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## ***Editors' Note***

# **Communities of Practice: Fostering ELT Research in a Development Context**

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Research in English language teaching in Cambodia has emerged in the past decade. For research in ELT to flourish in a development context such as that of Cambodia, the formation and fostering of communities of practice may be essential. Following Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder's (2002) concept of communities of practice, Keuk (2015a) explored communities of practice in Cambodia at the three levels of ELT research practice: micro, meso, and macro. For a community of practice to grow, as Wenger (1998, 2006) and Wenger et al. (2002) argued, the community and its members need to achieve three fundamental characteristics: joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoires. Through examining research practice from the micro level to the meso level and then to the macro level, Keuk's (2015a) investigation revealed the development of true communities of practice in the Cambodian context and may provide useful insights to other development contexts where ELT research is still emerging.

Communities of practice at the micro level may be viewed through the engagement of individual teachers in doing research and then sharing their research at their institutions and / or at conferences. In the case of teachers at a university in Phnom Penh, Keuk (2015b) found that more than half of the teachers (58.7%) had engaged in research activities. Taking Rogers' (2003) notion of adoption of innovation into consideration, these teachers have a shared interest in doing research, seeing the benefits that undertaking research may provide to teaching. In other words, teachers have a shared domain comprising ELT research activities, research knowledge and skills, ways of undertaking research, disciplinary knowledge, and available resources, all of which become important artifacts for a community of practice to develop.

At the meso level, domestic ELT institutions play an important role as intermediaries. These institutions facilitate teacher research activities through creating physical and virtual spaces and opportunities for teachers to undertake, present, and publish research by organizing research activities and events, and providing technical support (e.g., research workshops and training) or in-house journals in addition to research grants (Keuk, 2015a, 2015b). Teachers are able to interact, discuss, exchange, and learn from each other through their research endeavours. Institutions have also supported teachers to attend international ELT conferences, in particular the annual CamTESOL Conference. Institutions not only support and supplement teachers'

existing research skills, but also the development of such skills. Though not financially supporting teachers to study overseas, institutions have encouraged teachers to pursue advanced degrees, provided them with study leaves, and guaranteed positions on return. Within this practice, individual institutions provide vital assistance to teacher research and facilitate the further growth of the community of practice at the micro level.

At the macro level, Keuk (2015a) found that communities of practice which support ELT research have been mediated by the CamTESOL Conference Series, which is organized by IDP Cambodia in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS) of Cambodia and various domestic and international institutions. Since 2009, CamTESOL has been active (Keuk, 2015a) in promoting teacher research in Cambodia (as well as in other developing countries in ASEAN). The Conference provides grants and international ELT researchers as mentors to facilitate teachers' research. This international mentorship provides teachers with opportunities to interact with experienced researchers to complete their research grant activities. Along the trajectory of participation, teachers learn ways of undertaking research and build up best practices, that is, a shared repertoire. To further promote research, in 2014, CamTESOL, in partnership with the University English Centres Australia (UECA), held a one-day Regional Research Symposium. Now named the CamTESOL-UECA Regional ELT Research Symposium, it serves as an annual forum for presenting those research grant projects as well as other research conducted by teachers from the region.

*Language Education in Asia* (LEiA), with its focus on ASEAN authors, joins the CamTESOL Conference in communities of practice on two levels. At the meso level, the publication shares a common goal with authors in publishing quality peer-reviewed research and teaching practice papers that will benefit the LEiA readership. The publication process requires (as some authors may attest) intensive mutual engagement and the resulting contribution to the literature is evidence of a shared repertoire. At the macro level, the goals, systems, and abilities of the journal are continually reviewed so that authors and the readership are better served. In one example, next spring, we anticipate the launch of a peer reader program to support beginning authors in the ASEAN region, particularly Cambodian authors at first, and hope that the volunteer peer readers will include Cambodian researchers.

For communities of practice in ELT research to flourish, a supportive, workable, and practical framework is necessary. The continued development of all levels of such communities of practice in Cambodia and perhaps in other development contexts requires a great deal of inter- and intra-level cooperation, goodwill, and dedication. Communities of practice within and between each level must interact and learn, be willing to share knowledge and skills, and maximize resources and partnerships to thrive. We encourage researchers in Cambodia to research and at the same time look beyond their own research and actively participate in the different levels of communities of practice.

In Volume 6, Issue 2, LEiA publishes three research papers and one teaching practice paper. The first paper is a CamTESOL Regional ELT Research Grant Paper from Vietnam. Bui and Truong investigate English teachers' perceptions of creating and integrating theme-based content and language integrated learning (CLIL) into primary English language lessons. Next, Tran and Moore explore university English teachers' perceptions of the use of World Englishes in their teaching contexts in Vietnam. Concluding the research section, Aftab and Salahuddin examine the effect of authentic texts in reading comprehension of Grade VI and VII students in the South Asian ESL setting of Pakistan. In the teaching practice paper, Nguyen examines how pre-intermediate level university students perceive the use of the 'PechaKucha' presentation model in a reading class in the Japanese EFL context.

In the previous Editors' Note, there was an announcement about the availability of three LEiA books online:

*ASEAN Integration and the Role of English Language Teaching*  
[http://dx.doi.org/10.5746/LEiA/ASEAN\\_Integ\\_ELTA](http://dx.doi.org/10.5746/LEiA/ASEAN_Integ_ELTA)

*Research and Practice in English Language Teaching in Asia*  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5746/LEiA/RPELTA>

*English Language Teaching Practice in Asia*  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5746/LEiA/ELTPA>

We are very pleased to announce that a hardcopy version of the fourth LEiA book, *Language Learner Autonomy: Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Asian Contexts*, edited by Roger Barnard and Jinrui Li, will be available at the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual CamTESOL Conference in 2016. Researchers from Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam contributed chapters. Simon Borg, whose 2012 study with Saleh Al-Busaidi was the model for the research projects, graciously wrote the foreword, and Roger Barnard and Jinrui Li contributed the introduction. Phil Benson, plenary speaker for the 2016 CamTESOL Conference, provided an overview chapter, and Lawrence Zhang contributed the epilogue. We thank Roger and Jinrui for bringing this project to LEiA and then managing it so well, and we also thank all of the authors involved in this undertaking.

Our sincere appreciation also goes to the LEiA Advisory Board for its continued support of the publication. In addition, we thank the members of the LEiA Editorial Board for their dedication, particularly in the blind review process. Special gratitude goes to the editorial team; the journal would not be able to thrive without their unseen work to further support the authors and serve the readers.

We also appreciate all of the authors who submitted papers in good faith. Congratulations to the authors of the papers included in this issue.

Finally, thank you to our readership. We hope these papers bring knowledge, spark discussion and curiosity, and spur new research.

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## ***CamTESOL Regional ELT Research Grant Paper***

# **CLIL in Primary English Lessons: Teachers' Perspectives**

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Primary English lessons teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) across Asia have recently been moving towards more student-centered methodologies. However, little research has been done to explore the potential of models which integrate content and language learning (CLIL) from teachers' perspectives. This study presents an overview of teachers' perceptions of their experience of the design and implementation of theme-based CLIL lessons in a Vietnamese EFL context. Qualitative results indicate teachers found the CLIL lesson planning following the 4Cs framework (content, cognition, communication, and culture) time-consuming and demanding in terms of preparing teaching aids, linking content aims and language aims, and including cognition and culture aims in the lessons. However, teachers reported general satisfaction with student performance after implementing the lessons. Teacher perceptions on the process of designing and implementing CLIL alongside regular English classes in Vietnam offer insights into future implementation and research of CLIL in other contexts.

EFL teachers worldwide have found that the integration of curricular subject areas into English lessons can increase students' interest in content themes, therefore providing a cognitively meaningful foundation for new target language items to be acquired. This integration of content and language in English language teaching (ELT) is referred to as a content and language integrated learning (CLIL) approach or content-based instruction (CBI; Dalton-Puffer & Smit, 2007). Research results have revealed that this model is effective in enhancing primary English language learning, learning skills, and motivation toward learning a foreign language (see Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2014; Hüter & Rieder-Bünemann, 2010; Serra, 2007; Yamano, 2013). This study attempts to examine the design and implementation of a theme-based CLIL model in a specific primary EFL context of Vietnam. Findings of teachers' perceptions on the challenges of implementation are expected to be useful for teachers interested in how to link English language learning with a primary curriculum. The findings may have ramifications for curriculum designers, reminding them to consider teacher capacity in implementing a language program (Nation & Macalister, 2010).

## Literature Review

### CLIL in Primary English Education

The practice of CLIL varies along a continuum from a content-driven to a language-driven focus (Met, 1999). Primary CLIL in language teaching is most often conducted in theme-based foreign language instruction by linking it with aspects of other subjects in the curriculum (Coyle, Holmes, & King, 2009). This implementation thus moves toward the language-driven end, or a soft model.

According to Lyster (2011), CBI and CLIL are synonymous in many aspects, with CLIL a more recent term used mostly in Europe. Richards (2006, p. 27) stated that in language teaching, CBI can be seen as “[an] extension of the CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) movement but . . . [it] take[s] different routes to achieve the goal of communicative language teaching - to develop learners’ communicative competence.” Snow, Met, and Genesee (1989) argued that in CBI, language development and cognitive development are linked, but are separated in traditional methods. Lyster (2011) also stated that CLIL / CBI lessons in ELT are distinguished from Grammar-Translation teaching in the focus on meaning rather than form. Learning opportunities are initiated through cognitively meaningful communicative activities / tasks rather than repeated practice of discrete grammatical patterns.

Theme-based CLIL lesson design should involve meaningful communicative activities. The activities can be based on the 4Cs framework, which offers four principles connecting content, cognition, communication, and culture. This framework has been advocated as an effective planning tool for this approach. As Coyle, Holmes, and King (2009) argued, teachers can integrate language with content from across the curriculum. This can support both language and content learning. Next, learners should be engaged cognitively through activities that can promote creativity and higher-order thinking skills. Language is then used to learn and mediate ideas, thoughts, and values. Finally, learners should have an opportunity to appreciate the significance of the content and language, and their contribution to identity and citizenship.

### Teachers’ Perceptions of CLIL

The potential benefits of CLIL have also been supported by empirical research. Studies reported that it is effective in enhancing primary school students’ proficiency in the target language (see Hüter & Rieder-Bünemann, 2010; Ikeda, 2013; Serra, 2007; Yamano, 2013). In Asian EFL language education, the language-driven version has recently been found to work for Japanese primary and secondary school students. Results from a longitudinal study in a secondary school in Japan revealed that students perceived the CLIL course as distinctively different from other language courses, and teachers reported that their students’ essay writing skills improved significantly (Ikeda, 2013). Similarly, Yamano (2013) conducted a comparative study comparing a CLIL class and a non-CLIL class to explore the potential of the approach using the 4Cs framework in a Japanese primary school. She found that a CLIL program had the potential to improve EFL education, particularly in fostering a positive attitude in students toward the target language and vocabulary learning.

Although the potential benefits of CLIL for primary language learning have been supported by research (see Ikeda, 2013; Yamano, 2013), only a few studies have explored teachers’ perceptions of the approach in primary schools. In one such study, Massler (2012) explored how German primary school teachers perceived ProCLIL, a three-year program that investigated CLIL implementation and effectiveness in primary and pre-primary schools in four countries in Europe. Teachers reported a high level of student engagement in learning a foreign language through content-based topics. However, teachers considered CLIL an opportunity for



professional development yet a burden due to the additional workload, preparation time, and cost of materials. Similarly, teacher perceptions of a one-year CLIL implementation in five primary schools in Spain were analysed by Pladevall-Ballester (2015). She found that teachers felt satisfied and rewarded when their students finally adapted to the classes, showing great motivation after some initial reluctance. Teachers revealed challenges such as lack of time to prepare lessons and a lack of support from content teachers.

There are clearly gaps between academic research claims and actual classroom practices as well as how teachers perceive their experiences when they plan, design, and trial CLIL lessons alongside their regular English classes. In Asian contexts, little research on teachers' perceptions of the approach has been conducted. This study will provide a picture of how Vietnamese primary EFL teachers can and do move towards CLIL classroom instruction styles, and their difficulties and successes. It is important to note that the lessons in this study follow a theme-based CLIL model. The utilization of this soft version has considered the specific context of primary English education in Vietnam: traditional teacher-centered Grammar-Translation is still prevalent and primary students' proficiency level is quite low (Nguyen, 2011).

### **Method**

The research questions for this study are:

1. What perceptions do teachers have regarding theme-based CLIL lesson design and implementation?
2. What challenges and successes do teachers encounter when implementing theme-based CLIL lessons in traditional Vietnamese EFL classrooms?

### **Context and Participants**

In Vietnam, primary English education has been compulsory and given a high priority since the launch of the 2008-2020 National Foreign Languages Project (NFLP 2020; Ministry of Education and Training, 2010). However, challenges still exist regarding primary ELT as found in Nguyen's (2011) exploratory case study. She noticed the currently used 3P (present, practice, produce) approach in public primary schools limited students' interaction and communication as they had little chance to be exposed to more authentic communication. She also found that teachers "emphasized mastery of sentence patterns and words rather than stimulating creative or real-world communicative use of language" (p. 240).

The current study involved four primary English teachers who were unfamiliar with CLIL. These teachers, ranging from 23 to 40 years old, had three to 16 years of teaching experience (see Table 2). They were from four public primary schools in An Giang, a rural province, with two schools in Long Xuyen City and two in rural areas. These teachers were recruited from a cohort of local primary school English teachers who had attended an English upgrade program in 2014 at An Giang University (AGU) where the authors were instructors. The participants had expressed a great interest and willingness to participate in the project.

**Table 1**  
**Profiles of Four EFL Vietnamese Grade 4 Teachers**

Teachers	Age	Gender	Years of service	School status	No. of students
TA	23	Female	3	Rural	35
TB	28	Female	7	Urban	30
TC	40	Female	16	Rural	35
TD	36	Female	15	Urban	38

Students in the participants' Grade 4 classes (nine years old) had started learning English from Grade 2. They had been involved in an NFLP pilot curriculum from Grade 3. Thus, their English classes had increased from two to four 40-minute periods per week as required in the new curriculum. Students' proficiency level was not assessed. However, as teacher trainers having several years of observing classes in many schools in rural and urban areas of the province, the authors felt that at the Grade 4 level, students' proficiency level was generally limited to basic phrases and expressions. Informal discussions with the participants revealed that they believed that students in rural areas had lower proficiency than those in urban areas. More specifically, TA and TC felt that their students in the rural schools had lower levels of proficiency and motivation to learn English than those in TB and TD's urban areas.

The fourth grade level was chosen for two specific reasons: students have sufficient English background to follow the CLIL classes and the Grade 4 maths and science curricular content provides a rich source of ideas / themes which can be closely linked with the objectives of their English classes and meaningfully reinforced in English lessons to enhance language learning.

### Procedure

The project was divided into two phases: lesson design and implementation.

**Lesson design.** The participants were trained in CLIL methodology at a four-hour workshop organized by the authors at AGU (see Appendix A). A range of CLIL materials (see Birdsall, 2001, Calabrese & Rampone, 2007, Dale & Tanner, 2012; Deller & Price, 2007) were employed for reference. Then, based on a 4Cs planning guide, a cross-curricular common theme, Food and Nutrition, was selected. While the science content provided subject information on food and nutrition, the maths content was about calculating sums and presenting figures in a block chart. Pairs of participants worked together at two follow-up meetings to analyse the current primary curriculum with a particular focus on maths and science content. These meetings took place after the training classes at AGU, at the participants' convenience.

A complete lesson plan (see Appendices B and C) for a CLIL unit was successfully built by collecting ideas from individual participants' draft lesson plans. The emphasis was on communicative and hands-on learning activities that could provide opportunities for communication and interaction. The language aims were determined by the Food and Drinks unit goals in the current English textbook. While the maths and science content elements could be reinforced in CLIL lessons, some language items were recycled from earlier classes and some new target language items were taught. As the participants linked content aims with language aims, a series of activities were developed to encourage thinking skills and intercultural understanding. At the end of this lesson-planning phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants to gain insights into their perceptions regarding the phase.

**Lesson implementation.** The three 40-minute lessons were implemented in three consecutive weeks by each teacher. Six lessons were observed by the authors and extensive notes were taken. A semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant after each class. All interviews were carried out in Vietnamese. Finally, when the teachers finished their teaching, a focus group interview was conducted to explore their overall perceptions and perceived challenges (See Appendix A for interview questions).

The analysis of the interview data was conducted by assigning codes to the interview transcripts and the classroom observation summaries to identify themes and develop interpretation of the findings. The observation data were analysed and triangulated with the interview data to gain a clearer picture of what had happened in the classrooms. Relevant interview quotes were selected and translated into English by the authors.

## Results

### Teachers' Perceived Difficulties

**The four aims design.** The interview data revealed that the participants encountered various challenges in planning theme-based CLIL lessons. Incorporating all four aims in a three-lesson unit and adapting activities from the CLIL materials were demanding and time-consuming.

Designing this CLIL lesson plan to include all four aims demands a great amount of preparation: researching content, linking content of both maths and science and designing a variety of activities to stimulate thinking skills and intercultural understanding. (TB)

Online materials and CLIL activity books represent a great resource, but they need to be adapted both for the language and the content to meet the objectives and to suit the students' level. (TD)

**From a traditional towards a Communicative Method classroom.** Of the four aims, the implementing of cognition aims (learning skills such as classifying and reasoning) and culture aims (e.g., raising awareness that different people like different foods) took the greatest amount of preparation. The participants noted that before the training sessions, they had been unaware of linking across subjects and had never undertaken these aims in their classrooms.

**Timing.** While designing the theme-based lessons was reported to take a great amount of time and effort, their implementation was even more challenging. Observational data revealed that CLIL lessons took 50-55 minutes while traditional lessons took 35-40 minutes. The data from the focus group interviews and observations showed that the participants struggled with carrying out the communicative activities / tasks in the lesson plans. As a result, the timing in the lessons represented a major difficulty as the participants then had to actively try to scaffold and differentiate – both of which can take considerable time when the practitioners are new to the skills. TA described the difficulty in terms of preparation time to support weak students.

For my lower proficiency students, I had to provide lots of word cards and picture cards to support their oral retelling. This takes much more time. (TA)

Moreover, handling pair / group activities in large classes and implementing higher-order thinking skill activities represented challenges to the participants. TA and TD claimed that this was due to students' unfamiliarity with a range of collaborative and cognitively-demanding activities in the lessons. None of the participants commented on how these difficulties might

have been due in part to their own unfamiliarity with this method.

**Teacher skill.** Observational data also reveal that TA and TC, who claimed to have lower-achieving students, spent more time and effort on task delivery, classroom management, and scaffolding. Thus they could not give equal time for student presentations in the final class. TA and TC framed this difficulty in terms of what the students are used to, instead of looking at their own teaching methods.

It is because more pair / group work activities were conducted in the CLIL classes than the traditional classes and children were not used to working collaboratively. (TA)

As students were not familiar with the new lesson format, I had to find different ways to support them during the lesson. This really makes me tired. (TC)

**Perceptions of student readiness.** Participants were concerned that what they considered to be cognitively demanding activities might cause student reluctance to participate and the demotivation of weak students if the activities were not appropriate to students' age and level. Again, this fear of moving away from a traditional, teacher-centered methodology was reported in terms of student readiness, not as a fear of a different way of teaching. As even the most experienced participant reported:

Designing activities that can stimulate thinking abilities took me so much time. I have to make sure that the activities suit the students' cognitive level and are engaging enough to maintain their attention. My students are not used to learning this way. (TC)

**Specialized knowledge.** No teachers reported the need to consult the subject teachers for content knowledge as they believed they could manage those curricular aspects themselves by consulting teacher's books for subject teachers. However, TA and TC admitted that some content vocabulary items including *dairy*, *carbohydrate*, and *cereal* were unfamiliar to them. They also had to learn how to report the calculation of math sums in English.

In a traditional lesson of Food and Drinks, only names of common food items such as egg, rice, and chicken are taught. They are repetitively drilled and my students merely employed them in the practice stage. I have never thought about expanding the vocabulary items because I am not required to do so. (TA)

### **Teachers' Perceived Successes**

**Lesson planning.** Few concerns were raised when the participants started jointly planning the three-lesson unit. As the aims were firmly established, the participants could come up with ideas for CLIL activities independently. In their view, bringing content into the language lessons using themes and topics from the content curriculum led to more varied activity ideas due to the enriched cross-curricular opportunities and supporting resources. The participants expressed interest in other curricular topics (e.g., the water cycle, the butterfly life cycle), and in CLIL websites and books.

To be honest, I had found myself and my students getting bored with the content in the current textbook. Lessons [as presented in the textbook guides] are designed in the same format for different levels and the topics are repeated. Topics such as family, friends and school things are important for the students, but we needed to do something different as a way to motivate children. (TC)

Now I realize that teaching based on a textbook is so limited. I am amazed at the resources provided [in the AGU training]. I am able to design a good CLIL lesson if I am given support and relevant materials. (TB)

**Student gains.** Despite several obstacles encountered during the designing and implementing of the lessons, the participants reported overall satisfaction with student performance during the implementation phase. However, the following results regarding learning outcomes are drawn from participants' subjective assessments and have only been triangulated with in-treatment observational data (i.e., the observations were not of a pre / post design). A conclusion on learning outcomes can only be made when the data in this study are triangulated with quantitative data.

**Vocabulary.** All participants agreed that most students learned more English (particularly vocabulary) than in a traditional English class. While TB and TD, who have stronger students, did not express much concern about their students' expected uptake of a large number of new vocabulary items in the first class, this had worried TA and TC.

I was really worried on the first day. I had to review familiar food items and teach five new food items and all five food groups while a normal [traditional] lesson requires teaching only five or six simple vocabulary items in a 35-minute period. (TC)

However, the results of the second class surprised them.

I was not sure if the second class could proceed if my students could not use the vocabulary they had learned in the first class. But I was really surprised at their performance in the second class. They grasped the vocabulary better than I thought. That resulted in a smooth transition to the second and third classes. (TA)

**Grammar.** All participants expressed concern about the complexity of the structural patterns before the lessons. They noted that combined structural patterns are not required in the current syllabus for the fourth graders, and therefore, they had not yet been taught, modelled, or supported. However, TB and TD reported that they felt their classes experienced success after some initial reluctance. From these reports, the participants were clearly gradually getting used to moving towards not only a CLIL classroom, but a truly 3P (present, practice, produce) communicative method classroom. This is expressed by TB as follows.

It is hard for the fourth graders to say combined sentences like "I like . . . but I don't . . ." and "It has . . . because . . ." But I was pleased that they were able to use them after some reluctance. (TB)

**Fluency.** The participants agreed that most students, even weak students, were involved in speaking in English more actively in the CLIL lessons than in traditional classes. They stated

this was a time when the students could actually use the language. Participants felt that as the students were already familiar with the content, they were motivated to talk in this more natural and meaningful situation.

Some of my weak students did volunteer to successfully tell the class about a food they like and a food they do not like. They have rarely volunteered in my normal classes. They have hardly been able to say a complete sentence in English. (TC)

***Motivation and cognition.*** Both strong and weak students could benefit from this project. While the lessons could motivate weak students because of their focus on using English for a purpose, they challenged the strong students who had been demotivated because of the familiar content in the English textbooks.

I felt that I was not teaching them [the stronger students] anything new because the content I usually taught as new, following the current textbook, was already familiar to them due to their private lessons. (TD)

The participants also noticed that the cognitively engaging activities, such as finding an expert meal maker and doing a survey (see Appendices B and C), could create opportunities for students to use the language and hence stimulate an interest in learning English. Therefore, students could achieve a greater concentration span than in traditional classes.

It is more difficult to learn like this, especially at the beginning, but it makes students concentrate more, then they learn it better. (TD)

I found my students were amazed at how areas of maths and science were creatively recycled. They liked to report their calculation of the sums in English. This new experience may have excited them. (TC)

### **Discussion**

The study investigated the participants' perceptions of their experience with the process of designing and planning theme-based CLIL lessons that were integrated in an EFL teaching setting. The participants perceived both challenges and benefits with regard to the implementation of the lessons. The reported benefits, to some extent, support the results of previous studies (Doiz et al., 2014; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009; Massler, 2012; Pladevall-Ballester, 2015; Yamano, 2013). In fact, the current study reveals that the familiar curricular areas integrated and recycled in the English classes could engage students cognitively due to exposure to a meaningful learning context. This was found to offer a better opportunity for learning vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. Similarly, the reported challenges of additional workload and preparation time are consistent with those found in Massler (2012) and Pladevall-Ballester (2015).

Furthermore, as the participants perceived, this form of CLIL could enhance a positive attitude to learning English. Therefore, the results highlight the significance of promoting "deep" learning for young language learners. This has been pointed out in Yamano (2013): Japanese primary students in a CLIL class outperformed those in non-CLIL English classes who "simply engage in memorizing or producing the correct use of the learned language" (p. 25). The results of this study thus support Yamano (2013) and might provide evidence to explain the reasons why the participants perceived the cognition and culture aims as most challenging when they started designing the activities.

However, the findings also support Nguyen (2011) and Le and Do (2012) in that the participants were not adequately prepared to teach primary English. In fact, the participants' perceived challenges of the design and implementation of the lessons have raised two issues. First, the participants needed to have a wide range of experience of non-traditional, student-based teaching methodology (where group / pair work is standard and differentiation is mainstream) to handle the communicative activities. From the interview data, some pedagogical skills required in a communicative language class (e.g., timing, conducting pair / group activities in large-size classes, providing support materials, and classroom management) seemed to be lacking among the participants. The transition from traditional Grammar-Translation practice to CLIL seemed to be difficult for the participants and many of their challenges lay within the scope of communicative methodology. For teachers without training or experience in communicative methodology, CLIL represents a significant challenge.

Secondly, the reported challenges also imply that the participants lacked some skills required to carry out the CLIL lessons specifically. The lack of awareness until the training course of CLIL support materials (e.g., CLIL activity books or websites) was also a great obstacle for these participants. Hence, the ideas and skills to integrate other subject themes into the EFL lessons were not easily available for them. Therefore, these participants faced difficulties with CLIL-specific skills such as awareness of other grade curricular areas and integration of themes into instruction.

Generally, although the participants did not yet have all the skills necessary for CLT, they showed signs of readiness for cognitively meaningful English teaching such as CLIL. The awareness of the limitations of textbook-bound teaching and of perceived improvement in learners' motivation and learning outcomes that designing and implementing CLIL activities seem to bring teachers could have implications for in-service professional training and the implementation of the NFLP 2020.

More specifically, this research into the perceptions of difficulties and successes of teachers moving into modern language teaching techniques shows that teacher preparation programs should give greater emphasis on training in communicative or student-centered methodologies. As many of the difficulties these participants reported (e.g., time management) were necessary steps into CLIL, training in these basic teaching techniques would be valuable to teachers. To achieve the goals of the NFLP 2020, it would be of great help to in-service and pre-service teachers to have these skills. The NFLP 2020 should take into account teachers' pedagogical skills.

There are many limitations in this study. The most important were the unforeseen difficulties that the transition from traditional teaching to CLIL would cause. Future researchers may want to measure the pre- and post-perceptions of teachers along a continuum of traditional approaches to communicative methodology and then into CLIL. Discrete steps would allow for a greater measurement of where the challenges lie, and therefore give a better picture of how training can raise skills. Also, measuring student skill level gains would be helpful for clarifying how useful these methodologies are. Future research may look at either student pre- / post-treatment tests and / or triangulated longitudinal observational data. Regarding teacher perceptions, future studies might employ journaling through the process to better understand teachers' difficulties and successes with small day-to-day hurdles. A complete understanding of the teaching methodology and classroom before the training course would also help researchers more clearly understand the situations of participants.

As in any locally situated study, the small, localized sample size can be viewed as a possible limitation. Yet, in regard to the NFLP 2020 in Vietnam and the lack of other research looking into this specific location, the data from this set of participants is still resonant. Even with these limitations, it is clear that these teachers engaged with CLIL in a meaningful way and came away with a deeper understanding of what they could offer their students. This in itself is a strong outcome for the research into teacher perceptions.

### **Conclusion**

This paper examined the potential challenges and successes of theme-based CLIL lessons from primary English teachers' perceptions of their experience with the lesson design and implementation process. Challenges and benefits associated with this process were found. The results showed the participants had limited methodological repertoires of teaching skills that were necessary to handle a range of communicative activities / tasks as well as specific skills required in CLIL classes. However, the participants' positive perceptions of their students' enhanced motivation and learning outcomes revealed that the potential benefits of theme-based CLIL lessons could be promoted as long as teachers are adequately trained with CLIL and non-CLIL skills.

Recognizing the challenges of incorporating the CLIL approach in foreign language classrooms in Asia is important. There is a clear need for further research to determine students' reactions and their linguistic development affected by CLIL.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Researchers' Field Notes from the Workshop on CLIL Methodology**

We began the workshop by eliciting the teachers' thinking about the idea of enriching primary English teaching using the cross-curricular content aspects. We then raised awareness of CLIL practice by introducing the theory and existing CLIL examples in primary schools. As the teachers were able to get to know the 4Cs principles of CLIL and the possibilities of integrating cross curricular content into English lessons, we introduced the CLIL activities in a number of resource books such as Teaching other subjects through English (Deller and Price, 2007), Timesaver resource book (Birdsall, 2001), Cross-curricular resources for young learners (Calabrese and Rampone, 2007), CLIL activities: A resource for subject and language teachers Dale and Tanner (2012), and a range of CLIL websites. Then we provided them some tips on material development and classroom activities. The session continued with a demonstration of a CLIL activity adapted to integrate into one of the current English lessons for Vietnamese fourth graders using the maths and science content areas. The teachers were asked to evaluate the demo on CLIL principles. Finally, they were invited to discuss the content elements in the textbooks for maths and science for the fourth graders to find a common curricular theme for the design of a CLIL unit.

#### **Interview Prompts**

##### **Post-lesson design interview prompts**

1. What are the differences between planning a CLIL lesson compared to what you normally do in your English class?
2. What difficulties did you have when planning the CLIL lessons?
3. Did you have to consult the subject teachers?
4. What do you think about your CLIL lesson-planning experience?





##### **Post-lesson implementation interview prompts**

1. What are your views on the perceived effects of CLIL lessons on learners' attitudes towards language learning?
2. Do you think the CLIL lessons increase student motivation and participations in the lessons?
3. In what way did the lessons bring opportunities to develop the pupils thinking skills / cognition as compared to traditional language learning?
4. What subject related challenges might CLIL teaching represent?
5. Do you think the CLIL approach lead to better oral performance in the target language compared to traditional approaches?
6. What challenges did you encounter when implementing this project in your traditional English classroom?
7. Does CLIL contribute to your continuing professional development?

**Appendix B**  
**A Language-Driven CLIL Lesson Plan for Implementation**

<b>THEME: Food and Nutrition</b>	
<p><b>Curricular subjects:</b> Science and Math  <b>Level:</b> Primary (Grade 4)  <b>Time:</b> 120 minutes approximately (three forty-minute periods)  <b>Prior learning:</b> This is a review of Lesson 4, 5 and 7 in the science subject and Lesson 1 and 2 in the math subject taught in the mother tongue.</p>	
<p><b>AIMS</b>  <b>Content:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Be aware of healthy and unhealthy food. Learn to eat healthily (science).</li> <li>▪ Learn to describe the results of a survey diagrammatically (maths) and learn to calculate the sum in English, (e.g., 2 plus 3 equals 5).</li> </ul> <p><b>Language:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Target vocabulary: Food items (cereal, chicken, butter, cheese, eggs, hamburgers, yogurt, chips); food groups (grains, vegetables, fruits, meat, dairy); nutrients (carbohydrate, protein, fat, vitamins and minerals)</li> <li>▪ Structure:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review: <i>I like . . . / I don't like . . . and how many . . . ?</i></li> <li>- Use target structure: <i>What do you like to eat for breakfast?</i></li> <li>- Use linking words: <i>but, and, because</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Skill: Speaking. By the end of the unit, students will be able to say what food and drinks they like and don't like and say what they like to eat for a meal such as breakfast. They are expected to provide the rationale for their preferences.</li> </ul> <p><b>Cognition:</b> Classifying, reasoning, interviewing, decision-making, problem-solving  <b>Culture:</b> Raising awareness that different people like different foods.</p>	
<p><b>MATERIALS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A poster of food pyramid</li> <li>▪ A set flashcards (word cards and picture cards) of foods, food groups, and nutrients</li> <li>▪ A bean bag</li> </ul>	
<b>PROCEDURE</b>	
<b>Day 1</b>	
<p><b>1. Introduce the topic, teach the names of food and food groups</b> (10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher (T) writes the word FOOD in the middle of the board to create a spider gram. T shows a picture of various food items. Students (Ss) go to the board to write down as many food items as they know from the picture and their own knowledge.</li> <li>- T uses flashcards to review familiar food items, teach unfamiliar food items and food groups. Groups of 4 or 5 are handed with a set of flashcards of food from each of the food group. Each time T holds up a flashcard with a title of a food group and Ss show a flashcard of food that corresponds to that group (e.g., T says dairy, Ss raise a flashcard of cheese, butter, or milk and read it out loud).</li> </ul>

<p><b>2. Play the Show and Tell game and chain game</b> (13 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ss practice talking about food items they like and dislike. Ss review the structure “<i>I like . . . but I don’t like . . .</i>” A set of flashcards of food is handed to each group again. Ss take turn to show and tell food items they like and don’t like in their own group. T holds up 2 cards and gives a model sentence: <i>I like rice, but I don’t like bread.</i></li> <li>- Then groups of Ss take turn to go to the board and play the chain game. Each group member holds up his/her flashcards of a food item and tells the class about the food he/she likes. Then the rest of the class will decide whether the group members eat healthy food by a show of hands.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Play the Board Race game</b> (15 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ss learn to classify food items into the correct food groups. T draws 2 pyramids with 5 sections on the board. T divides the class into 2 teams. Ss run to the board to put the correct flashcards of food items in the correct sections in the pyramids.</li> <li>- To check Ss’ understanding of the food pyramid, T asks why there are five sections and some of the sections are bigger than the others in Vietnamese.</li> <li>- In groups, Ss discuss the sections and types of food they should eat more, eat moderately and eat less through their interpretation of the food pyramid. Ss are encouraged to speak English but Vietnamese is allowed for this task.</li> <li>- T monitors the group work and assesses Ss’ understanding of the food pyramid.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. End of class</b> (2 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- T reminds Ss of what they have learnt and asks them to think about nutrients given from different foods in their meals before they start the next class.</li> </ul>
<b>Day 2</b>	
<p><b>1. Review the names of food and food groups; teach leader nutrients of each food groups</b> (10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In small circles, the S in the center throws a bean bag to an S in the circle and shouts out a food name from one of the food groups. The receiver shouts out a food from that group and throws the ball back to the S in the center. The receiver who cannot name a food from a food group has to stand out.</li> <li>- T uses flashcards to teach the leader nutrients of each food group (carbohydrate, protein, fat, vitamins, and minerals)</li> <li>- Ss play the matching game to check their understanding of the names of nutrients. Ss match the food items with their leader nutrients.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Do the Table Display activity</b> (10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ss identify the nutrients found in each food group. Ss take turns picking up different food items on the table and describe nutrients found in that item to their group. For example, Ss may say “<i>Rice contains carbohydrates. Chicken contains protein.</i>”</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Do the survey</b> (18 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ss practice doing a survey to collect data on food for breakfast. T elicits and then drills the question form <i>What do you like to eat for breakfast?</i> before Ss start.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- T gives Ss a handout for the survey and tells them how to do the survey. (See Appendix C).</li> <li>- After the survey, T shows Ss how to complete the bar chart by doing an example on the board. T demonstrates counting the sticks for each food by asking them to count how many Ss have, for example, milk for breakfast. T gives a model sentence pattern for calculating the sum (e.g., 1 plus 2 equals 3). T shows how the results can be reported diagrammatically on the bar graph (see Appendix C).</li> </ul>
<b>4. End of class</b> (2 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- T consolidates the content of the class and asks Ss to think about what makes a healthy lunch.</li> </ul>
<b>Day 3</b>	
<b>1. Sing a song</b> (5 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ss sing along with a song from <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UaqISEs_uj0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UaqISEs_uj0</a>. This song is to warm them up before starting the new lesson and to review their previous knowledge of healthy food and unhealthy food and the structure “Do you like . . . ?”</li> </ul>
<b>2. Class project: Finding an expert meal maker</b> (20 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- T reminds Ss of the nutritional requirements for a balanced diet and a healthy meal which contains a variety of food from all food groups.</li> <li>- In groups, Ss create a poster on which they display food items that make up a balanced and nutritious lunch. Ss share their meal with that of other groups and then Ss take turns to explain the meal they make in front of the class. Ss vote for the healthiest lunch.</li> <li>- T elicits a model answer: <i>This is a healthy lunch. It has some  because rice contains carbohydrate. It has some  because fish contains protein. It has some  because tomatoes contain vitamins and minerals. It has some  because milk contains fats.</i></li> <li>- This activity will help consolidate content knowledge and language knowledge in the previous activities.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Game: Board Race</b> (8 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ss discuss typical foods worldwide. Then T sticks some pictures of food (sushi, spaghetti, hamburger, curry, and cheese) on the board.</li> <li>- T gives each group of Ss flags of Japan, Italy, America, India, and France. Ss run to the board to match the food with the country of its origin.</li> </ul>
<b>4. End of class</b> (2 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- T consolidates the content of three lessons.</li> </ul>

**Appendix C**  
**Class Survey**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Vietnamese bread</i>	<i>Instant noodles</i>	<i>Omelet</i>	<i>Steamed sticky rice</i>	<i>Rice noodle soup</i>
1. _____					
2. _____					
3. _____					
4. _____					
5. _____					
<b>Total = 5</b>					

**Arranging Information in a Block Chart**



## **Research**

# **Vietnamese English Teachers' Perceptions on Incorporating World Englishes Into Their Teaching**

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Understanding English varieties other than native-speaker norms has been regarded as necessary for effective communication in contexts where English is used as a *lingua franca*. In Vietnam, however, English language teaching remains focused on Standard English, which is somewhat out of step with the role of English in communication in the region. This exploratory study aims to uncover Vietnamese English teachers' perceptions of World Englishes (WE) in their English teaching. An online questionnaire, five individual follow-up interviews, and one focus group interview were conducted. A broad range of perceptions of Vietnamese English teachers at the university / college level towards English varieties was found. Introducing these was noted as having various benefits and challenges for teaching and learning. Suggestions for incorporating WE into teacher training, teaching, and materials development were deduced from the study, as were participants' imagined plans and implications of these plans for English teaching in Vietnam.

Understanding varieties of English, or World Englishes (WE), is considered a crucial task in language teaching and learning to prepare English users for effective and intelligible communication. In light of WE, English is argued to have become a denationalized language which is no longer tied to native speakers in terms of linguistic usage (Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2004; Widdowson, 1994). Introducing these Englishes to language learners parallels the ongoing increase in the number of non-native English speakers and communication among non-native speaker communities (Crystal, 1997; House, 2003; Kachru, 2005). The relevance of native-speaker norms in communicative activities outside native-English countries has also been brought into question (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Canagarajah, 2006; Jenkins, 2000, 2006; McKay, 2002; Ton & Pham, 2010). Despite this increasing importance of WE in English teaching, very few studies have been conducted in Vietnam to explore the kinds of English used or the perceptions of English teachers towards WE. The study reported here thus aims to shed light on the perceptions of English teachers at the university / college level in Vietnam towards incorporating WE in their English teaching contexts.



### Literature Review

This section presents studies conducted in the field from the broader context of Asia, to the ASEAN community, and Vietnamese teaching contexts.

In some Asian contexts, such as India and Pakistan, new Englishes are widely recognised (Kandiah, 1998), while in others, such as Japan, where English is mainly used as a foreign language, the awareness and acceptance of WE are lower (Samida & Takahashi, 2011). Suzuki (2011) investigated three Japanese student teachers' understanding of the diversity in English and their perspectives on introducing WE into English language teaching in Japan. Individual interviews along with student writing were explored in the study. Participants in the study displayed different levels of knowledge about varieties of English, which Suzuki attributed to their prior experiences of social and educational interaction with other second language speakers of English. Nonetheless, only American and British English were regarded as appropriate for English language teaching. The study recommended developing teachers' perceptions of other varieties of English in teacher preparation programs as well as developing skills in teaching English as an international language.

Within the ASEAN community, English plays the role of *de facto lingua franca* (Krasnick, 1995) and has been a working language of ASEAN as an institution since 2007 (Kirkpatrick, 2008). Among several studies in ASEAN contexts (Brown & Deterding, 2005; Lowenberg, 1991), Moore and Bounchan (2010) examined Cambodian English by employing questionnaires and focus group interviews. The study investigated the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and students as to the status of Cambodian English, and their preferences for different kinds of English. It revealed that English in Cambodia is perceived as "a second language or international language rather than a foreign language or *lingua franca*" (Moore & Bounchan, 2010, p. 121), along with the recognition of Cambodian English. Furthermore, although one particular Standard English variety was preferred in classroom teaching, others were also drawn on as the context dictated. Moore and Bounchan concluded that a balance was needed between teaching Standard English and newer varieties.

In line with the recognition of WE among many countries within the ASEAN region, it has been argued that Vietnam should develop an understanding of WE to develop and promote "mutual intelligibility" (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 193). Nonetheless, the current trend in English language teaching in Vietnam is to privilege British and American standard English. Of the few studies that exist discussing WE or issues of different Englishes in the context of Vietnam, Ton and Pham's (2010) is directly related to the present study. With the participation of 250 students and 80 university teachers from two universities in Vietnam, the study investigated attitudes towards the preferred kinds of English via a mixed-method approach involving questionnaires and interviews. The study found that although students used English more often with non-native speakers, they still preferred studying British and American English. Ton and Pham also suggested that students should explore more English varieties outside the classroom for more effective communication with non-native speakers.

To further explore the perceptions of Vietnamese English teachers towards WE, a broad perspective on teachers' participation is expected to provide a range of perceptions along with a deep understanding of their attitudes. The current study thus aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are Vietnamese English teachers' beliefs towards WE and issues concerning varieties of English?
2. What are their beliefs regarding introducing English varieties in their English teaching?
3. How might the teachers introduce varieties of English into their English teaching? What are the perceived advantages and challenges?

### **Methods**

A mixed-methods approach (involving both quantitative and qualitative data) was employed to answer the research questions; such an approach is argued to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the research situation than collecting only one type of data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). It has three main characteristics, including timing, weighting, and mixing (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In the current study, mixed methods research is utilized as a sequence (timing) with a stronger focus on qualitative data (weighting).

Vietnamese English teachers at the university / college level in Vietnam were selected to take part in the first stage of the research, an online questionnaire (see Appendix A), for salient reasons. First, among Vietnam teaching contexts, university teachers have more autonomy than primary or secondary teachers in the choice of teaching materials and teaching content. Their students may have stronger language proficiency and more experience of other kinds of English through overseas studies or workplace requirements. The choice of participants thus relates to the teachers' consideration of introducing WE in their teaching contexts. Therefore, only the responses of the respondents at university / college level (76) were used for the study from a total of recruited respondents (81) from a snowball online questionnaire. Further information on participants for each stage of the research is outlined below and in the following section.

Five of the participants, Vietnamese English teachers pursuing a master's degree in Applied Linguistics at an Australian university, took part in the interview stage, including individual semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B) and a focus group interview (see Appendix C), after they had answered the online questionnaire. These teachers had encountered courses relating to WE in their master's programs. Potential changes in their perceptions towards WE, compared with what they had understood before studying in an overseas university, were considered an important aspect of the investigation. Their views on the importance of different kinds of English in teaching and learning and in communication through daily contact with the diverse varieties of English in Australia were also of interest. Their imagined plans or actions relating to introducing these Englishes in their teaching when they returned to their home country were also expected to contribute to the understanding of its further implications for English teaching and learning in Vietnam.

The data collection process took place over a period of six weeks. In analyzing the data, the first author classified the participants into subgroups according to their teaching major and their previous experiences of WE. Quantitative data were analysed for trends and variance by providing frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data were the major focus of data analysis. Individual and focus group interview data were firstly transcribed and then analysed and interpreted through four stages: reading, coding, sorting, and interpreting. The online questionnaires and interviews (individual and focus group interviews) were conducted in English. Excerpts from the interview data in the following section are presented in participants' own words, including any non-standard forms and expressions.

**Findings**

Detailed findings of the three main sections including online questionnaire, individual interviews, and the focus group interview are presented in this section.

**Online Questionnaires**

After providing detailed information on the participants, this section provides findings from the online questionnaire.

**Table 1**  
**General Description of Participants in Online Questionnaires**

Number of participants	Gender		Age range					Total number of universities / colleges
	Female	Male	Under 25	26-30	31-35	36-40	Above 40	
N = 76	56 (73.7%)	20 (26.3%)	2 (2.6%)	34 (44.7%)	24 (31.6%)	5 (6.5%)	11 (14.5%)	26

Overall, seventy-six participants were Vietnamese English teachers at 26 universities / colleges in Vietnam (see Table 1). Regarding the question “Did you encounter the term WE before?” 57 (75%) answered “Yes” whereas 19 (25%) answered “No.” This, to some extent, shows unequal understanding or contact with this term among teachers in Vietnam. As for the question exploring the variety of English currently widely used in English teaching in Vietnam, 89% responded “American or British English” and 11% “both American and British English.” “American and / or British English” was also the most common answer (77%) to a question addressing the variety of English currently used most in English teaching materials in Vietnam.

Seventy-one percent of the respondents chose the answers “strong” or “very strong” when asked about the influences of native varieties on English teaching in Vietnam. This is consistent with the results of an open question asking respondents to nominate the varieties of English which have the strongest influences on English teaching in Vietnam. The most common answer to this question was “British and / or American English” (86%).

The respondents posited that students communicate more with non-native-speakers (75%) than native speakers. Interestingly, a majority of the respondents regarded “Vietnamese English” as an acceptable term (58%) with three main features noted as pronunciation, grammar / syntax, and culture. Accent was chosen to be the most common criterion to distinguish different kinds of English at 71%. Other criteria such as vocabulary, culture, and grammar constituted 10%, 9%, and 1% respectively. The option “Others” received 9% of the responses though no specific criteria were denoted as part of this open-ended response.

Due to the length limitations for this article, only prominent issues from the questionnaire are presented in this section. Further data related to the online questionnaire are presented in the Discussion section.

**Individual Interviews**

Two male (Linh and Manh) and three female (Suong, Thanh, and Tu) participants (pseudonyms used), ranging in age from 26 to 31, from various cities in Vietnam, participated in the individual interviews. Different experiences with the term *WE* were reported – through TESOL

workshops or colleagues' presentations (Suong and Manh) or MA courses (Thanh). Although Linh had encountered this term before, he did not express a clear understanding of it. He stated: "I heard this term two years ago but I did not know anything about this, also, I did not try to explore what it is."

All of the interviewees agreed that introducing WE was important to English teaching. Linh emphasized "it is really important to help the learners understand and as teachers we should introduce students with varieties of English." In support, Suong stated "the job of teaching is to prepare students for real-life later to avoid the shock later when they are exposing with other varieties of English". However, the interviewees still mentioned their doubts about how to introduce them effectively, as well as the challenges they expected to encounter.

Regarding the interviewees' experiences of incorporating different English varieties into their teaching, most of them stated that they had not employed anything other than British and American English. Difficulties in diverse teaching contexts were challenges for their introduction: teaching and learning materials, issues related to time and effort, the selection of the kind of English to be introduced, and students' resistant attitudes. "Number one . . . , lack of materials, number two, that would be very time and effort consuming, and also another major issue is important is the resistance of part of students . . ." (Manh). Interestingly, all of the participants reported their plan to introduce different Englishes. Thanh said that, "I think after I finish my MA, the way of my teaching has to change."

Regarding the introduction of WE in their classes, interviewees suggested different ideas, including activities they could do, as well as what institutions could do to support them. Conducting student needs analyses, raising students' and teachers' awareness, exploring attitudes, preparing for teachers and students' first encounter with other varieties of English, and investment in teacher education were all noted. Suong observed:

need analysis is very important to do here because if we, students and teachers both aware of the kinds of English they will use in future, their purposes of learning English or the kinds of English they will encounter later so the attitude may change.

Tu suggested the employment of technology and media as sources for introducing different Englishes. Manh noted that "the teachers should introduce, inspire students with English varieties because students are still more interested in studying native varieties." Careful preparation for the students' first encounter with different kinds of English was also considered an important task to reduce the possible initial shock and ease the conservative attitudes of the students towards these varieties.

### **Focus Group Interview**

In the focus group interview, participants discussed the prominent statements extracted from the online questionnaire and individual interviews along with their imagined actions relating to introducing WE after graduation.

When asked their opinions towards the statement reflecting one of the benefits of introducing WE, "introducing English varieties, especially non-native varieties, helps students to be confident with their own English and proud of their own English variety," the participants presented different points of view. Manh and Thanh agreed with this idea and posited that accent is not very important. Thanh claimed that: "I focus on more communication, fluency and a bit on accuracy; the accent needs to be accepted to identify identity". Despite agreeing with this, Suong

suggested that students' confidence in their own abilities "should be taken with caution. It may mislead students into believing that they do not need improvement." However, all participants expressed positive attitudes towards other kinds of English, both native and non-native.

The second statement in the focus group interview discussed the issue of native-like competence as the main goal of teaching, which reflects the contention that introducing different Englishes into teaching is unnecessary. All interviewees agreed with Manh's opinion that "native-like is most of the time not the target of learning English but the effectiveness on communication." Tu suggested the level of students' proficiency should be taken into account when introducing other varieties of English to reduce students' confusion.

The third issue discussed was the exam-oriented status of teaching and learning English in Vietnam, which may be implicated in the strong focus on teaching British and American English. All interviewees emphasized the necessity of an analysis of students' needs to identify the students' purposes for learning English to choose suitable teaching contents and methods. They also stressed the need for exposure to different Englishes in real-life communication. They claimed that introducing WE in teaching would not aim to change the learners' goals or targets (e.g., away from exam-oriented purposes); rather the aim would be to raise awareness of the kinds of English students may be likely to encounter. Manh further noted the reality that few learners in foreign language settings can be expected to reach the goal of native-speaker-like competence, adding that "[n]o matter how hard we try, we cannot reach the target (Standard English)."

With regard to introducing WE, Linh suggested that since he was teaching both major and non-major students, they should be introduced to it step-by-step through consultation with teaching staff. In other words, consensus among teachers is necessary to decide appropriate ways to introduce these Englishes. Specifically, Manh noted that he would employ a task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach to "help the students figure out the way to understand and explore more ideas of English varieties through Internet," whereas Thanh suggested their introduction through courses in listening skills or intercultural communication. Organizing related workshops or publishing research about WE to widen teachers' awareness and acknowledgement of it were also mentioned.

When discussing which kinds of English to teach, Linh stated that he preferred teaching those from ASEAN countries but suggested that this should be a decision made by teaching staff in specific contexts. Suong added that "how is more important than what" and recommended introducing them in a less formal (non-assessed) way, stating "do not take it as a big deal as the students are assessed." She also suggested that the teachers should consider the likelihood of encounters with those Englishes to choose suitable ones to introduce.

### Discussion

Vietnamese English teachers' perceptions of World Englishes are discussed under the analysis of three research questions with the data drawn from both questionnaire and interviews.

#### **Research Question 1: What Are Vietnamese English Teachers' Beliefs Towards WE and Issues Concerning Varieties of English?**

Participants in the study provided diverse opinions towards WE. The difference was firstly shown through their reported encounters with the term *WE*. Although a number of features have been identified in the literature to distinguish different Englishes, such as phonological features, lexical features, syntax, or cultural conventions (Brown & Deterding, 2005; Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Lowenberg, 1991; McArthur, 2002), accent was regarded by these Vietnamese English teachers as the most important distinguishing feature.

In terms of the teachers' awareness of English varieties, American and British English were all acknowledged by the participants. They also acknowledged other non-native kinds of English, such as those in the ASEAN region. Notably, Vietnamese English was more widely reported by the participants as an acceptable term along with its features in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and culture, which were noted in reference to differences between Vietnamese and English. However, whereas tenses were pointed out as grammatical features of Indonesian English (Kirkpatrick, 2007), word order ("house big," not "big house") and the use of articles or plural features ("two book," not "two books") were noted by participants as features of Vietnamese English. Vietnamese cultural norms involving direct questions of a personal nature (e.g., related to age, marital status, or financial status) were included as Vietnamese English features, which is to some extent similar to the results of Srihar (1991) regarding request strategies of Indian English transferred from local languages (as cited in Kirkpatrick, 2007).

Native and non-native Englishes were perceived by participants as having different roles and positions in English teaching in Vietnam. Native Englishes were commonly believed by the participants to be widely used and to exert a strong influence on English teaching and assessment, supporting the findings of Ton and Pham (2010). Native Englishes were explained as the kinds currently used in course books or English teaching materials used in English courses in Vietnam. These materials include English-language media such as films or game shows which extensively influence daily life in Vietnam. Importantly, international tests, namely IELTS, TOEFL, and TOEIC, were regarded by the participants as an important goal for Vietnamese students – all these tests currently privilege native varieties of English.

The importance of non-native kinds of English was also noted by many teachers in the study. Supporting Kirkpatrick's (2002) findings, the current study showed that Vietnamese students are more likely to communicate in English with non-native speakers than native speakers. Similarly, non-native varieties were claimed by the participants to contribute to successful communication, which focuses more on fluency than accuracy.

### **Research Question 2: What Are Vietnamese English Teachers' Beliefs of Introducing English Varieties in Their English Teaching?**

The study's participants stated that introducing WE into English teaching in Vietnam was an important and necessary task and was regarded as providing definite advantages. First, it was argued that the introduction of WE would prepare students for real-life encounters with different kinds of English, a beneficial factor for successful communication, and would help to change or improve students' confidence and awareness of English varieties, especially their own. These findings support those reported by Kirkpatrick (2007) and Honna and Takeshita (2000). In addition, introducing WE, especially non-native types, was seen by participants as a way of changing Vietnamese expectations of, and reliance on, standard native-English models.

However, introducing other Englishes was also perceived by the participants as a challenge for English teachers. First, lack of proper teaching materials is a major problem, as most current teaching materials draw on American or British standard English. Second, as with other innovations, requirements in time and effort were reported as one issue that needed to be taken into consideration. Linh, for example, stated that there was "no extra time for introducing these varieties." Teachers' awareness and knowledge of WE was also regarded as a constraint. Participants stated that they did not have enough information or contact with different kinds of English. Importantly, the teachers also stated that their students might show reluctance, resistance, or confusion on encountering non-standard English in the classroom. For example, Thanh stated that "students may get bored with those non-native English varieties" because "they just want to study native speaker voices only."

### **Research Question 3: How Might The Teachers Introduce Varieties of English Into Their English Teaching? What Are The Perceived Advantages and Challenges?**

With regard to introducing varieties of English, different teaching contexts revealed diverse perceived advantages and challenges. Therefore, to develop a suitable approach to their introduction, teachers must carefully consider each teaching context to employ appropriate actions in teaching or “clear and consistent learning models” (Swan, 2012, p. 384). The participants in this study suggested that different kinds of English must be introduced carefully, as learners may demonstrate confusion and resistance, or at an appropriate stage, as noted by Sewell (2013). It was also recommended that using workshops or informal presentations based on teachers’ personal experiences could help raise students’ awareness of this topic and its importance. The participants regarded this as an important step before teachers commence introducing WE.

The participants also posited that once the students were aware of the importance of understanding different English varieties, introducing the varieties must be conducted motivationally, such as through warm-up activities or through engaging media such as YouTube. Introducing different kinds of English through English clubs with students’ performance was also suggested as a means of encouraging students to explore WE.

In universities with support for teaching WE, the participants recommended these Englishes be introduced through TBLT. This approach may afford students the autonomy to select which varieties of English they may want to explore. Tasks related to real-life situations might also intrigue and stimulate students with the exploration and understanding of different kinds of English, as noted by Matsuda (2003). In universities or colleges with no courses relating to WE, the participants suggested that these tasks could be attached to other courses such as intercultural communication or listening subjects. In these certain circumstances, teachers could also use podcasts, YouTube videos, or intercultural movies (cf. Kachru & Nelson, 2006) to introduce different Englishes.

Regarding teachers’ knowledge and awareness, the participants reported that changing teachers’ conservative attitudes towards other Englishes, including non-native varieties, was an important task. They also recommended holding workshops, teachers’ meetings, and discussions about WE. In contrast to Matsuda’s (2003) suggestions of bringing in speakers of different varieties into classrooms or changing the recruitment process to include more non-native English teachers, the participants in this study focused more on investment in overseas teacher training such as that provided by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training. Through their experiences overseas with issues related to other kinds of English, participants noted that they believed that overseas training provides English teachers with real-life experiences to improve their awareness of teaching issues in international contexts.

### **Conclusion**

The study reported here explored Vietnamese English teachers’ perceptions of World Englishes as well as their beliefs regarding their introduction. Perceptions, suggestions, and imagined actions of the study’s participants provide insights into the current experience of teachers who work in contexts where the variety of English taught is not necessarily representative of the varieties students may be exposed to living and working in the ASEAN region. The research also adds to the limited amount of literature on WE in Vietnam, and provides evidence of the potential influence of WE in English language education in a region which is becoming increasingly interconnected and where competence in different kinds of English is destined to become necessary for successful intercultural communication.

The research has several implications for English teaching and language policy in Vietnam. First, there is a need to provide teacher training to improve teachers' knowledge and awareness. English teachers should also have opportunities to involve themselves in real-life English communication via funded short-term or long-term overseas courses. Further discussions or workshops should also be held to reach a consensus among teachers regarding the best methods for including WE in specific contexts. A degree of autonomy, for both teachers and learners, is also required so the varieties of English drawn on in the curriculum are most relevant to their current and future needs.

While this study has provided the insights outlined above, the findings are limited in terms of generalizability, as well as the participants chosen. First, the short turnaround time and limited numbers of participants in the study, with a focus on university and college teachers only, restricts its generalizability. Further, though unique traits of the interview participants (studying in Australia) provided an important perspective on the current and imagined future roles of WE in Vietnam, the voices of other teachers are also needed to provide a more in-depth understanding of the findings from the online questionnaire.

Further research thus needs to be conducted over a longer period to grasp the breadth of views expressed. Moreover, future studies should investigate the perspective of teachers who are teaching English in Vietnam and are thus directly influenced by their particular social and educational contexts. In addition, students' perspectives towards English varieties need further exploration rather than solely drawing on their teachers' interpretations. Finally, more work is needed into the analysis of Vietnamese English features to provide researchers, teachers, and learners with a clear understanding of what makes this variety of English unique.

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11. Which variety of English do you think has the strongest influences in Vietnam?  
.....
12. When we say “varieties of English”, what varieties of English are you aware of?  
.....
13. Which variety of English do you think should be best fostered for English teaching in Vietnam? .....
14. What is the most important factor distinguishing this variety from the others?
  - A. Accent
  - B. Grammar
  - C. Vocabulary
  - D. Culture
  - E. Other answer: .....
15. Which variety of English do you think best describes your own English?  
.....
16. Which variety of English do you think your students aim to study?  
.....
17. What do you think are the three main purposes of your students in studying English?  
.....
18. Which people do you think that most of your students might communicate in English with?
  - A. Native speakers
  - B. Non-native speakers
  - C. Other answer: .....
19. What varieties of English do you think your student might encounter in daily communication in English?  
.....
20. Do you think introducing different varieties of English into English teaching is important?
  - A. Yes
  - B. No
  - C. Unsure
21. What do you think are foreseeable benefits when introducing different varieties of Englishes into your teaching?  
.....
22. What challenges do you think teachers might encounter when introducing other varieties of English (besides the native varieties)?.....
23. What are the most three important criteria that you use to assess a student is good at English?
  - A. ....
  - B. ....
  - C. ....
24. Which variety of English do you use as a model in your English testing?  
.....
25. Do you think “Vietnamese English” is an acceptable term?
  - Yes
  - B. No
  - C. Unsure
26. What are some features of English used by Vietnamese speakers that you recognize or acknowledge? Please provide examples .....

## **Appendix B**

### **Individual Semi-Structured Interview**

The following are semi-structured interview questions that are going to be asked after the questionnaire results are analysed.

1. Which semester are you studying at the University of Queensland? What university are you teaching at in Vietnam?
2. Have you studied or encountered the term “World Englishes” (WE)?
3. Did you know this term *WE* before you attend this Master Course? In your opinions, what does this term mean?
4. Which varieties of English were you aware of before you attend this Master Course?
5. Do you think that your case is the same with most of other Vietnamese teachers in Vietnam?
6. Do you think understanding WE or English varieties are important to English teaching in Vietnam / to daily communication? How?
7. Have you ever employed different English varieties into your English teaching?  
If yes, how was it? What are your students’ attitudes towards those varieties you think?  
If no, why?
8. What are some obvious challenges that you think when introducing English varieties into English teaching in Vietnam?
9. Do you think you will employ WE or varieties of Englishes into your teaching context later on when you graduate? What are your future / imagined actions in terms of introducing English varieties into your teaching context when you come back your home country?
10. What are some suggestions that you would make to introduce English varieties in English teaching in your contexts?

**Appendix C**  
**Focus Group Interview**

1. It is presented that: “introducing English varieties, especially non-native varieties, helps students to be confident with their own English and proud of their own English variety” What do you think about this idea?
2. It is said that: the ultimate purpose of teaching and learning English is to achieve a native-like or as close to native-like level as possible. (We thus need to aim to Standard English for English teaching.) Introducing English varieties only make students confused and distracted with Standard English and their target.
3. The aims / target of teaching and learning English in Vietnam is examination-oriented, which is focused on TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS (Standard English). Therefore, the teacher only needs to focus on teaching these varieties (British and American English). What do you think about this?
4. What are some suggested solutions of introducing English varieties? Which varieties should we teach and how to teach?
5. What are suggested plans to introduce English varieties into English teaching context in Vietnam?

# **Authentic Texts and Pakistani Learners’ ESL Reading Comprehension Skills: A Mixed-Method Study**

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This paper highlights the varied perspectives towards authenticity and discusses a study which investigated the effects of utilizing authentic texts instead of the traditionally used passages on the Grades VI and VII students in an Asian ESL context, namely Pakistan. The research adopted a mixed method approach incorporating an experimental design and semi-structured questionnaires and involved 154 students of two private schools. The results showed that the reading comprehension abilities of more proficient and average learners who were exposed to authentic texts improved significantly as compared to the abilities of those who only had exposure to the traditional textbook material. The questionnaire responses indicated that the students were interested in reading authentic texts and they wanted these texts incorporated in their syllabus. Thus it is proposed that authentic texts should be utilized in second language classrooms, which can lead to the development of more proficient readers.

The theoretical beliefs underpinning the concept of *authenticity* in relation to language teaching have been undergoing considerable perceptual shifts in the last few decades which call for further investigations in actual educational environments. Initially, authenticity was only linked to texts which were taken from the world outside the classroom; thereafter with the importance being placed on language activities and learners, the scope of authenticity was extended to include varied aspects of the educational environment (Joy, 2011; Mishan, 2004). However, these changes in points of view also tended to obscure the concept. At the same time, a section of the literature (e.g., Berardo, 2006) continued to emphasize the importance of authentic texts in the acquisition of reading comprehension skills but without decisive evidence in support of the co-relation. Thus this article, while discussing the theoretical beliefs related to authentic texts, importantly presents a small scale study which attempted to provide empirical evidence indicating the positive influence of these text types on the second language reading comprehension skills of Pakistani learners.

In Pakistan, English is the second language which is being utilized in the major spheres of power, such as bureaucracy, commerce, and education (Pinon & Haydon, 2010). Nevertheless, the authors have assessed that the English reading skills of their college level

Pakistani students are inadequate because the learners have difficulty understanding the English material taken from the real world, though they may be able to handle typical classroom reading tasks. These deficiencies could be linked to inadequate teaching techniques and, specifically, the prescribed English textbooks, most of which incorporate non-authentic texts (Aftab, 2011) which can limit the learners' abilities to only handling these kinds of texts. Thus this study investigated the degree authentic texts can help Pakistani Grade VI and VII level students improve their ESL reading comprehension skills and whether the learners are motivated to read these texts.

The opening sections of this article will attempt to define "reading" and authenticity, and encapsulate a few studies focusing on the impact of authentic material on reading. The second part of the article will focus on the study: its research methodology, results, and implications.

## Literature Review

### What is Reading?

Reading is believed to be "interactive" in two respects. First, reading involves different processes (e.g., decoding, inference, prediction, and monitoring) taking place "simultaneously" and secondly, it entails interaction of "linguistic information" with knowledge from "long term memory" and schema (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, pp. 11-12). Snow and Sweet (2003) have defined reading comprehension as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (p. 10). These assumptions emphasize that reading is interaction whether external between the reader and the text or internal involving cognitive processes. Second language reading comprehension also involves interacting with the text, but the process may be rendered difficult in many instances because of unfamiliar cultural schemata and lexis (Iwai, 2010).

### The Plurality of "Authenticity" in Language Learning

*Authentic texts* have been defined from diverse theoretical angles. According to Morrow (1977, p. 13), "an authentic text is one written for the purpose of communicating information (not of illustrating specific language points)." Some sections of literature (e.g., Thornbury, 2006) adopting Morrow's (1977) line of argument have asserted that authentic texts are those materials which have not been especially prepared for language learning. The implications elicited from these definitions of authentic text can be summarized as follows: this type of text gives "exposure to real language and its use in its own community" (Widdowson, 1990, as cited in Tamo, 2009, p. 75). However, other sections of the literature have indicated limitations inherent in the concept of authenticity in relation to language teaching. For instance, Joy (2011) stated that the term *authentic text* is too open-ended to promote application in educational contexts.

In fact, learners' own reactions are more important than the kinds of utilized texts as far as language acquisition is concerned, and if a text (irrespective of its nature) is employed to help learners use the language in the classroom, this kind of practice can be equated with authenticity (Joy, 2011). Nevertheless, to create authentic language use scenarios in classrooms, the trend is to employ simulations which are by their very nature *unreal*. For example, if an activity requires the students to complete a bank form, the used text (a form) is real, but the created location (a bank) and the roles assigned to the students (individuals asking for a bank draft) are *artificial* since the classroom is not a bank and the individuals are language learners (Joy, 2011). This example reflects the unstable nature of the authentic text concept and thus Joy (2011) claimed that the *purpose* behind using the text should be the criteria for determining authenticity in the language classroom. Similarly, Mishan (2004) asserted that an



authentic text is something *unique* and limited to a particular context. In this sense, the issue of authentic text is complex. In contrast, the relation of authenticity to language use is relatively more straightforward: the activities generated by texts as viewed by users as having “real-life communicative” aims can be considered “authentic” (Mishan, 2004, p. 17). In fact, these multifaceted underpinnings associated with authenticity have led some linguists (notably Guariento & Morley, 2001, and Joy, 2011) to classify the term into different categories. These categories look beyond authentic texts and incorporate other aspects of the learning environment such as activities, learners’ responses, and classroom situations (Shomoossi & Ketabi, 2007).

Notwithstanding the plurality of meanings associated with authenticity in relation to language learning and the importance of tasks and learners’ perceptions, it is pertinent to highlight that students’ views about educational aspects may not necessarily be valid or even relevant due to their own limited expectations, beliefs, and experiences in some educational contexts. For instance, some learners may favour or plainly accept mechanical activities (e.g., completing gapped sentences) or simplified texts as effective because these materials are cognitively less challenging or the learners are not aware of the diverse task / text types available, irrespective of whether these materials are relevant in the context and facilitate the acquisition of the target language or not. Furthermore, language activities are diverse and they display varied degrees of authenticity, and so the discussion of such a wide topic in the limited space of this article cannot possibly do justice to the subject. Thus further discussion related to authenticity in this paper will limit itself to *authentic texts* implying real language since the discussed study attempted to investigate the extent exposure to authentic reading texts in a second language educational scenario can lead to effective acquisition of the target language.

### **Nature of Authentic Texts**

Non-authentic texts, which generally utilize “accurate” sentence constructions and “unreal” language, are apparently more suitable for teaching grammar rather than developing reading skills (Berardo, 2006, p. 62). In contrast, authentic material incorporates diverse sentence patterns, lexis, and other stylistic features aiming to present content using effective language relevant to the objectives of communication. The following examples of texts (taken from two English textbooks prescribed in Grade VI of Pakistani schools) illustrate these differences between authentic and non-authentic texts:

#### Text A

He watched them [the dolphins] stall and turn in perfect formation, cutting white slices through the skin of the water, curving back on themselves . . . Now that was desperately cool, no question. (Jones & Mann, 2006, p. 286)

#### Text B

After wandering for some time, I ate some more food I had with me and fell asleep. I had just begun to doze when a noise woke me up. (Howe, 2007, p. 159)

Text A is authentic; it is an excerpt of a children’s novel (incorporated in the textbook) which has the communicative purpose of providing entertainment or aesthetic pleasure. Thus, varied sentence structures and effective and graphic lexis (“perfect,” “cutting white slices,” and “desperately cool” [Jones & Mann, 2006, p. 286]) are appropriate here and mark this text as having what can be called a personal style. Moreover, this text also reflects the views of the writer about the dolphins capering in and out of the water. Text B, which is non-authentic, has the sole aim of assessing students’ reading comprehension; it narrates events using similar

sentence patterns without any vivid and descriptive details.

The literature (e.g., Tomlinson, 2008) has highlighted that the use of authentic texts have many advantages. For instance, exposure to authentic texts enhances the students' motivation because it provides opportunities for reading realistic language that is written for varied personal and professional reasons rather than only to present language for teaching purposes (Guariento & Morley, 2001; Tamo, 2009). However, utilizing authentic texts within the classroom can also be problematic. For example, some of these materials can be culturally unfamiliar; the linguistic diversity and complexity of the text can also hinder decoding, leading to incomprehensibility; and using authentic materials in the classroom will require more preparation time for teachers (Berardo, 2006). Some of these limitations can be countered if the selected texts are compatible with the students' tastes, needs, and linguistic backgrounds (Berardo, 2006). Guariento and Morley (2001, p. 348) have suggested that reading activities should not require learners to understand each and every word (a technique known as "partial comprehension") since even in real life we do not necessarily try to comprehend the complete text all the time.

### **Previous Studies**

The previous section listed a number of benefits of authentic texts as cited in literature; however, it is also important to examine empirical evidence of these assumptions through actual classroom-based studies. Konstantinos and Jeppe (2005) carried out a study in Swedish upper secondary schools to evaluate the attitudes of English students and one teacher towards authentic texts. The questionnaire and interview results showed that both the students and the teacher wanted to read authentic materials since these were based on appealing themes. The teacher also favoured authentic material as a means to create an active classroom and expose students to the real world language, but at the same time he indicated that to completely eliminate non-authentic texts was unrealistic. Therefore, a combination of the two types of texts should be utilized while teaching reading skills. Subsequently, Guo (2012) conducted an experimental study investigating the influence of extensive reading of authentic material on language competence of 49 Taiwanese college learners. The research illustrated improved vocabulary development and motivation. Ihtiari, Sundari, and Andayani (2013) through an Indonesian study, highlighted the positive effect of authentic texts on the English reading comprehension abilities of 100 Grade VIII learners. Finally, an experimental study (Marzban & Davaji, 2015) illustrated the positive correlation between authentic texts use and reading comprehension of intermediate level EFL Iranian students; the research also highlighted that the motivational level of students incorporating aspects such as reading curiosity improved. However, the study was limited in utilizing a small number of respondents (24), and the groups were "homogeneous" (p. 90).

### **The Current Study**

The studies discussed above have shown the positive influence of authentic texts on EFL reading skills and highlight the need for directly investigating the issue in a different language use scenario, namely ESL. Thus this article discusses a study examining the degree of effectiveness of authentic texts in a specific ESL context, namely two urban-based Pakistani private schools. This project shared some similarities with the above studies such as investigating the same co-relation, focusing on almost the same level of learners as those utilized in the Swedish, Indonesian, and Iranian studies (i.e., Grades VI and VII), and adopting primarily an experimental design like the abovementioned Asian projects. However, a relatively higher number of participants (154 students) were involved and a mixed-method based questionnaire survey was additionally incorporated. The current study is important since

it can suggest the kinds of texts (specifically authentic or non-authentic material) that can help both develop effective reading skills and provide learners with a more motivating experience, leading to improvements in reading programmes in Asian second language learning settings.

The study was based on the following research questions (derived from the discussed literature):

1. To what extent can authentic texts help Pakistani middle level private sector students improve their ESL reading comprehension skills?
2. To what extent are the Pakistani ESL learners motivated to read authentic texts?

### **Research Methodology**

The present research adopted the mixed-method approach, which involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative techniques and data in a single study. The quantitative procedures comprised the employment of closed-ended items incorporated in the two questionnaires and the experiment, while the qualitative approach involved the use of open-ended items included in the questionnaires. Dörnyei has commended this practice of integrating both approaches since “words can be used to add meaning to numbers and numbers can be used to add precision to words” (2007, p. 45).

One hundred fifty-four Grade VI and VII students of two private sector schools of Pakistan participated in the study. The participants, aged between ten and thirteen years, were all girls, and they belonged to different social backgrounds.

This study involved three phases. During the first phase, 43 of the participants randomly selected from the total sample population were surveyed about their views regarding the classroom reading texts through questionnaires (Questionnaire A) written in English. Questionnaires can be used to extract the attitudinal position of the respondents (Dörnyei, 2007) as was attempted in this study. This research tool was used since specific information was needed from a large number of participants during this phase. Questionnaire A had 6 closed-ended items requiring the students to respond by selecting any one of the three options – “Yes,” “To a certain extent,” and “Not at all” – and one open-ended question (see Appendix A). Closed-ended items were included in the questionnaire since elicitation of precise data was required (Dörnyei, 2007); an open-ended question was additionally utilized because the study required the respondents to simultaneously express their views freely, leading to more “insightful data” (as asserted by Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 93).

The second phase consisted of an experiment. The objective of the second phase of the study was to investigate the extent the use of authentic material could positively affect the reading comprehension abilities of a group of learners, and thus an experimental design was adopted. Students were randomly allocated to the experimental and control groups, each group consisting of 77 members.

Two pretests (one for each grade level) based on reading comprehension were prepared by the amalgamation of different authentic texts: a web-based flight schedule and a local magazine article were incorporated in the Grade VI test; a recipe page consisting of three recipes and a local newspaper article were included in the Grade VII test. The total marks of each test incorporating short-answer questions were 20.

After the administration of the pretest, the control group was taught reading comprehension through the use of non-authentic textbook material, while the experimental group was exposed to different types of authentic texts (e.g., articles, menus, and letters). The lessons commenced with brainstorming sessions aiming to acquaint all the participants with the topic of the reading

texts and familiarize only the experimental group members with the utilized genres. After this, the students of both groups read the texts and answered questions based on the texts. For each group, the lessons were conducted in addition to the regular classes with the permission of the administration; the 45-minute classes were taken five times a week for three weeks. Since class size, gender, teacher, the adopted methodology, and the length and number of lessons were similar for all groups, the influence of other possible variables was minimized. Following the completion of the treatment period, both groups were given a posttest which was the same as the pretest.

The last phase was once again a questionnaire survey (Questionnaire B) involving 41 participants randomly selected from the experimental group. Questionnaire B (in English) had two closed-ended items with the same options as Questionnaire A and one open-ended question.

After eliciting data from the experiment and the two surveys, the findings were correlated to determine whether the responses helped in explaining the quantitative differences in the scores of participants exposed to authentic texts and those who were exposed to non-authentic texts.

## Findings

### Phase I

The responses to Item 1 of Questionnaire A (focusing on the interest level of the textbook material) were generally mixed (see Table 1). The responses to Items 2 and 3 indicated the majority's favourable attitude towards their coursebook texts for improving their reading comprehension and general knowledge. Nevertheless, most of the students affirmed that the texts incorporated in their textbook are *not* similar to the real-world texts (Item 4). The responses to Items 5 and 6 highlighted that the majority liked to read about a variety of topics and read different authentic texts. Finally, for the last open-ended item (requiring the students to suggest some changes in their reading course) the respondents stated that they wanted to read some new kind of material and a wider variety of texts.

**Table 1**

**Questionnaire A Quantitative Data**

Item	Yes	To a certain extent	Not at all
1. Do you find the passages given in your text books for the reading comprehension skills interesting?	35%	44%	21%
2. Do you think that the passages in your textbooks help to improve your reading comprehension skills?	65%	23%	12%
3. Do these passages help to improve your general knowledge?	46.5%	32.5%	21%
4. Are these reading passages similar to the texts that you come across outside the classroom (in story books, newspapers, magazines, encyclopedias, etc., and on the internet)?	14%	19%	67%
5. Do you want to read texts based on a variety of topics?	98%	2%	0
6. Do you want to read different text types (recipes, advertisements, movie reviews, stories, poems, newspaper / magazine / web articles, Facebook pages and so on) in your class?	93%	2%	5%

**Phase II**

Figure 1 compares the pretest percentage scores of both groups. A large number of students of both groups did not do well in the pretest: 44% of the control group learners obtained less than 50% (referred to as below average marks), while 54.5% of the experimental group participants similarly obtained below average marks.

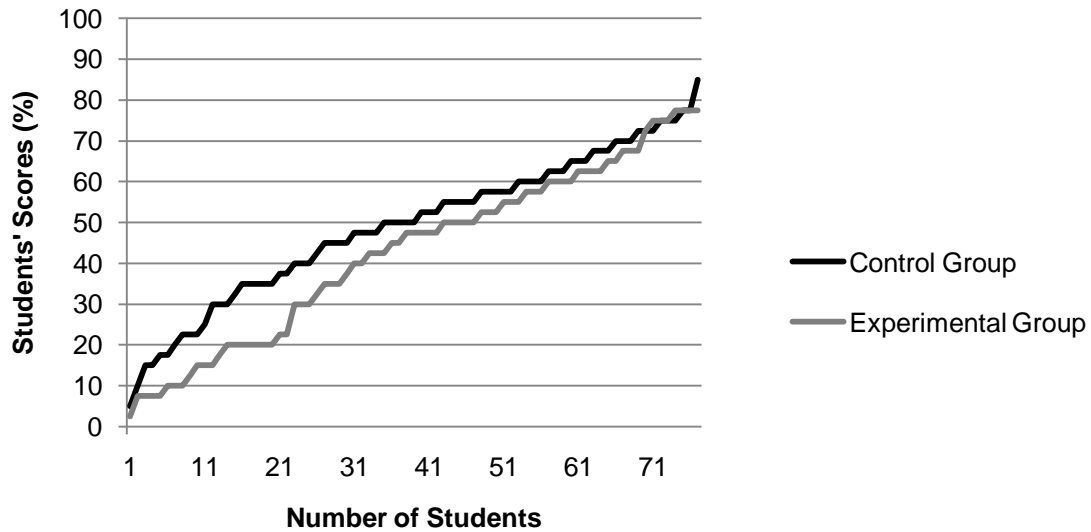


Figure 1. Control and experimental groups' pretest performance

Table 2 summarizes the key statistical data derived from the pretest. There seems to be little difference in the means obtained by the experimental and control groups. The very high standard deviations received by both groups indicate that their scores were very varied.

**Table 2**  
*Descriptive Statistical Analysis of the Pretest Data*

	Experimental Group	Control Group
<b>Mean</b>	42.825	49.156
<b>SD</b>	21.496	18.343

The results of the inferential statistical analysis of the pretest are presented in Table 3. The *p* value is not less than 0.05, and by standard criteria, this difference is considered to be not quite statistically significant.

**Table 3**  
*Inferential Statistical Analysis of the Pretest Data*

Difference in mean between the experimental and control groups	-6.331
95% confidence interval of this difference	-12.693 - 0.031
standard error of difference	3.220
<i>t</i>	1.9660
<i>p</i> value	0.0511

Based on the scores and the statistical analysis, we can assume that both the groups were at almost the same level as far as the reading comprehension ability was concerned. One of the

reasons for the poor performance of a large number of the participants in the two groups (see Figure 1) could be that no prior exposure to authentic texts was provided to the students in the classrooms.

Figure 2 compares the individual percentage scores obtained by the students of both groups in the posttest. Forty percent of the control group students scored below 50%, while thirty percent of the experimental group learners were low achievers in this test.

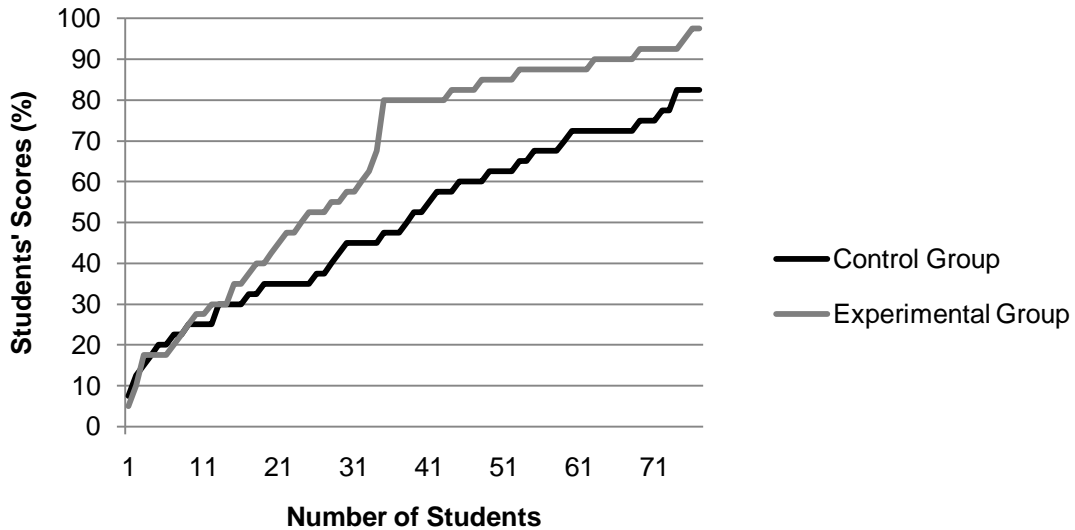


Figure 2. Control and experimental groups' posttest performance

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistical analysis of the posttest marks. Once again there was broad variance amongst the participants of each group as indicated by the extremely high standard deviations of each group. However, as the mean scores highlight, the experimental group performed better than the control group.

**Table 4**  
*Descriptive Statistical Analysis of the Posttest Data*

	Experimental Group	Control Group
Mean	65.260	50.617
SD	27.034	20.246

Table 5 presents the inferential statistical analysis of the posttest scores. The *p* value is less than 0.05 in this case; by standard conventions, this difference is assumed to be extremely statistically significant.

**Table 5**  
*Inferential Statistical Analysis of the Posttest Data*

Difference in mean between the experimental and control groups	14.643
95% confidence interval of this difference	7.038 - 22.247
standard error of difference	3.849
<i>t</i>	3.8043
<i>p</i> value	0.0002

As can be seen in Figure 3, the difference in the performance of the control group in the pretest and posttest is minimal.

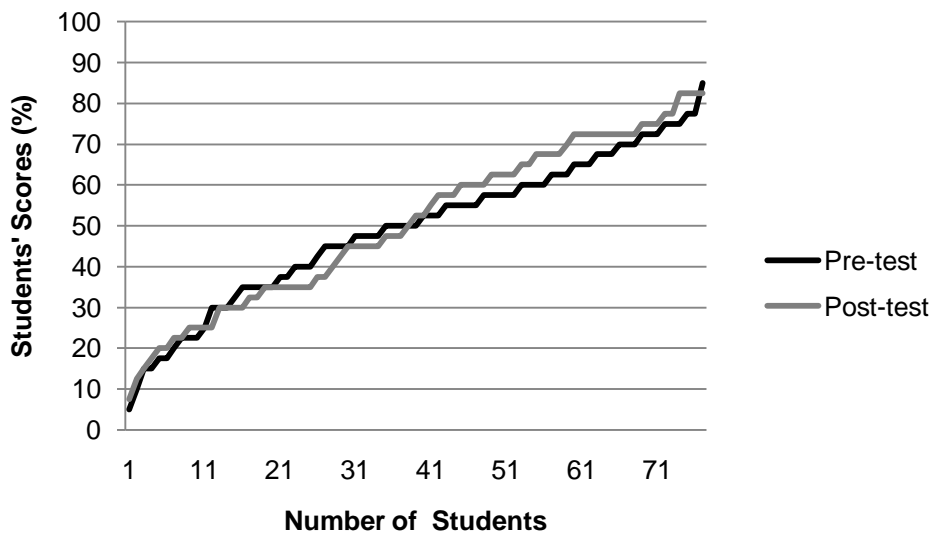


Figure 3. Control group pretest and posttest performance

However, as Figure 4 clearly highlights, the performance of the experimental group in the posttest significantly improved as compared to the group's performance in the pretest:

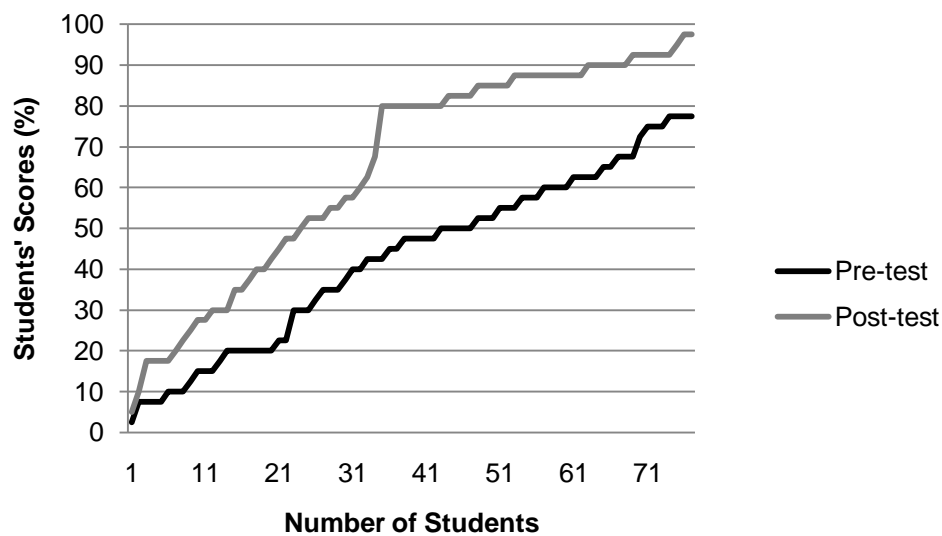


Figure 4. Experimental group pretest and posttest performance

### Phase III

The responses to Items 1 and 3 of Questionnaire B (see Table 6) highlighted that most experimental group students enjoyed reading the provided authentic texts during the treatment period and perceived that these text types had helped them improve their reading skills. The second item required the students to provide reasons for their responses to the first item. Some respondents stated that they really liked the texts because these texts were different from those incorporated in their textbooks and they increased their knowledge, while others preferred the material since they were close to real life situations. The students further indicated that their

syllabus was monotonous and that they wanted to have these text types included in their course.

**Table 6**  
**Questionnaire B Quantitative Data**

Item	Yes	To a certain extent	Not at all
1. Did you enjoy reading the texts that were given to you in class?	78%	22%	0
3. How far do you feel that reading these texts and undertaking the activities set on these texts have helped improve your reading skills?	85%	15%	0

### Discussion

The responses to the initial items of Questionnaire A survey highlighted that the majority of the respondents held a positive attitude towards their textbook reading texts. Apparently due to the students' limited vision, they believed that they were adequately informed about the world and that they had developed effective reading skills based on the good marks that they attained in routine classroom examinations. Nevertheless, as the learners were aware of the variety of reading texts available outside the class, most of the students realized that the coursebook texts were different from the reading material available outside the classroom. Most respondents wanted to study about a variety of topics and read different authentic texts. The reason behind these beliefs could be that the students were aware of these text types since they had come across these texts in their daily lives through the Internet, newspapers, and magazines, but this exposure had not been related to their classroom learning.

The data elicited from the experiment and presented highlight that the experimental group showed significant improvement in the posttest as far as their reading comprehension ability was concerned, while the control group did not show much improvement. The possible reason behind these findings seemed to be that the control group was not provided any exposure to the authentic texts during the treatment period, while the experimental group was trained through the exposure to these text types. The findings of the experiment additionally indicate that while among the control group members there did not seem any significant increase in number of students in the top slot (between 80% and 100% marks) in the posttest, for the experimental group students, there was an increase from zero to 44. However, the treatment seemed to have had no effect on the experimental group learners receiving the lowest scores. Thus it seemed that the treatment had more significant effect on the average and high achievers than the weakest students. However, it is possible that if the treatment had been provided for a period substantially longer than three weeks, the scores of some / most of the low achievers would have improved. At the same time, other factors which could be responsible for the poor reading comprehension ability of the weak students (e.g., weak decoding skills, inadequate vocabulary, and poor overall linguistic proficiency) cannot be ruled out.

The students' responses to the Questionnaire B survey items highlighted that the majority favoured the authentic material presented during the treatment. These responses, while providing further support to the findings elicited by Konstantinos and Jeppe's (2005) study, imply that exposure to authentic texts in class made the learners realize that there can be other types of material available for the development of reading skills in the classroom. Moreover, this study highlighted that the respondent students seemed motivated to read authentic texts, as has been illustrated by Guo (2012) through research, and claimed by Guariento and Morley



(2001) and Tamo (2009). Thus it can be assumed that the use of authentic texts can be beneficial especially as far as reading comprehension skills and motivation to read are concerned for second language learners in other countries as well.

Though the data helped fulfill the research objectives, there were some limitations in the research design: the research was at only two private urban-based schools, and the treatment period was limited to three weeks. These shortcomings could have influenced the reliability and validity of the study.

### **Conclusion**

The discussed study investigating the effect of authentic texts on Pakistani ESL students' reading skills highlighted the positive influence and the general favourable attitudes of the respondents towards these texts. As the result of the experimental study, it can be assumed that the use of authentic reading texts can help improve the reading comprehension abilities of some Pakistani students, especially the high achievers and the average learners studying in private sector schools. Keeping these findings in mind, it is suggested that second language programmes should incorporate authentic reading material at least to some extent.

Admittedly, since language learning is a multifaceted process, it is not possible to reach decisive conclusions from any applied linguistics-based research. However, at the same time, it is proposed that linguists should move beyond redefining the concept of authenticity and instead focus on investigating effects of authentic texts on diverse levels and types of second language learners in different countries and to conduct research highlighting the ways these texts can be effectively utilized in the classrooms. Presumably, experimental design with a longer treatment periods should be utilized in these research projects. Such empirical studies may provide more conclusive evidence which may lead to improvements in reading programmes the world over and benefit language learners.

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## ***Teaching Practice***

# **Student Perceptions of the Use of PechaKucha Presentations for EFL Reading Classes**

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A PechaKucha (“chitchat” in Japanese) is a concise style of oral presentation in which the presenter has 20 seconds to describe the main ideas for each PowerPoint slide showing images without text. In this study, Japanese EFL students, majoring in engineering, prepared two PechaKucha presentations, one teacher-made and one student-made. A follow-up questionnaire consisting of six 5-point Likert-scaled items and two open-ended questions was administered to the 210 pre-intermediate level university students to examine their perceptions of the effectiveness of this strategy. The students reported that learning to prepare and using PechaKuchas were beneficial and that these activities improved reading comprehension, speaking, and oral presentation skills. Although the majority of students enjoyed and benefited from the use of PechaKuchas, presentation pacing and personal shyness were reported as negative feedback. Results of the study and implications for further use of PechaKuchas in EFL classrooms will be discussed.

One of the major problems in improving communication skills for Japanese EFL students is their reluctance to speak in the classroom. As observed by Anderson (1993), Japanese students rarely start a discussion, ask for clarification, or volunteer to give answers, nor do they want to create new topics for conversations or challenge the instructor in class. They are generally quiet language learners who are shy about participating in class interactions compared with learners of other countries (Harumi, 2010; Nunn & Nunn, 2005). Additionally, Japanese students often use too many words and images in PowerPoint slides and read the slides when they present in English, causing the audience to lose interest in the topic (Soto-Caban, Selvi, & Avila-Medina, 2011). Therefore, a more concise and engaging presentation style, along with creating a more encouraging and motivating atmosphere (Miles, 2009), may improve students’ confidence, integrated language skills, and communication skills (Ryan, 2012). This paper will discuss PechaKucha oral presentations (hereinafter called “PechaKuchas”) as a teaching practice in a context of teaching and learning EFL reading comprehension. Specifically, in this study, how the performance of PechaKuchas impact students’ learning, and student views and attitudes towards the use of PechaKuchas in the EFL reading classroom will be investigated. Discussion will touch on the necessity of oral presentations in EFL classrooms, a description of PechaKuchas, and the practice of PechaKuchas in the EFL reading classroom. Some important implications for further use of PechaKuchas in an EFL context will be explored.

## **The Necessity of Oral Presentations in EFL Classrooms**

Practicing oral presentations can help students build confidence in making public presentations (King, 2002), perform better in their future job-required tasks, and develop oral communication skills in the business and / or the engineering world (Anderson & Williams, 2012; Stevens, 2005). Al-Issa and Al-Qubtan (2010) reported that performing oral presentations develops students' integrated English language skills since they have written notes for slides, are reading text or notes for these slides, are speaking to an audience, and are listening for questions and feedback cues. They also reported that there are improvements in students' decision-making abilities when they choose the speaking topic. As well, there is an increase in students' confidence in talking in front of people, and in their knowledge of the field. In addition, there is an enhancement of their critical thinking skills with the opportunity to be involved in taking full responsibility for their own learning. Lastly, there is an increase in students' skills in using technology to make their presentations more meaningful and memorable to the audience. Munby (2011) further claimed that performing oral presentations can foster students' autonomy and empowerment, enable them to realize their individual differences, and improve their presentations through peer-assessment.

## **What is the PechaKucha Oral Presentation?**

PechaKuchas are "the art of concise presentations" (PechaKucha™ 20x20, n.d.), and "an attempt to break through" the fatigue caused by traditional text-printed PowerPoint slides to "make the entire speaking experience more engaging" (Edwards, 2010, para 3). PechaKuchas have also been a rescue to the student presentation (Masters & Holland, 2012). The term *PechaKucha*, coined by Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham in 2003 (PechaKucha™ 20x20, n.d.), means the sound of "chitchat" in the Japanese language. A typical format of the PechaKuchas is "20x20" (twenty slides or images at twenty seconds each). The slides are created using the Microsoft Office PowerPoint application to make the entire presentation automatically run in only six minutes and forty seconds. The focus is on visuals, not on text-heavy slides. PechaKucha presenters are advised not to control the speed of each slide during the presentation. They should be ready to talk about each slide once it is shown automatically for twenty seconds. The presenter, therefore, needs to be focused and knowledgeable of the topic (PechaKucha™ 20x20, n.d.). An effective PechaKucha should have a well-organized presentation structure and presenters need careful planning and practice for an engaging, creative, and professional presentation (Atkins-Sayre, n.d.). Currently, PechaKuchas have been popularly used to present class work or projects in academia (Christianson, 2011; Foyle & Childress, 2015).

## **The Use of the PechaKucha Approach in Classrooms**

PechaKuchas have been investigated in various contexts. Soto-Caban, Selvi, and Avila-Medina (2011) used PechaKuchas in two engineering courses at an American university. Students who had not used PechaKuchas before (but had used PowerPoint slides) were asked to use these to present their research project results. Each PechaKucha presentation used twenty slides at twenty seconds each for a total of six minutes and forty seconds; each slide had only one image and a word or phrase. Findings showed that the use of the PechaKuchas helped students develop communication skills compared to other traditional presentations in classrooms. In another study, PechaKuchas also appeared to be more effective than traditional presentations within a time limit with engineering students, and in making engaging presentations and improving students' presentation skills (Christianson & Payne, 2011). Beyer, Gaze, and Lazicki (2012) compared the impact of PechaKuchas with traditional PowerPoint presentations used by psychology students and found that PechaKuchas were more favored because they were "more appealing" to the audience (p. 36). The performance of PechaKuchas was also found to be "a

valuable tool” for improving students’ retention of presentation content, developing their presentation skills, and giving them “better visual design literacy” such as image designing skills (p. 38). Their findings suggest additional appropriate uses of PechaKuchas for reviewing topics or materials. Another study by Anderson and Williams (2012) taught the use of PechaKuchas for three business classes. In their study, students were first introduced to video samples of PechaKuchas and then were instructed to make PechaKuchas. This approach differed from the study by Soto-Caban, Selvi, and Avila-Medina (2011) in which students had no formal introductions to PechaKuchas. The results indicated that creating PechaKuchas was challenging in terms of “time and content constraints,” but creating and performing were “more enjoyable, lively, and engaging” (p. 5). These findings further support the use of PechaKuchas with a focus on visual designs, engaging communication, and presentation skills in the classroom. Furthermore, Ryan (2012) reported that using PechaKuchas can help EFL students improve their pronunciation and intonation. Since English is a “stressed time” language and the time employed in PechaKuchas is strictly controlled, practicing PechaKuchas will help students better “achieve natural sounding connected speech” (p. 25).

These recent studies show benefits of using PechaKuchas in academic classrooms (Anderson & Williams, 2012; Beyer, Gaze, & Lazicki, 2012; Christianson & Payne, 2011; Ryan, 2012; Soto-Caban, Selvi, & Avila-Medina, 2011) in various contexts, but provide no specific findings on the use of PechaKuchas in EFL reading classes. In this study, the students’ views and attitudes towards the use of PechaKuchas in the EFL reading classroom will be examined. It is further hoped that this study will contribute to the use of the PechaKucha approach in EFL learning and teaching, especially in connection with reading comprehension.

### **Implementation and Methodology**

The PechaKucha approach was introduced to the English IV reading course for ten different classes at a Japanese university in the spring of 2014. The pre-intermediate level students, aged 18 to 21, majored in science and engineering. The textbooks used were *Reading Explorer 1* (Douglas, 2009) and *Reading Science and Technology* (Cengage Learning, 2013). Students met once a week for ninety minutes over sixteen weeks, including two ninety-minute integrated learning sessions. The PechaKuchas were implemented twice for all ten classes: once in Week 8 and again in Week 15.

#### **PechaKucha Practice 1 (Week 8)**

The teacher prepared twelve PowerPoint slides and made copies for all groups of students in class. Each group had two or three students and the same twelve slide copies. Pictures used for the slides were taken from the first six reading units (9A, 9B, 10A, 10B, and two science readings) that students had studied. There were two slides per unit, one to two pictures per slide, little or no text, and no video or audio. The slideshow time was four minutes on auto-run with twenty seconds on each slide. Each group divided the slides among themselves for their practice. All groups first practiced speaking about these slides using the instruction provided (see Appendix A). They were advised to talk about the key points of the pictures that supported the topic and to keep the twenty-second rule per slide. After a 20-minute practice, they presented this teacher-made slideshow to the class. There was no formal assessment, but students used a self-assessment checklist for their presentation (see Appendix B) which had been introduced and explained in Week 7 and included content, body language, speech and language, and the presenter’s expressed level of interest.

## **PechaKucha Practice 2 (Week 15)**

Instructions for creating PechaKuchas were explained to students in Week 14 (see Appendix C). Students worked in groups of two or three to make their presentations of twelve PowerPoint slides on the last six reading units (11A, 11B, 12A, 12B, and two science readings; the topics were Caribbean pirates, women pirates, Everest mysteries, missing pilots, the information superhighway, and bridge making). The rules for making PechaKucha Practice 2 slides were similar to PechaKucha Practice 1. If using the Internet, students were advised to cite the source of the image on each slide. Groups practiced their slideshows for fifteen minutes before they presented the work to the whole class. Each student talked about three or four slides for the same or different units. A rubric (see Appendix D), which had been explained in Week 14, was provided for students' peer-assessment. The rubric consisted of six categories scoring from one to five on the following criteria: a) content and visual appeal (the connection between the picture selection and the reading texts); b) slide design (little or no text on each slide, one to two pictures per slide, timed to auto-run for every twenty seconds); c) organization (ease in following the speech); d) body language (the use of gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions); e) speech and language (the use of voice volume, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar); and f) interest (the speaker's expressed level of interest).

At the end of the course (Week 16), a questionnaire (Appendix E) was given to the 210 PechaKucha student presenters to measure their perceptions of the PechaKucha approach in their reading classes. The questionnaire had six items using a five-point Likert-scaled format asking students to circle 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*) and two open-ended questions; students were asked to write their answers in English. The questionnaire was distributed and collected in the same day during Week 16 for each class. Two hundred complete sheets were collected for analysis.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Student Ratings of the Impact of PechaKucha Practice on Skills**

Items 1 to 6 asked students what impact they believed learning to perform the PechaKuchas had in the EFL reading class (see Table 1). The majority of the respondents of Item 1 agreed that PechaKuchas improved their text understanding (30% Strongly Agree and 63% Agree). Students rehearsed the PechaKucha several times, talking about the main ideas of the text before in-class presentations, which might have helped improve their understanding of the text or retention of presentation content. The result of the study by Beyer, Gaze, and Lazicki (2012) also showed students' improvement of understanding of the material used in their PechaKucha presentations. Similarly, in Item 3, most respondents agreed PechaKuchas were an effective tool that helped them review the reading texts they had learned previously (33.5% Strongly Agree and 48% Agree). Reviewing the text for PechaKuchas can deepen students' text retention, which contributes to their improved understanding of text and also makes their presentations more informative and focused.

**Table 1**  
**Results of the Questionnaire**

PechaKuchas ...	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
1. improved my understanding of the texts.	30	63	5.5	1.5	0
2. encouraged me to read more.	20.5	47	27.5	4.5	0.5
3. were an effective tool to review the text I have studied.	33.5	48	16.5	2	0
4. encouraged cooperative learning.	29.5	48	20	2	0.5
5. improved my English speaking and presentation skills.	47	44	5	4	0
6. provided a fun learning environment.	29	42.5	25.5	3	0

For Item 2, the majority of the respondents thought that having to prepare for PechaKuchas encouraged their reading (20.5% Strongly Agree and 47% Agree), while 4.5% disagreed and 27.5% responded “Undecided,” which contradicted the researcher’s expectation that PechaKuchas would motivate their reading in order to create PechaKuchas. This could be due to the limited exposure (two times per semester) to PechaKuchas. This possibility may also explain why 27.5% chose “Undecided” for this item.

Responses to Item 4 show that the use of PechaKuchas encouraged cooperative learning (29.5% Strongly Agree and 48% Agree). Students together made and practiced their PechaKuchas, which may have contributed to their enhanced learning cooperation. However, 2% disagreed, which may be from students who were shy and / or reluctant to join the group work. In the researcher’s experience, shy students preferred to practice the task by themselves and only joined the group when presenting the task to the class.

When asked if PechaKuchas improved their English speaking and presentation skills (Item 5), a majority of the students responded positively (47% Strongly Agree and 44% Agree) while 4% disagreed. This finding supports findings from previous studies on improved communication skills (Soto-Caban, Selvi, & Avila-Medina, 2011) and improved presentation skills (Beyer, Gaze, & Lazicki, 2012; Christianson & Payne, 2012). In the current study, students had one week (PechaKucha Practice 2) and in-class time (PechaKucha Practices 1 and 2) for their group rehearsal, which enabled possible corrections of their English oral speeches in the areas of delivery, pronunciation, word use, and body language. For the 4% who disagreed, the reason may be because of low proficiency speaking skills and / or shyness. Some students, in addition, only memorized a set speech (rather than practicing various ways to discuss the image or concept), which may have resulted in their assumption that the use of PechaKuchas did not improve their speaking and presentation skills.

Data for Item 6 shows that most students (29% Strongly Agree and 42.5% Agree) felt using PechaKuchas was a fun learning activity. Interestingly, when students were rehearsing PechaKuchas in class, they were very noisy and spoke in both English and Japanese (Japanese was accepted for minimal use). PechaKuchas also appeared to be fun and enjoyable as noted by Anderson and Williams (2012). When someone was thinking too long or trying to produce a word about the image, others were cheering. Only 3% disagreed with this statement, which may be from those who were shy or reluctant to join the teamwork. This is similar to their responses to Item 4 above.



### **Student Attitudes Toward PechaKuchas**

Two open-ended questions asked students what they liked and disliked about PechaKuchas in their reading classroom. Please see Appendix F for their comments.

Most of the respondents showed positive views and attitudes towards the use of PechaKuchas in their reading classroom, which are quite consistent with the answers to Items 1 to 6 above. These responses fell into the following groups. PechaKuchas are believed to have: a) improved their reading comprehension and retention of text contents by re-studying, reviewing or summarizing the texts (similar to the responses of Items 1 and 3); b) improved their English speaking, communication, and presentation skills (similar to Item 5); c) developed their cooperative learning, friendships, and speaking confidence and fluency (similar to Item 4); and d) provided a fun learning opportunity (even for shy students) and enjoyable way to make PowerPoint slideshows (similar to the response of Item 6).

Regarding what students reported disliking, some respondents such as R4 and R45 felt that a twenty-second limit was too short for talking about a topic. Christianson and Payne (2011, p. 10) acknowledged that there are “some trade-offs between the benefits of a fixed format and the drawbacks” of PechaKuchas. Students in the Anderson and Williams (2012) study also found the PechaKucha time too short and “terrifying” (p. 4). When using PechaKuchas, students must be fast-thinking and fast-talking to convey the main ideas of the text. The time constraint may result in content delivery constraints, which can be frustrating to some who are shy and / or prefer a slower-paced speaking style. One possible solution could be allowing more time for students to practice, especially in pair or group practice so that they can feel more confident before they present their work to the class. Other respondents (R155 and R180) also felt that using pictures without text was not sufficient for explaining the concept. As stated in the instructions for making PechaKuchas, since pictures were used to enhance the understanding and mastery of the course objectives, they must be carefully selected and strongly support the reading topic and advance the story in the text. Therefore, if the pictures or images chosen are highly detailed and strongly support the text topic, they could provide a clear view of the text. These “dislike” responses have important implications for future uses of the PechaKuchas in terms of practice time and image selection.

### **Conclusion**

Student perceptions of the use of PechaKuchas in EFL reading classes were examined. PechaKucha student presenters' responses suggest that the use of PechaKuchas can positively contribute to the improvement of EFL student presentation skills in connection with reading comprehension and may want to be considered by teachers or learners as an activity to improve skills through oral presentations. Although beneficial, it is also important for teachers to consider some drawbacks of the use of PechaKuchas that can be challenging to students such as time constraints, the necessary speaking speed, and image selection. It is also advisable to choose high proficiency students to lead the teamwork and practice.

It is necessary to note some limitations of this study. First, the study was implemented with students in one semester and from one university. Therefore, the findings of the study may limit its external validity to larger populations. Second, asking students to respond in English to the open-ended part of the survey questionnaire may be a disadvantage to some low proficiency students, which may cause some limitations in eliciting their opinions about the use of PechaKuchas.

Future research is needed to compare the PechaKuchas with other traditional PowerPoint presentations to examine if there are any differences in students' performance on discussing the EFL reading text. The method of the study will include both pre- and post-surveys / interviews (in both English and Japanese) and skills tests to have a more comprehensive assessment of this presentation style.

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**Appendix A**  
**Instructions for PechaKucha Practice 1, Week 8**

1. Preparation:
  - In a group, each person chooses four to six slide copies. There are two slides for each reading text.
  - It is good to think and write down some sentences about each picture / slide.
  - You can look at reading texts to find more information for the talk.
2. Questions to think:
  - What do you see in the picture?
  - Who / what is in the picture? What are they doing?
  - What do you think the picture is about? How is the picture related to the text you have learned?
  - Do you like the picture? Why or why not?
3. Practice:
  - In your group, each of you practices speaking (*not reading*) as much as you can about the slide using the twenty-second rule per slide and the following useful phrases for your talk: *Greetings (Hello everyone, I'm going to talk about . . . ); I think the picture describes . . . ; I like . . . because . . . ; The picture is about . . .*
4. Presentation:
  - Each group will present their PowerPoint slides (*prepared by the teacher*) to the class.
  - Each of you will take turn to talk about the picture / slide within twenty seconds.
  - *Think fast and speak fast!!!*
5. Each presenter will be awarded one point.

**Appendix B**  
**Self-Assessment Checklist (PechaKucha Practice 1, Week 8)**

Presenter's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Category	Questions	Yes	No	A little
1. Content	Did I talk about the pictures in connection with the reading texts?			
2. Body language	Did I use gestures, eye contact, and facial expressions appropriately?			
3. Speech and language	Were my voice volume and pronunciation used appropriately? Did I cover a good use of vocabulary and grammar?			
4. Interest	Did I feel happy about presenting the topic? Did I present the topic with a high level of interest?			

**Appendix C**  
**Instructions for PechaKucha Practice 2, Week 15**

1. Form groups of two or three to make one PowerPoint slideshow of four minutes; twenty seconds per slide.
2. Choose pictures from each unit you have studied: *Unit 11A, 11B, 12A, 12B, science reading 3-4.*
3. You can search for more pictures on the Internet (save the link). The pictures chosen must be appropriate, legally downloadable, and of high resolution and they must strongly support the topic of the text.
4. Use pictures to make a twelve-slide PowerPoint presentation: Slides 1-2 (Unit 11A), slides 3-4 (Unit 11B), slides 5-6 (Unit 12A), slide 7-8 (Unit 12B), slides 9-10 (science reading 3), slides 11-12 (science reading 4). There may be no texts on each slide, except for the unit title and the links of the images chosen. Each slide must have one or two pictures and must be set to auto-run for every twenty seconds. The total time for the slideshow is four minutes exactly.
5. Please send the PowerPoint slideshow to me before the class.
6. Please print a copy of the slideshow and bring it to the class for group practice.
7. Practice with your group members as much as you can. Look at the text again to find more information for your talk.
8. Use the following phrases: *Hello everyone, I'm going to talk about . . . ; I think the picture describes . . . ; I like . . . because . . . ; This picture is about . . .*
9. Groups will present the PowerPoint slideshow in class.
10. Each presenter will get one point.

**\* How to set the time for the slides (For PCs):**

Start with slide 1. From PowerPoint window page, click "Animations"; you will see "Advance Slide" on the right side. Click on "Automatically after" and click the upper arrow for twenty seconds for each slide. Repeat the same procedure for other slides. Check all slides again to make sure they are all set with the same time (twenty seconds each).

**Appendix D**  
**Scoring Rubric (PechaKucha Practice 2, Week 15)**

Presenter's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Category	Scoring Criteria	Scoring Points				
		5	4	3	2	1
Content / visual appeal	The pictures or images chosen were appropriate, highly detailed, of high resolution, and strongly related to the topic of the reading text.					
Slide design	Each slide had one or two pictures / images. Each unit had two slides, timed to auto-run for every twenty seconds. The slideshow ran smoothly. There was little or no text on each slide, except for citing the sources of the images or unit titles. One basic design pattern was used per slide.					
Organization	Pictures or slides were organized in a way that was easy to follow and understand.					
Body language	Presenter used gestures, posture, and eye contact confidently and appropriately. Used facial expressions appropriately and communicatively.					
Speech & Language	Presenter demonstrated a clear and audible voice, a good use of topic-related words, grammar, and clear pronunciation. Rarely used the notes.					
Interest	Presenter showed a high level of interest / happiness using body language expressions or rising intonation where necessary in presenting the topic.					

Total points: \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix E**  
**Survey Questionnaire on the Use of PechaKuchas in EFL Reading Classes**

Please read the following items about PechaKucha Oral Presentations (PechaKuchas) and put a check (✓) in the appropriate box.

- Strongly agree (SA)
- Agree (AG)
- Undecided (UD)
- Disagree (DA)
- Strongly disagree (SD)

Items	PechaKuchas . . .	SA	AG	UD	DA	SD
1	improved my understanding of the texts.					
2	encouraged me to read more.					
3	were an effective tool to review the text I have studied.					
4	encouraged cooperative learning.					
5	improved my English speaking and presentation skills.					
6	provided a fun learning environment.					

Please answer the following questions in English.

\* What do you like about PechaKucha oral presentations in the reading classes?

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

\* What do you dislike about PechaKucha oral presentations in the reading classes?

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

Thank you!

**Appendix F**  
**Responses to Two Open-Ended Questions**

Only respondents' (R) representative comments are presented below to save space.

---

Question 1: What do you like about the PechaKuchas?

---

- R6 I improve my comprehension of text. I can remember the text content longer.
- R10 It was very interesting and I knew the pleasure to give a speech.
- R13 It can inspire our English speaking ability. We can communicate with other friends.
- R19 I like to speak about important points in 20 seconds.
- R28 We can develop speaking and presentation skills. So I think PechaKuchas are important.
- R36 We can make friends and help each other to make PechaKuchas.
- R42 PechaKuchas enable us to re-study the texts. It is good.
- R49 I learned that speaking and presentations of English are good for my future jobs.
- R51 I want to use PechaKucha slides to make animation.
- R61 I like that PechaKuchas provide a fun environment to learn English. No stress.
- R66 I like PechaKuchas because I do not need difficult words to talk.
- R78 I don't like English speaking long, but PechaKucha is short, so I like it!
- R84 I develop my skills to make short talks.
- R87 PechaKuchas help me revise the text and improve my reading comprehension.
- R95 I like cooperative learning. I think I develop speaking skills through PechaKuchas.
- R101 I can understand each unit again. I can freely talk about the texts.
- R116 Good for me because I like to make PechaKucha PowerPoint slides.
- R135 I improve my listening skills through PechaKuchas of other friends. So it is good.
- R147 Speaking fast improves my speaking fluency.
- R158 I like to talk free about textbook.
- R169 I was able to know my communication skills so I want to learn about English.
- R172 PechaKuchas improve my confidence in class and in front of people!
- R175 I like to talk about pictures because if I forget the text I can see the pictures and talk.
- R181 I am shy to speak so I need PechaKuchas to practice my English.
- R189 I read the unit again for vocabulary words. I think this is very important to study English.
- R197 I improve teamwork skill and more effort to study.
- R200 I learned how to fast talk and summarize the text.

---

Question 2: What do you dislike about the PechaKuchas?

---

- R4 20 seconds is too short for me. I want to have more time to talk.
- R15 Speaking fast is hard.
- R45 I was nervous and shy, so it is difficult to speak within 20 seconds.
- R120 I forgot words and when I stood in front of people.
- R155 I think only pictures are not easy to talk about text.
- R177 I am very shy. I cannot even talk to my team mates.
- R180 Reading no text is difficult.

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