1995). Using Likert scales in L2 research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27(4), 733-736.
- Carlson, S. E., Seipel, B., & McMaster, K. (2014). Development of a new reading comprehension assessment: Identifying comprehension differences among readers. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 12, 40-53.
- Carrell, P. I., & Eisterhold, J. (1983). Schema theory and ESL pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17, 553-573.
- Chang, Y. F. (2006). On the use of immediate recall protocols as a measure of second language reading comprehension. *Language Testing*, 23(4), 520-543.
- Clarke, M. A., & Silberstein, S. (1977). Toward a realization of psycholinguistic principles in the ESL reading class. *Language Learning*, 27(1), 135-154.
- Dewille, C., & Chalhoub-Dewille, M. (1993). Modified scoring, traditional item analysis, and Sato's caution index used to investigate the reading recall protocol. *Language Testing*, 10(2), 117-132.
- Downing, S. M. (2006). Selected-response format in test development. In S. M. Downing & T. M. Haladyna (Eds.), *Handbook of Test Development* (pp. 287-302). New York, NY: Routledge.
- DuBay, W. H. (2004). *The principle of readability*. Costa Mesa, CA: Impact Information. Retrieved from: <http://www.impact-information.com/impactinfo/readability02.pdf>
- Duke, N. K., & Carlisle, J. (2011). The development of comprehension. In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, E. B. Moje, & P. P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research, Vol. IV* (pp. 199-228). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Lapp, D. (2009). *In a reading state of mind*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (no date). *Background knowledge: The overlooked factor in reading comprehension*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education. Retrieved from: [http://mcgrawhillfnetworks.com/pdf/White\\_Papers/8353\\_networks\\_Bckgrnd\\_Knwld\\_WhitePaper.pdf](http://mcgrawhillfnetworks.com/pdf/White_Papers/8353_networks_Bckgrnd_Knwld_WhitePaper.pdf)
- Fletcher, J. M. (2006). Measuring reading comprehension. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 10(3), 323-330.
- Fraser, C. A. (2007). Reading rate in L1 Mandarin Chinese and L2 English across five reading tasks. *Modern Language Journal*, 91, 372-394.
- Frederiksen, C. H. (1975). Effects of content-induced processing operations on semantic information acquired from discourse. *Cognitive Psychology*, 7, 139-166.
- Galton, F. (1879). Psychometric experiments. *Brain*, 2, 149-162. Retrieved from: <http://galton.org/galton/essays/1870-1879/galton-1879-brain-psychometric-experiments/galton-1879-brain-psychometric-experiments.pdf>
- Gass, S. M., & Mackey, A. (2000). *Stimulated recall methodology in second language research*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Glynn, S. M. (April 1983). Cognitive processes involved in text learning. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal, Canada. Retrieved from: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED232128.pdf>
- Goodman, K. (Ed.) (1968). *The psycholinguistic nature of the reading process*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Goodman, K. (1988). The reading process. In P. Carrell, J. Devine, & D. Eskey (Eds.), *Interactive approaches to second language reading* (pp. 11-21). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.



- Gough, P. B. (1972). *One second of reading*. In J. F. Kavanagh & I. G. Mattingley (Eds.), *Language by ear and by eye* (pp. 331-358). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Grabe, W., & Stoller, F. L. (2002). *Teaching and researching reading*. Harlow, UK: Longman/Pearson Education.
- Grotjan, R. (1987). On the methodological basis of introspective methods. In C. Faerch & G. Karper (Eds.), *Introspection in second language research* (p. 59). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Hatch, E., & Lazaraton, A. (1991). *The research manual: Design and statistics for applied linguistics*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Hayes, J. R., & Flower, L. S. (1980). Identifying the organization of writing processes. In L. W. Gregg & E. R. Steinberg (Eds.), *Cognitive processes in writing* (pp. 1-30). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. (2009). *Teaching readers of English*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Johnston, P. H. (1983). *Reading comprehension assessment: A cognitive basis*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Kamil, M. (1984). Current traditions of reading research. In P. D. Pearson (Ed.), *Handbook of reading research* (pp. 39-62). New York, NY: Longman.
- Kincaid, J. P., Fishbourne, R. P. S., Rogers, R. L., & Chissom, B. S. (1975). Derivation of new readability formula (Automated Readability Index, Fog Cog, and Flesch Reading Ease Formula) for Navy enlisted personnel. *Research Branch Report 8-75*. Millington, TN: Naval Technical Training Command.
- Kintsch, W. (1974). *The representation of meaning in memory*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Kintsch, W., & Miller, J. R. (1984). Readability: A view from cognitive psychology. In J. Flood (Ed.), *Understanding reading comprehension* (pp. 220-232). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Kintsch, W., & van Dijk, T. A. (1978). Toward a model of text comprehension and production. *Psychological Review*, 85, 363-394.
- Koda, K. (2005). *Insights into second language reading: A cross linguistic approach*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Lazaraton, A. (1995). Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A progress report. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29(3), 455-472.
- Leaver, B. L. (2013). From the provost's desk: Recall protocols. *Dialog on Language Instruction*, 23, 178. Retrieved from: [http://www.dliflc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/DLI\\_Vol\\_23.pdf](http://www.dliflc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/DLI_Vol_23.pdf)
- LeBerge, D., & Samuels, S. J. (1974). Toward a theory of automatic information processing in reading. *Cognitive Psychology*, 6, 293-323.
- Lindhour, P., & Ale, B. J. M. (2009). Language issues, an underestimated danger in major hazardous control. *Journal of Hazardous Materials*, 172, 247-255. Retrieved from: [http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=12&ved=0CCIOFjABOAo&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.researchgate.net%2Fprofile%2FPaul\\_Lindhout%2Fpublication%2F26698675\\_Language\\_issues\\_an\\_underestimated\\_danger\\_in\\_major\\_hazard\\_control%2Flinks%2F0f317539c867223e34000000.pdf&ei=J9\\_8VJGnItGzoQT9n4LwCQ&usq=AFQjCNEOE0n4T2Sq\\_FPK1Tt0tFCgyKhW&sig2=LlowaxGtxJicyIWfTGwQw&bvm=bv.87611401.d.cGU](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=12&ved=0CCIOFjABOAo&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.researchgate.net%2Fprofile%2FPaul_Lindhout%2Fpublication%2F26698675_Language_issues_an_underestimated_danger_in_major_hazard_control%2Flinks%2F0f317539c867223e34000000.pdf&ei=J9_8VJGnItGzoQT9n4LwCQ&usq=AFQjCNEOE0n4T2Sq_FPK1Tt0tFCgyKhW&sig2=LlowaxGtxJicyIWfTGwQw&bvm=bv.87611401.d.cGU)
- Livingston, S. A. (2009). Constructed-response test questions: Why we use them; how we score them. *ETS R&D Connections*, 11. Retrieved from: [https://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/RD\\_Connections11.pdf](https://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/RD_Connections11.pdf)
- Lutz, S., & Huitt, W. (2003). Information processing and memory: Theory and applications. *Education Psychology Interactive*. Valdosta, GA: Valdosta State University. Retrieved from: <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/papers/infoproc.pdf>
- McCambridge, J., Witter, J., & Elbourne, D. (2014). Systematic review of the Hawthorne Effect: New concepts are needed to study research participation effects. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 67(3), 267-277. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3969247/>
- McKamey, T. (2006). Getting closure on the cloze: A validation study of the 'rational deletion' method.

- Second Language Studies*, 24(2), 114-164. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.hawaii.edu/sls/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/McKameyTreela.pdf>
- Meyer, B. J. F., & Freedle, R. O. (1984). Effects of discourse types on recall. *American Educational Research Journal*, 21(1), 121-143.
- Michell, J. B. (1999). *Measurement in psychology: Critical history of methodological concepts*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from:  
<https://archivocienciasociales.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/joel-michell-measurement-in-psychology-a-critical-history-of-a-methodological-concept-1999.pdf>
- Michell, J. B. (2000). Normal science, pathological science, and psychometrics. *Theory and Psychology*, 10(5), 639-667. Retrieved from:  
<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.202.2742&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Miller, G. A. (Ed.) (1973). *Linguistic communication: Perspectives for research*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Miller, J. R., & Kintsch, W. (1980). Readability and recall of short prose passages: A theoretical analysis. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Learning and Memory*, 6(4), 335-354.
- National Reading Panel (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/nrp/documents/report.pdf>
- Ngoc, K. M., & Iwashita, N. (2012). A comparison of learners' and teachers' attitudes toward communicative language teaching at two universities in Vietnam. *University of Sydney Papers in TESOL*, 7, 25-49. Retrieved from: [http://faculty.edfac.usyd.edu.au/projects/usp\\_in\\_tesol/pdf/volume07/Article02.pdf](http://faculty.edfac.usyd.edu.au/projects/usp_in_tesol/pdf/volume07/Article02.pdf)
- Nunan, D., & Bailey, K. M. (2009). *Exploring second language classroom research: A comprehensive guide*. Boston, MA: Heinle, Cengage Learning.
- Oller, J. W., Jr. (1979). *Language tests at school*. London, UK: Longman.
- Perfetti, C. A., & Adlof, S. M. (2012). Reading comprehension: A conceptual framework from word meaning to text meaning. In J. P. Sabatini, E. R. Albro, & T. O'Reilly (Eds.), *Measuring up: Advances in how we assess reading* (pp. 3-20). Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.lrdc.pitt.edu/bov/documents/perfetti\\_reading%20comprehension.pdf](http://www.lrdc.pitt.edu/bov/documents/perfetti_reading%20comprehension.pdf)
- Perfetti, C. A., Landi, N., & Oakhill, J. (2005). The acquisition of reading comprehension skill. In M. J. Snowling & C. Hulme (Eds.), *The science of reading: A handbook* (pp. 227-247). Oxford, UK: Blackwell. Retrieved from: [http://www.pitt.edu/~perfetti/PDF/Acquisition%20\(Oakhill%20chapter\).pdf](http://www.pitt.edu/~perfetti/PDF/Acquisition%20(Oakhill%20chapter).pdf)
- Pikulski, J., & Chard, D. J. (2003). Fluency: The bridge from decoding to reading comprehension. *Current research in reading/language arts*. Houghton Mifflin. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.eduplace.com/state/author/pik\\_chard\\_fluency.pdf](http://www.eduplace.com/state/author/pik_chard_fluency.pdf)
- RAND Reading Study Group (2002). Reading for understanding: Toward an R&D program in reading comprehension. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.prgrs.edu/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph\\_reports/2005/MR1465.pdf](http://www.prgrs.edu/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/2005/MR1465.pdf)
- Reisman, A., & Wineburg, S. (2008). Teaching the skill of contextualizing in history. *The Social Studies*, 99(5), 202-207.
- Renandya, W. A., Lim, W. L., Leung, K. W., & Jacobs, G. M. (1999). A survey of English language teaching trends and practices in Southern Asia. *Asian Englishes*, 2, 37-65. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.academia.edu/6509966/A\\_Survey\\_of\\_English\\_Language\\_Teaching\\_Trends\\_and\\_Practices\\_in\\_Southeast\\_Asia](http://www.academia.edu/6509966/A_Survey_of_English_Language_Teaching_Trends_and_Practices_in_Southeast_Asia)
- Richards, K. (2003). *Qualitative inquiry in TESOL*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Riley, G. L., & Lee, J. F. (1996). A comparison of recall and summary protocols as measures of second language reading comprehension. *Language Testing*, 13(2), 173-189.



- Roebuck, R. (1998). *Reading and recall in L1 and L2: A sociocultural approach*. Stanford, CT: Ablex Publishing Company.
- Rumelhart, D. E. (1990). Toward an interactive model of reading. In S. Dornie (Ed.), *Attention and performance, VI* (pp. 573-603). New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Rust, J., & Golombok, S. (2009). *Modern psychometrics: The science of psychological assessment* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Shanahan, T., Kamil, M., & Tobin A. (1982). Cloze as a measure of intersentential comprehension. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 17, 229-255.
- Smith, F. (1971). *Understanding reading*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Spiro, R. J. (1980). *Schema theory and reading comprehension*, Technical Report No. 191. Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois. Retrieved from: [https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/17694/ctrstreadtechrepv01980i00191\\_opt.pdf?sequence=1](https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/17694/ctrstreadtechrepv01980i00191_opt.pdf?sequence=1)
- Spivey, N. N. (1989). Construing constructivism: Reading research in the United States. Occasional Paper No. 12. Retrieved from: [http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/download/nwp\\_file/104/OP12.pdf?x-r=pcfile\\_d](http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/download/nwp_file/104/OP12.pdf?x-r=pcfile_d)
- Stahl, S. A., Hare, V. C., Sinatra, R., & Gregory, J. F. (1991). *Technical report No. 526: Defining the role of prior knowledge and vocabulary in reading comprehension: The retiring of number 41*. Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois. Retrieved from: [https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/17521/ctrstreadtechrepv01991i00526\\_opt.pdf?sequence=1](https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/17521/ctrstreadtechrepv01991i00526_opt.pdf?sequence=1)
- Sterzik, A. M., & Fraser, C. (2012). RC-MAPS: Bridging the comprehension gap in EAP reading. *TESL Canada Journal/Revue TESL Du Canada*, 28(2), 103-119. Retrieved from: <http://www.teslcanadajournal.ca/index.php/tesl/article/viewFile/1103/922>
- Taylor, W. L. (1953). Cloze procedure: A new tool for measuring readability. *Journalism Quarterly*, 30, 414-433.
- Taylor, W. L. (1956). Recent developments in the use of 'cloze procedure.' *Journalism Quarterly*, 33(1), 42-48, 99.
- Turner, J. L. (2014). *Using statistics in small-scale language education research*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- van Dijk, T. A., & Kintsch, W. (1983). *Strategies of discourse comprehension*. New York, NY: Academic.
- van Lier, L. (1988). *The classroom and the language learner: Ethnography and second language classroom research*. London, UK: Longman.
- Venezsky, R. L. (1984). The history of reading research. In P. D. Pearson (Ed.), *Handbook of reading research* (pp. 3-38). New York, NY: Longman.
- Wells, D. R. (1986). The assessment of foreign language reading comprehension: Refining the task. *Die Unterricht/Teaching German*, 178-184. Retrieved from: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/3530700?seq=3#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/3530700?seq=3#page_scan_tab_contents)
- Wigdor, A., & Green, B., Jr. (Eds.) (1991). *Performance assessment for the workplace, Vol. 1*. Washington, DC: Committee on the Performance of Military Personnel, National Academy Press. Retrieved from: <http://www.nap.edu/read/1862/chapter/1>
- Wilkinson, I. A. G., & Son, E. H. (2011). A dialogic turn in research on learning and teaching to comprehend. In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, E. B. Moje, & P. P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research, Vol. IV* (pp. 359-387). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Williams, R. K. (1974). Problems in cloze testing. *TESL Reporter*, 7-9. Retrieved from: <https://journals.lib.byu.edu/spc/index.php/TESL/article/download/2772/2555>
- Wolf, D. (1993). A comparison of assessment tasks used to measure FL reading comprehension. *Modern Language Journal*, 77, 473-489.
- Wubshet, H., & Menuta, F. (2015). Investigating the practice of alternative assessment in English classrooms: The case of selected grade nine English teachers assessment practices. *International Journal of*

*Scientific Research in Education*, 8(4), 159-171. Retrieved from:

[http://www.ijere.com/Vol.,%208\(4\)-Wubshet%20&%20Menuta.pdf](http://www.ijere.com/Vol.,%208(4)-Wubshet%20&%20Menuta.pdf)

Young, D. J. (1999). Linguistic simplification of SL reading material: Effective instructional practice? *Modern Language Journal*, 83, 350-366.

**Appendix A**  
Respondent Demographics

Foreign Languages Taught		Educational Background in TESOL/Linguistics/SLA/Education		L1
English		7		7
Korean		11		20
Spanish		1		1

Respondent	FL Taught	# of Years Taught	University Degree	L1
1	Korean	11	MATESOL; BA, English, French	Korean
2	English	6	BA, English, French	English
3	Korean	5	MATESOL; BA, English	Korean
4	Korean	11	MATESOL	Korean
5	Korean	10	MATESOL	Korean
6	Korean	11	MATEFL	Korean
7	Korean	25	MATESOL, BA, Literature	Korean
8	Korean	16+	Applied Linguistics	Korean
9	Korean	20+	Education	Korean
10				
11	Korean	20	MATESOL/SLA	Korean
12	Korean	8	MATESOL	Korean
13	Korean	16	MA	Korean
14	Korean	8	Ph.D.	Korean
15	English/Korean	15+	SLA	Korean
16	Korean	30	Language/Literature	Korean
17	Korean	12	Chinese	Korean
18	Korean/English/ Japanese	10	MA	Korean
19	Korean	12	BA	Korean
20	Korean	12	MA, Journalism	Korean
21	English	2	MATESOL	English
22	Korean	10	MA	Korean
23	English	1	MATESOL; BA, Philosophy	English
24	N/A	N/A	MATESOL	Spanish
25	English	2	MATESOL; BA, International Relations	English
26	None	None	BA, Linguistics	English
27	English	2	MATESOL; BA, English	English
28	English	10	MATESOL; Journalism, Spanish	English

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire

You have been asked to complete this questionnaire as part of a research project called “Beyond the Psycholinguistic Model: An Analysis of the Attitudes of Foreign Language Teachers Toward Immediate Written Recall Protocols, Multiple-Choice, True-False, and Cloze-Completion Item Types for Assessing Reading Comprehension.” The purpose of this questionnaire is to learn about the methods foreign language teachers are using in their classrooms to assess reading comprehension. With this, I hope to discover teacher’s beliefs and attitudes about a framework for assessing reading comprehension known as “immediate written recall protocol.”

This protocol process requires students to immediately write down everything they remember after reading a text in the target language without looking back at the original text. The “immediate written recall protocol” differs from summaries because in writing a summary, the students may reread the original text.

Your responses are entirely voluntary, and you may refuse to complete any part or all of this questionnaire. This questionnaire is designed to be anonymous, meaning that there should be no way to connect your responses with you. Toward that end, please do not sign your name to the questionnaire or include any information in your responses that makes it easy to identify you. By completing and submitting the questionnaire, you affirm that you are at least 18 years old and that you give your consent to participate in this research. If you have any questions about this research before or after you complete the questionnaire, please contact <AUTHOR>.

**Directions:** Please carefully read each of the questions on all three pages of this questionnaire.

Then choose the answer you feel most appropriate and provide a written response. If additional space is needed, you may continue your response(s) in the blank space provided on page four.

**By proceeding with the questionnaire, you agree to participate in this study.**

1	Have you ever used immediate written recall protocols to assess reading comprehension in your classes?	Yes	No	Don't Know
2	Why or why not?			

3	Multiple-Choice items provide a very good measure of reading comprehension.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4	Please explain your response.								

5	Grading students' summaries of written texts is too time-consuming.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6	Please explain your response.								
7	True-False items provide a very good measure of reading comprehension.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8	Please explain your response.								

9	Fill-in-the-Blank items provide a very good measure of reading comprehension.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	Please explain your response.								
11	Cloze items provide a very good measure of reading comprehension.								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12	Please explain your response.								
13	What foreign language(s) do you teach?								
14	How many years have you taught foreign language(s)?								
15	In what field is your university degree?								
16	What is your L1?								

*Use the space below to continue your responses (if needed):*

---

**About the author:**

Kenneth J. Boyte is an ESL instructor at Cabrillo College in the San Francisco Bay area and a graduate of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey (MA, TESOL). In addition to ESL, he has a background in educational publishing (MA, Journalism, Southern Illinois University; BA, Journalism, Auburn University).

**Acknowledgement:**

I would like to thank my wife, Sook-Kyoung Boyte, for informing me about immediate written recall protocols, recruiting participants for this study, and distributing/collecting data-collection instruments. Additional thanks to Dr. Kathleen Bailey, Dr. John Hedgcock, Dr. Thor Sawin, and my classmates at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies for their help, as well as the editorial team at TIJ for their guidance throughout the publication process.



# ***TESOL International Journal Style Guide***

[updated 2016]

Authors preparing manuscripts for submission to *TESOL International Journal* must strictly follow the following style guide, which is based on APA style (6<sup>th</sup> edition). Papers not following the journal's style will be returned to the author.

## **Paper's Length:**

Papers should be up to 7000 words, though longer articles will be considered.

## **Title, Abstract, and Keywords:**

All submissions must include a title no longer than 20 words, an abstract no longer than 200 words, and about 4-6 keywords. The abstract should contain an informative summary of the main points of the article, including, where relevant, the article's purpose, theoretical framework, methodology, types of data analyzed, subject information, main findings, and conclusions. The abstract should reflect the focus of the article.

## **Paper's Organization:**

A typical paper should have the following components:

- Introduction (with an overview of the topic's relevance and the paper's focus)
- Literature review (with headings that reflect the content of the review rather than "Literature Review") Research Questions
- Methodology (participants, materials, data collection, analytical procedures)
- Findings (with sub-sections that clearly address the research questions)
- Discussion (with a brief summary of the findings and implications)
- Conclusion (discussion and conclusion can be combined)
- Endnotes (optional)
- References (APA style)
- Appendices (optional)
- About the Author(s) (maximum 50 words)
- Acknowledgements (optional)

## **Language:**

- The journal is published in English. Both American English and British English are acceptable, as long as the paper uses one style consistently (i.e., not mixing American and British styles in the same paper).
- The paper's English should be free of errors.

## **References:**

- If you use a reference management software (EndNote, Zotero, etc.), remove all field codes so that your citations and references appear as static text and not as linked fields. (Most reference management software has an option to turn citations into static text.) Linked fields (not static text) will be lost during formatting.
- In-text citations: e.g., (Halliday, 1978).
  - If specific information or direct quote is given, include page number, e.g., (Halliday, 1978, p. 10).

- If more than one author in a citation, use ampersand: e.g., (Martin & White, 2005) or (Martin & White, 2005, p. 123).
- If more than one citation are cited: list citations in alphabetical order by first author's last name, e.g., (Cumming, 2013; Esmacili, 2002; Fox, 2003; Gebril & Plakans, 2013, 2014; Yu, 2013)
- If more than one citation by same author: list earlier year first then later year; single-authored works first, then co-authored works, e.g., (Halliday, 1978, 1990; Halliday & Martin, 1980)
- Each citation with direct quote needs to have a page number in addition to the author and year of publication, e.g., Halliday (2005) noted, "A semiotic system is still one step further in complexity: it is physical, and biological, and social—and also semiotic: what is being systematized is meaning" (p. 68). Paraphrased citations do not require page numbers.
- Use block quote for citations longer than 40 words. E.g., According to Halliday (1978), [quote without quotation mark, text flushed left 3/8 inches and flushed right 3/8 inches] (p. 15)
- All in-text citations must match the entries listed in the references at the end of the paper.
- References: List all references after the main text and endnote if there is an endnote. Format the reference list as left aligned (flushed left), not justified alignment as in the main text.

For books:

Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic*. London, UK: Arnold.

Note that the title is only capitalized for the first letter of the first word. Capitalization should be used for the first letter of proper names and the first word after a colon. Note also that a country must be listed after the city of publication. For the United States, list the state, e.g., CA for California.

For journal articles:

Hyland, K. (2003). Genre-based pedagogies: A social response to process. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12(1), 17-29.

For book chapters:

Burns, A., & Knox, J. (2005). Realisation(s): Systemic-functional Linguistics and the language classroom. In N. Bartels (Ed.), *Researching applied linguistics in language teacher education* (pp. 235-260). New York, NY: Springer

Note that the editor's first name initial is listed before the last name.

For edited book with more than one editor: E.g.,

Burns, A. (2012). Text-based teaching. In A. Burns & J.C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to pedagogy and practice in second language teaching* (pp. 140-148). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

### **Indentation:**

- All paragraphs must be indented at 3/8 inches, or 0.95cm, except the first paragraph after a heading, where there is no indentation.

### **Font and font style:**

- Use Baskerville (preferred) or Baskerville Old Face font, 11 point for main text. (Use Courier New, 10 point, only for conversation analytic transcripts or when vertical alignment in text is important).
- Use italics for emphasis, not bold or underlining
- Use italics (not quotation marks) for words given as examples of language, e.g., “the authors prefer to use modals of possibility such as *would* to express a hypothetical or conditional possibility.”

### **Paragraph:**

- Use justified alignment paragraphs throughout (not left flush)
- No space after or before paragraphs
- Use single-spaced format
- Keep text formatting (e.g., italics, underline, etc.) to the absolute minimum necessary. Do not use bold style in paragraphs as bold style is reserved for headings only.

### **Title and Headings:**

- Paper’s title: Capitalize the initial letter of each word unless it is a short preposition (articles *A*, *An*, *The* should be capitalized)
- Heading Level 1: center, bold, 12 point font
- Heading Level 2: left, bold, 11 point font
- Heading Level 3: left, italics, bold, 11 point font
- Heading Level 4: indented, left, bold, 11 point font
- Insert 2 blank lines above each Level 1 heading
- Insert 1 blank line above the heading at all other levels

### **Tables:**

- must be referenced and discussed/ interpreted in main text and be referred to by number, e.g., “Table 1 shows...” Do not refer to tables as “the table above” or “the table below.”
- Format:

Table 1

*Heading in with Initial Letters in Capitalization, Except for Articles And Short Prepositions*

[no space between heading and table itself]

Table lines: make visible only top, bottom, and heading horizontal lines, no vertical lines

### **Figures:**

- include good quality figure image as a separate file in jpg or tiff format (resolution at 300dpi, at least)
- must be referenced and discussed/ interpreted in main text and be referred to by number, e.g., “Figure 1 shows...” Do not refer to tables as “the figure above” or “the figure below.”
- center figure image in paper
- Caption: under figure itself, centered text, capitalized first letter of each word. Figure captions must be editable and must not be part of the figure image.
- Format:

*Figure 1.* This is a Sample Figure Caption

**Endnotes:**

- do not use footnotes, use endnotes
- in-text reference to endnotes: superscript numbers, not automatically linked field but regular (static) text
- Endnotes: placed after main text, before references, font set at 10 point

**Appendices:**

- Appendices appear after references
- Label appendices as Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.
- Center appendix heading and title, bold text

**Author bio note and contact info:**

- Include a 50-word bio note for each author after appendices
- Include corresponding author's contact information (telephone number, email, mailing address)  
This will be inserted by the journal editor on the article's first page

**Acknowledgements**

- Acknowledgements, if any, appear after author bio note(s)