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Foreword

Welcome to the November issue of Asian EFL Journal in 2020, which contains 4 articles and 2 book reviews written by teachers of English as a Foreign Language and researchers in the field. These four articles include topics that deal with content and language integrated learning (CLIL), teacher self-efficacy beliefs, teacher training regarding the English language teaching; game-based learning (GBL), motivating and demotivating factors in EFL teaching pedagogy; teacher agency, updated curriculum, trilingual education; teaching vocabulary, the use of flashcards, wordlists and vocabulary techniques for vocabulary retention in EFL classes. The book reviews were focused on East Asian perspectives on silence in English language education and the marginalized status of minority languages in educational projects.

The featured articles in this volume were written by Guzyal Kassymova (Uskudar University, Istanbul, Turkey) and Hatime Çiftçi (MEF University, Istanbul, Turkey); Rui Lei (McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada) and Joseph Levitan (McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada); Bridget Goodman (Nazarbayev University, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan) and Laila Abdimanapova (Nazarbayev University, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan); Trần Thị Ngọc Yến (Vinh University, Vietnam). The book reviews were prepared by Bunga Ayu Wulandari (Universitas Jambi, Indonesia) and Marilyn Lewis (University of Auckland, New Zealand).

In *The Effect of CLIL Training on Turkish EFL Pre-service Teachers' Self-efficacy Beliefs and Attitudes towards CLIL*, Guzyal Kassymova and Hatime Çiftçi examined the effect of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) training on Turkish EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their attitudes towards CLIL. The findings revealed that the introductory CLIL teacher training had a statistically significant effect on self-efficacy beliefs of Turkish EFL pre-service teachers. The participants' attitudes towards CLIL turned out to be positive as well.

In *Motivating and Demotivating Factors of Game-Based Learning Approaches in Chinese College Students' Spoken English Learning: A Case Study*, Rui Lei and Joseph Levitan investigated the influence of a non-digital Game-Based Learning (GBL) approach on Chinese college engineering students' motivations to engage in spoken English language learning. Pre-test and post-test questionnaire surveys, semi-structured interviews, and researchers' observation journals throughout the workshop process were used to gather data. A general inductive approach was adopted for exploring, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data. The analysis of the data identified five motivating factors and three demotivating factors, which have implications for including GBL into language teaching pedagogy.

In *Alignment, Challenge, and Agency: EFL Teachers' Perspectives on Trilingual Education and Curriculum Reform in Kazakhstan*, Bridget Goodman and Laila Abdimanapova explored how primary and secondary EFL teachers in Kazakhstan, a

Central Asian republic and former republic of the Soviet Union, perceive and experience certain changes in language policy and language teaching: implementation of teaching subjects in three languages: Kazakh, Russian and English. The findings indicate that scholars and policy makers need to align EFL education and curriculum reform with both principles of effective pedagogy and student readiness for English language acquisition, with input from EFL teachers.

In *A Comparison of Wordlists and Flashcards as Vocabulary Instruction Techniques for EFL Learners*, Trần Thị Ngọc Yến looks at the impacts of flash cards and word lists as vocabulary instructional techniques. During the treatment, six groups of EFL learners at three different English levels were taught with flash cards and another six groups were taught with word lists. Unlike previous studies, which investigated learners' retention of meaning only, this research examines learners' retention of both meaning and spelling. The results of this study indicate that flash cards have advantages over word lists for beginner EFL learners at primary school, and that word lists provide more benefits to older learners at the elementary and pre-intermediate levels.

Bunga Ayu Wulandari prepared a book review on *East Asian Perspectives on Silence in English Language Education*, by Jim King and Seiko Harumi (eds.), *Multilingual Matters*: Bristol, UK, 2020. pp. 892. The book highlights 'silence' in English language education from the perspectives of East Asian teachers and students. It is a collection of research-based studies on silence in L2 settings from interdisciplinary perspectives and with different theoretical approaches. Marilyn Lewis wrote a book review on *Rejecting the marginalized status of minority languages: Educational projects pushing back against language endangerment*, by Ari Sherris and Susan D. Penfield (eds.), *Multilingual Matters*: Bristol, UK, 2019. pp. 168. This book is about maintaining the world's minority languages either through teaching or in some other way. The range of research methods could be a guide to academics and teachers wanting to explore the status of languages in other parts of the world.

In this issue of the Asian EFL Journal, the readers can be informed about EFL teacher training, teaching methods and approaches, vocabulary instruction techniques, education and curriculum development.

Sviatlana Karpava, Ph.D.

Production Editor of The Asian EFL Journal, November 2020

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The effect of CLIL training on Turkish EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes towards CLIL¹

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Bioprofiles

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¹ This study is reproduced from Guzyal Kassymova's unpublished MA thesis supervised by Assist. Prof. Hatime Çiftçi.

University of South Florida. Her work has appeared in such journals as *Journal of Politeness Research*, *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, and *CALICO Journal*.

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the effect of content and language integrated learning (CLIL) training on Turkish EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their attitudes towards CLIL. For this purpose, a group of 28 Turkish pre-service language teachers was trained on CLIL, its theoretical background, aims, principles, strategies for planning and teaching lessons. The data collection tools included a teacher self-efficacy scale, a questionnaire of attitudes and experiences in CLIL, and semi-structured interviews. The participants completed pre-tests and post-tests of teacher self-efficacy scale in order to measure the effect of training on their self-efficacy beliefs. Moreover, the participants' attitudes towards CLIL were explored through the attitudes questionnaire and semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The findings revealed that the introductory CLIL teacher training had a statistically significant effect on self-efficacy beliefs of Turkish EFL pre-service teachers. The participants' attitudes towards CLIL turned out to be positive as well.

Keywords: CLIL; teacher self-efficacy beliefs; teacher training: English language teaching

1. Introduction

The development of bilingual education in the European context has started since the early 1990s (Helot & Cavalli, 2017). A bulk of studies has already emphasized the importance of bilingualism and multilingualism regarding learners' academic achievements, personal and professional development, and life success (García, 2011; Sierens & Van Avermaet, 2014; Helot & Cavalli, 2017; Merino & Lasagabaster, 2018).

Research also seems to provide strong evidence for cognitive benefits of bilingualism in increasing attention and improving memory, metalinguistic awareness, and other thinking skills (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson & Ungerleider, 2010; Sierens & Van Avermaet, 2014) as well as social advantages, such as character development resulting in being better world citizen as well as raising economic capacity (García, 2011). As a relatively new method of bilingual education, content and language integrated learning (CLIL) has specifically received a growing interest with its significant effect on learner development. A great number of researchers confirm that CLIL plays a significant role in EFL context as it has been shown to improve the process of learning a foreign/second language as well as content acquisition (Pokrivčáková et al., 2013; Bozdoğan, 2015; Soler, Gonzalez-Davies & Inesta, 2017). CLIL also helps develop such cognitive skills as metacognitive awareness, linguistic confidence, communicative skills, cultural awareness, risk-taking (Coyle, 2005; Lorenzo, Casal & Moore, 2010) in addition to better oral description, greater ability of expressing ideas, better understanding of meaning, higher pragmatic competence, and increased writing abilities (Merino & Lasagabaster, 2018).

In Turkey, CLIL has been integrated into the language and subject teaching in numerous K12 schools for many years. At university level, it appears as English-medium instruction (EMI) where university students are educated in their subject area in English. The emergence of CLIL in Turkish educational system originally started in 1970s when Anatolian high schools (a type of lycée where CLIL programs were implemented) were established (Bozdoğan & Karlıdağ, 2013). In recent years, CLIL approach has been widely accepted and practiced in several primary and secondary schools across Turkey especially in the private schools where English language education is one of the salient subjects and highly demanded by parents. This actually puts a lot of pressure on English language teachers as they are expected to have certain background and experience with CLIL. Our assumption is that a CLIL training program for pre-service teachers may affect, to some extent, their beliefs about their own teaching potential or abilities regarding implementation and practice of a CLIL-based approach. Thus, this study investigates pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs

before and after the implementation of a CLIL teacher-training course. This study fills a gap by contributing to research in this line as there is a lack of investigation in CLIL-based pre-service teacher training. This study is also important as it sheds light upon whether Turkish EFL prospective teachers consider the possibility of integrating CLIL methodologies into their future teaching. Offering an introductory CLIL teacher training course is a remarkable attempt to provide such needs of future language teachers within dual-focused multilingual perspective and preparing them for a globalized world.

In accordance with the purpose of the study, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Does CLIL teacher training have an effect on Turkish EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs?
2. What are the attitudes of Turkish EFL pre-service teachers towards CLIL?

2. Theoretical Framework of CLIL

The 4Cs framework of CLIL

The major theoretical perspective that constitutes the basis of a CLIL program has been developed by Coyle (2005), which is called 4Cs framework. As discussed by Ruiz de Zarobe and Jimenez Catalan (2009), this framework supports CLIL's ambitious aim to achieve multilingualism plus mother tongue. Four key principles of the model are as follows: content – successful acquisition of knowledge, skills, and comprehension of the subject; communication – the use of language as a means to develop communicative competence and content learning as well as language learning at the same time; cognition – challenging learners to build their own understanding during the learning process by developing higher order thinking skills for students with any academic level; and culture – fostering students' tolerance and understanding of pluriculturalism, and raising their intercultural awareness (Coyle, 2005).

Within CLIL instruction, teachers should integrate these 4Cs into the learning

process by linking them together. From this, it becomes clear that such a dual approach to language and content learning drawing on cognitive and cultural elements creates a new learning environment, which is supposed to differ from traditional language or subject lessons (Coyle, Hood & Marsh, 2010). Thus, the 4Cs model of CLIL principles represents a strong pedagogical and methodological basis for the sufficient CLIL teaching and learning.

CLIL teacher training

CLIL teacher training programs for pre- and in-service teachers are crucial to establish since they promote CLIL teachers' professional and language skills (Kewara & Prabjandee, 2018). The training provision attempts to integrate both theoretical and practical frameworks related to CLIL. However, CLIL represents considerable challenges not only to students but also to teachers as it is demanding for a teacher to be professionally competent in both language and subject teaching (Pinner, 2013). The main reason here lies in poor collaboration between institutions and trainers as well as lack of attention paid to the training of teachers before they graduate (Delicado Puerto & Pavon Vazquez, 2016).

The following aspects have to be considered while building up a teacher training program: developing more CLIL course books and other materials addressing learners' real lives, providing future teachers with appropriate academic and practical aids, and also promoting an awareness about CLIL and its potential benefits (Banegas, 2012). Thus, it is necessary to develop specific support for the integration and development of CLIL teachers (Pappa, Moate, Ruohotie-Lyhty & Eteläpelto, 2017). In order to successfully implement CLIL into the real learning environment, a number of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs are suggested to be developed (Banegas, 2012). As CLIL approach requires teaching in other language rather than L1, teaching through this approach is quite challenging. Therefore, the lack of professional and qualified teachers might prevent the development of CLIL. Pre-service teacher education influences the formation of the future teachers' professional vision, their attitude and willingness to adapt as well as their pedagogical skill and abilities (Sylvén,

2013). In this regard, in order to become a professional teacher in CLIL-based practices, it is crucial to start preparing pre-service teachers at the university level by integrating specific CLIL teacher training programs (Biçaku, 2011). A sufficient number of studies and reports on CLIL teacher training demonstrate that it is necessary to build the training provision based on the theory of CLIL and its practical framework in order to achieve successful training practice for initial teacher education plus their further professional development (Banegas, 2012; Pokrivčáková et al., 2013; Ruiz de Zarobe & Jimenez Catalan, 2009).

Teacher self-efficacy beliefs

Teacher education goes hand in hand with the teachers' self-efficacy beliefs - teachers' willingness to realize their potential significantly influenced by their self-perceptions and beliefs (Karimvand, 2011). Thus, there must be a positive influence of the professional teacher preparation on their further self-efficacy beliefs. Researchers from different educational fields have found out a positive correlation between teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their productivity, enhanced teaching strategies, and professional goals (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy & Hoy, 1998; Henson, 2001; Karimvand, 2011). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) indicate that higher sense of efficacy is connected with teachers' willingness to apply new methods, approaches, and experiments. A number of studies also suggest that self-efficacy influences teacher effectiveness in various ways. Self-efficacy beliefs improve teacher ability to adapt successfully in stressful and challenging atmosphere, affect superior students' achievements and overall school effectiveness (Bray-Clark & Reid Bates, 2003; Tournaki & Podell, 2005). Thus, it is suggested that professional teacher development should be initially focused on the teacher self-efficacy beliefs as a key element in teacher effectiveness.

3. Literature Review

CLIL teacher education

Sylvén (2013) in her study on CLIL in Sweden examines the reasons why CLIL

research findings are diverse from country to country and introduces four main factors which are decisive in these findings. The first crucial factor according to Sylvén (2013) is CLIL policy framework which mainly means the documents providing guidance for schools and building educational system. The second factor demonstrated by Sylvén (2013) is the age of learners at which CLIL is being implemented. The next factor in the study is the amount of exposure to the target language outside of school since it has been resulted in correlation with language skills. The last factor influencing the results in CLIL implementation is teacher education at pre- and in-service level, as the researcher states CLIL teacher training influences future teachers and should not be underestimated. CLIL-based teacher education has been examined in a variety of international contexts. One of the rightful arguments made by Mattheoudakis (2017) stresses that such a training process should be designed or planned in collaboration with academia. Its integration into a teacher training program should relate to both pre-service and in-service teachers in that program. Banegas (2012) in one of his works, for instance, describes a CLIL course for Malaysian pre-service EFL teachers implemented in the context of Britain. The module of the program is divided into two terms, where the first term covers theory and practice of content-based English language teaching, and the second term promotes the development of teachers' practical skills in teaching CLIL lessons through literature texts.

In European context, Hunt (2011) describes and evaluates collaborative action research on 'e-based CLIL training' where a number of European countries participated. The training included both the face-to-face and the online sessions held for CLIL trainers, pre-service and in-service school subject teachers. The attitude questionnaire revealed the participants' positive perceptions about the face-to-face meetings, while the online sessions were not preferred (as cited in Banegas, 2012). Similarly, as for the mode of CLIL teacher training, De Santo and De Meo (2016) describe a blended CLIL teacher training course comprised face-to-face classes and online sessions. The research highlights the importance of this course with regard to the trainees' interactions and the role of e-trainers. The main outcome of this training course was in trainees' positive feedback and their interest in further study on CLIL approach.

In 2007, the University of Salamanca also launched a CLIL project where two universities from England and Spain cooperated to plan and implement a particular CLIL unit in six schools in Spain and in England. The project lasted 10 weeks, for a half of a day in a week, with the evaluation phase at the end of the unit. The schools from both countries prepared various teaching materials and online resources exchanging with each other, whether it is video, brochure, or website. The project has resulted in positive outcomes from teachers, students, and parents' perspectives (Gutierrez Almarza, Duran Martinez & Beltran Llavador, 2012). In the context of Czech Republic, Novotná and Procházková (2013) describes the implementation of CLIL training course designed for future maths teachers. The training program includes face-to-face classes covering various aspects of bilingual education, the use of language in content teaching along with online lessons on theory, methodology, and principles of CLIL. The results gathered from the anonymous online questionnaires show the trainees' positive attitudes towards CLIL approach (Pokrivčáková et al., 2013).

Regarding CLIL teacher education in higher education, Bruning & Purranann (2014) argue that CLIL teacher education is remarkably successful mainly because German teachers usually study the subject and language teaching together. These researchers highlight Braunschweig University, where CLIL is being integrated into the Master's program along with various subjects like history, chemistry, and mathematics. Guadamillas Gomez (2017) also reviews a CLIL training course provided for the fourth-year EFL pre-service teachers in a Spanish university. The CLIL training program integrates theoretical and practical content to encourage students to develop CLIL-based lesson plans accordingly. Briefly, results demonstrate participants' positive attitudes towards the practical part of training as they claim that micro-teaching lessons has helped them to improve their teaching skills. However, the theoretical part of the course has received mostly negative views as the students have found it difficult to understand CLIL's theoretical framework.

Finally, a recent study on CLIL teacher education in Thailand by Kewara and Prabjandee (2018) reveals overall positive attitudes of teachers towards effectiveness of CLIL regarding students' language development. However, as the majority of the

participants point out, CLIL approach requires more time, efforts, and energy to prepare appropriate materials and lessons plans and thus it is a responsibility of the schools' heads to create a specific CLIL training program for non-language teachers.

Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and attitudes of CLIL implementation

Concerning the attitudes of teachers' towards CLIL, Dalton-Puffer, Huettner, Schindelegger & Smit (2009) interviewed 28 teachers from Austrian HTL colleges about their beliefs. In terms of language learning, subject teachers state that CLIL promotes constant language learning. They also consider CLIL as additional to the classroom instruction but not substitute. However, content teachers do not demonstrate a concrete aim to improve students' language competence despite teaching specific subject terminology. The participants also mention that CLIL is successful at making students feel better when speaking in English. Overall results of the study indicate the teachers' strong feelings of responsibility. Pokrivčáková et al. (2013) have also surveyed 35 Slovak elementary school teachers about their personal views on CLIL and its implementation in their lessons. The study reveals teachers' uncertain or mixed views ranging from very positive to negative. Yet, the participants indicate that they feel unprepared and lack of competence in teaching CLIL, and define CLIL professionally challenging. Besides all the benefits of CLIL illustrated by teachers, certain challenges are also outlined as high demands for teachers and learners, lack of relevant materials and resources, and problems with balancing content and language teaching.

With a total of 80 Belgian secondary school CLIL-teachers, De Mesmaeker and Lochtman (2014) investigate the notion of professional identity by using an online survey of teacher self-efficacy scale. The results demonstrate low scores of self-efficacy beliefs regarding the general aspects of teaching. The researchers highlight the participants' low confidence in motivating students and helping them value their learning. Another study on teachers' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of CLIL from various schools and universities in 15 Colombian cities through a web-based survey reveals that the majority of teachers do not have sufficient knowledge of CLIL

(McDougald, 2015). However, they also express positive attitudes towards their CLIL experience regarding its effectiveness in developing language skills. The teachers highlight that they need more knowledge about the methodology and how to adapt it to the students' needs.

More recently, a study by Soler, Gonzalez-Davies & Inesta (2017) indicates Catalan school stakeholders' overall positive attitudes towards CLIL instruction. The results demonstrate that the initial stage of implementation and teacher preparation is an important factor for effective CLIL-based learning. Schools and professionals should cooperate and create a sort of CLIL culture. Finally, one more study conducted by Yessenova (2017) in Kazakhstan with regard to science and maths pre-service teachers indicates that participants have low level of self-efficacy beliefs regarding their abilities to teach through English. The results show that the main factor there is the lack of professional CLIL pre-service teacher training.

4. Methodology

Setting and participants

This study was carried out in a foundational university in the northwest of Turkey over spring semester in 2018. The specific context of the study was the Department of English Language Teaching (ELT) where prospective language teachers are provided with solid content and pedagogical knowledge on English as a second/foreign language teaching. Considering the undergraduate program of ELT, an increasing emphasis on CLIL started to take place in the last two years simultaneously with recent CLIL-oriented English language teaching implementations and practices in several K12 schools in Turkey. The present study utilized non-random purposive sampling technique (Tongco, 2007; Creswell, 2014). Thus, 28 Turkish EFL pre-service teachers participated in this study. They were all Turkish native speakers whereas one student was a bilingual of Turkish and German. Their age ranged from 20 to 24 years old, and one of the participants was at an age of 32. The participants consisted of 4 males and 24 females and they were all proficient in English as it was a prerequisite for entering the program.

Data collection instruments and procedures

This study used a mixed methods explanatory type of research design so that we could gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Creswell, 2014). To explore self-efficacy beliefs of Turkish EFL pre-service teachers quantitatively, the original Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSS) created by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) was implemented as the primary data collection tool in this study. The scale was administered twice during the data collection procedure as a pre-test and post-test to investigate the effect of CLIL training on Turkish EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. The three subscales of teacher self-efficacy beliefs (instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement) contained 24 items in total. To explore Turkish EFL pre-service teachers' attitudes towards CLIL, the Attitudes and Experiences in CLIL questionnaire was retrieved from McDougald (2015). For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire was slightly modified and thus only 17 items out of 20 remained considering their relevance to attitudes of the participants towards CLIL. Similar to the TSS in this study, this attitude questionnaire on 5-point Likert scale were given to the participants as a pre-test and post-test.

The 5-week data collection started with the TSS and The Attitude and Experiences in CLIL Questionnaire that were given at the beginning and end of the process. Once these were administered to the participants in the very first class of the first week, a 4-week in-class CLIL training was delivered by the second author, who was also the course instructor, through one-hour session every week over a period of 4 weeks in collaboration with the first author. Prior to the study, an introductory training program was developed by the researchers drawing on theoretical and practical aspects of CLIL and research on CLIL training programs for pre-service and in-service teachers (Banegas, 2012; Hunt, Neofitou, & Redford, 2009; Novotná & Procházková, 2013). The first session mainly provided basic theoretical knowledge, such as the history of CLIL, its definition, framework, principles, and strategies. The remaining 3 sessions were allocated to practical issues that would enable the pre-service teachers to develop CLIL lesson plans, to initiate reflective discussions on the implementation of CLIL, and to get feedback from each other. In the end, post-tests of TSS and Attitude questionnaire

were completed by the same group of participants and consequently compared and contrasted with the pre-tests data in order to see the impact of CLIL training.

Semi-structured interviews were also carried out as a follow-up to the TSS for triangulation and validation purposes. The interviews were conducted individually with six randomly selected participants who agreed to be interviewed voluntarily and lasted for about 30 to 40 minutes. The interview questions aimed to gather more in-depth data by exploring the participants' beliefs and ideas about CLIL as well as their own sense of efficacy in terms of instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement.

Data analysis

In order to analyse the quantitative data, SPSS as a statistical software was employed. First, the descriptive statistics were utilized to get the means and standard deviations of the scores from both pre-tests and post-tests of TSS and Attitude and Experiences in CLIL questionnaire. Following this, the means were compared and contrasted with the use of inferential statistics, a paired-samples t-test, to find out if there was a statistically significant difference between the means of the pre-tests and post-tests. In order to maintain credibility, the interview data was triangulated with the quantitative data for a more in-depth understanding of each research question. For the analysis of qualitative data, the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim and then content analysis was employed. It involved three main steps such as open coding, creating categories, and interpretation of the findings (Creswell, 2014). The content analysis in this study was inductive as the categorisation of the data was made within the existed themes taken from the TSS questionnaire (Armat, Assarroudi, Rad, Sharifi, & Heydari, 2018).

5. Results

The effect of CLIL training on Turkish EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs

The aim of the quantitative data analysis was to find out if there was an effect of the CLIL training on Turkish EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. The level of

significance in this research was defined as $\alpha = 0.05$ (Huck, 2012). After the data from both tests were gathered, the researchers used SPSS to produce descriptive analysis and paired-samples *t*-test (inferential) types of statistical analysis in order to find the means and standard deviations of the scores gained by the participants in pre- and post-tests and further to identify if there was a statistically significant difference between the means of pre- and post-tests scores.

Before the descriptive and inferential analysis was produced, the means of pre-tests and post-tests self-efficacy scores were tested for normal distribution in order for the results to be reliable (Huck, 2012). According to the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, the *p*-value of pre-tests results is equal to 0.731 while the *p*-value of post-test results is equal to 0.515. Thus, as both of the *p* calculated values are more than *p* critical value ($\alpha = 0.05$), it can be concluded that the data scores are normally distributed. Further, SPSS was used to produce a descriptive analysis of the data. For this research, the descriptive analysis was employed to find the means and standard deviations (SD) of the scores for each of 24 items obtained in pre-tests and post-tests of TSS. Consequently, the normally distributed data from the output of the descriptive analysis enabled the researcher to produce the dependent (paired-samples) *t*-test to compare the means of two dependent variables of the same sample size (pre-tests and post-tests on teacher self-efficacy beliefs before and after the CLIL training) and to detect a statistically significant difference between those means.

The dependent *t*-test analysis revealed the overall *M* and *SD* of both groups of scores. Thus, the overall mean of scores in post-test is higher ($M = 7.0725$, $SD = 0.312$) than the average of a set of scores in pre-tests ($M = 6.5708$, $SD = 0.361$). In order to define if the average difference between two variables is statistically significant the researcher referred to the last table in the SPSS output. The information in Table 1 presents the main values of the paired-samples analysis such as *t*-value, degrees of freedom (*df*), and significance level (*Sig.*), which enables to detect the statistical significance of the difference between variables.

Table 1. Paired-Samples T-Test Results for TSS data

			Paired Differences		<i>N</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>				
Teacher Self-Efficacy beliefs	Posttest	Pretest	0.50167	0.17812	28	13.798	23	.000*

* < 0.05

The results presented in Table 1 indicated that the means of two groups of variables (pre-tests and post-tests scores) are statistically different. The dependent samples *t*-test was associated with a statistically significant effect (Huck, 2012), $t(23) = 13.79$, 95% CIs [0.42, 0.57], $p < .05$. As the *t*-test revealed that the mean of the post-test scores is greater ($M = 7.0725$) than the mean of those from pre-tests ($M = 6.5708$), it can be concluded that the participants' self-efficacy beliefs in teaching raised significantly after they went through the CLIL teacher training course. Besides finding the statistical significance of the difference between two means, it is important to detect the effect size of the results as well. Estimating the effect size allows the researchers to find out the practical significance of the difference what demonstrates that the difference is truly meaningful and to what extent it is significant (if the effect is large, moderate, or small) (Huck, 2012). The effect size of the present results was found by estimating Cohen's *d* value via the online calculator. Thus, the effect size in the present research is $d = 1.48$ and considered as a large effect (Cohen, 1992).

The interview analysis yielded 3 major themes related to teacher self-efficacy and CLIL-based teaching: instructional categories, classroom management, and student engagement. Relating to the first theme, which is about the Turkish EFL pre-service teachers' beliefs of their knowledge and capabilities in instructional strategies they would use generally in teaching CLIL-based instruction, all six participants expressed their raised self-efficacy beliefs for using CLIL strategies in their future teaching practices. The following statements illustrate their sense of efficacy in using CLIL-based instructional strategies after the training:

In terms of teaching content, with the help of a subject teacher, I think I would be able to use

CLIL instructional strategies in my teaching. (Participant 3)

I think I have enough knowledge about CLIL instructional strategies from our Language Acquisition course. (Participant 4)

Among CLIL instructional strategies, all six participants mentioned the role of rich input and authentic materials. They also expressed the importance of scaffolding techniques, the use of real-life situations and strategies to activate higher order thinking skills, collaborative work, 4Cs instruction, and integration of relevant content into lesson plans. Finally, differentiated methods and student-centred instruction were also noticed as crucial in CLIL teaching by the interview participants.

Classroom management as the second theme pertaining to the participants' self-efficacy beliefs and CLIL-based instruction seemed not to be as easy as it was thought. The half of the participants (3/6) reported that they did not feel self-confident in their abilities to manage the classroom as they have no teaching experience in CLIL. Despite the theoretical knowledge the pre-service EFL teachers received during the training sessions, their lower sense of self-efficacy in managing CLIL classrooms were evident and especially linked to their lack of experience with this approach:

I don't have the competencies in managing EFL classroom as I'm only a second-year student but if I had an opportunity, I would definitely teach by CLIL. (Participant 5)

However, some of the participants (3/6) mentioned techniques to manage the classroom that they would experience in their future practice:

To get the students' attention the topic is very important so that the teacher should choose the relevant topic, which is not boring, which is different. (Participant 2)

For the higher level, students managing the CLIL classroom would be easier; For instance, I would manage the disruptive students by some warm-up activities, group activities, competitions, and

collaborative works. (Participant 3)

As can be seen in the interview data, it becomes clear that the participants were able to relate the instructional strategies they learned during the CLIL training to the classroom management techniques.

Student engagement as the third theme pertaining to self-efficacy beliefs about teaching CLIL was also evident and all the participants provided specific examples for engaging students in CLIL lessons. These include, but not limited to, group-work, collaboration, peer-feedback, games, realistic situations, problem-solving tasks, interactive instruction, and secure classroom environment. Some of the responses illustrating the pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about student engagement in CLIL lessons are presented below:

To engage the students in CLIL lessons you should make the lessons more interactive.

(Participant 1)

I would incorporate CLIL activities related to the students' real life so that they will be more willing to share with their peers and teacher. (Participant 2)

As indicated in the interviews, the participants were more confident in their capabilities to engage their potential students in CLIL lessons as they demonstrated their knowledge and awareness of certain strategies and techniques constructed during their CLIL teacher training. Thus, the participants were able to connect instructional strategies with methods needed for the classroom management and student engagement in CLIL lessons.

Overall, our analysis of semi-structured interviews indicated the current sense of efficacy of Turkish EFL pre-service teachers in terms of instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. The results demonstrated the participants' raised confidence in using the instructional strategies and methods for the student engagement whereas their self-efficacy beliefs about classroom management

are still negative due to the lack of teaching experience. Finally, interviews also revealed that the CLIL teacher training had a positive effect on their beliefs about their own abilities and competencies in two out of three abovementioned categories of language teaching.

The Turkish EFL Pre-Service Teachers' Attitudes towards CLIL

In this study, SPSS was used to produce a descriptive analysis of the normally distributed data obtained from the Attitude and Experiences in CLIL questionnaire. The descriptive analysis enabled to find the means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the scores for each of 17 items of the questionnaire (see Table 2).

As it is seen from Table 2, the highest mean score of the responses was found for the item 7 ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 0.670$). This shows that the participants had a clear understanding about the main aim of CLIL – its ability to teach both the language and the content of the subject simultaneously. In alignment with this, the two reversing items (item 5 and item 6) had the lowest mean score ($M = 1.29$) indicating a negative attitude to the statements that CLIL helps learners to develop only the language or only the content respectively.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for Attitude and Experiences in CLIL data (n=28)

Items	M	SD
1. I would like to know more about CLIL.	4.14	1.044
2. I would like to be given the opportunity to teach subject content (Mathematics, Science, Art, Music, Geography, Literature, Social Studies...) through English.	4.11	1.100
3. My experience in teaching subject content through English has been positive.	3.79	1.101
4. CLIL benefits students.	4.61	.497
5. CLIL helps students develop only their language skills.	1.29	.460
6. CLIL helps students develop only their subject knowledge.	1.29	.460
7. CLIL helps students develop both their language skills and subject knowledge.	4.68	.670

8. CLIL requires more methodology knowledge than ELT teachers possess.	3.96	.838
9. CLIL requires more subject knowledge than teachers ELT teachers possess.	4.18	.772
10. CLIL requires a lot of time (both lesson planning and teaching).	4.43	.690
11. CLIL requires new teaching materials.	4.39	.685
12. CLIL requires a lot of administrative support.	4.39	.497
13. CLIL requires cooperation with subject teachers.	4.46	.838
14. CLIL is only possible with intermediate students of English.	1.64	.989
15. CLIL is only possible with young learners.	1.64	.989
16. CLIL only possible with older students.	1.46	.838
17. I would be interested in future CLIL projects.	3.93	1.052

The next higher average mean belongs to the item 4 ($M = 4.6$) which claims that CLIL is beneficial for the students. This demonstrates that the majority of the participants strongly agree with the statement. A set of items also turns out to have high mean scores (items 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13) showing that CLIL requires more subject knowledge, time, and new teaching materials, as well as greater support from the administration. From this, it can be concluded that the participants have all shared the right view that CLIL is a complex approach which requires more efforts than the usual EFL lessons. Additionally, the majority of the participants seem to have positive views about CLIL in terms of wishing to get more knowledge about it and the interest in the future studies on CLIL as indicated by their responses to item 1 ($M = 4.14$) and item 17 ($M = 3.93$). Finally, a set of reverse items ($M = 1.64$ for item 14, $M = 1.64$ for item 15, and $M = 1.46$ for item 16) shows that CLIL is possible with learners from a varying age range.

Providing more insights into the attitudes of Turkish EFL pre-service teachers towards CLIL approach, our interviews have revealed 3 major aspects of the participants' attitudes: their understanding of the term CLIL, competencies they gained to teach through CLIL, and their attitude towards the role of CLIL in Turkish EFL curriculum. To start with the first category, 6 participants shared a clear understanding of the meaning of the term CLIL and its main aim as 'to teach a subject in a foreign

language through integrating content and language simultaneously'. The following excerpt illustrates how the participants define the term CLIL:

I think that CLIL is about content and language integrated learning and it's a good method because its' not only about focusing on grammar or on content but also on general knowledge about the world, the culture. (Participant 3)

As for competencies gained to teach through CLIL, all participants reflected their positive perceptions. They shared common agreements that they constructed their basic knowledge-base through the CLIL teacher training:

I think I definitely possess the main information about CLIL as last year I received some background knowledge on CLIL, and this year, with your training I got more information on CLIL; and maybe I will use it in my future teaching practice, especially it would be really appropriate for intermediate and advanced learners. (Participant 3)

Attitude towards the role of CLIL in Turkish EFL curriculum as the last category revealed that all the participants had generally positive attitude towards incorporating CLIL in the Turkish EFL curriculum. They referred to their own learning experience stating that current English language instruction at schools has certain drawbacks and it could be possible to eliminate those by implementing CLIL in EFL curriculum:

CLIL should play a really strong role in the Turkish EFL curriculum; the administration of the schools should consider it as a very important approach. (Participant 1)

Teachers should be well prepared and more teacher trainings on CLIL should be provided before they start teaching. (Participant 2)

Grammar-focused instruction, uninteresting topics, focus only on the lower order thinking skills, and insufficient teacher preparation were found to be the most frequent

reasons for the relatively ineffective language instruction mentioned by the participants.

6. Discussion and conclusion

This study has provided insights into the effect of introductory CLIL-based training on Turkish EFL pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their attitudes towards CLIL approach in English language instruction. The study has indicated an increased level of self-efficacy beliefs in Turkish EFL pre-service teachers. Relying on this, it can be argued that the implementation of the introductory CLIL teacher training facilitated the participants' raised sense of self-efficacy beliefs unlike some previous research (De Mesmaeker & Lochtman, 2014; Yessenova, 2017). One major implication of this study is that CLIL training seems to be effective for improving self-efficacy beliefs of teachers when it is provided or included in pre-service EFL teacher education programs. This is also relevant to the current trend for the expanding use of CLIL in K12 language instruction in several EFL contexts and thus our study addresses a potential need for preliminary CLIL training integrated into pre-service English language teacher education programs. The findings of this study may also help future teachers raise their self-efficacy beliefs, trigger administrators and teacher trainers to draw upon the study with respect to the need to enhance CLIL teacher training for future EFL teachers and how to enable them to incorporate it in a practical way.

Regarding self-efficacy beliefs, this study also suggests that the three major categories play a salient role for Turkish EFL pre-service teachers in CLIL-based teaching: instructional categories, classroom management, and student engagement. This clearly implies an important aspect of CLIL training in pre-service teacher education program in the sense that it should emphasize especially practical strategies or equip them with necessary tools for CLIL implementation. A variety of instructional strategies, such as rich input, authentic materials, scaffolding, real-life situations, activating higher order thinking skills, collaborative work, 4Cs instruction, relevant content, differentiated methods, and student-centered instruction, seem to be important for boosting pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for using CLIL in teaching English. As for student engagement, our study indicates that pre-service EFL teacher have become

quite confident in a variety of strategies, such as group-work, collaborative learning, peer-feedback, games, realistic situations, problem-solving tasks, interactive instruction, and secure classroom environment. These answers reflect the participants' high sense of self-efficacy regarding the instructional strategies and strategies for student engagement CLIL approach requires. However, Turkish EFL pre-service teachers' sense of efficacy in classroom management turned out to be relatively low, and the main reason mentioned by all the participants is the lack of teaching experience. Thus, one such implication of our study also relates to the provision of opportunities for implementing CLIL in pre-service English language teacher training. These CLIL-based teacher education training courses should also integrate the practical or actual implementation aspect of it as much as possible.

This study also highlights the importance of revealing the pre-service teachers' attitudes towards CLIL. Similar to previous work on CLIL (Bozdoğan & Karlıdağ, 2013; Dalton-Puffer et al., 2009; Pokrivčáková et al., 2013; McDougald, 2015; Soler, Gonzalez-Davies & Inesta, 2017), this study demonstrates the participants' positive attitudes towards CLIL. Turkish EFL pre-service teachers in our study support CLIL implementation or instruction and its influence on learners' language development. As the participants have also become aware of the necessity for effective preparation for CLIL implementation that requires more time, teacher effort, collaboration among colleagues, administrative support, and additional teaching materials (Kewara & Prabjandee, 2018), it is highly crucial to create such awareness and cultivate positive attitudes towards the role of CLIL in English language curriculum not only for its positive outcomes in students' academic achievements and individual development but also challenges to be faced. Integrating CLIL-based training into pre-service EFL programs would also help eliminate or reduce the heavy focus on grammar-based instruction and enable language teachers and learners to be involved in more authentic or communicative language instruction.

The study is limited to a specific group of pre-service teachers at a foundational university in Turkey. Therefore, the primary goal of the research was not to generalize the outcomes but gain deeper insights into the perspectives and beliefs of Turkish EFL

pre-service teachers about CLIL and teaching in general before and after the implementation of CLIL teacher training course. However, it is also quite likely to transfer the results and implications of this study to similar contexts where EFL pre-service teacher education is provided through structured program at undergraduate level. It is important to conduct further research on pre-service language teachers, their self-efficacy beliefs, the role of CLIL-based practicum or implementation, and other factors that might be influential in CLIL instruction or teacher preparation in similar contexts.

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Motivating and Demotivating Factors of Game-Based Learning Approaches in Chinese College Students' Spoken English Learning: A Case Study

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Abstract

This study qualitatively investigates the influence of a non-digital Game-Based Learning (GBL) approach on Chinese college engineering students' motivations to engage in spoken English language learning. Empirical research was conducted in a Chinese southeastern university with 15 sophomore engineering students who participated in six 90-minute sessions of a GBL spoken English workshop. Pre-test and post-test questionnaire surveys, semi-structured interviews, and researchers' observation journals throughout the workshop process were used to gather data. A general inductive approach was adopted for exploring, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data. The analysis identifies five motivating factors and three demotivating factors, which have implications for including GBL into language teaching pedagogy. This study offers recommendations for college EFL teachers to design and arrange games with the consideration of students' demographics, disciplines, and individual epistemologies. To ensure the effectiveness of the GBL implementation, adequate GBL pedagogical training, including language and motivational teaching practices training, may be necessary.

Key words: Game-based Learning (GBL), motivating and demotivating factors, spoken English learning, EFL teaching pedagogy, Chinese engineering students

Introduction

In recent years, an increasing number of researchers have conducted empirical studies confirming that the game-based learning (GBL) approach for second language

acquisition increases students' motivation to learn (Ebrahimzadeh & Sepideh, 2017; Hainey, Connolly, Stansfield, & Boyle, 2011; Sevy-Biloon, 2016; Tsai, Cheng, Yeh, & Lin, 2017; Vandercruysse, Vandewaetere, Cornillie, & Clarebout, 2013). The GBL approach is defined as applying certain game mechanisms and principles in educational settings to engage learners to achieve particular learning objectives (Hwang, Shih, Ma, Shadiev, & Chen, 2016; Kim, Park, & Baek, 2009; Pho & Dinscore, 2015). Different from the traditional English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching approach featuring highly structured curricula and programmed instructional materials, the GBL approach is understood as a form of experiential learning which values personal involvement and emotional connection (Dewey, 1928; Knutson, 2003). However, little is known about the different factors that motivate students to learn with the GBL method (motivating factors), and less is known about factors that impede students' learning motivation and might be present with different kinds of GBL approaches (demotivating factors). Therefore, this study begins to address this gap by analyzing motivating and demotivating factors of non-digital GBL approaches for Chinese college Engineering students engaging in spoken English language learning.

Empirical research was conducted in a Chinese southeastern university with 15 sophomore engineering students who participated in six 90-minute sessions of a GBL spoken English workshop. Pre-test and post-test questionnaire surveys, semi-structured interviews, and researchers' observation journals throughout the workshop process were used to gather data. A general inductive approach was adopted for exploring, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data. Five motivating factors and three demotivating factors were identified to provide implications for including GBL into language learning pedagogy. Other recommendations on game design, arrangement, and implementations, as well as adequate GBL pedagogical training for EFL teachers are also discussed at the end of this paper.

Context

The National College English Testing Committee (NCETC) (2006, 1) in China clearly states that the primary objective of college English learning is to enhance students'

integrated English skills, particularly listening and speaking (Yan & Huizhong, 2006; Lu, 2019). However, currently, most Chinese colleges and universities are in the preliminary stage of transitioning their emphasis on students' English reading and writing to communicative competence development. Formal English courses for non-English major students at Chinese universities are required for the first two years of college study with the aim of helping students to pass the College English Test 4 (CET 4) and/or CET 6. These tests focus on English reading, writing and listening skills but overlook English speaking by making it a separate and optional test, the College English Test-Spoken English Test (CET-SET). Most Chinese colleges and universities still implement the traditional teacher-centered lecturing method with the focus on students' English vocabulary and grammar learning (Chen, 2018; Yang, 2005) since the CET tests are considered the main indicator for students' EFL learning success. As a result, many non-English major students are criticized as learning "mute English" (Bahous, Bacha, & Nabhani, 2011; Chen & Goh, 2011).

This phenomenon is particularly widespread among science and engineering students (Evans & Morrison, 2011; Gan, 2013; He, 2013). They complain about the over-emphasis on reading and writing skills, boring learning experiences, uninteresting learning materials, and unclear links between regular English courses and their majors as well as future careers (Bahous et al., 2011). The limited spoken English practice opportunities in class are constrained to textbook reading, answering questions, group discussions, individual presentations and class activities (Gan, 2013; Zhang, 2009; Zhao, 2013). Most students report that the deliberate and organized English communicative activities are superficial, inconsistent, and infrequent (Zhang, 2009). All the aforementioned challenges impede college students' spoken English learning as well as their overall EFL learning motivation and achievement. However, motivation to learn is an essential aspect of acquiring language. As English is the *de facto* lingua franca of business, research, scholarship, and international work, Chinese students who learn functional communicative English in the science and engineering field are at a distinct advantage for accessing better opportunities in their careers and building international partnerships. Therefore, more interactive and engaging teaching strategies

are called for to increase students in Science and Engineering fields so that they are more likely to acquire communicative proficiency in English (Bahous et al., 2011; Chen & Goh, 2011).

In the Chinese higher education context, few studies have been conducted on implementing a GBL approach to motivate engineering students' English learning, particularly their spoken English learning. A full-time undergraduate university in southeastern China, JAM Institute of Technology (pseudonym), shortened as JIT, was planning to optimize its English curriculum and transform the traditional EFL teaching into more student-centered instruction. With the first author's previous EFL teaching experience and a strong interest in effective spoken English instruction for college students, she was invited by a colleague at JIT to increase students spoken English learning motivation and competence by launching a pilot spoken English workshop. The primary objective of this workshop was to identify the motivating and demotivating factors of a non-digital GBL approach as well as evaluate its effectiveness in engineering students' spoken English learning.

Literature Review

The GBL approach is a teaching strategy that integrates elements and principles of gaming into educational settings to enhance learners' knowledge and skill acquisition in their cognitive development (Gee, 2008; Kim et al., 2009; Plass, Homer, & Kinzer, 2015; Qian & Clark, 2016). When talking about games in the 21st century, it is always assumed to be digital games. Yet, both digital and non-digital games can be designed as educational games (Gee, 2008) if they are structured under specific learning goals with the consideration of students' social context, such as learning culture and styles, topics of interest, career path development, identities (e.g. Levitan & Carr-Chellman, 2018; Levitan and Johnson, 2020).. For example, Second Life (SL), originally an online social game allowing users to play different roles and design their worlds in 3D virtual space, was believed to have "tremendous potential for educational endeavors" (Zhang, 2013, p. 243) and was applied into many targeted educational scenarios, particularly language learning environments, to test its effectiveness in improving students'

learning motivation and performance (Chen, 2016; Lan, Kan, Sung, & Chang, 2016; Zhang, 2013). Many researchers and scholars acknowledged SL's positive influence on enhancing students' active learning and communicative competence under its immersive learning environment since students were given intriguing tasks and autonomy to communicate with their playmates in the targeted language. Not just SL, other interactive digital games, such as *World of Warcraft*, *Mingoville*, and *Minecraft* were also applied in language-learning research (Alyaz & Genc, 2016; Anyaegbu, Ting, & Li, 2012).

Non-digital games refer to traditional board games and/or any games in which electronic equipment is excluded (Pho & Dinscore, 2015). *Gossip Relay*, *Make-Up Stories*, and *Telephone Game* (Yang & Dixon, 2015) are common non-digital games in language teaching. *Gossip Relay* is a collaborative game played by groups of participants who whisper a message from the first player to the last player in a line and compete for the most accurate and rapid group. Considering its engaging and competing factors, this game was also included in this research. *Make-Up Stories* is a story-telling game started by an instructor and followed by students in sequence to encourage their willingness to speak and motivation to improve (Reinders & Wattana, 2015). *Telephone Game* is a role-playing game simulating phone chatting scenario that is common in real life with the targeted language. Role-playing games possess a strong sense of situation, which contribute to language learning motivation. Role-playing games are also an important type of game in this research. All the above non-digital games were tested as effective in promoting language output and students' learning motivations in the playing process (Yang & Dixon, 2015).

The experience, knowledge, and skills gained through the GBL approach are likely to be retained for a long time and are conducive to learners' cognitive development since a gaming strategy usually increases learners' interests, motivation, and engagement to construct new and transferable knowledge through situated and experiential learning (Butler, 2017; Gee, 2008; Kim et al., 2009; Plass et al., 2015; Sheu, Wang, & Hsu, 2013). Researchers found that despite the conflicting empirical results of the GBL approach for increasing learners' learning achievement and performance,

GBL could still be seen as a promising instructional approach if the content and design of the games involve affective, behavioral, cognitive, and social/cultural elements to elicit learners' deep learning (Plass et al., 2015). Therefore, more research needs to be done on the motivating and demotivating factors of GBL interventions in different domains and contexts. Based on prior studies within the past 20 years, the main motivating factors of a GBL approach for EFL learning research can be summarized as: 1) Feeling fun and exciting (Tsai et al., 2017); 2) A competitive learning environment (Sevy-Biloon, 2016); 3) An engaging and authentic learning environment (Chen & Yang, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2000); 4) Increased self-confidence and overall EFL learning reinforcement (Bernard, 2010; Yang & Dixon, 2015); 5) Transferable skills development valuable in real life (Anyaeibu et al., 2012).

Despite the noticeable motivating factors of the GBL approach, there still exist demotivating factors. Research shows that many teachers who implement the GBL approach are lacking enthusiasm, sufficient pedagogical training, adequate adaptation time, and sensitivity to students' contexts to choose the right mix of games, particularly digital games (Alyaz & Genc, 2016). Meanwhile, as the GBL approach is highly student-centered, it requires iterative changing and adaptation based on students' different learning styles, performance, identities, and voices (Levitan, 2018; Levitan, 2019; Johnson & Levitan, 2020). Students cannot be truly involved and motivated if teachers are not genuinely interested and prepared. In addition, since many currently popular digital games, such as *Mingoville*, *Minecraft*, and *Second Life* are designed based on western culture, students from other cultural backgrounds will frequently encounter unfamiliar conversations in playing games. Lacking a sense of belonging can easily lead to a loss of interest in the EFL learning process (Anyaeibu et al., 2012). In addition, as the preparations and adaptations require considerable time and extra efforts, EFL teachers are confronted with challenges of excessive workload (Zhang, 2013).

Apart from the challenges for EFL teachers, there are also foreseeable obstacles in equity and accessibility of GBL implementation. For example, Zhang (2013) discovered that students with less proficient English skills are likely to be marginalized in playing digital games in spoken English learning. At the same time, since there are

limited international network speeds and strict Internet censorship in China, it is almost impossible to play digital games on a campus freely and smoothly (Zhang, 2013). Furthermore, purchasing digital game software, launching staff trainings, equipment maintenance and software updates are costly, so universities and colleges are often unwilling to spend money on it. Anyaegbu et al. (2012), show that there were other observed problems, such as students' frustration during game's loading, insufficient game vocabulary in the game's dictionary, technical problems of pages freezing and notes missing, students' failure to remember usernames and passwords, and limited instruction/playing time. Finally, there is great social pressure against playing digital games in class. Although digital games were found to be highly engaging for students' language learning, it is still believed that digital games would arouse more problems than benefits in existing Chinese classroom-teaching environments (Anyaegbu et al., 2012; Zhang, 2013). As a result, given the complex situation above, integrating a digital game-based learning (DGBL) approach in China's current college EFL teaching context is challenging and unlikely. In contrast, non-digital GBL can be seen as a viable alternative, which allows for a change in pedagogy and practice that can support students' motivations to learn.

Generally, most GBL research applies a mixed-method approach (Anyaegbu et al., 2012; Hwang et al., 2016; Reinders & Wattana, 2015; Zhang, 2013) with questionnaires, interviews, and observations in their data collection. About one quarter to half of the participants are selected either randomly or purposefully to participate in interviews to further elicit their opinions and experience towards the GBL approach. Almost all the research corroborates the positive and effective learning experience of the GBL approach brought to participants in terms of students' English reading, listening, and speaking skills. Their learning motivations and self-confidence were tremendously increased. However, the research is still generally very broad, and does not focus on specific demographic groups, or different games with various difficulty levels, nor the potential drawbacks of the GBL approach. Research that is more specific and critical can help better understand the motivating and demotivating factors of the

GBL approach in order to get at the details needed for educators to teach with the GBL method effectively. This study contributes to addressing these gaps.

Methodology

Design

A mixed method response to intervention design was applied in this study. Here we report on the qualitative analysis and findings. We implemented six, 90 minute GBL workshop sessions with two sessions per week. Four kinds of games, ice-breaking games, word games, collaboration games, and role-playing games (see Appendix 1) with different difficulty levels were designed and applied during the workshop. The vocabulary used in games was within the range of the CET 4 vocabulary list, approximately 4,200 words in total (College English Syllabus, 1999) and was considered as the basic and functional English communication vocabulary size for college non-English major students. To better prepare participants during the game playing process, a targeted vocabulary list was also provided for participants before every session starting from the second.

Data Collection

Pre-test and post-test questionnaire surveys, semi-structured interviews, as well as researchers' observation journals throughout the workshop process were the methods used to gather data. The questionnaires (see Appendix 2) and interview protocol (see Appendix 3) were designed by the authors with reference to the previous GBL implementation and spoken English teaching research (Gan, 2013; Lan, et al., 2016; Reinders & Wattana, 2015; Yang, 2005). They were then analyzed to understand the motivating and demotivating factors in the GBL workshop. The certificate of ethical research processes involving humans was obtained from McGill University's research ethics board.

Participants

A total of over 60 engineering sophomores displayed interests of attending this GBL spoken English workshop when we recruited participants in both their English classes and online social media groups. Considering the learning effectiveness and individual experience under the guidance of 2 workshop facilitators (the first author and one English teacher from this university), 21 students who considered themselves capable of conducting basic English communications (mainly passed CET-4) and successfully registered before the stipulated deadline were recruited to join the workshop. 15 students, 3 females and 12 males all around 20 years old, were retained at the end of the study and completed both pre-test and post-test questionnaire surveys.

All the participants were volunteers and did not receive any financial or credit compensation. Based on the survey results on the scale of their learning motivational changes, 5 out of the 15 participants were selected for the semi-structured interviews (average time 30 minutes) at the end of the workshop. One student was selected because of their sharp motivation increase, one because of their small increase, one because of no changes, one because of a decrease in motivation and one whose changes were hard to explain. The semi-structured interviews were conducted by the first author in Chinese to facilitate interviewees' understanding and communication flow. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed into English. All transcripts were reviewed again and cross-checked by both facilitators. All of the participants names in this paper are pseudonyms.

Data Analysis

The general inductive approach (Thomas, 2006) was adopted for exploring, analyzing, and interpreting the qualitative data in this research based on questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews. The general inductive approach is a straightforward qualitative analysis method aiming to distill brief and clear summaries of interview content, identify links between research objectives and findings, and discover a model or theory underlying the raw data (Thomas, 2006). There are five main steps of using the general inductive approach in analyzing the raw data: data preparation/cleaning,

close text reading, category and codes creation, data revision (overlapping coding and uncoded texts), and continued revision and refinement.

We chose the inductive approach because GBL centers learners' individual experience and involvement as fundamental to the learning process, which means that students' voices and experiences will reveal rich and important data to better understand the efficacy of the approach (Levitan, Carr-Chellman, & Carr-Chellman, 2020). Furthermore, interactions among participants and between participants and facilitators may also affect learners' motivation and/or lack of motivation. Therefore, instead of creating a set of pre-given codes in analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data, the initial coding started from identifying emergent codes through close reading and analyzing interview transcripts as well as labeling repetitive concepts occurring words and phrases (Davis, 1995; Foster, 2004; Thomas, 2006). This inductive process ensures that both research objectives and underlying information could be discovered during data analysis.

To ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of the emergent codes, the questionnaires and transcripts were reviewed again with more focus on the meaning of units regardless of the text length and expressions to avoid overlapping codes and consolidate the consistencies of the initial codes (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013). The final codes were checked again by tracking them in the original contexts by both facilitators who conducted this workshop. Researchers' observation journals were also analyzed as supporting material to give context to the findings and discussions of this exploratory research.

Having completed the process of the general inductive approach, two main categories, motivating factors and demotivating factors were identified and refined. The codes include: game-based learning; engagement; authentic learning environment; role-modeling; improved teacher-student relationships; making friends; challenge; competition; games design and arrangement; unfamiliar and limited English vocabulary; listening difficulties; and speaking difficulties. All codes are illustrated and discussed in the following findings section. Participants' quotations from interviews as well as

their answers to questionnaires were used to display relationships within or among different codes and categories.

Findings

Motivating factors

Most students responded positively towards the GBL approach in increasing their spoken English learning motivation. All participants except for one expressed that they were willing to come back to study in this workshop again. Based on students' feedback in their post-test surveys on their learning experience, favorite games, key motivating factors of the GBL approach, as well as their comments in semi-structured interviews, the distinguishable motivating factors are as follows. We present representative quotes from the students to comprehensively demonstrate the content of each theme:

1. Engagement

Engagement is the most frequently occurring word in participants' post-test questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Nearly half of the participants directly pointed out that engagement was their most valued motivating factor in this workshop. It was also mentioned often when students were asked to comment on their favorite game. According to Annie (pseudonym):

Who is the Spy (See Appendix 1) is my favorite game. Although *Who is the Boss* (See Appendix 1) is also a role-playing game, it is not that attractive to me because only a few students were selected to act and speak. There was not as much *interaction* and *engagement* among students, which is what I think the most important thing in playing games with classmates.

Angela expressed a different opinion on the game *Who is the Boss*, but she still agreed that the engagement is the top motivating factor for her spoken English learning in this workshop:

My preference was mainly based on my personal experience and involvement in playing. For example, in *Bingo Game* (See Appendix 1), teachers talked most of the time, and only students who called Bingo at last got the chance to speak. Unfortunately, I was not the lucky dog, so I did not get the chance to speak English in that game. Yet, in the game *Who is the Boss*, the role players were allowed to interrupt one another and almost everyone had a chance to comment and express their opinion in the end. Thus, it is more attractive to me. According to my previous experience in regular English courses, only certain students were picked up to play while others watched them play. Students who were watching easily got bored and tended to play on their cellphones. But *Who is the Boss* requires collective discussion and values individual comment, which largely increases my *engagement* and *learning motivation*, and I think this is why it is my favorite game.

In fact, *Who is the Spy* and *Who is the Boss* shared almost equal favor and won 13 out of 15 participants' preferences in the post-test survey. Shawn said he liked them both:

What I like about this workshop most is the *engagement* and *interactions* in the playing process... I like role-playing games, i.e. the games with a strong sense of situation. This kind of game grants me more sense of autonomy because I can design my own monologue based on my role's characteristics. I think the *involvement* and *engagement* are the key motivating factors in the process. As long as everyone has time to prepare and speak, they can enjoy and benefit from these games.

It is clear that students enjoy and value engagement in their spoken English learning. Just as Angela said, students who were not actively engaged in the learning process easily get bored and lose learning motivation. As an integral component in learning motivation, engagement serves as the stimulus in increasing students' desire to complete the task and willingness to speak (Jackson & McNamara, 2013). From this aspect, the engagement is undoubtedly a major motivating factor for students' English communicative competence improvement.

2. Authentic learning environment

All the interviewees mentioned the authentic learning environment as one of their motivating factors in GBL implementation. The authentic learning environment here refers to a full English-speaking real-life learning environment (Nikitina, 2011). It includes authentic contexts that may happen in real life, authentic activities that college students in English-speaking countries would participate in, as well as constructions of knowledge, skills, collaborations, and reflections through learning processes under this environment (Nikitina, 2011). Compared with the traditional teacher-centered EFL approach, students felt fresh and excited about the way of practicing spoken English skills and completing tasks in a safe, relaxed and authentic environment. According to Shawn:

It gives us a place to speak English in an authentic environment. In fact, face-to-face English communication is the most motivating factor in my spoken English learning.

For some participants, the authentic learning environment is one of their initial motivations to join in this GBL spoken English workshop. Jessica said:

I wanted to join in this workshop at first because I wanted to experience an authentic English learning environment as there was limited chance to immerse in a pure-English atmosphere in regular English learning courses.

Jack believed that the authentic learning environment in the GBL workshop helped to increase his spoken English learning motivation as well as overall English learning performance:

The GBL method really interests me. I appreciate the authentic learning atmosphere. To me, the learning environment is very important. For example, I learn better in the library than in my dormitory as everyone in the library focuses on their study. I used to speak English word by

word and could hardly speak a complete sentence. Now when I speak English, I pay more attention to grammar and continuity of the sentence I make.

Some students also mentioned their preference for participating in the GBL workshop over attending online spoken English training because the face-to-face communications in game-playing processes were able to keep their attention and arouse their learning motivation. With visible body language, active engagement, and direct feedback from both teachers and their peers, students' willingness to communicate naturally increased in the authentic learning environment under the GBL intervention.

3. Teachers as role models

It is interesting that several interviewees specifically mentioned the role model effect in their spoken English learning in this workshop by connecting their increased English-speaking confidence with the power of their role models under the GBL intervention. According to Jessica:

I like the conversations between facilitators in this workshop. Their fluent conversations with humor at times largely reduced my anxiety in English-speaking and gave me *confidence* that maybe one day I could speak as good as they did.

Similar to Jessica, Jack also expressed his willingness to equal facilitators' spoken English skills in the future:

I admire facilitators' good communicative skills and I want to be as good as them. I think it is cool to speak fluent English in daily life. Previously, I had little chance to see people who speak really good English around. I sincerely hope that one day I could speak good English, too.

As mentioned by Jessica, many science and engineering students feel that it is difficult to learn a foreign language, especially speaking. However, having a good role model can somewhat make a difference to this situation. Furthermore, having EFL teachers as

role models can improve teacher-student relationships and further increases students' learning motivation. Another student Jack also mentioned in his interview that the close teacher-student relationship in the GBL workshop was one of his motivating factors in spoken English learning. Unlike traditional teachers who are dominant and give one-way direction to students in English class, teachers who apply the GBL approach serve as facilitators and grant more learning autonomy to students in the game-playing process.

Improving teacher-student relationship helps to create a relaxed learning atmosphere and increase students' confidence to communicate. From the very beginning of the workshop, the facilitators made it clear that the workshop was a safe environment to learn and play. The participants were allowed to make mistakes. Both facilitators and their classmates would help whoever had difficulties in either expressing themselves or understanding others. Thus, students gradually overcame their anxiousness in speaking English, and their confidence increased accordingly. In exploring what the participants learned or gained through the workshop in the post-test survey, quite a few students felt that their English-speaking confidence improved. Besides the direct comments such as "the GBL workshop stimulates my desire to express in English and increases my confidence", some students addressed this improvement as "I have more courage to express myself", "I don't feel embarrassed to speak English", "I am more willing to express myself and dare to refute others' ideas", and "I feel my confidence boosted by facilitators' compliments and encouragement".

4. Making friends

Making friends is another motivating factor in students' feedback on what kept them through the entire GBL workshop learning. It was actually the first motivating factor which did not significantly appear in previous research articles. Yet, it is not surprising that students consider this workshop as a good place to make friends as the GBL approach is noted for strong interactions establishment and transferable skills development (Anyaegebu et al., 2012). Considering the high rate of teamwork, problem-solving skills, and other social skills involved in the game-playing processes, making

many friends is one of the direct results of increased learning motivation. Jessica explained why she thought making friends was a motivating factor to her:

One thing I appreciate very much in this workshop is that we had a chance of face-to-face communication although time in class is limited. In the digital era, we are always stuck in our cellphones and even could not remember the names of our classmates, and we barely talked to each other. This is a good place to *make friends* and have some real conversations. I believe the face-to-face conversation also helps to improve my spoken English skills as I can see others' body language and gestures.

For some participants, making friends also means finding a language partner through the GBL workshop. Since there are limited spoken English practice opportunities in students' regular English classes and there is no requirement for students to pass certain spoken English tests, most engineering students lack motivation to improve their English communicative competence (Hu, 2011). Thus, for students who want to enhance their spoken English skills through daily communication, it is quite hard to find practice partners within the same class or major. In fact, several participants expressed their frustration in finding available language partners in their pre-test survey. After this workshop, many students became good friends and some successfully turned their friends into long-term language partners to practice spoken English after class.

5. Challenge and competition

Challenge and competition are innate features of the GBL approach, which are expected to arouse students' desire to win and gain a sense of achievement in the learning process. Compared to other motivating factors, challenge and competition were not mentioned as frequently as expected but were still one of the motivating factors by several students. Annie said in her interview:

I think the *challenge* and *competition* in the GBL approach are my motivating factors to attend this workshop. I am the kind of person who would be more motivated to learn and determined

to do it better next time when I encounter challenges such as unfamiliar words or difficulties to express myself.

There were mixed findings on the challenge and competition features of the GBL approach in previous literature. Some researchers criticized its inconclusive learning outcomes for students with varying language competence in their intrinsic learning motivation (Tauer & Harackiewicz, 1999; Vandercruysse et al., 2013). The inconclusiveness is partly confirmed by this study that only two participants referred to challenge and competition as their motivating factors, and they voted for *Charades* (See Appendix 1) and *Bingo Game* (See Appendix 1) as their favorite games. Both games are competitive games which produce either individual or group winners. Although the challenge and competition were not directly mentioned as demotivating factors, a few participants did check *the Bingo Game* as their least favorite game. But instead of taking a negative view on the inclusive outcome of those games, participants displayed strong self-reflectiveness as they considered the games' failures as a way to learn their deficiencies in English-speaking. Participants' positive attitude towards the "graceful failure" (Plass et al., 2015) echoes the argument which supports the GBL implementation in EFL learning since the gaming atmosphere provides a safe environment for learners' to take a risk, fail, reflect, try again, and grow.

It is speculated that inclusive games, such as role-playing and collaboration games with a strong sense of situation, engagement, and interactions, contribute more to motivating factors than competitive games for most Chinese engineering students. Previous research did not compare the different impact of competition and collaboration of the GBL approach in EFL instruction with the consideration of students' demographics, disciplines, and individual epistemology. Although both factors occurred as motivating factors in this research, students' intrinsic learning motivation is more likely to be developed by collaboration rather than competition under the GBL intervention if they are given free choice in the gaming process (Vallerand, Gauvin, & Halliwell, 1986).

Demotivating Factors

Apart from five semi-structured interviews, answers from two open-ended questions on demotivating factors and learning difficulties in the post-test survey under the GBL intervention were also summarized and analyzed to investigate the demotivating factors in the GBL approach. Three out of the fifteen participants stated that there were no demotivating factors, but all expressed encountering different difficulties in the workshop learning. The main demotivating factors in the GBL approach from students' perspective are illustrated in the following.

1. Game arrangement and students' learning style

It is noteworthy that the total number of the participants was 21 at first but reduced to 14 in the second session and remained at an average of 15 afterward. Why did one-third of the participants drop out after the first session? When contacted afterward about the reason why they excused themselves, most students blamed their conflicting schedules and heavy homework workload. Yet, in investigating the least favorite game in the post-test survey, *Passport Game* (See Appendix 1), one ice-breaking game played in the first session, ranked as the top. It is a hint that maybe some participants left because they did not like the *Passport Game* and they hid their true reason in later response for the sake of politeness. Annie's perspective in the interview can partly confirm this hypothesis:

I did not enjoy the *Passport Game* very much, maybe because I did not make any friends. I don't think this is a good game to make everyone get familiar with each other. Maybe the *Fishbowl Game* in the second session is a good option to replace it. I think one of the reasons that we did not enjoy this game very much is that this workshop is a form of unconventional teaching and learning. We didn't have time to adjust ourselves and it was a little hard for us to step out and get familiar with everyone in a short time. Classmates were very shy, and we wanted to hold back a little bit instead of taking initiatives in making new friends.

The purpose of choosing *Passport Game* as the first ice-breaking game to play was that it was new to Chinese students, and it was designed to give everyone an opportunity to make new contacts and find their possible language partners afterward. However, taking Annie's comments into account, this game was actually not appreciated by reserved students. Although most students were not introverts, they were accustomed to sitting still and receiving orders from teachers instead of taking initiative in the learning process. Thus, the *Passport Game* increased students' original English-speaking anxieties. As a result, students may feel overstressed, uninterested, and quit. Meanwhile, Annie mentioned that the *Fishbowl Game* (See Appendix 1) may be more attractive as an ice-breaking game to participants in the first class. When comparing these two ice-breaking games, the most noticeable difference is that the former game gave students' more freedom in making new contacts while the latter was organized by facilitators. In *Fishbowl Game*, students were asked to write their answers to the questions posed by facilitators on stickers, fold and put them into a large fishbowl. Students would briefly explain their answers and then introduce themselves to the whole class when their notes were randomly chosen by the previous student. Although the GBL approach is based on experiential learning which emphasizes students' engagement and authentic learning experiences, it is worth noting that not every student learns by active doing. Their learning experience is also constructed by being told and observation (Garris et al., 2002). Therefore, this drop-out phenomenon is considered as a direct result of these demotivating factors in the GBL approach.

2. Unfamiliar vocabulary and difficulty level

Over two-thirds of the participants expressed that their limited vocabulary and inadequate expression skills were the major challenges they encountered in the GBL spoken English workshop. Although all games were designed based on the difficulty level of College English Test 4 (CET 4) and the sophomore English course syllabi, and all the participants have an average of nine years EFL learning experience with a great emphasis on English reading and writing, they still found themselves short of the English vocabulary and expression skills they needed when playing games. This

includes those who felt relatively comfortable in expressing themselves in the first place. Shawn said:

I was very excited before participating in this workshop because I was interested in this GBL approach and I love to take part in English-speaking extracurricular activities. I thought spoken English learning in this workshop would be very relaxed. Yet, having participated, I realize that my vocabulary is not enough (to express myself).

In addition, several students still expressed their discomfort with the difficulty level of some collaboration and role-playing games. They felt that certain games were too demanding for them to participate and even understand their peers in the game-playing process. As facilitators of this GBL workshop, we did anticipate this situation and prepared a vocabulary list containing the most frequently appearing words in each game. We shared the vocabulary list on the workshop social media platform so that every participant had access to it. The vocabulary list was updated two days before each session with slight vocabulary increases to ensure and strengthen students' learning flow and efficacy. In the meantime, we frequently supported participants' expression and communication whenever we noticed that they were running out of words and felt awkward expressing themselves.

Although the difficulty level of the games in the GBL workshop might be reevaluated, it is not considered as a full demotivating factor since it has not entirely resulted from the GBL approach itself and is related to students' varying spoken English skills and overall English level. It is interesting that even though most participants felt that the unfamiliar vocabulary constituted a great difficulty in their playing-learning process, they also believed that it actually enriched their vocabulary bank and became what they learned in this workshop.

3. Listening difficulty

Another prominent demotivating factor observed by facilitators and that appeared in participants' questionnaires and interviews is students' difficulty with oral

comprehension. Over one-third of the participants clearly displayed worry in their poor listening comprehension skills and difficulties understanding others, particularly their classmates during games preparation and the playing process. Jessica mentioned:

I had a hard time listening and understanding classmates. I could understand the rules of games and conversations between facilitators most of the time. However, oral English with a heavy accent was beyond my listening capacity. I admit that listening is a major problem in my overall English learning... I think the key difficulty lies in myself, my poor listening ability. Also, I felt that there is a huge gap between me and some classmates who were able to fully understand the content in class.

Jessica also expressed that she believed the GBL approach was more beneficial for students with higher English listening and speaking skills. She appreciated the authentic learning environment and the chance of finding spoken English partners, but she doubted the feasibility of integrating the GBL approach in spoken English learning after class without the guidance and support of facilitators.

Again, students' inadequate linguistic competence, including listening difficulties, limited vocabulary, and inadequate expression skills, are not directly associated with the GBL approach itself but did pose challenges for students' spoken English learning. Facilitators are aware that varying proficiency of English listening and speaking skills could lead to students' unequal practice opportunities and may further contribute to students' learning demotivation (Zhang, 2013). As a result, facilitators took time in preparing students' prior knowledge of the rules before playing games in both English and Chinese. During the playing process, both facilitators circulated among students to address students' questions, provide help, and encourage students to communicate in English. However, the feedback of listening difficulty displayed that more work should be done to better facilitate students' listening comprehension of English learning under the GBL intervention.

Discussion

In general, the motivating factors identified in the GBL approach are more than the demotivating factors. Although all participants expressed learning difficulties and considered some as their demotivating factors during the GBL intervention, it is worth noting that some demotivating factors come along with students' varying English proficiency. In addition, some demotivating factors even shifted into motivating factors during and after the workshop learning. For example, Jessica said in her later interview that because of the unfamiliar vocabulary she encountered in the playing process, she felt more motivated to acquire more English vocabulary for better understanding and smoother communication afterwards. Hence, the GBL approach is generally effective in motivating Chinese engineering students' spoken English learning.

In investigating the willingness to come back to the GBL spoken English workshop, all except for one participant gave a positive answer. In further exploring the reason why this participant was not interested in attending again, he expressed that what he learned in this workshop contributed little to his aim of passing spoken English tests in his future graduate school interview. It is noticeable that the current EFL instruction in Chinese universities and colleges are still test-oriented. However, this traditional and highly structured teaching approach tends to demotivate students' learning interests and has been criticized frequently in helping students' truly master English linguistic and communicative competences (Gan, 2013; Yang, 2005). Thus, both Chinese EFL teachers and educators should have deep reflections on balancing students' English test achievement and compatible speaking competency with innovative instructional approaches. By integrating the academic speaking skills into the GBL approach, it is expected to address this dilemma.

Apart from the impact of the unique features inherent in games, teachers who implement a GBL approach also exert a strong influence on students' learning motivation. Several participants mentioned that the fluent and humorous conversations between facilitators served as their motivating factors in spoken English learning. In investigating the initial participation motivation of the GBL workshop in the interview with Annie, she said that her initial motivation came from one of the facilitators in the

workshop, who taught her regular English class before and impressed her with good spoken English skills and strong instructional passion. In fact, teachers were found to have close connections with students' learning motivation (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Trang & Baldauf, 2007). The GBL approach is known for student-centered teaching in which teachers serve as facilitators in the process of playing and teaching. A good teacher-student relationship and teachers' motivation in their teaching practices are essential to increase students' learning motivation, particularly in subjects where students' initial interest, confidence, and motivations are low.

What also needs to be pointed out is that both facilitators reported having difficulties in managing the instructional time under the GBL intervention. An average of two games, except for the advanced collaboration game and role-playing games, was expected to be played in each workshop session. However, due to the varying English competency of the participants and unfamiliar gaming context, more time was spent preparing students game-playing rules and review vocabulary lists in both English and Chinese. Thus, the playing time felt shorter than expected in 90 instructional minutes. Some participants expressed the willingness of having extended playing time for each session or extended workshop sessions. From this aspect, adequate teaching training and practice of the GBL pedagogy including class and time management skills are necessary. At the same time, since most non-native EFL teachers in current Chinese colleges and universities are not familiar with the GBL approach at all and are not comfortable with a completely authentic English-speaking environment (Chen & Goh, 2011), their spoken English competence and “motivational teaching practices” (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008, p. 72) should be also be valued and improved by Chinese universities through organized and targeted GBL pedagogy training to better exploit the motivating factors in increasing students' spoken English and the overall EFL learning motivation in a long-term.

Although digital games were not included in this GBL spoken English workshop and participants were not asked to compare digital games with non-digital games in questionnaires nor interviews, several students actively mentioned their preference of non-digital games because of specific features of these games. For example, Shawn

expressed in his interview that “face-to-face English communication is the most motivating factor in my spoken English learning”. Jessica strongly supported non-digital games implementation since “in the digital era, we are always stuck in our cellphones and even could not remember the names of our classmates”. It is clear that participants valued face-to-face interactions and the more personal connection fostered through non-digital games.

It is regrettable that this GBL workshop only lasted for one month and the games were only tested and adjusted after the first cycle. Thus, another limitation of this research is that it is lacking a longitudinal study. In order to further explore and analyze the motivating and demotivating factors in the GBL approach in the future EFL study, it is important to question what appropriate games are conforming to students’ interests, linguistic competency, and learning characteristics. Moreover, how long will the GBL approach sustain students’ spoken English learning motivation? Which game lasts longer and which shorter? How to take advantage of the motivating factors and avoid demotivating factors during GBL implementation? It is worthwhile to further explore the application and effects of the GBL implementation in students’ regular English classes in future research.

Conclusion

The aim of this research is to identify motivating and demotivating factors of the non-digital GBL approach in increasing Chinese college engineering students’ spoken English learning motivation. The noticeable motivating factors include increased student engagement and learning confidence, authentic learning environment, improved teacher-student relationships, making friends, and the sense of challenging competition. Meanwhile, the games’ arrangement, students’ existing learning style, and students’ varying linguistic competency in aspects of vocabulary, listening, and expression skills constitute the major demotivating factors under the GBL intervention. Although the research time was limited and there are a few design and arrangement deficiencies of the games, the identified motivating factors of the GBL pedagogy outscore its demotivating factors.

In further analyzing the motivating and demotivating factors under the GBL intervention, most participants responded positively towards the GBL approach. Most demotivating factors were the results of students' existing learning style and inadequate linguistic competency but not directly related to the GBL approach. To better take advantage of motivating factors in the GBL method, games need to be designed carefully with the consideration of students' learning styles and acceptable difficulty levels. Games should also be arranged to play in an appropriate sequence through the longitudinal research to reduce students' speaking anxiety while pushing them to step out of their comfort zone and make progress. Therefore, the future research needs to further explore the impact of each motivating and demotivating factor of the GBL approach in the long term to better design and implement appropriate games to improve students' spoken English learning.

Furthermore, since the role model effect, closed teacher-student relationship, and teachers' motivational teaching practice are considered as the important factors in implementing the GBL approach, adequate GBL pedagogical training as well as language and motivational teaching practices training are necessary for EFL teachers to ensure the effectiveness of the GBL implementation. The empirical study in the GBL pedagogical training for EFL college teachers is expected to be revealed in the future research.

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Appendix 1

Passport Game (20-30 mins)

Type: Ice-Breaking Game

When it was played: May 16th, 2018

How to Play:

Every student will be given a paper of passport and visa and four stickers with a different color. First, students need to write down personal information in their passport page and name initials on stickers. Then, students are free to talk to their classmates. Students exchange their stickers and paste it in the visa page if they share the same or similar information.

The friends-making process lasts about 10 minutes. In the end, students will be asked to share their visa page and see who has the most similarities and who is the most special person without any similarity to others. Students, who are called to share their visa page, will also be asked to introduce the students who have common with them. All questions and discussions will be in English. The Passport Game template is as follows:

VISAS		PASSPORT
Specialty	Favorite Movie	Name _____ Major _____
Biggest Dream	Most Wanted Superpower	Specialty _____ Favorite Movie _____ Biggest Dream _____ Most Wanted Superpower _____

It was first learned from Dr. Kayla Johnson. Template was retrieved from: <http://mixminder.com/passport-to-the-world/> and questions were modified by authors.

Fish Bowl Game (20-30 mins)

Type: Ice-Breaking Game

When it was played: May 18th, 2018

How to Play:

Every student needs to pick one of the questions given on the slides he/she is interested in and write down the answers on their stickers. Then all the notes will be collected and put into a box. The facilitators would ask for a volunteer to randomly pick up a note and read it to the whole class. The person whose note was read would introduce himself/herself. Then he/she will be the next one to pick up the note.

The questions given by the facilitators on the slide were as follows:

1. One moment or an accomplishment you are particularly proud of.
2. Tell us a silly thing about you.
3. Who is your idol or favorite person and why do you like him or her?
4. Share us a joke.
5. The country or city you like most and why.

Source for the game structure was retrieved from: <https://kidactivities.net/how-to-play-fishbowl-game/>. The game was split into two different games: fishbowl game and charades. Questions were designed by authors.

Bingo Game (10 mins per round/ 3 rounds per session)

Type: Word Game

When it was played: May 18th, 2018

How to play:

Every student would be given one color pen and one printed 5*5 card with English words in different arrangements. When the game starts, the facilitators would start reading Chinese words. Students need to pay attention to each word and interpret it into the corresponding English word and then mark it on their bingo board. When students find the select English words on their card in a row, they call out “Bingo!” to stop the game. The winner needs to review all the English words and the corresponding Chinese meanings he/she marked for the verification of winning. In the end, he/she will receive a little prize. After the winner is declared, the players exchange their color pen with others around and begin a new round.

Source for the game was retrieved from: <https://www.thoughtco.com/bingo-across-the-curriculum-2081088> and modified by authors.

Gossip Relay (10 mins per round/ 3 rounds per session)

Type: Collaboration Game

When it was played: May 23rd, 2018

How to play:

Eight students form a group. The first student in each group will randomly pick up a note with a sentence in English prepared by the facilitators. The first student needs to

remember the sentence, gives it back to the facilitators and whispers it to the second student in his/her group. The sentence would be relayed one by one by whispering. The last person who receives the sentence in each group would show their hands and spoke out the sentence to the whole class loudly. The facilitator would then reveal the original sentence to prove the right or wrong of their relay. The group which completes the task the most accurately and quickly win the game.

The game was first learned from Reinders & Wattana (2015) and modified by authors.

Charades (5-10 mins per round/ 2-3 rounds for each team per session)

Type: Word Game

When it was played: May 23rd, 2018

How to play:

Four to five students formed a team and stood in the opposite. One student who could see the word or phrase on the slide would act or describe it in English, while the others who could not see the given word or phrase guessed. There was a timer of 3 mins set for each round. All teams took turns to participate in the game while the other teams watched their performance as the audience. When all teams completed their first round, the team which guessed the most words won the game. Then the second round continued.

Students were provided useful sentence templates in advance and during the game process so that they could practice and improve their spoken English. The templates of asking and questioning questions were as follows:

Questions one could ask:

1. Is this a word or phrase?
2. How many word(s)/letter(s)/syllable(s) does this word contain?
3. What part of speech does this word belong to?
4. What's the synonym /antonym of this word?
5. What's this word/phrase about?

Answers one could give:

1. It is a word/phrase.
2. It contains/ There are XX letter(s)/word(s)/syllable(s).
3. It is a noun/ adjective/adverb/verb.
4. This is (about)...
5. Its synonym/antonym is...
6. You may say/use it when you are doing.../ We mentioned it las time when we talked about...
7. PASS

Source for the game structure was retrieved from: <https://kidactivities.net/how-to-play-fishbowl-game/>. The game was split into two different games: fishbowl game and charades. Questions were designed by authors.

Who Is the Spy (15-20 min per round/ 3 rounds per session)

Type: Collaboration Game

When it was played: May 25th, 2018

How to play:

Seven to eight students form a group. Each of them will receive a note with a word or phrase on it. All the notes will be the same except for one, a similar but not the same word or phrase. The person who receives the different note will be the Spy. All the identities will be kept secret among the students. When the game begins, the facilitators will decide the order of speaking, and each student needs to describe his/her note without directly mention this word/phrase. After all the students complete their description, there will be a group vote for the spy. Who gets the most votes will be considered as the spy and out of the game. If the vote is right, the game stops and the good people win. If the vote is wrong, the game continues. The spy wins when he/she is the last two people in the game. All the communication in the game will be English. There are two different notes in the second round, which means there are two spies and both of them need to be voted out for the success of the good people. In the third round, there are still two spies but one with a different note and the other with a blank note. The rest of the game remains the same.

It is a popular party collaborative game in China played in various scenarios. Source for the game structure was retrieved from: <https://busyteacher.org/24039-who-is-the-spy-talking-game.html>. The content was designed by authors.

Jigsaw Puzzle (20-30 mins)

Type: Word Game

When it was played: May 30th, 2018

How to play:

Every student receives a card about a clue of one vocabulary prepared by facilitators. Three to four students form a group. Students in one group work together to figure out their vocabulary. There are definitions, synonyms, descriptions or pictures on cards. After 5 minutes discussion, students of every group will share their vocabulary and the process of figuring out in English. One student from each group needs to make a proper sentence with this vocabulary, and another student interprets the sentence into Chinese to reinforce the vocabulary learning. The facilitators would ask the rest of the students to judge the correctness of each group's guess before the right answer was released.

One of the cards distributed to each group will be selected and constitute a big jigsaw puzzle for the whole class in the end. Who guesses the final word need to pick up another two students to make a proper sentence and interpret into Chinese. The who discovers the right answer and completes the task with the other two students he/she picks in the final round will receive a little prize as winners.

Source for the game structure was retrieved from: <https://www.jigsaw.org/>. The content was designed by authors.

Lies, Dam Lies, and Statistics (20-30 mins)

Type: Role-Playing Game

When it was played: May 30th, 2018

How to play:

Lies, Dam Lies, and Statistics is a phrase describing the persuasive power of numbers, particularly the use of statistics to bolster weak arguments.

In this game, students will be divided into several groups. Seven to eight students will form a group. Each group will be given a picture. Each group will be given 3 minutes to prepare their description of the picture with only statistics without adding adjectives but honestly. Then two groups will be randomly arranged to compete. One group describes their picture with statistics and the other group needs to take note and draw the picture from the description of the opponent. When the first-round ends, they switch. After two groups finish their drawing, each of the group needs to describe and show the real picture to the whole class. All of the students will decide the winner based on the similarities of the drawing and the real picture.

(Source: the authors)

Who is the Boss (45-60 mins)

Type: Role-Playing Game

When it was played: June 1st, 2018

Background Information

One start-up technology company is having a meeting to discuss the preparation of participating an influential nationwide technology exhibition. Five members presenting in this meeting are Barry, the CEO of the company; Declan, director of the financial department; Andy, senior software testing engineer; Celine, director of the product research and development (R &D); and Justin, director of the business development (BD). Your company is about to promote a key and advanced product in this exhibition one month later. However, the testing phase for this product cannot be completed within one and a half months, unless more professional software testing engineers are hired to complete this task.

How to play

There will be two parts in this role-playing game. In the first part, five students will be asked to play the CEO, finance department director, senior software programmer, software programming director, and the business development director. The rest of the students will be the audience. The first part stops when the dispute arises and stays in a deadlock.

In the second part, the audience will be divided into three groups. Each group needs to analyze the reasons for the dispute and provide solutions to solve it. At the end of the discussion, each group needs to choose a representative as the consultant to help the company solve the dispute. The five people and each consultant will finish their acting in the second part based on their own interpretations of their roles without any given scripts. All the students will be asked to share their thoughts on the best solution after the end of the game. All the conversation is in English.

(Source: the authors)

APPENDIX 2

Motivation on Spoken English Study (Pretest)

Name (Last, First): _____ Gender: M (____) F (____) Other: _____

Major: _____ Grade: _____

1. On a scale from 0 to 10, how do you rate the importance of spoken English study in your overall

English learning? (0: not important at all; 10: extremely important)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

have no idea

2. On a scale from 0 to 10, how do you rate your motivation in spoken English study? (0: not

motivated at all; 10: extremely motivated)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

have no idea

3. What factors motivate you in your spoken English study? Please specify: _____

4. On a scale from 0 to 10, how do you rate spoken English level? (0: extremely poor; 10: extremely excellent)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

have no idea

5. How long do you usually spend practicing spoken English within a week?

A. Not practicing at all B. within 30 mins C. 30 mins to 1 hour

D. 1-2 hours E. more than 2 hours, please specify your practice time _____

6. How do you practice your spoken English? Please specify (For example: in spoken English club/ English corner; on mobile APP; with friends or practice partners, etc.) _____

7. Have you heard about game-based learning (GBL) before in spoken English study?

A. Yes B. No

8. What difficulties have you met in your spoken English study? Please specify

9. What topics interest you in spoken English study? Please specify

10. What is your expectation(s) of spoken English study? Please specify

Motivation on Spoken English Study (Posttest)

Name (Last, First): _____ Gender: M () F () Other: _____

Major: _____ Grade: _____

1. On a scale from 0 to 10, how do you rate spoken English level? (0: extremely poor; 10: extremely excellent)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

have no idea

2. On a scale from 0 to 10, how do you rate your motivation in spoken English study? (0: not motivated at all; 10: extremely motivated)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

have no idea

3. On a scale from 0 to 10, how do you rate the impact of GBL in increasing your motivation of spoken English study? (0: no impact at all. 10: great impact)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

have no idea

4. On a scale from 0 to 10, how do you rate the impact of GBL in increasing your motivation of overall English study? (0: not motivated at all; 10: extremely motivated)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

have no idea

5. What game(s) do you like in this workshop? Please specify the game(s) and the reason(s)

6. What game(s) you do not like in this workshop? Please specify the game(s) and the reason(s)

7. What factors in GBL implementation motivate you in your spoken English study? Please specify

8. What factors in GBL implementation demotivate you in your spoken English study? Please specify

9. What difficulties have you met in GBL implementation? Please specify

10. Do you want to come back to this spoken English study workshop?

A. Yes B. No C. Have no idea

11. What have you learnt in this spoken English study workshop? Please specify

APPENDIX C – Interview Protocol

Individual Interview Question Guide (Semi-Structured)

First of all, thank you very much for your participation in this study, **A Pilot Workshop Project: Motivating Chinese College Students' Spoken English Study with Game-Based Learning Approach**. As you may know, I am currently pursuing my master's study at the Faculty of Education, McGill University. I am carrying out a pilot workshop project to facilitate the spoken English study. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated, as this research project would provide a valuable opportunity for us to evaluate the effectiveness of game-based learning (GBL) model in spoken English teaching, identify motivating and demotivating factors of the GBL model, and to further explore more effective and interactive approaches in EFL instruction.

During this interview, you will be asked semi-structured questions regarding your experience with games in our workshop. Therefore, there is no right or wrong answer.

Every effort will be made to ensure to protect the confidentiality and privacy of your participation. Your name and personal information will be kept confidential. In order to ensure that this interview can be reviewed during the data interpretation process, this interview will be audiotaped. Only this workshop's facilitators and my supervisor will have access to the audio-recordings. Interview tapes will be erased after careful transcription and your identity will not be directly associated with the interview transcripts.

I do not foresee any potential risks or discomfort to participants as a result of participating in this study. Your participation is entirely voluntary which means that you will have the right to withdraw at any time. Furthermore, if you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, please inform the interviewer about it. You do not have to answer any question you are not comfortable answering. Also, you may withdraw at any time without any penalty or prejudice.

Do you have any questions before we begin? Also, please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions at any time during the interview. May I/we start the recorder and begin the interview?

1. Is GBL approach new to you? And how do you like it in this spoken English workshop?

Yes/No

Why

2. How do you rate your motivation level in spoken English study before and after GBL intervention?

Any changes? Yes/No

Why

3. What factors prompt the above change(s)?

Factors within/without workshop

4. I noticed XXX in your questionnaires /while playing games. Could you tell me why you checked/responded/did this?

5. What suggestions do you have to improve the GBL spoken English workshop and EFL teaching to better facilitate your spoken and/or overall English study?



Alignment, Challenge, and Agency: EFL Teachers' Perspectives on Trilingual Education and Curriculum Reform in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

Kazakhstan, a Central Asian republic and former republic of the Soviet Union, has been aspiring for nearly two decades to construct a society where Kazakh is the state language, Russian is the language of interethnic communication, and English is the language of international communication. Within this broader societal goal is the planned implementation of teaching subjects in three languages, known discursively as trilingual education policy, which is intertwined with a reform of the school curricula in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) from grades 1–11. To explore how primary and secondary EFL teachers perceive and experience these changes, focus group interviews with 10 groups of EFL teachers were conducted in three regions of the country. Data are interpreted through a multilayered framework of language acquisition (Douglas Fir Group, 2016) integrated with the concept of teacher agency. The results indicate that teachers generally have positive perceptions of trilingualism and their role as agents of implementing both the updated curriculum for EFL and eventually the teaching and learning in English in the senior grades. Teachers also see a number of positive improvements in the updated curriculum including new pedagogical strategies, assessments, and general openness of students to communicating in English. Contrary to expectations of greater challenges introducing English to younger children, the authors found teachers of secondary students felt constrained by overly challenging curricula based on students' current language level, preparations of adapted materials, and limited resources in school and home settings. The findings indicate that scholars and policy makers need to align EFL education and curriculum reform with both principles of effective pedagogy and student readiness for English language acquisition, with input from EFL teachers.

Key words: Kazakhstan, reform, teacher agency, updated curriculum, trilingual education

Introduction

Kazakhstan, a Central Asian republic and former republic of the Soviet Union, has been

aspiring for nearly two decades to construct a society where Kazakh is the state language, Russian is the language of interethnic communication, and English is the language of “successful integration in the global economy” (Nazarbayev, 2007). To achieve this goal, the Kazakhstani government has developed multiple policies and programs understood collectively as the “Trinity of Languages” project or Trilingual Education Policy with a concomitant education reform, known locally as the *updated curriculum*, for all subjects including English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for grades 1–11. Broadly speaking, the Trilingual Education Policy reform involves teaching certain academic subjects in Kazakh, Russian, or English, and, since 2013, the teaching of English as a foreign language in addition to Kazakh or Russian as a second language in all schools.

On the one hand, teaching EFL to young learners potentially offers students greater opportunity to develop their Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills before attempting to acquire Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (Cummins, 1980) in English in the advanced grades. On the other hand, critics of the “earlier is better” movement offer evidence that foreign language instruction for early learners does not always lead to better learning outcomes than for late learners; rather, development is dependent on extensive input in the foreign language (e.g., Cummins, 2001; Flege, 2018; Ortega, 2019), age-appropriate, content-rich instructional approaches (Butler & Zeng, 2015; Cummins, 2001), and transferable skills from the first language (e.g., Pfenninger, 2016).

Above all, from a language policy and education reform perspective, bottom-up policies are likely to fail without bottom-up support from stakeholders (Hornberger, 2009). In particular, EFL teachers’ perceptions (Ahmad, 2018), practices (Chen, 2006), challenges (Chen, 2006; Diallo, 2014; Hasanova, 2016), or active resistance to policy (Nguyen & Bui, 2016) can impact effective implementation of a language-in-education policy reform. However, teacher agency in implementing education policy, and the constraints on teacher agency, remain under-researched in bilingual EFL contexts (Weng, Zhu, & Kim, 2019). In particular in the Kazakhstani context, EFL teachers’ perspectives on both trilingual education and curriculum reform have not been studied

yet. To address this gap, this paper uses qualitative data from focus group interviews with EFL teachers to answer the following research questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of the curriculum reform and trilingual education?
2. What successes and challenges do they describe in implementing the curriculum reform?
3. What do EFL teachers believe their role is in relation to trilingual education policy implementation?

We first describe in detail the development and key changes in policy and practice indicated in national documents regarding Trilingual Education Policy and the updated curriculum. Next, we present the Douglas Fir Group (2016) framework for language teaching and learning and its applicability to the present context. We then argue for a need to integrate this framework with the concept of teacher agency (Bridwell-Mitchell, 2015; Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, & Miller, 2012). After an overview of the data collection methods, we present the findings from participants according to the Douglas Fir Group's levels of macro, meso, and micro structures and practices. We will show that the EFL teachers value trilingualism, see the active, agentive role they can play in developing students' trilingualism, and see the benefits in new approaches to teaching English. The practical challenges that emerge are related to both macro-level political processes of curriculum reform, and micro-level limitations in educational and individual resources.

The development of trilingual education policy and curriculum reform in Kazakhstan

In 2015, three ministries of the Republic of Kazakhstan—the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Culture and Sport, and Ministry of Investment and Development—developed the Roadmap for Trilingual Education Development for

2015–2020 (2015), which, in part, ordered the National Academy of Education (NAE) to develop Uniform Language Standards for Learning Three Languages (Единый Языковой Стандарт Обучения Трем Языкам) (NAE, 2017a). This document describes the methodological approach, principles and strategies for teaching and learning three languages as well as the overall multilingual education model constituting “double entrance to knowledge” («двойного вхождения знаний») (р. 12), i.e., learning three languages as a subject, and learning subjects in three languages.

Although the learning of three languages as subjects is expected to take place in all grades, students are not expected to study academic subjects in three languages simultaneously from grades 1–11. Rather, starting in 2019, all students should start 1st grade with Kazakh or Russian as a medium of instruction². In 5th grade, students in both Kazakh- and Russian-medium schools should study History of Kazakh in Kazakh, and World History in Russian. Meanwhile, all students in grades 10–11 should study up to 4 subjects in English: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and Informatics (NAE, 2018).

In addition to changing the languages of instruction, the Kazakhstani government, with guidance from experts at the University of Cambridge, began a process in the 2015–2016 school year to implement new subject programs (Типовые Учебные Программы) with revised textbooks, teaching approaches, and assessments and for all subjects including EFL, i.e., the updated curriculum. For grades 1–3, 30 pilot schools—one urban mainstream and one rural mainstream school from each of the 14 regions, plus one school each from the two main cities of Kazakhstan—tested the materials and gave feedback to the NAE (NAE, 2016b, NAE, 2017b) before the new subject program was introduced in all mainstream schools. The rollout of the subject program for these three grades was also staggered; the Grade 1 subject program was piloted in 2015 and was distributed to all mainstream schools in 2016, the Grade 2 program was piloted in 2016 (NAE, 2016b) and distributed in 2017, and the Grade 3 program was piloted in

² The use of Kazakh or Russian as a medium of instruction should not be construed as “mother tongue” or “home language” education. Some children may speak or understand both languages at home and in the community, or speak a 4th language (e.g. Mandarin, Uzbek, Uyghur). In addition, some parents may choose to send their children to study in the language that is not dominant in the home or community to increase their children’s linguistic repertoire, educational attainment, or economic opportunities.

2017 and distributed in 2018. In 2017, however, the new subject programs for Grades 5 and 7 were distributed to all mainstream schools without piloting (NAE, 2016b, NAE, 2017b).

In terms of teaching and learning, the updated curriculum is designed to shift Kazakhstan away from its Soviet educational legacy. From Soviet times until the beginning of the curriculum reform, the education system in Kazakhstan was characterized by an overloaded curriculum, teacher-centered and fact-based learning, an absence of higher order thinking tasks, and “theory-oriented textbooks with a lack of opportunity for students’ creative, independent work” (Yakavets & Zhadrina, 2014, p. 37; see also Fimyar, 2014). In contrast, the updated curriculum is focused on developing skills that are applicable in real life: critical thinking; creativity; research, computer, and other digital skills; general communication skills; team work; and autonomous learning.

For all three language subjects, *communicative approach* (коммуникативный подход) is a key teaching approach (NAE, 2017b, p.38). The understanding and use of communicative approach is based primarily on the perspectives in the Russian literature (e.g., Koralyev, 1967; Passov, 1991; Pavlovskaya, 2003, Milrud & Maksimova, 2000, as cited in NAE, 2017a). The communicative approach, as defined in this literature, starts with teaching and developing oral communication skills (listening and speaking) and vocabulary skills first up to the level that a learner can speak at sentence level and communicate with others. Then written communication skills (reading and writing) are added to the language learning process. In addition, instead of teaching grammar per se, teachers are advised to facilitate use of grammar in the communication process and to encourage students to maintain the dialogue rather than critiquing their grammatical accuracy. Further, language teaching through the communicative approach is expected to be connected to the linguistic, social, and situational context that the language is used in (Milrud & Maksimova, 2000, as cited in NAE, 2017a). This approach is further conceptualized with the effective use of L1 where it is appropriate for explanation for teaching in the second language learning context (Richards, 2006, as cited in NAE, 2017a).

Granted, the separation and prioritization of skills outlined above are not usually reflected in definitions of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which focus on general language functions (Harmer, 1998) and competencies (Ull & Agost, 2020). However, the ultimate goal of both the communicative approach in Kazakhstani schools and CLT remain the same, which is “...the teaching of learners to be able to use the language effectively for their real communicative needs” (Hiep, 2007, p. 196).

Additional key features of the updated curriculum are the newly defined role of the teacher, the new connections within and among subjects, and approaches to teaching and assessment. Students are actively engaged in “constructing knowledge” (добывать знания), whereas a teacher takes a guiding role (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2018). Content in each subject grows from straightforwardness to complexity in a spiral basis throughout the years. Common topics are learnt across English, Kazakh and Russian language subjects and link to other subjects in the curriculum (e.g., plants). Teachers are advised to use student-centered approaches including responding to learners’ needs, active learning (i.e., learning by doing), scaffolding, and other approaches suggested for effective teaching and learning (Center of Excellence, 2015). Learning outcomes are specified in the learning objectives of each unit. These learning outcomes are assessed formatively on an everyday basis by teachers’ feedback and students’ reflections, and assessed at the end of each unit and term through summative assessment tasks that are criterion-based and based on formative assessment approaches (NAE, 2016b, 2017b). Textbooks have been updated according to the new subject content and feature research-oriented tasks (NAE, 2016a).

Macro, meso, and micro influences on language acquisition

The data presented in this paper are framed first and foremost by the transdisciplinary framework developed by the Douglas Fir Group (2016), a working group of senior

scholars in language teaching and learning. In their framework, they identify three layers of structures—macro, micro, and meso—that contribute to teaching and learning. The macro level consists of ideological structures and values related to cultural, political, religious, and economic factors (p. 25). Ideologies in Kazakhstani society that could shape teacher beliefs include the value of learning (in) multiple languages, and the value of learning English at an early age. The reform of the curriculum itself indexes an array of political macro-level values that are also key in our study. The meso level consists of institutions and communities as concrete as schools, as socially structured as families, and as socially constructed as identity formation, learner agency, and power dynamics. In Kazakhstan, there is a history of top-down education policy making (Goodman & Karabassova, 2018). At the same time, there is a diversity of material and institutional resources in mainstream and specialized schools, in urban and rural areas, in home languages and language practices depending on individual and regional preferences for Kazakh and/or Russian (Amantay, Myrzabayeva, & Karabay, 2017; Smagulova, 2019). Understanding how any or all of these factors are viewed by EFL teachers as impacting their implementation of curriculum reform is crucial here.

The micro level highlights the array of linguistic, multimodal (e.g., visual, oral), and interactional resources available for learning. Given the goal of the updated curriculum in Kazakhstan to transform EFL teaching with new models of teaching that draw on new modalities of learning, the empirical question of this study is the extent to which EFL teachers feel they can successfully and effectively employ such new resources for teaching and learning. Moreover, given the emphasis on development in three languages, the extent to which all three languages are seen as a resource (Ruiz, 1984) in EFL classrooms is of interest here. As Ortega (2019) noted, translanguaging—the use of multiple languages or language varieties in one’s repertoire for learning and communication—is not explicitly reflected in the Douglas Fir Group (2016) framework, but should be included as a component of study of how bilinguals and multilinguals learn additional languages.

Equally important are cognitive and emotional aspects of teaching and learning, which are imbedded in all levels of the framework. Teachers are seen in this framework

as having great power to encourage students to see themselves as “good” learners (Douglas Fir Group, 2016), which facilitates their language learning. Conversely, other scholars have argued that teachers can inhibit students by negatively viewing language practices of minoritized learners through a racialized lens (Flores & Rosa, 2019; Han, de Costa, & Cui, 2019). Unlike such racialized contexts such as the United States and China, the teachers and students in Kazakhstan are predominantly from the same ethnolinguistic group (Kazakh or Russian). Moreover, Kazakh and Russian languages and their speakers can be identified as majority or minority in terms of number of speakers and language prestige depending on the time period and region of the country (Pavlenko, 2008; see also Cenoz & Gorter, 2019).

Nevertheless, there is some evidence of the challenges of giving cognitive and emotional support in Kazakhstani schools. Fimyar, Yakavets, & Bridges (2014) reported on a curriculum that has previously emphasized “memorization and facts”, driving the need for a new curriculum that will encourage “cognitive activity and independence of thought” (p. 62). In undergraduate higher education, Kenzhetayev (2018) found that EFL learners had moderate anxiety about communicating in English in part because they feared negative evaluation by teachers. Collectively, these findings and theories suggest that teachers primarily play a gatekeeping role that encourages some students to develop language skills, and inhibit others through their patterns of interaction.

Although this critical view of teachers and their power over students is important, we agree with Allard (2017) that it is equally important to show that teachers’ practices may be shaped by the ideologies in their environment. By extension, teachers implementing an education reform may be engaging in micro-level interactions that are counterproductive to language development due to constraints at the meso level (institutional resources) and macro (curriculum development and guidance) levels. Exploring the interactions among these levels, and the potential negative or positive impact of these interactions on student learning, is a key objective of this paper. Before we can consider that relationship, however, we need additionally to consider the concept of teacher agency within this framework.

The nexus between language acquisition and teacher agency

Scholars of bilingual education who have acknowledged institutional and curricular constraints on teaching English learners have also highlighted cases when teachers resist environmental pressure and create more hospitable spaces for learning (Palmer & Martínez, 2013). This resistance is defined as *agency*. Bridwell-Mitchell (2015) defined agency more broadly as the “ability to choose between existing or alternative practices” (p. 147). In a context of education reform, whether these choices are aligned with policymakers’ alternative practices or teachers’ existing practices can indicate the direction and outcome of the reform.

Priestley et al. (2012), argued, however, that agency is often falsely portrayed as a dichotomy between the institutional environment and individual choices. Rather, they showed through case studies of two teachers engaged with a curriculum change in Scotland that teacher agency is the enactment of “repertoires for manoeuvre”, or “the possibilities for different forms of action available to teachers at particular points in time” (p. 211). Tao and Gao (2017), in their ethnographic study of teachers in a Chinese university undergoing curricular reform, aligned their study with not only possibilities of action but also teachers’ identity commitment, i.e., the choices teachers make that are aligned with the identity teachers construct for themselves in relation to the curriculum reform itself. Riveros, Newton, and Burgess (2012) also diverged from the institutional-individual dichotomy by highlighting the situatedness of agency as well as the value of collaboration among teachers in developing their capacity to exercise agency for effective reform implementation.

In short, across time and space, teachers in Kazakhstan may express or exhibit an array of ideologies and teaching practices situated in institutional or national policy and resource contexts. These ideologies and practices may be enacted in accordance with new language policies and new curricula, be employed as acts of resistance to these reforms, or created in a third space by the teachers alone or in partnership with other teachers. Taken together, these self-reported ideologies and practices may indicate the extent to which the reforms are likely to result in cognitive, emotional, and linguistic development in EFL learners in Kazakhstan.

Methods

The data presented in this paper come from a series of focus groups conducted by a research team with EFL teachers in Spring 2018. Initially the goal was to conduct 1 focus group each in 12 schools based on the following criteria: 1) region of the country (West, North, or South); 2) setting within the region (urban or rural); and 3) role in implementation of the updated curriculum (piloting or mainstream without piloting). However, the South and North regions did not have rural pilot schools for EFL, so in the end only 10 focus groups were conducted (see Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of Focus Groups with EFL Teachers

Group	Region	Setting	Curriculum Role
A_R2	South	Rural	Mainstream
A_U1	South	Urban	Pilot
A_U2	South	Urban	Mainstream
B_R1	West	Rural	Pilot
B_R2	West	Rural	Mainstream
B_U1	West	Urban	Pilot
B_U2	West	Urban	Mainstream
C_R2	North	Rural	Mainstream
C_U1	North	Urban	Pilot
C_U2	North	Urban	Mainstream

Note. Total number of participants is 39.

Interviews were conducted in Kazakh, Russian, and/or English depending on the preferred medium/media of communication of the teachers and the availability of researchers fluent in the appropriate languages. Interview protocols were approved by the University of Cambridge Institutional Review Board, and participants received and signed informed consent forms before the groups were recorded.

Interview questions focused on how teachers experienced general changes in the curriculum in their classrooms, experiences and challenges with specific changes (e.g., changes in assessment), and perceptions of trilingual education policy (please see Appendix). On average, focus group interviews lasted 47 minutes. After data collection,

audio files were simultaneously transcribed and translated into English. Data were coded on the basis of a combination pre-selected codes emerging from previous literature on education reform in Kazakhstan (Mehisto, Kambatyrova, & Nurseitova, 2014) and inductive open coding.

Findings are synthesized according to four themes that fall under the research questions and the theoretical framework: 1) EFL teacher beliefs generally influenced by macro-level policies of trilingual education and the updated curriculum; 2) The content of the new curriculum as a challenge for teachers coming from the macro level; 3) Meso- and micro-level successes and challenges and their alignment or conflict with trilingual education policy and curriculum reform; and 4) EFL teachers' perceptions of their agency in trilingual policy implementation and curriculum reform.

Macro-level policies aligned with or challenging micro-level teacher beliefs

In this section, we present findings of EFL teacher ideologies regarding trilingual education and the updated curriculum in general. In terms of trilingual education, although the number of teachers who commented on this point is small, those who did comment demonstrated an ecological view (Douglas Fir Group, 2016) of English in the context of trilingual education and the updated curriculum. One of these teachers, an urban pilot school teacher from the South, referred to the national discourses about the equal value and role of English, Kazakh, and Russian:

Excerpt 1. Focus group

A_U1 Teacher 1: Three languages is very good seeing as English is the international language, also for communication, it is accepted that this is the language of science. Kazakh is our heritage, it is our roots, it is our culture, it is that which we must progress and push forward. We need this, for our history. Russian is also history. It is the language of friendship, I would say, so it's the language of the Soviet Union, it doesn't harm the development of the child, and I think the more languages a person knows the wider their worldview. Yes, I see there's a risk of mixing cultures, certain attitudes or certain viewpoints, but, you know, these attitudes, when the three cultures cross a certain pragmatism appears, correctness, seeing of problems, in three different

ways, from three different perspectives and so an optimal solution is found. And this is convenient specifically for us. Yes, good, studying languages is obviously brilliant but culture is progress. That's how I would put it.

This same teacher viewed each of the three languages as necessary for development of a broader cultural worldview. Another teacher, a rural mainstream teacher from Western Kazakhstan, thought trilingualism was necessary but for more instrumental reasons: “it is necessary to prepare a competitive person” (B_R2 Teacher 2).

As for the updated curriculum, teachers' willingness to shift their beliefs about language learning to align with the macro-level changes in the curriculum depended on their success or challenges of implementation at the micro level. On the one hand, teachers reported a number of positive changes in the approaches to teaching and learning English. They report learning has now shifted from a traditional teaching approach toward a more student centered, communicative approach to learning that focuses on four skills: listening, speaking, writing and reading. Teachers also described the introduction of new pedagogies and tasks. They are integrating computer technology into learning and teaching. They are using more active learning. The lessons are more multimodal, e.g., teachers are using visuals, playing games, and doing body exercises. Students are also given more opportunities for independent work such as searching for information on the Internet.

One of the most frequently talked about changes in the curriculum is the change in assessment practice. Historically, pupils in Kazakhstan and other former Soviet countries have received a daily mark from their teachers (1–5, with 5 as excellent) for their performance in class. Within their new teaching practices and revised assessment strategies, some teachers reported they were able to integrate formative assessment with the active learning approach for learning English. As a result, teachers can see new ways students are managing learning new knowledge in the English language instruction. One urban pilot teacher from Western Kazakhstan explained:

B_U1 Teacher 1: [The students] are not shy and they don't cry about their marks. They can say their opinion about everything. For example, yesterday we had a theme: weather. And, of course, like, most understood new words. To understand these words, they show them. Like, for example, I don't know, thunder, what does it mean, and they show this using their hands or miming like that.

For other teachers, learning English through the communicative approach seems achievable, but only after some time passes and students adapt to the new teaching approaches. Particularly, teachers reported that students of Grades 5 and 7 who experienced learning English through the traditional way found speaking, listening and writing in English challenging when they start learning new skills. According to teachers, initially students of the updated curriculum showed less willingness to share their opinions or follow up discussion after reading or listening activity. They seemingly felt less confident and had limited vocabulary to speak. However, almost all teachers noticed the emergence of speaking skills among these students by the end of the academic year. That is to say, teachers confirmed students become more able to speak at least at the sentence level by the end of the academic year.

Some teachers indicated another change in students' emotional development under the updated curriculum: students are more open than the students of the traditional curriculum. Those teachers seemed to encourage students to express meaning and achieve fluency when the students speak rather than focusing on accuracy. An English teacher of an urban pilot school in the North described this phenomenon as follows:

Excerpt 3. Focus group

C_U1 Teacher 2: the eighth grade are too embarrassed, whereas the third grades, seventh grades, those working by the new program they are able to speak. Whether they know, whether it's right or wrong, they speak. For example, in the third, in the youngest years, I put Disney films on for them in English, they even ask themselves. So, I think they're more uninhibited.

New content as a macro-level challenge

Despite these reported successes, teachers also found macro-level challenges with the content of the updated curriculum itself. Contrary to expectations, multiple teachers reported that teaching in the early grades (1–3) was easier than teaching in the later grades (5–7). The teachers explained it was because the learning objectives in the later grades were set too high; the students had not had the benefit of the scaffolding of learning from the earlier grades, nor had teachers had the benefit of piloting the new curriculum to make adjustments. An urban, mainstream teacher from Western Kazakhstan felt the issue was a combination of the increase of the number of hours, the new types of tasks students were asked to perform, and the lack of piloting of the curriculum. She summed up her perceptions as follows:

Excerpt 4. Focus group

B_U2 Teacher 3: Why fifth grade is difficult because they have adaptation may be because English is three times in a week. They had one time in a week last year. Maybe right now they, maybe they know a lot of words. They know how to work in the class. But the first time when they come into to the fifth class, they were shocked. Of course, they must do reading, listening. They did not understand what they are doing. The first time, of course me too because it is a new program. We are like babies who do not know how to read and understand. Of course, we learned step by step. We study and learned. We used to inform. But now right now. They know what is the summative assessment; what is the listening or reading, speaking. They all know. What about speaking task, it is difficult for them. Because in the class there are students who know nothing...I do not know how to melt this iceberg.

This teacher's comment suggests the students have access to the opportunity to learn in English, and she is open to creating a safe space for them to learn. However, the tasks are too difficult for the students and she does not know how to help them “melt this iceberg”, that is, help them to manage their anxiety and scaffold the learning, or offer alternative activities that are feasible for students.

The disconnect between the curriculum and the textbooks.

A second challenge identified is the lack of sufficient, appropriate resources. English teachers in Grades 5 and 7 complained that their students do not have textbooks yet. Other teachers complained that even when they have a textbook, they must supplement with materials found on the Internet, which takes extra time. This may suggest that they feel some resistance to the new mode of teaching, or perhaps nostalgia for the days when they could simply “follow the textbook”. However, the data suggest the issue is more than that; it is a function of extra time and effort as well as the mismatch of students’ actual level, textbook content, and learning objectives. As one teacher from an urban mainstream school in the South put it:

Excerpt 5. Focus group

A_U2 Teacher 1: When the material in the book is insufficient, there will be paperwork. We search for ourselves and give it to children. The student level does not match with the tutorial, so we prepare tasks for that. It takes 2–3 hours to prepare for one 40-minute lesson. It takes our health and time. Because the content provided in the program is not in the book.

Meso- and micro-level resources present or absent in EFL classes

In addition to the opportunities and challenges identified by teachers in relation to the macro-level curriculum and the micro-level classroom resources, teachers identified four areas of concern (and opportunities) that are conditions of the institutional or regional environment: training in new teaching methods, development of their own language skills, access to technology, and students’ repertoires among different languages. Each of these is explained further below.

Insufficient professional training

Some teachers who are teaching English with an updated curriculum did not have training for teaching in the framework of updated curriculum. When they have questions related to teaching according to the updated curriculum, they ask any experienced teachers who have already taken a professional development course. These

teachers simply observe their peers' lessons to learn the updated curriculum.

Teachers' English language skills

Some teachers acknowledged that they have not sufficiently developed their own speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills. They especially felt the importance for them to improve their speaking skills, but they think that they are not in an environment where they can practice and develop their speaking skills. They feel that they need to attend trainings to improve their speaking skills.

Technological resources

Another issue emerged regarding technology in the classroom. Although teachers indicated they have Internet access at home or school for the purposes of preparing materials for students, parents do not always have Internet access at home, which limits the child's ability to complete certain tasks. An additional challenge was that only some teachers reported they had regular access from their school to technology for running their lessons. Some reported that they bring their own computers and speakers, which is a physical burden on them. Others simply go without these resources but wish they had them. Still others lamented that they do not even have the CDs that should come with the textbooks for listening purposes.

Linguistic limitations and resources

Multiple teachers point out that the curriculum implementation was more challenging for English than for Russian and Kazakh languages as subjects due the meso-level linguistic environment. As one rural pilot teacher from Western Kazakhstan said, comparing students' comprehension in Kazakh compared to English, "in Kazakh they can read and understand the learning objectives. At the English lesson they read only learning objectives. I wish they [the objectives] were easier" (B_R1 Teacher 2). In addition, the learning objectives and performance of tasks seems more manageable in Russian than in English for students who learn Russian as an L2 in rural, Kazakh-dominant areas. Two rural teachers at pilot schools in the North explained that Russian

language is more prevalent in society than English; therefore, students know words and can more easily construct meaning through tasks in Russian.

In other cases, because teachers were open to trilingual education policy and trilingualism in general, they were more willing to draw on all languages in students' repertoires as a resource for learning English. One urban teacher from a pilot school in Western Kazakhstan commented on the need for Kazakh and Russian in EFL classes as follows:

Excerpt 6. Focus group

B_U1 Teacher 2: Say you take the Multilanguage approach and just have a watch and ask the children in English *half past and ten past* and they might get confused so straight away if you take the Multilanguage, trilingual. Kazakh, Russian. And in the language for example I say one part's *past* and the other *to* and what is that in Kazakh and then they start to understand straight away.

Another teacher from a non-pilot school in the South indicated that for summative assessments they will translate the task into the native language so that the student can understand the task and respond.

EFL teachers' agency in trilingual policy implementation and curriculum reform

Although one would expect that teachers in pilot schools would express greater agency in education reform implementation than teachers from other mainstream schools, in fact, teachers across both types of schools and across settings and regions framed their experiences in two main ways that can be understood as exhibiting agency. The first is the ways in which teachers identify themselves in collaborations and knowledge exchange with other teachers. The second is how teachers reported on "the spaces they have to create" (Murat Baltabayev, personal communication, October 8, 2019) their own learning environments in ways that show these are conscious and agentic choices.

EFL teachers characterized their role in trilingual education as a continuum of giving and receiving support. They give support by offering seminars for content

teachers on methods and English language terminology for teaching their subject. They are also asked by content teachers to collaborate in writing lesson plans. EFL teachers participate in seminars conducted by schools with more experience implementing trilingual education. The main role identified for these was sharing of experience and discussing of ideas for lessons. This is more than simply receiving “training” as teachers often say in Kazakhstan, but rather a form of guided support that also operates as a safe space for co-constructing knowledge and articulating needs.

One teacher from a rural, mainstream school in the South said she has the resources she needs for teaching, but nevertheless chooses to make additional learning materials (e.g., flash cards) for students. In fact, multiple teachers talked about the ability to choose tasks, materials, and target assessments based on their knowledge of their students’ needs. As a teacher from an urban, pilot school in the South commented, “I think this suits my students better, because classes are all different and having read and analyzed, for example, the program for my own subject I can therefore put together the tasks myself, which is useful” (A_U1 Teacher 1).

Conclusion and recommendations from macro, meso, and micro level perspectives

We draw three conclusions from our study regarding EFL teachers’ perspectives, successes, challenges, and role in trilingual education policy and curriculum reform. First, we found that teachers’ ideologies are aligned with macro-level language policy goals, i.e., trilingual education policy. Teachers are also committed to their role as agents of implementation of trilingual education policy and, based on their teaching practice, aligned with the shifts in pedagogy inscribed in the updated curriculum. The teachers in this study seem to recognize that the curriculum reform in Kazakhstan and its paradigm changes for learning embrace non-essentialist views of language where “language is a process, not a product” (Ortega, 2018, p. 70). In other words, teachers no longer have to focus on accurate reproductions of grammar, pronunciation, or translations according to the view of language as a fixed model; rather, they can focus on using language as a means of social communication.

That said, challenges and affordances for agency emerge at the meso and micro

levels. At the school level, material resources are insufficient, and curriculum and objectives come from top down with inadequate training or alignment with student's previous experience. Teachers, especially in grades 5–7 resist both trilingual education policy and the updated curriculum because of these challenges. That is to say, they feel the objectives are too challenging for students in English, and want greater parity among expectations for English as a third language and Kazakh as a second language. Nevertheless, at the micro, i.e., classroom level, teachers are able to create a third space for themselves. They make their own teaching resources and choices about language use in the classroom (i.e., the use of Russian and Kazakh). They make these choices in an attempt to “melt the iceberg”, i.e., to enhance not only language learning but also overall cognitive and emotional development. These choices include the use of students' L1 to facilitate learning, suggesting teaching English to young learners is not necessarily perceived as a threat to Kazakh (or Russian) by EFL teachers. Rather, EFL classrooms are seen as a space where teachers have an opportunity to “use emergent multilinguals' resources to reinforce all languages” (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017, p. 909).

Based on these conclusions, we offer the following recommendations for stakeholders at macro, meso, and micro levels. For policy makers and curriculum developers, we encourage the introduction of new curriculum not one grade but one cohort at a time. We also encourage the return to piloting of curricula and textbooks, and training before piloting and before full-scale rollouts of new curricula for new cohorts. We encourage schools to invest in or seek funding for sufficient technology, software, and maintenance of hardware and software for innovative teaching and learning. Schools also need to allow EFL and content teachers time to collaborate and plan lessons together. Finally, we urge teachers to continue to actively seek training in new methods of teaching, especially the communicative approach, CLT methods, and translanguaging pedagogies. Teachers should also continue to exercise their agency around new curricula by responding to learners' individual needs and adjusting curriculum objectives and learning resources accordingly.

Limitations and recommendations for further research

Some limitations to this study need to be acknowledged. The data presented in this paper are based only on interviews. Additional means of data collection such as observations would help triangulate the teachers' stated views, as what teachers report they do and what they practice may be different. In the Kazakhstani context in particular, what was voiced in interviews may have been said as a means of compliance with superiors or general alignment with the designers of the curriculum.

Despite these limitations, the data reveal that teachers see both challenges and benefits of trilingual education policy and the updated curriculum, and they see a role for themselves as agents of change in language policy and curriculum reform in Kazakhstan. We encourage researchers not only to collect additional types of data, but to actively explore connections among curriculum, language policy, language acquisition, and teacher agency across contexts.

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Appendix

Interview protocol for discussion in teachers' discussion groups

1. “The chronology of change”

- a. Have your attitudes towards the various reforms changed over time and if so, how?
- b. How has each reform affected you and responsibilities? The new curriculum, new models of assessment, demands for additional professional development, the trilingual policy and new policies on inclusion?
- c. Have concerns of the past been resolved? What are the primary challenges and successes now?
- d. To summarise, how have the changes affected you and your region/school? A retrospective view.

2. “Factors that affect the effectiveness of various reforms”

- a. Using and going beyond your own experiences, do you think there are variations in how effectively each reform has been implemented? Or in how many have been received? What challenges might vary?
- b. Which specific elements to the overall reform (curriculum, assessment, trilingual, inclusion) are/would most likely be affected by external factors? Would this be in terms of different regions, different types of schools, different locations such as urban or rural schools, different medium of instruction, minority ethnic schools, poorer areas or any other factors?
- c. How would you compensate for this and check that the reforms are being implemented as intended?

3. What are the main **successes and challenges of the reform?**

- a. Looking in more detail of what is happening in the schools...
- b. What would you describe as the aims, goals and objectives of the new curriculum? How do these compare to previously? Does everyone understand the new aims? What are the challenges in understanding?
- c. Turning to content of the new curriculum, how would you describe the new curriculum content for various subjects? Is it adequate, better or worse? Have you adapted previous content or started from scratch with lessons?
- d. Continuing with teaching and learning, what new teaching practices have you performed/seen? Have the changes been enough to satisfactorily deliver the new curriculum? If so, why? If not, why not? How do you/teachers understand the new types of practice? Has there been any new understanding for you/teachers in how best to teach to improve all their students' learning?
- e. Let us now switch to discuss: the new models of assessment. What are your/your teachers' experiences with the new assessment approaches (or alternative assessments)? What new behaviours do the senior management in the school, teachers and students perform?
- f. Has there been any new understanding of assessment for learning? How are the new assessment approaches connected to learning goals / objectives? How do the new assessment approaches affect you/your teachers' teaching? How is each student's learning and each class overall affected by the new procedures?
- g. Accountability and assessment of learning. How do you think policymakers understand and anticipate implementation of the new assessment approaches in schools? How will they know the success of this? What do you think of the new assessment approaches?
- h. Response to changes in assessment practices: How do the primary school students themselves respond to the new assessment approaches

(or alternative assessment)? What other responses have there been to the new approaches from others such as parents, regional education authorities, non-pilot schools?

- i. Returning to teaching and learning, what are the new demands placed on you/teachers? What preparation and resources do you/they have and want? Effectively, how well supported have the changes been?
- j. In terms of other resources, how well-resourced have the changes been: textbooks, curriculum materials, facilities?
- k. Lastly, how much professional development has been available or mentoring in/with other teachers and schools (NIS partner school?)?
- l. What professional development have teachers received or are receiving, if any, to account for:
 - the demands of the new curriculum in relationship to its aims, goals and objectives;
 - curriculum in relationship to any new content;
 - the new models of assessment?
 - Is this enough?

4. “Coherence of the whole reform process”

- a. How well do various aspects of the reform work together?

For example, the new curriculum and assessment, the aims and goals with the content, the need for new teaching resources for the new curriculum, the demands of accountability and support from the regional education authority (REA), the amount of professional development available, integrating the trilingual policy with other reforms, adopting new policies on inclusion alongside the new curriculum or the trilingual policy (say)?

- b. How do the other reforms such as trilingual policy and inclusion work with changes to the curriculum and assessment?

- c. What would you recommend that improves the ‘joined-up’ nature of the reforms?

5. “Wider change”

- a. How well have parents and schools/others such as the local educational authorities adapted to the changes?
- b. How do you work with (other) schools, NIS, local education authorities, national organisation or any others?
- c. How do you see the future?



A Comparison of Wordlists and Flashcards as Vocabulary Instruction Techniques for EFL Learners

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Abstract

This study looks at the impacts of flash cards and word lists as vocabulary instructional techniques. During the treatment, six groups of EFL learners at three different English levels (beginners, elementary, and pre-intermediate) were taught with flash cards and another six groups were taught with word lists. Unlike previous studies, which investigated learners' retention of meaning only, this research examines learners' retention of both meaning and spelling. The results of this study indicate that flash cards have advantages over word lists for beginner EFL learners at primary school, and that word lists provide more benefits to older learners at the elementary and pre-

intermediate levels.

Keywords: Teaching vocabulary, flashcards, wordlists, vocabulary techniques, vocabulary retention

1. Introduction

For decades, linguists and language teaching practitioners believed that vocabulary instruction was secondary to grammar instruction. They assumed that once knowledge of grammar rules has been acquired, vocabulary will be learnt according to learners' needs. Advocators of autolingualism supposed that learners will learn vocabulary themselves and that the teaching instruction should focus on grammatical and phonological structures (Schmidt, 2001). However, researchers have recently started to reconsider the position of vocabulary instruction in language teaching. Lexical competence has been said to play an essential role in communication (Coady & Huckin, 1997; Thornbury, 2002). *"Without grammar, very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed"* (Wilkins, 1976, p. 111). In other words, if a learner's vocabulary is limited, it will be very difficult for the learner to express his/her intended meaning (Zhihong, 2000). Vocabulary instruction, therefore, has been considered an intrinsic part of language teaching (Qian, 1999; Zareva, Schwanenflugel & Nikolova, 2005; Coady & Huckin, 1997; Read, 2000; Richards & Renandya, 2002; Nation, 2005).

There is a large volume of published studies describing the techniques and activities for teaching vocabulary. Linguists have developed a so-called word-centred approach to language teaching (Thornbury, 2004), advocates of which usually support the use of language corpus in vocabulary instruction (Tribble & Jones, 1997). A few authors have attempted to classify vocabulary instruction activities into planned and unplanned activities (Seal, 1991; McDonald, 2008) and divide vocabulary learning activities into decontextualised, partially contextualised, and fully contextualised activities (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994). Other scholars have also proposed various types of exercises and tasks for practising vocabulary such as verbal glosses (Salehi &

Naserieh, 2013), matching, word-building, classifying, filling in crosswords, grids or diagrams, memory games, and using given lexical items to perform a specific task (Carter, 1998; DeCarrico, 2001; Nation, 2001; Scrivener, 2005).

Among the techniques and activities for vocabulary instruction are flashcards and wordlists, the usefulness of which has been confirmed by numerous authors (Hulstijn, 2001; Nation, 2001; Meara, 1995; Thornbury, 2002; Shillaw, 1995; Yongqi, 2003; Mondria & Mondria-de Vries, 1994; Palka, 1988; Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995; Tan & Nicholson, 1997). However, much uncertainty still exists about the efficacy of these two techniques as compared to each other. While some researchers are in favour of flashcards (Mondria & Mondria-de Vries, 1994; Schmitt & Schmitt, 1995; Mohammadnejad, Nikdel & Oroujlou, 2012), several others have stated that learning through lists is more efficient and that more of the acquired vocabulary remains in the long-term memory (Nation, 2001; Hulstijn, 2001). Some others have also reported that the efficacies of these two techniques are not significantly different (Baleghizadeh & Ashoori, 2011; Sinaei & Asadi, 2014).

The lack of consensus has put language teachers in a dilemma. Given that flashcards consume more time and effort to make than wordlists, should language teachers utilise flashcards if they do not bring about significantly better results than wordlists? Furthermore, almost all previous research in this field used a post-test that only tested the ability to recognise the meaning of the learned vocabulary. Far too little attention has been paid to the learners' ability to say the words (pronunciation). It is, therefore, necessary to have more empirical investigations into the effects of flashcards and wordlists on EFL learners' ability to retain both word meaning and pronunciation.

This study investigates and compares the effectiveness of flashcards and wordlists in vocabulary instruction with the hope to provide language teachers with a basis for their choice between flashcards and wordlists, and to make an important contribution to the understanding of the efficacies of the two techniques in vocabulary teaching. It was conducted in the form of an experiment, which involved 12 groups of EFL students at three levels of education (primary school, secondary school and high school).

2. Literature review

This section provides an overview of previous research on wordlist and flashcards in language teaching. It begins with the definitions of wordlist and flashcard, and then discusses their usefulness in vocabulary instruction. Finally, the literature on the efficacy of these two teaching techniques in English language teaching is presented.

2.1 Wordlists

The term “wordlist” was originally used in reference to wordlists made by researchers for the purposes of designing syllabuses, developing language tests, analyzing texts, and teaching vocabulary in a specific field. Those wordlists include the “General Service List” (West, 1953), “University Word List” (Xue & Nation, 1984), “Academic Word List” (Coxhead, 2000), “Business Word List” (Konstantakis, 2007), “Science Word List” (Coxhead & Hirsh, 2007), “Medical Academic Word List” (Wang, Liang & Ge, 2008), “First 100 Spoken Collocations” (Shin & Nation, 2008), “AgroCorpus List” (Martínez, Beck, and Panza, 2009), “Basic Engineering List” (Ward, 2009), and “Phrasal Expressions List” (Martinez & Schmitt, 2012).

In the past several decades, the term “wordlist” has also been used to refer to the wordlists created by language teachers for teaching specific vocabulary in their language classrooms. These kinds of wordlists are defined as a sheet of paper that contains a list of target vocabulary. However, this teaching material can appear in various forms. For instance, some wordlists are comprised of a list of target vocabulary along with their L1 equivalences, while some others contain the target vocabulary along with their phonemic transcripts or L1 translation.

A number of researchers have emphasised the usefulness of wordlists in teaching vocabulary. For instance, Thornbury (2002) called for a reconsideration of the value of list learning, which had been given inadequate attention. He also proposed a few strategies for using wordlists in language teaching, such as matching sounds with the written forms on the list, ticking the English equivalences on a bilingual list, and making stories from a list of words. Along similar lines, other researchers hold that wordlists are one of the most effective ways of learning L2 vocabulary and that list

learning is even more efficient than context learning (Nation, 2001; Meara, 1995). Their research found that a large number of words could be learned from wordlists within a short time period (Yong, 2003). Similarly, Laufer and Shmueli (1997), Hulstijn (2001), Bahrick and Phelps (1987) and Shillaw (1995) found that wordlists help learners retain the learned vocabulary in their long-term memory.

However, several researchers have questioned the value of wordlists in language teaching. They argue that contexts are fundamental for learners to acquire the meaning of a word (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2000; Bogaards & Laufer, 2004). In other words, teachers need to provide their students with opportunities for meaningful practice rather than just rote memorization.

2.2 Flashcards

Flashcards have popularly been used in language classrooms as a technique for teaching not only vocabulary but also other aspects of language. The uses of flashcards include teaching sounds of the alphabet and helping poor readers improve word recognition (Culyer, 1988), teaching students to practice their vocabulary development (Ervin, 1988), teaching prepositions, articles, sentence structures, tenses, and phrasal verbs (Palka, 1988), and improving reading comprehension and reading speed (Tan & Nicholson, 1997). There are various types of flashcards but each of them usually contains a word, a phrase, a sentence or a simple picture on one side and L1 translation on the other side.

A few authors have examined the effectiveness of flashcards in vocabulary instruction. Mondria and Mondria-de Veris (1994), for instance, point out that flashcards assist learners to establish meaningful contexts, which in turn facilitates vocabulary acquisition. Other researchers such as Palka (1998), Schmitt & Schmitt (1995), and Tan and Nicholson (1997) also suggest that flashcards can help students to remember and use the taught vocabulary effectively. In the same vein, Rokni and Karimi (2013) demonstrated that flashcards, along with other visual aids, have a positive result on learners' vocabulary studies. Other authors have also noted that flashcards offer a variety of uses in different activities and games (Hill, 1990), thus can

be useful for both the teacher and the learner. Students can even use them when they study on their own (Mohammadnejad, Nikdel, Oroujlou, 2012).

2.3 Wordlists vs. flashcards

Previous research has compared the efficacy of flashcards and wordlists as techniques in teaching vocabulary. An example of this is the study carried out by Baleghizadeh and Ashoori (2011). They investigated the participants' responses to vocabulary instruction using flashcards and wordlists. In order to do this, they used 20 flashcards with a picture on one side and L1 translation on the other side. The wordlists contained 20 words in one column and their translations were on one side of the words. The experiment lasted for two days, during which one of the groups was taught with flashcards and the other group was taught with wordlists. After that, a post-test was administered to both groups to see which group had remembered more words. The results indicated that although the flashcard group did better than the wordlist group, the difference between them was not significant.

Similarly, Sinaei and Asadi (2014) found that flashcards produced higher results than wordlists but the flashcard group's performance was not significantly better than the wordlist group's performance. In this study, the two researchers explored the efficacy of flashcards and wordlists in teaching vocabulary to engineering professionals at both the elementary and intermediate levels of English. Before the treatment, an Academic Test of Vocabulary was administered to all groups. The same test was used as a post-test at the end of the course and as a delayed post-test 15 days after the course. The treatment consisted of seven sessions overall. The data showed that the flashcard group had a higher score on the post-tests but the difference was not significant.

Conversely, Mohammadnejad, Nikdel, Oroujlou (2012) reported significant differences in efficacy between flashcards and wordlists. Their research was carried out at a school in Iran with 36 participants whose ages ranged from 11 to 14. The participants were supposed to learn 60 words in their textbook. The flashcards they used contained pictures on one side and L1 translation on the other side. The wordlists had the words in one column and their respective L1 translations in another column. Each

of the sessions in the treatment included a pre-test of the target vocabulary for that session and an immediate post-test to determine the participants' short-term retention of the words. A pre-test and post-test were also administered before and after every two sessions and the last post-test was done after the treatment finished. The findings suggest that flashcards are more effective than wordlists in vocabulary instruction.

Several issues can be raised from the mentioned studies. First, much uncertainty still exists about the advantages of flashcards over wordlists, thus there needs to be more research into this issue. Second, only one of those studies explored the impact of the two techniques on learners at different English levels. Other researchers did not consider the participant groups' English ability. It is therefore necessary to conduct more research to see if one technique is better for a particular level but is less effective for other levels. Third, the previous researchers focused on learners' retention of word meaning but not word spelling. In all of the tests they used, the participants were asked to write down the L1 translations but were not asked to write the target words. This indicates a need to investigate and compare the effectiveness of the two techniques on learners' retention of word spelling before we can definitively claim the advantages of one technique over the other.

3. Research questions

This study was carried out to determine whether flashcards have significant advantages over wordlists in helping EFL learners at three different English levels (beginners, elementary and pre-intermediate) to retain word meaning and sound. The following research questions were posed:

- a) Which technique better facilitates learners' retention of word meaning?
- b) Which technique better facilitates learners' retention of word spelling?
- c) Do the two techniques produce different results for learners at different levels of English?

4. Materials and method

The participants in this study were chosen from a population of students at primary,

secondary and high schools in Vietnam. There were four groups of primary school students, four groups of secondary school students and four groups of high school students. Altogether, the 12 groups originally included 526 students. However, after the screening for their English level, we found that 23 students were not at the same English level as the rest of their group members. Therefore, the analysis did not include the results of these 23 students. The four primary school groups, hereafter named P1, P2, P3, and P4, respectively consisted of 43, 40, 40, and 42 students at the beginner level. The four secondary school groups, hereafter named S1, S2, S3 and S4, respectively consisted of 39, 41, 40, and 41 students at the elementary level. The four high school groups, hereafter named H1, H2, H3, and H4 respectively consisted of 45, 43, 45, 44 students at the pre-intermediate level. At the beginning of the experiment, the 165 primary school participants included 82 females and 83 males, aged from 8 to 9; the 161 secondary school participants included 78 females and 83 males, aged from 12 to 13; and the 177 high school participants included 86 females and 91 males, aged from 16 to 17. During the treatment, all of the students were following the usual English programs at their schools, where English is a required subject. None of them were following any other courses of English at other institutions or having any tutoring English lessons.

For the main English program, the primary school groups used the book named *English 3*; the secondary school groups used the book named *English 7*; and the high school group used the book named *English 10*. These books were designed and published by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training.

Before the treatment, three English proficiency tests were used to ascertain the homogeneity of the participants in terms of language proficiency. For the primary groups, the Cambridge Young Learners Starters Test was used because children in the third grade were expected to achieve the pre-A1 level by the end of the school year. For the secondary school groups, the Cambridge Key English Test was used because the students were expected to reach level A2 by the time they finished secondary school. For the high school groups, the Cambridge Preliminary English Test was used since the students were expected to reach level B1 by the time they graduated high school. These

tests cover the four language skills: speaking, reading, listening, and writing with the speaking part conducted on a different day from the other parts.

In order to eliminate the possibility that some students might have known the target words before the treatment, three vocabulary tests were administered. These tests were comprised of words selected from the textbooks the students were using at school. Each test had two parts. Part 1 displayed the selected English words along with four choices of meaning or Vietnamese equivalences for each. The test takers were to choose the best option. Part 2 displayed the Vietnamese equivalence or translation of the selected English words along with the initial letter of the corresponding English word. The test takers were to write down the missing letters. The test for the primary school groups contained 30 words, the test for the secondary school groups contained 40, and the test for the high school groups contained 50 words. These tests were modified by reducing the number of words (only the words that none of the students knew either by meaning or spelling were kept) and used again as the post-test at the end of the experiment.

Based on the results of the vocabulary test, a set of target words were chosen for each of the levels. Respectively, 20 target words, 30 target words and 40 target words were chosen to be taught to the primary school groups, the secondary school groups and the high school groups. All of the words are content words. A set of flashcards and a set of wordlists were designed for each type of group (primary, secondary, high school). Each of the flashcards had a picture on one side and the Vietnamese equivalence on the other side. Each of the wordlists consisted of the target words in English along with their Vietnamese translations.

After the twelve groups were chosen, the English proficiency tests were administered. Each group took their test on two separate days: the reading, listening and writing parts on the first day, and the speaking part on the second. The results of the proficiency tests indicated that nine of the primary school students were above the beginner level; six of the secondary school students were lower than the elementary level; while eight of the high school students were below the pre-intermediate level. For this reason, although these 23 students still had the same treatment as their group

members, their results were not included in the data analysis. The remaining 503 students were then asked to complete the vocabulary tests. Their scores were then calculated. The results showed that some students had already known some words in the test, either by meaning or spelling. Therefore, only 20 words were chosen to teach to the primary school groups, 30 words were chosen to teach to the secondary school groups, and 40 words were chosen to teach to the high school groups.

The twelve groups then received the treatment. Half of the students (P1, P2, S1, S2, H1, H2), were taught the target vocabulary using flashcards, while the other half of the students (P3, P4, S3, S4, H3, H4) were taught using the wordlists. The treatment lasted for five weeks with one session of 20 minutes per week.

After the treatment, all groups sat the post-test.

5. Results

The participants' retention of word meaning was measured by counting the number of correct L1 translations/correspondences that they had on the post-test (part 1 of the test) and their retention of word spelling was measured by counting the number of the correct target words they could write (part 2 of the test). For each of the three levels, comparisons between the groups (flashcard vs. wordlist) and between the word aspects (meaning and spelling) were made.

5.1 The primary school groups

Regarding the participants' performance on meaning, the data indicated that both flashcard groups did better on meaning retention than the wordlist groups (see Table 1). On average, the participants who were taught using flashcards could retain the meanings of 15 out of 20 words (P1) and 16 out of 20 words (P2) while the participants who were taught using wordlists could retain the meanings of only 12 words (P3) and 11 words (P4). Note that the best participants in the flashcard groups scored 19 while those in the wordlist groups scored only 15. The one-way ANOVA results showed that the groups' mean scores were significantly different, $F(3, 163) = 132.42$, $p = 0.000$. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean scores for

group P1 ($M = 15.81$, $SD = 1.56$) and group P2 ($M = 16.63$, $SD = 1.51$) were significantly higher than the mean scores for group P3 ($M = 12.08$, $SD = 1.40$) and group P4 ($M = 11.71$, $SD = 1.17$). It can therefore be hypothesized that flashcards have a bigger impact on young learners' retention of word meaning.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Meaning Retention for the Primary Groups

		N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Variance	SD	Skewness
FL	P1	43	7	12	19	680	15.81	2.44	1.56	-0.25
	P2	40	7	12	19	665	16.63	2.49	1.51	-0.73
WL	P3	40	5	10	15	483	12.08	1.97	1.40	0.15
	P4	44	5	9	14	492	11.71	1.38	1.17	-0.07

In regard with the participants' retention of spelling, it was found that the flashcard groups did better than the wordlist groups, but the differences were minimal (less than 0.5). A one-way ANOVA revealed that the mean scores for group P1 ($M = 12.95$, $SD = 1.60$) and group P2 ($M = 13.00$, $SD = 1.43$) were not significantly higher than the mean scores for group P3 ($M = 12.65$, $SD = 1.23$) and group P4 ($M = 12.83$, $SD = 1.64$).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Spelling Retention for the Elementary Groups

		N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Variance	SD	Skewness
FL	P1	43	6	10	16	557	12.95	2.57	1.60	-0.25
	P2	40	5	11	16	520	13.00	2.05	1.43	-0.27
WL	P3	40	5	11	16	506	12.65	1.52	1.23	0.78
	P4	44	8	10	18	539	12.83	2.68	1.64	0.78

A comparison between the participants' retention of meaning and their retention of spelling showed that the flashcard groups performed better on meaning than spelling while the wordlist groups performed slightly better on spelling than meaning. However, there was no significant difference for the wordlist groups' mean scores whereas a significant difference was found between the flashcard groups' mean scores on meaning and their mean scores on spelling.

Altogether, these results suggest that while flashcards and wordlists elicit similar

results in terms of helping young learners to retain word spelling, flashcards are a better choice for those teachers who want to focus on the meaning of the word.

5.2 The secondary school groups

In regard to meaning retention, the four groups had similar mean scores, which ranged from 21.93 to 23.12 (see Table 3). A one-way ANOVA indicated that the mean scores for group S1 ($M = 22.95$, $SD = 2.36$) and group S2 ($M = 22.78$, $SD = 2.22$) were not significantly different from the mean scores for group S3 ($M = 21.93$, $SD = 1.93$) and group S4 ($M = 23.12$, $SD = 2.18$). This suggests that flashcards do not have advantage over wordlists in helping learners at secondary schools to retain word meaning.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Meaning Retention for the Secondary School Groups

		N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Variance	SD	Skewness
FL	S1	39	10	18	28	895	22.95	5.58	2.36	-0.04
	S2	41	10	16	26	934	22.78	4.93	2.22	-0.87
WL	S3	40	7	18	25	877	21.93	3.71	1.93	-0.15
	S4	41	10	17	27	948	23.12	4.76	2.18	-0.95

In regard to spelling, it is apparent from the data in Table 4 that the wordlist groups attained better results than the flashcard groups. Both of the flashcard groups achieved an average score of 18.67 (group S1) and 18.54 (group S2) whereas the wordlist groups achieved an average score of 21.70 (group S3) and 22.07 (group S4). The one-way ANOVA results showed that the groups' mean scores were significantly different, $F(3, 157) = 25.09$, $p = 0.000$. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean scores for group S1 ($M = 18.67$, $SD = 2.53$) and group S2 ($M = 18.54$, $SD = 2.28$) were significantly lower than the mean scores for group S3 ($M = 21.70$, $SD = 2.42$) and group S4 ($M = 22.07$, $SD = 2.41$).

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Spelling Retention for the Secondary School Groups

		N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Variance	SD	Skewness
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FL	S1	39	11	13	24	728	18.67	6.39	2.53	-0.16
	S2	41	9	14	23	760	18.54	5.20	2.28	-0.41
WL	S3	40	10	16	26	868	21.70	5.86	2.42	-0.71
	S4	41	12	17	29	905	22.07	5.82	2.41	0.39

5.3 The high school groups

As shown in Table 5, groups H1, H2, H3 and H4 respectively achieved an average score of 30.16, 31.86, 31.87 and 31.77 on the meaning retention task. The differences were not significant. Similarly, their scores on the spelling retention task were only very slightly different. Both types of groups had around 30 and 31 correct answers (see Table 6). Comparing the groups' results of the meaning retention task and their results of the spelling retention task, it was found that all four groups performed equally well on the two tasks. Altogether, these results indicate that the flashcard groups and wordlist groups did similarly well on the test. It is therefore likely that neither technique has advantage over the other in vocabulary instruction.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Meaning Retention for the High School Groups

		N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Variance	SD	Skewness
FL	S1	45	11	24	35	1357	30.16	8.27	2.88	-0.49
	S2	43	13	25	38	1370	31.86	8.36	2.89	-0.09
WL	S3	45	13	24	37	1434	31.87	6.53	2.55	-0.22
	S4	44	13	23	36	1398	31.77	6.83	2.61	-0.60

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Spelling Retention for the High School Groups

		N	Range	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	Variance	SD	Skewness
FL	S1	45	9	25	34	1358	30.18	3.47	1.86	-0.48
	S2	43	7	28	35	1355	31.51	2.40	1.55	-0.16
WL	S3	45	10	27	37	1383	30.73	2.97	1.72	1.33
	S4	44	12	25	37	1367	31.07	4.11	2.03	-0.06

6. Discussion

Previous studies comparing the impact of flashcards and wordlists as techniques in vocabulary instruction observed inconsistent results on whether either of them has

advantage over the other (Mohammadnejad, Nikdel & Oroujlou, 2012; Baleghizadeh, Ashoori, 2011; Sinaei & Asadi, 2014). As mentioned in the literature review, some researchers found that flashcards and wordlists have equal effects on EFL learners' word acquisition while others reported significant differences. The current study seeks to determine whether flashcards are significantly better than wordlists in vocabulary instruction to learners at three different levels of English: beginner, elementary and pre-intermediate.

One of the major findings of this research is that flashcards substantially facilitate the ability of young learners at the beginner level in retaining word meaning. This finding further supports those reached by Mohammadnejad, Nikdel, Oroujlou (2012) and confirms the hypothesis that flashcards lead to improved vocabulary learning (Mondria & Mondria-de Vries, 1994). This result can be explained by the fact that learners can categorize flashcards based on the difficulty level, topic, frequency, time order, use and so forth. This might have allowed the flashcard students to practice vocabulary extensively, and review frequently and selectively according to their needs and ability.

As for the wordlist groups, it is possible that they suffered a list effect caused by list learning, as proposed by Nakata (2008). Those participants might have been able to recall an item within the list but failed to do so when it was separated from the others. These learners, therefore, did worse on the test than the other participants who were taught with flashcards.

However, this study found that flashcards do not have advantage over wordlists for learners at higher levels of English (elementary and pre-intermediate). The data revealed that the participants at the secondary and high schools performed equally well whether taught with flashcards or wordlists. A possible explanation for these results might be that these older learners are perhaps not as attracted to pictures as younger learners are. Therefore, they will not benefit as much from flashcards as younger learners do.

With respect to the efficacy of the two techniques in facilitating learners' spelling retention, the present study found that at the pre-intermediate level, flashcards and

wordlists yield similar results. At the beginner level, flashcards are more beneficial than wordlists but the difference is minimal. Surprisingly, at the elementary level, wordlists are far more effective than flashcards. The results indicated that the wordlist groups at the secondary schools gained significantly higher scores than the flashcard groups. The reason for this is not clear but it may have something to do with the learners' learning styles and learning preferences.

One interesting finding that emerged from this study was that the participants tended to perform better on meaning retention than spelling retention. The results showed that for the flashcard groups at primary school and secondary school, the mean scores for meaning were significantly higher than the mean scores for spelling, while for the flashcard groups at high school, the mean scores for meaning were similar to the mean scores for spelling. In regard to the wordlist groups, the participants at both secondary school and high school performed better on meaning than spelling; the participants at primary school performed just slightly worse on meaning, but the difference was marginal. It can therefore be assumed that acquiring the written form is probably more challenging to Vietnamese EFL learners.

7. Conclusion

This study has identified the efficacy of flashcards and wordlists as techniques for vocabulary instruction. The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that flashcards do not have advantage over wordlists for high school learners. Those who were taught with flashcards and those who were taught with wordlists did equally well on meaning and spelling retention. This finding suggests that English language teachers can freely choose between flashcards and wordlists for high school learners inasmuch as they yield similar results.

This research has also shown that for secondary school learners, wordlists bring greater benefits when it comes to spelling retention. Given that wordlists are cheaper and easier to make, and that flashcards produce similar effects on meaning retention, it is advisable that language teachers working with this age group use wordlists for vocabulary instruction.

Another major finding to emerge from this research was that for primary school learners, flashcards work more effectively than wordlists in terms of facilitating their ability to memorize both word meaning and spelling. One implication of this result is that English language teachers who are teaching young learners should consider using flashcards when possible since it would lead to better vocabulary learning. This finding also indicates the need to explore why young learners do not benefit from wordlists as much as older learners do. Further studies could focus on the role of motivation and vocabulary acquisition, as it could be hypothesized that wordlists, compared with flashcards, are less attractive to young learners.

Finally, since the results of this study indicated that learners in all three age groups tended to retain spelling less effectively than meaning, English language teachers may want to design more activities that focus their learners on the written form of the word so that they can have a thorough grasp of the vocabulary they learn.

To conclude, notwithstanding its limitations, this research confirms previous findings and extends our knowledge of the efficacy of flashcards and wordlists in vocabulary teaching. The findings indicate that flashcards are a better choice for primary school EFL learners, but wordlists are more beneficial for older learners.

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East Asian Perspectives on Silence in English Language Education, by Jim King and Seiko Harumi (eds.), Multilingual Matters: Bristol, UK, 2020. Pp. 892.

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This edited book is part of Psychology of Language Learning and Teaching series. Interestingly, this volume highlights 'silence' in English language education from the perspectives of East Asian teachers and students. In the first introductory chapter, Jim King and Seiko Harumi, state that this book is a collection of research-based studies on silence in L2 settings from interdisciplinary perspectives and with different theoretical approaches.

This is an intriguing theme because in our age of the prevalent communicative approach in second language learning area, silence, particularly of East Asian learners has been viewed as problematic. Some studies have attributed silence and reticence to the 'characteristics' of East Asian students influenced by culture (Ferris & Tagg, 1996). There have been also counter-arguments against this stereotyping (Cheng, 2000; Littlewood & Liu, 1996). However, none of the studies have discussed 'silence' in light of a psychological perspective and this book addresses the gap.

In chapter 1, Jim King and Seiko Harumi present empirical research to stress the book provides a foreground to contest the assumption that silence is a 'flaw' and 'culturally embedded'. They also give an overview of the contexts and methodological approaches used by researchers in this book.

In chapter 2, Dat Bao investigates classroom tasks which cause students to fall into silent mode or even to be in 'in-between mode'. He also demonstrates that during tense sessions, students will be unlikely to respond. Bao suggests seeing silence as part of a learning process that is dependent on the task given to the students. It is the teachers' responsibility to be aware of their attitude towards talk or the silence. Teachers need to take chances to design tasks that can manipulate this dynamic according to the teachers' perception of students' preferences.

Seiko Harumi, in chapter 3, demonstrates her research findings related to how teachers responded to the silence of their students in the classroom. The teachers in her research who taught in a Japanese classroom context expected silence from their students as they were aware of culture-related issues. They did not see it negatively; instead they applied several techniques in confronting students' silences.

Chapter 4 is devoted to complete description of a longitudinal study conducted by Jim King, Tomoko Yashima, Simon Humphries, Scott Aubrey, and Maiko Ikeda on students' anxiety coping strategies. The chapter also covers the development of social interaction among students, and support from teachers to participate in communication in the target language. Their study reveals that the participants' silence was due to their concern in using English and their social hesitation. However, after interventions from the teachers through deliberate tasks, negotiated topic choices, and examination of teachers' roles, students' oral participation improved.

Next, chapter 5 focuses on a slightly different route to examine silence by implementing cognitive behavioural theory (CBT). Maher focused on one student who had been previously observed for having the tendency to silence in the classroom. He delves into her consciousness of how her thoughts contributed to her behaviour by an active process of inviting students to be aware of their thoughts. Maher reports that this strategy could actually develop the student's confidence to speak up.

Michael Karas and Farahnaz Faez, who wrote Chapter 6, investigated Chinese pre-service teachers in Canada regarding the function of silence in the classroom, and the teachers' responses to the seeming preference for silence. The study showed that sociocultural beliefs contributed to the silence mode utilized by the participants, and that participants held strong belief about its benefit. Like other contributors in this book, Karas and Faez reveal that teachers play an important role in overcoming the attitudes of their East Asian background students.

Meanwhile, Simon Humphries, Nobuhiko Akamatsu, Takako Tanaka and Anne Burns in Chapter 7, in contrast to most of the researchers in this book, explored Japanese high school students' resistance that they demonstrated as silence behaviour. The intention of the research was the same: to find out target language activities that support or obstruct students to speak English in class. It was revealed that cognitive tasks triggered silence, and that confidence was the key to encourage learners to talk. The eighth chapter by Jian-E Peng reports his study on examining the concept of willingness to communicate and silence in L2 classroom were comprehended.

The final chapter is by Amy. B. M Tsui and Rintaro Imafuku. They argue that the research presented in this book evidences the complexity of L2 learner and teacher silence and also call for a future longitudinal study. Further, Tsui and Imafuku maintain that silence as a complex notion should be understood as students' engagement in L2 learning. They invite the teachers to adapt their responds and teaching styles to the dynamic attitudes of their students.

This volume adds additional insight to the discussion of silence and willingness to talk especially in L2 classroom by examining the issues from psychological point of view. L2 learners especially from East Asian background seems to be less burdened now from long-time convention that their silence was due to their cultural beliefs and social background. Teachers or educators now are encouraged not to stereotype their students

but to facilitate how the dynamics between silence and talk become resource instead of obstacle in L2 classroom.

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Rejecting the marginalized status of minority languages: Educational projects pushing back against language endangerment by Ari Sherris and Susan D. Penfield (eds.), *Multilingual Matters*: Bristol, UK, 2019. Pp. 168.

Reviewed by **Marilyn Lewis**, Honorary Research Fellow, The University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Here is a ten-chapter book for anyone interested in maintaining the world's minority languages either through teaching or in some other way. Not surprisingly, given this subject, contributors are from many countries and present information about a range of languages, sometimes, but not often, their own. Here is a summary of the authors' starting points, beginning with the country where each of them is currently based and then (in brackets) their languages of interest: Argentina (various indigenous languages), Australia (the languages of Tibet, China and the Himalayas), Finland (Saami), Great Britain (Sakizaya from Taiwan and Manx from the Isle of Man), Hawaii (Hawaiian, and Kamsa from Colombia), New Zealand (Maori), Spain (Catalan), and three from the USA (native American languages, minority languages in general, and a minority language in Ghana). Some readers will have a particular interest in one of these languages, but many will be interested in each article's content since many experiences are paralleled in other parts of the world. Additionally, the range of research methods could be a guide to academics and teachers wanting to explore the status of languages in other parts of the world. To help further in that research process, each chapter has its own list of references. Given the positive actions of the writers, perhaps the next edition could move to a more optimistic opening verb for the title. How about 'Transforming' instead of 'Rejecting'?

In their introduction, Sherris and Penfield make the case for the book's starting point, namely the importance of rejecting the marginalized status of so many "indigenous, tribal and minoritized languages, cultures, bodies and lands" (p. 1). Along with the sadly familiar terms like political exploitation, racism and globalization I learned a new word here: "languacultures". (Incidentally, the fact that my computer wants to reject that term as I type it shows that it has yet to hit the mainstream.)

Attitudes to many minority languages, particularly in the countries where they are spoken, are not always flattering. Teare reports comments made about the Celtic language of the Isle of Man, at the time when it gained official protection in 1985. "Manx? That was never a real language." According to Sherris, the minority languages of Ghana are not even given names in the country's English-language constitution despite the requirement that to be a citizen of that country one must speak and understand one of those languages.

The story behind some of the writers' focus on a particular language makes interesting reading. Teare has already been mentioned in connection with Manx, the language of the island where he was born and brought up. As a child in the 1970s he was never formally taught the language of his ancestors although one teacher did give the children basic tutoring in the lunchtime. He also heard it spoken by his great-grandfather to his sheepdog! McNaught, on the other hand, from the University of London, is an outsider when it comes to the 16 minority languages of Taiwan, which he hopes to help promote as a teacher. In Hawaii, Kahakalau writes as an insider who has spent a quarter of a century in educational projects as well as her role as an activist and composer.

In some countries the status of minority languages has improved for the better over the years. Ka'ai traces attitudes towards the indigenous language of New Zealand, including the establishing of Maori language pre-schools in the early 1980s followed by Maori medium primary schools. It is a similar story in Finland where nine Saami languages are still in use. (They are also spoken in parts of Sweden, Norway and the

Murmansk region of the Russian Federation although this article concentrates on Finland). Pasanen makes the point that political recognition often goes hand in hand with language revitalization. This has happened gradually since the 1960s, but in the 1990s it was legislative changes that worked in favour of those languages. Taiwan's story is far more complicated as illustrated by McNaught's summary of the country's centuries of occupations.

Readers hoping to do their own research into minority languages will be interested to see the varied methods used by each of the researchers. To investigate the use of the Saami language in Finland, Pasanen combined quantitative data (85 responses to a survey) with the qualitative data which form the basis of this chapter, namely results from interviews with teachers of the language. A complication was that the language has three sub-groups but the chapter's extensive graphics, combined with the commentary, make her results easy to follow. In a co-authored chapter from Argentina, Argenter and Unamuno report an interesting investigation into the involvement of schools in language revitalization. The pairs of before and after photographs from stages in producing a children's storybook show how important it was to involve indigenous language speakers in producing the illustrations.

In the final chapter McCarty, from the University of California, writes from her starting point is as Principal Investigator in a U.S. wide study of immersion schooling for indigenous languages. She draws on contributions from all the chapters to wrap up the book's topic.

An interesting reflection after reading the book could be to ask oneself the question, "How many of these languages had I heard of before?". The answer could reinforce the need for the book. Widespread as they are, the contents leave plenty of minority languages waiting for a second edition.



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