Asian-Focused ELT Research and Practice: Voices from the Far Edge

Edited by Kelly Kimura and John Middlecamp

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Acknowledgments

Asian-Focused ELT Research and Practice: Voices from the Far Edge, which contains a selection of papers from *Language Education in Asia* (LEiA), Volumes 4 (2013) and 5 (2014), appears just after the completion of Volume 7. It is always interesting to go back through past volumes, see familiar titles and author names, and read the articles with fresh eyes. The last collection, *Research and Practice in English Language Teaching in Asia* (co-edited with Richmond Stroupe), including papers from Volumes 1-3, was published in 2013. Since then, we have published several books with original content: *ASEAN Integration and the Role of English Language Teaching* (2015, co-edited with Richmond Stroupe), *Language Learner Autonomy: Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Asian Contexts* (2016, edited by Roger Barnard and Jinrui Li), and, alongside this book, *Developing Classroom English Competence: Learning from the Vietnam Experience* (2017, edited by Donald Freeman and Laura Le Dréan). *Asian-Focused ELT Research and Practice: Voices from the Far Edge* returns us to a biennial focus on past LEiA papers.

I would first like to thank John Middlecamp, the co-editor of this collection, for his insightful introductory chapter. When we first talked about the chapter, I only had some vague thoughts of what I hoped it would be about, given our interest in supporting nonnative English speakers in TESOL (NNEST). John, through extensive research, produced a thoughtful overview of NNEST scholarship in Asia that truly exceeded my hopes. It would be remiss of me not to mention here that John's imprint on *Language Education in Asia* (LEiA) has been wide and deep from Volume 4, and his chapter offers a glimpse into how valuable his influence has been.

This book would not have been possible without the gracious assistance of the editorial team, who worked extensively, often over many months, with authors to bring their work to publication. For Volume 4, John Middlecamp, Kagnarith Chea, Caroline Ho, Chan Narith Keuk, Deborah Sin, and Alice Svendson all contributed their professional expertise and editing skills, and Phanisara (Nina) Logsdon skillfully facilitated communication between editors and authors. To publish Volume 5, Rheanne Anderson and Naashia Mohamed collaborated generously with the editors already mentioned, and Vathana Serey ably acted as Editorial Assistant. Their perseverance, patience, and willingness to take on new tasks as needed are deeply appreciated.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge with much gratitude the dedicated support of the members of the LEiA Editorial Board and the LEiA Advisory Board, and the ongoing generous support from IDP Education Cambodia and UECA: University English Centres Australia. This support from all directions is essential to continue the publication from which these papers were drawn.

John and I thank the authors whose papers appear in this book for sharing their work through LEiA. The papers were selected to highlight the variety of contexts and research represented in Volumes 4 and 5, to provide overviews on different aspects of the field, and to offer practical information on research and publication. We regret being unable to publish all the papers from these two volumes in this book and we encourage our readers to explore online the other papers in the issues. We also thank all of the language learners and colleagues who cooperated with studies described in this book.

Finally, we hope this collection informs and inspires our readers.

Kelly Kimura
Editor-in-Chief
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The Developing Research Community of NNEST Scholars Serving Asia and the World

John Middlecamp

Over ten years ago, a Vietnamese author writing about English teachers in his country who wanted to become researchers as well observed that, despite initiatives from ELT organizations, universities, and the government, they faced many obstacles in undertaking research and finding an international audience for it. The results of his qualitative study suggested a number of discouraging factors that many would-be researchers in developing countries face: a disconnect between the criteria for professional evaluation and the value of research to the profession, frustration with the conventions of reporting research, limited time and resources available, few outlets for publishing their work, and inadequate training in professionally appropriate research methods (Pham, 2006). Five years later, two observers of the situation that such fledgling researchers find themselves in reported that it had not changed a great deal. In their introduction to the first book in this series, Stroupe and Kimura (2011) concluded that, despite institutional efforts to encourage the participation of researchers using English as an international language (EIL), native-speaker journal editors and scholars and international educational organizations still needed to "develop a better awareness of and sensitivity to the challenges EIL authors face and strive to lessen, if not remove, these obstacles so that the contributions of these authors may enrich what will then become a truly international discourse community" (p. 16).

As this book, the fourth in a series designed to coincide with the CamTESOL Conference, is being edited, another five years have passed. Yet the path toward publication for ELT researchers in developing regions remains a challenging one. That said, at least one obstacle may be somewhat less daunting than in the past: because of the burgeoning number of online academic publications in various formats, there are more potential outlets for ELT research from all parts of the world. While the expanding array of online ELT publications is not without its hazards for new researchers (see Greg Rouault's article in this volume), rigorously refereed and edited e-journals are expanding their reach and influence.

Since 2010, *Language Education in Asia* (LEiA), through the work of many researchers, editors, and mentors, has been one of these. The articles in this volume represent some of the most insightful and useful contributions to several of LEiA's recent volumes. They provide compelling evidence that, although researchers in Southeast Asia may still face many difficulties in becoming an active part of the worldwide ELT research network, a vibrant research community is continuing to develop in and around the region. The authors presented in this collection, many of them nonnative speakers in TESOL (NNESTs), and all with valuable hands-on experience in the Asian context, represent a wide variety of educational environments and professional experience. Each article reflects LEiA's effort to promote the collaboration of NNEST writers and editors with native-speaker (NEST) colleagues to produce and publish high-quality research focusing on regional needs and interests.

The Growing Influence of NNEST Viewpoints on ELT Practice and Research

Before presenting the articles, it is useful to consider them as they relate to the emerging ELT literature examining the concept of NNEST professional self-identities. A brief look at the origins of the NNEST movement is helpful before doing so. Kamhi-Stein (2016) cited the work of two pioneers in the examination of nonnative teachers as being foundational to its origin: Hungarian educator and researcher Péter Medgyes, whose early studies of NNESTs (before they were known as that) suggested that nonnative teachers had an advantageous but overlooked bond with their students, one that could be used to increase the NNEST self-confidence in the classroom (Medgyes, 1983), and Robert Phillipson, who introduced the concept of the "native speaker fallacy" in his discussion of appropriate ELT goals (Phillipson, 1992, p. 185). Selvi (2014), in offering a comprehensive overview of the movement's emergence in the 1990s and its development toward the present, pointedly reminded his readers that the large majority of English speakers—and teachers of English—around the world are not native speakers. He noted that long-established standards for learner achievement, teacher practice, and design of curriculum and programs based on native speaker norms left the TESOL field ripe for change as the number of NNESTs grew over several decades.

A transitional event in the development of the NNEST movement, stemming from the perception—by both nonnative speakers themselves as well as their NEST counterparts—of inequality in professional opportunities facing nonnative speakers in ELT, was the establishment of the NNEST Caucus in the TESOL International Association in 1998 by TESOL experts including George Braine, Jun Liu, Lia Kamhi-Stein, and Aya Matsuda (Selvi, 2014). Such discrimination was based on a number of outmoded myths that often pigeonholed ELT practitioners due to their perceived status as NESTs or NNESTs, according to Selvi. Among the misconceptions that he pointed out are that native speakers and nonnative speakers are two distinct groups incapable of collaboration with each other, that one group (take your choice) is inherently better at meeting the needs of language learners, that learners are predisposed toward NESTs, that goals centered on English as it is used in what Kachru (1992) coined as Inner Circle countries (e.g., the United States and Britain) are always the appropriate guidelines for gauging learner progress, and that self-labeling of NNESTs marginalizes them in professional dialogues and in the workplace.

The goals of the still-active group (now a TESOL interest section) include developing nondiscriminatory workplaces for all TESOL members regardless of their first language or home country; offering networking opportunities for nonnative speakers at professional gatherings; enhancing the participation of NNESTs in professional leadership roles; and, most importantly for the purposes of this volume, promoting the development and distribution of research reflecting the positions and viewpoints of NNESTs (Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL, 2016). (For an earlier, more in-depth overview of the origins, history, and implications of the NNEST movement, see Massou & Llurda [2008].)

A Sampling of Recent Asian-Focused Research on the NNEST Experience in ELT

The unique perspective of NNESTs. Whatever strengths and weaknesses NNESTs may be judged to have in the classroom or academia, their role as part of the ELT research community is vital in establishing their NNEST identity as a positive and collaborative force in the profession. As the following Asian-focused research demonstrates, NNEST authors offer a unique perspective in analyzing the NNEST experience in ELT, particularly as related to issues concerning professional self-identities. Further, their research promotes both an awareness of identity-related professional issues facing Asian NNEST professionals (along with their NEST colleagues) and contributes to the discussion of the changes in policy and practice needed to address these issues. The sampling of research by NNESTs on NNESTs that follows suggests that NNEST self-identity can be constructively examined, at least in part, by considering three concepts: (a) NNESTs' awareness, as they create their professional identities, of NESTs as *others* in a shared professional world; (b) NNESTs' growing acceptance of themselves as legitimate ELT practitioners, based on an objective evaluation of the skills and experiences that they bring to the profession; and (c) NNESTs' emerging sense of the value of EIL and of their particular role in encouraging its acceptance. The literature presented here focuses primarily on NNEST pre-service teachers and is therefore particularly relevant for this volume since a number of articles in it focus on aspects of training future NNESTs in the region.

In 2014, Wang and Lin looked at the effect of the presence of NESTs in the teaching environment on the professional identity of trainee NNESTs in Taiwan. After introducing the concept of NESTs as professional "significant 'others'" (p. 5) for NNESTs, the researchers examined trainee beliefs about NESTs and NNESTs in two contexts: the trainees as part of the ELT professional world (micro-social) and the impact on NNESTs of social attitudes and resulting public policy (macro-social). In the first context, interview results suggested that the trainees' beliefs coincide with that of previous studies indicating that NNESTs can experience insecurity about whether they are adequate models for their students when compared to NESTs, especially in regard to speaking skills. However, as was found in an earlier study of Taiwanese EFL teachers (Chang, 2004), the trainees also saw the usefulness of being nonnative speakers in understanding the experiences and needs of their students (especially the need to master grammar). The interviewees' views of public policy on English education in Taiwan, which focuses on American English as the ideal and often relies on the use of uncertified NESTs in the classroom, are informative. Even though national policy requires trainees (and their future students) to focus intensively on grammar-based standardized tests more than on language proficiency, a policy that might be considered as an advantage for NNESTs, the trainees saw their professional status in the national education system as diminished when compared to that of NESTs. They were keenly aware that, as NNESTs, they would be seen by learners and policy makers as less valuable than NESTs as teachers of usable global English, which, policies aside, students and their families value highly.

Based on these results, Wang and Lin (2014) made three recommendations for bolstering NNEST trainees' confidence, thus enabling them to create a stronger professional identity and to use their nonnative status as a positive factor as they enter the profession. While specific to the Taiwanese context, these recommendations are applicable to Southeast Asia and globally. First, to address the "conflicting discourses" (p. 19) of policy and reality teacher trainees face, their training should focus more on developing their own language competence, specifically by emphasizing English as a lingua franca (ELF), rather than centering solely on native-speaker norms. Additionally, training should imbue in future teachers the idea that their NNEST status is "an important resource for meeting the needs and preferences of their specific teaching contexts" (p. 19). Finally, training courses should offer their participants knowledge of student needs and interests as English learners so that the trainees can begin their roles as practitioners with more confidence and a resulting ability to teach more effectively. Astutely, the authors suggest that these future NNESTs are actually *native* already, in that, whether they are aware of it or not, they possess the cultural competence that is essential for professional success in ELT.

Two studies of pre-service NNEST teacher trainees in Australia, most of whom were Asian, also suggest the possibility of a conflicted identity among many NNESTs. The first, Inoue and Stracke's 2013 study of eight NNEST postgraduate TESOL students, looked at their views on obtaining their master's degrees in a western native-speaking country. The first theme that emerged from their semi-structured interviews is that a TESOL degree from an Inner Circle institution continues to be more highly valued in their home countries than one from what Kachru (1992) labeled as an Outer Circle country (i.e., where English is used institutionally but not generally as a first language) or an Expanding Circle country (one where English is regarded as a foreign language). Subthemes that emerged from Inoue and Stracke's analysis include that (a) Inner Circle TESOL graduates are seen by trainees as being granted more social and professional prestige and authority in their home country than are practitioners who have earned their qualifications elsewhere; (b) the trainees themselves have a preference for developing native-like English, as opposed to other varieties, in order to improve their confidence as English speakers and as teachers; and (c) the trainees appreciate their firsthand exposure to an Inner Circle culture and pedagogical methodology. A second theme derived from the responses of Inoue and Stracke's interviewees is that NESTs are still overvalued by many institutions and employers in the interviewees' home countries. Reasons for this are reflected in the subthemes that emerged in the interviews: (a) "due to the socially accepted native-speaker norm," (p. 40), NESTs are perceived by institutions, parents of students, and students themselves to have higher levels of linguistic and cultural knowledge than NNESTs; (b) the interviewees themselves indicated that they find NESTs' English skills to be superior to their own, especially those related to speaking; and (c) the interviewees, overall, indicated that they find NEST mastery of cultural content and effective pedagogy to be superior to their own. Because of the risk of "self-marginalization" (p. 47) of NNESTs in the ELT world, Inoue and Stracke suggested that training programs for NNESTs must include courses that offer students a view of Inner Circle English that challenges its perceived superiority and thus will enable them to more realistically appraise their value as practitioners as well as that of their NNEST colleagues trained outside the Inner Circle.

A second study of nonnative-speaking Asian students in a TESOL training program at another Australian university focused on such a program. Xuan (2014), using the concept of the *legitimate speaker*, as coined by Bourdieu (1977, p. 650), for a sociological jumping-off point, performed a qualitative case study of students who had completed the course Language, Society and Cultural Difference as part of their training. He employed post-course semi-structured interviews and guided reflective writing to examine trainees' perceived transformation toward a self-identity as legitimate *teachers* of English during the course, which explicitly examined factors contributing to a NNEST sense of identity. Such an identity, he wrote, allows NNEST student-teachers to improve their sense of legitimacy as both speakers and teachers of English by building on their perceived strengths, including their experience of being additional-language learners themselves and a related insight into developing appropriate methodologies and curricula for students who share their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The participants' observations of themselves as English speakers, Xuan noted, revealed several themes that describe their emerging sense of legitimacy. These include their development of what Norton Peirce termed the "awareness of the right to speak" (1995, p. 18), both in and out of the classroom and a resulting realization that it is not necessary to imitate an Inner Circle accent to communicate authentically. In analyzing trainee reflections on themselves as legitimate teachers, Xuan reported that course participants became aware of the "constructedness of their own status as a NNEST teacher" (p. 14). In other words, they came to understand that native-speaker norms, and even the NNEST-NEST dichotomy, are not always valid constructs in building professional identities. One interviewee, for example, explained that she now felt competent to judge whether one western-centric paradigm of ELT, communicative language teaching (CLT), was always appropriate, or even realistic, in her home-country EFL context. Such comments demonstrate what Xuan saw as a culminating result of the trainees' professional transformation during the course: "their imagination of alternative instructional practices for teaching English on return to their home countries" (p. 16).

Asian NNESTs envisioning their role in the international ELT community. A third study, this time focusing on both preservice teachers and teacher trainers, expands on Xuan's pivotal observation and suggests that although NNESTs' ability to conceive of new practices and roles for themselves may still be limited in many cases, it is becoming more widespread as more NNESTs see themselves as part of an international community of English users. Ali's 2014 research in Malaysia, which for historical and political reasons, falls somewhere on the continuum between Kachru's Outer and Expanding circles, used data collected from small focus groups to determine (a) whether there was a perceived need among the participants for using EIL, as opposed to ESL based on Standard British English (SBE), as the instructional paradigm; (b) what the perceived advantages and disadvantages of adopting EIL were; (c) what the perceived future prospects for EIL in Malaysia were; and (d) what the perceived challenges to the adoption of EIL there were.

Support among Ali's participants for moving toward an EIL paradigm appeared strong, even though it is a fairly new concept in Malaysian ELT practice and policy. She reported that 80% "felt the need for teaching of EIL" (p. 101). The main advantage that participants foresaw from a possible shift to an EIL paradigm is its better equipping of students facing an increased need for international communication in English. One teacher trainer aptly observed that, regardless of traditional policies still in place, practitioners are already culturally scaffolding their presentation of UK-oriented texts through their additional use of local materials, concluding that "I think perhaps we are actually already in EIL. . . . It is just that we are not aware [of it]" (p. 103). Despite the overall support for transitioning to EIL, some participants did recognize at least two disadvantages: the lack of adequate EIL benchmarks and the related possibility that EIL-using Malaysians might be considered inferior when participating in native-speaker-dominated contexts, such as Inner Circle universities. Still, most participants did envision EIL gradually becoming the dominant paradigm in Malaysian ELT. Many noted, however, that the pace of the transition to EIL might be quite slow due to EIL's unfamiliarity to many Malaysian educators and students. Not surprisingly, the participants saw familiarizing teachers in the Malaysian education system with EIL's value as the primary challenge to its acceptance. A key factor in that acceptance, several participants pointed out, is the acknowledgment of Standard Malaysian English (SME) by educators and policy makers as acceptable for use in the country's classrooms and as a gateway for implementing EIL. Underlying both of these challenges, several participants observed, is the need for the findings of EIL-related research to filter down from academia to practitioners. Such information currently "stays on top," in the words of one participant, who added poignantly, "It's a bit sad, isn't it?" (p. 105). However, overall, the results of Ali's research indicate that there is a growing realization among ELT practitioners in her country that their status as NNESTs provides them with particular expertise in the vital ELT role, especially at the tertiary level, of teaching English as a world language.

Other emerging research. The preceding studies are only a part of a continually expanding body of research in Asia examining the NNEST experience and the emergence of a regionally based ELT model, as the following recent articles indicate. Walkinshaw and Oanh's 2014 study of the attitudes toward NNESTs held by English learners in Japan and Vietnam, suggests that student comparison of NNESTs versus NESTs remains a relevant issue in the region. It appears to confirm the results of other studies showing student preferences for NESTs as models for pronunciation and as cultural informants, although many students also expressed a desire to work with NNESTs as well because of their shared "cultural norms and values" (p. 7). Examining a different yet related theme, Ji (2015) proposed a new curriculum in China focused on a "practice-based Asian ELF," (p. 77) rather than one relying solely on native-speaker norms. The usefulness of ELF in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region, she found, is recognized by language learners at a Chinese university and has important implications for ELT training there. Most recently, and of particular interest, is Waterworth's (2016) report on the Research English as an ASEAN Language (REAL) project, supported by Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia and CfBT Brunei. The rich qualitative data provided by this groundbreaking research on the experiences and self-perceptions of NNESTs in 10 ASEAN countries found that many of them still feel inferior in some ways to NESTs in the region, although they also realize the strengths, that as L2 learners themselves, they bring to their classrooms. However, there remains, Waterworth observed, a need for better institutional support in the form of intercultural and pedagogical training for ASEAN NNESTs to better realize their potential as language educators in their rapidly changing and growing region.

A transformation in the identities of NNESTs and NESTs. After considering this small but rich sampling of Asian-centric research, it is fair to say that the perceived NNEST-NEST dichotomy and its implications remain a widespread source of discussion and concern among ELT professionals in the region. However, it is also apparent that a transformation is under way—many new NNESTs and at least some of their trainers (who often must navigate shifting educational policies beyond their control when designing courses and programs) have increasingly clear visions of the value of NNESTs to the profession and of how to enhance that value. They also lend support to Kamhi-Stein's observation that the body of research on language teacher identity indicates "that language teacher preparation programs can play a critical role in helping graduate students see themselves as belonging to communities of L2 users (rather than L2 learners or nonnative speakers)" (2013, p. 7). The articles presented in this volume reflect these perspectives in varying ways and thus provide a small but valuable addition to the literature on the transformational nature of the NNEST and NEST identities. Clearly, many NNEST practitioners find themselves in situations similar to the ones just described and are in need of the kinds of enrichment of their training that will further legitimize their status in the ELT community, specifically, as Pavlenko (2003) has advocated, training that emphasizes the value of multilingualism and linguistic multicompetence. Such enrichment will reflect the realization of a paradigm that Cook (1999) envisioned two decades ago, one where language teachers and learners have "a positive image of L2 users rather than seeing them as failed native speakers" (p. 185). How such enhanced teacher preparation can be further achieved in the region is a subject, it can be hoped, of ample future ELT research.

Professional Identities in Transformation and the Importance of Research from the "Periphery"

All of these recent studies also lend support to the view that NNEST and NEST identities are fluid and inescapably entwined with often complex linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Those identities often include an uneasy blend of professional confidence and insecurity, underlain by the ever-present although not always spoken question, "Who does English belong to?" Ultimately, the NNEST-NEST relationship moves along a changing continuum of people, experiences, and ideas. As Stephanie Vandrick remarked in her foreword to *Narrating Their Lives: Examining English Language Teachers' Professional Identities Within the Classroom*, an insightful collection of the professional and life experiences of six ELT professionals, today's practitioners "often have more diverse and less easily classified ethnic, racial, linguistic, and other identities than was true in the past" (Vandrick, 2013, p. ix). She wrote further of "the difficulty of definitively categorizing individuals into native or nonnative speakers of English, or of any language, when in today's world, there are so many who have moved back and forth among countries, schools, and languages" (p. xi). *Narrating Their Lives*, co-edited by Lia Kamhi-Stein and available online through the Johns Hopkins University's Project MUSE, is a must-read for any ELT practitioner, teacher trainer, or researcher interested in how ELT teacher identity arises from the interaction of perceived professional and personal identities. Progress in valuing the work and professional status of NNESTs, NESTs (who have insecurities as authentic practitioners too), and the growing number of educators who do not see themselves as quite one or the other depends on telling stories like those the book presents. It also depends on the improved dissemination of high-quality ELT research from what Adamson and Warrington (2014) referred to as "periphery" ELT journals (p. 401), those that provide a place for alternative voices from around the world to be heard but which struggle to find a place in an Inner Circle-dominated academic culture.

A Spectrum of Viewpoints from the Far Edge

We begin with two articles that give excellent overviews of some issues and challenges ELT professionals, in whichever of Kachru's increasingly fuzzy circles they find themselves, face now and will face in coming years. Based on her 2014 CamTESOL plenary speech and her extensive experience as an English learner and educator, Yilin Sun, 2014-2015 president of TESOL International Association, suggests some important trends that will continue to shape language education in this century. Among these are that an increasing number of ELT practitioners have the command of several languages besides English; that teachers' goals now include an aspect of social responsibility as well as language; that teaching methodology has become eclectic, grounded in more than one approach; that ELT is seen as part of an interdisciplinary curriculum; that communicative competence in internationally spoken English has emerged as a benchmark of success; and that effective teachers are seen as those who master both instructional and intercultural skills, regardless of their status as native or nonnative speakers. In a similar vein, Richmond Stroupe highlights important factors in preparing English learners to participate in professional environments of all kinds that are ever more globalized. He focuses on the skills beyond language that students will need, such as critical thinking and cultural awareness, and how ELT practitioners can help their students gain these skills.

At the heart of this volume are eight articles reflecting the experiences of researchers in Southeast Asia and neighboring countries. We begin with Linda Mary Hanington's report on a study of professional development for preservice primary teachers in multilingual Singapore, specifically in the area of reading aloud in English. She examines whether the trainees improved in the skills necessary for good oral reading (e.g., phonological awareness and parsing meaning) after participating in an intensive process-based program focusing on those skills and whether the trainees are able to consider what they have learned in terms of their future role in the classroom. Next, we offer Huong Quynh Tran's case study looking at the struggle of university EFL learners in Vietnam to master the use of figurative idioms found in their textbooks, as well as their broader interest in learning idioms. The author finds that while the learners' competence may be low overall, their desire to use figurative idioms is strong; she recommends that such idioms should taught as part of a skill set to negotiate meaning and, importantly, that learners be exposed not only to idioms found in Inner Circle varieties of English but also those used in Outer and Expanding Circle environments.

The next two studies report on issues related to extensive listening. Chun-Chun Yeh looks at how university students in a listening and speaking class in Taiwan used podcasts to improve listening skills. She examines both student learning experiences and their opinions on podcast use as a form of extensive listening. Students in the study, she reports, benefitted from scaffolding designed to help them autonomously select podcast resources that would offer them meaningful extensive listening. Her results reveal they found podcast use positive overall and that there were several factors leading to students' effective use of podcasts (e.g., freedom to select podcasts and close integration of podcast use with the course syllabus), although there were other factors that created challenges for students (e.g., difficulties in following podcast material designed for native-speaker listeners). In a related study, Asako Takaesu examines using TED Talks with college EAP (English for academic purposes) students in Japan, demonstrating how they can be used as part of extensive listening assignments for upper-intermediate and intermediate level students. She includes ways to support lower-proficiency learners and input from students regarding their view of the usefulness of TED Talks-based assignments in improving their listening comprehension, including familiarization with a variety of accents, and their motivation to learn.

The next four articles look at challenges faced by learners of another aspect of EAP, writing. The first is Luna Jing Cai's needs-analysis study of how Chinese postgraduate university students perceive the skills necessary for their academic writing. While these students may be required to write academic papers as graduate students or for publication when they begin their careers, many find that they have incomplete knowledge of the specific features of the sections of academic papers. Students in the study reported that, in addition to learning appropriate academic language, they want to be explicitly introduced to the conventions of research writing, rather than being expected to learn them solely through reading research articles. Two studies focusing on Cambodian undergraduate students follow. Virak Chan's action research project is based on the premise that the progress of bachelor-level academic writing students in Cambodia is diminished by the limited amount of reading they do and their resulting lack of ability to critically analyze issues. In particular, his study examines how training in the summary-response genre and journal writing helps students develop social awareness, which may improve their ability to respond critically in writing to what they have read. Sathya Chea and Lee Shumow next examine of the effect of two motivational constructs, self-efficacy and writing mastery goal orientation, on academic writing achievement among Cambodian bachelor in English students, as opposed to their western counterparts. The authors also discuss implications for the classroom. A collaborative effort from Thailand and Japan rounds out this group of articles. Ditthayanan Punyaratabandhu, Edward Rush, Michael J. Kleindl, and Paul Wadden discuss two approaches to academic writing offering university students the higher-level writing and critical thinking skills that will prepare them for academic success at western universities. While the authors advocate teaching writing using a periodic development approach, they also describe another method, situation-problem-solution-evaluation (SPSE), which can be more helpful for intermediate-level writers.

Finally, we present two very practical articles of interest to emerging researchers in the region. Brian Paltridge, the current co-editor of *TESOL Quarterly* and author or editor of publications on academic writing, research methods, discourse analysis, and English for specific purposes, discusses the always relevant topic of "What is a Good Research Project?" based on his recent CamTESOL workshop. He covers developing research questions and proposals that lead to well-constructed research projects and papers with a good potential for publication. The article lists resources for further guidance. We follow-up to this fine how-to guide with Greg Rouault's article on academic publishing, based on his workshop at the first CamTESOL and UECA Regional ELT Research Symposium preceding the 10th CamTESOL Conference in 2014. Providing a synthesis of advice from an international panel of journal editors, this article offers would-be authors guidelines for getting articles published, including deciding which journals to submit their work to, and demystifies the reviewing and revision process. It also explores important and ever-evolving issues related online academic publishing.

We hope the articles in this volume reflect both the growing value of ELT practice and research from the wide spectrum of professional viewpoints brought to light by Kamhi-Stein and Vandrick, as well as the importance and vitality of research from what is often seen as the far edge of the ELT world. Since these articles were first published, the editors at LEiA have continued in their efforts to mitigate barriers NNEST researchers face in achieving publication. One example of this endeavor is the *LEiA Author Handbook*, an online resource designed to assist authors in writing and editing submissions that meet our review guidelines and to support them in writing internationally publishable work. Our latest initiative is the Peer Reader Program for NNEST authors whose LEiA submissions, while promising, would benefit from more guidance before being considered for publication by LEiA or other journals.

It has been our pleasure to support a small part of the development of the NNEST research community in the Asian region and to see the growing international influence of NNEST research. We look forward to supporting further progress.

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Major Trends in the Global ELT Field: A Non-Native English-Speaking Professional's Perspective

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Twenty-nine years ago, as a young EFL university teacher full of dreams, I left China, going across the ocean to Canada to pursue my goal of getting a graduate degree in TESOL and Applied Linguistics. As the only graduate student from China in that prestigious Canadian graduate school, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) / University of Toronto, I encountered all kinds of challenges in addition to cultural shock during the first few months. The terminologies in the field were all very foreign to me. “Comprehensible input,” “UG,” “SLA” – I had never heard these terms. Even the daily interaction with Canadians was definitely not Small Talk to me. Whenever someone initiated a “small talk” with me, my heart started jumping fast. “Small talk” always felt like “stressful talk” as my English learning in China was based on grammar-translation, literature-translation, and memorization. With persistence and good learning strategies, I overcame one barrier after another and became the first Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from mainland China to graduate from OISE. OISE is one of the leading institutions in ELT in the world where many well-known ELT scholars have taught and / or studied, like David H. Stern, Jim Cummins, Merrill Swain, Michael Canale, J. P. B. Allen, Alastair Pennycook, Bonnie Norton, Ryuko Kubota, Brian Morgan, and Angel Lin, to name a few. Today, I am able to teach graduate students, do teacher training, and work with adult English language learners. I also have had the opportunity to serve as President-elect of TESOL International Association and am serving as President in 2014-2015. I have been working with people in the field whose work I read and respect. My story is just one of many stories about the journey of non-native English-speaking ELT professionals. Together, we are making a difference in our professional lives and writing a new page in the ELT field.

This paper, which is based on my opening plenary at the 10th Annual CamTESOL Conference, addresses nine major trends in the ELT field from my perspective as a non-native English-speaking educator.

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Trend 1: Changes in Perspectives on English Language Teaching and Learning

Over the last 50 years, and especially during the last 20 years, the ELT field has seen a dramatic change in educators' views of the role of English language teaching. English language educators have realized that many new English language learners already know two or more languages. English is not just their second language anymore. With this awareness, acronyms for the field have also evolved – from ESL (English as a Second Language) to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), from TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) to TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), Western English to English as an International Language (EIL). The term TENOR (Teaching English for No Obvious Reason because it is in the school curriculum and it is a job) has been replaced by TSR (TESOLers for Social Responsibility) and CLT (Communicative Language Teaching, Contextualized Language Teaching) and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). Nowadays, more and more research and discussions are focused on the issues of "World Englishes" and ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) rather than simply referring to any English spoken outside of the U.S., Canada, the U.K., and Australia as EFL (English as a Foreign Language).

Trend 2: Changes in Goals of English Language Teaching and Learning

In the 21st century, the goals of ELT have changed from focusing solely on developing language skills and mimicking native English speakers to fostering a sense of social responsibility in students. Students should be treated as language users.

A series of questions that have been put forward by many educators (Kirby, 1989, as cited in Cates, 1997)

> What good is it to teach our students to read if they only read degrading pornography? What good is it to teach students to write if they use their knowledge to write racist graffiti?

Today, more educators are realizing that ELT cannot be considered successful when students do not know about global issues or care about societal problems, or worse yet, in the future use the language skills they have learned for such destructive activities as participating in global crime networks or damaging the environment (Brown, 1994, 2007; Cates, 1997; Sun, 2010).

With the awareness of the importance of producing responsible citizens for society, teachers now have well recognized that teaching English is not simply to prepare students to imitate native English speakers as language learners but to produce fully competent language users, critical thinkers, and constructive social change agents as Crystal (1997, 2004), Cook (2002), and Brown (2007) noted.

Trend 3: Changes in Teaching Approaches

The TESOL field has evolved from using traditional grammar translation methods to communicative language teaching approaches where the focus of language teaching is on meaningful language use in a broad context, to where we are now. The 21st century is what Kumaravadivelu (2001, 2006), Brown (1994, 2007), and Richards and Rodgers (2001) referred as the "Post-Method Era" in which the ELT discussions are more focused on eclectic approaches rather than on a single method or approach. Brown (1994) called it *enlightened eclecticism*. Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Mellow (2002) have used the term *principled eclecticism* to describe a coherent and pluralistic approach to language teaching and learning.

Here are the main characteristics of principled eclecticism:

- Maximize learning opportunities
- Facilitate negotiated interaction
- Encourage learner autonomy
- Increase language awareness (tolerant of learner errors)
- Activate self-discovery (utilize learning and communication strategies)
- Contextualize language input
- Integrate language skills
- Ensure social relevance (a means for self-empowerment and expression)
- Raise cultural consciousness (goal, purpose of teaching / learning)

(Kumaravadivelu, 1994)

Today, the use of L1, as well as the use of a variety of accents in listening activities and assessments, is encouraged in teaching and learning.

Trend 4: Changes in Teaching Content, Curriculum Design, and Assessment

Today's ELT classroom is now interdisciplinary. The hot topics nowadays are CBLI (Content-Based Language Instruction), CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), or SIOP (Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocols), in addition to ESP (English for

Special Purposes). With such changes, now more and more programs require English teachers to use cross-curricular, cross-disciplinary content in teaching so the students learn both the content and English. English is not viewed as an end in itself but as a means to learn subject area knowledge such as history, mathematics, and science.

In terms of teaching content, textbooks and learning materials have more inclusion of multicultural content both from local and global resources to help students gain multiple perspectives and multicultural understandings. Students read from multicultural writers. They take a "field trip" to Angkor Wat or the Great Wall of China, but never leave the school. They work on collaborative projects to address critical issues locally and globally.

Curriculum designs are more content-based and theme-based with emphases on both language and content knowledge. The learning outcomes or learning standards are much broader and includes not only language skills, but critical thinking, learning strategies, and related content knowledge and skills in the real world. They emphasize both the learning process and the product. These learning standards / outcomes are guiding the curriculum design and classroom instruction.

Today, standards, accountability, and assessment have become a major focus of the educational reforms in many countries in the world, including Cambodia.

Trend 5: Expanding the Dimension of Communicative Competence

Much recent research and many publications have focused on the discussions of expanding the framework of communicative competence. Some scholars introduced a new way of looking at SLA as "multi-competence" (Cook, 2002 and others, such as Byram, 1997 and Kohn 2013), focused on the importance of intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

According to Cook (2012, para. 1-2),

> Multi-competence…presents a view of second language acquisition (SLA) based on the second language (L2) user as a whole person rather than on the monolingual native speaker… It changes the angle from which second language acquisition is viewed. It constitutes a bilingual 'wholistic' interpretation of bilingualism as opposed to a monolingual 'fractional' interpretation of bilingualism, in Grosjean's (2009)'s terms.

Another dimension of the expansion of the communicative competence framework is the discussions on intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997, 2009; Kohn, 2013). Those with intercultural communicative competence are able to effectively communicate with interlocutors from other cultures in appropriate ways. The implication here is that when teaching intercultural communicative competence, teachers need to teach both local and international cultures. Nowadays, there is less focus on the culture of native speakers of English unless there is a specific purpose. The goal is to produce effective language users who can use English as lingua franca, not just learners who mimic the "inner-circle" countries' language and cultures. Only in this way, TESOL educators can, for example, introduce the world to students in Cambodia and introduce Cambodia to the world.

Several researchers in the ELT field have raised a series of conceptual issues (Honna, 2005; Wen, 2013) in terms how cultures should be expressed in English:

> As a speaker, should you stick to your own way of thinking? Or should you adapt to the listener's way of thinking when you communicate with the listener? As a listener, should you impose your own way of thinking on the speaker? Or should you be sensitive to and tolerant of the speaker's different way of thinking?

Honna (2005) shared a study that he and his colleagues had conducted back in 2000 using the following story. The story, *My Mother Isn't Well, Sir,* was told by an Australian to Honna, a Japanese professor. The following conversation between a Hong Kong police superintendent who was British and a Chinese constable took place in the superintendent's office.

> There was a quiet knock at the door and in came a young Chinese police constable. He was, of course wearing his uniform. He saluted the superintendent and stood smartly to attention in front of the large wooden desk.
>
> "Yes?" enquired the superintendent.
> "My mother is not very well, sir", started the constable.
> "Yes?" repeated the superintendent, a frown appearing on his brow.
> "She has to go into hospital, sir", continued the constable.
> "So?"
> "On Thursday, sir".
> The superintendent's frown was replaced by a look of exasperation.

> "What is it that you want?" he asked sternly.
>
> At this direct question, the constable's face fell and he simply mumbled, "Nothing, sir. It's all right", and turned and left the room.
>
> As soon as the door had closed the superintendent turned to me and said:
> "You see. A classic case. They can't get to the point."
> "So, what would you want him to say?" I asked.
>
> "Well, instead of beating around the bush, he should come straight to the point. He obviously wants some leave so he can look after his mother. He should ask for leave and not waste my time going on about his poor mother."
>
> "You want him to say something like, 'Can I have some leave please, sir?'"
> "Yes, exactly", replied the superintendent.
>
> (Honna, Kirkpatrick, & Gilbert, 2000, pp. 16-17, as cited in Honna, 2005, p. 80)

The study surveyed 138 students and asked them to respond who they thought was responsible for the communication breakdown for the case *My Mother Isn't Well, Sir.* As indicated in Figure 1, sixty-nine percent of the respondents believed the British superintendent was responsible. While the British superintendent had understood the words and meaning of the constable's request, he refused to accept the style of the request since it reflected norms different from his own.

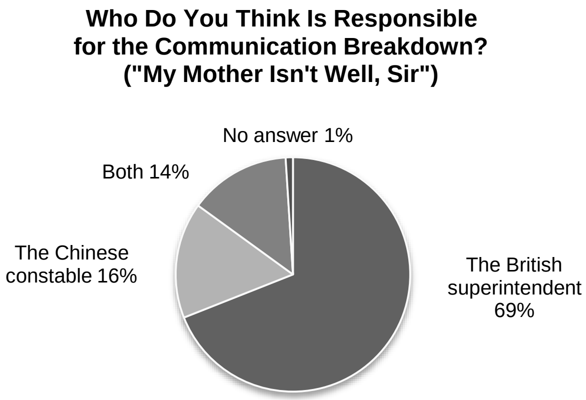

Figure 1. Student responses (*N* = 138) (Honna, 2005).

If this exchange had happened between a Chinese speaker and a Cambodian speaker, the outcome would have been very different:

Chinese: My mother is not very well, sir.
Cambodian: Oh, you must be worried. Would you want to take a leave and take care of your mother?
(adapted from Honna, 2005, p. 81)

In Asia, non-native speakers of English frequently begin to relate to and understand each other more when not following native speaker communication norms (Honna, Kirkpatrick, & Gilbert, 2000, as cited in Honna, 2005; Wen, 2013). Being able and willing to listen and try to understand what others are saying without expecting them to conform to one's cultural values and communication norms is essential in intercultural communication. As Honna (2005) stated, "with some degree of intercultural awareness, one is capable of understanding the other even if the two persons' communication styles are different."

It is clear that communicating effectively and appropriately involves both the speaker and the listener. Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) requires:

- Openness and respect: the ability and readiness to regard other people's values, customs and practices as worthwhile in their own right and not merely as different from the norm and willingness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own,
- Empathy and tolerance: the ability and willingness to understand, acknowledge and accept different behaviors and ways of thinking, the existence of opinions or behavior that one does not necessarily agree with,
- Sensitivity and flexibility: the ability and willingness to adapt and to deal appropriately with the feelings and ways of thinking of other persons, and the awareness and responsiveness to other people's behaviors and ways of thinking, and
- Knowledge and application of critical cultural awareness: knowledge and critical awareness of social groups, values and cultural practices in one's own and in one's target culture, and the ability to apply and act effectively using that knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.

(Byram, 1997, 2009; Kohn, 2013; UNESCO, 2013; Wen, 2013)

These traits and abilities are more important for successful intercultural communication than the native English speakers' (NES) norms of communication.

Trend 6: Changes in Views of an Effective English Educator

With the changing views of communicative competence and the awareness of intercultural communicative competence, the perception of what is an effective English teacher is also changing. Recent studies on World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca as well as the roles of NNESTs (non-native English speaking teachers) in the TESOL field have made more people recognize that the effectiveness of an English teacher should be determined by his / her linguistic, instructional, and intercultural competence rather than simply being a native speaker of English. In fact, English is used by more people whose mother tongue is not English (Canagarajah, 1999a, 2007; Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 1997; Kirkpatrick, 2007; McKay, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2011).

Such a shift has further raised the awareness of non-native speakers of English teaching in the TESOL community. English teaching is no longer dominated by native speakers. Educators who are speakers of English as a non-native language are thought to outnumber those who are speakers of English as a native language. Today, more and more non-native speaking educators are working in the ELT profession and playing important roles in TESOL leadership, research, and teacher training. They are in the front line with EL learners. Their significant contributions and impact on learners and the profession are no longer peripheral. TESOL, a leading professional association for English teaching around world, for example, has a Non-Native English Speaking Teachers Interest Section (NNEST-IS), with many well-known TESOL researchers and scholars as members. It is one of the most dynamic Interest Sections within the TESOL organization. The NNESTers work tirelessly together with native English-speaking researchers and educators to raise awareness of non-native English speaking educators.

In fact, there are many advantages that NNESTs possess in ELT. NNESTs are better at:

- Teaching learning strategies and anticipating learning difficulties
- Sharing multilingual and multicultural perspectives
- Empathizing with the needs of language learners
- Serving as models of successful learners and users
- Providing useful information about the language (Braine, 2005; Canagarajah, 1999b; Cook, 2005; Llurda, 2005; Mahboob, 2003; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Seidlhofer, 1999)

Educators want to make sure that students are served by well-prepared and well-qualified teachers, regardless their first language background (Braine, 2005; Canagarajah, 1999b; Cook, 2005; Liu, 1999; Llurda, 2005; Mahboob, 2003; Medgyes, 1992; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Seidlhofer, 1999, to name a few).

Trend 7: Early Start in Learning English

In recent years, many countries have started teaching English in earlier grades at school (Baldauf, Kaplan, Kamwangamalu, & Bryant, 2011). For example, in 2011, Japan made English as a required subject in the primary level. In 2012, Dubai introduced English in the kindergarten level instead of Grade 1. In Egypt, English is a required subject starting with the first grade. Since 2011, English learning has been introduced from Grade 4 in Vietnam and Saudi Arabia. Also, in 2004, Taiwan's Ministry of Education mandated all public elementary schools should start English courses from Grade 3, but the majority of schools actually begin to teach English in the first grade (C. Chern, personal conversation, 2013). In the People's Republic of China, since the new millennium, English has been a required subject for students from Grade 3 all the way to college and graduate school, and in 2011, the Ministry of Education introduced new national English curriculum standards for compulsory education which further raised the bar for all students in both primary and secondary schools (Y. Gong, personal conversation, 2013). In Thailand, English was first mandated to be taught in primary Year One in 1996, but in 2001, all schools had to be ready to teach English from Year One; in 2013, the Ministry of Education in Thailand announced another education reform aiming to improve students' English proficiency (S. Nimmannit, personal conversation, 2014). English is a compulsory subject in kindergartens in Malaysia, and almost all Malaysian children will learn at least some English in their kindergarten years. This trend can be seen in many countries around the world (Baldauf, Kaplan, Kamwangamalu, & Bryant, 2011).

Trend 8: Rapid Development and Integration of Information Technology in ELT

Today we face an information explosion. The World Wide Web contains seventeen times the information of the U.S. Library of Congress (Johnston, 2012). The recent rapid development of technology and the use of cell phones and different multimedia devices have opened endless possibilities for teachers to teach English and access information. The Internet, YouTube, Web 2.0, e-books, and various websites have changed the way teachers prepare their lessons and instruct their students. Now, with ready-made materials at the touch of a keyboard button, it is much easier to bring real-life issues to the classroom and have meaningful discussions. Teachers have free access to online resources and are less worried about limited class budgets in preparing lessons and creating teaching activities. Appropriate integration of technology in the classroom encourages students to use language in many different ways and bring world issues into the classroom.

Furthermore, learners from different parts of the world can be connected and exchange ideas via the Internet and other media devices. Thus, the way to gain information and knowledge in terms of accessibility, flexibility, and mobility has changed drastically. Students may know more about how to use technology than their teachers: nowadays, it is said that the 26 letters in the alphabet in English start with A for Apple, B for Bluetooth, C for Chat, D for download, E for e-mail, F for Facebook, G for Google, H for Hewlett-Packard, I for iPhone, and J for Java. Children, starting from a very young age, have been using digital devices in learning, communicating with others, and playing games, yet they need proper guidance from their teachers on how to select, analyze, and utilize the right information to achieve their learning goals.

Trend 9: Changing Roles and Increasing Responsibilities of Teachers

With all the new trends happening, the role of today's teachers is also evolving and their responsibilities have also been increasing. Trilling & Fadel (2009) outlined the seven most important skills that students need to be ready for as 21st century citizens:

The 7 Cs

1. Critical thinking and problem solving
2. Creativity & innovation
3. Collaboration, teamwork, and leadership
4. Cross-cultural understanding
5. Communication, information, and media literacy
6. Computing and ICT literacy
7. Career and learning self-reliance

(Trilling & Fadel, 2009, p. 176)

The needs of the classroom of today differ from those of the past few decades. In the 21st century classroom, teachers have multiple roles and responsibilities, the most important being facilitating learning and making an environment where learners are able to develop skills necessary for success in today's workforce (Learning Services International [LSI], 2007). In ELT, the goal of teachers should not be just to prepare language learners with knowledge of the language but to produce effective language users who are critical thinkers with strong 7C skills. To achieve this goal, teachers need to understand the students' learning styles, and even more importantly, engage learners with different strategies and ways to learn and use the language. One possible way to do this is to focus on learners having a preliminary experience of work environments. This can be done through a content- and project-based curriculum through which students work collaboratively, building skills in communication and higher order critical thinking as well as acquiring technological knowledge (LSI, 2007). The integration of technology is not an add-on but *a must* in teaching and learning.

Another important change is that teaching is not necessarily a solitary activity now (LSI, 2007). There are opportunities to co-teach, team-teach, and collaborate with teachers from other disciplines. For example, in 2013, I co-taught an ESP teacher training class with instructors from the Aviation Maintenance Technology (AMT) program to prepare future teachers who will teach students in the AMT program overseas as there is a rapidly growing demand for such teachers overseas.

The co-teaching experience has been one of the most rewarding experiences I have had during my more than 28 years of teaching.

Furthermore, teachers are no longer considered to bear the entire responsibility of making learning happen effectively; other parties include parents, school administrators, boards of education, local and larger communities, and the students themselves (LSI, 2007). However, in reality, teachers are still the ones who shoulder the most responsibility to educate students and implement all the mandates. Therefore, teachers need real institutional support on all levels including funding, and release time to attend training and implement new ways of teaching and assessing learning.

Final Words: Our Responsibilities

With the rapid changes in the ELT field, teachers are expected to engage in continuous professional development activities in order to keep current on trends, research, development, and practices as well as to remain effective and competitive.

Educators need to improve professionally by:

- Increasing their knowledge base and skills in ELT through professional development (PD) activities.
- Urging institutions and policy-makers to create supportive environments where PD is highly valued.
- Ensuring that institutions provide funding and release time for PD activities.
- Engaging in and critically reflecting on new ways of teaching, including different strategies and technologies.
- Implementing a "principled eclectic approach" and the 7Cs in an informed and effective way.
- Forming teacher learning communities to build support systems and exchange teaching and learning ideas.
- Sharing teaching and learning strategies and successes with others at conferences and in publications.
- Valuing perspectives, expertise, and resources of non-native speaking teachers of English.
- Being confident and open minded, embracing every opportunity to grow as professionals and as learners.

While teachers can make a difference in students' lives in the classroom, teachers can also make a difference in their own professional lives and make professional organizations better in serving them, their colleagues, and communities. The awareness of "World Englishes," "English as an International Language," the roles of non-native English-speaking teachers in the TESOL field, the mission of English language learning, and the global English teaching / learning community did not occur by happenstance. This progress has been achieved through the concerted effort of all involved individuals who care about the profession, the students, and the equality of all TESOL educators in the education system. The stronger the professional association, the louder the voices can be heard at different policy-making levels and professional organizations. Also, the more publications that are from NNEST educators and on the current research and teaching practice in the ELT field, the better the awareness and opportunities that can be created for teachers and for learners.

In conclusion, today, English language teaching has entered a new era. The role of English in global, social, cultural, and linguistic contexts has changed greatly over the decades. This is also reflected in the way English is taught in the classroom. However, ELT educators still face many challenges and responsibilities to ensure quality education for students and maintain professional integrity. The mission to improve ELT for all learners must continue. There is also a strong commitment to putting principles into practice to fulfill social responsibilities as TESOL educators. Professional development at all levels is necessary to improve our English proficiency and teaching skills and to continue sharing cutting edge research ideas and effective teaching strategies and successful stories, so challenges can be overcome, students can be prepared to achieve to the best of their abilities, and teachers can be reflective practitioners and critical constructive social change agents in this world of globalized Englishes.

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The Language Educator and Globalization: How Do We Best Prepare Our Learners?

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The process of globalization and increasing interconnectedness through technology, business, and institutional exchange is leading to greater opportunities and mobility for students. In response, in an effort to adequately prepare learners, the nature of the language classroom is changing. While still based on fundamentals of improving linguistic understanding and proficiency, emphasis is increasing on the broader role of the language class and language educator in preparing graduates to enter a global workforce. As a result, the increasing number of expectations placed on our profession lead to new challenges and opportunities. How can language educators prepare students for regional and international opportunities in a time of fast-paced change, increased expectations, and global competition? This paper presents some current and innovative approaches which address the need for skills beyond general fluency in English, including emphasis on English for professional purposes, development of critical thinking skills, and increasing cultural understanding.

The effects of globalization have been well-documented and are far-reaching (Institute for the Study of Labor, 2008; Milken Institute, 2003; Mrak, 2000; Sapkota, 2011). Multinational companies, supply chains that span multiple countries and regions, regional and international trade agreements, and an ever increasingly mobile workforce are commonplace. Politically and economically, international agreements bringing governments closer together are increasing in number and breadth (Burall & Neligan, 2001; Phillipson, 2001). Most recently, a number of countries around the Pacific are considering ratifying the Trans-Pacific Partnership free trade agreement, which would have significant consequences for some of the largest global economies (Congressional Research Service, 2013). Within two years' time, the

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Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states are planning further economic integration, which will also have economic, social, and political ramifications even beyond the nations in Southeast Asia (ASEAN Secretariat, 2008; Chia, 2013; Hansakul, 2013).

Contributions for this increased level of internationalization will be necessary from those in both the public and private sectors. Government officials will need to work more closely with their counterparts in other countries (Anderson, 2012; Council on Foreign Relations, 2012; U.S. State Department, 2012), and executives and managers in different business sectors will face increased and diversified competition (Dexter, 2004; Forbes, 2011; Institute for the Study of Labor, 2008; Kliesen, 2006; Lerche, 1998). Quite importantly, educators will be called upon to prepare each national workforce to rise to these challenges (Sahlberg, 2006; World Economic Forum, 2013). In particular, educators dealing with English language instruction will contribute by developing the proficiency of their learners to aid them in competing in a global environment which is increasingly relying on English as the international lingua franca (Dewey & Jenkins, 2010; House, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Ku & Zussman, 2010). Yet a focus solely on English language proficiency will leave learners lacking in the skills necessary to succeed in this competitive global employment marketplace. In this paper, other areas where English language educators should diversify their efforts are highlighted, along with programs successful in addressing each area.

In the business sector, proficiency in English as a second or foreign language matters greatly in the global economy, both to employers and to individuals (Forbes, 2011; Nickerson, 2005; Otilia, 2013; Phillipson, 2001). While standardized test scores remain important (Educational Testing Service, 2011), practical English language proficiency is becoming a more marketable skill for job-seekers (Otilia, 2013). Multinational corporations require employees with effective communication across their global operations; this points to the need for skills in multiple languages. Likewise, corporations are realizing significant economic benefits related to individual performance and institutions as a whole as the English and plurilingual skills of their employees improve (International Research Foundation for English Language Education, 2009). In a survey conducted by Forbes (2011), 106 senior executives of American companies with yearly revenues of $500 million or more indicated that issues related to language had become central to their effective functioning as global corporations. When asked, 65% admitted that language barriers existed, and that such barriers led to miscommunications (67%) and made collaboration more difficult (40%). At the same time, 71% suggested that executives in leadership positions increasingly required non-English skills, and many (66%) expected U.S. managers to gain minimal proficiency in the local languages where they were posted. A majority (68%) noted that cultural awareness / competence is also increasingly important (Forbes, 2011).

A clear need exists for increased English language proficiency in a number of sectors. Yet the question this paper poses is "Is English proficiency enough?" While a focus solely driven by increased hours of English language instruction at younger ages may result in a more proficient national population, other skills that are in as much demand (or more so) in a globally competitive employment market may be overlooked. A broader question for educators, learners, and policymakers is what qualities are necessary for competitive workers to have over the next decade. How can language educators empower learners in this global context, and how can these skills be integrated into the language learning classroom? This paper will focus on skills that can add to the competitive advantage of language learners as they enter the global marketplace, namely the development of academic and workplace skills, including specific linguistic skills, critical thinking skills, and intercultural communicative competence.

Specific Linguistic Skills for Specific Purposes

English language instruction encompasses the teaching of English for a multitude of purposes. Jordan (1997) considered these differences, first beginning with describing English teaching for general or social purposes, which would include a four-skills approach. From this point, Jordan (1997) began to draw a distinction between English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). EAP stresses the development of language required in specific fields of study, including professional discourse based on specialized lexical items and common forms of communication, and more generally, enhanced skills related to working with academic texts, engaging in research and taking part in class through activities such as posing questions and contributing to class discussions. In comparison, in ESP, the focus on specific skills necessary in specific workplace environments is the hallmark of this approach to language teaching (Orr, 2002).

This attention to specific skills necessary for workers in their professional environments is what formed the basis of the curriculum in the Lower Mekong Initiative Education Pillar English Project. The project focus is the development of professional communication skills for government officials in anticipation of the necessary requirements leading up to and after ASEAN integration in 2015 (Anderson, 2012; ASEAN Secretariat, 2009). A number of identified skills were highlighted as mid- to upper-level professionals and officials from one country begin working more closely and often with their counterparts in other ASEAN countries in the areas of health, the environment, and infrastructure, most often making use of English as the language of administration. In order to meet their responsibilities both regionally and internationally, the capacity of these officials in actively engaging in meetings, presenting ideas and plans in meetings, seminars, and conferences, being able to read and draft documents, and contributing to research initiatives need to be developed (Anderson, 2012). Focusing on English language proficiency for general or social purposes would have been insufficient; what was warranted was a more targeted approach. The program, completed in 2012, was evaluated positively, and therefore led to a second phase, expanded in number of countries involved and variety of sectors served. This second phase of the Lower Mekong Initiative is to be completed in 2014 (Lower Mekong Initiative, 2013).

Critical Thinking Skill Development

Specific linguistic skills for specific purposes are one component for success in the global community, yet there are other skills which are equally important. At Soka University in Tokyo, Japan, the Economics Department initiated a project to determine what these attributes and skills are, and how their curriculum could better prepare the students they graduated (Honma, 2008). Faculty members from this department surveyed top Tokyo Stock Exchange (TSE) companies in order to develop a graduate profile which would be attractive to these companies when searching for new employees. The qualities indicated included content knowledge and, more importantly, the ability to apply that knowledge in practice. English language proficiency, study skills (including research skills and time management) and international experience and cross-cultural understanding were also important. In addition, emphasis was placed on the development of critical thinking skills. It was not enough that graduating students had strong backgrounds in their content areas and could express themselves in English. Being able to analyze, apply concepts, synthesize information, and offer and support ideas and opinions were also valued.

The research on the importance and development of critical thinking skills is extensive (Bloom, 1956; Ennis, 1996; Facione, 1998; Willingham, 2007). While there has been much debate on the definition of critical thinking (American Philosophical Association, 1990; Bloom, 1956; Ennis, 1987; Facione, 1998), Ennis (1987) summarized the skill succinctly: Critical thinking is the process of incorporating the skills necessary to rationally decide what to do and believe.

Students accomplish this process informally on a daily basis. The challenge for educators is to develop these skills further over time in an academic context. This has been accomplished in the Economics Department at Soka University through the department's International Program, which includes a strong EAP component focusing on the development of critical thinking skills (Honma, 2008). Critical thinking skills have often been developed at only advanced levels of instruction or applied through ad hoc activities. In the International Program and other programs at the university, critical thinking skills are dealt with in the same way as other skills, i.e., developed over time, from a basic to higher level, with level-appropriate language support and content (Stroupe, 2006).

A practical approach to the development of critical thinking skills can benefit from an illustration of Bloom's Taxonomy (Figure 1). Bloom (1956) initially presented his hierarchy of critical thinking skills beginning with knowledge (understanding content). With this knowledge, learners can then progress to the next stage, by expressing their comprehension of the knowledge (by summarizing, paraphrasing, or comparing and contrasting in one area to another) or applying what the learners have understood to a new context (Forehand, 2005). The three higher order thinking skills would require learners to analyze the knowledge more deeply, synthesize that knowledge with information from external resources by integrating it into a new form, and then finally, make judgments or evaluations with supporting evidence and documentation of their positions and ideas. A newer version of Bloom's Taxonomy renames the synthesis level of the original version and elevates that creative component in the critical thinking process (Anderson et al., 2001, as cited in Krathwohl, 2002). In the current paper, the focus is on the original version which was adopted in the current context due to its relevance to academic skills.

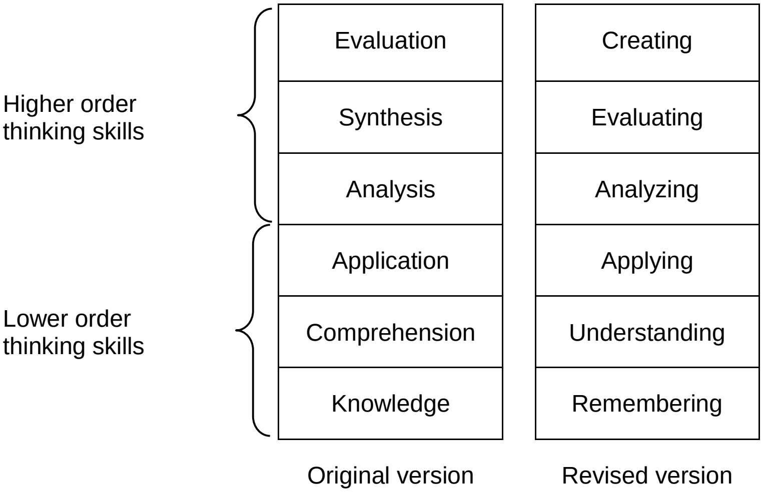

Figure 1. Comparison of Bloom's Taxonomy: Original and revised versions. From Forehand, M. (2005). Bloom's taxonomy: Original and revised. In M. Orey (Ed.), *Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching, and technology*. Retrieved from http://projects.coe.uga.edu/epltt/

Oftentimes, teachers can become disillusioned with focusing on the development of critical thinking skills in language instruction (or other) courses, lamenting their students' seeming inability to be able or to learn how to critically analyze. In many cases, this may be due to insufficient scaffolding or introducing linguistic skills or content knowledge beyond what the students are prepared to utilize. To overcome these challenges, some brief guidelines may be helpful:

- Critical thinking skill development should not be "saved" or allotted to only learners with advanced second language proficiency or content knowledge (Strauss, 2008; Stroupe, 2006, 2013; Willingham, 2007). All learners engage in critical thinking skills in their daily lives. The challenge for educators is to bring this dimension into the language learning classroom and expand on these skills, at all levels of language study.
- Tasks focusing on critical thinking skill development should be based on level-appropriate linguistic skills. Not all students have the linguistic skills or lexical knowledge to express judgment about, for example, the most effective method to reduce fossil fuel dependency and state their support of that position, regardless of the evidence they may have. Yet most lower-level proficiency students can often

quickly gain the linguistic skills necessary to explain who their favorite actor is and why. While the sophistication of the language and content knowledge necessary for these two tasks can be quite different, the critical thinking skill is the same: Making an assertion and supporting that judgment with reasons (Figure 2). The basic linguistic structure (I think X because A, B, and C) is the same, while the content is different, based on the complexity and necessity of previous knowledge.

Lower level: **Topic: Favorite movie**	**Advanced level:** **Topic: Concept of supply and demand**
Knowledge • What is your favorite movie?	Knowledge • What does the concept of supply and demand state?
Comprehension • Summarize the story of your favorite movie. What happens first, second, and so on?	Comprehension • Explain how the concept of supply and demand operates.
Application • Think about the ending of your favorite movie. Are there any other possible endings?	Application • Considering the recent oil shortage, explain how the price of oil may be affected. Use specific examples to support your answer.
Analysis • Compare and contrast your favorite movie with your partner's. What are the similarities and / or differences?	Analysis • Compare and contrast the effects of the oil shortages of the 1970s and early in the 21st century.
Synthesis • Use the Internet and investigate the life stories of the director and main actors in your favorite movie and present that information in some form (in a written report, discussion, or presentation, for example).	Synthesis • Research recent developments in the Middle East, and summarize predictions of the price of oil over the next 24 months.
Evaluation • Explain why this is your favorite movie. Use specific examples to support your opinion.	Evaluation • What is the most effective mechanism to reduce extreme fluctuations in the global price of oil? Use specific examples to support your answer.

Figure 2. Practical examples of application of Bloom's Taxonomy: Lower and Advanced Language Proficiency Levels.

- Tasks focusing on critical thinking skill development should also be based on level-appropriate content knowledge (Stroupe, 2006, 2013; Willingham, 2007). Also apparent from the actor / fossil fuel example above, the content knowledge necessary (and resulting lexical and linguistic complexity) to offer a judgment and support for the latter topic is far more demanding than the former. It is important that educators recognize this difference and focus critical thinking development tasks on content knowledge or interests readily accessible to learners, either through their previous studies or personal interests and experiences.
- Critical thinking skill development should be explicit in the course curricula. While there is debate as to whether critical thinking skills are most effectively taught inductively or deductively, explicit focus in the curriculum by educators is essential. Explicitly including the development of critical thinking skills as an educational goal "legitimizes" the process and encourages the inclusion of discussions of critical thinking into the professional discourse of those involved (Stroupe, 2006, 2013).

The International Program has realized significant success since its inception: The overall number of graduates from the Economics Department securing positions in Tokyo Stock Exchange (TSE) companies has been increasing, and incoming students began to choose economics as their major because of the reputation of this program. Subsequently, the program was used as a model for a similar content-based program in Japan-Asia Studies, a university-wide academic program, and most recently, a new English-medium department.

Increased Cultural Awareness

In addition to needing task-specific language skills and the ability to critically analyze, our learners, because of increased mobility and international communication, will more often be working with colleagues from different cultural backgrounds from their own. Fantini (2005) points out that in order to interact with others from diverse cultural backgrounds appropriately, a level of intercultural communicative competence is necessary in addition to linguistic proficiency. Many language educators recognize this importance and include discussions of cultural differences in their course curricula. Yet like critical thinking skills, developing the ability to understand and have empathy for others in different cultural contexts should be seen again in the long-term, progressing over time, supported by scaffolding and recycling.

Increased cultural awareness was one of the key components of the Program for Regional and Educational Exchanges for Mutual Understanding (REX Program) which has been implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Japan, and local governments abroad since 1990. The REX Program was developed to promote Japan's internationalization and provide unique opportunities for teacher development. Through this program, native Japanese-speaking English teachers in junior high and high schools in Japan have been selected to live in a variety of countries to teach Japanese at the secondary level. The REX Pre-Departure Program was designed to introduce departing teachers to Japanese language teaching methodology, cultural expectations of the educational context to which they were traveling, and support with daily life issues which they would face when living abroad.

In addition to teaching Japanese, another major component of the assignment abroad for these teachers was to teach about Japanese culture. This task may seem straightforward, yet the REX participants quickly realized that while they implicitly understood the nuances and practices of their own culture, making this knowledge explicit in a teaching situation was quite challenging. In addition, while the participants could readily describe cultural activities, because the meanings of these activities were often implicit, oftentimes they found it difficult to explain the reasons behind cultural traditions in which they had engaged for most of their lives. A framework for analysis of the implicit which would lead to explicit instruction was needed.

When discussing culture, the first question which comes to mind is indeed, what is culture? Again, this may seem obvious, but upon closer inspection, the answer seems elusive. How for example, is the exchanging of business cards culturally bound when the "same" item is used both in Japan and in other countries?

What is necessary is a definition of culture. While many are available, the definition that seemed particularly useful to the REX Pre-Departure Program is as follows:

> Culture . . . is the way of life of a society, . . . consist[ing] of prescribed ways of behaving or norms of conduct, beliefs, values, and skills, along with the behavioral patterns and uniformities based on these categories—all this we call "non-material culture"—plus, in an extension of the term, the artifacts created by these skills and values, which we call "material culture." (Gordon, 1964, pp. 32-33)

As can be seen with Gordon's definition, the concept of culture can be all-encompassing. For instructors in the classroom, it is problematic to teach everything about culture, so using a framework based on this definition as a pedagogical tool can help learners gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of culture.

From Gordon's definition, four key components were identified. The first is beliefs, including individual and social beliefs of members of a particular group, and the societal values on which these beliefs are based. These beliefs and values are central to the framework and inform the behaviors of members of a society, the second component in the framework. Beliefs help define what behaviors are expected, rewarded, or discouraged in a particular society. Yet behaviors are not decontextualized: Behaviors are associated with the third component, cultural artifacts, the "material culture" which Gordon refers to as the objects in a culture which members can see, touch, or feel. Finally, there are social institutions, which support and perpetuate social beliefs and values and cultural practices. Among the most influential social institutions are the family and community, educational systems, religious organizations, government, and business. Media can also play an important role, providing a method through which social institutions can further emphasize cultural practices. While it is at times difficult to identify all four components of the framework in a cultural activity, three of the four are typically readily identifiable, with beliefs always present, and can provide the basis for further analysis.

An illustrative example can be seen in the aforementioned common and quite important practice of exchanging business cards in Japan. Two components of the framework are readily identifiable. The artifact in this example is the business card itself. Additionally, when business cards are exchanged in Japan, there are a multitude of behaviors expected to occur related to the seemingly simple action of presenting the card: using both hands, holding the card in a particular manner, with the name of the presenter facing the recipient, and accompanying the actions with a bow based on the status of those involved. These behaviors are based on the Japanese societal belief of mutual respect and status in a relationship, with the accompanying belief of politeness in business interactions. This is such an important aspect of the business community that companies in Japan have lessons for their new recruits about how to properly exchange business cards in varying situations, thereby providing the fourth component in the framework, the institution that perpetuates the cultural practice.

Using beliefs as the beginning foundation for analysis, REX participants who will be living in western countries are provided with Kohls's (1984) *The Values Americans Live By* as an introduction and point of comparison between eastern and western cultural values (with the explanation that American values should not be seen as the equivalent to western values, but rather as a point of departure for discussions and further investigation). With this understanding of beliefs, the participants then began to objectively examine another culture, in this case that of the United States, based on events or social characteristics which shape cultures in different ways. Some influencing factors on culture could include history, the educational system, religion, ethnic diversity, and the family. In the same ways that these factors can shape culture, these can also be utilized to perpetuate or actively change culture over time. After completing an examination of one aspect of another culture, participants then had the knowledge and experience necessary to reflect back on their own culture, moving from a subjective understanding to a more objective understanding which could be explicitly shared with others, namely their non-Japanese students in their destination countries.

As shown from the points discussed above, the REX participants moved though a step-by-step process of understanding, reflection, and sharing of cultural values and associated behaviors, artifacts, and institutions. Each step in the process provides a foundation or basis for greater understanding in the next step. First, participants are provided a definition of culture and a framework with which to further analyze cultural beliefs and behaviors, in this case the framework based on Gordon's definition of culture. After providing a general understanding of values / beliefs of the target culture (in this case Kohls's article), additional, more specific cultural information from the target culture (readings, videos, web-based material, etc.) can be provided in a specific area (education, religion, historical events, etc.). After analyzing this cultural information using the framework, participants can then use the same framework and targeted area to reflect back on their own culture. Consolidation of these steps can be accomplished through a final project such as a presentation of a cultural aspect of the learner's own culture or of the target culture. In the case of the REX participants, this consolidation took the form of a demonstration lesson that would be used when explaining Japanese culture with their students in their destination country.

Initially, such analysis of the REX participants' and other cultures was challenging, but through each week of the Pre-Departure Program, the process became more familiar. Eventually, the participants began to discuss, question, and consider cultural influences which they could observe, not as an assigned task of the program, but because they had developed and internalized this approach to understanding the cultures with which they came into contact.

Conclusion

Increasing interconnectivity through globalization, digitization, and international activities is creating a more competitive environment for our learners. The responsibility is placed on educational systems and educators to ensure we prepare our students adequately for the expectations which they will face after leaving our classrooms. While global opportunities are increasing, access to those same opportunities is becoming increasingly competitive. As educators, it is necessary to better prepare graduates for global competition in a fast-changing business environment. A focus on developing critical thinking skills along with relevant linguistic skills is important. Graduating globally competent learners also includes developing their greater understanding of multiple cultures along with intercultural communicative competence. The global marketplace will only become more integrated and competitive in the future. Therefore it is incumbent upon us as educators to recognize our students' needs and prepare our students to excel and realize success in their future careers.

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Reading Aloud as a Technique for Developing Teachers' Awareness of English Phonology

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This paper describes an exploratory qualitative study that is part of a larger research project into the impact of experiential learning on teacher proficiency and practice. It focuses on how, through a process approach to developing and evaluating their own oral skills, trainee teachers at the National Institute of Education in Singapore became more aware of features of spoken language that relate particularly to reading aloud in class. Such awareness is important because when these teachers enter school, they will work with primary school children and follow the Strategies for English Language Learning and Reading (STELLAR) program, which takes a shared-book approach and involves both teachers and students in reading aloud activities. This paper demonstrates how increasing awareness of features of their own spoken English and reflecting on the implications for reading aloud helped the teachers improve their own delivery and relate what they had learned to the classroom.

Reading Aloud in the Development of Literacy

> The primary literacy education task of preschool and early school years is not teaching children letter-sound correspondences but reading to them. If a child is experiencing difficulty in learning to read, we should not ask if he or she knows the sounds of letters but if he or she has been read to extensively.
>
> (Moustafa, 1997, p. 78-79)

The importance of being read aloud to in the development of literacy has been extensively documented (Fox, 2008; Krashen, 2004; Trelease, 2006), and promoted through national literacy initiatives such as Becoming a Nation of Readers in the U.S.A. or through the National Literacy Trust in the U.K. A short article by McQuillan (2009)

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summarizes the benefits of being read to. These include learning the purpose of reading, exposing learners to different text types and to vocabulary and language patterns not part of their everyday repertoire, helping learners to imagine, and laying the foundation for good writing skills. Of particular relevance to this discussion is that it also enables learners to hear the phrasing, inflections, and expressions that good readers use.

While much of the research has focused on reading aloud in the child's first language, in today's multicultural world, many children come to school with home languages other than the school language. Similarly, children are learning foreign languages at ever-younger ages (de Lotbinière, 2011). For such children, being read to in the new language may be a critical aspect of their literacy development. Being read to is not just for young children, however. Krashen (2004), for example, reported a study showing that college students benefitted from listening to stories and then discussing them, while Amer (1997) found that learners of English as a foreign language who were read to outperformed their counterparts on reading comprehension tests.

Given the importance of being read to for learners of different backgrounds and ages, ensuring that teachers have the skills to read aloud effectively can be seen to be an important aspect of their professional development. At the word level, teacher readers need to be able to decode written language and recode it as spoken language just as their students do. This means being able to translate graphic representations into sounds, which in English means understanding sound-spelling relationships and word stress patterns. Resources such as the phonetic alphabet and dictionaries can further help native and non-native speaker teachers alike with the pronunciation of unfamiliar words. Reading aloud effectively goes beyond the word level, however. Above all, it requires the reader to have understood what is being read and then to parse language meaningfully, stress relevant words, pause at appropriate points and for an appropriate length of time, and maintain the rhythm of the target language. Peha (n.d.) outlines some further skills effective readers employ when reading aloud, such as changing pitch, volume, rhythm, and tone. All these elements are subsumed under the term *phonology* as used in this article.

A final and important consideration is that language teachers, whatever their teaching context, are expected to be good models of the target language; they are still in many cases the primary, and sometimes the only, standard models their learners hear.

Background to the Study

Singapore is a multicultural country, and there are four official languages: English, Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil. Education is conducted in the medium of English, but children entering school have varied levels of exposure to this language through their home or preschool backgrounds. In addition to different home languages, the use of colloquial versions of English, broadly categorized as Singlish, means that some may have little exposure to Standard Singapore English outside school. The primary school English Language syllabus is delivered through the Strategies for English Language Learning and Reading (STELLAR) program. This program was developed based on research in Singapore schools and "is designed to cater to a diverse range of EL learners in our school system" (Ministry of Education, 2012, para. 4); under STELLAR, "EL is taught through stories and texts that appeal to children" (para. 4) with the goal of building confidence in both speech and writing. As part of the program, both teachers and students read aloud target texts. Throughout school, reading aloud is also used to assess students' oral skills; for example, the critical Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) Oral Communication paper includes reading aloud.

The diversity of the students' language exposure outside school underscores the need for English-medium teachers to be role models of good language use. Indeed, the expectation is that "school leaders . . . must set high standards of spoken English for the whole school" (Wong, 2011, para. 7). As one way students are expected to demonstrate their skills is by reading aloud, this too is something teachers need to do well and model in their lessons. To help improve teachers' language awareness and their own language skills, in 2009, a supplementary program, the Certificate in English Language Studies (CELS), was introduced for students on diploma or degree courses at a university in Singapore. This program is for those training to teach English in primary schools. It aims to help develop the English language content knowledge and skills of the participants. The primary focus for the skills enhancement component is a two-week intensive program which is followed by a series of personalized tasks.

This intensive program takes an experiential approach to learning (Kolb, 1984) and models process approaches (Tompkins, 2010) that teachers are expected to use in school. Through the process of developing a digital story (Ohler, 2008), participants first write and record a script. Using a process writing approach to composing the script helps increase their awareness of their writing skills, while preparing the recording is an opportunity to focus on aspects of phonology. The program has been discussed from the course tutors' standpoints in Hanington, Pillai, and Kwah (2013), and this discussion inspired a qualitative study into the impact of the approaches used on the course on the participants' learning the next time it was conducted.

Methodology

The subjects for this exploratory qualitative study were the students who took the course in May 2013. After the course was over and grades had been awarded, they were asked for permission to use data they had generated in the normal course of the program for research purposes.

Of the 70 participants, 61 gave their consent. Only data from those giving permission were included in the study, and the names used throughout are pseudonyms.

The data for a main study comprised the self-reports of the preservice teachers' prior experience of such process approaches to learning and of process writing in particular, their reflections during the course on each stage of the process of creating a digital story, and their reflections on the application of what they had learned during their subsequent practicum period. The course participants loaded these items onto the course website and they were collated from the site for research purposes. For this smaller study, data relating to the phonology component, which comprised peer feedback on the recorded narratives (see Appendix A for the peer evaluation checklist that guided feedback), the participants' reflections on the two days of work on oral skills, and their final reflections (see Appendix B for the prompts for these items) were explored to identify themes relating to two research questions:

- Does helping these preservice teachers recognize and practice features of phonology with the goal of reading stories aloud increase their awareness of good oral skills?
- Are they able to relate what they have learned to their future classroom practice?

Classroom Approaches

The phonology component of the program, effectively one day of classroom input and activities followed by a day during which the participants applied what they had learned or reviewed to their own reading and received feedback on this from their peers and tutors, took a broad-brush approach to the topic.

Tutors started by introducing the sounds of English through the phonemes on charts such as the British Council's Phonemic Chart (2010). Since the majority of participants could produce most of the individual sounds, though they had some issues differentiating specific vowel sounds such as long and short vowels and some voiced and unvoiced consonants, this was presented primarily as a resource and a way to check the pronunciation of unfamiliar words in dictionaries. Participants were also shown how to identify word stress indicators in phonetic transcriptions. To practice applying these segmental elements, the participants were given lists of words commonly mispronounced in Singapore and used dictionaries to check and practice saying them in isolation and then in sentences which they might use in a school context.

Tutors then reviewed suprasegmental features of phonology such as linking, sentence stress, and intonation and practiced these using well-recognized activities including rhymes, jazz chants, and limericks. An amusing and effective limerick for this purpose is:

There was a young lady of Niger,
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger;
They came back from the ride
With the lady inside,
And the smile on the face of the tiger.
(This limerick is generally attributed to W.C. Monkhouse, who was writing in the late 19th century.)

Limericks allow a discussion of syllable-timed versus stress-timed languages and the impact of the latter on the pronunciation of content words, such as nouns and verbs, and on function words, such as articles and prepositions. This idea is quite challenging for speakers of Singapore English, where there is less differentiation in vowel duration and there are fewer vowel reductions than in British English (Ling, Grabe, & Nolan, 2000). Jazz chants also help reinforce these points, and there are many chants that allow for discussion of how stress and emphasis on key words help convey meaning. A useful jazz chant for adults is Scrivener's (2005, p. 418) dialogue about some missing keys. Here, course participants can be asked to consider the relationship between the two speakers and how this would be reflected in the dialogue. This makes the activity more meaningful and more amusing, and encourages the participants to convey emotion by using their voices.

To encourage critical evaluation of the features reviewed, participants next listened to and analyzed recordings of students reading aloud. Finally, they read aloud extracts from books they might read to their own students and considered how to project meaning, emotion, and different characters. They were given feedback by members of their study group and the tutor.

After this exposure, albeit very brief, to an area some had never previously consciously considered, the participants focused on reading their own scripts aloud. Reading one's own story has the huge benefit of removing any burden of comprehension. What the participants knew they needed to do was to engage their listeners and convey to them the meaning they intended with their stories. This was done first in class to get some immediate feedback. The next day, an e-learning day, they practiced and recorded their scripts using the Audacity online audio editor and recorder. The recordings were uploaded onto the course wiki, and study group members and the tutor gave each participant feedback. Based on this feedback, the scripts were rerecorded to create the final version which would be part of the soundtrack for their digital stories. To round off this two-day stage, the participants wrote a reflection on their experience.

Findings and Discussion

Peer Feedback

In class, the participants first practiced being detailed in their feedback and also looking both at positive aspects of the narration and at areas for improvement. Their later online comments indicated that they recognized improvements from the initial readings and were able to direct their peers to specific features of the narration, either to praise their performance or to highlight possible issues.

The two examples that follow show some of the feedback given to Philip, the first item pointing to earlier classroom discussion and the second considering impact on the listener:

> I liked the pausing which you used in this recording. Like Fatimah, I think you have taken into consideration our feedback yesterday. One pronunciation improvement would be on the word "table." In particular, the last syllable "ble." Other than that, job well done! (Tony)

> Hi Philip! Very nicely done. I especially like paragraph 2 where you have really placed emphasis on the sentences with exclamation marks. I can hear the excitement in your voice as you were reading the sentences. Your voice is very nice and the pace you read at was appropriate to the listener. (Lakshmi)

The next comments show a student giving her peer, Jin Hong, a resource that will help him check an issue with his pronunciation and other students providing input focusing on aspects of tone and sentence stress as ways to convey meaning (the narrator responded to his peers and then revised his recording):

> Hey Jin Hong, good reading, great pausing! I really love the part you added in some sound effects, e.g., the echoes. I agree that with visuals and more sound effect, it will definitely be awesome. The only part I find weird was the pronunciation for the word "attire." I felt it didn't sound very right. I checked the pronunciation with this website. http://www.howjsay.com/index.php?word=attire&submit=Submit. But, I think it is still better if you can check it out. :) (Doreen)

> Thanks!! I was pondering for quite a while on how to pronounce it haha, thanks for the suggestion! I'll see how I can work on it! :P :) (Jin Hong)

> Liked the change in voices throughout the reading! Haha the effect really brought out the story better. The pausing was good too :) I guess you could add a little more excitement in the "I did it, I did it" part, you just won the race!! (Mandy)

> I like your reading too! And yes, the effects really brought out the story. I just felt that for para. 2, "knowing you have an important day ahead," should stress on important instead of you, para. 5, "the announcement that somehow you are dreading to hear," could give more emphasis on "dreading." Just my suggestions though. I can't wait for the final product with your visuals and victory song! (Roslina)

These examples indicate that once the course participants had become more aware of features of phonology and the relationships between phonology, meaning, and the impact on listeners, they were able to guide others in their performance and make detailed recommendations. Many of the participants, including the recipients of the comments above, noted in their reflections how much they had benefited from peer feedback and how this had helped them when rerecording their narration. Indeed this process of noticing, with others' help, and reflecting seemed critical to their development.

Reflections

Research Question 1: Awareness of oral skills. The first set of reflections immediately after the sessions on phonology focused the participants on their own performance and addressed the first research question about increasing awareness of good oral skills.

The course participants found listening to and evaluating their recordings a useful exercise, and several noted later that they would like to use the same approach with their students. One noted that "teachers may get students to record their reading via Audacity and both teachers and students can listen to their own recording and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses in their reading" (Gene). They commented principally on three aspects of their oral skills in their reflections. The two aspects receiving most attention were how to use their voices to convey their characters' emotions or the mood of their pieces and how to pace their delivery, pause appropriately, and emphasize important words. The third aspect was using resources to check the pronunciation of individual words.

The second reflection question included a reference to audience. In many instances, when responding to either of the reflection questions, the course participants commented on their performance and the improvements they made in terms of making their stories more accessible to their target audiences:

> I focused on speaking slowly and clearly, being mindful that my readers and those listening could be from the lower primary. They would take longer to process information. (Lily)

> I brought in humor with different intonation. I brought in varying tones to build a sense of drama and to kill monotony. I felt that it might help keep the audience engaged. (Siva)

The respondents also commented on their own pronunciation and found listening to themselves an effective approach because "as we seldom hear ourselves speak, we don't usually know when we make mistakes while reading and conversing" (Annie). In evaluating their pronunciation, some commented on specific sounds, some talked generally about articulation and enunciation, and some discussed researching and noting sounds and word stress. Roslina, for example, said, "I need to be very careful with my articulation, especially the end sounds as it would make a lot of difference, especially for words in the past tense, e.g., learn vs. learned," while Pi Ying realized she was not sure of the correct pronunciation of some simple words in her text and commented, "This was a good learning point for me as I had to research the standard pronunciation for these words." A number of respondents, such as the following one, recognized that speaking too quickly had a negative impact on the articulation of words and addressed this when they rerecorded their texts:

> I also did many revisions of my narration as only when I listened to my recording did I start to find errors in pronunciation and pace. I also found out how muffled some words would sound if I rushed through the narration. (Shawn)

Critiques of themselves were not all negative, however. Some of the participants found the exercise an affirmation of their oral skills: "I have learned that I have good pronunciation skills. My friends as well as my tutor had great confidence in my pronunciation" (Ainah).

Others commented positively on the impact of the activities:

> Through the narration and dialogues, I had the opportunity to practice my oral skills. I became more aware of my pronunciation and articulation as I kept on replaying to hear for mistakes, and rerecording the narration over and over again to get the right pronunciation. At the same time, having the chance to receive constructive feedback from my classmates and tutor has helped to boost my confidence in oral skills. (Jean)

Research Question 2: Relating learning to classroom practice. The second research question was answered primarily through the reflections at the end of the program. Here the participants could choose to highlight any aspect of the course when linking what they had learned to their future teaching contexts, and many wrote about process writing and the software they had learned to use. Virtually all the respondents also chose to write about oral skills in their response to this task. Some talked about implications of the course for themselves as teachers, while others looked at how they could use some of the approaches from the course with their own students.

Comments about themselves as teachers ranged from immediate practical considerations, particularly relating being able to read aloud more effectively and in ways that would engage their students, to a recognition of themselves as models of target language:

> The pronunciation activities allowed me to learn the accurate way of pronouncing words, which will be useful when I start teaching. I have particularly chosen this item as this would be important when it comes to oral practice and examination for the children. By modeling the right way of pronouncing and enunciating words and sentences, my pupils will be able to emulate and learn the accurate way of speaking. (Chee Chen)

Some talked about continuing to use resources that had been introduced:

> Now that I am more aware of the International Phonetic Alphabet, I want to continue to learn more about it so that I am teaching my students the right thing. Especially when students are in the lower primary, I feel that it my duty to teach them the correct Standard English pronunciation. (Sharifah)

A few respondents extended the application of what they had learned beyond the immediate context of reading aloud:

> In schools, we rush through a lot of items when we speak to students as we want to get as much content to the students as possible, but now, I will take a step back to ensure that instructions are given clearly and content is delivered to students in a way that they will understand. (Philip)

While a significant number of respondents commented on implications for themselves as teachers, many focused on how the approaches they had been exposed to during the course could transfer to their own classrooms. Several participants talked about the phonemic chart being useful to both themselves and their students, because "when students are able to pronounce and articulate correctly, they will develop into confident speaking individuals" (Ruo Shin), and about its helping increase their autonomy in working out how to pronounce words. In a similar vein, others felt getting students to record stories and evaluate their own performance would help them become less dependent on the teacher for feedback. Jin Hong felt that having the students create and then narrate a story as a podcast was a very useful procedure as "by listening to themselves they would be able to pick out their own flaws and work on their own improvement," adding that "[t]his helps to ensure that the learning ownership lies with them." Another advantage respondents saw in having students record themselves was getting peer feedback. Finally, some participants made a link with students' performance during oral examinations and felt that learning to read aloud more expressively would help them perform well.

Conclusion

The comments above seem to indicate clearly that the approaches used on the course and having to read aloud and record their own narratives did, at least in the immediate term, raise the participants' awareness of their own oral skills and of the requirements of good oral skills when reading aloud. They also indicate that, while different participants took different insights from the course, they could readily see the classroom relevance of what they had learned, both in terms of their own performance as teachers and in terms of helping their students in similar ways.

Although the activities and approaches described above were selected and tailored specifically for this program, the author has integrated many of these ideas into courses for non-native speaker teachers from Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, and China. Such courses tended to take place over more extended periods and focus on the different aspects of phonology in more detail, but it is possible that some of the findings from this study are applicable to wider contexts.

Limitations

Although the findings from this study seem very positive, there were a number of limitations. Firstly, it was a very short program, and as trainee teachers are exposed to many other aspects of language and teaching during their studies and early school career, this study can indicate a potential to transfer learning from this course to the classroom but not confirm that this will happen. The researchers involved in the larger study on the impact of experiential learning on teacher proficiency and practice, of which the current research is a part, hope to conduct a follow-up study with some of the course participants, once they start teaching, to establish this. A second limitation was that the reflections that constituted the data for this study were done as an integral part of the course, which limited the questions that could be asked and which may also have affected the nature of the responses to a certain extent. Thirdly, the program focused on aspects of phonology through reading aloud; it did not address wider methodology issues relating to reading aloud, such as integrating discussion of language and content and vocabulary exploration. Finally, approximately a third of the participants in this study were taught by the author. Being a tutor on the program and having a vested interest in its success may have influenced her interpretation of the data. Nevertheless, the overall impression was that the course was impactful in ways intended. A final reflection underscores this impression:

I can safely admit that my whole perception of reading aloud has been changed! I've always had problems when it comes to reading and felt that I need to work hard in order to read well. I realize that it takes time and practice. I am more comfortable and much more interested in reading aloud with expression. Since I am more aware of the different aspects to reading like word stress on content words, sentence stress etc, I feel a renewed confidence. I feel better equipped to read to my students. (Sharifah)

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Appendix A
Peer Evaluation Checklist: Audio Recording

Voice	• Is the voice quality clear and consistently audible throughout the story? • Does the narrator sound natural?
Pronunciation	• Are the articulation and pronunciation clear? • Are there words / sounds that are incorrectly enunciated? Give specific examples.
Pacing	• Does the narrator speak too fast or too slow in some parts? • Does the narrator engage the listener by using appropriate rhythm and pausing?
Tone	• Is there good modulation of tone to express feelings or emotions?

Appendix B
Reflection Questions

Audio Recording

1. What have you learned about your oral skills in the process of narrating and recording your story?
2. What did you do to improve the narration of your story to engage the audience?

End of Course

Give examples of three things you learned or practiced on the course that you particularly hope to use when you start teaching. Explain why you have chosen these items.

Figurative Idiomatic Competence: An Analysis of EFL Learners in Vietnam

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This article explores the figurative idiomatic competence of language learners and their perceptions of idiom learning in an EFL context. As a descriptive statistics case study, it investigates the students' knowledge of 50 idioms collected from the lists of frequently used idioms by Grant (2007) and Liu (2003) and from two common idiom textbooks. The findings show the students' poor idiomatic competence, especially their very limited knowledge of the frequently used idioms. The analysis uncovers the paradox between the students' situation of using and learning idioms and their desires to learn. The study argues that figurative idiomatic competence should receive adequate attention in the learning process. Figurative idioms should be inclusively taught with the skills of negotiation of meaning. Also, learners should be exposed to a variety of idioms which are not only from traditional English-speaking countries but also from the countries of the outer- and expanding-circle contexts.

Idiom learning has recently attracted a greater level of interest in English learning contexts, from online learning websites to language textbooks. The website *BBC Learning English*, for example, has introduced a series of idiom-related sections called "Today's Phrase" and "The English We Speak." Additionally, the latest coursebooks widely utilized in teaching English programs in Asia put more emphasis on idioms in use. This tendency reflects the requisite necessity of idioms in the process of learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Indeed, the ability to use idioms helps establish figurative competence in the communicative competence model by Celce-Murcia (2008).

Within this trend, the assessment of how well Asian language learners use idioms in communication is a growing need. English users in Asia, such as pupils, university graduates, and teachers of English, have to be qualified in accordance to the requirements for English as a

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second / foreign language (ESL / EFL) in the national curricula. For example, in Vietnam, English language learners are evaluated either in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) or in international testing systems such as TOEFL, IELTS, and TOEIC. The National Foreign Languages 2020 Project in Vietnam states that the overall English proficiency of English teachers at secondary schools and of university graduates certified to teach English as a foreign language (TEFL) is expected to be at the C1 level in the CEFR or equivalent. One of the indicators, as listed in the CEFR listening skill band descriptors, is "I can understand a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms" (Council of Europe, 2012, p. 66). In the IELTS speaking band descriptors, mastery of idiomatic expressions is mentioned as a criterion of lexical resource from Band 7 onward, which is equivalent to the C1 level in the CEFR. In Band 7, language users are expected to be able to "use some less common and idiomatic vocabulary" (British Council, n.d., p. 1).

However, idiom teaching might have not received adequate attention in foreign language teaching contexts yet (Tran, 2012; Vasiljevic, 2011). Few teachers in Asia are aware of the roles of idioms in communicative competence. They may have encountered difficulties in choosing a suitable teaching method, selecting idioms, and explaining the use of an idiom in its appropriate contexts. Many teachers tend to avoid idioms in their language and teaching (Tran, 2012). Although there have been significant studies of learning and teaching approaches for idioms (Cooper, 1999; Lennon, 1998; Levorato, Nesi, & Cacciari, 2004; Prodromou, 2003; Zyzik, 2011), research on the assessment of the idiomatic competence of EFL learners in Asia is limited.

Therefore, this study focused on the figurative idiomatic competence of Vietnamese EFL language learners at a leading pedagogical university in Vietnam. The findings revealed the participants' low level of figurative idiom competence. This poor idiomatic competence might also be found in other Asian countries.

Literature Review

Figurative Idioms

Many attempts have been made to define and classify idioms (e.g., Cooper, 1999; Grant & Bauer, 2004; Lennon, 1998; Simpson & Mendis, 2003). Some scholars such as Lennon (1998) have emphasized the continuous scale of idiomaticity in language. Others such as Zyzik (2011) have focused on the fixed characteristic in the syntax of an idiom. In this viewpoint, the constituents of an idiom appear to co-occur (words that comprise an idiom may not be substituted or transformed). Idioms can also be categorized by the scale of non-literal meaning (e.g., Fernando, 1996), or length (e.g., Makkai, 1972).

The notion of figurative idioms in this study follows Grant and Bauer's (2004) definition and classification in which the degree of compositionality and figurative interpretation is counted. For example, the phrase "my cup of tea" in "some people fancy tennis, but it's not my cup of tea" is a figurative idiom. This idiom does not refer to a drink but to something or someone that one finds pleasing. In figurative idioms, there are figurative and literal meanings; therefore, listeners have to decide the meaning of a figurative idiom in a particular context.

Idiomatic Competence

Idiomatic or figurative competence has recently been discussed in accordance with communicative competence, which was inspired by Chomsky (1965), Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), and Celce-Murcia (1995, 2008). In the revised model of communicative competence by Celce-Murcia (2008), the ability to use idioms is regarded as a component of formulaic competence. Formulaic competence refers to the selection and use of fixed chunks or stretches of language in communication (Celce-Murcia, 2008). As part of formulaic competence, idiomatic competence is the ability to appropriately communicate with idioms in the roles of both an addressor and an addressee (Buckingham, 2006; Burke, 1988). It helps communicators fully encode and decode the meaning of a conversation.

Knowles (2004) described the learning process in five steps ranging from familiarization, recognition, and comprehension to mastery and automaticity. When students reach automaticity, they are able to confidently communicate in the language they are learning. Automaticity can be achieved through the practice of phrases and thought groups and the exposure to the target language, Knowles (2004) argued. This implies that language learners should be exposed to idiomatic expressions and should have intensive practice to be able to use idioms for communication.

Measuring Idiomatic Competence

Measuring idiomatic competence is problematic. Although the aspects of knowing a word can be academically described, designing a test for measuring multiple traits of words, such as forms, positions, functions, and meaning, tend to be unfeasible (Zareva, Schwanenflugel, & Nikolova, 2005). Some frequently used models for measuring vocabulary knowledge focus on two dimensions – the size and the quality (Nation, 2001; Richards, 1976). Other models, such as Henriksen's (1999), may add the receptive and productive control of vocabulary in communication to establish a third dimension of vocabulary development. Idioms are considered multi-unit words; therefore, a measurement of idiomatic competence may follow the above attributes. It should determine the breadth and depth of idioms that a learner is able to comprehend and use for communication.

Idiom-Related Research in Language Learning and Use

Studies of idioms in language learning and use can be divided into three main categories. Firstly, early research concerned the constitution of idioms (e.g., Fernando, 1996; Grant & Bauer, 2004; Makkai, 1972). Secondly, a great deal of research focused on methods of teaching idioms (e.g., Buckingham, 2006; Copper, 1999; Lennon, 1998; Tran, 2012; Vasiljevic, 2011; Wray, 2000; Zyzik, 2009). These studies attempted to find effective ways of teaching idioms for language learners in ESL / EFL contexts. For example, Zyzik (2009) discussed some activities for teaching idiom comprehension as well as literal and figurative meanings. Tran (2012) suggested four-skill-integrated tasks for teaching idioms. Vasiljevic (2011) argued that using conceptual metaphors and code switching to the mother tongue in discussing idiom meaning may be effective teaching methods. Thirdly, selection of idioms to be learned is also of research interest. Liu's (2003) and Simpson and Mendis' (2003) have focused on idioms which are the most frequently used in different contexts by using a corpus-based research approach. However, there is little research that explores the idiomatic competence of language users in EFL contexts. Therefore, this empirical study is an attempt to partly fill this gap in idiom-related research on language learning and use.

Research Questions

The study seeks the answers to the following questions:

- To what extent do EFL students know and use frequently used idioms?
- To what extent do they desire to know and use frequently used idioms?

Methods and Procedure

The research design is a descriptive statistics case study, which is a combination of descriptive statistics research and a case study. Descriptive statistics research is used to explore and describe people's characteristics, perceptions, and viewpoints (Brown & Rodgers, 2002). In this study, the research questions focus on the students' understanding of their knowledge and use of idioms. A case study, on the other hand, uses a case or cases as an instrument to obtain insight into a question (Stake, 1995). This design helps explore multiple aspects of the idiomatic competence of language learners. The answers to the two research questions in the present study are drawn from a measuring test on idiomatic competence, questionnaires, focus groups, and observations. These data collection tools were treated as triangulations to assure data reliability.

Seventy-four students in Year 1 and Year 2 at a university of education in Vietnam were the informants of the study. The former group was comprised of 47 freshmen who have learnt English for between 4 and 10 years. They were at the pre-intermediate level of English. The latter was a group of 27 sophomores at the intermediate level of English. They were pre-service teachers of English, so they were learning English in the roles of language learners and pre-service teachers. They were expected to achieve C1 in the CEFR or the equivalent after four years at the university.

The data collection procedure was prepared and conducted in three stages. Firstly, 50 figurative idioms were collected to design the test. The idioms and the questionnaires were grouped into two sets. The selection of the first set of 20 idioms was grounded in the findings of the corpus-based studies by Grant (2007), Liu (2003), and Simpson and Mendis (2003). These scholars presented a list of frequently used figurative idioms in several corpora. These idioms, regarded as fixed phrases, were searched for with advanced techniques in the Google search engine to estimate the number of online documents for each idiom. There was a very wide range in the number results from the Google search of the different idioms, but most were over two million per idiom. The second set of thirty idioms was selected from the books on idioms that were available in Vietnam; if the search results in Google search were over two million, the idiom was included.

Table 1
List of Selected Figurative Idioms

	Idioms	Google search results
1.	a piece of cake	9,950,000
2.	not my cup of tea	3,310,000
3.	add fuel to the fire	6,660,000
4.	make up one’s mind	10,870,000
5.	off the top of one’s head	26,000,000
6.	have/get a say/voice in	21,500,000
7.	all of a sudden	60,800,000
8.	be over one’s head	4,660,000
9.	a rule of thumb	24,000,000
10.	push the envelope	3,120,000
11.	bits and pieces	15,700,000
12.	thinking on my feet	8,810,000
13.	draw the line between	5,490,000
14.	take my word for it	33,000,000
15.	goes to show	78,000,000
16.	down the line	20,700,000
17.	get to the bottom of things	2,601,000
18.	have second thoughts	5,800,000
19.	out of the blue	26,000,000
20.	I can take it or leave it	11,400,000
21.	if all else fails	5,680,000
22.	in your shoes	146,000,000
23.	on top of the world	11,800,000
24.	make it big	5,890,000
25.	snowed under	2,160,000

	Idioms	Google search results
26.	speak your mind	60,000,000
27.	cross your mind	30,600,000
28.	in the long run	253,000,000
29.	at the end of the day	123,000,000
30.	black and white	391,000,000
31.	wouldn't hurt a fly	2,640,000
32.	be your bread and butter	5,930,000
33.	middle of the road	12,400,000
34.	down to earth	73,100,000
35.	over the moon	8,510,000
36.	your heart sinks	2,730,000
37.	a long face	3,280,000
38.	hit the sack	4,770,000
39.	odds and ends	10,100,000
40.	call it a day	5,320,000
41.	have a ball	14,700,000
42.	drop me a line	60,200,000
43.	flesh and blood	8,690,000
44.	make yourself at home	14,000,000
45.	under the weather	5,720,000
46.	make ends meet	10,300,000
47.	a know-it-all	22,400,000
48.	paint a picture	3,400,000
49.	go all out	23,000,000
50.	lift a finger	10,800,000

Secondly, one measurement test and two questionnaires were designed with the selected 50 idioms. The test (see Appendix) was designed in three parts to assess the students' knowledge and use of idioms. The first part, consisting of 20 items, was a task to complete the idioms based on the meaning descriptions of these idioms. The second part was a task to match the meanings and the idioms. The third part was a gap-fill task. Questionnaire 1 focused on the students' frequency of using idioms. It consisted of 50 selected idioms with four levels of frequency: never, rarely, sometimes, and often. Questionnaire 2 explored the students' attitudes toward learning and using idioms for communication. This questionnaire contained 10 five-point Likert scale items.

Thirdly, the informants were asked to complete the test and the questionnaires. A week later, six participants were randomly selected to form two focus groups. The purposes of the focus groups were to examine if the students cognitively understood the figurative meaning of the idioms and if they often used these idioms. The data were used to triangulate the findings accumulated from the test and the questionnaires. The focus groups were conducted in English and in Vietnamese. The researcher gave instructions and asked questions first in English and later in Vietnamese. The participants could speak either in English or in Vietnamese as they wished. All the responses in Vietnamese were translated into English by the researcher. The data in these focus groups were confidential; pseudonyms were used in analysis and discussion.

Findings

The findings showed that the investigated students knew and understood little about the frequently used idioms. Most of the selected idioms were unfamiliar for the students. They rarely learned and used idioms in their conversations, though the majority of the students acknowledged the importance of idioms and learning idioms in their process of learning EFL.

Table 2

Correct Answers Per Idiom

Group		20 idioms in frequently-used list (Group 1)		30 idioms selected from idiom books by Google search (Group 2)		50 idioms	
Group	*n*	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%
Year 2	27	1.3	5%	4.7	17%	3.3	12%
Year 1	47	3.3	7%	7.4	16%	5.8	12%

Table 2 shows the percentage and mean of the students who gave the correct answers to each idiom-related item in the test. The mean and percentage were calculated for the 20 frequently used idioms, for the 30 idioms selected by the Google search engine, and overall for the 50 idioms. The percentage of the students who gave the correct answers to each test item was quite low, and there was no significant difference between the results of the freshmen and sophomores. Only 12% of the students gave the correct answer to each question on average for both groups.

There was a slight difference between the results of the 20 idioms in the frequently-used-idiom list and the 30 idioms selected from the idioms books by Google search. Five percent of 27 sophomores ($M = 1.3$) gave the correct answer per idiom in the former, whereas nearly 17% ($M = 4.7$) gave the correct answer per question in the latter. For the freshmen, the means are 3.3 (7%) and 7.4 (16%), respectively. These figures mean that roughly 3 out of 47 students answered each question correctly for the first 20 questions whereas 7 gave the correct answer per question in the latter 30 questions. These results indicate that the students are more familiar with the idioms in textbooks than those on the frequently-used list. These figures seem to indicate that the frequency of use should be considered in selection when teachers and students choose idioms to study.

Table 3

The Students' Scores

Group	%	Mean	Mode	Median
Year 2	12%	6.1	5	5
Year 1	12%	6.2	4	4

Table 3 describes the students' test scores. Both Year 1 and Year 2 groups answered 12% of the questions correctly. On average, each student gave six correct answers out of 50 questions ($M = 6.1$ and 6.2 for sophomores and freshmen, respectively). The mode and median were 5 and 4, respectively. These numbers revealed that the students' scores were low.

The figures in Tables 2 and 3 were also confirmed by the data from the focus groups. When asked about their knowledge of idioms, Student 1 said "in fact, I am not good at learning idioms. I have known few idioms, so I hardly use idioms in my conversation."

Table 4

Students' Use of Idioms

	Mean	Mode	Median	*SD*
Year 2	1.51	1.37	1.37	0.3
Year 1	1.7	1.3	1.6	0.4
Year 1 + Year 2	1.6	1.3	1.5	0.4

Table 4 indicates the frequency of using figurative idioms in students' communication. This data came from the four-point Likert scale items asking how often the students used these 50 idioms. They were asked to choose never, rarely, sometimes, or often; the options were coded 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively. The means for using idioms in conversations were 1.51 for sophomores and 1.7 for freshmen. These figures indicate that these idioms were never or rarely used in the students' conversations.

Table 5

Students' Learning and Using Idioms Versus Students' Desires of Learning and Using Idioms

	Usually (4)	Often (3)	Sometimes (2)	Rarely (1)	Never (0)	Mean	Mode
Idioms learned	0%	8%	32%	60%	0%	1.12	1
Idioms used	0%	0%	20%	72%	8%	1.48	1

Table 6

Students' Desire and Perceptions Toward Learning and Using Idioms in Their Conversations

	Strongly agree (4)	Agree (3)	Neutral (2)	Disagree (1)	Strongly disagree (0)	Mean	Mode
Learning idioms is important	8%	60%	32%	0%	0%	2.76	3
I want to use idioms to communicate	32%	52%	16%	0%	0%	3.16	3

Tables 5 and 6 compare the students' actual learning and use of idioms with their desires and perceptions of learning and using idioms to communicate. It is likely that although the students rarely learned (M = 1.12; mode = 1) and used idioms (M = 1.48; mode = 1), they wanted to learn (M = 2.76; mode = 3) and be able to use idioms to communicate (M = 3.16, mode = 3). The significant gap between the reality and the desires of learning and using idioms reflected the inadequate process of learning of idioms. Sixty percent of students rarely learned idioms while over 60% agreed or strongly agreed that learning idioms was important in their learning process. Meanwhile, just under 80% of the students rarely or never used idioms in their conversations. In contrast, well over 80% of the students wanted to use idioms.

It can be seen from the findings that the students' perceptions of learning and using idioms have been changing since they entered the university. As Student 2 expressed,

> Before I went to university, I used to think idioms were not important. And the teachers rarely taught us about idioms. When I entered the university I started learning something about idioms. And then I changed my mind. I think that learning idioms is very good. I think students should be encouraged to learn idioms more and more to use idioms as well as possible.

Most of the participants in the focus groups agreed that idioms were part of the target language. They acknowledged that learning idioms was, moreover, very important, as idioms also contain many cultural values.

> In my opinion, learning a language is learning about its culture, so to learn a language effectively, we should learn about its culture. Idioms are part of the culture so, for me, learning idioms is very important and interesting. (Student 3)

However, they also admitted that they rarely or never used idioms for several reasons. First, they had difficulty remembering the idioms. As Student 6 responded, "I make mistakes when I remember and recall idioms as long phrases to express my ideas." Student 4 agreed by saying "Because it is a fixed phrase, so I can't change it, we have to remember that long phrases. If we change any word in that group, it's wrong." Second, the students are likely not encouraged to use and learn idioms in practice. Student 5 said that "in class, we don't pay much attention to idioms; sometimes we note down some idiomatic phrases in the listening and speaking sessions with its explanation, but we do not fully understand its uses." Third, they probably did not learn idioms systematically to fully understand the meaning, use, and context of each idiom. Student 1 admitted that

> although learning idioms is interesting, we meet difficulties in learning idioms because it's different in thinking when we use idioms. Some metaphors in idioms are not familiar to our culture. We do not know whether we use this or that idiom in this or that context is appropriate or not.

Student 3 stated, "I don't use idioms because I am not sure it's right or wrong in terms of meaning and context." Fourth, their process of learning idioms appeared sporadic and unsystematic. As Student 6 noted, "I learn idioms just for fun. Whenever I want to find or learn more idioms, I read them in the books such as novels or newspapers, [or] watching films."

Discussion

The students' figurative idiomatic competence is extremely low from different perspectives. Firstly, they seem to be very limited in their ability to recognize, understand, and use basic figurative idioms. The analysis mainly focuses on the students' ability at these low levels. Secondly, in comparison with Burke's (1988) and Buckingham's (2006) views of idiomatic competence, the investigated students are not able to appropriately communicate with idioms as addressors and addressees. Thirdly, while according to Knowles (2004), the learning process should be grounded from familiarization, recognition, and comprehension to mastery and automaticity, the participants are still struggling with familiarization and recognition. They need more effort to reach automaticity in using idioms. Fourthly, for the two-dimension measurement by Richards (1976) and Nation (2001) focusing on the breadth and depth of idioms, the participants' idiomatic competence is significantly low. Similarly, using the three-dimension model by Henriksen (1999), focusing on the quantity, quality and receptive-productive control, the students' idiomatic competence is considerably limited.

The students have limited knowledge of figurative idioms in their conversations for three main reasons. The first is the underestimation of the importance of idioms in language teaching in Vietnam. Both teachers and students appear to avoid idioms in the process of teaching and learning. In contemporary textbooks in secondary schools in Vietnam (*English 10, 11, 12*), few idioms are presented in reading or listening passages. Second, language learners are unfamiliar with the move from individual words to chunks. Learning vocabulary in Vietnam tends to mean learning individual words and associating each with a Vietnamese equivalent. This appears to prevent students from remembering multi-unit words such as idiomatic phrases, and later achieving automaticity in Knowles' (2004) learning diagram. Moreover, students do not have adequate repetition and practice over a period of time to step further toward automaticity (Knowles, 2004). Only 24 idioms are introduced in the three textbooks (six in *English 10*, six in *English 11*, and twelve in *English 12*). Among these, only one idiom is on the list of frequently used idioms by Grant (2007) and Liu (2003). These idioms are sporadically presented without any consolidation or practice. Indeed, there are no idiom-related exercises or practice in the textbooks.

If the communication strategies for the negotiation of meaning are integrated into the process of learning idioms, however, language learners become more confident in dealing with not yet known figurative idioms in their interactions. Such negotiation of meaning occurs when "the flow of conversation is interrupted" (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 317) and participants stop the flow of the ongoing conversation to solve communicative troubles. The process may use communication strategies such as clarification requests, recasts, confirmation requests, or comprehension checks. These communication strategies can be integrated into the process of learning idioms. For example, language learners can use one of these strategies to request conversational help when miscommunication occurs due to a lack of figurative idiom knowledge during their conversation. Long's (1996) interaction hypothesis argued for the value of interaction in second language acquisition, and a more recent study (Mackey, Abbuhl, & Gass, 2012) has also emphasized the strong connection between interaction and learning. Therefore, the integration of communication strategies for negotiation of meaning into learning idioms helps students have a deeper understanding of the use and the meaning of an idiom and assists learners in learning a language as a whole.

Limitations of the Study

The current study is still in the process of test design. If item difficulty and discrimination had been analyzed before the data collection period, the reliability of the findings would have been increased. Additionally, test items did not focus on the use of idioms in real communication either in class or outside class. Another limitation concerns extraneous variables such as the students' learning context and background. In the test, there was one item that almost all participants in Year 1 answered correctly because they had learnt this idiom in class a short time before the test. Despite these limitations, this study raises an alert about the low idiomatic competence of language learners in EFL contexts. Future studies should explore learners' ability to use idioms in conversation. Also, longitudinal studies should be conducted to comprehensively assess the idiomatic competence of EFL language learners.

Conclusion

The study focuses both on the figurative idiomatic competence of EFL learners in the dual role of language learner and pre-service teacher and the low idiomatic competence of other EFL learners. The investigated students knew and understood little about frequently used idioms. The majority of the selected idioms were unfamiliar to the students. Most of the students rarely learned and used idioms in their conversations although they acknowledged the importance of idioms and learning idioms in the process of learning English in EFL contexts. Their poor idiomatic competence was consequently derived from a lack of exposure to idiomatic language in their learning programs, inadequate guidance in learning and using idioms from teachers, and an insufficient habit of learning idioms as phrases and chunks.

The analysis also uncovers part of the learners' desires and abilities to learn idiomatic expressions, which language educators, teachers, and policy makers may want to consider when designing an English course or making a language policy. The investigation also urges EFL teachers and syllabus designers to give idioms a higher priority in their language teaching and learning programs.

The study additionally argues that figurative idioms should be inclusively taught with the skills of negotiation of meaning as a new pedagogical method for teaching figurative idioms. Furthermore, learners should learn idioms from the expanding circle of countries where English has not traditionally been used. This idiomatic exposure reflects the tendency of using English in the context of postmodern globalization (Canagarajah, 2006), in which English is no longer the possession of inner-circle English-speaking countries such as the U.K., the U.S.A., and Australia (Kachru, 1992), or outer-circle countries where English has had a traditional role as a second language. Language users may need negotiation skills to facilitate communication in English as a lingua franca to negotiate global and local norms (Canagarajah, 2006; McKay, 2010), especially when communication breakdown occurs. These skills of negotiation of meaning are apparently useful for language learners when they have to deal with figurative idioms, which contain typical cultural values.

To improve the situation of learning idioms, both teachers and students should be aware of the significant role of figurative idiomatic expressions in the language learning process. Teachers and students should have clear criteria of idiom selection and idiom teaching aspects so that students are able to learn and become familiar with frequently used idioms and their contexts. Students should be exposed to idioms from inner- and expanding-circle contexts as well. In addition, communicative strategies for negotiation of meaning should be integrated into the process of learning idioms to help students overcome breakdowns during interactions caused by misunderstanding figurative idioms. Consequently, they will be more confident in communicating with figurative idioms in everyday conversations.

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Appendix
Idiom Test

Dear students,
I am conducting a study on idiomatic competence of language learners at the Faculty of English. Your responses are completely anonymous and confidential. Please feel free to respond to the questions. Your responses will be of great value to the findings. Thanks a million for your contribution!

PLEASE WRITE ALL YOUR ANSWERS ONTO THE ANSWER SHEET!

I. Write ONE or TWO words to complete the idioms based on their meaning in the next column.

Idioms	Meaning
1. A piece ___________	A thing that is very easy to do
2. Not my cup ___________	Not what I like or am interested in
3. ___________ to the fire	Make a bad situation worse
4. ___________ your mind	To decide what to choose
5. Off ___________ of my head	Recall / speak something without preparation
6. Have ___________ in	The right to express your opinion and influence decisions
7. All of ___________	Quickly, unexpectedly
8. Be over ___________	Too difficult or complicated for me to understand
9. ___________ of thumb	A practical method of doing or measuring something, usually based on past experience, not based on science or exact measurement
10. Push the ___________	Go beyond the limits of what is allowed or thought to be possible
11. Bits and ___________	Small objects or idioms of various kinds
12. Thinking on ___________	To be able to think and react to things very quickly and effectively without any preparation
13. Draw the ___________	Distinguish between two closely related ideas

14. Take __________ for it	Believe me, trust me, I am telling you the truth
15. It goes __________	Used to say that something proves something
16. Down __________	All the way, throughout
17. Get to the __________ of things	Figure everything out
18. Have __________	Change your opinion after thinking about something again
19. Out of __________	In a way that was not expected, unexpectedly
20. I can take it or __________	I do not hate something, but don't particularly like it either

II. Match the meaning and the idiom.

1.	if all else fails	A.	very practical
2.	in your shoes	B.	written, not just a spoken agreement
3.	on top of the world	C.	something you say before stating a very important fact or idea
4.	make it big	D.	succeed, become famous
5.	snowed under	E.	very busy at the moment
6.	speak your mind	F.	a long time from now
7.	cross your mind	G.	be an activity or job you do to get the money
8.	in the long run	H.	is totally harmless and would never hurt anyone
9.	at the end of the day	I.	very happy indeed
10.	black and white	J.	in your position
11.	wouldn't hurt a fly	K.	state your opinion very clearly and openly
12.	be your bread and butter	L.	extremely happy
13.	middle of the road	M.	has no radical views
14.	down to earth	N.	if all other plans do not work
15.	over the moon	O.	think about something for a short time

III. Use the following idioms in their correct situations.

A.	flesh and blood	H.	odds and ends
B.	have a ball	I.	go all out
C.	make yourself at home	J.	make ends meet
D.	under the weather	K.	call it a day
E.	hit the sack	L.	lift a finger
F.	know-it-all	M.	your heart sinks / sank
G.	paint a picture	N.	drop me a line
		O.	a long face

1. ________ when I opened the letter and realized I had not been accepted into graduate school.
2. Little Mikey had ________ when he was told he couldn't go outside to play.
3. I'm so tired that the only thing I want to do is take a shower and ________.
4. This weekend I stayed at home and did some ________ around the house.
5. Look, it's already 4:30. Time to ________.
6. Thanks so much for inviting us to the party. We really ________.
7. Why don't you ________ some time to let me know how you're going?
8. All of our ________ came to the big family reunion.
9. I'm glad you could come. Please ________.
10. Jane's head and neck hurt, and her nose is stuffy. She must be ________.
11. Every month we have to plan our budget carefully in order to ________.
12. No one listens to Greg at meetings because he always acts like such a ________.
13. The nation's leading economist ________ about continued growth in the automobile industry.
14. No one will complain if you ________ but still don't succeed.
15. Mrs. Waters is upset with her husband because he doesn't ________ to help with chores around the house on the weekend. He just watches sports programs on TV.

An Investigation of a Podcast Learning Project for Extensive Listening

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This paper investigates a podcast learning project integrated into an English speaking and listening class for the purpose of promoting extensive listening and fostering independent learning. The study collected data through a questionnaire, students' podcast diaries, and observation notes on student project presentations, seeking to examine students' learning experiences as well as their views of using podcasts for pedagogical purposes. Results suggest that students were strategic in choosing podcasts suitable for their interests and proficiency levels. Overall, they found learning from podcasts not only convenient but also useful in enhancing their language proficiency and world knowledge. Their general satisfaction with the experience can be attributed to factors including freedom of choice, meaningful practice, and close integration with the syllabus. However, students also experienced frustration with podcasts containing unscripted authentic content delivered at a fast speech rate.

Input is considered critical in second language learning (Zhao & Lai, 2005). Many teachers strive to maximize target language input that suits students' proficiency levels and engages their interests. However, they cannot hope to provide sufficient input within the time constraints of the classroom. It is therefore imperative for teachers to find ways to extend learning beyond the classroom. In recent years, researchers and practitioners have started to recognize podcasting as a technological tool that can be effectively incorporated into language teaching and learning. The biggest benefit of podcasting is that it can provide an unlimited amount of authentic target-language input across a wide range of subjects (Chinnery, 2006). Furthermore, it can be used on portable devices such as mp3 players to facilitate an on-demand and on-the-go learning approach (McQuillan, 2006; Stanley, 2006; Stoks, 2005).

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This paper describes a podcast learning (PL) project integrated into an English speaking and listening class for the purpose of encouraging students to engage with listening materials of their own choice. The study collected data from multiple sources to examine students' learning from existing podcast resources. It also explored factors affecting students' choice of podcasts and the perceived benefits and problems of using podcasts for pedagogical purposes.

Literature Review

Extensive Listening and Independent Learning

Modeled on the extensive reading approach (Susser & Robb, 1990), extensive listening (EL) is defined as referring to an individualized listening activity with large amounts of target language input of learners' interests and at their levels. The value of EL lies in increasing "automaticity of recognition of words in their spoken form, in turn leading to improved aural fluency and thus improvement in overall comprehension" (Brown, 2007, p. 15). Ridgway (2000, p. 180) also regarded automaticity as a key element in language acquisition and held that practice plays the most important role in achieving automaticity: "Practice is the most important thing. The more listening the better, and the subskills will take care of themselves as they become automatized." Renandya and Farrell (2011, p. 56) advanced a similar belief: "just like reading, listening is best learnt through listening."

Another rationale for encouraging EL is the concept of "language learning for life" (Field, 2008, p. 4). Field argued that instructors need to provide a type of learner training that "involves preparing learners so that they can take full advantage of the sources of linguistic information that the real world provides" (p. 5). In other words, this approach aims to equip learners with the ability to continue learning after they complete language courses and when the teacher is not there to assist them. In this approach, reading and listening are two natural means of extending learners' knowledge through independent learning, the latter having an extra benefit of enhancing spoken fluency (Field, 2008). In this sense, EL can be used as a means to foster independent learning, and for teachers and students seeking to take advantage of new technology, podcasts can provide the rich target language input needed in the EL approach.

Podcasting in Educational Settings

Podcasts can be understood as online "audio or video broadcasts that contain a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed, allowing users to 'subscribe' to the podcast" (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007, p. 165). Once subscribed, podcast programs can be automatically delivered to the user's computer or portable media player when new episodes are released. Using existing resources is one of the two main potential uses for podcasting described in Rosell-Aguilar's taxonomy (2007). Existing podcast resources for language learning can be further divided into two main categories. The first is content created by native speakers for the consumption of native speakers, such as news podcasts released by broadcast media. The second category is teaching content created for language learning. Rosell-Aguilar (2007) sub-classified this category into complete courses and supporting materials either for a particular audience or for independent learners. The latter subgroup of resources—supporting materials for independent learning—can arguably be most readily used by classroom teachers for providing target language input. The PL project described in this paper featured podcasts in this category.

A major consideration in using podcasting in education is that it allows flexibility. The podcasting literature has determined that time, location, and pacing as the dimensions where this flexibility can be realized (Salmon & Nie, 2008). As a result of the time flexibility of podcasting, a learning activity is no longer constrained by time and location (Hew, 2009). Learners can access learning materials on the move, assuming they own personal mobile devices such as mobile phones and personal media players. A further advantage of podcasting is the provision of bite-sized learning opportunities (Lee & Chan, 2007), enabling learners to take advantage of idle time for constructive learning purposes. In addition to this mobility, having the ability to replay podcasts has also been found to improve learning (Salmon & Nie, 2008). The facility to download podcasts and listen repeatedly allows learners to work at their own pace to achieve the desired learning outcomes. These three dimensions of flexibility also contribute to learners' choice and control, which are considered key elements of learner autonomy and independent learning (Benson, 2001; Pemberton, Toogood, & Barfield, 2009).

In recent years, podcasting has been adopted in a wide variety of educational contexts. In subject courses, podcasting is often used to deliver recorded lectures and speeches (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007), enrich distance learning, facilitate self-paced learning, aid slower learners and to further develop advanced and / or highly motivated learners, among other uses (Walls et al., 2010). In language learning classrooms, podcasting has also been adopted for training in specific language skills, such as pronunciation (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009), oral and aural skills (Abdous, Camarena, & Facer, 2009; Chan, Chi, Chin, & Lin, 2011) and listening strategy training (O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007). These studies however, primarily involved either teacher-created or student-produced podcasts. Although these projects have generally met with positive reactions, the resources and technologies involved may not be accessible and the time and effort invested may not be viable for all teachers. It is therefore proposed that teachers use existing resources for designing a podcast project that both engages student interest and promotes EL. This kind of project can be as simple as the podcast homework suggested by Field (2008), where the teacher selects a weekly podcast for students to download and study during the week. Students listen to the podcast as frequently as needed and provide feedback at the end of the week. For more advanced and highly motivated students, teachers can design a learner-centered podcasting project, carefully integrating in-class activities to guide and scaffold students' exploration of podcasts for language development. This study presents the implementation of such a learner-centered podcasting project and investigates students' perceptions of its advantages and problems, seeking to answer the following research questions:

1. How do EFL university students use online podcast resources for listening practice?
2. How do they perceive the use of podcasting for educational purposes?

Methods

Context of the Study and Participants

The study was conducted in an English speaking and listening course at a public university in southern Taiwan. The course was mandatory for first-year English majors and was also open to all other students on an optional basis. Among the 23 undergraduates registered for the course, 13 were English majors and 10 were non-English majors. Their estimated English competence levels ranged from low-intermediate to low-advanced. None of the students had used podcasting for English learning purposes previously.

Design and Implementation of the PL Project

This podcasting project was designed to be closely integrated with the coursework, including an orientation, student sharing of their PL experience, teacher-directed podcast sessions, diary writing, and an oral presentation on their learning outcomes. First, an orientation session was given in the beginning of the semester to demonstrate how to find and use podcasts. In Weeks 2 and 3 of the project, students were invited to share initial podcasting experiences to facilitate peer learning and identify podcasts that fit their interests and proficiency levels. Furthermore, teacher-directed podcast sessions were designed with the aim of exposing students to a wide variety of online audio resources. In these sessions, the teacher also demonstrated ancillary learning materials such as listening comprehension quizzes, transcripts, and vocabulary lists. Additionally, students were asked to keep a diary of their PL experiences (see Appendix A for the suggested format for diary entries). The diaries served the purpose of developing students' independent learning skills and facilitating the teacher's evaluation of student progress (Kemp, 2010; Yeh, 2008). Finally, at the end of the two-month project, students were asked to summarize their PL experiences and to give a five-minute oral presentation to the class about the podcast most useful to their English learning. The presentation included the podcast's basic data and an explanation of how it was used for language learning, followed by an evaluation of the overall experience.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collected for this study included questionnaire responses, student podcast diaries and the teacher-researcher's notes on students' PL project presentations. First, an anonymous survey was conducted at the end of the project using a four-part questionnaire (Appendix B). Part A focused on students' prior podcasting experiences and current podcasting practices. Part B, using a 4-point scale, investigated factors affecting students' podcast subscriptions. Part C focused on supplementary activities that students performed to facilitate podcast listening. The final section used a 5-point Likert scale to measure students' level of agreement with eight statements concerning their PL experiences. This part also included two open questions to elicit students' perceptions of the advantages and problems of PL. Second, student diaries kept for the project were collected and prepared for analysis. Finally, the teacher-researcher's notes on students' project presentations were also used to triangulate the data. The notes included the featured podcast, reasons, and additional notes.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics were calculated on the responses to the scaled questions in the questionnaire. The responses to the open questions, together with qualitative data from podcast diaries and teacher-researcher's notes on student presentations, were read, coded, and then categorized according to the themes developed through analysis.

Results

Questionnaire Findings

Twenty-two students completed the survey. Survey findings indicated that students' podcast listening behavior varied widely (Table 1), but the majority subscribed to between 2 and 5 podcasts (77%), listened to podcasts 2 or 3 times a week (55%), and spent less than 30 minutes on each occasion (59%).

Table 1
Podcast Use Patterns

Subscribed podcasts	1 (14%); 2-5 (77%); 6-10 (9%)
Frequency (per week)	1 (9%); 2-3 (55%); 4-7 (27%); more than 7 (9%)
Time spent each listening session	Less than 30 min. (59%); 30 min – 1 hr (27%); more than 1 hr (14%)

As to the factors affecting a student's decision to subscribe to a podcast, "interest in the subject" of the podcast was found to be the most important, followed by speaking speed, content difficulty, availability of transcripts, and episode length (Table 2).

Table 2
Factors Affecting Decision to Subscribe to Podcasts

Factor	*M*	*SD*
Episode length	2.64	0.85
Speaking speed	3.05	0.84
Interest in the subject	3.23	0.97
Content difficulty	2.91	0.61
Accent (American, British, or others)	2.32	0.89
Format (audio or video)	2.23	1.11
Transcript (with or without)	2.77	1.15
Language (English or bilingual)	2.18	1.10

The questionnaire also explored whether and what supplementary activities were performed during or after podcast listening. Results showed that students conducted multiple activities to facilitate learning from podcasts (Table 3), suggesting a rather serious attitude towards and heavy investment in the PL project. It can also be observed that two of the three highly frequently performed activities—consulting a dictionary (86%) and listening repeatedly (82%)—involved tackling immediate listening problems and seeking overall textual comprehension.

Table 3
Supplementary Activities to Facilitate PL

Activity	Number of students	%
Consulting a dictionary	19	86%
Taking notes	10	45%
Searching for supplementary information	11	50%
Learning new words	18	82%
Repeated listening	18	82%

The next part of the questionnaire explored students' perceptions of the podcasting activity. With the first three items concerning the perceived benefits of podcasting, students indicated strong agreement. In particular, 95% of the students agreed that listening to podcasts enriched their world knowledge, while 86% agreed that the activity improved their English listening ability. Approximately two-thirds of the students (63%) strongly agreed or agreed that the activity increased their English learning motivation. Items 4-6 explored the students' perceived difficulties of using podcasts for language learning. In terms of technology, approximately three-quarters of the students (77%) found it easy to learn to use podcasts, while two students (9%) reported some difficulty in mastering the technology. Regarding the fifth and sixth items, half of the students found it easy to locate podcasts that suited their interests, while 59% encountered minimal difficulty in finding podcasts suitable for their proficiency level; for both items, almost one-fifth of the students (18%) indicated they found finding suitable podcasts difficult. However, the PL project was, overall, an enjoyable experience for the class (82%). In addition, more than two-thirds of the students (68%) indicated that they would continue to use podcasts for English learning purposes.

The questionnaire contained two open questions to encourage the students to suggest what, in their view, were the biggest strengths / limitations of using podcasts for pedagogical purposes. A summary of student comments about the advantages of podcasting is given in Table 4.

Table 4
Summary of Comments Regarding the Advantages of PL

Strength	Number of responses	Example comments
Language learning	7	It can improve my English listening ability.
Knowledge	7	I can get the latest information.
Convenience	6	You can listen to it whenever you want.
Variety	2	It has a variety of categories which we can choose.
Others	3	It's free.

While seven students referred to language improvement as a major advantage of PL, an equal number reported that podcasts provided opportunities to learn ideas, new information, and world news. Convenience was also viewed by six students as a big advantage of PL. They praised podcasts for easy access and automatic updates. They could download and listen to podcasts "at any time" (S2), so PL was "not limited by time and place" (S6). In addition, two students appreciated the variety afforded in the podcast world. One explained that "I can try to find one that suit my interest. I will not bored when listening to them" (S8).

Finally, the students also named problems they had encountered in PL, which can be generalized into three categories: language, technology, and personal (See Table 5).

Table 5
Summary of Comments Regarding the Problems of PL

Problem	Number of responses	Example comments
Language	6	Speed of talking is fast.
Technology	6	Because I don't have iPod, I can only listen those podcast programs through my computer.
Personal	5	Sometimes I just don't want to listen to it.

The students encountered language problems, including rapid speech, lack of understanding, and lack of transcripts. In particular, several students reported feeling frustrated when they could not understand the content even after repeated listening. Six students complained about various technology problems, caused mainly because they did not own iPods and had to spend long periods in front of their desktops for podcast listening. The five comments in the Personal category were more varied. One student had difficulty finding suitable podcasts. Another seemed to be overwhelmed by the amount of accumulated content from podcasts with daily updates and another mentioned the lack of interaction.

Observations from Student Presentations and Podcast Diaries

Analysis of student presentations and podcast diaries provided further information about students' learning strategies and experiences. It was found that among the most useful podcasts named in the project presentations (see Appendix C for a list of student-selected podcasts), podcasts targeted at ESL learners were chosen the most frequently (n = 9). An equal number of students chose to feature news podcasts, while a further three chose education podcasts such as TED Talks. The students provided reasons for their podcast choices, including the podcasts came with transcripts, were of short duration, had speakers with a British accent, were interesting, were not too difficult and were recommended by the teacher. Several generalizations can be made from the students' choice of podcasts. First, textual support was apparently very important to these intermediate English learners. In fact, of all the participating students, only three chose podcasts that did not include episode transcripts. Second, the students were observed to be careful and strategic in managing this PL project. In addition to finding podcasts covering interesting topics, they took care to choose podcasts of short duration (typically five to six minutes per episode) and of moderate difficulty (at a reduced speech rate or of bilingual instruction in English and the students' mother tongue, Chinese). Many also seemed to depend on teacher recommendations. More than half of their favorite podcasts were featured in the teacher-directed podcast sessions. Finally, half of the students chose podcasts delivered in British English accents. Although this may in part reflect the teacher's recommendations, some of the students explained that their choice was motivated by their curiosity about British accents (as contrasted with American English, normally adopted as the model for English learning in Taiwan), indicating that podcasts can indeed provide opportunities for explorations of a wide range of not just topics and interest areas, but accents and linguistic differences as well.

Finally, observations from student diaries revealed their exploration process in the podcast world. In the beginning, they had to navigate through this unfamiliar technology and explore what it had in store for them. Several students reported experiencing a period of difficulty before finding a perfect fit for their interests and language levels. However, the diaries revealed that most of the students sought to assess podcasts according to their own criteria so as to find a podcast neither too challenging nor too easy for their language levels, as shown in the following excerpts (unedited):

> Sometime I try to "BBC discovery" but it is nearly half hours and some speakers speak too fast. After listen two times, I give up.

> I change my mind to switch VOA [Special English] to this program because the special English is really slow and sometimes I felt bored.

> I found that I can almost understand what the hosts are talking about. Next time I will pick some more challenging podcasts to enhance my listening ability.

The students explored not only available podcast selections but also the tool's capabilities. For example, one reported his attempt at taking advantage of the mobility afforded in PL, although with a less than satisfactory result:

> Because I have to go back to my hometown with my family and sweep the forefathers' grave, I just download the MP3 into my cell phone that I can listen to it when I am in car. . . . however, I was attacked by my little brother who try to interrupted me in the car. Furthermore, because of the car swaying and the boring long trip, sometimes I can't focus on. Finally, I consider that I still prefer staying before computer much than listening by cell phone.

Despite the various challenges, the students generally seemed to enjoy learning from podcasts. One student commented in the diary that the project felt "less like an assignment." Another left a note in the questionnaire to express her appreciation of the experience:

> Roughly speaking, it's a wonderful experience of listening to podcast. I think I will use my free time to listen it and keep finding interesting podcast!!

Discussion

In terms of student satisfaction, the self-reported data collected in the present study revealed that, overall, the PL project was successful. This success may be attributed to three factors: freedom of choice, meaningful practice, and close integration with the syllabus. First, the students were given complete freedom to choose the podcasts to subscribe to, the number of episodes to listen to, and the amount of time to spend on listening. In line with research on free voluntary reading (Judge, 2011; Susser & Robb, 1990), this freedom of choice should contribute to the students' overall satisfaction with the experience. Furthermore, with the freedom of podcast choice, the students were given opportunities to do meaningful practice instead of mere mechanical drills. In addition to learning to listen, they listened to learn more about their areas of interest, assisted by a wide range of available podcasts. Such meaningful practice is widely recognized to be engaging for learners and indispensable in second language acquisition (Renandya & Farrell, 2011; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Finally, as described in the Methods section, this PL project was designed to integrate closely with the speaking and listening course through measures including introductory orientation, in-class podcast sessions, constant reminders from the instructor, peer experience sharing, podcast diaries, and project presentations. All these activities served to guide students through the process of learning to use podcasts and help them recognize podcasting as a useful educational tool. Such teacher guidance and careful integration with the syllabus have been identified as contributing to effective podcasting use for learning purposes (Abdous et al., 2009; Chan et al., 2011; Copley, 2007; O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007).

Although generally satisfied, the students encountered some difficulties and frustrations during the learning process. In particular, they seemed to experience considerable frustration with podcasts delivered at a rapid speech rate. These podcasts tended to contain unscripted authentic content created for native speaker audiences. This problem with authentic texts has been recognized in the literature on listening instruction (Hinkel, 2006; Vandergrift, 2004). To help alleviate the problem, teachers can consider learner training in metacognitive strategies (Cross, 2011; Goh, 2008; Vandergrift, 2007). Several commonly taught strategies include activating background knowledge about the topic, anticipating the language that might occur in the text, writing down a word to check its meaning later, and note-taking. Alternatively, a more structured approach to podcast listening, as detailed in a later section, can be adopted.

Regarding the concept of flexibility, this study found that PL may allow learners more flexibility in time and pacing, but not in place. This relative lack of mobility in place may be accounted for by two factors: (a) mobile device ownership and technical capabilities and (b) study habits and purpose. Although this study did not survey mobile device ownership, the students' complaints about having to sit for long periods in front of computers suggested that they either did not have handheld devices enabling mobile learning or they were not familiar with the technicalities of transferring audio files to their mobile devices. This corroborates findings in previous research showing the impact of technical capabilities on podcasting use (Abdous et al., 2009). Furthermore, students may need a quiet place for podcast listening, particularly when English is not their first language and when they see podcast listening as a serious learning task requiring concentration. In addition, listening to podcasts on the move makes it difficult to perform supplementary learning activities such as taking notes and consulting dictionaries, which the students reported performing with high frequency.

Pedagogical Suggestions

For teachers who wish to use existing podcast resources, several suggestions are offered. Teachers should first familiarize themselves with the technology and available resources in order to introduce learners to the basics of podcasting. Furthermore, while giving learners freedom to explore the podcast world on their own, teachers should emphasize the varying quality of existing podcast resources. They can also help develop learners' online information literacy skills by demonstrating how to evaluate podcasts using cues such as descriptions and customer reviews (Rosell-Aguilar, 2007). Furthermore, this paper contends that integration with the syllabus is key to ensuring the success of a PL project. Therefore, teachers should consider how they can organize the course schedule and assignments to guide learners through the learning process. One option is to adopt a project-based model as featured in this study to motivate learners, encourage student ownership in the learning process, and facilitate peer sharing and continuous reflection upon the experience (Stoller, 2006). With lower-level students, teachers may consider adopting a more structured approach, particularly in the beginning stage of the project. For example, teachers can assign a podcast for the whole class to download and listen to. They can also demonstrate how to use ancillary materials such as episode transcripts, if available, to enhance learning outcomes. Once students become more familiar with the technology and its potential uses, they can be encouraged to explore and expand their listening repertoires.

Limitations and Conclusion

The present study does have limitations, perhaps the major one being a reliance on self-reported data. It should also be noted that variables such as learners' English proficiency and technical capabilities cannot be controlled, but it is likely that individual students approached podcasting differently depending on factors such as areas of study, personal interests, language competence and English learning motivation. While this study has identified general usage patterns and perceptions of podcasting among EFL university students, case studies would further advance understanding of individual strategy use in learning from podcasts.

The amount of exposure to target language input is generally recognized as an important predictor of language achievement levels. Using podcasts as EL material involves only minimal technological knowledge, but it can provide a motivating variety of resources and facilitate learners' engagement with listening materials at a time and place convenient to them. It is hoped that this study will stimulate additional consideration of the use of podcasts in listening instruction and aid students in leveraging this technology for second language acquisition.

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Appendix A
Suggested Format of Podcast Diary Entry

Name of the podcast:
Duration: ____ minutes per episode
Frequency: Daily? Weekly?
Language: English? Bilingual (English plus Chinese)?
Category: Education? Music? News? Others?
Difficulty: Easy? Medium? Challenging?
This week's podcasting experience (50-200 words):

Appendix B
Questionnaire on Podcast Learning

Part A: Prior Experiences and Current Practices

1. Is this the first time you use podcasting for English learning purposes?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No. I used it for English learning purposes before this class.

2. How many podcasts are you currently a subscriber to?
   ☐ Only 1 ☐ 2-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-20 ☐ more than 20

3. During this podcasting project, how often do you listen to podcasts?
   _____ time(s) a week

4. In average, how much time do you spend each time you listen to podcasts? ___________________ (hours or minutes)

Part B: Factors in Choosing a Podcast

How important are the following factors in your choosing a podcast to subscribe to?

Factor	Not at all important	Slightly important	Fairly important	Very important
Length of each episode				
Speaking speed				
Interest in the subject				
Content difficulty				
Accent (e.g., American, British, or others)				
Format (audio or video)				
Transcript (with or without)				
Language (e.g., English or bilingual)				

Part C: Podcast Learning Activities

What learning activities do you do when (or after) listening to podcasts? Check all that apply.

☐ Consulting a dictionary
☐ Taking notes
☐ Searching for supplementary information online
☐ Learning new words
☐ Repeated listening
☐ None of the above
☐ Others, please describe:

Part D: Podcast Learning Experiences

Please indicate (✓) whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Listening to podcasts improves my English listening ability.					
2. Listening to podcasts increases my English learning motivation.					
3. Listening to podcasts enriches my world knowledge.					
4. It is easy for me to learn the technology for using podcasting.					
5. It is easy for me to find podcasts that suit my interest.					
6. It is easy for me to find podcasts that suit my level.					
7. Listening to podcasts is an enjoyable experience.					
8. I will continue to use podcasting for English learning purposes.					

9. What was the best thing about or biggest strength of podcasting as a learning resource?

    ____

10. What was the worst thing about or biggest limitation of podcasting as a learning resource?

    ____

Appendix C
Podcasts Featured in Students' Project Presentations

BBC 6 Minute English, available at
http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/6min

BBC Learning English for China, available at
http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/aab

CNN Student News, available at
http://rss.cnn.com/services/podcasting/studentnews/rss.xml

*English as a Second Language Podcast, available at
http://www.eslpod.com/website/index_new.html

Poem of the Day, available at
http://www.poetryfoundation.org/features/audio?show=Poem%20of%20the%20Day

TED Talks (video), available at
http://feeds.feedburner.com/tedtalks_video

VOA Words and Their Stories, available at
http://learningenglish.voanews.com/archive/learningenglish-programs-radio-words-stories/latest/978/987.html

*Editor's Note: membership now required

TED Talks as an Extensive Listening Resource for EAP Students

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This study examines how TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) Talks, used as an extensive listening material, affected college students' listening skills, and explores strategies to tailor the activity for lower-proficiency students. The qualitative data analysis, based on two surveys and students' journal entries, indicates that students felt the lectures improved their listening comprehension, enhanced their motivation, and accustomed them to listening to a variety of English accents. Finally, assisting students to select lectures appropriate to their comprehension levels and conducting various types of scaffolding activities for lower proficiency students are discussed.

TED Talks and EAP Students

Since 1984, TED Talks has featured lectures from around the world on technology, entertainment, and design. These lectures are available to the general public and have been used by educators since going online in 2007 (TED Talks, n.d.). Free transcripts in English and subtitles in over 40 languages accompany most of the lectures, delivered by native and non-native English speakers.

At a private liberal arts college in Tokyo, TED lectures were used as an extensive listening resource in a new academic speaking and listening course in conjunction with journal writing. As the lectures were a core listening task, their efficacy was gauged for future classes.

To accomplish this, the following research questions were developed:

1. How do students view the effectiveness of the activity in regards to their listening skills?
2. What other benefits are engendered?
3. If the activity does not improve listening skills, what are the causes and how could these causes be addressed?

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The paper will begin with an overview of some recent trends in the teaching of listening in the EFL / ESL arena. The definition, purpose, and benefits of extensive listening practice will be explored, followed by details of how the TED lectures were incorporated into an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course. Finally, survey results on students' perceptions of the efficacy of the activity and strategies to facilitate the task for students at lower comprehension levels will follow.

Literature Review

Listening as Part of EFL / ESL Teaching and Views on Listening Processes

Referring to the paucity of attention allotted to listening practice in the foreign language classroom, Nunan stated, "Listening is the Cinderella skill in second language learning. All too often, it has been overlooked by its elder sister—speaking" (2002, p. 238). Foreign language teaching mainly focuses on productive skills: speaking and writing. Listening and reading, considered secondary skills, are often neglected, although they provide essential input to learners and therefore are vital to their productive skills. However, listening is currently receiving more attention (Field, 2002; Nunan, 2002; Wallace, 2010).

The two prominent views on the process of listening influencing language pedagogy since the 1980s are the bottom-up top-down processes (Nunan, 2002, p. 239). The former view holds that listeners' understanding of what they hear begins with the smallest units of sounds. These sounds are combined to form words, phrases, clauses, and sentences to become concepts. In this process, listeners apply various types of knowledge in a "hierarchical" manner in order to make sense of the incoming message (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005, p. 24). The top-down-process view, on the other hand, holds that listeners actively reconstruct the meaning of incoming sounds using their pre-existing knowledge of context (Richards, 2003).

Most researchers concur that both processes are necessary for effective learning (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Nunan, 2002; Wallace, 2010). As decoding alone allows learners only literal interpretations of the input, learners need to be guided to use what they already know to help them make sense of what they hear (Wallace, 2010). When students appear to lack contextual knowledge, some form of schema-building activities is recommended before the listening process starts to help learners prepare for a more meaningful listening experience (Richards, 2003).

Increased Use of Authentic Materials

Another trend in the teaching of listening is the increased use of authentic materials as opposed to scripted and / or graded materials (Field, 2002; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). The argument is that learners should be exposed to real-life input because scripted materials are devoid of the redundancies of informal speech. Field (2002) also stated authentic materials afford examples of "hesitations, stuttering, false starts, and long, loosely structured sentences" (p. 244) which characterize natural speech, and advised exposing students to such materials in the early stage of their learning.

Field (2002) further argued that learners need practice and strategies in dealing with texts where they have only partial understanding of what they hear; this is what they encounter in real life. Since many non-native speakers do not understand everything they hear, they need to make guesses and they should be encouraged to do so. All learners "need to be shown that making guesses is not a sign of failure" (Field, 2002, p. 247), but is vital in comprehending real-world input. The practice of extensive listening is effective in exposing learners to real-life input (Renandya & Farrell, 2010).

Definition, Aim, and Benefits of Extensive Listening

Renandya and Farrell (2010) defined extensive listening as "all types of listening activities that allow learners to receive a lot of comprehensible and enjoyable listening input" (p. 5). They argued that listening might be best learned through listening, just as advocates of extensive reading believe "reading is best learnt through reading" (p. 3).

The aim of extensive listening is to develop "listening fluency," which is presumed to assist learners to improve automatic processing of the target language when done properly (Waring, 2008, p. 8). Choosing listening materials appropriate for the level of learners is important. Waring (2008) stated that listening materials should be easy enough for learners so that they "understand 90% or more of the content"; otherwise, they can become frustrated and can gain very little. However, he also pointed out that sometimes the complexity of the material is compensated for by the interest and background knowledge students have.

Extensive listening practice also helps students acquire more vocabulary, recognize various accents, and improve their pronunciation and speaking (Renandya & Farrell, 2010). Moreover, extensive listening is believed to augment students' motivation (Reinders & Cho, 2010). Field (2002) stated that students are generally not daunted or discouraged by authentic texts but feel motivated by obtaining unaltered information. Once such motivation is aroused, learners tend to pursue learning on their own and often maintain the new learning behavior regardless of the presence of teachers and others (Brown, 2002).

Motivation

In foreign language acquisition, motivation plays a pivotal role and is regarded as the universal principle that prompts learners to take independent action (Dörnyei, 2001). Learners can be motivated by intrinsic and extrinsic factors, depending on the situation and individual traits, but often these two factors are interrelated. In their study on student blog-making projects, Bhattacharya and Chauhan (2010) reported that the majority of their students were primarily motivated by internal factors and illustrated how this is related to autonomy:

> Students were motivated by intrinsic factors like sense of achievement, self-motivated corrections . . . and [this fact] seems to vindicate the position taken by Dörnyei (2001) and Deci and Ryan (1985) that intrinsic motivation is a fundamental construct in the development of learner autonomy. (p. 15)

Thus, it is essential to create a learning environment that fosters a sense of achievement and self-motivation, leading students towards autonomy.

Background for the Study

Speaking and Listening (S&L) Course

Freshmen in the intensive English program have 15 hours a week of English, most of which are dedicated to reading and writing, to prepare for future lectures in English. The S&L course is designed to establish a foundation for these core classes, and aims at assisting students to actively participate in and lead discussions as well as give presentations. As most of the hours in the S&L course are used to develop students' productive skills, it was felt they needed additional exposure to authentic speech outside the classroom.

Objectives for Assigning TED Talks as Outside Classroom Listening Practice

There were two objectives for assigning this activity:

- To improve students' listening skills through exposure to authentic speech.
- To offer students enjoyable and informative lectures that would motivate them to pursue tasks on their own, hopefully beyond the course.

Procedure for a Listening and Writing Activity Using TED Talks

Prior to assigning students the TED Talks task, 3 class hours were devoted to listening practice, as outlined below:

- Present "lecture language" (phrases that indicate the overall structure of lectures);
- Teach note-taking skills;
- Provide listening practice with pre-recorded lectures, followed by comprehension quizzes; and
- In the third class, introduce two preselected TED Talks. Give tips on choosing appropriate TED lectures, based on the length, lecturers, genres, etc. Assign the tasks of selecting lectures and keeping a listening journal.

In their Lecture Listening Journal (LLJ), students summarized lectures in 100 words and added reactions / comments in 50 to 100 words (see Appendix C). They took notes while viewing the lectures and submitted them with the journal. As an optional entry, students were asked to record how many times they had viewed a particular lecture and how long the task took. The journals were evaluated by engagement, rather than quality, so students received full marks for completion of the tasks.

Students brought their LLJs to class to share with peers in small groups. If time allowed, some instructors had students give brief reports on their LLJ in groups or to the whole class.

Students also filled in self-evaluation forms (Appendix D) to track their progress and submit at the end of the course.

Methods

Participants

The course was offered to 468 freshmen whose average age was 18; 349 were upper intermediate (average total TOEFL score: 514; listening: 52) and 119 were intermediate (average total TOEFL score: 443; listening: 45).

Data Collection

Two student surveys were administered, one at the beginning and one at the end of the term:

Survey 1. The first survey was given to obtain background information on students' habits for improving their listening skills, and their perceptions of their listening abilities. This survey was used as a reference and was not thoroughly analyzed for this paper.

Survey 2. The second survey (Appendix A) was given to all students to gauge their perceptions of the efficacy of the course, including the speaking portion. The survey consisted of three parts: the course in general, the speaking portion, and the listening portion. In the listening part, three closed questions and one open-ended question were asked. Out of 468 students, 303 responded. For this study, qualitative responses from the listening part of the survey were inductively read through and coded, isolating themes of interest. Data was separated according to upper intermediate and intermediate proficiency levels. The listening journals were also analyzed to confirm these themes.

Findings

The coding and analysis of the results of the second survey and students' listening journals generated the following salient themes: 1) listening comprehension skills, 2) motivation, and 3) authentic listening material.

Each of these themes is separately reported for the upper intermediate and intermediate levels with tables and qualitative data based on students' survey responses and journals. Students' unedited comments are also provided.

Listening Comprehension Skills

Upper-intermediate. As Table B1 (Appendix B) indicates, 78% of the upper-intermediate level students perceived that the S&L course helped them improve their listening skills; 82% agreed that the LLJ activity improved their lecture listening skills. One student stated, "Lecture Listening Journal is very meaningful because it makes us listen carefully to the lecture and that improve our listening skills." Another student said, "At first it was very difficult for me to understand English lectures. However, as I took more S&L lessons and listened more TED talks, I came to understand them much better."

Intermediate. Table B2 (Appendix B) indicates that the majority of intermediate students (74%) also perceived that the course helped them improve their listening skills; 76% said that the LLJ activity improved their lecture listening skills. One student said, "Using TED is the best way for me to learn how to speak English. It is so exciting and gave me various thinkings."

Motivation

Upper-intermediate. Table B1 (Appendix B) shows 85% of upper-intermediate students wanted to continue watching online lectures in the future. One student stated that the process of selecting and viewing lectures helped him to choose his major. He wrote, "TED.com gave me many topics that attracted me greatly. This site helped me pick up some majors that I will specialize in."

Many students expressed intentions of incorporating the task into their daily lives. One student commented, "I was impressed by listening to the lecture. I want to continue to watch online lectures like TED everyday during summer vacation."

Intermediate. Table B2 (Appendix B) indicates 77% of the intermediate students also intended to visit TED.com after the course. One student said, "TED was a big discovery for me. I think it is very useful. I want to continue to use it." Another commented, "At first, I was very hard. I did not understand what speaker says. However, I became to be able to understand spoken English a little. Now, I want to listen to English more."

Analysis of students' journals also revealed that some students were deeply affected by the content of the lectures, which inspired them to pursue topics introduced in the lectures. A student who had watched *Nadia Al-Sakkaf: See Yemen Through My Eyes* (Al-Sakkaf, 2011) stated she felt that the speaker's country was truly on the move for change and that the existence of women like Nadia would encourage many people. She intended to check the *Yemen Times* website (http://yementimes. com) and learn more about the country from alternative media. Another student stated that she was stimulated by a speech about school lunches by Ann Cooper. This student researched and presented on food education later in the course.

This last point seems to support the view of Dörnyei (2001) and Deci and Ryan (1985) that once motivated, students act independently.

Authentic Listening Material

Upper-intermediate. A number of students recounted that the TED lectures were realistic representations of speeches and applauded the value of being exposed to such listening materials. One student commented, "TED was very good way to train listening skills . . . I learned how to catch up with fast speed speaking." Another student welcomed the variety of English accents being spoken.

Intermediate. Intermediate students also agreed that TED lectures offered authentic English. One student stated, "I like it very much because most teachers speak English easily to us, however, we can listen more natural English in TED."

Discussion: Helping Low-Proficiency Students Cope Better

As has been illustrated, the results of the survey and student journals entries indicate that the majority of the students at both levels regarded the activity favorably. However, a more careful analysis of the data points to some issues to be addressed.

Speed of Speech

Speaking speed needs to be assessed when choosing lectures, especially for lower-proficiency students: fast speakers were a big stumbling block for many of them. Although many upper-intermediate students appreciated the challenge of the task, some with weaker listening skills were frustrated or discouraged to the point of giving up. One intermediate student recounted, “I hesitated to do LLJ at first because I couldn't catch up with the native speaker's speeds and couldn't understand what lecturer said. It took me a long time to take notes and write summary and reactions.”

Some students seemed to reach a certain point where a faster speech rate first causes lower comprehension, and soon almost no comprehension (Renandya & Farrell, 2010). At this stage, the task becomes ineffective and can be counterproductive. The instructors for this course misjudged the varying degrees of students’ proficiency in listening comprehension and also applied the same approach to different levels of students.

Selecting the Lectures

Some students indicated in the survey that time constraints they had from working on other assignments given in the intensive program and failure to choose lectures appropriate for their levels deprived them of the benefits of the tasks. To address this, a list of level-specific lectures could be prepared and initially offered rather than having students choose lectures themselves. Although such lists as “Top 10 TED Talks” (Deubelbeiss, 2008) are available, these lists do not indicate the degrees of difficulty of the lectures. Thus, a list that accounts for speed, accent, and vocabulary complexity should be prepared.

Need for Scaffolding Activities

The survey also revealed that after the LLJ activity is assigned, scaffolding activities in class are a requisite to address the issues students encounter. Field (2002) stated the most important aspect of a listening class is that of “diagnosing” where the communication breaks down and tackling the problem (p. 246). Students’ awareness of and practice on this type of problem need to be heightened. One of the activities Field (2002) suggested is a dictation exercise where students write a number of dictated sentences "containing examples of the weak forms such as /wəz/ for 'was', /tə/ for 'to', /ʊ/ for 'who' so that they can interpret them correctly the next time they hear them" (p. 246). Without such scaffolding activities, merely exposing students to substantial amounts of extensive listening will yield little, if any, positive benefit. Student progress should be regularly monitored by paying more attention to verbal cues and journal entries to identify problem areas. As many mini-lessons as time allows should be given to address such problems.

Pre-Listening Tasks

The degree of anticipation should be maximized. As Lingzhu (2003) pointed out, expectation plays a key role in listening comprehension. Thus, pre-listening activities should precede listening tasks to prepare students for what they will hear. Such activities should be clearly demonstrated and rehearsed in class so that students can conduct them on their own before they view lectures outside the class. A list of questions such as the following can be used prior to the listening:

- What do you know about the topic?
- What does the title indicate? What can you infer from it?
- Who is the speaker? Do a quick search on the speaker. What is his / her field and what is he / she noted for?
- What do you think the speaker is going to say?
- What words can you guess the speaker is going to use? Jot down the words in English as well as in Japanese, look up the English equivalent if you have written the words in Japanese, and check the pronunciation.

Lingzhu (2003) also stressed the importance of giving students contextual knowledge in pre-listening activities to ensure successful comprehension. While pre-listening activities are common practice, teachers should ensure that students integrate this into their own pre-listening habits.

Post-Listening Tasks

Post-listening tasks should be modified to make them more manageable for lower level students. Although upper-intermediate students appreciated the task of summarizing the lectures, claiming it helped improve their summarizing skills, many lower-level students stated it was very difficult and took substantial amounts of time, as just understanding the speakers was a challenge. For them, less demanding writing tasks, such as listing what they grasped and discussing their reactions with others, might suffice and be more motivating.

Focus on General Meaning

Students should be repeatedly reminded that they are not expected to understand the lectures perfectly and that the focus is on general meaning, not details. This could prevent unnecessary frustration.

Transcripts and Subtitles

The final point concerns the transcripts and subtitles accompanying the lectures. They can improve students' listening skills or deter them from developing. Some students believed they understood the listening materials when they were merely reading the subtitles. As Waring (2008) pointed out, students may only "be understanding what the subtitle says, not the original spoken English" (p. 8). Some students who confessed that they heavily relied on the transcripts or subtitles to write summaries confirmed this statement. One student said, "I think LLJ is a good assignment for English-learning beginner. However I sometimes rely on Japanese transcript. It doesn't help my improving." Such students were often tempted to copy phrases from transcripts rather than try to summarize the lecture, thus plagiarizing.

To address this concern, assigning the following procedure might be useful.

1. Watch the lecture without transcripts or subtitles to understand the general meaning.
2. Watch it again and take notes; note difficult points.
3. Read the transcript, not the subtitles, to understand the whole lecture and underline new words missed in previous viewings.
4. Look up the meanings and pronunciation of these words and practice pronouncing them to make them more recognizable.
5. Listen to the lecture again without the transcript. With the meaning and the pronunciation of the new words behind you, you may be able to follow the lecture more easily.

Students should be encouraged to refrain from reading the subtitles until the end to confirm their comprehension.

Conclusion

This article illustrates some benefits that can be gained from using online lectures such as TED Talks for students at lower and upper levels of proficiency. In addition to most students acknowledging that the activity enhanced their listening comprehension, it is noteworthy that the TED lectures motivated some students to independently pursue their own interests and spurred some to further research. The authentic listening materials also helped them become used to real aural input. The paper also describes some of the scaffolding needed to optimize potential student benefits. Future studies could compile quantitative data to accurately gauge how the activity affects listening comprehension. Finally, one must bear in mind Field's (2002) comment concerning listening: "We focus on the product of listening when we should be interested in the process—what is going on in the heads of our learners" (p. 246). More research is necessary on identifying difficulties students encounter, particularly at lower proficiency levels, and effective strategies to help students overcome them and become better listeners.

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Appendix A
Post-Course Survey Questions

I. On S&L course in general
1. S&L helped me improve my academic speaking and listening skills.
2. I enjoyed my S&L class.
3. How was the level of difficulty of this class for you?
4. How was the amount of homework for you?
5. Please feel free to write comments about your general impressions of the class.

II. On Speaking Skills / Tasks

6. S&L helped me improve my discussion skills (leading / participating).
7. S&L helped me improve my ability to make a short presentation of an opinion.
8. The "Speaking Phrase Tests" and online audio were useful for my study of phrases.
9. The "Final P&D" and Video Self-Analysis were effective for setting goals for improvement.
10. Please write any comments or suggestions about speaking skills and activities / homework.

III. On Listening Skills / Tasks

11. Compared with the beginning of the term, my lecture listening skills improved through S&L.
12. The Lecture Listening Journal (LLJ) was a good way to improve my lecture listening skills.
13. I want to continue to watch online lectures like TED in the future for English practice, even if it is not required.
14. Please write any comments or suggestions about listening and activities / homework.

Appendix B
Post-Course Survey
III. Listening Skills Results

Table B1
Upper-Intermediate Students

Questions	Responses	*n*	Percent
1. Compared with the beginning of the term, my lecture listening skills improved through the S&L course.	Strongly agree	60	30
	Agree	104	48
	Disagree	42	19
	Strongly disagree	7	3
2. The Lecture Listening Journal (LLJ) was a good way to improve my lecture listening skills.	Strongly agree	69	32
	Agree	107	50
	Disagree	25	12
	Strongly disagree	12	6
3. I want to continue to watch online lectures like TED in the future for English practice even if it is not required.	Strongly agree	107	50
	Agree	76	35
	Disagree	21	10
	Strongly disagree	11	5

Note. *N* = 213 for Questions 1 and 2; *N* = 215 for Question 3.

Table B2
Intermediate Students

Questions	Responses	*n*	Percent
1. Compared with the beginning of the term, my lecture listening skills improved through the S&L course.	Strongly agree	22	25
	Agree	43	49
	Disagree	15	17
	Strongly disagree	8	9
2. The Lecture Listening Journal (LLJ) was a good way to improve my lecture listening skills.	Strongly agree	28	32
	Agree	38	44
	Disagree	10	11
	Strongly disagree	11	13
3. I want to continue to watch online lectures like TED in the future for English practice even if it is not required.	Strongly agree	46	53
	Agree	21	24
	Disagree	11	13
	Strongly disagree	9	10

Note. *N* = 88 for Question 1; *N* = 87 for Questions 2 and 3.

Appendix C
Lecture Listening Journal Form

ELA Speaking & Listening: Lecture Listening Journal #______

ID: _________ Your Name:_________________________________

Date(s):_______________ Source:___________ _______________

Name of Lecturer:____

Title of Lecture:__________________________ Length:____ minutes

Summary (100 words or more): Summarize the main points in YOUR OWN words. Begin by mentioning the title, lecturer, source, and date.

Reaction (50 words or more): Write your opinion about a main point in the lecture.

Reflection: How was this LLJ? How many minutes did you take to listen? How about writing the summary? Write some short comments for your instructor and add any questions or suggestions you have.

Note 1: You can type your LLJ and print if you like, or write by hand neatly on this paper. In some cases, your instructor might ask you to upload it on a class blog.

Note 2: You will need to attach your lecture notes to your LLJ. Any kinds of notes are fine, but try to take notes well. The notes <u>will not</u> be evaluated for quality. They are for the instructor's reference to see how you took notes on that lecture.

Appendix D
Lecture Listening Journal (LLJ) Self-Evaluation Form

Full Name______________________________Section ___________

Your Lecture Listening Journal (LLJ) is a chance to practice listening to academic lectures. Any English academic lecture 10 minutes or longer can be used. TED.com and academicearth.org have many interesting lectures, or you can use LLA. In total, you must create and submit a journal entry and lecture notes for at least 6 lectures. Your instructor may give you more specific directions about deadlines, good topics or how to submit your journal.

Each LLJ entry is worth 2 pts, and should include:

1. Summary (1 pt): 100 words or more on the main points in YOUR OWN words. Begin by mentioning the title, lecturer, source, and date: Example = In his / her lecture titled "Title Words" on [Date / Year], [Dr. / Professor Name] mainly describes how… / argues that…
2. Reaction (0.5 pts): 50 words or more of your opinion about a main point in the lecture
3. Lecture notes (0.5 pts). Rough is fine, but try to take good notes as you listen, and make sure you use loose leaf so that you can submit them to your instructor.
4. (Optionally) A few words of comments for your own record such as whether it was difficult, how many times you listened, whether you used subtitles, etc. Short is OK.

LLJ	Title / Speaker / Source	Deadline (Late = - 0.5)	Met Criteria? Check
No. 1	e.g., K. Robinson says schools kill creativity / Ken Robinson / TED		Summary 100+ ☐ Reaction 50+ ☐ L. Notes ☐ / 2 pts
No. 2			Summary 100+ ☐ Reaction 50+ ☐ L. Notes ☐ / 2 pts
No. 3			Summary 100+ ☐ Reaction 50+ ☐ L. Notes ☐ / 2 pts
No. 4			Summary 100+ ☐ Reaction 50+ ☐ L. Notes ☐ / 2 pts
No. 5			Summary 100+ ☐ Reaction 50+ ☐ L. Notes ☐ / 2 pts
No. 6			Summary 100+ ☐ Reaction 50+ ☐ L. Notes ☐ / 2 pts

Final Self-Scoring _____ / 12 pts
Comment:

This evaluation form was created by Mark Christianson, formerly with ICU.

Students' Perceptions of Academic Writing: A Needs Analysis of EAP in China

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Academic writing remains a prominent issue for students and teachers in Asian EFL contexts. English courses offered in mainland China at tertiary levels mostly focus on teaching English for general purposes, and few concern writing for academic purposes, even for English majors. This small-scale needs analysis study reports on a survey of 50 Master of Arts students in English who are part of a new English for Academic Purposes program at a university in south China, as well as a focus group interview with a smaller group. Results indicate that 70% of the participants have never taken an academic writing course before and that the academic writing skills students found difficult are those less frequently taught. Students want a new course which provides them with generic features for writing the sections in a research article / thesis and, more importantly, the linguistic resources needed for writing academic papers appropriately.

Current Teaching of Academic English at the University Level in China

Tertiary students in EFL contexts are often faced with a gap between their limited command of L2 English academic literacies and their much more developed L1 academic literacies. In mainland China, while many universities are becoming more globally oriented, few institutions have established English language centers to provide specific linguistic consultancy for non-native English-speaking students, as those in English-dominant countries or other contexts in Asia (e.g., Hong Kong and Singapore) have done. The majority of universities in mainland China offer "College English" courses, employing a textbook oriented for College English Test (CET) preparation that emphasizes grammar drilling (Zhang & Luo, 2004) and overlooks academic writing. Due to local constraints such as "large class size, disjunction between classroom

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instruction and the CET test and students' test-driven learning styles" (You, 2004, p. 255), students' academic writing proficiency remains low.

As a result, Chinese students are constantly reported as able to attain high scores on grammar-based tests yet unable to write acceptable English compositions. According to Xu (2005), most Chinese students would like to rely on writing handbooks or directly imitate the format of published articles by borrowing certain expressions when required to write academic papers. Even though academic / thesis writing courses are offered in a few universities, they are usually teacher-centered lectures, with only referencing skills and thesis layout being taught, while elaborations on moves (the smallest discourse units that perform a certain communicative or rhetorical function [Swales, 1990]) or steps and linguistic features used in academic papers are ignored.

Non-English majors, except for the minority who want to apply for study abroad, do not seem to have much practical need to learn academic writing, as most colleges in mainland China do not require these students to write undergraduate or graduate theses in English, and some require theses to be written in Chinese only (personal communication with students in various disciplines). While some departments have taken the initiative to change textbooks for core courses to imported ones from the United States, answering the call for bilingual education in colleges (Department of Higher Education, 2001), most of these courses are still taught solely in Chinese due to the limited English proficiency of instructors. Students are thus free to choose which language to use in writing their assignments (Liang, 2006).

Needs for Academic Writing Instruction for English Majors in Mainland China

For most English majors in Chinese universities, especially the top ones, all assignments for courses and theses are required to be in English. However, although this group of students has been consistently required to write essays or research papers in English, the academic writing proficiency of English majors remains low (Sun, 2004). An important reason may be that few academic writing courses are offered. Sun (2004) surveyed 147 English-major Master of Arts (MA) students from 52 colleges and universities and found that only around 16% of the institutions offered academic writing courses for English majors and 15% of students had never been taught academic writing as undergraduates. Among these students, almost half reported having problems writing their Bachelor of Arts (BA) theses in proper academic writing styles. Major difficulties students experienced included their inability to express ideas in academic English, the lack of guidance on searching for proper references, and even uncertainty about the thesis or research paper format.

Taking into account the special context where postgraduate English majors in mainland China receive their ELT education, with academic writing being the most urgent need for the completion of their studies, they were chosen as the group to study. It is hoped that the results of this study can serve as a window for investigating the transformation of the College English unit, which is becoming a needs-based institute helping postgraduate students become international scholars across disciplines.

Needs Analysis

Needs Analysis (NA), i.e., identifying students' needs, is the essential initial step in developing an appropriate specialized English syllabus, as asserted by many researchers (e.g., Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Hyland, 2006; Kavaliauskiene & Uzpaliene, 2003; West, 1994). It is the technique used to evaluate the how and what of a course. NA has been regarded as the most appropriate method as it "can tell us a lot about the nature and content of the learners' target language needs" (Hutchinson, 1988, p. 71). Generally speaking, in NA, the course designer has to gather information about students' present and target situations (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998) through present situation analysis (PSA) and target situation analysis (TSA). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) developed TSA and PSA into a more manageable framework, adopted in the present research. They identified three components of target needs: necessity (needs identified by the requirements of target situation), lacks (the necessary proficiency for the target situation compared to what the students already know), and wants (what the students desire to learn).

There have been a few large-scale empirical NA studies carried out in Asian or Chinese ELT contexts. Major investigations conducted at tertiary institutions in Hong Kong include Hyland (1997), Littlewood and Liu (1996), and Evans and Green (2007). All these studies indicated that productive skills and acquisition of specialist vocabulary were the central language concerns of participants. Evans and Green pinpointed the striking problem of vocabulary and suggested that English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program design should attach great importance to the teaching and learning of "subject-specific and common core lexis" (p. 14).

However, due to the nature of comprehensive and large-scale surveys, none of these studies was specific to academic writing, and the specific nature of language problems as the most important hindrance was not identified in detail. The surveys provided a general picture of Hong Kong tertiary students' proficiency in all four English macro skills, while little was mentioned about the form and quality of academic writing courses offered. The present study thus aims to look into academic writing in particular. It attempts to explore students' attitudes towards learning academic writing, their current level in some academic writing skills, their biggest concerns in learning academic writing, and their opinions on previous and future academic writing courses. The findings are expected to help EAP practitioners develop an appropriate English academic writing course for English majors in south China and offer insights into the EAP agenda in the broader Asian EFL context.

This research was guided by the following three questions:

- What are MA students' perceptions of the importance of academic writing to their current studies and future career? (What are the purposes and motivations that drive them to learn?)
- What are the students' perceptions of the difficulties of academic writing skills?
- What are the students' attitudes towards their previous academic writing courses? (What do they want to learn in future EAP courses? And how?)

Method

Participant Background

Participants were selected from first-year MA students at a key university in south China. Fifty students were available at the time of the study and were willing to participate. They had obtained their bachelor's degrees from various universities, and their diverse backgrounds offered rich information about their previous academic writing courses. This group of students was selected based on two criteria: (a) they were the same cohort who would participate in a new EAP program and (b) they represented the group of students who have the most urgent need in learning academic writing for their current studies and future careers.

There has been no academic writing course offered for postgraduate students in this university. The leaders of the Foreign Language School believe that students are able to acquire academic writing skills by themselves (personal communication with department head), and that what they need are the "research methods" and "basic structures" that can guide their design and the contents of research paper writing / thesis writing. It is assumed that academic language does not have to be taught explicitly. Thus even undergraduate students with little experience in academic writing who need to write BA theses in English are only provided with several hours of lectures about the basic structure and the format of a thesis.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire items were developed according to Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) framework of NA. Fifteen items were divided into three major sections (see Appendix). Section I (necessity) focused on investigating students' motivation (orientations / purposes) for learning academic writing and the importance of different academic genres. Another item was added regarding students' intrinsic interest in learning academic writing, beyond "academic / personal goals" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987, p. 62), as intrinsic interest has been considered an important element in many second-language motivation studies (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005). Section II (lacks) explored students' perceptions on the difficulty of 18 important academic writing skills (adapted from Evans & Green, 2007). Section III (wants) first enquired about students' attitudes towards previous academic writing courses, if any, taken as undergraduates. Students who had not taken academic writing courses only indicated their preference for prospective teaching activities and materials. Further questions were asked on the aspects of knowledge (language problems or general writing skills) they would like to be emphasized and the five most important academic writing skills that should be included in the new academic writing course. The survey took around 30 minutes to complete.

Focus Group Interview

A follow-up focus group interview was conducted after the survey analysis to gain in-depth information which might not be shown in the survey. The interview was conducted mostly in Chinese because the participants were more comfortable expressing themselves in their native language. Each participant was given a sheet with the interview prompts in both languages. As the participants were English majors with sufficient proficiency to understand the prompts, no questions were asked to clarify anything on the sheet during the interview. The interview was fully transcribed and translated into English by the researcher.

Six students were selected based on their willingness to participate (two students had taken an academic writing course before). This number of students was considered optimal, as students could have a face-to-face roundtable discussion and build on each other's responses to think of ideas they might not have in individual interviews. The interview took around one hour and questions similar to those in the survey were asked, but in a clearer and simpler way, for example: "What do you want to improve most in your academic writing?" and "How did you learn to write a research paper?" Interviewees were also invited to give their comments on certain responses (that might or might not be theirs) and general results from the survey analysis. The interview was recorded and coded for content analysis.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: The Importance of Learning Academic Writing

In Section I, students were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale (*1* being the lowest value and *5* the highest) how important they considered academic writing to be to their current studies, future career, and publishing, and how much intrinsic interest they had in academic writing.

Results generally indicate that while students' imposed needs for learning academic writing are huge, they have little intrinsic interest in learning academic writing. The score of learning academic writing for the purpose of completing current graduate studies is the highest, with a mean of 4.55 (SD = 0.50), as students reported the need to write "for the courses, and for graduation" (focus group comment). While the need for learning academic writing for publication during graduate study is slightly lower (M = 3.98, SD = 0.80), it is slightly higher than the need for publication during one's future career (M = 3.78, SD = 0.97). Students find little inner pleasure in academic writing, presenting an average score of only 1.80 (1 = not interested at all).

In the focus group interview, students reported reasons for the relative lack of need for learning academic writing for a future career. First, the journals in the field of education or English language in mainland China are mostly published in Chinese. Except for students who will pursue a Ph.D., future need is much less than that for their current studies. The requirement for publishing a research-based paper is relatively lower if they opt to be secondary school teachers rather than college teachers. Finally, most students actually dislike using academic language, as it is "too formal and structured, and has little space for free writing" (focus group comment).

Among the eight text types which participants prioritized by preference, research papers / reports are of the highest concern (75%), followed by case studies (67.5%). The reason, indicated from the focus group interview, seems to be that research papers are the most widely assessed text type for their graduate studies. Additionally, students perceive that a research paper is like a mini thesis and is closely related to academic publishing. As for case studies, they are the text type the students "know the least about" but prefer to write, since they find that "doing experimental or empirical research is much harder because it is very difficult to control the variables" (focus group comment). Review articles, critiques, and theses are of similar importance; all were checked by about 60% of the students. The students explained that learning to review and critique is a basic skill for doing research; it is fundamental for developing research topics and identifying research gaps, a skill that might transfer to helping them write thesis literature reviews, one of their largest concerns.

The results agree with the findings of studies on non-native English-speaking undergraduates by Evans and Green (2007) and Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2010) that academic English is very important for the students' academic study. In addition, Evans and Green's (2007) study noted that in particular, "projects and reports play the most important roles in participants' academic lives" (p. 10). However, only a minority of students in Evans and Green's study attached importance to the text type of review, which seemed to suggest that students in Hong Kong tend to see it as less important than the participants in this study did. The authors' explanation was that students were not aware of the close connection of this academic genre with their dissertations. Another explanation, however, might be that as mainland Chinese students suffer from a strong lack of both research paper input (reading) and instruction in academic writing, they are more concerned about the full gamut of academic genres they are unfamiliar with, but which sound important.

Research Question 2: Students' Perceptions of Difficulties of Academic Writing Skills

Section II listed 18 important academic writing skills for which students indicated their perceived difficulty on a scale from 1 (very easy) to 5 (very difficult). The skills were divided into two parts: general academic writing skills and language problems.

The findings suggested that students experienced greater difficulty (M = 3.42 out of 5) in writing the structure and content than language-related problems (M = 3.38).

As seen in Table 1, the three most difficult general academic writing skills for these students are reviewing and critiquing the previous research and creating a research space (gap), designing research methods, and commentaries and discussions on the data. In contrast, writing references and the introduction posed little difficulty. (The focus group explained that in some undergraduate academic writing courses students had taken, the teachers only taught how to cite references).

With regard to language problems, students were generally confident about their grammar but found it difficult to achieve appropriateness in an academic context, e.g., by using appropriate lexical phrases to build sentences and paragraphs and by understanding the specific language features of the genre (such as the research paper). However, it should be noted that the students' perceptions varied conspicuously in terms of language problems, as indicated by the divergent *SD* scores in the items about grammar and lexical phrases (*SD* = 1.03 and *SD* = 0.98, respectively).

Table 1
Means of Perceived Difficulty of Academic Writing Skills

Items		Mean (difficulty)	*SD*
General academic writing skills (*M* = 3.42)	Writing introductions	2.83	0.96
	Searching for appropriate literature using databases and library resources	3.53	0.85
	Referring to sources	3.28	0.82
	Reviewing and critiquing the previous research and creating a research space (gap)	4.30	0.88
	Designing the research methods	4.08	0.69
	Writing the methods section	3.74	0.88
	Summarizing and presenting the data	3.53	0.91
	Commentaries and discussions on the data	3.85	0.74
	Writing references / bibliography	2.38	0.90
	Writing conclusions	3.10	0.79
	Proofreading written assignments	3.08	0.96
Language problems (*M* = 3.38)	Understanding the specific language features of the academic genre (such as research paper)	3.48	0.85
	Using appropriate lexical phrases (such as *on the basis of, it should be noted that*) freely to build sentences and paragraphs	3.80	0.98
	Summarizing / paraphrasing	3.28	0.82
	Writing coherent paragraphs	3.41	0.88
	Linking sentences smoothly	3.25	0.84
	Using proper “academic” language and vocabulary (style)	3.70	0.91
	Using the proper grammar such as correct tenses, agreements, reporting verbs, and prepositions	2.79	1.03
Overall Mean Score		3.40	0.47

Compared with what was documented in the literature review, the results here seem to suggest that students in both Hong Kong and mainland contexts find language problems difficult. Evans and Green (2007) highlighted Hong Kong students' lack of confidence in the language-related aspects of academic writing, especially lexical and grammatical aspects. Students' perceived difficulties in lexical and stylistic aspects of academic writing were also reported in research from other EAP settings where non-native English speakers were required to write (e.g., Hinkel, 2003; Shaw & Liu, 1998). However, unlike the students in the current study, undergraduate students in Hong Kong found language problems posed more difficulty than content and structure. The reason for this could be traced back to the different goals in high school English education in Hong Kong and mainland China: while Hong Kong students are exposed to various academic genres and have a basic understanding about structure and content of academic genres before they enter university, mainland Chinese students are generally much less proficient in academic writing, as requirements for English writing for college entrance exams are low, with only general English essays covered. Most mainland Chinese students, up to the postgraduate level, have little knowledge about academic writing, especially the research genres.

Research Question 3: Previous and Future Academic Writing Courses

What they learned. Section III enquired about students' perceptions of previous and future academic course design and curricula. Results show that 70% had never taken an academic writing course. This lack of experience is reflected in the remarks of a focus group participant:

> We were really surprised when we found out that as research postgraduate students in this university, we were not expected to be taught on how to write academic genres such as research paper and thesis in appropriate language besides the format and structure. We could only learn from imitating the model research papers in the journals which we have limited access to. We don't have much confidence in writing as a result.

Among the 12 students who had taken academic writing courses as undergraduates, eight found the courses "just so-so," one was "not satisfied at all," while four were "generally satisfied." Additionally, in the focus group interview, two students mentioned that "we have almost forgotten what we have learned in the previous academic course." Their teachers did not tell them how to write the sections of academic papers in detail, i.e., the moves and steps in each specific part of a piece of academic writing. Language features such as lexical phrases, academic vocabulary, and coherence were even less frequently addressed. The courses or lectures on academic writing only provided students with "a vague and general picture on what a thesis should be composed of" (focus group comment).

This point is supported by the findings displayed in Table 2. The average frequency for the academic writing skills included in previous academic writing courses is only 2.69 (5 = most frequent). For general academic writing skills, designing and writing research methods were least frequently included in previous academic writing courses (proofreading skills were also ranked low). Language problems were introduced less frequently (M = 2.56) than general academic writing skills (M = 2.78), with lexical phrases, academic vocabulary, and style the least frequently taught (M = 2.07 for each).

Furthermore, a significant negative Pearson correlation coefficient (r (50) = -0.51, p = .032) was found between the students' perception of difficulty of academic writing skills and the frequency of these aspects in writing courses; this suggests that the less these skills are taught, the more difficult the students feel they are.

Table 2

The Frequency of Academic Writing Skills Taught in Previous Academic Writing Courses

Items		Mean (frequency)	*SD*
General academic writing skills (*M* = 2.78)	Writing introductions	3.36	1.34
	Searching for appropriate literature using databases and library resources	2.57	1.28
	Referring to sources	2.79	1.12
	Reviewing and critiquing the previous research and creating a research space (gap)	2.93	1.33
	Designing the research methods	2.36	1.39
	Writing the methods section	2.21	1.25
	Summarizing and presenting the data	2.86	1.29
	Commentaries and discussions on the data	2.71	1.14
	Writing references / bibliography	2.93	1.27
	Writing conclusions	3.31	1.25
	Proofreading written assignments	2.50	1.09
Language problems (*M* = 2.56)	Understanding the specific language features of the academic genre (such as writing research paper)	2.50	1.09
	Using appropriate lexical phrases (such as *on the basis of*, *it should be noted that*) freely to build sentences and paragraphs	2.07	1.00
	Summarizing / paraphrasing	2.64	1.08
	Writing coherent paragraphs	2.79	1.05
	Linking sentences smoothly	3.00	1.18
	Using proper "academic" language and vocabulary (style)	2.07	0.92
	Using the proper grammar such as correct tenses, agreements, reporting verbs, and prepositions	2.86	1.17
Overall Mean Score		2.69	0.37

The frequency of other teaching activities in previous academic writing courses also confirmed that language-related activities were rare. Academic grammar and vocabulary drills were the least employed (*M* (freq) = 1.88 and 2.06, respectively). Reading authentic papers was usually not included as a task in the courses (*M* (freq) = 2.20). Generally, teacher-centered lecture was the most frequent teaching method (*M* (freq) = 4.19).

What they want to learn. All survey participants indicated the necessity of taking academic writing courses during their graduate studies. For the focus of the proposed new academic writing course, 58% of them chose "general academic writing skills," and 42% chose "language problems." Students further emphasized in the focus group interview that even though what they need most at present are general writing skills, they were, according to one member, "very unconfident about their use of [academic] language." They noted that it would be more efficient if academic language features were explicitly taught in class rather than learned from model papers.

Students were asked to brainstorm and write the five most important skills they wanted to learn in the new course. The results are presented in Table 3. Four general categories emerged from the answers: thinking, organization, searching for information, and language and vocabulary. Among the 31 respondents, 77% mentioned learning how to write the different sections (e.g., introduction, literature review, discussion). Commenting on and summarizing findings was also identified in particular (58%); this may be because students are "not sure what should be presented and how to organize data after analyzing them." They were never taught such skills, and are thus unsure how "to explore on their own after collecting data" (focus group comments).

Table 3

The Most Important Skills Students Want to Learn in the New Course

Category	Skill	%
Thinking	Critical thinking	32%
	Creating research gap	32%
	Designing research method	45%
Writing and organization	Writing different sections of RA (move / steps)	77%
	Referring to sources	13%
	Commenting and summarizing findings	58%
Searching for information	Finding academic resources, using E-databases	32%
Language	Academic language (style and academic vocabulary)	30%
	Coherence and cohesion	16%
	Chunks and phrases	31%

Preferred teaching activities and materials. Table 4 shows the students' preferences towards possible teaching activities and materials that had been applied in the previous course or that could be used in the new course. Students regarded reading exercises, especially reading authentic research papers, as the most preferable (M = 4.32), as well as other kinds of activities, such as group discussion (M = 3.81) and academic writing exercises (M = 3.75). For teaching materials, students prefer supplementary authentic research papers as models and supplementary handouts slightly more than other materials.

Table 4
Students' Preference Towards Possible Teaching Activities and Materials in the New Course

Items		Mean (preference)	*SD*
Teaching activities	Teacher centered lectures	3.83	1.15
	Student oral presentations	3.55	1.21
	Group discussions on tasks	3.81	1.28
	Academic grammar drills	3.41	1.32
	Academic vocabulary drills	3.38	1.34
	Academic writing exercises	3.75	1.08
	Academic reading exercises (reading text books)	4.00	0.88
	Reading and analyzing authentic research papers	4.32	1.01
Teaching materials	The key text book used in class	2.57	1.16
	Other supplementary hand-outs	3.53	1.11
	Supplementary authentic research papers as models	3.84	1.08
	Supplementary exercises	3.47	1.05

Comparisons to Other Studies

Unlike this study, little information has been found in other empirical studies concerning what students felt about their previous courses and what they want to be taught in new courses. Difficult skills in academic writing have been identified in broad terms such as "writing correct sentences" (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2010, p. 23) and "communicating ideas appropriately, accurately and smoothly" (Evans & Green, 2007, p. 11), while specific wants, such as those presented in the current study as potentially beneficial for EAP course designers, have not been addressed.

Besides identifying the suitable curriculum content of an EAP course and its pedagogy, the sociocultural context in mainland China must be taken into account. Unlike their counterparts in Hong Kong (see Evans & Green, 2007; Hyland, 1997), where there is a long history of ESL-medium education at secondary and tertiary levels, mainland Chinese students have much less exposure to academic genres and language in secondary and tertiary education. This may have resulted in the difference between the findings of this study and the ones obtained in a Hong Kong context, i.e., that mainland Chinese students have problems with basic knowledge about structure and content and more serious linguistic needs. These needs could possibly be fulfilled by EAP genre-based pedagogy (e.g., Swales & Feak, 2004), which addresses the specific move / steps and language features in the research genres and is mostly task-based with rich classroom discussion. This approach also puts strong emphasis on the in-class guided analysis of authentic genre exemplars where students can develop a strategy for independent learning of different genres in academic writing in the future.

Conclusion

From detailed survey and focus group interview data, mainland Chinese students' needs in learning academic writing have been suggested. Besides identifying target needs and difficulties students have in academic writing skills in general, as previous studies carried out in Asian contexts have done, this study specifically looks at students' perceptions and attitudes towards their previous academic writing courses and prospective new courses. The skills students find difficult are those less taught in their previous academic writing courses. Reviewing and critiquing are perceived as the most difficult general academic writing skills, while using proper academic phrases and style are the most difficult language-related problems. In their previous courses, students were not taught how to write each section of a research paper with appropriate moves / steps and were infrequently introduced to academic language features and styles. As a result, in a proposed new course, they would like to receive more help on these aspects. As for how the knowledge should be delivered, they prefer more reading of authentic research papers with group discussions in class.

Considering these results, an EAP genre-based pedagogy could be a possible and promising solution for EFL learners in mainland China or other Asian countries with similar problems in academic writing. To effect such change, teachers and instructors in university English departments in these contexts may need to consider transforming their thinking about academic writing instruction into an EAP- and ESP (English for Special Purposes)-oriented mode. For example, as a first step, they need to gradually replace outdated textbooks and develop new teaching materials that are compatible with the students' linguistic needs.

Finally, there are several limitations to this study. First, the sample size was relatively small as this study was targeted at developing a contextualized approach for teaching academic writing at the target university. Secondly, whether the results of this study can be generalized to university students in China with other majors who have similar needs remains a question to be further investigated. To inform EAP in China, especially across disciplines, the university's College English unit should conduct a more specific and larger-scale needs analysis across disciplines, including both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

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Appendix
Summary of Questionnaire Items

Section I. Your Perceptions on Learning Academic Writing

On a scale of 1 (least important) to 5 (most important), indicate how important you think academic writing skills are in your current studies and future career.

		Least important				Most important
a)	How important do you think academic writing skills are to your current graduate studies?	1	2	3	4	5
b)	How important do you think academic writing is to your future career in the long run?	1	2	3	4	5
c)	How important it is to have your academic work published during your graduate study?	1	2	3	4	5

Are you interested in academic writing at heart? Please choose from 1—not interested to 5—very interested.

1 2 3 4 5

Which one(s) of the following text types do you think should be of priority to be taught in an academic writing class? Please check in the box. You can check more than one answer.

- □ Writing research papers / reports
- □ Writing research proposal
- □ Writing short summaries
- □ Writing thesis
- □ Writing general argumentative essays
- □ Writing review articles
- □ Writing critiques
- □ Writing case studies

Section II. Your Perceptions on Academic Writing Skills

On a scale of 1 to 5, indicate how easy or how difficult you think the following skills are.

	Very Easy				Very Difficult
General writing skills					
a) Writing introductions	1	2	3	4	5
b) Searching for appropriate literature using databases and library resources	1	2	3	4	5
c) Referring to sources	1	2	3	4	5
d) Reviewing and critiquing the previous research and creating a research space (gap)	1	2	3	4	5
e) Designing the research methods	1	2	3	4	5
f) Writing up the methods section	1	2	3	4	5
g) Summarizing and presenting the data	1	2	3	4	5
h) Commentaries and discussions on the data	1	2	3	4	5
i) Writing references / bibliography	1	2	3	4	5
j) Writing conclusions	1	2	3	4	5
k) Proof-reading written assignments	1	2	3	4	5
Language problems					
a) Understanding the specific language features of the academic genre (such as research paper)	1	2	3	4	5
b) Using appropriate lexical phrases (such as on the basis of, it should be noted that) freely to build up the sentences and paragraphs	1	2	3	4	5
c) Summarizing / paraphrasing	1	2	3	4	5
d) Writing coherent paragraphs	1	2	3	4	5
e) Linking sentences smoothly	1	2	3	4	5
f) Using proper academic language and vocabulary (style)	1	2	3	4	5
g) Using the proper grammar such as correct tenses, agreements, reporting verbs, and prepositions	1	2	3	4	5
h) Please specify other academic writing skills and mark the difficulty, if any:	1	2	3	4	5

Section III. The Previous and Future Academic Writing Courses

The Previous Academic Writing Course

Is there any academic writing (or thesis / research paper writing) course offered at your university for graduate students?

□ Yes □ No

Have you taken any academic writing (or thesis writing) course during your undergraduate studies?

□ Yes, the name of the course is ___________

□ No (Please skip Questions 7-9 and answer Questions 10 and 11)

Are you satisfied with the previous academic writing course generally?

□ It was perfect

□ Generally satisfied

□ Just so so

□ Not satisfied at all

Have you learned the things that you need to learn most in your previous academic writing course?

□ Yes, I have learned a lot and they are still useful now.

□ I have learned something useful.

□ The course was generally OK, but it did not teach me the things that I want to learn most.

□ The course was organized very poorly and I learned nothing useful.

Which academic writing skills were taught in your previous academic writing course?

	Very Easy				Very Difficult
General writing skills					
a) Writing introductions	1	2	3	4	5
b) Searching for appropriate literature using databases and library resources	1	2	3	4	5
c) Referring to sources	1	2	3	4	5
d) Reviewing and critiquing the previous research and creating a research space (gap)	1	2	3	4	5
e) Designing the research methods	1	2	3	4	5
f) Writing up the methods section	1	2	3	4	5
g) Summarizing and presenting the data	1	2	3	4	5
h) Commentaries and discussions on the data	1	2	3	4	5
i) Writing references / bibliography	1	2	3	4	5
j) Writing conclusions	1	2	3	4	5
k) Proof-reading written assignments	1	2	3	4	5
Language problems					
a) Understanding the specific language features of the academic genre (such as research paper)	1	2	3	4	5
b) Using appropriate lexical phrases (such as on the basis of, it should be noted that) freely to build up the sentences and paragraphs	1	2	3	4	5
c) Summarizing / paraphrasing	1	2	3	4	5
d) Writing coherent paragraphs	1	2	3	4	5
e) Linking sentences smoothly	1	2	3	4	5
f) Using proper academic language and vocabulary (style)	1	2	3	4	5
g) Using the proper grammar such as correct tenses, agreements, reporting verbs, and prepositions	1	2	3	4	5
h) Please specify other academic writing skills and mark the difficulty, if any:	1	2	3	4	5

What types of teaching activities took place in your previous academic writing class? Please also indicate your preference of these activities if they were to be provided in a new course by checking in the box (from 1, least preferable, to 5, most preferable). If you have not taken an academic writing course before, please indicate your preference only.

	Least preferable				Most preferable
The key textbook used in class	1	2	3	4	5
Other supplementary handouts	1	2	3	4	5
Supplementary authentic research papers as models	1	2	3	4	5
Supplementary exercises	1	2	3	4	5
Others (please specify ________ and check for preference)	1	2	3	4	5

	Least frequent				Most frequent	Preference
Teacher-centered lectures	1	2	3	4	5	□
Student oral presentations	1	2	3	4	5	□
Group discussions on tasks	1	2	3	4	5	□
Academic grammar drills	1	2	3	4	5	□
Academic vocabulary drills	1	2	3	4	5	□
Academic writing exercises	1	2	3	4	5	□
Academic reading exercises (reading textbooks)	1	2	3	4	5	□
Reading and analyzing authentic research papers	1	2	3	4	5	□
Others (please specify ________ and check for preference)	1	2	3	4	5	□

How did you like the teaching materials in your previous writing course? For those who have not taken a course before, you can still check for your preference if they were provided in a new course.
□ Reading textbooks
□ Writing one complete essay / research paper / proposal as term paper
□ Writing parts of an essay / research paper
□ Reading other materials, such as research papers
□ Other (please specify):

What kind(s) of after-class assignments did you have in your previous academic writing class? You can check for more than one answer. If you have not taken an academic writing course, please skip this question.
□ Reading textbooks
□ Writing one complete essay / research paper / proposal as term paper
□ Writing parts of an essay / research paper
□ Reading other materials, such as research papers
□ Other (please specify):

The Future Academic Writing Course

Do you think it is necessary for you to take an English academic writing course (specifically research paper writing) in your graduate studies? □ Yes □ No

What do you think the focus of the academic writing course should be more on?
□ General writing skills □ Language problems

If a new academic writing course is offered, please write down the most important five skills that you want to learn in the new course:
1. __________ 2. __________ 3. __________ 4. __________ 5. __________

Personal Information
Age __________ Gender __________

The name of the institution where you did your undergraduate studies
____

Have you ever been to English speaking countries? □ Yes □ No
If yes, for how long? __________

Integrating Social Awareness Through Reading and Writing: A Classroom Action Research[7]

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As part of professional and course development, a 16-week action research project was carried out in one academic writing class at a university in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Twenty-four students participated in this research. Students were initially introduced to a structure of a summary-response genre, and were encouraged to read a local newspaper, The Cambodia Daily, every weekday. Each week, students were required to submit one journal entry, in which they summarized one piece of news of their interest and responded to it. At the end of the 16 weeks, analysis of the contents of students' writing showed increase in their social awareness reflected in the sources of news they read and improvement in their ability to give critical responses to news they read. Implications for the use of journal and genre approach are discussed at the end of this paper.

The English Department of the University of Foreign Languages (a pseudonym referred to hereafter as ED-UFL) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia offers 4-year bachelor's degree programs in teaching English as a foreign language, English for translation and interpreting, and English for professional communication. These programs require eight semesters to complete. To enter the programs, students are required to successfully complete high school and pass the entrance examination, which puts their English proficiency at an intermediate level. They start their first year with foundation classes both in English and Khmer. For their second and third years, they take four classes all in English: Core English, Literature, Global Studies, and Writing Skills (with Research Methodology classes added to the second semester of their third year). In Year 4, their subjects vary depending on their major.

This action research project arises from issues identified in one of the writing classes at the ED-UFL. The concern that students' lack of reading hinders their writing proficiency and their ability to think

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critically on issues surrounding them is also shared in monthly meetings at the department.

Literature Review

Reading-Writing Relationship

Fitzgerald and Shanahan (2000) discussed reasons for the segregation between reading and writing in American education. However, they pointed out the important shared knowledge that both readers and writers used, including metaknowledge, domain knowledge about substance and content, knowledge about universal text attributes, and procedural knowledge and skill to negotiate reading and writing. They suggested that educators should consider the critical shared thinking underlying both reading and writing rather than focusing on these skills separately. Consequently, analyzing the thought processes involved in reading a text may be beneficial for understanding how the text is constructed.

In L2 (second language) writing development, reading either in L1 (first language) or L2 has played an increasingly important role. Grabe (2003) recognized this importance, especially with the increasing need to prepare students to deal with academic tasks, which usually combine reading and writing. Tabatabaei and Ali (2012) examined the effects of different types of reading tasks on the writing performance of pre- and post-intermediate EFL learners in a university in Iran. Although the study did not employ an experimental design, the pre- and post-test results showed statistically significant improvement in students' writing performance. This seemed to suggest the effectiveness of using different reading tasks (comparison / contrast, description, cause / effect, and problem / solution) to improve writing performance.

Genre Approach to Writing Instruction

Genre is a social and cognitive concept that helps group texts according to their shared linguistic and discourse features. According to Hyland, "members of a community usually have little difficulty in recognizing similarities in the texts they use frequently and are able to draw on their repeated experiences with such texts to read, understand and perhaps write them relatively easily" (2008, p. 544). For instance, readers may know immediately if a text is a manual, a love letter, or a newspaper article because of its linguistic and discourse features. Myskow and Gordon (2010) illustrated how a university application letter genre was taught in an EFL (English as a foreign language) high school writing course. Parts of the teaching included getting students to build contextual knowledge of the genre, such as the possible audience and purpose of the letter, and to analyze for the linguistic and organizational features of the model letters, which they identified as following these rhetorical moves: introduction, dreams / goals, experiences, academic accomplishments, reasons for applying, contributions, and conclusion.

Hyland (2008) believed that this approach is suitable for academic writing classes in many contexts because it illuminates how language use is constrained by social contexts. The benefits of this approach to teaching writing have also been confirmed by a number of studies (see Johns, 2003; Yasuda, 2011).

Journal Writing

Dialogue and reflective journals provide spaces for students to reflect on their learning and thinking processes and to communicate these reflections with their instructors. As Ferris (2003, p. 126) has stated, "student journal entries are typically designed to build students' fluency and reflective thinking abilities and are almost never revised by students; feedback or correction on these is not likely to have much effect on student writing."

To promote students' writing and literacy skills, many ESL (English as a second language) teachers have made quite effective use of journal writing in their classrooms. Kim (2005) used dialogue journal writing in his adult ESL class to promote a sense of community and engage adult ESL learners in authentic and meaningful learning. Holmes and Moulton (1997), in their multiple case studies on students' perceptions of the use of dialogue journals, reported students' positive reactions to the use of dialogue journals as a learning strategy and on the students' improved fluency and motivation in writing, which they attributed to the use of dialogue journals. Dialogue and reflective journals have also been used as an effective data collection technique in classroom research, such as in Harris (2008) and Fazio (2001).

Voice in Written Text

Voice is an important concept in reading and writing pedagogy. Elbow (2007) discussed two conflicting perspectives on this concept. On the one hand, it is seen as an important dimension of text and deserves more attention because the writer's self and rhetorical power are represented by his / her voice in the text. On the other hand, it is considered to be a misleading metaphor and does not deserve much focus since the voice that is believed to be one's own is actually greatly influenced by one's history and culture. Elbow also distinguished between *text* and *voice*:

> "text" stands for words on page and "voice" for the spoken medium of language. Thus, the text lens highlights the visual and spatial features of language as print . . . ; the voice lens highlights language as sounded, heard, and existing in time. The text lens foregrounds language as an abstract system (Saussure's *langue*) in which words have the same meaning whoever utters them in whatever context – words as interchangeable and not attached to persons; the voice lens highlights how language issues from individual persons and physical bodies and how the same words differ, depending on who says them and how. (2007, p. 175)

He subsequently pointed out the common ground of these two conflicting perspectives, concluding that students need to be more empowered in the classroom. In an effort to promote student empowerment, Lovejoy (2009) encouraged students' voice through self-directed writing in his writing class; he created opportunities for students to write on topics of their interest using their own natural voice in different genres. Students' testimonials showed their positive attitudes and confidence as writers through discovery of their own voices. Drawing from Elbow's two important aspects of written discourse, text and voice, Luce-Kapler, Catlin, Sumara, and Kocher (2011) also illustrated how different writing practices can be designed to raise students' awareness in writing.

Research Questions

This action research hypothesized that utilizing the local newspaper (*The Cambodia Daily*) in the classroom, training students in a summary-response genre, and providing them with opportunities to voice themselves through a dialogue journal could encourage students to expand their knowledge of their society and write more critically about it. This research was guided by the following questions:

RQ 1: Do the utilization of a local newspaper, the training of students in a summary-response genre, and journal writing in a writing class expand students' knowledge of their society?

RQ 2: Do the utilization of a local newspaper, the training of students in a summary-response genre, and creating opportunities for them to express their voices through journal writing in a writing class increase their critical ability in writing as reflected in their responses to news in their journal entries?

Methodology

This study employs action research design, which according to Nunan (1992) is becoming popular in language education. It is usually carried out by practitioners (language teachers), and its aim is to understand or solve a specific problem. This action research identified the lack of student social awareness and critical thinking as a concern shared among instructors at the ED-UFL. Although English is a foreign language in Cambodia, it is used as a medium of instruction in almost every course at the ED-UFL. This study was guided by Koshy's (2005, p. 38) framework for action research, which includes the following steps:

- Identifying a topic and setting the context
- Reviewing and analyzing the literature
- Focusing on a topic and formulating a research question or hypothesis
- Planning activities
- Implementing and acting
- Gathering and analyzing data
- Analyzing the data further
- Reflecting on outcomes and generating evidence
- Reporting findings

This action research project was conducted in the September-to-December semester in 2012 in a writing class at the ED-UFL with 24 Cambodian students in their late teens and early twenties. This was a 16-week long semester, and classes met for 90 minutes every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. After the introduction to their writing class in the first meeting, the students were trained in identifying voices in text and the organizational and linguistic features of a summary-response genre in the second and third class meetings.

A Summary-Response Genre

This genre consists of elements of both summaries and responses, which are important for writing at college and university levels. Summaries require comprehension of the reading material and a concise explanation of its main ideas. Responses involve expression of opinion, analysis, and expansion of ideas. A good example of a summary-response genre would be a letter to the editor or an opinion page in a newspaper, in which the authors summarize articles in the previous issues and respond to them. The summary-response genre was selected as part of the intervention in this action research because of its importance in academic essay examinations and papers (Meyers, 2005) and its real-life application.

Two Intervening Lessons

In the first lesson, students were given a copy of a local newspaper article from *The Cambodia Daily* to read. While reading, they were required to underline all the direct and indirect speech examples in the article. After reading, they worked in small groups to compare their underlined parts and to discuss whose voices were represented there (some of the voices included those of the government, NGOs [nongovernmental organizations], social groups, an individual, or the author). The teacher led class discussion asking guided questions such as: "Whose voices are represented in the article?" "Considering the issue reported in the article, is there any voice that has not been represented in it?" and "Is the report biased? And why?" This lesson draws from the concept of voice in Elbow (2007), Lovejoy (2009), and Luce-Kapler et al. (2011), but students did not begin to use their voice until they had analyzed the newspaper text first to see how the author represented different voices in it. To conclude the first lesson, the teacher introduced students to the summary-response genre by drawing their attention to the opinion page of *The Cambodia Daily* and briefly explaining that people can write a letter to the editor expressing themselves on issues they read in the paper and may even have it published on this page.

In the second lesson, the teacher gave students a copy of a letter to the editor from the opinion page of *The Cambodia Daily*. After the article was read, the teacher told the students that this was a typical summary-response text and got them to identify which part was a summary and which a response. This lesson is based on the genre approach to writing informed by Hyland (2008), Johns (2003), Myskow and Gordon (2010), and Yasuda (2011). In small groups, students discussed what characterizes a summary and a response in terms of purpose, organization, and word and grammatical choices. On the whiteboard, the teacher drew two separate columns, Summary and Response, and invited each group to fill in each column. The teacher asked eliciting questions such as "What is the author summarizing?" "What are some words or phrases used to make reference in the text?" "Is there any reporting verb?" "What is the purpose of the response?" How does the author organize his / her response?" and "What are some words or phrases used to express opinion?" At the end of the second lesson, the teacher reminded students about journal writing and encouraged them to read news articles and write a summary-response text for their entries.

Data Collection and Analysis

To keep track of their reading and writing, students wrote one journal entry every week on topics of their choice; these were submitted every two weeks. They were encouraged to read *The Cambodia Daily*, which they could borrow to read at home, and to use the summary-response genre for their journal entries. They were required to submit a total of 12 entries starting from Week 3, and these entries were used as data to look at the development of their reading and writing.

Data for this project were analyzed using NVivo software, which is known for its power in organizing and managing qualitative data. For anonymity purposes, all students were identified as F (female) 1, F2, etc., or as M (male) 1, M2, etc., in the data. Only their Journal Entries 3 to 9 were selected for analysis because at the beginning and towards the end of the semester more administrative work, such as registration, orientation, course evaluation, tests, and semester exam preparation, was performed. Thus, Entries 3 to 9 better reflected students' work. All journal entries were organized and coded using NVivo 10, and three important codes were examined: the sources of information, the issues discussed, and the level of elaboration in the summary-response genre.

Results

Research Question 1

An analysis was conducted of the sources of news the students read and responded to and the issues they discussed in their responses. Although *The Cambodia Daily* is a recommended source, students referred to many other Internet and broadcast sources, including Dem Ampil News (DAP), Cambodia Express News, Yahoo, CNN, the Associated Press, Channel News Asia, and the BBC. Students read the news articles both in Khmer and in English. Students' expanding knowledge of society is probably best expressed in their expanding sources of information as they progressed from Journal Entry 3 to 9, and this is illustrated in the model in Figure 1.

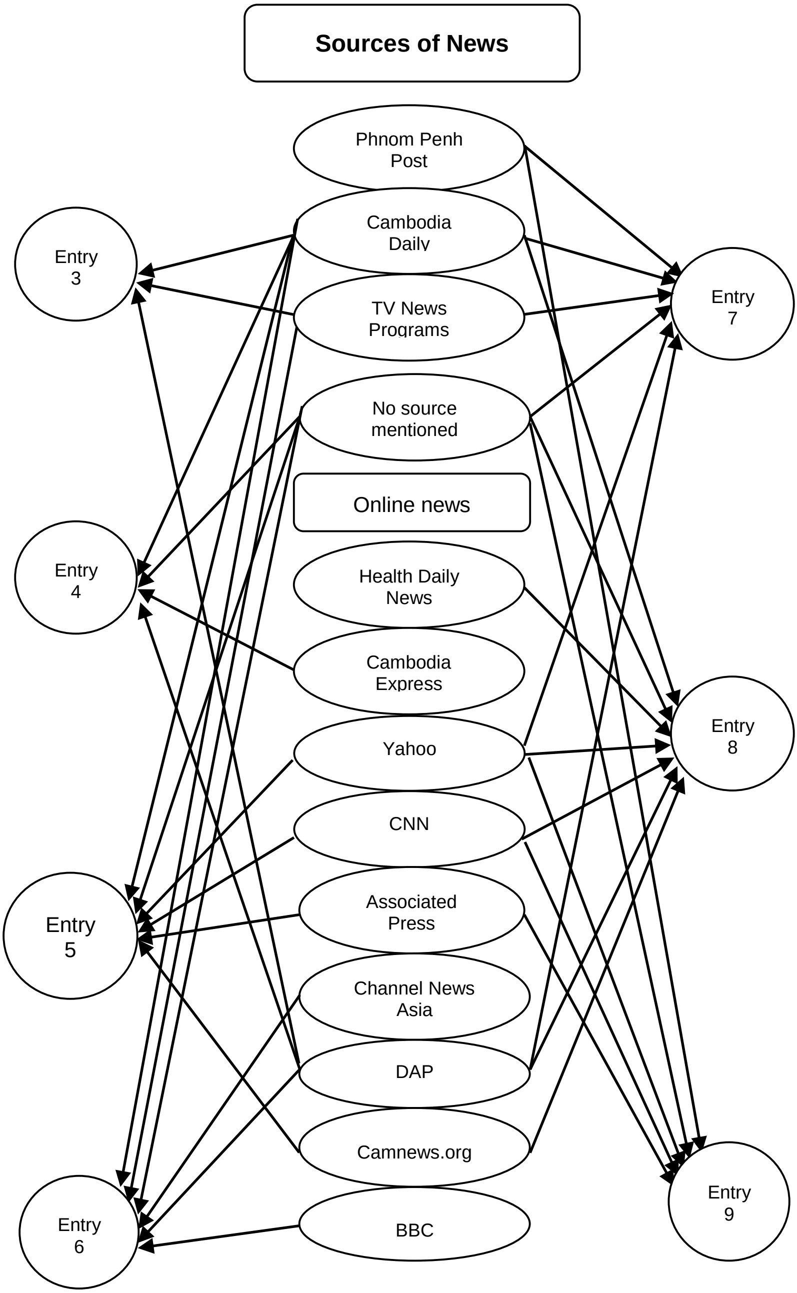

Figure 1. Sources of information from Journal Entries 3 to 9.

According to Figure 1, Entries 3 and 4 draw on news from only three to four sources, including *The Cambodia Daily* and DAP; but from Entries 5 to 9 the students started reading news from five to seven sources, including Yahoo, CNN, the Associated Press, Channel News Asia, and the BBC.

Students' increasing knowledge of society is also reflected in the choices of issues they discussed in their journal entries. Most of the issues are controversial and real-life happenings around them, including land disputes, traffic accidents, Cambodians migrating to work in the neighboring countries, the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, and domestic violence. The following two entries illustrate how students discuss some of these issues (for the purpose of this illustration, an example from Journal Entry 10 is also used):

> **Abroad Maids**
>
> Prime Minister Hun Sen personally ordered an immediate ban on sending Cambodian maids to Malaysia. But only two days after, the ministry of labor offered job recruitment agencies as exemption allowing them to continue to send thousands of registered recruit abroad. A secretary of ACRA, Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agencies said he allows who are under training and registered. New recruitment is not allowed any more. He added that, this allowed his company to recover the costs it had incurred for training, transport and travel documents or recruits which were at least $500, $600 per recruit. However, if this company keep on doing this, it seem like they act against the Prime Minister's order. A suspension is a suspension. It should not have an exemption to allow the sending of maids to continue. The total of trainees is about id [*sic*] about 7,000 which is a large number. So continuing sending is continuing those trainees to become new generation victims since there are a lot of examples in the past of this problem.
>
> (F5 Journal Entry 9)

Overdue Trials?

> In another one of Cambodia Daily issue today, one article was about the Khmer Rouge leader, brother "number two", Nuon Chea, who's being trialed alongside his other colleagues. In the article he talks about his side of the story of the Khmer Rouge. In short, he protested that their plan was the liberate the country from foreign influence and that the massacre was not their intention but ploys of their enemies, (The Lon Nol government, the Americans and the Vietnamese). In my opinions, these trials have long since passed their due date two decades ago. The ringleaders of the regime, including Mr Nuon Chea, had already lived their lives and are now old men just waiting for their deathbed. In just a few years, all of them would probably just died of old age. Then all these late overdue trials are just pointless in the end. Justice should've been dealt upon them as soon as they were caught. They should have all been given capital punishments for their crimes again humanity and their own countrymen. These people are responsible for approximately two millions deaths during their regime which they started and ran. Hatred for them burns for every living Cambodian who experienced their death-era. Yet when everybody were killed and starved in those four years, these men get to live out their lives for over thirty years and a decisive judgment for them hasn't even been given yet.
>
> (M3 Journal Entry 10)

Data showing the increasing sources of information students referred to and the choices of issues they discussed in their journal entries suggest that they were expanding their knowledge and awareness of their surrounding environment. Moreover, this was not actually limited to what was happening in Cambodia; some entries discussed more international issues such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), globalization, natural disasters, and social networking.

Research Question 2

An analysis was conducted of students' journal entries to observe their level of elaboration in their responses to the news summary. Each journal entry was coded at one of three levels. Level A contained only a summary of the news students read with no response to it. Level B consisted of a summary and a response, but the response was limited to one sentence only. Level C also had a summary and a response, which was more elaborate and at a paragraph length or longer. An example of each level follows, with the response part (in Levels B and C) in italics:

Level A

iPhone Battery Issues

Based on CNN news website updated on 10pm, Apple has fixed iOS5 on the battery performance by releasing iOS5.0.1 after admitted that iOS5 had battery issues. Few weeks ago Apple has released iphone 4S and got many complaints about the fast draining out of battery performance. In the mean time, iOS5 which has useful and new improvements on iphone, ipad and ipod, was also released, iOS5 users face with those issues as well. Noticeable what special in iOS5 is iCloud. After checking the performance of iOS5, iOS5.0.1 is released to fix the bug that keep iphone, ipad and ipod processing. However, now Apple is trying to figure out the problem if it still exists.

(F15 Journal Entry 8)

Level B

The Oil Price

On March 21, 2012, the BBC news report stated that the oil price of the world is now increasing to a very high level. In that morning the oil price trading for Brent crude was up to $124.43 per barrel and New York light was $106.57 per barrel. It continued that this matter was caused by the trouble in the Middle East and North America and the Iran sanction recently. It was a very big concern for all the country in the world that it will cause all the expenses and the cost of the products will highly increase that may lead too economics obstacle to the world. This main threat has made the oil minister of Saudi Arabia, Ali al-Naimi, said that the country will boost their output to about 3 million barrel more if needed. *Hence, even though it is a choice that makes us feel a bit relief, we should still worry about it and try to find some other ways that may better lift up the world economics out of this trouble.*

(F10 Journal Entry 6)

Level C

Rice Wine Poisoning Hits People to Death and Serious Injuries

Recently I have heard lots about rice wine poisoning in few provinces in Cambodia such as Kampong Thom, Pursat and Kratie. Minority of the victims died while the majority of them are being hospitalized. *This news clearly indicates all kinds of alcohol especially the poor quality ones are bad for our health. If you are consuming alcohol, means you are taking high risk already. Wasting money, affecting health, causing death, and losing family and personal honor are the disadvantages alcohols leave for abusers. Thus, to promote harmony life and peaceful society, Cambodia should do away with all kinds of alcohols as well as those addictive drugs. Government should strictly enforce the law about sale and consumptions. Regular checking the quality of alcohol and the due date and limiting the legal age for buying alcohol help bring the government policies to efficiency and effectiveness about this issue. Furthermore, to make sure that everyone all over the country is aware of this, media is the best way to bring this news—laws and disadvantages of alcohol to them in a convenient and fast way.*

(F8 Journal Entry 5)

Changes in the level of elaboration in students' responses to the news they read were reflected in their seven entries as shown in Table 1:

Table 1

Elaboration Level of Responses From Entries 3 to 9

Entry	A: No elaboration (News summary only)	B: Sentence elaboration	C: Paragraph elaboration
3	0	3	2
4	0	1	6
5	0	1	9
6	0	2	8
7	0	0	9
8	1	0	8
9	0	0	7

According to Table 1, the number of responses at Level C rose significantly from Journal Entries 3 to 5 and remained high through

Entry 9. Because the summary-response genre was not required and only recommended for students in writing their journal entries, not all of them used the genre, but when they did, they tended to be more elaborate in their responses. What is satisfying is not only the increase in their responses and elaboration, but also the quality of their responses, as seen in the following extract:

The Approval of Sending Maids to Malaysia

> 3000 women are planning to departure to work as maids in Malaysia, although there was a speech about the banning made by Prime Minister Hun Sen, for there is the high risk of being abused and exploitation on workers in this country, <u>according to</u> Cambodia Daily volume 50 issue 4. Labor Minister, Mr. Vong Sauth, who has approved this loophole of sending workers to Malaysia, <u>defended</u> his position by saying that what Prime Minister <u>said</u> about the banning applied only to new recruitment activities but not for the one that have already signed the contact with the agency. *However, <u>I will not satisfy with these reasons</u> that the banning is valid only to the new recruitment, for the prohibition of this is created <u>because the government considers about the high risk of workers being badly treated in Malaysia</u>, so why those 3000 women are still sent to Malaysia when we know they might face abusing from their employers? Moreover, in my understanding about Prime Minister Hun Sen speech, he did not say this focusing only to new or old recruitment but to the whole. <u>His commend is to suspend all activities involving in the sending of workers to Malaysia</u>, so the sending should not carry on. Additionally, <u>the job as a maid itself is very vulnerable which workers are easy targets for abusing and exploitation since no one they can turn on when they have problem</u>. They work in a house where owner can easily cut their communication from the outsider and abuse them. Overall, I do not accept the idea of sending women to Malaysia to work as maids, but it will be better if the agencies are able to alter the work from being a maid to the work in the factories.*
>
> (M2 Journal Entry 5)

Student M2 wrote about the issue of sending Cambodian women to work in Malaysia as housemaids in his Journal Entry 5. Although there are some minor errors in writing, he has shown good understanding of the important conventions in a summary-response genre, which are underlined above. These include the use of reference words or phrases, the use of past tense of the reporting verbs in the summary, stating one's position on the issue, and supporting it with reasons. This is typical of an elaboration at Level C.

Limitations of the Study

In this action research, the utilization of a local newspaper, the training of students in summary-response genre, and the use of journal writing for students to express their voices were designed to address the problem of the students' lack of reading and critical thinking. The results seem to have shown the effectiveness of these interventions; however, any attempt to make generalizations beyond the scope of this study will require an experimental design in which a control group is used. Therefore, caution is needed in the examination of the causal relation between the treatment here and students' knowledge of society and critical thinking. Moreover, a large number of entries were coded as non-summary-response genre and were excluded from the analysis. These writings are in essay format and could be rich in students' opinions in social issues, but inclusion of these entries in the analysis might have slightly skewed the results.

Discussions and Implications

From the results of this study, it is important to recognize the value of a news-summary-response genre especially in a composition class. Not only can it enable students to be aware of the important conventions of the genre, but it also has the potential for promoting social justice. First, students get to read about something that is happening around them in real life. For instance, in this study, they read about and reacted to important social issues in Cambodia, such as land disputes, traffic accidents, migration of Cambodian workers to their neighboring countries, the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, and domestic violence. These are controversial and ongoing issues in current Cambodian society. In addition to reading, the students also have a chance to react to the issues through writing. Some of the reactions in this study include identification of potential exploitations of the poor, critiques on the government's policies and measures, and solutions to social problems. As they read and react to news around them, the students become more analytical and critical of their surroundings. This skill is very important for any active citizen in a democratic society.

This study also illustrates that using a journal in the composition class provides students with opportunities to practice writing and also a space for them to express themselves in an anxiety-free environment. Students may be more motivated because they choose to write on their own topic without worrying about making errors, especially in their foreign language. Another reason for this motivation is the connection of their reactions to real-life problems in the news they read; this is also empowering since this journal closely represents the opinion page of a newspaper, where issues discussed are directly of writers' concerns.

Although this study examined the impacts of the use of journal writing, it did not include the instructor's responses as data because they were random and limited. Therefore, future research may include the examination of the roles of these responses on students' motivation and their actual writing.

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The Relationships Among Writing Self-Efficacy, Writing Goal Orientation, and Writing Achievement

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This study examined writing self-efficacy, writing goal orientation, and writing achievement among (*N* = 244) Cambodian university students studying English as a foreign language. Most studies of the relationships among these motivational constructs have been conducted in western contexts, and the findings of those studies might not be generalizable to Asian students. The study first examined whether writing self-efficacy and writing goal orientation were structured similarly by Cambodian students and western students. Factor analyses and Cronbach's alpha provided evidence of the unidimensionality of writing self-efficacy and of a tripartite structure for writing goal orientation. Second, the study investigated the relationships between writing self-efficacy, writing goal orientation, and writing achievement. Pearson Product-Moment Correlations showed that writing self-efficacy was related to writing mastery and performance-avoidance goal orientations. All writing goal orientation measures were related positively. Both writing self-efficacy and writing mastery goal orientation were shown to have positive correlations with writing achievement.

Self-efficacy is among the most notable motivational constructs educational psychologists have been examining (Lane, Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004; Pajares & Valiante, 1999; Shell, Colvin, & Bruning, 1995). Recently, researchers have investigated how self-efficacy is related to goal orientation, another notable motivational construct (Liem, Lau, & Nie, 2007; Phan, 2009, 2010). Most research on these constructs has been conducted in western and / or developed countries.

https://doi.org/10.5746/LEiA/14/V5/I2/A07/Chea_Shumow

This study was conducted in a developing nation, Cambodia. Participants were university students studying English as a foreign language (EFL); few studies regarding the concepts of self-efficacy and goal orientation have been conducted in this context.

This study had two main purposes. The first was to investigate whether writing self-efficacy and writing goal orientation were structured similarly by Cambodian EFL students and the more widely-studied western students. The second purpose was to test the relationship among writing self-efficacy, writing goal orientation, and writing achievement to ascertain whether the relationships found in western contexts are also observed among Cambodian students.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1997, p. 2). The current study examined self-efficacy in the specific subject of writing; thus, writing self-efficacy is defined as students' ability to perform in writing tasks, and specifically in the context of this study, students' ability to write paragraphs in English. Bandura posited that self-efficacy affects a person's behavior, which further causes him / her to achieve a particular outcome. Self-efficacy affects behavior such that a person with high self-efficacy tends to expend considerable effort when performing tasks and perseveres despite difficulty, thereby achieving good results. On the other hand, according to Bandura (1997), a person with low self-efficacy tends to expend less effort and give up easily when facing difficulty, and consequently achieves less. Self-efficacy also influences the activities an individual chooses to do. A person who believes in his / her ability will choose to do challenging tasks, while a person who doubts his / her ability will avoid situations which seem to exceed his / her ability.

Bandura (1977) also stressed that any study of efficacy should take into account three main dimensions: magnitude, generality, and strength. According to Bandura, magnitude means the difficulty and complexity of the task, generality refers to whether the task is associated with a general or specific sense of efficacy, and strength simply means how weak or strong a person's efficacy is. In his subsequent work, Bandura (1986) posited that students' self-efficacy explained the effect of other factors of academic achievement (i.e., skill or past performance) on later performance / achievement. The current study follows Bandura's advice on the measurement of self-efficacy construct. Therefore, students' writing efficacy was measured using an efficacy measure (which can be seen in Appendix A) that specifically deals with students' ability to write English paragraphs, rather than a general self-efficacy measure.

Goal Orientation

Goal orientation also has been used to frame studies of academic motivation and achievement. Pintrich (2003) described goal orientation as the reason behind students' achievement behavior. Initially, researchers distinguished between learning and performance-goal orientation (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Nicholls (1984) used the term *task-involved* in place of learning and *ego-involved* in place of performance, whereas Ames and Archer (1988) used the terms *mastery* and *performance goals*. While there are minor differences in these terms, there is enough similarity among them that they can be conceptualized as the same characteristics (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008). Recently, researchers have further divided performance-goal orientation into performance-approach and performance-avoidance subcategories and have examined the individual influence of each in various studies. Although some researchers also have posited a mastery-avoidance orientation, that construct has not been widely accepted.

In this study, the trichotomous structure of goal orientation (which consists of mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goals) is used. Students who are high in mastery goal orientation seek to gain understanding and competence in their learning and thus are willing to undertake challenging tasks in order to learn more (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Students who are high in performance-approach goal orientation seek to show off their competence or ability, and hence focus on gaining good grades and outperforming their classmates. Students with a performance-approach orientation are more likely to avoid challenging tasks than those with mastery goal orientation, because they do not want to risk coming behind in competitions. As a result, performance-approach-oriented students have lower persistence in the face of difficulty (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Students high in performance-avoidance goal orientation seek to avoid appearing incompetent in front of others (Elliot, 1999), avoid tasks which they perceive as challenging, and tend to lose confidence and give up when confronting challenging tasks.

Both mastery- and performance-approach-oriented students are expected to study hard and gain similar achievement in tasks that do not require much effort; however, students with a mastery goal orientation might perform better than those with performance-approach goal orientation in challenging and complicated tasks such as writing, which is the focus of this study. Students who are high in performance-avoidance goal orientation are not expected to perform well in a challenging subject such as writing.

Self-Efficacy, Goal Orientation, and Achievement

Self-efficacy and academic achievement. Bandura (2006) argued that self-efficacy measures should be specific to the subject area studied. In one study, Choi (2005) found that only specific self-efficacy (but not general or academic self-efficacy) predicted the academic achievement of college students in the United States. Other researchers have studied the effect of self-efficacy in specific subject areas such as mathematics at different academic levels. For example, Meece, Wigfield, and Eccles (1990) found that seventh and ninth grade students' general mathematics self-efficacy significantly predicted their mathematics achievement. Studying a similar sample using a task-specific self-efficacy measure, Pajares and Graham (1999) found the same result. The significant influence of mathematics self-efficacy on mathematics achievement is also reported in studies at the university level (Cooper & Robinson, 1991; Hackett & Betz, 1989; Pajares & Miller, 1995).

Writing self-efficacy has been reported as a significant predictor of writing achievement of students at different academic levels. Shell, Murphy, and Bruning (1989) constructed a writing self-efficacy scale which measured students' skills in different writing tasks (e g., writing a letter and writing an essay) and students' skills in writing components (e.g., spelling and parts of speech). They found that writing self-efficacy significantly predicted writing achievement as measured by students' holistically scored essays. They then adapted the writing self-efficacy scale to study the fourth, seventh, and tenth graders and found that students' writing self-efficacy predicted their reading and writing achievement operationalized as mechanical skill and essay writing (Shell et al., 1995). Similar findings have been reported in other studies of writing self-efficacy and writing achievement (McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985; Pajares & Johnson, 1996; Pajares & Valiante, 1997, 1999). Given the positive impact that writing self-efficacy has on writing achievement stated in the literature, this study used a self-efficacy scale that specifically measures students' confidence in their ability to write English paragraphs (see items in Appendix A).

Self-efficacy and goal orientation. Research has produced consistent results regarding the positive relationship between self-efficacy and mastery goal orientation (Elliot & Church, 1997; Liem et al., 2007; Phan, 2010). However, there have been inconsistent findings regarding the relationship between self-efficacy and performance-approach goal orientation. Some studies showed that self-efficacy had a significant positive relationship with performance-approach goal orientation (e.g., Greene & Miller, 1996), while some others reported a nonsignificant relationship between the two variables (Elliot & Church, 1997; Liem et al., 2007; Phan, 2010; Skaalvik, 1997; Wolters, 2004).

Similarly, studies on the relationship of self-efficacy with performance-avoidance goal orientation have found either a null (Hsieh, Sullivan, & Guerra, 2007; Phan, 2010) or a negative relationship between self-efficacy and performance-avoidance goal orientation (Liem et al., 2007).

Goal orientation and academic achievement. Although Dweck and Leggett (1988) posited that goal orientation led students to choose adaptive or maladaptive learning behaviors, thus influencing their academic achievement, subsequent research has produced inconclusive results on the relationship between goal orientation and academic achievement. Some studies showed mastery goal orientation has a positive relationship with academic achievement (Sins, van Joolingen, Savelsbergh, & van Hout-Wolters, 2008), while others show a null relationship (Liem et al., 2007; Phan, 2010). Similarly, studies on the relationship between performance-approach goal orientation and achievement reported either a positive relationship (Church, Elliot, & Gable, 2001; Senko & Miles, 2008; Wolters, 2004) or a null relation (Dupeyrat & Mariné, 2005; Phan, 2010) between these variables. Other studies have found either a negative association (Simons, Dewitte, & Lens, 2004) or a null relation (Phan, 2010; Senko & Miles, 2008) between performance-avoidance goal orientation and achievement.

Although so far there has been considerable research on self-efficacy and its relation to goal orientation and academic achievement, as revealed in the review of the literature, most of the studies were conducted using measures of general self-efficacy and goal orientation. A few studies focused on measures of self-efficacy in specific subjects like writing. Among those studies, none were found that were conducted at an Asian EFL college. Therefore, this current study aimed to address this gap in literature by examining the relation of writing self-efficacy and writing goal orientation with writing achievement in a non-western context. Two research questions were addressed in this study:

1. How are writing self-efficacy and writing goal orientation structured by Cambodian EFL learners?
2. How are writing self-efficacy, writing goal orientation, and writing achievement related to each other?

Method

Context

The study was conducted in the capital of Cambodia at a prestigious semi-private university which provides a four-year bachelor's program in English. Admission to this program is based on high school examination grades and at least intermediate performance on an English proficiency examination. The students who pass the entrance exam must have had quite solid background in English language learning.

The university provides three learning shifts, each of which consists of two 90-minute sessions: morning (7:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m.), afternoon (2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m., or evening (5:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m.). Students study one shift a day, five days a week, throughout each semester. Students choose to study during whichever shift they want. Most of the students who take classes in the evening shift are also engaged in either part-time or full-time employment in various fields.

The students take four required course strands with no electives: Core English, Literature Studies, Global Studies, and Writing Skills. The medium of instruction and communication is supposed to be English in all courses. This present study focuses on Year 2 students in Writing Skills classes, in which students are taught different types of writing in both paragraph and essay formats.

Participants

Approximately 600 Year 2 students are enrolled in the bachelor's program of English at the university. Nine classes were randomly selected to participate. Of the 281 students in those classes, 87%, or 244 (n = 121 males, n = 123 females), returned the questionnaires they were given.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix A) administered to students consisted of four sections. The first elicited students' self-efficacy with seven items. The second was about students' writing goal orientation and contained 14 items. The third, which contained 12 items, asked students about their learning strategies. The last section, with only two items, asked for students' background information—students' gender and learning shift (morning, afternoon, or evening)—to be used in the study. The questionnaire was administered, with permission from the department head and class lecturers, to students at the beginning of their class. It took them about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Measures

It is essential to establish measurement accuracy before testing relationships among the key variables. It cannot be assumed that measures developed in western countries will adequately measure motivation in other societies. Below are measures of key variables in this study.

Writing achievement. Students' paragraph scores, ranging from 0 to 50 on their writing final exam, were used to reflect writing achievement. Students were given two or three general topics to write a paragraph about for the exam. Lecturers scored students' paragraphs, following six features of writing skills focused on in the curriculum (i.e., grammar, word use, coherence and cohesion, punctuation, writing planning, and introduction and conclusion writing) and a holistic approach, which "assumes that in a writing assessment students should write, and that error counts alone cannot accurately reflect competency levels" (Myers, 1980, p. 1).

Lecturers used three different versions of the exam, resulting in different versions of paragraphs. Therefore, inter-rater reliability was established to ensure the reliability of the scores obtained as measures of participants' writing achievement. Five to ten copies of participants' paragraphs scored by each teacher in each shift were also scored by another rater. Scores from the rater were compared with the scores from the teachers and an inter-rater reliability index was calculated. Inter-rater reliability was .71.

Writing self-efficacy. This study operationalized students' writing achievement as paragraph-writing achievement. In accordance with Bandura's (2006) suggestions, the writing self-efficacy scales reflected students' paragraph-writing self-efficacy and utilized an 11-point response scale, ranging from 0 (*Totally Disagree*) to 100 (*Totally Agree*) with a 10-unit interval. The writing self-efficacy scale consisted of seven items (see Appendix A), which were based on Prat-Sala and Redford (2010) because the items matched well with the way writing skills were taught at the university in this study.

Writing goal orientation. Scales developed by Kaplan, Lichtinger, and Gorodetsky (2009) were used to measure writing goal orientation. Those writing mastery and performance-approach goal orientation scales each contained five items with average alpha (α) values of .89 and .90, respectively. The writing performance-avoidance goal orientation scale contained four items with an α value of .79. Cronbach's α reflects the interrelation among items supposed to measure the same construct, so a high alpha value indicates high internal consistency among the items of the measure. According to Santos (1999), an acceptable alpha value should be at least .70, although there may be some exceptions. Students used a seven-point Likert response scale ranging from 1 (*Totally Disagree*) to 7 (*Totally Agree*) to respond to each item (see Appendix A).

Results

Structure of Writing Self-Efficacy and Goal Orientation Measures in the Cambodian EFL Context

Research Question 1 asked whether the measures of writing self-efficacy and writing goal orientation would be structured by Cambodian EFL students in the same way as they were by the western students for whom the measures were developed. To determine this, the principal-component analysis technique (Field, 2009; Kline, 1994) was used, as this technique allows researchers to examine the unidimensionality of a construct through different measurement items.

Structure of writing self-efficacy. To assess unidimensionality of the writing self-efficacy construct, a principal-component analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on the data. Only items with loadings of 0.40, a commonly used cutoff, were retained (Kline, 1994). Results are displayed in Table B1 in Appendix B.

In order to be retained, a scale should have an eigenvalue greater than one and the variance explained by the factor analysis should be greater than 50%. All seven items from the original writing self-efficacy scale produced one component with eigenvalue = 4.7, which accounted for a variance in the items of 66.8%.

Cronbach's α is the most common index researchers use to determine the internal reliability of a scale (Field, 2009). A high value of Cronbach's α suggests high internal reliability of a scale. The data collected in this study yielded a Cronbach's α of .92, which was commensurate with the reliability found in western samples.

In this study, the scores from the self-efficacy measures yielded M = 66, SD = 11.45. Taken together, the results of the factor analysis and Cronbach's α suggest that the structure of self-efficacy by the Cambodian EFL university students is similar to that found in western samples.

Writing goal orientation structure. The same procedures were followed with the writing goal orientation measure as with the writing self-efficacy measure. However, while items from the writing self-efficacy measure were expected to form one scale, items from writing goal orientation measures were expected to form three subscales because of the tripartite nature of the expected structure.

A principal-component analysis was conducted (using varimax rotation) on the writing goal orientation measure. Table B2 in Appendix B displays factor loadings for the goal orientation items. Fourteen items of the writing goal orientation measures yielded three components with eigenvalues = 4.53, 2.72, and 1.53, respectively, which accounted for 62.76% of the variance in the items. Two of the total of 14 items (Items 3 and 5 of the measure of the writing performance approach goal orientation [Items 15 and 17, respectively, in the questionnaire]), were discarded because they loaded on two different components. The final 12 items were categorized into three components: mastery (five items), performance approach (three items), and performance avoidance (four items).

The scores from the final writing goal orientation measures yielded $M = 6$, $SD = .68$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$ for mastery goal orientation; $M = 4.26$, $SD = 1.23$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$ for performance-approach goal orientation; and $M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.28$, Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$ for performance-avoidance goal orientation. Thus, Research Question 1 can be answered in the affirmative for both constructs. That is, measures of writing self-efficacy and writing goal-orientation were structured by Cambodian EFL students as they were structured by western students.

Relationships of Writing Self-Efficacy, Goal Orientation, and Achievement

Research Question 2 addressed the relationship between writing self-efficacy, writing goal orientation, and writing achievement. To answer this question, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analyses were used.

The results of these analyses are shown in Table B3 in Appendix B. As expected, writing self-efficacy significantly correlated in a positive manner with writing mastery goal orientation, $r(242) = .40$, $p < .001$, and with writing achievement, $r(242) = .15$, $p < .05$. Unexpectedly, writing self-efficacy also correlated positively with writing avoidance goal orientation, $r(242) = .17$, $p < .01$. Writing self-efficacy did not have a significant correlation with writing performance-approach goal orientation, $r(242) = .04$, $p > .05$.

Writing mastery goal orientation had a positive correlation with writing performance-approach goal orientation, $r(242) = .14$, $p < .05$, and, as expected, with writing achievement, $r(242) = .11$, $p < .05$.

Writing self-efficacy, as expected, was significantly and positively correlated with writing achievement, $r(242) = .15$, $p < .05$, as was writing mastery goal orientation, $r(242) = .11$, $p < .05$. The two writing performance goal orientations did not have a significant relationship with writing achievement.

Discussion

Reliability and Validity of the Scores From Measures

Research Question 1 examined the structures of the constructs of writing self-efficacy and writing goal orientation in the Cambodian context. Each of the measures used in this study was found to have high reliability, as the scores obtained from the measures produced sufficient to high Cronbach's alpha values. Principal-component factor analyses conducted on the measures in this study suggested unidimensionality in each construct, which provides some evidence for the validity of the scores from the measures. These findings regarding the reliability and validity of the scores in this study were important because there have not been any tests conducted to examine these constructs in Cambodia; thus, these measures, presented in English, can be used in future research in Cambodia. Future studies can also examine whether similar structures will be found if the items are translated into Khmer, the Cambodian language.

Relationship Between Writing Self-Efficacy and the Other Variables

Research Question 2 in this study pertained to how writing self-efficacy related to writing goal orientation. Results reveal that, as expected, writing self-efficacy was related to writing mastery goal orientation and to writing achievement. These findings suggest that students who have high self-efficacy in English writing tend to focus more on learning for improvement and understanding when they are learning writing skills. These findings are consistent with those from a number of other studies including Elliot and Church (1997), Liem et al. (2007), and Phan (2010), that also showed a relationship between self-efficacy and mastery goal orientation.

Furthermore, writing self-efficacy was not significantly related to writing performance-approach orientation. Research has produced varied results ranging from positive to null relationships between writing self-efficacy and writing performance-approach goal orientation. The current study examined the relationship between the two constructs in a specific subject matter of writing skills and a new setting in which the population is learners of EFL. The population of this study typically finds writing in English a difficult subject because, to write, they have to articulate their ideas in a second language in addition to deciding what ideas to incorporate in their writing. They need to use correct grammar and vocabulary in a second language, which naturally adds burdens to their effort to write. In such a difficult subject, students with high writing performance-approach goal orientation may lose confidence and give up as predicted by Dweck and Leggett (1988).

The only unexpected result was the observed positive relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing performance-avoidance orientation. This result is inconsistent with previous studies (Liem et al., 2007), which might suggest that while the population in this study possesses belief in their own ability to write well, they also feel fear of embarrassment from failing the subject.

Research Question 2 also addressed the relationship between writing self-efficacy, writing goal orientation, and writing achievement. Results from this study indicate a positive relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing achievement. This result is in agreement with those obtained in myriad studies on the relationship between writing self-efficacy and achievement in general academic subjects as well as in writing as a subject (Dupeyrat & Mariné, 2005; Liem et al., 2007; Pajares & Johnson, 1996; Pajares & Valiante, 1997, 1999; Phan, 2009, 2010) and extends evidence supporting Bandura's theory to a new context.

Results further show that writing mastery goal orientation had a positive correlation with writing achievement, suggesting that students who focus on learning writing for improvement and understanding tend to fare well in their academic writing tasks. This finding is consistent with many studies in western countries conducted in various fields of study (Hsieh et al., 2007; Sins et al., 2008).

Another expected result was the null relationship between writing performance-approach goal orientation and writing achievement. Learning in order to win in competitions might be an adaptive behavior and might lead to success in some academic areas (Church et al., 2001; Senko & Miles, 2008; Wolters, 2004). Nonetheless, in face of difficulty, such as the difficult subject of writing, performance-approach oriented students often will give up easily (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), and thus they will not succeed academically.

Writing performance-avoidance goal orientation was also found to have no significant correlation with writing achievement, a result which was not anticipated but which is consistent with two previous studies (Phan, 2010; Senko & Miles, 2008). Students who are high in writing performance-avoidance goal orientation set out to do writing tasks for the purpose of avoiding looking unwise in front of others and often try to avoid challenging tasks because they will not be able to do well in such tasks.

Limitations

One of the main limitations in this study is the reliability of the writing scores. In this study, writing scores were obtained from different lecturers, and students wrote on different topics. Further studies on the relationship between writing self-efficacy and writing achievement should employ more standardized scores to ensure enhanced reliability of the scores to reflect students' writing achievement.

Another limitation is that this study examined students' writing achievement in only one Cambodian English language teaching (ELT) institute. Therefore, the findings from the study might not be generalizable to college students at other ELT institutes in Cambodia or in Asia as a whole. For a broader generalizability of this topic, further studies that cover a wider population are needed.

Conclusion and Implications

Self-efficacy and goal orientation were conceptualized by scholars to have an influence on academic achievement. Although this study was conducted in a setting in which there had been no previous research on this topic, the structure of the constructs was confirmed. Further, this study found a positive correlation among writing self-efficacy, writing mastery goal orientation, and writing achievement. These are positive results, as they contribute to the existing literature by incorporating goal orientation into the examination of the relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement in the specific subject area of writing within a new context.

One implication of this study is that EFL teachers might promote higher writing achievement by fostering students' writing self-efficacy and writing mastery goal orientation. Teachers can create an environment that is conducive to promoting students' writing self-efficacy while also orienting them toward mastery in writing. For example, EFL teachers can assign writing tasks that are challenging enough to engage students and to allow them to succeed with hard work. Writing self-efficacy develops through having successful experiences, seeing the success of peers, persuasion that success is possible, and feeling positive, not anxious (Bandura, 1977, 1997).

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Appendix A
Questionnaire
(Based on Prat-Sala & Redford, 2010; Kaplan, Lichtinger, & Gorodetsky, 2009)

Instruction: Please circle the options which best describe you and your beliefs and behaviors in learning.

Writing belief
To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

I am confident that

1. I can write a grammatically correct paragraph.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Totally Disagree					Moderately Agree					Totally Agree

2. I can use correct punctuation marks–for example, commas, full stops, semi-colons, etc.–in a paragraph.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Totally Disagree					Moderately Agree					Totally Agree

3. I can plan my paragraph well.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Totally Disagree					Moderately Agree					Totally Agree

4. I can write a good introduction which informs the reader of my intention for a paragraph.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Totally Disagree					Moderately Agree					Totally Agree

5. I can put ideas together in a paragraph in such a way that they are clear to the reader.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Totally Disagree					Moderately Agree					Totally Agree

6. I can link sentences together to make a well-organized paragraph.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Totally Disagree					Moderately Agree					Totally Agree

7. I can make a good conclusion to inform the reader of the ending of my paragraph.

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Totally Disagree					Moderately Agree					Totally Agree

Writing goal

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

When I do a writing assignment, writing in-class work, or writing homework,

8. it's important to me that I learn as much as I can.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

9. it's important to me that I improve my skills and knowledge.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

10. one of my goals is to learn as much as I can.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

11. it's important for me to really understand what there is to learn.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

12. one of my goals is to develop deep understanding of what I am learning.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

13. it's important for me to look smart in comparison to the other students in my class.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

14. one of my goals is to look smart compared to others in my class.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

15. one of my goals is to show others that those writing tasks were easy for me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

16. it's important to me that other students in my class think I am good at it.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

17. one of my goals is to show others that I'm good at this work.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

18. it's important to me that others don't see me as a stupid student.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

19. it's important to me that my teacher doesn't think that I know less than others in class.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

20. one of my goals is to keep others from thinking I'm not smart.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

21. one of my goals is to avoid looking like I have trouble doing the work.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

Learning strategies

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about your learning strategies in general, not just in writing?

22. I study a course material by repeating the material over and over different times.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

23. I study a course material by skipping over parts I think the teacher will not ask questions about.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

24. I study a course material by summarizing it.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

25. I study a course material by combining different sources (book, notes, . . .).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

26. I study a course material by memorizing something I do not understand.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

27. I study a course material by repeating the material until I can say it exactly like what appears in that material.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

28. I study a course material by connecting course material from different courses.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

29. I study a course material by distinguishing main points and details.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

30. I study a course material by studying something that is not clear again in order to understand it.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

31. I study a course material by skipping parts I do not understand.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

32. I study a course material by underlining the most important parts.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

33. I study a course material by skipping parts I do not find important.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Totally Disagree						Totally Agree

Background Information

34. Please indicate your gender.
    1. Male 2. Female

35. Please indicate your learning shift.
    1. Morning 2. Afternoon 3. Evening

This is the end of the questionnaire.

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix B
Principal-Component Factor Analyses on Writing Self-Efficacy and Writing Goal Orientation Scales and the Correlation Matrix Among the Variables

Table B1

Factor Loadings from Principal-Component Factor Analysis of the Writing Self-Efficacy Items

Items	Factor Loadings
5. put ideas together in a paragraph in such a way that they are clear to the reader	.85
6. link sentences together to make a well-organized paragraph	.85
4. write a good introduction which informs the reader of my intention for a paragraph	.84
3. plan my paragraph well	.82
1. write a grammatically correct paragraph	.80
7. make a good conclusion to inform the reader the ending of my paragraph	.78
2. use correct punctuation marks–for example commas, full stops, semi-colons, etc.– in a paragraph	.77

Table B2

Factor Loadings from Principal-Component Factor Analysis of Writing Goal Orientation Items

Item: When I do a writing assignment, writing in-class work, or writing homework,	Factor Loadings		
	PAPG	PAVG	MG
14. one of my goals is to look smart compared to others in my class.	.89		
13. it's important for me to look smart in comparison to the other students in my class.	.86		
16. it's important to me that other students in my class think I am good at it.	.81		
18. it's important to me that others don't see me as a stupid student.		.80	
19. it's important to me that my teachers don't think that I know less than others in class.		.79	
21. one of my goals is to avoid looking like I have trouble doing the work.		.71	
20. one of my goals is to keep others from thinking I'm not smart.		.71	
8. it's important to me that I learn as much as I can.			.83
9. it's important to me that I improve my skills and knowledge.			.77
10. one of my goals is to learn as much as I can.			.75
12. one of my goals is to develop deep understanding of what I am learning.			.71
11. it's important for me to really understand what there is to learn.			.69

Note. PAPG = writing performance-approach goal orientation, PAVG = writing performance-avoidance goal orientation, MG = writing mastery goal orientation. Only loadings higher than .40 on only one component are presented.

Table B3

Matrix of Correlation Among Dependent Variable, Predictor Variables, and Background Variables

	Ach	Pr_Ach	SE	MG	PAPG
Pr_Ach	.435***				
SE	.149*	.145*			
MG	.112*	.017	.404***		
PAPG	-.045	-.025	.035	.143*	
PAVG	-.021	-.079	.168**	.137*	.390***

Note. Ach = writing achievement, Pr_Ach = previous writing achievement, SE = writing self-efficacy, MG = writing mastery goal orientation, PAPG = writing performance-approach goal orientation, PAVG = writing performance-avoidance goal orientation; *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Towards More Sophisticated Academic Writing: Moving Beyond the Five-Paragraph Essay

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This article argues that due to test washback, simplicity of instruction, misconceptions of Western-heritage teachers about Asian students, and prevalence in ESL textbooks, the conventional five-paragraph essay is the dominant writing form taught to Asian university students. Yet as Dombek and Herndon (2004) observe, such a simplified form does not reflect the "periodic development" commonly found in the essays of proficient English-language writers and expected in Western university courses. To address this shortcoming, two sophisticated teaching methodologies used in language and liberal arts programs in Thailand and Japan are presented: the essay based upon periodic rather than cumulative development, and the Situation-Problem-Solution-Evaluation (SPSE) approach. Such pedagogies, it is argued, challenge students to move beyond formulas, to incorporate and integrate sources (in addition to personal experience), to engage in critical and creative analysis, and to enact a richer process of thinking in their writing.

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The Orthodoxy of the Five-Paragraph Essay

In a compilation of critical perspectives on language instruction in *TESOL Quarterly* in 1999, Alastair Pennycook observed that work in TESOL had for a long time been "too narrowly constructed to be of much interest to people outside the area" (p. 346). In other words, the instrumentalist assumptions that underlie much of the field seem to have been accepted to degree that analysis rarely occurred in the discipline. This rigidity continues to be illustrated in the widespread use – and misuse – of the "five-paragraph essay." Any student who has been required to take an English proficiency examination, such as the TOEFL or IELTS, will have been taught this familiar several-paragraph thesis-driven form (typically five paragraphs, but ranging from three to six). Driven by test washback (the back-to-front influence tests have on teaching and learning) and its ease of instruction, this model has become the norm in ESL courses and texts around the world. However, authentic writing by authors fully proficient in English rarely takes this form. Instead, as Dombek and Herndon observed,

> professional essayists tend to write . . . in the periodic style, leading up to the most important thought . . . in their final sentences. They do this because their ideas are so complex or counterintuitive that they could not be understood without the train of thought and pieces of evidence that precede them (2004, p. 27).

As Dombek and Herndon pointed out, while the five-paragraph essay can serve as a good base for beginners, it is often inappropriate for higher-level writing. Thus, this paper will suggest and evaluate teaching methodologies which can be used to help students move beyond familiar formulas and challenge them to employ more sophisticated writing styles and rhetorical forms to better engage in the kinds of critical and creative analysis common in authentic discourse.

The authors of this paper teach at two institutions. One is the Preparation Center (PC) for Languages and Mathematics, a pre-university program for Mahidol University International College (MUIC) in Thailand; the other is the English for Liberal Arts Program (ELA) at International Christian University (ICU) in Japan. Both programs are considered to be elite within their respective domains, and the English language skills of their students are generally higher than their peers in comparable universities. The common aim of these programs is to produce graduates who not only can use English to communicate functionally to complete basic academic tasks, but who also can use their language abilities critically and creatively. It is for these reasons that teachers in both programs have sought to introduce approaches to writing which move beyond the five-paragraph orthodoxy. To understand how these approaches can be used successfully, it is first necessary to understand why they are needed.

Literature Review

Situation

Recent data produced by Educational Testing Service (ETS) show that Thai speakers rank 85th out of 113 national language groupings on performance on the TOEFL iBT, while the Japanese rank 102nd (Educational Testing Service, 2011). However, data suggest that Japanese have developed better critical thinking skills than Thais. A comparative survey of the capacity of 15-year-old students to integrate, interpret, reflect on, and evaluate material contained in reading texts shows Thais ranked 52nd out of 65 countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), while the Japanese ranked 8th (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010). Therefore, though the linguistic challenges facing students in both countries are similar, the task of improving thinking skills in Thailand appears more formidable. The position of this paper is that the conventional approach to ESL writing is largely unsuitable for cultivating higher-order thinking skills.

As stated before, the unsatisfactory orthodoxy in writing instruction stems largely from the washback effect of standardized testing. This concern has been raised for many years. Writing in 1991, Raimes referred to the "formulaic essay writing and assembly line grading of ETS's [then] Advanced Placement [AP] Essay" (Vopat, cited in Raimes, p. 439). She further observed that it is doubtful whether standardized tests such as the AP Essay "recognize[d] a wider variety of rhetorical modes" than the ethnocentric deductive linear argument (Raimes, 1991, p. 439). She concluded that language instructors "should avoid recommending and using reductive methods of instruction and materials for test preparation" and that "students should be spending time learning English, not learning ETS coping skills." Nevertheless, almost all universities whose language of instruction is English still require non-native students to pass some sort of standardized English proficiency examination, preparation for which usually involves reductive coaching techniques and simplified writing forms.

The most commonly accepted proficiency standards are the TOEFL and IELTS tests. A student's performance on such tests often determines whether the applicant is accepted or rejected. Yet with such high-stakes tests, there are tricks and strategies which can be employed in order to raise test-takers' scores. Qi (2007) emphasized the effect of such tests on writing instruction when she stated "teachers and students [focus] only on the aspects of writing that they [believe] would help to achieve higher test scores, while completely ignoring the need to be able to write communicatively in real-life situations" (p. 65). To clarify, emphasis is placed on producing a clean piece of writing which follows set formulas and is easily graded. As a consequence, students are not pushed into the higher levels of thinking: analysis, synthesis, evaluation as in Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). Instead, they are tested on their recall and application of set patterns and models (Cheng, Rogers, & Hu, 2004; Hamp-Lyons, 1997; Raimes, 1990).

Problems

One problem with this approach is that students become more focused on "getting it right" (Blanton, 1987) than becoming skilled writers. Writing, especially for lower-level students, thus becomes a chore which is often approached with fear or boredom (Blanton, 1987). When writing is attempted, it tends to be formulaic (Vopat, cited in Raimes, 1990). Popular textbooks, whether for classroom instruction or exam preparation, often design topics to fit the five-paragraph essay structure. These topics generally present students with a choice which they must support using their own knowledge and experience, and because there is often no input resource from which students can draw to support their ideas, their topic development is limited to the extent of their personal experience. The result, as the authors and other professional writing teachers have observed, is essays written mechanically, "following the guidelines" of the standard five-paragraph format often consisting of claims or ideas supported minimally through limited knowledge of the topic (Dombeck & Herndon, 2004, p. 10).

Another problem stems from misconceptions of Western-heritage teachers about Asian learning styles and capacities. As Biggs has suggested, most Western-heritage teachers never seriously examine their assumptions that all Asian classrooms are "highly authoritarian; [use] teaching methods [that] are mostly expository, [and are] sharply focused on preparation for external examinations" (1996, p. 46). This leads to beliefs that Asian students will nearly always show a preference for "low cognitive level learning strategies" associated with poor learning outcomes (Biggs, 1996, p. 46). In other words, Western teachers often assume that Asian students do not want – or are unable – to think critically and instead benefit more from mastering set patterns in order to pass exams. Several studies have shown, in fact, that as a result of their preconceptions of ESL students, teachers often give feedback to L2 writers which focuses more on grammar and structure errors than on content (Ferris, Brown, Liu, & Stine, 2011; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010).

Methodology

Strategies for a Solution

Two strategies have been used by the authors of this paper to try to move beyond the simple prescription of the five-paragraph essay. Both approaches introduce students to a different way of thinking about their ideas. At ICU, some advanced writing classes now focus on developing periodic writing. The essays written in these classes look drastically different from typical ESL essays. Whereas the five-paragraph essay is thesis-driven and displays what Dombek and Herndon (2004, p. 26-27) termed "cumulative development," these essays are content-driven and display "periodic development." At MUIC, the Situation-Problem-Solution-Evaluation (SPSE) approach advocated by Hamp-Lyons and Heasley (2006) has been introduced to pre-university students. Each approach is explained in more detail in the following sections.

Cumulative vs. periodic development. This approach is employed by select teachers at ICU to teach upper-intermediate to advanced-level students with TOEFL ITP scores of 550 and higher. The course is a reading and writing class, and instruction is delivered via 3 classroom and 2 tutorial hours per week for 10 weeks. The students are first-year Japanese university students yet to declare a major. In addition to requiring students to write a traditional five-paragraph style persuasive essay based upon cumulative rhetoric, the course introduces students to periodic development in essays that draw upon this more sophisticated rhetorical pattern (Dombek & Herndon, 2004).

In traditional five-paragraph essays that follow cumulative development, the essay writer presents a thesis statement in the first paragraph, followed by paragraphs in which each opening sentence describes the topic of the paragraph, often referring directly back to the thesis statement; the essay ends with a conclusion which sums up the ideas presented in the essay and restates the thesis. While cumulative development may be appropriate for English proficiency examinations, this style of writing – as Dombek and Herndon (2004) have argued – tends to produce essays where topic development is simplistic and one-dimensional.

In contrast, sophisticated readers of English (including university professors) expect more complex forms of writing. Thus, in the ELA of ICU, some teachers introduce students to essay writing that uses periodic development. Under this approach, sentences at the beginning of the paragraph drive ideas forward and are used to link reasoning between paragraphs (Appendix A shows a visual representation of the rhetorical structure of periodic development in contrast to that of cumulative development). Furthermore, the thesis is often not presented until the conclusion of the essay, after the supporting ideas have been developed and elaborated upon. It can be argued that this approach is more authentic as it allows students to display their thinking process and, because ideas are explored as they arise, does not limit students to one idea from the very beginning. Thus, oftentimes student writers will discover that by the end of the essay they have moved from answering a simple question to asking (and answering) much more complex questions because they have been able to examine different aspects of the topic.

The differences in how students think about the topic are usually reflected in the transition words used in the essays. With cumulative development, transition words generally reflect linear thinking (e.g., *First*, *Second*, *Third*, *In addition*, *For example*), whereas with periodic development, they tend to reflect progressive thinking (e.g., *This being the case*, *Considering this*, *If so*). The end result is an essay where students have analyzed and evaluated several different aspects of a topic and have a formed a conclusion based on information and analysis which has not been manipulated to fit a pre-set idea. See Appendix B for a model of a periodic essay and Appendix C for an example of a student essay using this approach.

SPSE. MUIC PC started using the SPSE approach recently in their highest-level class in which students study writing 8 hours a week for 10 weeks. Students at this stage are at the intermediate level, most having entered the program at the lower-intermediate level, with TOEFL ITP scores between 420 and 530. For this approach, essays are referenced from input texts and lectures provided by teachers and from the student's own research.

To reiterate, SPSE stands for Situation-Problem-Solution-Evaluation. Firstly, students discuss the situation or background of the topic. This can include facts, current news, and different viewpoints related to the subject. Students then consider the problems associated with the issue, such as controversies or negative effects. From there, students are either asked to suggest solutions to the problem or explain solutions presented in the input sources. Finally, students evaluate the solutions. Evaluation includes not only an assessment of how effective the solution is, but also how ethical it is.

As the aim is to encourage integration of skills, essay topics are centered on a single theme which the students study all term. Thus, the students do not compose based on their own limited experience but instead are required to use information from several sources, including websites, books, adapted texts, and lectures. They are taught the Cornell University note-taking system, which has been shown to improve understanding and recall through the use of critical thinking questions and summary writing (Pauk & Owens, 2005). Students are also introduced to basic logical fallacies and ethical frameworks so they have a foundation on which to assess and evaluate information. To illustrate, a theme used at the MUIC PC in 2012 related to Jared Diamond's theory of social collapse. Students took notes of the material in the book during the term and were introduced to some of the more basic logical fallacies (e.g., "slippery slope" and "excluded middle") as an aid to critical analysis. Their final assessment task, after formative development, was to use notes they took of a lecture and reading on a related topic to write a fully referenced essay under exam conditions. They were given an opportunity to develop their ideas in a 25-minute group discussion. The assessment process was designed to move the students towards higher-level cognitive skills. Thus, after demonstrating understanding of the reading and lecture through their summary notes, the students were required to analyze and synthesize the arguments in their written responses, before evaluating the arguments using logical analysis in the final discussion. Appendix D presents a description of a particular SPSE task and a sample student response.

Process Writing

In both the MUIC PC and the ICU ELA programs, students follow a writing process consisting of planning, writing, and editing. Prior to writing, they produce a plan which they will use as an initial guide for their composing. Students then write several drafts edited first by themselves, then by their peers, and then by their teacher before a final draft is submitted for grading. In both programs, editing focuses mainly on content and organization, and, to a lesser extent, grammar. Thus, students not only make corrections to their essays but must also explain their errors and their corrections. In this way, students reflect on both the content and the technical aspects of essay writing.

Assessment

In ICU's ELA, the students' writing is assessed through graded drafts and a series of one-to-one writing tutorials with the teacher during which the student can ask for advice or clarification, describe intentions or problems, and receive direct teacher feedback on their writing. Many teachers use rubrics to give students feedback, such as the ICU Writing Rubric illustrated in Appendix E, which includes the criteria of Content (critical / creative thinking), Organization, and Language Control and Convention.

At MUIC PC, writing is assessed in three ways. Firstly, class essays are graded. Students spend two to three weeks on each essay and experience the entire writing process with peer comments and teacher guidance. Secondly, as mentioned previously, at the end of the term, they take an integrated exam. This starts with a 30-minute lecture and a 750-word reading over a 2-hour period. Students are then given 2 hours to write a response essay on the topic, referencing the inputs they were provided with. Thirdly, students take part in a 30-minute videotaped discussion related to the topic.

Discussion

In both cases, writing using periodic development is encouraged. However, as the students in the Thai program are often of a lower skill level than those in the Japanese program, they require a more guided approach in their writing. Thus, SPSE provides a framework for them to elaborate their thinking.

Writing produced by students using these two approaches displays more sophisticated thinking than that which results from the five-paragraph model. Writers are able to move beyond the narrow context provided in a typical opinion essay topic and examine a much broader range of views. Since the focus is not on finding reasons to support the initial thesis, but rather on investigating and exploring different relevant ideas and then drawing a conclusion, students are able to – and in fact, must – ask more questions and gather information. In such writing, students often end up challenging the initial assumptions of the topic instead of simply accepting the choices they have been given. Accordingly, their writing shows evidence of the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation taxonomized as higher-order thinking skills (Bloom et al., 1956).

By providing students with input resources (texts and lectures), the writing task becomes easier and more difficult at the same time. Students are relieved of the burden of trying to tap their limited knowledge relevant to the topic, but they must learn to utilize several additional skills such as note-taking and listening to analyze and evaluate information they have been given. This is a more authentic writing task than a traditional five-paragraph essay as it provides students with practice for university classes where professors will give readings and lectures and ask students to hand in a written response or compose research-based essays or reports. The writing task becomes much more integrated, in line with the goals of a liberal education. Moreover, students begin to realize that writing does not happen in a vacuum; their topics and their ideas have real-world relevance.

In general, periodic development challenges students to think more deeply about the topic and information they have been given. Because this type of development requires students to connect their ideas forward—going more deeply into one idea or moving on to a new, expanded idea—they are pushed towards higher-order thinking skills resulting in more complex thought processes. This process of increased sophistication can be seen in the model essay in Appendix B, “The Myth of Uniqueness,” in which O-Young Lee poses and answers strategic questions, quotes leading scholars, and debunks their statements to arrive at a conclusion, which his analysis logically builds toward but which is not apparent at first. It is also illustrated in the student essay on Muslim headscarves in France in Appendix C, in which the writer uses logic and analysis to unwrap the complexity of the issues, rather than taking a for-or-against position at the outset. Writing produced through periodic development, as these two essays suggest, becomes more interesting for both the teacher and the student and is more personal than writing in a five-paragraph essay based merely on private experience because students must examine, question, and sometimes revise their beliefs and assumptions. When students understand that essay writing involves more than just fulfilling a set pattern, they begin to see that differing essays can be written on the same topic. The most obvious consequence of this is that they stop trying to be “right” and start trying to be “good.” They realize that they can be different from their peers and those differences are what will potentially make their work outstanding.

One problem the authors still face is grammatical accuracy, especially in lower-level pre-university programs. The elimination of set patterns and models and the introduction of complex inputs mean that students are challenged on a much higher cognitive level. Under time constraints, such as essay exams, students tend to produce writing which displays more sophisticated thinking but less grammatical accuracy. More research needs to be done to find the balance between teaching grammar and teaching critical thinking.

Conclusion

Based on the experiences of the authors in both programs, a few practical recommendations can be made.

- Periodic development should be introduced to intermediate and advanced writing classes to encourage more authentic and complex forms of writing.
- Lower-level classes may find it useful to employ the SPSE approach as a framework for students who may find this type of thinking challenging.
- Additional skills, such as logic, ethics, and referencing, should be taught to enhance students’ ability to analyze and evaluate information.

- Writing tasks should be integrated with other skills, and such integration should be reflected in the assessment.
- Teachers should encourage self-reflection throughout the writing experience.

While the cumulative development form used in the conventional five-paragraph essay may serve as a good starting point for beginning writers, it should be just that – a starting point. Writing instruction should aim to produce writers who are able to critically examine a wide range of topics and employ a variety of forms to express more complex thinking. Periodic development, through the SPSE approach initially and then independently, can challenge students and foster the higher-order thinking and writing skills necessary to produce the sophisticated and authentic writing required at the university level and beyond.

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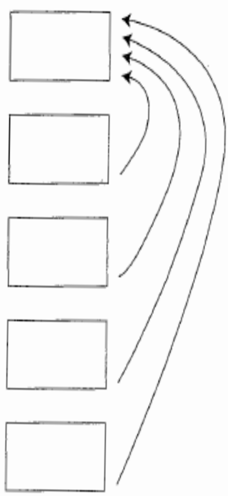
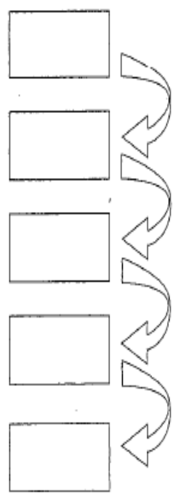
Appendix A
Visual Representations of Rhetorical Structure Underlying Cumulative and Periodic Approaches to Writing
(from Dombek & Herndon 2004, p. 28-29)

Cumulative Approach	Periodic Approach
Figure 2.1	Figure 2.2
Structure of the Thesis / Supporting Point Essay	Structure of the Periodic Essay with Subordinate Modification





Appendix B
Model of a Periodic Essay Used at International Christian University, Tokyo
The Myth of Uniqueness by O-Young Lee*

Many of the countless books that have been written about Japan have been showy, like French fashion magazines, and popular because of that. Since the end of the war alone, there have been innumerable interpretive works written about Japan. Some of them, such as Ruth Benedict's The Chrysanthemum and the Sword, The Anatomy of Dependence by Doi Takeo, and Japanese Society by Nakane Chie, have contributed new words to the popular vocabulary. Others, particularly Japanese books, have taken their titles from such phrases already in popular use as "economic animal" and "Japan Inc." In Japan these interpretations of Japanese society inevitably become best sellers, and large numbers of people pick up the jargon in them just as they would pick up and carry the portable shrine at a local festival. Such jargon appears in newspaper headlines, in magazine editorials, in talks given by television and radio commentators. In the hands of writers with more artistic inclinations, this vocabulary that began in the halls of academia end up as words to a popular ballad. This festival of interpretations makes it all but impossible to see the real, the naked Japan with one's own eyes. Before one knows it, that naked Japan is dressed in illusory clothing by the masses and pop culture. That is why I decided here to examine Japanese culture through the eyes of an elementary school child.

Why should it be that interpretations of Japan, whether they be by Japanese or Westerners, are cloaked in this illusory clothing? And what is the nature of the child's vision that could expose this cover-up? The Anatomy of Dependence, one of the most widely known interpretations of Japan, provides some clues. It is typical of the genre. I am particularly interested in this book, not so much because of its content but because of its attempt to discover what is unique about the Japanese psychology and because of the way its author, Doi Takeo, makes his case.

Doi states his methodology quite clearly: "If there is anything unique about the Japanese psychology it must be closely related with the uniqueness of the Japanese language." And Doi hits upon the concept of amae (dependence) and is convinced of "the uniqueness of the word amae as an item of vocabulary in Japanese." But is "dependence" as Doi defines it peculiar to the Japanese language? For if it is not, his whole argument goes up in smoke. And indeed, it is not.

The fact is that in Japan's nearest neighbor the concept of "dependence" is as common as pebbles scattered by the roadside. In Korean, there are two equivalent terms for the Japanese word amae: origwan and unsok. Both are an integral part of daily speech. Not only are there equivalent words, but the concept of dependence plays such a crucial role in child rearing in Korea that one could say dependence is even more inextricably bound up with the Korean psyche than it is with the Japanese. Such Korean words as omsal, used to gain the sympathy of others by exaggerating one's pain and suffering, are far more complex than the simple Japanese term amae.

This being the case, why did a learned scholar like Professor Doi make such a grave error by asserting that the concept of dependence as expressed by the term amae is peculiar to Japan? The problem is not Professor Doi's alone. His argument is merely the product of a sense of separateness from the rest of Asia, a feeling that the Japanese have entertained ever since the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Professor Doi relates that what convinced him amae was a word peculiar to the Japanese language was a conversation he once had with a British woman who spoke fluent Japanese. She was talking in English about her child's infant years but suddenly switched to Japanese to say, "Kono ko wa amari amaemasen deshita" (we were not especially indulgent with this child). When Professor Doi asked why she had used Japanese only for that one sentence, she replied there was no way to say such a thing in English.

From this Doi adduces that amae is a word unique to the Japanese language. It is a strange leap of logic, and it is an indication of just how deeply the Japanese have come to believe, since the Meiji Restoration, that English is the language of the West, and even all the rest of the world. How else could Doi have been led to believe that if a Japanese word does not exist in equivalent form in English it must be peculiar to Japanese? Perhaps this is the key to the "illusory clothes" that cloak Japan and interpretations of Japan.

This sort of premise, that if it does not exist in English it must be peculiar to Japanese, is not uncommon. Many interpretations of Japan written by Japanese revolve around just such simple Japan versus Britain / America comparisons. Even those works that take a somewhat wider view broaden only one side of the equation, substituting Westerners for British and Americans. Although we can imagine Doi substituting a French or German mother in his story, would he have ever considered a Korean woman? Yet if one is trying to find out whether or not amae is a uniquely Japanese concept it seems that a normal first step would be to look at a language such as Korean, which has a much closer linguistic relationship to Japanese than do any of the European languages.

This reluctance among Japanese writers to "look East" is far from uncommon. As a result, they often call something uniquely Japanese when it would be more relevant to call it common to Japan and Korea, or to all of East Asia. We need not go far to find examples. The popular historian Higuchi Kiyosuke has written, “Among the civilized countries of the world Japan is the only one where seaweed is eaten.” But he has apparently forgotten that Korea is a major producer and consumer of seaweed. In the book Nihonjin no Kokoro (The Spirit of the Japanese) by Umesao Tadao and four other Japanese scholars, it is boldly asserted: "The realization that night soil, human excrement, could be used as an organic fertilizer for vegetables was an amazing discovery." Umesao and his fellow authors conclude that it was originally a Japanese idea, failing to recognize that other people have long made use of this "high-level agricultural technology" (to use their own words). Anyone could tell after a few minutes in a Korean village that this wonderful organic technology is hardly unique to Japan. This is the same kind of short-cut logic we find in the amae argument: if it does not exist in the West, it must be peculiar to Japan. I have no desire to enter into a debate here on Japan's claim to the dubious distinction of a monopoly on amae, much less night soil. Nor do I seek to refute the work of these scholars. What I wish to point out is that sometimes popular books interpreting Japan, be they by Japanese or foreigners, wrap Japanese society in illusory clothing that bears little relation to reality. And this is usually because the basis of such books is a comparison only between Japan and the West.

The counterpoint to Western culture is not simply Japanese culture. Asian culture, although it does include Japan, is not defined merely by the experience of that one people. Characteristics of European culture must be seen in relation to all of Asia, not just Japan. For if we compare Japan only to the West, we run the risk of jumping to the mistaken conclusion that something is peculiar to Japan when in fact it might well be common to the entire Northeast Asian cultural sphere.

*Excerpt from *The Compact Culture: The Japanese Tradition of “Smaller is Better*.” Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984, pages 10-13. O-Young Lee, a prominent Korean writer and literary scholar, served as his nation’s first Minister of Culture.

Appendix C
Student Essay in Periodic Form

Moslem Headscarves:
The Veiled Reality Behind the Islamic Dress and Western Society

On September 2, 2004, a law banning students' displaying of religious symbols in French public schools came into effect. It forbid the wearing of ostensible religious apparel such as the Islamic veil, the Jewish Kippah and large Christian crosses (Jones). The French government had been debating the issue for nearly two decades, and it had intensified over the years with dozens of Muslim girls being expelled from secular schools for refusing to remove their headscarves on school grounds (Rhodes).

The government had claimed that there were several reasons to bring this law into effect. They insisted that wearing headscarves in schools showed submission to men and symbolized the inferior status of women, and the new law was significant because it encouraged Muslim women to be treated as equals to men in their French-Muslim culture. The change was also vital in that it protected the 1905 law of separation of church and state, known as laicite. France was sending a strong message to the world that they were maintaining a solid secular state with the new law that protected the laicite and stopped the human rights abuse of Muslim women (Benhold).

The issue would be settled by now if this was the end to the story. However, this scarf issue, or l'affaire du voile, is a lot more complicated than it may appear.

First of all, do women really feel that the headscarf is a sign of oppression? IslamiCity, one of the world's largest online sources of Islamic information, addresses how Islamic garments such as the veil are not a symbol of oppression, but rather a sign of self-respect and social status. The French government also announced in 2002 that out of 1.8 million French Muslim school girls, only around 2000 of them wore their headscarf to school. Moreover, only 157 girls refused to remove their headscarf when asked to do so (Taheri). The article and research manifest a misunderstanding of the symbolism of Islamic dresses by the French government and further shows that in reality, many woman are not being forced but have the choice to wear Islamic clothing.

If so, are Muslim headscarves not a symbol of human rights violation? Facts by IslamiCity and the French government suggest that perhaps the answer is, “Yes.” But when it comes to the new law, the answer is much different. For the individuals that consider the veil to be a symbol of belonging to the Muslim community, the new law is an oppressing law that deprives them of their freedom of expression. London Member of the European Parliament Human Rights and Civil Liberties Committee Jean Lambert criticizes the law that "[banning] the wearing of religious symbols is a clear human rights violation" (Meade). Although the French government explains that one of the central aims of the new law is to save women's human rights, without any clear evidence, the law has much more power to violate human rights than it does to save it.

With that said, it is reasonable to state that the case here is not just about religious symbols in school, or about maintaining secularism in France or any European state—it is about whether Muslims have a place and a right in a Westernized society. And judging from the direction that this debate is headed, many Western societies seem to be moving toward even greater marginalization of Muslims in their country. A study by the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) states that in 11 EU member states, Muslims have faced increased discrimination since the September 11 attacks and that there are widespread negative attitudes toward Muslims. For example in Germany, more than 80% of those surveyed answered that the word "Islam" is related to "terrorists" and "oppression of women." IHF also claims that the debate over the adoption of the French law banning ostensible religious attire in schools helped to encourage discrimination against Muslim women wearing headscarves across Europe. They see a rise in the anti Muslim sentiment known as Islamophobia, and that such attitude is salient in recent politics (Rhodes).

However, prohibiting Islamic attire for the mere fact that Islamic values are incompatible with Western values will not lead to mutual understanding and will only lead to a closed society without a place for Muslims to fit in. Western societies need to allow religious attire in public schools so that children can have a better understanding of non-Western values such as Islam and so that non-Western people living in Western societies will come to receive greater respect. If European societies start banning the headscarf at school, children in Europe might start perceiving the scarf as something immoral. It has the power to implant a negative image of Islamic clothing that would very easily lead to a negative image of Islam in general. National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) insists that "knowledge about religions is not only a characteristic of an educated person, but it is also absolutely necessary for understanding and living in a world of diversity" (Study About Religions), and it would certainly not hurt to know that there are many ways to express those beliefs, which will help children adapt better to different values.

The culmination of this debate will be a decisive moment for the Muslims living in Western societies. Even though it may be better for countries to prohibit ostensible religious apparel in some cases where clear evidence shows violation of health or human rights, generally speaking, it is crucial for Western societies to allow conspicuous religious attire to be worn in school and to allow Islam to integrate into the Western world. The new law violates the freedom of expression, and it is wrong to justify the violation of human rights by concluding that Islamic veils are a symbol of oppression of women when there is no clear evidence. The governments' answers will tell Muslims if they will be allowed to be who they are, or if they need to be "Westernized Muslims"—that is, Muslims without freedom of expression of their religious belief.

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Appendix D
SPSE Response to Integrated Task Question at MUIC PC, Thailand

This task was set for students preparing to enter Mahidol University International College. The entry standard is set at IELTS 5.5-6 or equivalent. The national average for all Thai students – at high school, undergraduate, or graduate levels – is 5.3.

Students were required to take notes on a 3000-word lecture on the state of the world (as determined by the Global Peace Index) and a 1500-word reading which explained possible causes for and solutions to instability. The students were then required to write a timed essay which integrated understanding of these texts in response to the following question: "Why do you think Thailand's GPI score is so low, and what actions could be taken to improve conditions in the country?" In the essay which follows, the student has used the SPSE structure.

Nowadays, Thai society is getting more dangerous and worse in these recent years. Thailand has been called the "Land of Smiles" for a long period of time (Punyaratabandhu, 2012). However, Thailand also has been recorded as a "flawed democracy", and one of the Asian countries which is at the risk of becoming a failed state (Punyaratabandhu, 2012). The Institute for Economics and Peace has established the program called the Positive Peace Index (PPI), which helps to improve the social's structure in each country all over the world (Punyaratabandhu, 2012). It shows most of the high level of education and low level of corruption is in the Scandinavian countries (Rush, 2012). However, Thailand ranks 66 out of 108 countries, which means that Thailand is one of the most unpeaceful countries in the world, so the Thai government still needs to improve the high level of corruption, and the inequality between rich and poor, well educated and less educated, in Thai society (Punyaratabandhu, 2012).

The most significant problem which has made Thailand become one of the most unpeaceful and undeveloped countries of the world, is the lack of education in rural areas of Thailand and the inequality between rich and poor people (Punyaratabandhu, 2012). About 50% of Thai children have not graduated from high-school and do not have enough efforts for the national standard (Punyaratabandhu, 2012). These problems are caused by "Thailand's social structure" because most of Thai children in rural areas do not have enough money to go to school. This problem makes more Thai children cannot chase their dreams or pursue that happiness in their lives (Punyaratabandhu, 2012). Furthermore, this shows the inequality between rich and poor people which still exists in the Thai society. People who have enough money can go to school. On the contrary, people who are poor cannot go to school. This situation seems getting worse every day. Moreover, the Thai government always focuses to improve only urban cities such as Bangkok, but they do not concentrate on development in the rural areas of Thailand. According to Punyaratabandhu (2012), many policies in Thailand have been created by the authority of a rich people which is unfair for poor people. As a result, this situation could lead to another problem such as poor people cannot express their ideas or opinions on what they want and their needs. Since this situation is getting serious, if the Thai government does not stop these problems or figure out the solution as soon as possible, Thailand will not be as a peaceful country as those Scandinavian countries.

To solve the problems, the Thai government should concentrate more on problems in the rural areas because they are the part of Thailand too. One of the popular foundations which helps to improve the education for children all over the world, known as the United Nations Children's Education Fund or the "UNICEF" (Punyaratabandhu, 2012), has been working in Thailand for many years because they want to make sure that Thai schools become "Child-Friendly Schools", or CFS. This program has been established for all Thai children in order to give them chances and opportunities equally to study in Thai schools (Punyaratabandhu, 2012). In order to become successful as a peaceful country in the globalized world, Thailand needs to improve the fundamental problems such as the social structure by creating a law to protect all of Thai people, not only rich people, and also it is essential for the Thai government to give an opportunity to poor people to have their freedom or rights to speak for their needs.

UNICEF might be a great idea or plan to reduce the problem of the unequal education for rural areas in Thailand because the UNICEF has been working in many countries around the world for such a long period of time. Therefore, they have their potential to reduce the inequality of the poor children to have their rights for studying. If the Thai government is concentrating about the rural areas' issue, the unpeaceful problem in Thailand will be eliminated as well. As a result, Thai people will live happily, and there will be no more fear about social discrimination again.

Appendix E
ICU Writing Rubric

	Excellent 3	Good 2	Developing 1
Content: critical / creative thinking			
• sufficient evidence			
• quality of evidence			
• logic			
Organization			
• intro-body-conclusion structure			
• arguable thesis			
• topic sentences			
Language control and convention			
• grammar, word choice, spelling			
• format (margins, spacing, indentation, font size)			
• citations and works cited			
Total			
Comments:			

What is a Good Research Project?

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This paper discusses characteristics of a “good research project.” It also discusses strategies for developing a research proposal. This includes suggestions for how to choose and focus a research topic as well as how to refine a research question. Details to include in a research proposal as well as the very specific areas that a research proposal needs to address are discussed. Questions to guide the design of the research proposal are also presented. The paper concludes with the discussion of a sample study which contains the characteristics of a good research project referred to in the paper. Suggestions for further reading on the development of a research project are also provided.

A key feature of a good research project is that it has never been done before; that is, it is in some way *original* in the sense that it is not aiming to find out something people in the field already know. The project also needs to be *worth doing*. It is, then, important to consider the value and relevance of the project as there are many things that might be capable of being done that are not worth doing. A good research project also needs to be *feasible* and *manageable* within the time frame available for it, with the resources that are available for the project and by the person (or people) who will be carrying out the study. Thus, a project that may take three to four years, as with a PhD project, will be much too ambitious if there is only a year available to carry out and complete the study. There may also be financial resources required for the project, such as airfare and hotel costs, that without them, the project may not be able to proceed. It is also important to consider whether the people who wish to carry out the project have the theoretical background and methodological skills that the proposed study requires. For example, if the study is a conversation analysis project, the people carrying out the study need to know how to do conversation analysis. If the study requires some kind of statistical treatment, the researcher (or researchers) needs to be able to do this. It is also important that the topic

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of the research be of interest to a wider audience, such as the international readership of a journal, as one of the aims of conducting research is disseminating it to a wider audience. Connected to this is whether the completed project is likely to lead to some kind of publication, such as a journal article or a book, so that the research is able to contribute to the development of the discipline in which it is located.

Developing a Research Proposal

There are a number of important steps to go through in developing a research proposal. A good place to start with this is by drawing up a shortlist of topics that might be worth investigating. It is then a good idea to take this list to someone who has had experience in carrying out research (such as a colleague or potential mentor) to get advice on which topic, in their view, is the best one to proceed with. The next thing for researchers to do is to formulate a general question that the research will answer and, from there, focus the question. This stage of the process often causes new researchers the most trouble, so people who are new to research should not rush this stage and should take as much time as needed to do this. In short, the question has to be both worthy and answerable. A question may be worth asking but impractical to answer, or answerable but not worth researching. The study, thus, needs to have a question that both has value and is answerable in terms of the proposed methodology and the question's capability.

Table 1 provides more detailed advice on ways to refine a research question.

Table 1
Ways to Refine a Research Question **(based on Stevens & Asmar, 1999, p. 17)**

- Read broadly and widely and to find a subject about which you are passionate. Immerse yourself in the literature, use your library, read the abstracts of other recent theses and dissertations, check theses on the web. For example: http://www.ndltd.org/
- Narrow your focus to a single question: be disciplined and not over-ambitious
- Be prepared to change or modify your question if necessary
- Be able to answer the question "Why am I doing this project?" (and not a different one)
- Read up-to-date materials - ensure that your idea is achievable and no one else has done or is doing it
- Work through the implications of your research question: consider existing materials and ideas on which it is based, check the logic, spell out methods to be used
- Condense your research question into two sentences: write it down, with pride, above your working area. Change the question if needed.
- Ask yourself: What will we know at the end that we did not already know?

Table 2 shows how a Chinese student who was a beginning researcher started from a very general topic and moved from there to a more narrowly focused research question that had value and was answerable. In his particular case, he was studying at a university outside China but was interested in how a communicative approach to language teaching could be implemented in university classes in his country. As he was not living in China, he could not get any firsthand data that he could use for his study. He did, however, have a set of textbooks with him that everyone in his university used to teach English. The researcher was also particularly interested in the teaching of listening so he brought the resources and the interest he had together by looking at how the teaching of listening was approached in Chinese university text books and comparing this with communicatively oriented textbooks published in English-speaking countries. He, thus, moved from a question that was worth asking but not, in his current situation, capable of being answered to one that was also worth asking and also capable of being done.

Table 2
Choosing and Focusing a Research Topic: An Example

Choosing a topic Communicative language teaching in China
Choosing a question Communicative language teaching in Chinese universities: Is it really possible?
Focusing the question The place of listening in the communicative classroom: An East-West comparison
Narrowing the focus of the question Focusing on listening in EFL coursebooks: An East-West comparison

Once the research question has been decided, a decision needs to be made about what data needs to be collected to answer the question, where and how it might be collected, and how the data might be analysed. An initial research plan can be drawn up from here. It is important, at the same time, to read enough in order to decide whether the proposed project is on the right track. To do this, previous research on the topic needs to be examined in order to see what research has already been carried out on the proposed topic as well as how this research was carried out. It is also essential to think about ethical implications of the research in terms of what permissions need to be obtained to carry out the research, and what guarantees of anonymity can be given to the people (if any) involved in the research.

The Structure of a Research Proposal

The next stage is to write a detailed research proposal. This should include definitions of key constructs in the proposal (such as “negotiation of meaning” or “willingness to communicate”) that would enable someone else reading it (and in turn the completed research) to understand what exactly is meant by these terms in the research.

Table 3 shows the typical structure of a research proposal and the purpose of each of the sections of the proposal.

Table 3
***The Typical Structure of a Research Proposal* (adapted from Paltridge & Starfield, 2007)**

Section	*Purpose*
Title	To summarise, in a few words, what the research will be about
Relevant background literature	To demonstrate the relationship between the proposed study and what has already been done in the particular area; that is, to indicate the "gap" that the study will fill
Research question(s)	To provide an explicit statement of what the study will investigate, i.e., the questions the study will answer or the hypotheses it will test
Definitions of terms	To provide the meaning of the key terms that have been used in the research question(s)
Research methodology	To provide an overview of the research approach that will be employed in the study, data that will be collected, how it will be analysed, etc.
Anticipated problems and limitations	To show awareness of the limitations of the study, what problems may be met in carrying it out, and how they will be dealt with
Significance of the research	To say why the study is worth carrying out
Resources required / Budget	To say what resources the research will require and what costs may be anticipated in carrying out the study
Ethics	To provide a statement as to how participants will be advised of the overall nature of the study and how informed consent will be obtained from them
Timetable	To give a working plan for carrying out and completing the study
References	To provide detailed references and bibliographic support for the proposal
Appendix	To provide examples of materials that might be used, or adapted, in the study

Details to Include in a Research Proposal

A research proposal is expected to include a focused research question that has value and is answerable. It should also contain the key terms in the question and their definitions so that during the study, these items can be observed. The proposal should include key research which has already been carried out on the particular topic. The main issues or controversies which surround the problem should be discussed, as well as any gaps in the previous research on the topic. It is also important to show how the previous research is relevant to the study being proposed.

The study needs to select a research approach that is an appropriate for the particular question or problem that will be investigated. A well-defined list of procedures that will be followed in carrying out the research needs to be described. This includes both the method of data collection and its analysis. There should be an indication of how the study's participants (or data) will be selected for the study. It is also helpful to plan for a pilot study so that the research instruments can be trialed and evaluated.

It is also important to say why the study is significant; that is, why it is worth doing. Ethical issues, if there are any, need to be discussed. This includes whether informed consent needs to be obtained for the study, and if this is the case, how this will be done. It is also helpful to include a proposed timetable for the research as this will give an indication as to how realistic the proposal actually is. A budget statement is also important as this will give an indication of how realistic the proposal is in terms of financial requirements and whether the research might need to be adapted in the light of these.

Nunan (1992) provides a useful set of questions for guiding the design of a research proposal. Each of these questions needs to be considered in the development and refinement of the proposal. These are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
***Questions to Guide the Design of a Research Proposal* (Nunan, 1992, p. 227)**

Area	*Questions*
Question	Is the question worth investigating?
	Is the question feasible?
	What are the constructs underlying my question?
	How will these be operationalised?
Design	Does the question suggest an experimental or a non-experimental design?
Method	What methods are available for investigating the question?
	Which of these are feasible, given available resources and expertise?
	Is it possible to use more than one data collection method?
Analysis	Does my research involve statistical or interpretive analysis, or both?
	Do I have the skills to carry out the kind of analysis I propose?

A Sample Study

Nakane's (2007) examination of silence in Japanese students' interactions in their regular university courses in an English medium university where there was mix of native and non-native speaker students of English is an example of a study that has many of the characteristics of a good research project described earlier in this paper. In her study, Nakane looked at the Japanese students' spoken interactions in the university classrooms as well as the other students, and lecturers' perceptions of the Japanese students' interactions. She combined the techniques of conversation analysis with ethnographic data in order to obtain multiple perspectives on the issue she wanted to explore.

Research question. The aim of Nakane's study was to examine the communication problems faced by Japanese students in their classes. She also wanted to see whether there were characteristic discourse patterns which could be sources of their communication problems. This question drew from her own experience as an English teacher in Japan, where she had begun to wonder how Japanese students would cope with academic interactions in an English-speaking country. She discovered from her reading of the research literature that we know very little about communication problems these students encounter and what causes communication problems for them. Her study, thus, was worth doing, capable of being done, and had not been done before. As such, it would fill an important gap in previous research about second language students' interactional patterns, and what they mean, in university classroom settings.

Methodology. The question Nakane proposed suggested a non-experimental, rather than experimental design as she had an open question she wanted to explore rather than a hypothesis she wanted to test. She used more than one data collection method for her study in order to give greater depth to her study. Nakane recorded classroom interactions which included the Japanese students, conducted individual interviews, focus group discussions, and administered questionnaires. Each of these data collection methods were within her expertise and were permitted by the institution where she was carrying out the study. Nakane combined this data with three case studies which drew on video and audio recordings, field notes, and artifacts from her classroom observations. The case studies used stimulated recall interviews and follow-up interviews with the Japanese students, fellow English-speaking students, and their teachers. A large-scale survey that had been independently carried out at another university was also used as a data source for the study. Nakane also collected data from classrooms in Japan in order to make a comparison between her observations of the English-medium classrooms and how Japanese students might typically behave in a similar kind of setting in Japan. The Japanese data consisted of video recordings, field notes, and artifacts from the Japanese classrooms.

Data analysis. Nakane's study involved an interpretive analysis of her data. She carried out a conversation analysis of the English classroom data. She also carried out a content analysis of the interview and stimulated recall data which allowed categories and sub-categories to emerge from the data, rather than using a set of pre-determined categories as the starting point for her analysis. This was important for her study as she didn't want to base her analysis on any previous conceptions she had as to why the students had difficulty communicating in their classes. The video and audio material were coded following patterns that had emerged from the students' and staff's self-reports in the stimulated recall interviews and the follow-up interviews. The conversation analysis component of the data was counter-checked by another analyst who was familiar with the conventions and expectations of conversation analysis to increase the reliability of her study.

Nakane also considered the results of her study in relation to other issues such as teacher–student interactional modes, teacher control of classroom discourse, timing in the taking of turns, the Japanese students' perceptions of politeness, and, in particular, the hierarchy-oriented politeness system they were used to in their interactions with teachers in Japan. She also considered her findings in relation to the issues of the Japanese students' language proficiency and their different schema, or interpretive frames, for classroom interactions.

Results of the study. The silence of the Japanese students was one of the major problems in the classrooms. Nakane also found that gaps in assumptions about classroom communication between the Japanese students, fellow English-speaking students, and their lecturers contributed to the students' silence in each of her three cases. The Japanese students' silence in class, she suggested, seemed to prevent the establishment of rapport between them and their lecturers. She also found there was a conflict between the lecturers' view of the Japanese students' personalities (for example, as being shy) when this was not the case for the students outside of the classroom. The students' silence in class was interpreted, she found, as a negative attitude and lack of commitment to their studies, where in fact, for one of the students she examined, this was not at all the case. Her initial feelings about what the issues might have been for these students in their classes, then, proved to be correct, although she needed to carry out her study to find this out.

Awareness of limitations. Nakane is well aware of the limits to the claims that can be made on the basis of her study and argues for the accumulation of further data and analyses of the kind that she had carried out. In particular, she points to the need to further explore the types and aspects of silence that she observed. She argues that these analyses need to be at both the micro and the macro levels; that is, by a detailed analysis of the actual interactions as well as a broader analysis of the situation and circumstances that surround the interactions. She also suggests the examination of student interactions in different types of study situations to see to what extent students' interactions in these situations are similar to, or different from, the interactions that she observed. She suggests looking at the reverse kind of situation as well; that is, looking at the interactions of English-speaking students in Japanese university settings to see to what extent the English-speaking students' experiences in a Japanese university classroom are similar to, or different from, the Japanese students' interactions that she examines in her study.

Commentary. A particular strength of Nakane's study was the multiple perspectives she took on her research question in order to provide both validity and depth to her research findings. These multiple data sources provided for a detailed and fine-grained analysis of the research questions. The project showed a good understanding of the importance of triangulation in this sort of study by combining different perspectives on the research questions that she examined. Her ethnographic data provided insights into her findings that would not have been possible by looking at the spoken interactions alone. Nakane's study is an example of a project that was well conceived, well designed, and well carried out. Further, it provided answers to questions that are of value to both university teaching staff and to students and that may help, in the future, to provide solutions to the kinds of communication problems the students in her study were experiencing.

Conclusion

This paper has aimed to outline some of the key characteristics of good research projects and illustrate those characteristics with a sample study. There is, of course, much more that could be said on this topic than has been outlined in this paper. Bell's (2010) *Doing Your Research Project*, for example, is a very helpful book for beginning researchers to consult for advice on developing a research project. Chapter Two of Bell's book discusses planning a research project, selecting a topic, focusing the study, and presenting a project outline. The first chapter of Elphinstone and Schweitzer's (1998) *How to Get a Research Degree* is especially relevant to writing a research proposal. Section headings in this chapter include "Choosing a thesis topic," "Defining your thesis topic," "Methodology and research design," "The research proposal," "Criteria for assessing a research proposal," and "Checklist of questions to be asked about a research proposal." Punch's (2006) *Developing Effective Research Proposals* is also a very good guide for writing research proposals. The final chapter of this book contains sample quantitative and qualitative research proposals. Paltridge and Phakiti's (2010) *Continuum Companion to Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* discusses approaches to research and areas of research that are of interest to people working the area of language teaching and learning. Finally, *Thesis and Dissertation Writing in a Second Language* (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007) has a chapter titled "Writing a research proposal" which provides more detail on this process than has been given in this paper.

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Writing for Academic Publication: Advice Drawn from Experienced International Journal Editors

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Many researchers understand that publications are a necessary evil that they must negotiate as members of the academy for employment, promotion, and fulfilling research grant requirements. The expectations and requirements for successful submission to academic journals can often be daunting and may seem shrouded in secrecy. This paper looks to clarify the guidelines for getting articles published, outlines approaches to targeting appropriate journals, and improves upon understanding the reviewing and revision process. Drawing largely from a panel discussion featuring international journal editors, the elements of peer reviewing in publications, the scope and purpose of academic periodicals, and various research paper types are covered together with acceptance rates, response times, and APA style conventions. Along with new developments in academic publishing, the editors' advice shared here should help demystify the process for the authors in Asian contexts willing to take up the challenge to submit research papers and articles for publication.

The *publish or perish* decree often attributed to employment entry and career progress (or even survival) in tertiary education quite evidently has varying levels of rigor that it is held to. The declining student population in Japan has reduced the number of university and college instructor positions. More widely across Asia, improved access to postgraduate studies has increased the competition for desirable positions that can make life as an ex-pat or domestic academic more stable. Networking with peers for "social capital" (Cotsworth, 2012), demonstrating accomplishments in part-time work, and keeping up membership in professional development associations can be important subjective factors when applying for jobs in higher education (Miller,

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2011). However, even such proactive steps can be shortchanged by the mere count and ranking of one's academic achievements, identified most specifically through publications. Since the number of publications may be merely tallied objectively by general administrators in the prescreening of standard application forms, one of the challenges applicants face is to build their list of published articles. Although books and monographs are positioned at the top of most standard application forms in Japan (and may even be a requirement for a tenure-track university position in American universities), this paper presents advice for publishing in peer-reviewed or refereed journals related to applied linguistics and ELT.

Background

Evidence of the importance of writing for academic publication can be seen in conferences held recently around Asia, such as the JALT (Japan Association for Language Teaching) College and University Educators SIG ESP Symposium in 2013, Getting Published in English: Opportunities and Obstacles; the JACET (Japan Association of College English Teachers) National Convention in 2013, with keynote addresses from Ken Hyland (*Applied Linguistics* co-editor) and Alan Hirvela (*TESOL Quarterly* co-editor); and the Regional Research Symposium at CamTESOL 2014, with workshops on conducting research projects, planning replication studies, mentoring for regional research networks, and doing classroom action research. Academics can also now find many self-help and how-to books on writing for academic publication. Thomson and Kamler (2013) offer an insider's perspective into the secret of academic publication that is theoretically grounded and contains strategies and samples to support authors in the "complex tangle of identity work and text work" (p. 1) that writing for publication presents. In the epilogue of a volume co-edited with Roger Nunn, Adamson (2012) summarizes the approach taken in collecting the perspectives of editors, reviewers, and proofreaders from five regional publications based in Asia. Their investigation into the academic norms, the review procedure, and the positioning of an academic journal in terms of its scope and style of content as well as target readership is highlighted as "a relatively rare enquiry in the field of research into academic publishing which tends to focus much more on the authors experiences, particularly those of non-Anglophone scholars, struggling to publish" (p. 172). In a similar vein this paper strives to bring advice from international journal editors to readers and writers in the Asian context.

The comments presented here were collected largely during a panel session, Getting Papers Published, at the 16th World Congress of Applied Linguistics, organized by the International Association of

Applied Linguistics (AILA) and held in Beijing in 2011. Facilitated by Leo van Lier, then editor of *Modern Language Journal* (*MLJ*) (who passed away in 2013), the following current or past editors representing well-known peer-reviewed journals shared responses to a list of FAQs (see Appendix) identified by the editors and used as an outline for the session: Allan Bell, *Journal of Sociolinguistics*; Elana Shohamy, *Language Policy*; Diane Belcher, *TESOL Quarterly*; Diane Larsen-Freeman, *Language Learning*; and Regine Hampel, *System*. (Authors seeking specific information about these journals should consult the most current guidelines for each.) With the goal of providing greater transparency and improved awareness, the opening section of this article covers guidelines for publishing in peer-reviewed publications. The second section addresses targeting an appropriate journal and is followed by information on acceptance rates and response times in the reviewing process. The final two sections look at quality of academic writing and current changes in academic publishing.

Guidelines for Getting Articles Published

Submissions to Peer-Reviewed Publications

Since the cardinal rule is to never submit the same paper for consideration to more than one journal, understanding the guidelines, format, and procedures for submissions to a particular journal is imperative. The panel cautioned that editors also work as reviewers and since reviewers may be involved with multiple publications, it is relatively easy to know if a paper is being sent around. The conclusion was clear that authors should not risk the blacklisting that would result from breaking this norm. Furthermore, all of the publications represented in the forum at AILA require authors to sign an agreement that the paper has not been submitted or published elsewhere. For these publications, this requirement then generally excluded submitting papers already published as department working papers (for Japan, an in-house *kiyo*), as well as any drafts published to a website. In many cases, translations of papers already published in the L1 would not be considered as an original, unpublished work. While invariably there is overlap in an author's writings, the key element sought by the editors is the new contribution a paper makes to the literature, although replication studies in a new context or looking at a different variable could be considered (see Porte, 2012, for a recent edited volume on replication research). With the proliferation of online and self-published output, a simple caveat is that if an author hopes to submit a paper for consideration by a peer-reviewed journal, they should wait until it gets rejected before uploading it to a personal or department website. And even then, only once the author has decided not to submit their paper to another periodical for review should it be uploaded to its final resting place online.

Papers sent to reputable journals and their editorial / review team of experts are blind reviewed, meaning the reviewer is not aware of the name or status of the author. This suggests that, based on the merit of the submission, every author has the same chance to be accepted as their favorite guru. Often the key difference is that writing for academic publication itself is a skill and a genre to be learned and developed through experience and feedback on multiple attempts (see Feak & Swales, 2009, and Swales & Feak, 2009, for an exploration of writing literature reviews and abstracts, respectively). For those authors with more experience with both rejection and acceptance, the option to become a reviewer was suggested as another way to develop one's own writing skills. PhD students (and their advisors) were cautioned against thinking of just submitting a chapter from their dissertation. The editors noted that a submission to a journal should be a stand-alone study or a paper written specifically for publication in a periodical.

Style Conventions and Mechanics

In addition to overall writing quality in terms of organization and development of content, successful submissions for publication, according to the editors, follow the required style for the journal targeted. The websites for academic journals and their parent publishing houses provide a lot of support for the task of writing for publication by covering very specific elements in terms of word count, format, and layout. Van Lier noted that neither editors nor volunteer reviewers have the time for papers where the authors have not followed the submission guidelines. Correct formatting of a manuscript submitted for publication is important as it saves time in peer reviewing and, if the article is accepted, in proofreading. Consequently, papers weak in this area would not even be sent out for review. With examples and resources easily found online or in back issues, there is no justifiable reason for authors to not become acquainted with and subsequently follow the required format and style conventions. Certain journals may include some unique elements of style, but most will largely make use of the format adopted by one of the major style guides. Writing guides such as Lester and Lester Jr. (2010) provide examples of citations and references and the minutiae of punctuating each for the major styles from the American Psychological Association (APA) as well as the Modern Language Association (MLA), the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS), and the Council of Science Editors (CSE) Style Manual.

Many publications in the fields of linguistics, ELT, and SLA have adopted the *American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual* as their style guide (see VandenBos, 2010, for the most current features). A checklist on pages 241-243 in the manual draws attention to spacing, margins, sequence, typeface, the abstract, paragraphs, special characters, and more. Given the information and examples available, there is no reason a writer who is looking to have a manuscript published should not put in the time on these initial and finishing touches. It is important to understand that it is the author's responsibility, not the role of copy editors or layout artists, to make the text look like the finished product in print or online. The only impressions that can be taken from a submission that does not attend to the mechanical criteria of the style sheet are a lack of care, little concern, or the notion that it is someone else's job – stances which will not endear editors or reviewers to your work and the possible merits of its content. Furthermore, in the *APA Publication Manual*, the largely mechanical items listed above only come after the very important (but often overlooked) discussion of the actual types of articles and the structure and content of the various sections of the manuscript (including the verb tense to be used in each).

Content and Structure

Looking in the table of contents (TOC) of the 6th edition of the *APA Publication Manual* (VandenBos, 2010), it is clear that adopting and writing in APA style is far more than just spaces, capitals, and commas (see Apple, 2008, for more dos and don'ts when writing with APA). The six-page TOC includes guidance on tables and figures, the mechanics of style (e.g., punctuation, capitalization, and numbers), the organization of writing (including the levels of headings and writing style, with a section on grammar), and important details on ethical reporting and reducing bias. Chapter 1 in the manual (VandenBos, 2010) looks at various types of writing in the behavioral sciences. Together with empirical studies and their typical IMRD sequence (Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion), four main types of articles are covered. These include literature reviews, such as meta-analyses or research syntheses; theoretical articles; new or modified methodological approaches; and case studies. In addition, brief reports, replies to previous articles, and book reviews are mentioned. Submitting reviews of teaching materials or academic and professional development titles was suggested by the editors as a useful entry point into writing for academic publishing. Each academic journal may accept and publish a range of article types, such as those highlighted by Belcher of *TESOL Quarterly*: research articles, discussion papers, summaries or reports on research in progress, and teaching or research issues, each with specific features and word counts. It is crucial, therefore, for authors to submit their paper to a journal that publishes in that genre.

Selecting an Appropriate Journal

Journal Scope and Purpose

In addition to following style guidelines and procedures, targeting an appropriate journal for the article type is a vital step. With access to the Internet, authors can easily review websites listing the aim and scope or positioning of the various journals they might consider suitable for their submission. For example, Bell noted that the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* looks broadly at papers with a social dimension while not being limited to language or teaching. In the opening chapter of his title focused on classroom research, Ellis (2012) explicates the scope of the journal he edits.

> *Language Teaching Research* will publish articles related to qualitative or quantitative research in fields of second and foreign language teaching. Articles dealing with the teaching of languages other than English will be welcome. Articles reporting studies of language learning without clear reference to the role of teaching will not be considered. (p. 1)

The editors suggested that, even before writing, authors should think about a particular journal and be familiar with its area of focus and style of writing. Submitting authors should also gain a sense of the content that has been published previously by reading back issues, scanning titles, reviewing abstracts, and searching for key words. One distinguishing feature to be aware of, the panel noted, is whether the journal accepts papers across topics for a more general audience, such as *System*, or if it has a narrower focus requiring additional background knowledge to effectively address the informed readership in that discourse community. At the submission stage, discourse communities include not only eventual readers but the editor and editorial advisory board, the panel of reviewers, authors who have contributed previously, and those scholars and authorities cited in the paper (Thomson & Kamler, 2013). Taking this into account along with the stated aims and purpose which position the journal will allow an author to understand the expectations and the range of choices and alternatives available. The latest annotated list of applied linguistics and English teaching journals and serials compiled by TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) provides a useful resource to compare various publications and may also serve as a guide to brainstorm possible avenues for publication (see Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2014 for a link to this resource).

Paper Types and Research Designs

To participate effectively in the academic publishing community, it is important to understand the precise framing for various types of papers and their research designs. The panel did indicate that empirical studies using either quantitative or qualitative methods would be considered and eventually published. It was also noted that mixed methods combinations, which incorporate both quantitative data (e.g., survey responses from students and their numerical grades) and qualitative data (e.g., interview comments from teachers and their lesson plan notes) have become increasingly popular. Authors were cautioned to ensure that complex statistics are accessible to a wide readership including those who are not specialists (see Language Learning & Technology, 2014, for details on how the online refereed journal *Language Learning & Technology* frames the guidelines for quantitative and qualitative research articles). According to the panel, the proportion of quantitative to qualitative articles seen published in the past issues of a journal is largely a reflection of the ratio of submissions received rather than of any editorial preference for a certain type of study. Shohamy noted that in addition to empirical research, *Language Policy* also publishes theoretical papers. Van Lier stated the *MLJ* also accepts conceptual papers but does not publish "survey papers," which Wagner (2010) summarizes as being different from experimental research in that "the researcher does not manipulate the setting or environment in order to investigate how this affects particular variables or the relationship between variables. . . . Instead the goal of survey research is to get information about learners' characteristics, beliefs, or attitudes" (p. 23). However, as Brown (2001) notes, survey instruments do allow the researcher to operationalize and measure abstract notions and psychological constructs that cannot be observed directly and therefore may be quite suitable for a journal with guidelines for research design different than *MLJ*'s. Clearly, researchers conducting survey-based studies in classrooms in Asia with convenience samples of captive learners would have to identify the international peer-reviewed journals that are open to reports on such investigations, sampling, and research design. Authors should complete this background work before following the procedures to submit their paper to a publication, completed most commonly now via e-mail or an online form.

Targeting Higher-Ranked Journals

Although publishing in prestigious journals may not be specifically required for positions or promotion in every academic context in Asia (see Stapleton, 2011, for a discussion of academic requirements in different contexts), some authors may be seeking to target higher-ranked journals in their field. Rankings can be reflected by the academic pedigree and publication experience of the editorial board and reviewers as well as through the journal's acceptance rates. A quick scan of which publications are cited frequently in other works in a particular discipline can also provide a general idea of the leading sources. Additionally, indices such as the *impact factor* can provide a more objective profile of a journal's position in the academic community. The impact factor is a ranking system used to compare journals in a particular field based upon the number of times an article is cited during the previous two years. As examples, the current impact factors, available on the individual websites for each of the periodicals represented in the 2011 AILA forum, are as follows: *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 1.729; *Language Learning*, 1.433; *Modern Language Journal*, 1.181; *TESOL Quarterly*, 1.000; *System*, 0.889; and *Language Policy*, 0.581, with the larger numbers representing more frequently cited articles. Well-recognized and oft-cited regional periodicals also offer an opportunity to be published in a respected, blind reviewed publication. *RELC Journal*, published on behalf of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) Regional Language Centre, for example, ranks in the top 150 out of almost 600 journals in language and linguistics.

Reviewing and Revision Process

Improving Transparency

One of the main purposes the editors had for holding a session at the AILA Conference was to demystify some of the process for reviewing and revisions in academic publication. Efforts made to share this information more broadly should help authors to prepare better quality submissions for the reviewers and thereby improve the efficiency and turnaround time of the editorial process. Van Lier noted that submission rates at *MLJ* have skyrocketed with the number of *good papers* having more than doubled during his time as editor. Van Lier also commented that as a result of this influx, the number of papers rejected in-house by his editorial team without ever being sent out to a reviewer has increased from 20-25% to around 65%. The two major reasons van Lier stated for papers being rejected are:

1. The paper or research does not make a significant, new contribution to the field for the readership of that journal.
2. The research design is flawed or not solid.

In addition to due diligence by the editors as the first wave of gatekeeping, a principal notion for going with in-house rejections was to avoid irritating the pool of volunteer reviewers by sending them a paper with no chance of getting through to publication. Nevertheless, the goal of van Lier as *MLJ* editor was still to provide the authors of even those papers with no chance of publication a paragraph or two of feedback. These comments would suggest that the effort put in by the author before submitting can influence not only the chance of acceptance but also the quality of the feedback returned with the rejection, which could provide very useful insight into revising the paper for submission elsewhere.

Acceptance Rates

On the matter of acceptance rates, the editors were quite frank in pointing out the standard for top journals in applied linguistics and ELT to be under 10%, with the typical range, including *TESOL Quarterly*, at 5-7%. Since its scope is not limited to papers on teaching and learning English, *MLJ* acceptance rates run as low as 1-2% for its ESL / EFL manuscripts. Shohamy stated from her experience with journals in English for specific purposes that acceptance rates can be as high as 20%. One very enlightening factoid picked out from single-digit rejections rates is the simple math that if a journal publishes 24 papers in a year and their acceptance rate is 8%, then they must review around 300 submissions annually. For an editor or reviewer, managing that quantity of papers each year may seem like a task few would be ready to take on. But as a researcher / practitioner / author looking to submit for publication, that number may fall far short of the imagined total that the top journals receive. Ken Hyland, co-editor of *Applied Linguistics*, identified recently the number of papers reviewed annually for that journal to be around 350, with about 10% going through to publication (personal communication, February 23, 2013). With a clear understanding of these figures, hopeful authors can have a better sense whether publishing in a top-tier, internationally peer-reviewed publication is reasonably within their reach. Of course success in making it into the short list of papers sent out for review still hinges on the quality of the submission.

Response Times

After meeting the guidelines for a targeted publication and being accepted for review, it can then be a matter of waiting for feedback from reviewers. Many authors, depending on the number of works they have already completed or might have in the pipeline, have had the experience of waiting in a state ranging from somewhat anxious to downright desperate on receiving feedback on their submission. Across the panel, the editors indicated that it would take 3-6 months for them to get feedback returned from their reviewers and possibly longer if a reviewer is busy or somewhat delinquent. It should also be noted that periodicals such as these send each submission to at least two reviewers, and even three in the case of *TESOL Quarterly*. The lengthy time frame is a reality associated first with the largely volunteer basis that academic publishing in applied linguistics runs on and second, on the breadth and scope of background positioning expected in papers in this field. Related to this time lag, Krashen (2011), in the conclusion to his paper for the International Symposium on English Teaching in Taiwan, called for shorter papers with less extensive literature reviews and more direct prose than that favored by the humanities, with no need to repeat findings in long conclusions with speculated implications. These suggestions would shorten the time to prepare, review, and publish papers, and even make more space in journals, while also making it easier for junior scholars to prepare papers for publication. While an innovative proposition, it does not yet seem to have taken much foothold in the publishing community. Part of the reason for this could be the disciplinary ideology in the social sciences and the academic identity of its members, who identify themselves and are identified through the language they use (Hyland, 2012), particularly in the forum of published academic discourse.

In terms of the time frame from submission to publication, most of the editors proposed an average of a year or two, depending on the quality of the initial submission, the degree of minor to major revisions expected, and the author's turnaround time in getting the revisions back in for editing. In academic publishing, there is little indication that the time frame for the process will be or can be shortened. A more common occurrence is a backlog of submitted or accepted papers that may cause further delays. Examples reported at the forum include that 200 papers were in for review at *System* and that *Language Learning* has published an extra issue every 2 years. This is likely not good news for authors waiting for accepted papers to be published, however, it was stated that very timely papers of exceptional quality are able to jump the queue. In any event, getting a paper to publication is clearly a lengthy process that requires advance planning and consideration of the lead time needed to secure publications in time for job hunting, promotion, or covering output requirements for research grants.

Quality in Academic Writing for Publication

One of the obvious functions of the editorial process is to maintain the quality standards of the publication and the content it provides to its readers. As mentioned, primary reasons for rejection include the lack of a novel contribution to the field, poor research design, or inattention to the submission guidelines. Novice writers or those writing in their second language can feel reassured by the editors' comments that if (a) the study has merit and (b) the guidelines and format were followed, then weaknesses in grammar, punctuation, or paragraph structuring were not stated as reasons for initial rejection. The responsibility to get the paper ready for submission does however rest with the author and requires meeting the standards of academic language for publication. Therefore, it was clearly stated that authors writing in their second language should have their academic writing checked by a proficient writer familiar with discourse in their field. Reviewers and editors could then act as peers and mentors to advise authors on revisions to papers that have already addressed basic language concerns. Larsen-Freeman recounted that in her time as editor for *Language Learning*, more papers from native speakers were rejected than from second, foreign, or other language users. The essential math behind that statement was simply that more papers were received from native speakers and subsequently a higher percentage of the papers published (and rejected) came from that group. She did state, encouragingly, to the largely non-native-English-speaker audience at the forum, that it is important to *participate* by submitting articles. (To assist new authors in improving their academic writing quality, in addition to a series of webcasts [e.g., *Introduction to Scholarly Publishing* and *How to Get Published*, Elsevier Publishing Connect, n.d.], Elsevier, which publishes *System*, offers an English language editing service with fees quoted online at http://webshop.elsevier.com/ languageediting/.)

Ongoing Changes in Academic Publishing

Digital Object Identifier (DOI) System

The editors also took time to outline some of the developments in the field of academic publishing. Changes in publishing do not only affect authors and submissions but also readers and their interaction when searching for and accessing content. Gardner and Inger (n.d.) have conducted research focused on three main forms of reader behavior with respect to online journals, including "citation searching, core journal browsing, and subject searching" (p. 8). Of particular interest to authors are innovations such as the digital object identifier (DOI) system of the International DOI Foundation (IDF) whose website, http://www.doi.org/, offers links to handbooks, FAQs, and factsheets. In brief, the DOI provides "a generic framework for managing identification of content over digital networks" (International DOI Foundation [IDF], 2013, 1.2 History). In practice, a DOI is "a unique alphanumeric string assigned by a registration agency . . . to identify content and provide a persistent link to its location on the Internet" (VandenBos, 2010, p. 189). This system for managing intellectual property and information on digital networks is coordinated by the IDF, which was formed in 1997 as a joint initiative of trade associations in the publishing industry (IDF, 2013, 1.2 History). Wiley-Blackwell, which houses *MLJ*, *TESOL Quarterly*, *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, and *Language Learning*, uses its EarlyView online system to enable readers to cite and access information via DOI from full-text, peer-reviewed, copy-edited articles as soon as they are accepted ahead of hard copy printed editions. Springer, which publishes *Language Policy*, has its own Online First system where, although no volume or page numbers are given until the article is published in print, the article is considered accepted and able to be cited and searched for online by DOI.

Predatory Publishing

While many people look at the term open-access with quite favorable reactions, Beall (2012) brings up the topic of *predatory publishing*, where solicitations are made for authors to submit an article promising a very rapid turnaround but which involves the author paying to have their paper published. Brown and Cook (2013) looked at seven e-mail solicitations by such publishers and found a set of common characteristics, including: (a) appeal to legitimacy with ISSN (International Standard Serial Number) / indexes, (b) mention of peer review, (c) inner-circle country affiliation (e.g., the United States, Canada, or United Kingdom), (d) multidisciplinary scope, and (e) a very fast turnaround. They also noted several cautionary red flags in the e-mail messages in terms of obscure editorial roles and affiliations, language errors, flattery, and open invitations to become a reviewer. Hidden in the e-mail texts, webpage tabs, or links was the issue of fees charged to the author to be published. Clearly technology and improved reach and access may not always be used in a positive or reputable way. Yet authors doing due diligence and avoiding any panic to publish urgently should be able to effectively avoid such unscrupulous options.

Beall maintains a readily accessible monthly blog listing potentially predatory publishers at http://scholarlyoa.com/ publishers/.

In Parting

Drawing from a panel discussion with international journal editors on getting published in applied linguistics and ELT held at the AILA 2011 World Congress in Beijing, this paper has looked at general guidelines for academic submissions to peer-reviewed journals. The hurdles, time lags, rejection rates, and other challenges notwithstanding, the experienced editors who hosted the forum did say that they want authors to submit their papers. The editors also stated that while rejection is painful, they too had all experienced it (and still are!) and that having an article declined is a natural part of the professional development process. Wise words of counsel included understanding that acceptance with no revisions of a first submission very rarely happens, even for experienced researchers and authors. Rejection should therefore not be taken personally or too negatively, since in the blind review process, the person deciding to reject the submission does not know if it belongs to a beginning researcher or a leading figure in the field. Furthermore, the feedback given in reviews can provide an opportunity for growth and offer some direction toward improving the paper to resubmit it elsewhere. In addition to changes through technology, the recent growth in the number of authors active in language teaching and learning studies has been matched by an increase in the number of publications available – with all of these looking for papers to publish. In summary, the task of academic publishing for language teachers and researchers comes down to authors and editors finding a match of article quality and context in a mutually, co-created process of professional, yet highly subjective practice.

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Appendix
FAQ – Publishing in Applied Linguistics Journals – AILA, Beijing, 2011

1. How do I select an appropriate journal for my paper?
2. Procedures for submitting a paper. Are there guidelines?
3. Can I submit to more than one journal?
4. Can I submit a chapter from my dissertation?
5. How long will it take before getting feedback?
6. What is the average time from submission to publication?
7. What are the average acceptance rates?
8. How does the reviewing and revision process work?
9. What if my draft paper is published on my website, or in departmental working papers?
10. What do I do if my academic writing skills are not very good?
11. What are the policies regarding duplication and plagiarism?
12. Please explain the EarlyView system and the online DOI date.

The language learning and teaching contexts in the Asian region are as varied and complex as the countries encompassed in this part of the world. Each context is defined by the history and culture of each specific country and the region as a whole and the language policies and languages involved, including a myriad of local, indigenous, colonial, and "global" languages.

In response to the ever-changing and challenging linguistic landscape in this area, in 2010, IDP Education (Cambodia) established *Language Education in Asia (LEIA)* as a forum to highlight and exchange research and insights into language education in this dynamic region.

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