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EDITORIAL

The articles selected for this year's journal reflect the varied interests of language teachers; moderation, assessment, materials development, teaching interculturally, teacher development and pragmatics. Using a range of research approaches, the authors have investigated issues of significance for the students or teachers with whom they work – these particular topics, 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 and procedures for the benefit of the students we teach.

In our first article, Read and Hirsch explore the moderation of assessment tasks as a way of establishing a common standard for assessing English language proficiency. They explore this issue across four Foundation Studies programmes, and highlight the scope for moderation of developmental tasks, capstone tasks and final examinations. In light of their findings, the authors suggest practical steps that could be taken towards standardising the assessment of English language proficiency for entry into tertiary study.

Looking at assessment from a different angle, Todd and Gu investigate whether rational cloze tests could be devised as a valid and reliable placement measure of reading ability for developing EAL readers in the junior secondary school. With year 10 students from four Wellington secondary schools, the authors trialled two versions of the tests, with and without a word bank, using texts based on Levels C, D and E specified in the draft form of the English Language Learning Framework (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2005). Their findings reveal evidence in support of the cloze tests as a measure of reading ability for this sample group.

In our third article Hunter and Coxhead report on an authentic materials development project for EAP students at Massey University. The data from the subject area classes that they recorded illustrate a growing use of new course delivery technologies in university courses, which they argue has received little attention in EAP research and materials development. The authors point out that EAL student uptake of these new technologies presents opportunities and challenges for EAP, and they call for further research in this area.

Lázaro and Reinders are also interested in the issue of materials – in the context of their investigation into the current state of play in self-access centres in New Zealand. They conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis of organisational, pedagogical and external features affecting the success of this type of language provision. They found a number of common issues affecting the operation of self-access centres in New Zealand, especially the provision of materials, the use (or lack thereof) of technology, and the integration of self-access provision and classroom learning.

Whether the methodological approaches of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are sufficiently eclectic to meet the diverse needs of learners of ESL is considered by East, Doogan and Bjorning-Gyde in our fifth article. They use Chinese learners of English as a case in point, and suggest that a fusion of Western and Chinese methodological approaches may work more effectively than a single reliance on communicative activities. The authors go on to consider how CLT as a framework might be broadened to take into account the diversity of cultures of learning that students bring to their ESOL classrooms in New Zealand.

In the following article Conway and Richards describe the pedagogical principles and processes they drew on to design a tailor-made professional development course for visiting teachers from China. They discuss how participant needs were met both during the course and once the participants had returned to their teaching context in China. The value of both lecturer and participant reflections and the effectiveness of learning transfer are considered, and implications are made for future courses.

Developing pragmatic awareness is a challenging aspect of second language learning. In the final article of this volume, Riddiford examines the impact of an instruction module in L2 pragmatics in an ESL setting. Data were gathered from discourse completion tasks, video-taped role-plays and interviews. The results showed that explicit metapragmatic discussion and analysis of authentic discourse, along with opportunities to practise the relevant language features, had a noticeable effect on learners' pragmatic awareness and competence.

The book reviews that have been selected cover a range of areas relevant to language teaching and research in the different sectors that the TESOLANZ membership represent – primary, secondary and tertiary – and highlight political, theoretical and practical issues to be considered by the profession.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the contributors who have submitted manuscripts for consideration in this year's volume of the journal. It has been heartening to receive manuscripts from so many TESOLANZ members. All are seeking, through individual and collaborative research, to contribute to our understanding of how we can more effectively meet student needs. Part of the process involved in preparing a manuscript for publication involves responding to questions and guidance from experienced peers. In this respect, I am indebted to members of the Editorial Board for their insightful and detailed reviews which reflect their dedication to developing the research capability of our community.

I would encourage the many readers of the TESOLANZ Journal, established researchers and those who are just beginning their research journeys, who have not yet contributed to the publication to consider doing so in the following year. You will find Notes for Contributors at the end of the journal, but always feel free to contact the Editor by email (s.gray@auckland.ac.nz), if you require any additional information. The closing date for receiving manuscripts for 2008 will be Monday 1 September.

MODERATING ASSESSMENT STANDARDS IN FOUNDATION STUDIES PROGRAMMES

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Abstract

Much attention has been focused on the need for common standards by which the proficiency of ESOL students can be assessed. One means of working towards common standards is to establish procedures for moderation of assessment tasks. This paper reports on a feasibility study of moderation across four Foundation Studies programmes. The findings highlight the scope for moderation of developmental tasks, capstone tasks and final examinations. The discussion focuses on the extent of commonality in the assessment tasks and marking criteria, issues and concerns raised during moderation, and the resource implications of establishing moderation procedures. In light of the findings, the paper suggests practical steps which could be taken towards standardising the assessment of English language proficiency for entry into tertiary study.

Introduction

An ongoing concern among ESOL teachers in various sectors is to establish standards by which the proficiency of their students can be assessed. At the senior secondary level, the introduction of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) has brought a system of achievement and unit standards into the schools for assessment across the curriculum, with somewhat controversial outcomes for both students in general and ESOL learners in particular. In the tertiary sector, international students are generally expected to achieve a minimum score in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test as the language requirement for admission to a degree programme, and IELTS bands have become a de facto means of describing learner levels for other purposes as well. Both NCEA and IELTS have their limitations and neither of them represents a framework of assessment that can be adopted nationally across all sectors of education.

In 2004 we undertook a research project for the Export Education Industry Development Fund administered by Education New Zealand to investigate the feasibility of establishing a system of national standards of English language proficiency for international students in the tertiary sector (Read & Hirsh, 2005). The study included an extensive review of the international literature on language assessment, as well as a survey of key staff in public and private sector tertiary education organisations in the main centres of the country. From the literature review it was clear that developing and sustaining the kind of assessment framework that had been envisaged for New Zealand would be a complex and costly exercise. In addition, our survey of the opinions of English language teaching professionals indicated that, while people could see merit in the idea of having national standards for English, there was no strong sense that it was a major priority for the sector. Therefore, we concluded that there was not much cause for optimism that a set of national standards could be implemented, particularly in the year after

there had been a major downturn in student numbers across the whole export education industry.

Nevertheless, the following year, we were asked to conduct a follow-up project for Education New Zealand that would address two of the recommendations in the earlier report. One was that a range of classroom assessment tools should be developed to meet the needs of ESOL teachers and also allow for reporting the proficiency of students on a summative basis. The other recommendation was that there should be a study to investigate how to moderate standards for meeting the English language proficiency requirements for entry into tertiary study. It is this second recommendation that is the focus of the present article.

Approach

The objective of the moderation strand of the project was to conduct a feasibility study with one type of provider, Foundation Studies (FS) programmes, on the practicality and value of establishing common standards for assessing learner proficiency and of implementing procedures for moderation across programmes. We worked on the assumption that the study's findings could subsequently be applied to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programmes.

The first stage of this process was to establish contacts with suitable FS programmes. Rather than attempting to work with all the FS providers identified in our previous report (Read & Hirsh, 2005, p. 58), we sought a small representative group of programmes, targeting providers which were located in one of the major centres, had well-established assessment systems in place, and catered almost exclusively for international students on an academic pathway. We approached four programmes – three within universities and one operating independently – and all agreed to participate.

In response to an initial questionnaire, the programmes provided information and samples of materials that documented the key elements of their assessment procedures. The responses to the questionnaire showed that the programmes assessed their students' achievement in English through a range of tasks, some of them focusing on a single skill and others which integrated skills (reading + writing, listening + reading + speaking, and so on). The tasks involved the learners' ability to deal with the language demands of academic study: to understand and utilise the ideas presented in lectures and written texts; to give oral presentations and participate in tutorial discussions; to select and utilise reference materials in assignments; and to answer essay questions in exam situations. A third type of assessment used in some programmes was testing of learners' knowledge of the grammatical and lexical systems of the language. Such tests, when well-designed, can provide useful and reliable data for placement and diagnostic purposes, but they were not widely used for proficiency assessment in the participating programmes.

The standard approach in the FS programmes is to award a university-style letter grade (A+, A, A-, B+, etc) for each student's overall achievement in the English component of the programme. The grade is based on multiple measures of the student's learning derived broadly from 1) ratings on holistic or analytic scales to assess speaking and writing performance, and 2) marks for the number of correct responses in tests of listening, reading and language knowledge. Ratings-based assessments typically involve tasks which are undertaken at least partly outside of class, whereas marked assessments are more usually done

under exam conditions. In our study we investigated the potential for moderation of each of these approaches in turn.

An assessment framework for productive skills

We focused initially on moderation procedures for the assessment of written and spoken performance, for which we developed a framework of generic descriptors. The approach taken in writing the descriptors was informed by the international assessment literature (see Read & Hirsh, 2005), as well as the information provided in the questionnaires from the programmes. The descriptors and other tools were intended to provide a common means of describing language competence and use between FS programmes, so that existing assessment procedures could be loosely aligned. This took account of the fact that there was significant variation across the programmes in the composition of student cohorts, course content, overall assessment processes, and the extent to which language was taught and assessed across the curriculum.

The assessment criteria used in the programmes varied according to skill area and task type, but generally the following features of communicative competence were identified: content, organisation, cohesion, coherence, language use and accuracy, academic conventions, and delivery of spoken performance. Rating scale descriptors included phrases such as “sophisticated use of sources,” “largely error free,” “message understood with some difficulty,” “systematic problems with grammar” and “style appropriate.”

It is recognised that language teachers are often able to make sound holistic judgements of spoken and written performance in terms of the degree to which the use of language in the context of the task requirement is satisfactory, effective, complete or convincing. Holistic descriptors of competence are thus seen as valuable. However, there can be considerable variability in subjective judgements. Thus, there is also a need for more analytic assessments of the types of language features indicated earlier.

An assessment framework was developed as a starting point for standardising assessment decisions. It comprised a generic marking scale, and marking criteria for speaking and writing, and descriptors representing performance at each level. The generic marking scale in Figure 1 is intended to be applicable to learner performance on the full range of assessment tasks. It describes performance holistically at six levels. Each level corresponds to grades of the type widely used in FS programmes to report performance on assessment tasks.

Figure 1: A generic holistic scale for speaking and writing assessment

Level	Performance categories					Grade
	Content	Comprehensibility	Text construction	Language use	Conventions	
5	Has performed the task effectively and with ease in spite of lapses					A
4	Has performed the task effectively but with weaknesses					B
3	Has performed the task satisfactorily					C
2	Has performed the task unsatisfactorily due to inadequacies					D
1	Has performed the task ineffectively					E
0	Has been unable to perform the task					-

The next step was to define rating criteria for written and spoken performance in each performance category, as presented in Figures 2A and 2B. The detailed descriptors for each level of the speaking and writing scales are in Appendix A. The descriptors utilise qualitative terms such as *effectiveness*, *appropriateness*, *intelligibility*, *relevance* and *adequacy* which are widely employed in the existing FS assessment procedures and thus provide ground for common understanding. Quantifiers such as *mostly*, *generally*, *some* and *few* were avoided as these tend to prove problematic when attempting to standardise assessment decisions.

Figure 2A: Criteria for written performance assessment

	Content	Comprehensibility	Text construction	Language use	Conventions
Features	depth, meaning, relevance and integration of ideas	ease of reading - ability of reader to follow text, extent of breakdowns or reformulation required	organisation of ideas; cohesion within and between sentences and paragraphs	sophistication; range; complexity; accuracy - extent and severity of errors	quotations; paraphrasing; in-text citation; references; format; length; formality

Figure 2B: Criteria for spoken performance assessment

	Content	Comprehensibility	Text construction	Language use	Conventions
Features	depth, meaning, relevance and integration of ideas	ease of listening - ability of reader to follow text, extent of breakdowns or guesswork required	organisation of ideas; cohesion within and between sentences and paragraphs	sophistication; range; complexity; accuracy - extent and severity of errors	delivery; format; referencing

Moderating performance tasks

These assessment tools were prepared and distributed in advance to the participants in a two-day meeting in Wellington in March 2006. The meeting brought together the researchers and a senior member of the teaching staff from each of the four participating FS programmes, to share common concerns in English assessment and to explore the scope for developing moderation procedures for written and spoken performance assessment.

The programme representatives brought samples of student performance at various levels. Assessment tasks which featured across programmes were:

- a written summary of a text
- a short argument essay
- a longer essay involving library research
- a research project, based on a survey, interview or experimental study
- an oral seminar presentation
- a final examination to assess listening, reading and writing skills.

From the discussion of the various assessment procedures used, it became apparent that two broad kinds of task had to be distinguished: 1) *developmental tasks*, having a formative role, with a focus on the teaching and learning of enabling skills; and what can be called “*capstone*” tasks, which require the integration of various language skills and have a more summative role in determining the student’s grade for the course.

General assessment issues

The opening discussion revealed several matters of common concern in the area of performance assessment. Plagiarism in assessment tasks created challenges in all four programmes. It can be time-consuming to check for, although there are computer-based systems such as Turnitin (www.turnitin.com) which can run these checks for teachers. FS programmes indicated a need to penalise students for plagiarism, but they also acknowledged that it can be unintentional. It may reflect the fact that students have not yet adjusted to new expectations regarding the appropriate use of source materials and the need to develop their own “voice” involving a critical perspective on what they read. In the discussion on the indicators of authenticity, it was noted that changes of style within a student’s written text did not always signal plagiarism.

Secondly, assessment tasks needed to be designed to offer students scope to demonstrate not just competence but excellence in their performance. On the other hand, a recurring issue was how to treat grammatical errors which detracted from an otherwise excellent task performance. Grammar was a particularly salient component for some teachers, to the extent that they were reported to penalise intrusive grammatical errors more than once across the performance categories.

A third area of concern was the ways in which teachers’ personal knowledge of the students could influence the way that their work was assessed within the programme. An important rationale for external moderation is to avoid that kind of bias in assessment outcomes and thus personal information about students should not be shared with moderators.

Moderation was seen as valuable not only in terms of maintaining standards but also by providing collegial contact with other programmes and giving opportunities for professional development. Two of the programmes already had moderation arrangements with partner institutions in Australia and could attest to the value of this regular external check on their assessment standards, but they also welcomed the prospect of similar arrangements with programmes in this country. Moderation is time-consuming for those involved and needs to be accounted for as a significant component of teacher workloads. Periodic face-to-face meetings were highly desirable, but were obviously expensive to set up and might not be affordable by individual programmes on a regular basis without external funding.

Moderating developmental tasks

The meeting looked at what would be involved in moderating two developmental tasks, the summary and the argument essay. A trial moderation exercise indicated that these tasks were problematic for moderation purposes because assessment of the students' performance needed to take into account: what had or had not been taught at the stage of the course when the task was given, particularly with regard to acknowledgement of sources and reading beyond primary sources; the specific requirements and expectations of the task; the degree of scaffolding provided by teachers; and the relationship of the task to course content.

This kind of contextual information could be conveyed to a moderator, but it became clear from the discussion at the meeting that, even though developmental tasks may count for some percentage of the final course grade, the main focus of moderation should be on capstone tasks that provide the basis for a realistic assessment of the student's readiness to make the transition from Foundation Studies to a university degree programme.

Moderating capstone tasks

The trial of capstone tasks, in the form of research essays and seminars, proved to be less problematic and more valuable. To facilitate effective moderation there was still a need for documentation: the result of any plagiarism checks conducted; the task requirements and guidelines, indicating the expected length, minimum number of sources to be used, and so on; grading sheets; source texts; notes on the relationship between the task and course content; and notes on any support provided by the teacher.

The research essay was viewed as having high predictive validity for subsequent academic performance, and the samples we looked at were found to be very comparable across the programmes in terms of the developmental stage they represented and the requirements that were specified for the task.

The oral presentation of a seminar was regarded as a valuable component in Foundation Studies, one which was often requested by academics for inclusion in both FS and EAP programmes. It constitutes a summative task, and its delivery represents an integration of language and research skills acquired during the course. It was agreed that a set of high quality exemplars representing a range of performance levels for seminars would be a valuable resource for examiner training within FS programmes, as well as for moderation across programmes.

There were several issues regarding seminars that were discussed. Some of these related to the standard practice of videotaping each seminar performance, so that it was available for later re-assessment and moderation as necessary. The recording had to be of high quality, but even a good recording could miss important aspects, such as the extent to which the speaker engaged with the audience – a significant element in seminar performance. There was also concern about whether the presence of the camera affected how well speakers performed. Another set of issues revolved around the seminar presenters' use of visual technology. The programmes varied as to whether students worked with overhead transparencies or PowerPoint presentations and to what extent they were trained in the effective use of these aids. One further practical consideration in an assessment context was how strictly presenters were kept to the specified time limit.

Thus, the main conclusion from the discussion at the first project meeting was that moderation across programmes would need to be based on capstone rather than developmental tasks, to ensure a manageable, meaningful and effective system. Although no formal evaluation was made of the assessment scales in terms of the consistency with which they could be applied, they proved to be useful tools in giving a focus to the evaluation of particular student performances.

Moderating final examinations

A second, one-day meeting was convened in May 2006 to explore the moderation of written examinations, which represent an important component of the final assessment of students in the English language course within FS programmes. The final examinations were allocated between 40% and 50% of the total marks, more than any other component of the final grade. From this perspective, there was a strong desire across the programmes to explore the scope for moderation of examinations as a further quality assurance measure. Weighting of sections (e.g. listening, reading, writing) was reasonably comparable across papers, so that it seemed feasible to apply a common standard for the purposes of moderation. The inclusion of the examination, along with the capstone tasks, meant that the students' performance in all four skill areas (listening, reading, writing and speaking) could be moderated. Taken together, these components represented at least two-thirds of the total mark allocation for the English language grade.

Each programme representative was requested to select one recently used final examination paper to present to the meeting. In addition, a document was drafted for consideration prior to the meeting outlining the suggested role of a moderator for a final examination, being to ensure that: 1) the paper was fair and unambiguous; 2) the mark allocation was appropriate for the course of study; and 3) the paper conformed to or exceeded standards set both in previous courses in the programme and in other FS programmes.

Structure and content of the papers

A comparison of the examination papers from the four FS programmes revealed similarities but, more importantly, substantial differences. Three of the papers included listening, reading and writing components, while the fourth was composed of reading and writing sections, with listening tested as a separate assessment task.

Listening: The listening tests were designed to simulate an academic lecture, with the students being required to take notes and answer comprehension questions. One mode of delivery used in the programmes was first to distribute a booklet containing the comprehension questions and space for note-taking, so that the students could read the questions before they listened to the lecture once and then answered the questions. In a second mode, the students initially received note-taking paper and listened to the lecture twice. Then they were given the question paper and allowed time to write their answers.

Reading: In all cases the reading assessment was based on at least one academic-type text, followed by questions requiring students to demonstrate their understanding of the content, format and linguistic features of the text. The actual number of texts varied. Two programmes used a single long text; in another programme, there were two texts, one of which was used as the basis for a summary writing task; and the fourth programme used five shorter texts, each with its own distinctive type of question focusing on particular characteristics of the text involved.

The participants in the meeting discussed the challenges of finding suitable texts for the listening and reading sections of the examination. Popular sources included EAP textbooks and magazines dealing with current affairs, social issues, economic development, and science and technology. One problem with articles in New Zealand publications was that the writer often assumed local knowledge of the society and culture that FS students could not reasonably be expected to have. More generally, the text needed to be accessible to students from a variety of national backgrounds and fields of study, ideally without advantaging any particular subgroup of students. One argument in favour of using more than one text for the reading assessment was to reduce the potential effect of the background knowledge factor. Apart from the content of the text, it was necessary to consider how clearly the discourse structure of the text was signposted, and whether there were lexical items (including technical terms, idioms and colloquial expressions) which might cause unnecessary difficulty for the students if they were not edited out or glossed. All of the programmes avoided using texts which the students had already worked with during the course and texts based on topics which had been studied in class.

Writing: In the setting of assessment tasks for academic writing, a major issue is what the subject matter of the writing should be. The standard approach in international English proficiency tests such as IELTS or TOEFL has been to set “independent” tasks, which draw on the general knowledge which all the test-takers are expected to have. The topic is not disclosed in advance so that students will not have the opportunity to memorise an essay which they then simply reproduce in the examination. Some of the writing tasks in the FS examination papers were of this type. The other main approach is to set “integrated” tasks, which are thematically linked to the listening and/or reading texts in the examination, so that the students can draw on information and ideas from those texts in their own writing. It also allows them to demonstrate their ability to make appropriate use of sources, eg, by paraphrasing rather copying verbatim from the source. Some of the FS papers featured thematic links between different sections but others did not.

There are arguments for and against the use of integrated tasks (see Lewkowicz, 1997, for a discussion). Interestingly, the new Internet-based TOEFL (iBT; www.ets.org/toefl), has adopted the compromise position of including both independent and integrated tasks for the assessment of writing.

The scope for moderation

This overview of the content of the FS examination papers makes it clear that, while there were certainly common threads in the papers, they also varied considerably in such key elements as the number of input texts, the degree to which different parts of the paper were linked, and the nature of the tasks that the students were asked to perform. Given that each paper had been developed independently, it was not surprising to find this level of variability, which was noticeably greater than for the capstone tasks. The programme representatives acknowledged that the variation in the final examinations could be reduced if FS programmes were to write their English language examinations according to an agreed set of test specifications. However, a logical precursor to developing such specifications would be standardisation of course objectives and developmental tasks, which would obviously involve more than just changes in assessment.

From a moderation perspective, the variability in the examinations raises the twin questions of what the role of an external moderator should be and how consistent standards could be established across programmes. At the outset it should be noted that all of the FS programme representatives reported that their programme already had some forms of moderation in operation. These included the following:

- An internal review of each new paper by other teaching staff in the programme.
- A review of the paper and the examination results by at least one academic or English teaching specialist appointed by the receiving university. Apart from providing feedback on the suitability of the texts and tasks in the examination, this offered the opportunity to receive feedback from academic teaching staff on areas of concern, such as the prevalence of certain types of grammatical error in the writing of international students.
- A reciprocal moderation arrangement with a partner programme. As previously reported, two of the FS programmes had such an arrangement with a programme in Australia and, in one case, there was also a link with another New Zealand institution.

From these experiences, the participants reported that an external moderator could be expected to provide feedback on the overall structure of the examination paper and how the marks were allocated; the suitability of the texts and the tasks; whether there were problems with the wording of particular instructions or questions; and whether the work of individual students – particularly those at the pass/fail borderline – had been fairly and accurately marked.

However, the fact that the moderation arrangements were already in place meant that there was less motivation to participate in a national scheme, unless the receiving universities were to agree that uniform national standards were a priority. As things stand at present, all the FS programmes are strongly linked to one or two universities, which have a primary concern with maintaining standards within their own programme.

Sharing the burden of preparing papers

One general consideration that came out in the discussion was that normally each programme needed to prepare a new paper each year or for each cohort of students. Partly this was for security reasons, to ensure that students could not learn about the content of the examination

from students who had taken it previously. However, these papers were seen as comparable to university degree examinations, where students usually take the paper with them when they have completed the examination, and papers from past years are available in the University Library. In these respects the examination procedure is quite different from the standard practice in major proficiency tests such as IELTS or TOEFL, where strict control of the test material is maintained both before and after the test administration, so that in principle a secure bank of good-quality material can be built up and recycled over time.

There are some interrelated issues here. One is that the preparation of a language examination involving the assessment of listening, reading and writing is a time-consuming process and draws on specialist skills which not all language teachers can be assumed to have. It is not easy to locate suitable listening and reading texts and, even with judicious editing, it is almost impossible to find multiple texts that represent exactly the same level of difficulty. Writing good test items based on the texts is another challenging task and is a further source of variation in the level of difficulty of the test. For these reasons the material used in major international English proficiency tests goes through an extended process of trialling, moderation and standard-setting before it is used in an operational test administration (see, eg, Norton Peirce, 1992), and the developmental costs involved make it highly desirable that the material should be available for use more than once.

Of course, a FS examination is a much smaller-scale form of assessment than an international proficiency test and, since all the students take the paper at the same time and at the same location, it is possible to adjust the marking when a particular listening or reading text turns out to be more difficult than expected, or when students do not interpret a writing task in quite the way it was intended. Nevertheless, it is worth exploring means of reducing the burden on particular FS teachers of producing a complete new paper once or twice a year. One of the participating programmes had in fact been able to keep their examination paper secure and reuse it in successive years. If that were adopted as a general practice, sections of a paper which had been successfully used in one programme could possibly be made available for use in other programmes. Failing that, there was certainly an important role for a moderation process which would allow the FS programmes to pool their expertise in assessment and help ensure that consistent standards were being maintained.

Thus, a more modest proposal than full moderation of examinations might be that participating programmes could spread the workload of producing good-quality examination material on a regular basis. This might include building up a pool of suitable listening and reading texts which could be adapted to meet the specific requirements of the examination in a particular programme. Another idea is that one programme could conduct a trial of new examination material under controlled conditions on behalf of a programme elsewhere in the country.

Conclusion

As a follow-up to the discussion at the two meetings, we asked the four FS programme representatives to reflect on the value of the meetings for them and their programmes, and also to consider realistically the prospects for implementing the kind of moderation we had discussed. Their comments are presented in Appendix B. The feedback suggests that there is much to be gained from the opportunity for programmes to share ideas on assessment practices and discuss issues of common concern, with a moderation process

seen as promoting greater standardisation of English language assessment in courses for international students.

The first meeting established a procedure for the moderation of seminars and research essays across programmes, and highlighted the potential value of establishing moderation procedures for final examination papers in light of their substantial mark allocation in all four programmes. On the other hand, the second meeting revealed the high degree of variability across programmes in the structure of final examinations, restricting the scope for effective moderation in this area.

Several proposals were raised at the two meetings for follow-up activities. One was to assemble a bank of exemplars of student performance at different levels for seminars, research essays and research reports, to help define standards for the assessment of performance tasks. Another was to develop a set of reading and listening tests designed specifically to focus on the learning objectives for these skills in FS programmes. These could be trialled and standardised on a single proficiency scale, thereby allowing programmes to benchmark their tests and marking against a common standard. A third suggestion was to develop a generic marking scale for the writing components of final examination papers, similar to the scales procedures developed for moderation of written and spoken performance introduced at the first moderation meeting. Unfortunately, the limited scope of the project meant that neither these proposals nor an ongoing moderation system could be implemented. Nevertheless, the feedback from the participants showed that the opportunity to come together and compare assessment procedures was valuable in itself, regardless of any longer-term benefits. In addition, we hope that this record of the discussions will be of wider interest to those involved in the assessment of student achievement in FS and EAP programmes throughout the country.

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Appendix A: Marking descriptors for writing and speaking

Marking descriptors for writing

Competency statement: *Use of language to write a summary of an academic text, a referenced essay, an essay in test conditions and/or a research report, adhering to task requirements and relevant academic conventions*

Holistic assessment	LEVEL	Analytic assessment				
		Content	Comprehensibility	Text construction	Language use	Conventions
Has performed the task effectively and with ease in spite of lapses	5	Ideas are sophisticated, deep, meaningful and relevant	Can be fully understood with ease	Ideas sequencing and cohesive device use are effective throughout	Language use is sophisticated, rich and complex, with minor lapses	Shows sensitivity to and care with referencing, format and tone
Has performed the task effectively but with weaknesses	4	Ideas are deep, meaningful and relevant, but with weaknesses	Can be fully understood with allowances for errors	Ideas sequencing and cohesive device use are effective but with weaknesses	Language use is rich and complex but with weaknesses	Effective referencing, format and tone, but with weaknesses
Has performed the task satisfactorily	3	Ideas are meaningful and relevant but lacking in depth	Can be understood but with some initial breakdowns	Ideas sequencing and cohesive device use are satisfactory but with errors	Language use is satisfactorily complex and clear in spite of errors	Satisfactory referencing, format and tone, but with errors
Has performed the task unsatisfactorily due to inadequacies	2	Ideas are relevant but inadequately deal with the topic	Can be understood only with re-formulation of breakdowns	Ideas sequencing and cohesive device use are unsatisfactory	Language use is simplistic or marked by a pattern of intrusive errors	Referencing, format and tone unsatisfactory due to major errors
Has performed the task ineffectively	1	Ideas are weakly related to the task	Text is too problematic to read effectively	Ideas sequencing and cohesive device use are ineffective	Clear language use is restricted to simple features	Referencing, format and tone ineffective
Has been unable to perform the task	0	Ideas are not related to the task	Basically in-comprehensible	Sequencing and linking not evident	Clear language use is not evident	Conventions not followed

Marking descriptors for speaking

Competency statement: *Use of spoken language to deliver an oral presentation or a research project, adhering to task requirements and relevant academic conventions*

Holistic assessment	LEVEL	Analytic assessment				
		Content	Comprehensibility	Text construction	Language use	Conventions
Has performed the task effectively and with ease in spite of lapses	5	Ideas are sophisticated, deep, meaningful and relevant	Can be fully understood with ease	Ideas sequencing and cohesive device use are effective throughout	Language use is sophisticated, rich and complex, with minor lapses	Shows sensitivity to and care with delivery, format and referencing
Has performed the task effectively but with weaknesses	4	Ideas are deep, meaningful and relevant, but with weaknesses	Can be fully understood with allowances for errors	Ideas sequencing and cohesive device use are effective but with weaknesses	Language use is rich and complex but with weaknesses	Effective delivery, format and referencing but with weaknesses
Has performed the task satisfactorily	3	Ideas are meaningful and relevant but lacking in depth	Can be understood but with some initial breakdowns	Ideas sequencing and cohesive device use are satisfactory but with errors	Language use is satisfactorily complex and clear in spite of errors	Satisfactory delivery, format and referencing but with errors
Has performed the task unsatisfactorily due to inadequacies	2	Ideas are relevant but inadequately deal with the topic	Can be understood only with reformulation of breakdowns	Ideas sequencing and cohesive device use are unsatisfactory	Language use is simplistic or marked by a pattern of intrusive errors	Delivery, format and referencing unsatisfactory due to major errors
Has performed the task ineffectively	1	Ideas are weakly related to the task	Text is too problematic to follow effectively	Ideas sequencing and cohesive device use are ineffective	Clear language use is restricted to simple features	Delivery, format and referencing ineffective
Has been unable to perform the task	0	Ideas are not related to the task	Basically incomprehensible	Sequencing and linking not evident	Clear language use is not evident	Conventions not followed

Appendix B:

Feedback from representatives of the four Foundation Studies programmes on the two moderation meetings

A: It would be possible to moderate internal assessments to a degree, using a global marking system. Of course, we would all have to be very clear about what the expectations for each task are. However, I cannot see how we could do it for the exams. There seemed to be enormous differences in requirements (and in level of difficulty) for a start. I think that the essay writing could not accurately be moderated without a detailed mark allocation system. There would be a great deal of work involved in doing this to everyone's satisfaction.

I found the two meetings extremely valuable, but if there is going to be much common ground, actual teaching materials would also need to be looked at to see if there is some equality of level. In fact, the success of moderation would probably start at that level. Another point I really would like to stress is that we are finding that we have to actually teach a lot more grammar and are actively moving to expand this aspect (the students really like it too, surprisingly enough). More emphasis on this area will be needed in the future, I feel.

B: The meetings have had very positive spin-offs for our programme. For a start, it has been useful and affirming to discover that the end point levels of the participating programmes have a degree of comparability already, and it can only be to everybody's benefit to sharpen up the comparability so that institutions can accept students coming in from other programmes with confidence.

Secondly, the chance to have a peek at assignment topics and exam papers from other institutions is rare and helpful. I came away with some very good ideas that will possibly find their way into our programme.

C: The benefits of meetings of the kind held in March and May 2006 are:

- an exchange of professional experience and expertise
- an opportunity to review and critique standards and procedures being used for assessment
- discussion of course content and reasons for including or excluding certain aspects/items from courses
- a chance to discuss common teaching issues, such as liaison with academic departments, progress of students through the courses
- it broadens the pool of teachers and assessors beyond one institution so that tasks can be shared, for example trialling of exam papers
- it provides a sort of informal review of one's own programme by putting it next to other programmes with similar aims

- professional contact, and in this respect it can be seen as a form of professional development because of the exchange of ideas. This is particularly important for programmes which are isolated from other groups of colleagues working in similar areas.
- exchange of information about resources available
- setting of common standards so that students can move between universities
- a feeling of security that each programme has met a set of common standards.

D: The moderation meetings provide on-going, professional development for both the participants and their teaching colleagues. Whilst assessment issues and moderation are the key elements of the meetings, the sharing of best practice teaching strategies for international students and the lively discussions on various aspects of English language teaching also add to the participants' learning experience. The ideas and processes discussed at the moderation meetings can then be further analysed in English staff meetings at the respective institutions.

The process of teacher reflection and review is essential for the delivery of high quality programmes within the New Zealand international language teaching sector. Insightful comments from other professionals can make you stop and think about your own programme and this can then lead to further refinements and improvements. Also, other people's comments can validate what you are doing and reassure you that your assessments and assessment procedures are fair and equitable for your students.

To keep competitive the New Zealand international student sector needs to provide students with high quality education. The moderation meetings allow classroom practitioners and university researchers to share their knowledge and work towards developing a common assessment framework for international students seeking entrance to New Zealand universities. Regular face-to-face moderation meetings, adequately funded, are essential and can only benefit the students and improve assessment practice by ensuring fair, consistent and equitable assessments across the sector.

RATIONAL CLOZE TESTS AS A PLACEMENT MEASURE FOR EAL LEARNERS

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Abstract

This study reports on the development of rational cloze tests for use as a placement measure of reading ability for EAL students in New Zealand secondary schools. The tests devised were based on text Levels C, D and E specified in the draft form of the English Language Learning Framework (ELLF) (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2005). Two versions of the tests, with and without a word bank, were trialled with Year 10 students from four Wellington secondary schools. The test sample included International students, newly arrived Pasifika students and students from a refugee and migrant non English speaking background. Findings reveal evidence in support of the cloze tests as a measure of reading ability of the sample group. Interpretation of test results and implications for the use of the tests are discussed.

Introduction

New English as an additional language (EAL) students arrive in New Zealand secondary schools at short notice and throughout the year. It is important that schools and teachers develop quick and reliable placement measures that help gauge the initial literacy level of these students. This study set out to investigate whether cloze tests could be designed and validated for such a purpose for a group of learners who come from a wide range of cultural and educational backgrounds.

A cloze test is an assessment procedure in which certain words are removed and the participant is asked to replace the missing words. In this report, we will argue for the usefulness of the cloze procedure as a practical and feasible placement tool for teachers. We will next describe the design and validation process of two types of cloze tests with rational deletions, one in which the test takers had to supply the missing words themselves and the other in which they could select words from a word bank provided.

The cloze procedure has largely been regarded as a reasonable measure of general language proficiency and in particular, reading ability. Despite earlier reservations (e.g., Alderson, 1979a; Carroll, Carton, & Wilds, 1959) that cloze may measure only basic reading skills and is largely a sentence level or clause level task, many studies have shown that cloze can measure more advanced reading skills and global language proficiency and results can correlate well with dictation, reading tests and essay writing (Bachman, 1982, 1985; Brown, 1984, 1988; Chavez-Oller, Chihara, Weaver, & Oller, 1985; Laesch & van Kleeck, 1987; Oller, 1973). In addition, evidence from introspective data (Cohen, 1998; Storey, 1997; Yamashita, 2003) reveal the cognitive processes involved in completing cloze tests supports the view that cloze can be seen as a measure of both basic comprehension related to

vocabulary knowledge and global understanding depending on the nature of cloze deletions and the language level of the learner being tested (Fotos, 1991).

Deletion patterns and response formats have received much attention. Classical cloze is characterised by fixed ratio, random deletion of every *n*th word; and rational deletion removes only words the test designer chooses to delete. Respondents are asked to either write the missing words in the blanks, or choose from a few possible answers (multiple-choice cloze) or from a word bank provided for the whole cloze passage.

Researchers are now aware that each cloze item does not carry the same amount or kind of information (Alderson, 1979b; Bachman, 1982, 1985; Jonz, 1990, 1991). Some words can be restored using local linguistic knowledge, such as prepositions and idioms. Others, such as lexical repetition and conjunctions, need textual understanding. Depending on the type of word deleted test-takers are likely to activate different types of knowledge or abilities (Abraham & Chapelle, 1992; Chapelle & Abraham, 1990; Kobayashi, 2002). The relationship between cloze item characteristics and item difficulty has also been explored (Abraham & Chapelle, 1992; Brown, 1988, 1993; Brown, Yamashiro, & Ogane, 2001). These studies show that items are easier if a smaller amount of context is necessary to restore a word and if the length of a word is shorter. Function words are easier than content words in fixed ratio and rational deletion but not in multi-choice cloze (Chapelle & Abraham, 1990).

Bachman (1982; 1985) notes that not all deletions measure exactly the same abilities. His studies identify three distinguishable factors, syntactic, cohesive and strategic, that can be used as a basis for making rational deletions. Bachman claims that rational deletions give test developers greater flexibility for revising specific items on the basis of content specification and item statistics. Bachman (1985, p. 539) develops a classification framework for cloze item types according to the hierarchical context hypothesized as necessary to complete each item:

1. within clause;
2. across clause, within sentence;
3. across sentence, within text;
4. extra-textual.

Bachman finds that a rational deletion cloze that maximizes deletions of category 2 and 3 item types forces test takers to look beyond the clausal level and ensures a wider engagement with the text. He further hypothesises the order of difficulty for the type of items, 1 being the easiest and 4 the most difficult. This method of classifying deleted items has been used by other researchers investigating rational cloze (e.g., Jonz, 1991; Sasaki, 2000).

Introspective data on test taking strategies has also revealed that the type of items deleted in a rational cloze can affect the comprehension strategies applied by students. Storey (1997), for example, shows that deletion of discourse markers encourages participants to analyse the rhetorical structure of text although it is hard to pin down the amount of context utilized by the learner. A test taker may use a whole range of different strategies based on clues from the immediate context, on prior or general knowledge and other strategies such as lexical substitution to solve an item if it requires inter-sentential reference. Yamashita (2003) deletes cohesive devices and key content words, to engage her subjects in higher order reading skills. Her data shows students making inferences and showing awareness of rhetorical structure.

In summary, cloze techniques, particularly rational cloze, can produce tests that measure, with some degree of accuracy, aspects of students' literacy/ reading ability. The accuracy of

measurement and the specific traits measured may be determined to a certain extent by the type of deletions made and the scoring method adopted. Of crucial importance is choosing a text of appropriate difficulty to match the sample group. Most research has been conducted on EFL university students so it could be assumed that young teenagers who are less mature readers with limited L1 background would find cloze tests challenging.

This study set about investigating if it were possible to design cloze tests that could help gauge EAL learners' initial literacy/reading ability level in the junior secondary school. In particular, we were interested to explore the following research questions:

1. Are rational cloze tests valid and reliable measures of reading ability for developing EAL readers in the junior secondary school?
2. Which version of cloze is more suitable, with or without a word bank, for this group of learners?

Methodology

Participants

Fifty four non-native speakers of English (25 girls and 29 boys) from a wide variety of language backgrounds participated in this study. The sample contained 8 Year 9, 45 Year 10 and 1 Year 11 student, from four Wellington secondary schools. They were all studying in mainstream classes and most were taking ESOL as an option. The sample included 16 international students who had been studying in NZ schools for as little as 2 months and up to 3 years as well as 32 students from a refugee or migrant background with 2–10 years in NZ schools. 16 of the students in this group were identified as having no or very limited L1 literacy. Five students were recently arrived Pasifika students. The sample contained a wide spread of English language proficiency (elementary to advanced). Scores on Nation's (2001) Vocabulary Levels Test ranged from 24–100% with a mean of 74.3% at the 1000 word level and 20–100 % with a mean of 66% at the 2000 level. 20 students in the sample group had recorded reading age scores (Gilmore, Croft, & Reid, 1981) that ranged from 6.6 to 11.9 with a mean of 9 years.

Materials

Texts

Cloze tests were created at three levels of reading ability, using texts calibrated against descriptors from the reading section of the English Language Learning Framework (ELLF) (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2005). Levels C, D and E from ELLF were chosen because trials with students in 2005 from Year 9 and 10 ESOL options showed that most students were capable of reading texts at these levels independently or with instructional support.

According to ELLF, Level C texts are the simplest among the three and must include simple or compound sentences and simple noun phrases. Vocabulary at this level is mainly high frequency vocabulary with a significant number of topic-specific words. D level texts are characterized by a wider range of sentence types and some complex sentences, and include

technical words supported by context. E level texts are characterized by varied sentences types, mostly simple or compound sentences. And Level E still contains a high percentage of high frequency words but may have greater variation of sentence types (with statements or direct speech) and may contain a greater range of tenses; also cohesive devices may be more distant from the original referent.

Non fiction texts were chosen from Geography, Social Studies, Health and Science. These included reports, recounts, instructions, and biographical texts. Each test consisted of a range of texts (Table 1) based on culturally familiar topics that would engage the students' interest (Sasaki, 2000) but ensure that one group of test takers was not unduly favoured by prior knowledge of the content (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). (see Appendix A for a sample from test Level C.)

Table 1: Cloze passages

Text level	Number of passages	Number of cloze items
C	4	44
D	3	50
E	2	50

An ESOL advisor was asked to verify the levels of the texts chosen. As a result, texts that had been placed at C were raised to D, and Level C texts were simplified further removing complex sentence structures. Some deletions were changed and technical vocabulary was removed from test D.

Deletions

A paragraph or introductory sentence was left intact before deletions were made to provide context for the passage. Most deletions were spaced within a range of 5 to 8 words apart. Deletions were made with the intention that they would all be solvable by reference to the text or by applying background knowledge (Alderson, Clapham, & Wall, 1995). Bachman's (1985) classification was used to ensure there was a range of item types that were solvable:

- 0=within clause (syntax)
- 1=within clause (lexis)
- 2=across clause within sentence
- 3=across sentence within text
- 4=extra textual

Jonz (1987) recommended that a rational cloze used for assessing reading comprehension should contain a higher proportion of type 2 and 3 items. These item types had shown greater sensitivity to contextual constraints. This was possible in the C level test where 46% of items were type 2 or 3 deletions, but it became more difficult to delete type 2 and 3 items as the texts became harder (more complex) at D level (30%) and E level (32%). Almost half of the items deleted in D and E tests were solvable at the clausal level. Table 2 shows the breakdown of item types deleted in all three tests.

Table 2: Item category types deleted from each test

Item classification	Level C items	%	Level D items	%	Level E items	%
0 within clause (syntax)	13	29	16	32	14	28
1 within clause (lexis)	7	15.7	18	36	17	34
2 across clause within sentence	4	8.8	7	14	6	12
3 across sentence within text	17	37.7	8	16	10	20
4 extra textual	4	8.8	1	2	3	6

Test versions

Two different versions of the tests at the three levels were trialled with the students. One version contained a word bank that had 2 or 3 distractors included, especially in test C where the passages were very short. Test E word bank had no distractors but each bank was relatively large as there were only two texts. The other version contained no word bank. Deletions made in both tests were identical.

Other measures of literacy

The following measures of the students' level of literacy and reading ability were obtained:

- Nation's (2001) vocabulary levels test results were collected for 1000 and 2000 word level
- Reading ages based on Tests of Reading Comprehension (TORCH) (Western Australian Education Department, 2003), Probe and Burt word recognition tests (Gilmore et al., 1981) (20 students) were collected
- A dictation was administered to all the students (based on a text at Level D)
- Questionnaire data (information about cultural background and student attitudes to school), plus a writing sample was scored by the first author.

Procedure

The tests were trialled with a Year 11 ESOL option class in one of the schools. The class had students of a wide range of proficiency. The C level tests were trialled with the less proficient students, the E level with the more proficient. All six tests were completed by at least 2 learners. From these results items in test C were modified reducing the number of category 4 items and removing one sentence in the 'Antarctica' section.

The student sample in each school was randomly divided in half so that each half sat one version of the test (with or without a word bank). Each student continued on with the same version for test D and test E. Tests were administered weekly or in some cases with longer gaps. At two of the schools students repeated test C or test D in the alternate version at the end so that results on the same test could be compared from the same student. More able students repeated test D rather than test C in most cases. Students were shown their previous test marked while they worked on the next test.

The same format was used in all tests. The instructions were read aloud to the students when they sat their first test. Any questions were answered. It was stressed that even with the word bank they were not bound to use these words as long as the words they chose made sense in the gap. Students were also urged to read a text through with the deletions before they began filling them in (Cohen, 1998). In subsequent tests the students were urged to read the instructions for themselves and reminded to read the text over before completing gaps.

Students were closely observed as they did the tests by the first author who recorded comments on student behaviour while they worked. Also, some students volunteered to be interviewed immediately after completing tests. Some of these interviews were recorded and comments were transcribed. The “acceptable word method” of scoring was used for both versions of the test, as reading ability rather than grammatical knowledge was being assessed. In this sense, we agree with Kobayashi (2002) that accepting answers that make sense in a given context but may be syntactically incorrect will provide a more accurate reflection of a learner’s reading ability.

Analysis

In order to find concurrent evidence to support the validity of cloze tests as measures of literacy level and reading ability, other literacy measures such as dictation, writing, vocabulary size, and reading age were correlated with different versions of the cloze test. For a closer look at the internal validity of the cloze procedure, immediate retrospective interviews with some students were done to tap into the mental processes and strategies cloze tests would involve. Reliability was calculated by the split half method, i.e., correlating all odd items with all even items in any one version of a cloze test. The Spearman Brown correction formula was then obtained for the split half reliability of each cloze test.

Results and Discussion

Cloze scores and literacy level

In this section, we will first present evidence suggesting the reliability of the cloze tests involved. We will next present the validity evidence for the cloze tests as measures of literacy levels in the following three ways: 1) whether the a priori difficulty levels that were modelled against the ELLF (Levels C, D, and E) can indeed be found in the test results; 2) whether satisfactory correlations can be obtained between the cloze scores and other concurrent measures of literacy; and 3) whether test taking strategies revealed the kind of reading skills that we wanted to elicit in cloze tests.

Split half reliability

We first obtained the correlation coefficients between odd items and even items on each version of the cloze tests. Next, we applied the Spearman Brown correction formula (Alderson et al., 1995, pp. 280-281) to get the split half reliability measures (Table 3).

Table 3: Split-half reliability of all six cloze tests

Cloze versions		Split-half reliability
With word bank	CWB	.925
	DWB	.921
	EWB	.942
Without word bank	C0WB	.737
	D0WB	.890
	E0WB	.885

The high split-half reliabilities in Table 3 indicate high internal consistency of all versions of the rational cloze tests in this study. These very high levels of internal consistency among items exceeded our expectations. Even the 0WB versions were very satisfactory.

Difficulty levels

Mean test scores in both versions reflected the increasing difficulty of the three levels of tests C, D and E (Table 4). In most cases, students' scores decreased as they sat tests in the same version at a higher level. Thus there was evidence suggesting that the cloze tests were able to reveal the difficulty levels of the texts that were built into the tests.

Table 4: Test scores for each level and in each test version

Cloze versions		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation	n
CWB	Level C Test with Word Bank	36	98	78.34	15.414	32
DWB	Level D Test with Word Bank	24	100	65.00	20.301	32
EWB	Level E Test with Word Bank	14	94	56.62	23.343	26
C0WB	Level C Test without Word Bank	38	93	70.70	15.434	37
D0WB	Level D Test without Word Bank	34	96	67.94	15.219	32
E0WB	Level E Test without Word Bank	28	88	60.00	16.342	27

External concurrent validity

Table 5 shows the descriptive information for each of these concurrent measures. Table 6 lists the correlations of each cloze version and the concurrent measures of literacy.

Table 5: Concurrent measures of proficiency

	Mean	Std. Deviation	n
Writing	54.30	13.596	54
Dictation	76.64	17.829	53
Vocab 1000	74.3	18.406	40
Vocab 2000	66.28	22.763	47
Reading Age	9.05	1.926	20

Table 6: Correlations between cloze scores and concurrent measures

		Writing	Dictation	Vocab 1000	Vocab 2000	Reading Age
CWB	r	.719***	.584***	.657***	.618***	.552ns
	n	32	31	26	28	11
C0WB	r	.569***	.608***	.752***	.531**	.623*
	n	37	37	24	28	11
DWB	r	.614***	.729***	.465*	.532**	.753*
	n	32	31	22	29	10
D0WB	r	.586***	.549***	.700***	.407*	.742*
	n	32	32	21	28	10
EWB	r	.744***	.754***	.700**	.759***	.492ns
	n	26	25	21	19	10
E0WB	r	.606***	.428*	.804***	.311ns	.854**
	n	27	27	18	23	10

* p<.05; **p<.01; *** p<.001

Table 6 shows that for the first four concurrent measures correlations were substantial if not quite strong across all tests. The correlation coefficients between Reading Age scores and cloze tests ranged from .492 to .854, with two of these (CWB, $p=.078$, and EWB, $p=.148$) not reaching a significance level of .05. This could well be a result of the small number of subjects whose reading age scores we obtained. In general, writing showed higher levels of correlations than dictation; and vocabulary 1000 had higher levels of correlation with cloze scores than vocabulary 2000. The correlations involving the EWB version were consistently good across the first four measures; the other cloze versions performed more variably in this regard.

In general, despite the small number of subjects involved, and despite the paucity of reading test data available across this sample of students, we believe these correlation levels indicate that the rational cloze tests in this study provide a reasonable measure of the subject's literacy level that can be used for placement purposes.

Internal validity: What is tested in a cloze?

Interviews done immediately after the tests revealed that our rational cloze tests were indeed able to elicit reading abilities specified in Bachman (1985) and Jonz (1991). Students appeared to use a combination of top down and bottom up processing as they completed the tests. Their knowledge of the topic appeared to strongly affect their ability to engage with it and fill in gaps correctly. An array of linguistic and non-linguistic cues both in the immediate context (within sentence) and in wider contexts (across sentence and extra-textual) were made use of in completing the cloze tests.

The students' background knowledge was found to be a prominent factor in influencing their ability in completing a cloze passage. The international students found the geographical extract "The world" (test C) straight forward to complete because they understood the concepts. The passage on cultural choices in food was deemed 'easy to understand' by most students. The most difficult topic for all the students in test D was "Wax-eyes." The

unfamiliarity of the topic forced students to apply their general knowledge of animals, with varying degrees of success.

In addition to a lack of background knowledge, the less proficient readers did not seem to be able to solve the meaning of a word from the surrounding context. They appeared to take wild guesses, sometimes choosing a word that collocated with the word immediately prior to a gap but that made no sense in the wider context of the passage. They were reading at the clausal level only because they had lost overall understanding of the context.

More proficient readers on the other hand clearly read the passages prior to and past the items they were attempting to solve. They made use of a variety of clues at clause, sentence, and textual levels to solve their problems. A Japanese student was applying her metalinguistic knowledge when she explained that “an adjective was needed here.” A capable reader chose “don’t” in “sharks don’t chew their food,” because the following sentence said “they eat food in big pieces.” Others took cues from headings. In test E: “Some ways to save water outside the home,” the gap was solvable by reading back to the previous heading (“Some ways to save water in the home”), or by reading past the heading to the examples that followed.

With or Without a Word Bank?

We will next turn our attention to the question of whether word banks should be provided. We will first see whether the two versions are indeed different. Next, we will compare the correlation levels between the WB and 0WB versions of the cloze tests with other concurrent measures. We will then compare the internal consistency reliability levels of each type of cloze. Where possible, we will also go deeper and examine what students do when they complete a cloze test with or without a word bank and see which version they prefer.

It is reasonable to expect that the students would achieve a higher score when word banks are provided because what is being tapped is mainly their receptive knowledge in a cloze with a word bank. Table 4, however, reveals a more complex picture. Students performed better on the WB version than the 0WB version only on the level C tests. This was probably due to the fact that levels D and E texts were too difficult for a substantial proportion of the participants. This was proven true in Table 7. The CWB scores were significantly higher than the C0WB scores for the fifteen students who took both versions of the same cloze. Only ten more proficient students took both versions of the D level cloze tests. For these ten students, they did perform better on the WB version as well, although the difference was not significant.

Table 7: Comparing WB and 0WB versions of cloze

	Mean	n	Std. Deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
CWB	71.27	15	17.248	4.020	.001
C0WB	62.13	15	15.928		
DWB	75.20	10	17.441	1.657	.132
D0WB	68.80	10	16.061		

Results of students completing the same test in different versions almost always improved their scores in the word bank version. When a group of students who had repeated tests in both

versions were interviewed about which form of the test they preferred, several students said that they liked having the option to check their guesses. However, an able student commented that she thought having no word bank was a better test of what they know as they had to “make up the words.” One of the most proficient students who did the 0WB version did not get perfect scores. He frequently chose to use quite sophisticated vocabulary and made mistakes rather than playing safe with simpler words; testing his language learning hypotheses was a notable feature of a developmental stage (Ellis, 2003) and this testing situation was clearly not ‘high stakes’ for this learner.

On the other hand, less proficient students applied a scatter gun approach inserting words from the word bank randomly rather than appearing to “test” the word to see if it made sense first. Some students who had completed the tests in the WB version, when repeating a test without a word bank appeared unable to solve gaps unaided. One student wrote on her paper (D0WB): “this is too hard for me” her result from DWB to D0WB went from 70% to 46%. Other students who repeated tests at the same level also recorded a considerable fall in test scores when doing the 0WB version. They tended to be more recently arrived overseas students or students less proficient in reading. The word bank clearly supported those with receptive vocabulary knowledge but, without a word bank, students were being tested for their productive language recall, a more demanding vocabulary task as “learners’ receptive vocabulary size is greater than their productive vocabulary size” (Nation, 2001, p. 371).

Many students explicitly said that they preferred having a word bank and those without a word bank often complained that their test was harder! The short passages with small word banks (12-15 words even with distractors) made it relatively easy for students in the sample to get words right, although less proficient readers appeared to make random choices. With the 0WB version, making guesses required a higher level of thought processing and choices made were often closer to the mark even if wrong. However, a survey of the number of gaps left unfilled in both versions of the E level tests (22 students counted in each version) showed 62 gaps left in E0WB and 137 gaps in EWB. Clearly the lack of a word bank did not stop these students from guessing overall. Some slow readers meticulously crossed out words as they went, but did not always make sensible choices. With test CWB more proficient students ignored the word bank at times and explained that they just used it for checking. This occurred at Level D and E also, especially when the word banks became larger.

Another look at Table 6 suggests that the WB versions tended to yield higher correlations with other concurrent measures of literacy than the 0WB versions. Scores on the word bank versions correlated significantly with writing (.719, .614, .744), dictation (.584, .729, .754), vocabulary 1000 (.657, .465, .654) and vocabulary 2000 scores (.618, .532, .726). Correlations with 0WB tests were also significant with writing and dictation but not quite as high as WB scores with the exception of vocabulary 1000 scores. Furthermore, Table 3 indicates a clear advantage for WB versions of the cloze tests in terms of internal consistency.

Although both forms of the test were shown to be internally consistent and to correlate well with other literacy measures the word bank version achieved higher levels of internal consistency and correlated more strongly with writing, dictation and vocabulary (2000). On the basis of these results and the expressed preference of many students, the word bank version appears to be the preferred version to use as a placement test as it offers support to a wider range of students at this level. That said, the level of text must be suitable for the

students tested. If the text is beyond the students' level, the cloze will be too difficult and frustrating; if the text is too easy, the resulting cloze will not be challenging enough. Neither will be able to elicit the students' true reading ability.

Careful analyses of cloze scores of top, middle, and bottom groups reveal more information for the teacher after the initial placement decision is made. For example, students who score below 50% at Level C are probably not capable of reading texts at this level without considerable support and are even more limited in coping with higher level texts. This implies these students would have great difficulty reading or interpreting written text in all mainstream classes. On the other hand, top scorers on Level E texts could be placed into mainstream classes with sufficient scaffolding. For the majority of EAL students in the middle group, their scores on a cloze test at text levels C, D, and E would be able to offer information as to which level of reading support they need in the mainstream classroom.

Conclusion

This study investigated whether it was possible to design and validate a rational cloze test for the placement of developing EAL readers in secondary schools in New Zealand. High internal consistency reliabilities were found for all six versions of the cloze, especially the versions with word banks provided. Satisfactory correlations between cloze scores and concurrent literacy measures were obtained. In addition, learners were found to adopt a range of bottom up and top down strategies that varied according to their level of reading and the difficulty of the text they were attempting to comprehend. We also argued that the word bank version of the test was our preferred choice over the version without a word bank. It should be noted that we have only presented evidence suggesting the potential of cloze tests as a placement measure of reading ability for EAL learners entering the New Zealand secondary school system. Teachers interested in placing their new EAL students according to their initial literacy level should be encouraged to use other more direct measures to complement the cloze test.

Further studies could use more substantial reading ability measures and obtain the predictive validity of cloze tests by tracking student progress in both English language and other mainstream subjects. Further trialling and an extension of text levels incorporating authentic texts from mainstream subject areas is recommended to improve these tests as a placement tool for the junior secondary school. In addition, this study tested only a small sample of students ($n=54$) from the target group of language learners. Further validation would need to be obtained trialling the tests with a larger group to ensure that results are generalisable to the wider population of students.

Note

¹ It is to be noted that the classifications were carried out by the first author only. In hindsight, independent classifications from at least two researchers and a consistency check might have revealed some discrepancies as Jonz (1990) found when he re-analysed Bachman's (1985) cloze text.

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Appendix:

Materials Test sample of passage one, test C used in the study

Level C

Name:

In the following passages some of the words have been left out.

First read over the whole passage and try to understand what it is about.

Then try to fill in the spaces. It takes only one word to fill in each space.

You may use the words in the text box at the bottom of the page to help you. Any word that makes sense in the space will be accepted.

Try to fill all the spaces.

Here is an example showing how to fill a space:

I can speak English (1) _____ now.

I can speak English (1) well now.

Level C1

The world

There are seven continents in the world – Europe, Asia, North America, South America, Africa, Australia, and Antarctica. There are also _____ large oceans – Pacific, Atlantic, Indian and Arctic.

Asia is the largest _____ and Australia is the smallest. Africa has the _____ countries. It has 53 countries. Europe is a _____ continent with 25 countries. There are 22 _____ in North America and 13 countries in _____ America. Australia is a continent, a country _____ an island.

most	countries	has
and	four	small
South	island	continent

English Language Intensive Programme:

Stage 1, Reading.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN UNIVERSITY LECTURES AND TUTORIALS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR EAP PROGRAMMES

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Abstract

To better understand the language demands that non-native speakers of English face in university lectures, and to create a bank of authentic local materials, we undertook a materials development project for first year students in our English for Academic Purposes (EAP) credit courses. The lectures and tutorials that formed our materials highlight developments in the ways that university courses exploit multiple technologies, both new technologies and traditional delivery modes, in supporting student access to course content. With relatively little attention in EAP to the use of teaching technologies in university lectures, we not only need to keep abreast of such developments, we also need further research in how EAP and English as an Additional Language (EAL) students interact with and learn from them.

Introduction

EAP teachers are well aware of the challenges our students face in understanding and learning from academic lectures in university disciplines, and the challenges of participating in accompanying course tutorials. Fortunately, a body of materials and literature addresses this need, including study guides on academic listening and speaking strategies and analyses of lecture and tutorial genres. These materials outline ways that students can exploit features of academic lectures and tutorial discourse, and thus aim to enhance students' access to classroom participation and subject matter.

At Massey we wanted to augment the available published materials on understanding and participating in university classes with materials set in our local context. With a small pilot grant from the Fund for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching (FIET) we recorded classes in programmes popular among our EAP students. We videoed two lectures, one in Media Studies and the other in Business Law, two discussion groups/tutorials, one in Exercise Science and the other in Business Communication, and two seminar presentations, which were demonstrations of how, and how not to, give a seminar from Student Learning Services. We then extracted 10-15 minute selections of the recordings, prepared videos, and developed a bank of materials based on them. For more on the materials development part of this project, see Coxhead, Hunter, Pierard, and Cooke (forthcoming). Whilst our data from the pilot study is small, we were struck by the number of ways in which lecturing staff used a range of new technologies and traditional course delivery modes to make the content more accessible for their students. It is the nature of the discipline course delivery that we would like to focus on in our discussion here.

The variety of ways we found that learning is supported in university discipline lectures ranged from traditional, low-tech chalk-and-talk course delivery to relatively high-tech support afforded by new developments in classroom teaching technology, such as PowerPoint, and in virtual classrooms, such as Web CT. None were designed specifically for language learners, which, we believe, could be both advantageous and disadvantageous to our students. This burgeoning variety in forms of classroom delivery and teaching technology, along with their potentially inconsistent effects on EAP students, calls for a review of how we prepare students for academic classrooms. That is not to dismiss current materials, but rather to expand our approaches.

In the following discussion we will first address the literature on academic lectures and tutorials in EAP. Then we will describe the wide range of technologies lecturers employ to support student learning, which to date have received minimal attention in the EAP literature. We will follow with a discussion of current uses of new and more traditional course delivery in discipline courses. Finally, we conclude with implications for EAP curriculum and for research.

Approaches to Academic Lectures and Tutorials in EAP

One common EAP approach to enabling students' access to lectures is through discourse structure. Lecture listening materials, as well as research, often focus on the discourse structure of lectures and on teaching students to attend to it (Flowerdew, 1994; Flowerdew & Miller, 1997; Jordan, 1997; Kelly et al, 2003; Lebauer, 2001; Lewis & Reinders, 2003; Lynch, 1994, 2004; Young, 1994). The rationale is that understanding the structure of lectures can help students grasp the overall gist and organization, follow the development of the lecture, and understand the relationships among the ideas and information. Lexical expressions and other signals, which mark lecture organization and provide cues as to the nature of upcoming content, are found in many teaching materials. For example, Lewis and Reinders (2003), in a student guide to university study, present categories of organisational speech acts in lectures with lists of corresponding expressions. For example, "a Summary of Today's Topic" is signalled by phrases like *and so we have seen, today we've been talking about, in summary* (p. 71).

Recent research supports instruction in discourse signals as enhancing lecture comprehension. Jung's (2006) study of 80 Korean EAP students showed that "discourse signalling cues play an important role in L2 listening comprehension" (2006, p. 562). In Jung's view, understanding the discourse of lectures helps students understand the main ideas and the relationships among ideas in lectures. Moreover, Jung sees discourse comprehension as a skill beyond sentence level comprehension. Hence for students without prior EAP preparation, academic lecture discourse could prove quite challenging.

Besides structure and discourse cues of lectures as a means of accessing lecture organisation, EAP research and course materials also deal with several aspects of lecture content. Overall, this area is less coherent and less developed than the discourse structure based approach. Much of the research identifies the challenges students face in dealing with certain kinds of content. For example, Littlemore (2001) reports on the prevalence of metaphor in academic lectures, particularly in evaluative content. She emphasises the importance of cultural and other background knowledge in comprehending metaphor and the tendency for EAL (English as an additional language) students to misinterpret them without recognising that they have

done so. Mason's ethnographic study of second language students' perceptions of lecture comprehension (1994) also deals with issues of inaccessible content. Mason describes a student who, despite a strong background in the subject he was studying, had trouble understanding the jokes, slang and other references in the lecture. Another failed to grasp the connections between American film clips and course concepts that the clips illustrated. Mason points out that when cultural references are used to illustrate significant points in the lecture, students' comprehension is crucial, in contrast to the use of cultural markers merely to make the lecture interesting and entertaining. Other researchers and materials developers make similar points about the difficulties students have in distinguishing important and unimportant speech acts such as jokes and asides, or personal stories that illustrate conceptual information (e.g., Jordan, 1997; Kelly et al, 2003; Lewis & Reinders, 2003; Reinhart, 2002, citing the MICASE data).

Teaching technologies, and support materials in general, do not seem to play a significant role in EAP lecture listening materials. However, Flowerdew and Miller (1997), in a contrastive analysis of a commercially prepared and an authentic academic lecture, emphasise the integration of visual material with lectures as an important feature of authentic lectures. Citing McKnight (1994), they point out that visual material may be a distracter for second language learners in lecture settings, for they tend to follow the visual over the aural. In other words, the additional, visual mode may disadvantage students in lecture listening. Flowerdew and Miller suggest that integration of lecture material with pre-reading of course texts and tutorial follow-up would benefit EAP students. They call for increased attention to the integration of media before and after lectures, i.e., lecture listening with reading of course texts and tutorial discussion, in EAP programmes. It is important to note that Flowerdew and Miller's (1997) study was published before widespread use of electronic multimedia in university lectures, which we will discuss below.

Flowerdew and Miller's suggestion for pre-reading dovetails with evidence for the positive effects of background knowledge in lecture comprehension (Chang & Read, 2006; Mason 1994). The importance of shared background knowledge in comprehension came to the fore with schema theory, developed in the 1970s in cognitive science. EAP lecture listening programmes have for some time included pre-listening activities, "where teachers prepare students for what they will hear and what they are to do," including topic, text structure, and cultural knowledge (Vandergrift, 1999, p. 172). Chang and Read's study involved 160 tertiary Taiwanese ESOL students and compared four types of support on a listening comprehension test. Each of the four groups received one treatment, either topic preparation, vocabulary instruction, repeated input, or a preview of the comprehension questions. Results were best for the group that received a preparatory reading passage covering the general topic of the subsequent talk, including students with both higher and lower English proficiency. We should note that the students in the study were not preparing for academic study in English and the listening text was not a lecture. Nevertheless, Chang and Read's findings reinforce the importance of background knowledge, and may suggest further focus on prior content knowledge in the kind of pre-listening activities referred to by Vandergrift, above.

While EAP materials regularly incorporate attention to background knowledge in listening materials, there is little evidence of current developments in teaching technologies in published materials. Some mention of PowerPoint is made in more recent materials, such as Lynch's book (2004), which includes one lecture that is accompanied by a PowerPoint handout. Lynch advises readers to pre-read the PowerPoint, making note of the points that

need clarification. He also suggests they follow the handout as they listen and take notes, but does not deal with learner uptake or other issues around visual distraction from the spoken lecture content. Yet the Massey materials development project heightened our awareness of a burgeoning use of a great variety of teaching technologies alongside traditional course presentation. All this variety of course delivery is to support student learning, but may be taken up in different ways by EAL students.

Tutorials and seminars, generally designed as an adjunct to lectures, seem not widely researched in EAP. Jordan (1997) presents an overview of research in this area from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. The overall concept of tutorials is a variety of forms of group discussion, featuring questioning and giving information, with some debate around specific types of student needs, for example whether students are most challenged by learning how to break into discussions or merge with the fast pace of discussion. Similar to lecture research, discourse structure analysis links speech acts with typical expressions to teach students. In the current decade, EAP materials appear largely influenced by this approach. Lewis and Reinders (2003), for example, include purposes of tutorial discussions EAL students' concerns, and appropriate expressions for participation such as joining in, agreeing and disagreeing.

In sum, the bulk of EAP research and materials development in comprehension and participation in discipline courses appears to focus on the structure and content of lectures and tutorials. Some, however, do address the integration of spoken and visual text and pre- and post-lecture support. It is this latter focus that is of particular interest to us, as highlighted through our materials development project.

The Nexus of New Technologies and Traditional Course Delivery

In our data, both new technologies and traditional presentation were linked in lecturer and tutor talk, at times very closely. We look at both resources in turn and at their nexus. In doing so we will also draw on the perspective of Flowerdew and Miller (1997), who recognise pre-lecture reading, lecture listening, and post-lecture tutorials as a coherent, complementary integration of media that facilitates student access to course content. Thus we will look at both the lecture and tutorial data that we collected.

New technologies

PowerPoint was used in both lectures we recorded, and certainly anecdotally, it appears that many lecturing staff now prepare PowerPoint slides for use both in lectures and for posting on Web CT for students to access either before or after the lecture, or both. The Business Law lecturer made this connection clear when he stated at the start of the lecture, "The PowerPoint is drawn from the lecture notes so don't try fiendishly writing it all down because it is in the lecture notes as well."

The PowerPoint slides from the Business Law lecture were posted on Web CT prior to the lecture. Such postings highlight the wide usage of online tools such as Web CT and Blackboard for university courses. At Massey University, Web CT has been adopted for use with distance students and is now used widely internally also. For some lecturing staff, participation in Web CT discussions is graded as part of a final assessment for papers. For

others Web CT functions as tool for asynchronous tutorials with problem solving and discussion, as well as a link between internal and extramural students working on the same paper (M. Paviour-Smith, personal communication, 26 February 2006), and a notice board for internal courses. Massey's School of Language Studies has also adopted Wimba Voice Tools, a facility for posting oral submissions which can build up into a discussion in much the same way as written submissions to Web CT do. Some faculty members use software called Breeze for online meetings, materials, and learning modules. Google Docs and Spreadsheets allows students to post assignments, view and edit them synchronously with lecturers in different offices, buildings, cities, and even countries. Email also adds to the raft of high technology that is available for students and lecturers to promote access to course content.

Other kinds of electronic technology such as DVDs and videos have been widely used in language teaching (Stempleski & Arcario, 1992) and other pedagogical contexts for many years. In the Media Studies lecture, a video clip from an American sitcom from the 1960s (*All in the Family*) was used to illustrate how "in America in the sixties ... sitcoms started changing to accommodate this change in society and you've got sitcoms like Mary Tyler Moore, *All in the Family* and *M*A*S*H*." The video was integrated into the lecture through a brief preamble and was summarized post watching also.

CDs also form part of the high technology access to learning at tertiary level. In one agriculture paper at Massey, which was not part of the original data set, the entire course is copied on to CDs and sent to distance students, including PowerPoint slides, Excel spreadsheets, readings, and videos. The paper is delivered in this mode because many of the students live rurally and are either not connected to the internet or have slow dial up. Another lecturer, in Engineering this time, also outside the project, told us that he makes all his materials available electronically and expects all students' assignments to conform to industry standards, that is to be submitted as softcopy, or word processed computer files, and include spreadsheets, diagrams, and other electronic visual materials. Mobile phones can now be used to download many kinds of files from the internet, including vocabulary learning software that is available in Japan, for example (C. Brown, personal communication, 25 April 2006). These examples show a great variety of new technologies in delivering university discipline courses, a development which has not yet been well recognised in EAP.

Traditional course presentation

Readings were given to students as preparation for both our videoed lectures. For one lecture, 19 pages of text were provided, while the other lecture provided four pages of summary notes. Below is a sample from the Business Law lecture on breach of contract, which describes general damages.

Excerpt 1. Business Law pre-lecture reading materials

28.3 Terminology- the types of damages

There are a number of kinds of damages recognised by the Courts. The following definitions are from Halsbury's Laws of England (Vol II 3rd Ed 217 ff).

General Damages: "General damages are compensation for general damage. General damage is the kind of damage which the law presumes, when a contract is

broken or a tort committed, to flow from the wrong complained of and to be its natural or probable consequence."

A plaintiff must prove that general damages have been suffered, though it is not possible to exactly quantify the amount. An example would be a claim for mental anguish when, by reason of a breach of contract by a travel wholesaler, a holiday is unsatisfactory¹.

As well as definitions such as the example above, the reading provides references to case law through footnotes (see below), excerpts and summaries of cases to illustrate points, and substantial explanations. Whilst we would consider the provision of readings as a traditional level of support, the lecturer had posted the readings on Web CT before the class and the students were expected to download and read them.

Reinhart (2002) notes the use of narratives or story telling in academic lectures in the Michigan MICASE (English Language Institute, n.d., cited in Reinhart, 2002). Similarly, our recordings showed several instances of narratives in lectures as a way to connect the students to the course content. In one case, a lecturer used a personal story to illustrate tension in families arising from the highly divisive 1981 Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand that split opinion up and down the country. Current events in New Zealand were also referred to in the Media Studies lecture. In describing American society and family norms in a 1950s sitcom, the lecturer commented: "This is all really relevant isn't it, compared with what's going on in New Zealand at the moment, that Civil Union Bill." The expectation here was that the students were all aware of the Civil Union Bill and could relate the event to how the sitcom portrayed 'normal' family lives.

Another traditional practice was the involvement of students in a tutorial discussion through asking them to comment and report on a topic they had been working on for an upcoming assignment in a communication paper. The tutor called on each student in a small group to talk about his or her project, which the other students and the tutor then commented on, or added ideas and insights. The assignment specified that the students draw on local businesses as part of the task, thereby allowing all the students to connect with local events and entities. Excerpt 2 below is from the Business Communication tutorial and shows the range of ways in which the tutor drew on members of the class to comment and answer questions on the topic of pirating of music, which is the focus of one student's assignment.

Excerpt 2. Inclusion of students through question and discussion

T: Would you buy...Would you buy one or accept one [a CD] which was illegal?

J: I mean ...no...you can't say...

T: I didn't ask you how many ... you wouldn't say "no" automatically?

J: Yeah.

T: Ok. B?

B: I'd never buy an illegal one, that's for sure.

T: You wouldn't?

B: No I'd never buy an illegal one because you can just get them...

T: Why not?

¹ *Jarvis v Swan Tours Ltd* [1973] 1 All ER 7

B: 'cause you can just get them. You don't need to pay for them.

T: Oh I thought it was going to be something noble-minded like the artist not getting their percentage or something.

T = tutor, J and B = students

The Media Studies lecturer asked the class directly what they knew of the sixties, calling for class participation and sharing of background knowledge. She used the classes' responses to build on the topic in Excerpt 3, below:

Excerpt 3. Knowledge of the sixties

Um, and then you've got the sixties and suburban utopia just disappears. Sixties, what do you know about the sixties? [inaudible student response] Flower power, right. What else? Specifically talking America, because this is where most of the sitcoms were coming from -- here we go [scrolls to class notes on overhead screen] Civil Rights Movement mmmmm President Kennedy's assassination, rise of second wave feminism and dissension over the Vietnam war.

As we commented above regarding handouts of reading materials, lecturers have also exploited new technologies to disseminate and complement more traditional face-to-face talk.

The nexus of the new and traditional

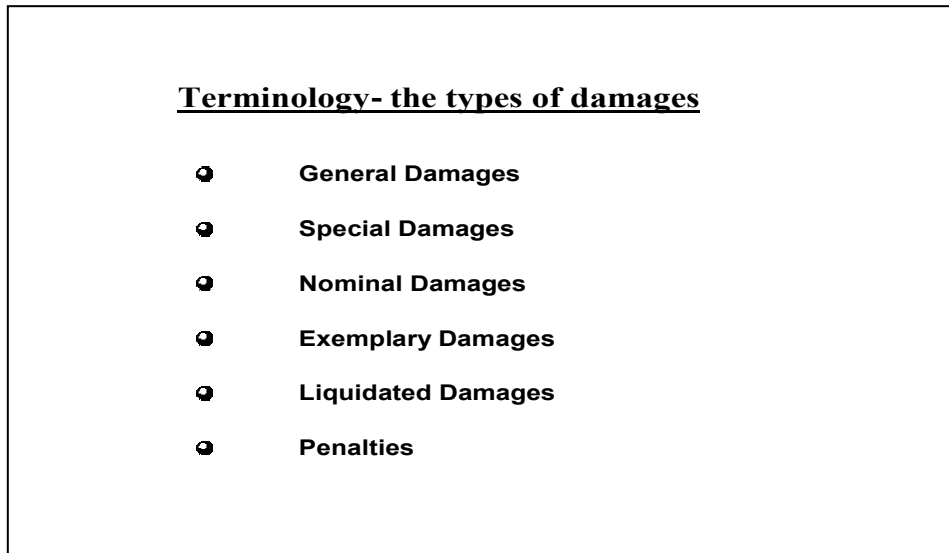
In the Business Law and Media Studies lectures we recorded, the lecturers made clear links between the different technologies they employed. In Excerpt 1 above, we saw a section on general damages from the Business Law lecture from a reading supplied by the lecturer for students to read in preparation for listening. Below in Excerpt 4, we see the transcript of the lecture itself and the words of the lecturer when he told the class that general damages "are damages for losses." Note that in the reading in Excerpt 1 above, the definition comes from Halsbury's Laws of England (Vol II 3rd Ed 217 ff), whereas in the lecture itself, the lecturer defined general damages using an example of pain and suffering that could be easily understood, that is, the loss of a body part. The lecturer also referred to the Accident Compensation Commission (ACC).

Excerpt 4. Business Law lecture oral description of general damages

The types of damages (this is just um vocabulary) general damages, these are damages for losses – you can't exactly quantify them – you can establish loss ah in personal injury cases which we don't have in NZ, but pain and suffering is a good example um you can't actually put a figure on pain and suffering – um well you can, the courts do, but you can't be exact about it um ACC has a table ah which actually values various bits of your body for monetary compensation starting with the top joint of your little finger and moving up to, you know, both legs, both eyes, that sort of thing, which is the full amount um but generally you can't. Loss of enjoyment – you can't put a figure on that. That's general damages.

Let us compare that discussion of general damages with the PowerPoint slide used in the lecture (see Excerpt 5 below).

Excerpt 5. PowerPoint slide from Business Law lecture on general damages



The bare bullet point, “General Damages,” in the PowerPoint slide above (Excerpt 5) belies a large amount of information supplied by the lecturer both in speaking and in writing about the nature and definition of general damages.

Overall, the Business Law lecturer gave a wide variety of information to the students, and as mentioned above, instructed them not to “try fiendishly writing it all down.” He gave lecture notes, disseminated on Web CT in advance of the lecture, PowerPoint slides that encapsulated his main concepts, and the actual talk. That combination offers EAL students several avenues to access the lecture content. Reading the lecture notes (Excerpt 1) provides background knowledge for the lecture. PowerPoint slides (Excerpt 5) allow students to follow the structure and content of the lecture, as slides are typically changed to match the pace of the lecture. And the lecture itself (Excerpt 4) is illustrative of the “messiness” of spoken language (Flowerdew & Miller, 1997) and slows down the delivery of content, allowing the speaker time to plan and the listeners time to process the information.

However, if we look closely at the lecture notes, we can see that the language is relatively dense, abstract and syntactically complex. While a written text offers students a source that can be accessed repeatedly over time, unlike spoken lectures, unpacking and expanding these notes would require considerable effort for an EAL student. It seems likely that students would need to read the notes both before and after the lecture. Students who rely on the PowerPoint visuals would not be able gain much information from the slides. Additionally, according to our students, this Stage-One Business Law course is known to be very difficult, and many EAL students drop out before completing the course. In other words, the course content itself may be a daunting challenge for a number of reasons, not just the support materials.

Another example of how the old and new combine comes from the Media Studies lecturer. In her lecture summary, she actively encouraged her class to access and read an online discussion of the prior year's class on a particular sitcom. The lecturer also referred to a class reading and summarised the content in the lecture, which served to remind the students to read it as well and to highlight the relevance of the reading to the class topic. She scrolled through the lecture notes on the overhead screen, keeping pace with her talk. While a number of EAP writers (e.g., Flowerdew & Miller, 1997; Jordan, 1997) have commented on the distraction students face with multiple media in lectures, these notes were made available before the lecture, so that students could access and read them in advance. The amount of social and cultural knowledge embedded in this lecture was considerable, and without topic preparation it could be formidable for EAL students. When trialling this lecture video in our EAP classes, some tutors did not provide the background information, and students complained that it was incomprehensible.

Like the PowerPoint slides in Business Law, the lecture notes for Media Studies were a condensed form of the lecture. For example, the notes on the social context for the 1950s sitcoms list highlights, as in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6. Media Studies notes on the 1950s

The 50s: post-war the development of, and move to, the suburbs, and with it a gentler type of family sitcom. Men returning from war assumed role as head of household; women (who had been encouraged to work during the war, now "encouraged" to stay home. Lots of new families = lots of new houses and demand for household goods. Domesticity rules.

Also, as in the Business law lecture, the information in the Media Studies lecture is more fully elaborated than the visuals shown in the lecture. The following, Excerpt 7, from the lecture transcript on the 1950s illustrates:

Excerpt 7. Media Studies lecture, oral description of the fifties

Ok, I want to talk about what happened in the fifties, and the impact that that had on sitcoms – it also had impact on other media as well. But you're right, it's all based around the end of World War 2 and what happens is, that during the war women had been encouraged to go out and work, like you actually had lots of publicity saying "we need you" and women went to ammunition factories, women built planes, women did all sorts of things and it was seen as a good and patriotic thing to do and then the guys come home from the war and how are we going to cope? They need jobs; they need a sense of who they are, which is 'head of the family' again. So suddenly you've got all this publicity saying, you know, real women stay at home and look after the kids, um, except they didn't put it quite like that. Um, and, it was, yeah, before it hadn't been seen as harmful for the children. Suddenly to --for women to go to work and put their kids in care of any kind was seen as harmful for them. Um, during the war at the movies, patrons saw news clips of babies happily learning and playing in childcare centres and women all geared up in overalls learning things, but after the war that all came to an end.

As we can see, the language of the notes in Media Studies appears more readable for EAL students than the highly abstract, densely written notes for Business Law, and the language of the lecture is casual and conversational. McKnight's (2004) research on student strategies for uptake of lecture content offers a very helpful way out of the dilemma that many EAL students face in lectures. While students in his study relied almost solely on visual material at the expense of attending to spoken lecture content, making accessible pre-lecture notes available to students may eliminate the pressure students feel to spend class time copying OHTs and PowerPoints.

Finally, both of these lectures may have required more than comprehension of language, structure and course content for students to fully grasp the concepts being taught. EAL students may lack the cultural framework shared by many English-speaking students. For example, the references to ACC, the Civil Union Bill, and the Springbok Tour in these lectures provide New Zealand students with information and commentary relevant to their national experience, but tend to bypass international students. Furthermore, underlying cultural frameworks are implicit in the notion of damage awards or advertising pressures on commercial television. White's comment (forthcoming, 2007, citing Jegede, 2000) on language learning in technology-mediated environments sums up well:

various cultural borders . . . must be crossed to make learning meaningful . . . the culture of the content being learnt and the cultural framework through which it is presented, then the native culture or the culture of the immediate environment of the learner and the culture of the use of technology and the particular communication technology.

Conclusion and Implications

The most striking point in our data is the sheer variety in the ways in which university lectures and tutorials are delivered and in the tools that are used to make context accessible to learners. Furthermore, the high and low technology in the readings, PowerPoint slides, Web CT, lectures, and handouts form a nexus. Even in our small sample, we found distinctly different approaches to the same pedagogical concept that learners should be supported in their access to content as much as possible. EAP students need to be exposed to such variety and be encouraged to see the learning opportunities in the complementary overlap of these different types of support, rather than seeing them all as separate documents or events.

EAP students in pre-university courses should clearly be exposed to the 'real thing' in preparation for the challenges ahead. The English Proficiency Programme (EPP) university preparation course at Victoria University, for example, invites guest lecturers from a range of university and professional groups to speak to EPP students in a formal, structured way. The guest lecture series provides an excellent opportunity for students to prepare for listening by reading content based on the lecture, take part in a live lecture including use of PowerPoint, and to discuss the lecture afterwards in class. The lectures are recorded and the recordings are available for all classes. In contrast, the EAP paper at Massey is credit-bearing and students attend lectures for other papers concurrently. This means our students are experiencing lectures and tutorials in many different settings and subjects around the campus at the same time that they are studying our EAP paper. Our students are well aware of Web CT,

PowerPoint, and the nexus with traditional approaches used to access content because they are part of their everyday reality.

Many examples of teaching and learning with PowerPoint at university seem to be centred on the 'how to' aspect. That is, how can teachers and students create a good PowerPoint presentation? However, Gray (2006) points out that PowerPoint itself can be used pedagogically, in her case, to strengthen academic writing skills. EAP courses could also include instruction on taking advantage of classroom technology such as PowerPoint, Web CT and so on, both as a listener and a presenter. Perhaps we could consider the engineering lecturer's concept mentioned earlier that an engineering graduate should have high level computer literacy, and think about what qualities an EAP graduate should have. A further challenge is that just as our EAP students need to learn how to prepare a talk using PowerPoint and to talk around the bullet points, they need to be able to listen around the bullet points in lectures.

Our EAP materials project has indicated new developments and directions in university teaching technologies, but also left unanswered a number of questions that call for further research in EAP. Research on how EAL students interact with and learn from multiple technologies is necessary to guide our programmes. For example, do students favour visual information, as much of the research suggests? To what extent do PowerPoint supported lectures help them follow the basic outline, but possibly miss, even ignore, the fuller meaning of the lecture? Does their lecture comprehension develop over time, through exposure to academic lectures, and then do they concomitantly gain more from lecture talk?

Finally, the recordings in our study illustrated to us the dynamic nature of course delivery. While we cannot prepare our students for every kind of technology and every lecturing style, we can keep abreast of changing technologies in our lives, and reflect on how they might be integrated into our teaching and learning. With the central theme of accessing, understanding, and interpreting subject matter, as EAP professionals, we have much to contribute in terms of language, accessibility, and learning.

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THE STATE-OF-THE-ART OF SELF-ACCESS IN NEW ZEALAND: RESULTS OF A SWOT ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Self-access centres form an important part of language education in New Zealand. A recent study (Reinders et al., 2003) showed that all tertiary providers in the country offered some form of self-access language learning facilities. However, little is known about the types of support available and their strengths and weaknesses. As part of the study 13 centres in New Zealand were visited and interviews were conducted with their managers to identify current approaches to self-access and specifically to conduct a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis. This paper reports the results of the analysis and discusses the key issues that emerged.

Introduction

Self-access centres (SACs) play an important and increasingly common role in New Zealand language education. A recent study (Reinders et al., 2003) found that all tertiary education providers in New Zealand offered some type of self-access facilities and there are active professional networks like the self-access centre special interest group (SACSIG), that also include many members from the private language school sector. Little research has been done, however, on how these centres operate on a day-to-day basis. What are the key types of support they offer? What are the specific challenges they face? And what are their strengths? Answering such questions can help us better understand the role of self-access in New Zealand language education and identify possible areas for improvement. The study reported here attempted to answer these questions through a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) (Thompson & Strickland III, 2001) of 13 SACs in New Zealand.

Background and literature review

A brief history of self-access

SACs originated in the 1970's and 1980's with the growing interest in learner autonomy. The relationship between self-access and autonomy is highlighted in one recent definition:

A Self-Access Centre consists of a number of resources (in the form of materials, activities and help), usually in one place, that accommodates learners of different

levels, styles, and with different goals and interests. It aims at developing learner autonomy among its users. (Reinders & Cotterall. 2000. p. 87).

SACs have a number of potential pedagogic benefits. They can offer a flexible environment where learners of different backgrounds and with different needs can be supported, and offer an opportunity for developing self-directed learning skills. As such they can act as a 'bridge' between 'public domain' learning (that is, learning which is based on shared classroom activities) and 'private domain' learning (that is, personal learning) (Crabbe, 1993, p. 144). Gardner and Miller also discuss the notion of the SAC acting as a "bridge to the outside, unstructured environment" (1999, p. 22). They suggest this can have both positive and negative effects. On the one hand learners can build up their confidence in a supported and safe environment, but on the other hand such an environment can keep them from using the language in authentic contexts.

In addition to the potential pedagogic benefits, there are also practical reasons for institutions to set up a SAC. One of these is to provide more flexibility and greater accessibility to language support. Especially in tertiary institutions, many SACs provide a support service to students who do not need or do not have time for a formal course. In many language schools, the SAC is used for remedial purposes, and also to provide opportunities for less formal types of language learning such as through movies and conversation groups. Some see economic reasons for institutions to have a SAC: "(. . .) such centres can also be seen as providing language learning on the cheap, potentially substituting for direct teaching operations (. . .)" (Aston, 1996, p. 283). Others do not agree with this view. Gardner and Miller (1997) warn:

Implementing SALL should not be seen as a cheap alternative to teaching. It should be seen as a useful complement to teaching which enhances language-learning opportunities and provides learners with the independent learning skills to continue learning languages after they have finished formal studies. In this light it may be judged to be relatively cost efficient. (p. 32)

Whether SACs offer a cost-saving for the school or not, their benefits or otherwise should be primarily determined from a pedagogic viewpoint, something which surprisingly few studies have done.

Previous studies on self-access centres

There are few studies that have investigated or compared the operation of self-access centres. One of the exceptions is offered by Gardner and Miller (1997) who report on a study of five self-access centres in Hong Kong. In their study they focused on a wide range of aspects affecting the centres, including: SAC management, the effectiveness of self-access learning, the relationship between the SAC and the classroom, user motivation, users' learning behaviour, their beliefs about self-access, the roles of SAC staff, SAC materials, practical aspects of the SAC (location, opening times, support staff, budget) and institutional attitudes towards self-access learning. This large-scale study was based on data obtained from managers, students and tutors. In their conclusion the authors make several recommendations for improving self-access provision. These include to promote autonomy, to integrate self-access into the curriculum and to develop more appropriate materials. They also make recommendations around the dissemination of information, which should include users, teachers and institutional stakeholders. Thirdly the authors emphasise the importance of

research and recommend that SAC staff pursue research interests related to self-access learning and the use of SAC.

Navarro Coy (2003, 2005) analysed three SACs, one at a university in the United Kingdom, one in a university in Spain and one in a public language school, also in Spain. She focused largely on the ways in which the centres supported the development of learner autonomy. She described the operational characteristics of each centre, such as the extent to which the space promotes group work and offers space for language advising and similar one-to-one support. She also looked at practical matters such as whether a centre offers extended opening times to allow flexible access and a wide range of resources to cater for different learners' needs. She also looked at pedagogic practices in the centres, including whether a centre offered orientations and language learning advice, whether it offered 'learn to learn' materials and whether advisors working the centre were trained in the area of learner autonomy. The results of the study suggested that there is no ideal model of SAC, and that the context should determine its individual characteristics. Nonetheless, the author presents a set of general features that are crucial for the successful operation of a SAC. These include adequate learner support, the development of independent learning skills and the promotion of change in learners' and teachers' roles in the learning process.

Studies of self-access in New Zealand

Also in New Zealand (and in Australia) self-access centres have gained recognition as providing an opportunity for increasing student-centred learning. In the Australasian context, an early study from 1990 survey commissioned by the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs looked at the role and effectiveness of Independent Learning Centres (ILC) (the term for SACs favoured in Australia) in the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP). The report concluded that:

ILC provide a legitimate and valued alternative Learning Activity in the AMEP and contribute to its mission in that they enable a significant number of clients to progress their learning of English according to their own style or at their own pace. (Technisearch, 1990, p. 74)

Not much research has been done on the provision of self-access in New Zealand, except one previous study (Reinders, Anderson & Jones-Parry, 2003; Anderson, Reinders & Jones-Parry, 2004) that investigated the rationale, structure, pedagogy, resourcing, perceptions of effectiveness and direction of SACs in both New Zealand and Australia. The authors interviewed the managers of fourteen centres who also completed a guided survey form. The results of the study suggested that SACs in Australasia show a number of interesting pedagogical developments but also suggested that work was still to be done to support these developments at an organisational, financial and practical level, to set standards and to become integrated into the institutional contexts in which they operate. The authors reported that there were

. . . contradictions and disparities which filter the ability of the centres to focus on developing the language learning environment. These issues occur primarily in the awkward positioning of many centres organisationally, physically and pedagogically resulting in a not yet fully realised search for academic and organisational identity; in their disconnection from institutional policy and strategy development and in the

absence or limited leadership of central agencies in integrated budgetary, educational and strategic policy development. (Anderson, Reinders & Jones-Parry, 2004, pp. 24-25)

The present study further builds on these findings by analysing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of self-access in New Zealand.

The study

This study reports on the results of a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of 13 self-access centres in New Zealand. The analysis was conducted on the basis of interviews with their managers. The interviews were recorded and subjected to a categorical content analysis (see below).

Participants

A total of 13 centres were included in the study. Eight are part of a tertiary institution and five part of a language school. The centres were selected on the basis of their focus on adult learners (i.e. no primary schools or secondary schools were visited) as these had been the focus of previous research and would thus allow for comparisons to be made. Within this group Centres were selected through convenience sampling (Manheim, 1977). All the included SACs were active Centres; that is to say that they were used frequently and formed a clear part of the larger language teaching and support context. Although it is possible that not all such Centres in New Zealand were identified, it appears that at least most were included in this study. The Centres showed a mix of different types of support, with some operating as drop-in Centres and others providing complementary support to language classes. Some only catered to university students whereas others provided support to adult migrants as well.

The manager of each Centre was contacted in writing and the background and purpose of the study was explained to them. All managers who were approached agreed to participate in the research.

Procedures

In preparation for the research, information about the centres was gathered from the managers and through published research. Individual appointments were made with the managers of all the centres and they were informed beforehand about the purpose of the study and the fact that a SWOT analysis would form part of the interview. The interview questions were emailed to the managers before the visit. One of the authors of this paper personally visited the SACs. On each visit a tour of the facilities was given by either the manager or a staff member and informal questions about the rationale and operation of the centre were asked, normally before the interview, which lasted from one to two hours.

Instruments

The interviews consisted of 35 questions (most of them open, divided into nine thematic blocs, adapted from Gardner and Miller (1999) (see appendix). Together they cover the main

pedagogical and practical issues related to self-access as identified by Gardner & Miller and in the wider self-access literature. The nine themes included: learners' and teachers' attitudes towards autonomous learning in the SACs, a SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of the Centre, questions about the counselling service, learner training, learner profiles, materials, activities, assessment and evaluation. The interviews were semi-structured; although each of the topics was discussed, the interviews left plenty of room to the interviewees to bring up additional topics or to move through the questions in a different order.

In this article we focus mainly on the results of the SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis is a tool originally used for management purposes that looks at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of organisations. More recently it has been adapted for use in educational contexts (Thompson & Strickland III, 2001). Strengths in this context are the capabilities and resources that are advantages for the operation of the centre. Weaknesses are the aspects that limit or reduce the potential of the SACs. Opportunities are the factors that could be developed to ensure the optimal functioning or future of the centre and threats are the elements that could negatively impact on the centre and even affect its existence. This article draws mainly on the respondents' answers to questions directly asking about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the SACs, although useful additional information was obtained from the answers on the remaining questions.

Analysis

The interviews were transcribed for content and this was analysed by using the categorical analysis model (Bardin, 2003) to extract the key issues that emerged. The content analyses were conducted within an open categorisation framework (L'Ecuyer, 1990), which has no predetermined set of categories, in order to ensure that the resulting categorisation corresponded to the reality as felt and expressed by the managers and not to the prior conceptions of the researchers. The transcripts of the interviews were analysed by both researchers. In four cases there was a discrepancy between the categorisation of the two researchers. In all four cases the categorisations were discussed and a consensus was arrived at. For example, when managers talked about the development of materials, one researcher interpreted this as an organisational issue as it concerned the resources of the centre. The other researcher, however, interpreted it as a pedagogical feature related to the provision of appropriate learning materials. After discussion it was decided to categorise this aspect as an organisational feature because the data revealed that the participants discussed materials creation in the interviews mainly from a resource provision point of view, and not so much from the perspective of the use of the materials with learners.

The data were analysed through a framework for the pedagogical structure of SACs previously developed by one of the authors (Lázaro, 2006). This framework divides the data into three categories; organisational, pedagogical and external features. These features were derived through a bottom-up analysis of data from prior visits to 33 SACs in other parts of the world and as such had been tested before being applied to the data of the present study. A recent study (Mozzon-McPherson, 2007) uses a similar distinction between the provision of effective organisation and support systems, pedagogical use of resources and promotion of independent language learning, and provision of adequate infrastructure by the institutions.

Organisational features refer to easily observable aspects of SACs, such as their physical setting and the materials they offer. Organisational features are of primary importance, as they affect the implementation of the pedagogical aspects of the Centre. Pedagogical features relate to aspects of the Centre designed to support learning. These aspects are not directly observable. They include such learning and teaching activities as language advising, learner training, introduction session, etc. In the literature, organisational features of SACs have been measured in terms of their efficiency, i.e. ‘the relationship between output and cost’ (Gardner & Miller, 1999, p. 228) and pedagogical features in terms of their effectiveness, i.e. ‘the meeting of pre-set [learning] goals’ (Gardner & Miller, 1999, p. 228). Finally, external features describe elements that depend on external agents but that affect the SAC, such as financial and institutional constraints. In previous studies conducted by the authors in other countries (Germany, Hong Kong, Spain, Switzerland) these three categories were found to correspond closely to the observed operation of SACs. They were also found to be interrelated, as shown in the examples in figure 1 below:

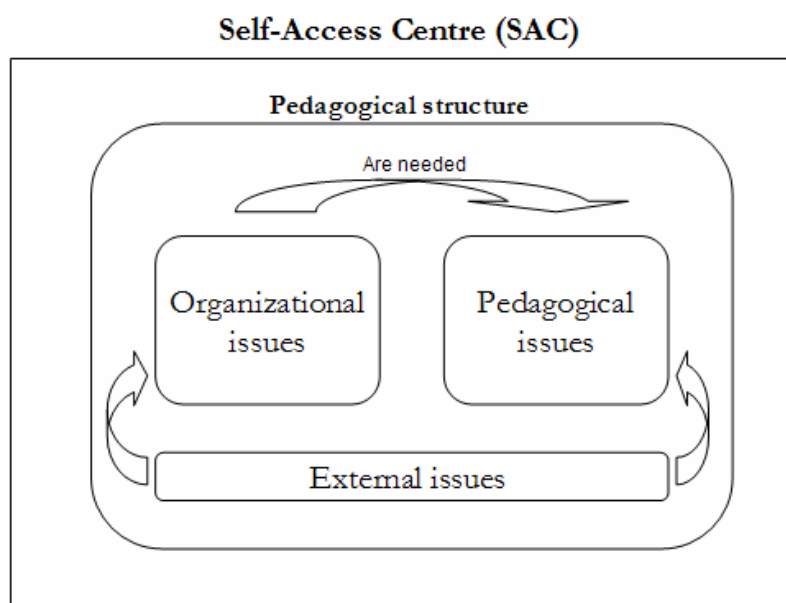


Figure 1: A model for SAC operation (Lázaro, 2006, p. 364)

Results

The results section describes the organisational, the pedagogical and the external features identified through the interviews, related to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the SACs. Twelve out of 13 interviewed managers responded to all the questions relating to the SWOT analyses of the centres, whereas one manager answered only the questions related to the strengths and weaknesses.

Organisational features

Organisational strengths

Five of the 13 SACs in the study mentioned the wide range of resources they offer to students as one of their key strengths. Another strength identified by several of the SACs is that they offer a comfortable and supportive learning environment. In most SACs, both in New Zealand and overseas, learning in the SACs is largely a voluntary activity and creating a comfortable environment is thus important. The location of the SACs is an important organisational feature for many centres that is seen to heavily impact on its success. Some centres were located in the institution's library, which was felt to have advantages, as this makes the centre easy to find and access. In the case of some private schools, being close to a tertiary education provider was perceived to have the advantage of giving the centre more academic credibility. Four of the participants in this study acknowledged that having long opening hours was a major strength of their centres.

Further highlighting the importance of resources in self-access, three participants pointed to the systems they had in place for facilitating access to language learning resources, ranging from online catalogues to digitised materials and various coding mechanisms. Several centres regularly create in-house materials to meet the needs of their students and cater to their specific levels, backgrounds and preferences. This level of individualisation was seen as an important strength by three of the participants. Other strengths mentioned include the integration of the SAC into a larger support structure, experienced management, its benefit to marketing the institution, the fact that use of the centre is voluntary and open to the community, and in one centre, that a variety of languages is supported.

Organisational weaknesses

Again, resources were the most common category. Where having good resources is an obvious advantage, not having sufficient or appropriate resources is seen as a definite drawback. Several SAC managers complained that suitable materials are not available to cater to the wide range of learners that use their centre.

Although SACs are increasingly making materials available online, they still require considerable space; support staff need to be on hand, personal language advisors need a private workspace to meet with students, computer workstations need to be available and of course, books, tapes and other hard copy materials take up room. For three of the SACs visited, lack of space was a clear concern. Computer problems, issues around an unfavourable location, problems with security (theft of materials) and poor physical facilities were all mentioned once.

Organisational opportunities

The most often mentioned organisational opportunity is the acquisition or development of resources. Four centres mentioned they felt their user numbers could be increased to reach more of the students in their school/institution. Two centres mentioned opportunities in offering support in languages other than English and the ability to lend out materials, like a library.

Organisational threats

Few of the threats mentioned were organisational in nature. A lack of self-developed materials was mentioned once. This could be seen as an organisational issue as a lack of commercial materials for example for advanced level or specialised student groups may lead to such students not receiving the necessary support. Another threat mentioned is in the area of security, with resources being stolen. One centre mentioned a possible relocation as an organisational threat.

Pedagogical features

Pedagogical strengths

The promotion of a strong link between the work in class and the SAC is the most often cited strength. For the centres it is important that tutors use the SAC with their classes, as this motivates students to come in their free time. Integration is also important in the sense that the different types of support such as advising, workshops and programmes are coordinated and offer the students a follow-up. A pedagogical strength mentioned in three of the studied centres is that the programmes offered by the SACs offer a strong alternative for the learning of languages based on a learner-centred approach. Other pedagogical strengths mentioned include the availability of counselling services, strong professional development which positively affects the service offered to students, the level of personalisation of the service, and the fact that the centre encourages and facilitates collaborative work.

Pedagogical weaknesses

Due to the lack of integration between language classes and self-access learning, managers point out that learners often come to the centre unprepared. This separation between classroom and self-access learning also leads students to see the centre as a last resource, for example when an essay is due or an exam coming up, rather than as a learning centre to visit regularly. One important factor is the lack of teachers' involvement, often for want of training or because of preconceptions about the role of self-access. A lack of integration with a Languages Department or similar can also negatively impact the service and degree of collaboration between classroom teachers and self-access staff. Three centres mentioned a lack of advisors and their inability to offer advisory services in the centre at all times.

Pedagogical opportunities

Opportunities are seen in the further integration of self-access into the institution's curriculum, for example (as mentioned by one manager) through the provision of more teacher-led activities in the SAC. One centre was about to implement the use by classes of the centre under the supervision of a teacher, at least once per week. This could lead to increased collaboration with the teachers for the development of needs analysis and assessment materials. The use of technology was seen as an opportunity by three of the participants. One

example given included the setting up of an LMS to make needs analyses and materials more widely accessible and to better manage student learning.

Others included the provision of a counselling service as a way to offer more tailored student support and to better monitor progress, increased teacher development to allow staff to offer higher quality support, the hiring of additional staff, integration with the general learning centre and the use of portfolios.

Pedagogical threats

The only pedagogical threat mentioned (twice) was the possibility that departments would not integrate self-access learning into their courses and that the centre would therefore rely on voluntary use, possibly leading to under-use and less motivated students missing out.

External features

External strengths

One external strength mentioned was the integration of the SAC into a larger support structure that included other support services (e.g. counselling, learning support). Integration within a library was said to have advantages in the areas of materials purchasing and central funding. Strong institutional support was mentioned by two managers as an important reason for the centres' success. It was felt by these managers that the institution believed in the principles of autonomy and actively supported its implementation in the SAC.

External weaknesses

Four managers mentioned financial constraints as an important weakness, undermining the success of the SAC. As mentioned in the literature review, self-access has sometimes been seen (by administrators) as a way of reducing costs in the provision of language support (Gardner & Miller, 1999). In practice, self-access can be costly and insufficient funds may thus be available.

External opportunities

Four managers saw opportunities for the centre in attracting more users either from within the institution or outside, as a way to raise the centre's profile and to attract more funding and several managers (3) spoke of the potential of SACs to provide a model for teaching and learning in other contexts. Some spoke of self-access providing opportunities in developing countries where its philosophy of fostering autonomy and its focus on easy access to resources and support could provide a cost-effective means of implementing language education.

External threats

The greatest external threat for the majority of SACs is the lack of funding and the financial constraints for staff, materials and resources. SACs may be seen as an 'extra', a type of

support that can easily be dispensed with. Almost all managers felt acutely aware of this possibility. In other centres managers (4) felt that the resources were not used as intensively as their managers wanted, often because students do not have time to use the centres in out-of-class time. Obviously, this constitutes a threat to the viability of the centres. There is also a risk (3) that institutions see SACs as a cost-cutting alternative to classroom teaching, and not as a pedagogical alternative in their own right. This can lead to negative attitudes among teachers and negatively impact the services available in the centre where there may no longer be funding for counselling services, workshop facilitation or other staff-intensive types of support. The centre may be reduced to a resource centre.

Summary of the results

The table below shows a summary of the results from the SWOT analysis.

Table 1

Results from the SWOT Analysis

	Strengths (n= 45)	Weaknesses (n= 24)	Opportunities (n= 37)	Threats (n= 23)
Organisational features	60%	46%	32%	13%
Pedagogical features	31%	37%	46%	9%
External features	9%	17%	22%	78%

The results show that the main strengths and weaknesses, as perceived by the managers, are organisational. Although this may be considered a reflection of the managers' concern with administrative issues, it needs to be pointed out that all managers interviewed were actively (and often for most of their time) involved in teaching and supporting students in the Centre. In some cases they were the only full-time staff members and would thus be responsible for most of the contact with students.

The main opportunities are seen at the pedagogical level, with also a substantial number of weaknesses reported. Conversely, the number of pedagogical strengths mentioned is considerably smaller than the number of organisational strengths. By far the largest number of threats is seen at the external level.

It is interesting to note that the number of strengths mentioned was high compared with the number of weaknesses, and the number of strengths and opportunities outweighs the number of weaknesses and threats by roughly 2:1, showing a generally optimistic view of the centres.

Discussion

The results of the SWOT analysis highlight a number of key issues that affect self-access centre operation in New Zealand. Although the results were obtained from different Centres, we could not find any systematic differences between them; all seem to grapple with similar issues. The first and most commonly reported is the provision, creation and, in some cases, lack of language learning materials. This is perhaps no surprise given the nature of self-access, which is built around the provision of a wide range of varied materials to cater to different language needs. Many definitions give resources a key role in self-access:

The constructivist re-orientation in the methodology and didactics of teaching second/foreign languages has made it clear that a rich learning environment is a prerequisite for successful (language) learning. For this reason, the issue of suitable learning materials is of the utmost importance for integrated learning centres. (Langner & Prokop, 2003, p. 65)

Although this concern with materials was expected, it seemed to be limited to practical questions around purchasing and provision. Pedagogical concerns, often mentioned in literature on self-access, were not mentioned in the interviews. It is possible that this is a result of the interviews having been conducted with the managers, who could have been expected to be more concerned with the practical aspects related to resources. However, all managers in the study also actively worked in the centres and offered language support using the available resources. Previous studies such as those cited in this article have also reported the results for both managers and other staff together and have not found any noticeable differences between the two groups. As the interview questions were open in nature, it could have been expected that more attention would have been given to pedagogical issues. One is left with the impression that more attention could be paid to the support mechanisms and procedures in place for ensuring the materials offer the type of support required by students, in the way that is most beneficial to the students.

A second observation is that there was little discussion of the possible roles of technology in self-access. This was somewhat surprising considering the increasingly important role of technology in self-access worldwide. A previous study by the authors (Reinders & Lázaro, 2006) reported that 72% of 46 self-access centres surveyed in five countries (Germany, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Spain and Switzerland) offered internet-based resources to students and much has been made of the potential for computers to provide flexible access and to offer more individualised learner support (Langner & Prokop, 2003).

A third issue that emerged was the lack of integration between language classes and self-access learning. It was both cited as strength in those centres where collaboration took place between teachers and self-access staff and as a weakness or even a threat in the majority of centres where there was no integration. At one level these concerns are somewhat surprising. The issue of integration has been central to the field of self-access for many years now. Numerous suggestions have been made in the literature on integrating self-access into the wider language support context, either at the course level (Cotterall 1995), by integration in a wider (online) language support network (Reinders 2007), or through language advising (Mozzon-McPherson & Vismans, 2001). A recent publication brings many of these suggestions together (Gardner, 2006). Clearly, at a practical level, barriers exist (quite possibly those mentioned in this article) that prevent practitioners from implementing the integration.

Finally, financial constraints were reported by 11 out of 13 centres. Budgetary issues were also found to be of primary concern in the studies by Reinders et al. (2003) and by Gardner & Miller (1997) (see above), who, in referring to the Hong Kong context emphasise the importance of institutional and financial support.

Implications

What then are the implications for others working in or with self-access resources in New Zealand? At a practical level the results reported here suggest that for self-access to make a meaningful contribution, several, pedagogic, financial, and organisational, conditions need to be met.

The results suggest that one of the key pedagogic implications is that SACs should work towards further integration with the broader curriculum, for example by giving students credit for their learning. Where there is integration it is seen as a strength or opportunity, where there is not, it is seen as a weakness. This integration may involve organisational, pedagogical, institutional and financial challenges, but is a crucial way for bringing self-access into the mainstream and to ensure acceptance of independent learning as a viable complement to classroom learning.

The use of technology in SACs has been shown to be less common than expected. SACs are learning environments that have the potential to greatly benefit from the use of technology and should be at the forefront in developing innovative ways of tapping the potential of technology for increasing flexible access to learning support and for individualising learning, both prerequisites for successful self-access learning and both with implications for broader learning and teaching practice.

A key organisational feature is the provision of materials. While the importance of materials in the self-access context cannot be denied, it is crucial that sight not be lost of the pedagogical questions around the suitability and possible adaptation of those materials. Previous studies have found that self-access materials are not always adequate, and as such SACs have an important role in revising, or developing alternative materials for use in the centres, and to support out-of-class learning in general. This requires SACs to take on an active and pedagogically critical role in the area of materials, not one of a passive consumer.

Adequate funding is a financial condition that has been found both in this and in other studies. Previous studies in the Australasian context (cf. Reinders et al., 2003), have already identified cases where self-access facilities were seen as a kind of exotic library, without any clear pedagogical underpinning and without the necessary learner support. The authors called for self-access to be recognised as a valuable pedagogical approach to language learning and teaching in its own right, not a substitute for, supposedly more expensive, classroom teaching. The findings from this study indicate that a similar situation still exists. Both initial and ongoing costs need to be met to ensure there is sufficient funding for the purchasing and creation of high-quality materials, the training of staff, and the development of new approaches to student support. If regular funding is not available, the SAC may quickly deteriorate to the point where it is no more than a resource room.

Finally, any review of SACs in practice can benefit from considering the organisational, the pedagogical and the external features affecting the operation of the centre, as suggested in this study, as these are interrelated and need to be considering together to better understand the challenges that are faced.

Conclusion

In summary, this study has shown that self-access managers are generally optimistic about the operation of their centres. The number of reported strengths and opportunities far outweighs the number of reported weaknesses and threats. Nonetheless, there clearly are a number of issues that may affect the long-term prospects for self-access centres in New Zealand. Of obvious concern are the financial constraints reported by most of the centres. Other concerns are more subtle. Self-access centres still largely seem to focus on their role as providers of materials and there are challenges around linking self-access to classroom learning and teaching. Increasing such links and offering pedagogical support to complement the provision of resources, for example through advisory sessions or workshops, often involves additional staffing or the development of online support mechanism. Both of these may be difficult to realise in a financially challenging environment.

Notes:

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Appendix:

Interview questions

What are in your opinion the learners' and teachers' attitudes towards autonomous learning in the Self-Access Centre (SAC)?

Learners' attitudes	
Teachers' attitudes	

What are in your opinion the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities and the threats of your Self-Access Centre?

Strengths	
Weaknesses	
Opportunities	
Threats	

About counselling service in the centre

Is a counselling service offered in the centre? What type of counselling sessions do you offer?	
<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> individual face-to-face interviews <input type="checkbox"/> learner-groups interviews <input type="checkbox"/> e-mail-counselling <input type="checkbox"/> other:	
<input type="checkbox"/> obligatory counselling sessions <input type="checkbox"/> free sessions <input type="checkbox"/> learner asks for it <input type="checkbox"/> counsellor does	
Learners' attitudes	
Teachers' attitudes	
Strengths	
Weaknesses	
Other comments	

About learner training

Is there any learner strategy training in the centre? What type of training?	
<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> integrated training <input type="checkbox"/> in workshops <input type="checkbox"/> in counselling sessions <input type="checkbox"/> other:	
Learners' attitudes	
Teachers' attitudes	
Strengths	
Weaknesses	
Other comments	

About learner profiles

Are any learner profiles used? What do they look like?	
<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> obligatory <input type="checkbox"/> free <input type="checkbox"/> other:	
Learners' attitudes about the profile	
Teachers' attitudes about the profile	
Strengths	
Weaknesses	
Other comments	

About materials

- What types of materials are used by most learners?	
<input type="checkbox"/> published language-learning materials <input type="checkbox"/> adapted published materials <input type="checkbox"/> authentic materials <input type="checkbox"/> special produced materials <input type="checkbox"/> generic materials <input type="checkbox"/> other:	
<input type="checkbox"/> print <input type="checkbox"/> audio <input type="checkbox"/> video/TV <input type="checkbox"/> Computer programs <input type="checkbox"/> Internet <input type="checkbox"/> other:	
Strengths of the centre's materials	
Weaknesses of the centre's materials	
Other comments	

About the activities in the Self-Access Centre

What skills are in your opinion most trained?	
<input type="checkbox"/> reading comprehension <input type="checkbox"/> listening <input type="checkbox"/> writing <input type="checkbox"/> speaking <input type="checkbox"/> phonetics <input type="checkbox"/> grammar <input type="checkbox"/> other:	
What work forms are in your opinion most used?	
<input type="checkbox"/> individual activities <input type="checkbox"/> pair and group activities <input type="checkbox"/> tandem (native-speaker contacts) <input type="checkbox"/> e-mail-tandem <input type="checkbox"/> other:	
Strengths of the centre's activities	
Weaknesses of the centre's activities	
Other comments	

About the assessment

How are the learners assessed?	
<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> self-assessment <input type="checkbox"/> collaborative (with counsellor/ teacher) <input type="checkbox"/> external <input type="checkbox"/> other:	
Strengths	
Weaknesses	
Other comments	

About the Centre's evaluation

How is the efficiency (use frequency of materials, resources and services, of the quality of management, value for money of materials and equipment, value for money of staffing, the deployment of resources (material and human) throughout the academic year, the return on the overall cost of self-access, the responsiveness of self-access to student needs) evaluated?	
<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> questionnaires <input type="checkbox"/> interviews <input type="checkbox"/> observations: record behaviour <input type="checkbox"/> use and user statistics <input type="checkbox"/> other:	
How is the effectiveness (self-access' facilitation of learning, appropriate learning practices in self-access learning, changes in learning strategies, changes in attitudes and behaviour of learners and staff over a period of time, learners' and teachers' attitudes to self-access learning, learners' motivation, consistency with which students return voluntarily to self-access learning, the development of autonomy in learners, role of self-access in enhancing classroom learning) evaluated?	
<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> questionnaires <input type="checkbox"/> interviews <input type="checkbox"/> observations: record behaviour <input type="checkbox"/> discussions with groups of learners <input type="checkbox"/> language tests <input type="checkbox"/> other:	
<input type="checkbox"/> none <input type="checkbox"/> internal evaluations <input type="checkbox"/> external evaluations	
Strengths	
Weaknesses	
Other comments	

Other comments	
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Adapted from: Gardner, D. & Miller, L. (1999). Establishing Self-Access. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

TEACHING ENGLISH INTERCULTURALLY IN NEW ZEALAND: DO WE NEED A NEW METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK?

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Abstract

The methodological framework of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is now firmly embedded in the culture of language teaching practice, not only in New Zealand but also globally, and a perception exists that CLT is the “best” way to teach languages. In recent years, however, the uniform approach to language teaching and learning found within CLT and reinforced by globalisation has been challenged by the re-assertion of individual differences and the need to recognise the diverse cultures of learning that learners bring to the classroom. This article raises the question of whether we need a new methodological framework, broader than CLT, when teaching English interculturally in New Zealand. The case of Chinese learners of English is used for illustrative purposes. It is suggested that a ‘fusion’ of Western and Chinese methodological approaches may work more effectively for Chinese learners, rather than a single reliance on communicative activities. The article illustrates how a “fusion” model might work with one discrete skill (speaking), and the notion of a fusion is used as a basis to consider how CLT as a framework may be broadened to take into account the diversity of cultures of learning that students bring to their ESOL classrooms in New Zealand.

Introduction

The methodological framework that has come to be known as *Communicative Language Teaching*, or CLT, is now firmly embedded in the culture of language teaching practice in New Zealand. CLT has precipitated a distinct move towards an understanding that language exists for real-world communicative purposes. Notions such as authenticity, learner-centredness and negotiation of meaning are now well established as core values of language teaching (Benson & Voller, 1997). This is so not only in New Zealand but also globally.

It certainly seems that on a global scale a perception exists that CLT is the “best” way to teach languages. Bax (2003) describes this as the “CLT attitude.” Bax argues that “the benefits of an emphasis on communication are widely accepted in principle by professionals everywhere” (p. 278). This has led, in his view, to the assumption that CLT is “the only way to learn a language properly” (p. 279). That is, “if you don’t have CLT, then you are backward, and you can’t learn a language” (p. 280). In recent years, however, the CLT framework has been challenged as different emphases have been brought to bear on it and as the notion of *globalisation* has been confronted by localising forces. Indeed, CLT itself has been subject to a variety of interpretations, such that teaching approaches within CLT have diversified and become more “eclectic” (an issue we discuss more fully later). This article focuses on one

challenge to CLT: the different cultural assumptions about teaching and learning that Chinese learners of English bring to New Zealand classrooms. We suggest that in the light of these often contrasting assumptions a *fusion* of Western and Chinese methodological approaches may work more effectively for Chinese learners, rather than an emphasis on “communicative” activities. We illustrate how a fusion model might work with one discrete skill (speaking). We then use the notion of a fusion as a basis to consider whether we need a new methodological framework, broader than CLT, when teaching English interculturally in New Zealand.

Communicative Language Teaching

The central notion driving the CLT framework, and subsequent language teaching and testing practices, is that language use is to be seen as “the creation of discourse, or the situated negotiation of meaning,” with language ability being regarded as “multicomponential and dynamic,” requiring language testers to “take into consideration the discoursal and socio-linguistic aspects of language use, as well as the context in which it takes place” (Bachman, 2000, p. 3, *our emphasis*). CLT has led to a distinct move away from artificiality of language and an emphasis on frequently decontextualised grammatical structures and vocabulary learning common within earlier frameworks such as ‘grammar-translation,’ and towards an understanding that language exists for purposes of real communication with real individuals in real contexts. Furthermore, *the negotiation of meaning* is a concept that, according to Kramsch and Thorne (2002), has been “at the heart of foreign language teaching since the 1970’s” (p. 83). Although it is clear that dimensions such as grammatical accuracy have not become superseded (even though initially grammar appeared to take very much a backseat in what came across as an “anything-goes-as-long-as-you-get-the-message-across” approach to second language teaching (Savignon, 1983, p. 1)), they became reformulated to fit the emerging methodological approach, alongside notions such as authenticity, learner-centredness and negotiation.

According to Benson and Voller (1997), CLT has come to be regarded as “an axiom of language teaching methodology” (p. 10), with its emphases and influence worldwide driven by forces of globalisation:

Behind these changes lay major shifts in the structures of language education on a global scale, of which the most important aspect was the rapid growth of migration and travel with its consequent influence on markets for language education. This new structural framework for language education undermined traditional anglocentric assumptions that the main purpose of learning foreign languages was to broaden the mind, and focused attention on learners who were learning languages because they needed to *use* them in an ever-shrinking world. (pp. 10-11 – *emphasis in original*)

Thus, globalisation has helped to frame an approach to language teaching which has taken on high significance both in and beyond New Zealand in contexts where the focus is on learning a language in order to communicate successfully in that language. Its axiomatic position has been strengthened by international testing practices for English, such as those organised by or through the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES). This has inevitably had a washback effect into teaching contexts worldwide.

Bax (2003) contends, however, that CLT is having a *negative* effect essentially because, within the CLT paradigm, we do four things:

1. Assume and insist that CLT is the whole and complete solution to language learning;
2. Assume that no other method could be any good;
3. Ignore people's own views of who they are and what they want;
4. Neglect and ignore all aspects of the local context as being irrelevant. (p. 280)

In essence, argues Bax (2003), the CLT approach is assumed to be “the way to do it, no matter where you are, no matter what the context.” Bax goes on to assert, however, that “there are many different ways to learn languages” and that “the context is a crucial determiner of the success or failure of learners” (p. 280).

In fact, in recent years the CLT framework has been challenged as different emphases have been brought to bear on it. In particular, the largely uniform approach to language teaching and learning found within CLT and reinforced by globalisation has been challenged by the re-assertion of individual differences. The New Zealand social psychologist Carr describes globalisation as “a uniform mode of acting (behaviour), believing (cognition) or feeling (affect) within groups, between groups, and between an individual and a group” (Carr, 2003, p. 7). Carr goes on to argue that such uniformity is constraining, and that individuals and groups around the world are “kicking back,” rebounding against the constraints they perceive. Carr goes on to assert that “many forms of cultural backlash, including anti-globalisation movements, are proliferating. Counter-cultures, reasserting local and traditional values, are finding voice” (p. 8). This kicking back against globalisation and its assumptions has led to situations in which “*interactions*, including conflicts between different systems of belief, have become the norm” (Carr, 2003, p. 8, emphasis in original). In the midst of all of this the CLT paradigm is not only being challenged directly, but approaches within it are also undergoing refinement.

One such refinement has been a broadening understanding of what it means to teach according to communicative methods. Kumaravadivelu (1994) suggests that a method “consists of a single set of theoretical principles . . . and a single set of classroom procedures directed at classroom teachers” (p. 29). Bell (2007) argues, however, that classroom teachers are in fact “far more ready to see method as emerging from practice and sensitive to context” (p. 137). He concludes from data collected from different groups of teachers on teacher beliefs about methods that teachers approach their language teaching in a variety of ways. They see themselves as “very eclectic,” using “a little bit of everything depending on the context” or teaching “according to the situation” (p. 136).

Three teacher perspectives from Bell's (2007) data serve to underline the importance of acknowledging the students in any consideration of methodology (p. 140):

- “Some methods work for some students and other methods work for others. The teacher's job is to . . . find ways to incorporate the necessary methods into one larger method, and this larger method is likely to change from class to class.”
- “I am confident that as long as I . . . maintain a dynamic relationship with my students, changing and responding to their needs, I will remain an effective teacher.”

- “The teacher should use a teaching method or group of methods that suit . . . the student’s proficiency and interests. . . . The successful teacher usually organizes and makes a blend of methods he/she thinks are appropriate.”

These teacher perspectives exemplify Bax’s (2003) assertion that “[g]ood teachers naturally take account of the context in which they teach – the culture, the students, and so on – even when they hold that CLT is essentially the answer” (p. 284).

Beyond the confines of local classrooms, Canagarajah (2002) notes a growing concern among language teachers and applied linguists outside Western contexts about the use of Western teaching methods and pedagogical paradigms. Questions have been raised about the cultural relevance and appropriateness of these methods in local contexts (Holliday, 1994; Miller & Emel, 1988; Mukherjee, 1986; Sampson, 1984). The need has been expressed to develop methodological frameworks for teaching which are based on indigenous pedagogical traditions (Hornberger, 1994; Watson-Gegeo, 1988). Canagarajah views this, however, as a “line of dichotomous thinking (East versus West; local versus foreign)” (p. 134). If this is applied to approaches to language teaching, it is either CLT or something else entirely. In his view, the situation is more complex than this by virtue of “increasing cultural hybridity, human migration, and media expansion” (p. 134). Seen in the light of Carr’s (2002) assertion that interactions between different systems of belief are now normative this line of dichotomous thinking is insufficient: Canagarajah argues, on the one hand, that “[l]ocal intellectual traditions have developed in contact with other cultures and communities” (p. 134). He suggests on the other hand that students in non-Western contexts might want to be acquainted with Western foreign language teaching methods and materials. As Canagarajah asserts, “some of them will migrate to those European and North American communities to continue their educational and social life” (p. 134). Others will migrate to Australia and New Zealand for the same purposes.

Thus, in terms of language teaching methodologies, there is a need to recognise that the global and the local interact. This interaction arguably needs to have an influence on the CLT paradigm. There is arguably a need for a fusion between CLT and other teaching approaches and pedagogical paradigms and the development of new language teaching methodologies that acknowledge the different cultural perspectives on learning that learners bring to the classroom, wherever that classroom might be (Bjorning-Gyde, Doogan & East, in press). Bell’s (2007) evidence might suggest, however, that a rather ad hoc approach to diversification is being employed by many classroom teachers. That is, approaches are not necessarily underpinned by either a theoretical model or a consideration of the specific culture of learning which particular groups of learners might bring with them. It may be that methods found within the CLT paradigm could be refined or refocused in a way that takes more conscious account of the background and cultures of a range of other learners. This article therefore now considers Chinese learners of English as a case in point, and then moves from this specific cultural group to consider the wider implications for language teaching methodology.

Chinese learners of English in New Zealand

Taking the specific case of “Western” teachers from core English-speaking countries and Chinese learners of English, Jin and Cortazzi (1998) undertook a study which contrasted the cultural expectations of the two groups and examined some of the effects of these expectations

on classroom interactions. Although they acknowledge that to speak of Western or Chinese cultures of learning is to generalise, they recognise that “Chinese learners share some common cultural background, including language and clear long-standing cultural perceptions of what it means to be Chinese and how to learn. In contrast, “Western” cultures of learning share a different set of norms, perceptions and ideals” (pp. 101-102).

This reality has several implications for Chinese students learning English in New Zealand. Chinese learners continue to form a substantial part of the cohort of international students learning English in New Zealand. Although East (2003) speaks of a downturn in numbers in 2003 as a consequence of three conspiring factors – the SARS virus (which prevented many Chinese students from travelling overseas), the strengthening of the New Zealand dollar (which made New Zealand, relatively speaking, a more expensive location for study), and scare-mongering reports in the Chinese media (People’s Daily, 2003) about the potential dangers of studying in New Zealand – it is evident from Ministry of Education statistics (Ministry of Education, 2005) that in 2004 86.5 per cent of foreign fee-paying students (FFPs)² in New Zealand came from Asia, with China accounting for 45 per cent of all FFPs. Furthermore, there is an increasing trend for Chinese students to take part in joint EFL programmes between Chinese universities and Western partner universities (Chen, 2006), including New Zealand, whereby students complete, for example, two years in China and a further two years overseas (2 + 2 model). In one way or another, therefore, the ‘Chinese market’ remains significant for New Zealand, and it would be in our best interests to consider some of the potential barriers to success with learning English that confront Chinese students.

One such potential barrier is the “cultural” one erected through clashes in learning style. In the majority of New Zealand classrooms Chinese students have been expected to engage with the established Western approach to language teaching found in CLT, including the notions of authenticity, learner-centredness and negotiation. However, these Chinese learners bring with them a complete set of understandings about teaching and learning, influenced by what is known as Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC), which is at points in conflict or at variance with the CLT approach. According to Jin and Cortazzi (1998), the culture clash that results may influence the learning experience profoundly because it is “a significant factor in how teachers and students perceive language learning and how they evaluate each other’s roles and classroom performance” (p. 98).

Chu (1990) identifies four basic concepts of learning in the Confucian tradition:

1. memorisation
2. understanding
3. reflecting
4. questioning.

Memorisation is a key component of the tradition (Biggs, 1996). Chinese education organised around the Confucian classics required students to memorise, recite and explain. Martin, Dall’Alba and Kun (1996) make it clear that memorisation, as understood and practiced within the CHC paradigm, deepens and develops understanding. Thus a Chinese cultural model of learning English would place emphasis on mastery of knowledge and the learning of rules and meanings by heart, with the teacher being central as the transmitter of this knowledge. CLT, by contrast, has a much more learner-centred approach, and the focus is on interactive

² It should be noted that this figure represents the percentage of FFPs regardless of subject of study.

engagement, learner autonomy and the development of communicative skills. Jin and Cortazzi (1998) suggest that these different cultural understandings about language learning can become barriers, leading to:

- very different expectations about the roles of teachers and students;
- different understandings of what constitutes effective teaching;
- misplaced judgments about teaching and learning;
- stereotyped views strongly influenced by the participants' culture of learning.

Towards a fusion model

In the light of these arguments it may be suggested that a more effective methodological framework for Chinese students of English would be one that embraces both a Chinese cultural model and a Western cultural model. Different cultures of learning are not mutually exclusive but can be reconciled or interwoven (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Furthermore, CHC learners have a proven record of academic success internationally (Volet, 1999; Watkins & Biggs, 1996). They would no doubt continue to derive benefit from an approach that acknowledged the traditional methods of learning to which they were accustomed. Jin and Cortazzi (1998) conclude that a solution to the difficulties inherent in the inevitable 'culture clash' is "for participants to become more aware of their own cultural presuppositions and those of others in order to build a bridge of mutual intercultural learning" (p. 99). This itself requires "a willingness for classroom participants to challenge their own assumptions" (p. 99).

One way of challenging the assumptions of both Chinese learners and their teachers is to raise awareness among classroom participants of the different cultures of learning that exist, and to develop a methodological framework that can incorporate these cultures of learning. Jin and Cortazzi (1998) propose a cultural synergy model. An alternative approach is a fusion model – a "synergy of selected and evolving contemporary theory and teaching techniques, predicated on the needs of Chinese teachers and learners" (Bjorning-Gyde & Doogan, 2003). This model is based on the belief that a fusion leads to more efficient teaching and learning and higher levels of fluency than an exclusive reliance on either CHC or CLT learning practices. The fusion model aims to incorporate and include the elements illustrated in Figure 1 (adapted from Bjorning-Gyde et al., in press).

Figure 1: English language teaching within CHC and CLT cultures of learning

CHC culture of learning	and	CLT culture of learning
1 Knowledge from the teacher	↔	Asking and answering questions
2 Focus on accuracy	↔	Focus on fluency/communication
3 Individual work	↔	Interactive/collaborative work
4 Deductive approach, rely-based	↔	Inductive ‘discovery’ learning
5 Use of models, translation	↔	Awareness raising and ‘noticing’
6 Repetition, memorisation and understanding	↔	Deep processing, meaningful learning
7 Discrete skills, discrete items	↔	Integration of skills
8 Focus on product	↔	Focus on process
9 High level quality and quantity input aiming at understanding	↔	Awareness of learning strategies, extensive skills development and autonomous learning

To illustrate how the model might work in practice, its application to the discrete skill of speaking is described below.

The fusion model and speaking

Speaking has been chosen for illustrative purposes because this skill presents particular challenges to Chinese learners. One of these challenges is that Chinese learners have often not engaged in the types of communicative discourse which are common within the CLT paradigm. Speaking in the CLT classroom is often practised via an invitation to learners to talk in pairs on a subject, negotiate meaning, justify a point of view and challenge opposing viewpoints. There may be emphasis on expressing individual feelings and opinions openly and spontaneously, completing problem-solving tasks, volunteering answers, making suggestions or talking about personal topics. Social interaction in a CHC culture tends to be focused on a small inner circle of family and close friends, with communication taking place in groups rather than one-to-one. Maintaining harmony within the group is valued over individual assertion and disagreement is rarely expressed openly. Commonality and agreement tend to be found quickly in an effort to avoid confrontation and argument (Bond, 1999).

Where these cultural perspectives are taken into account it is suggested that the more open and spontaneous CLT approach to speaking practice might be modified in several ways, each of

which operationalise different elements (1 to 9) of the fusion of CHC and CLT cultures of learning illustrated in Figure 1:

1. Explore and explain the conventions of CLT which encourage the open exchange of ideas so that learners are aware of the expectation and benefits of being able to justify and defend an opinion (Element 1).
2. Provide pre-planning opportunities and build in “thinking time” to lower potential anxiety for the learners and to allow them to focus on aspects of accuracy and fluency in speaking (Element 2). Kim (2002) suggests that Asian learners perform significantly less well if they are required to verbalise and problem-solve simultaneously. Richards (2002) and Willis (1996) observe that in spontaneous communicative activities learners have little time to reflect on the language, and what they produce may be marked by low levels of linguistic accuracy. Pre-planning helps to reconcile fluency work with the concern for acceptable levels of grammatical accuracy. Planning therefore facilitates higher levels of accuracy, and preparation of the content supports fluent production.
3. Allow for task repetition with different speaking partners within lessons so as to increase confidence, accuracy and fluency (Element 3).
4. As part of a listening task, highlight model lexis and structures from the text which can be used successfully in spoken interactions, and ask learners to memorise these (Elements 5, 6, 7).
5. After memorisation of model lexis, use culturally contextualised and structured role-plays as bridges to more authentic communication (Element 4).
6. Use translation and contrastive analysis of model discourse in Chinese and English to raise awareness of differences in approach to language use and social conventions (Elements 4 and 5).
7. Include a focus on phonology-based listening (Bjorning & Doogan, 2004) followed by activities in which students can record, transcribe and edit their own speech for pronunciation as well as accuracy and fluency (Elements 2 and 7).

In all these ways accommodations are made to CHC culture in ways that also maintain the important communicative aims of CLT. It is possible to apply this type of fusion to the other three discrete skills, and to vocabulary and grammar learning.

Do we need a new methodological framework?

A consideration of a fusion of CHC and CLT cultures of learning which might work to the benefit of Chinese learner of English leads to the question of whether we need a new methodological framework for language teaching in New Zealand. Drawing on the work of others, Bell (2007) concludes that, on the one hand, the search for the best language teaching method has been abandoned, that we have in fact moved beyond this search to the post-method condition (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). On the other hand, Bell acknowledges Block's (2001) assertion that classroom teachers are still very interested in the issue of methodology. These arguments led Bell to investigate the perspective of teachers on methodology. His conclusion, as outlined earlier in this paper, is this:

When asked to describe their own methodology, teachers overwhelmingly use the term “eclectic.” Teachers’ eclecticism appears to be based on an awareness of the existence of different methods and a willingness to draw from each of them. Eclecticism is most often connected to notions of teacher autonomy and context sensitivity. (p. 141)

This article has focused on Chinese learners of English because such learners still represent a significant part of the student cohort in New Zealand. In the case of Chinese learners an appreciation of a CHC culture of learning will help students and teachers to understand each other better. This awareness and appreciation has implications for language teaching methodology. For Chinese learners of English, the development of a new, or at least refined methodological framework might include helping teachers to develop their understanding of CHC culture, and the benefits of this cultural approach with regard to language learning. In the Chinese context, therefore, a new methodological framework might advocate a more eclectic approach – but one that is built on a solid theoretical understanding of what Chinese learners bring to their classrooms. The fusion model suggested above aims to do this.

Nevertheless, other cultural groups (both within and beyond Asia) are represented in our ESOL classrooms. Bearing in mind the variety of cultures that confront teachers of ESOL in New Zealand, it becomes more difficult to prescribe a methodological framework for teaching and learning that will adequately reflect the diverse needs that confront teachers. Also, if we accept Nunan’s (2001) conclusion, as cited in Bax (2003), that the search for the one best method is well and truly dead, it may be that the prescription of a new methodological framework for teaching English interculturally, whether in or beyond New Zealand, is unnecessary. There is no “one size fits all.”

Bell (2007), however, concludes his article with the viewpoint of one teacher who argues for the importance of methodology:

I think that teachers should be exposed to all methods and they themselves would “build” their own methods or decide what principles they would use in their teaching. We cannot ignore methods and all the facts that were considered by those who “created” or use them in their teaching. We need a basis for building our own teaching. (p. 143)

We may, in this light, consider it important to develop a new methodological framework – a basis for building teaching. What, then, might this framework look like? In a multicultural teaching and learning context the central concern is one of awareness-raising and sensitivity. That is, a broader methodological framework for teaching English interculturally needs at the very least to consider and be sensitive to the culture the learner brings to the classroom. Where teachers of English are aware of the cultures of learning that the students bring with them, and where teachers are willing to incorporate aspects of these cultures of learning into their teaching, there is the potential to enhance students’ success and knowledge acquisition. Being consciously aware – that is, being aware of the different learning styles of learners, and doing something proactive with that awareness – is probably the best we can do. Conscious awareness embraces more than an ad hoc approach to methodology based on teachers’ perceptions of student needs. It would include encouraging teachers to take the time and the trouble to learn something about the different cultures of learning their students might bring to

the classroom before they go in and teach them. In the Chinese case, for example, this would include learning something about CHC culture and its implications for teaching and learning.

The ability and willingness on the part of teachers to adapt and be flexible with CLT approaches (such as the fusion model suggested above), and thereby to develop current methodologies in the light of both student needs and prior knowledge of their students' cultures of learning, will potentially reap dividends and decrease some student frustration. It may therefore be that a new methodological framework should be built around the concepts of context sensitive and culture-of-learning sensitive eclecticism. If it is in the best interests of our students to adapt our teaching to suit contextual considerations, a new methodological framework can legitimately be framed as eclectic. This framework would, to use the words of teachers interviewed by Bell (2007), "incorporate the necessary methods into one larger method" and be "a blend of appropriate methods."

Conclusion

Communicative Language Teaching has firmly established itself into the culture of language teaching practice in New Zealand. Furthermore, forces of globalisation have helped to establish CLT as the axiomatic framework worldwide and the communicative method is now often perceived as the "best" way to teach languages. In recent years, however, CLT has been challenged as different emphases have been brought to bear on it. In this article we have focused on the different cultural assumptions about teaching and learning that Chinese learners of English bring to our classrooms in New Zealand. We have argued that a fusion of Western and Chinese methodological approaches may work more effectively for Chinese learners. Seen in the light of localisation – the rebounding against globalising forces whereby interactions between different systems of belief have become normative (Carr, 2003) – it is also important to consider whether we need a new methodological framework, broader than CLT, when teaching English interculturally, regardless of the cultural background of the learners.

This does, however, raise a considerable problem. The multicultural nature of ESOL classrooms in New Zealand, and the resultant varieties of cultural approach the learners bring with them, make it difficult to prescribe a single methodological framework for language teaching and learning. The answer is not, however, to resort to an exclusive reliance on CLT. It is important for teachers at the very least to become aware of the different cultural assumptions their learners bring with them. Awareness-raising and sensitivity to the culture the learners bring to the classroom is, however, probably as far as we can go in multicultural contexts. We cannot be prescriptive about a new methodological framework for teaching English interculturally, but we must at the very least challenge the assumption that CLT is the best approach and be willing to experiment with a range of methods, alongside CLT-focused methods, that might enhance the learning experiences of our students. A new methodological framework which embraces eclecticism in the light of context and learner needs would ensure that methodology (which is, after all, at the heart of the way we teach) will remain central to what we do.

Note

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MEETING THE NEEDS OF VISITING IN-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS FROM CHINA

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Abstract

Providing short term intensive professional development courses that successfully meet the needs of course participants can be a challenging task. This paper discusses a tailor-made programme for visiting overseas teachers to a New Zealand university. It presents the pedagogical principles underpinning the course, and the considerations and processes taken in designing the course to meet participants' needs. The paper discusses the extent to which these needs were met on the course as well as looking at how the learning was applied once the teachers were in back in their teaching context in China. It concludes with the language teacher educators' insights into establishing and meeting needs, the value of reflections and the effectiveness of learning transfer

Introduction

In recent years, international language teaching professionals have been coming from a wide range of environments to visit and study in tertiary institutions in New Zealand. These professionals may be teachers-in-training, novice teachers or expert teachers. Some enrol in existing programmes for extensive periods of time, for example postgraduate study, while others come for tailor-made short term courses, often referred to as short term international experiences (STIE).

Among those discussing courses for teachers travelling abroad for the international experience is Willard-Holt (2001) who records the value of an international experience for mainstream pre-service teachers, both during and after the course. Carrier (2003) suggests how an introductory course can adequately address the needs of non-native speaker (NNS) English language teacher trainees in a Western-based TESOL programme. Barkhuizen and Feryok (2006) draw conclusions about ways host institutions can improve the STIE for international NNS pre-service English language teachers. These include making sure the experience is truly an international one where the programme presents “innovative ways of offering more intercultural and interlingual contact” (p. 132).

This paper looks at the STIE of a group of eight experienced NNS English language teachers visiting from China. It examines how far the teachers' needs were met on the course, and what learning the teachers applied once they returned to their own teaching context. We present the main pedagogical principles underpinning the course, ways to gather data to inform course design, and evaluation tools used to ascertain how far participants' needs were met. The study draws on data gathered before the course, during the course and over a six month period after the course and we conclude with further insights in ways to meet course participants' needs.

Pedagogical Principles

When preparing an STIE course, we believe that there are four key principles to consider. The course needs to be context responsive, encourage transfer of learning to a new context, be based on experiential learning, and provide extensive opportunities for participant reflection.

Context responsive

Context responsive courses consider a number of factors. These include the teaching situation where participants will be applying the new learning, as well as the participants' background and level of experience. Furthermore, the course needs to create an environment where there can be a mutual exchange of teaching and learning. Bax (2003) and Carrier (2003) have discussed the need for Western-based TESOL programmes to take into account the situations in which both teacher trainees (native and non-native) will be teaching once they enter the profession. Teachers' level of experience is another factor to consider. Berliner (cited in Freeman, 2002) suggests that the novice teachers (those with less than three years of classroom experience) are mainly concerned with managerial matters such as organising the classroom and controlling the students. On the other hand, expert teachers, (with more than five years teaching experience) tend to be more concerned with the purposes and aims of their teaching and how they can meet their teaching goals. Course content then, may be significantly influenced by the participants' experience and stage of career. While novice teachers may want to focus more on pedagogical skills, such as an effective lesson staging model, experienced teachers will benefit from understanding alternative approaches to lesson staging and making informed decisions about future practice in their own context. Context-sensitive teacher education programmes need to provide an atmosphere conducive to interaction (Bax, 1997). Experienced international teachers bring a depth of professional knowledge, providing opportunities for collegial exchange with the language teacher educators. Interaction with other professionals in the wider context (such as other teachers in the school) can further increase mutual understanding of educational contexts.

Transfer of learning

The ultimate goal of language teacher education programmes is for application of new learning beyond the course. James (2006) notes concern for the impact of instruction outside the classroom, suggesting impact of a course has to do with the transfer of learning, but classroom learning, beyond basic skills, may not necessarily always occur. Perkins and Solomon (cited in James, 2006) suggest there is "high road" and "low road" transfer. Low road transfer is the unconscious process that triggers connections between previous situations where learning occurred and application to new situations. High road occurs when a conscious link is made between two situations that do not immediately appear to be similar. James identifies a number of instructional strategies language teachers can use to enhance transfer which can also be used in language teacher education. Low road transfer strategies include setting learner expectations, matching learning experience to future applications of learning, as well as modelling and providing real-world tasks. High road transfer strategies include asking participants to generalise concepts by drawing on principles from the classroom that could be applied in other situations; and also asking them to anticipate applications, by considering new ways and contexts in which they can use their new understanding. Incorporating opportunities for transfer can enhance the effectiveness of a course for participants.

Experiential learning, loop input

Multi-sensory experiential learning can encourage deeper participant experience (Woodward, 2003), and making the learning experience conscious can influence teachers' personal beliefs (Carrier, 2003; Freeman & Richards, 1993). When teachers have the chance to try out a new process they can have a more memorable experience than just reading about the activity. Follow up discussion encourages deeper understanding of the process. Even deeper learning opportunities can be provided with the use of loop input, a type of experiential learning in which the process (eg. jigsaw reading) and content (texts on the topic of jigsaw reading) are closely aligned. Therefore, an effective course needs to provide opportunities for learners to deeply process information through their experiences.

Reflection

Reflective practice is seen as a “central pillar in teacher education” that enables teachers to weave together their past and present experiences, and to “find and establish meaning in their work” (Freeman, 2002, p. 11). Reflective practice can be used for participants to reflect on their own teaching practice, to reflect on their observation of another teacher, or it may be used by participants to reflect on the way they are being taught and their subsequent learning. Post-event diaries and journals are often used for formalising the recording of reflections. They are a means of encouraging teacher development, can provide useful data for the researcher (Borg, 2001; Halbach, 1999; Moon, 1999; Nunan, 1992) and they may be used to enhance language proficiency (Orem, 2001). To maximise reflective practice it is important that participants have an understanding of both the purpose of reflection, and knowledge of how to approach it. Another consideration is the extent to which language teacher educators provide guidance and structure to promote useful reflection, rather than just description of events.

Preparing courses to meet participant needs

Devising effective courses to meet participant needs is a detailed, complex process involving a range of steps from assessment to analysis, to course implementation and course evaluation. These steps may not necessarily be discrete or chronological. The process, involving decisions, actions and reflections, is cyclical in nature (Graves, 2000) and includes a number of informants. When writing about a client-centred approach to teacher development, Nunan (1998a) notes that it is important to develop content and methodology through a consultation and negotiation process with learners. In the case of STIE courses, consultation with the overseas institution can have a strong influence on course content (Barkhuizen & Feryok, 2006).

The starting point in designing a course is commonly needs assessment and analysis. Needs assessment encompasses deciding what information to gather, the best way to gather it, when, how and from whom, (Graves, 1996; Long, 2005; Nunan, 1998b; West, 1994). Several procedures exist for collecting data about participants and their needs. They may include unstructured interviews, surveys, questionnaires, observation, diaries, logs and task based criterion referenced tests and the choice of tool depends on time, resources and expertise available. In small scale projects, there may be less opportunity for face-to-face interviews or observation or detailed questionnaires and where time for gathering data and preparing a

course is limited, Gardner and Winslow (cited in West, 1994) suggest that frequently needs assessments may not be carried out because of pressure on staff time. However if the goal is a tailor-made course, it is essential to make time for some form of needs assessment before participants arrive. While needs assessment involves the collection of data, needs analysis assigns value to the data gathered (Pomeroy cited in Graves, 1996). The findings of the analysis inform the course design which is also influenced by the educators' previous teaching and planning experience (Dubin & Olshtain, 1986) and their pedagogical beliefs and principles. In our case the guiding principles were context-responsiveness, transfer of learning, experiential learning, and reflection.

Judging course effectiveness in meeting participants' needs

As mentioned previously, preparing a course to meet participant needs is a complex and process and so also is evaluating a course. There are a number of purposes for evaluation, stages at which evaluation may be carried out, as well as a range of ways for gaining an understanding of how effective the course is.

Two main reasons for course evaluation are accountability purposes and programme development. In addition, it is important to consider the audience and the course information they are interested in receiving. For example, while teacher educators will be interested in the quality of teaching and learning, managers and administrators may be more interested in receiving a report on the overall goal achievement, and management of any difficulties that arose during the course. The timing of course evaluation may vary. Summative evaluations done at the end of a course are usually for accountability purposes and to inform the development of future courses. Mid-course evaluations are formative and seek to find out the appropriateness of course aspects for the participants, such as the level of the course, the pace, the content, and the methodology. The data gathered may be used to address any problems identified and to improve delivery of the current programme.

Another consideration is the way course evaluations are carried out. They can be administered by the teacher, the students, or an independent administrator using a range of instruments including structured feedback forms, questionnaires, interviews, diaries and journals, written or oral reports, teachers' records, and observation. Some tools gather richer data than others, for example interviews provide a large amount of useful data but are time-consuming to undertake with anything more than a small group. Block's study (1998) comparing two different ways of capturing language learners' evaluation (questionnaire and interviews) concluded that an evaluation that produces valuable data needs to be "more than just a pen and paper questionnaire . . . and has to involve the teacher and the students in ongoing, in-depth and personalised contact," (p. 173). Diaries and journals, as a source of information on participants' reactions to course content (McDonough, 1994), provide a basis for a negotiated syllabus between teacher and student (O'Brien cited in West, 1994). Furthermore, they have pedagogical use in that they offer the reader insights into participants' needs during the course. This negotiation assists in the ongoing development of the current course, and end-of-course evaluation gives feedback for future courses. However course effectiveness must ultimately be judged by the participants' perceptions of course usefulness once they are back in their own teaching context. Post-course evaluation is often logistically difficult to carry out, especially when it involves gathering data a number of times over an extended period beyond the course. However, it provides significant insights into the extent to which the course has

met participant needs. Furthermore, other needs may also emerge, providing opportunities for ongoing dialogue with course participants and possibilities of developing future courses. One tool for gathering post-course data is the questionnaire, but as Halbach (1999) suggests, the information obtained from evaluation questionnaires can be insufficient, not necessarily faithfully reflecting what participants really think. The nature of the less structured reflective journal provides an alternative tool that yields detailed, personalised information which can then be categorised and interpreted to reveal long-term course usefulness.

The study

A range of data was collected to inform the design of a course for international language teaching professionals. The first data came from a formal memorandum of understanding between our university and an institution in Shanghai, as a result of a previously submitted proposal with a general framework for teacher education possibilities. We received notice that eight Chinese teachers from a vocational polytechnic in Shanghai were to be sent for an intensive three week in-service professional development course. Reading current articles and talking to Chinese colleagues in the university informed us of the likely background of these teachers and their potential needs and assisted us in preparing a needs assessment questionnaire to gather more detailed data from the individual course participants. This tool (see Appendix A) asked factual, behavioural and attitudinal questions (Dornyei, 2003; Richards, 2001). The questions were mostly short, open and written in English using simple structures as we were unsure of the language level of the cohort that would be arriving. The questionnaire was administered by a colleague who was visiting the Chinese institution. She had the assistance of a Chinese interpreter who was able to answer any questions. The colleague returned the completed questionnaires along with photos of the teachers and their institution, which helped introduce us to the course participants.

The reading and discussions with colleagues indicated that the group coming to study would probably be teaching large classes in China and they might have a range of experience in teaching structural, communicative or task-based syllabi (Cheng & Wang, 2004; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Liao, 2004). Testing would be an important part of their curriculum and teaching programme. The teachers could have a range of language teaching qualifications and their teacher education courses would have had a strong focus on the development of their English language skills, content knowledge and academic proficiency (Cheng & Wang). The teachers were also likely to have had only a brief practicum experience on their initial teaching course and their classroom skills would probably have been developed by being mentored by more experienced teachers (Cheng & Wang).

The analysis of the needs assessment questionnaire provided us with more detailed information about the particular group. We noted that while some teachers were fluent and informative in their written responses to the questions, others gave very limited responses. This may have been because of a lack of familiarity with the needs assessment procedure. “The process itself may engender uncertainty in the students, as knowing their needs is presumably the responsibility of the teacher or institution” (Graves, 1996, p. 160). In addition, completing the questionnaire in detail may not have been a priority in teachers’ busy lives. Furthermore the simplicity of the questions may not have encouraged deep, elaborated answers. However, the data we received indicated the teachers were all very positive about teaching English, they were experienced at English language teaching (ranging from 2 to 13

years) and they all used English more than 50% of the time with their classes. They had a very clear idea of what they wanted for their students and also what they hoped to gain from their time in New Zealand. In addition, although the responses were sometimes brief, they gave us an indication of the level at which we should pitch the course in terms of content and language demands and clearly revealed the following five key areas of teachers' needs:

- motivating their students
- developing knowledge of new techniques and new ideas about teaching
- improving their own language, both oral and written
- comparing education in China and New Zealand
- learning about New Zealand life and customs.

Using the data gathered from the range of sources, we were then able to start planning the three week intensive course to meet these needs. The course content and method of delivery were planned according to our beliefs in context-responsive courses involving experiential learning and reflective practice, drawing on our pre- and in-service language teacher education background.

The choice of course content and mode of delivery were tightly linked in the course we designed to meet the teachers' needs. For example, we aimed to meet the need to 'motivate their students' by delivering Approaches to the Four Skills in a task-based learning mode. As the Chinese teachers had clearly expressed their desire to know about how we teach language in our university, it was important to give them the experience of being active learners in a communicative, task-based environment. At the same time we wanted to encourage collegiality, open discussion and sharing ideas about teaching and learning in different contexts. (See Figure 1 for a summary of the course content and delivery mode).

Figure 1: Course Content and Delivery Mode

COURSE CONTENT	DELIVERY MODE
History of Methodology	Readings
Reflective Practice	Interactive tasks
Approaches to Four Skills	Reflective journals
Vocabulary development	Observations and discussions
Phonology	Task-based learning
Testing and assessments	Project work
Content-based teaching	Seminars
Cross-cultural communication	Panel discussions
Exploiting course books	Experiential learning
Expectations of students in New Zealand	
The New Zealand experience	

Throughout the course, each participant completed a minimum of six entries in guided reflective journals (see Appendix B). We used these journals as a means of establishing a dialogue with the individual Chinese teachers, and as well to gauge their level of satisfaction, and to note ongoing interests and issues in language learning and teaching. We also started to

see how far we were meeting the Chinese teachers' needs. The reflections revealed two new areas of interest in addition to the five previously identified needs:

- Teacher roles
- Resources.

The emergence of these two areas informed further course content. In the initial timetabling, flexi slots had been scheduled enabling us to respond to teachers' needs as they arose.

We carried out two of end-of-course evaluations: a summary letter and a questionnaire. The teachers were asked to write a summary of their journals in the form of a letter to a colleague (see Appendix C), reflecting on their time in New Zealand, and the impact the course had had on their ideas of teaching and learning. The questionnaire was directly linked to the teachers' expression of their needs, as well as to the content covered in the programme (see Appendix D). We analysed the data from these two instruments, firstly to see the extent to which participants felt their needs had been met, and secondly to provide a basis for improving future courses.

When we had run short courses in the past, we were mainly concerned to see how far the course met the participants' needs as stated in their needs assessment. This time we wanted to know how far the learning from the course was meeting the teachers' needs once they returned to their Chinese teaching context. So following the course, we asked the Chinese teachers to complete three post-course reflections over a six month period. We asked them to write reflections on any class that they were teaching, focusing on any aspect of teaching and learning. We then analysed and coded the data to see the extent to which the course met the teachers' needs once they were back in China.

Discussion: Extent to which participant needs were met

In this section we discuss our findings on how far the course met the seven identified needs of the Chinese teachers, and provide evidence from data gathered during and after the course.

Motivating students, learning new techniques and improving oral and written language

The strongest need that the course participants expressed was their desire to motivate their students. They wanted to know how to "encourage students to grasp the knowledge in class," how to "attack the interest of students" and how to "help students to learn actively." A second important need was learning new teaching techniques: "I want to show my students new and fresh things." "I want more advanced methods of English teaching." "I want to know about interesting styles." All of the teachers wanted to further develop their own language skills and to know more about English grammar and phrases, and idioms and slang in everyday life.

Both the needs to motivate students and to gain new teaching techniques are intrinsically linked. Introducing the teachers to a range of methodologies was a way we believed we could meet these two needs, as well as develop the teachers' oral and written English. We felt that experiential learning would help the Chinese teachers understand ways they could develop student motivation as well as gain an understanding of a new technique, as for example in the following listening task.

Early on in the course, the Chinese teachers visited our local art gallery with a questionnaire about their art preferences. Previously the language teacher education lecturers had created a taped listening dialogue based around the art on display. We then taught a listening lesson to the Chinese teachers with pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening tasks. After they had completed the lesson, we provided an opportunity for discussion on how the lesson had been delivered, and its effectiveness and relevance of the technique to their context in China. Over the following week the teachers worked in small groups to prepare their own listening text and lesson about a visit they made to a local place of interest in Auckland. In the last week of the course, the teachers delivered their lesson to their colleagues and this was followed by individual written reflections on the listening task process.

Although the Chinese teachers were initially daunted, their on-course reflections indicated that the task had been effective on many levels. It was motivating for the Chinese teachers, it provided exposure to a new teaching technique and it helped them to focus on their language skills. As well, it met a number of other identified needs. The task provided a strong link between the classroom and the new environment, encouraging teachers to find out more about New Zealand culture. In addition, the group work fostered a new collegiality and gave the teachers exposure to working on group assignments, which is a significant difference between studying in a Chinese institution and some tertiary environments in New Zealand.

There was significant evidence in the teachers' reflections, both during the course and post course, that the listening task had an application for their own teaching context. In her final summary letter to a friend, one teacher wrote:

After doing some listening practice about the art gallery according to the tape, much to my surprise it was not the end of the lesson. We still had an important task to do. We must do the listening presentation. That meant we had to find a good place to visit, prepare our dialogue, record it, then design questions from general to detailed. And the last thing is to do our presentation. Isn't it interesting? I'm sure both the teachers and the students will like this way because you can achieve a lot from it. You're not only teaching students some knowledge to pass the exam, but also teaching them the way to study by themselves.

Another teacher in his post-course reflections indicated he was implementing this new technique successfully back in China with his beginner listening class of 41 students. He mentions that earlier his students were unmotivated, showing little interest in his English listening lessons. "My students felt very bored. They were sleepy in my listening classes, although they knew listening was very important." He describes how he made his own listening material and gave an account of recording English dialogues at a local football match and making up listening material based on the dialogue. He gave students an opportunity to practise their oral English and was pleased with this lesson. "The effect of this class was perfect." and he was pleased with the "wonderful" new teaching method. "Now the students are not sleepy any more in my class."

In the end-of-course evaluation questionnaire, all teachers indicated they had significantly improved their knowledge in how to motivate their Chinese students, help them learn actively, and encourage them to talk more in class. Nearly all of the teachers felt they had improved their oral English and all of them indicated a degree of improvement in their knowledge of new teaching methods.

Comparing education in China and NZ

The Chinese teachers wanted to compare education between the two countries. They particularly wanted to look at this from the perspective of a Chinese student studying in New Zealand. They were interested in “feeling the atmosphere in a foreign university,” “finding out about the Chinese students in New Zealand,” and getting to know more about the “living conditions of the students.”

So that the teachers were able to compare education in China and New Zealand, we provided opportunities for them to observe a range of English language classes and levels being taught in our university. We also arranged two panel discussions. Chinese students studying in mainstream classes came to talk about their academic experience in New Zealand and answered questions from the Chinese teachers. On another occasion, staff in our school met with the Chinese teachers for discussion to get a better understanding of the educational challenges and differences in a different context. All the panel participants prepared questions beforehand to focus the discussion.

In their reflections and summary letters, the Chinese teachers commented on the similarities and the differences in teaching in both countries. Similarities included the fact that both Chinese and NZ teachers worked a full day, planning, teaching and marking as well as following the same teaching procedure: “prepare, do, recall, reflect, conclude, prepare.” All of the teachers reflected on differences in size of class, age of the students, course aims, length of class teaching periods, and the variety of teaching styles, and noted the student-centred lessons with a focus on learner independence.

You’ll find the teachers here are so lucky because there are only twenty to thirty students in a class and nearly all the students study English actively and independently. Isn’t it quite different from what we have seen in China? . . . The aim for students learning English is not to pass an exam but to use this language fluently so they are not afraid of making mistakes and are willing to use it at any time.

The end-of-course evaluation showed all teachers had increased their understanding of a foreign university and their knowledge about study and life for Chinese students in New Zealand.

Exploring the teacher/learner role

Early on in their reflections the Chinese teachers commented on the differences in teacher-student relationships in our university class and the different roles the teacher played in the classroom in New Zealand. Classroom observations, project presentations and discussions gave them opportunities for processing their thoughts about the varying teacher roles.

For example, a book review project, where they reviewed and presented key findings on a self-chosen language teacher education book, allowed teachers to explore various topics of personal interest including teacher-student roles. One teacher wrote:

I’m interested in chapter 11 because it deals with classroom management. . . . I think the role of teacher is well worth reading about because I think that in China even if a teacher has taught you for one day, you should treat him like your father for your

whole life. So in old teaching method, many teachers acted as a controller, rather than a guide or an organiser . . . now teachers and students have a very good relationship, something like friends. . . . A teacher should be a tutor, an organiser, an assessor, a prompter and a participant, not merely a controller. After three weeks training I feel more confident than before.

After observing her first class, one teacher Carol commented in her reflections: “I found the atmosphere was very active. [Lecturer Z] looked like a guide and organiser rather than a teacher, and the students have more chance to practise their oral English.”

Many of the teachers continued to reflect on the teacher-student roles once back in China.

We should show respect for [the students] so that they are confident to say anything in front of you. Never give them too much pressure. Regard the students as your friends . . . allow the students to ask any questions or say anything freely . . . they can do it without standing up and I will not forget the praise. The result is now most of the students are not afraid of speaking simple English in my class.

Sharing and developing teaching resources

When designing the course, we had looked at a range of Chinese ELT text books commonly used in China and prepared a session on ways Chinese teachers could exploit and supplement these course books. The session began with a brief visit to our ESOL resource room and was to be followed by a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of using texts. However the resource room visit aroused such great interest that the teachers stayed there for the full session. In their reflections the teachers commented on the large range of texts and the variety of teaching materials. They particularly noted the folders of up-to-date teacher-prepared materials for all levels of general English classes which set English in every day contexts. The idea of teachers preparing materials for their learners and then categorising and sharing them with other colleagues teaching at the same level was completely new to the Chinese teachers. They could see the benefits of sharing resources related to every day life and they were all keen to establish a sharing system of their own when they returned to China.

I got the first surprise when I was visiting their resource room. There were so many teaching materials - magazines, journals, course books, newspapers, tapes, video tapes, reference books of all levels - they were all on teaching language. I was even astonished when I learned that some teachers didn't have textbooks and they could choose suitable materials that they would like to teach students. It is impossible at [our institution].

In each folder there were rich teaching materials which were made by teachers. Some were designed by the teachers themselves. I was told that the teachers often added something new to the folders and deleted the materials that were out of date. I think in my future teaching I will try making this kind of folder.

In spite of their enthusiasm and intention to increase and share their language teaching resources on their return to China, there was little mention of this in their post-course

reflections, except for one teacher who commented that they needed more financial support, and their principal had not had time to talk to them about this.

Learning about New Zealand life and customs

When asked about what they were looking forward to seeing in New Zealand, the teachers made comments such as “the ocean and the architecture” and “museums and the living areas of the local people.” To meet this need to know more about life in New Zealand, we arranged a number of activities, outings and social occasions. Some of these were arranged for teachers to do independently, and others included university teaching staff.

The final section of the end-of course questionnaire, asked students about their level of satisfaction with visits to places of interest, and their satisfaction with the socialising opportunities. Of the six activities listed, dinner in a language teacher education lecturer’s home with other staff and their families, and a relaxed trip to the beach with a lecturer were considered the highlights of their stay. Both of these situations were very informal and offered the teachers real insights into how New Zealanders spend their time. Other outings, for example visits to the museum and a local shopping centre, were less satisfying. It was interesting to note from the data that the areas teachers were most satisfied with were those which were followed up and exploited in the classroom by the language teacher education staff. The summary letter and on-course reflections supported the end-of-course evaluation findings.

[X lecturer] took us to the beach in his class. It’s a really happy morning and he bought us ice-creams. That’s cool. I think today is the first day we really feel relaxed. We forgot the presentation, the homework. Muriwai beach . . . – peace, blue, quiet sea without the noise of human world. Everyone is crazy with this wonderful beach, taking off the shoes and playing with the water, picking up lovely shells.

All of the teachers commented enthusiastically on the dinner in a New Zealand home, in particular they mentioned the Kiwi hospitality, the friendly nature of the lecturers, the wide variety of delicious new food, and the home itself.

I never expected that I could have such delicious beef in a foreigner’s house. . . . I was impressed by the photographs I saw at [Y lecturer’s] home. The pictures described the process that Y and her husband created (sic) their home. They did everything themselves. . . . It was really a great job which was incredible to us Chinese people.

Although there was considerable mention of the New Zealand experience in the pre-course needs assessment and in the on-course reflections, no mention of the experience in the new culture was made in the post-course reflections.

Conclusion and Implications

A number of conclusions and implications can be drawn from this study.

Needs

Before designing a course to meet participant needs, it is not only important to carry out a pre-course assessment, but to read and talk to colleagues about the likely context the participants will be coming from. Although our needs assessment provided more detailed data on the participants' needs, we feel that it could have provided more extensive, in-depth data if the Chinese teachers had had an explanation of the purpose of the needs assessment. As a result, before courses in the future we will send a covering letter outlining the reasons for the needs assessment and the impact this will have on designing a tailor-made course for participants. We also recognise the importance of establishing dialogue with course participants early on during the course to ensure that we are aware of any other needs that arise so that we can cater for them. Catering for additional needs is made easier if, at the course design stage, timetables incorporate flexislots (i.e. sessions with no scheduled content) to allow continuing course development.

Reflections

The Chinese teachers responded well to the reflective practice component of the course as it was not a new concept for them, but they appreciated the guidance the journals provided. Their on-course reflections revealed a focus on developing their knowledge about teaching and learning. We found, unlike Barkhuizen and Feryok (2006), that there were not many comments about more affective factors. This may have been because the teachers were mainly expert rather than pre-service or novice teachers, resulting in their interests being more concerned with objectives related to their teaching goals. With regard to post-course follow-up reflections we have learned they are enlightening and worthwhile. The data gained after the course validated in general our choice of content and approach to delivery. The reflections were effective in yielding useful data. We feel this was because the Chinese teachers had had practice with guided reflections on the course, and engagement in dialogue with the LTE educators through the journals. This made it easy for us all to continue the dialogue once the teachers were back in their own environment.

While in general the course reflections showed that teachers' needs were met, there are two implications for improving future courses. As mentioned earlier, Barkhuizen and Feryok (2006) call for STIE programmes to provide a range of interlingual and intercultural contact. To a large extent we feel we were able to provide multiple opportunities for this. There was contact with a wide range of staff members in our institution, (eg panel discussions, observation debriefs, social gatherings), project work where teachers met New Zealanders, as well as outings and social occasions with language teacher education staff and family. Less successful were independent outings where the Chinese teachers were not accompanied by a lecturer. So another time we would arrange for a staff member to go with the teachers on local visits to provide opportunities for discussion and cultural exchange.

Transfer

The low road strategies (Perkins & Solomon cited in James, 2006) we used with the Chinese teachers encouraged transfer of learning into the teachers' context. Post-course reflections indicated that some months after the course, teachers were using new techniques to motivate their students, trying project work with classes, and exploring the role of the teacher. However, there was little mention in their post-course reflections of building up a shared bank of resources and no mention of using their experience in a new culture. These areas had received significant comment both before the course and on the course. It may be that the participants saw the New Zealand experience as valuable for increasing their personal knowledge, rather than being a source of useful teaching material. For future courses we have designed a learning application proforma (see Appendix E) to prompt awareness of how new learning might be used in another context. A further plan for future courses is to encourage group discussion of the completed proforma, or of participants' reflections. As Boud (2001)) suggests, having pair or group discussions on reflections is more powerful than just reflecting in isolation.

Reflecting together on our study has given us a much greater understanding in a number of areas. We understand the importance of gaining a wide knowledge of the participants' context which informs the needs assessment tools and administrative procedures. We have an increased awareness of the value of providing tools (ie guided reflections, transfer proforma) to encourage participant reflection, and of offering subsequent opportunities for discussion to enhance learning transfer. Working together through discussion and debate can be mutually beneficial for course participants and language teacher educators, helping all those involved with the course to gain a deeper understanding of learning and teaching issues. Having a greater understanding of these areas will help us be even more effective in meeting the needs of participants on short term professional development courses, both locally and internationally.

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Appendix A: Needs Assessment Questionnaire

(Original questionnaire on 2 pages with space for written responses)

Hello

We are looking forward to meeting and working with you when you come to New Zealand. To help us with our programme planning and organising could you please answer the following questions:

Please use the space provided and write your answers in English.

How long have you been teaching?

What subjects do you teach?

What do you like about teaching?

How much English do you use when you teach?

How often do you use English in areas other than teaching?

Which do you think is your strongest skill in English?

Which area of English language would you like to know more about?

Which area of teaching English would you like to know more about?

What are you looking forward to doing when you come to New Zealand?

What are you looking forward to seeing when you come to New Zealand?

Thank you for your time.

Course Planners

Appendix B: Reflective Practice

Name:Date:

As a guide to writing reflections in English you may initially like to consider one or more of the following areas.

Warm – up	Lesson openers	
Feedback to students	Groupings	Student teacher interaction
Teaching grammar	Teaching and learning roles	Classroom energy and motivation
Personalising the lesson for students	Lesson phases and transitions	Other Questioning
	

Focus on a particular event in the day or week either inside or outside the classroom which was significant for you and respond to these questions:

What happened?

Why was it significant?

How did you react and why?

Has this incident changed/ reinforced your beliefs about good teaching practice?

Appendix C:

Summary Letter Writing Guidelines

This is the time now for deeper reflection on the entire course. So you can give a balanced opinion about your teaching and learning at AUT, use these questions below to guide you in your planning.

Before you start writing, decide which colleague or group of colleagues you are writing to and the level of formality you need.

Focus on the things you have found at AUT that are the same as in your teaching and learning environment in Shanghai.

Identify anything that you have particularly noticed that is different.

Identify one area that you have found particularly interesting in the teaching and learning context at AUT that you would like to try out in your teaching in Shanghai. Give some details as to how this could be incorporated in your programme.

Clearly the learning experience for you has gone well beyond the classroom. It would be good for you to be able to inform some of your colleagues of any highlights of the trip and also give advice to a colleague who may come here in the future.

The letter may follow this form:

Introduction - includes a greeting and setting the context.

Body of letter – approximately four paragraphs

Short conclusion – summing up

Appendix D:

Programme Evaluation

(Students were asked to respond on a 5 Likert scale where 1 means 'no' and 5 means 'a lot'.)

Your Needs Analysis indicated that you wanted to know more about different areas in English Language Teaching and Life and Visits in New Zealand. On the scale below, please indicate how well you feel these needs have been met.

English Language Teaching

I have improved my knowledge in...

1. how to motivate students
2. new teaching methods
3. how to help students learn actively
4. encouraging students to grasp knowledge
5. practical activities to encourage students to talk more in class
6. the differences in teaching methods in China and New Zealand

Life in NZ

I have developed ...

1. my knowledge of NZ customs
2. my oral English
3. my understanding of a foreign university
4. my knowledge about study and life for Chinese students in NZ

Visits

I was satisfied with the visits to...

1. Auckland City Art Gallery
2. Botany Downs Shopping Centre
3. Dinner at [Lecturer Y] house
4. Muriwai Beach
5. Rotorua
6. Auckland Memorial Museum
7. Other...

General Comments

What has been the best part of the course for you?

What suggestions have you got for improving the course?

Appendix E: Application of New Learning

(Pro-forma for use in future professional development sessions, conferences, etc.)

[illegible]

MAKING REQUESTS APPROPRIATELY IN A SECOND LANGUAGE: DOES INSTRUCTION HELP TO DEVELOP PRAGMATIC PROFICIENCY?

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Abstract

This paper reports on a classroom-based study that aimed to provide insights into the effect of instruction in L2 pragmatics. The study explored the development of learners' production of requests in a workplace communication course for skilled migrants. The results indicated that explicit instruction using authentic input facilitated the development of both pragmatic awareness and pragmatic proficiency.

Introduction

Developing pragmatic awareness is a challenging aspect of second language learning. A growing body of research has focused on the development of socio-pragmatic proficiency in second language learners, examining the extent to which L2 learners are able to recognize and produce socially appropriate language in different contexts.

In the area of pragmatics, L2 learners differ from native speakers in a number of ways (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Although L2 learners are generally aware of pragmatic features and strategies in their own language (albeit often unconsciously), this awareness is not always carried over to their L2 production. Pragmatic infelicities can have more serious consequences than grammatical errors for the L2 learner, since native speakers are generally not very aware of the underlying rules and discourse practices that they unconsciously use in communication. They therefore often regard L2 learners who make pragmatic errors as being intentionally rude. Since the majority of learners do not seem to pick up pragmatic knowledge incidentally, it seems clear that exposure to the target language by itself is usually not enough. Pragmatic features are not sufficiently noticeable to second language learners and are therefore not likely to be integrated even after considerable exposure. (Schmidt, 1993, p. 36). As Schmidt observes, both noticing and then understanding how different features are used are important aspects of pragmatic awareness:

In pragmatics, awareness that on a particular occasion someone says to their interlocutor something like, "I'm terribly sorry to bother you, but if you have time could you look at this problem?" is a matter of noticing. Relating the various forms used to their strategic deployment in the service of politeness and recognizing their co-occurrence with elements of context such as social distance, power, level of imposition and so on, are all matters of understanding (Schmidt, 1995, p. 30).

In addition, it is very unlikely that native speakers will provide any helpful feedback on what they may consider to be politeness transgressions rather than language learning errors. It

would seem therefore that some sort of instruction is not only important but as Kasper (1997) argues, vital and necessary. The classroom setting provides a safe environment for learners to experiment with new patterns of communication where pragmatic errors do not have unpleasant or embarrassing consequences.

Is teaching effective?

Research has indicated positive effects of classroom input and intervention in the area of instruction in second language pragmatics (Alcon Soler, 2005; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Takahashi, 2001; Tateyama, 2001) and that learners who do not have any pragmatic instruction often continue to produce non-target language in pragmatic areas (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001).

Some recent research has also looked at the impact of different types of instruction and at the effect that they have on pragmatic competence in L2 learners. A number of these studies have revealed that providing learners with some sort of explicit instruction at a metapragmatic level is more effective than implicit instruction where the learners are simply exposed to the target language features, (Alcon-Soler, 2005; Kasper 2001; Rose, 2005; Takahashi, 2001; Tateyama, 2001).

Input: The use of authentic materials

The type of input is an important component of any instructional programme. As Bardovi-Harlig (2001, p. 30) observes, one cause of non-target like pragmatics is misleading input in teaching materials. She maintains that providing authentic language input is a crucial feature of classroom instruction. Bardovi-Harlig considers that providing authentic input is a form of “fair play, giving the learners a fighting chance” (2001, p. 30).

Unfortunately, most native speakers’ awareness of their pragmatic competence is unconscious and is not readily transferable to teaching materials. Indeed a mismatch has often been discovered when textbook dialogues and authentic discourse are compared, (Bardovi-Harlig, et al, 1991; Rees-Miller, 1994). After surveying the literature on prepared conversations Kasper (1997, p. 11) suggests:

Because native speaker intuition is a notoriously unreliable source of information about the communicative practices of their own community, it is vital that teaching materials on L2 pragmatics are research-based.

Factors that affect uptake of pragmatic features

As research on second language acquisition indicates, in any group of learners there is often a range in levels of uptake of language features. Studies of acquisition of pragmatic features demonstrate a similar variation. Several factors could be responsible for this. A significant factor is the transfer of L1 pragmatic knowledge, which can have both positive and negative effects. Negative transfer, where the learner assumes that the pragmatic and language features

of the L1 and L2 are similar, is seen by some researchers as a primary cause of pragmatic error (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Takahashi, 1996).

The amount of input and degree of acculturation can play important roles. High acculturation seems to lead to greater pragmatic ability but not necessarily to a high level of grammatical ability (Ahmad, 2003; Kasper, 2001; Takahashi, 2005). A related variable is the type of setting. As might be expected, one study discovered that learners in an EFL and an ESL context displayed differences in their recognition and rating of pragmatic and grammatical errors (Schauer, 2006). The ESL group in the study showed more awareness of pragmatic infelicities and their awareness of pragmatic features increased during their stay in the English speaking environment. Similarly, ESL learners were found to be more sensitive to deviations from native speaker norms than EFL learners (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001, p. 28). It could be that motivation plays a part here. It seems that the more learners are motivated to integrate with the L2 community, the more they attend to pragmatic input (Takahashi, 2005).

An intriguing relationship seems to exist between levels of grammatical proficiency and pragmatic ability. Some studies indicate that grammatical knowledge precedes pragmatic knowledge whereas others suggest the opposite (see Kasper & Rose, 2002, for a summary). What seems clear is that a high level of grammatical ability is not necessarily concomitant with advanced pragmatic knowledge and ability.

A further significant factor in variation of uptake is the deployment of attentional resources. Appropriate conversational responses need high levels of processing control and some L2 learners struggle to devote enough attention to pragmatic features when engaged in a meaning-focused interaction. Failure to supply the appropriate response in pragmatic terms, even after metapragmatic discussion and training, might simply indicate difficulties in producing suitable language in real time. Takahashi (2001) found that the request form 'I wonder if you could . . . ' occurred in the speech of learners all situations regardless of level of imposition and can perhaps be accounted for by limitations in control of processing. A strategy for minimising these limitations is offered by Schauer and Adolphs (2006) who suggest that learning routinised chunks is important as it frees up attentional resources and allows them to be allocated to where they are needed.

The production of pragmatically appropriate language may also be influenced by the way in which learners judge the situations where they find themselves. Bardovi-Harlig, (2001, p. 20), cites several studies that show a mismatch between native speaker and non-native speaker perception of the context variables in a range of situations and speech acts. Thus the selection of an inappropriate response may not be the result of lack of awareness of suitable forms, but of a difference in perception of the type of response that the situation requires.

Finally, as Rose (2005) points out, even with instruction certain areas remain difficult for all learners, particularly when the target features are used in an online interaction.

Literature on requests

A small body of research has focused on requests as the target language strategy in instructional settings. Some studies have investigated the use of particular features of requests, such as mitigators, bicausal request forms, and request modifiers (see Rose, 2005 for

a summary). In most of the studies, the results indicate that instruction has a noticeable effect on the use of the targeted features.

As mentioned earlier, the focus of several studies in instruction in second language pragmatics has been on the relative merits of explicit and implicit instruction. A few of these studies have looked at requests in particular. Alcon Soler (2005) examined the question of explicit and implicit instruction in raising the awareness of request strategies and found that while learners benefited from both types of instruction those exposed to explicit instruction made more progress. Takahashi (2001) found that explicit instruction helped learners to acquire request forms. Learners who received only implicit instruction produced well-embedded but inappropriate forms, such as, 'would you please.' These forms endured in their production despite more appropriate forms being noticed in the input. Learners exposed to a form-comparison treatment noticed target request forms more often than learners exposed to a form-search condition (Takahashi, 2005).

It is important to note that most of these studies have been carried out in a foreign language environment where there was little English input beyond the classroom (Rose, 2005). Few studies have looked at the impact of instruction on request features in an ESL setting.

The study

Research question

Rose and Kasper (2001, p. 4) identify three questions that should be borne in mind when investigating how the learning of L2 pragmatics is shaped by instructional context and settings: (i) the opportunities that are offered in language classrooms; (ii) the development of pragmatic knowledge in classrooms where there is no instructional focus on this; (iii) the effect of various methods of instruction on pragmatic development.

This study reports on an action research project that looks most specifically at the third question. The study investigates the effect of an explicit instruction module in an ESL setting, where, as the first step, learners' attention is drawn to specific features in authentic conversations containing requests.

Requests have been chosen as the focus because of their critical nature. Requests are a high stakes speech act and making requests is a face-threatening act in any language (Li, 2000). For a L2 learner of English in an English-speaking environment the consequences of failing to express a request appropriately can be serious. These consequences can be even more severe if the L2 learner has a good command of the formal features of the language and is operating in a professional capacity. In these circumstances the risk that inappropriate forms will be attributed to rudeness is significant.

Participants

The participants in the study were volunteers from three intakes of a Workplace Communication Course for Skilled Migrants at Victoria University of Wellington, New

Zealand, and were taught by the researcher. They had been in New Zealand between two and six years and were looking for employment suited to their backgrounds and qualifications. They come from many countries: Sri Lanka, Russia, India, China, Korea, Bangladesh, Nepal, and had a wide range of professional experience: banking, medicine, accounting, human resources, teaching, business and policy analysis, public relations, and economic research and planning. Several had used English as the primary medium in the workplace in their country of origin. English proficiency levels of the group varied from intermediate to advanced, or IELTS level 5.5 to 7.5.

The instruction module

Kasper (1996, p. 148) points out that, as with other types of L2 knowledge, acquisition of pragmatic knowledge requires relevant input, opportunities for learners to notice the input, and opportunities for learners to develop a high level of processing control of the language features. Bearing this in mind, the instruction module developed for assisting learners to focus on pragmatic features of English communication involved four components: authentic input, metadiscussion of the input, practice with native speakers with feedback, and observation tasks.

Guided by the research on the value of authentic input outlined earlier in this report, and bearing in mind the specific workplace focus of the instruction module, authentic conversations from the Language in the Workplace Project, Victoria University of Wellington, were used as real life examples of communication that illustrate certain communicative acts as they take place in a white-collar workplace context: requests, refusals, complaints, suggestions and disagreements. (See Holmes, 2005; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Vine, 2004; www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/lwp/).

The four components of the instruction module were as follows. First, the authentic conversations were analysed in terms of the influence of socio-cultural factors on the language choices that the speakers had made, as well as in terms of the language forms themselves. For example, learners' attention was drawn to the significance of familiarity, status, and degree of imposition or difficulty in each situation and how these factors influenced the way the communication was carried out. Secondly, learners discussed L1 and L2 perceptions of these factors. As Schmidt observed (1995), both noticing the form and gaining an understanding of the socio-cultural elements involved are important in the development of pragmatic knowledge. After this analysis and discussion, the third stage entailed opportunities for the learners to practise the language in role-plays with their classmates and with native speakers who visited the class weekly. The native speakers were encouraged to provide feedback on the suitability of language choices and other pragmatic features. The role-plays were also video-taped and, after class, learners were required to analyse their performance and reflect on what was successful or not in the interaction and the appropriateness of the language used. The fourth component of the module required learners to observe the use of speech acts in their daily lives outside the classroom and during the work experience period of the programme. Overall, the time spent on pragmatic instruction and practice during a course of 12 weeks was generally about 20 to 25 hours.

Data collection methods

Three methods of data collection were used in this study: discourse completion tasks (DCTs), video-taped role-plays and retrospective interviews. The DCTs and role-plays were completed as a pre-test and post-test measure, the pre-test in the first week of the course, prior to instruction and the post-test in the final week of the course (Week 12). Over the course of three programmes, 18 learners completed the DCTs and four learners participated in recorded role-plays followed by retrospective interviews (see Table 1). The recorded role-plays and retrospective interviews took place in the first and third programme. In the first programme included in the study, two learners participated in role-plays and retrospective interviews at two points in the programme, Week One and Week 12. Following the suggestion of Bardovi-Harlig (2001, p. 12) that it was useful to gather evidence of the stages that learners progressed through during the instructional process, in the third programme two learners took part in the role-plays and interview midway through the programme, in Week 4, as well as in Weeks 1 and 12. Because of constraints beyond the control of the researcher, only DCT data was collected from learners in programme 2.

Table 1: Numbers of participants involved in each data collection method

	Discourse Completion Tasks	Recorded role-plays	Retrospective interviews
Programme 1	6	2 (Weeks 1 and 12)	2 (Weeks 1 and 12)
Programme 2	5	0	0
Programme 3	7	2 (Weeks 1, 4 and 12)	2 (Weeks 1, 4 and 12)

Participants were given 10 DCT tasks (see Appendix) where they were required to write a suitable request in response to a written prompt. The DCTs provided situations that included power, social distance and degree of imposition as the sociopragmatic variables investigated in this study; variables that play a particularly central role in speech act behaviour (Hudson, 2001, p. 284). The situations all used the white-collar workplace as the specific context, as this fitted with the focus of the course.

As Tateyama (2001, p. 221) observes, DCTs assess metapragmatic knowledge but they do not provide evidence that the learner can produce suitable language in face-to-face interaction. Role-plays go some way towards compensating for this gap as they require conversational interaction in real time. Although, as Kasper (2001, p. 513) notes, the task demands involved in creating both the context and the language in a role-play might prove to be so challenging for some speakers they may not be able to display their true communicative ability; and despite the fact that role-plays do not provide evidence of learners' ability to use their pragmatic knowledge in genuine real life situations, they remain an effective data collection method for capturing relatively life-like responses. Furthermore, research suggests that role-

plays can elicit responses that closely resemble those produced in natural conditions (Morrison & Holmes, 2003). For this reason role-plays were included in this study.

The role-plays were taken from the DCT scenarios that the participants had completed one day earlier, so that a comparison could be made of the type of data each instrument generated. Five of the DCT situations, illustrating a range of contextual variables, were used in the role-plays.

The retrospective interviews were carried out immediately after completion of the recorded role-plays in Week 1, Week 4 and again at the end of the course (Week 12). In this procedure, learners viewed the role-plays and commented on any communicative issues observed and on their thoughts on the language choices that they had made. In the later interviews learners also viewed their earlier role-plays and commented on changes that they noticed in their pragmatic competency. These interviews provided insights into the various options that learners consider while involved in an interaction and into their developing perceptions of the socio-cultural variables present in each situation.

Results

Analysis of the DCTs administered in the first week of the course, prior to any focus on pragmatics, revealed that participants demonstrated some awareness of politeness strategies but these were limited to a small selection of forms. “Please would/could you,” “would/could/can you,” “please can/could I,” “excuse me, can you,” were commonly used to express requests regardless of the context. Apart from a higher frequency in the use of “excuse me” and “please” when the boss was being addressed, there was little difference in the language chosen to address someone of higher status compared to that used when addressing a colleague or subordinate. Some unsuitable politeness strategies, such as the use of titles “Boss” and “Dear,” were also a feature of the DCTs completed in Week One.

Analysis of the DCTs administered in the final week of the course indicated significant changes in the language choices made in response to different contextual variables. “Please” and “excuse me” were not evident at all as politeness strategies at this stage. Instead, participants used a variety of other strategies to indicate politeness, such as:

- A wider range of more linguistically complex and indirect language forms, e.g. “Will you please give me a lift home?” (version 1) “I was wondering if you could possibly give me a lift” (version 2). “Could you please” (1) and “I wonder if you could” (2). “I am so sorry, can you help me” (1) and “I hope you don’t mind my asking but I wonder if you could possibly” (2). “Can you give me” (1) and “I just wonder if you could” (2).
- The pronouns ‘I’ or ‘we’ rather than ‘you’ were more commonly used to reduce the imposition in the request.
- First names were used appropriately and inappropriate titles were no longer evident.
- More grounders and preparators were used before the request to minimize the imposition, e.g. “Can I have a quick word?,” “Sorry to interrupt.”
- A range of softeners were used in version 2, such as “just,” “a little” and “possibly.”

There was some variation in control of the language features and some learners produced non-target like features in version 2, such as, “I was wonder,” “I would be grate if,” “I will appreciate,” “I am appreciate,” “I wondering,” which indicated that grammatical proficiency had not always kept pace with the developing pragmatic awareness.

An analysis of the recorded role-plays indicated similar results; a wider range of indirect request forms and softeners were used in the second, and where it was available, the third recording. The data from the role-plays also indicated further features that were not evident in the DCTs, more responsiveness to the addressee as illustrated by the use of small talk, increased use of personal names, and more strategic use of pausing. A comparison of data taken at three points from one DCT task and the role-play of the same situation illustrates these aspects.

The scenario is from DCT exercise 8: “An unexpected request from your boss means that you will have to ask your secretary to stay late to help you prepare a report. You have worked with your secretary for the last year. Ask your secretary.”

DCT exercises (Jenny)	Role-play exercise (Jenny)
<p>Week 1</p> <p>Hi (name). I'm sorry for that but (name) just request to us to finish this. I'm afraid we have to work a little bit longer today. Can you please help me to do ... please? So I think we can finish earlier. Sorry about that. Thank you very much.</p>	<p>Week 1</p> <p>Excuse me Nicky. I am sorry to disturb you, and ah, we really got something need your help. You know, the report, we, we should deliver it tomorrow but our boss asked me for earlier so I think we gonna have to work extra times at night. I'm sorry to let you overworking but could you please stay a little bit later to help work it out?</p>
<p>Week 4</p> <p>Hi Nicky, I just came back from Paul's office. Um, it seems like that we have to finish that report today. I am aware that you are about to leave now, but is it possible that I could hold you a little bit longer, mm, say 9.00pm. Sorry about that.</p>	<p>Week 4</p> <p>Hi Sarah</p> <p>Oh hello, hi Jenny</p> <p>Busy, huh?</p> <p>Yeah, yeah</p> <p>Well, look, um - I'm sorry to bring this, - you know I just came back from the meeting with Paul and (sigh) - it turned out our report have to be finished today which means one day advance, so ah - (tsk), is that, I was just wondering, is it possible that I could get your help tonight a little bit later - let's see - 9 o'clock?</p>
<p>Week 12</p> <p>3. Hi (name). I've just come back from (name). It looks like we both have to stay a little bit longer for the report. I'm sorry about that. You're ok with that aren't you?</p>	<p>Week 12</p> <p>Hi Nicky</p> <p>Sorry bad news (laughs). I just came back from Paul's office and he said that report has to be presented earlier. It looks like we will have to stay a little bit longer tonight - are you able to do that?</p>

As can be seen from the transcripts, the DCT data provided evidence of increased use of softeners: “is it possible,” indirect request forms “I was just wondering” and the use of the pronoun ‘I’ rather than ‘you.’ The role-play data adds further evidence of developing confidence in L2 pragmatic ability in the use of preparators: “I’m sorry to bring this” (Week 4), “Sorry bad news” (Week 12), relationship building small talk, longer discourse turns and the strategic use of non-verbal features: pausing and sighs. The evidence of these additional features demonstrated the value of using role-plays as a further method of data collection.

The transcripts also demonstrate the value of collecting data at the midway point as well as the pre and post instruction stages. As can be seen, the learner (Jenny) moves from a more direct request form: “Can/could you please” (Week One) to the more indirect “is it possible, I was just wondering” in Week Four. The more indirect form illustrated a growing perception of the level of imposition of a request downwards in the L2 context. For example, in interview two in Week 4, when Jenny compared her recorded role-plays from Week One and Four, she commented:

The first thing I have noticed is, at the first time, I focused on the task itself more, how to solve this situation, how to make more choice. But I didn’t think about much language skills, or how to soften it, or how to, you know, use the indirect ways. I can tell this time, after the training, I know how to use the pause, how to use the ‘mm, mm,’ like that and how to use the indirect words like ‘I was wondering,’ ‘I was just wondering,’ and a ‘little bit,’ like that.

The DCT and role-play data collected in Week 12 illustrate a further development to a more confident and familiar tone. In the final interview, Jenny commented on this change which had resulted from awareness gained in her recent work experience as an intern in the second half of the programme:

Actually, I think more about the situations, the familiarity between me and another one. And also it is different between different organizations and or teams. For example, in my team in the internship if you said so indirect they would think you were unusual – so I would follow their roles. Also I am not that nervous. I get more confidence.

I am more confident now as I know the situation. Before I didn’t know I am not sure what I should say in the situation - is that proper – even if I said it properly I didn’t know that. Because I doubt myself, so every sentence I said it sounds like I’m unsure and I did something wrong. Now I am better at reading situations so I’m quite confident - I know what should be done.

Several learners commented on the process of noticing, as suggested by Schmidt (1995) as being central to their developing pragmatic awareness. In the interviews they talked about noticing a variety of different pragmatic features: forms, levels of directness and sequences. For example, one learner, in the interview in Week 12, mentions:

When I watching TV before, I didn’t realise when they talked about the sentence. But now I can aware – oh that sentence, I learned it from the class, from you. For example, someone talked: ‘I was just wondering...’ Oh, I know, I know that sentence but I didn’t realise, recognise before – but I know, ah, in that context,

that sentence is useful, in that situation, and then I can recognise it easily, even also in the workplace, anywhere (T, Programme 1, Week 12).

Perceptions of levels of directness were also noted. Initially, prior to instruction learners commented that New Zealanders were fairly direct when making requests. Somewhat to their surprise, after analyzing authentic input and observations, learners noted that native speakers were more indirect than they had thought. Takahashi (2005) observed the same trend and suggests that learners in language classroom settings were more likely to hear the teacher modeling more direct forms of requests and tended to generalize from this experience.

Discussion and Implications

Evidence from the pre-test and post-test DCTs and role-plays indicates noticeable development in pragmatic competence and awareness during and after the instructional sequence. As mentioned earlier, unlike many of the reported studies of instructed pragmatics, this study was carried out in an ESL setting. This setting was a likely factor in the significant gains made by the participants. The learners in this setting had many more opportunities to notice and practise their developing pragmatic ability than many of the learners in the reported studies in EFL settings. Learners in this study frequently reported on observations and critical incidents involving request strategies that indicated the opportunities available for observing, testing and practicing classroom understandings in a wider context.

In addition to these opportunities, learners in this particular group were highly motivated to find work in New Zealand and therefore were receptive to ways that would enhance their ability to fit into the workplace. Because coming to New Zealand was a conscious choice, in terms of acculturation most members of this study displayed high levels of desire to adapt to the local way of behaving and interacting. These aspects may well have encouraged high levels of integration of pragmatic features. It is also possible that the levels of language proficiency displayed by the participants also contributed to their pragmatic gains. On the other hand, pragmatic improvement seemed to occur irrespective of whether the grammatical proficiency levels were high or intermediate. It is more likely, as Takahashi (2005) observed, that motivation played a more crucial role.

Not all learners displayed complete control of the target features. As mentioned earlier, in version 2 of the DCTs some non-target structures were used, for example, “I was wonder.” One explanation for this is, as Bardovi-Harlig suggests (2001), that it is very likely that learners move towards pragmatic competence in phases. The phases seem to be related to the limitations in control of processing discussed earlier in this paper. The amount of attentional resources that a learner has at their disposal in any interaction can lead to non-target structures being used as well as to an over-reliance on a few well integrated features. The over-reliance on a relatively small number of request strategies was evident in this study. For example, after learners became aware of the forms ‘I wonder’ and ‘I was just wondering’ they tended to use them everywhere, whether or not the situation called for that level of indirectness. This was found in both the DCTs and role-plays. As mentioned earlier in this report, Takahashi (2001) noted a very similar use of these request forms. Learners themselves noted this developmental strategy:

When I talk I repeat the same words all the time. I have to use different words but I cannot think quickly. I know different types of politeness words or indirect words but when I use some words I just keep using those words – that is my problem. (T, Programme 1, Week 12)

On the other hand, this over-reliance on certain forms, irrespective of the context, could also be strategic and intentional, as one learner comments:

For myself, since I am still not totally confident in using English properly as well as my poor New Zealand culture knowledge, I tend to use more indirect and polite language to avoid mistake. It is the safest way. If I were in China, my culture knowledge makes me easily understand the distance and status by reading listeners' facial expressions when I make the requests, so I can handle it more confidently and appropriately. (S, Programme 1, Week 12)

Results from this study indicate the value of including role-plays and retrospective interviews as additional data collection methods. Despite the problems in using role-plays outlined earlier in this report, the role-plays significantly supplemented the insights gained from DCTs. The role-play data were able to go some way in demonstrating learners' pragmatic knowledge and their control of processing of pragmatic features in real time. They also illustrated features of pragmatic competence that the DCTs could not provide, in particular, the awareness of pausing and intonation to convey intention. The retrospective interviews gave insights into learners' planning and thought processes and were a valuable means of understanding the process and not the outcome alone.

Conclusion

As Rose (2005, p. 5) points out, most interlanguage pragmatic research in ESL learners has not looked at classroom learning. The study described in this paper offers a small glimpse of pragmatic learning in an ESL context where attention is given, in a classroom setting, to pragmatic features of English. Key features of the instruction programme were the use of authentic language examples as well as many opportunities to practise and use pragmatic features with classmates and native speakers.

The findings of the study confirm the results of many of the previous studies in instruction in pragmatics, that is, explicit metapragmatic discussion coupled with authentic input facilitates the development of both pragmatic awareness and competence. This development takes time and learners move through stages at different rates but instructional intervention is a valuable component of the process.

The main goal of teaching pragmatics is to raise learners' awareness of pragmatic issues and to give them choices in their interactions in their L2. A better informed learner will be more aware of the consequences of different pragmatic choices and will have the tools for interacting in the target community, but the extent to which these tools are included in their repertoire is a matter of individual choice.

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Wellington Language in the Workplace Project website: www.vuw.ac.nz/lals/lwp

Appendix: Making Requests

Write what you would say in the following situations. If you think you would not make the request in any one of the situations please say why.

1. You have just started a new job, sharing an office with another colleague who is very friendly and helpful. She is a smoker. You are a non-smoker and the building has a non-smoking policy. Your colleague ignores the non-smoking policy and smokes in the office while you are both there. You really wish she didn't. You want to ask her to stop. Write what you would say.

2. You arrive at work and realize that you have left your wallet at home. Because of this you have no money for lunch. You would normally ask Peter who is the work colleague you are closest to but he is not at work today. You do not know your other colleagues very well but you really want to ask them to lend you some money for lunch. Write what you would say.

3. You have been at your present job for about one month. It is a cold, wet winter evening and you have just finished work. On your way out of the office you realize that your team manager lives on the same street as you and drives a car. You'd love a lift home because it will be very difficult to find a taxi in this weather. Ask for a lift.

4. You have been in your new job for about 3 months. A report that you are writing for your boss is due today. It is not ready and you need a bit more time to finish it. Ask your boss

5. You want to discuss with your boss a report you are writing. You have worked with your boss on several projects over the last 2 years. When you pop in to see her she is busy and cannot talk right away. Ask her for an appointment for a later date.

6. You have just started a new job and you are also taking a part time university course. You have some course work to fulfill that involves asking your boss to answer some questions. It will take about 10 minutes. Ask your boss.

7. You have been working in your present job for the last 3 years. You are taking a university course and you need some information for an assignment. You would like to ask your work colleague to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire will take about 10 minutes. Ask your colleague.
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8. An unexpected request from your boss means that you will have to ask your secretary to stay late to help you prepare a report. You have worked with your secretary for the last year. Ask your secretary.
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9. You have been assigned a new secretary while your usual secretary is on leave. You need to ask her to carry out a number of routine tasks. Ask her to phone and make arrangements for a meeting, prepare some documents for the meeting and complete the filing of yesterday's letters.
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10. You have been working in the same company for 10 years and are beginning to feel rather unmotivated. You have asked a colleague to read your CV and give you some feedback as you are thinking of applying for a new job. You would like to send the CV off tomorrow but your colleague has not returned it. Ask for it back and remind your colleague that you don't want anyone else to know about your job application.
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BOOK REVIEWS

Lin, A. & Martin, P. (Eds.) (2005). *Decolonisation, globalisation: Language-in-education policy and practice*. Clevedon, U.K.: Multilingual Matters. Pp. 204. ISBN: 1-85359-824-0

Reviewed by David Cooke, York University

In New Zealand, we may have some worrying issues around language, but spare a thought for other countries. In Hong Kong, Kenya, India, Malaysia, Singapore and Southern Africa, they contend with an official language that is also the colonial language, a jostling context of multiple indigenous languages, and the relentless forces of globalisation propelling English to centre stage. In such places, the situation of languages in contact is complex, the question of Language-in-Education is pressing, and the process of Language Planning and Policy is urgent and contested.

These issues are the focus of Lin & Martin's wide-ranging and thought-provoking book. From a critical perspective, they set out to theorise and problematise issues of inequality in education and the excruciating tension between local and global forces. The contributors consistently reveal the conflicted dilemmas of post-colonial societies – the competing demands of nation-building and global pressures, of official policies and pragmatic practices in education, of idealism and frankly hopeless education.

The overwhelming conclusion from the collected analyses is that English swamps everything else. "*Englis opens my breans*," writes a Grade 8 South African student. No matter the often impressive efforts of politicians, planners and educators to accommodate the challenging realities of diverse languages and populations, the growing worldwide appeal of English undermines policies for incorporating indigenous languages in education and sets up practices that are clearly counter-productive. Grace Bunyi, for instance, depressingly describes the hegemony of English, which "presents enormous challenges for the majority of Kenyan children" (p. 131). She recounts reading lessons that are tedious, boring and inefficient, with a negative hidden message: "reading is mere recitation – a game that is unrelated to meaning" (p. 136).

Just as sad is Martin's account of a policy in Malaysia to switch from Malay to English in some subjects, which in any case, confounds the position of indigenous languages in the classroom – "their own languages are relegated to also-rans" (p. 94). In a rather similar discussion of Tanzania, Birgit Brock-Utne searingly decides, "The English language has become a barrier to knowledge" (p. 181) and she concludes, "The situation that African teachers are forced into is tragic" (p. 189). But she does propose a reasonable alternative language model for Africa: master the mother tongue, learn a regional African language, then learn an international language as a subject (on the grounds that procedures like English-medium education are disastrous for learning).

Several chapters invoke the notion of "safe talk" – doing the lesson in a way that enables both teacher and student to save face, but without any learning actually taking place. There is attention to code-switching and code-mixing, denigration of local languages in favour of international languages and forces, English-medium instruction in universities (e.g., Turkey) and "English as hidden curriculum" (Iran).

The text is consistently informative and educational. Several studies draw richly on ethnographies of classrooms (e.g., Martin on Sarawak; Bunyi on Kenya). There is recent and fascinating history of liberated societies (Probyn on South Africa; Annamalai on India; Rubdy on Singapore). Nation-building is a repeated theme across different countries.

Two principles stand out. One is the political nature of decisions around language planning and policy, and language-in-education. “Considerations of language allegiance, sociolinguistic identity, and linguistic attitudes are rarely rational, pragmatic, or objective,” says Canagarajah in his Afterword (p. 195). “They are ideological.” The other is the underlying case for social justice. Chapter after chapter details inequities and inequalities in education, language provision and language imposition: it is up to us to realise that these descriptions are pleas for social equity.

The sub-title then, is painstakingly explored. Curiously, though, the main title poses problems. Many of the situations depicted are described as post-colonialism rather than decolonisation. With others, it might be more appropriate to talk of “afterwards-colonisation,” to capture the idea of the continuing aftermath of colonisation: “The hegemony of the colonial language English in education has remained an enduring legacy of colonialism in Kenya,” writes Bunyi (p. 131). And overall, the book is a testament to *re-colonisation*, as it stresses the overwhelming return of English: “globalisation has made the borders of the nation state porous and reinserted the importance of the English language for all communities,” says Canagarajah (p. 196).

Meanwhile, given the highly productive focus on problematising and re-conceptualising issues throughout the book, it is perhaps surprising that the term, “globalisation,” escapes scrutiny. While it is critically examined as a negative force in language questions, it seems to be uncritically used in a single sense to mean internationalisation. There are other more malignant definitions of globalisation in extensive literature around the world, summed up in the title of Korten’s book (1995), *When corporations rule the world* – in other words, globalisation as an agent of corporate control (see also Kelsey, 1999; Mander & Goldsmith, 1995; Martin & Schumann, 1997). If this view of globalisation has some validity, it would pose a disturbing tension with the necessary concentration on the nation-state. Some critiques approach this dilemma. Analysing South Africa, for instance, Probyn speaks of “the competing discourses of [national] transformation and the market economy,” neatly encapsulating the environment that drives language choices.

Nevertheless, this is a powerful book. It informs us richly about the difficulties and inequalities of education, language choice and life opportunities in complex language communities. It locates the discussion in a reflective theoretical frame that Lin & Martin call “a critical construction paradigm” (p. 2). ESOL teachers and teacher educators need to know the challenging realities that many of our students face and that we may well encounter when we venture abroad for our ELT OE’s. And we need a highly alert critique of the role of English worldwide (see also Tollefson, 2000). For language teachers and applied linguists, it is valuable to learn about language choices in diverse societies, confronting dilemmas that are not entirely remote from decisions about Maori, English, Pasifika and Community languages in New Zealand. Notably, Prof. Stephen May spoke about *language policy* at the NZ Diversity Forum in Auckland in August, 2007, reminding us of the long period of stagnation since the Waite Report (1992) and Shackleford’s (1997) analysis of language policy.

Language, after all, is a social phenomenon, so we might as well inquire strenuously into the interaction of language and society, which is what *Decolonisation, globalisation* does.

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Reed, C. (2007). *500 activities for the primary classroom*. Oxford, UK: Macmillan Education. Pp. 318. ISBN: 978-1-4050-99073.

Reviewed by Roger Barnard, University of Waikato

As the title suggests, this new book is a compendium of practical suggestions for use with learners aged 4-12, although it would have been useful to identify the focus on language learning in the title. The authors intend it to be used by language teachers working with young learners in the state or private sectors, especially those who have had little or no professional development in this area. In many ways, it may be seen as a recipe book simply to provide simple and practical ideas to respond to the question posed on page 5, 'What am I going to do with my class tomorrow?' However, the author claims that the book is intended to take into account the learning and development of the whole child, rather than just narrowly language-focussed practice. It is worth pointing out at this stage that the book focuses on teaching English as a second or foreign language, but it is evident that the vast majority of activities can be adapted for use with other languages.

After a 12-page general introduction about the book and working with children (from a broadly Vygotskian perspective), the book is divided into ten sections: Listening and speaking; Reading and writing; Vocabulary and grammar; Storytelling and drama; Games; Rhymes, chants and songs; Art and craft; Content-based learning; ICT and multi-media; and Learning to learn. Each section commences with an overview of methodological issues related to the topic and a set of questions intended to facilitate the teacher's reflection while, and after, using the activities. Those for the first section include: Did the children want to speak/listen during the activity? Why / Why not? Was the purpose the activity made clear?

Were the language demands appropriate? What support did you give to help children understand and/or use the language?

There are between 20 and 30 activities in each section, and they are set out within a standard format. Thus, for each activity the following are specified: appropriate language levels (based on the Council of Europe's *Common Framework for Languages*); the suggested age range of the target students; the class organisation (pair, group, whole class); the aims and language focus; the recommended materials, designed to be easy to prepare; the procedure set out in easy-to-follow steps; and final comments and suggestions for variation.

To give an idea of how this works out, the following is an outline of the 'Frisbee' activity in Section 1.

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|------------|------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Level | all | Age | 7-12 | Organisation | pair, whole class |
| Aims | to say what you can use something for; to develop creative thinking skills; (to develop reference skills). | | | | |
| Language focus | can (for possibility), any vocabulary children need. | | | | |
| Materials | <i>Essential</i> : Frisbee or other object / <i>Optional</i> : picture dictionaries or bilingual dictionaries (class set). | | | | |
| Procedure | (in this case, ten easy-to-follow steps) | | | | |
| Comments and suggestions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By doing an activity like this, children are encouraged to think flexibly and to develop their imagination. They also feel a sense of achievement and 'ownership' of ideas and this helps to build self-esteem and make learning memorable as well as enjoyable. • You may be surprised by how many creative ideas children have. An example by a seven year old child I once taught is 'You can use a Frisbee as a swimming pool for ants'. • Other everyday objects suitable for use for this activity are a ruler, a stone, a pot or a CD case. | | | | |

Looking at this example, it is easy to see that the suggestions are relevant, practicable and clearly explained. It is also noteworthy, both from the aims and the concluding comments, that the purpose is not merely to fill out a lesson with language practice, but to develop broader educational goals. This is particularly true of the 22 activities in the final section, 'Learning to learn', which include 'Setting goals', 'Classroom jobs', 'Our classroom contract', and 'Why I am learning English'. Many of the activities are fairly standard suggestions that can be found in other 'recipe' books for young (and older) language learners, but with variations and educational objectives derived from the author's wide experience of teaching both children and their teachers.

The value of this collection lies not only in the wealth of practical and useful suggestions but also in the way that the activities have been categorised into the ten sections and the clear guidance provided. There are also four very useful indexes: Language structures and grammar; Topics and lexical sets; Learning skills and attitudes; and Activity titles. These make it easy for the teacher to select appropriately from, and cross-reference, the materials. There is also a list of forty books for further reading, and seven websites for further information and advice. Thus, the book serves to develop teacher's competence in the area of language teaching.

I can strongly recommend this well-conceived book to teachers of EAL students in our primary schools. Also, since it will be mandatory from 2008 for all schools to offer instruction in one or more additional language in Years 7 to 10, it will be very useful for those teachers who have had minimal, if any, experience of language teaching. This book will not be a substitute for formal professional development, but it will help them to overcome some of the challenges they face in their day-to-day language teaching. It will also be a valuable resource

for programmes designed to introduce basic methodological issues to prospective language teachers.

Maybin, J. (2006). *Children's voices: Talk, knowledge and identity*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 1-4039-3330-8.

Reviewed by Jo Anna Burn, Auckland University of Technology

Children's Voices is a fascinating work, which examines the way in which a group of British schoolchildren communicate with their peers and others. It differs from most studies in that it does not focus solely on language produced in the classroom, but follows the children through all their social interactions at school for a period of three weeks. Two groups of 10 to 12 year olds were radio-miked and their interactions recorded by the author researcher. The transcripts were supplemented by a series of follow up interviews with the subjects in their friendship pairs. "This book is about what 10-12 year-olds talk about and how they do it, especially when they are away from adults" (p. 5).

Janet Maybin approaches her work from an "ethnographic perspective" (p. 14), using observation and unstructured conversation to gather empirical data from real world, authentic interactions. She then goes on to employ Vygotsky's theories of socialisation and learning through dialogue and Bakhtinian speech genres to interpret the data.

These pubescent children provide particularly rich data as they "are constantly evaluating their social experience in the course of talk" which in turn "reflects their social background and the beliefs and values of their community" (p. 4). What is truly interesting in this work, however, is the way in which the author has been able to penetrate the complicated, often strange and alarming world of children. She found that the most interesting data often came from "the gaps between the official curriculum spaces" (p. 12): the interactions in dinner queues, in corridors and illicit conversations in class. The vivid authenticity of the language wonderfully illustrates the sophisticated and highly complex processes involved as the subjects interact with their world whilst attempting to position themselves as social identities.

A key point is how children reproduce other, often adult voices to assist them in "expressing varying degrees of commitment to, or distancing from, the evaluative perspective it brings" (p. 186). For example, Darren's narrative describing a standoff with a young man:

"This man called me a fucking bastard, right, I go 'back to you', he goes 'come here', I go 'come on then' and he's got about size then trainers and he chased me right, and then when he got, he caught me, right, like that, and he goes 'who's fucking saying?' And I goes 'fuck off', I says 'fuck off' and he goes, he goes, 'Do you want a fight?'

Darren's creative use of idiom, referencing to other speech genres and borrowed snatches of dialogue reflect the complexity of the processes beyond the macho posturing. What emerges is a fluid and highly mutable process of negotiated meaning in which an utterance may be accepted, challenged or subverted by others. In contrast to the more rigidly defined social language of instruction and authority, the language of children in informal situations is ambiguous, and constantly being revaluated by self and peers.

The book is also interesting as an account of the journey of a researcher as she struggled to define processes, and was eventually forced to reappraise her interpretations in light of the data. Whether your interest is education, anthropology, sociology or linguistics, there is much in this book to fascinate. It is a significant addition to our understanding of the way that language functions to construct identity alongside the formal place of instruction.

Gee, J. P. (2005). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (2nd ed.). London, New York: Routledge. Pp xii + 109. ISBN: 04-15211867.

Reviewed by Sharon Harvey, Auckland University of Technology

This publication is a comprehensive update on Gee's 1999 book of the same title containing substantial new theoretical material and a plethora of examples. As the title suggests the book serves as an introduction to Gee's particular take on discourse as well as a way into discourse analysis as a method of research. This is aimed at a student and non-specialist market although there is much here for seasoned scholars of discourse as well. Written in accessible lay language, the book includes helpful 'boxes' from time to time which in some instances contain revision points and in others examples of analysis.

One of my quibbles is the book's propensity to concentrate on young people's talk and school discourse rather than a wider range of written texts, including my particular interest, policy texts. Having said that, the organisation of the book is excellent, taking the reader through Gee's seven "building tasks" of language, i.e. what do we make significant through our language, what activities do we signify, what kind of identities do we enact, what relationships do we signal, what kind of distribution of social goods do we give a perspective on, what connections do we make and what knowledge systems do we privilege? These, Gee asserts are the key things we *do* with language.

Gee then moves on to explaining his tools for analysing how building tasks are enacted and with what consequences. These are based on the whole range of grammatical devices with a particular emphasis and preference for systemic functional linguistics (see Halliday, 1994). The final three chapters provide samples of detailed discourse analysis, Gee style. An explanation of "Grammar in Communication" is incorporated in the form of an appendix although readers are urged to look beyond this for more descriptive and analytical tools and a stronger understanding of how language works in action.

When there is so much we could look at in any particular text/s it is sometimes difficult prioritising features and feeling sure that we have chosen the 'right' ones. However, Gee reassuringly points out that there is no way around the dilemma; judgement is always subjective. Inevitably our judgements are informed by our theories of "how language, situations, and interaction work in general and in the specific situation being analysed" (p. 106). Gee argues that validity in this case is not about how detailed a transcript is, but how "...the transcript works together with all the other elements of the analysis to create a 'trustworthy' analysis" (p. 106). I found this common sense approach and explanation of the limitations of the 'science' of language refreshing in an applied linguistics text.

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Hudson, T. (2007). *Teaching second language reading*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Pp. 350. ISBN: 978-0-19-442283-3.

Reviewed by Marilyn Lewis, Honorary Research fellow, The University of Auckland

This most recent book in the *Oxford Handbooks for Language Teachers* series covers many bases. Much of the content includes first language reading processes and skills as the starting point for discussing the more specific case of second language readers and their teachers. One way of describing the book's organisation would be spiral. Appropriately for a book about reading, the content includes plenty of previewing and reviewing of topics both within chapters and throughout the text.

Thus, in Chapter 1, with its broad brush approach to issues in reading, a *New Zealand Herald* article about a cricket match between Otago and Central Districts gave me a chance to measure the importance of the reader's background knowledge. For more depth, the topic of content schema and background knowledge are later revisited in Chapter 6.

The focus of Chapter 2 is approaches to first and second language reading, including top-down, bottom up and, midway, interactive approaches. Then, issues of particular interest to teachers of second language reading start in chapter 3. Here the question is raised whether difficulty with second language reading is due to language needs or reading needs. There are connections between someone's ability to read in a first language, their general proficiency in the second language and their performance in second language reading. Chapter 4, "Reading skills," becomes even more specific. Amongst other points Hudson addresses the difficulty of using what we know about first language reading as the starting point for describing subskills for second language readers. The normal age difference between the two groups is just one difficulty.

By Chapter 5 teaching implications start to be more explicit with a table that adapts Wilhelm's (2001) "steps in using think-aloud approaches to teach strategies" (p. 137). Chapter 8 deals with genre and contrastive rhetoric, an important aspect for New Zealand educators, given the high numbers of students who change countries for their tertiary studies. One example illustrates Hudson's setting of current theory in its historic setting. He reproduces Kaplan's 1966 graphic representation of cross-cultural differences in paragraph organisation although, as noted, this is "much too simplistic to explain the complete rhetoric of any language or group of languages" (p. 214). Chapter 9 is devoted to the importance of vocabulary in both first and second language reading. Not surprisingly, work by Paul Nation and Ave Coxhead is included. In Chapter 10, the connections are between reading and writing. Like many other parts of the book, this one is dense with information, which makes for detailed, but not difficult, reading. Thus the final chapter (11) reviews the whole book.

A book needs to be judged by its stated purpose, which in this case is as a textbook for teachers in training and a reference for teachers and researchers (p. 4). Given the Ministry of Education's widespread focus on literacy this could be an important book also for New Zealand policy makers. A bonus for local readers is the recognition of the work of reading specialists like Tom Nicholson and before him Warwick Elley.

Titles in the *Oxford Handbooks for language teachers* seem to be increasing in size and substance. The original edition of *How languages are learned* by Lightbown and Spada (1993) was about a third of the size of this one and included illustrations. George Yule's

(1998) *Explaining English Grammar* was longer but retained the idea of using many examples to illustrate the points.

Hudson's book is weightier in its presentation. Several descriptors come to mind. The first is 'thorough,' with an almost 40 page bibliography which is a resource in its own right. The second is 'objective.' Although, as stated in his introduction, Hudson has been interested in the reading process since childhood, he avoids taking sides in controversial aspects of teaching reading. It is hard to imagine him asking the question that was once posed to me at a reading conference in California about whole language. "Which side are you on?" The third description is 'encouraging.' Despite its scholarly approach, there is an emphasis on what teachers can do. In some chapters the instructional implications sections encourage teachers to do the application.

Esteras, S. R. & Fabré, E. M. (2007). *Professional English in use: ICT*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 1978-0-521-68543-6

Reviewed by Helen Cartner, Auckland University of Technology

This book is part of the *Professional English in Use* series, which, as indicated in the series introduction, offers vocabulary reference and practice for specialist areas of professional English. Other titles in the series are *Finance*, *Medicine* and *Law*. The book under review is on Information Communications Technology (ICT), and describes the communication technologies we use in our daily lives. As described in its introduction, the book is designed for intermediate to advanced level learners who need to use the English of computing and the Internet both for work and study. I would certainly use it with advanced classes and with more scaffolding of activities I could use it with Intermediate learners.

A definite plus for the book is that it has used material from the Cambridge International Corpus. This Corpus has been built up over the last 10 years with English from a variety of sources including newspapers, novels, non-fiction, websites, magazines and recordings of people's everyday conversations. The corpus currently has around one billion words. Because use has been made of this Corpus, I feel assured that the book's vocabulary is based on authentic, current language.

The authors state they have written this ICT vocabulary book because many professionals from engineers to desktop publishers, have to read technical documentation and also because English is the language of computers and the Internet. I would also include non-professionals benefiting from this book too as increasingly more and more workers including those from the assembly line need to understand the vocabulary of ICT. Knowledge of the Internet and communication tools such as email and online banking are necessary for a growing number of people for work and home.

When I first examined this book my concern was to ascertain whether the material was recent and able to be useful to students and teachers for a number of years in the future. I am now happy to be able to recommend it because the topics covered concern the most important ICT areas such as PCs, printers, word processing, multimedia, email, web design, video conferencing, mobile phones as well as a section on future trends, word building and language functions.

The book is divided into 40 thematic units plus one introductory unit, each occupying two pages. The book is very easy to work from. Each topic covers two pages so there is no need to turn pages forward or back to locate texts. The left-hand page presents and explains ICT lexical areas. Information Technology vocabulary items are presented using a variety of different techniques including a definition, paragraph explaining a concept or device, a diagram or picture illustrating a technical process, a situation where terms are used in context and in an authentic or adapted text from an original source. The right-hand page is for practice and extension of vocabulary. Sometimes the exercises focus on using words from the left-hand page in paragraph form, other times as a crossword or other type of puzzle, or a diagram. There are also matching exercises and word-building activities using prefixes, suffixes and compounds (a feature of new word acquisition in a new field such as computing). The Cambridge International Corpus is the source of a lot of the material.

A point to note is that no specialist knowledge of computers is required by the learner or teacher. The first topic is about living with computers; Units 2-9 deal with hardware components; Unit 10 with health and safety; Units 11-18 with software and jobs in computing; Units 19-29 range from computer networks and the Web to e-commerce; Units 30-32 are about future developments; Units 33-36 with word-formation processes and collocations and Units 37-40 on some typical language functions in ICT English.

Care has been taken to present the texts and learning activities using a variety of approaches that take into account learning styles. There is reading of text from different sources such as magazines, text-books, brochures as well as filling in gaps in diagrams, pictures, tables, puzzles and the more common sentence format. Students are required to match definitions, do true/false activities, solve problems, apply reading and make inferences, choose most appropriate solutions, and reflect on alternatives. There are a range of learning tasks that match learning styles for those students who like to work with concrete experience, reflection, conceptualisation and practical application.

Although the focus of the book is on reading and vocabulary writing, activities can be followed up through the section 'You and computers' at the end of each unit. There are two types of activities. The first are follow-up activities where students are encouraged to develop language skills by writing or discussing topics and secondly activities based on the book's website. These are based on links to external websites related to the unit being worked on. These web links are very relevant and introduce another set of materials suiting a variety of learning styles.

Finally I would like to note that the book is beautifully presented with excellent quality coloured pictures clearly depicting, for example, up to date technology, tables, graphs brochure material. The cartoon at the end of each unit is there to liven up the content and to enjoy.

This book in only 118 pages certainly provides learners with lots of material in order to develop an extensive ICT vocabulary and it also provides activities to improve reading skills. There is some opportunity through the web links to utilise listening skills as in the Podcast link where learners listen to a Podcast and fill in a table based on information from it. Given one book cannot be expected to cover all the macro skills, I believe a teacher could adapt many of the reading tasks to include listening, speaking and writing activities.

I can wholeheartedly recommend that teachers on courses relating to computing, business or employment have this book on their desk. I also highly recommend it be on a shelf for any course with ICT a focus or unit. Also I would recommend anyone wanting to write a book for learners of English to learn from the book's design being Corpus based, incorporating authentic texts and using materials that take into account current learning style theories.

Reference

McLoughlin, C. (1999). The implications of the research literature on learning styles for the design of instructional material. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology*, 15(3), 222-241.

Glendinning, E. H. & Howard, R. (2007). *Professional English in use: Medicine*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. Pp.176. ISBN: 978-0-521-68201-5

Reviewed by Rosemary Wette, The University of Auckland

Part of a new series that also includes ESP for Finance, Law and ICT, this book consists of 46 two-page units covering a number of broad medical themes: personnel and places (e.g. clinicians, nurses, hospitals, primary care); systems, symptoms and diseases (e.g. signs and systems, blood, bones, gynaecology, oncology, the skin, mental illness); investigations (e.g. laboratory tests, endoscopy, Xray, CT, MRI, ultrasound, ECG); treatment (medical~, surgical~, therapies); prevention; epidemiology; ethics and research. A further 14 units of communication skills units include taking a history, carrying out an examination, explaining a diagnosis and discussing treatment as well as conference based communication skills (e.g. data displays, research articles, conference abstracts and presentations). The book concludes with six appendices (parts of the body, medical abbreviations, medication, symptoms & pain, verbs of instruction and lay terms and definitions) and a comprehensive answer key.

The primary audience for this book is medical professionals at an Intermediate/High Intermediate level of proficiency who intend to travel to an English-speaking country for a conference, clinical attachment or other kind of visit. While it may provide a useful self-study tool for those seeking registration in New Zealand, its fairly superficial, broad-brush treatment of each of the 60 medical topics means that it is probably best used as a supplementary text. The medical information found in the book would be considered rudimentary by a qualified professional; however it offers a range of lay-medical terms and examples of "patient-talk" in each of the topic areas that might well be new to those who have qualified and practised in non-English speaking environments. This is a particularly valuable component of the book; for example students are asked to match patients' descriptions of signs and symptoms with medical terms, or to make patient-friendly questions out of "Is your cough productive?" or "Do you suffer from dyspnoea?" when taking a history.

Unlike the other book for medical professionals by Glendinning (Glendinning & Holstrom, 1998), this volume focuses only on vocabulary and language development. There are no listening texts and only very short reading texts and writing tasks. The level of proficiency expected of learners is slightly lower than for the earlier Glendinning text, which may be appropriate for a text designed primarily for self-study.

The layout of the book is clear, colourful and easily accessible. Since each unit takes up only two facing pages, it is easy for the reader to move from the presentation of new language content on the left hand page (set out in clearly titled short texts, diagrams and tables) to exercises on the right hand page providing practice in using the new language. At the bottom of this page, the unit ends with an *Over to you* box that can lead to a discussion or written answers (possible content for these more open-ended tasks can also be found in the answer key).

There is much to recommend this book, and I think it will serve its target audience and study purposes well. The authors note that they have endeavoured to make sure that medical content is accurate, and that they have drawn on the corpus of medical English from the University of Edinburgh. It can therefore be said to provide authoritative content in a user-friendly format that is particularly suited for independent learning by those wanting to learn or revise basic medical English.

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Widdowson, H. G. (2007). *Discourse analysis*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Pp. 185. ISBN: 978-0-19-438921-1.

Reviewed by Anthea Fester, Waikato University

Widdowson is a well-respected and well-known academic in the area of discourse analysis. It seems appropriate, then, that he should author a concise introduction for readers new to this area of language studies. This book is the most recent addition to a series of brief surveys produced by Oxford University Press called *The Oxford Introductions to Language Study*. A range of topics such as Language Testing, Sociolinguistics and Grammar are covered in this series. Each of the books in the series consists of four parts namely; a survey section, a selection of readings, annotated references and a glossary. The series is intended to “prepare the conceptual groundwork” as Widdowson states. The author draws on his wealth of knowledge of discourse analysis to compile this readable reference.

In this book, Section 1, the survey section, contains eight chapters covering some of the main aspects of discourse analysis. The eight areas are: language in use, communication, context, schematic conventions, co-textual relations, negotiation of meaning, critical analysis and text analysis. Within each chapter in the first section, issues and concepts related to the particular chapter focus are addressed in such a way that it is easy for students who have no expertise in the area to process.

In Chapter 1, for example, where the focus is on ‘language in use,’ Widdowson addresses issues related to text, discourse and spoken versus written English within the context of their encoded meanings. The chapter starts with a deconstruction of the simple prohibition sign “Keep off the grass” and soon the reader realizes the complexity of a simple text in terms of the grammatical structure, the context and the cultural boundaries. Although designed for

novice readers in the area, Widdowson does not detract from the intricacies and complexities embedded in language study.

The second section of the book focuses on brief but significant extracts from readings that relate to each of the chapters covered in Section 1. Extracts from books or articles by a number of well-known researchers, such as Halliday & Hasan (1976), Hoey (2001), Cook (2001) and Labov (1972), are included as points of discussion for the questions. For chapter one there are four short texts provided on various definitions of the term “discourse”. Particularly useful for the target audience are the thought-provoking questions posed after the texts. For chapter one, the reader has to compare and contrast the information in the text with the information given and also to evaluate the views of the writers in the short text. If you are teaching in the area of discourse analysis, this section will provide you with useful discussion questions for your classes.

Section three, the reference section, contains a list of relevant reference sources for each of the chapters covered in the first section. This encourages wider reading within the topic areas described in the first section. Each reading contains a brief annotation to give the reader some overview of the contents of the reading. These highly recommended readings include articles by academics such as Fairclough (2001) and Brown and Yule (1983). A very useful feature of this reference section is the classification of each of the suggested readings into ‘introductory level, more advanced and consequently more technical’ and ‘specialised, very demanding.’

The final section in the book is an alphabetised glossary of subject-specific terminology. For example, essential terms used through section one like “co-operative principle”; “declarative knowledge” and “discourse community” are included. As readers negotiate their way through each of the chapters, the technical terms included in the glossary are printed in bold so that it is evident which words or terms are covered in the glossary. This serves as a very user-friendly mini dictionary.

Particularly effective is the way in which Widdowson presents each of the short text scenarios as examples to stage the multiplicity of meanings in a simple text. These move from basic grammar deconstruction to highly unlikely, but probable, interpretations of meaning of the text is based on the individual’s frame of reference. One issue that came to mind while reading this book is that it could have benefited from the inclusion of some slightly longer texts in the text analysis chapter to highlight aspects of coherence and cohesion, such as discourse relations, that are vital to the readers’ understanding of texts. However, in light of the target audience, that might have been a little too challenging.

This valuable book is an accessible read as an introduction to discourse analysis. It will undoubtedly be well received by the target audience as well as by scholars currently engaged in studying or teaching in the area. For the later group, it could serve as a basic reference source to delve into when necessary.

References

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Hoey, M. (2001). *Textual interaction: An introduction to written discourse analysis*. London: Routledge.

Labov, W. (1972). *Sociolinguistic patterns*. London: Basil Blackwell.

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.
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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.
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