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TESOLANZ
Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600
Tel: (04) 463 5600
Fax: (04) 463 5604

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EDITORIAL

The articles selected for this year's journal focus primarily on ways, through practice, policy development and critical reflection, teachers can enhance the language learning of their students both inside and outside the English language classroom. Using a range of research approaches, the authors have investigated issues of significance for the students or teachers with whom they work – these particular issues, the research methods adopted and the findings will be of interest to the readership of TESOLANZ, as we continue to develop our teaching practice, to work collegially and to develop policy for the benefit of the students we teach.

In exploring an important aspect of classroom practice in language learning, listening materials, Kmiecik and Barkhuizen are interested in the attitudes of elementary level students towards these materials, in particular those that are specially prepared compared with those that are authentic. In a carefully designed four-week study, students, who were studying ESOL at a university, listened to one authentic and one non-authentic text at weekly intervals. Data were collected from questionnaires and interviews completed during each session. The findings suggested that these particular learners preferred the specially prepared materials, ones that are readily available in published resources; learners perceived these to be more easily understood than authentic materials. Learners' perceptions and preferences, however, varied and Kmiecik and Barkhuizen found that text type emerged as an important variable to consider.

The second article explores another source of input that teachers can use – film. Andrew reports on a project designed to gauge the response of second year degree students of English as an Additional Language (EAL) to learning about sociocultural and ethnolinguistic features of speaking through the study of a careful selection of film. Martin drew on data from students' film studies presentations and reflective diaries submitted after these oral presentations. His findings suggested that learners responded enthusiastically to applying the theme of spoken identity, "we are what we speak" at both whole film and close discourse analysis levels. In addition to being made aware of their own speaking selves, learners saw cultures through language and perceived the value of listening to non-standard Englishes for learning in a globalised context.

Using action research principles, Wright examines EAL learners' experiences in and perceptions of opportunities for speaking English outside the EAL classroom. Having found that students' opportunities were limited, she designed a number of interventions, which included speaking logs, language tutor sessions, and class discussion with more advanced level EAL learners, to encourage learners to seek and record opportunities for speaking English beyond the formal learning environment of her classroom. Drawing on data from questionnaires administered prior to and after these interventions as well as the data from students' speaking logs, Wright found this structured and practical support had positive outcomes for students – increased motivation, increased confidence, and greater reflection on their learning.

In the fourth article, U and Strauss also investigate the challenges EAL students face outside the EAL classroom – in this case, in mainstream university programmes. The precise challenge that U and Strauss identified for EAL students in the mainstream was participating in group projects. In their study, they explore this issue from the perspectives of EAL students, of English-speaking background students and of lecturers from a range of faculties.

One of their main findings was that EAL students lacked the appropriate English linguistic knowledge and specific cultural knowledge to enable them to participate meaningfully in the group projects. U and Strauss conclude their article with suggestions for EAL lecturers to use in better preparing students for participation in a wider context.

In the fifth article Bedford and Kitchen are also concerned with the wider context in which students learn, a context that could expand or limit opportunities. In an exploratory study, they investigate teacher and student perceptions of New Zealand secondary school initial placement policies and practices for migrant students. Their findings suggest that although all teachers tried to include the student voice when making subject and level of study choices, the placement tests each school used to assess English language proficiency functioned as the real gatekeepers. In addition, Bedford and Kitchen found that although students were given information about subject choice they often experienced difficulty accessing it, and often decisions about subject choice and level of study were made for them.

In the final article of this volume, Batstone challenges teachers and teacher educators to consider their own beliefs about power and control. In this position paper he suggests that teachers' opinions about grammar teaching may often conceal strongly held beliefs about the use and abuse of power. These beliefs, he argues, often shape how teachers interpret ideas about language teaching that they encounter in teacher education programmes. His paper reports on a small-scale study of in-service teachers' interpretations of an extract from a book about grammar teaching, and suggests that some of these interpretations are strongly conditioned by prior beliefs about power.

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

In conclusion, we would like to thank all the contributors who submitted manuscripts for consideration in this year's volume of the journal. It has been wonderful to receive manuscripts from teachers who are seeking, through individual and collaborative research, to understand their teaching and the contexts in which their students learn. 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 perspicacity and generosity of spirit that characterize their reviews.

We encourage the many readers of the TESOLANZ Journal who have not yet contributed to the publication to consider doing so in the following year – either individually, or, as half of the authors did this year, collaboratively. You will find Notes for Contributors at the end the journal, but always feel free to contact the corresponding Co-Editor by email (s.gray@auckland.ac.nz), if you require any additional information. The closing date for receiving manuscripts will be Monday 3 September 2007.

LEARNER ATTITUDES TOWARDS AUTHENTIC AND SPECIALLY PREPARED LISTENING MATERIALS: A MIXED MESSAGE?

Krystyna Kmiecik
Auckland University of Technology
Gary Barkhuizen
The University of Auckland

Abstract

This study is based on the premise that learner attitudes to different types of listening input need to be investigated as they can have a profound effect on the decision to listen and subsequent language learning. This classroom-based study, conducted with a class of elementary level refugees and migrants attending an ESOL course at an Auckland university, examines learners' attitudes towards authentic and specially prepared listening materials with particular reference to whether learners found them interesting, useful for language learning, and challenging. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews and informal classroom observation. Overall, findings indicate more positive attitudes towards the non-authentic texts, but responses were not consistent across all questions and text types. The findings of this study suggest that while teachers should continue using specially prepared listening materials, there is also a place for authentic materials in the curriculum.

Introduction

While it is acknowledged that listening is critical to second language (L2) acquisition (Rost, 2001; Vandergrift, 2004), there is still considerable uncertainty regarding the relative merits of different types of listening input. The investigation of learners' attitudes to different types of listening materials could have important implications for classroom practice as there is a widely accepted belief among L2 researchers that positive attitudes can be linked to increased motivation and better learning outcomes (Bacon & Finnemann, 1990; Vandergrift, 2005). Gallien, Hotho and Staines (2000) maintain that it is "crucial to explore learner responses to, or perceptions of, input as these may play a significant role in the learner's overall disposition towards the language class and the language learning process" (p. 276).

This article reports on a study that explores learner attitudes towards the use of authentic and specially prepared listening materials in an L2 classroom. The study investigates whether more positive attitudes are associated with authentic or specially prepared listening materials. It is based on the premise that learners interpret classroom activities from their own perspectives, which may differ from those of their teacher (Kumaravadivelu, 1991), and that teachers need to explore and understand these learner perceptions in order "to facilitate desired learning outcomes in the classroom" (Barkhuizen, 1998, p. 102). Attitude is understood as "the individual's reaction to anything associated with the immediate context in which the language is taught" (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003, p. 172). In this study 'anything' refers to listening texts. Authentic materials are defined as spoken texts which have not been specially produced for language learners (Miller, 2003) and which "fulfil some social purpose in the language

community” outside the L2 classroom (Little, Devitt & Singleton, 1989, p.25). Specially prepared materials, also referred to as non-authentic, are those produced specifically for L2 learners such as exercises found in course books, which are unlikely to be current (Little, et al., 1989).

It is argued that, although a text may be linguistically authentic, removing it from its original context can ‘de-authenticate’ it (Rost, 2001; Nunan, 1999). An analysis of the very controversial issue of ‘authenticity’ in the teaching of listening is beyond the scope of the study that focuses on whether linguistically authentic or specially prepared listening texts are perceived more positively by a group of learners. The overall attitudes of a class of L2 learners, towards the interest, relevance and perceived difficulty of the texts, are investigated by addressing the following research questions:

1. Do L2 learners find authentic or specially prepared listening materials more interesting?
2. Do L2 learners view authentic listening materials as more relevant to their language learning needs than specially prepared materials?
3. Do L2 learners find authentic or specially prepared materials more challenging?

Flowerdew and Miller (2005) identify attitude, motivation (which for L2 learners includes a need and desire to develop listening and language ability in the target language), and emotional and physical feelings as key variables that may lead to a decision to listen. However, it is often assumed that if learners are exposed to the ‘linguistically authentic’ language of the real world, they will “acquire an effective receptive competence in the target language” (Guariento & Morley, 2001, p. 347) and will be better able to cope outside the classroom. According to Miller (2003), the aim of all listening lessons should be to help learners acquire the independence and confidence needed to deal with the language they will meet in the real world. The best way to do this, it is argued, is to use authentic materials, which are not simplified to reflect what the author assumes to be the language level of the learner. Such materials demand the type of listening needed outside the classroom, where the learner has to accept that not every word will be recognised and understood.

Some researchers argue that authentic input should be introduced early in language learning. Bacon and Finnemann (1990), for example, claim early exposure appears to be associated with more positive attitudes and better comprehension and satisfaction levels. Nunan (1999) suggests that use of authentic materials from the beginning makes learning more interesting and meaningful by bringing the content to life. Field (2000) believes that using authentic listening texts with beginners familiarises learners with the rhythms and features of “natural everyday speech” (p. 30). Both Field and Nunan maintain that beginners can feel positive about authentic texts if they are taught strategies to cope with any potential uncertainty and are set realistic tasks. In such a way, learners can avoid the shock they may experience when moving from scripted to authentic texts. Guariento and Morley (2001), however, caution that the use of authentic texts with lower level students can lead to frustration, confusion, demotivation and poor language learning outcomes. This viewpoint is supported by Day (2003), who argues that authentic reading materials are too difficult for beginner and intermediate students and their use can decrease motivation and damage attitude. This analysis may also apply to listening texts.

A number of studies have investigated the relationship between authentic listening materials and learners' attitudes. Peacock (1997), in a study involving beginner level Korean EFL learners, found that classroom observations suggested increased levels of on-task behaviour, concentration and involvement in target activity when learners were using authentic, rather than specially prepared materials. There was also a small, but significant increase in self-reported motivation when using authentic materials as the study progressed. However, learners rated authentic materials as significantly less interesting than prepared materials, which suggests the relationship between interest and motivation is not straightforward.

Chavez (1998), Thanjaroo (2000) and Dongkyoo (2000) report positive learner attitudes to authentic materials. Chavez distributed a 212-item questionnaire on learners' attitudes to authentic texts to 186 German L2 learners at an American university. Analysis of responses indicated that learners believed authentic materials to be conducive to language learning and they enjoyed working with them. Chavez concluded that perhaps "learners like what they think helps them succeed" (p. 294). Tanajaroo, in a study based on extensive interviews with seven high intermediate English L2 learners, found that the use of authentic listening materials appeared to increase students' motivation for language learning, enthusiasm for listening to the target language and desire to interact with native speakers. Dongkyoo, found that the use of authentic listening materials had significant positive effects on learners' subsequent attitudes towards authentic input and resulted in improved listening proficiency.

Gallien, et al. (2000) in their study of the impact of different types of text modification on the perceptions of French and German L2 learners, found that simplified input was perceived as easier to understand and more interesting and appealing than authentic input. However, it could not be concluded that learners automatically attributed higher language learning value to input they found more interesting and easier to understand. Learners appeared to appreciate a challenge, but how much of a challenge is an open question.

Methodology

Participants

Participants in this study included a typically diverse class of 17 adult English L2 learners attending a full time ESOL programme for job seekers at an Auckland university. The stated learning goal of the programme was *ESOL for living and working and/or studying in New Zealand*. All the learners were permanent residents, 15 refugees and 2 migrants, and had lived in New Zealand for between one and ten years. The 9 women and 8 men came from nine different countries: Afghanistan (5), Ethiopia (4), Iran (2) and one each from Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Tonga. Their educational backgrounds varied from a few years of informal home schooling to completed secondary education and their ages ranged from 16 to 53 years. The general language level of the class was informally assessed as elementary by teachers on the programme, who also recognised that the listening and speaking skills of many of the learners were above elementary level and stronger than their reading and writing skills.

Data collection

The data were collected over four weeks in four one-hour sessions which were led by the class teacher and integrated into the normal learning programme of the class. During each of the four sessions the students:

- listened to one authentic and one non-authentic listening text (each lasting about 80 seconds), in alternating order;
- working collaboratively, completed two listening comprehension tasks, one relating to each of the listening texts;
- completed two identical questionnaires, one after completing each comprehension task.

In order to improve the internal validity of the study (Gallien, et al., 2000), the teacher helped select suitable authentic and non-authentic texts with similar formats and themes for each session. The texts chosen included an authentic and non-authentic (coursebook) version of (1) a telephone *information line*, (2) a radio *news* report, (3) radio *advertisements* and (4) a radio *discussion* (see Appendix A). Choice of authentic texts was constrained by availability and care was taken to select content type that was not too complex or specialised and might be familiar to the learners. In line with established practice, in order to help the learners deal with listening input that might be beyond their language level, the listening comprehension tasks were graded to suit the level of the learners (Field, 1998; 2000). Tapes were replayed two or three times, in full or in short chunks, in response to students' feedback. A similar task type was chosen for each pair of listening texts to avoid the task, rather than the text, becoming the variable in this study. All tasks included an initial verbal question about the gist of the text and two or three written questions asking for specific information that had been clearly stated and repeated in the text. Students were given the option to write down their answers, but emphasis was placed on collaborative conversation and on-going verbal listener response. In order to minimise confusion, the tasks reflected the type of listening activities with which learners were familiar.

Quantitative data to assess learners' attitudes to authentic and non-authentic listening texts were collected in the form of a closed-item type questionnaire (see Appendix B). It included seven questions with four response options, graduated from very positive to negative. The format was intentionally kept simple and the wording reflected the type of language used by the students and teacher in the class. A small space was provided after each pair of questions for comments, which might provide insight into learners' attitudes and illuminate the quantitative data.

Two or three different students were interviewed after each class, depending on their availability. This resulted in a total of eleven interviews, with a representative cross section of students. Each interview lasted between five and ten minutes. Many of the participants in this study were able to express themselves more easily in speaking than in writing, and interviews gave them the opportunity to comment more extensively on their questionnaire responses and their attitudes to the listening texts.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to identify and illustrate any differences in learners' attitudes towards the different types of listening materials. Questionnaire responses were assigned a

numerical value, ranging from 1 (positive) to 4 (negative). In order to obtain a clearer picture of the frequency of positive and negative attitudes, the 1 and 2 responses for each question were then combined and categorised as a positive attitude, and 3 and 4 were combined and categorised as a negative attitude. Totals for the frequency of positive responses were expressed as percentages to overcome the problem of variation in the number of participants who attended the four listening lessons. The frequencies of positive responses to each question and for each text were compared and a chi-square test was used to assess whether any differences were statistically significant ($p = <0.05$). Only significant results are reported in this article. Findings from the frequency analysis were further explored in the light of an analysis of the mean scores of student responses to each pair of authentic and non-authentic texts. A t-test was used to determine whether students' questionnaire responses showed a statistically significant ($p = <0.05$) shift from authentic to non-authentic texts. Mean score data were found largely to support the frequency data and only significant findings are referred to in this article.

Students' written comments and interview transcripts were examined for reoccurring themes. Identified themes were viewed in the light of the research questions and findings were triangulated with the quantitative data.

Results and discussion

The findings are first discussed with reference to the overall attitude shown by the learners to the authentic (A) and non-authentic (NA) listening texts (T). This is followed by an analysis and discussion of learners' attitudes with reference to each of the specific research questions. The important role that text type may play in shaping learners' attitudes emerges from this analysis. An examination of the data in relation to each of the four text types (*telephone information line, advertisements, news and discussion*) thus follows.

Overall attitude

"I like all listening." This comment from an interviewee provides a succinct summary of the predominately positive attitude to all the listening texts shown by the L2 learners in this study. The overall frequency of positive questionnaire responses (combined 1 and 2) for each of the four pairs of authentic (A) and non-authentic (NA) listening texts was calculated and is shown in Figure 1 below. All eight texts show a positive frequency score of over 55%, rising to almost 80% for the NA *discussion*. The overall mean scores for each of the four pairs of ATs and NATs and are shown in Figure 2. All means are below 2.5 (positive 1, negative 4), which supports the frequency data and indicates an overall positive attitude to all the listening texts. Mean scores range from over 2.4 for the authentic *discussion* to below 2.1 for the non-authentic *discussion*.

Figure 1

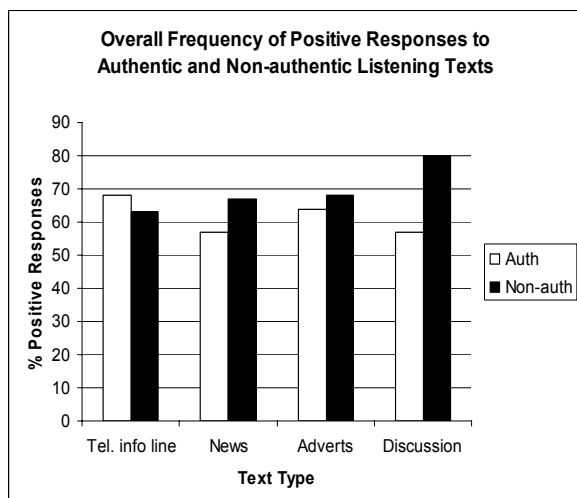
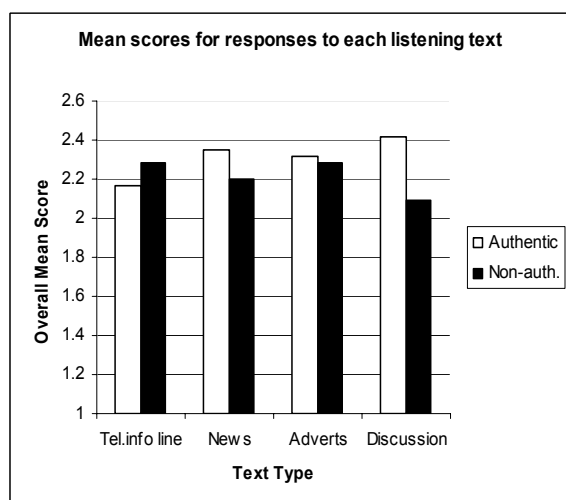


Figure 2



“Good for everything.” “I liked them.” “They were good for me.” Sentiments such as these expressed by interviewees appear to strongly reinforce the overall positive attitude to all texts revealed by the quantitative data. Similarly, the comments written in response to question 4, “Would you like to listen to more tapes like this one?” were strongly positive (83 out of a total of 96 comments for this question) for all the text types. This is reflected in the frequency distribution (see question 4, Table 1), which shows positive attitudes to all listening texts, ranging from 77% to 93% for this question. Furthermore, informal classroom observations, confirmed by the class teacher, showed that the students appeared to be actively engaged with the listening texts and tasks, and the sessions were lively and animated.

Difference in attitude towards authentic and non-authentic listening texts

A closer examination of the data suggests some difference in learners’ attitudes towards authentic and non-authentic texts. Figure 1 and Table 1 show a higher frequency of positive attitudes towards the NAT *news*, *advertisements* and *discussion*, but this is apparently contradicted by the more positive attitude shown towards the authentic telephone *information*

line. Nevertheless, a chi-square test, $\chi^2 = 5.0$, $p = < 0.002$, indicates that learners' overall attitudes were significantly more positive towards non-authentic listening materials than towards authentic listening materials. The distribution of overall mean scores (Figure 2) appears to confirm this more positive attitude towards the NATs, while also showing a more positive attitude to the AT telephone *information line*. An examination of the overall positive attitude towards NATs from the perspective of the research questions raises some interesting issues.

(1) Do learners find the authentic or specially prepared listening materials more interesting?

The frequency distribution (Table 1) does not indicate that learners consistently found authentic or specially prepared listening materials more interesting (see Question 1b), and suggests attitudes may vary according to the content and type of listening text. The data for both the *information line* (64%) and *advertisements* (75%) show no difference in attitude between ATs and NATs. However, the AT *news* (46%) and AT *discussion* (43%) elicited noticeably fewer positive responses for this question than their NAT counterparts (62% and 64% respectively). These were the lowest scores recorded for any of the eight listening texts for this question.

Similar, though generally more positive, attitude trends were indicated by the data (Table 1) relating to the question (1a) of whether the learners liked listening to the tapes. Interestingly, the distribution of responses shows exceptionally positive attitudes towards the NAT *discussion* (86%).

(2) Do learners view authentic or specially prepared listening materials as more relevant to their language learning needs?

An examination of the data relating to meeting learners' language needs (questions 2a and 2b) shows that learners view all texts as useful. However, the data (Table 1) show a strong preference for the NAT *discussion* (86% and 93% for Questions 2a and 2b respectively) compared to 64% and 71% for the AT *discussion*. Table 1 also shows a higher frequency of positive attitudes towards the NAT (75%) *advertisements*, than towards the AT (63%) for both these questions. However, the data show no difference in attitude towards the AT and NAT *information line* and a mixed message for the *news*. This mixed message was reflected in the interview data with learners' opinions fairly evenly divided among a preference for ATs, NATs or no preference. Overall the data again suggest that the content and type of text, as well as the authenticity of its source, may play an important role in shaping learners' attitudes.

(3) Do learners find authentic or specially prepared materials more challenging?

Overall the responses to the questions which relate to the perceived difficulty of the texts (3a and 3b, Table 1), indicate markedly less positive learner attitudes than responses to the other questions. Learners perceived most of the texts as difficult but the data suggest more positive attitudes to the AT *information line* and, to a lesser extent, the AT *advertisements*, than their NAT counterparts. However, the NAT *news* and *discussion* were perceived as easier than the corresponding ATs: 46% and 54% as opposed to 39% and 39% for the *news*, and 64% and 71% compared to 29% and 43% for *discussion*. These discrepancies suggest that text type and content may have a greater effect on attitude than authenticity.

Table 1. Percentage of positive attitudes shown by questionnaire responses according to text type

LINE	INFO		ADVERTS		NEWS		DISCUSSION	
	AT	NAT	AT	NAT	AT	NAT	AT	NAT
Actual number of students participating.	14		16		13		14	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1a. Did you like listening to this tape?	79	71	75	69	54	77	64	86
1b. Was it interesting?	64	64	75	75	46	62	43	64
2a. Was [it] useful for improving your listening?	64	64	63	75	85	62	64	86
2b. Was it useful for learning English?	71	71	63	75	62	77	71	93
3a. Was [it] easy for you to understand?	50	36	44	38	39	46	29	64
3b. Did you understand it?	64	57	50	50	39	54	43	71
4. Would you like to listen to more tapes like this one?	86	79	81	94	77	92	86	93
Overall	68	63	64	68	57	66	57	80

AT = Authentic Text NAT = Non-authentic Text

Information line

The more positive attitudes shown towards the AT *information line* than towards the NAT presents an apparent anomaly in the data for which there does not appear to be an obvious explanation. The AT referred to a familiar location and was delivered in a local New Zealand accent, but the importance of authenticity of context did not seem important since it was only mentioned by one interviewee: “The first one was more important because they were talking about Auckland.” Perhaps order of presentation affected perceptions as the AT was played first, but there is no data to support this suggestion. The mode and speed of delivery and the key vocabulary used in both the A and NA texts were very similar. This perception is reflected in the comments of the interviewees: “They were just the same for me,” and “same, no difference.” Information lines tend to follow quite a predictable pattern with a deliberate manner of delivery and clear diction. Information is provided in separate chunks and there is only one person speaking. Furthermore, students are also likely to have had some experience of listening to similar texts in class. All these features, present in both the NAT and AT, indicate a relatively low cognitive load, which is identified by Brown (1995) as a key factor in determining the difficulty of a listening text. However, the data (Table 1) indicate that 50% of learners found the AT easy to understand compared to 36% for the NA and this is confirmed by a t-test which indicated a statistically significant ($p = <0.05$) overall preference, $p = 0.02$, for the AT.

Advertisements

Data (Table 1 and Figures 1 and 2) relating to the *advertisements* suggest slightly more positive attitudes towards the NAT than the AT (68% as opposed to 64%). Advertisements are designed to be appealing and to catch the listener’s attention. It is possible that this appeal was able largely to counteract the negative aspect of the fast speed of the delivery of the AT, which was noted by a number of participants in their written comments. The explanations provided by interviewees give some insight into the attraction of both *advertisement* listening texts. Firstly, the content was perceived as relevant to the students’ lives. Referring to the AT, one student said: “Today we were listening to prices down. I liked them because the furniture is cheaper and I’ll buy it.” Referring to the NAT, the same student explained: “The price was jazz, for dancing, for enjoying. I like it. Jazz is enjoyable.” Another student made a written comment: “I don’t like it because it’s about a bar and dancing.” It appears that the appeal of the content may be more important than the authenticity of the source.

News

The AT *news* was played to the students after the NAT and the negative reception it received was very evident in many of the students’ indignant reactions noted during informal observation. These observations are supported by the frequency data (Table 1). Only 39% of the participants felt they understood the AT, compared to 54% for the NAT. Seven written comments referred to the AT as too fast, compared to one for the NAT. More of the written comments mentioned difficult words in the AT, than in the NAT. Both the interviewees found the AT more difficult than the NAT, “They spoke very fast,” and “Too many difficult words. Maybe I understood 20%.” Not only does the AT *news* include difficult vocabulary, but it is also likely to present a high cognitive load (Brown, 1995) for the learners as the content is dense, ideas run into each other, the order of telling often does not match the order of events and inference is required by the listener.

In spite of the difficulty presented by *AT news*, 77% of the learners would like to listen to more AT news in class. Sentiments expressed by one interviewee highlight an interesting perception that might explain why this is so: “The second one (AT) was more difficult, but I liked it better.” When asked for a reason the response was: “Because I want to learn English. Learn English faster.” It appears as though these students, as functioning members of society, are genuinely interested in the news and see it as a good opportunity to improve their listening skills in a meaningful context. However, three interviewees mentioned watching, rather than listening to the news. Perhaps the radio news is not only too difficult for them, but also presents a non-authentic context, unlike television: “The most important thing is to listen to and watch a lot of TV. If you don’t understand the words, like with movies, you can understand the actions.”

Discussion text

All the *discussion* listening texts data indicate the most marked difference in attitude towards the AT and NAT. A highly statistically significant difference in frequency of positive perceptions is shown by the chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 11.418$, $p = < 0.001$) and this significance is even more pronounced in the t-test, where $p = < 0.000004$. Clearly, the students preferred the NAT. Furthermore, all data indicate that the overall attitude to the AT (equal with the *AT news*) is the least positive (57%). To attribute these scores to the fact that one recording was from an authentic and the other a non-authentic source, could be too simplistic. The interviewees drew attention to some of the problems with the AT and all three expressed a firm overall preference for the NAT. “Very fast speaking” [AT]; “I think tape 2 [AT] had more difficult words”; “Tape 1, I understood well. Tape 2 was confusing. For listening, tape 1 was wonderful.” Eight written comments also indicated the AT was too fast, compared to three for the NAT.

The students’ reactions to the AT, evident during the classroom observation, supported these findings. They found it very difficult to cope with the whole extract in one playing, and at their request, the tape was replayed in short segments. They needed a lot of support to make sense of the fast, unpredictable style of this radio phone-in programme, which involved three participants. Like the *AT news*, this text presented a high cognitive load and learners assessed the *AT discussion* as the most difficult to understand of all eight texts.

In spite of the perceived difficulty of the *AT discussion*, the frequency data show that it was considered as effective as the other texts for improving listening and English skills. This attitude, that a difficult text can help one learn, may explain why 86% of learners claimed that they would like to listen to more tapes similar to the *AT discussion*. Student interview data appear to support the quantitative data:

1. “Yes, it’s a good idea to understand the words and more English.”
2. “It’s good to hear fast and slow and sometimes we can get new words. I want to speak fast and hear people talking fast.”
3. “Yes, it’s good because you listen to people talking. It helps me understand.”

Lastly, the *NAT discussion* was taken from an intermediate coursebook (Soars & Soars, 1996), which was above the assessed language level of the learners. In spite of this, learners consistently rated the text as easier than any of the other. Many written comments support the quantitative data and these positive perceptions are reflected in the interview data (see above).

Conclusion

The findings from this study support the claim that we need to question the widespread belief “that authentic input, however difficult, is more interesting, motivating and appealing than modified materials” (Gallien, et al., 2000, p. 289). The students in this study appeared to prefer the listening texts they found easier to understand, and features that seemed to make texts difficult, were more prevalent in the authentic than the non-authentic texts. In particular, the speed of delivery of authentic texts was faster and the vocabulary was more difficult. In addition, the authentic texts presented a higher cognitive load to the learners. In spite of this, the authentic *information line* was perceived more positively than the NAT text, and attitudes towards the *advertisements* did not indicate a strong preference for the NAT. This suggests that the features that appear to make texts difficult may not be intrinsic to all authentic texts or that other factors may counteract their effect: “What may matter most to the learner is not whether the text was authentic, but whether it was accessible” (Gallien, et al., 2000, p. 289).

Speed of delivery was seen by many participants in this study as a crucial barrier to comprehension and accessibility, and the authentic texts, with the exception of the *information line*, were usually perceived as too fast. Difficult vocabulary also appeared to make authentic texts less accessible and was linked to negative attitudes. The authentic texts, with the exception of the *information line*, clearly presented a heavier vocabulary load in terms of both range and low frequency items. However, as Gallien et al., (2000) point out, learners tend to have unrealistic expectations regarding comprehension. This was a serious obstacle for many of the students in this study, who adopted a ‘bottom-up’ as opposed to a ‘top-down’ approach to listening (Rost, 2001) and believed that unless they understood everything, they had failed as listeners. The initial reaction of many of the students on first hearing the tapes, to use Field’s (2000) analogy, suggested they were overwhelmed by the fog and felt unable to find their way through. Many learners did not recognise that the tasks set were achievable even after they had successfully achieved them. Even those assessed by the teacher as having particularly good listening skills, were clearly unwilling to take risks and confront the input (Bacon & Finneman, 1990).

The findings of this study relate to this particular group of learners only and thus provide a small window into their attitudes towards different types of listening texts. Nevertheless, this research raises some interesting issues for teachers to explore.

Firstly, it is possible that the learners in this study had less positive attitudes towards authentic materials because they were too difficult for them at this stage of their language learning (Day, 2003). Use of similar materials could lead to demotivation, confusion and poor language learning outcomes (Guariento & Morley, 2001). This interpretation is good news for teachers because they can continue to rely on readily available published materials and do not need to spend hours searching for, and recording authentic materials.

On the other hand, maybe authentic materials should not be automatically rejected as too difficult. Perhaps the learners in this study felt overwhelmed by authentic materials because of their previously limited exposure to similar texts in the classroom and their unrealistic comprehension expectations. Some researchers argue that learners should be introduced to authentic texts from the beginning in order to help them learn how to cope with the type of listening they encounter outside the classroom (e.g. Bacon & Finneman, 1990; Field, 1998, 2000; Nunan, 1999). One possible way to do this is, is to set achievable tasks and convince learners that they do not always need to understand everything they hear. At the same time they

need to be helped to develop strategies to make best use of what they do understand and compensate for gaps in their comprehension (Field, 2000; Miller, 2003). Presenting the text in short chunks and allowing ongoing listener response and collaborative conversations are techniques used in this study and are recognised by Rost (2001) as helpful for improving the accessibility of listening input.

Lastly, as was seen with the authentic *information line*, learners do not find all authentic listening materials difficult (Chavez, 1998). This suggests teachers could use carefully selected materials to gradually introduce learners to authentic texts. One problem with this approach is that finding such materials is very time consuming. However, perhaps this difficulty could be addressed if more accessible texts, originally produced for English first-language speaking communities, were available in published format. It might be necessary to sacrifice authenticity of local context and currency, neither of which were identified by the learners in this study as important, in order to make it easier for teachers to use of this type of material in the classroom. On the other hand, while all authentic material used with low-level students must involve some selectivity, too much selectivity could defeat the purpose of helping learners deal with the shock factor that they will face when engaging in listening activity outside the classroom.

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Appendix A. Materials: Description of listening texts and type of comprehension tasks used in the study

Week	AUTHENTIC TEXT	TASK	NON-AUTHENTIC TEXT	TASK
1	Recorded telephone information line for Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium in Auckland. *	4 questions about opening times, prices and payment method.	Telephone information line for San Francisco Zoo (Blum, 1990).	4 questions about opening times, prices and a phone number.
2	A news report about a hurricane in Queensland, recorded earlier that morning.	Verbal recall of the key points.	An Australian news item about a three year old boy who had wandered into the bush. (Brown & Cornish, 1997). *	Verbal recall of the key points.
3	Two advertisements from local radio for: * a) a furniture sale b) a used car dealer.	Completion of a what, when, where grid.	U.S radio announcements for: a) a jazz concert b) a movie festival (Gordon, Harper & Richards, 1995).	Completion of a what, when, where grid.
4	A radio phone-in about how people use their mobile phones. (3 speakers).	Identifying features the interviewee and caller used on their mobile phones.	Three British people discussing modern technology (Soars & Soars, 1996). *	Identifying the advantages of the 3 types of technology discussed.

* = text played first

Appendix B: Questionnaire

What did you think of this listening tape? Please answer the questions below and write a comment in each space.

1a) Did you like listening to this tape? Tick ✓ one box.

Yes, very much.	Yes.	A little.	No.
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1b) Was it interesting? Tick ✓ one box.

Yes, very interesting.	Yes.	A little.	No.
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Comments _____

2a) Was this tape useful for improving your listening? Tick ✓ one box.

Yes, very useful.	Yes.	A little.	No.
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2b) Was it useful for learning English? Tick ✓ one box.

Yes, very useful.	Yes.	A little.	No.
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Comments _____

3a) Was this listening tape easy for you to understand? Tick ✓ one box.

Yes, very easy.	Yes.	A little difficult.	No, very difficult.
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3b) Did you understand it? Tick ✓ one box.

Yes, very well.	Yes.	A little.	No.
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Comments _____

4. Would you like to listen to more tapes like this one? Tick ✓ one box.

Yes, very much.	Yes.	Not much.	No.
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Comments _____

SPEAKING ABOUT FILM AND LEARNING ABOUT SPEAKING: TEACHING SPEAKING THROUGH FILM STUDY

Martin Andrew
Unitec

Abstract

Apart from Aken (2003), research into using film in language teaching has overlooked the potential of film, streaming video or DVD to encourage sociocultural and ethnolinguistic learning about speaking, particularly among advanced learners. Flanked by a study of literature on film's pedagogic applications, this paper examines the sociocultural learning about speaking that can develop from applied study of filmic speech in an advanced English as an Additional Language (EAL) course in and about speaking. In particular, this paper describes a form of pedagogy using film studies presentations as tools for rehearsing, presenting and assessing students' speaking. The research uses a grounded methodology to locate emergent understandings in the transcripts of videotaped presentations and oral reflective logs of 13 second-year students. These understandings articulate aspects of sociocultural learning about speaking which most impact on learners. The data also leads to a consideration of what insights learners can glean about their own voices and identities as speakers of EAL. These understandings and insights corroborate my pedagogy of using films to heighten learners' awareness of sociocultural aspects of speaking—and our spoken selves.

Introduction: Using film to heighten socio-cultural and self-awareness

This paper reports on a research project designed to identify ways in which using film to teach advanced speaking can enhance learners' sociocultural awareness and have positive impacts on the learners' self-conceptions as speakers of English. Teachers of advanced EAL learners can conceive of films as repositories of largely authentic spoken discourse within realized sociocultural contexts. Aken (2003) describes a 14-week film-for-English course where students focused on sociolinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of spoken English and argues that such an approach, grounded in realistic speaking, contributes to autonomy. King (2002) writes, "the realism of movies provides a wealth of contextualised linguistic and paralinguistic terms and expressions, authentic cross-cultural information" (p. 510). Film provides texts to apply pragmatic discourse analysis, speech act theory or conversation analysis, using methods such as those devised by Burns, Joyce and Gollin (1996) for analyzing transcribed authentic texts. More importantly for the purpose of this paper, film, rather than scripts, can depict varieties of Englishes within sociocultural contexts. Learners can be encouraged to focus on sociocultural aspects; on how speaking contributes to collective/ community and individual identities. In film, to an extent, characters are what they talk.

We Are What We Talk (De Silva Joyce & Hilton, 2003), an Australian resource for teaching casual conversation, gestures to a connection between speaking and identity. This suggests that utterances are an assertion of self; acts of speaking portray who we are to others. Tutors with an interest in the sociolinguistic aspects of speaking can focus on far more than speech act theory in exploiting film. Encouraging learners to scrutinise the role of speaking in creating film cultures and characters directs attention to how collective and individual identities are formed. The societies of such various movies as *My Fair Lady* (1964) and

Whale Rider (2002) are, for instance, characterised in part through how and what the characters “talk,” and the protagonists are themselves characterised through talk, whether it be Eliza Doolittle’s Cockney or Paikea’s young-but-wise Maori English.

Speaking, both that of filmic characters and of students in academic and social discourses, involves a public participative engagement and investment in the verbal self. It combines the personal facets of voice, face and body with the presentation of content. As Miller (2004) explains:

Speaking is itself a critical tool of representation, a way of representing the self and others. It is the means through which identity is constituted, and agency or self-advocacy is made manifest. In other words, we represent and negotiate identity, and construct that of others, through speaking and hearing. (pp. 293-4)

It could be argued that there are analogical similarities between three aspects of representation through speaking: the student, creating an academic identity in a film studies presentation; the filmic character, fashioning a self through words within the represented world; and the actor, using voice as one method of characterisation. This allows for us to draw on poststructuralist conceptions of identity as being multiple, complex and a site of flux and potential struggle (Norton, 2000). In the words of a maxim attributed to Confucius: “You are as many people as languages you speak.” In a globalised context, it is important to identify oneself as speaking a variety of English, and to be aware of one’s “audibility” (Miller, 2004) as an external register of identity.

Examples of the construction of identities in film—by actors and by characters—are numerous, and this paper will examine 13 examples selected by participants, and refer to other examples. None is more sententious than Henry Higgins’s equation of spoken self and social position in his refashioning of guttersnipe Eliza Doolittle into a lady. He appoints himself to “change her into a different human being by creating a new speech for her” (*My Fair Lady*, 1964, based on Shaw’s *Pygmalion*). This famous scene articulates the idea that speaking, involving voice, face and *in-person-ness*, is a social, public skill projecting the still-evolving self, conscious and otherwise. The students apply this idea to a range of movies from *Gone with the Wind* (1939) to the *Bridget Jones* films (2002-4).

Also interesting are actors who create characters, with accent being a keynote of identity creation, sometimes successfully (Meryl Streep’s Polish English in 1982’s *Sophie’s Choice* or to a more limited extent her “Strine” in *Evil Angels*, 1988), sometimes less successfully (Anthony Hopkins’s “Invergargillese” in *The World’s Fastest Indian*, 2005). Film texts do not need the improvisational scripting characteristic of Mike Leigh (*Secrets and Lies*, 1996) to be authentic texts with authentic characters. Speaking is central to filmic characterizations stylized though they are: Cate Blanchett’s recreation of Katharine Hepburn in *The Aviator* (2004) or Phillip Seymour Hoffman’s of *Capote* (2005) rely heavily on capturing the rhythms and tones of the voices of these historic personages. The process of an actor’s accent training, often described in published or DVD-extra interviews that students can locate during the research process, instances the notion of “voice” as something that can be chosen as part of an individual’s negotiation and construction of identity.

Setting up the film studies presentation

That speaking about film can be motivating (Ryan, 1998; Dündar & Simpson, 2004) is supported by my findings. Giving students the chance to talk about film as a speaking opportunity or assessment allows them not only to engage in potentially interesting, individually-selected subject matter, but also to zoom in on how films create characters/identities through their voices and spoken interactions. In and out of their communities, characters define themselves through processes of identification and negotiation. Analysing this allows learners to interrogate the ways in which speaking is vital to an individual's (and/or a community's) senses of identity. Further, the learning can be self-reflexive.

A 12-minute film study powerpoint presentation is the final assessment in a second-year speaking course in an EAL degree at a tertiary institute in Auckland. Students select a short clip and prepare a transcript to demonstrate their sociocultural or ethnolinguistic focus. Then, they perform a basic conversation or pragmatic analysis. The task includes non-assessed post-presentation spoken reflective logs as well as the presentation. In the former, students evaluate their performance and their attainment of phonological goals—“reflection on action” (Schön, 1983). They comment on how filmic language increases their awareness of both speaking in globalised contexts and themselves as a speaker of a variety of English. The post-presentation logs, together with transcribed presentations, provide the data for this paper.

The speaking course offers a range of ideational content, beginning with our spoken selves and speaking identities. This leads into a focus on accent, dialect, voice and identity, covering world Englishes and oral culture. Students then explore national, cultural, historical and individual identities in film, analysing speakers of accented or world Englishes (see Rogers, 2004). As a case study, *Whale Rider* (2002) is anatomized (See Appendix A). Movies selected for the presentations contain characters with relatively non-standard English, such as the Pakistani family in *East is East*. Film choices should also contain spoken interactions to which analysis can be applied. The assessment serves as a focus for assessing learners' *development in speaking* as well as their *learning about speaking and identity*.

Pedagogy and procedure

Preparation for the film studies presentation covers the final five weeks of a 14-week semester and includes nine two-hour lessons. The process begins (Lesson 1) with vocabulary awareness work on film genre, personnel, techniques and history, building on learners' existing knowledge. The second lesson uses a transcript of a movie scene—the hitch-hiking scene in *It Happened One Night* (1934, See Appendix A)—with three showings. The first focuses on context and situation, particularly the historical and social context, the social identities of the interactants, their use of slang and their attitude towards each other. The second focuses on conversational analysis (turn-taking, adjacency pairs). A third viewing directs attention to pragmatic aspects (expressions, gestures, manner, irony). The aim of this three-tier process is to provide a model for the kinds of analysis students will perform in their presentations.

Two lessons in the sequence have a phonological focus and occur in a language laboratory with video equipment. In the third lesson, students analyse the phonological features of the scene from lesson two and/or similar scenes, with particular focus on the actors'—and their

own–pitch, intonation and manner. Lesson six allows the students to identify an aspect of their own speaking, whether it be pause groups, use of pitch, stress patterning or sentence intonation, which they wish to demonstrate improvement in during their presentation. Each student is directed to resources, particularly online and CALL sources, for self-directed learning.

The fourth and fifth lessons, structured around task sheets, involve a movie case study: we watch a film (*Whale Rider*, 2002) and analyse it using the lexis and applied discourse analysis skills (Appendix A). Students identify a range of features including gendered language, Maori English and idiom, and the ways in which director Niki Caro uses spoken language to tell the story. We focus, for instance on voice-overs used for a retrospective first-person narrative, and on the interactive dialogues and effective monologues, such as Paikea’s speech about her grandfather. Further, we examine how speaking is used to characterise the protagonists. We analyse Pai’s speech in detail and relate it to the film’s main theme: Pai’s evolving identity.

In lessons six and seven, backgrounded by Kachru’s (1982) circles of English, the students perform basic ethnolinguistic analyses, investigating how aspects of speaking–voice, accent, manner, lexis–construct both collective and individual identity. Films such as *East is East* and *Bend it like Beckham* (2002) are suitable due to their contrast of migrant and local voices. We identify a range of films featuring varieties of English. The extensive list includes Chinese English (*Floating Life*, 1996; *The Wedding Banquet*, 1993); Indian English (*Passage to India*, 1984; *Monsoon Wedding*, 2001; *Bride and Prejudice*, 2004) and Punjabi (*Anita and Me*, 2002); Japanese English (*Japanese Story*, 2004; *Lost in Translation*, 2002; *Bridge on the River Kwai*, 1957); Vietnamese English (*The Quiet American*, 2002; *Heaven and Earth*, 1992) and Singapore English (*Chicken Rice War*, 2002). Other possibilities include Ebonic and Samoan varieties (as in, for instance, *Hustle and Flow*, 2005, or *Sione’s Wedding*, 2005), accents (Kiwi, however we define its filmic production, authentically as in *Whale Rider* or semi-authentically in *The World’s Fastest Indian*, 2005), dialects (Cockney, as in *Snatch*, 2002), invented argots or socially realized “anti-languages” (Nadsat in *A Clockwork Orange*, 1971; or Valley Girl Speak in *Clueless*, 1995). This leads to discussion on the role of interlanguages, dialects and idiolects in identity formation.

In Lesson 8, we analyse a past student’s presentation and the tutor offers a live model presentation (on the Kiwi film *Rain*, 2001) and invites the students to “mark” it using the actual marking criteria used during the course. Lesson 9 gives students a chance to workshop parts of their presentations and gain peer and tutor feedback. Presentations are given and co-assessed the following week. Students complete a spoken reflective log right after finishing their presentation.

Literature review

Speaking and identity

Speaking can be connected with evolving speaker identity in poststructuralist thought. Norton reminds us that “the role of language is constitutive of and constituted by a learner’s social identity” (Norton, 1995, p. 17) and Miller (2004) describes speaking as “a critical tool of representation” (p. 293). Speaking involves a public participative engagement and investment in proclaiming the verbal self. If discourse is “the site in which identity is manifested”

(Shotter & Gergen, 1989, in Ivanic, 1998, p. 18), then the discourse of the presentation allows learners not only to focus on their own spoken identities, but also to apply these ideas to the world of the film. Gee (1996) reminds us that discourse is “a kind of identity kit” with instructions of how to talk in order to assume “a particular social role that others will recognise” (p. 127). The focus on the course reported on here lies in how [English] is “appropriated to legitimise, challenge and negotiate particular identities for ... individuals” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 13). This involves understanding the students’ desires for access to “imagined communities” (Kanno & Norton, 2004, p. 242). In this case, the discourse of the film studies presentation is the site of assessment and hence of the learner’s “identification” (Wenger, 1998, p. 191) and self-construction.

Using films to teach speaking

The virtues of using film to learn about speaking and content are extolled widely in the literature, notably by Sherman (2003) and Aken (2003). These virtues include the authenticity of filmic speech, “the language of daily conversational exchange” (Sherman, 2003, p. 13; see also Aken, 2003; Peterson & Coltrane, 2003; Hwang, 2005) and its value as a language model and as “a window into English-language culture” (Sherman, 2003, p. 2; see also Summerfield, 1993; Kortner, 1997; Peterson & Coltrane, 2003). Research focuses, too, on encouraging critical thinking about controversial issues and media literacy (the “film as content” movement, Cox & Goldworthy, 1995; Williamson & Vincent, 1996; Chappell, 1999). Further, films contain visual support to fast, idiomatic speaking (King, 2002), or subtitles for supporting bilingual connectivity (Herron, Hanley & Cole, 1995; Kikuchi, 1997). Using subtitled DVDs also promotes aural skills and learner autonomy (Elven, 2004). Moreover, Burt (1999, para 3) argues that film “allows learners to see facial expressions and body language at the same time as they hear the stress, intonation, and rhythm of the language,” while Aken (2003) identifies sociopragmatic aspects (inflection, emphasis, irony; p. 52). Speaking about film promotes pragmatic competence, “the knowledge of social, cultural and discourse conventions that have to be followed in various situations” (Edwards & Csizér, 2004, p. 17).

In the same way, ways to use film creatively for specific language points or “whole film approach” fluency-producing applications are enumerated in articles and books for teachers (Canning-Wilson, 2000; Stempleski & Arcario, 2000; Stempleski & Tomalin, 1990, 2001; King, 2002; Aken, 2003; Mejia, 2003; Sherman, 2003; Dündar & Simpson, 2004). Similarly, the general strategic learning skills students can hone via the use of film in pedagogy (from word recognition to understanding discourse structure) are covered in the literature.

The scripted and ideological nature of film

Tutors can turn two potential key problems of using commercial films—the facts that they are scripted and carry inbuilt ideological discourse—into virtues. Film scholarship reflects “the field’s long-standing antipathy to speech in film” (Kozloff, 2000, p. 6) largely due to the ideological freight that can be embedded in scripts, spoken by actors. Students have the opportunity to apply sociocultural insights and to speak about them when they unpack this ideology. They may, for instance, look at the Chinese and Malaysian actresses (Gong Li, Ziyi Zhang and Michelle Yeoh) playing Japanese in the English-speaking film *Memoirs of a Geisha* (2005) and consider a raft of issues: the political appropriateness of Chinese woman playing geishas; issues related to female voices, power and silence; the

depiction of Asian women in western movies from Anna May Wong to the present and the destabilization of stereotypes. These issues provide opportunities for chatroom-savvy learners to apply both media literacy and speaking skills. Should Chinese stars have been cast as geishas? Is Ziyi Zhang's interlanguage insulting to Japanese? Does it detract from the film's credibility, when we consider Yeoh's barely-accented Malaysian English, or does her voice mark her as more patrician? When students comment on the actors' interpretation of scripts, they necessarily consider paralinguistic and pragmatic features as well as the adoption of voice for characterization.

Similarly, the scripted nature of films is no barrier. We must note, though, "the difference between a real-life conversation and those portrayed in films is clearly apparent when one reads linguists' transcriptions of actual talk" (Kosloff, 2000, p. 26). These films were scripted to replicate the verisimilitude of spoken interactions within a specific genre and at a certain point in time. Writers of screenplays write to achieve a particular goal, and in such films as the British *East Is East* or the Australian *Japanese Story* (2003), it is in part to create speaking which naturalistically mirrors that of Pakistani migrants or Japanese businessmen. The scripted nature of the speech need not suggest lack of authenticity. Even instances where the spoken language is stilted or stereotypical, like that of the Japanese Commandant in *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), can be used as touchstones for the real and authentic. Again, this type of critical thinking can consolidate learning about both speaking and speakers.

Methodology

Participants

The participants were 13 adult migrant and international students. All are motivated by various desires to access the power and capital that can be gained by improving their English-speaking selves. The students whose reflections are cited in this study belong to the 2005 intake and comprise two males and eleven females, ranging in age from 19 to 49 and from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, Thailand and Sweden. All names in this text are pseudonyms.

Context

This classroom research is contextualised in an assessed presentation and taped reflective comment in a spoken awareness and development paper for Year 2 tertiary learners of EAL in a Bachelor of Arts programme. After giving their assessed presentations, the students recorded a non-assessed reflection on their learning during the preparation, research and presentation stages, and evaluated what they learned about film, about speaking and about themselves as speakers of English. Together with an objective observation of the students' presentation, recorded on video, these reflections form the basis of the data for this project. While this focuses on individuals' self-portrayals, it is a flexible method of data collection, heeding what Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) refer to as "the full range of individuals' linguistic repertoires" (p. 7).

Process

The thirteen logs were transcribed and analysed and extracts were taken from the thirteen videotaped presentations. The process of recurrent themes follows grounded methodologies identifying categories from data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As particular themes emerged, they were open-coded, categorized and tabulated. The students' self-reported reflections were matched with the record of the performance preserved on video.

Findings and discussion

The students' presentations of selected films yielded considerable sociocultural/ethnolinguistic learning about the use of spoken English. Although their film choices tend towards the popular and recent, they are able to attach a thesis about speaking to their research and presentation and carry it through to conclusion.

Findings from presentations

Appendix B presents the students' film choices, their focus and their discovery related to their thesis. The following is a discussion of some of the examples students used in their presentations to illustrate their sociocultural insights. These learnings relate, for instance, to the fact that both idiomatic expressions and features of dialect may be class, era, gender or race-specific or may mark membership of and exclusion from social groups. Learners also analyse the importance of accent and interlanguage as measures of individuals' places between two cultures in filmic worlds. Other students present insightful discussions on the ways in which actors use idiolects to create eccentric characters or adapt regional accents to bring verisimilitude to their characterizations.

Discussion: Student analyses

Jean, presenting *Forrest Gump*, analysed the lead character as the embodiment of the American Dream in the guise of a Shakespearean fool and identified some era-specific idioms (such as "tune off, tune out and turn on"). Her evidence included the wisdom behind his aphorisms ("stupid is as stupid does"), throwaway comments (for instance, "he got me invested in some kinda fruit company," which turns out to be an allusion to Apple computers) and metaphors involving birds, butterflies and the box of chocolates. Paul, analyzing another Tom Hanks speaking part, "Viktor Navorski" in *The Terminal*, looked at how Viktor's "Krakozhian" accent was a portmanteau of Bulgarian. Paul learned from the DVD extras that Hanks was taught this language by his wife, Rita Wilson, whose father was Bulgarian. Paul goes on to say that although the character comes from a fictional nation, he is understood to come from somewhere like Bulgaria, or Albania, and the national anthem he sings is musically similar to the Albanian one. In Paul's analysis, the identity of the character depends on the credibility of Hanks's accent. Paul concludes by demonstrating that the airport is seen as a global everyplace, where we can hear the accents of, for instance Mexican and Indian workers.

Interlanguage and identity was a focus of four students. Penny examined the satiric use of "Japlish" in *Lost in Translation* and Jenna examined how three generations of Greek women in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* show how migrant accents normalize according to how a person views their relation to the new culture and its ways of speaking. Further, Qing

elucidated Thai English in *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, and June, analyzed the features of *Spanglish*. All four films exploited the mispronunciation of interlanguage speakers for comic potential: in *Bridget Jones*, for instance, a Thai woman calls the protagonist “Bri-shit,” a comment on Thai pronunciation of /dj/. The most interesting of these presentations is that on *Spanglish*, a film focusing on a Mexican woman, Flor Moreno, who refuses to learn English when she moves to the United States with her young daughter, whose English is soon fluent. June refers to Stavans’s (2003) study and lexicon of Spanglish to show how the movie articulates his thesis: that Latin American migrants select the “in-betweenness” of identity through their variety of English. Its features include an audible schwa sound at the end of words with a final consonant and the rounding of vowels, as in *loncha* (lunch). All four students also discussed the sociolinguistic issue of speaking as a register of social class: Bridget’s accent and tendency to speak crassly when embarrassed disqualify her from entry into conservative society; Flor’s refusal to upgrade her Spanglish into English ties her to life as a housekeeper.

Issues of class identity, accent and “-g-dropping” interested Jill, who compared “slave English” and “polite Georgian English” in *Gone with the Wind*, and Miwa, who tracked Eliza Doolittle’s progress from profane Cockney to cardboard lady in *My Fair Lady*. The processes that British-accented Vivien Leigh and Audrey Hepburn experienced in acquiring Southern American and Cockney accents are discussed too: both used dialogue coaches and learned phonetically. Mark, meanwhile, compared the rhotic Pakistani tones of actor Om Puri’s family in *East is East* with those of the “native Londoners,” using the website <http://dictionary.laborlawtalk.com/rhotic> for key definitions. In contrast, Indian Puri was acutely aware of identifying phonemic and vernacular features of the Pakistani accent and aimed to use his knowledge to create a Pakistani speaker of English whose accent would not offend British Pakistani migrants.

The experience of actors researching authentic accents is the main focus of Karen’s presentation on *Cold Mountain* and a major aspect of Gerda’s introduction of *Big Fish*, whose idiosyncratic protagonist, Edward Bloom, played by Albert Finney, is identified by his elaborate story-telling and embellished speaking. Karen explains that, despite extensive accent coaching, the *faux* Appalachian accents of British Jude Law, Australian Nicole Kidman and Texan Renee Zellweger in *Cold Mountain* were criticized as stereotypical. She is interested in the notion that accent is a teachable and a mutable aspect of social identity, arguing that many students of her age (20) select American accents for themselves because this makes them feel less like outsiders to the globalised world.

Findings from reflective logs

The next section of findings, derived from analyses of the post-presentation reflective logs, describes five key emergent themes about speaking about film and learning about speaking. In their reflections, students comment on their achievement of their thesis, their sociocultural learning and their learning about their own spoken identities.

Studying film is a motivating way to learn speaking (Jenna)

The visual medium, as opposed to aural media (tapes/ CDs/ podcasts), offers ample opportunity for pragmatic analysis while depicting a created culture. Film constructs a spoken text that may be transcribed, allowing opportunities for learning via immersion. The nine

student comments collected under this heading (a comment from Jenna) are general, as in Jill's comment: "To immerse ourselves in great movies can gain a lot of benefits." Penny's comment corroborates the pedagogy: "I learned how to apply a range of basic film elements to my speaking," and Karen comments: "I really got into the film studies presentation because it was fascinating and I learned a lot." Sara, who studied *Bring It On*, said: "I interested in American culture, because it is global culture today for Chinese people, so I wanted to study how the high school girls speak, and learn about what they say." Her motivation in selecting this film appears connected with the spoken self she would construct for herself. These nine students said they either "really liked" this assignment or found it "interesting" or "useful." These are comments on how motivating film can be for teaching speaking.

Lets me see into cultures through language (Jill)

This finding, a comment in eight of the 13 transcripts, reflects the agenda of the course. This suggests that cultural knowledge *can* be attained through analysis of films. The comment on *Bring It On* fits here, and Jill describes how she had contextualised the speaking in *Gone with the Wind* in ethnolinguistic terms: North versus South, white gentry and black help. In both cases, speaking figures identities. Jill also used this as an opportunity to parallel the world of the film with the state of her country today:

I learned that human nature is incredibly difficult to control—morality become less important when people are in very difficult—no more morality in Chinese culture now—time did not improve people's avarice—grateful for insight into human nature. Learning this is an abundant harvest for me. (Jill)

Paul and Mark comment on their learning about linguistic and social difficulties faced by migrants, particularly when your own language is the "powerless one" (Mark).

The students who studied *Lost in Translation*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, *Spanglish* made comments about characters who speak a form of the privileged English contrasted with those marked as culturally other through their interlanguages. Karen comments that the realism of *Cold Mountain*, due in part to the accents, "teaches me about the hardship life in historical Carolina." Miwa claims that Eliza "loses her real culture when she loses her low-class speaking." The presentation on *Forrest Gump* interested Jean because she located idioms from the stages of Gump's life, and "idioms clearly show us the changing cultures of American." The most common general comment to emerge in this category suggests that this type of analysis remains challenging: "Second language students need to work hard in order to become familiar with English and other different cultures." Film has the potential to hold up the mirror to cultures and identity formation.

I can think more when I watch movies (Jill)

As exponents of "film as content" maintain, films provoke thinking. In the assessment, this thinking is specifically directed to analysis of spoken language and its application to the themes of culture and identity construction. The student who viewed *Big Fish* "continuously" thought about the "voice repertoires" of such actors as Albert Finney. There were seven comments along the lines of "A chance to learn from movies, thinking" (Jill) and "I had a chance to understand how actors spoke and act" (Penny). The comments on *Bring It On* and *Gone with the Wind* above demonstrate the kind of thinking that students are referring to. One student said that his discovery of DVD extras (on *The Terminal*) helped him to think about

how Tom Hanks fashioned his eastern European accent. Those who studied *Cold Mountain* and Bridget Jones commented that Zellweger's creation of characters via their voices "really made [them] think" about whether second language students can also "become" their assumed accent. One of them speaks enviously about a student in another class whose American is so perfect that it must be her *choice* to speak like that.

I can see speaking is the important part of who we are (Karen)

One of the theses of the course is that one of the ways in which individuals fashion themselves within a culture is through speaking and voice. It is encouraging that one common theme to emerge was that fictional characters fashion and forge identities in part through their utterances. Each of the 13 students made this point. Mark observed that speaking Pakistani-accented English was linked to "non-Englishness," not being able to be a true English citizen, while Jenna indicated that second generation Greek women chose to speak more like Americans than like their mothers and grandmothers. Sara showed that how characters spoke in *Bring It On* demonstrated "how cool or not are they." She mentions that "fag" and "dykeadelic" are regarded as spoken argots in the idiom of the movie, as well as being socially specific lexical items in their own rights. Karen and Mark's observations concur with Henry Higgins's: "An Englishman's way of speaking absolutely classifies him." Unsurprisingly, this was the thesis of Miwa's presentation on *My Fair Lady*, where she analysed Henry Higgins's articulation of the link between Eliza Doolittle's social identity and speech: "It's 'aoow' and 'garn' that keep her in her place/ Not her wretched clothes and dirty face." Then, her presentation of pictures of Eliza in her Ascot wear demonstrated that clothes, too, make the woman.

Learning about identity and speech can also be reflexive, as in Sara and Karen's comments about choosing speaking style and accent to gain access to particular imagined communities. Similarly, viewing the video can lead to reflexive learning. As Gerda, after watching her presentation, said:

I never thought before that I can improve and change a lot from my performance . . . I feel myself is a new person from what I was before when I watched myself on video. You can have a look at yourself and change what you don't like. You can change a lot of things when you do a presentation. (Gerda)

To understand this process can be affirming to the student. As Sprott (2000) observed, "I know that my students need many affirming experiences—experiences that help them to know who they are and how they fit into the world picture" (p. 50). This presentation has the potential to present similar affirmations by demonstrating that speaking is a vital part of who we are and who we can be.

Nowadays, we need understanding different accents for business, education (June)

June's comment indicates that comprehending non-standard and accented varieties of English speaking may be an investment in one's future. Although research demonstrates ESL students' relative difficulty with non-standard varieties of English, an understanding that being able to understand ethnic Englishes is vital is starting to emerge (Rogers, 2004). Nine students commented on the usefulness of listening to accented speech in film. June says: "learning about Spanglish will help me when I go study in American" and Karen states: "different kinds of American accents are very useful to know these days." Spring (presenting

Whale Rider) comments: “I live in New Zealand now and need to understand Maori speaking and slangs like *smokes* for *cigarettes*. I must listen carefully.” She articulates a willingness to invest in understanding Maori English. Mark pointed out that in Britain, “racial tolerance is linked with patience of migrant accents, as shown in *East Is East*.” This paper contends that listening to non-standard speaking prepares students better for interaction in their future imagined communities.

Conclusions

The pedagogical possibilities for utilising well-selected films in the context of an advanced EAL programme extend beyond those covered by the recent research. This paper demonstrates that speaking about film is an effective way to learn about speaking and its connections with collective and individual identity because it is motivating and thought-provoking. As analysis of the student reflections demonstrates, the pedagogy of the film studies presentation does more than “help to bring the outside world into the classroom” (Aken, 2003, p. 52). It leads more specifically to sociocultural and ethnolinguistic learning applicable to appropriate knowledge of speaking and speakers in a globalised world.

Each of the five key findings gives rise to a pertinent conclusion. Firstly, that one specific way in which this may be motivating is that it helps learners to find their own identities as English speakers. Second, films have the capacity to mirror historical and naturalistic cultures and the fashioning of identities within them, and spoken language contributes to their creation. Third, this pedagogical use of film provokes learners to think reflexively about such sociocultural issues as the connections between voice and identity formation. This leads to the more specific fourth point about being able to see the construction of individual identities through voice and action in film study. Accent is not fixed and may be chosen in order to accommodate oneself more completely into an imagined community. Being able to participate in spoken interactions with speakers of non-standard Englishes might also be useful in this regard, and exposure to filmic speech can facilitate this process.

The process opens windows into the ways in which the spoken word exists within discourses, cultures, communities and power groups. Students learn that film is a vast repository of information about speaking. Film is a mirror where screenwriters, directors and actors collaborate to use (amongst other tools) spoken forms to construct characters and cultures. In the same mirror, students can see the created characters asserting and projecting who they are in their fictional cultures, with their own back-stories and complexities. Voice is a vital part of identity and it envelops culture, ethnicity, origin and self, imposed or negotiated. Through filmic speech, audiences eavesdrop on the triumphs, crises, catastrophes and epiphanies of characters. Both the performer and the character, to purloin the terminology of Goffman’s theory of self-presentation (in Ivanic, 1998, p. 19) contain freight that students can unpack to learn about speaking. In many ways, we, like filmic characters, can be what we talk.

The pedagogy needs a clear critical framework for analysing stereotypes and critically explaining the use of interlanguage speakers as objects of humour in *Spanglish*, *The Terminal* and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*. Students enjoy identifying funny moments (“Brishit Jones”) but need to analyse the problematic positioning of the interlanguage-speaking character in terms of the relationship between the artefact (the manufactured film) and the spectator. This means incorporating politicised media literacy into the pedagogy.

Students also need to articulate how and why such films as *East is East* or *Lost in Translation* try to hold a mirror up to nature—or perhaps, sometimes, it is a distorting mirror. Films depicting culture and language clashes need a framework of multicultural diversity or language policy. Benson and Nunan's (2005) comment about learning diversity is helpful here:

In a world in which the boundaries between sociocultural contexts are increasingly blurred, learned diversity indeed appears to take on a new character, in which the construction of new, and often highly individualised, multilingual identities through second language learning plays a crucial role. (p. 190)

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Appendix A: Two Sample Applications

Here are two examples of classroom materials demonstrating how films may be exploited to capture sociolinguistic learning.

Sample Application 1: *Whale Rider* (Niki Caro, 2002)

While they watch *Whale Rider*, students take notes under a range of headings such as “Examples of Maori English,” “Words where you hear a Kiwi accent,” “Examples of male and female speaking,” “Spoken genre in the film,” “Utterances about identity,” and “How voice-over is used.” These leads us into ethnolinguistic discussion about Kiwi vowels and idioms and sociolinguistic debate on ideas about gender embedded in language and culture: scenes of women gossiping and working in the kitchen are contrasted with scenes of masculine ritual. We also identify features of Maori speaking: such features as the pluralisation of uncountable nouns (“get your gears”), the use of “the smokes” for “smoking” and the shortening of “brother” to “bro” are readily identifiable. The class consider how Paikea’s speaking remains that of a girl when her connections to her legendary namesake are revealed. We focus on how voice-over uses “written spoken English”—Witi Ihimaera’s prose—as opposed to “spoken written English” to present narrative and back-story. In short, there are discussions on speaking about film and learning about speaking and identity. This is followed up with a close cloze-study of Paikea’s pivotal speech about her “paka”/ grandfather, and his role in her identity formation as a “chosen one.” The transcript is available on <http://www.script-o-rama.com>.

Sample Application 2: *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934)

Movies of the 1930s are excellent for pragmatic conversation analysis. There are numerous possibilities in the raising of an eyebrow. Not only do the actors’ voices convey a clarity necessary in early “talking films,” but these films are products of a society and era (post-Depression USA) which valued verbal fluency as cultural capital (Kosloff, 2000; DiBattista, 2001). This was an age of human potential: the figure of the career woman emerged, able to rise professionally if in possession of a quick mind and a clever tongue. The down-on-his-luck American-on-the-street could turn his fortunes around with a bit of clever double-speak and “gift o’ gab.” In 1934, speaking was a form of power.

We analyse the hitch-hiking scene from *It Happened One Night*, the transcript of which, like many films, is available online (<http://www.alexanderstreet.com>). Its fast-talking dame is a runaway heiress, Ellie Andrews (Claudette Colbert) on a bus trip from New York into the heartland, and its quick-fire but temporarily luckless hero-in-waiting is a newspaper hack, Peter Warne (Clark Gable), who works out who she is and spots a headline. In sociolinguistic terms, this offers obvious contrasts: gendered language; class-specific speaking; city talk versus country talk. In terms of historical lexicography, there are 30s idiomatic usages (“a smart alek”) and lexis (“panhandling”) aplenty. The pair use rapid, quick-fire, often elliptical speech and witty repartee as a reflection of the battle of the sexes. The potential of this scene for conversation analysis is clear: the turn-taking is crisp and staccato; there is implicature galore.

Appendix B: Films presented, speaking focus and thesis

Name	Film Title	Speaking learning focus	Thesis on learning focus
Jean	<i>Forrest Gump</i> (1994)	Americanisms and aphorisms through the twentieth century	US culture is seen through the spoken language
Karen	<i>Cold Mountain</i> (2003)	The actors' creations of historic Carolina accents and dialects	Actors can assume spoken identities so students, too, can choose to speak with an American accent, for instance
Gerda	<i>Big Fish</i> (2003)	A variety of characters are marked by their voices	The voice is a distinct characteristic and marker of individuality
Penny	<i>Lost in Translation</i> (2003)	"Japlish", language and culture clash	Despite the film's acclaim, the interlanguage spoken here is stereotyped
Miwa	<i>My Fair Lady</i> (1964)	Identity, the spoken word and class	Eliza did not change inwardly, but her voice was trained to be a lady
Jill	<i>Gone with the Wind</i> (1939)	Southern American accents; characters of blacks	Voices show characters' moral worth; black discourse is more non-grammatical and elliptical
Qing	<i>Bridget Jones: Edge of Reason</i> (2004)	Speaking and social class; "Thailish"	Bridget's status is marked by her lower-class accent; Thai-English interlanguage is characterised by sound-dropping and mispronunciation
Sara	<i>Bring it On</i> (2000)	The speaking of US high school teens and cheerleaders	Many marks of an idiolect are here, including slang, to show group inclusiveness
Paul	<i>The Terminal</i> (2004)	Tom Hanks's invention of a speaker of a fictional Eastern European language	Phonetic features of the language are similar to Bulgarian; the process of learning speaking
Mark	<i>East is East</i> (2000)	Voices of Pakistani family clashing with Londoners	Film-maker uses the clash of accents to show the Pakistani asserting identities for political purposes
Jenna	<i>My Big Fat Greek Wedding</i> (2002)	Old Greek generation and new Americanised Greek generation	Although Greek interlanguage is used comically, generational identity is part of Nia Vandalos's autobiography
June	<i>Spanglish</i> (2004)	A Spanish speaking servant in an American household	The interlanguage Spanglish is the site of comic misunderstandings
Spring	<i>Whale Rider</i> (2002)	The features of Maori English	Maori speakers of English code-switch for lexical reasons and their speaking contains more stress and less linking

SPEAKING ENGLISH BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: IDENTIFYING BARRIERS AND EFFECTING CHANGE

Cathy Wright
Unitec

Abstract

English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners often miss out on opportunities for language learning outside class because they find it difficult to break down barriers between their formal learning environment and the wider environment in which they live. This paper reports on an action research project that investigated learners' experiences and perceptions of speaking English outside the classroom and how teacher intervention or 'scaffolding' could help learners overcome barriers to speaking English outside class. The study found that these interventions had positive outcomes in four main areas. The findings are discussed along with implications for EAL learners and practitioners.

Introduction

Studies have shown that a major disappointment for EAL learners is the difficulty they have meeting and maintaining contact with fluent English speakers in the community (e.g., White, Watts & Trlin, 2001; Wright, 2004). Neville-Barton (2003) found that even attending full-time English classes could significantly reduce opportunities for speaking English outside class.

This paper reports on an action research project that investigated adult EAL learners' experiences and perceptions of speaking English outside the formal classroom environment. The research was carried out by the author with a class of pre-intermediate level EAL students who she was teaching at the time. The project identified some of the barriers to speaking English outside class and explored how EAL practitioners can help learners overcome these barriers. After describing the background to the study, the paper discusses: why speaking English outside class helps develop L2 proficiency; ideas about learner autonomy; and the concept of "scaffolding." The project is described and the research findings are used to explore issues related to the idea of speaking English beyond the classroom. Finally, implications for EAL programmes are considered, together with some suggestions for future action.

Background

This project arose out of earlier research by the author (Wright, 2004) that investigated, firstly, EAL learners' use and perceptions of a self-access centre and, secondly, other ways they learnt English outside the formal learning environment – for example, by reading English newspapers, using computer assisted language learning and speaking English outside class.

One of the key themes to emerge from this earlier research was learners' concerns about, what they perceived to be, limited opportunities for authentic speaking practice outside the classroom. Representative comments include: "very difficult to speak English with Kiwi"; "nobody speaks to me"; and "I really think speak lots of English but very difficult." This lack

of speaking opportunities concerned the students because they were aware that speaking English outside class was very useful for their English. The self-access centre, which acts as a bridge between the classroom and outside world, could not meet the demand for speaking practice. The learners wanted teachers to help them find more opportunities for speaking English outside class, although no specific suggestions were made as to the actual form this help should take.

The importance of speaking English outside the classroom

Ellis (2005) outlines ten general principles for successful instructed language learning. Three of these principles are particularly relevant to the present study because they highlight the importance of speaking English outside class. They state that successful instructed language learning requires both extensive L2 input and opportunities for output and that interacting in the L2 is central to developing L2 proficiency. Speaking English in the community, therefore, enables EAL learners to gain access to both extensive L2 input and opportunities for output. Interacting in the community is a vital part of their language learning because language acquisition takes place when learners have problems communicating and have to negotiate for meaning. To achieve this, learners cannot just rely on their existing linguistic resources, but are pushed to create new resources. Interaction with fluent English speakers in the community also has implications for acculturation, identity and feelings of belonging.

Learner autonomy

There has been considerable interest in, and discussion of, learner autonomy over the past twenty-five years (e.g., Holec, 1981; Cotterall, 1995; Benson & Voller, 1997; Chan, 2001). It is now widely accepted as a necessary part of effective learning and enhancing learner autonomy has become a key concern of language teachers. Autonomous learning is “a fruitful approach and one that impinges on every aspect of language learning theory and practice” (Gremmo & Riley, 1995, p. 156).

One of the most widely accepted definitions of autonomy is that it is “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec, 1981, p. 3). Learners need to be both *willing* and *able* to take control of their learning, for instance by setting learning goals, choosing appropriate learning strategies, reflecting on the learning process and assessing their progress. It is worth noting that autonomy is a process rather than a product: learners do not so much *become* autonomous as *move towards* autonomy. One implication of this is that learners in the same class will have different degrees of willingness and ability to learn autonomously.

Both cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies are important for developing autonomy. Cognitive strategies – for instance, note-taking and contextualisation – are applied to incoming information by learners. Meta-cognitive strategies are about learning rather than the learning strategies themselves. One way for a learner to develop their meta-cognitive awareness and their ability to become more autonomous is through self-reflection, something that was encouraged in this project. Affective factors such as motivation and attitude towards the target language also influence learning. Williams and Burden (1997), writing about language learning psychology, claim that learners learn better if they feel in control of their learning. Gardner and Miller (1999) argue that autonomous learning enables students to use strategies that reflect their preferred learning styles. It is, therefore, “crucial to transfer as much responsibility for learning to the students themselves” (Vockell, 2004, p. 1). However,

it is not simply a matter of teachers *telling* students to do this; they need to be *supported* in their attempts to become more autonomous learners.

Scaffolding

This idea of supporting learners in their efforts to be autonomous is one that is central to a Vygotskian approach. In Vygotsky's view (1978), a difference exists between what the learner can do independently and what they can do with support:

The zone of proximal development is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers. (p. 85)

In the Vygotskian view of cognitive development, teachers and/or more capable peers provide scaffolding to help learners learn new information and develop more complex thinking abilities. Scaffolding enables the learner to perform a task under guidance that they could not otherwise achieve. For scaffolding to be effective, the teacher needs to engage the learners' interest, help motivate learners to achieve goals and structure activities at the right level to provide the right amount of challenge. In this project, scaffolding was used to help learners improve their spoken interaction outside the formal learning environment. It was hoped that what the students could achieve today with assistance, they could achieve tomorrow independently.

The research project

Purpose

The project had two main aims. The first was to gather data on learners' experiences of, and attitudes towards, speaking English outside class. The second was to investigate how teacher intervention or 'scaffolding' could help learners engage more successfully in L2 interactions with fluent English speakers outside the formal learning environment. This was felt to be an important issue given that oral interaction is a key way learners acquire language (Ellis, 2005).

Participants

The participants were from a class of pre-intermediate level students being taught by the author at the time of the project. The twelve students were studying in a tertiary institution in Auckland, New Zealand. There were eleven international students and one permanent resident. Eight students were from mainland China, two from Korea, one from Vietnam and one from Taiwan. The student who was a permanent resident was 48 years old; all the others were 18 to 24 years old.

Methodology

This project is an example of action research, which places the concerns of practitioners at the centre of the enquiry process (Nunan, 1993; Verma & Mallick, 1999; Hopkins, 2002; Cardno, 2003). Much action research has been criticised for unreliable methodology. To counter this,

Hopkins (2002), amongst others, advises using “triangulation,” a technique used to verify results through cross-checking. The data in this project were triangulated by using two student questionnaires, written reflections, speaking logs, self-access centre records and teacher observations.

Two questionnaires, which were piloted and revised, were administered in this project, one at the start and one at the end of the project. The questionnaires were completed by students during their normal class time. The first questionnaire consisted of ten questions, which required students to report on their experiences and attitudes towards speaking English outside class. The questions were both closed and open; one closed question required students to rank statements about the usefulness of speaking English outside class according to a 5-point Likert scale. Example questions are: “In one week, how much time do you spend speaking English outside class?”; “Do you live with any fluent English speakers?”; “Who do you usually talk English with outside class?”; “How do you feel about speaking English outside class?” (See Appendix A.)

The second questionnaire included the same ten questions, to enable any changes in participants’ experiences and attitudes over the course of the project to be noted. It also included seven additional questions to assess learners’ opinions about the teacher interventions. (See Appendix B.) Some of the additional questions included: “Students from ‘Advanced’ talked to our class about speaking English out of class. How useful was this?”; “You used a ‘speaking log’ this term. How useful was this for improving your English?”; “What will you do in the future to improve your speaking skills?”

An innovative approach to supporting or “scaffolding” learners’ attempts at spoken interaction beyond class was developed, using activities to encourage reflection and raise awareness of strategies and opportunities. The three kinds of scaffolding or intervention used are explained below.

(i) Four students from the ‘Advanced’ level at the same tertiary institution were invited to the class to share their experiences about speaking English in the community and how barriers could be overcome. This was a non-threatening, peer-mentoring session with the teacher present only as an observer. Students were divided into four groups, each with one Advanced student (one each from Korea, China, France and Thailand). Each Advanced student spoke to each of the groups so that students could hear a range of different experiences. The discussion lasted one hour and students then worked individually on producing a written reflection of the session for a further thirty to forty minutes.

(ii) A language tutor appointment was booked for each student because, in the first cycle of the research, many students said they found the booking system difficult or lacked the confidence to talk to a language tutor. By making appointments for them, it was hoped that these barriers would be overcome and all students would thereby have the experience of talking to a language tutor – something they might not do without the teacher’s support. I liaised closely with the self-access centre manager and she was able to check whether students had kept their appointment. Cotterall and Reinders (2000) argue that on-going teacher support is important for self-access language learning.

(iii) The students were given ‘Speaking Logs’ in which to record their experiences of speaking outside class. These booklets were created by the author. They included weekly

‘record sheets’ where students noted their speaking experiences and a weekly ‘reflection sheet’ where students reflected on their speaking. Each week, they recorded when, where, to whom and why they spoke and some information about the content of the conversation. They also reflected on their experiences, the strategies they had used and their effectiveness; and evaluated their progress and set goals for the following week. The speaking logs were handed in each week and I wrote comments in the logs to maintain an on-going conversation with the student. The learners also discussed their experiences each week in class.

The purpose of these teacher interventions was to encourage and support students in their attempts to communicate with fluent English speakers outside class and to assess the relative usefulness and effectiveness of the different kinds of intervention. Learner reflection was an integral part of these activities.

Reflection

Reflection can be defined as, “the ability to be self-aware, to analyse experiences, to evaluate their meaning and to plan further action based on analysis and reflection” (de la Harpe & Radloff, 2002, p. 1). Reflective learning occurs when we learn from our mistakes and successes, consider alternative courses of actions, try out different solutions and then reflect again. Methods for promoting reflective learning, for example, learning journals and class discussions, can lead to increased meta-cognitive awareness and greater capacity for autonomous learning. The research participants were encouraged to reflect at all stages of the project: in the questionnaires and speaking logs; in written reflections after talking to a language tutor and to the Advanced students; and in class discussions.

Data analysis

The project generated both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were generated by most questions in the questionnaire and by the weekly record sheets in the speaking logs. The data analysis involved coding responses and counting the number of responses in each category. As there were only twelve participants in the study, it was more useful to use numbers rather than percentages. Qualitative data were generated by written comments about the discussions with advanced-level students and language tutor sessions, by the reflection pages of the speaking logs and by open-ended questions in the two questionnaires. Content analysis was used to analyse comments and reflections for recurrent themes. The researcher read the comments and noted consistent ideas and keywords that emerged from the data. Responses were sorted by theme and the number in each category was counted.

In some cases, themes are mentioned more than once by the same participant, in which case they are counted more than once; this happened most frequently in the speaking log reflections because students were commenting on a weekly basis and often repeated themselves. Where this happens, results give a general indication of themes rather than an analysis of each individual participant’s answers; a more detailed analysis was beyond the scope of the current paper.

Results and discussion

Questionnaires

The first questionnaire showed that the participants usually spoke English outside class with classmates, friends (usually other international students, but in two cases ‘a kiwi friend’), home-stay families and their friends, flatmates, people associated with their tertiary institution, for example administrative staff, teachers and language tutors. People in the wider community were not a major source of oral interaction; only shop assistants, bus drivers, one hairdresser, one ‘car mender’ and one neighbour were mentioned. Only about one third of students in the first questionnaire and half in the second questionnaire reported that they lived with fluent English speakers.

The two questionnaires showed significant changes in attitude over the course of the project. By questionnaire two, students were more convinced that speaking English outside class was very important (all instead of half) and more certain it could improve their speaking, listening, vocabulary and understanding of life in New Zealand. Furthermore, participants had become more positive about their experiences of speaking English in the community. In the first survey, only four students made positive comments and seven made negative comments. However, in the second survey, seven respondents made positive comments and only two made negative comments. Positive comments include: “Feeling good. I enjoy it”; “I think very interesting, because I can use English conversation with somebody”; and “That’s good for improve my English.” (Participants’ spelling and grammatical errors have been retained). Nine respondents planned to improve their speaking by putting in more time and effort and three by learning more vocabulary.

The second questionnaire also sought respondents’ views on the teacher interventions. All interventions were considered to be useful or very useful, with the language tutor sessions rated most highly, followed by the discussion with advanced students and then the speaking logs.

Language tutor sessions

All twelve participants kept their appointment with a language tutor and all said it was either useful (four students) or very useful (eight) for their speaking. Comments were either positive (ten) or a mixture of positive and negative remarks (two). Positive comments include: “They are friendly and very patience”; “I can improve English from them. It’s useful”; “It is very helpful”; “I feel satisfied with them. They are OK.”

Many participants subsequently made it a goal in their speaking logs to speak regularly with a language tutor. In the final questionnaire, this form of “scaffolding” was rated more useful than the speaking logs and the discussion with the advanced-level students. Language tutor records showed that, compared to the previous term, a higher proportion of students in the class used the language tutor service.

Discussion with Advanced level students

During the discussion, the students talked animatedly and were fully engaged. Afterwards, each student wrote a reflective record. I gave them no input other than the opening sentence,

“Today, four students from ‘Advanced’ visited our class.” Analysis of the learners’ reflections showed that forty-seven separate comments had been made; four main themes emerged.

The first theme was “usefulness of the discussion” (seventeen comments). Representative comments are: “They have give me some good ideas. It will useful for me in the future”; “Certainly, I’ve got some important informations from this convesation. They gave me many ideas about ...what I want to know”; “I like it. I think my classmates all like this”; “A good experience”; “We were very amazed because they were speaking very fast and friendly.”

The second theme was “speaking strategies suggested by the advanced-level students” (sixteen comments). Representative comments include: “Go to community center eg Maori center. We learn to dance with Maori or Kiwi so we speak English”; “live with homestay and people come from different countries so you can speak English with them”; “Every weekend, go to English church and talk to some one”; “When you go shopping and something you can speak more English with someone.”

The third theme was “encouragement given by the advanced-level students.” Three comments were about encouragement generally, for example “Just try to speak. After sometimes I can improve my English speaking.” The other five comments focused on fear and anxiety, for example: “Don’t worry to make mistake talking with somebody”; “You have to speak English outside and don’t afraid”; “Don’t mind the man’s feeling” (the feelings of the person they talk to).

The final theme was “meta-cognitive awareness,” for example: “People come from Europe study English is easier than others come from Asia, so I may spend more time to get high level”; “Don’t be afraid make mistake because mother language people sometimes have mistake”; “Vocabulary is very important because it is guarantee communication with other people”; “My character is withdrawn. I need to change my character for speaking.”

All the pre-intermediate students and the four visiting students were very positive about this event, which fits with the questionnaire findings. It was particularly useful for informing students about specific strategies and ways to create opportunities for speaking, raising their meta-cognitive awareness and encouraging them to overcome the barrier of anxiety and fear.

Speaking logs

Initially, some learners were embarrassed by having so few “speaking experiences” to record and others needed help with setting goals. However, this situation improved as more class time was devoted to completing reflections in class, sharing experiences and ideas and setting goals. The speaking logs proved to be a rich source of data on learners’ goals, experiences and attitudes to speaking English outside class.

To be successful, EAL learners need to be able to set goals and have the inner drive necessary to work towards those goals (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). Initially, the participants found it difficult to formulate specific goals for speaking outside class: they wrote rather general goals such as “Spend more time to speak English,” “Speak English better than now” and “Speak English with a lot of English speaker.” After feedback and more teacher input, goals became more focussed: “I will talk to a keeper in his shop”; “Talk about rugby with someone”; “I will talk to the bus driver”; “Talk longer with my host family.” However, some students continued

to find it difficult to formulate specific goals and it is likely that even more teacher support was needed.

The time spent speaking English outside class ranged from a few minutes to several hours per week, but for most students the time was under an hour a week. Spoken interaction usually occurred in the student lunchroom, at home-stays, at places where goods and services were provided and, very rarely, in other places such as at a golf course. The people conversed with included the host family, friends, a “dealer,” shop assistants, a schoolteacher, other international students, language tutors, a kiwi friend, policeman, a Kiwi person selling a TV, son’s teacher, a nurse, golfers, a bus driver, a hairdresser, a person selling tickets in a cinema, a home-stay organiser, women at a bus stop, classmates, a neighbour and a Kiwi woman who was selling her car. It was noticeable that there was more spoken interaction with fluent native speakers than was stated in the first questionnaire and a wider variety of people spoken to.

Each week, on a 5-point Likert scale, students ranked their enjoyment of speaking English, how confident or nervous they felt and their understanding of what was said. The data shows that, over time, the majority increased their enjoyment of speaking English, maintained or increased their level of confidence, felt less nervous (although two said they felt more nervous) and understood the same or more of what was said to them.

As well as goal-setting and recording ‘instances of speaking,’ the students used the logs to make reflective comments. From the seventy reflective comments that were made altogether, a detailed picture emerges of participants’ feelings about speaking English outside class, problems encountered, ideas about how to improve, evaluation of progress made and plans for the future.

Twenty-three per cent (16) of these reflective comments related to learners’ feelings and of these, just over two-thirds were negative. Although disappointing, this result was not unexpected and was further evidence that the students needed more support. The negative feelings seemed to stem from anxiety and lack of confidence: “I feel my speaking is very bad”; “I think my pronunciation is not good so I worry to speaking”; “When I met Kiwi people I was nervous”; “Sometimes I afraid make mistake.” Very few students said they enjoyed speaking English; the following comment was certainly unusual: “Speaking is the most confident for me. I can speak faster than another people who is the same level as me . . . anyway I enjoy speaking English.”

About 30% (21) of the comments focused on problems encountered when speaking English outside class and ideas about how to improve. Learners’ were able to articulate their difficulties and, in most cases, analyse them: “I felt speaking is too difficult because my pronunciation is not good so somebody not understand to me and listening difficult to me. I think reason is I haven’t got many words”; “I always forgot what I wanted to say and some important words about this conversation”; “Sometimes I hate my bad listening. I couldn’t understand what they said so I didn’t know how to reply and what I shall say.” Fortunately, the learners also had some ideas about how to improve: “I felt I need learn a lot of new words because this is basis of improve English”; “I feel vocabulary is very important for English so I’ll go on learn more vocabulary”; “I always remember many mistakes when I finished every talking. I will correct them at next time”; “I want talk of more people, that is a good practice for my speaking”; “I have a lot of mistake of grammar in speaking so I can do some practice about grammar.”

As we have seen, a lot of negative comments were made about speaking English outside class. However, the picture is more encouraging when we look at the learners' reflections on their progress. Thirty per cent (21) of the comments were evaluations of progress and it is pleasing to report that all except one student noted at least once that their speaking had improved. Example comments are: "I discovered improve speaking"; "I feel my speaking is getting better"; "Unexpected, I can understand most usual talking when I use my all attention." Other comments showed that students felt they had benefited directly from using the speaking logs, for instance "I feel my speaking improve after the exercises." Several students wrote that they were more confident than before for example, "I felt now I not nervous when I speak English"; "My speaking has a bit progress this week. I don't feel nervous when I talk to someone." These findings corroborate those of the second questionnaire survey, which indicate that, over the course of the project, respondents became more positive about their experiences of speaking English in the community.

The learners certainly seemed very motivated to improve their spoken interactions beyond the formal learning environment. All of them resolved, in different ways, to work hard and make progress: "I really want to improve my speaking so I decide to do more speaking exercise"; "I'd like to improve speaking because I thought that is the first step to be a successful English learner"; "I'm going to exercise speaking every day"; "I will try my best listening and speaking more"; "I should much more speak English." This supports findings from the second questionnaire that: students were more convinced than at the start of the project that speaking English outside class was very important (all instead of half); and more certain it could improve their speaking, listening, vocabulary and understanding of life in NZ.

Overcoming the barriers to speaking English outside class – was the intervention successful?

The project showed that the EAL learners in the case study encountered significant difficulties when they attempted to speak English beyond class. For most of them, contact with fluent English speakers was fairly limited, in terms of both talking time and range of people spoken to. The three main barriers were: first – and most obviously – a low level of English ability (pre-intermediate); secondly, the learners' lack of confidence and feelings of anxiety; and thirdly, insufficient support from EAL practitioners. These difficulties prevented most of the students from making full use of the opportunities for spoken interaction available to them in an English-speaking country.

When assessing the success of the teacher interventions in the project, it is important to be careful about what conclusions are drawn because this is a small exploratory study. Nevertheless, in relation to this particular group of learners, the interventions had positive outcomes in four main areas. Firstly, they helped the participants to overcome some of their fear of speaking English outside class and to increase their confidence, as clearly evidenced in students' reflective comments. Secondly, levels of motivation increased. Thirdly, learners received structured and practical support in the form of an introductory language tutor session, advice from more capable peers, a safe place to discuss problems and share ideas and strategies, help with goal-setting and the expectation that they would speak English outside class and complete their speaking logs. Fourthly, they encouraged the learners to reflect and, in the process, to become more autonomous learners: "Students who reflect on their learning are better able to understand themselves and the learning process and exercise control over their own learning" (de la Harpe & Radloff, 2002, p. 1).

Given the time constraints that most teachers work under, the most useful and effective teacher interventions in this project seem to be the discussion with the advanced-level students and the language tutor sessions. In both cases, the amount of teacher input required was not too demanding of the teacher's time and all the students found them useful or very useful for improving their spoken interaction outside class. Participants thought most highly of the language tutor sessions and language tutor records showed that the students made a greater than expected use (compared to previous patterns of use) of the language tutor service. The speaking logs were another useful form of scaffolding and certainly prompted a great deal of learner reflection. However, they were considered less useful by the students and required a significant amount of teacher time. As well as creating the logs and explaining the process, the teacher had to support students through the process, check that they were doing their logs and give weekly written feedback. Furthermore, even with a lot of support, it was still difficult to get some students to regularly complete the logs. The speaking logs certainly encouraged autonomous learning and were a rich source of data, but they also made high demands on the teacher.

Implications for EAL programmes

The opportunity to interact in English is central to developing proficiency in English (Ellis, 2005). In oral interaction, language acquisition takes place when learners have to negotiate for meaning. Therefore, given that EAL learners spend a lot of time outside the classroom, the degree to which they engage in speaking English outside the formal learning environment is an important matter for EAL programmes. Language practitioners have a responsibility to support learners in their efforts to speak English outside class. The examples of teacher intervention or 'scaffolding' discussed in this project were fruitful ways of supporting one particular group of students; it is likely that they could also be successful in other contexts. There are of course other ways of encouraging EAL learners to speak English beyond the classroom, but these are outside the remit of this particular study.

By understanding more about EAL learners' attitudes towards, and experiences of, speaking English outside class, and what kinds of intervention might be useful, we should be better able to support students in their efforts to engage in spoken interaction with fluent English speakers in the community and, in the process, help them further along the path to becoming more autonomous learners.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire 1 and 2

Questionnaire 1: Speaking English outside the classroom

*Please complete the questionnaire. There are no wrong or right answers.
Answers are confidential.*

1. How important is speaking English **OUTSIDE** class? (not in the classroom)
 Not at all important Quite important Very important
2. In the table below are some statements about speaking English outside class. Read them and circle:
 - (1) if you **strongly agree** with a statement
 - (2) if you **agree**
 - (3) if you are **not sure**
 - (4) if you **disagree**
 - (5) if you **strongly disagree**

Speaking English outside class can help me....

improve my speaking	1	2	3	4	5
improve my listening	1	2	3	4	5
improve my reading	1	2	3	4	5
improve my writing	1	2	3	4	5
improve my grammar	1	2	3	4	5
improve my vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
learn more about life in New Zealand	1	2	3	4	5

3. In one week, how much time do you spend speaking English **OUTSIDE** class?
4. Do you want to spend **MORE** time speaking English outside class? Yes No
 Why / why not?
5. Who do you **usually** talk English with outside class?
6. Who do you **sometimes** talk English with outside class?
7. What fluent English speakers do you talk with?
8. Do you live with any fluent English speakers (eg homestay parents, flatmates)?
 Who?
9. How long have you been in New Zealand?
10. How do you **feel** about speaking English outside class?

Questionnaire 2: Speaking English outside the classroom

*Please complete the questionnaire. There are no wrong or right answers.
Answers are confidential.*

1. How important is speaking English **OUTSIDE** class? (not in the classroom)
 Not at all important Quite important Very important
2. In the table below are some statements about speaking English outside class. Read them and circle:

- (6) if you **strongly agree** with a statement
 (7) if you **agree**
 (8) if you are **not sure**
 (9) if you **disagree**
 (10) if you **strongly disagree**

Speaking English outside class can help me....

improve my speaking	1	2	3	4	5
improve my listening	1	2	3	4	5
improve my reading	1	2	3	4	5
improve my writing	1	2	3	4	5
improve my grammar	1	2	3	4	5
improve my vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
learn more about life in New Zealand	1	2	3	4	5

3. In one week, how much time do you spend speaking English **OUTSIDE** class?
4. Do you want to spend **MORE** time speaking English outside class? Yes No
 Why / why not?
5. Who do you **usually** talk English with outside class?
6. Who do you **sometimes** talk English with outside class?
7. What fluent English speakers do you talk with?
8. Do you live with any fluent English speakers (eg homestay parents, flatmates)?
 Who?
9. How long have you been in New Zealand?
10. How do you **feel** about speaking English outside class?

11. Students from ‘Advanced’ talked to our class about speaking English out of class.
How useful was this for your speaking?

Very useful useful not very useful

12. You talked to a ‘Language Tutor’ this term. How useful was this for your speaking?

Very useful useful not very useful

13. You used a ‘Speaking Log’ this term. How useful was this for improving your speaking?

Very useful useful not very useful

14. What do you think about the Language Tutor service? (Write a few sentences or some key words.)

15. What do you think about ‘Speaking Logs? (Write a few sentences or some key words).

16. What will you do in the future to improve your speaking skills?

**“Thank you
for
answering**

PREPARING EAL STUDENTS FOR THE INTERACTIONAL DEMANDS OF MAINSTREAM GROUP ASSESSMENT PROJECTS

Alice U and Pat Strauss
Auckland University of Technology

Abstract

For English as an additional language (EAL) students, the adjustments required to study successfully at a tertiary institution are varied and taxing (Myles & Cheng, 2003). Probably the greatest difficulty they encounter is overcoming the lack of the appropriate linguistic and cultural knowledge needed for meaningful interaction both in and outside the mainstream classroom (Myles & Cheng, 2003; Zou, 1998). In this article, we present research at AUT (Auckland University of Technology) investigating the challenges facing one particular cohort of students and their lecturers. This research indicates that many of these students have great difficulty with oral communication in English and are uneasy about interacting in groups, particularly with their English Speaking Background (ESB) peers. Obviously, this difficulty impacts negatively on their participation in the group assessment projects commonly employed by lecturers. Many EAL students find it difficult to participate in the meetings, which are an essential part of group projects, and often feel sidelined or belittled particularly by their ESB counterparts. We discuss possible reasons for this state of affairs and make suggestions as to how English for Academic Purposes (EAP) lecturers can prepare EAL students to become more successful in their interaction in group projects.

Introduction

Research indicates that in an education climate where group work is strongly encouraged at university level, and where group projects are routinely used as assessment tools, the difficulties EAL students experience are a cause of growing concern. ESB students are understandably concerned that the presence of students who do not appear to be able to cope with the demands of group projects will negatively impact on their marks. Those of us who teach these EAL students know what an enormous contribution many of them are capable of making, and are indeed eager to make, to group projects. The best way, it would appear, to counter the resentment of ESB students and the unhappiness of their EAL counterparts is to encourage open communication. Yet, the oral communication that takes place during the meetings for the group projects can sometimes exacerbate rather than ameliorate the problem.

Background

The group work process is “a set of values that encourages behaviours such as listening and constructively responding to points of view expressed by others, giving others the benefit of the doubt, providing support to those who need it, and recognising the interests and achievements of others” (Deeter-Schmelz, Kennedy & Ramsey, 2002, p. 116). The linguistic challenges that EAL students face in this regard have been well-documented (Dooey & Oliver, 2002; Bartlett, 2000; Coley, 1999; Aspland & O’Donoghue, 1994). Many students appear to lack the relatively sophisticated command of language that would enable them to engage successfully in the group process. In this minefield, it would appear that both lecturers

and students need to be well-equipped to deal with problematic situations that may arise. Baldwin, Bedell and Johnson (1997, p. 1393) point out, as far as student peer interaction is concerned, so little is known that “any recommendations made to date really constitute wishful thinking more than empirically supported prescriptions.”

There is, however, research indicating that imputed expertise can affect group members’ perceptions and behaviour. External status characteristics are used by group members to form initial expectations about the relative competencies of other members of the group (Karakowsky & McBey, 2001; Ledwith & Lee, 1998). An ESB student in a study by Ledwith and Lee (1998, p. 115) said, “They (EAL students) could be super-intelligent in their own country . . . but it doesn’t come across, so we just think ‘they don’t know what they are talking about’ sort of thing.” Leki (2001, p. 60) argues that ESB students might position themselves as “experts, masters or at least the more senior members of the community or practice” and view the EAL students as “novices, incompetents or apprentices.” This can happen even before groups are formed and can result in some students “being tacitly bypassed in group formation” (Leki, 2001, p. 48). The obvious result is that EAL students’ contributions will be sidelined or undervalued (Strauss, 2001).

To exacerbate matters these students are often reluctant to assert themselves during the selection process or in the subsequent meetings. Carrier (1999) points out that a student’s native culture might define status relationships in such a way that EAL students find it very difficult to question or make requests. Often they will wait for some indication that their contributions will be treated seriously before they enter into dialogue with the other group members.

These cultural differences can also colour the EAL students’ interpretation of the communicative strategies employed by their ESB peers even when it is possible that the latter are attempting to build solidarity in the group. EAL students often complain of teasing that they have to endure but teasing may be a way of showing acceptance. Brown and Levinson, as cited in Davies (2003), classify jokes under positive politeness strategies because they are oriented towards solidarity and affiliation through establishing common ground. However, Davies argues, “different norms exist for appropriate contexts of joking” (p. 1369). In other words, what one culture might interpret as a friendly overture might be seen by members of another as rudeness. Davies points out (p. 1362) that “collaborative joking interaction is also arguably the most complex form of communication that we engage in routinely; this situation is also the most ‘situated’ in its interpretation” and that full participation in joking with native speakers “requires a high level of communicative competence” (p. 1363). If some EAL students’ English has not reached this required level, they might well misunderstand the intentions of their ESB counterparts.

Although both these issues might be resolved if members of the groups communicated their feelings and opinions more clearly and openly, many EAL students seem unwilling or unable to talk to their ESB peers. Kang (2005) investigated EAL students’ willingness to communicate in a conversation partner programme at a state university in the United States. Although the group work in which our students are involved does not fall into the same category, many of the points that Kang makes are of relevance in cross-cultural group dialogue. Kang defines a willingness to communicate as “an individual’s volitional inclination towards actively engaging in the act of communication in a specific situation” (p. 291). Kang argues that this willingness to communicate appears to be strongly influenced by the

psychological conditions of excitement, responsibility and security. Security was defined as “feeling safe from the fears that non-native speakers tend to have in L2 communication” (p. 282) and appears to be linked with concerns about loss of face. According to Kang, EAL students’ reluctance to speak was greater in front of other EAL speakers who were more fluent than they were. This might account for the silence of EAL students when some of the members in their groups shared the same language and cultural background as they did. Feelings of security were also influenced by group size – the larger the group, the more threatening it was perceived to be.

Khuri (2004) notes that recommendations to improve inter-group contact include intervention on an emotional level, helping people become aware of their negative feelings and helping them believe that they might succeed in these interactions. In an article discussing Chinese students’ reluctance to participate in oral English classes Liu (2005, p. 14) observes that many of these students “seemed to be helpless about being reticent” and argues that these students should be “aware of and acknowledge the existence of this reticence” if they are to develop strategies to deal with it. The important question, therefore, is if EAL students are helped to acknowledge and develop insight into these difficulties whether there are ways in which they can be helped to function more successfully in the group environment.

There is research that may be helpful in this regard. In particular, as Koike and Pearson (2005) point out, there has been a sudden growth in the number of studies that examine language learners’ pragmatic competence in the target language. Rose (2005) posed three questions in a recent paper asking whether:

- it was possible to teach targeted pragmatic features,
- instruction in the target feature was more effective than no instruction,
- different teaching approaches were differentially effective.

Rose (2005, p. 392) found that that the research provides “ample evidence” indicating the teachability of pragmatic features; that instruction is more effective than exposure alone in the learning of pragmatics and while not resolving the issue as to whether differing teaching approaches were more effective, found that research in this area provides “considerable support for the value of explicit instruction” (p. 396). Suggestions include role play, the use of videos, identification of “acceptable” and “unacceptable” responses within a variety of contexts, and bringing ESB speakers in to the classroom to interact with the EAL students.

The large body of research into group assessment is sufficient evidence of the challenges faced in implementing this approach. However, while we were aware that group projects presented difficulties at AUT (Strauss, 2001), the extent of the problem only became apparent during our initial study (Strauss & U, 2005) when we investigated the challenges facing EAL students and their lecturers in mainstream classes. These findings led to our follow-up work on group projects.

The studies

Two studies were conducted with ethical consent obtained from the university’s Ethics Committee. The initial study had a broader scope and investigated challenges facing EAL students and their lecturers in mainstream classes, while the follow-up study focussed specifically on the use of group assessment projects in the classroom.

Methodology

The studies employed a qualitative descriptive design (Sandelowski, 2000) and involved semi-structured interviews with lecturers and their students. This allowed us to ask the questions in the same way of each interviewee but at the same time granted us the latitude to alter the sequence of the questions and investigate more deeply certain issues that appeared to be of importance to the interviewees (Robson, 2002). The face-to-face interviews, where lecturers and students were asked to comment on their experiences in multicultural classrooms lasted between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours each. The questions for the interviews were based on our reading of, and reflecting on, the literature, discussions with our colleagues and informal conversations with small groups of students. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the focus of the questions asked of both lecturers and students in the initial study.

Table 1: Interview Prompts – Lecturers (initial study)

General: 1. Faculty 2. Tertiary teaching experience 3. Number of EAL and ESB students in class
Specific: 1. Challenges in teaching multi-cultural classes 2. Positive/Negative effects on students/staff 3. Approach and strategies used in multi-cultural classes 4. Support from university 5. Other comments

Table 2: Interview Prompts – Students (initial study)

General: 1. Faculty 2. Nationality 3. Time in New Zealand
Specific: 1. Challenges and experience in mainstream studies 2. Approach and strategies used for studies 3. Support from university and lecturers 4. Other comments

The transcripts of the recorded interviews were returned to the lecturers and the students to check for accuracy and to verify that they were willing to allow the information to be used in our research. The transcripts were then read and analysed independently after which the findings were compared. These independent readings generated a number of themes which were regarded as relevant. The themes were then discussed, some accepted or discarded and others merged. This enabled us to decide on a final category of themes that were employed in the analysis. This method is referred to by Patton (1990, p. 464) as “analyst triangulating” and allowed us to explore others’ and our own assumptions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Participants

In the initial study, lecturers in all faculties at the university were emailed information about the proposed study and they and their classes were invited to participate. As shown in Table 3, the participating lecturers had a wide range of tertiary teaching experience, and represented disciplines in the Faculties of Arts, Science and Engineering, Business and Health. Table 4 outlines the diverse backgrounds of the participating students, who were all enrolled in first year degree programmes across all faculties.

Table 3: Lecturers' Profiles for Both Studies

Number of lecturers	Faculty	ESB lecturers	EAL lecturers	Experience in tertiary teaching	Number of EAL students in classes
M = 8 F = 13	Business – 10 Arts - 7 Health - 2 Science and Engineering – 2	16	5	3 – 24 years	20% - 50%

Table 4: Students' Profiles for Initial Study

Number of students	Residency Status	Faculty	Ethnicity	Educational Background	Entry Level	Most difficult language skills
M = 16 F = 8	Int. – 10 PR – 10 NZ citizen - 4 (time in NZ: 1 mth -10 yrs)	Sc. & Eng. – 11 Business – 10 Arts – 3	Chinese – 13 Indian – 3 Philippino – 1 Singaporean – 1 Tongan – 1 Samoan – 1 Iranian -1 Iraqi – 1 Russian – 1 Tahitian – 1	Masters (overseas) - 2 Bachelor (overseas) – 6 High Sch. (overseas) – 8 High Sch. (NZ) – 6	IELTS – 14 Bursary - 6 RPL – 2	Speaking -11 Writing – 8 Listening – 3 Reading and Terminology - 2

One of the key findings from the initial study was that group assessment was a major area of concern for both lecturers and students. Therefore, a follow-up study to investigate these concerns was undertaken.

In this follow-up study, interviews were conducted with those same lecturers in the initial study who had indicated that they used group assessments routinely. However, we did not attempt to contact those students who had taken part in the initial interviews as we argued that they might feel “over-researched.” In addition, some of the students in the individual interviews appeared reluctant to express their views openly and we also wanted, if possible, to gain at least some insight into the perspectives of ESB students. It was decided that focus groups would best serve our purpose. As Krueger and Casey (2000, p. 11) note, “A focus group presents a more natural environment than that of individuals interview because the participants are influencing and influenced by others just as they are in life.”

The university library has rooms set apart for group projects and one of the researchers, over a period of a few weeks, approached the students working in these rooms and asked for volunteers. Those willing to participate were assigned to one of the focus groups. Details of the student participants are outlined in Table 5. The interview questions asked of the focus groups are noted in Table 6.

Table 5: Students' Profiles for Follow-Up Study

Number of students	Residency Status	Time in New Zealand (EAL students)	Ethnicity	Faculty
M = 4 F = 10	International – 4 PR – 6 NZ citizen – 4	1 yr – 5.5 yrs	Sri Lankan – 1 Chinese – 6 Indian - 1 Thai - 1 Samoan – 1 Malaysian – 1 Russian – 1 NZ European - 2	Business – 8 Design & Creative Technologies – 1 Applied Humanities – 5

Table 6: Interview Questions for Follow-Up Study

General: 1. Faculty 2. Time in New Zealand 3. EAL/ESB 4. Ethnicity
Specific: 1. Group selection 2. Group interaction 3. Process 4. Likes and dislikes regarding group assessments 5. Other comments

Findings

In the initial study, the interviews with the lecturers and students raised a number of issues. The lecturers identified as problematic:

- the English language proficiency levels of EAL students in their classes;
- the challenges encountered in the delivery of lectures. Many argued that it was very difficult to pace the lectures in such a way that EAL students would be able to follow, while at the same time, as one lecturer put it “not bore the pants off” the ESB students;
- the lack of institutional support for lecturers already carrying heavy workloads who were expected to cope with the needs of the large numbers of EAL students in their classes;
- the uncertainty surrounding the use of group assessments in multicultural classes.

This last point appeared to be the most important issue for the lecturers.

Interestingly, the students identified speaking English as their greatest concern. This was supported by the fact that these students identified interacting with staff and other students, especially ESB students, as problematic. They were not comfortable in class debates and discussions, preferring to remain silent in case they revealed their language difficulties and

their lack of familiarity with the topics under discussion. Clearly, their major concern was oral interaction.

In the follow-up study, the lecturers indicated that there was much to recommend group assessment practices arguing that such practices prepared students for the work environment by developing and enhancing the social skills needed for interaction in a multicultural society. However, a number had reservations as to whether the negative aspect of the practice did not outweigh its undeniable advantages and even those who strongly favoured this approach were well aware of the challenges of successful implementation. The lecturers raised a number of challenges they faced in successfully implementing group assessments:

- ***Group selection***

Lecturers felt that all methods of selection had drawbacks and were concerned about the implications. Lecturer selection meant that the lecturer accepted responsibility for the composition of the groups. While some saw it as an ideal opportunity to encourage intercultural exchanges and allow EAL students to improve their English, others were uneasily aware of the resentment many first language students harboured towards this practice. Even ESB students who were willing to work with their EAL counterparts were often uncertain as to how they should manage communication difficulties. There was a real concern that students, both ESB and EAL, might be placed in groups where they might not be welcome or where they would be disadvantaged because of such placement. Random selection, which a number of lecturers favour as being the most equitable, also presented the same difficulties. Self-selection, the method most favoured by students, did not appear to encourage cultural mixing and raised concern over what lecturers termed “the leftovers” who were not welcome in any of the groups.

- ***Group interaction***

Lecturers indicated that differing levels of English language competence and different interpretations of group work often led to tension and unhappiness. They were aware of the resentment many ESB students harbour towards projects that involve group members from different language and ethnic groups. One noted that groups were unwilling to accept students they felt might jeopardise their chances of a good mark and added that EAL students were especially vulnerable to this discrimination.

- ***Equity and reliability***

While lecturers were concerned about group selection and interaction, the fairness and reliability of group assessment was perceived to be the real Achilles heel of the process. There was a perception that a number of students were progressing through their degree studies “on the back of somebody else.”

The focus group students felt that the group assessment projects offered them an opportunity to engage with peers from different backgrounds that often led to stimulating exchanges of ideas. Group presentations, widely used in group projects, appear to be far more popular than individual presentations because presenting in a group relieved individuals of much of the pressure associated with this very public form of evaluation. Students also felt that these

projects encouraged the development of skills such as time management and the ability to negotiate and resolve differences and conflict.

Despite their very real appreciation of the benefits associated with group projects, the majority of the students in the focus groups were either indifferent towards their implementation or actively disliked being compelled to take part in this type of assessment. The emotions about group assessment displayed by EAL students in the focus groups were more intense than the feelings of the lecturers. One student thanked us at the end of the interviews for allowing her to share her feelings of inadequacy and helplessness. The students raised a number of concerns:

- ***Group process***

The idea that the process was unfair and out of their control was expressed regularly and at times, with a great deal of emotion. The students resented having group members who did not contribute or contributed only minimally to the project but were still rewarded with a good mark. They felt that there was a need for group rules and it was argued that lecturers should have greater knowledge of the workings of the group and reward students according to their input. This feeling was summarised by one student who likened group assessment to gambling. Although some students had reported recalcitrant group members to lecturers, the majority appeared to believe that such behaviour was “like telling tales.”

- ***Group interaction***

Although not all group issues are influenced by linguistic or cultural differences, it seems fair to say that the majority of students felt that these differences did at times present difficulties. In one focus group, the issue whether it was impolite to talk to group members in a language that excluded others in the group was hotly debated without resolution. Students whose first language is English felt that they were often forced into leadership roles in cross-cultural groups because of their fluency in the language and resented having the role thrust upon them. They were equally resentful of EAL students' expectations that ESB students would help them with their English difficulties. In turn, the EAL students felt that ESB students did not show them any respect and often ignored their attempts to contribute to the group. A number of young female EAL students complained of unkind teasing and said that their accents were mimicked and their language errors derided. Such behaviour inhibited their participation in the group. The EAL students also said that their ESB group members would not take directions from them. Some EAL students admitted employing negative strategies to counter the unacceptable behaviour of their ESB counterparts. They would withdraw from any interaction with their first language counterparts and form groups with students of their own language and cultural backgrounds. If they were forced to mix with native speakers, they would remain silent, refusing even to speak to group members from their own country.

- ***Logistics of group projects***

Students felt that lecturers underestimated the logistical problems of group projects. They complained that there were too many assignments and that the assignments were often poorly spaced with the result that it was very difficult to find meeting times that suited all group members. Students also felt that the necessity of contacting other group members,

many of whom only had mobile phones made communication expensive. There was also resentment that they would often have to come to university only to attend group meetings and this meant that they incurred extra transport costs.

Discussion of findings

A short article in the university's student magazine headed "10 things that are suckful at AUT and some ways to deal with it" listed group assessments in the top ten. The article asked:

Why do we have to put up with this at a university? It's not like the real world makes you do this sort of stuff. You just know you will get grouped with some Muppets who do nothing and get credit for your hard work. Dob them in to your lecturer. You know you want to.
(debate Issue 4, 2004, p. 4)

Many of the group assessment issues, which cause resentment and unhappiness, are beyond our control as EAP lecturers and we can merely alert discipline lecturers to their presence. However, we argue that careful preparation of EAL students in EAP classes could better equip them to deal with some of the challenges involved in these group projects, particularly those involving participation in group discussions.

The issues on which we feel we need to focus more closely concern the breakdown in oral interaction between members of the groups during group sessions. This breakdown appears quite often to be linked to linguistic and cultural issues. The perceptions of EAL students that they were teased and made the butt of unkind jokes and that their contributions were sidelined or belittled were major stumbling blocks to successful group interaction. We feel that those different cultural notions of acceptable behaviour might be partly responsible for some of these perceptions.

Joking and teasing

This issue is not an easy one to deal with. Our interviews with lecturers confirmed that they were aware of the unhappiness in some groups and that a certain amount of discrimination took place against those students perceived as "muppets." However, it is clear from the literature that joking or gentle teasing might be viewed as a way of demonstrating solidarity. Unfortunately, such interaction requires a sophisticated control of language that EAL students might not possess. In our communication with these students, the suspicion grew that at least some of this "unkind teasing" was, in fact, a somewhat clumsy attempt on the part of ESB students to establish more friendly relations in the group.

EAL students need to reflect on what is culturally appropriate joking behaviour in their own culture and how this differs or is reflected in the host culture. Unfortunately, this reflection is complicated by students' problems with language. One of the concerns raised by both EAL students and the lecturers was the linguistic difficulties they experience. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to suppose that they might struggle to make sense of "the most complex form of communication that we engage in routinely." It is very difficult for EAL speakers to evaluate what is good-natured teasing aimed at promoting feelings of solidarity and inclusion, and what is prompted by a desire to exclude and marginalise. The withdrawal strategy some EAL speakers employ will only exacerbate the situation. If the ESB students meant well, they might well feel rebuffed and disinclined to repeat the friendly overture. If the

teasing was aimed at excluding or marginalising EAL students, their withdrawal rewards the unkind behaviour.

Asserting themselves

An inability to assert themselves in a cross-cultural group work situation was another of the issues raised by the EAL students in our focus groups. They complained of being sidelined and ignored even if they had both ideas and knowledge to contribute. As discussed earlier in the article, there is support in the literature for their contention that they are undervalued. The students, we interviewed, felt that the only way to counter the ESB students' behaviour was to withdraw from group activities. Clearly, such behaviour will do little to rectify the situation and these students need to be able to assert themselves in ways that they, and their ESB peers find acceptable.

While arguing for this sensitising of EAL students, we do not wish to imply that there is no onus on ESB students to reciprocate in this regard. ESB students must also accept responsibility for the breakdown in communication in group projects, perhaps even more than their EAL peers, as the situation is far easier for them. As EAP lecturers, we have no ESB students in our classes and there is limited interaction with them in other spheres. However, we feel that these issues should be discussed with ESB students and have highlighted our concerns to discipline lecturers.

Implications for the EAP lecturer

As indicated earlier, many of these issues are beyond the power of the EAP lecturer to address but we believe that the lecturer can make a difference and better prepare students not only for the socio-cultural and linguistic challenges they will face in group work but also the psychological challenges they will encounter. In particular, we believe we have a role to play in preparing students for the informal interaction they will encounter in the group meetings.

Raising awareness of issues in group meetings

One of the important issues that an EAP lecturer can raise with EAL students is their willingness to communicate in a second language. A number of students in the focus groups commented that EAL group members quite often took no part in group proceedings even when they were explicitly invited to comment. This unwillingness to participate appeared to annoy not only their ESB counterparts but other EAL students as well. EAP lecturers could help students confront their fears of communicating by highlighting challenges that might arise when EAL students are engaged in group discussions. Role play could be used to simulate potentially fraught interactions that might arise in these groups, and students could be afforded opportunities to rehearse how they would deal with remarks they found belittling or behaviour that seemed to sideline them. If it was appropriate, students could describe how they would behave in similar situations in their own cultures and compare this with accepted behaviour in the host country. Greater understanding of acceptable communicative practices in the host culture might help EAL students to reach a better understanding of their ESB peers in mainstream classes.

Stressing the importance of being well-prepared

The topic under discussion is also a factor. If it was one with which EAL students were unfamiliar, they could feel uneasy in the discussions. Conversely, students might be more eager to participate in conversations where they felt they were well-informed. They also

might take time to warm up to the topic preferring to listen and observe in the early stages of the conversation. This participation led to feelings of excitement, which Kang (2005, p. 284) defines as “a feeling of elation about the act of talking,” was aroused by topics that interested them and in which fellow group members took an interest. Kang suggests a number of ways in which these non-participating EAL students can be helped to help themselves. Undoubtedly, they need to be well-prepared for group discussions and enthusiastic about the group project. This knowledge and enthusiasm will go a long way to giving them the confidence they need to participate in the group dialogue. As taking part in the early stages of the discussion might be very stressful, a student could indicate his/her interest and then allow a time of observation before entering the discussion.

Future research

Aspland (1999, p. 37) notes that each EAL student is “required to undergo a process of transformation that is fraught with dilemmas and contestations which are difficult to resolve, particularly in isolation.” We acknowledge that if the interactions are to be successful, more is needed from both sides. Not only must EAL students attempt to come to terms with communicative practices in the host country but ESB students must also be encouraged to examine their own communicative practices and develop a greater sensitivity towards their peers who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. As EAP lecturers, we can only encourage our counterparts in other departments to encourage this self-examination.

We are acutely aware that this is insufficient and are conducting further research that we hope will better inform group assessment practices at our university. The students whose opinions are cited in this article volunteered for the focus groups and, very possibly, did so because they felt strongly about group projects. We feel that it is desirable that we have a more comprehensive overview of the opinions of both student cohorts as to the advantages and disadvantages of group projects.

We are currently involved in research that investigates the opinions and perceptions of over two hundred students in two faculties at our university. Using questionnaires, we are tracking their insights over a semester of group projects. We hope that the findings of this larger research project will inform group assessment practices at the university and assist us as EAP lecturers to alleviate the “general powerlessness of the language learner in a world of native speakers” (Davies, 2003, p. 1382).

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SECONDARY SCHOOLS AS GATEKEEPERS: THE ROLE OF ESOL STUDENTS IN PLACEMENT DECISIONS

Jenni Bedford
Margaret Kitchen
The University of Auckland

Abstract

When overseas students arrive at the secondary school gate who makes the decisions about their initial class placement? Is the student voice included in decision making? We argue that it should be. We report on a study that investigated students' and teachers' perceptions of NZ secondary school initial placement practices. Using qualitative case study procedures, we found that the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers are the real decision makers. Students are given written information about most school subjects and offered choice but they are often unable to access the information and, ultimately, the placement tests, fair or not, serve as gatekeepers. We recommend a collaborative voice in decision making and more research into appropriate placement and programmes.

Introduction

In our work roles with the secondary school advisory service and as lecturers on the Graduate Diploma in Teaching English in Schools to Speakers of Other Languages (TESSOL), we were aware that sometimes schools have no policy on enrolment and initial placement of ESOL students, that practice is varied, and that students, at times, end up without “coherent pathways” for further learning (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 32). While there may not always be coherent pathways for native English speaking students either, McComish and Franken, in their 2003 report on practice in schools, use data from the Programme for International Student Assessment to point out NZ ESOL students' comparatively poor performance compared with ESOL students in Australia and Canada. Placement practices could be a factor. The following email from a school advisor relates the issue of placement to subsequent achievement:

[I have] an invitation from a school with high Pasifika numbers wanting to discuss their enrolment and placement assessments for new to NZ Pasifika students . . . At present too many of their bright Pasifika students end up in classes with students who have low motivation and low expectations for success.

When teachers and school advisers are wanting answers, why, we wondered, was policy not written and shared understanding of what constitutes appropriate practice not developed? We found that schools with policy base this on the ESOL teacher's general understanding of appropriate practice, rather than known research findings. In the absence of policy based on research evidence, individual teachers making initial placement decisions are potentially in very powerful positions to affect enrolling students' identities and future pathways (Duff & Uchida, 1997). With or without written policy, the enrolling students are not the decision makers (Barkhuizen, 1998, p. 85). Yet when students have input into these pathways they have access to a wide range of resources within a school and access to possibilities for the future: “collaborative relations of power . . . can serve to empower rather than marginalize”

(Norton, 1997, p. 412). In this article, we report on a study that investigated ESOL teachers' and senior secondary students' perceptions of school placement policies.

McComish and Franken, in their 2003 report, surmise that factors such as the comparative paucity of national language policy development, of support for language learning in schools, and of research into second language learning may account for the clear differences in performance for ESOL students compared with Australian and Canadian students. This policy vacuum may be matched at school, when migrant students enrol. Delpit found that the progress of newly arrived students is often heavily influenced "by the extent to which schools reflect or counteract the power relations that exist within the broader society" (1986, p. 32). She reminds us "Those with power are frequently least aware of – or least willing to acknowledge – its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence" (p. 26). Research into the inclusion of the migrant student voice has been well documented in America and Canada. Cummins argues that students from "dominated" societal groups are "empowered" or "disabled" as a direct result of their interactions with educators in schools (1986, p. 21). One of his critical tenets is that participation (of the minority group) should be an integral component of a student's education. This goes beyond just the inclusion of the migrant voice in enrolment. Norton suggests that "the question 'Who am I?' cannot be understood apart from the question 'What can I do?' " (1997, p. 410). Placement and the resulting teaching and learning need to make room for learners from diverse backgrounds and with different strengths, and enable them to participate in life inside and outside the classroom (Harklau, 2003). Becoming a New Zealander shouldn't mean the surrender of first cultures, languages and an academic pathway. Gunderson (2000, p. 705) encourages the incorporation of student voices so that the students don't "dissolve into a cultural slurry."

Reform for inclusion of the migrant community voice needs to happen at the management and policy level: "Educators and policy makers . . . must attempt to persuade colleagues and decision-makers – such as school boards and the public that elects them – of the importance of redefining institutional goals" (Delpit, 1986, pp. 33-34). In New Zealand, Franken and McComish (2003) found that some ESOL teachers had real autonomy in decision making and enjoyed this autonomy. However they emphasise the role of school management in enhancing ESOL programmes, pointing out that the relationship between senior management team, teachers, and teacher aides is an important factor in effective programmes.

New Zealand Ministry of Education regulations and curriculum documents mandate policy development, but are light on specifics for ESOL students. The draft New Zealand policy document, *The New Zealand Curriculum*, released in 2006, contains six principles that underpin learning (p. 9). These could be unpacked to empower ESOL students (excellence, learning to learn, cultural heritage, equity, connections, coherence). The draft has a section on effective pedagogy and this implies that ESOL students will be learning in the mainstream and that the mainstream teacher's role is to cater for their needs:

. . . [N]ew learners of English require specific help as they adapt to learning through the medium of English. Their teachers must combine the teaching of content with the explicit teaching of English vocabulary, word forms, sentence and text structures, and language uses and must clarify the specialist language used in each learning area. (p. 24)

The existing National Education Guidelines stipulate that each school must develop a strategic plan that documents policy showing how the school is carrying out the National

Education Goals and the National Administration Guidelines. Policy for the enrolment and placement of newly arrived students could fit under this umbrella – but few schools have such policy documents. Kennedy and Dewar in their 1997 study sought to describe the way in which a selected number of schools provided programmes to cater for the needs of ESOL students. They concluded that schools often did not have policy statements specifically for ESOL students “schools often took a more ‘inclusive’ approach, choosing to make statements about meeting the needs of all students and not singling out particular groups” (p. 61). Kennedy and Dewar include only three exemplars of policy statements for Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) students. Two include one reference to initial placement and but neither includes detail of appropriate placement other than it should be “culturally appropriate” or “the student will be placed with another student with the same language background” (p. 65). More detailed policy writing could be easily justified under the National Education Goals one and two. (The highest standards of achievement, through programmes which enable all students to realise their full potential as individuals, and to develop the values needed to become full members of New Zealand's society. Equality of educational opportunity for all New Zealanders, by identifying and removing barriers to achievement.)

Planning for coherent pathways is another clear theme in the literature and one of the principles of the new draft curriculum. In this context migrant students need placement policies that open academic pathways. Sometimes ESOL classes are seen as second class possibly because of the paucity of collaboration with the mainstream. Harklau's 1994 study followed immigrant students as they made the transition from ESOL to mainstream classes identifying significant differences in the content and goals of the ESOL versus mainstream curricula. She concluded that the “students’ educational experience was a makeshift response of a system fundamentally geared towards the instruction of native speakers of the language” (p. 267). Delpit describes this as “the disabling of students . . . frequently rationalised on the basis of students’ needs” (p. 33). Many students were concerned that ESOL courses took away from the time they had to study academic content. Franken and McComish (2003) describe a similar situation in NZ schools:

the school had a number of timetabled options to meet different needs of different students. But because students study a number of different curriculum areas as well as ESOL, their learning context is quite fragmented, and they are largely responsible for integrating their own language learning with content learning. (p. 111)

The student in Lewis's study put it this way:

I am one of the student that used to take ESOL at school. Yes, ‘Used to.’ I quit, I thought that there was no point for me to missed out on other subject to go to ESOL. (1998, p. 5)

Increasingly, however, educators are acknowledging that special language instruction that is isolated from and not integrated with the mainstream curriculum is not sufficient to develop the language proficiency required to succeed in academic contexts and that mainstream instruction must be more responsive to these students' needs. As van Lier (1983) observed:

We increasingly find classrooms in which only a few, or maybe just one, of the learners speak a native language which is different from the language of instruction.

For these learners every classroom is an L2 classroom, and unless they are left to sink or swim, every teacher in such a classroom is at least a part time L2 teacher. (p. 7)

Such approaches necessitate a change in the disciplinary isolation of ESOL educators from teachers in academic subject areas. The development of a curriculum that reflects both mainstream content objectives and the particular needs of ESOL students requires that ESOL teachers work closely with colleagues who have expertise in subject areas. ESOL teachers are needing to rethink placement practices in light of conditions that promote academic language acquisition.

The study

The study is a small-scale exploratory study of four ESOL Heads of Departments (HODs) and twenty seven students. We are mindful that the study asks broad, complex questions around placement policy, policy in practice and coherent pathways for learning. The issues do require further, more focused, more in-depth study. Tighter control of variables such as ethnicity and length of time in New Zealand may be beneficial. The purpose of this study is to report on teacher and student perceptions. Our study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What policy informs placement decisions?
2. What are the student and teacher perceptions of the decisions?
3. What are the implications of these decisions?

We wanted to investigate students' and teachers' perceptions of NZ secondary school initial placement practices. Barkhuizen (1998, p. 89) discusses the confusion that arises when participants are asked about their perceptions. What are they being asked about? Is it their perceptions of initial placement, their attitudes towards the decisions and the decision makers, or to evaluate what happened and how it affects them now? Following Barhuizen's lead we use perception to mean a "process of apprehending through sensory input" (Holahan, 1982, p. 24, quoted in Barkhuizen, 1998, p. 89).

Data collection and analysis

Our research was initially deductive in approach in that we started out with hypotheses based on both our experience in schools and on international and national research findings. We had set interview questions. However, we could also describe our approach as inductive in that we did want to develop our understanding from the data itself. "The inductive-deductive relationship should not be seen as binary but rather as two ends of a continuum. Qualitative research cannot be entirely one or the other (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 258).

In order to discover the perceptions of the students and teachers we employed a qualitative inquiry approach. "Qualitative data represents the nature or attributes of something" (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 253). We sought to understand the perspectives of new migrant students in the context of their everyday school life and to focus on a small number of typical individuals within a small range of schools using purposive sampling (Richards, 2003).

Participants

The participants for the study were twenty seven senior migrant students and four teachers (Appendix A). The students were studying in Years 11, 12 or 13. All had been in New Zealand between six months and three years. The students were from refugee, international and migrant backgrounds and from the major ethnic migrant groups (Pasifika, Chinese, South Korean). The four teachers were HODs ESOL, and were all women. They taught at multi-ethnic, co-educational secondary schools. The schools' decile ratings were in the low to mid-range. These schools were selected because they were typical of urban schools with large numbers of ethnically varied migrant students. We wanted to include both small and large schools, and a mix of migrants. All participating teachers, their principals and the students signed consent forms as required by The University of Auckland's Human Subjects Ethics Committee.

Questionnaire

We designed a questionnaire for the teachers using Ellis and Barkhuizen's main steps (2005, pp. 43–44). Initially we trialled this questionnaire with twenty secondary school teachers at a secondary school advisory workshop to gauge the wording, clarity and range of our questions (Jenkins 1999). This trial informed the wording of our final questionnaire (Appendix B). The structured questionnaire was sent electronically to all the HODs ESOL. The questions were a mixture of closed and open questions exploring teachers' understandings of policy and practice.

In analysing the responses to the questionnaire we recorded answers to the closed questions on a grid. We read the data from the open questions separately, coding the data for salient themes. Together we compared our salient themes looking for patterns, and making interpretations (Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005, p. 259). These emerging patterns then informed the interviews that followed.

Interviews

The HODs ESOL participated in follow-up, prearranged interviews. These interviews used the same questionnaire that had been sent electronically. In the interviews we focused on the themes that had emerged and sought clarification and expansion of responses.

The students were interviewed in pairs or singly using pre-set open and closed questions (Appendix C).

In analysing the responses to the interviews we separately transcribed the data, merging the data from the teacher questionnaires and the teacher interviews. We analysed the qualitative data again, independently, for apparent themes. We then compared our results and examined the data together developing a description of patterns.

Findings and discussion: The teachers' perspectives

Is there written policy and is it based on principles?

The schools all had written placement policy, written by the ESOL department and, in one case, in collaboration with management. None of the policy statements referred to research based principles of effective practice. Two of the four teachers orally mentioned a principle that informed the written policy: "To find a suitable learning pathway for each individual" (Tania); "Providing support at the students' level of need" (Mary). A third teacher said the policies were generally based on what teachers "think is good practice" (Brenda). The fourth teacher pointed to a comprehensive list of guidelines for placement, "Factors to consider when making placements." In the four schools the teachers said that policy and processes develop out of habitual practice, rather than principle, and this is not written down. "It's not written into policy, just the way it has developed" (Brenda).

Policy in practice: What is the role of the ESOL teacher?

These policies and guidelines were not seen as mandatory by the HODs who could over-ride the policies and did. For example, although policy was to consider the student's preferred placement level, Claire pointed out that this was adhered to "to a certain extent . . ." She outlined how when the students arrive around Years 10 or 11 pragmatic decisions are made to put them into Year 11 rather than Year 10:

. . . because it is pretty much bedlam here compared to what they're used to in the junior classes. I don't mean this school particularly I just think the NZ school system generally is far more noisy and open and they're not used to that kind of structure.

We found that the four ESOL HODs had considerable power in placement decisions: "The student is enrolled as per normal with the exception of placement on timetable . . . the timetable is left entirely up to the reception teacher" (Claire). All HODs had sole responsibility for placement decisions and thought this was important.

The ESOL teachers saw their power as positive: "I like the control we have over it" (Brenda). This control may facilitate entry for the student to appropriate mainstream classes - "it's decided by consultation between ourselves and the HOD" (Claire). This was reiterated in all four schools.

Because I am the Head of ESOL as well as the International Dean they come to me. It helps me enormously because then I can do their placement in a more sensible fashion. I can discuss that directly with their teachers and negotiate what subjects they can or can't do. (Tania)

A collaborative and functional relationship with the other HODs was seen as the key. In no schools are these links that facilitate entry into wanted subjects written into policy, however.

One of the teachers was not confident her recommendations were actioned all the time. When recommendations were sent to the deans they were "usually" listened to (Mary).

What subjects did the teachers see as most appropriate for the students?

One of the teachers had set ideas about subjects that were appropriate for migrant students and these were often the ‘practical’ subjects: “At the moment a lot of stress is on the more practical subjects but that’s not just because of ESOL” (Mary). She perceived these practical subjects as being easier for English language learners because there was less emphasis on language. All of the teachers, while steering some students in non-academic directions, were prepared to consider the students’ academic aspirations and ensure pathways were available for them.

We have students who want to go to medical school and who certainly will be able to go if it all works and we have others who are not interested in school so we steer them to more practical subjects . . . In the technology department there’s a great variety – they have electronics, hard materials so there’s a number of those they can do. (Mary)

Claire’s school wouldn’t allow students to be placed in subjects they hadn’t done before “they haven’t done certain subjects before, they can’t get into them.”

One teacher had generalised perceptions about different ethnic groups and so admitted to different placement ideas for different groups.

that’s a really terrible thing to say . . . Chinese, Korean, Japanese students are more likely to go out and do maths earlier because we know they’ve already studied it – the knowledge is there – it’s just language. Um, for the Africans, that’s not. We can’t assume that. We have to plod our way through systems – make sure they have the knowledge. I push the refugees to do computing. . . . Asian students are more likely to say they don’t need ESOL and to want to do subjects that are really beyond them . . . The refugee students here are more passive on the whole placement thing. (Mary)

Mary tried to avoid putting all the Pasifika students into alternative options and instead to work intensively on their reading and writing skills so they could join the mainstream.

Often their speaking and listening is very good and it’s just a matter of getting their reading more accurate . . . we don’t want them to go into the alternative learning department where they’d probably be more culturally comfortable, because of the high number of behaviour problems that are there.

This teacher tried to assist the Pasifika and international students by letting them repeat a year if it looked like they were not going to be able to cope, but their previous school records were “good.”

We do listen quite carefully as to what their future is . . . So if their language level is very low but they have a good academic record then we would encourage them to go a year lower to have an extra year at high school if the parents agree . . . The teachers are very flexible in that respect. We’re a small school and we have a good relationship with the heads of departments. It does depend on that you know.

Did the teachers think the students had a say in placement?

The HODs all said they tried to accommodate the students' wishes. Brenda said, "their wishes are taken into account but it's decided by consultation between ourselves and the HOD." The teachers all said that the students could select their subjects but that the "level" was chosen by the teacher. Claire spoke of "over-ruling" unwise student decisions. She said, with significant use of the modal verb, that they "may compromise." The teachers all said they try to discuss the students' long-term career plans and to make sure that these are accommodated.

We try to work backwards from Year 13 to their present level to ensure a sensible fit. At senior level, student's career goals and subject preferences are discussed. This can be compromised if the student arrives during the academic year and some classes are full. (Claire)

Students are consulted about their preferences, but it seems that these need to coincide with the teacher judgements. Arrival during the year certainly limited the students' choices.

How important are placement tests?

Although all teachers perceived that students' wishes were accommodated to a large extent, they all raised the issue of the role of placement tests. These serve a real gatekeeping role: "their [students'] opinions/wishes are considered, but in light of the ESOL test" (Claire). High stakes or not, Mary was not confident about the fairness of their testing procedures and this was one thing she wanted to change. The placement tests decided whether the students go into mainstream or alternative classes such as applied maths:

We have maths test too. Initially we will decide whether they go into ordinary maths or applied classes when they come at Year 11. But after they're in class then the maths department decides. As soon as they get in to class then the maths department takes over. (Claire)

Students are excluded from classes because of the tests:

There was always one or two that I had to deal with to say I'm sorry you cannot do that. But there's always been testing – based on testing. Those students will get a science test/physics test/chemistry test as well as their language test – even with maths to see where they're at. So we have been able to base our decisions on facts and that's very important. As long as that's done, parents and guardians seem happy to comply with it. (Tania)

In this case the tests are used to justify placement to parents – as an instrument to ensure compliance.

The students may be put in mainstream only to be pulled out and put in an alternative stream because of the testing: "the Deans place them in a class but whether they get withdrawn into the special enrichment or ESOL classes depends on the further testing that is done" (Tania).

The teachers said they would revisit and move students where appropriate. In one school this was systematic. In the other three the practice was more informal: “It’s very easy to move them if we discover they’re misplaced” (Mary).

Are the pathways coherent?

All of the teachers acknowledged the need to ensure coherent pathways, but in reality there were real constraints. Two schools talked about the importance of giving students academic options, while acknowledging that this didn’t always work out.

It doesn’t always work of course. In the ideal world it would be like that for every child. But being a small school the timetable doesn’t always allow it . . . there are always those who fall through the cracks because there is not exactly the right option available for them. (Tania)

Mary spoke of flexibility and multi-levelling to cater for the students’ needs and interests, and her constant visits to the timetabler advocating for the changing needs of the students: “Oh yeah, I’m sure the timetable man hates me. We have the most interesting timetables down here, he allows that which is good.”

Tania also blamed the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) for a lack of flexibility, making catering for student needs more difficult. Existing unit or achievement standard programmes aren’t set up to meet the needs of students arriving during the year.

Before NCEA, if a student came in and was very weak they could have 2-3 classes of ESOL . . . Now, they might be in the middle of an assessment, they will have missed so many credits already so why hook into that course when you’ve lost half a year? There’s no point in doing that. I find that really hard . . . So, I find if they’re in ESL it’s a problem, joining the mainstream – it’s even worse in mainstream. (Tania)

Tania may be suggesting that senior ESOL curricula are NCEA credit driven, rather than based on cross – curricular academic student language and learning needs.

Findings and discussion: The students’ perspectives

Were the students given information?

All the students were given written (and sometimes oral) information but they could not easily access the information, or they were unused to making choices themselves. Most said they didn’t use the written information to make choices.

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Amina: | They gave us a little booklet and they ask what you wanna be in the future? |
| | And then we choose the right subjects |
| Interviewer: | You feel like you made the choice? |
| Amina: | No actually I get some help from Mr [careers adviser] |

Students such as Jeannie found the information booklets provided by the school hard to understand. “A book – I think I can understand but some things I can’t understand but someone will help me. Yes, it would be helpful in my own language.”

Did the students think they made the choices?

The students perceived they were invited to make subject choices but said they couldn’t choose because in many cases they were confused. Riko said “I was confused so my feeling was ‘up to you’ ” (laughs). They were in an unfamiliar environment and so, as Riko found, informed choices couldn’t be made: “I didn’t know which one is good.” They talked about the subjects being different and that they didn’t know English. Jason relied on others to tell him about the subjects: “She tell me what subject like and how we can choose.” Sometimes it was the ESOL teacher who chose for them as in Min’s case:

Min: Ms [ESOL teacher] she asked what you want for your future?
 Interviewer: Did you choose these yourself?
 Min: The teacher chose for me

Dahab spoke of the HOD ESOL “helping” with subject choice. And they often thought the advice from the teacher was good. Amina reported: “Yeah teacher very helpful.” Choosing subjects was often something that was done for the students. It was a passive choice as in Alex’s case: “Yes, computing, physics, maths. The Dean decided. He said if I do computing at university you need this and this subjects.”

The students may have opted for a subject but they had different ideas about how they ended up in alternative rather than mainstream options. Eseta thought it was the school placement tests and doubted their fairness.

Eseta: . . . because you know how the students they come and they have to do those tests to be put into classes and then they just end up in the lower classes even though they are brainier they just put them there
 Interviewer: So how does that happen do you think?
 Eseta: I don’t know it’s just the way the teachers put the informations together

Others, such as Min, accepted the rightness of the decision. “I just come in she give me the timetable and I know my English is not good so she tell me you go to ESOL so I say yep.” Some thought it was previous school reports that determined classes: “I think it’s from the report . . . the school you get them from the school you been to” (Patrick).

How did the students choose subjects?

Friends were the biggest influence where the students had choice. Min said: “I have a friend. He can speak Chinese so I asked him.” Jun was more detailed about the subject guidance he received from a friend: “My friend told me EA2 and ESOL and maths and art.” Many of the friends, Michael’s for example, gave advice on the basis of whether subjects were perceived as easy. “My friends helped me. They told me this one’s easy for you, that one’s hard for you.” Others such as Eva relied on relatives or the internet. “I just checked the internet and my aunty’s daughter is in this school so sometimes I asked her.” Latu said that if he had a

friend come to the school he would tell him to take the same subjects that he [Latu] was taking: “Same subjects as me so I can help him.”

When advice from friends was not mentioned many students said they chose subjects because they perceived them as being easier than others: “I choose materials – that one is like easy subject” (Alan). Students also said they chose subjects because they liked them. A Korean student chose the subject that was taught by a Korean teacher because that teacher would help her. At senior level students chose subjects that would enable them to ‘bank’ NCEA credits. Mamiko thought Japanese students were prepared to take easy subjects to get credits– “Japanese, tourism, maths – so they can get credits easily.” Sometimes students chose for their future: “I chose human bio. It’s slightly hard – you have to learn. I want to be a nurse” (Alan).

Did the students have regrets about their choices?

Many students expressed feelings of regret, one major one being their inability to enter mainstream classes. Some felt being in ESOL limited their mainstream choices. Eva said: next year I want to choose geography. I think it’s interesting but I don’t know because I want . . . I have English tests just English test and ah then teacher tell me EA2 [ESOL class].” Eseta wanted to take mainstream science.

I wanted to take science. I couldn’t take science . . . cos they told me to take the ELS one . . . instead of science...like alternative science . . . I wanted to take science so I can keep on...I’m not taking science cos it’s kind of hard now cos the other stuff I didn’t learn before . . . so I’m not taking it.

A number of the students expressed concerns that they had been placed in subjects that were too difficult or not useful. Fonua said he would like to change science “because too hard.” Some, such as Eva, had many changes when trying to find appropriate subjects. “For next year . . . I don’t like science so I want to change to geography.” Students could find that at the end of their schooling they had changed subjects so often that their options were very limited. NCEA, too, has narrowed the choices for some students. Mamiko said: “This year I didn’t get much credit so I only could choose maths, ESL level.”

Conclusion and recommendations

Though the findings of this study are limited, they provide a glimpse of teachers’ and students’ perceptions of enrolment policy and practice and, in a very small way, the beginnings of a look at students’ subsequent access to coherent pathways for the future. More research is needed into ESOL student learning in the New Zealand context (Franken and McComish, 2003).

The 2006 draft NZ curriculum begins with an overview that is encapsulated in a diagram of a lens (p. 7). Reading from the centre of the diagram, the implication is that students’ needs, as defined by the vision statement, are placed first/centrally in the curriculum. The findings of our study highlight the need for placement of ESOL students where their needs are central. We found that migrant students who were enrolling were all given, but didn’t access, written school information on subject choices, although they did often act on oral information from the enrolling ESOL teacher, or from friends. Material that is more accessible to enrolling

migrant students would be useful. This could be material in L1 where practicable and could include information on 'alternative' subjects and about pathways when students take 'alternative' subjects. The students' preference, in many cases, was to use the advice of friends. This could be formalised with peer information sessions and possibly class visits with peers to see what subjects are like.

Our study shows the gate keeping role of placement tests. All teachers, and many of the students, referred to this. The tests were administered by the ESOL Departments to determine entry into mainstream English or ESOL classes. One of the ESOL Departments administered the tests to sift for mainstream maths classes, while the other teachers had to leave this testing to the maths and science departments. Two of the teachers were unhappy with the validity of their tests and we echo their requests for further research in this area.

The National Education Goals, the National Administration Guidelines and The New Zealand Curriculum: Draft provide the framework for policy development, but leave it up to individual schools to frame policy. It is hoped that with the advent of the new curriculum those in positions of power will write policy collaboratively that is inclusive of the migrant voice.

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Appendix A: Participants

Student participants

Name	Gender	Year Level	Date of Arrival in NZ	Ethnicity
Eva	F	12	2006	Chinese
Jeannie	F	12	2006	Chinese
Dahab	M	12	2005	Sudanese
Jun	M	12	2006	Korean
Mamiko	F	12	2006	Japanese
Alex	M	12	2006	Chinese
Michael	M	11	2004	Vietnamese
Frank	M	11	2006	Filipino
Alan	M	11	2005	Filipino
Min	M	12	2004	Taiwanese
Ata	M	12	2006	Tongan
Latu	M	12	2006	Tongan
Fonua	M	12	2005	Tongan
Eseta	F	13	2004	Samoaan
Patrick	M	13	2005	Niuean
Kevin	M	13	2005	Chinese
Va	F	13	2003	Samoaan
Than	M	12	2004	Vietnamese
Michael	M	12	2004	Vietnamese
Jason	M	12	2003	Chinese
Stephen	M	12	2005	Korean
Akito	M	13	2004	Japanese
Kaishi	M	13	2005	Japanese
Riko	F	12	2003	Japanese
Sun Hee	F	12	2005	Korean
Amina	F	12	2003	Iraqi
Sharbat	F	12	2004	Afghani

Teacher participants

Name	Length of time as HOD	Length of time in current school	Decile rating of school
Brenda	1	6 years	2
Claire	9	10 years	4
Tania	10	10 years	3
Mary	2	2 years	4

Appendix B: Questionnaire: Teacher in charge of placement

1. Does the school have a written policy on initial placement of ESOL students?
(If no, go to Q.2)
 - a) What principles is the policy based on?
 - b) Who was consulted in the development of the policy?
2. What is the procedure for initial placement of ESOL students?
3. Is there more than one placement alternative for ESOL students at your school. Please list below.
4. Is there an option of multi-level placement for students at your school?
5. Are the parents consulted in placement decisions? How much weight is given to parents' wishes?
6. Are the students themselves consulted in placement decisions? How much weight is given to their wishes?
7. Are L1 support people used during placement discussions? If so, how are they used?
8. What information is given to ESOL students concerning placement decisions?
 - a) ESOL classes
 - b) Mainstream subjects
9. How does the teacher in charge of ESOL placement ensure coherence of students' programme (i.e. a sense of integration and direction rather than a mix of unrelated subjects)?
10. How is information about students shared with prospective teachers?
11. Is the placement decision revisited? If so, at what stage does this happen?
12. Does the curriculum committee review what is on offer at the school to see if all student needs are being catered for?
13. Is there anything you would like to change about the current initial placement process for ESOL students?

Appendix C: Interview questions: ESOL students

1. Think about the first time you came to the school, think about when you were enrolling. What were your feelings?
2. What is your understanding of how the school places ESOL students?
3. What information were you given about placement options?
4. What opportunities were you given to take part in the decision making?
5. What did you think about your placement in subjects/classes?
6. Is there anything you would like to change about the process?
7. What advice would you give to a friend enrolling?

TEACHER BELIEFS ABOUT POWER AND CONTROL

Rob Batstone
The University of Auckland

Abstract

There is a growing interest amongst teacher educators in the notion that the way teachers think about language teaching is strongly influenced by their prior beliefs about teaching and learning. These beliefs are important for teacher education because they are known to be resistant to change. In this article I focus on one particular area of teacher beliefs – beliefs about power and control. Many teachers have strongly held views on the appropriate exercise of power and control in pedagogic contexts, but although they may express their beliefs entirely in terms of pedagogical argument, I suggest that these may often be surface rationalizations which mask much deeper and more personal feelings about the use and abuse of power. I make this argument partly through theoretical discussion and partly by referring to a study of teacher beliefs conducted amongst postgraduate teachers undertaking a Masters programme in TESOL. The article concludes with the suggestion that it is the personal (and often unconscious) nature of beliefs which makes them so resistant to change, and that consequently we need to think more about how we can make them available for critical scrutiny through consciousness raising activities in the context of teacher education programmes.

Teacher beliefs

Over the past fifteen years or more, research in language teacher education has increasingly turned to the notion that teachers' access to new ideas about language pedagogy is strongly influenced by prior beliefs they hold about (for instance) the key characteristics of good or bad teaching, beliefs which may have been formed early in life and which are deeply held (e.g. Pajares, 1992).

When teachers encounter novel ideas about language teaching, their openness to such ideas is constrained by their beliefs systems. In the context of teacher education programmes, for instance, beliefs are said to function as 'filters' on the new inputs which teacher receive, so that ideas which are perceived to be congruent with their established beliefs tend to be more easily accommodated than ideas which run counter to them (Williams & Burden, 1998). Such is the strength and persistence of such beliefs in teacher thinking that many scholars now argue that teacher education programmes can only hope to make a real difference to what teachers do if they are carefully crafted so as to address and work with (rather than against) whatever beliefs currently prevail in the teachers' thinking (Roberts, 1998).

In this article I want to focus on teachers' opinions about the appropriate exercise of power and control over classroom events. I want to argue that opinions of this sort often take the form of beliefs which are so personal that they have a particularly strong capacity to filter (and hence to significantly reduce the effectiveness of) inputs in teacher education. But before moving on to present this argument in greater detail, I need first to establish what I mean by power and control in the context of second language pedagogy.

Power and control in language pedagogy: Teacher and learner-centred pedagogy

Teaching (whether of language or any other discipline) is necessarily concerned with changing people – changing them by developing their understanding, by encouraging them to think about learning in different ways, and by helping them to find alternative ways of thinking about the world. The question of change, particularly when set in the formal context of the classroom, necessarily invokes the question of control. So pervasive is control in our thinking about pedagogy that it plays a pivotal role in distinguishing a number of key methodological concepts, in particular the distinction between teacher-centred teaching and learner-centred teaching.

In the rest of this article I refer to ‘power’ in terms of the teacher’s capacity to intervene in the world, including the classroom world of teachers and learners, on the basis of socially and institutionally sanctioned authority. The related concept of ‘control’ is defined here as the *exercise* of power, in particular by limiting individuals’ options and freedom of action.

Teacher beliefs about power and control

Research into teacher beliefs about language teaching frequently makes reference to beliefs about power and control, either directly or indirectly. An example of research which directly addresses this issue is the work of Meighan and Meighan (1990). They argue that teachers’ beliefs about the power relationship between teachers and learners tend to constellate around a variety of key metaphors, including the construction of learners as ‘resisters,’ as ‘receptacles’ or as ‘partners.’

An example of research into teacher beliefs, which raises questions of power and control more indirectly, is the work of Richards (1998). Richards refers to teacher beliefs about language teaching as ‘maxims’, and he lists eight of them, including the maxim of involvement (‘keep students involved’), planning (‘try to keep to your plans’), order (‘maintain discipline’), encouragement (‘seek ways to encourage student learning’), efficiency (‘make the most efficient use of class time’), and empowerment (‘give the learners control’).

Richards’ aim is to show how teachers’ beliefs embrace many aspects of classroom teaching, but it is not difficult to see how power and control are relevant in many of his maxims. The maxims of empowerment, planning and order all presuppose the power to intervene in learners’ worlds. Similarly, control is explicitly a part of the maxim of empowerment (‘give the learners control’) but also a part of the maxim of planning (since a central purpose of planning is to give shape to the ways in which teachers control their classroom) and the maxim of order (discipline being an overt expression of the teacher’s control).

Beliefs as pedagogic rationalizations vs. beliefs as personal values

An example of beliefs about power in language teaching: critical pedagogy

In one sense, questions about the use or abuse of power and control in language teaching have become something of a hot topic in recent years, where a whole field of enquiry, known as ‘critical pedagogy,’ has emerged (see Apple, 1990; Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1999).

Critical pedagogy is devoted to examining how the interests of a favoured minority are privileged at the expense of the majority in a variety of contexts ranging from the employment of teachers (and the so-called dominance of native speaker teachers) to the choice of teaching materials (where it is argued that white, middle class, western values and contexts are consistently preferred: Gray, 2001).

Many proponents of critical pedagogy argue very strongly for learner-centred approaches to language teaching. Pennycook (1997), for instance, has this to say:

Surely the idea of giving students help in becoming more independent language learners is not one that any right-minded, liberal-thinking language educator would want to oppose, linked as these ideas are to concepts of democracy in the classroom, learner-centred pedagogy and independence. (p. 39)

Pennycook is giving expression to his own beliefs about the use and abuse of power in language teaching, beliefs which are argued for not so much on pedagogic as on political grounds. His commitment to learner-centredness is ultimately an ideological one: if you are committed to liberal and democratic ideals, then of necessity you should also be committed to the learner-centred classrooms and related ideas about learner self-expression and learner autonomy.

Other applied linguists take a somewhat different line. Sheerin (1997), for example, argues as follows:

Independence, a quality which may not be valued as highly in all cultures as it is in the west . . . should not be an end in itself but rather the means to an end, namely more effective learning. It is important to be clear, therefore, that the reasons for encouraging learner independence are to do primarily with the psychology of learning rather than any moral or political imperative alone. (p. 56)

In contrast to Pennycook's overtly ideological stance, Sheerin's position is primarily a pedagogic one, since she argues that the rationale for adopting one methodology over another ought to be based on issues of learning and learners.

'Pedagogic' versus 'personal' beliefs

Pennycook and Sheerin neatly represent the two very different kinds of belief: beliefs seen as pedagogic and as pedagogically justified, and beliefs seen as an expression of a particular ideological standpoint. But I am not arguing that the beliefs which are not argued for or maintained on pedagogic grounds are by definition ideological in the way that Pennycook expresses them. They may or may not be avowedly political, but they are necessarily an expression of an individual's personal value systems. For instance, a teacher's earliest experiences of being taught at school (perhaps by an exceptionally strict or by a charismatically learner-centred teacher) may have induced a strong tendency to value a learner-centred approach to language teaching over more teacher-centred options, but with no concomitant political allegiance.

We can see evidence of both these perspectives on beliefs at play in the positions taken by different researchers. In Richards' discussion of teacher maxims referred to earlier (Richards

1998), it is the pedagogic which he stresses in his definition of maxims as “*rational principles* that serve as a source of how teachers interpret their responsibilities and implement their plans” (p. 53. *Italics added*). In contrast, Williams and Burden (1998) argue that beliefs are essentially subjective in nature, since they are “closely linked to [teachers’] values, to their views of the world and to their conception of their place within it” (p. 56). In linking beliefs to teachers’ world views, Williams and Burden are clearly positioning beliefs as personal rather than as purely pedagogic constructs.

Looking for evidence of underlying personal belief systems

The relationship between pedagogic and personal beliefs

In the earlier discussion of beliefs amongst critical linguists, it was noted that Pennycook’s strongly personal beliefs contrast quite noticeably with the much more pedagogic beliefs voiced by Sheerin: Pennycook adopts the position of the political ideologue (only a pedagogy based on liberal democratic ideals is ethically viable), whilst Sheerin’s position is that of the pedagogic pragmatist (any position which works for effective teaching is practically viable).

But pedagogic and personal beliefs are not always so easily distinguished. Very often, one suspects, teachers might express their beliefs about teacher or learner-centred methodologies in purely pedagogic terms, whilst in reality being strongly influenced by an underlying commitment to a particular value system. For example, imagine a teacher who says that she is attracted to a more learner-centred mode of teaching because it fits with her belief in the importance of self-expression, and who consequently encourages her learners to work in groups putting the language to their own use through discussion and debate. But under the surface the picture may well be more complicated, since this teacher’s beliefs in the importance of learner-centred group work may well stem not simply from a rational consideration of the pedagogic arguments, but from a fundamental belief that self-expression is a manifestation of a basic freedom.

Potential evidence of underlying beliefs

In the study I report on in the following section, I look at teachers’ responses to reading an extract from a book written for language teachers, examining them for evidence of personal belief systems. This raises the question of what might count as evidence of such beliefs – a thorny issue, particularly in light of the preceding discussion of how personal beliefs can so easily become masked by an overlay of pedagogic rationalization.

Beliefs are often said to ‘filter’ ideas about language teaching. Williams and Burden, for instance, talk about teachers’ ‘affective filters’ which (whether consciously or not) get called into play as they engage with inputs of one sort or another in teacher education programmes (1998, p. 56). This idea extends the notion, central to much discourse analysis, that engaging with and making sense of language is always an interpreted process, a process which necessarily involves bringing to bear preconceptions which play a major role in shaping the meanings we read in to texts. So if we are looking for evidence of underlying beliefs in the process of reading academic texts, we are looking in particular for indications that beliefs are ‘affectively filtering’ what is read in the creation of particular interpretations of the text.

I want to suggest two possible ways in which such a process might take place. Firstly, a teacher who has a prior commitment to a particular set of beliefs will be inclined to *re-interpret* what is or is not said in such texts in ways which are congruent with those beliefs. For example, a teacher with a commitment to learner-centred teaching might read a passage advocating teacher-centred approaches in a very assertive way, either disregarding or at least re-contextualizing certain points made along the way. Such a process is in line with the kinds of reading discussed by Widdowson, who argues that readers can project into the text their own scheme according to their personal beliefs and prejudices “so that the text is adjusted to fit the patterns of [their] own significance” (1989, p. 90). Reading of this kind, Widdowson argues, is “not an act of submission but of assertion” (p. 91).

The second manifestation of prior beliefs has less to do with simply re-interpreting the text and more to do with the power of the text to *evoke* a constellation of highly personalized opinions which relate to the topic of the text but which may also speak to a very different perspective to the one the author is arguing for. For example, a text dealing with the importance of a learner-centred classroom might evoke a set of critical reactions which speak not to the justifications for learner-centredness but instead to the reader’s own arguments in favor of a teacher-centred classroom.

A study of teacher beliefs

The research context and rationale

The data discussed here is taken from research conducted at the Institute of Education, University of London with a group of eighteen experienced language teachers who were enrolled on a Masters in TESOL. The teachers came from a wide variety of countries, including China, the U.K., Germany and Australia.

The procedure I adopted involved asking the teachers to read a passage taken from a book specifically written for language teachers (Batstone, 1994: see appendix for the full text). The passage involved a discussion of the importance of teaching grammar in the learner-centred classroom, and dealt specifically with the need to encourage learners to use grammatically rich language in ‘context gap’ activities (activities which are similar to the more familiar information gap tasks, but which allow greater scope for learners to select their own linguistic forms).

The choice of this particular text was based on its potential to arouse teachers’ beliefs about power and control in the language classroom, since the topic has to do with a key issue in pedagogic control – combining the relative freedom of learner-centred classrooms with a need to encourage learners to use grammatical forms which are relatively complex and which conform to the conventional norms of grammatical accuracy. Argument about context gap necessarily invokes arguments about the nature and extent of pedagogic control over what learners do, since it involves encouraging a measure of freedom for self-expression whilst avoiding excessive constraint over the grammatical forms which learners can use. I was interested to see, then, whether I could detect in my participants’ responses any evidence, however speculative, of underlying beliefs about power which appeared to go beyond the purely pedagogic.

Research methodology

The book from which the passage was taken is part of a series of books, all of which follow the same general format of combining discussion in the text with tasks inviting the reader to reflect on the issues raised.

The participants were asked to read the extract and to write down their responses to a series of general questions on an accompanying questionnaire, whilst allowing themselves to be as critical as they wished. In the data which follows I present responses to the following questions: ‘How do you react to the passage as a teacher? Is what is said relevant in your context? Would it have an effect on your teaching in any way? In what ways do you react to the passage with approval or disapproval?’

Interpretation of the data

Categories arising

In this section I will discuss three categories of response to the questionnaire. These categories were arrived at through a ‘bottom up’ process of sifting the data and looking for evidence of the influence of personal beliefs without having any specific prior categories in mind. In each case I will discuss the extent to which the data presented shows evidence of personal beliefs of the kind outlined; evidence, in other words, either that the reader is re-interpreting the data according to prior beliefs, or that the text is evoking the expression of beliefs which go beyond and which contradict the perceived opinion of the author.

Pedagogic intervention seen as unwarranted imposition

This first category involves evidence that readers are interpreting the argument for context gap tasks as an argument not for allowing learners a measure of freedom, but as an argument for an excessive imposition on learners’ voluntary freedom of action. The following quotation illustrates this category:

1. “I do not like ‘pushing’ my learners to do anything (i.e. ‘beyond the stage of getting their message across’, or ‘to use language with greater precision’). I’d prefer them to see the need for themselves. This author describes the process in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (teacher 6)

In terms of re-interpreting the text, it should be noted that the term ‘pushing’ is used in the original text as a feature of task design: “we can push learners to use language with greater precision through *building into tasks* the need to make certain meanings clear” (italics added). But this teacher has re-interpreted the term, seeing it as an ideological matter of what teachers directly do to learners, rather than a pedagogic matter of what materials designers can do with tasks. In addition, he has positioned teachers’ ‘pushing’ of learners as being in direct contrast to what learners might want to do for themselves, again signaling his interpretation of ‘pushing’ as having to do with the abuse of power, and running contrary to the argument in the original passage that “a proper regulation of context-gap calls for careful thought [about] . . . *how the learners can be motivated to discover and share [new] information*” (italics added).

This response is also written with a good deal of assertiveness: note in particular the use of underlinings. One gets the sense that this teacher has a strong concern for respecting learners' territorial boundaries, coupled with a suspicion that there is some form of opposition or conflict between 'us' (it's unclear whether he means teachers or applied linguists or both) and 'them' (presumably a reference to the learners).

There may well be grounds here for thinking that the text is evoking in this reader a strong sense of learners' rightful boundaries and the danger of infringing their freedom of manoeuvre. A similar interpretation may apply to the next quotation, with its reference not only to 'control' but to the rather more value-laden term 'manipulation' (although the comment is too brief and enigmatic to warrant a more in-depth analysis).

2. "(paraphrasing from the passage) 'Instead, we want to motivate learner to make their own meanings clear by building into tasks a need to make which are not already self-evident'. [Is this] control, or manipulation?" (teacher 13)

The author's use of tasks seen as an unreasonable use of power

This second category refers specifically to a task which immediately followed the text, a task in which the reader is shown three classroom activities taken from different language teaching textbooks, and is asked to speculate about the extent of the context gap implicit in each activity. One of the questions I asked in the questionnaire relates to this and asks the question 'do you think the author has in mind a correct answer to the task?' One teacher responded to this question as follows:

3. "Of course he or she does! I feel this should be explicitly stated. I feel patronized somehow by the open-endedness of this approach" (teacher 4)

And the same teacher commented later:

4. "TASK is a HORRIBLE WORD!" (teacher 4)

The issue of power and control is very relevant here, as this teacher takes issue with what he perceives to be the unreasonable denial of information about the author's own position on the answer to the task. But whereas quotations one and two addressed the power of teachers in relation to learners, this quotation addresses the power of the author/expert knower in relation to the reader/learner.

Although it is hard to say in this instance whether or not the text is being re-interpreted, it is fair to say that this teacher's notion that the author has a clear idea of a correct answer is incorrect. In fact I had no idea of a correct answer; my objective was to allow different readers to draw different conclusions depending (amongst other things) on the kinds of learners and learner's cultures they were most familiar with from their own teaching experience.

Assumptions that the text implies a criticism of teacher-centred teaching

This third category concerns the ways in which the text can evoke expressions of belief which explicitly counter the reader's understanding of the view proposed by the author:

5. I don't think (process teaching) can replace more structural, explicit instruction about grammar points I think it's dangerous for people to downplay the importance of structural, explicit instruction" (teacher 18)

Taken out of context this is a statement with which many language teachers might agree. But the text which evokes it is simply arguing the case for a form of learner-centred activity in classrooms, and says nothing against the importance of teacher-centred teaching. This is a response, then, which points to the teacher's strong beliefs in the importance of maintaining tight control over grammar work in the classroom, beliefs which appear to be evoked by the text but which are not (strictly speaking) warranted by the text. It may also, by implication, suggest a radical re-interpretation of the passage, if it is the case that the teacher is reading into the text a critique of teacher-centred teaching for which there is no obvious evidence.

Concluding remarks: A consciousness raising approach in teacher education

My suspicion is that for some teachers at least, it is the pedagogical and more rational aspects of their beliefs which are most readily available to conscious and critical inspection, whilst the more personal beliefs which sometimes underlie them are less conscious.

This raises important issues for teacher education. If it is the case both that personal beliefs are deeply held and resistant to change, and that they are often unconscious, then there must be a case for some form of consciousness raising designed to help teachers to become more aware of and to reflect on the existence of these beliefs, as a necessary preliminary to being able to modify them.

How might this be done? It is beyond the scope of this article to go into any detail here, but one possibility would be to develop activities not entirely dissimilar to the reading questionnaire used in the research reported on here. For instance, activities which are designed to engender assertive responses to ideas about language pedagogy in texts chosen to deliberately target issues of power and control. Activities of this sort could then be used as points of departure for further and more explicit discussion of teachers' underlying beliefs about power, raising their awareness of such beliefs and challenging them to consider how their current beliefs might unnecessarily delimit the range of classroom options which they call upon in their own teaching practices.

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Appendix

NB. The term 'product teaching' refers to teacher-centred teaching. The term 'process teaching' refers to learner-centred teaching.

We have seen, then, that under the pressure of real-time language use, learners will very often find themselves unable to simultaneously manage all the skills required. Yet this does not mean that they will dispense with grammar entirely. Instead they may dispense with just those aspects of the grammar which are redundant because they would only signal meanings which were already self-evident. It makes sense, in short, for learners to concentrate resources on those points which need to be communicated because they are not part of shared knowledge.

In process teaching, of course, the precision of learner language has to be contingent on the context of the task in question, and on the motivation and limitations of the learners themselves. Nevertheless we can push learners to use language with greater precision through exploiting the principle of shared knowledge. If learners reduce the quantity and quality of their language in response to information which is already shared between them, this can be countered by building into tasks a need to make certain meanings clear which are not already self-evident. In essence, they will share knowledge through the performance of the task, rather than rely entirely on knowledge which is shared from the outset of the task.

In product teaching this is achieved through information gap activities. Typically, these require the careful distribution of information between, say, two learners who then have to share their respective knowledge through the carefully controlled exchange of question and answer ... In process teaching this level of control is inappropriate. Instead, we want to motivate learners to make their own meanings clear. So, in place of the traditional notion of an information gap, we might think instead of a *context-gap*. Context-gap is the gap in knowledge between what is known, and known to be known, between all learners at the outset of a process task, and the knowledge which they need to clearly express to complete the activity. Context-gaps can be created and regulated in various ways, without at the same time controlling the specific forms which learners will use.

Every task in process teaching presupposes a context-gap of some kind; every process task, that is, creates a partial or incomplete context – a problem to solve, an argument to conclude. The learner's job is to complete the task by reducing or eliminating the context-gap through language use. A proper regulation of context-gap calls for careful thought – the task designer needs to consider what exactly is unclear or unavailable when the task commences, and how the learners can be motivated to discover and share this information. This means getting a suitable balance between two extremes: on the one hand, avoiding an over-rigorous control of learner language (this would be product teaching), while avoiding texts and tasks which are so ambiguous that the learner is left wondering what she is required to do, and why.

(Batstone 1994, pp. 88-90)

BOOK REVIEWS

De Bot, K., Wander Lowie, W. & Verspoor, M. (2005) *Second language acquisition: An advanced resource book*. Oxford, UK: Routledge. ISBN: 045 33870 0 (pbk).

Reviewed by Margaret Franken, University of Waikato

While it states it is an advanced resource book, the book assumes that the readership is not conversant with reading research articles in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), has little knowledge of theoretical influences in SLA, and has little or no experience of carrying out research projects, even on a small scale. “The target audience ... is upper undergraduates and postgraduates on language, applied linguistics and communication studies programmes as well as teachers and researchers in professional development and distance learning programmes” (p. xii).

The book is organised into three major sections. The first, Section A, ‘Introduction’, covers seven topic areas deemed by the authors to be the most important in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). They are:

- Defining the field,
- Dynamic aspects of SLA,
- Historical perspective,
- The multilingual mind,
- The developing system,
- Learner characteristics,
- The role of instruction.

There is a particular theoretical ‘take’ on these topics that will be discussed later in the review.

The second section, Section B ‘Extension,’ presents readings or parts of readings to extend a reader’s understanding of the topic areas introduced in Section A.

Section C, named ‘Exploration’, sets research tasks for the reader to carry out which are related to the topic areas introduced and expanded on in sections A and B. Sometimes data is supplied and sometimes readers are directed to collect their own data. The tasks require readers to write up their small scale studies according to the conventional structure of a research report.

The fact that the sections are thematically interrelated and represent a reading, reflection and research sequence is a strength of the approach that the authors have taken. It also gives the topics meaning for the readers.

As mentioned above the authors have a particular theoretical ‘take’ or perspective on the topics. Their theoretical perspective also to some extent determines the topics chosen. The book is framed by Dynamic Systems Theory (or DST). The theory, originating in the area of Biology, is an attempt to account for and describe systems that are essentially chaotic but at the same time self-organising. This is a relatively new and not widely acknowledged

perspective for SLA, and one initially suggested by Larsen-Freeman (1997), and further developed by Herdina and Jessner (2002).

As a rationale for the choice of DST, the authors state: “We want to start from the basic assumption that there is a language system in every language user and that that system has all the characteristics of a dynamic system: it is complex, the components are directly or indirectly interconnected, it is constantly changing, and it is self governing” (p. 22).

An individual’s language development is seen to be in a constant state of flux and change and is never stable, that is, if the language or languages that an individual knows continue to be used. Any stability in the language system (such as what might be termed fossilisation by other theorists) is labelled “attractor states.”

For authors espousing DST, stability is important, as is variability (both within and between individuals). The authors consider variability in the individual’s language system as a sign of change and consequently believe it to be an important focus of research. This is not that different from researchers involved in analysing changes and development within an interlanguage paradigm. The authors state, “Errors and a great deal of variability are part of an individual’s learning process” (p. 35).

The second and fifth topics (‘Dynamic aspects of SLA,’ ‘The developing system’) deal with DST in most detail and present, extend and explore aspects of an individual’s language system that is subject to change, growth and attrition. They do this in each of the three sections A, B and C. As mentioned above, the development of the topics through the three sections is one strength of the book and this is certainly evident for this topic. For instance, the study comparing re-learning of previously learnt words with the learning of new words in section C clearly illustrates the way an individual’s language learning system operates.

The third unit selects, in the main, historical perspectives and theories that can largely be seen to be compatible with DST. These include Chomsky’s Universal Grammar for instance to explain both the shared and distinctive features of languages. Another theory that is dealt with is Connectionism to explain the way in which language systems are reorganised in response to language input and interaction. Connectionism “is a movement in cognitive science that seeks to explain human intellectual abilities by using computer simulations of neural networks” (p. 31).

A teacher of applied linguistics courses may wonder how students with little understanding of fairly well established paradigms such as information processing or the interaction hypothesis would be able to come to terms with more specific and less well known paradigms such as Connectionism dealt with in this unit. The same could be said of the topic, ‘The multilingual mind’. This covers Levelt’s general language processing model, which is essentially a model for the way in which vocabulary is processed and stored in an individual’s mind, and De Bot’s interpretation of this model for learners of two or more languages.

The topics ‘Learner characteristics’ and ‘The role of instruction’ represent a familiar way of organising information in SLA books. They cover familiar ground: age, aptitude and intelligence, attitude and motivation, and form focussed instruction. It is these topics that indicate a failure to critique or integrate more sociocultural perspectives. The authors describe, somewhat unsatisfactorily, Dörnyei’s (2001) more socioculturally informed view of

motivation for instance and Vygotskian concepts such as scaffolding and the ZPD, but fail to present their understandings of how these can or cannot be integrated with their dominant perspective, DST, the sometimes unstated tenets of which are as follows:

- the focus is on the individual, and the individual's development;
- it is a cognitive focus, in particular a language processing focus;
- all languages known by an individual are part of the system;
- languages known by an individual are not seen as discrete systems, and therefore bilinguals or multilinguals access the same information store;
- all elements of a person's repertoire are in a state of flux and affected by development e.g. the L1 is affected by the learning of the L2;
- individual variables such as age and aptitude are also part of this system influencing its stability and variability; and
- a focus beyond the individual is the consideration of different languages and different language varieties as they themselves are in a state of flux and change.

In summary, the book is strongly motivated by one theory, DST. The authors seem intent on piecing together aspects of other theories that align with DST. The result presents a challenge to even those well versed in the predominant paradigms in SLA over the last decades. This would suggest that it is not that suited to the intended purpose and audience of upper undergraduates and postgraduates with little of this background.

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Pitt, K. (2005). *Debates in ESOL teaching and learning: culture, communities and classrooms*. London: Routledge.

Reviewed by Marilyn Lewis, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Auckland

Someone should run a competition based on book titles only (no author, no publisher) requiring competitors to predict what the content might be. The problem with titles is that

they must distinguish themselves as relevant to the target readership, they must avoid titles that have been used elsewhere and yet they must reduce totally accurate titles until they fit on the cover. This collection is organised in the form of debates, it does focus on the teaching of English to speakers of other languages, and it does touch on the three aspects of the subtitle. Probably the only element not fitted into this title is the word ‘adult.’

Kathy Pitt is based at Lancaster University, but with “experience of teaching English . . . in a range of countries around the world” (p. vii). She has brought together and organised into five sections topics debated in SLA circles and paralleling the content of SLA acquisition courses taught at universities. The basis of the debates is a number of articles published between 1986 and 2001.

The first chapter summarises the ongoing search for characteristics of second language learning, although I notice the term ‘an additional language’ gaining ground here over the traditional “ESOL” descriptor of the title. The second chapter looks at changing definitions of the good language learner. Chapter three is titled “From mono- to multilingualism: language use across settings and identities” and includes one reading on the developing of students’ writing, which is also the topic of section 4. Finally there is a section on learning spoken language.

The format is a mixture of input and tasks, the input coming from both the editor and the extracts. Each section (chapter) begins with the editor’s two or three page introduction to the topic. These sections could stand alone as a topic summary for teachers wanting a quick catch-up on issues they have read about earlier in their careers. Pitt then juxtaposes extracts from two or three sources. Some are published articles from *Language awareness*, *TESOL Quarterly*, *Language Issues*, *ELT Journal*, and others are chapters from edited volumes by Candlin and Mercer, Breen, Auerbach and others.

There is considerable variety in the tone and content of the extracts, some being research reports and others state-of-the-art articles. McLaughlin, described as “an ESOL tutor in Britain” (p. 84) reports on “developing writing in English from mother-tongue story-telling.” Here the style is first person and informal: “I had for some time wanted to encourage . . .” and includes a lengthy taped extract from a lesson. There are also two versions of a student’s writing, one in Italian and one in English, translated by the teacher. By contrast, there is the extract from an article by Chamot in Chapter 2 entitled “The role of learning strategies in second language acquisition.” Not surprisingly for someone who has been studying the topic for two decades, Chamot brings a broad overview to the topic. Her review of frequently asked questions includes “What is the ‘good language learner?’” which goes back to some of Rubin’s original work. (References within the articles are not included in the book’s final list.)

The debate element of the title is organised in two ways. One is through the juxtaposing of work by different authors, as illustrated above. The other comes in the second part of each section, where two types of task guide readers through the extracts. The discussion topics refer to the extract and also to teachers’ own experiences, such as their learning to read and to write a different script (Chapter 4). Research suggestions include collecting data for analysis either through tape-recording a class or analysing a text book, through keeping a learning diary or inviting students to keep one, and through interviewing students to find out their first language literacy experiences.

How will the book be used? It is probably best suited as a course text, where busy teachers will be grateful that answers to some of the big questions of the discipline are answered via selections only from the original articles. Their lecturers, on the other hand, have all the details if they wish to source the entire article or chapter. One option would be to work through the book systematically, following the editor's gently worded suggestions as in "It may be a good idea to read the article by Carter now" (p. 129). More probably, readings would be assigned according to the outline of the course being taught locally.

I need to stress a small point about layout. It wasn't quite clear to me on what basis some sections were shaded and others not. The shading seemed to be used sometimes for the readings and other times for the tasks. This minor point apart, I can see this book complementing an SLA course. Its clever format, with the mixture of existing and new material, is worth borrowing for other Applied Linguistics topics.

Gruba, P. (2005). *Developing media literacy in the second language classroom. Teaching with new technology series*. Sydney: NCELTR, Macquarie University. ISBN: 1 74138 115 0. Pp. 64.

Reviewed by David Cooke, Senior Scholar, York University

"News values are not 'natural' or 'neutral'," says Abel (1997, p. 17), talking of NZ media. "Decisions about what is 'hard' news and what is 'soft' news, what is 'unambiguous' or 'meaningful,' are necessarily a product of definite social, political and/or cultural ways of understanding the world, and in consequence such decisions have an ideological aspect." Gruba would agree, since he wants students to become "media literate," with a "heightened awareness of how the media shape and influence an understanding of the world" (p. 2).

Like Abel, Gruba has a comprehensive and acute analysis of media as a social institution, with an appreciation of how media are constructed and produced, of how important interpretation is, and of how cultural, political and ideological factors feature in media. In five brief chapters, Gruba carefully defines digitised video as text, then sets out to explore the process of making sense of such "videotexts," genre awareness, newscasts, and commercial languages, with an appendix on "teaching media literacy" that includes a list of relevant web-sites. In keeping with the series he's publishing in, the book follows a given format: principal findings from the literature on computer-based technologies, practical suggestions, lesson plans, and issues to explore. He includes many Things to Do for teachers searching for ideas to implement in media studies.

Gruba is well versed in literature on digitised technology, including recent titles like *Teachers and technoliteracy* (Lankshear & Snyder, 2000); *The changing nature and uses of media literacy* (Livingstone, 2003); and *New literacies* (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). As a result, he tends to draw on terms like *deconstruct*, *intertextuality*, *macrostructure*, though usually with definitions and examples. He also insists on taking into account the cultural bases of videotexts (one of the obstacles for L2 students), helpfully suggests comparing video clips from different cultures and warns of a tendency in media texts to reinforce cultural stereotypes.

Why study media production? asks Roger Horrocks (2004). One of the advantages, he argues, is to develop a critical ability: “We become active, discriminating viewers who can recognise the slant or manipulation involved in a media text” (p. 20). Again Gruba would agree. He is clearly on the side of the more reflective angels, since throughout the book; he repeats his call for becoming “critical consumers of media texts” (p. 1), for critically examining videotexts, and for developing “critical thinking skills” (p. 10). Like Horrocks, part of his approach is to ask how media are constructed, inviting students to get into the mind of journalists and to see media production from the inside. The issue itself, promoting *critical* media literacy, poses an absorbing question for second language teachers and not incidentally, for second language learners. How to do it?

One way would be to include analyses or deconstructions of some selected videotexts or their transcripts, to illustrate the guidelines suggested. Another would be to display and explore visuals through the text, such as stills from video and TV, to exemplify the rich and layered information contained in pictures and video sequences. Given modern technology, a related means to the end would be to slide a CD into the jacket of the book, to illustrate the kinds of programmes worthy of attention, along with accompanying analysis. It shouldn’t be too hard to get approval from TV channels to use part of a videotext for educational purposes. In these ways, the goal of media literacy could become tangible, teachers could visualise the process (beyond prose text and bullet points), and they would have illustrations of critical analysis to react to in whatever way they see fit. If Gruba were to include such steps, he would enhance his text by preaching what he practises. And his lesson plans would take on greater vitality and cogency, by not just suggesting what we can do, but showing how he does it.

In this connection, it’s a little disconcerting to find one of the Issues in the book labelled *Teaching cynicism*, where Gruba appears to have slipped into the popular parlance of substituting “cynicism” for “criticism” or “critique.” Introducing the exercise, he notes, “Critics of the media literacy movement point out that educators fail to teach the ‘crucial’ skill of cynicism as a way to encourage critical thinking” (p. 50). In the midst of the well-informed discussion throughout his book, this frame strikes a discordant note, asking as he does, “What is the role of cynicism in media literacy development?” Since he makes such a determined pitch for critical thinking, it would be consistent to stick with language that reflects rigorous media analysis.

“To establish a ‘critical distance’ from the media, and to ‘demystify’ the media, does not necessarily *diminish* the pleasure we take in media,” say Goode & Zuberi (2004, p. 4). “In fact,” they conclude, “Media Studies can enhance our critical appreciation of the media on many levels.” In just such a way, Gruba argues the benefits for students “gaining a better understanding of the mass media as they learn to develop critical thinking skills, find value in the close inspection of images and come to appreciate the cultural values that underpin media productions” (p. 52).

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Bloor, Thomas and Bloor, Meriel (2004). *The functional analysis of English* (2nd Ed). London: Arnold. ISBN: 0 340 80680 X (pbk).

Reviewed by Annette Sachtleben, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland

The second edition of *The functional analysis of English* aims to update new developments in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). It would be an excellent text for university students studying this area of linguistics for the first time, as it gives a clear explanation of Halliday's approach, with very good and varied examples.

The systemic functional approach to language involves how language is used and how it is structured for use. According to Eggins, Halliday's contribution particularly identifies (1994, p. 52) "the correlation between the organisation of language itself (the three types of meaning it encodes) and specific contextual features." By approaching grammar from a semantic perspective, Halliday shows which contexts are important in language use. His concept of speech roles, developed from interpersonal speech, pinpoints how relationships between the speakers are established.

Halliday writes "when we interpret language in these (functional-semantic) terms we may cast some light on the baffling problem of how it is that the most ordinary uses of language, in the most everyday situations, so effectively transmit the social structure, the values, the systems of knowledge, all the deepest and most pervasive patterns of the culture. With a functional perspective on language, we can begin to appreciate how this is done (1973, p. 45).

Bloor and Bloor are thorough in explaining Halliday's concepts. They start with a general description of grammar and meaning, and how to use the book, and then proceed to preparatory work on word classes and the structure of the clause. Halliday refers to the clause used to exchange information as a proposition "exploring how a sign in a semiotic system gets its meaning through entering into both paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations with other signs" (1973, p. 198). Bloor and Bloor (p. 8) introduce the clause as used in systemic functional grammar, as having "a special place in expressing meaning because it is at this rank that we can begin to talk about how things exist, how things happen and how people feel in the world around us. It is also at the rank of the clause that we usually use language to interact with others. In other words, instead of simply uttering sounds or single words, we can construct complex ideas and show how one idea relates to another."

Halliday represents the difference between understanding a text and evaluating a text. The former uses language analysis, but the latter is more difficult. He writes

“It is through the realizational relationships established between each metafunction and a grammatical system, and between the tripartite functional organisation of language and the tripartite construction of register, between cultural context and the schematic structure of text, that a systemic model offers an effective tool for exploring this higher level of extended analysis.” (1973, p. 309)

The chapter in *The functional analysis of English* on the ‘Process and Participant’ clarifies this seminal stage in a very simple and straightforward way. The major text used for examples in this chapter is from Dashiell Hammett’s thriller, *Red Harvest*. This nonacademic text in a very nonacademic style will lighten the heart of any industrious student struggling with the terminology of SFL.

Bloor and Bloor often give their sentence and clause analysis as helpful tables, showing alternative ways of analysing for example, adjuncts and nominal groups in embedded clauses. The authors’ own use of simple and direct language, with generally short sentences enable students working with SFL for the first time to make good progress. Bloor and Bloor show understanding of potential difficulties with an occasional reference to foreign speakers of English and English teachers. This serves to enhance the value of this book for tertiary level English-medium classes of mixed nationalities, as are common here in New Zealand.

Each chapter has a summary, suggestions for further study and a number of exercises. And the time-challenged lecturer will welcome the answers at the back of the book. The glossary is generous, and where appropriate capital letters are used to follow the conventions of SFL. The final chapter gives additionally an excellent historic overview of the various schools of linguistic thinking that preceded Halliday. This book could well be used in conjunction with Halliday, and prove to be a very useful addition to SFL resources, because although SFL becomes more easily understood by reading *The functional analysis of English*, it in no way diminishes Halliday’s approach or simplifies the concepts.

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Kroll, B. (Ed.). (2003). *Exploring the dynamics of second language writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0 521 52983 2 (pbk).

Reviewed by Caroline Malthus, Unitec New Zealand

Exploring the dynamics of second language writing, like the earlier volume edited by Barbara Kroll, *Second Language Writing: Research Insights for the Classroom*, is a collection of articles by researchers in the field of second language (L2) writing. The articles in the

previous volume have been frequently cited in the literature of L2 writing and the 2003 collection looks likely to form the basis of future research and article writing.

Kroll describes her target audience as “future L2 writing teachers” (p. 1) and in the introduction outlines the growth in the teaching of writing as a separate specialism in applied linguistics, and the need for teachers with an in-depth theoretical and practical understanding of second language writing. She points out, as Cumming and Riazi (2000) have done, that we still lack information about the interaction between the teaching of writing and the process of learning to write, and to what extent the process of writing in a first language resembles that of writing in a second language; in other words, the degree to which teachers can expect skills acquired via L1 to be transferred.

Unlike many editors of collections of thematically articles, Kroll does not desert her readers after the introduction, but intersperses groups of articles with editorial comment. This has the effect of lighting the reader’s path through the book and emphasising the connections between sections, thus making the text form a coherent whole.

The chapter by Charlene Polio on research in second language writing provides tables relating aspects of writing, researchers, dates, research question, technique and broad approach. Although the studies cited are mostly limited to work by North American researchers, this chapter will be useful for those writing literature reviews. Fortunately this tendency to bias is not apparent in every chapter. The book extends its focus to aspects of second language learning and the process and products of writings – notably in the chapter by William Grabe on interactions between reading and writing.

The student perspective on writing is included in a chapter edited by Tony Silva and Melinda Reichelt in which the texts of 5 highly competent L2 writers are presented. These writers describe the processes by which they achieved their current level of proficiency, and how they feel now about their second language writing. The writers are mostly left to speak for themselves, and while they do not provide any conclusive insights, apart perhaps from the importance of self-motivation, they are interesting reflective glimpses into the minds of writers. Most emphasise the time it has taken to become skilful and the variety of inputs that guided their writing development. These texts could be useful to share with learners in advanced level writing classes, as a means of encouraging reflection.

We often judge collections of articles according to notions of current relevance to our work. I found the section titled ‘Exploring Writer’s Finished Texts’ to be the most stimulating. The first item in this group is an article by Dana Ferris on responding to writing. Ferris summarises the conclusions of recent research studies on error correction and feedback, providing evidence-based guidelines that are also soundly based on student feedback and common sense. Following this is a successful blend of theory and practical advice by Jan Frodesen and Christine Holten titled ‘Grammar and the ESL Writing class.’ In a readable way this chapter discusses key questions about the role of grammar in writing development and options for integrating grammar instruction into the teaching of writing, persuading the reader of the usefulness of doing just that. Also in this section is a chapter by Liz Hamp-Lyons, a contributor to Kroll’s earlier volume. Hamp-Lyons discusses the assessment of writing, clearly outlining the key issues and bringing together threads in research in this area to draw conclusions that can guide assessment decisions. Hamp-Lyons emphasises that we should not

lose sight of the messages we are sending to emerging L2 writers through our assessment and feedback choices.

A book like this, with a focus on teacher education, would do well to outline the knowledge that it is assumed that readers will have at the outset. Kroll's introduction suggests that the book contains what she calls 'foundational knowledge' about the teaching of writing, suggesting that prior knowledge is not essential. I think that those with most to gain from the book would be experienced writing teachers and students of Applied Linguistics at Masters level. The book assumes knowledge of:

- the process and genre debate,
- the nature of English for Specific Purposes,
- the nature of English for Academic Purposes,
- how to conduct a needs analysis for writing,
- key principles of assessing writing,
- second language research methods,
- the principles behind interlanguage analysis and error correction.

This list is not exhaustive and is not intended as a critique of this excellent book. It is provided in order to show that the best use of the book would be for those who have had a sound induction into the theory and practice of second language writing. It seems ideal reading for those teachers who have been teaching writing for some years and feel the need for further input and the opportunity to reflect on issues in the field. It could provide the basis for a staff reading group or professional development sessions in which different members of the team read and analyse different chapters.

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Cumming, A. and Riazi, A. (2000). Building models of adult second-language writing instruction. *Learning and Instruction*, 10, 55-71.

Smith, D. G. & Baber, E. (2005). *Teaching English with Information Technology*. Modern English Publishing. ISBN: 1 904549 01 2.

Reviewed by Karen Haines, School of Languages, Unitec

In the 21st century it is difficult, as a teacher, to ignore Information Technology and its affordances for our students. Opportunities for extra language practice abound online, but the tools that can be accessed through computers and the internet may be overwhelming for the average language teacher. Smith and Baber's practical book offers an easy **in** for the 'professional English language teacher' on how to teach English with IT.

In the introduction, the authors give a clear rationale for using IT to teach English, with a focus on pedagogy rather than on technology for its own sake. They assume readers have minimal knowledge/experience of using IT in the language classroom. With chatty tone and easy step by step instructions, they provide scaffolding to give teachers confidence in using IT to support their students' learning as well as providing a good practical overview of the field.

The cover promises that the book is ‘packed with practical advice, teaching tips and lesson ideas’ and I felt that it delivered these and more.

Topics covered include the use of CD ROMs, standalone software, email and the internet, with chapters on websites, webquests, learning management systems, text and audio chat, as well as audio/video conferencing and creating interactive exercises for students. Clear layout and headings within each chapter make the book very accessible, even enticing, for the ‘just-browsing’ reader. Tips every few pages give practical advice, jargon boxes de-mystify language and abbreviations while judicious use of screen shots can clarify explanations. Specific examples of applications are considered (e.g. the differences between authoring software like Hot Potatoes and Quia, or concordances such as WordSmith Tools, Collins CoBuild and the British National Corpus) and their uses and limitations explored as well as ways of integrating them into a standard language classroom. I thought the section on First Steps with HTML particularly useful and found myself itching to get onto the computer and try out their suggestions for creating my own webpage. Each chapter concludes with a useful summary of why you might choose to use this particular software or tool.

Appendices at the end of the book were helpful, giving websites that relate specifically to each chapter as well as a useful list of keyboard shortcuts, suggestions for language learning CD-ROMs, and more relevant reading for teachers. The books listed focus on internet use rather than theory or approaches to e-language learning. A comprehensive glossary and a simple index complete what is a useful book to have on the shelf of the staff resource area.

The inevitable problem with books about IT is that they quickly go out of date, as technology moves on and new applications and tools become the norm. While the authors recognise this, they have done their best to ensure the book has at least five years of currency by giving generic websites or portals that are likely to remain up to date. As well, the software applications suggested have proved stable and of value for a wide range of teaching situations.

I felt that there were some notable gaps in the overall content, however, both in the directions in which technology is pushing language teaching and also in applications that are now widely recognised/used by language teachers (and which can be downloaded for free from the internet). While blogs are given their own chapter, neither podcasting nor mobile learning (both with large potential for language learning) are mentioned. Given the comprehensive nature of the book, the omission of software such as Audacity for sound recording, Skype for audio conferencing and Moodle as a learning management system suggests that these have become popular since the book went to press.

Teachers come to use IT with a wide range in experience and knowledge, and this is difficult to cater for in books like this. Smith and Baber have managed it reasonably successfully, by covering a wide range of areas so that there are suggestions here that will be appropriate for most teachers. While some technological ‘giants’ may blithely integrate the use of JavaScript or Flash into their language teaching, most of us professional language teachers are grateful for books such as this one, with down-to-earth, practical ideas on how to extend our use of IT for teaching English.

Nettle, M., & Hopkins, D. (2003). *Developing grammar in context: Grammar reference and practice: Intermediate with answers*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0 521 627125. Pp. viii + 328. RRP: \$54.99

Reviewed by Elaine W. Vine, Victoria University of Wellington

The one-page introduction to *Developing grammar in context* explains that it is intended to be used either for self-study or as a class text. Learners can dip into it as needed if they wish, rather than working through it in sequence. The only information about target users is "students at intermediate level." The content of the book seems to be aimed at adults, or possibly older teenagers.

The blurb on the back cover says that it uses "real spoken and written examples drawn from the Cambridge International Corpus" and that "language is shown in authentic contexts encouraging learners to focus on meaning as well as structure." I would like to have seen a more comprehensive introduction which provided information about the Corpus, how and why examples were selected, and what "real" and "authentic" mean here, given that some of the written texts in the book are referenced as "adapted," and others are not sourced at all. It is not clear whether all examples are drawn from the Corpus. If they are, the spoken texts at least have been rather heavily edited - they are "cleaner" than I would expect of spoken text transcripts.

Developing grammar in context is not part of a series. The only additional material available is a "without answers" version, which could be useful if a teacher wanted to manage learners' access to answers. The answer keys provided are clearly set out and thorough. Where exercises are to some extent open-ended, the answer keys provide some "possible answers" which is helpful.

The book contains 50 units. The first, "Learning grammar, and how to use this book", introduces students to the way that each unit is organised. This first unit is built around a list of grammatical terms, together with explanations. This is an accurate foretaste of what is to come. Grammatical terminology is extensively used throughout the book. Clear explanations are provided, but the book as a whole is not for the terminologically faint-hearted.

The other 49 units are organised into 5 groups of 7-12 units. Each group has an additional review unit that provides a set of exercises to practise and test the various structures presented in the section. The groups are titled: time and tense, sentences, other verb forms, naming and describing, and functional areas. The book covers a wide range of grammatical structures, from present and past simple tenses and countable/uncountable nouns, to conditional sentences, reported speech, relative clauses, and expressing obligation and necessity.

Each unit has four sections:

1) "Getting started" presents one or more short texts. There are many more written than spoken texts, and for the written texts, the main sources are newspaper and magazine articles. I expected to see more diversity in the text types, given the authors' claims about the corpus-based nature of the book. Also, I could not find any reference to recorded versions of the spoken texts, so I assume they are not available, which is a pity.

"Getting started" contains some exercises which relate to the texts presented. These exercises fall far short of the claim on the back cover blurb that "language areas are presented inductively to help engage learners' attention". Most often they focus on simply identifying the focus grammatical structure(s).

The content of the texts presented throughout the book is human/general interest. In some units, there is an attempt to develop a theme, but in others there appears to be no such attempt. There is also no attempt to develop themes across units. As a result, the "context" in which the book develops grammar is localised and narrow.

2) "Looking at language" is the grammatical reference section of each unit. It provides explanations of the focus grammatical structure(s), and examples of them. Some examples come from the texts in the first section, but others are decontextualised. There are also some exercises in this section that are intended to check the reader's understanding of the grammatical explanations.

3) "Getting it right" contains further exercises to give practice at recognising and using the focus structure(s).

4) "Classwork" ends each unit with a speaking activity. These encourage use of the focus structure(s) through fluency practice.

The book is clearly set out. It has a blue, black and white colour scheme, which together with some illustrations, reproductions of texts, diagrams and tables provides at least some visual variety. I found it easy to find my way around the units, but, given the "grammar reference" claim in the title, I was surprised to find no index.

Many teachers and learners could find that this book provides useful grammar explanations and exercises. However, don't expect too much of it in terms of discourse and context. It moves beyond an "isolated sentences" approach to grammar, but it does not achieve extensive coherence or contextualisation even within each unit, and there is no apparent intent to achieve these across units. The exercises are largely conventional ones such as find examples, fill-the-gaps, complete the sentence, match sentences or sentence parts, identify and correct errors, write sentences or short texts. There is more variety and creativity in the "Classwork" section at the end of each unit, where the activities are interactive and thus more likely to engage learners.

Wong, S. (2006). *Dialogic Approaches to TESOL: Where the ginkgo tree grows*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. ISBN: 0 8058-3901 1. Pp. 259.

Reviewed by Rosemary Wette, University of Auckland

Where and how this book fits into the wide world of TESOL is quite possibly not transparent to the casual browser from its title and chapter headings: 'Political and philosophical roots of TESOL'; 'Under the ginkgo tree'; 'Learning in a Community'; 'Taste of the ginkgo nut: problem posing'; 'Learn by doing'; 'Memory: Knowledge for whom?' and 'Conclusion.' If it were to be returned to the shelf unread, however, the reader would miss out on a wealth of

scholarship, professional knowledge and insights into preferred learning styles, teaching practices and cultural background of both Chinese and Western teachers and learners. Shelley Wong herself is a third generation Californian from a rather unconventional family—a childhood friend of Allan Luke, who wrote the book's preface—with extensive teaching experience in Hong Kong. The book has had a long period of gestation, as it is based on her doctoral thesis with the addition of a number of reported episodes by herself and others from their teaching experiences.

The metaphor of the ginkgo tree is a unifying thread throughout the book, the structure of which comprises main chapter texts (the tree trunks) concerned with particular aspects of dialogic pedagogy together with some 6-8 “branches” or other texts, set off from the main one but linked to it as well as to other branches. Thus the chapter, ‘Learn by doing’ has branch sections on Semiotic theory, Mao Zedong, Claiming the right to speak, On learning literacy by doing, and John Dewey in China. Admittedly, this is not as incisive as the approach taken in most second language teacher education texts, but it is one which is very much part of the author's cultural and philosophical background, and from which much can be learned.

Features of this book that I most liked and appreciated included its clear, comprehensible introductory texts on a broad range of topics, including:

- Contrasting Krashen's and Vygotsky's ZPD (Branch 1-3);
- Rogerian communication (Branch 2-2);
- Reading/Writing workshops (Branch 2-4);
- Freire & problem-posing (Branch 3-1);
- Women's ways of knowing (Branch 3-6);
- Mao Zedong's theory of learning by doing (Branch 4-2) and
- Memory, race, colonialism & language teaching (Branch 5-8).

Also worthy of appreciation was the writing style of the author, which is clear and easy to read. Shelley Wong draws on a wealth of classroom teaching experience in California and Hong Kong as well as on her experiences (and those of her family and contemporaries) as Chinese Americans. She tells some fascinating personal stories. I also enjoyed the way the author draws on and quotes from a range of Chinese and Western philosophers, literary sources and relevant sources from education to support her theoretical discussions.

This book is unusual and original in its approach, appealing and easy to read. I recommend it to anyone who is interested in gaining further knowledge about non-Western approaches to and less mainstream aspects of the world of TESOL.

Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. (2006). *Cambridge Grammar of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0521588464 | ISBN-13:9780521588461. Pp. x + 973.

Reviewed by Rosemary Erlam, University of Auckland

An initial reaction to a book with this title may well be—why do we need another grammar of English? However, closer examination of the book's cover gives clues as to what this particular treatment of the topic may offer that existing ones don't. We first see, under the title, the words ‘A comprehensive guide: Spoken and written English grammar and usage.’

We also notice a picture of a CD-Rom and a logo with the words ‘Cambridge International Corpus: Real English guarantee’. The distinctive feature of this grammar book then, is that it is a grammar of *spoken* as well as *written* English.

The emphasis on spoken English is reflected in a number of ways in the book. Firstly, the three chapters focusing ‘most saliently’ (p. 16) on spoken English (Introduction to grammar and spoken English/From utterance to discourse/From discourse to social contexts) are placed early in the book (they are preceded only by the A-Z section, see below). Secondly many of the specific examples used in the text are taken from the Cambridge International Corpus (CIC), which includes a special corpus of spoken English – the CANCODE corpus. The dialogues and spoken examples are, we are told, ‘laid out as they actually occur in the transcripts of the CANCODE recordings’ (p. 11). Furthermore, these conversational exchanges and patterns of use can be listened to on the accompanying CD-ROM. Another way in which the emphasis on spoken English is reflected in the book, is in the large number of references to differences that may exist between spoken and written language use. All of these aim, the authors claim, to correct the bias that traditional grammars have had towards written English.

The ‘Spoken language’ section of the book, comprising the three chapters listed above, is followed by a section called ‘Grammar and discourse.’ This section represents perhaps another way in which this grammar departs from a number of its predecessors. The two chapters that are devoted to grammar and discourse and the way in which larger units of meaning are created (Grammar across turns and sentences/Grammar and academic English) aim to reflect the attention that has been given to discourse in recent years. The authors also outline another way in which the book represents ‘a first step towards a context-based or discourse grammar of English’ (p. 8)–in the careful labelling of the examples so that the reader has, where appropriate, information about the particular context and speaker roles. I must add that I particularly liked the authentic examples and the descriptions that accompanied them, e.g. [at a travel agent’s; the customer has just received his tickets].

It is time now to mention the very useful first section of the book – one entitled ‘From word to grammar: an A to Z’. It presents words that are chosen for special focus because they are known to cause problems or to be ‘individual’ in some way. There are, in total, 108 entries in this section. One is reminded of Michael Swan (1980) in miniature. However, references to individual words are not limited to this section. Throughout the book, the reader is referred to other sections that deal with specific words, as to more comprehensive grammar points. It is in this section, that the reader first comes across another very useful feature of the book – common errors that learners make with respect to given language features are indicated. These are taken, we are told, from a learner corpus.

The sections of the book dealing with word classes and phrase classes follow the section on ‘Grammar and discourse’ and comprise a major component of the book (175 pages). Here I liked the way that word class and associated phrase type is dealt with in the same chapter. I also appreciated the approach to tense and aspect in the ‘verb’ section; I particularly appreciated the way that perfective and progressive aspects were defined. A chapter called ‘Word structure and word formation’ is next, then a series of five chapters dealing with sentence and clause patterns. I was surprised to see the use of the term pseudo-intransitive introduced in the chapter on verb complementation – I would have expected the more usual

‘middle construction’ (which is common enough to rate a mention in the *New Oxford dictionary*) although the CGE does gloss it as ‘middle construction.

‘I liked the way that future is dealt with in the three chapters that focus on time. Once again, the novelty of an explanation particularly attracted my attention—in this case the explanation that ‘choices of form depend on how certain or definite the speaker wants to sound and that for this reason a number of ways of referring to the future demand modal verbs’ (p. 629). I was left wondering though, as I read this section, whether corpus analysis had anything to say about the most common ways of expressing future time.

Six sections deal on notions and functions (“core conceptual notions such as negation, condition and comparison,” p. 19) and the last three chapters entitled ‘Information packaging’ concentrate on how speakers and writers decide to present information in clauses and how speech is reported.

An impressive range of appendices dealing with numbers/time/spelling et al conclude the collection. One that I found particularly interesting was called ‘Word clusters’ and reported the most common two/three/four/five word clusters in spoken and written English (from Corpus analysis). This is all information that could have practical implications for teaching.

A few words on the CD-ROM are called for. I had some trouble here because I could not find anywhere where the CD-ROM is explicitly presented or explained. Questions I had were: How does it relate to the grammar? How is it different/similar? Exploration revealed that it is essentially a replication of the book but with additional features. These are: the chance to hear sentences from the corpus (warning—there does not appear to be a non-British accent in sight, apart from the American English section), an ability to copy and print from the text (very useful), access to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* on-line (another worthwhile resource available to users) and a type-in word function so that you one can locate something quickly.

All in all, I had the impression that as someone who teaches and works with language and who teaches grammar that the *Cambridge Grammar of English* is a resource I wouldn’t want to be without.

Reference

Swan, M. (2005). *Practical English Usage*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

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. Contributions should in general be no longer than 5000 words.
3. Referencing conventions should follow that specified in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. This publication is available in most university libraries. In the text, references should be cited using the author's last name and date of publication. If quotations are cited, the reference should include page numbers (e.g. Brindley, 1989, pp. 45-46). 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.
4. 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.
5. All graphics should be suitable for publication and need no change.
6. It is understood that manuscripts submitted have not been previously published and are not under consideration for publication elsewhere.
7. Enquiries and draft submissions should be sent by email to the Co-Editor, Dr Susan Gray, The University of Auckland, on s.gray@auckland.ac.nz . The preferred format is WORD.
8. All submissions should be accompanied by a full mailing address, a telephone number and, if available, an email address and/or fax number.
9. Submissions will be considered by the Co-Editors and members of the Editorial Board.
10. Those interested in submitting a book review should contact the Review Editor, Dr Martin Andrew at School of English and Applied Linguistics, UNITEC Institute of Technology, on mandrew@unitec.ac.nz .
11. The closing date for the submission of manuscripts for 2007 is **Monday 3 September**.