THAITE SOL
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS 2020

Harmony in Diversity:
ELT in Transcultural Society

30th January – 1st February 2020
The Ambassador Hotel, Bangkok
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Join us at

41st Thailand TESOL International Conference 2021

"ELT in the Digital Era and Beyond: Innovation, Engagement, and Sustainability"

29th January – 30th January, 2021
Khon Kaen, Thailand

www.thailandtesol.org
Welcome to the e-Proceedings of the 40th International Conference organized by Thailand TESOL Association. To ensure that a conference is a successful and effective one requires that papers accepted for its proceedings pass a rigorous review process. For our conference in 2020, a large number of manuscripts were submitted to the conference from many international countries. The papers that have been selected for publication cover a wide range of topics related to the conference theme of “Harmony in Diversity: ELT in Transcultural Society.”

On behalf of the Organizing Committee, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the authors whose contributions are included in this year’s Proceedings. The significance of the research presented in the 40th conference represents a step further in the continuous development of English Language Teaching in the global, multicultural contexts. I would like to thank all our speakers who synthesized the materials and their wide and rich experiences to deliver insightful talks. I would also like to thank all the publishers for their great efforts in delivering interactive and useful workshops that address the learning needs of all levels.

I want to convey my message of special thankfulness to Associate Professor Dr. Singhanat Nomnian, the Editor, and Mr. Kriengkrai Sakulprasertsri, the Associate Editor, for completing this very time-consuming and laborious task. We are very grateful to the editorial team for their indefatigable energy in reviewing the manuscripts and to other volunteer reviewers for their valuable help.

Finally, I hope that all the 2020 Conference Proceedings papers will provide timeless insight into how we can enhance growth and advancement in ELT in this coming new decade.

Associate Professor Dr. Supong Tangkiengsirisin
Notes from the Editor

On behalf of Thailand TESOL Association, I am honored and proud to present readers the achievement of ThaiTESOL Proceedings 2020 despite this challenging time of Covid-19 pandemic that has its unprecedented effects globally. We not only have all shared this difficult situation, but we have also united to fight against this disease. Yet, our dedicated authors whose papers had been presented at the 40th ThaiTESOL - PAC International Conference “Harmony in Diversity: ELT in Transcultural Society” in January could make it through a serious peer-review and revision, which led to the successful completion of these academic and publication endeavors.

There are 17 accepted papers from China, Japan, Mexico, Vietnam, and Thailand. They have reflected a wide array of interesting topics and education levels that can be beneficial and applicable to your professional contexts. Here they are as follows:

First of all, Incorporating Technology-Mediated Writing into University General English Curriculum by Saber Alavi, who explored the implementation of technology to enhance the teaching of writing and to promote learners’ active engagement and out-of-classroom communication and collaboration.

Secondly, Jason Tacker’s paper on Cheating with Smartphones in Japanese EFL Classes examined the cultural origins of smartphone cheating in Japanese EFL classrooms and offered new insights into why the students chose to cheat and how teachers adapted their pedagogy to acknowledge and incorporate such norms.

Next, the paper on The Impact of Teacher Trainees Learning and Practicing English Teaching by Luz Irene Licea Claverie supported teacher trainees to engage in their professional development and commitment to students and society’s education.

Fourth, Steven Charles’s paper on Building Skills, Building Writers: Teacher, Peer and Self-Assessment in the EFL Writing Classroom valued peer and self-assessment in writing that required detailed and comprehensive instruction to increase student confidence and skill.

The fifth paper on Scaffolding Strategies Used in Teaching Listening Comprehension to Young Learners by Radi Albalawneh and Saowaluck Tepsuriwong suggested the use of scaffolding strategies to teach young learners’ listening comprehension.

Sixth, Gary Muddeman’s paper entitled Exploring the Affordances of WeChat for Reflective Purposes on a CLIL Module Whilst Assessing Chinese University Students’ Participation and Interaction revealed the students’ positive perceptions towards the use of WeChat in writing messages for exchanging information between students and teacher.

Seventh, Outcomes of an English Day Camp: An Interaction between Primary-four Students and Fourth-Year Students by Intira Charuchinda, Pornsin Supawan, and Saranyoo In-U-Ris found an improvement of the students’ knowledge and their high satisfaction and perceived benefits with the camp.

The eight paper of Nuttapong Sittiviboon and Kitcha Thepsiri on Retaining Vocabulary through Poetry: A Haiku a Day Makes Memory Stay demonstrated how writing haikus could strengthen vocabulary retention, and whether vocabulary would be memorized if its meaning was illustrated.

Ninth, Lyndon Small wrote Features of Japanese Discourse Style that Impede Communication in English to reveal some discourse features causing intercultural communication difficulties such as silence, minimal responses, pronunciation and spelling, limited lexical choice and range, loanwords, and over-reliance on technology.
The tenth paper entitled *Active Learning in the Communicative English Classroom Using Data-Driven Learning in Thailand* by Pichinart Kumpawan and Chikako Nishigaki found that students generally had neither strong positive or negative views on using DDL; yet, they understood, proceduced, and retained target language forms.

Eleventh, Chalermwut Khrongsakun and Pamararat Wiriyakarun’s paper on *Learning English Vocabulary through Non-educational Online Games* showed that the students used vocabulary learning strategies while playing non-educational online games although some factors might affect their vocabulary learning such as the characteristics and preferences of the players and their partners, types of games, and features of games.

Next, Mian Hu and David Collett’s action research regarding *Students’ Perceived Engagement in Peer Review in a Transnational University Context* indicated that students lacked confidence and required greater autonomy to fully participate in peer review.

In the thirteenth paper, *Motivating Freshmen in Learning Vocabulary with Innovative Interactive Whiteboard Activities* by Le Huynh Ha Van and Nguyen Xuan Hiep examined the effectiveness of IWBs on students’ motivations to learn vocabulary.

Fourteenth, Patimoh Yuso, Pitchayanin Chorsom, and Nantawadee Hayeejood’s study on *Student–Teachers’ Perceptions Towards Cultures in English Language Education* found that they held positive perceptions towards learning cultures and the cultural differences would allow them to know appropriate social manners of different cultural contexts.

The fifteenth paper on *Increasing Awareness of Marginalized Communities with Unstructured Writing Tasks and TEDx Talks* by Mario A. Perez and Kym Jolley conducted an exploratory research project assessing whether the use of TEDx Talks and fluency writing exercises could increase STEM students’ awareness of diversity, LGBTQ community, women, and Japan’s multiracial population.

Next, Patdanai Puvacharonkul and Jeffrey Dawala Wilang’s preliminary study on *Exploring the Mindsets of Thai Graduate Students in English Language Learning* suggested students’ growth mindset potentially benefited and transformed their academic achievements.

Last but not least, *The Promotion of Positive Classroom Management in ELL Classrooms* by Hiroshi Nakagawa, David Wright, and Hisae Nakagawa addressed interpersonal relations and classroom interactions as key factors influencing students’ behavior and learning outcomes.

These seventeen papers have shared and provided interesting insights into the advancement of ELT and TESOL professional development at local and global communities. I would like to thank the Associate Editor Kriengkrai Sakulprasertsri and reviewers for their time and contribution to make this Proceedings a success!

Thank you once again to all authors and conference participants who contributed to Thailand TESOL Association. On behalf of the committee members, I hope you all stay safe, strong, and healthy. Look forward to seeing you all again at the 41st “ELT in the Digital Era and Beyond: Innovation, Engagement, and Sustainability” from 29th January – 30th January, 2021 in Khon Kaen province! Till we meet again.

*Associate Professor Dr. Singhanat Nomnian*
Incorporating Technology-Mediated Writing into University General English Curriculum

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Abstract

Integrating available technology into English classroom enhances the learning opportunities and provides a better understanding of technological capabilities and gives more realistic expectations for its appropriate usage. The current study has incorporated online-writing episodes parallel to the classroom writing into the media-oriented general English course in Payap University. The purpose of the study was to explore the implementation of technology to enhance the curriculum and the teaching of writing in a General English course. Being at pre-intermediate level of their English proficiency, the participants were expected to write about the same topics appeared in their course materials. Attending to classroom writing, they worked in small groups to both negotiate and provide mutual feedbacks for their peers’ writings. They were also asked to write and independently online at their convenience. Then their online writing samples were compared against their classroom ones. The accuracy and complexity of their writing were analyzed through descriptive statistics done by SPSS software. Discussing the results, although the achievements were fairly significant in complexity term, but participants reported a by-far less stressful writing experience with a greater focus in online writing episodes. As they felt less pressure compared to the classroom writing, they could easily comment and think about the comments they received which led to a greater accuracy. The empirical findings of a few recent studies have revealed the effectiveness of online writing in facilitating EFL learners’ active participation and engagement and out of classroom communication, collaboration and work.

Keywords: General English, EFL, Writing, Curriculum, Feedback
1. Introduction

English language has turned into a necessary course in academic establishments all over the world as well as Thailand. For an English course to be effective, basic and rudiment criteria of any standard language courses must be followed. A debate over what would be an ideal method/approach of teaching writing skill will often yield quite some controversial thoughts. An assortment of methodologies or instructional approaches are undertaken by both syllabus designers and writing teachers.

A recent study found that composing for delivery, that is authentic communication with the readers not just a product oriented classroom exercise, or engaging in a writing process for publication, resulted in audiences’ readability. This takes into consideration an authentic view of the audience and purposes, and links the entire writing procedure to the last step so as to prepare students for authentic writing which is beyond the classroom (Kessler, 2005; Chan, Bax, & Weir, 2018). Moreover, innovative technology is expanding at a booming rate and will just keep on developing. Accessing the data is by far faster and easier now than at any other time, and the ability to interact with different people from around the world through different electronic gadgets is possible. Integrating this available technology into learning opportunities and providing an understanding of technology capabilities and expectations for appropriate use become a challenge for educators.

In arranging proficient development that prompts students’ achievement in English language classes, executives and syllabus designers as well as teachers ought to think about how the incorporation of technology in the class impacts the teaching of writing. It has been emphasized that technology can be a tool to save time for students and teachers, thus expanding time spent on writing. It reported in Good and Brophy’s (2008) study that the quality of writing is greatly enhanced by the utilization of innovative technology in writing classrooms (Lee, 2017; Mannion, Siegel, Li, Pham, & Alshaikhi, 2019).

The present research integrated the technology and peer feedback to English writing classes to explore the students’ experience and evaluate the course syllabus as the writing skill is underemphasized in the syllabus. The present study looks at how to use oral skills to enhance writing in a technology-mediated writing course. The results of this study can inform stakeholders and reassess course syllabus and materials. As stated earlier, follow-up comments (feedbacks) from teacher or students will also create opportunities for the individual students in the classroom to brainstorm their ideas on one another writings which will enhance both the quality of the writings and will teach the students some new sets of skills or even knowledge at some level. Feedbacks, either oral or written, have been an inseparable part of both EFL/ESL language classrooms. Since the activity encourages the negotiation and construction of meaning which helps to expand students perception toward different aspects of writing, it has gained a considerable amount of attention in both EFL and SLA writing classroom (Hyland, & Hyland, 2019; Liou, 2009). With the rise of technology-driven language courses and the inclusion of
technology and peer (friends/classmate) feedback into the writing courses, it has developed into a creative method for utilizing educational tools both for teaching and learning.

Peer feedback, in which individual students comment on their friends/classmates writing sample both written and orally through an active engagement over different drafts, has become a common feature of process-oriented writing classrooms (Stanley, 2011). Here are a number of studies in the literature that have supported the benefits of peer feedback stating that receiving feedbacks from both teachers and peers will develop their writing skill and build their confidence level as well (Coniam & Lee, 2008; Lin & Yang, 2011; Zhu & Carless, 2018; Adachi, Tai, & Dawson, 2018).

2. Research Question

The current study is part of a bigger ongoing research project and it only seeks to answer the following general question with two sub-questions;

2.1. Are online writing sessions more effective in supporting students’ writing than classroom writing?
2.2. What are students’ attitudes toward online and classroom writing?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 29 sophomore Thai EFL students, 19 to 22 years of age, and at nearly the same level of language proficiency (pre-intermediate) confirmed by the university placement test for their homogeneity. The participants of the study enrolled in General English Course 136 (GE 136). The course is learning English through media, which lacks writing skills and as the name implies the greater part of the course is dedicated to the oral skills.

3.2 Instruments

The students’ course material which is mostly based on oral skills will form the core writing topics. Here at the early stages students are required to provide a written version for the same oral task. This would familiarize the students with the basics of writing and yet practicing a mutual and interactive feedbacks on their online writing samples. The first data collection tasks are adapted from Effective Academic Writing 1 book as a standard sample and tasks of writing. Book 1 of Effective Academic Writing, The paragraph, introduces the students at the high beginning to low-intermediate level to the academic paragraph. Each of the units addresses a particular rhetorical mode and provides user-friendly guidance to mastering the form. The second task is oral skills, based on the course material. This would familiarize the students with the basics of writing and yet practicing a mutual and interactive feedbacks on their writing samples. To evaluate the students’ perspectives toward the online writing session, a Likert-scale questionnaire was used to obtain data.
3.3 Data Collection

The participants will undertake some writing activities followed by some prior instructions. After being provided with some guideline and instructions for the writing process in the class, the students start creating a writing sample and once done with their task. They will exchange their written work with their friends’ in the group and this is where the individual participants provide feedbacks on each other’s writings. In an online session, students received a similar type of peer/teacher feedback as to that of a classroom writing.

To measure the written accuracy, Error-free T-units is applied in this study. By T-unit, all the main clauses with subordinate clauses embedded in them were counted as T-units. Error-free T-units: only those T-units that contained no grammatical, syntactic, lexical, or spelling errors were counted as error-free T-units. To measure accuracy, the number of error free T-units is divided by the total number of t-units (Rahimpour, 2008). Among the different complexity items, lexical density is used in this study. To measure the complexity, the number of lexical, or ‘open class’, words in a text (i.e. full verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs ending in –ly) is divided by total words multiplied by 100 (Rahimpour, 2008).

3.4 Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data from the participants, SPSS software was utilized to do the data analyses associated with research questions. The writing samples, both online and classroom, were be tested mainly for their accuracy and sentence complexity to find out which one of these writing sessions tend to be more effective. To answer the second research question, a small part of a larger questionnaire is analyze descriptively to reveal the students’ perception toward the online writing session.

1. Results and Discussion

Reporting the result is categorized based on the research questions which are also followed by discussions.

4.1 RQ 1: Which one of these writing sessions tend to be more effective?

Figure 1 indicates the mean differences in the rate of accuracy between the online writing samples and classroom writing samples. It can be inferred from the participants’ performance that the time pressure and the supervision of the teacher at some points might have a counter-productive effect. As long as the teacher is explaining the process and it is at the drafting phase, the students benefit the presence of a knowledgeable source. However, when it comes to an individual and independent writing to create the final draft, students benefit the most in their comfort zone at their convenient time without feeling the pressure of their peer, submitting first or last, etc. Besides, it can encourage the autonomous writing by not interfering and on the other hand can focus on accuracy by encouraging the students attend to their own writing. As figure 1 shows, the amount of accuracy is greater when the participants wrote online.
According to the findings of the study, due to their readily available online nature and user-friendly characteristics of technology, these online pages can encourage students’ self-expression in English, inducing a revolutionary engagement in writing in a stress-free time manner. These findings are in line with a growing body of research to name only a few by Glogoff (2007), and Deng & Yuen (2011). It can be concluded that with online sessions, students can have a personal space to read and write, share their ideas in a social network.

The second point in the first research question is concerned with the rate of sentence complexity, content complexity, of language in Thai ELF learners’ online and classroom written samples. Figure 2 indicates the mean differences in the rate of the complexity of online and classroom written sessions. Although the complexity of the performances of the online episode is higher than the classroom writings, this gain in complexity is not high enough that could be statistically justified. The results of the statistical procedures (Figure 2) reveal that both online and guided classroom writing episodes have positive effects on the overall complexity in the participants’ language performance. It is shown in Figure 2 that there are statistically significant differences between online and classroom episodes in terms of the number of content words used by the students. Although no statistical significant differences were found, online writing contained more formal content words than classroom writing products.
4.2 RQ 2: From the students’ perspective, which writing session is preferred; online or classroom?

Discovered through the questionnaire data analysis, the majority of students had positive perception towards the online writing and commenting episodes. Findings also showed that the positive feedbacks provided for the students through the online part may had a significant role in helping the students with their writing problems particularly, their accuracy and complexity. These feedbacks especially during the online writing process, motivated the participants of the study to work on their writing skills, changed their negative attitudes towards writing into positive ones, and by urging them to mingle and share learning cooperatively. The online writing episode has improved their general linguistic knowledge. The results of this study showed that evaluation of most writing classes are more or less is based on the final stage of writing production whereas here in this study, there has been a transition from the product to the actual process through multiple drafting and applying the feedbacks from the teacher and the peers or even the automated feedbacks, which is not the focus of the current study.

This study, together with Smith, Pacheco, & de Almeida’s (2017) study, revealed that in informal online writing, the students more willingly express their very own voice and thoughts in their own styles of writing successfully. It has also been proposed by Elola and Oskoz (2017) that teachers can use the “bridging activity” to enable students to take part in new genres of writing, which is possible by observing and collecting the digital texts and practicing their favorite ones to lead themselves toward a creative writing rather than just following the other’s writing samples.

It is worth mentioning, based on the results of the self-report, students generally tend to pay closer attention to the formal language choices and other formal aspects of writing. They tend to show more interest in producing complete sentences with proper punctuation, all of which is due to lack of pressure and writing on their own at their convenient time. Therefore, these variables according to the statistical analysis are significant. Figure 2 below sums up the percentages of responses;
Conclusion

Technology has been employed increasingly in the writing classrooms since it is considered a viable way to promote meaning construction and different types of interaction (van Lier, 1996; Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Watanabe, 2008; Peterson, 2009). That is, the content could be saved for further analysis which provides a great source of review among the students. Additionally, monitoring the writing process by the teacher has become an easy task compared to its traditional version of giving feedbacks. To understand more about the nature of interactive writing and attending the online writing episodes, more studies need to be done. Another aspect to focus on is the language use aspect. According to the results, the language use, accuracy and complexity in the online version of the writing were more flexible and developed compared to the classroom writing. Without the time frame, individuals tend to produce writing with higher textual quality and even comment of their friends’ writing in more organized fashion by obtaining more formal style. As a limitation of the study, similar to other word-processing software, online pages do have spelling checker which improved the correct spelling in the participants’ overall writing quality. The texts published by students contained the smallest number of spelling errors compared to their classroom writing samples and all were of acceptable quality, as some students corrected others’ mistakes. This fact provides further support for the students’ self-reports concerning writing quality. Future researchers can control this factor by either excluding it or setting it as another variable to their study.


Cheating with Smartphones in Japanese EFL Classes

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Abstract

The use of smartphones for cheating in classrooms has been widely documented. In Japan, where smartphones are omnipresent in schools and students tend to be technologically sophisticated, the issue is particularly pervasive. This paper examines the cultural origins of smartphone cheating in Japanese EFL classrooms. Using novel survey data from two Japanese universities, and applying Hofstede’s (1980) anthropological theory of cultural dimensions, this study contributes to the literature on cheating as a unique cultural practice. It argues that calling such activities “cheating” may not be an accurate way of classifying a behavior that is often not considered wrong by students of Asian cultural backgrounds. Rather, the use of technology in the Japanese EFL classroom could be considered an extension of deeply held cultural traits around collectivism, power, risk aversion, and, especially, uncertainty avoidance. Understanding these cultural norms provides new insights into why Japanese students choose to cheat — and how teachers can adapt their pedagogy to acknowledge and incorporate such norms.

Keywords: cheating, classrooms, Japanese, EFL, culture

Introduction

For all its versatility and benefits, the smartphone has also become a controversial tool for manipulating the classroom experience. Whether excessive smartphone use is considered a positive or negative factor depends upon whom one asks — the teachers or the students. Examples abound of students from around the world who have been caught cheating in class by using a smartphone. In the United States, for example, the media has reported an increasing number of cases of students using their smartphones to cheat. In a landmark case from 2008, 12 students at the University of Maryland were caught cheating during an accounting exam by finding answers others had posted to a website, which they subsequently accessed through their smartphones (Moran, 2008). More recent examples demonstrate the growing sophistication of student cheaters: In 2019, students at a major U.S. university were caught using tiny earbuds to relay answers to one another, also via their smartphones (Chandler, 2019). These devices are considered the ultimate “CheatTech” gadget, creating innovative avenues for students to dupe their teachers — and, ultimately, shortcut their academic experience.
In Japan as well, a growing number of students have been caught cheating in classes, tests, and university entrance exams in order to get the results they desire without putting in the requisite work. Journalist Martin Fackler documented some of these transgressions in a 2011 *New York Times* piece entitled, “Internet Cheating Scandal Shakes Japan Universities.” In his investigation, Fackler (2011) discovered that cheating with smartphones had become an extremely serious situation for Japanese universities, which place outsize emphasis on entrance exams for admissions. His article exposed how popular websites would solicit help for answers to math and English questions, which were actually taken from entrance exams to prestigious Japanese universities. The answers were being posted — and being answered by other users — while the exam was still underway. The scandal culminated in a manhunt and eventually prompted the Japanese Ministry of Education to ban smartphones and other communication devices during exams (Fackler, 2011).

Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Japan have observed many more examples in their own classrooms. Students frequently hide their smartphones under their desks or between their legs while teachers pass by, only to take them out again when the teacher can’t see them; they then use apps such as Google Translate do their work for them. In other reported instances at Akita University, Japanese students were caught taking pictures of friends’ graded book reports with their smartphones. They would then reproduce or plagiarize those book reports as if they had done the assignment themselves. Had teachers never kept copies of their students’ reports, and been vigilant enough to cross-reference assignments, they might never have caught on.

Arguably the most popular way to cheat by smartphone in Japan, however, is through “kopi-pe” — the Japanese term for “copy and paste.” Study itself may be obsolescent in the Internet age when this particular technique is so pervasive — and so easy. The trick works like this: Suppose a student has a term paper due yesterday. The professor is getting impatient, and the student has not even started. Rather than drop the course or stay up all night poring over source material, students simply Google the subject of their report and find websites selling the efforts of past students. Naturally, students are clever enough to change the wording here and there, but essentially, someone else completes the assignment. According to an article from *Shukan Gendai* magazine, an estimated 50 percent of Japanese college students look to kopi-pe before even attempting to tackle an assignment on their own (Jordan, 2010).

While these experiences in Japanese classrooms could certainly be considered cheating — after all, the smartphone is not taking the class, the student is — should they be? This paper argues that calling such activities “cheating” is not an accurate way of classifying a behavior that may or not be considered wrong by students of Asian cultural backgrounds. Rather, the use of technology in the Japanese EFL classroom to fast-track assignments could be considered an extension of deeply held cultural traits — a reflection of specific cultural norms around collectivism, power, risk aversion, and uncertainty avoidance, among others. Using an online survey that incorporates Hofstede’s “cultural dimensions”
theory (Hofstede, 1991), this study examines Japanese students’ own beliefs about the use of smartphones to “cheat” in EFL classes, evaluating the cultural underpinnings of why the prevalence of smartphone “cheating” appears to be increasing in spite of local and national efforts to curb it.

**Cultural Differences in the EFL Classroom**

Teachers of EFL in Japan often come from native English-speaking backgrounds or Western cultures that have a much different concept of cheating in classrooms than do the students who take their courses. The teacher is of course the authority figure in a classroom, and as such, makes the final decision on how to control, enforce, and punish what he or she considers to be cheating. However, in doing so, teachers often fail to account for the complexities of the behaviors and actions their students consider cheating, including the vastly different cultural perceptions their students may hold vis-à-vis their own.

One study by Thompson and Williams (2001) — aptly titled, “But I Changed Three Words! Plagiarism in the ESL Classroom” — expounded on some of these cultural differences. In exploring the problem of Asian EFL students plagiarizing papers and turning them in as their own, the authors identified a cultural disconnect between the ways the students perceived their behaviors and how their teachers saw them. Specifically, they found that for many EFL students, learning *not to cheat* is more than a difficult task; it is a cultural and pedagogical hurdle. In some Asian countries, students are taught to memorize and copy well-respected authors, leaders, and academics to show intelligence and good judgment in their writing. In such cases, emulation is more than mere flattery; it is the first step in the learning process. The authors found this to be particularly true of Chinese students, who frequently defended this approach in class. Similarly, Korean students stated that their country adopted similar “customs” around learning, arguing that their educational system emphasizes the importance of grades more than the way in which one achieves those grades (Thompson & Williams, 2001).

To quote anyone directly — be it a journalist, scholar, or public figure — without appropriate attribution or citation would almost assuredly be considered plagiarism within the rigid standards of Western academia. Yet, Thompson and Williams (2001) found that this concept came as a surprise to many Asian students taking the class. The conclusion of their article reaffirmed that the problems of perception are often cultural in nature: they found that in teaching the concept of plagiarism to EFL students, typical textbook-type exercises — including homework, journals, and classroom discussions around the rules of citation — simply did not work. For many students, the concept was entirely foreign (or, in their case, “American”), a “culturally different way of thinking and performing” (2001, p.130).

In the aforementioned example, the EFL students’ pre-existing beliefs about classroom culture did not align with their Western teachers’, and students simply superimposed their cultural behaviors on the class without even realizing they were doing it — let alone knowing it would be construed as cheating. The same disconnect often permeates Japanese EFL classes. When an EFL Teacher from a native English-speaking culture enters a classroom in Japan, he or she must first acknowledge deeply
entrenched Japanese cultural behaviors. In this way, the concept of cheating becomes a cultural artifact — one Western teachers must learn to appreciate and, to some extent, accept.

If culture is a key determinant for cheating and use of smartphones, there are two questions this study sought to answer:

1. If it is culture that justifies cheating with smartphones in Japanese EFL classes, then what aspect(s) of culture are a driving force?
2. Why are students continuing to use smartphones to cheat in Japanese EFL classes?

A Theory of National Culture

Throughout the years, anthropologists have promulgated numerous definitions of “culture,” long debating how the term can be captured, expressed, and applied. At its most basic level, culture refers to patterns of behavior common to a particular population of people. For the express intent of trying to understand on a cultural level why students use smartphones for classroom cheating, this study uses a theoretical framework espoused by Dutch psychologist and anthropologist Geert Hofstede. Hofstede’s (1980) definition of culture is effective for its easy-to-follow taxonomies and versatility of application; he posited that, “Culture represents a set of likely reactions of citizens with a common mental programming. . . . Reactions need not be found within the same persons, but only statistically more often in the same society” (1991, p.112). His widely regarded “cultural dimensions theory” thus sought to define not only how certain groups share culture but also how individuals express those shared patterns with varying degrees.

In Hofstede’s (1991) framework, a person of a specific culture may not express a cultural dimension (defined below) as strongly as others. His paradigm thus uses a continuum as its unit of measurement across five dimensions:

1. **Individualism vs Collectivism** - “I” vs. “we”: Cultures that are individualistic put their own and their immediate families’ interests first while collectivist cultures put the interests of the larger group or society first.

2. **Power distance** – The extent to which members of a group, institution, or organization expect that power is distributed unequally in the system. The lower end sees more distribution of power while the higher is stratified and hierarchical.

3. **Uncertainty avoidance** – A society’s tolerance for ambiguity. The higher the number, the more structured and less tolerant of unknown risks a society has. Thus, everything from behavior to laws rely on an absolute truth that needs to be followed. The lower the number, the more tolerant of risk and accepting of differences in ideas or thought.
4. **Masculinity vs femininity** – Masculinity in a society is the preference for competition, heroism, assertiveness, and material reward. Femininity, as the opposite, is the preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for people, and quality of life.

5. **Long-term vs short-term orientation** – This dimension was added after the original four later on to account for the lack of applicability to East Asian cultures. Long-term orientation is for fostering virtues oriented toward future goals — in particular, perseverance and thrift. At the other end of the spectrum, short-term orientation is for fostering the past and present, protecting your own reputation, and beliefs in absolutes about good and evil.

**Materials and Methods**

Adopting Hofstede’s belief that people express national cultural dimensions to varying degrees, an online questionnaire through Survey Monkey was created for 198 students at two Japanese universities: Akita University and the Kanazawa Institute of Technology. The survey was created with modified Likert Scale (6-point) questions adapted from the book *Leadership: Theory and Practice* (Northhouse, 2015). Questions in the survey concentrated on those dimensions that seemed most relevant to education and smartphone use: namely, individualism/collectivism, masculine/feminine, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term/short-term orientation. The four questions and answers below were the clearest indicators of a primary cultural dimension upon which Japanese students agreed.

**Table 1 Results of “Uncertainty Avoidance” Survey No. 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>強く反対 (Strongly disagree)</th>
<th>反対 (Disagree)</th>
<th>やや反対 (Kind of disagree)</th>
<th>やや賛成 (Kind of agree)</th>
<th>賛成 (Agree)</th>
<th>強く賛成 (Strongly agree)</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first question explicitly identified Japanese EFL students as a highly risk-averse cultural group. 111 students agreed that order and consistency are more important than creativity and innovation in Japan, compared to 87 that disagreed.
Table 2 Results of “Uncertainty Avoidance” Survey No. 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>反対</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>やや反対</td>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>やや賛成</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>賛成</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>強く賛成</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question two was similar to question one. However, out of 198 respondents, nearly equal numbers agreed (97) and disagreed (101) that social situations are understood in detail so all Japanese students know what is expected of them. In other words, there may be unforeseen cultural misunderstandings when social norms are not explicitly defined. The survey results also suggest that Japanese students may be more “collectivist” than “individualist” in their thinking, looking to others for affirmation of their actions and behaviors.

Table 3 Results of “Long vs. Short-Term Orientation” Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>反対</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>やや反対</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>やや賛成</td>
<td>92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>賛成</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>強く賛成</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Question three specifically asked students if they needed to use a smartphone in the EFL classroom to accomplish their work. An overwhelming majority of students (171 out of 198, or 86.4%) agreed that using a smartphone in class was essential to accomplishing EFL classroom tasks.

Table 4 Results of “Uncertainty Avoidance” Survey No. 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>やや反対</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>やや賛成</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>賛成</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>強く賛成</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Question four was again about uncertainty avoidance, specifically in the EFL classroom. Students largely agreed (169 out of 198, or 85.4%) that rules, instructions, and requirements must be spelled out in detail so students know what to do.

In total, 14 different survey questions attempted to answer what aspects of national culture played the largest role in why students cheat in EFL classes. While students were unsurprisingly strong in cultural dimensions like collectivism and masculinity — nearly 70% of participants were males, likely contributing to some level of selection bias — uncertainty avoidance was hands down the most prominent dimension on the survey. This finding is consistent with Hofstede’s own research, in which he found that Japan is one of the highest uncertainty avoiding cultures (Hofstede, 1991). Questions about short-term vs. long-term orientation were not conclusive enough to be used or mentioned.

Results and Analysis

The results of the survey administered to Japanese EFL students from Akita University and the Kanazawa Institute of Technology provide a compelling answer to the first question posed in this study: If it is culture that justifies cheating with smartphones in Japanese EFL classes, then what aspect(s) of culture are a driving force? The results point to the cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance as a potential explanation.

With Japanese culture being high on uncertainty avoidance, it is certainly plausible that Japanese students place a greater premium on not being wrong than any corresponding punishment associated with cheating. In other words, the risks — and potential embarrassment — of being unsure or incorrect simply outweigh those of the alternative of getting caught. As stated previously, smartphones have been used widely in Japan for cheating in classrooms as well as on entrance exams, and have been pervasively observed by EFL teachers at Japanese universities. The growing problem may be attributable to deeply embedded cultural norms around uncertainty avoidance, which would explain why students are inherently disincentivized to abandon the practice.

This line of reasoning also offer insights into the second question about why students are using smartphones to cheat in Japanese EFL classes. The connection largely reaffirms the findings of a similar study conducted by Srite and Karahanna (2006). In their article entitled “The Role of Espoused National Cultural Values in Technology Acceptance,” Srite and Karahanna (2006) also adopted Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and applied them to a “Technology Acceptance Model,” or TAM. The TAM is an information systems theory that organizes how people come to accept and use technology in their daily lives. It presents a number of variables, of which cultural groups must have three or four to adopt the new technology and put it to continual use:

1. **External variables** (EV) - such as social or cultural influence
2. **Perceived usefulness** (PU) – How will this help me get what I want?
3. **Perceived ease-of-use (PEOU)** - How effortless is it to use this technology to get what I want?

4. **Attitude (A)** – The users view on using or use of the technology.

By using this model, uncertainty avoidance becomes an external variable. When combined with the useful multi-functions of smartphones (PU); the ease of use inherent in the smartphone experience (PEOU); and, finally, the already favorable attitude most Japanese have toward smartphones (A), one arrives at the behavioral intent (BI) to use this technology to moderate the risk of failure in an EFL classroom. These variables may help explain system adoption and use — that is, the need to cheat by smartphone.

![Figure 1 Schematic drawing of the TAM adoption model (Srite & Karahanna, 2006).](image)

Thus, for the second question, uncertainty avoidance is again a powerful external variable that may be exerting social and behavioral influence on students. Students may look to their classmates for acceptance of cheating behaviors because they all share and acknowledge uncertainty avoidance as being very important in Japanese culture. Smartphones are already ubiquitous, and if a shared attitude toward the practice already exists, the continued use of smartphones as a tool for cheating will benefit students at risk of failing EFL classes — and, in turn, the entire group.

According to Hofstede (1980), in strong uncertainty avoiding cultures, there tends to be greater tolerance of unfairness. For example, as uncertainty avoidance increases, individuals are more likely to believe that the ethical standards are determined by the least ethical competitor (Hofstede, 1980; Bernardi & Long, 2004). For both this study and the Srite and Karahanna (2006) study, the results suggest that uncertainty avoidance plays a major role in the acceptance and use of technology for “cheating” by students. When uncertainty avoidance is used as an external variable in the Technology Acceptance Model, it is the moderator of the relationship between the belief that other students will approve of cheating and the intent to use smartphones to cheat. Across both studies, uncertainty avoidance was found to have a consistently significant effect on the relationship between subjective norms and the behavioral intent to use the technology, such that the relationship was stronger for individuals with higher levels of articulated uncertainty avoidance.
As the surveys in this study demonstrate, students from high uncertainty avoidance cultures look to peer groups such as classmates for social cues. The social cues indicate the acceptance and use of smartphones to cheat in the classroom as a means of risk avoidance. The strong influence of peer behavior may suggest that academic dishonesty not only is learned from observing the behavior of peers, but that peer behavior provides a kind of normative support for cheating. The fact that others are cheating may also suggest that, in such a climate, the non-cheater feels disadvantaged. Thus, cheating may come to be viewed as an acceptable way of getting and staying ahead.

The EFL classroom has a particularly high risk for cheating behavior due to disparities in learning levels, as well as the gap between cultural norms held by the teacher and the students mentioned earlier. Whereas a Western teacher would most likely come from a culture of low uncertainty avoidance, promoting concepts of autonomy and freedom of speech in classrooms, Japanese students come from the high end of uncertainty avoidance, and are accustomed to environments that are more structured, strict, and rule-bound. Moreover, as Kuehn, Stanwyck, & Holland (2012) have previously noted, when EFL teachers encounter behaviors reflecting cultural differences they do not recognize, their most likely response is to judge those behaviors and to characterize the students who engage in them in terms of their own cultural value systems. Such situations may create a “student vs. teacher” dynamic, where students perceive themselves as a group working together — against the teacher — to get through an EFL class.

It is not just cultural differences between teachers and students that dictate perceived risk, however. Other factors in the Japanese education system may play a role in determining how strongly students feel they need to manifest uncertainty avoidance in the EFL classroom. In many cases, low motivation to learn English could be a major proponent of uncertainty avoidance, and thus cheating via smartphones. As Jordan (2001) has pointed out, low motivation in a course of study not only increases a student’s risk for cheating in that course but also increases the student’s tendency to cheat repeatedly. A student who is uninterested in a course may look for ways to complete the course with the least amount of effort. Likewise, high extrinsic motivation may also increase a student’s temptation to cheat. If a student’s purpose for taking a course has little to do with the course content and more to do with extrinsic goals, such as grades or career opportunities, cheating may ultimately serve those longer-term goals.

Most students in Japan are forced through the Japanese Ministry of Education to take required, standardized English courses throughout their high-school career. In this way, students either come to enjoy or despise English studies in school. The students who do like EFL classes when they get to university find they naturally have an easier time in class, while those who feel they have been forced to enroll suffer, receiving a grade in a language they feel is useless for them.
A final example of espoused uncertainty avoidance is the pressure put on students to succeed. While this is hardly unique to Japan, Japanese culture places especially high emphasis on getting a degree from university in order to become a *shakaijin* — literally, a proper “member of society,” a term indicating one has graduated from school and entered the work force. Students often do not care so much about the career they take, so long as they have career stability and lifelong employment, and can thus be recognized as a *shakaijin* by their friends and colleagues.

**Conclusion**

The pressure on Japanese students to achieve academic and occupational success is undeniably intense — success that depends in large part on earning a college degree. The Japanese are also well known for their team and group orientation (Diekhoff et al, 1999). Thus, if cheating is commonplace and socially supported within a group, then it may be very difficult for a Japanese student to resist the temptation to cheat. Moreover, if a Japanese student’s end goal in university, much like in an EFL class, is simply to finish and obtain the academic degree/credits so they can become a productive member of society (*shakaijin*), then learning doesn’t really matter. Simply put, when it comes to cheating using smartphones in Japanese society, the ends often justify the means.

This study has contributed to the existing literature by providing new survey data from two Japanese universities that reaffirm deeply held Japanese cultural norms and values which may be drivers for cheating behavior in EFL classes. Specifically, if such behavior is justified by the group and driven by a strong sense of uncertainty avoidance — one that, based on students’ collective cost-benefit analyses, outweighs the consequences of getting caught — students may be loath to discontinue the cheating behavior. If so, EFL teachers in Japan — and indeed, other similar Asian cultures — would be smart to adapt their curriculum and policies not to punish perpetrators *per se*, but rather to leverage technologies in more permissive yet productive ways. Teachers would also benefit from more thoroughly understanding the cultural values that underpin such behaviors and adapting their teaching methods in more culturally sensitive and technologically progressive ways. By becoming part of their students’ “in-group,” teachers may find that “cheating” with smartphones can still contribute to the learning process while advancing students’ broader career goals.
References


The Impact of Teacher Trainees Learning and Practicing English Teaching

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Abstract

The following action research project consisted in guiding 30 Teacher Trainees with a B1+ English level, from the Elementary and Kindergarten programs at Escuela Normal Fronteriza Tijuana (ENFT), located in the north of Mexico border with the United States of America; into teaching a sequence of two 30 minute English classes, part of their usual practice process at their respective assigned schools, to motivate them to continue teaching the language throughout their professional career, familiarize themselves with the current English program, as well as to encourage other English teachers from Normal Schools to do the same follow up with their Teacher Trainees. Data was collected and analyzed by direct observation, practice reports, video, surveys and interviews, and processed in Google Forms. The results show that teacher trainees who are encouraged to practice English teaching are more likely to want to carry on during their professional careers; although it is not their specialty, it can turn to be part of the vocation and calling for their job development, as well as a commitment to students and society’s education. Concurrently, children from kindergarten and elementary schools showed respect towards English class, the acquisition of vocabulary, and the opportunity to practice it on school grounds. Those who already were English speakers, expressed their appreciation regarding the recognition of English as their previous education language.

Keywords: English, Practice, Teacher, Trainees, Trainers.

Introduction

Escuela Normal Fronteriza Tijuana (ENFT) is located in the city of Tijuana, Baja California neighboring San Diego, California, and has the record of the most visited border city in the world; therefore, finding English speaking people is not uncommon, but the majority of the population are not speakers yet. Normal Schools are the Teaching Universities in Mexico, where are offered Basic Education Bachelor Programs in eight semesters or four years, such as Kindergarten -age four and five-, Elementary -age six to 12-, Inclusive Education -children with disabilities- and Secondary Education with a specific field -age 12 to 15- (DGESPE, 2018b).

Mexico is a country that has plenty of migration, accordingly to National Migration Institute (INM) (cited in Rivera, 2019) 207,814 Mexicans were deported from the USA only in 2019, most of them working adults with a career path, but also with children, who end up in Mexican public schools,
at least till the parents establish back in Mexico. On the other hand 360,000 immigrants came to Mexico in 2019 from different countries (INM cited in UNIVISION, 2019), and even if most of them were trying just to transit to the USA, they stayed at border cities such as Tijuana, creating a necessity to incorporate children into schools.

Therefore, when talking about an Education Reform, one should always consider and design the right strategies and actions to develop and target the main goals of such changes. In 2017 in Mexico, the Secretary of Public Education (SEP) developed a new English Program that hadn’t been seen before, because it includes not only Basic Education (Kindergarten, Elementary and Secondary) as the 2010 program suggested but also Normal Schools in a 20 to 30 year period goal to get most of the population bilingual or multilingual, in the case of indigenous regions. The strategy consisted of hiring, under very strict standards, around 700 English Trainers nationwide, and install them at Normal Schools. At the same time, they developed a new English program in collaboration with Cambridge University.

The ultimate goal, as pointed out before, is to get most of the Mexican population to learn this foreign language, to develop the economics and work fields in a 20 to 30-year period. But the short term goal is to get every Teacher Trainee to learn the language so they can include English speakers to a public Mexican classroom, and teach it to the rest of the group. For this to be accomplished, English Trainers, besides providing Teacher Trainees with language acquisition classes, should also make sure that teaching strategies are learned, comprehended and put to practice before they graduate and start their teaching careers.

Problem approach

Since 2010 when the English program for Basic Education in Mexico was created, there has been an area of opportunity in Kindergarten and Elementary Tenure Teachers, as they should be teaching English as a foreign language without having had any training in the pedagogy nor knowledge of the language, forcing them to set aside such program and simply not to teach it. Therefore, Teacher Trainees should start and continue to develop their English speaking abilities and teaching skills to amend the said specific issue.

Hypothesis: If Teacher Trainees who are already proficient speakers, were taught and encouraged to start practicing English Teaching instead of going through the language acquisition program; they could become proficient English teachers as well as the rest of the subjects included in Kindergarten and Elementary Bachelor Programs.

General Objective: To guide Teacher Trainees with an English level of B1 or higher, from the Kindergarten and Elementary Bachelor Programs, into teaching English at their practice schools to motivate them to continue doing it throughout their professional career, as well as to encourage other English Trainers from Normal Schools to do the same follow up.

Specific Objective 1: To provide tutoring to B1+ Teacher Trainees to familiarize themselves with the Basic Education English Program, lesson planning, and teaching strategies.
Specific Objective 2: To allow Teacher Trainees to teach English as part of their practice and encourage them to keep teaching this subject throughout their career.

Specific Objective 3: To encourage other English Trainers throughout the country to teach and guide their Teacher Trainees into practicing English Teaching.

Scope and limitation: This intervention was applied by 30 Teacher Trainees from ENFT in 30 different school groups: 12 in Kindergarten and 18 in Elementary, covering 12 different public schools and almost all grades, except for Elementary first and second. The sample was broad and the results were mostly favorable. The assignment was to teach only two 30 minute classes in two weeks of practice. The city had a couple of contingencies, one for fires and one for flooding, so about four classes were canceled, resulting in some of the practitioners not being able to carry the assignment fully. Also, having a broader sample would have had more opportunities for success.

Theoretical Framework

Undoubtedly, when talking about teacher training, we must talk about a process. In Normal Schools is usually presented in a theoretical way along with the practice. Teacher Trainees acquire knowledge in contents at the same time that they are applying it in their practice school, and this is why it is very important to teach English the same way as the other subjects, because as Richards (1991) points out “most teachers develop their classroom skills fairly early in their teaching careers. Teachers entering the profession may find their initial teaching efforts stressful, but with experience they acquire a repertoire of teaching strategies that they draw on throughout their teaching” (p.1).

The programs are constructed for Teacher Trainees to learn English language, but there is no emphasis on teaching them how to carry out an English class. Since in teaching, knowledge gets synthesized from not knowing to knowing; from imperfect, unfinished and insufficient knowledge to a perfect, sufficient and, even if it is not ideal, it gets close to what the student requires (Gonzalez, 2015, p. 45); it is almost imperative that they start getting such abilities and knowledge on how to teach as soon as possible.

It is within the four years of university, that Teacher Trainees should acquire the language (unless they are already proficient speakers) and develop their teaching skills; therefore, it is the duty of English Trainers to prepare them to teach English as part of the curriculum, as well as to participate in the English programs in Basic Education 2010 and 2017, so they can practice. In that matter Harmer (2007) makes emphasis in knowledge facilitation: “the value of a teacher depends not just on their ability to use the language, but also on their knowledge about the language and their understanding on how to facilitate both that ability and that knowledge in the mind of their students” (p. 119).

It is important to mention that motivation is a key on teacher training: Teacher Trainees should always feel happy and enthusiastic on both learning and teaching, as Bekes (2017) reflects about her own practice “whatever topic I brought into the classroom, if I was enthused and engaged enough, that
enthusiasm will be contagious”. That being the case, motivation starts in the Normal School’s classroom, when English Trainers encouraging Teacher Trainees to practice not only the language, but teaching the language too; because at the end of their career, it is through experience that they will have learned the most.

In that same matter and after the practice, it is quite important to make a self-evaluation to get an idea of which things or fields should one improve, as well as considering the reasons for the successes noted in such class. Richards (1991) talks about the importance of what he called Reflective Teaching, which consists of “observing and reflecting on one's teaching, and using observation and reflection as a way of bringing about change (p.1)”. On that account it is not only important to allow Teacher Trainees to practice English teaching, but also provide them with feedback, reflection on their practice as well as areas of improvement; guide them into committing with themselves, their teaching career, and their students. If they do not give an assessment and thorough evaluation of their practice, all this effort might end up being worthless.

English Trainers should encourage their Teacher Trainees to keep teaching, especially after having a difficulty, as Dettori et al (2006) establishes “these competencies mostly develop gradually through practice, and to do so they must be consciously pursued by those who design instructional activities for teachers and by those who supervise them” (p. 407). After several practices, one should be looking forward to Teacher Trainees get a hold of their knowledge and experience to keep up practicing as “consolidation is a dynamic, generative, transformative, and lingering process that is posited to balance maintenance of useful experience-dependent internal representations of the world with the need to adapt these representations to the changing world” (Dudai et al, 2015) it is important to conduct such practices to favor its success.

Another reason to practice English teaching, has to do directly with children. They are used to subject classes, such as Science, Spanish, Mathematics, and Art, but in most public kindergarten and elementary schools they do not have English teachers, nor Tenure Teachers are willing or know how to teach this program. When Teacher Trainees have the chance to start with the program, they would be starting a new generation of trainers who can teach English, and the impact of their practice is big. As Chomsky (cited on Makepeace, 2010) pointed out “a language is not just words. It's a culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is. It is all embodied in a language”. Children have expressed their liking of the classes, and considering the actual need of the Mexican population to learn the language, the social and cultural impact of developing this practice is quite big, and it could be bigger if everyone participated nationwide.

Regarding language teaching in public classrooms, Thornbury (2015) reassures that it “brings together two of the qualities that most uniquely define us as humans: language and cultural transmission in teaching. If we cease to be fascinated by either, we risk turning our vocation into just another routine occupation” (p. 12). It is a social transmission, a cultural knowledge that Teacher Trainees started bringing up and consolidating, responding at a very plausible need, especially in a border city where
American children are going to Mexican schools and vice versa.

It is a reality that migration in Mexico is very common and it should be taken accountable that many children have gone to American schools, have English backgrounds or at least have the necessity to learn the language, if not for immediate purposes, for future ones to develop their careers. Consequently, it is very important to start preparing Teacher Trainees to teach in full immersion classrooms, as Krashen (2009) pointed out “what immersion has taught us is that comprehensible subject-matter teaching is language teaching (...) the subject matter class is a language class if it is made comprehensible. The subject-matter class may even be better than the language class for language acquisition” (p. 53). In conclusion, the more prepared they are, including teaching a second language, the better children shall feel in their classrooms.

Materials and Methodology

Participants

This Action Research Project has a Qualitative Approach, and is targeting every Teacher Trainee from Normal Schools in Mexico, who are already proficient in the English Language. It has been conducted with a focus group of a total of 30 participants, 12 from the Bachelor in Kindergarten Education and 18 of the Bachelor in Elementary Education from ENFT, holding a level of proficiency in English Language of B1, B2 and C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Cambridge English, 2019). Each Teacher Trainee taught a group of 25 to 40 students, from Kindergarten and Elementary levels, having a total of 773 children receiving an English Class.

Regarding English Trainers from Normal Schools in different parts of the country, 35 participated in a survey, 31 with similar experiences, and four who expressed not having had the opportunity to conduct such assignments. Two English Trainers from ENFT collaborated in the creation of a program as a proposition for an alternative course targeting proficient Teacher Trainee speakers from Normal Schools, which is pending on approval, but was implemented in the said university.

Methodology

A special program was designed (and in process of national approval) to show the impact of encouraging Teacher Trainees to teach English as part of their practice path. It started with an analysis of teaching skills, where they were assigned to self-evaluate and write an essay about the skills they think they already have developed, and focus on the ones that they might feel unconfident. Follow-up sessions were conducted and also, a specialist in group management and a child's behavior was invited to give a workshop so Teacher Trainees could review and work on further development of teaching skills and other topics that they expressed to have in common.

During their first practice period they applied two types of diagnostic tests targeting two different topics: English family background and Children’s English level. They reviewed the English
Program for Basic Education 2010, focusing on the grade they needed to teach, teaching methodology was presented, and thereafter, they presented a lesson plan, showed Tenure Teachers their assignments, and after previous approval from all the actors in the education program and schools, they taught a sequence of two 30 minute classes.

In order to encourage other English Trainers to do a similar follow-up, a previous paper on the same research topic was presented in the 1st National Normal School English Trainers Conference (CONFIEN) in Irapuato, Guanajuato, Mexico in September 2019; which resulted in a follow-up survey and some interviews. Also, a Program of English Teaching Strategies was presented to the National Education authorities in collaboration with two English Trainers from ENFT, which is pending on approval.

**Materials**

Teacher Trainees recorded evidence by different media: some presented audio (to protect children’s physical identity), others took some photographs, and the ones that had the permission, collected video evidences. There is also physical evidence such as drawings, notes, and other products, recorded in checklists. After the assignment took place, Teacher Trainees were interviewed in a class where they presented all of their findings and overall experience, having the opportunity to talk about it with peers from different levels, who provided feedback and advice. As a result, each trainee was encouraged to carry out a reflection about their full experience.

Data has been collected through Google Forms Likert survey, charts were taken showing the results and percentages of different categories. Five interviews were conducted and coded with the interviewer initials-Elementary (EL) or Kindergarten (KG) number-Date, resulting in the following codes: LILC-EL1-11DEC2019, LILC-KG1-11DEC2019, LILC-EL2-11DEC2019, LILC-KG2-12DEC2019, LILC-EL3-12DEC2019. Also, three English Trainers interviews had been registered in codes by initials of the interviewer-initials of English Trainer interviewed-date of the interview. The said codes are: LILC-AHO-10JAN2020, LILC-DWG-11JAN2020 and LILC-JPT-15JAN2020.

**Results and Discussion**

Having 30 Teacher Trainee responses, which 12 corresponds to Kindergarten and 18 to Elementary, data was collected through a Google Forms survey, and it can be seen that the experiences were mostly satisfactory. The results have been divided into five categories to study them thoroughly. Such categories are: Diagnostic, Children Experience, Teacher Trainee Experience, Reflective Teaching, English Trainers. Thereafter, the most relevant findings in each category are discussed and presented in charts managed in Google Forms as a way of summing up their entire experience from lesson planning to self-evaluation.
Diagnostic

The most interesting findings include that most group levels were provided with a class (as shown in Chart 1), from 2nd grade of Kindergarten to 6th grade of Elementary, with first and second grade being the only ones that did not get a class. It is important to mention that these are all different schools and grades. This fact enriches the experience of the practice, since there is a broad spectrum of responses, from four to 12-year-old children, divided into eight different school levels. Percentages are: 6.7% Kindergarten 2nd, 33.3% Kindergarten 3rd, 0% Elementary 1st and 2nd, 10% Elementary 3rd, 16.7% Elementary 4th, 23.3% Elementary 5th, and 10% Elementary 6th. Also relevant to note is that the most common grade in Kindergarten was third, which is the last of this school level in Mexico, and in Elementary the mode was in fifth grade.

Chart 1. School grade taught.

When Teacher Trainees are practicing, they do it under the supervision of the tenure lecturer, who is a key person in the process. If this particular teacher disagrees with the assignment, such class might not be able to be taught. It is through conversation from the authorities of the Education Department that teachers can be open to offer English classes as part of the everyday school work, and at the very minimum allow Teacher Trainees to practice teaching them. The results, although mostly satisfactory, one can observe that there are still tenure teachers unwilling to cooperate and participate, as can be seen in Chart 2 with 33.3% of active participation, 46.7% supportive but not collaborative, 3.3% allowing it but not happy about it, and 16.7% didn’t allow the trainee to teach the class, representing a barrier in the process of knowledge and teaching consolidation, contrary of what the literature revised and this research suggest.
For everyone not having to surpass that barrier, they started by conducting a children’s diagnostic, as it should always be done, regarding their knowledge of the language and their exposure to it. Most results are that some children have some sort of English background and almost no group had the English level required to take the class as intended in the program, since 66.7% are starters and only 33.3% have elemental knowledge, as it can be seen in Chart 3. That is, even if there are children with knowledge of the language, most of them did not acquire it at school like the rest of the subjects, but they have English background as a result of their own family experience in different contexts. Everyone should be able to get equal opportunities to learn the language, provided at school, like every other subject.

**Children Experience**

Most Teacher Trainees showed in their results that children were motivated, excited, and participatory during the class, being 40% of responses where all children were interested. 36.7% said that some of them were interested (see Chart 4). As expected, just a few did not show any interest (10% to 13.3%), they were bored or just unhappy with the class; mostly the higher grades of Elementary (5\textsuperscript{th})
and 6th) who have never gotten any English classes before, or they find the language difficult to learn; which led to some teaching reflection of their practice as well as the motivation to do more research about the causes of their lack of interest. On the positive side, 76.7% of the children were excited and interested in having more English classes.

Chart 4. Children interest in having more English classes.

As mentioned before, besides presenting the language, the main goal of the Teacher Trainee lesson planning was for children to start learning some Basic English vocabulary and practice it at school grounds. Due to having such a limited time (only two 30 minute classes) and a minimal amount of classes, very little achievements were developed. The first and most important one was, as pointed out before, that they were motivated to learn about the English language, to participate in a class, and to start developing interest in it.

The second one was the actual acquisition of some English vocabulary, and against all odds, there were some experiences in which the results were also satisfactory: 16.7% said the main purpose was accomplished (see Chart 5), while 46.7% expressed that only some vocabulary was learned, and even if for the lack of frequency, they got to forget it soon after, as said by 30% of the Trainees. Children also expressed to be dragged by the curiosity to learn more, which in this case, and due to the limitations, it is considered a big success. Only Teacher Trainees who couldn’t participate in teaching a class (6.6%) did not get any results.
Reflection and feedback are key for the teaching training process. Overall, most Teacher Trainees felt motivated about their experience. They described, as shown in Chart 6, it as either good or great. In terms of motivation, results show that 93.4% is willing to keep teaching English as part of their regular practices, and 56.7% are looking forward to continue practicing during the next semesters, while 36.7% want to keep teaching, but are not as motivated as the first group. Even if this first experience was not a great one for some of them (6.6%), privately, three Elementary Teacher Trainees have expressed their desire to make this the main focus of their Thesis, which is the mandatory paper to be presented in order to obtain their Teaching Degree. They will be provided with a tutor to complete said wishes and continue their research throughout the next school year.

Reflective Teaching

As mentioned before, after the practice it is quite important to make a self-evaluation to get an idea on things or fields one should improve, as well as to consider the reasons for one’s success.
Therefore, Teacher Trainees were assigned and encouraged to talk about the areas of teaching in which they felt more confident, and share their experience with their peers, so they could take some advice and not just a teacher's guidance. As shown in Chart 7, 25 of them felt very confident about their interaction with students and 19 about their level of caring and motivation, while 16 felt confident about the caring, fairness and respect. The aspects that they expressed to feel less confident were Disciplining students and time management (only 2 each) and Classroom management (only 3).

Chart 7. Areas of confidence.

As a result of inviting an expert in Classroom Management and Child Behavior to conduct a workshop, Teacher Trainees got a better understanding about what they consider to be their areas of improvement. It was conducted successfully, and they had the opportunity to reflect on their practice, give each other feedback, and when interviewed most of them had empowering results. Five encouraging opinions are listed, three from Elementary and two from Kindergarten Teacher Trainees.

“I don't really expect to master English from one day to another. I think I must continue learning so that I can master it, I want to focus on my confidence and continue practicing the language” (LILC-EL1-11DEC2019).

“I liked teaching my first English class, and to know the great interest that children have and the pride they feel when they learn English”. (LILC-KG1-11DEC2019)

“My experience was better than I expected, children were very participatory and attentive in class and the expected results were achieved”. (LILC-EL2-11DEC2019)

“It was a beautiful experience, because the children told me: Teacher, we want the English Class again”. (LILC-KG2-12DEC2019)

“I think it is very important to look for strategies to handle those situations in which a student speaks or even has English as a first language, because instead of seeing it as a "warning, danger" we should be able to see it as a "Great!, you can help". (LILC-EL3-12DEC2019)
In the same matter, some Teacher Trainees did not feel confident and they expressed it too. Overall, their Reflecting Teaching got to a point where everyone was able to communicate their frustration, work in their confidence, get a couple of new teaching techniques, practice their English speaking, practice peer assessment and get and give overall feedback; therefore, they should be ready to resume their practice soon.

**English Trainers**

Results from direct interviews after presenting a paper at the CONFIEN 2019, it was learned that 31 English Trainers throughout the country have conducted similar assignments, some as micro-teaching projects for their full group, some as experimental projects with only one student, others as a wrap up for the semester. Seven of them said they felt encouraged to do so after the talks in the Conference said before, and four more expressed wanting to do a similar assignment but felt that their Teacher Trainees were not prepared to do it yet.

In the case of having only one Teacher Trainee who is a proficient English speaker, an English Trainer from Sinaloa, Mexico had to say: “I had one (Teacher Trainee) who asked about it (teaching English), she lived in the United States for a few years and tried it (teaching) as a demo, she said it was more difficult than she thought” (LILC-AHO-10JAN2020), which is why the importance of motivation, reflective teaching, and feedback to continue the process until having a fulfilling experience, but also to encourage the rest of them to do similar practices.

Other English Trainers have exposed Teacher Trainees to practicing English Teaching as a consolidation of their knowledge, such as an English Trainer from Mexico City (from the English Teaching Program) describes: “I have told them it is the best way to close the loop and finally reaffirm their knowledge base”(LILC-DWG-11JAN2020). There are many ways of helping Teacher Trainees achieve consolidation, encourage them to practice English teaching is a great source of achievement.

The most similar experience was conducted in Yucatan, Mexico by an English Trainer who worked with a micro-teaching assignment by her Kindergarten Teacher Trainees taking the A2 English level class: “I have asked them (Teacher Trainees) to do a micro-teaching at the end of the semester as a project. They had to plan, make their materials and teach. At the beginning they were terrified because English is not their main focus of study. They just loved the experience at the end” (LILC-JPT-15JAN2020). This was only an initial approach to her class, and will be conducting further similar assignments through the next semesters.
Finally, as a result of all the findings described previously, a proposition was handed out to the General Management of Higher Education for Professional Educators (DGESPE) authorities, about adding an English Teaching Program as an alternative for those Teacher Trainees that are already proficient English speakers. Such a program is still developing in collaboration with two English Trainers from ENFT, and it should be ready by the 2020-2 semester.

Conclusions

It seems clear that the first and ultimate conclusion is that Kindergarten and Elementary Teacher Trainees of Normal Schools in Mexico, must be provided with the opportunity of teaching the English Program for Basic Education as part of their training process, once they reached level B1, as part of the Professional Learning Environment of the current program (DGESPE, 2018a) and to be included as a key experience of their teaching practice, especially in their last year of training. Teacher Trainees that are motivated and encouraged to teach English during their school years are more likely to want to continue with the teaching, and rather than just be an option at their work fields and schools, it can be a part of their vocation and calling for their professional development throughout their whole career, as well as an integral education commitment to children and society.

Children who feel integrated as part of their groups are more likely to succeed in their academic achievements. There is plenty of fluctuation of the population in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico, and more often than not, there is at least one child in every classroom that has an English background. If teachers are prepared to receive and greet such students, their change and adaptation process would be gentler and more constructive, influencing directly their social and cultural development and immersion as part of a whole, instead of the feeling of not belonging. Children that have not had the opportunity to get in touch with the English language, would start getting such opportunity at schools, where they spent a plenty amount of hours throughout their childhood and first adult years. It is known that this is the language for international transactions and economics, so even if it seems that they wouldn't benefit from the experience in the immediate time, they most likely will once they have reach adulthood and are ready to enter the working field.

English Trainers who have been in conferences and other courses conducted by the Education authorities in Mexico as well as international conferences, are realizing the importance of including teaching techniques in their classes. Those who participate in similar practice assignments, collaborate directly to this 20 to 30-year project that includes Normal Schools and that is heading towards bilingualism in Mexico, as well as helping Teacher Trainees with the consolidation of their knowledge of the language, their career paths and by all means, their teaching skills.
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Building Skills, Building Writers: Teacher, Peer and Self-Assessment in the EFL Writing Classroom

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Abstract

Students require and desire assessment on their work. While teacher assessment is found in virtually every classroom, peer and self-assessment may not be. The latter two serve multiple functions. Peer assessment pushes students to take greater control of the learning process as they take on a more teacher-like role and increases the social nature of writing. Self-assessment accomplishes similar goals but also encourages learners to evaluate their own work and strengthen their identities as writers and language learners. This project tracks a second-year writing class at a Japanese university over the course of a 15-week term. Using mainly quantitative analysis, it sought to record the three sources of assessment and examine and interpret the relationships between them as way of documenting the improvement of students’ assessment skills. The results were somewhat inconclusive as they contradicted predicted patterns, yet they indicated a need for further instruction on the assessment process.

Keywords: writing, assessment, student agency, peer review, feedback

Introduction

In the traditional teaching paradigm, teachers evaluate students’ work and assign grades. In many cases, this results in students merely performing for the teacher in order to get better grades. Ideally, writing should be read by students and teachers as a social and communicative task (Hyland, 2014). Peer and self-assessment increase levels of interaction as students begin to read and evaluate their peers’ writing and reflect on their own.

These two activities serve numerous education goals. First, peer review helps to de-emphasize the teacher and allow students to take on a more teacher-like role as they evaluate student writing. Self-assessment encourages students to reflect on their work and find their strengths and weakness on their own. Both tasks can be seen as being quite similar in nature, particularly in this project as both peer- and self-assessment were conducted using the same rubric and explicit instruction in the classroom.

While peer-assessment can encourage students to build agency in the classroom, it is not without its issues. Namely, Japanese students generally have no experience in performing peer review and may not see its value or purpose. In addition, the East Asian cultural landscape often presents further problems as students may not feel comfortable giving and receiving critical feedback from other L2 learners due to a preference for teacher or “expert” feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2013). Furthermore, a study of competitive tasks run by Mori and Mori in 2013 indicated that Japanese
participants generally aimed for equality of evaluation and avoided assigning inferior or superior status to the winners or losers, respectively. In the context of peer review, some Japanese students may be reluctant to assume a “superior” position by providing criticism of a peer’s paper. On the bright side, after receiving explicit instruction on how to read and assess a paper, Japanese students can typically develop a more positive attitude towards giving and receiving peer feedback (Wakabayashi, 2013).

Likewise, self-assessment presents a similar set of issues as students may not understand the purpose of the task or how to perform it. As with peer review, explicit instruction on how to conduct the task plus explicit instruction on the purpose of it generally improves students’ perceptions and performance (Suzuki, 2009). Japanese cultural attitudes may also impede performance of this task. Yamagishi, et al. (2012) wrote that self-effacing is an adaptive strategy for living in a more collective society. As such, Japanese students may revert to this pattern of modesty when performing self-assessment, thus reducing its effectiveness and accuracy.

The purpose of both tasks should be made clear and specific (Cote, 2018). Students in this project were told repeatedly in class that their goal was to improve the writing of their peers and themselves. With peer assessment, students were told to imagine themselves as teachers giving feedback or perhaps view themselves as coaches giving feedback to improve performance. With self-assessment, the comparison was made to looking in the mirror before leaving one’s house in the mirror.

The instruction for both tasks must also be made clear and specific (Cote, 2018). Given the aforementioned issues, the potential for faulty and ineffective assessment can be high. Berg (1999) wrote that writing students should be told to focus mainly on deeper issues (content and argumentation, for example) in the text rather than more surface forms (grammar and vocabulary, for example). This is to counteract L2 learners’ typical approach of focusing on surface forms, such as vocabulary and grammar errors (Hyland, 2014), which are typically easier for students to notice.

Students may also struggle with determining what language is appropriate for peer and self-assessment. Hyland and Hyland (2001) stated the three categories of feedback as praise, criticism and suggestions. Students need to be instructed on these three categories and their functions in the assessment process. Breaking the functions down further, students should be taught to give clear and focused praise (“thesis is clear”, for example) rather than giving positive but ineffective praise (“great paper”, for example). With regards to criticism, students need to be taught that a reviewer is critiquing the paper, not the writer (Cote, 2018) and to avoid needlessly negative comments (Hyland, 2014). Finally, suggestions should be explained to students as helping to improve future drafts and assignments, while also following the guidelines set above.

Research methodology

Context

This project was conducted with two second-year writing classes during the first term of the 2019-2020 academic year. The two classes totaled 27 students, all English majors. The classes
consisted of 14 female and 13 male students. 26 were Japanese, with one Brazilian student. Each writing class consisted of three written assignments covering different topics and argumentative styles. Thus, the students examined for this project had already written six papers their first year, with their seventh, eighth and ninth assignments being examined here.

Students conducted peer feedback sessions on all three drafts of each of the three assignments using an analytic rubric described in the next section. Students received teacher feedback on the second and third drafts as well as a graded evaluation on the third and final draft. Finally, students conducted self-assessment on the third draft. Peer feedback and evaluation was conducted on all three drafts as the peer review process was prioritized by the teacher as per the explanation found previously in the introduction of this paper. Teacher feedback was given on the second draft as it was thought that peer feedback was more appropriate for the first draft and students would desire feedback from the teacher before the final draft.

Rubric

All evaluations (including the teacher’s) were conducted through the use of the same rubric for the sake of consistency and transparency. The rubric (shown below this paragraph in Table 1) consists of three criteria (organization, language and content) and three grade ranges (<70%, 70-80% and <80%). Organization refers to the presence and development of the parts of an essay, such as introduction and conclusion. Language here refers to clear and effective use of vocabulary. Finally, content looks at the development and support of thesis and conclusion.

Table 1-Assessment Rubric

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Students were explicitly instructed how to use the rubric before each feedback/evaluation session. At the beginning of the term, students were given a rubric that had explanatory text for each grade range of all three criteria used. Students read and discussed the rubric and were instructed to refer to it throughout the term for peer and self-assessment. This served as a norming process for the rest of the academic year. A full version of the explanatory rubric can be found in Appendix A at the end of this paper.

The squares on the rubric shown above are purposefully blank. This allows students to input their own values for each criterion and write text comments during evaluations. Students also were instructed to write the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the draft in the space below the rubric.
Finally, students were instructed to give a numerical grade on the third draft but not the second draft. The score was based on the three categories listed above, with equal weight given to each category. This score was not shown to the original writer (during peer evaluation) and was only known to the teacher and the original peer evaluator(s).

Assessment Sessions

Peer evaluation was conducted in a blind review fashion, with students omitting their names on their drafts and only providing their students numbers. Depending on the number of students attending the class on a particular day, peer evaluation groups were separated into roughly equal groups (three groups of four students, for example). The drafts were collected from each group and given to another peer group. This anonymity was chosen to encourage more direct and thus potentially useful feedback from the students. As such, students would generally read and provide feedback to three to five drafts and their drafts would generally receive feedback from three to five peers.

Peer assessment sessions were held for the second and third drafts of a three-draft cycle for each assignment. Peer reviewers filled out the rubric and gave text comments for both drafts. Students were asked to give a numerical score only on the third and final draft of each assignment. This score was recorded by the teacher and not shown to the original author as it was felt that peer scoring could artificially influence students’ attitudes towards their own assessments.

Self-assessment was only conducted on the third and final draft of each assignment. It was conducted following the larger, more time-consuming peer assessment. Students were instructed to print out three copies of their final drafts for all three assessments.

Collection of Data

Peer-assigned scores were collected anonymously and averaged together for each draft. Self-assigned scores were also collected and recorded. Finally, teacher scores were recorded. These three variables were recorded for each of the three writing assignments of the term. The numerical data was entered into an Excel worksheet for analysis. The teacher-, peer- and self-assigned scores were compared within each of the three assignments to observe any patterns that emerged.

Another measurement that was taken during this project was an analysis of the teacher- and self-evaluation for each assignment. While the individual students in the peer review groups would vary with each session, the teacher and writers were constant and thus were deemed worthy of analysis as well.

This project was conducted in a more informal, non-experimental fashion and so research questions were not presented by this researcher. Instead, some predictions came to mind as this project was organized. Given some of the cultural patterns mentioned in the literature within the introduction, it was predicted:

1. Peer assessment will be inflated due to an aversion to criticism in Japan (Mori & Mori,
2. Self-assessment will be harsher due to Japanese tendencies towards modesty (Yamagishi, et al., 2012).
3. Teacher assessment may be somewhere in between.
4. Peer-Teacher-Self (in descending order) is the predicted pattern.
5. Peer- and self-assessment may move towards the teacher’s assessment, indicating some progress in students’ assessment skills.

A weakness in the data collection for this project was observed and should be noted here. Out of 27 students, only nine attended and correctly performed all three assessment sessions of the final drafts. This sampling potentially omits the typical writing student in the classes observed for this study. Student absences often increased on scheduled feedback days and many students did not use the rubric correctly or completely, perhaps indicating students not seeing or understanding the value of peer review. This implies some issues for both the teacher and the students and it will be addressed in greater detail in the Results and Discussion section later.

Results and discussion

The results for the first assignment showed great variety in the patterns of evaluation. The predicted pattern of Peer-Teacher-Self (in descending order) was the most frequent, with four out of nine (44%) assessments matching the prediction. Self-Teacher-Peer was a distant second, with two out of nine (22%) matching. Also at 22% was the pattern of all three assessments being perfectly equal. Peer-Self-Teacher was the least frequent combination, with one out of nine (11%) matching. For a closer look, the results of the first assignment are shown below in Figure 1.

![Figure 1-First Assignment](image)

While the predicted pattern was dominant, it was not a clear majority. In fact, there was no majority pattern in the data. The Self-Teacher-Peer pattern is noteworthy as it goes against the
The second assignment showed more variation with less dominance of any of the patterns. The most frequent pattern was Peer-Self-Teacher with 33% of the assessments. The second most frequent pattern was Teacher-Self-Peer with 22% of the assessments matching this pattern. The Peer-Teacher-Self, Self-Teacher-Peer, All Equal and Teacher-Peer-Self patterns each appeared once out of nine assessments, representing 11% of the total. The complete results are shown below in Figure 2.

Figure 2-Second Assignment

Aside from the increased variation, the relationships between any two of the three variables presented noteworthy patterns. With the fifth and sixth students, Peer and Self-assessments are equal and higher than that of the teacher. On the other hand, the seventh and ninth students received equal assessments from peers and teacher which were higher than the self-assigned score. The matching of scores throughout this second set of data may represent a convergence of assessment as the three parties move towards each other, albeit in an imperfect and uneven manner.

The results from the third and final assignment showed as much variation as the second assignment but with no dominant pattern of assessment. Peer-Teacher-Self, Peer-Self-Teacher, Teacher-Peer-Self and Self-Peer-Teacher each represented 22% (two out of nine) of the total. The All Equal combination only appeared once for 11% of the total. In contrast with the second assignment, less convergence but greater consistency was observed. With the third, fourth and sixth students, teacher and peer assessments were equal. On the other hand, self-assessment from the fifth, sixth and eighth students were higher than that of teacher and peer, contradicting the predicted cultural pattern. The results are shown below in Figure 3.
Unit 3 also exhibited other interesting and unpredicted patterns. 33% of the papers received the highest assessment from the original writer, a pattern that is slightly surprising in a cultural setting that generally promotes modesty. Speculative explanations include inflated sense of the students’ writing abilities or misuse or misunderstanding of the evaluation instrument and process. Expanded speculation can be found in the following Discussion section.

The fourth and final analysis conducted was the Teacher-Self assessment relationship. Since the peer groups rotated every session, the individual reviewers could not be analyzed here. For ease of analysis, the sample was reduced to five students. While this is not a standard practice in research methodology, it is included here for the purpose of presentation of this study’s results. 40% of the sample (two out of five) exhibited a pattern of self-assessment being higher than teacher assessment, contradicting the predicted pattern. One of the five (20%) students matched the teacher’s assessment, with roughly equal assessments on all three papers. The other two (40%) students exhibited no clear pattern of assessment in relation to that of the teacher. It should be noted that given the small sample here, it is difficult to make definitive claims. The data is shown below in Figure 4.
The possibly inflated self-assessment of 40% of the class data may represent some immodesty on the part of those two students, although misunderstanding of the assessment process may also be a possible explanation. The one student whose assessment generally matched the teacher relates to one of the predictions made previously as student abilities move towards the more experienced teacher. However, at only 20% of the data, no significant pattern can be observed.

Conclusions

First Assignment

In the first assignment, the fourth prediction of Peer-Teacher-Self was the most frequent outcome (43%) but was not a dominant majority. On the other hand, the fifth prediction, that all assessments would synthesize as a measure of developing student assessment skills, was only observed in the first assignment. This was unexpected as teachers predict and plan for students’ skills to develop and improve over the course of a term or year.

The other combinations of outcome were not very dominant or varied on the first assignment. The low rate of variation among the outcomes also conforms to the predicted outcome of synthesis of assessment, but with no clear pattern.

Second Assignment

In the second assignment, Peer-Self-Teacher was the most frequent (33%), but less dominant than in the first assignment. A more interesting observation is that this assignment yielded greater variation in outcomes but with less dominance. This contradicts the predictions made and may even represent issues with both teacher and student users of the rubric and the assessment process. The students were instructed on how to assess writing on three assignments, but students may have been more focused in the first few weeks of the term.

The hoped-for outcome of all assessments being roughly equal only appears once out of nine students and so does not represent a significant trend. The unpredicted outcome of teacher assessment being highest was only 22% of the results, but could indicate that student assessment becomes “harsher” as students make greater attempts at providing critical feedback to peers and themselves. While this stands in contrast to the “beginner’s luck” observed in the first paper, these results may be a greater marker of developing assessment skills.

Third Assignment

The third and final paper assessed for this project showed no clear dominant pattern and a similar rate of variation to the second. A minor pattern (33%) emerged with self-assessment being greater than peer or teacher assessment. This runs contrary to the predicted cultural pattern of modesty typically found among Japanese students. Perhaps the Japanese students observed for this study are not as modest as previously discussed. As mentioned previously in the Results and Discussion section, this
could represent an inflated self-image of the three students or it could, more importantly, represent a problem with the process of self-assessment.

An informal observation that was not calculated previously was that 22% (two out of nine students) made assessments that were significantly higher (as much as 10 points) than that of the teacher. In the first two assignments, the three assessments were typically within a range of plus or minus five points. This wild variation certainly contradicts previous predictions but also seems to indicate some further issues with student assessment. If the teacher can be assumed to be consistent in assessment throughout the term, then student assessment becomes the issue to focus on in future classes and research.

Teacher-Self Assessment

Analysis of the relationship between teacher and self-assessment followed the patterns discussed above by contradicting the predicted patterns. 40% (two out of five) of the students assessed their papers more highly than the teacher did. One of the five students roughly matched teacher assessment on all three assignments. The remaining two students’ assessments did not match the teacher in any meaningful way and in fact showed no discernible pattern.

The inconclusive nature of this measurement also indicates that there are issues with the assessment process. The teacher could spend more time instructing students on the assessment process or the students should receive more explanation of the purpose of the process. This project did address this issue directly but it could be an issue to be addressed in future projects in which the purpose and process of assessment are taught more thoroughly and with more hands-on practice.

Limitations and Future Research

The primary limitation of this project was the small sample size. Only one-third of the students completed the assessment process accurately for all three assignments. While the small sample size made analysis more feasible, it clearly restricts the representative nature of this project. Increasing sample size (multiple semesters or even multiple teachers, for example) could increase significance of any findings and perhaps display different patterns of student assessment.

Another limitation and potential issue with this study is the assessment instrument itself. Looking at the first and third assignments, the teacher’s assessments were suspiciously uniform, with eight out of nine (88.8%) of the students receiving grades of 80. The rubric used in assessment may be inaccurate and may need to be adjusted or replaced in future projects to produce more precise assessments.

This project also was limited by its use of exclusively quantitative data. Numerical data is easier to interpret and display, but also omits much of the intimate detail that comes with analysis of students’ feedback comments. Collecting and interpreting qualitative data in the form of student
feedback could provide greater insight into students’ assessments and assessment skills. For example, questions concerning students’ attitudes about the purpose and effectiveness of assessment could be implemented in future projects. Combining quantitative and qualitative data could also enhance analysis of student assessment as the researcher could examine both for patterns and differences between the two data sets.

All the measurements taken for this project were inconclusive and the data did not display any clear patterns or even development of student assessment skills. The results also contradicted most of the predictions made at the beginning of this project. This unexpected result could inspire future research on the issues of assessment and students’ skills mentioned previously. Use of rubric for assessment is one area for future research teachers could create new instruments and/or adjust in-class instruction on their use.

While peer and self-assessment are valuable tasks in the writing classroom, students need to have a clear understanding of their purpose and value. More detailed and comprehensive instruction of these tasks may increase student confidence and skill. Addressing the other limitations of this project may also improve use of assessment instruments for greater effectiveness in future writing classes.

References
Mori, K., & Mori, H. (2013). Japanese are modest even when they are winners: Competence ratings of winners and losers in social comparison. Psychology, 4 (11), 827-830.
### Appendix A

#### Writing Project Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>excellent papers (&gt;80)</th>
<th>good papers (70-80%)</th>
<th>papers that need improvement (&lt;70%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>• All major parts of the project are fully developed</td>
<td>• All major parts of the project are present but may have problems.</td>
<td>• There are major problems or instructions were not followed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Structure is well developed and any minor omissions such as transition markers are appropriate.</td>
<td>• The structure is clear but there are minor problems that should be fixed.</td>
<td>• The structure is poorly developed or problems cause lack of clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The communication style is direct</td>
<td>• The communication style may be indirect at times.</td>
<td>• The communication style is mostly indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language and Accuracy</strong></td>
<td>• Effective use of broad vocabulary</td>
<td>• Uses topical vocabulary effectively</td>
<td>• The vocabulary level is insufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Errors do not cause lack of clarity</td>
<td>• Errors cause lack of clarity</td>
<td>• Errors cause significant lack of clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The paper reads smoothly and does not require rereading</td>
<td>• Some slowing down or rereading may be necessary</td>
<td>• A lot of rereading is required for comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>• The thesis and conclusion are well supported</td>
<td>• The thesis and conclusion are logically supported.</td>
<td>• There are formatting errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ideas are well developed and sophisticated.</td>
<td>• Ideas are explained but may draw from a limited knowledge base.</td>
<td>• Ideas are not explained sufficiently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The concluding sentence or statement gives a clear call to action,</td>
<td>• The concluding sentence or statement is just a paraphrase of the thesis</td>
<td>• The concluding sentence or statement is absent, unclear or the same words as the thesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>recommendation, evaluation or prediction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Scaffolding Strategies Used in Teaching Listening Comprehension to Young Learners

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Abstract

Listening is considered a difficult skill to learn, especially for young learners. Therefore, students need “scaffolding”, a support structure that helps them comprehend the listening tasks in hand. Drawing on classroom observations and interviews, we reported a case study to investigate how an elementary school English teacher of grade 6 planned and applied scaffolding strategies to help his young learners in the listening comprehension lesson. The data from the interviews and observations were transcribed and qualitatively analyzed. The findings revealed that the teacher planned and adopted the macro scaffolding strategies of task sequencing, building on students’ existing knowledge, setting explicit learning goals, and cooperative learning. At the micro level, the teacher implemented modeling and demonstration, visual aids, explanations and instructions, repetition, focusing students’ attention and checking their understanding, allowing learners time to think and respond, and providing more opportunities for students to say more. The importance of both levels of scaffolding strategies, the relationship between them, and the flexibility in executing the plan were also discussed. The implication arising from this study indicates that scaffolding strategies such as physical demonstration, visual aids, and repetition are helpful in teaching young learners. It is recommended for curriculum designers and teachers to allocate the micro strategies within the macro ones when planning as it is useful in articulating effective pedagogical practices.

Keywords: listening comprehension, scaffolding strategies, young learners

Introduction

In Thailand, English is considered a foreign language and it is not commonly spoken in the society. According to Simasangyaporn (2016), listening is not given the importance it deserves, as it is not usually tested. Among the four skills in English language learning, listening is the initial stage in first and second language acquisition. It is considered the channel through which language is naturally acquired (Nunan, 2008; Rost, 2011). Moreover, researchers have considered listening as one of the key communication skills due to its importance in running communication in different aspects of life (Battel, 2006; Field, 2008; Nunan, 2008). Since communication is a two-sided process, a message cannot be communicated unless there is someone to receive it. Thus, listening comprehension is both pre-requisite
However, listening is treated as one of the most difficult skills to learn and consequently to teach (Rost, 2011; Simasangyaporn, 2016). Due to its difficulty and importance, researchers consider listening as a significant skill to develop in foreign language learning, and listening activities should be facilitated and supported to help learners develop their listening skills (Kurita, 2012; Rost, 2011; Simasangyaporn, 2016; Vandergrift, 2007). Strategies on how to help learners have been suggested by some researchers. They include preparing learners to listen, providing support during listening, selecting appropriate tasks, providing positive feedback, teacher’s modeling of appropriate listening strategies, direct instruction, and guided practice (Al Aila, 2015; Gibbons, 2015; Goh, 2017; Reiser & Tabak, 2014). These kinds of support and help have been referred to as “scaffolding”, which is what a teacher does when working with a learner to solve a problem, carry out a task, achieve a goal or acquire a skill (Gibbons, 2015; Reiser & Tabak, 2014; Van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010).

Previous studies have recognized that scaffolding has significantly contributed to the improvement of the English language listening skill among EFL (English as a foreign language) learners. For instance, Maturana (2016) found that implementing scaffolding in forms of authentic and semi-authentic aural materials developed the listening comprehension skill of third graders in the primary school context in Colombia. Moreover, Shabani and Malekdar (2016) indicated that collaborative scaffolding strategies were effective in enhancing Iranian EFL learners’ listening comprehension. Besides, Talebinejad and Akhgar (2015) confirmed the significant impact of the teacher’s scaffolding on listening achievement in male and female EFL learners. Reviewing these studies, we have noticed that their emphasis is mainly placed on the effectiveness of scaffolding in developing EFL learners’ listening comprehension. What has been underexplored is the examination of how teachers plan to scaffold and teach a listening comprehension lesson. Therefore, this research aims to bridge the gap and provide a better understanding of the scaffolding strategies that a teacher deploys in teaching listening comprehension to young learners.

**Literature review**

1) **Teaching listening comprehension to young learners**

Listening comprehension is the ability to hear and to understand what others say. It is the relationship between the speaker, the listener, and the message. That relationship is important due to the fact that when we listen, there is a message and a person involved. The meaning of the message depends on the understanding and the intention that each of them has at the moment (Hamouda, 2013; Jafari & Hashim, 2015; Lynch, 2001; Rost, 2011). Besides, the listeners need to use their knowledge to get the appropriate intention from what they listen to. This includes knowing speech sounds, comprehending for communication and a bridge to learning a language (Field, 2008; Hamouda, 2013; Nunan, 2008; Rost, 2011).
the meaning of individual words and understanding the syntax of sentences (Anderson, 2015; Hamouda, 2013; Wilson, 2008). Therefore, listening comprehension activities in classrooms should encourage the learners to share and interact in these activities; as such their participation in interactive listening comprehension activities will show how much they comprehend what they listen to (Anderson, 2015; Rost, 2011).

For young learners (YLs) in particular, researchers agree that teaching this group of learners is different from teaching adults. At young age, they are still considered to have the advantage of being better at developing some areas of language skills, particularly in listening skill (Cameron, 2001; Klein, 2005; Pinter, 2017). However, children’s attention span is very short and can be interrupted easily (Pinter, 2017). Therefore, tasks should be varied and motivation should be maintained. YLs also enjoy playing and movement. They rely on the spoken word as well as the physical word to convey and understand meaning. If they can work out messages from meaningful contexts while having fun, YLs are more likely to pick up the second language (Harmer, 2007; Pinter, 2017; Scott & Yetberg, 2004).

On the other hand, Ellis and Brewster (2014) state that the objective is to focus children’s attention not only on what they learn from listening but also how they learn to become more effective and independent learners. This can be achieved if teachers scaffold children's understanding of listening tasks more effectively and guide their attention to specific parts of what they listen to.

2) Scaffolding

Scaffolding in education is mainly to describe the support provided by teachers during the process of learning. It has been considered as the support given to students which is tailored to their needs in fulfilling learning goals (Gibbons, 2015; Reiser & Tabak, 2014). With the modified role, teachers employ scaffolding to help students construct their knowledge and promote effective learning. Scaffolding is initially added, and then modified, increased or decreased based on students’ needs and responses, and eventually removed when no longer needed (Kamil, 2017; Reiser & Tabak, 2014; Van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010). Researchers have suggested that the main benefits of scaffolding include: a) Learners will successfully perform certain tasks and move to more complex ones. Learners become more responsible for their learning, more motivated, and more successful when guided, supported and provided with the necessary attributes, b) Scaffolding also engages learners. The learners do not passively listen to the information presented, instead, through teachers’ prompting the learners to build on prior knowledge and forms new knowledge themselves, and c) Scaffolding can minimize the level of frustration of the learners (Kamil, 2017; Maturana, 2016; Reiser & Tabak, 2014; Vacca, 2008). It can be used to aid learners who are easily frustrated when facing a challenging task.

To implement scaffolding, teachers need to plan their lessons considering lesson outcomes, students’ level, age, prior knowledge, and select appropriate tasks and materials. Researchers have referred to these strategies as macro-level of scaffolding, while the tailored support provided during teaching to aid students’ understanding of a task has been referred to as micro-level of scaffolding (Al
Aila, 2015; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Hogan and Presley’s (1997) scaffolding guidelines to identify the macro and micro strategies used in both planning and teaching include “pre-engagement with the learners and curriculum; actively diagnosing the understandings and needs of the learners; establishing a goal of the lesson and sharing it with the learners; providing tailored assistance; maintaining the pursuit of the goal; controlling frustration; giving feedback; and assisting internalization, independence, and generalization to other contexts” (pp. 186). In this study, these guidelines are adopted to single out the macro and micro strategies used in the listening comprehension lesson.

The literature is replete with studies on scaffolding effectiveness in developing EFL learners’ skills of speaking (Chen & Zhao, 2016; Goh, 2017), writing (Faraj, 2015; Vonna, Mukminatien & Laksmi, 2015), and reading (Al Aila, 2015; Rahimi & Ghanbari, 2011), but a few studies have focused on scaffolding in listening skills (Maturana, 2016; Shabani & Malekdar, 2016; Talebinejad & Akhgar, 2015). It is worth noting that these few studies have mainly investigated the impact or the belief of scaffolding in developing EFL learners’ listening comprehension skills without a deep description on how teachers planned and applied scaffolding strategies in teaching listening comprehension, particularly to young learners. To this end, this study aimed to investigate how the teacher planned and applied scaffolding strategies to help his young learners in a listening comprehension lesson. To fulfill the aim of this study, the researchers attempt to answer the following question:

How does a teacher scaffold young learners in the planning and teaching stages of a listening comprehension lesson?

Methodology

Our research is conducted through a case study. According to Yin (2018), the benefits of this research method are twofold. On the one hand, it allows an in-depth exploration of a contemporary phenomenon. On the other hand, a case study deals with “the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points” (Yin, 2018, p. 46). We believe that the deployment of such approach not only enables us to examine the particularity of a specific issue, but also helps understand “how an intricate set of circumstances come together and interact in shaping the social world around us” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 153). In the meantime, we are aware that this research does not intend to make a generalizable conclusion but rather to place an emphasis on the implementation of scaffolding.

The research participant we recruited was an in-service native EFL teacher from the U.K. For the purpose of the study, he has been anonymized as Tim. At the time of data collection, Tim was an English teacher of grade 6, who was in charge of two listening classes. More importantly, through his professional contacts with the first researcher, he exhibited his persistence and determination to help learners improve their listening skill. Thus, Tim was invited for the study. He was asked for an interview to discuss his lesson plan, an observation for one listening lesson that was repeated for 2 classes, and a post-teaching interview.
In the data collection process, Tim took part in two semi-structured interviews, which were held at pre- and post-teaching stages of his listening classes. These two interviews, which were audiotaped and transcribed, ranged from 45 to 80 minutes. The pre-interview focused on the preparation for his listening classes, and how he planned to scaffold the learners. Data were also sought on what challenges he anticipated and how he planned to tackle the potential difficulties in his 2 classes. In the teaching stage, the first researcher observed Tim’s classes in an unobtrusive manner to gain insight into his scaffoldings techniques and to prepare questions for the post-interview, which took place after the classes. The post-interview aimed to investigate Tim’s reflection on the lesson and the factors that affected his decision to conform or to deviate from the plan.

In response to our research question, thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) was adopted to analyze Tim’s data. As the first step, we immersed ourselves in the transcripts to garner the initial sense. After iterative readings, we started jotting down interesting points on the margin. Then we moved to the stage where manual categorization occurred. In this stage, open and axial coding concepts (Huberman & Miles, 2002) were borrowed to identify thematic categories from interviews and class observations. Meanwhile, these identified categories were constantly compared to triangulate the participant’s perspectives. We also realize that researchers’ bias in data inquiry is likely to emerge (Creswell, 2005). Thus, Tim’s transcripts were respectively analyzed by two authors and then we compared two sets of themes between one another. In this way, a dozen of unanimous categories were generated and then sorted into different broader themes. In what follows, these finalized themes were further divided into two levels of strategies (macro and micro) based on our understanding of scaffolding guidelines (Hogan & Presley, 1997).

Results

The data from the interviews and observations show that Tim scaffolded his students at the macro and micro levels in both the planning and teaching stages.

Macro scaffolding strategies used

Data from the interview and observation suggested that Tim planned three and used five macro scaffolding strategies in his lesson as in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Macro strategy</th>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tasks sequencing and selection</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Expanding students’ existing knowledge</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cooperative learning</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Setting explicit learning goals and sharing them with students</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Controlling students’ frustration</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tasks sequencing

From the plan and observation, Tim selected a wide variety of tasks and sequenced them by moving from easy to difficult and from words level to sentences level, so that each task serves as a building block with the subsequent one while moving from a stage to another during the lesson. Tim started from the easier stage -Warm-up- that included a game with easy vocabulary for students (right, left), and simple directions (stand up, sit down). In the second stage, he introduced more difficult directions (go straight, go one block, turn right, and turn left). In the practicing stage, Tim started by giving one direction phrases to students to act out. Then he gave students sets of directions to act out in the production stage.

Expanding students’ existing knowledge

Tim clearly stated in the pre-teaching interview that his plan was an expansion of students’ background knowledge:

“First, I will go through the vocabulary most students know and know how to pronounce them. Then I’ll move into actions. For example ‘turn left’.”

Tim planned to start from the known and familiar words such as right, left, stand up and sit down and extended the lesson to the new target expressions, such as turn right, turn left, go straight, go one block, go two blocks etc.

Cooperative learning

Tim planned and used this macro strategy in both classes to engage the students. He planned to use pair and group activities in the lesson. He clearly stated the use of this strategy in his plan as the extracts show:

“I’ll get one or 2 pairs of students in front to give and act the actions to engage them, and be more active.”

Setting explicit learning goals and sharing them with students

In class, Tim told his students the goals of comprehending the directions and highlighted the importance of directions in real life. He first asked them what they would do if they were asked by a foreigner on how to go somewhere. Then he pointed out the importance of understanding directions in the O-NET (Ordinary National Education Test). Tim told the students that directions with pictures were common in the O-NET. Tim didn’t plan this scaffolding strategy but he added it in the actual teaching. He clarified in the post-teaching interview that he added this strategy to motivate students, as in the following extract:
“I found from O-NET previous tests that directions are included in the tests, and I wanted them to pay more attention. I also said it will be helpful in their daily life.”

Controlling students’ frustration

This is another unplanned macro strategy. Tim tried to control his students’ frustration and encourage them to answer. He told his students not to worry, and not to be afraid of making mistakes. Tim also said it was ok to make mistakes and if we don’t make mistakes, we won’t learn.

“Some students are shy in general and afraid if they make mistakes, their friends would laugh at them,. they make mistakes as it is a part of their learning, and they won’t speak out. Even if they make mistakes, I tell them it’s fine and not a problem.”

Micro scaffolding strategies used

Tim seemed to have a detailed scaffolding strategies plan, and he was flexible employing them in class. No unplanned scaffolding was noticed.

| Table 2: Micro scaffolding strategies planned and used in the lesson |
|------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Micro strategy | Plan | Teaching |
| 1.Modeling and Demonstration | √ | √ |
| 2.Explanation and Instruction | √ | √ |
| 3.Visual aids | √ | √ |
| 4. Repetition of key points | √ | √ |
| 5. Focusing students’ attention and checking their understanding | √ | √ |
| 6. Allowing learners a time to think and respond | √ | √ |
| 7.Providing more opportunities for students to say more | √ | √ |

Modeling and Demonstration

Tim planned to use modeling and demonstration strategies throughout the lesson. To help students comprehend, he planned to model the target expressions pronunciation, and demonstrate by showing students how to physically act out those expressions, as shown in the following excerpts:

“I will say these expressions and physically do them at the same time and hopefully, it will be easy for them because they can see me do the actions. For example ‘turn left’ I'll physically do the action.”

In class, the researchers observed that Tim used this strategy in both the strong and the weaker classes. However, it was observed that this strategy was used more often in the weaker class.
Explanation and instructions

Tim planned to write the expressions on the board and verbally explain the meaning to the students. He explicitly used this strategy during the teaching stages. However, the researchers noticed that Tim had to explain more for the weaker class. For example, his explanation appeared to be the translation of the words’ meanings in the students’ first language (Thai) to help them comprehend, for example, Tim said “khwa (right) and sai (left)”. In the post-teaching interview, Tim justified doing this to help students comprehend the concept of the target language.

“Just to help in strengthening their understanding. They know them in Thai.... So I find the occasional use of their L1 to connect it with L2 is helpful ... I wanted them to know the concept of giving directions.”

Moreover, Tim verbally gave instructions step by step and added written instructions on the board in the weaker class. For example, he wrote ‘Simon says stand up’ and ‘Stand up’ on the board. Then he put a ‘√’ and ‘×’ after the phrases to aid students’ understanding as follows:

“Simon says stand up √.”
“Stand up ×.”

Visual aids

Tim planned to use visual aids to help his students understand the listening lesson. For example, he planned to use the classroom seating to help students understand the meaning of expressions like “Cross the street and “Go one block”. Tim arranged the classroom seating into blocks-like shape using the chairs, then he told the students to imagine that a chair was a building and surrounded by four streets. Tim then placed two chairs next to each other with a space between them to help students visually comprehend that space is a street, and a chair is a block. This visual aid seemed to work with the strong class, but not with the weaker one. Tim actually had thought about this problem in the planning stage and therefore implemented another form of visual aids. Tim scaffolded the weaker students using visual aids in the form of pictures drawing to help them comprehend. He drew six squares with lines separating and surrounding them. Tim pointed out that each square was a building block, and each line was a street. At this point, the researchers noticed that drawing did actually help the weaker students to get the idea of streets and blocks.

Repetition of key points

Tim also planned to repeat the target expressions to remind the students of key points.

“I would go again over the vocabulary to strengthen their understanding.”
In class, every time Tim mentioned any of the target expressions of directions, he repeated those expressions and asked the students to repeat as they listened to him. Repeated pronunciation drilling was used more often in introducing the target expressions stage. Tim also repeated directions to the students who acted out the directions in the practicing stage. Moreover, Tim did more repetition in the weaker class than in the strong class as planned.

*Focusing students’ attention and checking their understanding*

Tim planned to keep the students focused and to check their understanding of directions. To apply this strategy, Tim planned to use “Simon says” game in the warm-up stage. Tim justified that the use of this game would help focus his students’ attention and to prepare the right mood. Besides, the game would serve as a mean to check the students’ understanding.

> “Will start with ‘Simon says’ to get them in the mood for listening for instructions and directions. They have to listen to ‘Simon says’ and the directions that follow to make sure those students are listening carefully.”

In the actual teaching, “Simon says” game seemed to be fun and engaging as both classes enjoyed it. The activity somehow went as planned in both classes with some extra help in the weaker one as mentioned earlier. It created a fun atmosphere, focused students’ listening attention, and helped in checking their understanding of simple directions as they performed well while listening to Tim. Moreover, Tim asked the students after each stage if it was clear or not to check their understanding. After the students confirmed using the word “clear”, Tim moved on to the next stage.

*Allowing learners time to think and respond*

Knowing his students level, Tim planned to give them time to think before responding. In the practice stage, Tim gave directions to the students to act, and he got the students to give directions to each other in the production stage. In both stages, Tim didn’t push his students to act quickly. The researchers noticed that the students were allowed a waiting time (average of 15 seconds) to think of what Tim and their peers directed them to do, and then responded by doing the actions.

*Providing more opportunities for students to say more*

Tim planned to provide more chances for his students to speak. Those opportunities were planned in forms of participation by the students. Tim planned to ask his students to give directions to their peers to act. The researchers observed that the students were given the chance to participate in the lesson in both classes. In the production stage, the students chose directions and gave to their peers to act them out. Some students gave one direction at a time like go straight, while in others, especially in the strong class, provided more directions, like go one block and turn right.
To sum up, the results showed that Tim had a detailed lesson plan to scaffold his young learners on both the macro and micro levels of strategies. However, Tim adapted his plan for both classes in the actual teaching. The adaption of the plan seemed to be by adding or expanding to help his students comprehend the tasks given. For instance, Tim adapted his plan when he added the macro strategy of controlling students’ frustration and encouraging them to take the risk to answer when he asked for volunteers to participate as he did not expect that his students would be frustrated. Moreover, Tim expanded the use of explanation, visual aids, and repetition in teaching the weaker class.

**Discussion**

The findings suggest that the teacher’s implementation of scaffolding to teach listening comprehension to young learners lies on both the detailed and flexible plan at the macro and micro levels, and the complement of the two levels of strategies.

The macro-level scaffolding provides the big picture of how to support students to achieve specific objectives of the lessons. This level helps teachers plan suitable tasks for their students. Macro-level planning takes account of the teachers’ goals; understanding of the language demands of the planned tasks; knowledge of students’ current abilities, and sequencing of tasks. The findings from the current study support Hammond and Gibbons’ (2005) findings concerning the importance of scaffoldings and how scaffoldings should be designed. It is necessary for teachers to plan to select and sequence tasks in ways that take account of different levels and abilities of specific groups of learners, and specific macro-level strategies are needed. As shown in the finding, Tim was well aware of the importance of a macro-level plan. He planned the tasks based on his students’ level and age. He thought of the overall objectives of the lesson and stages and selected and sequenced the tasks accordingly.

The micro-level scaffolding informs us that providing tailored support ensures the successful completion of each task of the lesson. This level of strategies is to support students to meet the demands of specific tasks that will assist the learners in achieving relevant goals, which pave the way for sustained learning. Previous studies reveal that micro-level of strategies is contingent in which support occurs at the moment of interaction between teachers and students (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; van de Pol, Volman, Oort & Beishuizen, 2015). However, we argue that micro-level scaffolding can also be planned if the teacher is experienced and well-aware of his students’ level as revealed from Tim’s plan.

More importantly, flexibility plays an integral part in the process of scaffolding. Planning to lead the learners to a better understanding of a task and the execution of the plan include support strategies provided continuously during learning. This means that lesson plans are subject to on-going adaptations and changes based on the learners’ level and the challenges they face as the lesson unfolds. To this end, we lend support to other studies (Lineback, 2015; Tabak & Radinsky, 2015) that in the actual teaching teachers need to have the ability to read the needs of students from moment to moment and the flexibility to improvise and act on those needs to accomplish learning goals. As revealed from
the findings, Tim was flexible in executing the plan, and made some changes to assist his students when they faced difficulties in understanding certain tasks.

To be effective, scaffolding requires tasks that enable learners to extend their cognitive understanding of a task to the following ones. For this to occur, we contend that the support provided at a micro level needs to be located within the macro framework of a planned lesson, which corresponds to Hammond and Gibbons’ (2005) conclusion that without the existence of the planned macro-level of scaffolding, support on the micro level may become simply a hit and miss affair that may contribute little to the learning. In other words, there is a need for complementing both levels of strategies in implementing scaffolding to achieve the objectives of the lesson. This indicates that having previously planned stages is important to decide which micro strategies to use in order to achieve the desired outcomes. In the case of Tim, his overall designed lesson helped him to decide which micro scaffolding strategies would fit in each task. For instance, he planned to activate students’ prior knowledge and check their understanding by using a game in the warm-up stage.

Conclusion and suggestions

This paper has explored how a teacher scaffolded young learners in a listening comprehension lesson. Young learners are a special group of students that need teachers to employ proper scaffolding strategies to support their learning. Pedagogically speaking, we suggest that there are three strategies for EFL teachers to consider when they deal with young learners: 1) Physical demonstration. Teachers should demonstrate difficult aspects of the lesson using body gestures, because young leaners tend to associate spoken words with physical expressions (Scott & Yetberg, 2004). In this way, it will help them understand what the teacher says; 2) Visual aids. As children are very much linked to their surroundings and their own understanding comes through hands and eyes and ears, visual aids will be of use to help learners remember information; 3) Repetition. Teachers should repeat the target language to improve learners’ memory and concentration, especially on low-level proficiency learners (Chang & Read, 2006; Talebinejad & Akhgar, 2015). We believe that these three strategies not only promote student engagement in the classroom, but also facilitate learners’ listening comprehension.

In conclusion, this investigation of scaffolding strategies used in teaching listening comprehension to young learners helps reflect the actual classrooms teaching. The findings highlighted the two levels of scaffolding strategies planning and the flexibility in implementing the plan. This study should be of interest to curriculum designers and teachers regarding the importance of planning to scaffold learners on both macro and micro levels, and the relationship between the two levels of scaffolding in articulating effective pedagogical practices. In the meantime, while this study was conducted on teaching listening comprehension to young learners, we hope that our findings will provide some insights into teaching other skills of English language to this particular group of learners.
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Exploring the Affordances of WeChat for Reflective Purposes on a CLIL Module Whilst Assessing Chinese University Students’ Participation and Interaction

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Abstract

This comparative action research study explores the affordances of WeChat, an instant messaging app, as a means of reflection for Chinese third year undergraduates studying an elective Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) module at a university in Shanghai, China. Although WeChat is multifaceted, students in the experimental group were assessed on their ability to reflect on lesson content – by writing weekly synchronous messages in English to a communal group chat – with their final exam scores later compared to an unknowing control group. Student participation was analysed quantitatively via content analysis, with the majority of students sending at least one message on a weekly basis. Learner interaction patterns were examined by qualitatively determining whether any of the student exchanges included High Level Messages – defined as posts that were sufficiently critical and/or personally reflective – however only three comments could be classed as such. Thus, several factors to increase the amount of High Level Messages including WeChat Reflection buddies, teacher intervention and pedagogical administration are considered. Findings showed that the experimental group unequivocally outperformed the control group in the final exam, and questionnaire data implied that student perceptions of the WeChat group were generally very positive. Finally, limitations and implications of the study are also discussed.

Keywords: WeChat, Reflection, CLIL, Participation, Interaction

Introduction

This action research project was influenced by and built on the pedagogical principles of the researcher’s Master’s dissertation which investigated the logistics of, and optimal administration for, building an online community for professional development and reflection through blogging. Although a slightly different context, the premise of using technology to explicitly express one’s reflections was not only similar but also current, pertinent and transferable. Consequently, this study explored the affordances of WeChat, a popular instant messaging app in China, as a means of reflection for Chinese third year undergraduates studying a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) module called
Western Culture at Shanghai University of International Business and Economics in Shanghai, China. The three key components of this study – CLIL, WeChat and reflection – along with a rationale, will now be discussed.

Firstly, CLIL is centred on a non-language subject being imparted through the medium of a foreign language, with content and language having a dual role (Coyle et al., 2010). As Western Culture was initially deemed too teacher-centred, with fairly complex and dense content, it was revamped as a communicative course. The foundations of CLIL were considered – cognition, content, culture and communication – as well as encouraging student “interaction with the world” (Coyle et al., 2010, p.29). Therefore, the use of technology was also implemented in order to enable students to comprehend the content more effectively.

As the approach to language learning has progressed in recent years, so too has the sophistication of technology. Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) can be defined as the use of a mobile device to improve the process of learning a language. These devices are mainly normalised in everyday life (Walker & White, 2013), and as this project took place in China, WeChat was chosen as the platform of choice due to its overwhelming ubiquity in the country. Moreover, since WeChat is embedded in Chinese culture, it was hoped that the familiarity of this platform would encourage student reflection on the class content.

Although there is no overriding consensus in the literature on the definition of reflection, Dewey (1933) is widely considered to have coined the notion of reflective thinking. Yet, in terms of this context, communication and technology are paramount. As such, Lave and Wenger (1991), through their work on communities of practice, emphasised the social process of reflection where learners no longer reflect individually but by actively participating in the social world.

Building on this notion of reflection through social interaction, Deng and Yuen (2011) proposed a framework centred on the educational affordances of blogging. This concept consisted of a three-stage linear continuum: self-reflective writing, then reflection activated through reading others’ posts, before eventually commenting in a dialogic, interactive manner. Thus, this action research project attempted to explore how the reflective process, fostered through WeChat, would allow students to understand the class content more effectively.

Materials and Methods

This comparative study occurred in the first semester of the 2017/2018 academic year which consisted of students in the experimental group being assessed on their ability to reflect on content by writing weekly synchronous messages in English to a communal group chat. There were 14 subjects (13 females and 1 male) in the experimental group, with 25 unknowing subjects in the control group. Learners studying this module were between B1 and B2 on the Common European Framework of
Reference (CEFR), received a weekly input of 90 minutes per lesson, and elected to take the class rather than it being a compulsory subject.

In terms of the assessment criteria, for both groups, attendance and note-taking were worth 10% each, and the final reading and writing exam equated to 60%. The solitary difference between the two cohorts was that, for the control group, the oral presentation component comprised 20% of the final grade whereas for the experimental group, the presentation and WeChat Reflection (WCR) were worth 15% and 5% respectively. It must be noted that the groups were only subjected to their own specific assessment criterion.

The teaching semester ran from Week 1 to Week 14, with the final exam taking place in Week 15. As the course was titled Western Culture, a number of topics were covered such as intercultural communication, politics, philosophy and religion. In order to introduce, fully explain and sufficiently scaffold WCR, it was deemed necessary to give thorough instructions and encourage questions during the first two lessons, with the activity beginning in Week 3. It was also decided that because Week 14 was a review lesson, WCR would finish in Week 13, therefore it ran for a total of 11 weeks between Weeks 3 and 13.

The first lesson introduced the notion of WCR; it aimed to encourage students to reflect on the weekly content, offer opinions about what they had learnt in that particular lesson, and also link the material to personal experiences. Students were informed that they would be assessed on both their participation (how much they took part) and interaction (how much they communicated with other classmates). Regarding when reflective messages should be sent, the deadline was after each class and before the start of the following lesson. Students were also urged to use their own words and warned about the consequences of plagiarism. In addition, they were implored to write in English throughout; using Chinese and the WeChat translation feature was discouraged. In week 2, students were quizzed and reminded of the regulations and requirements, as well as being instructed to change their group alias to their English name upon joining the WeChat group.

WCR began in Week 3, and it was asserted that a relevant question would be asked at the end of the lesson so students had something concrete to reflect on. Furthermore, at the end of the class in Week 3, and also in Week 4, students were given verbal and written reminders that they were being assessed on their participation and interaction. During Week 4 – a few days after that weeks’ lesson – as there had been no interaction between the subjects, the researcher sent an open-ended question to one particular student which elucidated an anecdotal response, before the researcher thanked the student for their insight and linked their message to a later lesson. It is worth noting that these were the only occasions that the researcher got actively involved in the process. As a result, it was also decided that students would no longer be reminded of the requirements during lessons, thus the researcher was a silent observer for the duration of the task until its completion. During the review lesson in Week 14, students were asked for their university email addresses, then they took the content-focused final exam.
in Week 15. After the exams were marked and moderated over the following week, the researcher compared the average marks of the experimental group with the control group to discover which cohort achieved the higher average score in the final exam. While obtaining higher scores does not necessarily infer a greater level of comprehension, ultimately this did help determine which group had grasped the content better in terms of demonstrating an understanding of the course in an exam setting.

A week after the exam, an email was sent to students in the experimental group detailing that the researcher would like to analyse the WeChat group for research purposes and was therefore seeking retrospective consent for completing a questionnaire about the course, which would be useful for the future direction of the module. It was explained that the group messages and questionnaires would be anonymous as students would be able to write their English name and also choose a pseudonym. It was also stated that withdrawal from the process would be acceptable at any point. Finally, students were asked to offer their response with regards to consent by replying to the email by stating ‘Yes’ or ‘No,’ as well as outlining their chosen pseudonym. Only students who responded ‘Yes’ were sent a link to a Survey Monkey questionnaire, with the above information summarised as a final ethical consideration. Students were asked 10 questions; three open questions where students had space to offer their opinions, and seven closed questions which used a Likert Scale system ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The ten questions – with the open questions emboldened – were as follows:

1. What is your English name?
2. Did you enjoy the WCR aspect of the module?
3. Were you satisfied with the amount you messaged in the WeChat group?
4. Were you satisfied with the amount of interaction you had with your classmates in the WeChat group?
5. Did you only send messages in the WeChat group because it was assessed and a course requirement?
6. How did the WCR benefit you?
7. Do you think an online community developed throughout the course?
8. Do you think having a WCR buddy would have been a good idea? (WCR buddy = a classmate assigned to be your partner during the WCR task)
9. Why/why not?
10. How would you improve the WCR aspect of the module?

This study was a mixed methods approach – using quantitative and qualitative techniques – as not only does it provide a richer set of data, but it also eliminates the possibility of researcher bias and increases the likelihood of obtaining reliable results (Cohen et al., 2011). Firstly, questionnaires were chosen as they are a common instrument when collecting information from participants and it is straightforward to ask both qualitative and quantitative questions. However, it is imperative for “the language and the concepts behind the language” to “be within the grasp of the respondents” (Cohen et al., 2011, p.383). As a result, the language was sufficiently graded and abstract terms were defined (EG: Q8).
In terms of analysing the messages in the WeChat group, the conversation history was exported to a Microsoft Word document; the majority of the data contained standard text, but as there were also pictures, emoji’s and emoticons, it was decided that these would all constitute one word each. Content analysis was used to quantitatively compare the participation levels of the 14 subjects because it is a highly useful technique for “making replicable and valid inferences from texts” (Krippendorp, 2004, p.18). To compare the quantity of messages, a study carried out by Domalewska (2014) was valuable in order to determine student participation, with the number of messages and the average length in words of a message being the two key characteristics.

However, investigating the quality of messages is slightly more contentious. Domalewska (2014, p.24) also used a category which judged the content of a message (EG: informative). Furthermore, other categories such as social (exchanging pleasantries) and affective (expressing gratitude) were considered, but compartmentalizing comments into distinct categories was eventually disregarded as it was deemed too subjective and time-consuming, with certain messages also likely to fall into more than one category. As students were initially informed that they were being assessed on their participation and interaction, in terms of the latter, the researcher was predominantly concerned with inspecting the interaction patterns of the WeChat group. Thus, whenever a message resulted in a direct response from a fellow student, this was considered to be an interaction, therefore it was qualitatively examined as to whether it could be adjudged a High Level Message. Consequently, this was defined as when the content of the message showed a sufficient amount of criticality and/or personal reflection.

**Results and Discussion**

**Table 1: Final Exam Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Number of Exam Takers</th>
<th>Average Mark</th>
<th>Mark Range from 90-100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>88.4%</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75.8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that the experimental group unequivocally outperformed the control group in the final exam. Although there were fewer students in the former, 64.3% attained exam marks between the range of 90-100 whereas only 8% of the control group achieved this feat. Moreover, the average mark of students in the experimental group was 12.6% higher than the control group. As a result, it seems to imply that WCR played a role and was a factor in this disparity.
Table 2: Content Analysis of the WeChat (Experimental) Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Messages</th>
<th>Average Length of Words per Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luyu</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>85.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celine</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>44.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildness</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>87.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>66.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zulu</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>97.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cristiano</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>90.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thev</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>166.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexi</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>85.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>147.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jodie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>278.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yaz</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Researcher</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 illustrates that there was a vast range in participation between the subjects. Firstly, as WCR was worth 5% of the students’ overall grade, it was decided at the end of the semester that students would receive the full quota if they had sent 11 messages, due to the fact that the activity lasted for 11 weeks. Thus, for those who had failed to send that amount of messages, their score was reflected by how much they had participated. Although students were initially informed that they were being judged on their participation and interaction within the WeChat group, participation was deemed the fairest and optimal method of judgement because there was a considerable amount of activity in the group and the majority of students did actively participate by sending messages on a weekly basis. The following section will discuss and analyse some of the messages, in their original form, which students sent to the WeChat group throughout the task.

Excerpt 1 – Week 5

Luyu:
In the class on week 5, I had a general knowledge of Western Religion. I know there are monotheism and polytheism which means single god and various gods respectively.

Excerpt 2 – Week 13

Celine (A):
What’s more, Christmas is time for family reunion, setting up christmas tree and eating a big dinner with turkey.

Winnie (A):
Have you ever eaten turkey?

Celine (B):
Hhh yes I think so … I had eaten turkey in Hong Kong Disneyland haha
The majority of the messages were paraphrased or summarised reflections about the content; 
excerpt 1 is an example as Luyu restates material which was covered during the religion lesson. There 
was also evidence of social messages occurring in the group, especially during Week 13, with one 
example given in the exchange between Celine and Winnie in Excerpt 2. Though both types of message 
are undoubtedly useful in their own ways – paraphrased content for better understanding the material, 
and social messages for building relationships – neither were critically reflective by nature. Yet, excerpts 
3 and 4 show the High Level Messages which are followed by *(HLM)* with spelling mistakes highlighted 
by *(sic)*.

**Excerpt 3 – Week 8**

**Wildness (A):**
Indeed, many teenagers are obsessed with computer games. It seems that we become a “games addicting 
generation”

**Liz (A):**
Guess I’m a freak cause I don’t play the Glory of Kings nowadays. Feeling a little upset.

**Wildness (B):**
You never played “The Glory of Kings?” If so, it is incredible

**Wildness (C):**
I have great self control and I didn’t play it at first. However, when all your friends and roomates *(sic)* play it, I feel an indispensible *(sic)* power to tempt me play the game. It may call the conformity. *(HLM)*

**Liz (B):**
Just once. I think it’s too boring and low tech content. I prefer WOW and Heart Stone etc. Even COC is much more interesting than the glory of kings. Playing the glory of kings is really a good way to make friends and enhance the emotional bond. *(HLM)*

**Excerpt 4 – Week 13**

**Cristiano:**
Finally, I want the latest Nintendo Switch as my Xmas gift.

**Liz:**
I like the design of Pro, which makes playing games more comfortable and flexible. You can play games 
with Pro in many positions, it doesn’t require two hands holding together any longer which is extremely 
attractive. There’s many funny stories about it on microblog. *(HLM)*

Regarding High Level Messages – posts which showed a sufficient amount of criticality and/or 
personal reflection – there were three overall, and two appeared during Week 8 in Excerpt 3. Wildness 
(C) states that initially she was able to control herself when it came to playing a computer game called 
The Glory of Kings, but gradually felt pressured by her peers and eventually conformed, which was 
deemed sufficiently personally reflective. Liz (B) responds by being quite critical of the game at first – 
comparing it to others she views as superior – before mitigating her response by claiming it does have 
some positives; as such, this was deemed sufficiently critical. The other High Level Message occurred 
during Week 13 in Excerpt 4. Cristiano mentions a type of console before Liz critiques it in detail, which 
was seen as both sufficiently critical and personally reflective as Liz’s account is seemingly experiential.
Although there were certainly fewer High Level Messages than the researcher expected, all three were interestingly centred on gaming which implies that the topic was something students were interested in, felt comfortable openly discussing and possibly even enjoyed communicating about. However, as there was a scarcity of High Level Messages in the interaction patterns of the WeChat group, it was viewed as crucial to assess the students’ responses in the post-study questionnaire. In this vein, the following section will present noteworthy questionnaire data and analyse student responses to ascertain how such studies could yield an increased level of interaction involving criticality and personal reflection.

Table 3 – Student responses to “Did you enjoy the WCR aspect of the module?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 – Student responses to “Do you think an online community developed throughout the module?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 – Student responses to “Did you only send messages in the WeChat group because it was assessed and a course requirement?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses to these three questions were fundamental because if students had not appreciated the concept of the activity, had only sent messages as it was compulsory, or had never felt comfortable with their peers online, then motivation alone could have been the determining factor behind the lack of High Level Messages. In essence, motivation can be defined as the “reasons underlying behaviour” (Guay et al., 2010, p.712). However, students did generally enjoy WCR (table 3) and also felt that an online community had developed (table 4). Moreover, students did not merely complete the task as it was mandatory and on the whole they were undecided when asked about their motivating factors (table 5). Interestingly, Garza and Smith (2015) found that an online community for reflection had been cultivated but it was unclear and possibly contentious to assume whether the academic rewards had outweighed the reflective benefits. Regardless, a lack of student motivation in this study was deemed too reductionist, therefore it was important to enquire about other pedagogical factors.
WCR Buddies

Table 6 – Student responses to “Do you think having a WCR buddy would have been a good idea? (WCR buddy = a classmate assigned to be your partner during the task)”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excerpt 5 – Student response to “Why/why not?”

Wildness: Because different people have different ideas toward the same things. Through WeChat reflection, I have to form my own understanding before I say something. Besides, I get different reaction and opinions.

As Table 6 shows, almost half of the subjects believed that having a partner for this task would have been conducive. When asked to justify their opinion, although this notion may have been too restrictive for some, many commented on the social and reflective advantages that this could bring. Thus, in excerpt 5, Wildness alludes to the aforementioned linear process posited by Deng and Yuen (2011) which was centred on sending a message, reading others’ messages, then commenting. This buddy system would also offer the benefit of granting every student a definite audience, which is extremely powerful in the writing process, because if students were assigned a partner then this could result in higher quality reflections as they might feel that the interaction is more purposeful and therefore meaningful. Another option would be to put students into groups and assign a leader, as evidenced in a collaborative writing study carried out on WeChat by Yan (2019), who found that there were many benefits to this method. However, there was one main difference between that research and this context – teacher intervention – but also one similarity which was time fragmentation, that can be viewed as an administration issue. Therefore, these two notions will now be discussed.

Teacher Intervention

Excerpt 6 – Student responses to “How would you improve the WCR aspect of the module?”

Celine: The teacher should join in or we will feel like doing a must-do task rather than talking in a communication group

Miss: I would like our teacher to join us and light the atmosphere sometimes
Celine and Miss, in excerpt 6, profess the opinion that they would have appreciated some teacher participation during the process; it might have assuaged the assessment side of the task and also lightened the ambiance of the group. In Yan’s (2019) study, the teacher was an active member of the group chat, however WCR was assessed. Consequently, when such tasks are assessed, teachers ought to withdraw from the group as it is somewhat contentious to become too involved as there should ideally be a strict level of parity to ensure objectivity and reliability.

**Excerpt 7 – Teacher’s messages during Week 4**

**Researcher (A):**
Interesting insight – how is it poetic, and what exactly do you find romantic about it?

**Researcher (B):**
Very creative and insightful. We’ll be touching on this during our Mythical Creatures lesson next week.

That being said, in excerpt 7, the researcher did send two short messages to one particular student during Week 4. As there was a paucity of communication, the initial open-ended question by Researcher (A) was essentially a palpable reminder for all subjects to interact but it also acted as a model in which to potentially initiate future conversations. It is worth noting that these were the only two occasions when the researcher got actively involved in the process and only did so to encourage interaction – and therefore student autonomy – because students believed it was a core requirement of the task and seemingly needed this brief prompt.

**Administration**

**Excerpt 8 – Teacher question to students at the end of the lesson in Week 3:**
“How important is language to culture?”

Setting a concrete question in the first week of the task for students to reflect on was deemed pedagogically necessary because it would encourage both participation and interaction. This question, related to the lesson content, can be seen in excerpt 8. Warschauer (2006) vouches for this tactic as students are said to be more engaged in a task when a topic is assigned because ultimately they then have a conversational goal. Asking further questions in the subsequent weeks was considered but it was felt that this might restrict student reflections. However, as Winnie implies in excerpt 9, the researcher could have urged the students to ask specific questions related to class content. Ultimately this would have certainly empowered students in the process and may have also led to deeper interactions.
Excerpt 9 – Student responses to “How would you improve the WCR aspect of the module?”

**Winnie:**
Tutor can encourage students to ask some questions about the lesson in wechat

**Wildness:**
I think at first we have little communication because we don’t know what should send to the platform and we afraid of making mistakes. If teachers give some guidance at first, I can we can better communicate and interact with each other.

Also in excerpt 9, Wildness claims that the low level of interaction was because students were reluctant to make mistakes and if the researcher had provided more scaffolding while setting up the task, this may have resulted in increased levels of communication. Admittedly, although the first two weeks of the semester were set aside for instructions and questions, an example conversation would have undoubtedly aided students. For example, a fictional interaction could have displayed students critically reflecting on content covered during the first two weeks, thus acting as a model for learners to aspire to thereafter.

The last administrative factor is time fragmentation. As Yan (2019) found, students sent messages at different times therefore it was difficult for consistent interactions to occur. Interestingly, Wuyungaowa (2015) also experienced problems with time fragmentation when using WeChat for a group learning project and felt that there was an absence of academic discussion in the group due to, amongst other factors, the students’ low level of English. However, this was certainly not the case in this context as students were between B1 and B2 on the CEFR. Nevertheless, it might have been more beneficial to stipulate stricter parameters when sending messages as students were only urged to do so between the end of the lesson and before the start of the following one. Had they been given a smaller timeframe to reflect, or specific times each week, this may have resulted in an increased amount of high level interactions.

All in all, though there was a lack of High Level Messages, the experience was certainly beneficial for students in a number of ways, as can be seen in excerpt 10. Luyu claims that her English aptitude had progressed, and They state it helped with her spelling. Zulu’s comment is centred on identity because seeing other messages encouraged her to be more diligent in the reflective process, with Cristiano echoing the powerful social process of reflection. Yet most importantly, Liz muses that she acquired fresh understandings from rereading the messages, and Wildness professes that she understood the content better through reviewing the material. Therefore, this seems to imply that the student experience of the task was wholly positive.

Excerpt 10 – Student responses to “How did the WCR benefit you?”

**Luyu:**
Improve my English ability

**They:**
English spelling
Zulu:
I could see the idea from my classmates, and because of the WeChat Reflection, I thought I am one of my class and wanted to study hard to reflect better.

Cristiano:
Reflection made it possible for me to share and acknowledge various personal opinions.

Liz:
Gain new insights through reviewing old material and classmates’ opinion

Wildness:
It helps me review the lesson we learned and through communication, I have a better understanding of the class.

Conclusions

This comparative action research study explored the reflective affordances of WeChat for Chinese undergraduates studying a CLIL module at a university in China. Students in the experimental group were judged on their ability to reflect on lesson content – in terms of participation and interaction – by writing synchronous messages in English on a weekly basis to a shared group chat, with their final exam scores later compared to an unknowing control group.

Participation was assessed quantitatively via content analysis and the majority of students sent messages every week, with many far exceeding this core requirement. Interaction was retrospectively not assessed but after further content analysis of the interaction patterns, there was concrete evidence of communication occurring in the group. In order to decipher the quality of these exchanges, a qualitative criterion was created centred on High Level Messages – defined as messages that were sufficiently critical and/or personally reflective – however, only three examples were found. Thus, a number of considerations to increase levels of High Level Messages were discussed.

Questionnaire data implied that perceptions of the experience were generally positive as the majority of students seemed to enjoy WCR, while also benefitting from it in myriad ways. Lastly, as the experimental group indisputably achieved higher exam scores than the control group, this potentially infers that they understood the content better.

Limitations

This study had clear benefits but there were also certain limitations. Essentially, CLIL modules should have a dual focus on content and language, however this assessed study was solely focused on students reflecting on the content, largely due to the fact that the final exam was content-oriented. Thus, language errors were neglected in WCR which was unfortunate yet also unavoidable in this context. Another limitation was that there were 14 subjects in the WeChat group and 11 responses to the questionnaire. Though this study garnered many interesting results and reflections, overall generalisations should be somewhat restrained due to its modest sample size.
Content analysis confirmed that many students participated more than anticipated and the test scores of the experimental group were impressive compared to the control group. However, it is impossible to claim that there is a positive correlation between the two; in order to assert this, the final scores of individual students in the experimental group should have been analysed along with their corresponding participation, and possibly interaction, in the WeChat group. Finally, it is worth noting that the questionnaire was issued after the completion of the final exam. Consequently, this might account for the positive perceptions of WCR. Therefore, students may have viewed the whole experience more favourably than in reality.

**Implications**

There were a number of implications that arose from this study. First, giving students a space to reflect on the content in a CLIL course was extremely valuable. Furthermore, as students in the experimental group attained higher scores than the control group in their final exam, it may be useful for other CLIL modules at other institutions to incorporate such practices. Next, analysing the interaction patterns of the experimental group and adjudging whether there were any High Level Messages is a unique method which proved beneficial when comparing the quality of the messages. As there is a dearth of similar criterions in the literature, this fairly straightforward benchmark avoids any issues while also offering an innovative contribution to the field. However, as there was minimal evidence of higher level messaging, questionnaire data helped the researcher explore how to optimally increase the amount of sufficiently critical and/or personally reflective messages.

In this regard, three main ideas were discussed. Firstly, the notion of WCR buddies was mainly positively endorsed by students, as this would ultimately supply a definite and consistent audience. Alternatively, students could be placed into groups with leaders being appointed to oversee and direct the reflection. Secondly, if such tasks are assessed, then it is recommended that teachers refrain from participating to ensure parity. However, brief messages in the initial stages to encourage interaction and autonomy is deemed permissible providing the teacher is judicious. Finally, prudent administration is paramount. Assigning questions for students to answer could be useful, but also restrictive. Providing models of high-quality exchanges has obvious pedagogical benefits since students are then more aware of what is required. Lastly, stipulating strict guidelines for when to send messages would be advantageous as this would hopefully circumvent concerns such as time fragmentation and unresponsiveness.
References


Outcomes of an English Day Camp:
An Interaction between Primary-four Students and Fourth-Year Students

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Abstract

The English Department of Phranakhon Rajabhat University together with its fourth-year students has organized an English day camp (EDC) using the activity-based learning method highlighting games and songs for primary-four students of Petcharawuth Wittaya School on a mission of academic service. This research aimed to: 1) compare learning achievements of primary-four students before and after they participated in the EDC, 2) investigate their satisfaction and opinions of benefits from participating in it, and 3) explore fourth-year students’ satisfaction and opinions of the benefits from organizing the EDC. The samples comprised a total of 233 primary-four students at the aforementioned school and a total of 50 fourth-year English majors at Phranakhon Rajabhat University. The research tools were a pre-test and a post-test, a learning management plan, a questionnaire asking the primary-four students about their satisfaction with the EDC and opinions on participation in it, and a questionnaire asking the fourth-year students about their satisfaction with the EDC and opinions on organizing it. The data were analyzed by using frequency, percentage, standard deviation and paired t-test. The findings were as follows: 1) There is a significant difference between the pre-test scores and post-test scores of the primary-four students, which suggests an improvement in their knowledge. 2) The overall satisfaction with the EDC expressed by the primary-four students is high. Similarly, their overall opinion on the benefits from the EDC is high. 3) The overall satisfaction expressed by the fourth-year students is high, and their overall opinion about benefits from organizing it is high, too.

Keywords: English Day Camp, Activity-based Learning, Game, Song, Academic Service
Introduction

Education generally prepares learners for life and work. Meanwhile, universities attempt to serve society. Academic service can be used to introduce young adults to the concept of assisting others (Hegarty & Angelidis, 2015). Moreover, the experience students gain from academic service helps promote life-long good citizenship as well as develops ethical standards in their professional careers (Vega, 2007). Thus, educational institutes usually support academic service for communities in their designated areas.

The English Department of Phranakhon Rajabhat University surveyed the need for an academic service in its service area. It came up with a project entitled “English Day Camp” (EDC) for primary-four students at Petcharawuth Wittaya School, and considered this a part of the Internship Preparation course offered to fourth-year students. This project was under the supervision of faculty members, in the hope that the faculty members and the fourth-year students would be able to develop, transmit, and apply knowledge for the public good.

Like other typical classrooms in Thailand, the classrooms of Petcharawuth Wittaya Schools may not always be appropriate to organizing activities in response to young children’s learning styles. Most classrooms are attached to each other and not air-conditioned. Conducting bustling activities becomes a concern for teachers, for this may disturb neighboring classes, especially when they require calmness. Thus, games and songs are out of the question. Although English is actually a tool for communication, students, most of the time, might simply sit and work independently, with books, a blackboard and a teacher in front of them.

In relevance to this, the EDC aimed to enhance English skills of the primary-four students in the aforementioned school. Featuring outside classroom activities, the EDC lasted for a single day. In other words, the students returned home in the evening. The EDC promoted interaction among these primary-four students and the fourth-year students in a friendly and lively atmosphere through the activity-based learning approach, highlighting the use of games and songs. It should be noted that the activity-based learning is defined as the acquirement of concepts through activities involve concepts to be learned (“Activity-Based Learning,” 2012). In this approach, the role of teachers shifts from that of delivering knowledge to that of facilitating and motivating (Keengwe, et al., 2009). Heineke (1997) lists three learning benefits of learning through activities, namely motivating learning, providing a common experience base, and illustrating concepts or ideas that are abstract or complex.

Following such support for activities in learning, we employed games and songs in the EDC. Several writers suggest that teachers should conduct learning activities by incorporating fun elements for young language learners such as games and songs. As for games, El-Shammy (2001, p. 15) defines a game as ‘a competitive activity played according to rules within a given context, where players meet a challenge to achieve an objective and win.’ For El-Shammy, language games comprise many factors such as rules, competition, relaxation, and learning in particular. Moreover, young learners love to have
fun and their imagination is ready for games and activities, for they love imagining things, fantasizing, and playing with language sounds, imitating, and making funny noises (Brown, 2007). Chen (2005) lists benefits of language games as follows: 1) Games are learner-centered. 2) Games promote communicative competence. 3) Games create meaningful contexts for language use. 4) Games increase learning motivation. 5) Games reduce learning anxiety. 6) Games integrate linguistic skills. 7) Games encourage creativity and spontaneous usage of language. 8) Games construct a cooperative usage of the language. 9) Games foster participatory attitudes of the students. As for songs, a large body of literature supports the use of music and in particular, of songs in language classrooms. For example, Shin (2017) lists benefits of the use of songs in English for young learner classes as follows: 1) providing authentic, meaningful context, 2) introducing children to target culture, 3) creating enjoyable classroom atmosphere, 4) providing opportunities to practice oral language, 5) aiding in retention and comprehension, 6) enhancing literacy instruction. In the same respect, Sevik (2012, p. 1029-1030) identifies several benefits of the use of songs as follows: First, songs are a great tool for language learning at an early age. Another benefit is that songs are an excellent memory tool. Moreover, songs provide a variety of comprehensible input. Furthermore, songs are extremely repetitive and help facilitate language fluency. Millington (2011) points out that young learners can learn vocabulary, grammar, sentence structures, pronunciation, and speaking skills from songs.

This project, apart from rendering an academic service, may also help promote some of the ‘21st century skills.’ It should be noted that the term “21st century skills” refers to a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed to be crucially important to success in today’s world. The 21st century skills can be applied in all academic subject areas, and in all educational, career, and civic settings throughout a student’s life (“21st Century Skills”, 2016). Communication and collaboration skills are 21st century skills. The EDC, which emphasizes the use of English communication skills to accomplish tasks in teams, might have helped develop the primary-four students’ communication and collaboration skills. Meanwhile, the EDC could have provided the fourth-year students with chances to pick up career and life skills, which are also 21st century skills. To accomplish this project, they were required to work collaboratively with their peers and the faculty members in a realistic setting for the community.

**Research Objectives**

This research was conducted to examine the outcomes of the EDC. Its purposes are described in details below:

1. to compare learning achievements of the primary-four students before and after they participated in the EDC,
2. to investigate the primary-four students’ satisfaction with the EDC and opinions about benefits from participating in it, and
3. to explore fourth-year students’ satisfaction with the EDC and opinions on benefits from organizing it.
Research Methodology

Participants

This study involved two groups of participants. The first group had a total of 233 primary-four students from Petcharawuth Wittaya School. The reasons for selecting the students of this school were threefold. First, its location was a short distance from the university and in its service area. Second, the school was willing to co-operate and participate in this project. Third, the school was able to provide a venue and necessary technical equipment. The second group had a total of 64 fourth-year English majors from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Phranakhon Rajabhat University. They were purposively selected because the English Department wanted to provide them with a chance to engage in academic service prior to the commencement of the internship program in which they would be required to work in a realistic setting.

Research Procedure

1. The English Department of Phranakhon Rajabhat University surveyed the needs for an academic service and it found that Petcharawuth Wittaya School had such a need. The school administrators advised that the project be implemented for primary-four students. The English Department discussed the contents with the English language teachers of this school.

2. The English Department reviewed literature on activity-based learning, English camps, language games and English action songs.

3. The English Department and the fourth-year students devised a management plan featuring activity-based learning.

4. The researchers constructed research instruments as follows:

   4.1 A pre-test and a post-test were generated. The contents were based on the activities presented in the EDC. These tests were devised to assess the primary-four students’ achievements before and after participation.

   4.2 Two questionnaires were developed. One was to ask the primary-four students about their satisfaction with the EDC and opinions on benefits gained from their participation. The other was to ask the fourth-year students about their satisfaction with the EDC and opinions on the benefits of organizing it.

   4.3 All the test papers and the questionnaires were examined by three experts of English language teaching and revised by the researchers accordingly.

5. The fourth-year students prepared materials and were trained in hosting games as well as leading action songs. They had been required to perform a demonstration before the real EDC started.

6. The EDC was implemented on 25th July 2019.

Instrumentation

1. Instruments for data collection from the primary-four students
1.1 A pre-test and a post-test. The researchers used a pre-test and a post-test of which the contents were exactly the same. The contents covered vocabulary about animals, weather, clothes, accessories, body-parts, and action verbs, as well as the usage of can and can’t. Its format was four-response multiple choice. The discrimination and the difficulty of all the twenty question items were no less than .48 and ranged from .37 to .79 respectively. The reliability coefficient of the whole test paper was .86, hence indicating that the test was reliable.

1.2 A questionnaire. It comprised three parts. Part I asked about their gender. Part II, a three-point Likert scale questionnaire, concerned their satisfaction and opinions on the benefits gained from participating in the EDC, having 5 and 7 items respectively. Part III, featuring an open-ended format, asked the respondents to write their reflections. The reliability of the whole questionnaire calculated by using Cronbach’s alpha, was .767.

2. An instrument for data collection from the fourth-year students

A questionnaire. It had three parts. Part I asked the respondents about their gender. Part II was a five-point-scale questionnaire, asking their satisfaction and opinions on benefits of organizing the EDC with 8 and 14 items respectively. Part III comprised an open-ended format, asking them to write about their retrospective comments and to reflect on their learning and experience. The researchers used Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient to identify the overall reliability of the questionnaire and found that its overall reliability was .924, thus suggesting a very high level.

3. An instrument for organizing the EDC

This study used a learning management plan organizing around the activity-based learning approach which comprised two sessions. The morning session, lasting about an hour, included icebreaking activities and was conducted in the main hall for all the primary-four students. The afternoon session followed a rotational model. There were about 35-40 students in each group and each rotated across six stations, spending about 20 minutes in each station. All the stations had to adhere to the time frame, starting and finishing simultaneously. Each station was organized and hosted by a group of 6-7 fourth-year students. Its contents were based on the primary-four students’ coursebook New Express English 4. Most of them had been covered in the classroom before the EDC started. A very brief description of each station is given as follows:

What is it? Students are divided into two teams. Each team chooses members to mime the words, and the rest guess them. The team members take turns at miming. Those who mime the words are not allowed to say the target words, spell them, or translate them. The team guessing the greater number of the target words correctly wins.

April Fool Sentences. Students are divided into four teams. Each team listens to a statement about animals. After that, they raise a card of which one side has the letter T and the other the letter F, representing True and False respectively. For example, the students will hear statements like, “The fish can swim,” or “The elephant can fly.” In case of false statements, students are encouraged to
correct them. Thus, they are expected to say, “The elephant can’t fly.” The score of each turn is based on the number of the right answers given by all the team members. The team scoring the highest wins.

*Human Scrabble.* Students are divided into three teams. Each is given a set of English letters. In each turn, a picture is shown to them. Each team forms a word corresponding to the picture. The team forming the correct word the fastest wins that turn. The team scoring the highest wins the competition.

*Today’s Weather.* Students are divided into two teams. Each team sends two representatives to create a dialogue about the weather according to the visual cue cards shown by the game masters. The pair making the better conversation wins that turn. The team members take turns at being their team’s representatives. The team with a higher score wins.

*Oh! My Body.* Students are divided into two teams. Each team sends a representative. The game masters give instructions which are about doing things with parts of their body. For example, the game master says, ‘Touch your nose.’ The representatives who touch their nose first will get a point. The team members take turns at being their team’s representatives. The team scoring higher wins.

*I Can Do It.* Students are divided into two teams. Each team sends two representatives to make a conversation about abilities by using *can* and *can’t* according to the visual cue cards shown by the game masters. The pair making the better conversation wins that turn. The team members take turns at being their team’s representatives. The team scoring higher wins.

**Data Collection**

The researchers employed the following procedure to collect data from two sources.

1. *Data from the primary-four students.* The pre-test was given to the primary-four students after the ice-breaking activities of the morning session. The post-test was administered and the questionnaire was distributed to them after they had participated in all the six stations in the afternoon.

2. *Data from the fourth-year students.* The fourth-year students were asked to respond to the questionnaire on the following day.

**Data Analysis**

1. The primary-four students’ pre-tests and post-tests were marked, with a correct answer scoring 1 point, and an incorrect answer scoring 0. The overall scores for all tests were analyzed by using mean and standard deviation. Also, a paired *t*-test was performed to identify any significant differences between the means of the pre-test and the post-test scores.

2. The analysis of the primary-four students’ satisfaction and opinions was performed by using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. It is worth mentioning again that the researchers used a three-point-scale questionnaire. The interpretation was derived from the following calculation:

\[
\frac{(\text{Max}-\text{Min})}{\text{A number of ranges}} = \frac{(3-1)}{3} = 0.67
\]

The mean scores were interpreted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.34-3.00</td>
<td>High / agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.67-2.33 -- Middle / neutral, neither agree nor disagree
1.00-1.66 -- Low / disagree

3. The fourth-year students’ satisfaction and opinions were investigated using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. It is worth repeating that the five-point-scale questionnaire was employed. The interpretation of the mean values is based on Best (1997, p.147) as detailed below:

4.50 – 5.00 -- Very high/ strongly agree
3.50 – 4.49 -- High / agree
2.50 – 3.49 -- Middle / neutral, neither agree nor disagree
1.50 – 2.49 -- Low / disagree
1.00 – 1.49 -- Very low / strongly disagree

Results and Discussion

Results

1. Results from the primary-four students

1.1 Genders of the sample. Just a little over a half of the primary-four students (51%) were female.

1.2 The comparison between the pre-test scores and post-test scores. After the primary-four students had participated in the EDC, their achievement increased at a significance level.05 (t =2.886, and p-value = .005) as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. The comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores (N = 233; total score =20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>12.46</td>
<td>4.408</td>
<td>2.886</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>12.91</td>
<td>4.672</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3. Primary-four students’ satisfaction. Their overall satisfaction towards the EDC was high (\( \bar{x} = 2.65 \) and SD = 0.285) as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. The primary-four students’ satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Activities in the afternoon session (rotating across the six stations)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.382</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Activities in the morning session (main hall)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Venue</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>.443</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Time management</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>.572</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Prizes</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>.609</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.285</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.4 The primary-four students’ opinions about benefits from participating in the EDC. Their overall opinion was high, suggesting positive results. Viewed in greater details, the results show that all individual statements were rated high as in Table 3.

Table 3. The primary-four students’ opinions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I enjoyed the activities.</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.410</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I’ve acquired new knowledge.</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>.406</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I’ve reviewed the learned lessons.</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>.479</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I’ve practiced working in a team.</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>.537</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I want to learn English more.</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>.502</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I become more confident in using English.</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>.523</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I’ve practiced communicative skills.</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>.597</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>.288</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Results from fourth-year students

2.1 Genders of the sample. The questionnaire was distributed to all the 64 students and 50 of them replied. Thus, the return rate was 78.13 percent. About three quarters of the respondents (76%) were female.

2.2 The fourth-year students’ satisfaction with the EDC. Their overall satisfaction was high. It also finds that that all the aspects were rated high as in Table 4.

Table 4. The fourth-year students’ satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Involvement in the EDC</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>.681</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Activity content</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>.619</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Activity format</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>.651</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>.905</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Readiness for the EDC</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>.599</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>.810</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.927</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 Opinions about benefits from organizing the EDC. The overall mean score of the fourth-year students’ opinions was 4.31 and the standard deviation was .495. This indicates that the overall
benefit was high. The respondents rated being proud of their contribution the highest, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. The fourth-years students’ opinions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I’m proud of my contribution.</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>.539</td>
<td>Very high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I’ve acquired problem-solving skills.</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>.644</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I’ve learned to be self-controlled.</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>.603</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I’ve gained teamwork skills.</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.692</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I’ve learned to be a responsible team member.</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.720</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I’ve learned to serve as a volunteer.</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.599</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I’ve acquired leadership skills.</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>.642</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I’ve learned to be punctual.</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I’ve learned planning and analytical skills.</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>.603</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I’ve learned how to coordinate with my friends from other groups and the teachers.</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.717</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I’ve had an opportunity to enhance my creativity.</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>.627</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I can apply these skills to jobs in my daily life or future careers.</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>.722</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I’ve learned how to communicate with those younger than me.</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.664</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I’ve learned to apply information technology to accomplish tasks.</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.775</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overall** | 4.31 | .459 | High |

**Discussion**

1. A comparison of the primary-four students’ achievements before and after the exposure to the EDC. Their achievement increased significantly after they had participated in the EDC. This indicates that the activity-based learning approach highlighting the use of games and songs worked effectively. A possible explanation is the fact that games and songs facilitate language learning. Chen (2005) says that games integrate linguistic skills and create meaningful contexts for language use. As for songs, Sevik, (2012) found that the use of song facilitates the memorization process. Also, Millington, (2011) points out that young learners can acquire grammar and vocabulary along with other language skills through songs.

2. The primary-four students’ satisfaction and opinions

2.1 The primary-four students’ overall satisfaction was high. Taking individual aspects into consideration, it finds the first two highest rated aspects were activities in the afternoon session, and those in the morning session, in which they played games, sang, and danced. Such activities required them to act and work as a team. This might suggest these young learners found enjoyment in mobility, competition and cooperation in these activities. Nikolov and Djigunović (2019) point out that tasks for young language learners that work best tend to have some fun elements, as they love music and rhythm, songs and rhymes accompanied by physical activities. The fact that these young learners expressed the highest satisfaction towards the afternoon session might suggest that the rotational model was effective. Requiring these students to move to the next station every 20 minutes might have prevented them from
getting tired and bored. This finding might also be explained by the fact that these young learners’ attention span was naturally rather short. Cameron (2003) says that young learners have short attention spans.

However, their satisfaction with prizes and time management were relatively low. These outcomes could have been a result of budget and time constraints respectively. This might suggest that prizes were preferable, for these tangible items might have provided them with positive reinforcement, motivating them to exhibit particular behavior. It is universally agreed that rewarding can be a crucial aspect of games, especially for young learners. Hoffmann et al. (2008) found that the elementary teachers’ use of tangible rewards was positively related to students’ goal orientations. As for time management, this may imply that it might not have always been easy to achieve a balance between letting the students enjoy the activities as they were pleased and adhering to the schedule. Apparently, the more fun they had, the more time they wanted to continue.

2.2 The overall opinion about the benefits gained from participating in the EDC expressed by the primary-four students was high. The highest rated aspect was enjoyment. These might be due to the fact that the activity format and the staff were effective. The format of the EDC activities might have corresponded to their learning styles. A growing body of research reveal that most young learners have positive attitudes towards games and songs. They enjoyed the relaxing atmosphere and the competition, and they gained motivation in learning the language (Huyen & Nga, 2003). It also could be explained that games and songs were appropriate to these primary-four students, aged 9-10. Nikolov and Djigunović (2019) observe that for learners aged 8-11, peers become increasingly important, and peers may turn into young learners’ motivational role models through cooperation and competition. Meanwhile, the fourth-year students could have contributed to the fun learning atmosphere. Their enthusiasm might have made these young learners feel as if they had been playing games, singing and dancing with their older sisters or brothers. Also, their teamwork could have helped the activities run effectively and excitingly.

3. The fourth-year students’ satisfaction with and opinions

3.1 Satisfaction with the EDC. Their overall satisfaction was high. The aspects rated the highest were involvement in the EDC, the activity content, and the activity format. The high satisfaction towards their involvement might have been a result of their positive attitudes about the academic service project. Throughout their years at Phranakhon Rajabhat University, they had been taught to be concerned about the community, for this educational institute has been established for the local communities. Also, their satisfaction with the activity content was high. This would be explained by the fact that the content was based on the course book which was used to teach to these primary-four students. Thus, the primary-four students might have been familiar with it. In addition, the fact that the fourth-year students had high satisfaction with the activity format could be a result of the effectiveness of the implementation of several short activities. Also, there were several kinds of activities including individual work, pair work,
group work, and activities for all large audience participation. Such a variety might have corresponded
with these young learners’ characteristics.

However, the aspects rated relatively low were transportation, food, and readiness. The
main reasons might have been budget and time constraints as well as scheduling conflict. The project
was time-consuming and complicated, for it had to meet the needs of both the university and the school.
Furthermore, it involved several parties: the school administrators, the school teachers, the primary-four
students, the university administrators, the faculty members and the fourth-year students. For example,
the English Department had to collaborate with the school administrators to set the date and venue.
Moreover, we had to discuss the contents and the formats of the activities with the school teachers.
Furthermore, we had to handle paperwork in order ask permission to use the budget and transportation
of the university. In addition, we had to discuss this project with the fourth-year students and supervise
their preparation. Also, we had to contact all those involved to perform their part in the inaugural and
closing ceremonies. Last but not least, we had to prepare research instruments. Meanwhile, the fourth-
year students themselves had to prepare game materials and prizes, as well as practise hosting games
and teaching action songs. These were urgent and important tasks for the English Department and its
fourth-year students that required effective management and teamwork skills.

3.2. Attitudes about benefits of organizing the EDC. The overall attitude was high. The detailed
consideration shows that the students’ pride in their contribution was rated the highest. Doing good things
for others can have a good impact on the individual. To strive for the project goals, a variety of gambits
were introduced to these students. For example, prior to the commencement of the EDC, the fourth-year
students were informed about values and goals of this project, and they were briefed on their roles and
responsibilities. This might have empowered them to work on behalf of the university. After the project,
the school administrators thanked them, and the faculty members complemented them on their success.
Louie-Budu and Wolf (2008) state that service-learning uplifts ‘students’ spirituality’ by which they
mean one’s subjective awareness and internal values, and it is an opportunity to explore the meaning and
purpose of one’s life.’ Duffy and Raque-Bogdan (2010) point out that better learning outcomes are
achieved when students understand and appreciate the values and goal of a service-learning project.

The fact that skill and attribute acquisition were rated high indicates that this project benefited the
fourth-year students professionally and personally. In particular, it helped develop their career and life
skills. Moreover, it required these students to develop desirable traits such as being self-controlled,
responsible, punctual, and having a sense of social responsibility. In other words, this academic service
project promoted 21st century skills.

Despite the aforementioned usefulness, several limitations of this study are worth noting. The
first limitation is a disruption effect. The study involved, apart from its two groups of participants, the
presence of the school teachers, the school administrators, and the faculty members. Their presence
during the implementation of the EDC may have potentially exerted some effects on the outcomes.
The significant improvement of the primary-four students’ achievements and the four-year students’
performance might have been a result of these people constantly monitoring them. Without their presence, we might not be sure whether similar outcomes would have been achieved. Secondly, this study had time constraint; the EDC lasted for a relatively short time (only a day). We cannot be sure whether the outcomes would have been the same if the EDC had been conducted for a longer period of time. Thus, the findings of this study do not imply that this practice has a greater advantage over the conventional practice or other practices. Thirdly, this study suffered from lack of content analysis and employment of qualitative research methods, which could have validated the findings from questionnaires, offered insightful results, and yielded useful information about room for improvement. Even so, the current study provides an empirical support to positive impacts of the activity-based learning approach, highlighting the use of games and songs on young language learners as well as of the academic service learning on university students.

**Conclusion**

The academic service might well be considered a golden opportunity to achieve mutual gains enjoyed by the university and the community. The outcomes of this project illustrate a clear picture of the mutual gains. The EDC featuring the interaction between the primary-four students and the fourth-year students produced positive outcomes as evidenced by the primary-four students’ significant improvement in their achievement and positive responses together with the fourth-year students’ high satisfaction and opinions. The fact that the primary-four students found enjoyment in the EDC might be considered the principal outcome. This might foster a positive attitude towards English language learning in these young learners, which is good for them in the long run. Moreover, the experience that the fourth-year students received from this project may help lay the seeds of lifelong good citizenship. Although this project involved several parties and required their cooperation, these efforts should be continued in order to maximize the benefits.

**Acknowledgements**

We thank the teachers and administrators of Petcharawuth Wittaya School for their kind coordination. It is worth reiterating here that this project was financially supported by Phranakhon Rajabhat University.

**References**


Appendix I
Pre-test /Post-test of the English Day Camp
For Primary-Four Students

Name ___________________________ Class _______________ ID Number ___________________

Instructions: Choose the best answer for each question.

1. A monkey can _________ a tree.
   a. sing  b. talk  c. fly  d. climb

2. I can help my mother wash the ______________.
   a. dishes  b. plants  c. TV  d. book

Look at the table and answer Questions 3-5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>fly</th>
<th>swim</th>
<th>read</th>
<th>sing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A bird</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ✔ means “can,” and x means “can’t.”

3. Can a bird swim?
   a. Yes, it can.  b. Yes, it can’t.  c. No, it can.  d. No, it can’t.

4. Can Jenny read?
   a. Yes, she can.  b. Yes, she can’t.  c. No, she can.  d. No, she can’t

5. Can a bird sing?
   a. Yes, it can.  b. Yes, it can’t.  c. No, it can.  d. No, it can’t.

6. I can _____ with my eyes.
   a. swim  b. walk  c. eat  d. see

7. I eat with my ____________.
   a. toes  b. mouth  c. neck  d. legs

8. I smell with my ____________.
   a. ears  b. arms  c. nose  d. hands

9. Look at the picture and answer the question.
   How’s the weather?
   It’s ________________.
   a. cold  b. cool  c. rainy  d. sunny

10. Look at the picture and answer the question.
    How’s the weather?
    It’s ________________.
    a. sunny  b. cloudy  c. cold  d. windy

11. It’s cold and snowy today. My father is wearing ______________.
    a. a raincoat  b. a sweater  c. a shirt  d. a vest

12. It’s raining. Please ______________ the window.
    a. point to  b. touch  c. open  d. close

13. The weather is very hot today. I am wearing ______________.
    a. mittens  b. shorts  c. a raincoat  d. a scarf

14. Look at the picture and answer the question.
    What is Jack wearing?
    Jack is wearing ______________.
    a. a jacket and boots  b. a hat and a skirt  c. a jacket and shorts  d. a hat and a jacket
15. Look at the picture and answer the question.
   What is Kevin wearing?
   Kevin is wearing ___________.
   a. a scarf and boots
   b. a sweater and pants
   c. a raincoat and boots
   d. a sweater and shorts

16. Fish and __________ are swimming in the pond.
   a. ducks  b. pigs  c. goats  d. chickens
17. __________ has four legs.
18. __________ give us milk.
   a. Lions  b. Cows  c. Chickens  d. Elephants
19. __________ have big ears.
20. We collect eggs from __________ in the farm.
   a. pigs  b. hens  c. peacocks  d. horses

***************** The End of the Test*****************
(The actual questionnaire was in Thai.)

Appendix 2

Questionnaire on Satisfaction with and Opinions of Primary-Four Students about Participating in the English Day Camp

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information about the satisfaction with and opinions about the English Day Camp. Your information will be used as a guideline for the improvement of the EDC.

Part I: Are you a boy or a girl?
☐ A boy ☐ A girl

Part II: For each statement below, you are requested to rate how much you are satisfied with the EDC and how much you have benefited from it by checking (√).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High Middle Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>😞 😞 😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>😞 😞 😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>😞 😞 😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>😞 😞 😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>😞 😞 😞</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benefits gained from participating in the English Day Camp

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree Neutral Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>😞 😞 😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>😞 😞 😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>😞 😞 😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>😞 😞 😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>😞 😞 😞</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>😞 😞 😞</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Part III: Write your answers.
1. How do you like the activities in the EDC? Why so?

.............................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................

2. What activities or songs do you like best?
.............................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................

3. Do you have any other comments or concerns?
.............................................................................................................................
.............................................................................................................................

Thank you for your time.

English Department, Phranakhon Rajabhat University

****************** The End of the Questionnaire******************
Appendix 3
Questionnaire on Satisfaction with and Opinions of Fourth-Year Students about organizing the English Day Camp

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information about the satisfaction with and opinions about the English Day Camp. Your information will be used as a guideline for the improvement of the EDC.

Part I: Gender
☐ Male    ☐ Female

Part II: For each statement below, you are requested to rate how much you are satisfied with the EDC and how much you have benefited from it by checking (✓).

Satisfaction with the EDC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Very high</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Very Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Readiness for the EDC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Involvement in the EDC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Activity content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Activity format</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Time management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Venue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benefits gained from organizing the English Day Camp the EDC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I’ve learned planning and analytical skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I’ve acquired leadership skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I’ve gained teamwork skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I’ve learned how to coordinate with my friends from other groups and the teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I’ve learned how to communicate with those younger than me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I’ve had an opportunity to enhance my creativity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I’ve acquired problem-solving skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I’ve learned to be a responsible team member.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Benefit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I’ve learned to serve as a volunteer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I’ve learned to be self-controlled.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I’ve learned to be punctual.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I’ve learned to apply information technology to accomplish tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I can apply these skills to jobs in my daily life or future careers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part III: Write your answers.**

1. Do you have any other comments or concerns?

2. What have you learned from organizing the English Day Camp?

3. What is your general impression of the English Day Camp?

Thank you for your kind cooperation.
The English Department
Phranakhon Rajabhat University

****************** The End of the Questionnaire******************
Retaining Vocabulary through Poetry:  
A Haiku a Day Makes Memory Stay

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Abstract

Since meaningfulness is a key to long-term memory, learning vocabulary might be done effectively by creating contexts for any new words that we learn. To avoid the influence of grammar that could prevent us from freely making sentences and forming contexts, a haiku was considered because of its free-from-grammar characteristics and brevity. This study aimed to investigate whether writing haikus helped increase vocabulary retention and to explore the relationship between vocabulary memorization and the illustration of words. Six sets of vocabulary were selected for haiku writing activities with six participants. Vocabulary tests were done twice - right after the participants finished the activities, and fourteen days after those. Both test results and participants’ written haikus were analyzed, revealing that writing haikus could strengthen vocabulary retention, and vocabulary would stay in memory longer if its meaning was illustrated. Some implications in applying haikus as a means for increasing Thai students’ vocabulary retention as well as teaching vocabulary, in general, were discussed.

Keywords: haiku, poetry, vocabulary learning, word retention

Introduction

Vocabulary is considered important for effective communication as we might confuse our listeners or readers when we use wrong words, or we might fail to understand messages when we do not know the keywords that we confront in a discourse. Although in a real situation, our body language or contexts could compensate and fill the gap, we still need to equip ourselves with sufficient vocabulary knowledge, ready to reach a mutual understanding at any time.

According to Hu and Nation (2000), if we know more than 95 percent of words in a text, we will have comprehension of the text without having to consult a dictionary. And if we know more than 98%, incidental vocabulary learning will be likely to occur (Nation, 2001). Therefore, in order to avoid an interruptive moment of using a dictionary, developing as much vocabulary as possible would be a great idea.
In Thailand, one of the most popular ways of learning vocabulary was through vocabulary notebooks - keeping and reviewing the learnt words. It was relatively easy and did not require much time and effort, and might be the most practical strategy in the Thai context where English was considered a foreign language, and Thai students did not have enough chances to expose to English use. Fortunately, according to past studies, this strategy was found associated with better improvement of vocabulary (Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999), and it also helped promote students’ memory for tests due to the advantages of ‘de-contextualized’ learning (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994).

However, such ‘de-contextualized learning’ might not be effective in the long run because those learnt words were likely to fade away from memory rapidly. That was why ‘contextualized learning’, which could be a better approach for enhancing vocabulary, letting students learn new things by linking them to their existing knowledge and experience, should also be considered as it might make what they had learned stay in their long-term memory (Oxford and Scarcella, 1994; Berns & Erickson, 2001). Naturally, the easiest way to learn vocabulary was from context. By putting words into context, meaning was given to those words, and meaningfulness was a key to long-term memory.

It was elaborated in the levels of processing model by Craik and Lockhart (1972) that to make the memory last long, information should go through semantic processing. The process involves elaboration rehearsal, which concerns a more meaningful analysis of information like associating that information with prior knowledge. By doing so, the information will be moved from short-term memory to long-term memory and be easy to recall.

In that case, creating sentences for new words would be a good strategy for learning and remembering vocabulary. However, when making sentences, grammar could be an obstacle as ones might not want to make any if they could not think of appropriate grammar structures.

It was true that, apart from vocabulary, grammar was quite important in order to make our messages clear and comprehensible. Still, the core of language was vocabulary (Lewis, 1993). Little could be understood without grammar, but nothing could be understood without vocabulary (Wilkins, 1972). When focusing on promoting vocabulary knowledge and word retention, being able to create contexts (sentences) for words without giving much attention to grammar might be great.

Therefore, two things that came into consideration were “literature” which could provide contexts for new words, and “poetry” which could be free from grammar matter because of poetic license. By the definition from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, poetic license is “the freedom that poets and other artists have to change facts, ignore grammar rules etc, because what they are making is poetry or art.” With these characteristics, when poetry was used in English class, students would be exposed to chances to experiment with language and vocabulary, and also freely share their ideas, moving away from strict grammar rules or sentence structures (Robertson, 2013; Koch, 1978). This was the reason why poetry was chosen to be the primary concern of this study in order to find out whether it could promote word retention or not.
Literature Review

Literature covered a wide variety of written and spoken works and had been used in language classrooms for many purposes, including improving vocabulary knowledge and strengthening word retention. Literature, especially poetry, could be used to develop students’ language skills if it was appropriately applied to classroom activities as it could activate students’ imagination and decrease tension of language rules at the same time. Many researchers conducted studies to confirm the benefits of poetry and found out some useful methods that could feasibly be applied to teaching English. For example, according to the past research papers, literature (poetry) could be used to develop communicative skills (Srisermbhok, 2017; Kim, 2004), improve learning environment (Preston, 1982; McConochie, 1985), and strengthen students’ language knowledge (Newfield and D’Abdon, 2015). When it came to the benefits of poetry in terms of learning new vocabulary and word retention, the concept of incidental vocabulary learning was quite interesting.

Incidental vocabulary learning was defined as the by-product of an activity unintended to serve that purpose (Gass, 1999; Hulstijn, 2001; Loewen, 2015), for example listening to songs that could promote vocabulary learning - both vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary retention (Pavia, Webb, and Faez, 2019). A large number of words could be gained from songs (Schwarz, 2013) and learners’ memory could be strengthened by songs’ rhythms (Abbott, 2002). Because poems and songs shared a close relationship, benefits from songs could somehow be considered benefits from poems.

Furthermore, it is usual nowadays to see songs being added to English language textbooks. The theories behind this might be based on the fact that the area in the brain that processed language was the same area that processed music. According to Murphey (1990)’s and Salcedo (2010)’s research, songs lingered in the brain and repeated uncontrollably, making the lyrics and melodies difficult to forget. Riah (2018) suggested that teachers should create their own pedagogical songs containing linguistic points or vocabulary that they would like to teach in order to make the songs fit the content of the class and help students remember the lesson better.

Apart from teachers creating pedagogical songs as mnemonic aids (Riah, 2018) or choosing poetry for students to learn new words in class, which was a passive way of learning, it was quite interesting to see whether students could remember new vocabulary longer if they were the ones who created literature (poetry), giving meaningful contexts for the new vocabulary by themselves.

A haiku, a Japanese poem consisting of three lines - five, seven, and five syllables respectively, would be a perfect choice of poetry in this study because it is short and its structure is not complex. A haiku was originally created by Japanese poets to express emotional experience and to describe beautiful scenery. Later it was adapted by some European poets. Because of the differences between the Japanese language and Western languages, the original pattern of five-seven-five syllables with rhyme has been adjusted somehow to fit the languages. Therefore, no rigid rules of structuring sentences and rhyme are required for a haiku, which makes it suitable for students who are not familiar with poems and whose English level is not advanced. Some examples of haiku are presented here:
First autumn morning
the mirror I stare into
shows my father's face.
(by Murakami Kijo)

Toward those short trees
We saw a hawk descending
On a day in spring.
(by Masaoka Shiki)

An old silent pond...
A frog jumps into the pond,
splash! Silence again.
(by Matsuo Bashō)

Srisermbhok’s (2017) once used a haiku in her study and found that it had a positive impact on learning English because of its entertaining ability and creativity. The participants were unashamed of making mistakes and felt more confident in using English because there were few grammatical rules or no grammatical rules at all to follow.

Another example of using haikus in class was a case in Texas. Smith (2017), intending to erase her 5th-grade students’ stress after a high-stakes test, brought haiku writing to her class. Surprisingly, it yielded a successful result as the students enjoyed poetry and thought more creatively. Moreover, thanks to the required syllables in each line of haiku, the students developed their critical thinking skills and vocabulary range at the same time as they had to search for the right words to meaningfully fit in their writing.

Last but not least, haikus naturally forced students to summarize their ideas in three lines, making them focus only on the most critical points and use words that were rich and powerful enough to convey their ideas (Weightman, 2001).

Although making sentences to provide meaningful contexts for new words might somehow be effective for word retention, it would be interesting to explore whether creating haikus, which was another way to provide meaningful contexts, could yield better results. Unlike making sentences that required grammatical correctness and standard use of English, creating haikus was free and could motivate students to express their ideas more, providing contexts that might be richer and much more meaningful. Moreover, a haiku required students to complete its pattern so there was also a goal for students to reach. The more students analyzed and tried to find the right words to express their thoughts in the required pattern, the more they engaged in meaning making and might embed those words in their memory. Therefore, with its meaningfulness in brevity, as well as its free-from-grammar characteristics, a haiku could probably be used as one way to improve vocabulary and word retention.

Research Questions

The researcher, prior to the research, asking his students to write a haiku with a new word every week and seeing that the students could remember some words that they wrote many weeks ago, hypothesized that writing a haiku could promote vocabulary learning and word retention, especially when the word was presented in the context created by the students themselves. Therefore, the research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Does writing haikus help increase vocabulary retention?
2. Is there a correlation between vocabulary memorization and the use of vocabulary in a haiku?
Participants

The participants in this study comprised six students who were studying in the researcher’s tutoring class. Their ages were slightly different (eleven to fourteen), but their language proficiency was considered to be at the same level (pre-intermediate). Hence, using the same method of teaching and applying the same vocabulary from the book “Cambridge English Vocabulary in Use Pre-intermediate and Intermediate”, a textbook used in the researcher’s classes, in the study could suit their competence.

It was quite convenient and practical to introduce or add poetry in lessons because all of the students knew how to write a haiku as they had leisurely been writing it in the researcher’s tutoring class for six months.

Research Instruments

Two instruments were used in this research: a vocabulary test and haiku. The vocabulary test was divided into three parts – vocabulary tests 1, 2, and 3 - with the adaptation of the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) (Wesche & Paribakht, 1996) for scoring the answers. The haikus created by the participants were also analyzed. The details are as follows:

Vocabulary Test 1: As language proficiency of the six participants was considered to be at the same level - pre-intermediate, “Cambridge English Vocabulary in Use Pre-intermediate and Intermediate” was chosen. Twenty-five highlighted words from the book were selected and put in a table to test the participants’ knowledge of the vocabulary. The participants had to give meanings in Thai for those twenty-five words to find out which words they knew, or which words they did not know. After that, they were verbally asked whether they had seen those words before or not.

Vocabulary Test 2 and 3: The chosen words were arranged with the scale adapted from the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (Wesche & Paribakht, 1996) to test the participants’ knowledge of the vocabulary they had learned by writing haikus. (Figure 1) Only four levels were taken for this test because Level 5 was out of the free-from-grammar characteristic of haiku.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-report categories</th>
<th>Possible scores</th>
<th>Meaning of scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The word is not familiar at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>The word is familiar but its meaning is not known.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>A correct synonym or translation is given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The word is used with semantic appropriateness in a sentence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>The word is used with semantic appropriateness and grammatical accuracy in a sentence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 The VKS Scoring Categories (Wesche and Paribakht, 1996)

Research Procedure

Twenty-five highlighted words were selected and arranged in a table to be vocabulary test 1, which required the participants to give meaning to the words in Thai, to find out which words the
participants knew, did not know, and had never seen before. Those selected words were “feed”, “takeaway”, “make-up”, “shave”, “iron”, “outskirts”, “location”, “space”, “rent”, “balcony”, “study”, “kettle”, “cupboard”, “tap”, “tile”, “drop”, “slip”, “spill”, “burn”, “tear”, “cashpoint”, “cash”, “fee”, “loan”, and “account”. Then the results from vocabulary test 1 were processed, and five words that the participants had never seen before from vocabulary test 1 were chosen and used to create vocabulary tests 2 and 3 for the participants individually – each participant got a different set of vocabulary.

Fourteen days after vocabulary test 1, the five chosen words were taught to each participant – the words were only presented with their meanings in Thai and examples in English. That was to make sure that the participants really knew the words’ Thai equivalents and really understood the words when they were used in the examples. After that, the participants were asked to create five haikus for those five words before taking vocabulary test 2 – giving meanings in Thai to those words and use them in sentences. Being able to translate the words into Thai and put them in contexts could be evidence for the retention of the vocabulary in their short-term memory.

The Vocabulary Knowledge Scale Scoring Categories (Wesche & Paribakht, 1996) were adapted here to give scores for vocabulary test 2 (and also vocabulary test 3). Each word could yield the maximum of four scores. Therefore, the highest score that each participant could get was twenty scores, as there were five words in total. An example of scoring was presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Knowing Scale</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kettle (n.)</td>
<td>I have never seen this word before.</td>
<td>The participant got 1 score for this word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have seen this word before, but I cannot remember its meaning.</td>
<td>The participant got 2 scores for this word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know this word. It means กาน้ำ (in Thai).</td>
<td>The participant got 3 scores for this word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>√</td>
<td>I know this word and its meaning. I can use it in a sentence (in English). I boil the kettle for cooking foods.</td>
<td>The participant got 4 scores for this word.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fourteen days after learning the words, making haikus, and taking vocabulary test 2, the participants were asked to take vocabulary test 3 - giving meaning to the words and use them in sentences again. Vocabulary test 2 and vocabulary test 3 were exactly the same, so what the participants had to do for both tests were exactly the same except that, for vocabulary test 3, the chosen words were not presented and taught, and the participants did not have to write haikus from those words. This was to test their long-term memory.

The results from vocabulary test 2 were analyzed to measure the participants’ short-term memory, and the results from vocabulary test 3 were analyzed to measure the participants’ long-term memory. The participants’ haikus were also analyzed to find out the link between how well they
remembered the words and how they illustrated the words in their haikus - all of the haikus written by the participants were read and given scores by five experienced teachers to determine whether the words used were “illustrated”, “partly illustrated”, or “not illustrated”. The criteria for rating the words used in the haikus were presented here in Table 2.

Table 2 The criteria for rating the words used in the haikus (The word “kettle” was chosen as an example)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustrated</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>I use my <strong>kettle</strong> to boil water for coffee</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I drink when it's hot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>I use my <strong>kettle</strong> And I drink coffee today</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is delicious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>I use my <strong>kettle</strong> and I enjoy swimming</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I love to go shopping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average scores from the rating were graded into “illustrated” (1.34 – 2.00), “partly illustrated” (0.67 – 1.33), or “not illustrated” (0.00 – 0.66).

Data analysis

The main purpose of this study was to investigate whether writing haikus help increase vocabulary retention or not. In order to answer this research question, at the beginning stage, vocabulary test 1 was used to find out which words the participants did not know and had never seen before. After that, five words that the participants had never seen before were chosen for each participant individually (see details in Appendix B).

Fourteen days after taking vocabulary test 1, the five chosen words were taught and the participants were asked to create haikus for those five words before taking vocabulary test 2. Then, after another fourteen days, the participants were asked to take vocabulary test 3. The scoring for both tests was the same and the results of both tests were compared here in figure 2.
Figure 2 The average score from vocabulary test 1, vocabulary test 2, and vocabulary test 3 (Total score = 20)

Note: For Test 1, there were twenty-five words but only five selected words for each participant were counted.

It is clear from Figure 2 above that writing haikus can strengthen vocabulary retention. From Test 1, the participants had no knowledge or familiarity with the selected five words at all (average score = 0.00). Then fourteen days later, the participants learned the words, wrote haikus with those words, and took the immediate Test 2. The result shows that the participants almost remembered every word, achieving a high score in the immediate test (average score = 19.17), which could be interpreted that the vocabulary that they learned was well-stored in their short-term memory and ready to be recalled. Furthermore, most of those learned words seemed to stay in their memory until Test 3, which was fourteen days after Test 2 (average score = 16.00). According to the observation, the fact that the participants could recall the learned words might be partly because of the contexts that they created for the words which still lingered in their memory. The meaning of the words might not come up in their mind promptly, but with the help of the lingering contexts, it came up in the end.

The average percentages of Test 2 and Test 3 are 19.17 (95.85%) and 16.00 (80.00%), respectively. This shows that the decrease in their memory after fourteen days is only 16.52% (95.85% - 80.00%), which could be evidence that writing haikus helped retain the vocabulary in long-term memory.

Figure 3 The individual score from the three tests (Total score = 20)
Individually analyzed, the test results show that each participant tends to have the same memory pattern. Most of them got a high score in the immediate Test 2 (score = 17-20) and there was a slight decrease in the delayed Test 3 (score = 14-20). There was only one participant who could remember and could use all of the five words in sentences even if fourteen days had passed (Participant 2).

In order to explore a correlation between vocabulary memorization and the use of vocabulary in a haiku to answer research question 2, the haikus written by the participants were read and given scores by five experienced teachers. In this process, the illustration of the word used in a haiku, i.e. the meaningful use of words in haikus which could create pictures of those words in readers’ heads regardless of grammatical inaccuracy or inappropriate sentence structures, was analyzed. The average scores from the rating were graded into “illustrated” (1.34 – 2.00), “partly illustrated” (0.67 – 1.33), or “not illustrated” (0.00 – 0.66) and the average scores from Test 2 and Test 3 were calculated in percentage, separated for each group for the comparison. The results were presented below.

Table 3 The relationship between the illustration of the words used in haikus and the scores from Test 2 and Test 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The word was illustrated.</th>
<th>Test 2 (Average Score in Percentage)</th>
<th>Test 3 (Average Score in Percentage)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>95.45</td>
<td>84.09</td>
<td>-11.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly</td>
<td>94.44</td>
<td>80.56</td>
<td>-14.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>97.50</td>
<td>75.00</td>
<td>-23.08%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data from Table 4 shows that, when the words were illustrated in haikus, they could stay in memory longer than when they were partly illustrated or were not illustrated at all (comparing the results of Test 3 from “yes”, “partly”, and “no” which were 84.09%, 80.56%, and 75.00% respectively). Moreover, the forgetting rate, which could be interpreted from the difference between Test 2 and Test 3, shows that, after fourteen days had passed, the words that were illustrated in haikus seemed to fade away a little (-11.90%) while the words that were partly illustrated or were not illustrated at all seemed to fade away faster (-14.71% and -23.08%).

In order to support the hypothesis that writing haikus could strengthen vocabulary retention, especially when the words were illustrated meaningfully, the haikus written by Participant 2, who reached the total scores in both Test 2 and Test 3, were presented here in Table 2 as an example.
Table 4 Haikus written by Participant 2 and sentences used in Test 2 and Test 3 for scoring.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Haiku</th>
<th>Test 2 (score: 1-4)</th>
<th>Test 3 (score: 1-4)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>The word was illustrated in haikus.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have a kettle And I boil it every day For cooking the food</td>
<td>4 (I boil the kettle for cooking foods.)</td>
<td>4 (I'm boiling a kettle for cook.)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I take out a loan Cause I buy watercolors It is expensive</td>
<td>4 (I like to take out a loan.)</td>
<td>4 (My friend take out loan.)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I go to cashpoint For taking out some money To buy the paintbrush</td>
<td>4 (My mom likes to go cashpoint for get some money.)</td>
<td>4 (Mom goes to the cashpoint for take out money.)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I live in Thailand I live in the outskirts And want to go city</td>
<td>4 (I want to live in outskirts.)</td>
<td>4 (I want to live in outskirts.)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My friend has some beard He wants to buy a shave For shaving his beard</td>
<td>4 (My friend wants to shave beard.)</td>
<td>4 (My friend shave his mustache.)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The five haikus in Table 2 showed that Participant 2 actually knew and understood the words that she learned as all of the five words – kettle, loan, cashpoint, outskirts, and shave – were used and put in meaningful contexts, illustrating clear pictures of the messages she intended to convey. This could be considered the reason why all of those words were effectively retained in her long-term memory.

With all of the findings presented above, it is quite positive that writing haikus could strengthen vocabulary retention, and vocabulary would stay in memory longer if its meaning was illustrated.

**Discussion**

Ebbinghaus (2011), who was the founder of the experimental psychology of memory and discovered the forgetting curve, was the first psychologist to use meaningless syllables in research and found that forgetting occurred most right after the learning process. The results of his famous experiment showed that, after twenty minutes of learning something, 53% of that thing would be remembered while 47% of it would be forgotten. And after fifteen days of learning something, 25% of that thing would be remembered while 75% of it would be forgotten.

A recent study on forgetting textbook materials by Sprenger (2005) showed that, after one day, 54% of what was learned was remembered, while after fourteen days, 21% of it was remembered.

The two studies mentioned above were classic and well-known in the field of psychology. They showed that generally speaking, what a person learns today would be remembered only around 21-25%
after two weeks had passed. These statistics could be applied to anything that we learn, including English vocabulary.

Writing haikus with new words that have been learned could be one useful technique for learning and retaining vocabulary in our memory. According to the findings of this study, the participants could remember 95.83% of what they learned right after they wrote haikus, and they could still remember 80.00% of it after fourteen days passed. These numbers of retention were higher than those of the two classic studies mentioned. Even the participants with the lowest scores could remember 70% of what they had learned after two weeks. It is evident that writing haikus could help increase vocabulary retention. However, the high percentage of vocabulary retention might also be supported by the fact that the chosen words were not difficult. They were all concrete nouns and verbs, which are easier to get the concept and remember. For future research in the same field, it would be interesting to see more results on other kinds of words such as adjectives, adverbs, etc.

The findings of this study also revealed the relationship between vocabulary memorization and the use of vocabulary in a haiku, answering the second research question that, if a word was illustrated in a haiku, the word tended to be remembered longer than a partly illustrated and unillustrated one. The idea of meaning illustration could be applied to other activities or techniques in vocabulary teaching and learning. A haiku was chosen for this study just because of its brevity and free-from-grammar characteristic, which was quite suitable for Thai learners who might be afraid of using English and making mistakes if there are lots of rules to follow. If students are quite good at English, other activities could be used instead, for example, short paragraph writing or story-making, to provide students with chances not only to illustrate new learned words in context but also to use those words in grammatically correct sentences, gaining both vocabulary knowledge and grammar knowledge at the same time.

After all, learning vocabulary and retaining it needed a variety of strategies (Ghazal, 2007). Sticking to one method yielded less effective results than employing various tools (Scarfaru & Tofan, 2006). Common strategies that learners could apply were 1. note-taking which was proved effective because of visual memory (Scarfaru & Tofan, 2006), 2. using bilingualized dictionaries which was found significantly better than monolingual and bilingual ones (Laufer & Hader, 1997), 3. repeating words aloud which was more efficient than studying silently (Gu, 2003; Seibert, 1927), and 4. putting words in cards and reciting them which encouraged deeper processing of the words (Nation, 2001).

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study

This study was based on only six students who were studying in the researcher’s tutoring class. Therefore, they might not be representatives of general Thai learners. Different learners have different styles of learning and surely have different interests. Using poetry or writing haikus activity might not be applicable to all learners. Moreover, there were only five words for the participants in this study to learn and write, which might not be enough to generalize to make sure that the results would be the same if there were more words to remember. Last but not least, as mentioned before, studying in a tutoring
class could be considered a special or unusual class (not a regular class in school), which could affect
the memory of the participants. They might remember what they learned in the unusual class better than
what they learned in the regular class. To clarify this point, further research could be done with students
in a school class where they study English on a daily basis. Writing haikus could also be applied as a
tool for learning vocabulary and remembering words in any research regarding vocabulary development
and vocabulary retention. Furthermore, if possible, comparing word retention rates between the words
learned with writing haikus and the same words learned with other ways would help confirm whether
writing haikus is an ideal way to learn vocabulary or not.

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APPENDIX A
Vocabulary Test 1

Vocabulary Test 1: Twenty-five highlighted words from the book “Cambridge English Vocabulary in Use Pre-intermediate and Intermediate” were selected and put in a table to test the students’ knowledge of the vocabulary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name ___________________________</th>
<th>Age _________</th>
<th>Date ________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Translate these words into Thai**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Part of Speech</th>
<th>Meaning (Thai)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>feed</td>
<td>v.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takeaway</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make-up</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shave</td>
<td>v.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iron</td>
<td>v.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outskirts</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>location</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>space</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rent</td>
<td>v.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>balcony</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>study</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kettle</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cupboard</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tap</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tile</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drop</td>
<td>v.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slip</td>
<td>v.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spill</td>
<td>v.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burn</td>
<td>v.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tear</td>
<td>v.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cashpoint</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cash</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fee</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loan</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>account</td>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The result of vocabulary test 1 and the five chosen words were presented here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Seen</th>
<th>Unseen</th>
<th>Five chosen words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>feed, takeaway, make-up, iron, outskirts, location, space, balcony, study, cupboard, tap, tile, drop, burn, tear, cashpoint, cash, loan, account</td>
<td>shave, rent, kettle, slip, spill, fee</td>
<td>shave, rent, kettle, spill, fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>feed, takeaway, make-up, iron, location, space, study, cupboard, tap, tile, drop, slip, spill, burn, tear, cash, account</td>
<td>shave, outskirts, rent, balcony, kettle, cashpoint, fee, loan</td>
<td>shave, outskirts, kettle, cashpoint, loan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>feed, make-up, shave, iron, space, study, cupboard, drop, slip, burn, cashpoint, account</td>
<td>takeaway, outskirts, location, rent, balcony, kettle, tap, tile, spill, tear, cash, fee, loan</td>
<td>outskirts, location, balcony, kettle, cash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>feed, make-up, iron, location, space, study, cupboard, tap, tile, drop, burn, account</td>
<td>takeaway, shave, outskirts, rent, balcony, kettle, slip, spill, tear, cashpoint, cash, fee, loan</td>
<td>takeaway, rent, kettle, tear, cashpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>feed, takeaway, make-up, shave, iron, space, rent, study, cupboard, tap, tile, drop, slip, spill, burn, tear, fee</td>
<td>outskirts, location, balcony, kettle, cashpoint, cash, loan, account</td>
<td>location, balcony, kettle, cash, loan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>feed, make-up, shave, iron, space, rent, study, tap, tile, drop, slip, burn, account</td>
<td>takeaway, outskirts, location, balcony, kettle, cupboard, spill, tear, cashpoint, cash, fee, loan</td>
<td>takeaway, kettle, spill, tear, fee,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C
Vocabulary Test 2 and 3

Vocabulary Test 2 and 3: The chosen words were arranged with the scale adapted from the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (Wesche & Paribakht, 1996) to test the students’ knowledge of the vocabulary they had learned by writing haikus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: __________________________</th>
<th>Age: _______</th>
<th>Date __________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocabulary Test</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word</strong></td>
<td>√</td>
<td><strong>Knowing Scale</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. word - (part of speech)</td>
<td>I have never seen this word before.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have seen this word before, but I cannot remember its meaning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know this word. It means _________________________ (in Thai).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know this word and its meaning. I can use it in a sentence (in English).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. word - (part of speech)</td>
<td>I have never seen this word before.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have seen this word before, but I cannot remember its meaning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know this word. It means _________________________ (in Thai).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know this word and its meaning. I can use it in a sentence (in English).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. word - (part of speech)</td>
<td>I have never seen this word before.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have seen this word before, but I cannot remember its meaning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know this word. It means _________________________ (in Thai).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know this word and its meaning. I can use it in a sentence (in English).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. word - (part of speech)</td>
<td>I have never seen this word before.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have seen this word before, but I cannot remember its meaning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know this word. It means _________________________ (in Thai).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know this word and its meaning. I can use it in a sentence (in English).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. word - (part of speech)</td>
<td>I have never seen this word before.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have seen this word before, but I cannot remember its meaning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know this word. It means _________________________ (in Thai).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I know this word and its meaning. I can use it in a sentence (in English).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D
Participants’ Haikus

Participants’ Haikus: The haikus from the students were analyzed to see the link between the possibility to remember a new word and the illustration of the word used in a haiku.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Haiku</th>
<th>Test 2 (score: 1-4)</th>
<th>Test 3 (score: 1-4)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>The word was illustrated.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Your love is kettle Its shape is like an oval That means &quot;difficult&quot;</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I very hate fee Fee is enemy for me Pay fee I agree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My heart that you steal When I give you spill It hurt more than feel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>You're like a serpent Love that you gave me is rent I hurt with accent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-50.00%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I love you with brave You throw me like when you shave It's like I'm in the cave</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I have a kettle And I boil it every day For cooking the food</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I take out a loan Cause I buy watercolors It is expensive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I go to cashpoint For taking out some money To buy the paintbrush</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I live in Thailand I live in the outskirts And want to go city</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>My friend has some beard He wants to buy a shaver For shaving his beard</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Haiku</td>
<td>Test 2 (score: 1-4)</td>
<td>Test 3 (score: 1-4)</td>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>The word was illustrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3           | Mama in kettle  
I eat Mama in kettle  
I like a kettle          | 4                   | 2                   | -50.00%    | Yes                      |
|             | I'm on balcony  
I play on a balcony  
I like balcony           | 4                   | 4                   | 0.00%      | No                       |
|             | I have some of cash  
She doesn't have any cash  
I have much of cash     | 4                   | 2                   | -50.00%    | No                       |
|             | My house on outskirts  
I live on outskirts of Bangkok  
Do you like outskirts? | 4                   | 4                   | 0.00%      | No                       |
|             | Location so good  
My house has good location  
I like location          | 4                   | 2                   | -50.00%    | Partly                   |
| 4           | I have one kettle  
I like to use my kettle  
I put on table           | 4                   | 4                   | 0.00%      | Partly                   |
|             | I have my cashpoint  
At home I have ten cashpoints  
But I just dream again  | 4                   | 4                   | 0.00%      | No                       |
|             | I like to tear school  
It's fun to tear my school  
But I'm just dreaming   | 4                   | 2                   | -50.00%    | No                       |
|             | Now I like takeaway  
I don't have time to eat food  
I like to eat food       | 2                   | 2                   | 0.00%      | Partly                   |
|             | I rent many rooms  
And I like only one room  
That one is I like       | 4                   | 4                   | 0.00%      | Partly                   |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Haiku</th>
<th>Test 2 (score: 1-4)</th>
<th>Test 3 (score: 1-4)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>The word was illustrated.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I don't have <em>kettle</em> But I have some hot water I sit beside table</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-25.00%</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I want good <em>location</em> Because I have to build house I don't have action</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-25.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He wants some <em>loan</em> He wants to buy a car Now he buys I-Phone</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-25.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I use <em>cash</em> to buy I don't have my credit card I wish to cry</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-25.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I walk to balcony My hotel doesn't have flowers I go to buy pony</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-50.00%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Haiku</th>
<th>Test 2 (score: 1-4)</th>
<th>Test 3 (score: 1-4)</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>The word was illustrated.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>She buys a <em>kettle</em> Because she does not have it She has a table</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He has lots of <em>fee</em> Because he wants location He wants to feed bees</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-33.33%</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I make everything <em>spill</em> Because I am very clumsy She wants to be ill</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She wants to <em>tear</em> a book Because she's very angry It is a bear Look!</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He wants <em>takeaway</em> Because he doesn't finish eating Elder can't run away</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-50.00%</td>
<td>Partly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Features of Japanese Discourse Style that Impede Communication in English

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Abstract

This paper outlines numerous features of Japanese discourse style and how these can negatively impact smooth communication in English. Some discourse features that can cause communication difficulties for Japanese speakers include silence, minimal responses, pronunciation and spelling, limited lexical choice and range, loanwords, over-reliance on technology, lack of language skills to explain, unfamiliar and unconventional styles in English, lack of topic development, and making assumptions through a lack of cultural awareness. Although the problems presented throughout this paper exemplify ways that native Japanese speakers communicate in English, such aspects of intercultural discourse are not unique to Japanese culture. Therefore, the content of this article may be relevant to speakers of other languages in various cultures. Regardless of the context of interaction, this article should be of interest to anyone who wants to communicate with native Japanese speakers using English as the lingua franca.

Keywords: discourse style, Japanese, pragmatics, loanwords

Introduction

One of the main intentions of this paper is for readers to consider some ways that Japanese think and behave and how these are reflected in characteristics of their discourse style. Intercultural communicative acts can suffer when the expectations and conventions of discourse differ from those of speakers from other languages and cultures. Discourse style incorporates (para)linguistic features, which are forms of culture-bound expression and for communication to be effective requires the use of strategies and active management by both speakers. Therefore, an awareness of differences in cultural discourse styles (see Carbaugh, 2007) when communicating is of primary importance to minimise pragmatic failure. In this paper, the theme is how this relates to communication in English between native Japanese and non-Japanese speakers. Another main intention is for readers to gain insights and advice so that they can become more skilled communicators, manage possible linguistic and cultural obstacles, and avoid communication breakdown, in particular if speaking in English with native Japanese. The paper first introduces elements of context and pragmatics. This includes reference to pragmatic failure, formal and honorific expressions, and vagueness associated with Japanese discourse. The main section of the paper then explains and exemplifies a range of discourse features that can be problematic for Japanese when they communicate in English. These highlight a variety of linguistic and
paralinguistic features of communication. Furthermore, there are examples of perspectives, cultural concepts and practices, and aspects of language that are unconventional in English. It is not possible to cover all the main aspects of discourse style, nor to comprehensively explain these in this paper. Throughout, the reader is asked to reflect on their own discourse style and those within their culture with the hope that an understanding of issues highlighted in this paper can help them to engage in more effective intercultural communication.

**Context and pragmatics**

An initial consideration regarding discourse is the notion of ‘context’. Teun Van Dijk provides a useful explanation of the cognitive interface of discourse (European University at Saint Petersburg, 2013). He believes that context is not an external, objective social construct, but an internal, subjective interpretation of a communicative situation by both speakers. The contextual relevance of one’s role as a speaker is framed within social structures and speakers communicate with varying interpretations of their roles within discourse frames of interaction (European University at Saint Petersburg, 2013). When we engage in intercultural communicative acts, there may be features of discourse that challenge or violate perceptions based on our own cultural norms. For instance, depending on culture, it might be considered usual or rude to ask someone’s age when first meeting. Other aspects of interaction might seem superfluous. Japanese often ask and talk about food preferences, whereas this is a topic that native English speakers might not generally discuss when getting to know each other, or at least not as directly as Japanese speakers do.

In comparison to interactions between native speakers of the same language, communicating across invisible cultural fault lines is more fraught with potential for missed cues and miscomprehension given variations between what speakers expect to convey, the interpretation of information they exchange, and the manner and attitude of discourse, among other factors. The relevance of context is the immediate focus to achieve our personal communicative goals and we evaluate how well we can achieve the outcome intertwined with our interpretation of the other speaker’s manner. We might claim that another speaker was rude, curt, unhelpful, or careless, when there is simply a clash in expectations based on our experience, filtered through our cultural frames of reference (Kecskes, 2015). Opinions such as ‘staff in culture X were rude, but staff in culture Y were so friendly’ are expressions of our own interpretations. Yet objectively, staff in culture X might not really be rude or have a poor attitude but communicate as they usually would within their own culture. Alternatively, staff in culture Y might match our expectations for interaction more closely based on our own cultural perspective and therefore seem to be friendly. Kecskes (2015, p. 46) provides an example of a Japanese student who thought an utterance was rude and therefore did not respond appropriately. The student failed to interpret the expression ‘Get out of here!’ as a happy, supportive reaction. In another example, Osuka (2017, p. 289) includes the comments of a Japanese student who studied in the US for one semester. When he gave something for a friend’s birthday, he thought it was impolite that the response was ‘You didn’t have
to’. In English, this utterance conveys appreciation for the effort of the present-giver. The Japanese student probably misinterpreted this expression as form of rejection similar to the Japanese form *iranai*, meaning ‘(I) don’t need (it)’. Similarly, when Japanese give a present, they might say *kochira wa tsumaranai mono desu ga*, which translates as ‘This is a boring thing (I’m giving you)’. This is an example of a highly ritualised expression that English speakers need to understand is the (friendly) equivalent of ‘Here’s a little something for you’.

David Crystal believes that pragmatics is a fundamental aspect of communication (Levels, 2014). He states that common aspects of language learning such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation are all subordinate to the role of pragmatics. In addition, he says that pragmatics enables us to understand the reasons why we make particular linguistic choices and the effects these have when communicating (Levels, 2014). Pragmatics includes utterance forms, syntax, semantics and referential semantics. It also entails the appropriacy, or conversational implicatures of what we say and write (Korta & Perry, 2020). According to the Cooperative Principle put forward by Grice in 1975, speakers make utterances according to the maxims of quality; say what is true, quantity; say enough, relation; be relevant, and manner; avoid obscurity and ambiguity (Davis, 2019). These have since been honed to neo-Gricean principles (see Davis, 2019). The basis of pragmatics is context and because this is internal, it is the way that individual speakers subjectively evaluate how well a communicative act progresses. Pizziconi (2009, p. 244) states that ‘we judge people based on the way they talk and against our parameters of “normality”’. Whether linguistic, paralinguistic, or a combination of these, a clash in the use of conventional forms of interaction by speakers from different cultures can result in pragmatic failure. This might occur when the meaning (implicature) of an utterance is not correctly interpreted by the other speaker.

Some elements of communication are more ritualised and therefore predictable (Bardovi-Harlig, 2012). Examples of formulaic patterns of communication are the highly formal expressions and honorific forms in Japanese referred to as *keigo*. Categories of *keigo* include polite forms, *teineigo*, deferential forms, *sonkeigo*, and humble forms, *kenjoogo* (Pizziconi, 2011, p. 48) and is part of the high context culture of Japan, where social hierarchy determines language forms. The concepts of ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture are explained well by Hua (2018, Chapter 6). Not only do these forms reflect one’s role as a speaker or listener as a superior/subordinate, but also that of ‘horizontal’ insider/outside interaction. To briefly clarify, the term ‘outsider’ does not specifically refer to ‘foreigner’, although this could be the case. It refers to a speaker who is outside one’s inner social circle of interaction. Minami (2009, p. xiv) notes that Gricean maxims do not necessarily take into account language-specific features, such as those in polite language forms.

Polite speech forms such as *keigo* are a good example of register, where we consider what is appropriate according to whom we speak. These are some of the features of communication that Van Dijk states is what pragmatics is all about (European University at Saint Petersburg, 2013). Expressions
might not translate well and perhaps have no equivalent in another language. Examples of these include some common polite Japanese business expressions (Plaza Homes, 2019). One of these is the utterance *otsukare sama desu* when Japanese staff encounter colleagues in the workplace. This roughly translates as ‘You must be a tired person (from your work)’, but there is no such formal expression used between workers in English, where ‘Hello’ is a conventional acknowledgement. Conversely, Japanese are unlikely to repeat *konnichi wa*, ‘Hello’, if they meet the same person throughout the day. At the end of the working day, Japanese will likely say *otsukare sama deshita* (past tense), whereas in English, ‘See you tomorrow’, or ‘(Good)bye’ are conventional utterances. The implication here for effective intercultural communication is that speakers need to be aware of the linguistic (and paralinguistic) social conventions of the person with whom they interact. Depending on the cultural context of interaction a speaker might need to modify their style of discourse and/or behaviour.

Discourse activates vast amounts of knowledge. Smooth communication relies on accessing a shared pool of cultural information and the ways that elements of context and content relate through threads of coherency as a basis for comprehension. This information not only includes content, but also how speakers ought to interact and their understanding of the sequences and phases of a communicative act (Carbaugh, 2007). Discourse is coherent when it is comprehensible and when we can construe a mental model of what the information refers to – this comes from a psychological background, not one based in linguistics (see Barsalou et al., 2008; Yeh & Barsalou, 2006). It is important to note that this knowledge does not only refer to linguistic content, but also to sociocultural features of camaraderie, relating, finding common ground, and cooperation. As a (polite) way to initiate small talk, a Japanese speaker will often say *samui/atsui desu ne* ‘(It’s) cold/hot, isn’t it?’ It is most likely that the other (Japanese) speaker will simply agree with the comment because they are aware their agreement is all that is expected with little extra information required. Such interaction style also typifies the way that British people initiate small talk, in contrast to more verbose, assertive American styles according to Fox (2004, as cited in Hua, 2018, p. 95).

When speakers of the same native language communicate, they usually share an implicit understanding of such aspects as deictic expression, time, place, identity, roles, aims, presupposition, implication, relevance and perhaps experience. In comparison to the discourse roles of American (English) speakers, who share feelings directly with each other, Clancy (1986, as cited in Pizziconi, 2009, pp. 224-225) says that the onus is on the role of the listener in Japanese discourse to interpret the meaning of the speaker. To generalise, Pizziconi (2009) concurs with the prevailing academic view that Japanese discourse is indirect in comparison to a more direct style in English, although she believes we should be wary of perpetuating cultural stereotypes and goes on to provide evidence that Japanese discourse style can also be direct.

To provide an example not included in Pizziconi’s study, one example of the vagueness of Japanese discourse style is the common use of the expression *kamoshirenai* to indicate an element of doubt approximate to ‘perhaps’. To refuse an invitation, English speakers might say ‘No, I’m sorry. I
cannot come’ and then maybe add a reason why they cannot. If a Japanese speaker replies to an
invitation with ‘Maybe’ in English, it does not provide the requested answer and this could lead to a
frustrated host. This example of indirectness could be explained by Caffi (2007, as cited in Pizziconi,
2009, p. 229) as a device to mitigate uncertainty, to show caution and consideration. Its function is to
help reduce the risk of conflict or losing face. However, we should not assume that vagueness in
discourse transfers when Japanese speak in English. In the US, when refusing an invitation, Osuka
(2017, p. 289) found that Japanese speakers tended to use the translation equivalent ‘I can’t go’, which
can sound too direct. During intercultural interaction, speakers might not be aware of each other’s
cultural discourse style. To help compensate for this, there should be ways that (both) speakers can
convey their intentions effectively and appropriately. Unlike native first language interaction, this
requires more focused and regular use of strategies by each speaker such as slower and clearer speech,
repetition, explanation, paraphrase, asking for clarification, gesture, patience and making allowances,
for example.

Problematic discourse features for Japanese in English

This section presents a number of features of discourse style of native Japanese as they
communicate in English. Throughout, the reader is encouraged to consider how they and others within
their culture communicate, reflecting on their experience of speaking in English with speakers from
other cultures.

Silence

To generalise, Japanese do not suffer from shyness as a cultural trait, but rather more commonly
situational shyness (see Carducci, 2017). It is safer to remain silent rather than risk making a mistake,
admitting lack of understanding, or to avoid the attention and focus of others. Silence is a common way
that Japanese express that they do not know how to respond. Combined with silence, Japanese might
tilt their head sideways and/or pout. Despite silence conveying the meaning of not understanding how
to reply, unfortunately this aspect of discourse stifles interaction and little can be achieved without any
input from the other speaker. EFL teachers in Japan know that often students will not even verbalise ‘I
don’t know’ because it may be embarrassing for them to do so around their peers.

Minimal responses

A minimal step up from silence is a preference for one-word or very short replies. For
agreement or disagreement, Japanese speakers often only reply ‘yes’ or ‘no’ as they do in Japanese.
However, this style can sound blunt and unfriendly in English, where slightly longer utterances such as
‘yes, I am’ or ‘No, I haven’t’ are more acceptable. This has a different discourse function to the frequent
use of ‘yes’, which can mean ‘I am listening to you’ as an example of the common aizuchi back-channel
discourse markers explained at length by Kawamori et al., (1996).
It is common for Japanese to utter single words, especially adjectives, as they do in Japanese. Similarly, it is quite acceptable in English to make single-word utterances such as ‘Wow!’, ‘Interesting’, ‘Great!’ or ‘Cool!’ for example. In English, however, there is often longer syntax. There is a noticeable difference in proficiency between utterances such as ‘The party was great’ and ‘Very enjoy’. For some reason, in Japan as self-evident as the answer is, when asking where a Japanese speaker comes from, the response is often ‘Japan’. If the speaker is then asked where in Japan, the response is usually a one-word place name. The problem for smooth discourse here is that there is often no additional information offered beyond the (too) brief response so that interaction tends to sound one-sided. This then leads one speaker to take on the role of asking questions to maintain interaction. Unfortunately, an attempt at conversation can quickly become a one-sided question and answer ‘interview style’ encounter. Lack of topic development is discussed more in a following section.

**Pronunciation and spelling**

It is well-known that native Japanese speakers have trouble pronouncing ‘l’ and ‘r’ sounds. This has the potential to cause miscomprehension in English, not only for speaking but also for spelling. Common spelling errors are ‘Austraria’ and ‘Singapole’, for example. At the entrance to an American steak house restaurant in a large hotel catering to foreign visitors, a sign read ‘We have English menu’ and in large writing was the word *sarada* the English loanword ‘salad’ written in romaji (English alphabet). The spelling *sarada* is the direct orthographic transfer from the katakana script in which almost all loanwords are written. Without any contextual reference, the same menu advertises a ‘curse’ in bold letters. This is supposed to be spelled ‘course’. Another example, a pizza topping ‘tsuna freak’ is the attempted English spelling of ‘tuna flake’. Both spelling errors result from the direct transfer of Japanese syllables, in the case of ‘freak’, *fu-re-ki*. There is no ‘cosmopolitan quality’ to menu items that are incomprehensible because their spelling is completely wrong. To prevent such errors, menu items should be written in the usual Japanese style in a “Japanese menu” and the spelling of translations checked in a dictionary for an “English menu”.

Some other English pronunciation difficulties for Japanese speakers include using exaggerated diphthongs where English has an unvoiced vowel, pronunciation of both voiced and voiceless ‘th’ as ‘s’, and ‘er/ir/ur’ modified to an ‘ar’ sound. Japanese also add vowel sounds to the end of words as they do in Japanese. If combined with a lack of prosody and words pronounced individually, the result challenges comprehensibility in English. Intended meaning is conveyed by the combination of various elements of pronunciation and also grammar. Japanese commonly say ‘One more, please’ with the likely intended utterance ‘One more *time*, please’. Instead, the utterance sounds as though it should be an alternative ‘Once more, please’ and so this simple grammar error can result in listener confusion.

To provide a random example of spelling difficulty and how this affects comprehensibility, a total of 72 first year university students were asked to write the English word ‘surfing’ from the loanword katakana サーフィン  *sāfin*. Only 20 students wrote the correct spelling. The second most
common spelling was ‘surfine’ with 12 responses and the third most common was ‘surfin’ with 10 responses. From the remaining 30 responses, there were 20 other variations of spelling which were incomprehensible and three responses where students changed the part of speech to a verb from the noun. Orthography can also be problematic, with legibility perhaps affected by the first language influence of writing the rounded Japanese script hiragana (see Small, 2020).

**Limited lexical choice and range**

The lexical choices Japanese speakers make are often restricted and therefore predictable. Frequently, these comprise dictionary-style translated vocabulary (Small, 2019). For example, Japanese usually talk about ‘the sea’, but not ‘the beach’, ‘the coast’, or ‘the ocean’. Another example is common use of ‘hobby’ instead of ‘interested in’, ‘interests’, ‘free time’ activities, or what they ‘like to do’. Limited lexical range is evident with consistent use of ‘delicious’ rather than a variety of other, commonly used adjectives to express the same meaning in English. The use of adjectives overall is also quite limited and are frequently restricted to such elementary lexical items as ‘good’, ‘bad’, ‘happy’, ‘sad’, ‘big’ and ‘small’. For basic communication, these might be enough to convey meaning, but the limited range and overuse of these lexical items demonstrates low English proficiency. The IELTS test, for example, specifically evaluates candidates on their choice and range of lexis and the flexibility of its use. The ability to paraphrase, even simply, is an important second language skill. Ability to express the meaning of one’s intentions and opinions requires much more than simply translating first language forms and consistently using the same limited range of lexical items to achieve a variety of communicative goals.

**Loanwords**

One of the complexities of communication with Japanese speakers is their use of loanwords with the assumption that these are English words that English speakers understand. However, the use of loanwords can impede effective communication because they are not always an appropriate lexical choice (Small, 2019). Their pronunciation, meaning and form in utterances will vary from those in English. Not all loanwords come from English. Fashion and food loanwords are often from French, science and medicine from German and some other lexical items come from historical influences of Portuguese, Dutch and Spanish. To improve the chances of comprehension, loanword forms should be written either completely in Japanese or as complete English words. You cannot simply write Japanese pronunciation using romaji (the English alphabet) and assume that the word will be comprehensible in English. Loanwords might be clipped forms, such as ho-mu ‘(plat)form’ and sando, ‘sand(wich)’. Unfamiliarity with such forms can cause miscomprehension for English speakers. ‘Sand’ is not a food in English and so a menu that reads ‘whipped cream sand’ requires the reader to understand that ‘sand’ is a clipped form of ‘sandwich’. This is an example of the previously mentioned shared pool of cultural knowledge that allows comprehension.
In addition to pronunciation, perhaps the most problematic aspect of loanwords is for English speakers to understand the meaning and use of ‘made in Japan’ vocabulary, known as ‘waseieigo’ (Kay, 1995). Examples include handoru ハンドル ‘steering wheel’, and kanningu カンニング ‘cheating’ in a test. A prominent recent example is the usage of the loanword ōbashuto オーバーシュート ‘overshoot’. The Japanese government has chosen this loanword to refer to the situation where the increase in the cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) overwhelms the medical system (Swift, 2020). An important consideration for intercultural communication is that the lexical and semantic features of some lexical concepts is specific to Japanese cultural discourse. Although their forms are based on constructions of foreign vocabulary, their meanings are culture-bound in Japanese expression. For instance, the single-word emphatic utterance faito ファイト ‘fight’ in Japanese shows encouragement for another person. However its meaning, from ‘fighting spirit,’ differs from the usual connotation and usage of the single English lexical item ‘fight’. Although non-Japanese speakers might be able to understand the conceptual content of waseieigo, its semantic potential might not be accessible unless there is focused and deliberate explanation, or pre-existing awareness of a cultural concept. Therefore, for improved communication in English, Japanese speakers should take care with pronunciation and if possible, paraphrase loanword meaning for clearer comprehension by non-Japanese speakers.

Over-reliance on technology

Many Japanese believe that translation software is much more accurate than it actually is. Written and spoken communication can suffer breakdown for a combination of reasons from poor translation of Japanese terms, loanwords or expressions, for example. This might be an inconvenience for contexts such as communication in hotels or shops, but in medical situations, using online translation services could endanger a patient’s life. The experience of such attempted communication in a Japanese hospital is recounted by a foreigner injured while skiing (Smith, 2017). Another dubious use of translation software is for law enforcement, where police may not be able to conduct investigations clearly and accurately with criminal suspects.

Examples of poor translation frequently occur in advertising. On a sign for tea, the English reads ‘certified functional tea’ which conveys little meaning. The Japanese explanation is that the tea promotes healthy digestion. It would be interesting to learn if the information also written on the sign in Korean and Chinese is comprehensible to speakers of those languages.

A menu at a festival food stall in Japan featured ‘pork rose’ with a picture of thinly-cut pork char-grilled on bamboo skewers, known as butabara. The problem is the direct translation of buta and bara separately. The first kanji 豚 buta refers to pork. However, the second free morpheme bara usually written in katakana バラ refers to the flower called a rose. The cut of meat advertised at the food stall is one word, butabara, which is ‘pork belly’. An English menu would probably also include an adjective such as ‘grilled’ to describe the cooking method, even if this was obvious by looking at the actual food.
Future application of technology may provide more reliable means to convey meaning across languages and cultures. Currently, despite great progress, translation software might not produce completely accurate or appropriate output, perhaps because of erroneous input. It might be useful to an extent in some contexts such as ordering in restaurants or asking for directions, but it is only a resource not a complete solution or replacement for conversation strategies and negotiating meaning face-to-face. The use of translation software can also detract from the subtleties of in-person interaction, where meaning is conveyed in fundamental ways such as through emotion and gesture.

**Lack of skills to explain**

Paraphrase is a very useful skill that demonstrates a degree of linguistic flexibility and proficiency. Japanese have a lot of trouble explaining such things as customs and other cultural practices in English and to be fair, it is often quite difficult even for native English speakers familiar with Japanese culture to explain some concepts clearly and adequately. Skill at paraphrasing is especially problematic for second language speakers with limited lexical and grammatical proficiency in English.

One of the frequent obstacles for clear communication includes the utterance of Japanese vocabulary. Although the use of code mixing is sometimes unavoidable, merely inserting or repeating Japanese vocabulary risks miscomprehension by non-Japanese speakers. Another problem related to this is the reliance on translation, assuming this will convey intended meaning. Japanese can often only rely on their ‘learning’ of English from extensive grammar-translation practice at school. Some forms are not easily or well-translatable. Let’s consider a cultural practice, where Japanese go to shrines to pray for good luck at New Year. Japanese might say ‘I did hatsumoude’ and if asked to explain, they often attempt to translate the kanji for this concept directly 初詣 ‘first’ + (silence). A literal translation might be ‘first worship/pilgrimage’ and a dictionary might state ‘pay a visit to a temple’, but these are not enough to explain the concept and might strike an English speaker as odd lexical and syntactic choices. One of the issues with translation is that there are not always lexical or even conceptual equivalents in another language. Therefore developing skills to explain and paraphrase meaning are very useful.

**Unfamiliar and unconventional styles in English**

When Japanese communicate in English, there can be problems for an English speaker to comprehend the lexical forms and concepts they try to convey. One example is the lexical concept ‘climb a mountain’ which is a direct translation of the expression yama ni noboru. To a native English speaker, it seems odd to hear that someone’s mother likes to ‘climb a mountain’ every week. This aspect of lexical incongruity is a result of the clash between primary cognitive models for that lexical concept in Japanese and English (see Evans, 2009). In Japanese, to ‘climb a mountain’ is more akin to the lexical concept of ‘go walking in the mountains’ in English. It is commonly a free time exercise activity, perhaps walking up and down a local hill, that can be enjoyed frequently, including by children and
completed in a relatively short time. The concept might approximate ‘hiking’, but it does not necessarily involve carrying food, drinks or a backpack. This lexical concept lacks the danger, altitude, equipment, preparation and time required for ‘mountain climbing’ as it is understood in English. Such semantic features differ from those in Japanese unless climbing in rugged mountainous areas. Although the utterance may be understood with contextual support, this example illustrates that meaning in interaction might need clarification. To reiterate, this is where skills of paraphrase are useful.

Another example of unconventional English style is evident in the ways that Japanese express the concept of time. One aspect of this is that Japanese consider time by the calendar whereas English expresses duration. For example in English, one might go on an ‘overnight trip’, but in Japanese, this is clearly expressed as a ‘one-night, two-day trip’. A departure on Monday and a return on Wednesday, for example, might be expressed as a two-day trip in English considering the time period from Monday to Tuesday (one day) and then Tuesday to Wednesday (one day). In Japanese, this schedule would be considered a two-night, three-day trip. This difference in time expression has the potential for miscommunication in intercultural medical exchanges. Doctors need to accurately understand the amount of time a patient has experienced symptoms. In Japan, non-Japanese patients need to understand that a ‘four-day’ supply of medication will last a duration of three days.

In English/Japanese interaction, there is potential for confusion over ‘this’ week and ‘next’ week and which day begins a week. This difference in conception reinforces the need for speakers to hone their skills of checking the information conveyed when making plans and reconfirming the day as well as the date to avoid miscommunication. Japan uses a month+day format for dates and so written without the supporting kanji, there is the potential for confusing 3/4 for April 3rd instead of March 4th, for example, depending on the culture of the reader. To prevent such confusion, the full or abbreviated spelling of the month should always be written.

In English, there are various conventions for writing time. Two o’clock in the afternoon can be written as 2 p.m. or 14:00 and Japanese prefer the latter form. There is a clear dichotomy of 12-hour periods between a.m. and p.m. in English. However, in shops, bars and restaurants in Japan it is not unusual to see time after midnight written as 26:00, for example. The reservation confirmation at a large international hotel in Tokyo stated the check-in time as 15:00~30:00. A non-Japanese might think this was an error and perhaps the time was supposed to indicate 3 a.m. (3:00), but the time 30:00 was repeated on the reservation page. By adding the ‘extra’ hours, this probably means that one can check-in until 6 a.m. the day following the reservation date. This could be clarified by writing ‘15:00~6:00’ followed by ‘the next day’ in English, or in Japanese yoku jitsu 翌日. This example illustrates how Japanese (written) discourse can cause misunderstanding because it is a completely unconventional style to that in English.

Lack of topic development
Whether it is from a lack of lexical resource, experience, embarrassment, or simply not knowing how to respond, it is often difficult for Japanese speakers of English to develop a topic of discussion. In addition, a Japanese speaker might feel hesitant to offer personal information (in English) because they don’t usually do so when speaking in Japanese, perhaps not even to their peers. For example, an English conversation about someone’s recent holiday might involve asking and freely offering information about the food, weather, sights, activities and so on. It is not uncommon for a Japanese speaker to simply say *yokatta desu* ‘(It) was good’. In Japanese, this is an expected response, but it doesn’t consistently translate well in English, where the utterance of various alternative adjectives might be more suitable.

**Making assumptions**

Some final comments about intercultural miscommunication relate to a generalised lack of awareness of Japanese about foreign cultures. There seems to be as assumption that the nationality of Caucasians is American. Instead of asking a conventional open question such as ‘Where are you from?’ Japanese often ask ‘You’re American, aren’t you?’, expressing a potentially offensive assumption. Similar experience is recounted by Japanese students who travelled abroad and were asked if they were Chinese or Korean. One of the golden rules of smooth intercultural communication is not to make assumptions. Don’t assume that someone from Japan lives in Tokyo and eats sushi for breakfast every day. Through the influence of the media, another common misconception for Japanese is that 外国 ‘foreign countries’ are dangerous because they are collectively characterised by crime, drugs, violence, disease and war. There is also a strong sense of cultural difference; ways of doing things are either Japanese or foreign and that things in other countries are inherently strange and different. This can extend to more parochial attitudes and comments such as ‘This is a Japanese persimmon. You don’t have these in America’. In the conversation following such comments Japanese are often surprised, even shocked, that some aspects of their lifestyle are not uniquely Japanese. In this situation, lack of shared cultural knowledge has the potential to lead to interaction that might offend one or both speakers.

**Conclusion**

Because discourse styles vary culturally, aspects of spoken and written language in one context can seem unconventional to those of other cultures. It is important to state that there are various discourse pitfalls regardless of the lingua franca of communication. Readers from any culture should be able to relate to the types of discourse problems presented in this paper. This understanding should be evident in the examples readers could provide from their own intercultural communication experience and indeed, various other aspects of discourse. Overall, the perspective presented is that to minimise perceptual and pragmatic failure when communicating, speakers need to be aware of and sensitive to differences between their own features of discourse and those of speakers from other cultures. We cannot always effectively engage in intercultural communication in the same way that we
do with speakers from our own culture. Whether we do so consciously or through our lack of awareness, communication is fraught with the risk of pragmatic failure. That can result in negative feelings and not being able to achieve our intended purpose of communication. We need to take care with the lexical choices we make, including the use of loanwords, the topics we talk (and do not talk) about, and consider the role of paralinguistic features of communication. This article explained some of these aspects of discourse in the context of native Japanese speakers communicating in English.

References


Active Learning in the Communicative English Classroom
Using Data-driven Learning in Thailand

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Abstract

In response to a government-led effort to improve education in Thailand by focusing on active learning, this study looked at the plausibility of improving English grammar using paper-based data-driven learning (DDL) in an extracurricular four-lesson trial with a small group of 10th grade EFL high school students. Effectiveness was measured by pre-, post- and retention tests, and student feedback was collected through daily end-of-lesson reflections and questionnaires. Although questionnaire data suggested that students generally had neither strong positive or negative views on using DDL, an analysis of the test data showed that significant gains were made by students in understanding and producing and retaining target language forms. This exploratory study adds to our understanding of parameters for implementing DDL with A1 CEFR-level high school students.

Keywords: beginner-level EFL, data-driven learning, learner autonomy, paper-based DDL, secondary education

Introduction

Background

In an effort to modernize education in Thailand, in 2010, the Ministry of Education (MoE) implemented the World-Class Standard School Policy as a part of Thailand’s educational plan to promote learner autonomy through Independent Study (IS) courses, for example, IS1 Research and Knowledge Formation and IS2 Communication and Presentation in 500 schools across the nation (Office of Basic Education Commission, 2010). In its National Education Policy for the Fiscal Year 2020, the MoE emphasized the importance of 21st century learning skills and included a focus on active learning, STEM education, and foreign language studies using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (MoE, 2019). Because the results from the Ordinary National Education Test (O-NET) for Grade 9 students, especially in English, did not yield satisfying results (“Obec brands failure,” 2019), Thai foreign language educators have identified grammar translation teaching and passive learning as major factors. This paper explores data-driven learning (DDL) as one possible means to increase active learning and improve English language education.
DDL in the EFL Classroom

As the Ministry of Education has urged a transformation from teacher-oriented to learner-oriented classrooms, many schools have been putting this policy into practice through Independent Study (IS) courses and writing courses to assist students in becoming more active in terms of observing, searching for information, gathering data, synthesizing their findings and presenting these in the form of academic writing. However, the results of one follow-up analysis of tenth grade student writing suggested that while the content of the writing improved, there were still consistent grammar errors (Kumpawan, 2014). The MoE has emphasized Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in language classrooms; however, students still need grammar knowledge, particularly to score on national standardized tests needed to enter university, such as the O-Net Test and GAT/PAT. According to a report on 2019 O-Net test scores (“Obec brands failure,” 2019), the average English score for Grade 9 students was the lowest (29.45%), compared to Thai language (54.42%), mathematics (30.24%), and general sciences (36.10%). Additionally, a study by Matden and Charumanee (2017) showed that Thai Grade 9 students had low ability in grammar, reading and writing skills. They also found that there were reciprocal relationships between these skills which means students who have a high ability in grammar tend to have high ability in reading and writing as well. Additional research (Pongpanich, 2011) also suggested that the lack of linguistic competence (phonology, vocabulary, and grammar) was one of the major causes of failure in oral communication. To address these problems and as an alternative to traditional grammar translation or teacher-oriented grammar explanations, data-driven learning (DDL) may provide a solution.

Data-driven learning (DDL) was originally suggested by Johns (1991) and its use has slowly gained ground in various applications of corpus linguistics. In general applications, a “corpus,” or body of language data, is searched to identify particular aspects of a language. In second language learning, students search a corpus with a tool called a concordancer, using clearly defined parameters, and “notice” or “discover” aspects of language including language forms, common collocates, and grammatical patterns. Rather than being presented with a grammatical structure on a blackboard by a teacher, a learner can see how a particular word is used in numerous authentic examples. The learner becomes a researcher of sorts, and by observing many examples, creates a hypothesis about a grammar rule, leading to an implicit understanding. An example is shown in Figure 1. This is a computer screenshot of a list of concordance lines for a search of the word *hope*, extracted from a newspaper corpus. The concordancer extracts all occurrences of this word from the corpus and shows them aligned in the center of the computer monitor. This aligned display of the searched word is called a keyword in context or “KWIC.” The sentences on the screen are called “concordance lines.” The users can sort sentences to more easily see patterns. In Figure 1, the words to the right of *hope* were highlighted, and the sentences were sorted in alphabetical order. Students are exposed to authentic English and notice how sentences using *hope* are constructed: [*hope* S+V], [*hope that* S+V], [*hope to* + verb], [*hope for* +
(adj.) + noun], and [hope of ...ing]. Thus, DDL is active, inductive, promotes “noticing,” and fosters student autonomy.

![Concordance lines for the word hope.](image)

*Figure 1. Screenshot of concordance lines for the word hope.*

Although DDL itself is not communicative, it is student-centered. When it is implemented in a communicative language class, it can help students develop their L2 knowledge through discovery or active learning. DDL has been shown to be effective for learning vocabulary (O’Keeffe, McCarthy & Carter, 2007), grammar (Chujo, Kobayashi, Mizumoto & Oghigian, 2016) and collocations (Molina-Plaza & Gregorio-Godeo, 2010); for improving writing (Tono, Satake, & Miura, 2011), error correction (Frankenberg-Garcia, 2014), and increasing learner autonomy (Oveshkova, 2018). These are just a small sampling of hundreds of studies. To get a better understanding of the extent and use of DDL in L2 settings, three meta-analyses have been done (Boulton & Cobb, 2017; Lee, Warschauer, & Lee, 2018; Mizumoto & Chujo, 2015). The extensive body of work on DDL applications makes it clear that it can be effective in various types of classrooms for a variety of objectives; however, it is worth noting that most studies have been focused on intermediate and advanced level university students. The application of DDL to secondary-school learners is uncommon. Boulton and Cobb (2017) reported in their meta-analysis that 10 of 88 samples were with secondary level learners.

There are several reasons DDL applications at lower proficiency levels are limited, but these limitations can be overcome. Concordance lines from most available corpora contain complex language and can be confusing and overwhelming, so the use of a level-appropriate corpus or pre-selected search results are necessary, as are user-friendly search tools, closely controlling the tasks, and using a parallel corpus. (See Oghigian & Chujo, 2010.) DDL can also be paper-based. Generally, students use computers or tablets to search a corpus and observe concordance lines on a screen, such as in Figure 1.
For paper-based DDL, they observe concordance lines selected and printed on a worksheet by their instructor. With paper-based DDL, teachers extract specific concordance lines to narrow the focus to a particular target grammar. Another advantage is that the use of paper-based DDL does not require access to technology or electricity.

Although uncommon, there have been studies using DDL for beginner or remedial level university students (Chujo, Nishigaki, Uchibori & Oghigian, 2008; Chujo, Oghigian, Anthony & Yotaka, 2015), and more recently with young learners (Nishigaki, Yokota, Kamiya, Aba & Oyama, 2019). In Thailand, Boontam and Phoocharoensil (2018) administered paper-based DDL to 30 Thai students in Grade 4 for six weeks. They were at the A2 CEFR level in a private primary school. Students learned three English prepositions using DDL: during, among and between. The results showed that there was a statistically significant increase between the pre- and post-tests, and questionnaire and interview data indicated positive attitudes of the participants. In a study by Kumpawan and Nishigaki (2019), DDL was implemented in a 9th grade English class in a Thai secondary school in Bangkok. They found DDL was effective for learning grammar; however, questionnaire responses revealed that some students did not have much confidence when doing the tasks individually. In addition, some lower-level students stated in self-reflections that they had some difficulties in understanding some of the DDL sentences. This underscores that students’ learning styles and a need for support in learning a new methodology should be taken into consideration when designing lessons using DDL.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

To bridge the gap of communicative learning and English grammar ability, and building on this research, the purpose of this study has been to explore the use of paper-based DDL with secondary school EFL students in Thailand as a potential active learning method for improving writing-based grammar. Specifically:

Research Question 1: Can the use of paper-based DDL improve students’ understanding and production of gerund and infinitive forms, the use of the verb forms have and has, and prepositions of time in, on, and at?

Research Question 2: What are students’ opinions toward using DDL?

**Methodology**

**Participants**

The participants were 31 tenth-grade students, aged 15 and 16 years, who took Writing II in the 2019 academic year at a secondary school in Bangkok, Thailand. There were seven male students and 24 female students. Participants were volunteers who had wanted to take part in after-school English writing lessons and were therefore free from “grade pressure” that they usually undergo in regular English lessons. They had a mixed level of English proficiency with a majority at the beginner level (A1 CEFR). The instructions were given in the native language, Thai.
Procedure

Four 50-minute English lessons focused on writing were held in a three-week period. They were designed using “guided induction” which is “an approach that provides a structured, scaffolded framework for inductive learning, places the learner at the center of the learning task, with the learner seeking to discover the nature of the grammar structure through interacting with the language” (Smart 2014, p.187). We also incorporated a 4-step lesson framework from Nishigaki, et al. (2016). The flow of each lesson is shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Exposure to Target Grammar by Listening &amp; Speaking or Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Paper-based DDL</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Work</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summing Up Rules</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Writing Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td>Peer Editing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Step 1, students were exposed to the target grammar items in a meaning-focused way with listening and speaking or reading activities. These are described in more detail in the next section. In Step 2, worksheets showing concordance lines were distributed to the students. Students worked in groups for about 10 to 15 minutes to build confidence in doing the tasks and then worked individually. They studied the concordance lines and were asked to find language rules. After noticing and hypothesizing, students exchanged their ideas and confirmed the language rules with the whole class under the guidance of the instructor who generalized and confirmed the findings. During the DDL activity, students were encouraged to take full responsibility of their own “discovery” while the teacher monitored their learning and provided assistance as needed. For Step 3, students worked on writing tasks individually, and for Step 4, they did peer editing. In Steps 3 and 4, students applied the language rules they learned in Step 2.

Material

The original material used in the four writing lessons were entitled “Tell me about your Family,” “My Hero,” “My Favorite Place,” and “Adventure Time.” These topics were drawn from the lessons taught in the Writing II course and were familiar to the students. The target grammar items were 1) gerund and infinitive verb forms, 2) the use of have and has, and 3) prepositions of time in, on, and at. The KWIC were the verbs love, like, enjoy, and have. These grammar items had been identified by the instructor as specific common errors in students’ writing.
A sample of the concordance lines used in this study are shown in Figure 2. Level-appropriate sentences were selected from school textbooks and Sentence Corpus of Remedial English (http://www.score-corpus.org/). The number of the sentences were restricted and were shown in a clear font (Trebuchet MS). This type of adjusted level-appropriate corpus is called a “pedagogical corpus” (Chujo, Oghigian & Akasegawa, 2015). Compared with the truncated concordance lines in Figure 1, those in Figure 2 are short, complete sentences, and are much easier to read. As a result, the load of rule finding was reduced, and allowed students to focus on finding language rules without being overwhelmed by complex grammar and unknown vocabulary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concordance lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hot chocolate is good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We will have a party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom visited me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are giving a concert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We can meet again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have four classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls meet their boyfriends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Sample concordance lines for the preposition on.*

Along with paper-based concordance lines, students were given a worksheet that provided instructions for each task, and for noting their observations and hypotheses (findings). For the concordance lines shown in Figure 3, students were asked to examine the words or phrases appearing after each verb and create a hypothesis for the grammar rules to describe what they see. A student’s work is shown in Figure 4. The worksheets and concordance lines were based on the work of Nishigaki, Oyama, Kamiya, Yokota, and Nishisaka (2015).
Figure 3. Example of a student worksheet. Students were asked to circle the words and phrases to the right of the KWIC and formulate hypotheses about the language rules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Concordance lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The movie starts at 10 o'clock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mai gets up at 6:00 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>School starts at 7:50 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The shop closes at 11:00 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>We meet here at noon every day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nana often goes out at night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>We lived in California at that time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Concordance lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Hot chocolate is good on a cold day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>We will have a party on Christmas Eve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>See you on Monday!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tom visited me on my birthday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>We are giving a concert on Saturday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>We can meet again on the day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>We have four classes on Wednesday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Girls meet their boyfriends on Valentine's Day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Concordance lines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>He became a movie star in 1995.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>We had a big meeting in 2003.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>We can see cherry blossoms in April.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>What do you want to do in summer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>We have two lessons in the afternoon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>The singer gave a concert in the evening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>The girls go to school in the morning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluation

The effectiveness of DDL instruction (RQ1) was measured with a written test. Student views on using DDL (RQ2) were collected from reflection sheets and a questionnaire.

Grammar Tests

A written pre-test, post-test, and retention test were given to measure students’ improvement and retention of grammar knowledge. The same test was used for all three measures and included gap-filling, error identification, and sentence writing. The total score was 40. The pre-test was administered three days prior to the first lesson; the post-test was given ten days after the final lesson, and the retention was given three weeks after the post-test.

In the gap filling section, participants were asked to fill in the blanks with appropriate form of the verb in parenthesis (gerund or infinitive), following the verb love, like, enjoy, or have. An example is shown below.

Q. Rose really likes .................. hamburgers whenever she goes to this restaurant.  (order)
For error identification, students read a sentence and identified the underlined part, regardless of accuracy. They then corrected any errors by writing the correct answer in the given space.

In sentence writing, students wrote grammatically correct sentences using given words and a picture prompt.

**Reflections**
At the end of each lesson, students were asked to write their own reflections regarding the summary of their findings, and to write about what they “would love to know more.”

**Questionnaire**
Students were asked to respond to a five-point Likert scale questionnaire, on the last page of the worksheets at the end of each lesson. There were six questions regarding their opinions concerning the lesson, instructions, and their understanding. The questions were: (1) I understand the vocabulary and grammar point in this lesson; (2) I can write sentences describing people and actions; (3) The discussion on the findings with my classmates is helpful; (4) I understand the vocabulary in the concordance lines; (5) The sentences from the concordance lines are helpful to conclude the findings; and (6) The instructions are clear so I know what to do.

**Results and Discussion**

**Grammar Tests**
The first research question on effectiveness was measured using three grammar tests. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the scores gained for the pre-test (pre), the post-test (post) and the retention test (delayed). Each test was identical and the full mark was 40. Figure 5 illustrates the score transition of the three tests. To compare the scores of the grammar tests given at the three test phases, a one-way ANOVA was conducted and the result was \( F (2, 60) = 44.17, p = .000, \text{ partial } \eta^2 = .592 \). A multiple comparison was carried out by Bonferroni, and consequently there were significant differences between the pre- and post-tests and between the pre- and delayed-tests, and the effect size was large.
(\eta^2 = .65). However, the score drop between the post- and the delayed-test was not significant. This suggests that students were able to improve their understanding and production of the target grammar items and that this knowledge was retained three weeks after the instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>post</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22.06</td>
<td>[19.82, 24.31]</td>
<td>6.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>delayed</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20.94</td>
<td>[17.94, 23.93]</td>
<td>8.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Grammar Tests (Full Score: 40 points)

Based on the pre-test score, students were divided into three groups: lower, medium and upper level. Then the average test scores of the three test phases were compared for the three levels of students. The descriptive statistics are shown in Table 3 and score transitions are shown in Figure 6. The data as whole were examined by a two-way ANOVA, and consequently, significant differences were detected within level (lower, medium, upper) and test (pre, post, delayed): level (F (2,28) = 24.593, \( p = .000 \), partial \( \eta^2 = .637 \)), and test (F (2,56) =44.166, \( p=.000 \), partial \( \eta^2= .612 \)). However, no significance was detected in the interaction between test and level. Accordingly, multiple comparisons by Bonferroni were carried out, and it was found that the participants’ levels are as lower=medium < upper, and tests were as pre < post=delayed. From this, we can understand that test score improvement was not led by the upper level students, but by all levels of students. Thus, regardless of the students’ level, DDL could be effective. However, we can see from the result of the post-test that there is room for students to increase grammar knowledge further. Once students become accustomed to using DDL, and are
provided with further support to find and generalize language rules, this may improve. For example, the use of parallel corpus (showing L1 equivalents) has been shown to be very helpful for students who are able to quickly scan the translation for meaning and can then focus on the new grammar (Chujo et al., 2005; Nishigaki et al., 2011; Nishigaki et al., 2015).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Grammar Tests Gained from Three Levels of Students (Full Score: 40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tests</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>pre</th>
<th></th>
<th>post</th>
<th></th>
<th>delayed</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M 95%CI SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>M 95%CI SD</td>
<td></td>
<td>M 95%CI SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6. Grammar tests results of three levels of students at three phases.

Reflections and Questionnaire

At the end of the lesson, students were asked to summarize the day’s lesson, and indicate “What do you want to know more?” Summaries provided an interesting roadmap of students’ self-defined learned outcomes, and their answers informed what else should be brought into the class, and which part of the lessons should be revised. This was useful for both students and teachers for self-assessment and material development.
From an analysis of summaries, using frequencies of students’ answers, 66% of the answers (86 of 131 statements) were that they noticed the grammar rules, and observed the sentence structure. Furthermore, about 18% of their answers noted that they learned new vocabulary (23), and about 11% indicated that they improved their writing (15). Additionally, about 4% of their answers (5 of 131) noted that they gained a better understanding and about 1% (2) had a chance to analyze the sample sentences from the concordance lines.

For the second question, we noted that about 50% (45 of 91 statements) of students’ answers indicated that they wanted to study more vocabulary, including meaning, transition and root words. About 15% (14) said that they wanted to learn more about grammar and about 10% (9) wanted to see more sample sentences. No student indicated “nothing” as an answer, which suggests that the DDL tasks engaged students’ curiosity. Interestingly, about 11% of the answers (10) stated that they needed the teacher’s explicit grammar explanation and assistance. This suggests that some students still rely on the teacher’s support and collaborative learning with the classmates.

**Figure 7.** An overview of how students viewed their progress, as given in students’ lesson summaries

**Figure 8.** An overview of students’ requests as given in student responses to “What do you want to know more?”
The results of six questionnaire items are shown in Table 4. These results suggest that the students understood the grammar and vocabulary (3.38 of 5), and that they can write sentences describing people or actions (3.15). They found the discussion was helpful (3.43) and they understood the vocabulary in the concordance lines (3.44). In addition, the concordance lines were helpful for writing a summary (3.35) and the instruction were clear (3.41). The mean scores of the six questions were considered at a moderate level, meaning that generally speaking, students had strong feelings neither in support of nor against using DDL but were slightly more favorable than unfavorable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Results of the Questionnaire (Full Score: 5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>I understand the vocabulary and grammar point in this lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>I can write sentences describing people and actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>The discussion on the findings with my classmates is helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>I understand the vocabulary in the concordance lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>The sentences from the concordance lines are helpful to conclude the findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>The instructions are clear so I know what to do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the second research question, data from the reflections indicate that students were able to notice the target grammar, learned the vocabulary and could improve their writing skills. However, the answers from the questionnaires concerning DDL lessons were at a moderate level. This suggests that the students need time to gradually adjust their learning style from passive to active, as they were not quite familiar with DDL-inductive learning. The evidence from reflections also suggested that they still depended on the teacher’s explanation. Moreover, the number of concordances lines in each lesson (approximately 20-25 sentences) might be overwhelming for them for their English proficiency level (A1 CEFR) which may have played a part in the responses on the questionnaires. Although simple sentences were carefully selected and adjusted to be used in the lessons, some students may have found them difficult. Therefore, in an application with introductory-level students, the number of concordance lines should be taken into consideration as well as simplified text or the use of a parallel (L1) corpus.

**Conclusion**

In this small study of 31 students, the introduction to using DDL proved effective for improving and retaining grammar understanding and production in a communicative EFL class; however, there were mixed results. Although student gains were measurable, there was no control group. And while students appeared on-task and engaged during lessons, Likert scale responses were generally
favourable, but indicated they were not particularly impressed by or daunted by the use of DDL. As with any novel methodology, familiarity over time creates more confidence and even the small successes in this study are encouraging. Future studies would benefit from a larger population, a control group, and more support for students including the use of a parallel corpus and longer periods of collaborative learning, at least until students appear more confident in using DDL.

Acknowledgements
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Pongpanich, N. (2011). A study of problems in English speaking in speech communication of management sciences students, Kasetsart University, Sriracha Campus: October 2007 to
Vocabulary is regarded as an essential factor in mastering languages. However, learning vocabulary is often perceived as a boring activity. Language teachers have tried to solve this problem by using different kinds of in-class activities. Playing games is one of the activities which language teachers use for teaching vocabulary, since it is an activity which teenagers love doing in their spare time. Even though games tend to have a negative reputation among parents and educators, a number of studies have reported that playing games could increase problem-solving and collaboration skills, learning motivation and learning achievement (Sanchez & Olivares, 2011; Sung, Hwang, & Yen, 2015). Games can also be used for developing students’ language competencies (Sung, Chang, & Yang, 2015). This study, therefore, aims to investigate the effects of playing online games on learning English vocabulary. There were two research instruments: questionnaires which were used to select the qualified participants for the main study, and semi-structured interviews which were used to gather in-depth information about how the participants learn English vocabulary through online games. The volunteering participants were secondary students from four schools in Chachoengsao province, Thailand. The findings showed that the participants seemed to use some vocabulary learning strategies when they were playing non-educational online games. However, there were some important factors that might affect their vocabulary learning such as the characteristics and preferences of the players and their partners, types of games, and features of games.

**Keywords:** learning vocabulary / online games / vocabulary learning strategies

**Introduction**

Vocabulary is seen as crucial to mastering a second or foreign language. Wilkins (1972) suggested “Without grammar very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed” (pp.111-112). In order to communicate with other people, language learners have to understand what others say (listening skill) or understand what they read (reading skill) so that they can respond via the speaking or writing skill (Teng, 2015). Despite its essential nature, learning vocabulary is perceived as an unpleasant activity for many language learners since the learners are typically asked...
to remember a lot of vocabulary together with its spellings, and they usually have to do a lot of related
in-class exercises (Florence & Alvin, 2006). To lessen the boredom among learners and increase their
excitement while learning English vocabulary in class, games are introduced as learning materials to
actively motivate the learners during the lessons and to enhance their vocabulary knowledge as they
play, which will later be explained in details.

Games are useful in teaching and learning for students mainly because they connect to students’
interests as the current generation loves social media and especially playing games (Gee, 2007). Many
young people spend a lot of their time playing video games. This could be viewed as a problem among
parents and educators since they believe that video games disrupt adolescents’ academic activities.
However, many researchers have argued that games can develop players’ skills, including problem
solving and spatial skills, together with persistence, motivation and achievement in learning (Shute,
Ventura, & Ke, 2015; Sung, Hwang, & Yen, 2015). For instance, mobile video games can improve
students’ problem-solving and collaboration skills (Sanchez & Olivares, 2011). Games can also serve
to persuade students to learn, and help develop their language competencies in different effect sizes
based on variables such as learning stages, intervention settings and durations, teaching methods,
learning skills and target languages (Sung, Chang, & Yang, 2015). Therefore, games are used and
adapted by some language teachers in their classroom to engage students in academic learning.

Games can be divided into two groups. The first one is educational games, also sometimes
called ‘serious games’ which are created for academic purposes and are focused on developing different
language skills of players (who are also students). On the other hand, non-educational games, also
known as commercial games, are designed for recreational, not educational, purposes (Djaouti, Alvarez,
& Jessel, 2011). In the present study, the term ‘non-educational games’ refers to those commercial
games which are played for the players’ relaxation and enjoyment, not for learning any particular
language features.

According to Vate-U-Lan (2017) and Jaruratanasirikul, Wongwaitaweewong, &
Sangsupawanich (2009), it seems that a number of Thai students play non-educational online games in
their spare time. The amount of time which they spend playing these games has become an issue among
their parents and schools. In order to provide and support out-of-class learning through daily life
activities and to promote learning autonomy of the students, this study aimed to investigate if, and how,
Thai students develop their vocabulary knowledge through non-educational online games.

Games and vocabulary learning

Playing games is normally viewed as an activity that most teenagers like to do in their spare
time. According to Gee (2007), playing games is a popular leisure activity for people of all ages. Game
players can interact in many circumstances which are considered important in second language
acquisition (SLA), for example, comprehensible input in the games’ settings, scaffolding through
interaction among the players, and motivation (Sylven & Sundqvist, 2012).
Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG) are games that allow a multitude of players to play in a single game together at the same time. In doing so, the players can develop their communicative competence through chatting, or talking with other players in the game via text or voice features. Players’ language competence is developed because these games require players to communicate with other players for purposes such as asking for information or asking for help to complete their missions or quests, mostly by players’ sending messages among themselves and sometimes talking with each other via audio chat. Players can also develop their language skills by responding to game content such as explanations of quests and items in games (Visser, Antheunis, Schouten, 2015 & Barr, 2017). To study exposure to English outside the classroom, in particular the role of non-educational online games in learning English vocabulary, the participants in the current study were asked whether or not they play games with foreigners as one of the qualifications of being a participant in the research. Furthermore, it was required that the features in non-educational online games played by the participants be in English as well.

Some studies suggest that non-educational games can develop players’ vocabulary knowledge. For example, Florence and Alvin (2006) compared the effects of learning English vocabulary from games through websites which were designed for students who wish to increase their English vocabulary with those from face-to-face lessons without playing games through websites. The results showed that the students learning via online vocabulary games tended to outperform those who did not. The researchers observed that the players could retain the learned vocabulary longer and retrieve more vocabulary than those who attended a face-to-face classroom.

Another study concerning learning vocabulary via non-educational games compared with in-class learning also yielded the same results. Ranalli (2008) explained that the students who learned vocabulary about household objects through The Sims (the game focused on in the study, which provides a wide range of vocabulary about household objects with pictures) outperformed those who learned through the traditional way of classroom teaching.

It is not only the extent to which the game content is related to the lesson topic that affects the results of learning vocabulary through games, the amount of time spent playing games also affects the learning as well. For example, Sundqvist and Wikstrom (2015) studied the effects of out-of-school digital gameplay on in-school L2 English vocabulary measures and grading outcomes. The result showed that the learners who played games more than 5 hours per week had higher scores on vocabulary tests and used more advanced vocabulary than those who did not play games or played games for less than 5 hours. The study also noted that most ‘frequent gamers’ (i.e. students who play games more than 5 hours per week) were male gamers. On the other hand, more females than males tended not to play games in their daily life. The researchers argued that learning vocabulary through digital games might be more effective for males than females. This observation may stem from the difference in life-styles between males and females, so it leads to the difference in their leisure activities.
Sundqvist (2019) compared the types of games played by the players, particularly teenagers, with the amount of time that the players spent playing games and vocabulary learning. The results showed that the amount of time of playing games had a significant effect on vocabulary learning in games, while the types of games did not. When comparing the scores on the vocabulary tests of non-gamers with those of gamers, the study showed that the gamer groups significantly outperformed those who did not play games, at all vocabulary frequency levels and especially the difficult words.

In Thailand, Wichadee and Pattanapichet (2018) compared the effects of learning vocabulary through application of digital games with learning through conventional methods. The results revealed that the students who learned through digital games had significantly higher scores than those who learned through conventional methods. The researchers also observed that students had a great attitude towards learning language through digital games. Reinders and Wattana (2015) also revealed that gamers had significantly increased their willingness to communicate in the games. The possible reasons from their interviews were that the gamers felt relaxed and confident in producing the language. They had low anxiety so that they became risk-takers; in other words, they produced language without worrying about making mistakes.

As mentioned above, it seems that games can enhance players’ vocabulary in many contexts, depending on the content of games, types of games and the amount of time spent playing games. The willingness to communicate in games to achieve goals and quests, collaborate with other gamers and exchange information seems to provide a great benefit in learning vocabulary as well.

As games are typically seen as activities that students do outside the classroom, questions concerning the roles of games in enhancing language learning have rarely been addressed. However, one study from Sylven and Sundqvist (2012) compared the similarities of non-educational games (World of Warcraft) to Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Their study displayed that there were eight learning principles which can be found in both CLIL and World of Warcraft, as follows:

1. Critical Learning Principle: Games make players active and critical rather than passive;
2. Psychosocial Moratorium Principle: Games make players dare to take risks;
3. Identity Principle: Games make players feel safe, as they can hide their real identity by taking on a different role;
4. Practice Principle: Games provide plentiful chances to use the target language in a virtual environment;
5. Regime of Competence Principle: Games’ challenges are perceived as ‘doable’;
6. Subset Principle: Games let players start from the level they are comfortable at, then gradually introduce more difficult tasks;
7. Transfer Principle: Games provide chances for players to solve new problems that arise during play; and
8. Affinity Group Principle: Games let players work together towards a mutual goal.
From the eight learning principles mentioned above, it might be argued here that playing non-educational online games could be a means of language learning outside the classroom. Players in the games could actively interact and share information in the target language in order to achieve the games’ goals or missions. During this process, hiding the real identity of the players may be one of the important factors of learning English vocabulary through non-educational online games, since the players feel safe and dare to take risks which might help the players learn vocabulary in games incidentally.

In addition to the eight learning principles mentioned previously, Sylven and Sundqvist also developed three key factors for fundamental consideration in learning language via games: immersion, authenticity, and motivation. Immersion is ‘being immersed in another language’. The player is immersed in a virtual world where the target language is used in the game. In this case, the player needs to communicate and understand that particular language so that they can survive and make progress in a game. While interacting with other players, especially with more knowledgeable ones, the sociocultural approach of Vygotsky spontaneously occurs. To be able to achieve the goals or missions in a game, the players are immersed in the target language and are asked to share or exchange their information with other players, particularly those who are more skillful. Authenticity refers to an arena of target language learning. Games provide a situation for players which necessitates use of the target language. When using the target language in playing a game, the player has to receive input, produce output, and interact in that language. Such interaction with authentic language in games can increase the amount of exposure to the target language and eventually promote vocabulary learning. Motivation is the players’ degree of motivation to understand the communication occurring in a game. Motivation is seen as an important factor in mastering L2. In a game, players are highly motivated to understand and communicate rules, commands, and explanations with their co-players in order to achieve missions or simply survive.

From the eight learning principles and three key factors presented in the previous studies, it can be claimed here that MMORPGs such as World of Warcraft can be used in promoting players’ language learning.

**Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLSs) in Non-educational online games**

While playing such games, players seem to use many strategies to overcome the difficulties they may encounter in the games, for example, asking for and sharing information, talking and planning with other players or interacting with objects and resources, all of which may facilitate second or foreign language learning (Goh, 2016) and enrich players’ vocabulary repertoire and communicative competence (Jabbari & Eslami, 2018). Through this process, playing non-educational online games using a target language might allow players to acquire vocabulary indirectly (Sylven & Sundqvist, 2012). By doing this, players can develop their language proficiency and especially apply vocabulary learning strategies since they are used more than other strategies in learning a language (Schmitt, 1997).
Vocabulary learning strategies are a subset of language learning strategies which are seen as one of the key aspects of language learning. Vocabulary learning strategies have defined as ‘any actions, behaviors, or techniques in which learners make a decision on to manage and control their own learning to help them find out the meaning of new or unknown words’ (Gu, 2005; Nation, 2008; Schmitt, 1997).

Several researchers have proposed taxonomies for vocabulary learning strategies. Schmitt (1997), for example, proposed five vocabulary learning strategies which are determination strategies, social strategies, memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and meta-cognitive strategies.

**Determination strategies** are the strategies that learners use to find the meaning of words by themselves without depending on others. For example, guessing the meaning from the context, relating to L1 cognate or finding the meaning in a dictionary.

**Social strategies** refer to the strategies that learners use to discover the meaning of words by interaction with others such as asking for the meaning of words from teachers or friends, interacting with native speakers or participating in group discussions.

**Memory strategies** focus on learners’ previous knowledge in finding the meaning of vocabulary which they encounter, for instance, connecting to personal experience, relating the words with images, linking to synonyms or antonyms, or using physical response in learning the meanings.

**Cognitive strategies** concern the use of mental processing by focusing on vocabulary repetition and using mechanical means, for example, spoken or written word repetition, using a vocabulary notebook or making word lists.

**Metacognitive strategies** are strategies which the learners use to consciously control their own learning, including planning, monitoring and evaluating. The strategies are testing themselves, using English media in learning language, selecting or skipping words for learning, and the continuum of learning vocabulary over time.

Other vocabulary learning strategies have been proposed by Gu and Johnson (1996). They classified vocabulary learning strategies into eight categories which include:

1. Beliefs about vocabulary learning – whether words should be memorized and how they should be memorized: Words should be acquired in context (bottom-up), or words should be studied and put to use (top-down);
2. Metacognitive regulation – selective intention, and self-initiation;
3. Guessing strategies – using background knowledge/wider context, and using linguistics clues/immediate context;
6. Memory strategies (rehearsal) – using word lists, oral repetition, and visual repetition;
(7) Memory strategies (encoding) – association/elaboration, imagery, visual encoding, auditory encoding, word structure, semantic encoding, contextual encoding; and

(8) Activation strategies – using words in many situations as much as possible.

Bytheway (2015) adapted the framework of Gu & Johnson (1996) in their study and displayed that there were about 15 vocabulary learning strategies used in *World of Warcraft (WoW)* – the non-educational online game examined in the study. Those vocabulary learning strategies include noticing the frequency of words, recognizing knowledge gaps, selecting words for attention, equating images and actions to words, giving and receiving explanations and feedback, observing players, using words to learn words, reading in-game information, and using Google. The researcher also emphasized that these vocabulary learning strategies merit further study, especially for autonomous learning in informal digital contexts.

In order to study the process of learning vocabulary through non-educational online games, the previous frameworks of the scholars presented above were adapted and used to collect the interview data about use of vocabulary learning strategies in non-educational online games in the current study.

**Research Questions**

How do Thai students learn English vocabulary through non-educational online games?

**Participants**

The participants in the study were 216 secondary students in four public schools in Chachoengsao province, Thailand by using convenience sampling through questionnaires. They have learned English for at least 6 years in their primary schools. All of them use English as a foreign language, have never been abroad, and are not exposed to English-speaking environments outside the classroom. Their English proficiency ranges from basic to pre-intermediate levels.

Only four out of the 216 secondary students were randomly selected based on the following qualifications (Sundqvist & Wikstrom, 2015). First, they must play non-educational online games more than 5 hours a week. Also, they must play non-educational online games in English. The participants whose the qualifications met the requirements were asked to join the main study. They were interviewed about how they learned English vocabulary through non-educational online games. They were informed that the study would not affect their scores or grades, and they could end their participation in the study at anytime.
Research Instruments

The previous studies related to learning vocabulary through games and vocabulary learning strategies were reviewed in order to create two research instruments: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview.

Questionnaires: Questionnaires (adapted from Sundqvist & Wikstrom, 2015 & Bytheway, 2015) were used to collect the basic information of the students who volunteered to be the participants of the study. (See Appendix A for more details.)

Semi-structured interviews: Semi-structured interviews were used to gather the in-depth information of four qualified participants randomly selected from the questionnaires in the previous part about how they learn English vocabulary through online games. (See Appendix B for more details.)

Research Procedure

The researchers contacted four public schools in Chachoengsao, Thailand, to ask for permission to collect the data for the study. The students in these four schools were informed that there was a study about learning English vocabulary through non-educational online games. If they wished to participate in the study, they could join the study by scanning a QR code and then answering an initial questionnaire via Google Forms.

After collecting the data of the participants through Google Forms, those participants who passed the selection criteria were randomly contacted to arrange their participation in the study. Before starting the interview, the participants were assured again that their answers would be used for academic purposes only. The interview section took about 30 to 40 minutes for each participant. Then the findings were transcribed, coded and reported.

Data analysis

The data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and the data from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings were coded, grouped, and interpreted.

Result and Discussion

The data from the questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics, and the data from the semi-structured interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings were coded, grouped, and interpreted.

- Basic information of the participants

There were 216 students who volunteered to answer the initial questionnaires. About 54.20 percent were female, while the rest were male. The majority were those in grade 7 (34.30%). The rest are in
grade 10 (18.50%); grade 12 (18.10%); grade 8 (12.00%); grade 11 (9.70%); and grade 9 (7.40%) respectively.

- Participants’ grades in their basic English subjects

The findings from the questionnaires concerning the participants’ grades in their basic English subject in the previous semester showed that more than 50 percent of the participants’ grades were higher than 3.

- Playing non-educational online games in English

Out of 216 voluntary participants who answered the questionnaires, 66.70 percent of the participants played non-educational online games in English, while the remaining 33.30 percent said they did not play non-educational online games in English.

Those participants who played non-educational online games in English were asked to continue answering subsequent questions in the questionnaires.

- Types of non-educational online games

The result from the questionnaires showed that 86.10 percent of the participants played ROV. 69.40 percent of the participants played PUBG. 22.90 percent played Ragnarok Mobile, and 26.00 percent played DotA.

- Experience in playing non-educational online games with foreigners

Most of the participants (70.10%) reported that they had played non-educational online games with foreigners, while the remaining 29.90 percent said that they had never played non-educational online games with foreigners.

- Perceptions about learning English vocabulary through non-educational online games

About 86.80 percent of the participants stated that they could learn some English vocabulary through non-educational online games, while 13.20 provided negative responses.
The participants were also asked to provide the English vocabulary which they had learned in non-educational online games. Their vocabulary lists were put in the AntConc program to calculate the most frequently learned words. (See table 1 for more details.)

Table 1 shows the vocabulary list of the most frequently learned words as reported by the participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>guild</td>
<td>23 times</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>bluff</td>
<td>9 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>clan</td>
<td>22 times</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>run</td>
<td>9 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>rank</td>
<td>22 times</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>connect</td>
<td>8 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>jump</td>
<td>21 times</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>test</td>
<td>8 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>kill</td>
<td>20 times</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>help</td>
<td>7 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>option</td>
<td>18 times</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>skill</td>
<td>7 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>party</td>
<td>17 times</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>boss</td>
<td>5 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>setting</td>
<td>12 times</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>enemy</td>
<td>4 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>play</td>
<td>11 times</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>map</td>
<td>4 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>gun</td>
<td>10 times</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>victory</td>
<td>4 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>item</td>
<td>10 times</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>warp</td>
<td>4 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>attack</td>
<td>9 times</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>win</td>
<td>4 times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After completing the questionnaires, the interview participants were randomly selected on a voluntary basis. The researcher contacted each participant to make an appointment for an interview. From 144 voluntary participants who played non-educational online games, 37 (25.70%) volunteered to join the next stage.

The data from the semi-structured interviews can be presented as follows:

Table 2 Information from participants in interview section

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>Grade from basic English subject</th>
<th>Hours spent playing games per day</th>
<th>Types of games</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Max (Male)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 - 4</td>
<td>ROV, PUBG, Free Fire, Call of Duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New (Male)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5 - 6</td>
<td>ROV, PUBG, Free Fire, Ragnarok Mobile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yim (Male)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3 - 4</td>
<td>ROV, PUBG, Free Fire, FIFA, PUBG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy (Male)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 - 3</td>
<td>ROV, PUBG, Free Fire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All the names here are pseudonyms.*
Most of the participants expressed strong support for the notion of learning English vocabulary through non-educational online games. Max said:

‘...I think it helps. At least I can get into English outside the classroom. Moreover, some vocabulary I learn in games even related to the topic in the lesson...’

Yim also reported his use of non-educational online games as an example of out-of-class learning of English vocabulary. He said:

‘...whatever vocabulary that I want to know especially the ones that I have not seen before, I will find the meaning of it...’

New, another participant, affirmed that non-educational online games can be used for learning English vocabulary. He said:

‘...I can learn English vocabulary from my co-players that I play with. Some vocabulary I learn even related to the classroom topic...I think if I play games with native speakers more often more than I usually do, I might learn some more vocabulary...’

From the three excerpts presented above, it could be argued that non-educational online games could be used as an activity for learning English vocabulary outside the classroom, since non-educational online games could extend players’ exposure to the target language beyond just learning it in the classroom.

Moreover, some of the participants pointed out that the amount of time spent playing non-educational online games played an important role in their vocabulary learning through such games. Boy, one of the participants, noted the effects of the amount of time spent playing non-educational online games with learning English vocabulary, as he said:

‘...I think I can learn some vocabulary in games mostly depending on the amount of time that I play. The more I face those words, the more I can remember...’

Boy’s answer to the questionnaire revealed that he played games about 1 to 2 hours a day. His favorite games were ROV, PUBG, and Free Fire.

‘How they learn English vocabulary through non-educational online games.’

Below are some vocabulary learning strategies which the players said that they use while they play non-education online games.
1. Memory strategies

The participants said that they could remember the meanings of vocabulary through playing non-educational online games. Max observed:

‘...If I play games every day, I think I can remember them (vocabulary). But if I do not play maybe I forget them...’

Yim also expressed a similar thought:

‘...I just play it again and again so I can remember the vocabulary...’

The amount of time which the participants spent playing non-educational online games had a great impact in terms of memory strategies for learning English vocabulary in the non-educational online games.

2. Reading in-game information strategies

The participants also stated that they could learn English vocabulary though reading in-games information that appeared during the course of such games. New said:

‘...if I have to find the items from the monsters, I have to carefully read the quests’ explanations...if I want to study about the items dropped from monsters, I can talk to the NPC in games...’

The participants seemed to be actively motivated to read in-games information, which eventually could enhance their vocabulary learning.

3. Guessing strategies

The participants also reported that they used more than one vocabulary learning strategy at a time. For example, they sometimes used reading in-game information together with guessing strategies such as guessing from context clues, and guessing from visuals and selecting words. Yim said:

‘...In the very first time, if I don’t know the meaning of that vocabulary I will guess first...’

Max also noted that the visuals in games could help him practice guessing strategies as well. He said:

‘Sometimes, there are some vocabulary that I don’t know the meaning but there are some pictures with them...So, I guess from the pictures...’

Boy also used guessing strategies, as he said:
‘...If I don’t know the meaning of that vocabulary especially in Free Fire, I mostly ignore it...Since most of the vocabulary in the game is guns, bombs or bullets and it is presented with the pictures, I think I can easily choose the weapon from the pictures...’

So, in addition to using the strategy of reading in-game information, the participants could also use their guessing strategies by relating the vocabulary with pictures presented in the non-educational online games as clues to help the players during their gameplay. This process seemed to be able to help the players learn English vocabulary.

4. Machine translation strategies

An interesting point from the interview data was that most participants used machine translation (mostly Google Translate) in helping them understand the text or the information in games, as New said:

‘...if I don’t understand the game information, I have to translate them mostly by using Google Translate...’

Max also used machine translation strategies. He said:

‘...if other players are really good, I will quit the games immediately and put all the information on Google Translate and try to understand it...’

From the excerpts, the environment in non-educational online games like the missions, quests, or the willingness to win the games may encourage the participants to learn English vocabulary outside the classroom. The participants use machine translation (Google Translate) to learn the unknown words in order to achieve their in-game goals.

5. Interacting with other players strategies

Some of the participants pointed out that they could learn English vocabulary through non-educational online games by interacting with other players. However, the participants said that they preferred interacting with other players via typing to speaking. Max said:

‘...I think if they typed in words for me, it will be much easier and I think I can learn English vocabulary in games...It is very hard to understand them when they speak. They speak too fast for me to understand. I can catch up just some words or ideas but most of them I can’t...’

Some participants said that the playing style of other players affects their vocabulary learning through interacting with the other players. New said:

‘...But sometimes the players use their own first language. They do not use English in games which I totally don’t understand them...’
Yim pinpointed the effects of his co-players’ playing styles on learning English vocabulary through games as he said:

‘…I normally ask about the strategies in playing games. But it ends up with there are no responses to me…Moreover, sometimes they blame me or even give me some bad or rude words…Maybe I did not meet friendly foreigners so the conversation was not that effective…’

Boy also expressed the same thought:

‘…I rarely meet with the foreigners in the games. Moreover, when I meet them, they tend to just use those bad words to me and other players…’

In order to learn vocabulary via interacting with other players in non-educational online games, there seemed to be a number of factors which affected the players such as the medium of communication (via audio or text) and the playing styles of their co-players.

6. Observing strategies

The participants could also learn English vocabulary through non-educational online games by acting as observers while playing games. Max said:

‘…when I first play Call of Duty, I don’t know what to do. I just do like the others do. Then I realize that if these words or phrases occurring, I have to do this and that…’

New added:

‘…Sometimes I’m not quite sure about the meaning of that vocabulary. But after I observe what other players behave, I can guess the meaning. Then I try to use it with my co-players…’

Observing other players’ actions may help the players learn English vocabulary through non-educational online games. After the participants guessed the meanings of vocabulary, they checked what they understood by using those new words in the games. While doing this, the participants or the players perhaps got feedback from their co-players or they could also check the meanings of the words by themselves.

The data from the semi-structured interviews showed that the participants could practice some vocabulary learning strategies while playing non-educational online games. Those vocabulary learning strategies included memory strategies, reading in-game information strategies, guessing strategies, machine translation strategies, interacting with other players’ strategies, and observing strategies. It can be stated here that playing non-educational online games may assist the players in learning English vocabulary outside the classroom, since the games provide the context in which players need to interact using the English language in order to accomplish the games’ goals. However, there seem to be many
factors that need to be considered in order to strengthen the effectiveness of learning English vocabulary through playing non-educational online games.

The most important factor is characteristics and preferences of the players and their partners. The previous study from Reinders and Wattana (2015) revealed that gamers had significantly increased willingness to communicate in the games. The possible reasons from their study were that the gamers’ relaxation and confidence in producing the language enabled them to have low anxiety so that they would become risk takers; in other words, when playing games they produced language without worrying about making mistakes, in order to win or accomplish the quests or missions.

The participants in this study shared this feeling as well. It could clearly be seen from the learned words which the participants listed. The participants tended to focus on grouping together with their co-players, for example, the words ‘guild’ (No.1) and ‘party’ (No.7). However, simply having high willingness to communicate through non-educational online games might not guarantee the effectiveness of learning English in the games, according to the interview findings:

‘...I normally ask about the strategies in playing games, but it ends up with no responses...Moreover, sometimes they blame me or even give me some bad or rude words...Maybe I did not meet friendly foreigners so the conversation was not that effective...’  
Yim

‘...I rarely meet with the foreigners in the games. Moreover, when I meet them, they tend to just use those bad words to me and other players...’  
Boy

When comparing the participants’ perceptions on playing non-educational online games with three key factors in learning language via games from Sylven and Sundqvist (2012), it should be noted that the players in the study lack the authenticity factor while playing non-educational online games. Although the players achieved the first two factors – immersion (being immersed in the English language context) and motivation (being motivated to communicate to achieve the goals in games) – they could not experience the meaningful communication which may help them learn some English vocabulary by receiving input and producing output through the interaction with other players while playing non-educational online games. The result here may well explain that even if the players have very high willingness in communication in games, they may not succeed if they do not have good interaction with their co-players.

Another vital factor is types of games. Non-educational online games could be used as a means of incidentally learning language via a virtual world outside the classroom. It could provide an environment which may facilitate second or foreign language learning, since players could use many strategies to overcome the difficulties appearing in games, like interacting with other players via digital characters known as avatars, asking for and sharing information, talking and planning with other players, and interacting with objects and resources. Games could enrich players’ vocabulary repertoire and communicative competence (Rama, Black, van Es, & Warschauer, 2012; Goh, 2016; Jabbari &
Eslami, 2018). Through this process, types of games play a role. As could be seen from the learned word lists from the participants, the words like ‘rank’, ‘jump’, ‘kill’, ‘gun’, ‘item’, ‘attack’, ‘bluff’, and ‘run’ are related to types of games which the players play, (PUBG, ROV, and Free Fire). These games can be categorized under action, adventure and massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG) altogether. The result is similar to the study of Ranalli (2008), which explained that students who learned vocabulary about household objects through The Sims (the game of focus in the study) outperformed those who learned the vocabulary in the traditional way, in the classroom. Therefore, it can be argued here that types of non-educational online games dramatically affect types of vocabulary learned by the players. If the players do not play the various kinds of games, their learned vocabulary seems to be limited like Yim, one of the participants, who explained in the interview section,

‘…the vocabulary is quite the same, I rarely see new vocabulary... You get the same kind or even exactly the same vocabulary...’

The other factor that should not be ignored is game features. Some non-educational online games provide clues within the games like colors to highlight the important points or hints to help the players achieve quests or missions.

Some games provide features which can help players guess the meaning of the vocabulary, like the position of the vocabulary between ‘important’ and ‘crucial’. In one game, the word ‘crucial’ appears above the word ‘important’, so the players (as Yim, one of the participants in the study, stated) may guess that the word ‘crucial’ may mean ‘most important’ since it is placed in the highest position in that feature.

However, some non-educational online games do not require that much understanding of English in order to play the games. Such games are less effective as a tool for learning English vocabulary, as Yim, one of the participants, said:

‘...To me playing PUBG does not require you that much understanding of English vocabulary. I can play without using any tools to help me understand the meaning of the word like Google Translate...’

Conclusion

It can be concluded that learning English vocabulary through non-educational online games seems to hold promise for Thai students. It was clearly stated by the participants through the semi-structured interviews that playing non-educational online games can serve as a means for learning language, and especially for learning vocabulary. The study yielded results similar to those of Bytheway’s study (2015), which argued that playing non-educational online games in the target language could facilitate vocabulary learning strategies of the players, since they were compelled to adopt them in order to accomplish the tasks or quests in the games.
The study presented the interesting points that although the players can practice some vocabulary learning strategies through non-educational online games, for example, memory strategies, reading in-game information strategies, guessing strategies, machine translation strategies, interacting with other players strategies and observing strategies, there are some crucial factors that need to be taken into account in order to increase the effectiveness of learning English vocabulary through non-educational online games, such as characteristics and preferences of the players, and the types and features of games.

Learning English through online games is an activity that language teachers can use to promote learner autonomy beyond the classroom. The students (the real players in games) must be trained about various kinds of vocabulary learning strategies especially the ones that can be used in the non-educational online games. Furthermore, teaching the students about metacognitive strategies may help them create their own learning pathway to study by themselves from the activity that they really love to do in their spare time. In addition, to promote interactions between players through meaningful in-game communication, establishing Learning English through Online Game Club within schools or across schools in local and global communities might help increase the students’ motivation and avoid any problems caused by uncontrollable players who tend to use rude words when playing online games. More research should be conducted to investigate vocabulary learning strategies using non-educational online games by using alternative instruments like observation, focus group interviews and other methods both qualitative and quantitative. Also, mixed method research might provide an in-depth information about how to train Thai students to become autonomous learners by using non-educational online games.

References


The study is aimed to investigate the effects of playing non-educational online games on learning English vocabulary in Thailand. The questionnaire is aimed to collect the basic information of the participants together with the general information about playing non-educational online games. Moreover, the questionnaire is also aimed to use for selecting the qualified participants to join the next stage of the study.

The questionnaire is divided into 3 parts as follows:
1. The basic information of the participants
2. The general information about playing non-educational online games
3. Asking for the willingness to join the next stage of the study

Thank you for collaboratively participate in the study.
Your answers will be kept confidential and only be used for academic purposes.

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Part 1: The general information of the participants

Instructions: Please make a mark (✓) on the box (☐) or fill in the information on the blanks provided.

1. Gender
   ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Educational level
   ☐ Grade 7 (M.1) ☐ Grade 8 (M.2) ☐ Grade 9 (M.3)
   ☐ Grade 10 (M.5) ☐ Grade 11 (M.11) ☐ Grade 12 (M.6)

3. The grading from basic English subject in the previous semester
   ☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 1.5 ☐ 2
   ☐ 2.5 ☐ 3 ☐ 3.5 ☐ 4
   ☐ 3 ☐ 3.5 ☐ 4 ☐ Other (Please specify ____________________________________________)

4. The grading from supplement English subject in the previous semester (In case, you have)
   ☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 1.5 ☐ 2
   ☐ 2.5 ☐ 3 ☐ 3.5 ☐ 4
   ☐ 3 ☐ 3.5 ☐ 4 ☐ Other (Please specify ____________________________________________)

Part 2: The general information about playing non-educational online games

1. Do you play any non-educational online games in English?
   ☐ Yes. (Please continue answering)
   ☐ No. (Thank you for your participation)

2. The average time spending on playing non-educational online games per day
   ☐ Less than 1 hour ☐ 1-2 hours ☐ 3-4 hours
   ☐ 5-6 hours ☐ 7-8 hours ☐ More than 8 hours

3. Types of non-educational online games you play (Can answer more than 1 choice)
   ☐ Action ☐ Adventure ☐ Strategy (Real time/Turn base)
   ☐ Simulation ☐ Sport ☐ Racing
   ☐ Fighting ☐ Puzzle ☐ Education
   ☐ Shooting (First-person/Third-person)
   ☐ Role playing games (RPG)/Massive multiplayer online role playing game (MMORPG)
   ☐ Other (Please specify ____________________________________________)

4. Which of the following non-education online games do you play in English? (Can answer more than 1 choice)
   ☐ ROV/AVO ☐ PUBG/PUBG LITE ☐ Ragnarok mobile
5. Who do you play non-educational online games with?
   - I play Alone
   - I play with my friends.
   - I play with friends who I meet in games.

6. Do you have any experience on playing non-educational online games with foreigners?
   - Yes, I do.
   - No, I do not.

7. Can you learner English vocabulary through non-educational online games?
   - Yes, I can. (Please continue answering)
   - No, I cannot.

8. Please write 5 English vocabulary you learn through non-educational online games.
   1. ______________________________________________________________
   2. ______________________________________________________________
   3. ______________________________________________________________
   4. ______________________________________________________________
   5. ______________________________________________________________

Part 3: Asking for the willingness to join the next stage of the study.

The study is divided into 2 stages.

Stage 1: Collecting the basic information of the participants together with the general information on playing non-educational online games by using the questionnaires.

Stage 2: Collecting the information on learning English vocabulary through non-educational online games by using the semi-structured interviews.

1. Would you like to join the stage 2 of the study?
   - Yes, I would.
   - No, I would not.

2. Please provide the following information.
   - Name (Can be your nickname)_______________________________________
   - Your mobile phone number_________________________________________
   - 3. Other contacts
      - Facebook_________________________________________________________
      - Twitter__________________________________________________________
      - Line___________________________________________________________
      - Instagram_______________________________________________________
   - Others (Please specify _____________________________________________)

Thank you for collaboratively participate in the study.

Your answers will be kept confidential and only be used for academic purposes.
APPENDIX B
(Semi-structured interviews)

CONTENT APPENDIX B

Semi-structured interviews

The study is aimed to investigate the effects of playing non-educational online games on learning English vocabulary in Thailand. The semi-structured interview is aimed to collect the in-depth data about learning English vocabulary through non-educational online games. Your answers will be kept confidential and only be used for academic purposes.

Part 1: Basic information
1. Nickname
2. Age
3. Educational level
4. Average amount of time spending on playing games
5. Names of online games that you play

Part 2: The data about learning English vocabulary through non-educational online games
1. Can you learn English vocabulary through non-educational online games? Why or why not?
2. How do games help you learning English vocabulary?
   - reading in games information, selecting words, observing repeating words
   - using previous experience
   - interacting with players in games
   - using words to learn words
   - observing other players
   - using pictures, actions, or graphics in games
   - noting down words
   - checking the meaning of vocabulary
   - etc.

Thank you for collaboratively participate in the study. Your answers will be kept confidential and only be used for academic purposes.
Students’ Perceived Engagement in Peer Review in a Transnational University Context: An Action Research

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Abstract

Peer review is being increasingly used in higher education as a stage in the writing process to improve the quality of students’ writing. Teachers and students tend to perceive engagement in this process quite differently. Employing an interpretive action research paradigm, this study draws on Deci and Ryan’s (1985) self-determination theory as a framework to explore EAP (English for Academic Purpose) students’ perceived engagement in the peer review process in a writing project at a transnational university in Suzhou, China. Using a peer review checklist, students’ perceived engagement is evaluated from the three dimensions in the framework - perceived autonomy in doing peer review, perceived competence in giving feedback, and willingness to participate in peer review practice. Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered from 20 responses to two online Likert scale questionnaires and a focus group interview with four participants. The results indicate that students generally lack confidence and require greater autonomy to fully participate in peer review. The present paper brings forth the reasons for disengagement in peer review writing classes, learners’ perspective on this issue and recommends a peer review model for future research and practice.

Key words: peer review writing, action research, self-determination theory, students engagement

Introduction

Feedback is regarded as a key element in the learning process, especially in the development of writing skills (Biggs & Tang 2011; Falchikov, 2005; Topping, 1998). The benefits from feedback on developing composing skills have received wide acknowledgement from researchers who propose a process-oriented approach to language teaching and learning (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). However, teachers as the only feedback provider makes it difficult to provide on-going personalised feedback during the writing process due to high teacher-student ratios in most language classrooms. In this respect, students are introduced as alternative feedback providers for their peers’ writing, and this process is called peer review.
Literature review

The benefits from peer review do not only provide students with a wider range and increased quantity of feedback. While participating in peer review, students are also able to learn writing by reading others’ written work (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009) and view writing from the audience’s stance (Mangelsdorf, 1992; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994), which often leads to a negotiation of meaning with their peers to incorporate feedback into the next draft. This process can also create opportunities for collaborative learning and social support among peers (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996). During peer review, learners enhance their writing skills from ongoing personalised feedback received from their peers, evaluate others’ writing and develop collaborative learning by working in pairs or groups.

Although the positive effects from peer review have been evidenced by researchers, some empirical studies have revealed potential issues of peer review in terms of cultural acceptance and pedagogical effectiveness, particularly in some L2 contexts. Since the peer review process involves learner interaction, many factors such as language, cultural differences, and power distance (Nelson & Carson, 1998) could result in variables in interaction patterns and effectiveness. In terms of the language factor, non-native speakers tend to give feedback on a surface-level as their feedback often has a focus on vocabulary or grammar rather than content or flow of ideas. Students are also inclined to question the correctness of peer feedback as their peers are non-native speakers (Tsui & Ng, 2000). Furthermore, teachers are regarded as the authority of feedback giving (ibid), while peer feedback is rarely implemented or acknowledged as an alternative feedback source. When it is applied in some L2 classrooms, most learners perceive teacher feedback to be more reliable as evidenced by Zhang’s (1995) study on perceptions of self, peer and teacher feedback, revealing a strong preference for teacher feedback.

Admittedly, peer review is beneficial to language learners in developing writing skills and enhancing academic behavior. However, there are obstacles impeding its effectiveness, especially in L2 contexts, due to learners’ cultural and educational backgrounds, lack of language proficiency and peer review training. As a new mode of learning, peer review will inevitably provide many challenges for learners and teachers. Literature on peer review has illustrated complex attitudes towards doing peer review in language classrooms, especially L2 contexts. To examine how students are engaged and what improvements can be made in the peer review practice, this study will be conducted in a L2 classroom at Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU) where the majority of students have not experienced peer review before entering the university. The following questions will be explored in the current study:

**RQ1**: To what extent are students engaged in peer review practice in a L2 classroom?

**RQ2**: Are there possible areas to develop the current peer review practice? And how?
Methodology

1. Research paradigm

Education research is broadly divided into those adopting a positivist epistemological position using quantitative data, which believes there is one concrete answer for a research question, and those in the interpretive paradigm mostly relying on qualitative data to explore processes and outcomes. The research questions raised in the previous section are concerned with “how learners perceive” and “how peer review can be developed”. In this respect, the interpretivist paradigm seems to be more appropriate as it places greater emphasis on process and results.

Action research is one important approach within the interpretivist paradigm. Miles & Huberman (1994) proposed that action research allows researchers to make interventions and study effects simultaneously. Through this process the researcher is able to continuously evaluate interventions allowing for more more comprehensive understanding of the research subject. Baskerville & Myers (2004) also suggest that one main advantage of action research is that knowledge does not exist in a vacuum and therefore should be applied in practice to benefit individuals. As the current research aims to evaluate and enhance the peer review experience, action research appears to be an appropriate methodology as it focuses on active intervention. Moreover, the researcher in this study is also a teaching practitioner in the research context. Burns (1999) suggests that action research by classroom practitioners make teachers more engaged in their classroom practices, and aware of external factors impinging teaching and learning, thus providing opportunities for professional development. It is expected that this action research will bring implications for future research and also enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the current context.

Given numerous variations of action research, the most widely recognised is proposed by Kemmis & McTaggart (1992). They (ibid) suggest that there are four stages in conducting action research: plan, action, observation and reflection. McNiff and Whitehead (2002) develop the model further into: “review current practice”, “identify aspects to be improved”, “imagine a way forward”, “try it” and “monitor and reflect on results”. Correspondingly, this study will first analyze students’ perceived engagement in their current practice, then identify potential areas for improvement, propose measures for improvement, apply the measures, and reflect on the peer review practice. Detailed action plan steps are described in Table 1.
2. Research framework

Self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) is concerned with teaching practice and its impact on student engagement. SDT illustrates three essential elements of learning: perceived engagement, relatedness, and autonomy. The first element, ”perceived competence”, refers to students’ beliefs regarding their abilities and skills to achieve success (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). Students’ perceived competence can be improved by accomplishing challenging learning tasks and receiving positive feedback (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). The second element, “relatedness”, concerns students’ sense of being related to others. Collaboration with teachers and peers are important in promoting a sense of relatedness. The third element, “autonomy”, can be further divided into three categories: organisational, procedural and cognitive autonomy (Stefanou et al., 2004). Organizational autonomy refers to students’ ownership of their learning environment through their interaction with classroom management policies; procedural autonomy is concerned with learners decisions to organize and present their ideas; cognitive autonomy is how learners take ownership of their learning. In this project, students’ perceived engagement was evaluated via the three dimensions - perceived autonomy in doing peer review, perceived competence in giving feedback, and willingness to participate in peer review practice.

3. Participants

This study was conducted on twenty Year 1 Intermediate level Chinese students aged between 18 and 20 (Mean=19) enrolled in EAP (English for Academic Purposes) for Industrial Design Technology at XJTLU (Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool university) with full responses in the questionnaire survey and four participants being interviewed in the focus group. This module mainly consists of students majoring in engineering who lack experience in reviewing the work of others. The researcher has taught this module for two years and noticed that most students did not appear motivated and engaged in doing peer review. In identifying the reasons for disengagement and attempting to enhance students’ learning experience, this research invites students to voice their thoughts and needs.
4. Data collection and analysis

A mixed methods approach was adopted for its integration of qualitative and quantitative research strengths, which can help make sense of complexity, answer “why” questions and provide more flexibility (Dornyei, 2007). This approach also allows the researcher to analyse research phenomenon from different perspectives and present data analysis in-depth (Watson Todd, 2012). Mixed methods is generally considered to have four main purposes: triangulation, complimentarity, development, and expansion (Collins & O’Cathain, 2009). Considering the purpose of development, this study collects quantitative data to identify “what are the major challenges for learners in peer review”, “who are experiencing extreme difficulties in peer review”, then moves to qualitative data to answer “why learners are experiencing difficulties”, and “how learners can improve their experience of doing peer review”.

A five-point Likert online questionnaire was designed to measure students’ perceived autonomy, competence and relatedness in their current peer review practice. The data was elicited through five options which ranged from 1 “Strongly disagree” to 5 “Strongly agree”. Participants were instructed to choose one option to reflect on the current peer review practice. Measuring the mean scores for responses to perceived autonomy, competence and relatedness illustrated which area is more challenging for the class. These questionnaire results provided the rationale for identifying potential interview participants for the focus group and used to develop discussion questions. The four participants who rated themselves significantly disengaged were invited to a 40-minute focus group to 1) explain their responses in the questionnaire, 2) make suggestions concerning how future peer review activity could be improved in terms of procedures and materials. The focus group interview was recorded, transcribed, and grouped into themes according to the frequency of items by the researcher, which can interpret and possibly add to the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2003). After implementing suggested changes by participants in the focus group in a subsequent peer review activity, the second questionnaire was sent to the 20 students to compare the practice before and after the intervention by inviting responses to an open-ended questionnaire. The qualitative data was analysed by the researcher in terms of frequency of items, which aimed to reflect on the intervention to provide recommendations for future action.

Results

RQ1: To what extent are students engaged in peer review practice in a L2 classroom?

Descriptive results of the five-point Likert online questionnaire are shown in Table 2, with the mean scores 3.88, 3.05, 3.57 for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. It is noticeable that students generally perceive they are given the required autonomy to do peer review (M=3.88), however, they are not very confident in their ability to conduct peer review activity (M=3.05). Item 6, “Peer review was an activity I couldn’t do very well”, had the lowest mean score (M=2.8) after reverse scoring, with
two respondents strongly agreeing with the statement. The answer aligned with the qualitative data in the following section concerning students’ confusion in conducting peer review.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of students’ perception of engagement in doing peer review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>N of items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatedness</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N=20

RQ2: Are there possible areas to develop the current peer review practice? And how?

Students’ suggestions on how to improve peer review were collected via semi-structured focus-group interviews. The four students’ comments in the interview were analysed for themes. The following three themes were identified: 1) preference for teacher’s feedback, 2) concerns about peer review materials, 3) autonomy in doing peer review.

Preference for teacher’s feedback

One reason students gave for their reluctance in doing peer review is that they prefer to receive feedback from teachers rather than peers, as they have ever only experienced feedback from teachers and therefore consider teachers as competent language users who have the only authority or responsibility to give feedback.

Interviewer: Do you want to try peer review in the future?

Judy: No, because the teacher can give feedback better than me.

Miles: A lot of students still think it is teacher’s responsibility to give feedback. Why should we trust a student’s feedback at the similar level as us?

Concerns about peer review materials

Students also reported their concerns about the lack of clarity with the peer review materials. The checklists used for peer review only give general requirements and they seem confused about what assessors expect from their writing.

Eric: I could not figure out the standards. How do I peer review others’ articles?

Interviewer: Do you think the checklist is clear or not?

Eric: Not very clear. I can only give general feedback ... I don’t know how to improve an article.
To make peer review materials support the writing process, one student proposed that the peer review checklist should be developed from marking rubrics. Although a marking criteria is shared by teachers and students at XJTLU, it is too general and the current peer review checklist and teachers’ marking guidelines are often different. In this focus group, students suggested that to improve the clarity of peer review feedback a peer review checklist should be similar to the teachers’ version. Furthermore, the checklist using only yes/no questions is too restrictive, which fails to demonstrate how to achieve higher levels in writing.

*Miles:* *I think this peer review checklist should be related to marking criteria.*

*Interviewer:* *Do you think this peer review checklist has reflected marking criteria well?*

*Miles:* *We need some explanations from teachers, because the teacher will give the final scores.*

*Eric:* *I think you should add an overall comment area. You can also add grammar and vocabulary section, and how innovative the ideas are.*

*Arson:* *The checklist is only yes/no question. How to differentiate different levels?*

**Autonomy in doing peer review**

Although students have shown high perceived autonomy in the questionnaire survey, participants in the focus group have shown reluctance to be involved in developing peer review materials. The researcher’s original plan was to develop a revised peer review checklist through negotiation with students. However, the plan was altered as one student insisted that the work should only be done by the teacher as students have no voice in giving the final mark or feedback.

*Interviewer:* *Why do you think the checklist should only be provided by teachers?*

*Miles:* *Because the final mark is given by teachers.*

*Interviewer:* *Should students also be involved in assessments?*

*Miles:* *That’s a good idea. If it comes true, I worry about if students could be neutral to give peer scores.*

Further, students expressed that the peer review checklist is very controlled as they can only tick Yes/No for the given questions and it failed to provide opportunities for them to include individual personalised comments. A comment area was suggested to be included.

*Interviewer:* *How can we improve the peer review practice.*

*Miles:* *Peer review cannot provide a very clear structure…. just tick the box, not really respond to writing.*
Eric: Everyone should write feedback with details.

Arson: Can include our own opinions.

Finally, reflecting on the intervention and results, the majority of students reported a strong preference for the revised checklist developed after the focus group discussion. The rationale given for their preference is that the revised checklist relates more to writing assessment rubrics and provides greater freedom as they now have a comment area to write further suggestions.

“It’s more related to the Writing Coursework rubrics”

“Because I think is more specific and student can know which part they need to improve. The comment area can give some suggestions.”

Discussion

In line with previous research, students in this study expressed their reluctance in carrying out peer review due to a lack of trust in feedback from their peers and their low confidence in giving feedback (Tsui & Ng, 2000). They questioned the reliability of peer feedback. This could result from “harmony maintenance” (Carson & Nelson, 1996), as Chinese learners were observed to be reluctant to criticize or disagree with peers, which can lead to ineffective comments. Moreover, students in this study also showed a strong preference for teacher feedback. Asian learners’ strong preferences for teacher feedback may lead to a lack of motivation to participate in the peer review process (Nelson & Carson, 1998; Tsui & Ng, 2000).

1. Deconstructing marking rubrics

Students in this study expressed their lack of competence in giving peer feedback and requested a detailed checklist developed from rubrics by teachers to guide them in carrying out peer review. Rubrics are used widely in higher education assessment (Andrade, 2000; Reddy & Andrade, 2010). In viewing assessment rubrics, learners can understand what is expected in the assessment, and revise their drafts after receiving feedback, however, not every student instinctively knows how to use rubrics (Stevens & Levi, 2013). They may misunderstand terminologies from the rubric, or not be able to use the rubric to make critical judgements. Lorraine et al. (2017) found that deconstructing rubrics to use in peer review and self-review tasks, improved writing grades. This study also evidenced that deconstructing rubrics is an effective strategy to engage students in peer review.

2. Peer review training

In addition to making rubrics more transparent, peer review training has been illustrated with its positive effects on writing qualities and revision skills (Berg, 1999; Hu, 2005; Min, 2008). During
peer review training, students can negotiate academic expectations with teachers, assessors and peers. Furthermore, students may develop an ability to make critical judgements by commenting on example writing and comparing their comments with teachers’ or peers’ to consolidate understanding. Compared to a prepared checklist, peer review training is more process-oriented and enables students to learn how to give peer review feedback. Motivating students to participate in peer review training might prove challenging without allowing for more student autonomy. However, increased autonomy could be achieved by inviting students to marking standardization discussions.

3. Autonomy in doing peer review

Students in this study also expressed their need for autonomy when they were evaluating the peer review checklist. Moving from deconstructing writing rubrics to peer review, more autonomy can be given to learners, however, a further question will be how much autonomy is sufficient. Both peer review training and marking with deconstructed rubrics take place in the classroom with input from teachers, which may limit the peer review in terms of time and space. To facilitate autonomous learning in the writing process, Man et al. (2017) investigated postgraduates carrying out autonomous peer feedback and found that this contributed to building learning communities and enabled learners to develop evaluating skills. Using social media and other online platforms may give learners more opportunities to conduct peer review without limitation of time and space. These tools can be implemented with more advanced learners who are already familiar with rubrics and the peer review process.

Recommendations

Pedagogically, it is advised that students with low perceived competence in doing peer review use the Figure 1 model to move from teacher directed, teacher-author negotiated and author directed peer review. Deconstructing marking rubrics can provide input knowledge to understand rubrics related to their writing. In order to train students to understand the peer review process and tasks, guided support is necessary with student inclusion in assessment not being neglected. Given the knowledge of product and process, learners could be encouraged to participate in autonomous peer review in online learning communities.

![Figure 1. Peer Review Model](image)
Conclusion

To sum up, this action research evaluated perceived engagement in peer review at a transnational university and explored possible areas to improve. Through qualitative and quantitative analysis, it is found that participants reported low perceived competence and require greater autonomy to be able to fully participate in the peer review process. The action was to use a checklist deconstructed from a marking rubric with a free comment area to facilitate peer feedback, which has proved to be beneficial to learners. It is also suggested that to further boost students’ perceived competence and autonomy in peer review, a peer review model from teacher-directed to author-directed can be a potential future action as it could give more autonomy and develop students’ competence in conducting peer review. Further research and practice is called for in examining this peer review model.

References


Motivating Freshmen in Learning Vocabulary with Innovative Interactive Whiteboard Activities

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Abstract

Vocabulary is one of the most essential factors in English acquisition. Therefore, how to teach vocabulary fascinatingly plays a crucial part in supporting students acquire new words better. Students’ motivation in vocabulary learning can be enhanced by using Interactive Whiteboard (IWB). It has been globally known as a useful tool for teachers to draw students’ attention and boost their motivation by many interactive activities. This paper examines the effect of IWBs on motivating students to learn vocabulary. Mixed methods were used in this investigation. The research data in this thesis were drawn from three main sources: questionnaire, vocabulary motivational scale, and focused group interview. Thirty-five freshmen at Van Lang University, Vietnam participated in this study. The findings show that IWB can be used to motivate freshmen in vocabulary acquisition. The final part of this paper recommends some practical IWB activities for teachers to apply into vocabulary teaching.

Keywords: Interactive Whiteboard, teaching vocabulary, motivation, vocabulary acquisition, SLA

Introduction

Vietnam is integrating into the international community, so fluency in English communication is a great advantage nowadays. However, shortage of lexicons can hinder students from reaching fluency. In fact, students’ successful academic performance or communication depends on vocabulary. Besides, the limitation in the methodology of teaching vocabulary is one of the key factors prevents learners from achieving the highest result. In Vietnam context, the reality in teaching English reveals that teaching Grammar is the main focus in most of educational levels, even in university. Vietnamese students may know a lot of words, but do not know how to apply them to work or communication purposes (Nguyen, 2015). Nguyen (2015) also emphasized that the amount of vocabulary that a person can memorize is not as important as the lexicon repertoire they can really use. Therefore, the result from vocabulary learning of Vietnamese students shows many shortcomings, which is attributed mainly to passive learning attitudes (students only wait for the lexicon items from teachers), the underestimation of the importance of vocabulary acquisition, the lack of guidance about the appropriate method to study...
vocabulary effectively and the inadequacies of pedagogic approach in vocabulary teaching (directly translating English words into Vietnamese) (Nguyen, 2015).

One of the technologies that enhance vocabulary teaching is IWB. The IWB is a touch screen digital board which can be controlled with an electronic pen or fingers (Vetter, 2009, as cited in Katwibun, 2014). Glover et al (2005, as cited in Katwibun, 2014) added that the IWB enables learners to learn more quickly and effectively. In comparison with other traditional ways of teaching vocabulary, IWB with its activities as a pedagogical tool can gain students’ attention (Gillen et al., 2007), boost students’ ability to understand complex concepts in math and science (Hennessey et al., 2007), make learners more engaged and attentive (Higgins, Beauchamp, & Miller, 2007, as cited in Hur & Suh, 2012), improve teaching and learning as well as increase motivation (Orr, 2008, as cited in Hur & Suh, 2012), encourage learners’ collaboration, communication and thinking (Kersner et. al, 2010), enhance learners’ motivation and enthusiasm with visual images (Hwang et.al., 2013, as cited in Hur & Suh, 2012) or promote students’ reinforcement of vocabulary (Katwibun, 2014). Because not many studies have been conducted before to prove the effectiveness of IWB activities towards the motivation in learning vocabulary in Vietnam, this paper aims to investigate the effect of Interactive Whiteboard on motivating EFL students’ vocabulary acquisition. It will also look at some possible disadvantages of using IWB and recommend IWB innovative activities to better teaching and learning vocabulary.

Literature Review

What Is an Interactive Whiteboard (IWB)?

According to Smith, Hardman, & Higgins (2006), as cited in Hur and Suh (2012), an interactive whiteboard (IWB) is a “touch-sensitive device that allows users to interact with digital materials. This device connects a computer to a projector and shows resources on the surface of the board” (p.322). Pen, fingers, mouse or keyboard can be used on the board to draw, write or erase. In addition, the ability to utilize a computer at a distance makes the tool more effective for presentation and interaction. Vita, Verschaffel, and Elen (2014) adds that an interactive whiteboard (IWB) is a relatively new tool that provides interesting affordances in the classroom environment, such as multiple visualization and multimedia presentation and ability for movement and animation. There are some available innovative features such as screen reveal and capture, handwriting recognition, cropping tool – which allow teachers to walk around the room to give lectures. Students can manipulate on IWB as what they can do on their cellphone screen, which makes the IWB different from a normal blackboard.

What Is ActivInspire ®?

ActivInspire ® is a software that helps teachers bring lessons to life with rich, powerful activities that grab students’ attention, blending real-time assessment and real-world experience into the learning process, according to https://www.prometheanworld.com/. ActivInspire ® provides thousands of flipcharts, available activities, and games. With ActivInspire ®, teachers can create a wide range of
learning activities: crosswords, matching games, dice board game, flash card and so on. Templates for designing interactive activities are available as well as easy to approach whereas it is extremely complicated to design the same activities with Power Point - with lots of steps and high technical requirements. Using PowerPoint to create IWB lessons can be harder for teachers who are low-tech because many complicated steps need including like triggers or the effect order. Therefore, the usage of ActivInspire® is more prominent than that of Power Point.

The literature on using IWB to teach English vocabulary has highlighted several softwares that are well utilized with IWB such as the English Vocabulary Instructional System and the Five Modules of Review Activities of English Vocabulary in the research of Lin et al. (2014) in a junior high school in northern Taiwan. In a primary school in Africa, XERTE software, whose functions are described as similar to ActivInspire (Bahadur & Oogarah, 2013), is used with IWB to test IWB’s effectiveness on teaching at school. While these softwares have been proven efficient in combination with IWB, does ActivInspire software have the positive impact on motivating students to learn vocabulary in Vietnam university context?

**What Is Motivation and Why Should Students’ Motivation Be Increased?**

It has been agreed that the crucial values of motivation on language acquisition process are undeniable (Gomleksiz 2001, cited in Anjomshoa & Firooz, 2015). Various definitions of motivation and its role in EFL have been put forward so far.

Motivation, as asserted by Gardner (1985), is the combination of both effort and desire to achieve the goal of language learning and favorable attitudes towards learning the language. Meanwhile, Gredler, Broussard and Garrison (2004), as cited in Gandhimathi and Anitha Devi (2016), define motivation as “the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something” (p. 4). Similarly, Guay et al. (2010), as cited in Mahdikhani and Iran (2016), refers motivation as “the reasons underlying behavior” (p. 712). Despite being explained in different ways by different researchers, it is generally acknowledged that motivation is a psychological factor that drives language learners internally to overcome all obstacles in order to be successful in their learning.

Researchers have provided empirical evidences to confirm learners’ motivation as an effective device of improving their language acquisition as it determines the extent of active, personal involvement in language learning. In his language acquisition theory, Krahne and Krashen (1983) stressed that together with attitudes, motivation is the most influential factor in unconscious language acquisition and the learner's motivational level acts as an affective filter on language intake. Together with technological movements in EFL classroom, Atkitson (2000), as cited in Mahdikhani (2016) emphasized that students’ motivation is positively affected by technology and teachers’ motivation. Teachers should make conscious efforts to create activities that encompass some forms of technological tool thanks to students’ positive response to technology and motivation created by technology for them.
The same idea is also proved by Prensky (2001), as cited in Mahdikhani (2016), that is, introducing technology infused lessons may prove to be a beneficial motivator for every grade level.

According to Reeve’s article (1996), as cited in “Ways of Motivating EFL/ESL Students in the Classroom” (n.d.) on British Council website, “student motivation is influenced by both internal and external factors that can start, sustain, intensify, or discourage behavior”. The teacher has to activate these motivational components in the students. Some methods have been recommended such as “pair work” or “group work”, the seating of the students, maximizing eye contact, changing partners or changing groups, concerning the ways of how to correct errors to avoid hurt and humiliation, using the role-play activity, using realia, flash cards, stories and songs in teaching, using audio visual material: cassette player, video, computer and so on. Based on these suggestions, it is obvious that IWB almost satisfies these motivation – boosting methods with its features.

All the above-mentioned researchers confirmed the fact that motivation helps learners succeed. Learning a foreign language is very demanding but if learners have internal desire to learn it, they can do well. Motivation not only increases their interest in learning but also supports them in overcoming obstacles to achieve the goal. Gardner (1985) strongly believes that it is motivation that provides learners with an aim and direction to follow. Without desire, learners can hardly gain effective results. Undoubtedly, to facilitate students’ vocabulary acquisition process, the key factor is to maximize learners’ motivation.

The Importance of Vocabulary Learning and the Reason Why Students Learn Vocabulary with the IWB

Lexical knowledge contributes significantly to the success of all areas of language learning. Allen (1983) indicates that development of vocabulary knowledge is highly necessary for both native and nonnative speakers, so learning a language depends on learning its vocabulary. Reconfirming the idea of Allen (1983), as cited in Norouzi & Mohammadi (2014) highlights the importance of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension not only in first language (L1) but also in second language (L2). To clarify the inevitable significance of vocabulary, previous researches agreed that lack of vocabulary was a major reason for the performance gaps (Borgia, 2009; Carlo et al., 2004; Wallace, 2007). Blachowicz, Fisher, and Ogle (2006), claims, “Knowledge of English vocabulary is one of the strongest correlates of the discrepancy between the reading performance of native English speakers and that of ELLs” (p. 526). Nevertheless, vocabulary acquisition is a complex process because the learning of word meaning requires more than the use of a dictionary, said Allen (1983). He modifies that besides learning words’ meaning, words’ part of speech, their grammar uses in context, and their cultural meaning also need concentrating on (p.4-5).

Hur & Suh (2012) adds that utilizing visual and audio aids is one way to help ELLs acquire new vocabulary and improve English skills. Gersten and Baker (2000) explains, “Because the spoken
word is fleeting, visual aids such as graphic organizers, concept and story maps, and word banks give students a concrete system to process, reflect on, and integrate information” (p.321). Digital technology allows teachers to create and incorporate audio and visual data easily, and studies demonstrate that using technology is beneficial to improving English proficiency (Kern, 2006; Liu, Moore, Graham, & Lee, 2003). These findings indicate the importance of using a visual and audio-based teaching tool like IWB to enhance the speed of students’ vocabulary acquisition.

Mixed Findings about the Benefits of IWB in Vocabulary Learning as well as in Enhancing Students’ Motivation

In Thailand, a mixed method research on the effects of IWBs in vocabulary teaching was conducted with the participation of 51 students at 11th grade in 2011. After 3 lesson plans with 3 IWB instructional media, the data obtained from post-teaching teacher’s note, vocabulary knowledge test, students’ participation observation form and attitude questionnaire showed that after using the IWB, the students’ vocabulary knowledge, participation and attitude were at a very good level (Katwibun, 2014). By combining many methods of data collection, this research could increase the reliability for its conclusion on the efficiency of IWBs. Regardless of this, Katwibun (2014) did not clarify whether the vocabulary test was pre or posttest as well as whether there was a comparison on students’ vocabulary proficiency before and after using IWBs. Nonetheless, the author suggested that IWBs should only be used as a part of the whole lesson to maintain students’ participation because teachers that overuse multimedia or IWB technology would lead to cognitive overload (Schmid, 2008, as cited in Liang et al. 2012). Along the same vein, Thompson & Flecknoe (2003), as cited in Liang et al., (2012) assert that over-lengthy use of IWB as a presentation medium with student interaction can lead to boredom and subsequent disruptive behaviors. Hence, it is advised that IWB should only be used as a part of the lesson because the students’ participation dropped slightly at the end of the lesson if the IWB accommodated the whole period of teaching (2013).

As a significant modification to Katwibun’s experimental study (2014), Norouzi, Mohammadi & Madani (2014) used vocabulary pre and post-test to examine the knowledge of 30 students on their vocabulary at Farzanegan secondary school in Iran. They wanted to prove that smartboard would facilitate interactive and collaborative learning as well as motivate student’s participation in the class activities. However, the data collected illustrated that interactive whiteboard was not effective in improving students’ vocabulary retention in experimental group, so teaching vocabulary using the IWB has no significant effect on EFL learner’s vocabulary retention. Overall, only employing pre- and post-test was not enough to indicate whether students had made any progress in enhancing interactive and collaborative learning or motivating their participation. Therefore, the result from Norouzi, Mohammadi & Madani’s study (2014) is in contrast to Katwibun’s conclusion (2014).

When it comes to motivation, Lewin et al. (2008), as cited in Manny et al. (2011) concluded that students feel greatly motivated when they have opportunities to take part in various functions of
the board and the experienced teachers who identified this motivation used it to enhance student learning. Manny et al. (2011) reconfirmed this idea by conducting a project including six middle and high school in Israel for 2 years. The result pointed out that students’ motivation and engagement in the learning process increased when studying with the IWB. In the same way, Lin, Hsiao, Tseng, & Chan (2014) supported the idea that classroom practitioners can effectively employ technologies to increase students’ motivation in learning in addition to promoting collaborative learning. Additionally, the enjoyment of sequenced activities is emphasized in the finding of Glover, Miller, & Averis’s research (2004) as one of the significant elements of IWB that enhance effective learning in Math. This poses a question about the efficiency of interactive activities in motivating learning English vocabulary. Having the same agreement on the significance of interactive activities, Lin, Hsiao, Tseng, & Chan (2014) recommend that learners should have repeated exposures to vocabulary if they want to increase and retention of vocabulary. Likewise, the importance of interactive activities is also highlighted by the study of Bahadur & Oogarah, (2013), which assert that without interactive activities, IWB will be normal blackboard. As a confirmation of the benefits of IWB activities, but more specialized in games, Edwards, Hartnell, and Martin (2002) explain that the use of interactive games increases students’ enjoyment in learning. Obviously, these findings present the crucial role of interactive activities in boosting students’ motivation and learning vocabulary.

Besides interactive games, Hur & Suh (2012) also clarifies that interactive whiteboard can also be employed for visual presentations and test reviews, which was useful for the English language learners to learn new vocabulary and engage them in learning. One of the innovative points of this research is the combination of many data collections such as daily video podcasts (for lesson’s revision), vocabulary tests (examined students’ vocabulary understanding as related to the weekly theme), student survey, photo story project, teacher interview, classroom observations, final report cards, and informal meetings. Although lots of studies confirm the advantages of IWB in language learning, the result from a survey of Bahadur & Oogarah, 2013 quotes that language subject do not need teaching with IWB because language is a static subject. It raises a doubt about this finding and requires a serious study to find an accurate answer. The conclusion from Bahadur & Oogarah’s study is challenged by McCormick and Scrimshaw (2001), Glover and Miller (2002), who highlight the need for pedagogic change - from the didactic to the interactive, or to the integration of the technology and media into lesson planning.

Together these studies provide important insights into the deciding factors that motivate learners powerfully in the learning experiences with IWB such as the novelty of interactivity (Glover, Miller, & Averis, 2004), the flexibility and versatility of IWB as a teaching tool (Smith et al., 2005), the physical interaction with the board, the multi-sensory input which suit all types of learning styles - visual, auditory, and tactile learners (Bahadur & Oogarah , 2013; Beeland, 2002), the reduction of monotony thanks to the alternative format of instruction delivery (Morgan, 2010) and interactive games (Edwards, Hartnell, and Martin, 2002). A question is posed about other factors that can lead to learners’ motivation in learning vocabulary with IWB.
Teaching and learning English vocabulary in Vietnam context or universities are often underestimated because teaching vocabulary in a pedagogical way is often time-consuming because teachers not only teach students the word meaning but how to use that word in context and its part of speech, collocation, and figurative meanings. Hence, Vietnamese teachers often give students lists of lesson vocabulary and force them to learn by heart, which is considered more time-saving but demotivating to students themselves. As a consequence, students may remember words, but when they need to apply those words in real communicative contexts, they cannot do that, or all words they have studied become passive words, not active (Kaufmann, 2017).

Previous papers have indicated that it is imperative to include interactive activities with IWB if teachers would like to enhance students’ motivation in vocabulary learning, especially primary and high school students. How about university students? Addressing these limitations, this research contributes to the literature by investigating the efficacy of IWB in ESL, specifically, on learners’ motivation of vocabulary learning. Moreover, this paper hopes to fill the gaps regarding to IWB activities, with the hope of making it a learner-centered tool which motivates students in vocabulary acquisition. This paper also aims to answer the research questions:

1. How IWB interactive activities affect freshmen at Van Lang University, Vietnam in learning English vocabulary?
2. Do students need IWB as an innovative method to learn vocabulary better?
3. Is ActivInspire software used successfully in motivating freshmen in vocabulary learning?
4. From students’ perspective, what factors can lead to students motivation when they learning English vocabulary with IWB and ActivInspire software?

**Methodology**

**The Research Method and Data Collection Techniques**

Mixed method was employed in this project because it is useful when either the quantitative or qualitative approach by itself is inadequate to best understand a research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this paper, questionnaire, vocabulary motivational scale, and focused group interview were used to collect data. The purpose of quantitative data (vocabulary motivational scale and questionnaire) in this study is both to identify the impact of IWB with ActivInspire interactive activities on freshmen’s motivation in learning vocabulary and to see students’ feelings and attitudes towards learning vocabulary with IWB. In order to make the results more persuasive, the qualitative data from the semi – structured interview in focused group (10 students) embellish and explain the quantitative findings in more depth and to get an insight into the effectiveness of ActivInspire as well as key factors enhancing students’ motivation.
**The Sample Population**

The participants were 35 freshmen coming from two business administration classes at Van Lang University in Vietnam. The students were from 18 to 19 years old, at pre-intermediate level and learned General English. The participants have not ever used IWB before. Since the participants were 18 years old and above, there was no need to ask for their parents’ permission for their participation in the research. Instead, a consent form must be given to the participants to ask for their agreement. The consent form aims to make sure that the participants would not be hurt in any circumstances as a result of their responses in the questionnaire or interview.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

When it comes to the vocabulary motivational scale (VMS), before the analysis, the gathered data was prepared and screened for the invalid or incomplete responses. The dataset from VMS was checked for missing data and then analyzed using Mean and SD. The mean and SD of the thirty–two-statement motivation scale was calculated by SPSS software to find out whether students were motivated with IWB during Vocabulary classes. If Mean score is more than 3, it can be inferred that using IWB with the ActivInspire can motivate freshmen’ in vocabulary study. The data was presented in Table 2. Regarding the questionnaire, the data were synthesized into themes which help to indicate students’ opinion and feelings towards IWBs. The interview recordings were transcribed and processed by thematic analysis. Some typical answers were quoted as evidence for the themes. Finally, the result from 3 sources was put together to response appropriately to the research questions.

**The Study Design**

The research project was conducted for five weeks with five vocabulary lessons. Before IWB was applied, it had taken about two months to prepare for technical knowledge related to IWBs and ActivInspire software.

At the beginning of the project, the subject students were guided to use the IWBs and familiarize themselves with the manipulations on IWBs. In addition, interactive lesson plans were designed carefully with the ActivInspire software as well as tested on real IWBs by the teacher.

During the project, in each lesson theme, the subject students learned vocabulary integrated in the activities with IWBs. Before each lesson, about twenty questions were asked to check whether students had known about those new words. After teaching vocabulary with IWBs, the teacher organized one interactive activity to check the students’ memory of the new vocabulary. After the project, the data from questionnaires, vocabulary motivational scale and focused group interview were analyzed to draw the conclusion whether the subject students were motivated to learn new words. The vocabulary topics and the IWB activities that were used during the project were displayed in the Table 1.
Table 1. The vocabulary topics and IWB activities used during the project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week number</th>
<th>Lesson theme</th>
<th>Activities with IWBs and ActivInspire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Guessing game “what kind of food is it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sequencing words in a sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conceal -reveal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Matching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Appearance and Personality</td>
<td>Slap the board and choose the right adjective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wanted game (read the description on the board, compete and choose the correct answer).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Parts of the body</td>
<td>Faceoff flash game (increase the competitiveness between 2 groups).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hang man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hot seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>Identify names of clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>Hangman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conceal -reveal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weather game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>Word search with ActivInspire ®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Who is quicker? (with ActivInspire ® and ActivPen)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Results from the Interview

A focused group interview involving 10 students was conducted at the end of the project. Their answer was collected into four main themes: problems in vocabulary learning prior to the study, benefits with IWB during vocabulary lessons, students’ attitudes towards IWB activities, vocabulary improvement after learning with IWB and difficulties learning with IWB.

Problems in English Vocabulary Learning before Learning with IWB Activities.

Concerning problems in vocabulary learning before IWBs were applied into interactive lessons, most of students believed that they were not good at remembering new words, lacked the knowledge of necessary vocabulary, or felt lazy to study new words (11%). Other students stated that they could not remember all learnt word fully due to the difficulty and diversity of lexical items (44%). Most of students blamed these problems on lack of skill for word organization. Some students attributed their trouble to their brains (45%).
Attitudes towards IWB Activities.

All participants agreed that IWB activities were exciting, innovative, interesting, entertaining, creative, motivating, relaxing (42%) and created happy, funny, lively atmosphere during lessons (58%). They also thought that IWBs was helpful because they could understand the lesson faster, or wanted to learn more, became more confident, pro-active, more comfortable, and remembered vocabulary more quickly with visual aids. However, some students stated that images on IWB were sometimes blurry, and eye-soring.

Benefits of IWB in Vocabulary Learning.

Participants listed a lot of benefits they could receive from learning with IWBs. Benefits mentioned by a lot of students were fun atmosphere (30%), easy grasp of new words (30%), long-lasting memory of words (25%). Some students added more concentration and more motivation as other benefits of IWBs (15%).
Vocabulary Improvement after Learning with Iwb.

One hundred percentage of students stated that IWBs was helpful in improving their vocabulary significantly. After studying vocabulary with IWB, they not only could remember words more quickly, especially some difficult words, but they also wanted to learn more words. Besides, having vivid pictures to illustrate the meaning and real contexts really guided them to use those words in communication. All students admitted that they had made progress in learning vocabulary. In addition, IWB really drew much more attention to the lesson, encouraged them to look up new words in the dictionary, and forced them to participate in interactive activities if they wanted to have the best results. Feedback and mistake correction from their partner also contributed to students’ vocabulary improvement.

Figure 3. Benefits when learning vocabulary with IWB

Figure 4. The vocabulary improved after learning with IWB
**Difficulties When Learning with IWB.**

The majority of students (80%) found the biggest trouble was that they were not familiar with controlling the IWB. About 10% of students complained that IWB was eye-soring because they had to look at the screen all the time. The rest of the students (10%) made no complaint about IWBs learning process.

![Difficulties when learning vocabulary with IWB](image)

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**Results from the Questionnaire Data**

All students who took part in the project did the questionnaire. The first 4 questions focused on the learners’ attitude towards IWB, the effects of IWBs on students’ concentration, the impact of IWB on students’ enthusiasm, learners’ desire to participate in the lessons. The options for the first 4 questions range from 1 to 4 (1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: agree, 4: strongly agree). The last question is an open-ended one to uncover what interest students during vocabulary lesson with IWB.

**Attitudes toward IWB.**

88.2 % of students said that they appreciated learning vocabulary in the classroom using the IWB. Only 11.4 % of students disagreed with this view.

![Attitudes towards IWB](image)
The Effects of IWB on Students’ Concentration.

When it comes to students’ concentration, 85.8 percent of students have the same idea that the IWB-based lessons help them to concentrate better. Only 2.9% disagree with this.

![Figure 7. The effects of IWBs on students’ concentration](image)

IWB’s Impact on the Enthusiasm of Students.

85.7 percent of students believed that if the IWB were used more, they would work harder. Only 14.3 percent denied that IWB could make them enthusiastic in learning vocabulary.

![Figure 8. IWB's impact on the enthusiasm of students](image)
The IWB and the Participation of Students.

94.3 % student shared that they would enjoy school more if teachers used the IWB more frequently. However, 5.8 % disagreed with this idea.

Favorite Elements of IWB Activities.

According to the pie, the most favorite aspect of IWB activities was fun atmosphere (with 48.6% students). 17.1 % students believed that students’ connection also motivated them to join the lesson. Interesting pair work / groupwork comes next (14.3%) in the rank. Some students displayed interest in various activities (8.6%) or more chances to interact (5.7%). Interesting tasks were preferred by 5.7 % students.

Results from Vocabulary Motivational Scale

Motivation scale was adapted from thirty -two -statement motivation scale by Crookes & Schmidt (1991) and Dornyei (1994), as cited in Takagi (2000). There are 4 options ranging from 1 to 5 for learners to choose (1: Totally disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, 5: Totally disagree). All
of the learners gave answer to this scale, which focuses on 4 main aspects: evaluation of vocabulary class, evaluation of IWB activities, evaluation of the teacher, and attitudes towards vocabulary learning.

The data (mean and SD for each statement) from the motivation scale can be summarized into the table 2, which showed a positive outcome of IWBs on motivation of students after their lexical lessons with IWB.

Table 2
Students’ attitudes toward the vocabulary class, the IWB activities, the teacher, and vocabulary learning in general

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The class is enjoyable.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.371</td>
<td>.8075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The class is difficult.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.400</td>
<td>.7356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The speed of the class is fast.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.514</td>
<td>.7425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The class is useful for an entrance exam.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.200</td>
<td>.96406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The class is useful for communication.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.486</td>
<td>.8179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The class is useless.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.629</td>
<td>.7311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The class is interesting.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.343</td>
<td>.8726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The IWB activities are interesting.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.200</td>
<td>.8331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The IWB activities are difficult.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.629</td>
<td>.7702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The IWB activities are useful.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.486</td>
<td>.8179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. There is a large quantity of teaching activities.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.343</td>
<td>.8726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. There is enough rapport between the teacher and the students.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>.558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. My teacher has enough knowledge of vocabulary.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.514</td>
<td>.7425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. My teacher has enough knowledge of vocabulary teaching.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.229</td>
<td>.8432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I like my teacher's way of teaching.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.114</td>
<td>.7960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. My teacher's way of teaching is effective for learning vocabulary.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.200</td>
<td>.9641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My teacher prepares well before class.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.486</td>
<td>.8179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. My teacher points out strictly when I make a mistake.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1.457</td>
<td>.7413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. My teacher often praises me.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.086</td>
<td>1.0109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I learn vocabulary because it is useful for entrance exam.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4.200</td>
<td>.9641</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table indicates that the mean scores of 26 statements, which belongs to 4 constructs (vocabulary class, IWB activities, the teacher, vocabulary learning), were higher than 4. This means the learners has positive attitudes towards using IWB to learn vocabulary. Particularly, they found IWB activities a great stimulus and high interest (statement 8, 10, and 30). Besides, they also perceived the IWB as a motivator to create friendly and interactive learning environment for the vocabulary class. Last but not least, the results revealed students’ enthusiastic welcome to learn vocabulary with IWB activities in the future (statement 31, 32). On the other hand, there were 6 statements whose means were lower than 4 (statement 6,9,18, 23,24,29), but these statements represent negative feelings about using IWB to learn vocabulary. Therefore, it can be inferred that students did not have negative attitudes towards IWB and their vocabulary lessons.

### Findings and Discussion

The results from Interactive White Board (IWB) study show that interactive IWB-based activities and games not only offer a unique opportunity for quick memory of English vocabulary but also enhance students’ motivation in English vocabulary acquisition. In other words, IWB has a positive impact on freshmen at Van Lang university in the process of learning new words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Dev</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21. I learn vocabulary because it is useful for communication.</td>
<td>4.314</td>
<td>.8321</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I learn vocabulary because I want to get a high score in a regular exam.</td>
<td>4.400</td>
<td>.7356</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I am unwilling to learn vocabulary, but it is a required subject.</td>
<td>1.371</td>
<td>.4902</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I do not know why I have to learn vocabulary.</td>
<td>1.457</td>
<td>.5054</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. The teacher shows us why we have to learn vocabulary.</td>
<td>4.314</td>
<td>.8321</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. The teacher shows us the required goal in every class.</td>
<td>4.314</td>
<td>.8321</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I have a feeling of achievement in every class.</td>
<td>4.486</td>
<td>.8179</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. The regular exams are good stimulus to study vocabulary.</td>
<td>4.342</td>
<td>.8725</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I would not learn vocabulary if there were no exams.</td>
<td>1.685</td>
<td>.4710</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. There are activities which provide a good stimulus to learn vocabulary in the class.</td>
<td>4.200</td>
<td>.9640</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. The style of the class should not be changed.</td>
<td>4.400</td>
<td>.7356</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. I would like more interesting activities to be introduced into the class.</td>
<td>4.400</td>
<td>.6039</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Through interview, vocabulary motivation scale and questionnaire, freshmen are found strongly motivated. They felt very happy and interested in the lessons and wanted to figure out more about the upcoming lesson if the IWB was used. They also prepared well for their next coming periods/classes. Therefore, from the students’ perspective, it is rather crucial to utilize IWB in language classroom.

The combination of data from the interview, the vocabulary motivational scale, and the questionnaire illustrates freshmen’s preferences of interactive activities created by ActivInspire software and implemented in class with the support of IWB. Similar to two previous softwares mentioned by Lin et al.(2014) (English Vocabulary Instructional System and the Five Modules of Review Activities of English Vocabulary) or by Bahadur & Oogarah (2013) (XERTE software), ActivInspire also proves its effectiveness on creating interactive activities and motivates students.

These findings reconfirm Kaufmann’s theory (2017) that vocabulary should be learnt in a real context and teacher’s role is to build up the context for learners by integrating real and useful activities. In this case, IWB with its interactive activities can meet this demand, or motivate students in vocabulary classes. Moreover, this result consolidates Norouzi, Mohammadi & Madani’s findings (2014) or Lewin et al.’s findings (2008), as cited in Manny et al. (2011) about using IWB to boost students’ motivation and participation. In addition, the IWB activities and its visual presentation really enhance and engage students in vocabulary learning, which exactly coincides with the results collected from Hur & Suh (2012).

Beside the factors leading to students’ motivation found in the previous studies in the Literature Review part, the statistics from the questionnaire and interview pointed out other factors leading to learners’ motivation like fun atmosphere, interesting pair work / groupwork, various activities, more chances to interact and exciting tasks. The discovery of other factors resulting in freshmen’s motivation contributes significantly to the pedagogical adjustment in the hope of boosting motivation, raising pedagogists’ awareness of what need concentrating on for student’s better motivation.

The findings also confirm the crucial role of IWB with ActivInspire in addressing the universal issues mentioned in Nguyen (2015): passive learning attitudes due to boring activities, underestimation of the significance of vocabulary acquisition, and the inadequacies of pedagogic approach. This study provides the empirical evidence of exciting interactive IWB activities that motivate learners. The uniqueness of the IWB formed by interaction among teacher, students, the IWB, and the lesson breaks the boring routine of the classroom. In addition, the crowded class size is solved by assigning effective group work. The complexity as well as novelty of the IWB arouses students’ curiosity or attention, which is similar to Morgan’s conclusion (2010).

On the other hand, there are some limitations of the study progress. The first one is about the technical issues. Students found it hard to use the IWB smoothly because of the lack of hi-tech skills. For example, when students could not move the objects on the IWB smoothly, they became irritated. Teachers sometimes had the trouble with IWB connection at the beginning of the lesson. Next comes the visual effect. If there are many IWB activities, students must pay attention to the screen most of the
time, which is eye-soring. Furthermore, classroom management was also a problem when using IWBs because of fixed desks and chairs. Crowded class led to too much noise and less space for students to join tasks comfortably. In addition, there was heavy workload teachers must deal with from lesson plan preparation for interaction so that IWB activities involved equal participation from the students. Last but not least, the IWB preparation and application are a time-consuming process in which the teachers have to spend his or her spare time to prepare for those tasks.

**Suggestions for the Better IWB Application into Teaching Vocabulary.**

Here are some suggestions to solve above problems. Firstly, to deal with the technical issues, teachers need to check everything carefully before coming to class as well as going to the classroom early to set up and test whether IWB works properly. Moreover, teachers should keep contact with a technician in the school just in case they cannot deal with the matters arising. In terms of visual effects, try to choose the pictures or text colors that are not too colorful or too bright to keep students’ eyes comfortable. To cope with classroom management, teachers should prepare carefully the activities that everyone can join groups and takes part in the activities. Group work and equal involvement will reduce students’ distraction and the noise of non-participating students. To save time for lesson planning, teachers should explore the diverse IWB activities resources that are available on the Internet and adapt to their own lessons. By this way, their burden of workload also decreased significantly.

**Limitation and Implication for the Future Research.**

In general, the generalization of this study still needs a caution because the sample is small, only 35 participants. Further data collection of bigger sample is required to determine exactly how IWB with ActivInspire affects motivation in learning vocabulary.

Together with the merits of IWB on primary and high school students’ motivation in various subject settings (Katwibun, 2014; Norouzi, Mohammadi & Madani, 2014; Manny et al., 2011; Lin, Hsiao, Tseng, & Chan, 2014; Glover, Miller, & Averis’s research, 2004; Bahadur & Oogarah, 2013; Edwards, Hartnell, & Martin, 2002; Hur & Suh, 2012), the evidence of positive influence of IWB with ActivInspire on freshmen’ motivation in Van Lang University, Vietnam illustrates a comprehensive picture of IWB’s educational benefits to both little children and teenagers in not only English language but in various subjects. However, the extent to which IWB affects the primary children’s motivation in comparison with the university students’ motivation need a further research in the future.

Thirdly, from the detail analysis of the factors affecting the motivation mentioned in the Literature Review as well as in the Results, it should be cautious to take these factors into a consideration to ensure the validity and reliability of the future research.
Finally, an unexpected finding is that the majority of students admitted that the IWB activities can facilitate them in acquiring new words. Hence, the effect of IWB with ActiveInspire on the speed/ the amount of vocabulary acquisition can be a topic that is worth further investigation.

**Recommendations for Designing Motivating Activities Using IWB.**

From this study, it is crucial to design innovative interactive IWB activities which match with students’ interest and involve their movement and boost their motivation. The most commonly used software with IWBs in Vietnam is ActivInspire. First, teachers can take advantage of various templates available in Activities section to create their own lesson quickly such as Matching, Sequencing, Crosswords, Word search. Besides, Flipchart section is for those who prefer creating their own unique lessons with helpful tools like magnifier with magic ink, hide and show, media (videos/pictures), or board games with dice. Furthermore, teachers can also take advantage of IWB activities from the Internet sources as follows:


Here are 9 interactive activities (designed with Flipchart of ActivInspire software) that can be applied or adapted to motivate students in learning vocabulary.

Activity 1: Revealing pictures to draw the attention from students.

*Figure 11. Revealing activity*
Activity 2: Divide students into two groups by letting students choose blue ball or red ball hidden under the meadow.

Figure 12. Group division activity

Activity 3: Matching task

Figure 13. Matching activity
Activity 4: Listen and color parts of picture according to what you heard.

*Figure 14.* Listen and color picture activities

Activity 5: Watch a short video clip and choose the job you hear. If your choice is wrong, the answer won’t be into the box.

*Figure 15.* Listening, drag and drop activity
Activity 6: Use the magnifier to look for the person whose job matches with the words on wooden panels.

![Figure 16](image)

*Figure 16. Find the pictures with magnifier activity*

Activity 7: Roll a dice and start the board game (click the star to throw a dice).

![Figure 17](image)

*Figure 17. Board game with dice on screen*
Activity 8: Jigsaw puzzle (match the piece of words with the piece of blanks and guess the final picture.)

Figure 18. Jigsaw puzzle activity

Activity 9: Car race activity (pick up the words hidden under two cats, drag and drop them into the right blanks to complete the sentences). One correct answer means the group’s car can move forward one step).

Figure 19. Car race activity

Conclusion

The evaluation of research results showed that (1) the innovating activities with Interactive White Board (IWB) technique was successful in motivating students in English vocabulary learning, (2) the process of IWB activities should be facilitated for students to perform with more fluency, confidence and ease. (3) The researcher and her colleagues should apply the IWB technique into teaching vocabulary as a long-term method due to its efficiency to help VLU students enhance their English vocabulary learning as well as their overall learning. Besides, the appropriate tasks, the inputs given, the preparation time, the feedback technique should be taken into consideration.
Besides those positive results there are some limitations that influence the results negatively: the technical issue, time limit, as well as visual effects, or classroom management. Hopefully, this research paper can spread the innovative and novice activities to teach vocabulary with IWB to other inspiring teachers or those who are interested in IWBs.

References


Exploring Student – Teachers’ Perceptions Towards Cultures in English Language Education

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Abstract

A language is a symbolic representation of cultures, and the language itself is shaped and mobilized by them. Thus, English learning is associated with its target cultures as well as learners’ host cultures. Given this complexity of cultural learning contexts, the researchers investigated perceptions of student-teachers of Faculty of Education, Phuket Rajabhat University towards cultural learning in English language education. 65 student-teachers from eleven majors responded a questionnaire, and six of them willingly participated in an interview. Written documents related to the English courses required in the curriculum for the student-teachers were also analyzed. Later, the quantitative and qualitative findings were critically analyzed and triangulated. The findings revealed that the student-teachers held positive perceptions towards learning cultures in English classes. They highlighted that such cultures could be English target cultures and Thai host cultures as the cultural differences would allow them to know appropriate social manners of different cultural contexts. In addition, they argued that the learning materials dealing with cultural matters in the university context are still insufficient even though the university is located in Phuket Province, where is regarded as the world’s famous tourist destination.

Keywords: Culture, Perception, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Student-Teacher, Cultural Awareness
Introduction

Cultures have been regarded as an emergent phenomenon in the learning processes which are oriented in the means of communication (Atkinson, 2004; Kramsch, 1993, 2013). To learn a foreign language efficiently, Moran (2001) mentioned that learners need to bring themselves into the cultural contexts to assimilate the ways in which a language is used in the same way as native speakers. This process is called a cultural experience of the target language which can help the learners develop their language learning better and faster comparing with memorizing vocabulary and rules (Omar, 2015; Ziegenfuss, Odhiambo& Keyes, 2014). In other words, cultural learning plays a direct role in learning a foreign language since having knowledge of foreign cultures can help students interpret the meaning of the cultural framework as well as to apply cultural knowledge to use in a daily life (Tzotzou and Kotsiou, 2015; Peterson &Coltrane, 2003; Farooq, Soomro& Umer, 2018).

Crossing the conceptual learning that target cultures are emphasized in the foreign language learning, several studies of Mackay (2000, 2002, and 2004) address the necessity of incorporating learners’ local cultures in the process of teaching English as an International Language (EIL). This is because, as McKay (2004) argued, within the process of English learning, learners are not only required to understand their interlocutors’ messages but also to express their own views, attitudes, and thoughts. She illustrated further that learning cultures in EIL classrooms can affect Asian learners’ development of linguistic competence which consists of semantic, pragmatic, and rhetoric patterns. The semantic relates to the learning of lexical items that need cultural backgrounds of native speakers to understand such as Big Tree, Super Bowl, or yellow journalism. The pragmatic refers to the teaching of speech acts like giving and asking information, and making and refusing invitation. Meanwhile, rhetoric patterns are likely to be direct or indirect expression of ideas which tend to mismatch with the preference styles of the target language. Given this deep effect of cultures towards language learners’ learning, considering similarities and differences of the target and local cultures of learners are essential as they determine the roles of teacher and learners as well as the achievement of classroom performances (Corttazzi & Jin, 2002).

Moreover, several scholars went thus far to highlight the significance of cultural learning in a foreign language education. For instance, Kramsch (1993) stated that the goal of cultural learning is beyond the learning of local, national, or global cultures. Rather, it is to enable learners to be culturally competent in communication as to respect and value the cultural diversity, participate and take a responsibility from communities to the global scales. Kramsch (2013) pointed further that cultures are ‘transgredience’ as learners learn not only to use the language correctly and appropriately but also to reflect their own experiences and perspectives of a third place. The third place in this sense means learners are able to see themselves both from the inside and the outside without being hostage with a
specific perspective and worldview (Kramsch, 2009). This intercultural competence will lead the language learners to have “the process of meaning making itself” (Kramsch, 2013, p. 68).

To achieve intercultural competence, learners need to constitute of five capacities, as proposed by Byram (1997) in his Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) theory. They are (1) critical cultural awareness, (2) knowledge of social group and identities construction, (3) skills of interpreting and relating, (4) skills of discovery and interaction, and (5) attitudes as a mediator. Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002) described further that knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to cultural appreciation of learners would be complemented by the values they held, and such values would represent their social identities. In other words, the ultimate goal of learning cultures in a foreign language education is to encourage learners to hold decentre attitudes and willingness to reexamine their own values, beliefs and behaviors (Byram et al. 2002).

**Cultural perceptions in English learning and teaching**

Several researchers stated that intercultural competence in English classes should be promoted throughout the learning of cultural diversity which might associate with target cultures of English, international cultures, as well as learners’ host cultures (i.e., Cortazzi& Jin, 2002; Borkhorst- Heng & McKay, 2008; Hinkel, 1999; McKay, 2002, 2004). Within English learning and teaching classes, positive perceptions will be a starting point for teachers and learners to be culturally competent speakers or mediators. Deardorff (2009) identified the requisite attitudes of intercultural competence which were consisted of respecting and valuing other cultures, openness to people of different cultural backgrounds, and curiosity and discovery to tolerate ambiguity and learn uncertainties. These kind of attitudes will develop the perceptions of personal learners into interactive levels resulting in internal desired outcomes of adaptability, ethnorelative views, and empathy in behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately.

The study of Jabeen, Zahid and Sattar (2013) illustrated the effects of learners’ perceptions of cultures to English learning achievement. This survey study revealed the contrasted perceptions of students living in two different Pakistani contexts. The students in urban communities held positive perceptions towards their target culture, whereas the students living in rural communities held some negativity. The cultural sensitivities that might cause the students in rural areas feel uncomfortable to learn the target cultures associated with homosexuality and funeral traditions. The researchers concluded that cultural perceptions of learners affected their target language learning success, and the learners with a positive attitude were likely to perform higher performances of English achievements.

The cultural perceptions in English classes do not affect only learners’ performances but also teachers’ decision- making process. Ding and Teo (2013) revealed that 211 Thai teachers of English in 55 Islamic private schools in five southern border provinces of Thailand positively perceived to include
cultural contents in their English classes. Focusing on the teachers’ cultural backgrounds, the teachers preferred to use their own cultural identities of Thai Malay cultural contents in their English classes comparing with target cultures, Thai cultures, and international cultures. The teachers also perceived that the dimension of cultural perspectives should be mostly focused, but the cultural product dimension should be the least.

Likely, Fungchomchoei and Kardkarnklai (2016) revealed that 61 Thai secondary school teachers were aware of the significance of teaching cultures in English classes. The findings which were collected from a questionnaire, structured interviews, and journal entries reported that the teachers agreed to provide their learners diverse cultural knowledge. However, they perceived that their cultural environment lacked of diversity, and it obstructed themselves and their students to learn cultural differences. The teachers consequently tried to apply various kinds of communication technology such as Facebook, Instagram, and television programs to enable their learners to expose various cultural experiences. Regarding the teachers’ training issues, the teachers reflected that they were unsatisfied and teacher professional development did not provide them enough of contents, knowledge, teaching techniques and strategies, and activities implementation dealing with intercultural competence. Yeganeh and Raeesi (2015) similarly found that learning cultures in English classes in Pakistani contexts were underestimated. In this study, 291 questionnaires were administered to EFL teachers at the secondary school level. The findings revealed that even though the teachers realized of the teaching cultural differences between target cultures and learners’ host cultures, there was still a gap between the teachers’ perceptions and their instructional practices in dealing with cultures.

Given the significance of cultural perceptions of learners and teachers towards English learning achievement and intercultural competence, this study aims at examining perceptions of the student-teachers of Phuket Rajabhat University. In the study, the student-teachers are focused since they are expected to work in primary and secondary education levels where the global citizenship and intercultural competence are required as identified in Basic Core Curriculum (2008). This research question helps frame the study: What are student-teachers’ perceptions towards learning culture in English language education?

The participants

The overall participants of the study were 65 student-teachers studying in faculty of Education, PKRU. The participants were consisted of nineteen English major students, seven Thai major students, nine Social Studies major students, three Physical Education major students, ten Music major students, seven Mathematic major students, one Science major student, two Chemistry major students, four Computer major students, and three Early Childhood Education major students. The participants were in year three and were purposively selected since they exposed some learning experiences of English
classes at least three English courses required in the curriculum: English for Communication, English for Presentation, and English for Teachers.

**Data collection**

At the beginning, an online questionnaire were administered to all eleven groups of student majors following the purposive selection. In total there were sixty-five student-teachers responded the questionnaire. Moreover, the participants were asked their willingness to participate in the interviews. Six students from three different majors (one Thai majored student, one Computer majored student, and four English majored students) were willing to participate in the interview. In addition, the written documents related to the required English courses were collected. These three resources of the research findings were later triangulated to seek its validation and reliability.

**The research instruments**

To study the perceptions of student-teachers towards cultures in English language education, three instruments were used in collecting data including a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview, and written documents.

1. **Questionnaire**

In this study, the questionnaire of Rostami (2016) was borrowed. The reliability index of the questionnaire was determined at 0.77 through the utilizing Cronbach’s Alpha procedure. The questionnaire was translated into Thai to collect the perceptions of student-teachers toward learning culture in English language education. The questionnaire is divided into three parts: (1) general information, (2) 20-question dealing with learning cultures in English language education, and (3) additional contact information in case the participants were willing to participate in the interviews.

2. **Interview**

To collect additional information, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews which dealt with four issues: the students’ perspectives of language and culture relationships, cultural learning exposures, cultural learning resources, and accessibility. The interview questions were open-ended which sought information on the student-teachers’ perceptions regarding learning cultures in English language education. In total, there were six student-teachers from three different majors (one Thai major student, one Computer major student, and four English major students) who were willing to participate in the interviews. Each session of the interview lasted about fifteen minutes.
3. Written Document

The written documents were useful and objective sources of data as some data contained in the documents might not be found in other sources (Merriam, 2009). In this study, documents relevant to the student-teachers’ English learning practices were used such as English course descriptions of English for Communication, English for Presentation, and English for Teachers, the scope of the contents, teaching methodology and strategies used in the courses, the textbooks and handout implication, learning resources, as well as the learning assessment. These documents helped validate the findings of the study and displayed some actual learning practices of English language education.

Data analysis

The quantitative data obtained from 65 questionnaires were analyzed with descriptive statistics which were $\bar{X}$ and S.D. The levels of the student-teachers’ agreement towards the statements in the questionnaires were defined based on five Likert-Scale (Nemoto & Beglar, 2014) as shown in the Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Level of agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.21-5.00</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.41-4.20</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.61-3.40</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.81-2.60</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00-1.80</td>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the qualitative data, the content analysis was used to codify and categorize the contents generated from the semi-structured interviews and written documents. Then, the groups of the findings from three different resources of questionnaire, interview, and written documents were triangulated by comparing and contrasting to categorize again. Pseudonyms were used to substitute the name of all participants. Three themes of findings were generated which were (1) the student-teachers’ perceptions in cultural learning, (2) the cultural awareness between host cultures and target cultural differences, and (3) the opportunities and recommendations in learning and teaching cultures.

Findings

As the findings of the study were obtained from three different resources, the findings were compared and contrasted and generated into three themes as followed:
(1) The student-teachers’ perceptions in cultural learning

Regarding the student-teachers’ perceptions in cultural learning, the participants perceived learning cultures in English language education in a positive way as the average mean of the total questionnaire responses were at 3.77 (S.D. 0.85). In addition, when considering the perceptions of the participants towards the inseparable relationship between language and culture, as reflected in the nine of twenty statements in the questionnaire shown in the Table 2, the participants rated in overall in an agree level with \( \bar{X} = 3.92 \) (S.D. 0.82). Particularly, two statements: #1 *There is close relation between language and culture* and #4 *I see social manners of culture of great importance*, were rated in a strongly agree level. Whereas, the other six statement items #7, #5, #6, #2, #14, #3, #9 were rated in an agree level, and only one item of #9 statement was rated in a neutral level.

Table 2: The student-teachers’ perceptions in cultural aspect learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Level of agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>There is close relation between language and culture.</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>I see social manners of culture of great importance.</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>We should get familiar with all aspects of target culture.</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>Learning some aspects of culture is challenging.</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>I see cultural component as an inseparable part of language teaching program.</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>I spend long time studying about customs of target culture.</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#14</td>
<td>I encourage my classmates to explore target culture outside of the classroom.</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>My classmates are eager to receive cultural instruction.</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>My classmates find culture teaching very boring and irrelevant.</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>neutral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly to the quantitative findings, the analysis of the interviews revealed that the student-teachers were really aware that a language and its cultures are inseparable. In other words, they perceived that knowing the target cultures of English would help them communicate more effectively. For instance, Malee mentioned that knowing cultures could benefit her in making a relationship with others. She said:

“You have to get to know her/his culture first so that you will be able to speak [the target language] properly and have a smooth relationship.”

Likely, Elizabeth and Daniel highlighted the cultural perspective in learning English. In Elizabeth’s own words,

“I think without culture, language didn’t rise.”
Daniel also stated that

“I learn Thai cultures because they reflect our life. And, I have to learn the target culture (English) to understand and accept the cultural differences of each society. This brings me to communicate properly and reduce cultural conflicts.”

The findings obtained from the analysis of the written documents were not or less the same. It found that two of the three English courses, English for Presentation and English for Teachers, some parts included cultural matters in the scope of the courses as identified in the course descriptions;

English for Presentation: development of English skills for communication with foreigners in local contexts, presentation of basic information of Thailand, communities, development of personalities in communication and presentation, responding questions of foreigners

English for Teachers: usage of English for communication, listening, speaking reading, and writing skills, vocabulary, reading English passages, news, documents, course book, asking questions, demonstration of English conversation, English for teacher professional development, study of native speaker’s backgrounds and cultures, and cultures of living together in peace.

(2) The cultural awareness between host cultures and target cultural differences

The average mean of the perceptions towards the cultural awareness was rated in an agree level at 3.72 (S.D. 0.85). As the findings of the statement #13, #15, #17, and #19 shown in the table 3, they reflected that the majority of the student-teachers were aware of their own interests and goals of learning cultures. They could critically analyze the target cultural sensitivities in their Thai cultures, as well as they pursue to learn more about the target cultures.

Table 3: The cultural awareness between host cultures and target cultural differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>( \bar{X} )</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Level of agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#17</td>
<td>I know my own cultural interests and goals.</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#19</td>
<td>I know there are some sensitivities to target culture in our cultures.</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#13</td>
<td>We give feedbacks on our awareness of target culture</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#15</td>
<td>I keep myself updated new developments of target culture.</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualitative findings obtained from the interviews went along with the level of perceptions towards the cultural awareness of the participants. The student-teachers illustrated their awareness of cultural differences between Thai and target cultures of English in several issues. The cultural issues were both seen and unseen cultural aspects such as greeting norms, eating manners, social power distance, and gender roles existed in different societies. Suchart stated his views regarding the greeting norms in this way,
“English native speakers usually greet by hugging or shaking hands, but Thais greet by saying Sa-wat-dee and do Wai. We do not touch, so I think the culture of English speakers is sensitive to Thai society.”

Suchart elaborated more about the causes of sensitivity to hug each other in Thai society that Thai people usually have high power distance especially people who have far different social status and different genders. Likely, Malee argued that she tended to do Wai to elderly as it was a sign of respect. In her own words,

“In Thai society, we have to respect the elderly, but I think this is different from British society as there people are treated equal.”

Likely, as the analysis of English for Presentation course syllabus revealed, task-based approaches were employed throughout the course design. The students were required to create a video production introducing attractive places especially in Andaman coastal regions of Thailand, history, ways of living, cultural fests, and traveling suggestions for foreigners. Within these processes of studying their own cultures, the learners were naturally encouraged to examine the cultural gaps, cultural misunderstandings, and create traveling guideline for foreigners. Meanwhile, in English for Teachers course, the cultural learning is likely involved in the text reading such as in the topics of Fashion Statements, the Vote, and Local Hero. Moreover, throughout the analysis of text reading in the course book, intercultural communicative competence were promoted under the topics of Bullying, A Good Job, and Positive Psychology.

(3) The opportunities and recommendations in learning and teaching cultures

The student-teachers were likely to agree that studying in Phuket Rajabhat University, where its location is regarded as one of the world famous traveling destination, created opportunities in learning various cultures. As the average means of the statement #8, #11, #16, #20, #18, #12, and #10 were shown in the table 4, the student-teachers rated the perceptions towards the opportunities of learning culture in an agree level at $\bar{X}=3.60$ (S.D. 0.92).

Table 4: The opportunities and recommendations in learning and teaching cultures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>$X$</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Level of agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>The Institute where I learn English is supportive regarding inclusion of target culture in the class.</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#11</td>
<td>When I struggle in learning cultural aspects in class, I receive help from my teacher and classmates.</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#16</td>
<td>My teacher and classmates are a source of encouragement for me.</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#20</td>
<td>My Institutes managers provide us with the cultural resources.</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#18</td>
<td>I can share my problems and concerns with culture teaching with my institute managers.</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even though the quantitative findings reported that the participants rated in agree level towards their learning opportunities in learning culture, the qualitative results revealed some contradictions. There are two groups of perceptions towards learning culture opportunity. The first group of perceptions was retrieved from two students of Thai and Computer majors. They stated that they did not use English materials for improving their cultural knowledge except when teachers assigned tasks. As Supot stated, “I will study and pay attention to culture only if I have to make a report to submit to the teacher”.

Contrastingly, students of English major perceived that they are not hesitated to learn cultures when they have opportunities to learn. They mentioned that they like to watch video logs and YouTube channels presented in both Thai and English versions, and most of the times they learn when they are out of classrooms.

More importantly, the student- teachers raised problems happened in the university as lacking of accessibility and opportunity in learning target cultures of English. Rosie, one of English majored student, shared her problem in this way,

“Although I am an English student, I have hardly studied with English native teachers. Unluckily, other major students faced the problems too.”

Similarly, Sofia reflected her opinion about the ways that the university tried to solve the problems of students’ English proficiency. In Sofia’s own words,

“Even though the university provided English Discovery program, I couldn’t find that it is interesting enough. It is better if the university provide high- speed internet or lend some users of entertaining applications or channels so that the students could access the learning resources based on their own interests.”

Discussion

Regarding the student- teachers’ perceptions in cultural learning, the researchers could sum up that the participants held positive attitudes towards learning cultures which reflected the perceptive foundation of intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2009). The participants were aware of the interwoven relationships between cultures and English learning, open- minded, and interested in learning other cultural differences. These positive perceptions and values, as Byram (2009) argued, were grounded in developing the learners’ characteristics of global citizenship. He described further that to cultivate global citizenship and intercultural competence the teachers in different subjects should interactively collaborated, and a language teacher should be the main agent of the collaboration. The
Instructional practices might be designed to encourage the learners to compare their own country with cultures of other countries as well as to have learners involve in activities in and out of the schools.

As the participants of the study are the student-teachers who are expected to be primary or secondary education teachers in the future, their positive perceptions were not only a good signal in building their intercultural competence and global citizenship but also their self-perceived instructional practices. Likely, Estaji and Rahimi (2018) revealed that cultural awareness of the teacher participants represented their beliefs and consequently affect the skills of teaching monitoring and strategic choices in instructional practices. Within Estaji and Rahimi’s study (2018), 111 EFL teachers were purposively selected, and 12 teachers were interviewed.

Even though the student-teachers of the study held positive perceptions towards learning cultures, the researchers of the study could not firmly conclude that the participants held the right understanding of intercultural competence since the findings revealed only the participants’ awareness of the cultural differences and advantages in their communication. Whereas, intercultural competence required much more constituents of knowledge and skills dealing with cultures such as critical cultural awareness, knowledge of social group and identities construction, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and attitudes as a mediator (Byram, 1997). Moreover, regarding the association of the intercultural competence with linguistic competence (McKay, 2004), there were not enough evidences pointed out that the participants fully understand it. Rather, the participants only realized the significance of intercultural competence in communicative levels.

Another example illustrating the student-teachers’ misconceptions of intercultural competence was they believed that native English speakers are the main resources of cultural learning. Whereas, building intercultural communicative competence were the process of making meaning, and such competence will be applied in any contexts of local and international cultural environments. As Byram et al. (2002) underlined, intercultural competence is “not the transmission of information about a foreign country” (p. 14) rather it emphasizes on helping learners to understand how intercultural communication takes place in their life, seek their own cultural identities, and how they learn more to reflect their own identities. Hence, the needs of the university to facilitate the learners’ learning of cultures are not only the native speakers of English but the culturally competent teachers who are able to systematically design cultural experiences in English language education. Byram et al. (2002) highlighted this issue in this way, “What is more important than native speaker knowledge is an ability to analyse and specific training in systemic cultural analysis is an important aid in becoming a foreign language teacher, regardless of the teacher’s mother-tongue.” (p.18).

Apart from the positive perceptions and cultural awareness of the participants, the opportunities and recommendations in learning and teaching cultures proposed by the student-teachers were far significant. The student-teachers argued that even though the university is located in cultural diversity
contexts, the university is likely to provide insufficient cultural learning environments. This problem was also stated in a number of English teachers’ teaching records that the university provision of the learning equipment and budgets for outdoor activities should be promoted. Under these circumstances, on the one hand to enhance cultural learning environments, the infrastructure action plans of the university should emphasize on the process of internationalization (Deardorff, 2016). The university might create cultural learning of aesthetic and sociological dimensions by providing various kinds of media, cinema, and literature, as well as to promote international interpersonal relations, various leisure activities and customs within the institutions. Such cultural environment will eventually shape the movement of learners’ interactions, thought process, social skills, and interpersonal relations to conform to the new environment of the learning contexts (Adaskou, Britten & Fahsi, 1990).

On the other hand, the cultural learning practices in classrooms is still crucial. English teachers who are culturally competent in designing cultural learning exposures should be regarded as teaching qualification requirement. Furthermore, to promote learners’ intercultural competence, the authentic cultural diversity of local cultures of Phuket Province should not be marginalized such as the dominant cultural groups of Russian and Chinese business groups, Indigenous Morgan people, Myanmar labors, and other European or Asian people who have been living in Phuket for decades. This cultural knowledge of minority people should be involved in the process of English learning so that Thai learners will understand the authentic complexities of Thai cultural society not only through the lenses of tourism but sociocultural as well as to promote a tolerance towards other cultural differences (Yuso, 2018).

Conclusion

This study aims to investigate the student-teachers’ perceptions towards learning cultures in English language education. Given this, a questionnaire of learning culture in English language education was administered to 65 student-teacher learners’ perceptions as well as semi-structured interviews were elaborated with six student-teachers who were willing to participated. The analysis of student-teachers’ responses to the questionnaire revealed their positive perceptions towards learning culture in English language education. Moreover, the responses from interview questions and written documents were analyzed and triangulated.

In overall participants’ responses indicated that learning culture is a part of their learning of English. The student-teachers perceived that cultures cannot distinguish from language learning and learning culture attracted them to learn English more effectively even though they found the limitation of their learning target cultures in their daily lives.

Regarding the triangulated findings on the perceptions of learning cultures in English language education, the student-teachers interestingly reflected their voices to educators and administrators of the university. They argued that the university contexts did not provide enough opportunities for
learners to learn cultures in their everyday life even though the university is located in the world-famous tourist destination. They asserted that they were interested in learning both Thai cultures and target cultures and persisted that cultural awareness is important in learning a foreign language. The student-teachers realize of power distance in Thai society resulting in different traditions, ways of living, and thinking concepts.

Limitation of the study

This research was conducted to investigate only sixty-five student-teachers’ perceptions throughout the questionnaire and six student-teachers’ interviews. To increase the numbers of participants of each major must provide more sufficient findings and rounded dimensions. In addition, the perceptions of the student-teachers towards understanding of intercultural competence should be investigated in deeper levels.

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University Press.
Increasing Awareness of Marginalized Communities with Unstructured Writing Tasks and TEDx Talks

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Abstract

This paper discusses an exploratory research project which assesses whether the use of TEDx Talks and fluency writing exercises could increase STEM students’ awareness of diversity and marginalized communities, in particular, the LGBTQ community, women, and Japan’s multiracial population. CBI methods and unstructured writing tasks were used within an EFL context to achieve results described herein. First, a discussion of the background and purpose of this study are presented, followed by a literature review. The methodology describes how two writing classes at a Japanese university responded to pre/post surveys before and after watching three TEDx Talks and completing unstructured writing tasks. Results indicated that students felt the activities helped them develop awareness of and sympathy for said marginalized communities. The paper concludes with a discussion of pedagogical implications for educators with an eye for conducting similar projects.

Keywords: Unstructured writing, Content-Based Instruction, Marginalized Communities, TEDx Talks

Introduction & literature review

The aim of this project, which builds on Perez’s (2018) pilot study, was to provide Japanese university STEM students with an opportunity to consider historically marginalized communities via TEDx Talks and unstructured writing, and thereafter analyze pre and post student responses. The researchers wanted to test whether the use of TEDx Talks and fluency writing exercises—whilst simultaneously being pedagogically meaningful—could increase STEM students’ awareness of diversity and marginalized communities, namely, the LGBTQ community, women, and Japan’s multiracial population. In making their case, the presenters first discuss the societal need for such projects followed by research as it pertains to CBI (Content Based Instruction), as well as fluency and unstructured writing.
Before continuing, it should be noted that while the breadth of this investigation does indeed include both a discussion of pre and post survey responses as well as an in depth analysis of students’ written responses to the content material, the scope of this paper allows the researchers to aptly present on only one aspect of the study: pre and post surveys. Indeed, a future publication will be necessary to present on the latter point of inquiry.

To begin, the need for exposure to diversity in STEM classes can be highlighted by the lack of female representation in STEM related fields. While STEM is not traditionally known for its diversity in terms of gender demographics worldwide, there are few developed countries where this is as demonstrably evident as in Japan. While not referring to STEM alone, the Global Gender Gap Report 2020 ranked Japan 121 of 153 surveyed nations (GGGR, 2020). In terms of STEM specifically, Inuzuka (2014) shares that in 2013, women comprised only 14.4% of researchers in Japan. She also calls attention to low numbers of female university faculty, where women with full professorships in STEM make-up the lowest figures: sciences overall at 4% and engineering at 3.1% (Inuzuka, 2014). Highlighting the same issue, Geuna and Shibayama (2015) mention that women make up only 25% of PhD students and 31% of Bachelor students within STEM. Similarly, the 2019-2020 school-year statistics on gender within the study site’s STEM department are also reflective of these numbers: females made-up 27.6% of the undergraduates and 24.14% of the postgraduates. And, depending on the major, these numbers decreased significantly: for example, women in nanotechnology made-up 7.8% of undergraduates and 0% of postgraduates. Clearly, all these figures point to the necessity of education on matters of diversity.

As mentioned, the three marginalized communities highlighted in this project are women, the LGBTQ community, and Japan’s multiracial population. As for the former, the aforementioned statistics demonstrate obvious purpose for their inclusion in this study. In terms of the LGBTQ community, the university where this study was completed has in recent years conducted events to raise sexual-minority awareness. In contribution to these efforts, the researchers included this group in their investigation. Finally, they added a community particular to Japan itself: the Japanese multiracial community, which makes-up a small but ever-increasing presence in the country. With these communities in mind, the researchers designed their project.

Next, CBI played an important role in motivating these activities and research. CBI posits that language learned through instruction on and engagement with a particular topic or theme is perhaps a more stimulating and effective method than employing traditional means of language study. This teaching approach was founded on Krashen’s (1981) theory of “comprehensible input”—where the meaning of input outweighs the importance of its syntactic form. It later fostered work by Swain (1985) and others who highlighted the significance of “comprehensible output”—which emphasizes the indispensability of instruction on form in addition to comprehensible input. Since its inception, CBI has taken on many forms and branched out in numerous directions. Of relevance here, Richards & Rogers’ (2001) straightforward description is helpful: CBI is “an approach to second language teaching in which
teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus” (p.204). Further, Heo (2006) highlights that in utilizing CBI, students can, in a communicative and academic fashion, work with materials that are contextualized, linguistically demanding, and authentic.

As mentioned, CBI consists of numerous approaches; this study, however, utilizes English for Academic Purposes. Stoller & Grabe (1997) say this approach may adhere to any one of three models: theme-based, sheltered, or adjunct instruction. While the latter two are often packaged in predetermined forms of instruction, theme-based instruction is a type of CBI that can be decided upon by the language teacher or the students themselves. Stoller & Grabe (1997) argue that in a solid theme-based CBI course, the topics should be “tied together by the assumption of a coherent overall theme” (p.4) and should “be appropriate to student needs and interests, institutional expectations, program resources, and teacher abilities and interests” (p.5). As such, they lay out what they call a “Six-T’s” criteria for a robust theme-based model, the components of which are as follows: “Themes, Texts, Topics, Threads, Tasks, and Transitions” (p.4). Aside from ‘Themes’ described above, they mention ‘texts’ as “content resources (written and aural) which drive the basic planning of theme units”; ‘topics’ as “the subunits of content which explore more specific aspects of the theme”; ‘threads’ as “linkages across themes which create greater curricular coherence”; ‘tasks’ as “the basic unit of instruction through which the Six-T’s Approach is realized day-to-day”; and ‘transitions’ as “actions which provide coherence across topics” (p.5-7).

As the list below demonstrates, the researchers of this study utilized all but one of the ‘Six-T’s’ in their study design:

1. **Themes**: Considering historically marginalized communities
2. **Texts**: TEDx Talks (see below and Methodology)
3. **Topics**: Japan’s multiracial community, LGBTQ community, and women
4. **Threads**: not utilized; the researchers employed only one theme, it was therefore unnecessary to prepare coherence between themes.
5. **Tasks**: unstructured fluency writing tasks (see below and Methodology)
6. **Transitions**: pre and post surveys (see Methodology)

As for the source of the content material itself—the ‘texts’—the researchers decided on TEDx. TEDx is an independently organized program provided with free-license to conduct grass-root events produced with the same modus operandi as TED itself. Together, they offer an online library consisting of thousands of lectures on educational topics free for educators to use. Numerous studies report the benefits of using TED related activities in the EFL classroom (Abdulrahman, 2018; Broadaway, 2012; Harb, 2018; Hernández, Cuevas, & Valencia, 2018). The most beneficial aspect of TED and TEDx, particularly for EFL instructors and students, is their element of language support, with subtitles for the majority of speeches available in many languages. Indeed, Broadaway (2012) tells us that the two
features which make TED Talks an extremely effective tool for language teaching are its transcripts and subtitles. It is these tools which allow students to understand content so they can participate in worthwhile activities.

Finally, in addition to ‘texts’, ‘tasks’ are also of importance in a CBI context. In this study, students were tasked with fluency writing assignments. Herder & Clements (2012) share that writing courses which prioritize fluency, as opposed to those which place too much emphasis on accuracy, are supported by the whole language theories of learning which maintain that learning transpires from whole to part. They argue that by prioritizing fluency “language skills are learned not in isolation, but in a rich and interactive context that involves learners in meaningful activities directly relevant to their personal and educational needs” (Herder & Clement, 2012, p.233). Hirose (2001) makes a case for fluency writing, arguing that Japanese students are already acquainted with the type of unstructured writing that takes place with such tasks in their native language. Clearly put, due to their L1 experience, Japanese university students come to the table during fluency tasks already knowing that grammar and structure are not paramount which makes them an effective method for L2 writing acclimation. Moreover, Dupenthaler’s (2002) study on written feedback demonstrates that the type of fluency-writing students do in journals is contextual and purposeful and enhances student motivation to write as well as fluency itself. Though Hirose (2001), Dupenthaler (2002), and Herder & Clement’s (2012) studies refer to the journal writing typical of a diary, the type of writing tasks that students in this project performed mirrored this type of writing—one that is unstructured, where students need not concern themselves with syntactic or lexical complexities. While not discussed here, a future publication will demonstrate how students’ responses took a diary-like approach in the form of personal anecdotal narratives.

The present study utilized the background and body of research thus presented to demonstrate a rationale for moving forward with the following methodology. A clear description of the site, the participants in the study, the materials used, and the procedures followed will assist in understanding the results and subsequent discussion and conclusions.

**Methodology**

This study was conducted with two classes of second-year students taking an EFL academic writing course within the faculty of science and technology at a Japanese university. The study was carried out in language-labs equipped with a laptop and listening device for each student. Aside from varying gender gaps and class-size, the only distinguishing factor between each group was course major: one class majoring in mathematical science, and the other in biomedical science. In total, 49 students (N = 49) participated in the study. The academic writing course that both groups took was identical in terms of material and content taught and met once per week.
The entire project took seven weeks to complete divided into three identical two-week sessions and one week for student reflections (to be discussed in a future publication). During the first week of each session students first answered a two-question pre-survey, using Google Forms, in which both their self-determined knowledge of and sympathy for a marginalized community was recorded utilizing a 6-point Likert scale (see Tables 1, 2, and 4). Here it should be mentioned that all survey questions and writing prompts were introduced in both English and Japanese. They were then provided a link to watch a short TEDx lecture on their laptops (see three lectures below):

1. *Explorations into being hafu* (Japan’s multiracial community) by Nishikura Megumi.
2. *Embracing different* (the LGBTQ community in Japan and abroad) by Patrick Linehan.
3. *Fighting for new laws to protect women in Japan* (women in the Japanese workplace and entertainment industry) by Yoshimatsu Ikumi

These talks were chosen for two reasons in particular. Firstly, it was felt they aptly and succinctly convey the content material the researchers sought to present their students. Secondly, all three talks were delivered in Kyoto, a city within regional proximity of the research site. The researchers felt that if students could place the speakers’ experiences in Japan, and, indeed, within an area close to home, they might find it easier to understand and perhaps even better sympathize with their stories.

Each TEDx talk was accompanied by either Japanese subtitles or a translated transcript. After watching the selected TEDx talk clips, students were provided with a writing prompt which asked them to explore their opinions of and share their knowledge about the experiences discussed in the TEDx Talks. The writing prompts were as follows:

1. Nishikura Megumi says that multiracial people in Japan face a lot of discrimination. Do you think her depiction of the struggles multiracial people face in Japan is accurate or exaggerated? Why?
2. Patrick Linehan briefly describes the discrimination he experienced throughout his life for being gay. Think about LGBTQ people in Japan. What kinds of discrimination do they experience? What do you think their situation will be like in 20 years from now?
3. In this TEDx Talk, Yoshimatsu Ikumi discusses various forms of harassment that women face in Japan. She explains that this is not uncommon for women all over Japan. Do you think harassment of women is likely to decrease in the near future? Why -OR- why not?

Students were instructed to use any structure or writing-style they felt appropriate to respond to the questions and that grammar and sentence structure should not be a cause for preoccupation during the writing process. After receiving a worksheet with the prompt, students were allotted five minutes to plan their response in either English or Japanese, then another 15 minutes to type their responses in English using Google Docs, in class. Students were then told to complete their responses for homework. They were given a limit of 200-250 words and instructed that while they were free to check for spelling errors or look-up difficult words, they need not be overly concerned with doing so. The only instruction in terms of writing that they were given was to apply Times New Roman script, font size 12, and left
justification. It should be noted that the class instructor created and controlled all of the individual Google Docs that the students used, with the instructor adding the new writing prompt to all documents just before each new task.

Week one of each unit utilized 30-35 minutes of class time. Upon return to class in the second week, students were to have completed the writing assignment. During the second class, five to ten minutes of class time was spent where students completed a two-question post-survey. Using a 6-point Likert scale, this survey gauged students’ self-determined change in knowledge of and sympathy for the marginalized community in question after completing the tasks (See Tables 1, 2, and 4).

Results and discussion

For all surveys the frequency of responses and descriptive statistics were analyzed using SPSS 25. As previously noted, both classes within this study were part of different faculties: Mathematical Science (MS) and Biomedical Science (BMS). The BMS class also had a greater gender balance in class (F=15, M=10) than the MS one (F=4, M=20). Therefore, exploratory independent T-tests were conducted to see if significant differences occurred between the two.

It should be noted that as the surveys were conducted over seven weeks, respondent numbers varied weekly. There were various reasons for this—absences, tardiness, willingness to respond, and/or communicate technical issues. Therefore, it is impossible to definitively measure any change that occurred between the pre and post surveys. In the future, more robust data collection allowing for the assessment of only full datasets may be required to carry out such comparisons. However, in this case participant post-survey responses allow us to analyze students’ self-reported changes in awareness and sympathy due to the treatments.

Finally, though results below are displayed in English all information was given to participants in English and Japanese during the study.

Activity 1

Table 1: Activity 1 survey results (Nishikura TEDx Talk)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>6 strongly agree</th>
<th>5 agree</th>
<th>4 somewhat agree</th>
<th>3 somewhat disagree</th>
<th>2 disagree</th>
<th>1 strongly disagree</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRE-SURVEY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 1. I am very aware of the problems Japanese multiracial people experience.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (4.9%)</td>
<td>12 (29.3%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>14 (34.1%)</td>
<td>4 (9.8%)</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>1.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 2. I feel sympathy for the struggles Japanese multiracial people experience.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (4.9%)</td>
<td>21 (51.2%)</td>
<td>9 (22%)</td>
<td>8 (19.5%)</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>.942</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statement 1. *After I watched Nishikura Megumi’s speech and completed the writing task, I became better aware of the problems Japanese multiracial people experience.*

| N=47 | 5 (10.6%) | 18 (38.3%) | 17 (36.2%) | 3 (6.4%) | 4 (8.5%) | 0 | 4.36 | 1.051 |

Statement 2. *After I watched Nishikura Megumi’s speech and completed the writing task, I came to feel more sympathy for the struggles Japanese multiracial people experience.*

| N=47 | 2 (4.3%) | 22 (46.8%) | 13 (27.7%) | 7 (14.9%) | 1 (2.1%) | 2 (4.3%) | 4.23 | 1.108 |

Participants (N=41) reported a fairly low awareness of the problems that Japanese multiracial people face (see Table 1), with disagree the most frequently selected response (34.1%) for statement one. However, somewhat agree was the next most frequently chosen statement (29.3%). This, perhaps, indicates some difference in opinion between the participants. Statement two on the pre-survey (see Table 1) again resulted in relatively low disagreement for sympathy towards problems faced by the Japanese multiracial community. The standard deviation however, displayed greater unity in responses, with over half of the respondents (51.2%) selecting they somewhat agree with statement two.

Respondents (N=47) to the post-survey mostly agreed that their awareness and sympathy for multiracial Japanese people increased after completing the TEDx Talk and writing task (see Table 1). In particular, the standard deviation indicates there was more uniformity in responses to statement one about increased awareness, with the vast majority selecting somewhat agree (36.2%) or agree (38.3%) on the Likert scale. There was slightly less uniformity in the responses to statement two. However, almost half (46.8%) of the participants selected agree as their response.

Independent T-tests were run on the pre and post surveys to see if there were any significant differences between the two classes. However, in all cases, no significant differences (p>.05) were found.

**Activity 2**

**Table 2: Activity 2 survey results (Linehan TEDx Talk)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>6 strongly agree</th>
<th>5 agree</th>
<th>4 somewhat agree</th>
<th>3 somewhat disagree</th>
<th>2 disagree</th>
<th>1 strongly disagree</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRE-SURVEY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 1. <em>I am very aware of the problems LGBTQ people experience.</em></td>
<td>2 (4.4%)</td>
<td>6 (13.3%)</td>
<td>16 (35.6%)</td>
<td>9 (20%)</td>
<td>7 (15.6%)</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 2. <em>I feel sympathy for LGBTQ people who experience discrimination.</em></td>
<td>4 (8.9%)</td>
<td>11 (24.4%)</td>
<td>18 (40%)</td>
<td>3 (6.7%)</td>
<td>4 (8.9%)</td>
<td>5 (11.1%)</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
POST-SURVEY

Statement 1. After I watched Patrick Linehan’s speech and completed the writing task, I became better aware of the problems LGBTQ people experience.

N=47  
11 (23.4%)  
11 (23.4%)  
19 (40.4%)  
1 (2.1%)  
3 (6.4%)  
2 (4.3%)  
4.43  
1.298

Statement 2. After I watched Patrick Linehan’s speech and completed the writing task, I came to feel more sympathy for LGBTQ people who experience discrimination.

N=47  
8 (17%)  
22 (46.8%)  
12 (25.5%)  
3 (6.4%)  
0  
2 (4.3%)  
4.62  
1.114

Responses (N=45) to the pre-survey found that most students had some level of awareness and sympathy for the LGBTQ community (see Table 2). However, the standard deviations indicate less uniformity in agreement amongst the respondents. It should be noted though that when looking at response frequency, somewhat agree was the most frequently selected option in both cases (35.6% & 40%).

Post-surveys (N=47) indicated that students agreed that the TEDx Talk and writing task had increased their awareness and sympathy towards LGBTQ communities and the struggles they face (see Table 2). 40.4% of respondents selected somewhat agree for statement one, making it the most frequently selected. However, it should be noted that both agree and strongly agree received 23.4% of the responses each, totaling 46.8%. Therefore, a clear majority indicated that they thought the activity had helped increase their awareness of LGBTQ issues. This is replicated with statement two. In this case, however, agree was the most frequently chosen response (46.8%), indicating that students felt the activity increased their sympathy towards the LGBTQ community.

Table 3: Significant independent T-test findings (activity 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-survey</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am very aware of the problems LGBTQ people experience.</td>
<td>22*</td>
<td>3.86*</td>
<td>.990*</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>p&lt;.05 (.015)</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23**</td>
<td>2.91**</td>
<td>1.474**</td>
<td>1.385</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-survey</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After I watched Patrick Linehan’s speech and completed the writing task, I came to feel more sympathy for LGBTQ people who experience discrimination.</td>
<td>25*</td>
<td>4.96*</td>
<td>.676*</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>p&lt;.05 (.031)</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22**</td>
<td>4.23**</td>
<td>1.378**</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*= Biomedical Science, **=Mathematical Science

Activity two independent T-tests found two significant differences between the classes (see Table 3). The first significant difference was between the reported awareness of the problems faced by
the LGBTQ community in the pre-surveys (t_{(38.6)}=2.549, p<.05, d=.76). The BMS class was found to have greater reported awareness and uniformity in their responses. In the post-survey the BMS students also reported increased sympathy (t_{(29.669)}=2.266, p<.05, d=.67), and greater uniformity in responses. Cohen’s d in both cases indicated that there was a medium effect size. However, importantly, the MS class did still respond positively to increased sympathy, though at slightly lower rates and with less agreement in responses than the other class. Anecdotally, the class teacher reported that the BMS class had already shown greater interest in LGBTQ issues when self-selecting writing topics earlier in the year. Therefore, perhaps it is unsurprising that the class which had already completed some LGBTQ research reported greater awareness. Future research with larger cohort sizes will be necessary to determine replicability. It would also be interesting to discover the reason(s) for these results, and whether they are related to faculty choice, gender demographics, etc.

Activity 3

Table 4: Activity 3 survey results (Yoshimatsu TEDx Talk)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement 1. I am very aware of the issues many Japanese women experience with sexism in the workplace, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and stalking.</th>
<th>N=49</th>
<th>6 strongly agree</th>
<th>5 Agree</th>
<th>4 somewhat agree</th>
<th>3 somewhat disagree</th>
<th>2 disagree</th>
<th>1 strongly disagree</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (8.2%)</td>
<td>13 (26.5%)</td>
<td>22 (44.9%)</td>
<td>7 (14.3%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3 (6.1%)</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>1.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 2. I feel sympathy for the many Japanese women who experience sexism in the workplace, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and stalking.</td>
<td>N=49</td>
<td>12 (24.5%)</td>
<td>17 (34.7%)</td>
<td>13 (26.5%)</td>
<td>2 (4.1%)</td>
<td>3 (6.1%)</td>
<td>2 (4.1%)</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>1.308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement 1. After I watched Yoshimatsu Ikumi’s speech and completed the writing task, I became better aware of the issues many Japanese women experience with sexism in the workplace, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and stalking.</th>
<th>N=46</th>
<th>10 (21.7%)</th>
<th>26 (56.5%)</th>
<th>8 (17.4%)</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1 (2.2%)</th>
<th>1 (2.2%)</th>
<th>4.89</th>
<th>.971</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement 2. After I watched Yoshimatsu Ikumi’s speech and completed the writing task, I came to feel more sympathy for the many Japanese women who experience sexism in the workplace, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and stalking.</td>
<td>N=46</td>
<td>14 (30.4%)</td>
<td>22 (47.8%)</td>
<td>5 (10.9%)</td>
<td>2 (4.3%)</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>2 (4.3%)</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>1.222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results show that participants mostly agreed they had awareness of the issues women face in Japan (see Table 4). Interestingly, responses to statement two on the pre-survey received a high amount of strongly agree (24.5%) towards sympathy for women who experience marginalization. However, somewhat agree (26.5%) and agree (34.7%) were still more frequently selected.
Post surveys also resulted in high levels of agreement that the TEDx Talk and writing task had increased awareness and sympathy towards problems women face in Japan (see Table 4). Statement one displayed a good amount of uniformity in responses, with more than half the respondents selecting agree (56.5%), and most others selecting strongly agree (21.7%) or somewhat agree (17.4%). Statement two also had agree as the most frequently selected response (47.8%). It also received a high frequency of strongly agree responses (30.4%).

The above indicates that students perhaps related to the marginalized community in this activity most. Women as a marginalized demographic are probably the most accessible and easily understood community for the students. This could be because they are either women themselves or have relationships with them and therefore could not as easily position women as the ‘other’ as they could the other two groups. This does not mean that students did not benefit from this activity. As indicated in the post-survey, students reported both increased awareness and sympathy for the struggles faced by women within Japanese society after the viewing and writing task.

Table 5: Significant independent T-test findings (activity 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-survey</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>I am very aware of the issues many Japanese women experience with sexism in the workplace, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and stalking.</em></td>
<td>25*</td>
<td>4.48*</td>
<td>.770*</td>
<td>2.492</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>p&lt;.05</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**</td>
<td>24**</td>
<td>3.71**</td>
<td>1.334**</td>
<td>1.334**</td>
<td>1.442**</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>p&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>I feel sympathy for the many Japanese women who experience sexism in the workplace, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and stalking.</em></td>
<td>25*</td>
<td>5.00*</td>
<td>1.000*</td>
<td>2.595</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>p&lt;.05</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**</td>
<td>24**</td>
<td>4.08**</td>
<td>1.442**</td>
<td>1.442**</td>
<td>1.442**</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>p&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>After I watched Yoshimatsu Ikumi’s speech and completed the writing task, I came to feel more sympathy for the many Japanese women who experience sexism in the workplace, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and stalking.</em></td>
<td>24*</td>
<td>5.38*</td>
<td>.576*</td>
<td>3.116</td>
<td>26.668</td>
<td>p&lt;.05</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**</td>
<td>22**</td>
<td>4.32**</td>
<td>1.492**</td>
<td>1.492**</td>
<td>1.492**</td>
<td>26.668</td>
<td>p&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = Biomedical Science, ** = Mathematical Science

Independent T-tests found significant differences between the two classes to both pre-survey statements \( t(47)=2.492, p<.05, d=.71 \) and statement two \( t(26.668)=3.116, p<.05, d=.94 \) in the post-survey (see Table 5). Again, it was the BMS class that responded with greater awareness, sympathy, and reported increased sympathy. This may not seem surprising when we consider it had a greater gender balance, with slightly more females \((F=15, M=10)\). In particular, their low standard deviations indicate less variation in responses to the statements. Again, it should be noted that the MS class still responded somewhat positively to most statements overall, but with lower results and with less uniformity. The effect sizes for all three were medium to large, indicating that some factor...
is possibly at play. To be sure, larger cohorts in future studies will be needed to discover whether these results are replicable.

**Conclusion**

Results from all surveys indicate that students can increase their awareness and sympathy of marginalized communities via content-based activities and writing tasks. Clearly put, this study has demonstrated that the EFL classroom is an opportune environment to expose students to societal issues—in this case, marginalized communities. Further, activities like these may not only help educate students on topics of which they have little knowledge, but they can also help increase the knowledge of those with self-professed levels of understanding whilst maintaining pedagogical integrity. In this way, TED/TEDx Talks combined with unstructured writing tasks provide an opportunity for EFL students to not only consider the content they have viewed, but also reflect upon its meaning and connection to their lives. The writing tasks ensure that the students do not merely view content, but requires them to actualize and organize their thoughts into concrete ideas on a screen. This in turn helps increase their awareness and understanding of the marginalized communities whilst practicing their writing on important issues within a safe environment, one free from syntactic or lexical scrutiny. This should be viewed in a positive light because it hopefully lessens the cognitive load needed to complete writing on complex issues.

In closing, it should be stressed that when performing these types of tasks it is important to remain cognizant of students’ need to feel secure in sharing their opinions. Students should therefore be ensured that all views expressed in writing and on the surveys are welcome. Lastly, replications might do well to incorporate larger cohorts as well as tools for tracking changes in individual responses between pre and post surveys as well as differences in responses by gender. Such information might allow for accurately measuring shifts in attitude as well as provide data for interesting gender and cohort comparisons to be drawn.

**References**


Exploring the Mindsets of Thai Graduate Students in English Language Learning: A Preliminary Study

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Abstract

The concepts of fixed- and growth-mindsets in psychology have been applied to various disciplines including education. However, very limited studies have been conducted in applied linguistics, specifically in English language learning. To our knowledge, there have been few studies that explicitly measures growth mindset in English language education. This paper presents the results of a preliminary study concerning the mindsets of the graduate students toward English language learning in a university context. An adapted English Language Mindset Survey (ELMS) was distributed to 32 graduate students enrolled in English foundation courses in a top-ranked university in Bangkok. Rasch Analysis and Ministep software were used to ensure the reliability of ELMS. Accordingly, the person reliability, which is 0.71 and the item reliability, 0.68 indicate acceptable reliability while infit and outfit mean squares of 11 out of 12 items are within the range 0.5 to 1.5, which show a good survey design. Results show that growth mindset of graduate students is high when their classmates succeed in the English class (M=4.13, SD=1.34). Their growth mindset is moderate when they assess the potentials of their own individualities to change in the English class (M=2.75, SD=1.26). Among factors of ELMS, the students are growth-minded in ‘Success of Others’, and are neutral-minded in their ‘Own Ability’.

Keywords: English Language Learning, Fixed Mindset, Growth Mindset, Questionnaire Design, Rasch Analysis, Thai Graduate Students

Introduction

Knowledge on the Broad Topic

Many graduate students complained about the overwhelming workload after being assigned readings at the beginning of the semester, while some of them appeared to be motivated by the assignments. Such phenomena could be best explained by self- and implicit theories of intelligence. These theories posit the concepts of the fixed mindset and growth mindset to account for the psychological processes that connect to the patterns of individual behavior (Blackwell, Dweck, & Trzesniewski, 2007; Dweck, 1999; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Dweck & Molden, 2005). According to the theories, fixed-minded students believe that intelligence is immutable while growth-minded students
believe intelligence to be malleable and can be developed. Students with the fixed mindset focus more on performance as the goal of learning; view effort as useless in difficult situations; stop putting in effort after failures; and keep persevering only on the same learning strategies. On the other hand, students believing in the growth mindset concentrate more on learning as the goal of learning; view effort as useful; put in more effort after failures; and try different new learning strategies. (Blackwell et al., 2007; Chiu, Dweck, Hong, Lin, & Wan, 1999; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Henderson & Dweck, 1990; Robin & Pals, 2002).

Growth Mindset and Its Effects on Learning

Having a growth mindset has been shown to produce positive effects on academic achievements. In other subjects, students with the growth mindset had higher grades during a difficult period of junior high school than those with the fixed mindset (Blackwell et al., 2007). In fact, other authors argued that possessing the fixed mindset impedes students’ academic successes (see Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Rattan, Savani, Chugh, & Dweck, 2015). Unlike students with growth mindset, those with fixed mindset dislike challenges, avoid obstacles, depreciate effort, do not tolerate constructive criticism, threatened by the success of others, and try to prove and show off ability (see Table 1).

Table 1

Responses of the Fixed Mindset and Growth Mindset to the Six Factors (Dweck, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Fixed Mindset</th>
<th>Growth Mindset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Challenges</td>
<td>Dislike challenges</td>
<td>Like challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Obstacles</td>
<td>Avoid obstacles</td>
<td>Confront obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Effort</td>
<td>Depreciate effort</td>
<td>Appreciate effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Criticism</td>
<td>Not tolerate constructive criticism</td>
<td>Look for constructive criticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Success of Others</td>
<td>Threatened by success of others</td>
<td>Inspired by success of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. General Viewpoint on Own Ability</td>
<td>Try to prove and show off ability</td>
<td>Try to learn and improve ability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of research on growth mindset interventions have suggested promising outcomes on students’ short-term and long-term academic performances as well as academic enjoyment (Aronson et al., 2002; Cury, Elliot, Fonseca, & Moller, 2006; Darnon, Harackiewicz, Butera, Mugny, & Quiamzade, 2007; Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2014; Elliot & Murayama, 2008; Shim, Ryan, & Anderson, 2008). Nevertheless, the application of this scholarship to language education in applied linguistics is in its infancy. It is not clear to what extent of the six factors that graduate students possess a growth mindset and apply it to their language learning processes.

Previous studies in other fields suggested that students have the mixture of the two mindsets, allowing room for growth mindset intervention. For example, Blackwell and colleagues (2007).
demonstrate in their longitudinal study that performing an educational intervention teaching growth mindset to the students for eight consecutive weeks, each week with one 25-minute session, acts as a buffer for poor-performing students against the low GPAs in math. This effect persists even two years after the intervention ended. A more recent study reports the same buffering effect of a growth mindset intervention at a nationwide scale despite using only one session (less than an hour), online intervention (Claro, Paunesku, & Dweck, 2016).

**Measuring Psychological Constructs of Survey Questionnaire**

In education and psychology, questionnaires and tests are generally used to measure psychological constructs such as knowledges, skills, abilities, attitudes, personality traits, and academic achievements. However, the data obtained from these tests need more in-depth analyses than basic statistical analysis, for example, descriptive statistics. In his article, Boone (2016) clarifies this point by using an example of a 25-item multiple-choice test in biology that is used to rate four students in order. Of the highest possible 25 points on the test, the four students A, B, C, and D score 24, 19, 10, and 5 respectively. Boone argues that these scores cannot be used to accurately compare biological knowledge among the four students since they assume that all the 25 items are equally difficult.

Likewise, the same principle applies to the survey data. The data are commonly coded as strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA) with the attributing values of 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. It is true that participants who endorse SA are more in agreement with the question than participants who endorse A, D, and SD respectively. Nevertheless, the distance between SA and A does not have to be equal to the distance between D and SD for each item and each participant. Researchers who immediately perform mathematical operations on these data assume that all the distances are equal, which is probably not true since all the items are probably not equally difficult (Boone, 2016; Wright & Stone, 1979).

To solve the concerns above, Rasch Analysis was introduced as it mathematically takes into account the items’ difficulties and allows researchers to express the raw test scores on a linear scale (Wright & Grosse, 1993). Specifically, it transforms the raw data into natural logarithm (ln) of probability quotient, so that the ordinal data could be compared on an interval scale. The more the data fit with the Rasch model, the more they could be fit on an equal interval range. Then the range is established for that set of data. The more the data do not fit with the model, the more they could not be compared on an equal interval scale. Rasch model is different from other statistical models in that it creates a model from the data obtained instead of fitting the existing model to the data. This allows the Rasch model to attenuate the scale to be dependent on only two variables, which are the item’s difficulty and the person’s ability on the test (Bond & Fox, 2015).
The Gap that Needs Addressing

Until now, the concept of growth mindset has been successfully applied to many disciplines especially education and mathematics (Blackwell et al., 2007; Boaler, Dieckmann, Pérez-Núñez, Sun, & Williams, 2018; Fraser, 2017), except in applied linguistics, specifically on English language learning. Since there is this lacking of research on mindsets in language learning, the methods of conducting research is also limited. To the knowledge of the researchers, there have been few survey questionnaires in the literature that explicitly measures growth mindset in English language education. Therefore, there is a need to explore mindsets in English language learning.

Significances of Addressing the Gap

Importantly, addressing this knowledge gap leads to a survey questionnaire that specifically measures growth mindset of graduate students in English language learning and teaching. The English language and mathematics are distinct fields on their own, and the natures of which have both significant differences and similarities. Some view the study of numbers as a language with a lesser degree of interpretation and subjectivity than the English language, but both of them are used to describe realities (Leshem & Markovits, 2013). Consequently, a body of knowledge regarding growth mindset in learning the English language must be studied within its domain, separately from and in parallel with the growth mindset of learning mathematics.

Also, it is not clear to what extent our graduate students possess a growth mindset and apply it to their language learning processes. If the graduate students learning the English language believe more in the fixed attitude, the growth mindset intervention is prone to positively transform their perceptions, learning behaviors, GPAs, and engagement with the learning processes. Also, the purposes of a preliminary research are to have a look into the areas that have not been studied in-depth, and set up priorities in order to improve the design of the future study. The results obtain from the new survey questionnaire in this study will inform the decision on applying growth mindset intervention on the future English language learning.

Aims and Hypotheses of the Present Study

The aim of this study is twofold (1) to identify the current mindsets of Thai graduate students in Bangkok toward fixed, neutral, or growth mindset and (2) to identify the reliability of the questionnaire by Rasch Analysis. Implications of this exploratory study will be used to improve our final research project.

As the application of the growth mindset research to language education in Thailand is in its infancy, most Thai graduate students are unlikely to be accustomed to and benefit from it. Thus, it is hypothesized that (1) the current mindset of Thai graduate students tends toward the fixed mindset and (2) the reliability of the questionnaire is in an acceptable range for this set of participants.
Research Methodology

Context and Participants of the Study

This preliminary study was conducted to explore the mindsets of our sample population to help us shape our final study. Also, we aim to identify the reliability of the proposed measurement to measure mindsets in English language learning.

The data was collected from graduate students enrolled in foundation English courses in a top-ranked university in Bangkok. Based on our classroom observations, it is hypothesized that graduate students experience challenging conditions in language learning. The foundation English language courses were chosen because students are expected to have higher language proficiency and are more motivated. Thirty-two graduate students enrolled in the foundational English language courses volunteered to take part in the study. These students came from various background including applied linguistics, engineering, biotechnology and science education.

This paper concentrates on the graduate level as it is a time that presents great challenges to the students. According to the work by Huang (2012), the transition to the graduate studies presents students with two major challenges, learning to live as adults and learning to study in the adult learning environment and style.

Survey Questionnaire

The English Language Mindset Survey (ELMS) was adapted from Blackwell et al’s (2007) 6-point scale. The original 6-point scale survey targets on students’ personal belief about their ability to change their level of intelligence in general context using six response categories. In the present study, the 5-point Likert-type scale was proposed to explore the personal belief or mindset in between fix and growth mindsets specifically in English language learning context. The response categories are Strongly Disagree (SD, 1) representing a fixed-minded tendency; Disagree (D, 2); Neutral (N, 3); Agree (A, 4); and Strongly Agree (SA, 5) representing a growth-minded tendency. The 12 statements of ELMS were categorized into the six factors (Table 1) to evaluate students’ mindsets.

Data Collection Procedures and Analysis

To answer the first question, the ELMS was distributed to 32 graduate students enrolled in English foundation courses in a top-ranked university in Bangkok. The points in the Likert-type scale (EMLS) were divided into three groups according to mindset conditions, fixed mindset (1.00-2.33), neutral mindset (2.34-3.66), and growth mindset (3.67-5.00). The neutral mindset was introduced to the scale in order to make more distinction between the fixed and growth mindsets. Descriptive statistics was used to know the mindsets of graduate students in language learning.

To answer the second question, Rasch analysis was employed to ensure the reliability of the survey questionnaire. It is an approach based on Item Response Theory (IRT), which assumes that
mindset is a latent trait and therefore raw data has to be changed into equal interval ranges of the logit unit (Bond & Fox, 2015; Harwell & Gatti, 2001; Rolf, Manfred, & Michael, 1999; Wu & Adams, 2007). Performing mathematical operations on these data assuming equal interval ranges may provide inaccurate results (Hodge & Gillespie, 2003; Li, 2013; Pett, 1997). To further validate the ELMS, the 12 items are run by Ministep, a component of Rasch analysis.

Results

The overall mean (M) for the growth mindset is 3.55, SD 1.01 (see Table 3). The internal consistency (α) of EMLS calculated using Analysis of Variance yields a high value of 0.95.

Table 2
Results of the Individual Means of the Six Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Factor Details</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mindset condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>4. In the English language class, I like to try things that are hard.</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Feeling challenged in learning English makes me want to try harder.</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstacles</td>
<td>6. I usually quit when something gets difficult in the English language class.</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. I don’t mind making mistakes in the English language class because I can learn.</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>9. If I have to work hard during the English language class, it means I’m not smart.</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. The more difficult the English language task is, the more motivated I become to put in effort.</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticisms</td>
<td>10. In studying English, I rarely take criticisms as personal attacks.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. In the English language classroom, I dislike negative feedbacks on my performance even if they will help me improve.</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success of Others</td>
<td>2. When other students do better than me in the English language class, it makes me feel inferior.</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. When other students succeed in our English language classes, I feel inspired.</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Viewpoint on Own Ability</td>
<td>3. I can always change basic things about the kind of person I am when I learn English.</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. I can do things differently in the English language class, but the important parts of who I am can’t really be changed.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four items are in growth mindset condition (items 5, 7, 8, 9). These suggest that the students assess themselves positively. When looking at the counterpart items in the same categories of these four items, the self-report results and means also have the tendencies toward the growth mindset condition. In contrast, only the item on GVOA (item 1) tends toward the fixed mindset condition.
These 12 items’ means are averaged to six factors shown in Figure 1. At the factor level, results show half of participants fall into the growth mindset and the other half into the neutral mindset. They report being growth-minded on factors of Success of Others, Challenges, and Obstacles respectively. There is no group where the participants report being fixed-minded.

![Figure 1. Means of the six factors into fixed, neutral, and growth mindsets](image)

In Rasch Analysis, the person reliability of ELMS is 0.71, which is acceptable. The item reliability is also acceptable at 0.68. In Table 2, Ministep gives fit statistics results showing how well the data fit with Rasch model. The infit and outfit value at 1.00 suggesting that the items totally fit with the unidimensional scale. The values ranging from 0.50 to 1.50 are productive for constructing the survey, 1.50 to 2.00 are unproductive, but not degrading the construction, and the values higher than 2.00 are unproductive and degrading the construction (Linacre, 2002).

Results show infit and outfit mean squares of all items within the range 0.50 to 1.50, except for item 10 (infit mean square 1.75, outfit mean square 1.86). The person reliability 0.71 also indicates the level of reproducibility and reliability of items’ difficulties to the same participants which is equivalent to the Cronbach’s alpha. The item reliability 0.68 indicates the level of reproducibility of participants’ abilities (growth mindset) to the same set of items. These reliability values are in an acceptable range. Moreover, Ministep gives fit statistics results shown in Table 3 and calculates the chi-square fit statistics to show how well the data fit with the Rasch model (Court, Greenland, & Margrain, 2010; Van der Wal et al., 2012).
Table 3  Fit Statistics and Item Calibration Measure for ELMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>Item Calibration (SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infit</td>
<td>Outfit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

It is interesting to note that graduate students have growth mindsets on three areas including challenges (M=3.77), success of others (M=3.77), and obstacles (M=3.69). The first goal of this study is to explore the English language learning mindsets and categorize them into fixed, neutral, or growth mindset. The results reveal that graduate students welcome challenges, success of others, and obstacles as opportunities to improve. They have a tendency to view efforts and criticisms as advantageous to their learning processes and have a mild tendency to perceive their own abilities as malleable traits. As the learning goal, they aim to improve rather than prove their performances. Their English language academic performances should continually improve.

These tendency toward a growth mindset in self-report scores may result from the fact that most of the graduate students are new to the graduate study level and cannot accurately assess and anticipate the full coverage of the courses’ challenges, resulting in optimistic viewpoints. Most of these students might performed well in their undergraduate English language classes and expect the graduate classes to be the same. Another possible explanation involves the students’ interpretations of the item of the highest mean (item 5). If the students reporting the score perform better than or equal to those who succeed in class, it is easier for them to feel inspired. However, if they perform poorer, it can be harder for them to be inspired. This item depends heavily on how the students derive the meaning from the sentence.

Our results support the findings from previous works in measuring growth mindset (Blackwell et al., 2007; West et al., 2016; Zeng, Hou, & Peng, 2016). The results show the highest mean (M=4.13) at the statement: When other students succeed in our English language classes, I feel inspired (item 5). The lowest mean (M=2.75) is the statement: I can always change basic things about the kind of person I am (item 3). The 50.18 percent difference between the highest and the lowest means may signify the misleading biases in the self-report results. Theoretically, the more students view their own abilities as malleable, the greater growth mindset they possess (Dweck, 2017).
In this study, the reliability of the survey questionnaire, ELMS, was sought. Focusing on the causes of the lowest mean item by asking, why does the malleability of own ability scores point more toward the fixed-minded condition? It is unlikely the participants misinterpret item 3 on the ELMS or that item 3 has some reliability problems because the infit and outfit values of item 3 are within the productive range. Rasch Analysis produces the person-item map (Appendix A) showing the mean of persons’ abilities (growth mindset) and mean of items’ difficulties are almost at the same logit when plotted together (Bond & Fox, 2015). The items’ difficulty covers the majority of the persons’ ability range with the latter being a little higher. Item 3 and 6 distinguish the persons having high growth mindset while item 5 and 7 differentiate among those low in growth mindset. Item 3 is still within the range of the persons’ ability. The other explanation for why the malleability of own ability scores point more toward the fixed-minded condition is that item 3 reveals some biases in the self-report data.

In the probability curves of item 3 (Figure 2), the response categories work well for this group of participants. The curves do not overlap significantly with one another suggesting each response category possesses a unique probability of being selected and not selected more than other categories for a specific person difficulty (Court, et al., 2010). Thus, in terms of the survey design, item 3 functions properly. The lowest mean at this item is more likely to suggest that some biases exist in the response data for the other 11 items.

![Probability Curves for Item 3](image)

*Figure 2. Probability Curves for Item 3: Each curve represents one response category. The calculation in Ministep is based on fit statistics.*

Biases in self-report scores may be caused by several influences. For example, Ehrlinger, Mitchum, and Dweck (2016) reports that most of the fixed-minded people have overconfidence and inflate the perception of their abilities. They wish to prove their performances rather than improve them. Likewise, another research suggests that reference bias brings about misleading results in students’ self-
report scores. Each student has to conjure up a reference of, for instance, a hard-working person, and rate herself against that mental reference how hard-working she is. This reference is different from person to person. (West et al., 2016).

Conclusion

In investigating the current mindset of the graduate students, we find that most of the students have the neutral mindset with a strong tendency toward the growth mindset. A growth mindset intervention is likely to benefit the students by transforming the neural mindset students into the growth condition. The academic achievements of the students will, in turn, be transformed. However, the intervention will be more accurately applied to the potential group in this sample when taking into account the mis-responses or biases that may have occurred in the results.

Of all the six factors indicating growth mindset, five follow the same tendency toward the growth attitude, while only the GVOA factor tends toward the fixed attitude. When the self-report data are viewed as latent trait with the unknown interval between the response category orders, Rasch Analysis provides a mean to compare these data on an equal interval range. It statistically validates the item with the lowest mean in the GVOA factor and indicates that biases may well involve in the data. Rasch provides a more accurate picture of the validity and reliability of the ELMS than the Cronbach’s alpha for the ordinal data.

Implications for our Final Study

The purposes of a preliminary research are to have a look into the areas that have not been studied in-depth, and set up priorities in order to improve the design of the future study. There are six limitations found in this study. Future works are to address these six limitations in the future study. Then the growth mindset intervention can be efficiently introduced to the English language classes to help raise academic success among the English language learners. First, the lack of further evidence to substantiate the validity of the self-report scores such as English language pre- and post-test and academic records of participants. Though useful in this pilot study, self-report scores are not fully reliable. Exploring the use of other methods, e.g. individual interview is necessary to understand deeper insights about the topic. Second, the out of range value of item 10. Third, the lack of anchoring vignettes to prevent the reference bias (Kyllonen & Bertling, 2013; West et al., 2016). Fourth, the lack of the items in ELMS to distinguish the people at the high end of the growth mindset continuum and the bottom end (see Figure 1, at -1.0 logit and from 0.9 to 3.0 logits). Fifth, the numbers of the ELMS’s response categories. Rasch Analysis suggested that in 7 out of the 12 items, N and A response categories should be grouped together for this particular set of participants. Future survey design should word the items more precisely and the response categories should be reconstructed to a 6- or 4-point scale. Last, the demographic data of the participants i.e. sex, race, nationality, and native language will be collected.
References


Appendix A: Item-person Map for ELMS

Note: On the left side, each X represents one participant, M is persons’ mean of growth mindset, S is one SD from the mean, T is two SD from the mean. Number -1 to 3 signify a logit scale. On the right side, M represents the mean of all items’ difficulties.
The Promotion of Positive Classroom Management in ELL Classrooms

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Abstract  
Classroom management is a topic of enduring concern for ELL teachers, and many ELL teachers integrate a variety of motivational and group dynamic theories into their classroom planning to maximize how classes are organized. Creative methodology, including cooperative and hands-on activities, is a successful strategy for lowering the affective filter and engaging students in active learning. This paper provides ELL teachers and language educators with a comprehensive, practical description of current classroom management research and methodology. First, the authors will present how to create a productive learning environment and enhance the conditions for personal growth in ELL students within the Japanese university context. Next, practical examples and specific details of the authors’ classroom management techniques, and the relationship to students’ personal and academic needs, will be presented. This will be done in relation to a hierarchical model, which represents class motivation and learner autonomy. Based on that, the authors will discuss interpersonal relations and classroom interactions as key factors influencing students’ behavior and learning outcomes. In addition, teachers’ roles in promoting learning platforms, scaffolding through in-class activities, and motivating students to enhance their English proficiency will be highlighted. The paper will conclude with a reflection and discussion of the relationship between productive group formation and autonomous learning.

Keywords: Classroom management, Motivation, English Language Learners
Introduction

Within the Japanese university context, enhancing English language learner (ELL)s’ motivation is one of the most pressing challenges among English language educators. This paper focuses on one motivational model that has been implemented in Japanese university English classrooms and describes its effectiveness from the teachers’ and students’ perspectives. To help English language educators better understand, the authors will introduce a motivational model for enhancing group performance through the personal growth of individual students as they earn each other’s trust. In this paper the authors will also focus on how understanding our learners’ cultural backgrounds can help create a safe learning community. After several years of teaching English as a second language in the United States and Japan and with the consideration of the ELL’s perspectives and feedback from university classes, the authors have formed the belief, supported by research literature, that culturally diverse students, such as students from different socio-economic backgrounds, are unique and need tailored assistance. For example, a diverse group of students are most likely to expand and improve their pronunciation, intonation, grammatical, lexical, and cultural knowledge of the target language and associated culture through communication with their peers in a positive and supportive learning environment. Thus, the authors have been examining ways to support ELL students by enhancing their motivation in the university English classrooms and help them succeed in taking personal responsibility for their academic and social goals.

Background

One of the more recent challenges in language teaching, particularly in reading/writing classes is creating a learning environment that fosters the students’ autonomy. The authors have observed this themselves in teaching contexts in Japan. At the beginning of the fall semester of 2016 the lead author instructed four different classes each with approximately 30 second year students, who had previously taken mainly lecture-style courses. The students were therefore used to taking a passive role in their learning by quietly listening, taking notes, and memorizing both new vocabulary and grammatical forms that the teacher recommended. According to Tomlinson (1999), the ELL’s performance can be improved by working towards creating a positive learning environment through recognizing individual learner differences. Therefore, the instructor attempted to create a positive learning environment by working with these learners and arranging seating according to their individual needs (e.g. sociocultural differences) such as personal interests as stated in a student résumé. The students were also encouraged to interact with their peers by either peer teaching or simply helping each other to promote learning outside a typical teacher fronted lecture. Throughout the semester the instructor started to observe positive results. For example, students who usually sat at the same desk and only talked with friends started to interact with a broad range of their classmates, and there was a greater focus on communication among themselves rather than primarily communicating with the instructor. By talking with each other, students were able to work through their misunderstandings and negotiate meaning in
relation to the class activities. Through this experience, the authors have realized that if both the teacher and students work together to construct a cooperative and motivating learning environments, the students are more likely to realize their learning goals. By doing this they rely on their peers more while on their way to becoming more autonomous in their approach to language learning. Therefore, since the fall semester of 2018, the authors have focused on creating a positive learning environment by adapting Paydon’s (2012) model for developing a motivational learning environment based on individual differences. This was operationalized by adapting the work by Paydon (2012), which hypothesizes that there are five levels to classroom motivation: the first four levels: Structure, Trust, Cohesion, and Performance, focus on building and strengthening the group. The fifth stage, Personal Growth, focuses on supporting the individual’s own development. By examining each stage to enhance motivation and to create a positive learning environment, the authors have successfully employed traditional learning tasks; while structuring classrooms dynamic (e.g. student groupings) in ways that help learners to increase their autonomy to improve their language and personal goals in language classes. The process is firmly rooted in education theory.

Motivational Models in ELL Classrooms

A useful guide for generally understanding why students behave the way that they do and in determining how learning may be affected by physiological or safety deficiencies is the promotion of positive classroom management in ELL classrooms. The is based on the Sequential stage theory by Ehrman and Dornyei (1998)’s and the foundation of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. First, sequential stage theories of group development introduced by Ehrman and Dornyei (1998) paved the way for forming the classroom motivational model and suggests that there are four stages of development: formation, transition, performing, and dissolution. Furthermore, groups undergo each of the stages in order. Learners first go through the formation stage where members meet others for the first time and start developing closer relationships. It is necessary for teachers to pay careful attention to this stage since a group does not move forward until this stage has been favorably completed. Next, groups go into the transition stage where a dichotomy of opinions or deadlock occurs for them to be more cohesive with each other. By experiencing the process of agreeing and disagreeing, groups develop and enhance their performance. This, performing stage, is a desired stage which teachers should strive to reach with their students, and since they have performed to their maximum potential, students start developing their individual learning even after groups disassemble. Finally, once group members of a class have achieved the prior three stages, teachers can determine whether a group has grown into certain level by observing them after it has dissolved. That means, members of a successfully formed group will be highly likely to commit themselves to working hard, even individually without input from an instructor.

Second, Abraham Maslow is a well-known psychologist who created the theory of hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943). His assumption in this theory was based on the idea that human development involves actualization. Also, it focuses on describing the five stages of growth in humans because
psychopathology results from the frustration of a human being’s essential nature. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs is formed and represented as a hierarchy pyramid. The bottom four stages represent physiological needs, and the top stage of the pyramid is considered as growth needs. In his theory, the lower needs must be satisfied in order to meet the higher stage needs. In other words, on the whole, an individual cannot satisfy any stage unless needs below it are satisfied (Maslow, 1943). As shown in Figure 1, the bottom stage is related to physiological needs, or in other words, survival needs. In this stage, literal requirements for human survival are considered. For example, in the classroom, if students are hungry, they are easily distracted. Once their physical needs are met, the next stage, safety needs, takes over. This need includes safety and security within the environment, physical health, protection of property, and access to resources. To satisfy these needs, many teachers always check that the number of desks and chairs are set for students, the lights are on, and the temperature of the classroom is well adjusted for students’ comfort. Once those needs are met, the next stage, love and belonging, can be considered. Since students feel a sense of belonging and acceptance (i.e. love) from the teacher and classmates through the time they spend together, their social relationships become an important factor for their learning development (Maslow, 1943).

Figure 1: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943)

Many students’ academic performance may be affected by time spent forming friendships to feel accepted. By establishing their social relationship and recognizing their achievement, confidence, and acceptance of others, they may start to seek their own self-esteem. Once those bottom four physiological stages have been satisfied, the highest level of needs, self-actualization, or self-fulfillment, is established. Maslow emphasized the need for self-actualization, and he defined self-actualized person as one who is satisfied with basic needs, has fully exploited talents, and is motivated by values. The common characteristics of the self-actualized person that Maslow describes are ones who have a superior perception of reality, increased acceptance of self and others, and improved interpersonal experience with high levels of creativity (Maslow, 1943). Because a highly motivated
person tends to increase autonomy and resists conformity, behavior is not driven and motivated by deficiencies.

As mentioned above, because ELLs may follow the stages of the development in their language learning, following the theories should be considered as they have positive implications in the classroom. Therefore, in this paper, the authors will concisely outline the main principles: Structure, Trust, Cohesion, Performance, Personal growth, based on the motivational theories above, and arrange them so as to effectively employ a teaching approach that enhances ELLs’ motivation to learn.

**Structure**

At the structure stage, students discover interpersonal relationships which provide the basic proximity, contact, interaction, and security that facilitates the development of trust (Paydon, 2012). Creating a favorable atmosphere by constructing a working structure plays an important role when it comes to managing a language classroom. In this stage, especially at the beginning of the semester, teachers need to consider students’ initial concerns towards their class, classmates, and learning tasks. Teachers may focus on the learning content, trying to make it meaningful and fruitful, or attractive and enjoyable by applying it to students’ needs, while others reckon learning strategies to be more significant. Dörnyei (2001) also emphasized that it is necessary to be thoughtful about classroom language in order to create a pleasant atmosphere so that students do not feel anxious and feel motivated to learn. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers consider how to create a favorable classroom atmosphere for students before jumping directly into course content or a formal learning strategy. One practical example is to help students feel safe interacting with each other, which the authors do by first asking them to create a personal résumé (see Appendix 1). Each student writes his/her birthday, interests, hobbies, favorite sports, and academic goals. Once created, it provides a way for the students to form and strengthen peer to peer relationships by simply asking questions about the content of their résumé. In this way, they were to show mutual interest in each other. Students break the personal barrier while simultaneously speaking English to others. By creating a friendly social atmosphere in the classroom, students will, over time, feel more at ease taking risks to speak out in English and to share their own ideas, thoughts, and opinions. This student interaction helps students extend their interpersonal relationships, which eventually leads them to the next stage, trust (Paydon, 2012).

**Trust**

After creating the structure stage, the authors focus on the trust stage by creating a favorable atmosphere where students feel comfortable to come to class. According to Paydon (2012), trust can be created on mutual understanding between people and to achieve a desired goal; therefore, teachers need to be aware that there are two kinds of significant relationships in a class: a relationship between students, and between students and teachers (Furrer et al, 2014). One of the ways that the authors
successfully build trust at the beginning of the semester among students is by allowing students to speak in their first language in the classroom when necessary. Despite the fact that there are some teachers and researchers who think that only the target language should be used in a language classroom, the use of the first language by students has a positive effect (Cook, 2001). Especially for the basic level ELLs (e.g. pre-beginners), frustration from miscommunication and not understanding the task may demotivate them and cause them to feel isolated in the classroom (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). Once students and the teacher talk more comfortably and have a reciprocal understanding in the class, students feel comfortable and have more trust in the process. That is simply because students, especially beginners, can express and embrace opinions and feelings most clearly when they talk in their first language. Even though it is true that the maximized use of the target language can enhance language learning or even students’ motivation in certain situations (Moeller, 2013), in terms of building trust, it is fairly inappropriate and extremely difficult at the start of the course. This is especially true for beginning language learners and so using their first language, as a socialization tool, helps such students to gain a better understanding with other students (Mora Pablo et al, 2011). However, there are two main aspects of first language use in the classroom. First, teachers should not only allow students to use their first language, but also recognize it as important and crucial for students so that they can willingly utilize it (Burden, 2001). Second, the English proficiency level of students should also be taken into consideration as those with low proficiency levels are more likely to need the first language use (Carson & Kashihara, 2012). Since students and teachers are inevitably in different positions, there is at least a slight barrier between them. As mentioned above, trust is constructed upon reciprocal understanding. A study by Tartwijk et al., (2009) states that it is essential to have positive student-teacher relationships to have a successful multicultural classroom. Thus, to be successful in lessons and activities with students, it is recommended that teachers be equipped with the skills necessary to accomplish the tasks as well as having an accepting and understanding perception of students’ cultural background and learning styles (Swafford & Dainty, 2009). In prior research, Nakagawa & Wright (2015) created a critical thinking (CT) prompt and implemented it, in the form of several topics based activities, into practical ELL classes. Building on the results of that work, a practical CT worksheet was created for use in language teaching classrooms (see Appendix 2). This activity is designed to elicit relevant content from the learners and is linked to students’ own learning. The students are encouraged to create their own survey format to exchange information on self-selected content. In this activity, students are also able to share their worksheet to explore classmates’ opinions. Therefore, students are individually applying their knowledge and complete the assignments by following the question prompts and are being supported by the perspectives of their peers. The worksheet was revised several times based on student feedback and post-task assessment by the authors over the last several years.
Cohesion

The aim of cohesion is to make the students feel safe enough to take a risk and share their own ideas, thoughts, and opinions with peers in the classroom and link with them in a variety of groups; therefore, students are not just sitting with their best friends or somebody who happens to be in close proximity. For example, when the teacher examines students’ personal information and background that they share in the classroom (e.g. from the résumé activity in Appendix 1), the teacher is easily able to identify those who have common interests. Many teachers who spend quality time in the first orientation of the class may take notes on their students’ personal information and utilize it for more personal and successful communication. Once common interests are identified, the teacher is then able to group students together based on shared interests or experiences. Also, mixing the groups or changing the seating several times during a class provides several different types of interaction and grouping configurations in any given lesson which often creates a productive classroom atmosphere. Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2013) also stated that English language learners benefit from opportunities to use English in multiple settings across content areas. Through meaningful interaction, students can practice speaking and making themselves understood by asking and answering questions, negotiating meaning, clarifying ideas, and other techniques. Important teacher strategies used to promote interaction include a variety of grouping options which support language and content objectives, such as ample wait time for responses and opportunities for clarification in the student’s native language when possible. With this in mind, the authors created a checklist adapted from the SIOP model (Nakagawa, 2017). The checklist was utilized by teachers in their English classes (see Appendix 3). The SIOP model shares a common goal with the cohesion stage presented by Paydon (2012), in that encouraging students to feel empathy towards all their peers through the sharing of both their similarities and differences, the class as a whole is able to build interpersonal relationships that enable them to perform at their best. As cohesion is the glue that binds a group of people together, their strong relationships with each other combine when they are in bigger groups which enables them to focus on motivating not just themselves but each other. This is essential when moving on to challenging, authentic activities. The key in this stage is for students to offer to share their personal experience and background; therefore, within certain limits, speaking to the class in the native language is more favorable than the target language, especially when they break the interpersonal barrier at the beginning of the class. The input in a native language can then be the start of an activity focused on second language communication. Building on this, students feel coherent with others when they work closely together and have as many opportunities as possible to work collaboratively. Thus, involving all the members into one is another important aspect to creating cohesion. In addition, Brandt (1998) explains that second language learners tend to equate their ability with outcomes, and from this motivation becomes a more complex construct. It is stated that oral communication skills and other non-writing related language skills develop during interactions in a social environment because students in the classroom did not simply improve multiple language skills, but they also exchanged their personal information and their background experience in a foreign
language. Therefore, it is important for them to share with each other the products of their learning so that they can see the results of their development. The act of sharing, alongside the content provided, is what builds cohesion.

**Performance**

Once a cohort of learners has experienced the structure, trust, and cohesion stages, the group will have already started to become unified. They will often act as a single entity in the classroom as shown when students help and collaborate with each other to achieve certain goals. That means teachers can expect greater performance in such a classroom. Tomlinson (1999) suggests that when teachers teach new academic concepts to students, it is important to consider how the students’ cultural backgrounds, use of language, and other possible factors, affect their learning. Therefore, it is important to utilize the students’ life experiences and ideas to help students develop new vocabulary using their background knowledge. During this process, as they think critically, they can significantly apply their knowledge, and then emotionally produce ideas in a variety of oral communication activities. For example, in discussion activities, the students are encouraged to individually reflect on what they learned from the stories they have encountered in the class materials so that they can construct a personal definition. After sharing these definitions as a group, students are asked to apply what they have learned so that they connect these lessons critically with their own life experiences, which they then share with their peers. Littlemore (2012) also found that schema, the students’ cognitive framework stimulated by their interests, helped students organize and interpret information. Individually students’ learning styles may also be shaped by their past learning experiences and coded differently from their peers. During the class, students’ personal résumés, mentioned above, are highly recommended because the files contain meaningful vocabulary and personal information relevant to the students’ life experiences. By utilizing the vocabulary in the personal résumés to describe life experiences, students are able to expand their semantic networks to share with classmates in the discussions, presentations, and a variety of other in-class activities (Dunn, 2012). Connecting existing language ability and new concepts developed during interaction and mediation with peers and the instructor helps students learn core concepts and allows them to fill the language gap (Jenkins, 2012), which results in improved language ability. Thus, by contributing their own unique examples (e.g. from the research results stated above), each student feels that they have an important role to play in co-constructing the classes’ understanding and their language performance. On the contrary, adverse effects can be also anticipated to be brought about if teachers naively misuse a group activity (Long, 1990), so careful attention should be paid when it comes to administering group work.
Personal Growth

After these components described above are achieved, students tend to focus on and enhance their ability, based on their own personal growth as mentioned by Dörnyei and Malderez (1999). Furthermore, students who have belonged to a cohesive group are highly likely to start considering their own learning style. It is important for learners to have a clear personalized vision in order to successfully acquire language for their own purpose. Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) mentioned that the first step which should be taken to increase students’ motivation is to provide students with opportunities to clarify a personal-future vision. The first benefit gained from realization of personal vision is that students are more likely to start working alone or together even outside the classroom in order to satisfy their goals, which is an inevitable part of successful language acquisition (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014). Students without a personal vision are unlikely to have an opportunity to study outside the classroom even though it is an essential part of language acquisition according to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009), simply because there is no obligation or punishment to study without the teachers’ instruction. Conversely, personally motivated students study outside the class precisely because a content class does not match their needs to achieve their personal goals and consequently, they tend to seek chances to study more extensively outside the classroom. This is also supported by the well-known concept of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), intrinsic motivation (e.g. desire to be an English speaker) is highly likely to last longer than extrinsic motivation (e.g. pressure from external factor). Some students have personal goals in mind, which means that they are intrinsically motivated, and they do not lose their motivation even after class finishes. Also, they are not obligated to study. Many researchers have pointed out and concluded that autonomy enhances language acquisition, so it is of great importance to facilitate students’ autonomy. To do achieve autonomy students need to have their own personal reason to study so as to be autonomous (Onozawa, 2010; Wagner, 2013). As shown in Appendix 1, the Résumé activity includes a series of writing topics. One of the spaces in the worksheet is their English goal for the semester, which helps learners organize their English learning objectives. By having clear vision students can plan manageable tasks. Therefore, helping students to manage their own personal growth by giving them the opportunity to go through the stages offered by Paydon (2012), including: structure stage, trust stage, cohesiveness stage, and performance stage, can lead to a greater degree of learner autonomy.

Student’s Perspectives

In a prior research project related to critical thinking (Nakagawa, 2015), the author surveyed students about their attitudes towards learning. The number of students in the interview was 10 (n=10). The students in the interview were randomly selected. The level of the English classes was intermediate, and the students in the group followed the required English course work through the semester. At the end of the semester, the authors conducted the interview to identify the students’ perspectives regarding
the classroom management described above and with a specific focus on the résumé (see Appendix 1). To ensure reliability, at the beginning of the semester, the teachers who taught this course participated in a professional development session to understand components of the classroom management explained above. The interview questions were conducted to produce how students perceived the positive classroom management that the teacher has created through the semester. The main questions asked to participants were, “How do you feel about the class atmosphere?” and “How did this class help to keep you motivated through the semester?” A total of five out of five students answered that getting to know each other and learning together helped their learning most. The following responses are evidence of such assertions and reflect increased levels of autonomous learning and social communicative learning by the individual students. The first response relates to how a teacher should be a facilitator of learning by providing students with a conducive atmosphere that is tailored as much as possible to motivate them to study English. What students want a teacher to do is not simply to teach what they do not know, but to tell them how to get to know what they want to know or to provide useful resources so that they can make an effort to study for themselves, even outside of the classroom.

In English class, I usually don’t talk to my classmates and don’t know about them. However, after changing seats and introducing myself to my classmates, I felt comfortable with sharing myself. Even though I was not able to communicate well in English I was able to imitate my classmates to answer with my personal experience. That helped me get used to speaking in front of classmates. At least, I felt like I was able to practice with my classmates together during the activities. Now, we talk in the classroom and do not hesitate to discuss and share our ideas. The teacher allows us to use Japanese only when necessary for the tasks, and also helped us to promote better communication and understanding too. Through the semester, I realized I started to interact and exchange my opinions more often. (Student A: Intermediate level)

Many students experience fear when making mistakes, especially when faced with tasks that they have never experienced before. However, as Paydon (2012) explains that in terms of levels of classroom motivation, at first, students found their interpersonal relationships and developed trust among peers. Based on that, students are guided to provide basic proximity, contact, interaction, and security, which allows them to feel safe enough to interact with each other. A mixture of individual-centeredness to challenge the activities and group learning as reviewing and sharing with classmates helps students to boost their motivation and task management (He, 2004). Therefore, to reduce stress towards making mistakes among peers, it is effective to allow them to interact and share a variety of examples with peers across a series of activities, as is shown in the following.

I enjoy communicating with classmates. It is easier for me to ask questions in English to classmates compared to my teacher. Sometimes, my classmates understand how difficult learning English is so that they share their ways to learn English. Once I understand, I feel motivated and want to share more with others. (Student B: Intermediate level)
He (2001) explains that when learners are highly motivated, they express a positive attitude, feelings of competency and satisfaction. Therefore, students seem to communicate and socialize through positive classroom management. On the contrary, the negative feedback that students had received was sometimes found to create various forms of frustration.

It is too time consuming to change partners and repeat the process. I am an individual learner and prefer to be alone. If we share answers, I most likely copy my classmates’ answers every time. Even though I had to work together with classmates, they might not like to do group works with me. (Student C: Intermediate level)

The comment indicates that teachers would ideally teach students how to learn English by telling them learning strategies or in some cases clarifying the final purpose of a task so that students can clearly imagine what they should do to achieve it, rather than the teacher just giving them the answer upfront. Thus, it is important for teachers to know and clearly understand how students’ authentic needs, personal preferences, and language goals develop through the semester. Students tell their personal thoughts only when they feel safe and when a good rapport has been established, so promoting close interaction among students is of paramount importance for deeper insight into students’ mental state (Luz, 2015).

Conclusion

English language learners in Japanese universities will continue to struggle if universities in Japan maintain traditional, lecture style teaching approaches which only allow students to learn passively. Without helping them set their own academic goals and concomitantly motivating them to autonomously learn English within a positive learning environment, ELL students’ English language proficiency will never be effectively improved. To be qualified for future careers in Japanese society, students’ needs for academic English has been increasing year by year. Therefore, it is very important for Japanese universities to mandate more communicative teaching practices rather than traditional grammar-translation methods. With the implementation of positive classroom management techniques, such as Structure, Trust, Cohesion, Performance, Personal growth (Paydon, 2012). Future research that includes the collection of empirical feedback from teachers and students will assist English learners in Japanese universities improve their oral communication ability, critical thinking skills, and academic language comprehension. In the long-term, this will result in the building of a foundation of learner focused development pedagogy. The intention to extend learners’ social networks by helping them understand their academic needs and future goals and to articulate those during academic tasks that demonstrate the value of self-directed and self-sufficient learners. Thus, this paper may encourage teachers in Japan and other places where passive learning is prevalent to create effective language teaching syllabi that promote learner autonomy through attention to individual differences. The
learning outcome of such efforts will be motivated language learners who seek out knowledge on their own.

References


Appendix 1. Personal Résumé

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Birth:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student ID:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobby</td>
<td>I love fishing. I always go to Hadano river with my friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your English goal in this class

| Your future goal |  |

Resume worksheet 1
Appendix 2. Critical Thinking and Self-reflection sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic [Copy]</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Relation to you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• How the topic relates (connect) to your life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• What does the topic mean to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Where are places you can do or see the topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• When did (or will) you first encounter the topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Who was (or might be) with you? + How did (or might) someone react?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Why is (or will) the topic important to you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talk time:</th>
<th>Check your language usage: use a dictionary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+++ Ask</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>react</td>
<td>answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>follow-up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DIY (do it yourself): 1. Create a survey 2. conduct the survey 3. enter your survey data below

Write about the topic (topic + 3 or more supporting points + conclusion = 5+ sentences)

Talk time (Round 2): Talk with a new partner WITHOUT your paper/notes

Self-reflection
What did you learn from this topic? (Write in your preferred language.)
### Appendix 3. Interaction Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Check ✓</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To develop classroom community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide a shared experience for everyone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote multiple perspectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To encourage collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide practice opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To scaffold instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To give assistance before independent practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Class</th>
<th>Flexible Small Groups</th>
<th>Partnering</th>
<th>Homogenous Grouping</th>
<th>Heterogeneous Grouping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group students homogeneously by language proficiency, language background, and/or ability levels</td>
<td>Group students heterogeneously to maintain students' interest during the class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cooperative Learning Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cooperative Learning Ideas</th>
<th>Information gap activities</th>
<th>Four corners</th>
<th>Numbered heads together</th>
<th>Roundtable</th>
<th>Send a Problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each student in a group has only one or two pieces of the information needed to solve the puzzle or problem. Students must work together, sharing information, while practicing their language and using critical thinking skills.</td>
<td>This activity lends itself well to introducing a topic or chapter of study. Write one question or idea on each chart paper. Divide class into 4 groups, each group has a different color marker. Each student group moves to one corner chart and a designated student begins writing their ideas on the chart. Students then move clockwise to next corner, read responses and add their comments.</td>
<td>Similar to jigsaw, but without forming expert groups. Each student works on one portion of assignment and then students share.</td>
<td>Use with open-ended questions, grammar practice. Small groups of students sit at tables, with one sheet of paper and a pencil. A question, concept, or problem is given to each group by the teacher; students pass paper around table, each writing his/her own response. Teacher circulates room.</td>
<td>One table team sends a question or problem to another table. Each table team solves or answers the question and passes it back to original table.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Attention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students need:</th>
<th>Teachers should:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiple opportunities to practice</td>
<td>Divide content into meaningful short chunks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant and meaningful ways to practice a concept</td>
<td>Keep practice time short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands-on experiences and concrete manipulatives</td>
<td>Keep practice periods frequent and close together when exploring new content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review material periodically from previous learned content</td>
<td>Give students immediate feedback</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interaction Checklist: