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## EDITORIAL

The articles in this year's TESOLANZ reflect the aims and scope of the Journal, in their focus on research and practice that is directly relevant to the context of the teaching of English as an additional language in Aotearoa/New Zealand and internationally. The articles selected for publication in the 2018 volume of TESOLANZ draw on a range of learning and teaching contexts. They provide insights into the study abroad experience in New Zealand (Cavor and Barkhuizen), teacher autonomy, focusing on a primary school teacher in Vietnam (Hoang) and literacy acquisition for an ESOL learner in a New Zealand primary school context (Finikin).

In the first article, Jovan Cavor and Gary Barkhuizen contextualise study abroad language learning as part of a learner's investment in imagined futures. Their data, including narrative interviews, narrative frames, and data from a Facebook discussion group, was synthesised into an explanatory story, contextualising its significance in relation to study abroad learners' investment in imagined futures and identities. This allows insight into the potential struggles associated with study abroad language learning, and prompts the authors to call for the need to understand study abroad students as individuals, rather than just as language learners.

The second article, by Ha Hoang, moves to an international context. The article investigates teacher autonomy in an English teacher of a young learner in a remote rural area in Vietnam. The data, selected materials from an extensive email interview between the researcher and the informant, is reported in a narrative inquiry. The inquiry shows that individual teachers can act agentively to create their own autonomy in their professional activities; however, without system support, it is difficult for this autonomy to extend to others in the teachers' professional community.

Gwenna Finikin's article is a case study documenting one student's acquisition of literacy in a New Zealand primary school over a period of sixteen weeks. Relying on observation and data from the learners' performance on the Reading Recovery Observation Survey (2013), the article focuses on the learner's progress through a literacy intervention. Because the learner needed to make accelerated progress in order to catch up with his peers, his intervention was changed from being a part of an ESOL group to being taught 1-1 as a Reading Recovery student. This accelerated his literacy learning to the point where he was able to access the curriculum with his class mates.

The book reviews that follow have been selected to cover a range of areas relevant to language teaching and research and to highlight current issues being explored in the literature.

In conclusion, it is important to thank all the contributors who submitted manuscripts for consideration in this year's volume of the journal. Part of the process involved in preparing a manuscript for publication involves responding to questions and guidance

from experienced peers. In this respect, we are indebted to members of the Editorial Board for their insight and generosity of spirit that characterize the reviews.

We encourage the many readers of the TESOLANZ Journal who have not yet contributed to the publication to consider doing so next year – either individually, or, collaboratively. You will find Notes for Contributors at the end of the journal, but always feel free to contact the corresponding editor by email ([Jean.Parkinson@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Jean.Parkinson@vuw.ac.nz)) if you require any additional information. The closing date for receiving manuscripts will be Monday, 19 August 2019.

Angela Joe and Jean Parkinson



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## ARTICLES

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# A KOREAN STUDENT'S STUDY ABROAD STORY IN NEW ZEALAND: 'IT'S REALLY HARD TO DISHWASH'

Jovan Cavor and Gary Barkhuizen  
University of Auckland

## Abstract

*In addition to offering educational benefits, study abroad is a context that can facilitate a wide range of potentially life-altering outcomes. This article reports on a study that explored such outcomes in light of the investment in the imagined identities of South Korean study abroad learners of English in New Zealand. The experiences of one particular participant is the focus of this article. Narrative analysis or writing as analysis is used to interpret the data and to present the findings in narrative form. The findings contextualise the learner's study abroad experiences as investing in English and other forms of capital in order to construct future imagined and desired identities.*

## Introduction

The 'English fever' phenomenon has long been recognised in South Korea. It has its roots in the early 1990s when English became a key component of Korea's strategy to become a significant economic presence on the world market stage. The country's commitment to increasing English proficiency amongst its population was reflected in curricular reforms in the 1990s; English was promoted to a compulsory subject from elementary school and up, and became an integral part of the country's educational system. These developments marked the early stages of 'English fever', which quickly escalated and formed a multi-billion dollar English education industry that still exists in Korea today. The English domino effect gained traction as the language quickly became a marker of the ruling classes and an indispensable prerequisite for heavily contested access to quality tertiary education, lucrative career options, and therefore upward social mobility (Song, 2011). In an already competitive society, with existing class disparities, English has become an additional form of social capital (Bourdieu, 1991) placing a burden on a large proportion of the middle and lower socioeconomic groups.

Despite the high cost of private English education in Korea, many families still invest in their children's English education: 75% of primary and secondary students attend private institutes, amounting to an average of 25% of household income spent on private education (Kim & Lee, 2010), most of which is spent on private English lessons (Moodie, 2015).

Because many Koreans now feel pressured to learn English they find the learning process stressful and unenjoyable. With many also being subjected to a highly competitive, test-oriented education system, and a hierarchy-dominated, high-stress workplace culture, acquiring English becomes yet another difficult hurdle to overcome. Consequently, study abroad has emerged as a viable option for Koreans looking to improve their English as a key form of social capital in Korea while exploring a new

context and temporarily escaping the pressures of their native society; for some, it can also become a pathway to global citizenship and settling outside of Korea.

This article reports on a narrative study which aimed to explore the various types of investment (Norton, 2013) that Korean study abroad learners of English in New Zealand engage in. It focuses on the study abroad sojourn of one of the six participants in a larger study, Park (a pseudonym), an adult male who came to New Zealand to learn English with the hope of settling in the country. The larger study sought to uncover: how the students' investing in English study was related to the socially imposed expectations of Korean society; what identity processes and outcomes they experienced while negotiating their investing in the New Zealand study abroad context; and how their study abroad experiences informed the imagined futures they invested in. Considering that human experience was the central subject of the inquiry, stories were adopted as a key component in this study: first, as a meaning-making tool that allows us to "preserve our memories, prompt our reflections, connect us to our past and present, and assist us to envision our future" (Kramp, 2004 p. 107); second, through storying as analysis (Benson, 2013), which involves constructing from a range of data a story that offers explanations (Polkinghorne, 1995) pertinent to the research problems under study (Bell, 2002). In sum, this article tells the story of a Korean study abroad student's experience of investing in learning English, and thus in his identity, in order to fulfil his desire of settling in New Zealand to live a life away from the societal pressures he has encountered in Korea.

### **Study abroad and imagined identity**

Study abroad can broadly be defined as an educational activity undertaken in a foreign country for a fixed period of time. Apart from educational benefits, study abroad can provide a range of potentially life-altering outcomes and experiences (Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott & Brown, 2012). Negotiating study abroad experiences is often described as an identity destabilising affair (Block, 2007) as it typically involves exposure to and interaction with contexts characterised by a foreign language, a new culture, and unfamiliar societal norms and practices. Furthermore, study abroad experiences and associated identity developments can be affected by the various types of *investments* (Norton, 2013) that students engage in, investments which test their agency and inform the identities they desire and are able to construct through claiming various types of capital (Kramsch, 2013) in their new contexts. Given that investment is often contested and continually shifts in accordance with changing desires and possibilities, it is also referred to as *investing* (Barkhuizen, 2016), reflecting its fluid nature, particularly in study abroad contexts.

For Koreans, studying abroad in New Zealand can include pre-existing plans of investing in legitimate membership in the New Zealand context as a desired community of practice (Wenger, 1998), and investing in various forms of capital that hold currency in relation to their imagined futures (Darvin & Norton, 2015); alternatively, the study abroad experience itself can be a catalyst for new hopes and dreams for the future, and

therefore new forms of investing in imagined identities. Investing therefore in study abroad entails constant refinement of students' imagined futures, as it is informed by their sense of agency and the constantly evolving ideas of the possible, based on their experiences in the study abroad context.

### **Data collection and narrative analysis**

Uncovering complexities and making sense of human experience is a task we most often engage in through the activity of storytelling, which has evolved throughout human history as an activity that assists us to make meaning of the world and our place within it (Polkinghorne, 1995). In the current research, the study abroad experiences of six adult participants were investigated through the collection, co-construction and interpretation of narratives (Barkhuizen, 2017) over the course of their involvement in this study, which spanned a six month period of their study abroad sojourn. The data upon which the study is based was obtained via three data collection methods: semi-structured narrative interviews, narrative frames, and a private Facebook group. Narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) was used as the primary method of analysis.

The primary source of data was narrative interviews. The participants took part in four to five narrative interviews (Chase, 2003) that averaged 45 minutes in length and were held at six to eight week intervals. The interviews, guided by open-ended questions, allowed participants to take longer turns at talking and engaging in dialogue with the interviewer, allowing for active co-construction of the narrative and for meaning making, on the part of both student participant and interviewer, to take place (Riessman, 2008). Functioning as a secondary research instrument, narrative frames (Barkhuizen, 2014) were also used to collect data, serving as a guide for reflective writing and further participant meaning-making. The frames were completed by participants two to three days prior to the interviews, thus serving as preparation for the interviews and highlighting the topics to be discussed.

Finally, exploiting the potential of social media as a data collection instrument, this study included a private Facebook group as a research instrument. The participants were asked to share and discuss their study abroad experiences and reflections with each other. Engaging with others in the private Facebook group allowed participants asynchronous participation, physical absence, and more time for reflection prior to participation in discussions (Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2015).

Writing as analysis, or what Polkinghorne (1995) refers to as *narrative analysis*, allows researchers to make sense of the collected set of data by unifying it into a coherent story. Narrative writing is, therefore, used as an analytical approach by the researcher whereby the data is interpreted and presented to the reader in narrative form. This approach allows for synthesizing of the data to construct explanatory stories. The findings of the narrative analysis, therefore, "are usually to be found in the narrative itself" (Benson, 2013, p. 251). In the present study, this analytical process served the purpose of the research by highlighting the fluid nature of the participants' investing in English; in

relation to social expectations in Korea, identity work in the study abroad context, and the imagined identities they desired and were able to invest in. Park's story, which exemplifies these study abroad experiences, is now presented.

### **Park's story**

Study abroad stories are often imagined as uncontested experiences of excitement, fun, discovery, and freedom. This is why study abroad sojourns are mostly expected to be gratifying and enjoyable experiences for those who are lucky enough to live them. However, Park's experience was entirely different, mostly due to the goal he had set himself prior to leaving Korea: to remain in New Zealand and build a life for himself, his wife, and their infant son. This goal would define to the smallest detail the time he spent in New Zealand, and demonstrate how active investing in an imagined future can influence and shape the study abroad experience.

Park's plan of living abroad has its beginnings in developments related to his employment situation in Korea. As a proud holder of a Master's Degree in Physical Education from a major university in Seoul, Park was happy with his job as a secondary school PE teacher; he was working in a job he loved, had excellent relationships with his students, colleagues, and the school principal. However, all changed when the school principal retired, only to be replaced by the vice-principal, who quickly decided to release Park from his role: "All of a sudden, he brought in someone new pretty PE teacher, so, yeah - just I am fired. I was fired. Yeah. So, that time, I don't want to live in Korea". Struggling to accept his dismissal, Park soon began thinking about moving away from Korea. He saw Korea as a place of unequal opportunities where "rich people is have many benefit...I am just poor people...I hate that situation in Korea". His first choice would have been to move to Hawaii, where his friend moved some years ago, and has settled very well: "My friend who live in America, he also poor people but he got married in America and he live very well". Park visited his friend twice before deciding he also wanted to move to Hawaii in search of a better life; however, his visa application was rejected. This is when he decided to change his plans and explore the option of settling in New Zealand in search of a better life. It was clear that Park's investment in settling in a Western country was partly motivated by the desire to escape the inequalities of Korea; he saw Western societies as similar in promising equal job opportunities and offering better lifestyles to those who weren't necessarily near the top of the societal hierarchy.

Park's decision to pursue a future away from his homeland resulted in English learning becoming one of his main priorities: "I thought about to emigrate to other country. That's when I started studying English". Although he claims he never cared for it before, it was clear to him that English was now an essential prerequisite of life in a Western country. After being dismissed from his job in Korea, Park studied English for almost two years, and was now intending to invest more of his time and money in studying English in New Zealand; he was well aware that he would need a high level of English in order to obtain a university certification, find proper employment, and eventually sit

and pass an IELTS test for his permanent residency. It was therefore justified that Park took English into consideration when opting to enrol as a full-time English language student in Auckland, find a “Kiwi” job within one month of arriving in New Zealand, and abandon the safe and comfortable flatting lifestyle with three other Koreans in central Auckland in favour of moving far from the city centre to stay with a Kiwi family. His strong sense of agency and willingness to conquer his fear of doing the difficult is what characterised Park, as he did not shy away from the intimidating challenges of finding employment and living with locals in a new context, while having limited English proficiency. Furthermore, it was clear that through facing these challenges Park was investing in English as the founding cornerstone of his imagined future in New Zealand:

Today I told my friends I thought I am wasting three months because I can't talk –I can't use English in my place. But my friends told me ‘no, you are comfortable in your place, in your previous place because you could talk to Koreans’, so, but, actually I was not comfortable because my mind is always ‘I have to use English, I have to use English’ but actually I used Korean all the time. Keep speaking Korean, so, I am not comfortable. Even now I don't understand my landlord, yeah, but I am happy because I can use English, yeah.

Park also quickly realised the importance of finding work, not only as a source of income, but more importantly as an additional source of opportunity for English learning. He made a clear distinction between “Korean” and “Kiwi” jobs: the first type is more convenient and easily accessible, as it usually involves working for a Korean business owner, which also usually means working with other Koreans in a context dominated by their native language; the second, on the other hand, involves working for a local business and being immersed in a context dominated by English. Just like in the case of accommodation, Park chose the more difficult option in relation to his employment: he found a job at a “Kiwi restaurant”. In the hope of having more opportunities to speak English, he accepted a dishwasher position where there was no “break time”, where it was “really hard to dishwash”, and the job was stressful because the plates stacked up very quickly. He also felt uneasy about being pressured by the head chef to work extra hours, despite claiming he didn't “need that much money” and he thought “studying (English) is more important”. His strong investment in English through work was also evident from his claim that he almost “give up finding a Kiwi job” and was about to settle for one of many Korean job offers, but was really happy when he found this “Kiwi restaurant” job, despite having insecurities about his English, which would make working in a Kiwi job more challenging.

However, Park would soon realise the potential difficulties associated with immersion in a new context, especially for a study abroad student with little social capital. In the “Kiwi job” that Park struggled to find, he felt “nervous” as he would often be unable “to understand what Kiwi says”. Wanting to impress his employer and do a good job, he would work with “no break time for eight hours” and reports that his “elbow would really hurt”, with the head chef often being “really rude” to him. Furthermore, the head

chef would insist on assigning Park more working hours than his visa allowed and would ignore Park's complaints that this was illegal. At last, Park realised that he worked so hard that he had little time to talk to anyone, which meant that in addition to being a difficult job, it also did not help his English, making him quit the job after one month. However, despite this somewhat negative adventure with the "Kiwi job", Park would continue his mission of trying to become immersed in the new context and improve his English through real life immersion. Although Korean owned, his next workplace was a shop where he worked as a cashier and had more opportunities to speak English with customers while using less physical energy than in his previous job.

Park's work experiences in New Zealand helped him quickly realise the extent to which his quality of life in his new context would depend on English. He knew that if his "English is not enough, I can work just dishwasher or do physical work". He was proud that in a few months he managed to find a cashier's job, which, although not high-paying, was much easier than dishwashing, and allowed him more opportunities to speak to people in English.

As mentioned above, in addition to investing in English through employment, Park opted to move in with a Kiwi family in the hope of creating opportunities for English practice in his homestay. He described his homestay family as "really kind"; every weekday he would finish "school and go to home until sleep and just keep talking". Despite having difficulties understanding the Kiwi accent and reporting feeling "sorry" because of being unable to communicate with his host family very well, he would persist, even if his contribution to the conversation often amounted to nodding and "pretend to understand, and say 'yeah, yeah'". He understood that forming meaningful relationships with locals was crucial in gaining access to real life English practice and new networks in the new context. This is why he said he would "hope, hope, hope" to meet and "talk to Kiwi people", and that by moving in with a Kiwi family he "got many opportunity", as his landlord took him places and introduced him to "some new Kiwi people".

Park's sense of agency played a major part in helping him confront his challenges since arriving in New Zealand. It was the sense of agency that he noticed many of his fellow study abroad students and migrants in general did not have: "other students or migrants, they don't try something new...they don't get a job, they stay just home...they don't change their life. I don't want to do that, so I try everything I can do". This approach helped Park create a number of opportunities for himself, which were all directly or indirectly related to his investment in an imagined future of a New Zealand resident who would enjoy a happy life with his family in New Zealand. Within a space of a few months he managed to find four different types of work, change two places of stay, buy a motorbike, change two language schools, and find a local Christian church that he visited every Sunday. In short, in such a short period of time, he managed to dive in and experience real life in his new context with all its positives and negatives—which is, arguably, much more than an average study abroad student manages to achieve.



Park's strong focus on English and building the foundations for his future in New Zealand did, however, affect the quality of his life in the new context. Despite being happy with his achievements, he reported feeling that pursuing English was not enough for him to be happy: "I just thought I need my English skill. But, I've lived here four months, I realised I need some relationship deeply...I need close friends...but I don't have any friends now". Although he avoided relationships with Koreans due to wanting to focus primarily on English, he admitted now wanting to make Korean friends if he could. This prompted him to pursue friendships with younger Korean study abroad students—something he would have never done in Korea due to the cultural barriers which prevent friendships between people of significant age differences.

Despite Park's commendable efforts, his story in New Zealand would not finish as he had anticipated. His planned pathway to residency in New Zealand changed when stricter immigration laws were introduced; a higher IELTS score and a job offer with a higher salary were now required. Park realised that instead of the planned two to three years, he would need five to seven years to obtain permanent residency. Already struggling and feeling increasingly lonely in New Zealand without his family and friends, he decided to abandon his plan of pursuing long-term stay in New Zealand and returned to his native Korea. However, his plan to live overseas did not change, and after only a month of moving back to Korea, he was due to travel to Canada in order to implement the same plan he unwillingly had to abandon in New Zealand.

## **Discussion**

Informed by poststructuralist theory, Norton (2014) recognised identity as a "site of struggle", often negotiated in contexts "of inequitable power relations", defined by our relationship with the world constructed across space and time, and how we understand our "possibilities for the future" (p. 61). Park's narrative reflections on his negative workplace experience in his homeland, as well as his views on the inequitable social structures of Korean society, highlighted his struggle to negotiate access to the desired possibilities for his future in Korea. Furthermore, it proved to be a catalyst for investment in English and a new imagined identity with hopes of a better future in New Zealand. This reflects Kramsch's (2009) assertion that "investment...accentuates the role of human agency and identity" in pursuing desired forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1991) when constructing imagined identities.

However, as Park's story demonstrates, investing is often a highly contested social action (Barkhuizen, 2016). The negotiation of his imagined belonging in the New Zealand community (Wenger, 1998) entailed the real life struggle of investing in English as a crucial form of capital. Some of the difficulties associated with his investing included: sustaining the financial expenses of high language school fees; seeking English learning opportunities and immersion through employment, which offered low pay, along with stress, hard physical work, and sometimes humiliation; and paying higher rent in pursuing homestay experience with a Kiwi family, despite struggling to understand their Kiwi accent. Furthermore, loneliness, the absence of family and

friends, and tightening of immigration laws, forced Park to revisit his investing in English and a future in New Zealand. As Pavlenko and Norton (2007) claim, the constant negotiation of membership in our desired communities “may influence agency, motivation, investment, and resistance” in study abroad language learners (p. 669). Consequently, despite Park’s strong sense of investment in English and an imagined future in New Zealand, he realised that the study abroad context can also be one of inequitable power relations, where study abroad students struggle to negotiate membership and claim the desired forms of capital necessary to achieve their future goals. As the ending of Park’s story suggests, the weight of his investing eventually forced him to revise his “plot” (Barkhuizen, 2016) and reconsider his future. His investment in an imagined future in the Western world remains alive, however, as he prepares for his next challenge of settling in Canada.

## **Conclusion**

Investigating study abroad experiences of language learners and their investments in English and imagined identities reveals often unexplored dimensions of language learning. It uncovers the significance of English in relation to study abroad learners’ future plans and the struggles they are willing to endure in the face of inequitable relations of power. Park’s story serves as evidence that English can represent a key form of capital in relation to study abroad learners’ imagined identities and desired futures. However, it also highlights how investment in English through immersion may be conditioned by limited access to the sought after local networks in study abroad contexts. Moreover, this exemplifies the unequal power relations students have to sometimes negotiate in study abroad contexts, consigning them to positions of marginality and greatly reducing their possibilities for successful immersion and the pursuit of valued forms of capital.

The narrative approach to inquiry used in this study allows for the learner to be presented as a person with their own life story (rather than being narrowly presented as ‘learner’); pursuing English and other forms of capital in study abroad and situated in the context of their life goals and dreams. It also highlights the potential of storytelling as a valuable meaning-making act that can benefit learners as they make sense of their study abroad experiences; furthermore, it poses a question about whether study abroad programs may consider more effective approaches to English education, which move away from typical (at times impersonal) classroom lessons, and include approaches where teachers familiarise themselves with the stories of the learners. As exemplified by the positive feedback of participants in the current study, it can offer learners a sense of validation and achievement when their experiences are discussed with a member of the local context (in this case, the researcher), given that isolation and lack of access to local networks is one of the reported key issues for study abroad learners. Further research of this kind may benefit and inform decision-making surrounding the design of study abroad programmes in New Zealand, which could result in those programmes more closely addressing the needs of learners in study abroad, empowering them, and helping make their study abroad journeys in New Zealand more useful, meaningful and

enjoyable. However, the extent to which study abroad learner needs can be addressed is largely dependent on the goals and beliefs of language schools and their teachers, as well as the resources available to them. Curriculum-supported community involvement would be a step in the right direction, as would the re-imagining of teaching practice to more thoroughly cater for learner needs. These steps would help learners counter the positions of inequality they so often find themselves in while investing in their future selves through study abroad.

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# TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS IN RURAL VIETNAM: AN AUTONOMOUS TEACHER'S NARRATIVES

Ha Hoang

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## Abstract

*This article is a participant inquiry about teacher autonomy in a teacher of young learners in a remote rural commune in Central Vietnam, where English as a Foreign Language was made compulsory at primary school level in 2012. Through the participant's narratives, the present inquiry sheds light on the difficulties an autonomous teacher may experience in the absence of support. The manuscript first sketches the setting of the inquiry then presents and discusses the participant's narratives, with the aim to present the voice that needs to be heard to foster autonomy in teaching English to young learners in rural Vietnam and to reveal the facilitating conditions required to foster autonomy among teachers in similar contexts.*

## Introduction

Teacher autonomy is a counterpart to learner autonomy. Like learner autonomy, it is difficult to arrive at a conclusive definition of teacher autonomy because the notion is open-ended, multi-faceted and context-sensitive. In general, an autonomous teacher is an agentic individual who takes control of their teaching and exercises self-directed professional. Teacher autonomy can be operationalised as the capacity to initiate self-directed professional action (i.e., teaching) and professional development (i.e., teacher-learning) within the prevailing constraints of a given context (Smith & Erdoğan, 2008; Ushioda, Smith, Mann, & Brown, 2011). There is a strong implication in current literature that teacher autonomy is a professional attribute, which requires the teachers to be autonomous in their own practice before they can foster autonomy in their learners.

It is often understood that responsible teachers make on-the-job decisions in the interests of their students and make changes to their immediate work environment. These decisions reflect their autonomy with regard to both curriculum and general teaching management (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Yet the actions that an individual takes may not mean that he/she is in control of the situation (Huang & Benson, 2013). Even when a teacher is highly autonomous in his/her daily teaching, without a facilitating environment, the effects of this autonomy may not be felt beyond the classroom. Indeed, teacher autonomy has often been discussed in conjunction with work environment constraints and professional freedom (e.g., Lamb & Reinders, 2008). It is within the prevailing constraints of a work environment that teacher autonomy arises, but if the environment is restrictive to the extent that the teachers' professional autonomy is limited, the internal capacity for autonomy is likely to diminish. Teacher autonomy is known to thrive in the presence of critical reflections, collegial dialogue and collaboration, and a facilitating system (Kennedy, 2014). In other words, teacher autonomy is not to be taken for granted; the attribute needs to be fostered.

However, teachers may not always find themselves in a situation where the ideal conditions for fostering autonomy exist. This inquiry reports on how, despite the contextual constraints, teacher autonomy is manifested in the daily practice of an English teacher of young learners in rural Vietnam. The manuscript first sketches the setting of the inquiry then reports on the participant's narratives. It aims to shed light on the difficulties an autonomous teacher may experience in the absence of support and how these may be overcome.

### **The present inquiry**

English as a foreign language has been taught to primary school children in Vietnam as an elective subject since the 1990s. Recently, as part of a national language education reform project – Project 2020 (<http://dean2020.edu.vn/>), English has been piloted as a compulsory subject at selected primary schools, starting from Grade 3 (aged 8). Accordingly, children at Grades 3, 4, and 5 receive four 40-minute periods per week (420 periods over three years) with the aim being for them to achieve a level equivalent to the A1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference when they complete primary school.

The participant in this inquiry is Minh, who taught at ABC primary school in a rural commune in a province in Central Vietnam where the pilot English program was being conducted. (All names are pseudonyms to protect the participant). He completed a BA in English Language at a private university and a Certificate of English Language Teaching at the regional Teachers' Training College in Vietnam in 2007. After graduation, Minh was appointed as an English teacher at a secondary school in the province. As part of Project 2020, in 2012, he was transferred to a primary school in his home village in the same province due to the increasing need for English teachers at the primary school level. After a nationwide re-standardisation test in English proficiency in 2011, Minh was selected for a trainer course in primary English language teaching co-organized by the British Council and the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training in 2014. The selection was based mainly on the fact that he was one of 12 (out of 404) primary and secondary teachers in the province who achieved the B2 level, the required proficiency level for teachers at primary and secondary schools, as set by the new standard in Project 2020.

The trainer course Minh attended, the *Primary Innovations Training Programme*, was a joint initiative between the British Council Vietnam and the Ministry of Education and Training (<https://www.britishcouncil.vn/en/teach/work/primary-innovations-training>), aiming to improve the quality of English language teaching and learning in state primary schools across the country. The course was a 'cascade' training programme whereby selected participants were trained by British Council 'master' trainers to become local trainers in teaching English to young learners. Over four phases of the programme (each phase lasted for two weeks), the participants received 240 hours of input on young learner methodology as well as training and workshop planning skills. At the end of

each training phase, the participants delivered a two-day workshop to teachers of young learners in their locality. Minh is now one of two trainers (the other trainer is from the local Department of Education and Training) for teachers of young learners in his province.

Since this manuscript was inspired by Minh's stories of his professional development, narrative inquiry was chosen. His stories were employed to tell a larger story of teacher autonomy in the context of rural Vietnam (cf. Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014). The narratives reported below (translated into English by the author) were selected from a three-month extensive email interview, which consisted of 87 email threads of different lengths, between Minh and the author, who taught him during his BA. These email exchanges, being synchronic, had created the space for extended and in-depth narrative-based conversations between Minh and the researcher (James, 2007) and allowed Minh to organise and present his stories in his way (cf. Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014). Thanks to the mutual trust and in particular Minh's commitment, the email exchanges were regular, continuous and extremely rich in details. Since Minh was given the time and space he needed to respond to the questions, his stories were marked with his conversational style and filled with elements of spontaneity. Minh used Vietnamese for ease of expression.

The narratives reported in this manuscript tell of Minh's teaching and professional development activities before and after the British Council trainer course – a landmark in his career. These narratives show the constraints of the work environment over Minh's autonomy, his action scheme to attain autonomy in his teaching and professional development, and specify the support required to promote teacher autonomy.

## **Minh's narratives**

### ***Before the trainer course***

The transfer in 2012 put Minh in a difficult situation because he had not been trained, and was not prepared to teach English to young learners. The new work situation was “a catastrophe” in his words:

The children couldn't understand me because they didn't have enough English. None of us [teachers] knew anything about teaching primary school children since most of the English teachers in primary schools were transferred from secondary schools. I didn't know who to ask. The traditional way, focusing only on structures, was not at all helpful to the children. I knew it didn't work, but I had no idea where to fix it. From school managers to teachers, we were all used to the traditional method: teaching means teaching grammar, teaching means translating.

Minh thus faced a quandary regarding how he could break with traditional teaching practices in order to cope with an unfamiliar teaching situation and meet the children's learning needs. Without training and mentoring, how would Minh find the solution to his puzzle?

In addition to the lack of training, there were limited opportunities of in-service professional development for Minh. In Minh's region, teachers would attend annual professional development seminars organised by the local Department of Education and Training. The seminars, conducted in the form of teaching demonstrations, were probably meant for teachers to learn from their peers, but somehow this goal was not fulfilled. Minh described a typical seminar as follows:

In such a seminar, the teacher who volunteered or was selected to demonstrate would prepare a lesson under the guidance of the specialists. The teacher would then rehearse the teaching session again and again, and then show-teach for all other teachers to watch.

Minh did not find these seminars helpful. He needed to know about the characteristics of young learners, the process of second language learning among children, the principles of designing and implementing tasks and activities for children, and the practice of assessment and evaluation for young learners. However, instead of receiving input on '*how to fix*' their problems, the teachers were asked to demonstrate a '*standardised*' teaching procedure. This learning opportunity, limited to once a year, did not help Minh and his fellow teachers solve their problems of how to teach English to young learners.

Minh also had many complaints to make about these seminars.

Such seminars were heavily focused on assessing teachers' performance so they were not real teaching. Everyone was worried about critiques, so they tried to rehearse as many times as possible, and then if there was feedback, even constructive feedback, they were not willing to accept. When people observed my session, they just said, "That's already good!" Who doesn't have weaknesses! Yet people just didn't tell me, didn't give me feedback.

Given that most teachers were turned into primary school teachers overnight, perhaps it was not easy for them to give feedback on their colleagues' teaching. It was unlikely that Minh and his fellow teachers could gain much from this practice of teaching performance and diplomatic criticism. The lack of interest and engagement in peer discussion and feedback was not a sign of a supportive collegial culture. It seems that the purpose of "professional development" of the annual seminars in his area was defeated by the assessment-oriented approach in which they were conducted. In this way, the system was not able to provide Minh and his colleagues with the support and training they needed to teach English to the children.

Minh felt "so lost". However, instead of giving up, he decided to take positive actions, for a number of reasons.

Maybe I didn't want to feel like a loser. Or maybe it was just self-pride. If someone is transferred from secondary to primary school, people may infer that the person either is incompetent or has disciplinary problems. I wanted to show



that this was not true. But above all, I could see the problems in English language teaching from the early days of my teaching career, and always wanted to change the way of teaching especially for the children. I didn't want to order my students to study all I taught – at school and at home, as this made it difficult for them to remember what they had learned. Even when they had learned all those things by heart, they couldn't use them effectively. I wanted to know how to help the children learn English naturally, use it fluently and not just use English for tests or exams.

Minh was motivated by a sense of self-worth and a desire to be recognised in his work environment. He interwove his sense of self-worth with the children's learning needs, seeking to establish his professional mark in the new school through improving the children's learning, the outcome of which motivated his development in return. Teachers like Minh, who act on their students' interests, have been known to be the agents of change in their immediate work environment (Robinson, 2012).

Placed in the situation where he could either sink or swim, Minh devised a scheme to aid his teaching and teacher-learning, using his English and computer skills as tools:

So I bought a computer, connected to the Internet and started to learn. I spent hours searching for materials and activities for children on the Internet, and adapting the contents to use them with my pupils. I also used different materials as additional reference sources such as Friends and Family, British Council's Little Kids, materials from the Integrate Ireland Language and Training, etc. [...] I used English as a tool to learn to install software programmes and fix them when they gave problems. Once I had an idea about how to prepare a lesson, I'd look for a software programme to help me do it, like editing sounds, drawing pictures, making crosswords. [...] I also tried to approach English programs at higher levels by giving private lessons to students [at these levels]. I used books on TOEIC, IELTS to improve my English. [...] I inquire into things I want to know, learn about them, apply what I've learned in the class, draw lessons about the good and bad things around it, make changes, use the modified knowledge in the class, and then again learn from the outcome, repeatedly like that.

Minh constantly tried out new ideas and looked for new resources to change the way of teaching English to his young learners. This whole process of teacher-learning was, by nature, trial-and-error, guided only by what he perceived to be better teaching, and better learning for the children. Yet by consistently asking himself what worked and what did not work with his pupils, with the aim of improving the teaching and learning in his classes, Minh was practising reflective teaching. He incorporated this self-initiated and self-regulated development cycle into his daily teaching in order to learn from his own practice. Minh's repeated cycle of teacher-learning above, which was based on the outcome of his teaching and the children's learning, echoes what Emery and Rich (2015) describe as "taking steps to examine teaching incidents more critically" (p. 31). This

critical reflection has been shown (e.g., Lamb, 2008) to be the key for teachers to overcome context-generated constraints to become autonomous in their teaching.

Minh's working conditions were actually not conducive to teacher learning. He had to teach four classes (87 children), and fulfil class administration duties and school service (e.g., maintaining the school's computer system, and running other errands for the school) with a monthly salary of about 300 NZD. In particular, his professional learning took place completely outside the school, and was unsupported. In order to apply the new ideas in his classrooms, Minh had to squeeze in the innovations while keeping in line with the set syllabus. Without authority over the goals and objectives of the course, the contents and skills to teach, the teaching materials and tasks (teachers are required to use solely prescribed books in class), or allocation of class time and space, Minh allowed himself the freedom to decide on his own teaching methods and strategies (cf. Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). As shown in his narrative above, with a given task, Minh would keep the contents but change the delivery method by replacing the task procedures in the course books with the ideas he learned from the Internet and the reference books. These innovative "pockets" helped him to engineer the changes, though at low level, in his daily teaching.

By addressing the children's learning needs, practising reflective practice and maintaining a self-directed professional learning agenda, Minh was able to create his own autonomous space without support from peers or the system. He continued with this for about two years when he applied and was selected for the British Council's *Primary Innovations Training Programme*.

### **After the trainer course**

#### ***As a teacher***

The trainer course, the only training that taught Minh the methods to teach English to children, helped to liberate him, enlightening him on the methodology of teaching young learners and validating his self-initiated professional activities.

Minh has become empowered with current practice, knowledge and skills in teaching English to young learners. He says:

The course was wonderful. Since the course, everything is different. I love the children more. I am happier in the teaching hours and my teaching quality has improved. I now understand more about children, their needs, the nature of teaching English to children and the way to work with them naturally. I am more active and more confident in creating activities for the children. To put it exactly, it [the course] has opened the door for me to walk deeper into [the world of] teaching English to children.

Minh is very excited about the possibilities of bringing new, up-to-date methods into play when teaching English to the children. When translating the training into his daily

teaching, Minh notes the extensive changes among the children and in his way of teaching:

The Grade 3 children [aged 8] have become more confident, and can figure out my questions even when they haven't learned the structures. Now I do not have to start the lesson with a grammar structure, and I'm not worried too much when they make a grammar mistake. As long as the children can give an answer, I am happy, whether they use the correct structure or not. For example, when I ask 'How many ... are there...?', and the children said 'Five' instead of 'There are five ...', I accept it as a correct answer to build their confidence and encourage them to participate in class. [...]The children now can understand [the language] without me having to explain the structure and translate it into Vietnamese for them.

As can be seen, Minh has become confident enough to stop using the structure-focused teaching practice altogether, which allows the children to work around their low language proficiency to enjoy their lessons in a supportive learning atmosphere. In other words, Minh's autonomy has been extended from the level of task procedures to the level of teaching approach.

Yet the best thing that Minh has gained from the course is the re-conceptualisation of his professional self-esteem, and of his career as an English teacher to young learners:

Deep inside, I don't have that idea that I'm "just a primary school English teacher" any more. [...] Instead, I've found joy, the joy in seeing the children, in working with them, that I didn't realize until now. And I realize that it is very difficult to teach English to young learners – much more difficult than what people think.

The course has no doubt been a transcendental professional experience for Minh who now values his job because he sees himself as empowered (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). The discovery of his pride in being a primary school English teacher has been an essential part of making the learning process more enjoyable for both Minh and the children. Their positive response and learning outcomes have given Minh the affirmation that his initial efforts to improve his language proficiency and teaching quality helped him get selected for the trainer course and that he should continue his self-initiated professional learning cycle, now an informed one.

No longer lost in finding a suitable method to teach the children, Minh is inspired to become more creative to explore new ideas and activities. He has applied more technology (e.g., software to create cartoon strips, puzzles, videos) and included traditional dance and music (Minh can play a traditional flute) in his lessons. Especially, the children can actively contribute to their own learning by putting their drawings and posters on the wall for other classes to see, telling him why they like or dislike an activity or a teaching aid, and talking to him about their learning difficulties. This is precisely what Borich (1998) maintains: teachers who experience positive affirmation in the

school and classroom, i.e., who have their impact recognised, exhibit the flexibility that allows them to welcome learners' contribution and foster learner autonomy.

The transformation in Minh's teaching approach and professional identity and the autonomy found among the children are a result of efforts from both sides, displaying the interactional relationship between the individual teacher's autonomy and the authority's support. Minh was selected for the course thanks to his sustained passion and commitment, and the trainer course was indeed the turning point for Minh to circumvent the context-bound constraints and thrive as an autonomous teacher. Minh's case confirms that when an autonomous teacher is liberated, the effects can be felt deeply not only in general teaching and learning, but also in learners and teachers' affect and motivation. The case particularly indicates that teacher autonomy, and thus learner autonomy, is a mission that teachers can best fulfil when their teaching and professional learning are supported.

### *As a trainer*

After the course, Minh and a specialist from the local Department of Education and Training organised an eight-day training programme for all teachers of younger learners in the whole province, mainly to report what they had learned, as per the British Council's cascade training model. Now a member of the Committee of the English subject in his District, Minh prepares tests for the annual Best English Teacher Contest, assesses the teachers in this contest, and prepares teaching syllabi for them. Minh enjoys the new responsibilities, mentioning that "*when it comes to professional activities, I make myself available to help other teachers*".

The new position of being a trainer has brought Minh new frustration: he has not been able to spread the autonomous spirit to other teachers. Apart from his self-initiated activities of daily teaching and his own professional development, Minh's autonomy has not brought about the desired changes in his teaching community. He still has to face the lack of collegial speak that he experienced earlier:

When I trained the teachers in the province, most of the time if they had questions they would ask me. I couldn't exchange ideas or ask them for opinions, because no one was willing to talk to me sincerely. It's just because they thought I was better [in English] than them! The same thing happened in the observation sessions, people just didn't want to share ideas or give feedback.

In the training sessions, people asked me to demonstrate a model lesson so they could use it later. [...] They wanted to know whether to teach vocabulary before or after the dialogue. If before, the step should be documented so later there'd be no refutation, there'd be no one finding faults with their teaching procedure. [...] The thorniest issue is teachers wouldn't accept the fact that there are shortcomings in what they are doing, and constantly seek to prove that they are right, and in the general atmosphere that everyone tries to please everyone else, the shortcomings become "perfect". [...] I felt that their motive wasn't for the

children's sake, but rather, for school managers and authorities who would watch their show and assess them.

As can be seen, there is an obvious and persistent reluctance to reach out to each other in this teacher community. This lack of engagement has been difficult for Minh to handle as a trainer. In Minh's words, the teachers appear passive and disengaged, and seem to prefer to follow a prescribed teaching procedure. Instead of seeking innovations and professional autonomy in their general teaching and class practice, they seem to be seeking fixations and dependence. Perhaps the long-term exposure to assessment-driven professional practice and the associated fear of retribution have damaged the teachers' confidence and motivation, resulting in this habit of withdrawing from professional conversations, even in a training programme. They must have considered Minh's training lessons as new standardised teaching procedures upon which they would be assessed later. No matter how open the training atmosphere was, the same teachers who were not willing to offer Minh feedback when he was not their trainer would have little confidence or motivation to discuss his training now. For different reasons, they do not see any value in making their voice heard and thus do not recognise collaborative collegial talk as integral to their professional development. Indeed, teacher collegial talk, a facilitating condition to foster professionalism and autonomy (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2013), is a practice that needs to be cultivated over time. If teachers do not practise professional collegial talk on a daily basis, it would be almost impossible for Minh to see it in these one-off training sessions.

It is worth mentioning that primary school English teachers in this region are disadvantaged in many ways. Besides a packed teaching schedule and low pay, they hardly have access to professional development opportunities or resources. For example, despite teaching at a "pilot" school, Minh does not have access to any resources or teaching aids other than those created by him. Minh's school at least has received funding for a projector and a speaker system; in other schools, it is not possible to think about any funding or resources dedicated to English learning. Geographically constrained in a remote area, many teachers here have lost their English proficiency over time (reflected in the results of the nation-wide proficiency test mentioned earlier) as their English is "limited to the course books only". This is not to suggest that teacher autonomy depends on teacher cognition or academic ability – there is, in fact, little correlation between them (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Although their expertise can be affected by economic and geographical constraints, as will be seen in Minh's narratives below, other factors within the work environment may have a more direct influence on these teachers' autonomous capacity.

There is also a lack of attention from education leaders in general. Minh mentions that English teachers in his region are "isolated" in the sense that school managers do not get involved, mainly because they do not speak English, so they just "leave it to the teachers". In addition, the system does not seem to expect teachers to initiate moves in their professional learning. When Minh volunteered to run a seminar to share what he

has been doing in his class, “*the [local] Office of Education and Training did not have time to attend; so the seminar was postponed. It’s now almost the end of the school year, but they still haven’t responded*”. Minh has again displayed the intended spirit of autonomy where one reaches out of the classroom for peer interaction and feedback (Frase & Sorenson, 1992). However, the system requires rigid administrative procedures for even a school-level professional development seminar to take place, which essentially failed Minh in this instance.

What Minh has experienced illustrates what Huang and Benson (2013) have described: Minh is autonomous, but he does not have control over his context. He says, “*Although I am the trainer, I am just another teacher. When I explain and show other teachers the new ways of teaching, they will applaud, but they won’t apply the new knowledge.*” The lack of opportunities for professional collegial talk and professional development activities as well as the lack of involvement from the system have resulted in a restrictive work ecology, which has effectively limited Minh’s autonomy to his classroom only.

### **Concluding remarks**

Because Minh is both a teacher and a teacher trainer, his account can provide a glimpse into the realities of a typical teacher of young learners in rural Vietnam from both perspectives. The children in Minh’s classes can have happy hours of learning English with a teacher who has successfully built his small bubble of professional autonomy in order to meet their learning needs. However, Minh will probably remain isolated in his autonomous practice due to a lack of a facilitating environment.

Through Minh’s narratives, this inquiry has built a case that individual teachers, including those in disadvantaged areas, can build their autonomy by addressing the children’s learning needs, reflecting on their daily teaching, and persisting with their professional learning. His story provides a realistic example of the teacher playing the agentive role in bringing about the change within the system. The inquiry has also shown that, to foster autonomy in teachers and teaching communities, individual efforts alone are inadequate. System support is of paramount importance.

As mentioned at the beginning, when the system is not facilitating teacher autonomy, it can deprive the teachers of this capacity. Although autonomy may manifest differently in different contexts and even in different individuals (Benson, 2011a), it is not an isolated individual trait. The capacity is mediated by a wide range of factors, particularly those in the work environment (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005), which are beyond the individual teachers’ control. For autonomy to become an inherent professional attribute, and for this attribute to shift from the autonomy among “committed but often isolated” teachers to one among those who can influence their work environment (Benson, 2011b), the capacity needs to be fostered with a concerted effort from the whole system.

Teachers’ autonomy will be present when teachers have conditions to take control of their teaching and learning. These conditions can be very simple. For example, in

Minh's case, the system can withdraw from dictating the teachers' lesson plans, prescribing teaching models and assessing their teaching skills in peer observation sessions. In addition, formal in-service learning opportunities should be regular and abundant. In-service learning can consolidate not only teachers' knowledge and skills but also their professional esteem to do their teaching and learning with confidence. More importantly, once teachers have exercised reflective practice and self-initiations in their daily teaching and professional learning, they need to be able to demonstrate and disseminate these capacities in their work environment so they can see their value and the impact of their efforts. This can effectively be achieved in a work environment that is conducive to collegial talk, one which provides more opportunities, and less bureaucracy, for teacher-led collaborative professional development activities.

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# THE ACCELERATED PROGRESS OF AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER THROUGH READING RECOVERY: A CASE STUDY

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## Abstract

*When English language learners enter a New Zealand primary school, there are two types of intervention commonly used to help them reach age appropriate levels: ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) support, and, if available, Reading Recovery. This paper describes a case study of Reading Recovery support provided to one student over the course of sixteen weeks to help him meet literacy targets and shows the benefits such support can provide.*

## Introduction

Reading Recovery was developed in New Zealand in the 1970s by Dame Marie Clay and has since spread to many countries around the world. It is an intense teaching method where one student and one teacher work together for half an hour each day, five days a week, to improve reading and writing strategies and to instil in learners a self-extending reading system that will improve whenever they read and write (Clay, 2005a). It is expected that a typical lesson series will last between 12 and 20 weeks with the student reaching the average reading level in their class in that time. Participants are the lowest readers after one year at school. For a school to be considered to have full implementation of Reading Recovery, the six-year-olds with the lowest literacy levels, regardless of potential, absence, ethnicity or other factors must receive support (Ministry of Education, 2015).

Pale (a pseudonym) started at my school, a state primary in a provincial town, in June 2015, having just arrived from Sāmoa. He was six years and eleven months old and had almost no spoken or written English. Pale was included in the lowest ESOL group with nine other students ranging in age from 5 to 8 years. He made average progress in this group, increasing his reading levels at the rate of one level a month, on track to reaching Level 12 of the levelled books after one year in school (Ministry of Education, 2016a). At this rate he was unlikely to catch up to his peer group who were generally reading at around Level 15 at the time.

After his first half year at my school, I decided to include him on the Reading Recovery intervention to accelerate his reading and writing to move him more quickly towards the level of his peers. This paper describes Pale's journey of learning through his sixteen weeks in Reading Recovery as an English language learner, in order to show the benefits a Reading Recovery intervention can provide.

### **Literature review**

There is a view among some international literacy experts that Reading Recovery coverage needs expanding and should be offered to all students, regardless of English proficiency, as it increases their English ability as they work through book levels (Kelly, Gómez-Bellengé, Chen, & Schulz, 2008). Reading Recovery is used to support English language learners in New Zealand, Australia, the UK and USA. Longitudinal studies show the students make progress in all aspects of English and benefit from inclusion in the intervention, while taking no longer to work through the lesson series than first language English speakers (Clay, 2005b).

Students need to be taught in such a way that takes them beyond conversational fluency and allows them to have enough language proficiency to work in the context-reduced, cognitively demanding situation of the classroom (Cummins, 2000, p. 173). By carefully scaffolding lessons using specifically chosen texts and experiences, students can move from Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) to Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). While students can obtain enough verbal fluency within 1-2 years (BICS) to interact with peers on a social level, it can take much longer to develop academic language (CALP). Although Reading Recovery uses books at an early level that are about everyday experiences for young children, the topics and contexts about which the children read and write expand as the levels increase, matching topics and texts used in the classroom (Clay, 2005a). This scaffolding of text topics and complexity of language allows them to develop the skills required for the context-reduced, cognitively demanding classroom.

Westerveld (2013) found that Sāmoan children transitioning from total immersion to English-medium schools very quickly came to surpass their monolingual peers in vocabulary. Vocabulary is the strongest indicator of success in reading (Sprenger, 2013) and the expanding lexicons of levelled books, introduced in a way to extend word understanding (Clay, 2005b), gradually helps to expose students to a greater range of vocabulary.

While there is a lot of backing for using the intervention to support students from non-English speaking backgrounds, not all researchers agree that Reading Recovery is the best learning environment for an English language learner. Reading Recovery could be placed in the low-challenge, high-support ‘comfort zone’ of learning where teachers give too much support, so students are not able to proceed in their classrooms independently (Gibbons, 2009). Nevertheless, the goal of Reading Recovery is to instil in learners a self-extending reading system that will improve whenever they read and write (Clay, 2005a).

A further criticism of Reading Recovery is that it does not teach enough phonics (Tunmer & Chapman, 2003). Here ‘phonics’ is used to cover the different but linked ideas of ‘phonemic awareness’ and the instruction around phonological awareness. Phonemic awareness describes noticing and thinking about the sounds, or phonemes,

within words. Phonological awareness describes manipulating these sounds while phonics is a type of reading instruction that promotes the discovery and understanding of the correspondence between sounds and letters (Scarborough & Brady, 2002). These skills are taught in an integrated way within Reading Recovery, rather than as a specific focus. Teachers are expected to find the opportunities to raise phonemic awareness and teach phonological skills through the reading and writing activities within each session (Clay, 2005b). It was therefore important to teach Pale New Zealand English letter sounds as he had some literacy in Sāmoan, which differs phonologically from English such as the lack of distinction between /p/ and /b/ and differing vowel systems. It was also important for him to focus on spelling patterns (Duranti & Reynolds, 2000).

Although having early literacy skills in a first language supports the development of literacy in the target language (Goodrich, Lonigan & Farver, 2013), there is not always a strong correlation. While Sāmoan literacy is often taught through repetition and memorisation of texts (Dickie & McDonald, 2011) and Reading Recovery has a focus of learning in context to encourage the self-extending system (Clay, 2005a), this home/school differentiation is one that teachers need to equip their students to deal with as they go through a schooling system that will not always be responsive to their cultural capital (Hunter et al., 2016).

Although Reading Recovery is often used with English language learners, there have been few formal studies published examining this. In a quantitative US study of 25,601 children, Ashdown and Simic (2000) compared the results of English language learners and native English speakers who received a Reading Recovery intervention with both English Language learners and native speakers who needed the intervention but missed out, as well as a control group who did not need the support. They discovered that, on average, students with limited English who received the intervention made as much progress as native English speaking learners receiving it. Ashdown and Simic's conclusion was that pressure on schools to achieve successful discontinuations of the lesson series, where students reach the average reading levels of their peers, often resulted in learners with low English fluency being excluded from the intervention due to the perception of low oral fluency affecting the student's ability to learn in the target language. However, it takes approximately ten weeks for a good judgment of whether students will reach expected levels or not to arise (p. 39).

In a New Zealand study, Vine (2003) observed a Sāmoan child learning to participate and access the curriculum through interactions with his peers. These interactions tended to be non-verbal, as the students did not initially have a shared language. They were not always positive interactions with the child hitting his classmates as one of his main forms of communication. Within the setting of the current study, Pale was not interacting with a peer, but a trained ESOL and reading teacher. He was able to work towards accessing the curriculum in a scaffolded and supported way where there was less of a struggle for negotiated meaning.

The case study reported in this paper differs from Ashdown and Simic's (2000) investigation in to the effectiveness of Reading Recovery for teaching English language learners, and Vine's (2003) case study of a five-year-old Sāmoan boy learning how to participate in class through interactions with his English-speaking peers in that it is an in-depth documentation of one child's journey towards the literacy levels of his peers in the English language. Ashdown and Simic produced a quantitative study comparing the time and results of Reading Recovery between English language learners, native English speakers, and a control group that did not receive intervention. Vine's case study followed a five-year-old's interactions with his peers, rather than a teacher, as he moved towards accessing the curriculum. This study is a formal intervention, following the procedures, protocols and paperwork of Reading Recovery undertaken by a trained and experienced Reading Recovery and ESOL teacher. Lessons were held every day for 30 minutes rather than once a week for 45 minutes.

### Method

When Pale arrived from Sāmoa in June 2015 he spoke very little English beyond 'hello' and 'thank you' and could write only his name. Pale was included in the second funding round for English language learner support in 2015. He was at the foundation stage of the English Language Learning Progressions (Ministry of Education, 2008) for reading, writing, listening and speaking. His score was 0 (an absolute beginner level). He had some literacy in Sāmoan, having started school in Sāmoa a few months previously, and we spent a lot of time sharing *The Samoan (sic) Picture Dictionary* (2006) together, where he read the Sāmoan words and we discussed meanings. He would slowly decode the written word then match it to the picture. He had good awareness of the phonological representation in the writing system of his first language. He was included in the lowest ESOL group with nine other students ranging in age from 5 to 8 years. The group worked each day for 20 minutes before the younger children would leave and the older children, including Pale, would work for another 20 minutes on reading and writing. Over those few months Pale was able to go from emergent reading and writing to being able to read and write a little in English.

After the summer holidays Pale returned to the school and participated in the Reading Recovery Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 2013). The survey consists of seven parts as described below.

- *Reading Level*: the reading of continuous text is assessed using a Running Record which is when a student is given texts at various levels to read aloud until they can achieve an accuracy of between 90-94%. This is the student's reading level.
- *Letter Identification*: This measures a student's ability to identify and name the capital and lower-case letters, including the print versions of 'a' and 'g'. Letter names or sounds, or a word starting with the same letter are all considered as a correct response for each letter. This is measured out of 54.
- *Concepts about Print*: This measures components of print knowledge including directionality, punctuation and noticing changes in text order. The maximum score is 24.

- *Word Reading*: This is measured using two single-word reading measuring tools. The Clay Reading test is a list of 15 words while the Burt word reading test (Gilmore, Croft & Reid, 1981) is a list of words that gets progressively harder. The child reads through the list until they gets 10 words incorrect in a row. Their total number correct is added together and compared to the score sheet. A score of fewer than 20 words correct indicates they have a reading age of less than 5.10 to 6.04 years.
- *Word Writing*: The student is given ten minutes to write as many words as possible. The teacher prompts, asking them to write their name, the names of people at home, expected known words, or by asking, “Can you think of any other words like that?” but they are not prompted to write lists of rhyming words. Each correctly spelled and formed word is given one point with no maximum. Directionality, letter formation and order, size and spacing are noted.
- *Spelling*: Hearing and Recording Sounds is a dictation activity that observes the learner’s ability to say words slowly and write the phonemes they hear in the correct order. Students are asked to write a sentence from the Observation Survey. A point is given for each phoneme correctly represented with a maximum score of 37.

Pale’s initial Reading Recovery Observation Survey scores are shown in Table 1, which includes a comparison with the expected average scores of a child of his age. Pale’s scores were very low and indicated the need for intervention.

Table 1:  
Pale’s initial Observation Survey scores

<b>Observation Survey Scores</b>				
	<b>Possible Total</b>	<b>Pale initial aged 6.8</b>	<b>Expected average scores aged 6.5-7 (Clay, 2013)</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Book Reading Level	Open ended	5 91% S/C 1:3.6	15	10
Letter Identification	/54	52	53	1
Concepts about Print	/24	13	20	7
Clay Reading	/15	4	14	10

<b>Observation Survey Scores</b>				
	<b>Possible Total</b>	<b>Pale initial aged 6.8</b>	<b>Expected average scores aged 6.5-7 (Clay, 2013)</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Burt Reading	/120	7 Reading age <5.20-6.04	32 Reading age 6.10-7.04	25
Word Writing	Open ended	5	46-56	40-50
Hearing and Recording Sounds	/37	17	36	19

### **Implementation of Reading Recovery**

We then proceeded to work together every day for 30 minutes, where we followed the outline of a Reading Recovery lesson series. Each lesson series is designed for an individual learner, but follows the same basic outline of reading a known book to work on intonation and phrasing, administering a Running Record on the previous day's book to assess the needs of the student, working on letters in isolation, composing and writing a story, cutting up and reassembling the story, and reading a new book.

### **Results**

As this is an ongoing intervention, each week the Friday Running Record was added to a cumulative reading level graph and was shared with Pale's classroom teacher with the expectation that Pale's classroom reading would accelerate at a similar rate. As shown in Figure 1, Pale made accelerated progress. There were three times where he remained on the same level for two weeks but this still equates to twice the speed of what would be expected to occur in a mainstream classroom.

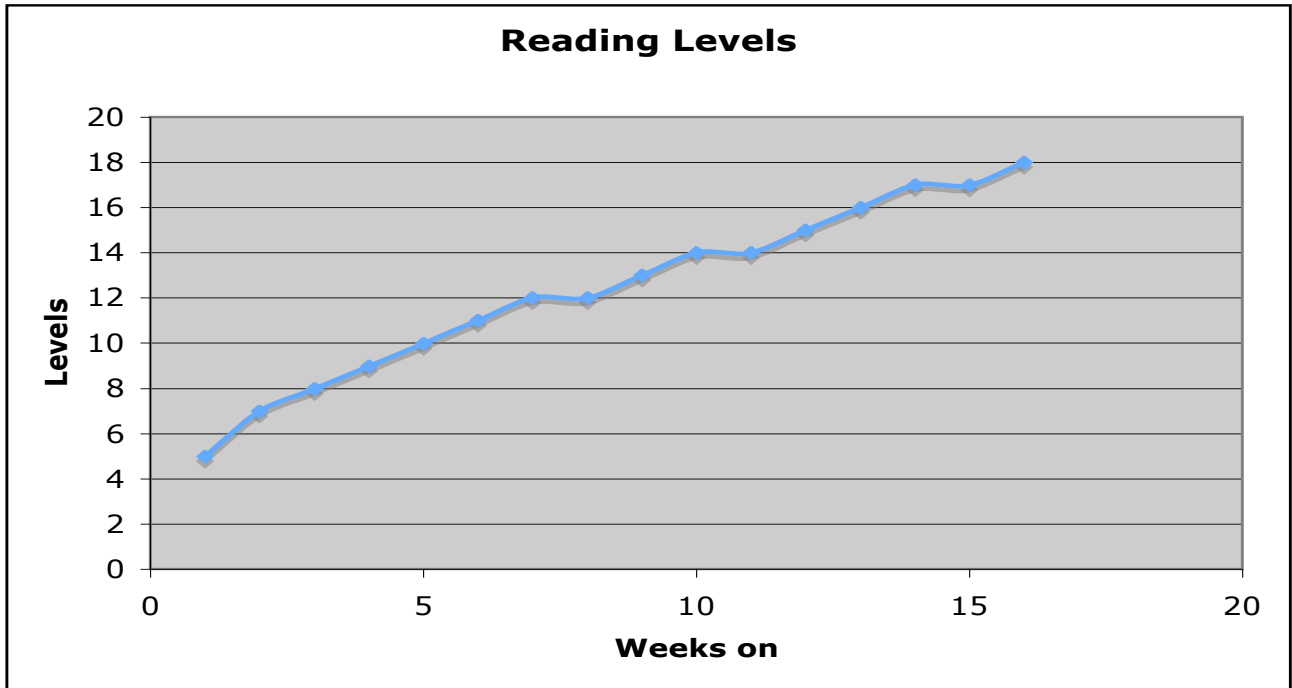


Figure 1:  
Reading level graph

After 16 weeks Pale's reading level reached that of his classmates. The Observation Survey was then re-administered and his daily lesson series was discontinued. Table 2 shows the increase in scores of the Observation Survey components. He was then placed in an ESOL group to continue working on his sentence structure.

Table 2:  
Comparison of Observation Survey results

		Pale observation	Reading survey	Recovery levels
	Possible Total	Initial	Final	Change
Book Reading Level	Open ended	5	18	+13
Letter identification	/54	52	54	+2
Concepts about Print	/24	13	23	+10
Clay Reading	/15	4	15	+11

		<b>Pale observation</b>	<b>Reading survey</b>	<b>Recovery levels</b>
	<b>Possible Total</b>	<b>Initial</b>	<b>Final</b>	<b>Change</b>
Burt Reading	/120	7 Reading age <5.20-6.04	37 Reading age 7.03-7.09	+30
Word Writing	Open ended	5	60	+55
Hearing and Recording Sounds	/37	17	36	+19

Pale's results were included in the Reading Recovery Data Collection (Ministry of Education, 2016b) and I worked under the supervision of the local Reading Recovery tutor. By including him officially in the Ministry of Education Reading Recovery programme, a commitment was made to continue the intervention to completion.

Although Pale's reading and writing were of a high enough standard to allow him to access the curriculum with his peers, his syntax was still not up to standard New Zealand English and, for this reason, he was again included in an ESOL group to continue working on this, following Clay's recommendation:

At the conclusion of the lesson series the (English language learner) child is still in need of rich opportunities for further development in the language of instruction. His (*sic*) exposure to English vocabulary and grammar have been limited, and many of the concepts he encounters in his classroom reading will be unfamiliar. However, after a series of Reading Recovery lessons the child then has three complementary routes to that further language learning, via oral language, writing and reading (Clay 2005b, p. 183.)

Reading Recovery has two positive outcomes: successful discontinuation of the lesson series having reached the average reading levels of the class, or referral on to the next level of support (Clay 2005b). It can take up to ten weeks before it is obvious whether a child will successfully complete the lesson series, which can last 20 weeks (Ashdown & Simic, 2000). By Week 10, I was confident Pale would reach the average reading level of his class mates, as he had made such good, average progress for a student on the intervention (whether English language learner or native English speaker). In 2016, Pale was working in the middle ESOL group, working on English Language Learning Progressions (ELLP) (Ministry of Education, 2008) writing level Stage 1. When he started the school in June 2015, his over-all ELLP score had been 0. In July 2016, his ELLP overall score was 4, being Stage 1 for reading, writing, listening and speaking.



His English had improved in all areas to the point where he could now interact with his peer group and teachers in the classroom. Pale was able to write a simple story quickly in English and record all sounds in words although this was still influenced by his Sāmoan pronunciation. His syntax continued to improve and he was able to use more of the figures of speech and correct collocation that his mainstream classmates used, such as ‘During playtime I played with my friends’, ‘I am good at rugby’ and ‘I am faster than him’. He was able to decode text, split it into chunks and compare unknown language with words he knew. He would not always monitor whether or not he knew a word and would sometimes keep reading the continuous text even when it did not make sense. He had become an independent worker and knew he was doing well. He commented on the changes in his English reading ability and boasted how much better at books he was than his younger sister, who was by then receiving a Reading Recovery series of her own.

At the beginning of 2016, as we were starting Reading Recovery, Pale was put in a classroom reading group with a student struggling to learn and struggling to interact with teachers appropriately. In the 16 weeks I worked with him in the withdrawal lessons, this class reading group moved from Level 5 to Level 9. The Ministry of Education indicates that, on average, improvement of one level per month can be expected based on the need to gain 12 levels in 12 months. The classroom teacher and I needed to work closely together to ensure our expectations of Pale were similar (Abrahamson, 2016). I supplied a copy of his Friday Running Records and would talk to Pale’s teacher about his areas of work and improvement. By the end of his time, Pale was in the class reading group closest to level 18. Pale was reported by his teacher to be holding his own in that group, being able to interact with literacy tasks in his classroom at a comparable level with his peers.

## **Discussion**

Reading Recovery implementation comes with the expectation that students receive five lessons a week (National Reading Recovery, 2017). This becomes difficult if lessons are missed due to school events such as visiting performers, or absences due to illness or family bereavement. Although this did not happen often, as with my other students, if there was not a space available due to another child being absent, we would make up our missed lessons during lunch times. This is in line with Haworth’s (2015) findings that a great deal of work by New Zealand ESOL teachers is of a voluntary and flexible nature. Although Pale always worked hard during lessons, he was generally happier to come at lunchtime rather than during class. While Chan and Dally (2000, cited in Westwood, 2012) may claim this is because he felt marginalized being removed from the class, he reported that it was his reluctance to miss out on classroom iPad activities. Once he was seated, he would be ready to work. As there is such a lot of different types of support put in for different children in the school, there was nothing particularly unusual about him having extra help, to the point where his friends would sometimes come and read in the back of the room, waiting for him to finish our catch-up lessons.

Although Pale was older than most children starting Reading Recovery, Clay (2005b p 183) states that “in special cases it is also appropriate to work with older children aged seven to nine if they need foundational instruction in English reading or writing”. Reid (2001) found in her eight-month study of middle-school students that English language learners included in the intervention often made good progress in their reading levels. By studying six English language learners who were struggling with English literacy she came to the conclusion that the techniques increased confidence and skills and resulted in higher standardized test gains than peers who had not been taught using the techniques. Furthermore, Pale’s early literacy skills in his first language correlated with his reasonably high (52/54) initial letter identification score and supported him within the acceleration of literacy in his target language (Goodrich et al., 2013). Knowing those letters freed up cognitive space to focus on other aspects of literacy as he did not have to work out letter-sound matches (Stainthorp, 2017).

Tunmer, Chapman, Greaney, Pronchnow and Arrow (2013) suggest Māori and Pāsifika students under-perform in Reading Recovery, but often expectation will affect outcome (Ministry of Education, 2003). After years of practice and experience, I expected Pale to make the required accelerated progress, which he did. A combination of teacher expectation plus the appropriate situation to meet his needs meant Pale was able to move swiftly to become a more independent and capable reader and writer in English. However, as noted in Table 2, Pale did not manage to reach his age level in the Burt assessment. This had more to do with vocabulary than reading skills, as words such as ‘luncheon’, ‘journey’ and ‘refrigerator’ are not ones he frequently uses.

Almost all one-to-one interventions produce positive results in reading and writing for the individual learner (Gersten, Newman-Gonchar, Haymond, & Dimino, 2017), and it could be argued that Pale’s learning rate would have accelerated using any other individualised lesson series. What this study shows is that Reading Recovery produces the positive results expected provided that Reading Recovery lessons are held five times a week, as mandated. This provides better opportunity for engagement through increased opportunity to learn (Education Review Office, 2012). If an intervention that occurred less frequently or for a shorter duration each lesson was applied, it would diminish this opportunity. Having a trained teacher implementing a carefully crafted, individualised intervention is more likely to promote acceleration than a non-trained person administering a step-by-step programme (Harris, Davidson, & Aprile, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

This case study was carried out to chronicle the accelerated progress of one child through Reading Recovery. The learner was included in the programme as he was making only standard progress within the ESOL group and needed to make accelerated progress in order to catch up with his native speaking peers. Cummins (in May, Hill & Tiakiwai, 2004) states that it can take between five and eight years to reach peer level in academic language. Accelerated progress from specialized interventions can support

this through giving the base literacy and vocabulary skills from which to build on the context-reduced communicative proficiency.

An area of further study could be a comparison of children who receive full Reading Recovery lesson series with those receiving less structured one-to-one help to see if the rate of improvement is comparable. Investigating how Reading Recovery affects the bilingual reading abilities of ESOL children would also be worthwhile.

There is no indication that Pale felt marginalised in an intervention requiring him to be withdrawn from class, and I believe that the on-going difficulties caused by him not being able to perform at the same levels in English as his peers would have been worse than feelings of standing out by receiving extra support. This intervention has been very successful for him and suggests that Reading Recovery is as well suited to English language learners as to native English speakers.

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## **REVIEWS**

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**Flowerdew, J. & Costley, T. (Eds.). (2006). *Discipline-specific writing*. Lon. & New York: Routledge. ISBN: 978-1-138-90744-7 (pbk). 217 pp.**

**Reviewed by Cherie Connor, Victoria University of Wellington**

The area of English for specific academic purposes has gained increased attention in recent years in line with growing student demand for tertiary studies in an English medium, and the acknowledgement that language is best considered within the social context in which it is used. This edited volume addresses the types of questions that may arise in the development and delivery of a course for discipline-specific writing. Emerging largely from workshops given at a Summer Institute hosted by the City University of Hong Kong, it provides a comprehensive addition to literature in the area, with a particular strength in offering research-based pedagogical approaches to the teaching of discipline-specific writing. In this volume theory is never left in the abstract, but is aligned closely to a specific pedagogical setting.

Each of the book's thirteen chapters is characterised by a very clear and unifying format. It begins with a brief overview of what the chapter will achieve, moves on to outline the theoretical basis or principles which inform the approach to writing pedagogy, before providing practical frameworks, and methods for implementation in a classroom. Each chapter finishes with discussion questions to engage the reader. This similarity across chapters makes the book immensely readable and easy to follow, while the theory into practice structure makes it a very practical resource.

The first three chapters, including a very helpful introduction by the editors, offer a broad discussion of the topic, with Forest and Davis making an argument for discipline-specific writing teachers to ensure that a thorough investigation of their local context informs their course planning. They go on to provide a 'toolkit' (p.18) of how to identify the way that students and staff conceptualise writing in a particular institution. Basturkmen's chapter also emphasises the importance of situational factors in discipline-specific writing course development, and she highlights the need to consider the level of expertise the student and teacher / course developer have in the discipline. Her chapter also provides a clear and thoughtful contrast of English for general academic purposes (EGAP) and specific academic purposes (ESAP).

Many of the thirteen edited chapters in this book focus on a particular discipline, but offer generalisable principles and pedagogical approaches. For example, Miller and Richards' chapter is based within the context of a course for report writing and presenting in science, but it focuses specifically on how grammar is dealt with. The use of a table mapping principles to specific activities is particularly useful, and may allow for discussion about how well each task illustrates the principle. Coxhead's chapter on identifying discipline-specific vocabulary is similarly practical and useful across disciplines. Gimenez describes an ethnographic study of business students and lecturers and how their conceptualisation of writing for business compares with what the genre

literature suggests. The inclusion of specific tasks shows how the results of the study can be turned into practical activities. While Parkinson's focus is the laboratory report in science, her discussion of genre and moves analysis provides a pedagogical approach that can be adapted and adopted in other disciplines. Her reminder not to "present genres prescriptively, as unchanging, rigid structures" (p.107), for example, is sage advice for all practitioners.

Further chapters focus on approaches to teaching specific genre types. While Flowerdew and Wang address research articles, Fitzpatrick and Costley look at the use of annotated biographies to facilitate student engagement with the readings in their writing. Explicitly favouring an academic literacies approach, whereby academic writing is viewed as a social practice which involves power and identity, they aim to help students find their voice as novice social scientists. Again, although these chapters are embedded within a specific context, they offer principles and frameworks which course planners can consider within their relevant socio-linguistic context and think about how they may adapt and utilise them.

Several themes emerge from the volume. One of these is the idea that the role of the discipline specific writing course is not just acculturating students into a discipline, but empowering them to consider it critically. The critical literacies perspective is referred to in the chapters of Forest and Davis, Chun, and Fitzpatrick and Costley. In his chapter, Chun presents a framework for introducing a critical literacy approach in the classroom which is thought-provoking and may encourage practitioners to consider their own stance on this perspective.

Another theme is the extent to which the writing teacher needs to be a disciplinary expert. This is touched on in chapters by Basturkmen, and Forest and Davis. Parkinson draws on Swales (1990) to suggest that while the writing teacher may not be an expert in the subject, (s)he should aim to draw insights from textbooks, observation of content classes, and also by speaking with content staff. However, there is minimal reference in any chapter to the complexities involved in the writing teacher's collaboration with discipline-content experts.

Flowerdew and Costley's compilation is both unified and impressive in scope. It should be highly recommended to anyone developing or teaching (and for many in the field, it is realistically both) a discipline-specific writing course or considering genre within an EGAP course. A thorough read of the chapters provides a theoretical basis from which to proceed, approaches and perspectives to consider, as well as a wealth of transferable tasks and ideas.

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**Fanselow, J.F. (2018). Small changes in teaching big results in learning: Videos, activities and essays to stimulate fresh thinking about language learning. International Teacher Development Institute (iTDi) 340 pp.  
<https://itdi.pro>**

29 videos illustrating the teaching and learning activities are freely available at:  
[www.iTDi.pro/itdihome/small-changes-big-results-videos](http://www.iTDi.pro/itdihome/small-changes-big-results-videos)

**Reviewed by Margaret Kitchen, University of Auckland**

I first encountered John Fanselow's passion for language teaching and learning at a Japanese Association for Language Teaching SIG in Okinawa in 2016. There, in his keynote, as in his latest book, Fanselow challenged my expectations of academics. We, the audience, were asked to play the role of Fanselow's language students and we thoroughly enjoyed the quirky language learning activities we engaged in. In the same style, in his latest book, Fanselow challenges assumptions and questions commonly held in teaching and learning practices while encouraging the reader to discover something different about teaching and student learning. He suggests that as teachers we should primarily be guided by careful self-observation and analysis of what language learning students do in our own contexts. As in my real life encounter, Fanselow factors in affective features of learning referencing Sylvia Ashton Warner's practices in remote, rural Aotearoa.

Aimed at anyone who is a teacher of language learners, the book begins with a brief allegorical narrative about starting out teaching in Nigeria. The allegory explains the gist of the book: take commonly held assumptions about learning and consider creating alternative practices. Starting out as a teacher educator Fanselow observed the first 20 minutes of one teacher's lesson and then the second 20 minutes of another teacher. He shared with each teacher one or two of the activities the other teacher had carried out and suggested that each teacher try the other's activities and notice the small changes. Because they were busy teaching it was hard for the teachers to notice the differences but Fanselow, as an observer, could. The teachers were often surprised by the results. Fanselow suggests that teachers develop a continuum of assumptions such as: *Ignore errors when you think you know what learners mean/Notice and correct errors and have students practise correct forms*. He encourages teachers to choose an item from the continuum and create an alternative activity every few days and explore the results. He suggests that noticing that what you want to do, what you think you do and what you actually do is exhilarating.

The book is in two main sections. Part 1 is *Making small changes to develop self-reliance in language learning and teaching*. Part 1 has seven chapters addressing activities in the different modes. To give an example, the first chapter focuses on mastering speaking, listening, reading and writing through an activity he calls *Read and Look Up* attributed to Michael West. This technique addresses some students' dread of

reading aloud while exploiting the positive attitudes others have for it. Fanselow supplies considerable specific detail about what he usually does for each activity, but he is suggesting that readers create their own versions. He quotes Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855) reinforcing the notion that fundamentally we need to discover new ways of teaching in our own contexts. Part 2 is called *Exploring and analyzing the results of small changes*. In this section Fanselow explains in detail how he uses transcription and analysis.

This textbook is aimed at both novice and experienced teachers of English as an additional language. The contexts in the examples are decidedly EFL and traditional in terms of the focus on grammar. The activities (never described as *tasks*) are explained with such detail that the novice teacher can understand them. The book can be used by individual teachers as well as in informal teacher training groups. The resource is user friendly and can easily be dipped into – a chronological reading is not necessary. Each chapter is accompanied by videos, freely available on the internet, that demonstrate the activities.

*Making Small Changes in Teaching* may appear deceptively simple in that it focuses on the detail of teaching and learning activities, but Fanselow's underlying and primary concern is to challenge our classroom routines, habits and practices through analysis, together with our students, of classroom transcripts. Such a process is both challenging and transformational and yet infrequently practised.

**Eldridge, C. (2016). *Real Grammar*. Australia: InHouse Publishing. ISBN: 9781925497670 (pbk). 327 pp.**

**Reviewed by Marilyn Lewis, University of Auckland**

*Real Grammar* is self-published by a first-time author, a thirty-five year old Australian “who has spent many years abroad interacting with a variety of English speakers” (p. 327). His Facebook page adds that he is currently teaching in Japan.

When a new grammar book or a fresh edition of an old one comes on the market, as they do not too infrequently, people with a row of grammar books on their shelves want to know how this one differs from its predecessors. The covers of just a few titles published in the past couple of decades show how authors bid for readership. Some name a specific group of users (students, teachers or both); a few narrow down the contents (advanced grammar, functional grammar); many emphasise the way their book could be used (self-study, practice, a reference). Eldridge's descriptive grammar for students has the subtitle “Understand English. Clear and simple”. His introduction makes clear that students are the intended readership although some teachers may be

drawn to the suggestion that it is for anyone “who needs to understand and needs to know *why*” (p. vi).

In its layout *Real Grammar* offers various original features. In tiny letters in the top right hand corner of some pages are traditional grammar terms, in contrast with the much larger, bold-type headings for that page. Thus the large headings “**shall, should**” on page 124 are supplemented by tiny words in the top corner which announce the topics first functionally (“advice and prediction”) and then with the traditional label (“deontic, dynamic and epistemic modality”). Diagrams are another feature, some of them the work of the author but others sourced from such sites as Google Ngrams as on page 126 which shows the relative frequency of *should* and *ought*.

I ought to punch you.

I should punch you.

The reference to “a blue rounded rectangle” (p. vii) suggests the plan had been to include some colour in the book. This didn’t happen, which leaves a number of places where the print is quite pale, including parts of the Answers section.

As is traditional, there are two ways to access the book’s contents. The Table of Contents has seven sections with a mixture of heading types. Some are quite general (*Basic building blocks, Think and say*), some use traditional grammatical terms (*Future and past*), and others have functional labels (*Adding information, Adding more*). In the Index too there is a mixture of terms. There are everyday words that students might have heard or read and want to know more about (*because, from, some, want...*) as well as technical terms for those familiar with descriptive labels (*epistemic modality, modal remoteness, past perfect progressive or transitive verbs*).

Looking at one section in detail will give a sense of the range of input methods and practice activities. Page 225 on *adding information to verbs* (yes, the page headings start with lower case letters) is part of the section *Adverbs* which in turn comes in the larger section *Adding information*. Following the two headings in large and small print as mentioned earlier, come two statements, each with its own substitution table, explaining that adjectives add information to nouns while “We use **adverbs** to add information to things that are not nouns. We add information to verbs”. Next comes a general explanation about how the same basic meaning can be conveyed in more than one way. This is followed by four examples plus an explanation for each. Within each example four different fonts are used: plain, bold, italics and then in brackets a pale print which may have been intended as colour.

“The bus **suddenly** stopped. (**what** happened: *suddenly* describes *stop*)”.

After a sentence with additional information and examples comes the Practice section. Answers are at the end of the book.

Not surprisingly, given the author's international experience, the examples come from many countries. Characters are quite active, playing soccer in London, swimming in Hawaii, riding a motorbike in Salt Lake City and enjoying cricket in Bangladesh. Australians go surfing, swimming and scuba diving. The menus are also diverse: tacos, pasta, sandwiches, pies and some dishes that call for chopsticks. For spelling and terminology he has opted for American versions.

Eldridge's voice comes through the book in personal, straightforward, factual language: "Other is the most common adjective in the English language... There are lots of things we can describe with adjectives" (p. 216).

Often he avoids being dogmatic. Explaining the use of the present perfect progressive he adds that:

"We often use other sentence patterns too. These are used a lot in friendly conversations. The meanings are slightly different but because they are simply used to start a conversation it doesn't usually matter which one you use" (p. 97).

A new self-published book is never going to sweep the market in the way of titles from the large publishers, but that is not a reason against giving it a go. In summary, the book looks attractive, with its bright blue cover and its size of slightly under A4. It is based on the author's teaching experience and it explains grammar points in a straightforward way. No doubt the next edition will add the intended colour but in the meantime there is plenty for learners and teachers to use and enjoy.

**Griffiths, C. (2018) *The strategy factor in successful language learning. The Tornado Effect (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters ISBN: 978-1-78309-973-3 (pbk). 280 pp.**

**Reviewed by Nick Marsden, Unitec**

Metaphors can provide us with useful images to help us to conceptualise our thinking on matters that require analysis, understanding and explanation. The author uses the image of a tornado to represent a cumulative, upward spiral gathering force and momentum. It is used to create a powerful force out of strategic learning processes and attributes related to factors which encourage effective language learner agency. The assumption is that this powerful upward movement accelerates the process, so for once tornadoes can be seen as a positive force of power – in this case, a very purposeful one which accelerates language learning, empowering learners faster than ever. While this image has much to offer, the metaphor fails to avoid the trap of being a mixed one.

The title explores a range of variables which have influenced studies on the role of strategy in language learning. It highlights a track record of contradicting theories, and

the general lack of consensus. Variables such as motivation, learning styles, and affective strategies are included in the mix. There is a potted history of the emergence of interest and research in language learning strategies, much of it strongly influenced by twists and turns of teaching and learning theories. It looks at how strategy is perceived, used or justified according to the lenses of, say, behaviourism, cognitivism or post-structuralism. The author questions the validity or otherwise of some research methodologies and at times the issue of strategy feels riven with isolated sub-storms on issues about beliefs about language learning and methodologies. The contention is that some of these issues over the years have turned up spurious results, and that until the ‘unproductive controversies of the past’ are sorted out, strategies for language learning will remain a slightly fuzzy area.

What is impressive about the book is its scope of coverage. It includes many different stances and beliefs on learning, a range of behaviours and attributes that might best lead to efficacy of agency in learning. Theorists mentioned range from Kolb to Vygotsky. The author makes the point that some of the theories examined and some of the research discussed feels like part of the problem, and that this disagreement and contradiction has been disempowering and has slowed down the progress of research on strategy.

On the tiki tour through all the different variables and takes on what constitutes an effective strategy for language learning, the book calls out ‘unhelpful’ issues, including the transience of theories and beliefs about teaching and learning. These issues are useful to know, and an important part of the whakapapa of the evolving landscape of learner strategies. Griffiths also asserts that at times wind changes in language learning are behind the problem, and that some of the research on the issue has been unhelpful because of vagaries of terminology or of research methods, and it could be time to break and re-set the bones.

Whilst the metaphor of a tornado is a great image of power and movement developing strength and momentum, it can also depict a trail of destruction left behind by this force. Scattered debris is littered with remains of theories, unhelpful data and questionable research methods. With the constant climate change of thinking on language learning, we need to aim for more consensus and to clear up ‘fuzzy areas’. Presumably then we will have better, more powerful tornadoes, maybe even perfect storms.

Other strengths of this book lie in its coverage of key developmental phases, and the breadth of discussion on learner strategies, warts and all. A spectrum of research, of voices and variables is discussed. Whether the focus is on qualitative or quantitative data or whether it questions the reliability of some research indicators, the author remains true to the belief that strategies can make a huge difference in an individual’s language learning. In this respect, the book presents a robust discussion which would be of use to teacher educators and teachers who can employ these insights to better understand learners (and learning) of other languages.

The book begins with the author sharing some personalised examples from her learning of Turkish, among other things. It manages to put the discussion about learner strategies on the table for re-consideration. If this can help to generate awareness and discussion with learners and teachers, it has succeeded. Perhaps we will conclude that because the Strategy Factor in language learning is festooned with variables, it will always involve individualised choices to an extent. In that case the plurality of voices, approaches and opinions on the subject might be a good thing. The author's definition of strategy as 'actions chosen by learners for the purpose of learning language', seems to allow for this.

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**Schnurr, S. & Zayts, O. (2017). *Language and culture at work*. Abingdon: Routledge. ISBN: 978-1-138-68849-0 (pbk). 158 pp.**

**Reviewed by Nicky Riddiford, Victoria University of Wellington**

Stephanie Schnurr and Olga Zayts' book, *Language and Culture at Work* is a most welcome addition to workplace communication research. In this book, the authors explore language and culture at work and propose an innovative framework to help shed light on discrepancies between assumptions about culture and actual behaviour.

To look more deeply at the relationship between language and culture in the workplace, Schnurr and Zayts carried out a research study that analysed workplace data from a range of multicultural professional settings in Hong Kong. The study focussed on the analysis of two types of data: firstly, interviews with participants about their perceptions of differences in workplace practices, and secondly recordings of these participants in action in their workplaces. The interview data revealed that the participants often regarded workplace differences as being influenced by cultural beliefs and assumptions. Rather strikingly, however, the interaction data showed that there were often some inconsistencies in the participants' perceptions and their actual behaviour.

Following recent developments in politeness research, Schnurr and Zayts propose a framework for looking at the notion of culture that combines the insights gained from the analysis of participants' verbal and non-verbal behaviour at work with their assumptions and beliefs about culture (p. 2). The suggested framework has two parts: culture1, a first order, more static idea of culture used by people when they think and talk about culture; and culture2, a second order, more dynamic notion of culture which is constructed during actual interactions (p. 6).

To examine the culture1/ culture2 framework the authors collected data from a range of multi-cultural professional settings in Hong Kong, including an NGO, hospitals, a multinational corporation, two language learning centres, a District Council, and an IT consulting company. The participants in the study included medical professionals,



CEOs, project managers, administrative staff, interns, and members of a District council.

Chapter 1 of the book discusses the culture1/culture2 framework and refers to recent research in the area of language and culture. The next six chapters contain interview extracts that reflect the participants' cultural perceptions (culture1) and an analysis of their interactional data (culture2). Each chapter focusses on one particular aspect of these cultural beliefs and assumptions: face and politeness, decision-making, leadership, identity, gender, and work-life balance. As mentioned earlier, the analysis of the authentic data from the workplaces revealed that the participants' views and perceptions of cultural norms and behaviour were often in sharp contrast to their actual, observed behaviours, and that in everyday workplace interactions 'culture' was not as big an issue as the participants had reported in their interviews (p.2).

The final chapter provides a summary of the earlier chapters and includes a suggestion that a combination of both culture1 and culture2 notions in academic research has the potential to provide further insights into the area of language and culture at work.

The strengths of this book lie in the ground-breaking conceptualising of the notion of culture in terms of culture1 and culture2, and the analysis of authentic data from workplace interactions which illustrate the way the participants actually behaved in a range of multi-cultural environments in Hong Kong.

The book would be highly relevant to anyone involved in the study of language and culture from many perspectives, particularly those interested in workplace and intercultural communication.

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## NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

1. Contributions to *The TESOLANZ Journal* are welcomed from language educators and applied linguists within and outside Aotearoa/New Zealand, especially those working in Australia and countries in the South Pacific.
2. Articles should in general be no longer than 5000 words.
3. Reports on research or practice should be 2000-2500 words. No abstract is needed. Reports should a) describe the context and motivation for the study, b) highlight gaps or issues, c) describe the innovation, action or research, d) report on and discuss outcomes, and e) include a reflection and future steps.
4. Referencing conventions should follow that specified in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6<sup>th</sup> Edition). The reference list at the end of the article should be arranged in alphabetical order. The reference list should only include items specifically cited in the text.
5. As far as possible, comments and references should be incorporated into the text but, where necessary, endnotes may be placed after the main body of the article, before the list of references, under the heading Notes.
6. All graphics should be suitable for publication and need no change.
7. It is understood that manuscripts submitted have not been previously published and are not under consideration for publication elsewhere.
8. Enquiries and draft submissions should be sent by email to the editor, Victoria University of Wellington, [Jean.Parkinson@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Jean.Parkinson@vuw.ac.nz). The preferred format is WORD.
9. All submissions should be accompanied by a full mailing address, a telephone number and, if available, an email addresses and/or fax number.
10. Submissions will be considered by the Editor and members of the Editorial Board.
11. Those interested in submitting a book review should contact the Reviews Editor, Victoria University of Wellington, [Katherine.Quigley@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Katherine.Quigley@vuw.ac.nz)
12. The closing date for the submission of manuscripts for 2019 is **Monday 19 August**.