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## Forward

Welcome to the June 2011 Issue of AEJ. We are happy to present another very varied issue with contributions from a broad variety of locations and authors across Asia. In the first paper, John Adamson, Howard Brown & Naoki Fujimoto-Adamson (*Archiving Self Access: Methodological Considerations*) provide an interesting illustration of an ethnographic approach to investigating a Self Access Learning Center in a Japanese University, using qualitative interviews and conversational narratives. Among the advantages of this approach is the provision of voice and agency to local stakeholders whose voice might often not be heard. The study also addresses the continuous improvement of practice.

Deepti Gupta and Getachew Seyoum Woldemariam (*The Influence of Motivation and Attitude on Writing Strategy Use of Undergraduate EFL Students: Quantitative and qualitative perspectives*) examine the influence of motivation and attitude on the writing strategy use of undergraduate EFL students at Jimma University, Ethiopia. They found that motivated students demonstrated a high level of enjoyment, confidence, perceived ability, and positive attitude towards effective teaching methods of writing and employed writing strategies most frequently. They also found a link between high writing strategy use and effort, high scores and early support and encouragement from significant others.

In another paper focusing on writing in a neighboring country, Ahmed Mahmoud Aliweh

*(The Effect of Electronic Portfolios on Promoting Egyptian EFL College Students' Writing Competence and Autonomy)* examined the effect of electronic portfolios on enhancing Egyptian EFL college students' writing competence and autonomy. Interestingly, while Aliweh could not identify significant effects on students' writing competence and learning autonomy, he still provides a convincing argumentation for both using Electronic Portfolios and for investigating their effect differently.

Wenxia Zhang, Meihua Liu, Shan Zhao, and Qiong Xie suggest that “although numerous studies have been conducted on language learning strategy use and its relationships with individual learner characteristics, not much research has been done in the area of English test-taking strategy use, which merits further investigation in that it may greatly influence learners' test performance.” In *English Test-taking Strategy Use and Students' Test Performance*, Zhang et. al. report on a study in a Chinese university of English test-taking strategy use and its effect on students' test performance. They find that students' test performance was significantly correlated with compensation and social strategies and that metacognitive strategies were particularly influential.

A regular contributor to AEJ from Oman over the years, Mohamed El-Okda (*Developing Pragmatic Competence: Challenges and Solutions*) investigates perceived challenges faced by teachers finding that they face difficulties in this area in related to their pre-service education program, in-service training, textbooks, teacher guides, tests and opportunities for learners' exposure to natural language use outside the classroom. Arguing that pragmatic competence is both teachable and testable, El-Okda suggests strategies for overcoming those difficulties.

In *Discourse Markers in the ESL Classroom: A Survey of Teachers' Attitudes*, Loretta Fung explores the pedagogic values of discourse markers, considering the attitudes of Hong Kong teachers towards them. Fung concludes that they are underused in existing teaching materials and teaching. Fung identifies the need to develop learners' linguistic awareness of DMs, to modify existing teaching materials and prepare learners to develop more effective communication by learning how to use them across contexts.

In *the Relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy and their Pedagogical Success in Language Institutes*, Afsaneh Ghanizadeh and Fatemeh Moafian, examine the relationship between EFL teachers' self-efficacy and their pedagogical success in Language Institutes and the relationship between age, teaching experience and self-efficacy. The survey-based study revealed a significant relationship between teachers' success and their self-efficacy and between teachers' self-efficacy, teaching experience and age.

Hui-Ju Wu (*Anxiety and Reading Comprehension Performance in English as a Foreign Language*) investigates the relationship between language anxiety, reading anxiety and reading performance. The results indicated that lower LA and RA go with higher performance. Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment can therefore be expected to help improve students' reading comprehension performance. Wu also found that coping with RA appears to require more time than coping with LA.

Manfred Wu (*Learners' Beliefs and the Use of Metacognitive Language-learning Strategies of Chinese-speaking ESL Learners*) investigated the relationship between

beliefs about language learning and the use of the metacognitive language-learning strategies in a vocational education context in Hong Kong. Integrative Motivation and Language and Communication Strategies were found to have the strongest positive relationships with MCLLS use. It was also found that Self-efficacy and Learning and Communication Strategies were good predictors of the use of many MCLLSs. The importance of boosting self-efficacy (whether for students or teachers) is therefore once again underlined in this same issue.

Saad Torki (*Teachers' intention vs. learners' attention: Do learners attend to what teachers want them to attend to in an EFL vocabulary class?*) investigates the relationship between teachers' intention and learner's attention in a vocabulary class. The study adopted a multi-instrumental approach, relying on uptake to obtain strong evidence of intake. The results showed that learners appear to focus on meaning at the expense of spelling and pronunciation in this context. Torki proposes a more holistic approach to lexis which includes greater attention to form (pronunciation and spelling).

Yuko Yamashita and David Hirsh (*Second Language and Cognition: Conceptual Categorization of Count/mass Nouns in English with Japanese University Students*) explore count/mass noun distinction with Japanese students. The study examines the notion of cognitive individuation (count nouns are conceptualized in the mind of the speaker as individuated while mass nouns are not). The study also provides insights into effective ways to help students make count/mass noun distinctions in English.

In the final paper, Bee-Hoon Tan (*Innovating Writing Centers and Online Writing Labs*

*outside North America*) discusses two successful centers in North America and surveys the emergence of writing centers in Asia. The study highlights common difficulties such as countering concepts of writing centers as simply places where a client can go for proofreading and grammar correction.

## **Archiving Self-Access: Methodological considerations**

**John Adamson, Howard Brown and Naoki Fujimoto-Adamson**

*University of Niigata Prefecture, Japan*

### **Bio Data:**

John Adamson received his Doctorate of Education from Leicester University. He teaches English for Academic Purposes at the University of Niigata Prefecture in Japan. His research has focused on interview discourse, learning strategies, Teacher Development, and Business English methodology. His current interest is in the area of ‘interdisciplinarity’.

Howard Brown is an assistant professor at the University of Niigata Prefecture in Japan. His teaching interests are in English for Academic Purposes and Content Based Instruction. His current research interests include issues in self access and Content and Language Integrated Learning. He is also involved in faculty development.

Naoki Fujimoto-Adamson is currently completing her Ed.D. thesis from Leicester University, U.K., on team-teaching in Japanese junior high schools. She works at the Self-Access Learning Center (SALC) in University of Niigata Prefecture. Her research interests are in the fields of team-teaching, and the history of ELT in Japan.

### **Abstract**

This study has illustrated how a long-term ethnographic approach of archiving data and profiling its key participants represents an effective means of revealing perceptions of a new Self-Access Learning Center (SALC) within a university in Japan. This on-going process of conducting qualitative interviews and conversational narratives with center staff, accompanied by student questionnaires, has required methodological reduction of the large amount of ensuing data. Such a process is achieved by a combination of

crystallization of themes emerging from dialogues, and analysis of questionnaire data from various perspectives. This methodology reflects the researchers' wishes to investigate the self-access center where they work in a manner more locally situated, co-constructive and, importantly, in one which accords voice and agency to peripheral SALC stakeholders. As a study for the purpose of the continuous improvement of practice, the triangulated methodology employed to gather and analyze data can be adopted by other self-access centers seeking a rich, diverse body of evidence and an analytical framework to respond to the pedagogical and institutional environment where they operate.

**Keywords:** Self-Access Learning, Methodology, Ethnography, Archive

## **Introduction**

By investigating the growth of a self-access learning center (SALC) in a Japanese university, we as center staff and committee members seek to illustrate in this study the ethnographic methodology implemented over a 2-year period from 2009 to 2010. The methodological stance is that longitudinal, qualitative research undertaken by three central figures in the running of the center and involving various stakeholders represents an effective means to investigate and understand shifting views of self-access and institutional conditions surrounding the center.

We start the study with an overview of the context in which SALC was established and profiles of the stakeholders using and managing the center. Following this, the methodological approach in the creation of a triangulated 'archive' of data is outlined. In keeping with the centrality of ethnographic principles in the research process, we then critically describe the methodology itself. Thereafter, selected archived findings are presented in order to illustrate the importance of using ethnographic techniques to understand diversity and shift over time of themes central to a growing SALC. Finally, we state conclusions and implications for the methodological approach.

### *Context of the research*

The context of this study focuses on the history of SALC, the institution, and the stakeholders – the committee created to direct the center’s operation, students who use it, university management, and non-institutional bodies at the regional and central governmental levels. As both committee members and researchers, we believe that this rich description provides a means to understand more clearly the total “ecological microsystem” (Creese & Martin, 2008) surrounding SALC.

The university was established in April 2009 and was previously a two-year college with courses in various fields, including English Studies. Upon becoming a university, fields were expanded and English Studies was removed from the curriculum. Instead, English was announced as the intended medium of instruction for many content courses, hence requiring a full first year of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction to 160 students in International Studies and Regional Development (ISR/D), and 80 students in Human Life Studies (HLS – including nutrition studies and a pre-school teacher’s course). The EAP programme offers students instruction in reading, writing, speaking, and lecture listening and note-taking. SALC was established in April 2009 as part of the change to university status and a SALC Committee was immediately set up to direct its operation. The committee meets every few months and has 13 members, the largest in the university, the majority of which are English language instructors and SALC mentors. Three part-time mentors staff the center in shifts from 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday. Their role is to maintain the center and provide advice to students on language learning strategies, resources and events in the center.

SALC itself is a large hall with 10 internet-linked computers, a reception, tables, chairs, a sofa and a carpet area. It has full graded reader collections (including audio book CDs)

from most major publishers, DVDs, grammar reference materials, games, and a large number of paperbacks and reference materials linked to subjects taught on the ISRD and HLS curricula. Some Chinese, Korean and Russian self-study materials are also available as those languages are also offered as options from the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Self-study sites are also bookmarked on the computers for English and Chinese studies.

SALC's day-to-day operations are funded by the university, which is a regional government institution, and budgets have been allocated for its materials from the university itself and the central Japanese government (the Ministry of Education). Furniture and other infrastructure expenses are funded directly by the regional government.

Use of SALC English materials (graded readers and audio CDs) is integrated with the EAP curriculum as taught by six expatriate teachers. Of the six Japanese teachers of English, one has integrated his syllabus with SALC materials usage. No integration with content teachers in the ISRD and HLS faculties has been made. As EAP is obligatory for first year students, requiring up to 16 hours per week of study, the vast majority of visitors are freshmen. Second year students are only required to take five credits of English classes a year, most of which are taught by Japanese faculty members, so considerably fewer sophomores use the center for English self-study, although students taking Chinese, Korean and Russian do visit to borrow self-study materials in those languages. Use of self-study materials for those languages has not been linked to evaluation in the corresponding syllabi.

There are various other ways in which the center has been integrated with the EAP programme taught by expatriate teachers. Workshops are held with a view to focus on areas which the mentors and teachers feel represent deficits in students' competencies, for

example, process writing. In an attempt to involve teachers of other languages and subjects in SALC, mini lectures are given by some of those teachers who are willing and able to introduce their subject areas and their experiences of learning English. These lectures have been well-attended and popular.

In this study, an archive of one-to-one semi-structured interviews, informal group “conversational narratives” (CNs) (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p.3) and questionnaire findings has been compiled. We have adopted this mixture of methods in consideration of our dual role as practitioners and researchers, two stances which inform each other and benefit from multiple perspectives of SALC usage, both in terms of accessing a wide range of participant voices, and also allowing those participants various means to express their voices. This process is one which firstly regards narratives and our own experiences as valid forms of data in that they provide insightful evidence for research purposes (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). Additionally, our method of data collection reflects and enriches the democratic practice of the SALC committee in which co-construction of ideas through dialogue is considered professional practice in its own right.

Every few months the researchers have met to discuss SALC’s progress in the one-to-one interviews and group CNs, all of which have been recorded and summarized. These participants have pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. To aid the reader in understanding the role of participants as a key part of the context of this ethnographic study, and their profiles are given in brief below.

### *Participant profiles*

**Peter:** Peter has been the head of the SALC Committee since its opening and reports to Mr. Tanaka. He has experience in setting up small extensive reading self-access centers

(in Japan), medium-sized self-access centers (in Thailand) and has visited other centers in Europe and Asia. As committee head, his role is to co-ordinate the SALC operation, particularly with regard to budgets allocated to the center. He is a doctor in his late-40s, a UK national and is keen on ethnographic, qualitative research.

**Paul:** Paul is a committee member and has experience teaching in Turkey and Japan. He has set up small, non-staffed self-access centers in other universities and is familiar with computerized systems of monitoring student self-study. He is a Canadian national, qualified with an MA and is in his early 40s. He is interested in perceptions of self-access and the role of mentors.

**Lee:** Lee is a committee member from Singapore with various experiences of self-access in Japan and Singapore. He is a strong advocate of extensive reading and learner autonomy. He is a doctor in his early 40s. He conducts research in the field of language policy and is responsible for SALC promotion.

**Sayaka:** Sayaka, a Japanese graduate of the institution when it was a college and in her early 20s, worked for one year as a mentor in SALC before moving on to a full-time teaching position elsewhere. She graduated from an American university (an undergraduate degree in second language acquisition), but had little teaching experience before becoming a mentor. She was instrumental in setting up and promoting the center.

**Keiko:** Keiko has been a mentor in SALC since its opening and is seen as the ‘senior’ mentor. She is Japanese, in her early 40s and has extensive experience teaching English at junior high schools in Japan. She has an MA from a UK university and is studying for a doctorate. She has experience using self-access in large UK universities and also helped set up a small extensive reading center in a Japanese college before becoming a mentor. Her specific role in SALC is to manage the day-to-day budget for the mentors’

administrative needs and make orders for resources.

**Simon:** Simon is a young American mentor who joined SALC in its second year of operation. He recently graduated from a university in America, but was brought up in Japan. He is multilingual (bilingual in English and Japanese) and also speaks some Chinese. He takes care of the computer systems in SALC and is responsible for coordination between teachers of Chinese, Korean and Russian and SALC.

**Rika:** Rika also joined SALC as a mentor in its second year. She recently came back from university in Canada where she graduated with a BA and has a teaching certificate in TESOL. She organizes SALC events and is responsible for coordinating the duties of SALC student assistants.

**Mr. Tanaka:** Mr. Tanaka is the administrative manager of SALC and is a regional government official working at the university. He is head of the mentors but does not manage their day-to-day activities, preferring to leave that to the SALC committee to determine. His role as manager is to allocate budgets and evaluate the center to report to the university management, regional government administration and Ministry of Education. With an MBA from an English-medium university in Japan, he speaks English well and is a strong advocate of self-access in the university.

With this contextualization of SALC and its participants, we now turn to the methodological approach employed in this study.

## **Methodology**

The triangulated methodology draws upon an archive of one-to-one interviews and group “conversational narratives” (CNs) (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p.3) with various SALC stakeholders (committee members and management), along with a large body of findings

from questionnaires completed by students (see Appendix 1 for the questionnaire). Among the committee members involved in the study, all were encouraged to keep journals to record their feelings about SALC over time, especially to note any critical incidents affecting their views and to use in interviews or CNs. The concept of CN was used when the group met to discuss issues as the agenda was not pre-determined. For one-to-one interviews, themes were negotiated beforehand so that preparation could be made, for example, by recalling notes kept in the participants' journals. The schedule of data collected is illustrated chronologically in table 1.

<b>Time/Method</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Theme</b>
1. 1 <sup>st</sup> November/ CN	4 Committee members (CM)	Mentors
2. 2 <sup>nd</sup> November/CN	5 Committee members	Half-year review
3. February/Questionnaire	1 <sup>st</sup> year students	SALC use in first year
4. March/CN	4 Committee members	Questionnaire /year review
5. April/Interview	1 CM & office manger	Images/management
6. May/CN	3 Committee members	First year review
7. 1 <sup>st</sup> June/Interview	1 mentor	Images/curriculum/improvement
8. 2 <sup>nd</sup> June/Interview	1 mentor	Images/curriculum/improvement

**Table 1: Schedule of data collection**

This represents the archive of CNs, interviews and a questionnaire over the 2009-2010 period. The data is qualitative and involves much reflection on SALC's progress and future directions within the interviews and CNs. In this sense, we see some resonance to studies into autonomous learning in Finland by Kjisik (2007 in Gardner ed.) in which an action research approach was adopted and in Hong Kong by Morrison (2008) in which the voices of a range of stakeholders was regarded as important. The process in this study

of creating an archive of data is epistemologically ethnographic in that it focuses on the position of a SALC within a larger university community and on its participants over time. It also places the process of understanding shifting contexts and critical views towards SALC at the center of the researchers' considerations. Blommaert and Jie (2010, p. 10) see this process as the "product" of ethnographic research since the archive "documents the researcher's own journey through knowledge".

### *Interviews and conversational narratives*

As a large amount of recorded data was collected for the archive, data reduction was necessary. In the analysis of CNs and interviews, a three-stage process of data reduction was carried out based on an adapted "phenomenological reduction" (Hycner, 1985; Kvale, 1996). In the first stage, it was noted from the audio recordings what views were expressed (and by whom) for each topic under discussion, whether relevant to the topic or not. New themes that had not originally been predetermined were also added to the list of topics. For the second stage of reduction, "natural meaning units" or "central themes" (Kvale 1996, p. 195) were identified which were directly relevant to the topics, termed by Hycner (1985, as cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 294) as "crystallizing" each theme's meaning, and included eliminating irrelevant data. After "crystallization" was completed for each interview, a final stage of analysis compared and contrasted the views expressed across interviews and between participants to ascertain what shifts in opinions had occurred over time.

Interviews were based upon a loose, semi-structured schedule of themes conveyed to all participants beforehand, but were also open to both participants' topic extensions and deviations (Drever, 1995). In this sense, all interviews were thematically open to

negotiation and “co-constructed” (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995, p. 171) between participants. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) see this as “active” interviewing (p. 114). In reality, the open-ended nature of the interviews and frequent deviation from any predetermined themes resulted in long interviews which more resembled the group CNs in which participants encouraged each other to jointly build mini narratives without a strict, pre-determined agenda. The interviews and CNs attempted to explore and extend themes in a reflexive manner between participants. These themes were often indexed to unrecorded and spontaneous conversations which arose on a day-to-day basis out of participants’ readings and critical incidents. We believed the creation of rapport was essential to achieve this joint meaning-making and so aligned the interviews and CNs with Alvesson’s (2003) and Roulston’s (2010, p. 217) “romantic conception of interviewing” where themes are drawn out in the form of mini narratives. Additionally, the process of participation in both interviews and CNs could be seen as beneficial for personal development and “transformative” (Roulston, 2010, p. 220) in that, through the dialogic process, ideas and assumptions about self-access were frequently challenged, and new insights were formed during the discussions themselves, rather than pre-determined ideas simply being reported. Baker and Johnson (1998, p. 241) actually see such interaction as “situated professional practice” in its own right, since it creates a healthy opportunity to “share moral ground” (Baker & Johnson, 1998, p. 231), create rapport and share stories related to practice (Ellis & Berger, 2003). In effect, the discourse emanating from interviews and CNs formed two “cartographies of communicability” (Briggs, 2007 as cited in Talmy, 2010, p.130) which conceptualize how the interactions can be viewed as “social practice” (stakeholders meeting to talk about SALC as collegial, collaborative meaning making) and as “research instruments” (methods in which data can be

generated) (Talmy, 2010, p. 129). All one-to-one interviews and CNs were audio recorded in SALC itself or at a conference venue.

### *Questionnaires*

At the end of the first academic year we gave out questionnaires to all university students who had access to SALC. The two fields of study, ISRD (International Studies and Regional Development) and HLS (Human Life Studies) had various levels of classes, as shown in table 2. Institutional consent was granted and the objectives of the study were explained to the students by all class teachers. Some teachers allocated class time to complete the questionnaire, whilst others chose to allow students to complete it in their free time. Of the 240 students enrolled in ISRD and HLS, 180 students were available for the study, among which 114 returned their questionnaires, representing a 63% return rate.

	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>HLS 80 students</b>	1 class: 18 returns	2 classes:39 returns	no classes taught
<b>ISRD 160 students</b>	1 class: 17 returns	3 classes: 27 returns	1 class: 13 returns

**Table 2: Questionnaire returns**

The questionnaire was devised in consultation between mentors and teachers working for the SALC committee and comprised ten questions on six areas of enquiry as represented in table 3:

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Views of SALC (room and materials):	Questions 1 -3
Views of mentors:	Questions 4- 5
Reasons for using SALC and personal use:	Questions 6- 7
Teacher engagement with SALC:	Question 8

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Metaphors of SALC:	Question 9
Suggestions for improvement:	Questions 10

**Table 3: Questionnaire themes**

There were two final sections for open-ended responses; one asking students to add a question that they feel should have been asked and answer it, and the other inviting students to write any free comments. A mixture of open-ended and closed questions was used which were qualitatively analyzed. We invited students to complete the questionnaires anonymously in either English or Japanese and informed them that there was no obligation to participate in the study.

The questionnaire data from the 114 students was in paper form and collected from class teachers in the last two weeks of the first year of study. Analysis of returns was conducted in Japanese by Japanese speakers and in English by a native English speaker. This involved identification of the most or least commonly-occurring words or phrases such as ‘informative’, ‘kind’, ‘helpful’ or ‘good’. In questions for which responses could be counted, numbers were totaled for classes, levels and fields but then brought together to constitute generalizations such as ‘most students at the basic levels in the HLS field’ or ‘some students’, ‘a few students’ or ‘one student’. It was thought among the researchers that data quantitatively analyzed to produce findings represented in detailed percentages would be less informative or meaningful to us.

Following the basic concept of data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1984), the analytical framework for this questionnaire data was formulated to meet local needs of revealing student perceptions of SALC at multiple levels. The returns were analyzed according to the following scheme of data reduction in four stages:

### Stage 1: Individual class analysis

Returns were analyzed from the eight classes revealing patterns (most common responses) and idiosyncrasies (least common but informative responses) within classes.

### Stage 2: Level analysis for two fields

Findings from each level were compiled in separate fields, ISRD (Basic, Intermediate and Advanced) and HLS (Basic and Advanced). At this stage, patterns started to emerge at different levels.

### Stage 3: Combining levels across the fields

Findings from the three levels were then combined across the HLS and ISRD (with the exception of the advanced level which existed for the ISRD faculty only). This revealed some commonalities across the two fields, yet care was taken to note important differences between the fields if they occurred.

### Stage 4: Revisiting the individual classes

To make sure that important results had not been missed in the subsequent stages of findings, individual class returns were then redistributed among the researchers, each receiving a set of returns that they had not originally analyzed. This enabled us to make the analysis more reliable in that initially missed, yet potentially informative; responses could then be reintegrated in the findings at stages 2 and 3 respectively. In fact, some insightful findings were successfully reintegrated in this manner.

The four stages adopted in this data reduction scheme provide multi-perspectives on the same body of data: from the individual class, individual fields, and levels of classes across the fields. These perspectives serve not simply to inform the researchers educationally, but also equip us in appropriate dissemination of the findings to the various stakeholders in the university and beyond who need different types of detail on

SALC's effectiveness.

### **Archived findings**

The methodological approach in this study leads to the formulation of data which needs to be interpreted within the context and setting. For the purpose of this study, selected findings from only one major theme within the archives are given to illustrate the diverse and shifting nature of opinions. They are presented in a variety of forms which constitute the ethnographic procedure: key group conversational narrative (CN) findings in their same conversational format to reflect the co-constructed nature of many decisions: interview and questionnaire findings in summarised form. Participant pseudonyms and positions as described in their participant profiles earlier are given in brief in table 4 below.

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Peter	Committee head (UK, English teacher)
Paul	Committee member (Canada, English teacher)
Lee	Committee member (Singapore, English teacher)
Sayaka	Committee member (Japanese mentor for one year in 2009)
Keiko	Committee member (Japanese mentor from 2009 to present)
Simon	Committee member (American mentor from 2010 to present)
Rika	Committee member (Japanese mentor from 2010 to present)
Mr. Tanaka	SALC manager (Japanese regional government/ university staff)

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**Table 4: Participants**

An example of one theme emerging over the period 2009 to 2010 was that of language policy for SALC. Below key findings from the archives are presented chronologically and are followed by a discussion which both summarises the opinions expressed and links them to key literature in the field.

## ***Language policy***

*2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2009: CN - extract*

Lee: One committee member suggested strict guidelines on language policy, even asking students to leave SALC if they speak Japanese. Many felt this to be too strict since most students come from non-English speaking school environments.

Keiko: I was one of the objectors to this proposal as my experience of language center use in the UK was one of flexibility in code switching.

Lee: Initially our policies were based on a view of one homogenous student group. However, the diversity among them is fairly wide as we have groups of students doing different programmes. There was also diversity as how faculty members perceived the students.

*February, 2010: student questionnaire - summary*

Some students' feedback stated that the loose language policy should be more strictly enforced as many students appeared to make little effort to practise English in the center.

*May, 2010: CN with mentors and other committee members - summary*

Keiko reaffirmed her image of self-access as one influenced by her own experiences in UK universities which employed multilingual mentors. This made those centers the scenes of linguistic code-switching, rather than of the strict monolingual language policies in other self-access centers. Peter and Keiko referred to this as “translanguaging” where the ability to switch languages between L1 and L2 is regarded as a linguistic competence in its own right because the L1 is valued, not censored.

*June, 2010: Interview with a new mentor, Simon - summary*

Simon encouraged students to use English, but would not ban Japanese. He felt code-switching was linguistically beneficial for both students and himself when giving advice.

More important than a strict 'English only' policy was the "cost/benefit" idea (persuading students that they should think of the costs of their study to get as much benefit as possible).

*June, 2010: Interview with a new mentor, Rika - summary*

Rika was unsure how strict a language policy should be enforced and felt that a positive "cool" "knock-on effect" occurs when students speak English in the vicinity of less confident students.

### ***Discussion of language policy***

Archive findings appear to show that the initial 'English only' policy has been superseded by the realization that some use of the students' L1 is beneficial when talking about language. This "translanguaging" (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 105) suggests that code-switching is recognized as a third competence (after competence in L1 and L2) among mentors and committee members. However, there remains the important issue of how students themselves regard use of the L1 as some findings illustrate objections to a loose language policy. "Parallel monolingualism" (Heller, 1998) or the "two solitudes" (Cummins, 2005, 2008) approach to language acquisition would appear to be more embedded in student beliefs about language learning than among committee members. The new mentor's (Rika) comments about making English usage "cool" among student peer groups, coupled with the other new mentor's (Simon) policy of reminding students of the "cost/benefit" of using as much English as possible both represent perhaps a more persuasive approach of achieving more English use in the center. Although, in principle, code-switching is seen by committee members as a valid 'third competence', feelings of resistance to L1 use, "guilt" (Setati et al, 2002, p. 147) and lack of awareness of

translanguaging as a bone fide skill remain possible obstacles to the multilingual space as envisaged by the elder mentor, Keiko.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

The purpose of this study has been to represent the methodological approach so as to inform researchers involved in developing a new self-access learning center in a university context. The longitudinal and qualitative process employed is ethnographic in nature as it regards context as central and ever-shifting. Static approaches to assessing a center's performance are rejected in this study since they do not account for such longitudinal changes. Instead, the diversity of views is better represented by carefully collected archives of discussions (semi-structured interviews and CNs), and questionnaire data representing views of a range of stakeholders who impact the center's development.

We have argued that within the process of gathering data, particularly in the semi-structured interviews and CNs, various purposes can be cited for talking with stakeholders. One is to gain access to opinions and beliefs over time to create a body of data, meaning that the discussions themselves are "research instruments" (Talmy, 2010, p. 129); the other is to create sites of "social practice" (Talmy, 2010, p. 129) in which participants co-construct beliefs through mini narratives in a collegial manner. This represents a form of professional development at the workplace which can be regarded as empowering for participants who may normally feel excluded, or marginalized in the organization at large.

The archives in this ethnographic approach have been presented in chronological format for the purpose of illustrating potential shifts of views over time as well as how participants express a diversity of opinions. This representation is an important exercise

for the SALC committee to engage in regularly so that the archive itself is constantly being reviewed, revisited and challenged. Findings themselves are localised to this particular university context, yet the methodology outlined here may serve as a useful basis for other self-access centers in monitoring growth over time.

Implications for this study suggest that an expansion of methods may benefit the effectiveness of the archives. A greater emphasis on autoethnographic journal keeping can provide more individual records for public use in the archives, rather than private use alone. Importantly, as the center operates within a larger university organization which is itself overseen financially and evaluated by regional and national governments, access to stakeholder voices outside of the committee and student body can provide wider perspectives on how the center is positioned and viewed. As internal evaluation by the committee has adopted this current ethnographic stance, the possibly more financially-oriented, quantitative evaluation criteria of the university management, regional and national governments also need to be taken into account to supplement the qualitative criteria of the committee.

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## **Appendix 1: English questionnaire**

### **1.What do you think of SALC?**

- The room? (Space, enough seats ..)
- The posters (interesting? Informative?)

### **2.What do you think of the resources in SALC?**

- Books/CDs/DVDs?
- PCs , DVD players?
- Games,?
- Grammar materials, testing materials etc?
- Magazines?

### **3.What do you think of the activities/events?**

- With teachers (including the lecture series)
- Workshops
- Festivals/celebrations
- Movie nights

### **4.Did you ask the mentors for advice? (Yes/No)**

If yes, what did you often ask?

If no, why not?

### **5.How was the advice from mentors?**

- About how to use SALC
- About language and language learning

### **6.Why did you go to SALC? (Mark O as many times as you wish)**

- My teacher told me ( )
- SALC is a good place to study ( )
- SALC is comfortable ( )
- SALC is a good social place ( )
- Other reasons:

### **7. How about your use?**

- How easy or difficult is it to use SALC?
- How often do you visit SALC per week? (Mark O)
  1. Once a week ( )
  2. A few times a week ( )
  3. A few times a month ( )
  4. A few times a semester ( )
  5. Never ( )
- How long do you spend each visit? (Mark O)
  1. Less than 10 minutes ( )
  2. 11 – 30 minutes ( )
  3. 31 – 60 minutes ( )
  4. More than 60 minutes ( )
- What do you usually use SALC for? (Mark O)
  1. Lecture activity? ( )
  2. ER/EL? ( )
  3. Games? ( )
  4. Grammar? ( )
  5. Testing preparation? ( )
  6. Events? ( )
  7. Talk with friends? ( )
  8. To pick up materials to study at home? ( )
  9. Group projects? ( )
  10. Watch DVDs? ( )
- Do you study by yourself or with friends?

**8. How about your teachers?**

- Do they encourage you to use SALC? (Yes/No)
- Do they encourage you to study independently? (Yes/No)
- Is SALC integrated with classes? (Mark O)
  - No ( )
  - A little ( )
  - Enough ( )
  - Too much ( )

**9. How do you see SALC? As a....** (Mark O as many times as you wish)

- Self-study center? ( )
- Homework center? ( )
- Place to meet friends? ( )
- Library? ( )
- Another CALL? ( )
- Advice center? ( )
- Another ?

**10. Suggestions for improvement:**

- More materials? Which?
- More technology? Which?
- More events/activities? Which?
- Other suggestions?

**11. What question(s) did we forget to ask you? If you have a question, please answer it.**

Question(s)

Answer(s)

**Other comments:**

## **The Influence of Motivation and Attitude on Writing Strategy Use of Undergraduate EFL Students: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of motivation and attitude on the writing strategy use of undergraduate EFL students at Jimma University, Ethiopia. The students are required to develop their writing skills to meet academic requirements and future demands of writing in professional settings. Data was collected from respondents about their motivation and attitude, writing ability and writing strategy use using

questionnaires, proficiency test and interviews (n=680, 668 and 46 respectively). Analyses and summaries of the data were done using quantitative and qualitative techniques. Results obtained indicated that undergraduate students with strong motivation demonstrated high level of enjoyment, confidence, perceived ability, and positive attitude towards effective teaching methods of writing, and they were found to have employed writing strategies most frequently. That is, highly motivated students were found to use more writing strategies than less motivated ones. Moreover, students who frequently practised writing, exerted adequate effort, scored expected grades, and obtained early support and encouragement from significant others were also found to be high writing strategy users. The study also revealed that the majority of the undergraduate students were instrumentally motivated when learning writing. This motive has been found to be one of the main driving forces in developing writing skills of learners in the EFL context.

**Keywords:** Writing Strategies, Motivation, Attitude, Writing Goals, and Motivational Variables

## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of the study**

In Ethiopia, English is used as a medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary education and as a working language in most government and non government organizations. At tertiary level, students' writing ability is critical to their academic success, as they are required to carry out various academic writing tasks. At work places, good skills in writing are necessary to compile reports, write proposals, letters, and office memorandums.

In order to enable students to develop the required writing skills, a 48 hour English writing course covering 16 weeks of instruction is delivered at Jimma University during the first year or second year programme. From these writing students, some students composed their thoughts and ideas clearly and logically using effective language, whereas others faced difficulties in expressing themselves and appeared to be less

motivated to perform writing tasks in and outside the classroom.

The researchers believe that the writing problems of the students can be alleviated through empowerment; that is, by raising their awareness about the importance of good writing skills for successful career development and by organizing and offering effective writing skills training courses that will enable them acquire knowledge and skills in efficient writing strategies so as to help them develop good writing skills. As stated by Hsiao and Oxford (2002) the use of learning strategies “pave[s] the way towards greater proficiency, learner autonomy and self regulation” (p.372).

However, the use of writing strategies may be affected by several factors (see a review of Oxford, 1989); among these, attitude and motivation are crucial variables that could be used to show the difference between high achievers and low achievers. The findings of Gan, Humphreys, and Lyons (2004) indicated that “different levels of success may be explained by a complex and dynamic interplay of internal cognition and emotion, external incentives, and social context” (p.228). These researchers admitted that factors such as attitude and motivation have not been studied well, particularly their combined effects on the use of strategies for language learning in EFL contexts. Such factors may play a significant role in determining the differences in language learning outcomes.

Therefore, since the influence of motivation and attitude on writing strategy use has also not been studied well in Ethiopia, the present study aims to provide empirical evidence towards the influence of these factors on writing strategy use of undergraduate EFL students. To guide this study, the following questions are addressed:

1. Does motivation have an influence on the use of writing strategies?
2. Does attitude have an effect or influence on the use of writing strategies?

3. What motivational factors are most helpful for undergraduates to develop their writing skills?

In what follows, firstly, the review of relevant literature on learners' motivation, attitude and learning strategies are presented. Subsequently, the method and procedures for data collection and analysis are described, followed by a compilation of quantitative and qualitative data collected to address the research questions of the study. The data is then analyzed and discussed.

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Importance of motivation**

Motivation research in language learning has shown that motivation is one of the key factors that influence the use of language learning strategies. For instance, one of the findings of Oxford and Nyikos (1989) revealed that motivation “was the single most powerful influence on the choice of language learning strategies...” (p.249). That is, highly motivated students were found to use more learning strategies than less motivated ones; as a result they were able to improve their language ability. This implies that the more students are motivated towards writing, the higher is the use of writing strategies which in turn leads to the development of writing competence.

Likewise, based on their findings, Spratt, Humphreys and Chan (2002) concluded that “motivation is a key factor that influences the extent to which learners are ready to learn autonomously” (p.245). Furthermore, Dornyei and Csizer (1998) underlined the importance of motivation saying “Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula and good teaching enough to ensure student achievement” (p. 203).

## 2.2 Motivational variables

Motivation is defined by Brown (1994) as “an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one to a particular action.”(p.152). In line with this definition, a more elaborate description of motivation was given by Masgoret and Gardner (2003). These researchers describe motivation as a goal-directed behaviour demonstrated by an individual to achieve particular goals. A motivated individual can demonstrate several behaviour traits which have been identified by the two researchers as follows:

The motivated individual expends effort, is persistent, and attentive to the task at hand, has goals, desires and aspirations, enjoys the activity, experiences reinforcement from success and disappointment from failure, makes attributions concerning success and/or failure, is aroused, and makes use of strategies to aid in achieving goals. That is, the motivated individual exhibits many behaviour, feelings, cognition etc. that the individual who is unmotivated does not (p.128).

Since the characteristics of a motivated individual illustrated in the above quote are many and multifaceted, it is difficult to measure all of them. For this reason, Masgoret and Gardner (2003) recommend paying attention to those best characteristics that represent the others. Consequently, they suggested three attributes to be employed in the assessment of motivational behaviour. These are *Motivational intensity*, *Desire to learn a target language*, and *Attitudes towards learning a target language*.

*Motivational intensity* measures the amount of effort a learner invests in learning the language. *Desire to learn the target language* measures “the extent to which an individual wants to achieve a high level of competence in the language” (p.128). Finally, *attitude towards learning the target language* measures “the affect experienced while learning the language” (p.128).

### 2.3 Selection of motivational variables to the purpose of the present study

In line with Masgoret and Gardner's suggestion, the researchers in the present study selected and considered the motivational variables listed below.

- Perceived level of enjoyment in writing (interest)
- Perceived confidence in writing
- Perceived ability in essay writing (self-image)
- Perceived importance of developing writing competence
- Learning writing goals

These self-perception motivational variables have been recognized to have motivational properties by different researchers who have applied them in their respective studies. In what follows, a few examples of each variable are cited to demonstrate their use and application in motivational researches.

The variable, *Perceived ability in essay writing (self-image)* corresponds to Dornyei's (1994) concept of *Perceived L2 Competence*. Similarly, the variable, *Perceived confidence in writing* is very similar to the *Linguistic self confidence* variable as used by Dornyei and Csizer (2002) and Csizer and Dornyei (2005). Lee and Oxford (2008) have also used this variable in their studies in the term *English learning self-image*. *Perceived importance of developing writing competence* was the other variable recently employed by Lee and Oxford (2008) and it is consistent with the concept of *importance of English*. A similar concept also appears in Williams and Burden's (1997) model in the term, *Perceived value of the activity: personal relevance....* Moreover, *Learning writing goals* have been found to be consistent with Gardner's (1985) view of language learning orientation which is classified into integrative and instrumental orientations. The variable, *perceived level of enjoyment in writing (interest)* also corresponds to Deci and Ryan's, (1985) concept of *intrinsic motivation*.

## 2.4 Attitude

One of the variables which has a close relationship with motivation and the use of writing strategies is the attitude of the learners. Learners' attitude is generally believed to play a central role in language learning. This is because "it assumes that attitudes to language learning condition language learning behavior" (Gan, Humphreys, & Lyons, 2004, p.230). That is, learners' attitude either enhances or inhibits learning. For instance, positive attitudes to learning a language are acknowledged as influential factors on making a decision to learn that language and to continue learning it (Williams and Burden, 1997). Empirical instances include the study conducted by Liu (2007) which concluded that the students with greater positive attitudes towards learning English, were found to demonstrate more motivation in learning that language ( $r=.867$ ,  $p.=0.001$ ).

As stated in the study by Zimmerman and Bandura (as cited in Charney, Newman and Palmquist, 1995), the attitudes and the beliefs the learners have about themselves, their language skills and knowledge may enhance or hinder the effort they exert and the persistence they demonstrate in writing tasks. Particularly, in trying to employ new strategies to accomplish writing tasks, learners need to have positive attitudes and beliefs about writing.

According to Dornyei (1994), interest is one of the four motivational factors related to a subject. If an individual has an interest in the subject, he/she may have a positive attitude towards learning that subject. Attitude is likely to be influenced not only by the interest of an individual in learning the language concerned, but also by aspects of the learning environment such as the course and the teacher. It is probably for this reason that Garden (1985) considered the evaluation of the course and the teaching method so as to measure the individual's attitude towards learning situation in his socio-educational model. In line

with the components of Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), the two attitudinal variables related to the course and the teacher's evaluation selected and used in the present study were the level of satisfaction the subjects had with the methodology and the results of the writing course. Dornyei's (1994) model also encompasses the two areas in its third level, *Learning Situation*.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The study has used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to draw conclusions on the relationship between motivation, attitude, and writing strategy use.

#### **3.1 Quantitative study**

##### **3.1.1 Participants**

The participants of the study were mainly second year students drawn from eight faculties and one college at Jimma University. These faculties were Medical Sciences, Public Health, Technology, Business and Economics, Education, Law, Social Sciences and Humanities, Natural and Information Sciences and College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine.

From the total population of the study (N= 3980), a random sample of 680 students representing 12 different departments was selected for the quantitative study. On an average each group had about 57 students to be used as a sample of study subjects. Out of the 680 respondents in the study, 598 (81.3%) were males and 97 (13.2 %) were females with the average age of 20.65 (SD=2.14). The majority of these students are enrolled in a three year degree programme course and have stayed in the university for over one and a half years. In their first year, most of them took one English writing course, but prior to

their joining Jimma University, they studied English for about twelve years.

### **3.1.2 Instruments for data collection**

Data on students' writing strategy use and writing abilities was collected using a self-administered questionnaire and proficiency test of essay writing respectively. The questionnaire was developed by adapting Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning scheme (SILL) and using the experience of the researchers and insight gained from the literature review.

#### **3.1.2.1 Questionnaire Part I**

The writing strategy questionnaire included 38 items that deal with different aspects of writing and approaches to writing (see Appendix 1). These items were meant to obtain data regarding the frequency of strategies the students employ when writing in English. Students were requested to respond to questions with choices on the frequency of writing strategy use, based on a five point Likert scale (never or almost never true, usually not true, some what true, usually true, always or almost always true) as used in Oxford's SILL.

The overall reliability of the internal consistency of the 38 writing strategy items for the study group was found to be .88. All the 38 items were categorized into five major dimensions (rhetorical, cognitive, metacognitive, social/affective and others) based on theories related to writing and experiences drawn from the previous studies. Then, a factor analysis was performed to check whether coherent constructs were measured by the items. All the items under each category were found to satisfy the criterion of factor loadings greater than or equal to .40.

### **3.1.2.2 The sample writing proficiency test**

The sample writing proficiency test was administered to 668 students in order to obtain data on their levels of writing competence in writing essays. Here, the students were asked to write an effective essay of about 300 words on a topic familiar to them within 70 minutes (see Appendix 3 for details).

The 668 essays written by the students were divided into three categories and were randomly distributed to three pairs of trained raters. Two pairs of raters marked 222 essays each and the third pair of raters marked 224 essays. Each essay was rated by two independent raters using analytical scoring guides modified from Jacobs et al.'s (1981) English Composition Profile. To measure the agreement between two raters (pair of raters), Kappa was used.

After the completion of rating, the first data was recorded and analyzed using SPSS version 13 to determine the average scores of the essays. Then the results obtained were exported to Stat/ES 8.0 (statistical software) in order to group the subjects into three writing proficiency levels: high achievers, average achievers, and low achievers, using quintile.

## **3.2 Qualitative study**

Qualitative data was collected from 663 subjects who completed Part II of the questionnaire which comprises both close and open-ended questions. The other qualitative data was collected from 46 respondents through interviews.

### **3.2.1 Questionnaire Part II**

This questionnaire includes questions related to motivation. These are mixed types of

questionnaire containing open-ended and close-ended questions. The close-ended questions include dichotomous questions (yes or no) on satisfaction with exam results and ways of teaching writing, whereas the open-ended ones focused on reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction with exam results and ways of teaching writing. Close-ended questions were also used in order to rank reasons for learning writing (see Appendix 2).

### **3.2.2 Semi-structured interview**

Of the 680 respondents in this study, 48 were randomly selected for the interview session of 30 minutes duration. Forty six students were interviewed on their writing experiences of whom 25 were from the high achievers group and 21 from the low achievers group. They were asked to respond to two types of semi-structured interview questions. The questions in the first category were related to attitudes towards writing and writing strategies useful for developing writing competence. The questions in the second category were designed to rate responses of strategy use based on a five point scale ranging from not important to very important.

To assess the respondents' attitude towards learning or developing writing skills, two interview questions (item 1&2 below) were designed and used in the present study in addition to two open-ended questions used in Questionnaire Part II ( items 3 and 4 below).

1. The first question concerning the attitudes and feelings was: *What is your feeling towards writing?*
2. The second question concerning identification of useful strategies was: *What writing strategies are most helpful for you in developing your writing skills?*

3. The third question concerning the evaluation of the course result was: *Were you satisfied with your writing course (Sophomore English) exam result? Yes/No. Explain why?*
4. The fourth question concerning the evaluation of the teacher was: *Were you happy with the way you were taught writing? Yes/No. Explain why?*

### **3.3 Procedures and methods used for data analysis**

To assess the relationship between motivation and writing strategy use, first, motivational variables were identified and the responses to these variables were analyzed. Next, the relationships between these variable results and writing strategy use results were examined using different statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and correlation analysis.

In this investigation of relationship between motivational variables and the use of writing strategies, qualitative approaches were adopted, in addition to quantitative approaches. The qualitative data analysis procedures used in this study were similar to the techniques recommended by Bogdan, Biklen and Wolcott (as cited in Hancock, 2007). All the responses to each open-ended question were compiled and carefully analyzed to detect recurring themes and codes were designated for the same. The themes were organized into two levels: major and sub themes, and presented with their frequency counts and direct quotes chosen as illustrative examples (see Appendices 4&5 for details).

The process of organizing interview data started with validation, that is, notes made during the interview were read to each participant and it was validated that the notes reflected their views. Following this, the notes were copied into a notebook and organized in the same ways used in the process of analysis of the data derived from the open-ended

questions. Such organization of data is to facilitate the identification and development of themes. Themes were identified in the texts not only by looking for the commonly mentioned points or statements, but also by paying attention to distinct points mentioned by individuals.

In general, the qualitative approaches adopted in the present study seemed to be similar to that of phenomenological research design, which is usually recommended to study participants' behaviours, experiences, and motivations from their own perceptions and perspectives (Lester, 1999), which are the main focus of the present study.

#### **4. Results and discussions**

The first motivational variable designed to investigate the respondents' perceived level of enjoyment in writing tasks (interest) was item Pq2, *Rate your level of enjoyment in writing a text*. This instruction was given with the following Likert scale options: extreme dislike, dislike, neutral, enjoyment, and extreme enjoyment. The second variable was the item that assesses the respondents' perceived confidence in writing: *I write a composition in a class with confidence and ease*. This item was accompanied by five response options ranging from never true of me to always true of me. The third variable intended to assess the respondents' perceived ability in writing (self-image) was item Pq1, *Rate your ability in writing an essay*, having the following options: *very good, good, average, fair and poor*. The fourth variable intended to assess the subjects' perceived importance of developing their writing skills was item q39, *How important is it for you to develop your writing skills in English?* This item was followed by five response options ranging from not important to very important.

Apart from the four close-ended questions designed to assess the level of motivation of

the subjects, other variables were used to evaluate the respondents' motivation. These were *perceived learning writing goals* (items, Pq31-37), which were designed as rank-ordering questions in Questionnaire Part II that read: *Show the order of importance of the reasons for learning writing*. The quantitative analysis made on the seven learning goals and the four motivational variables is shown in Table 4.1 below.

#### 4.1 Quantitative data on motivation variables

**Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics of motivational variables**

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
(q38 ) I write a composition in a class with confidence and at ease.	670	1	5	3.37	1.05
(Pq2) Level of enjoyment in writing a text	663	1	5	3.72	.71
(Pq1) Perceived ability in essay writing	663	1	5	3.58	.86
(q39) How important is it for you to develop your writing skills in English?	46	4	5	4.80	.40
To get prepared to meet the future demands of writing in professional settings	603	1	7	3.35	1.82
To meet my academic requirements	610	1	7	2.85	1.59
To get an opportunity to work in a foreign country	573	1	7	5.03	1.95
To express my thoughts and feelings.	609	1	7	2.45	1.71
To master the English language written system	565	1	7	3.93	1.93
To pursue my postgraduate studies in the future	560	1	7	4.58	1.61
To achieve high grades in the writing course and others	555	1	7	4.84	1.82

As shown in Table 4.1 above, of the three variables of motivation on a 5 point scale, item Pq2 that deals with the respondents' level of enjoyment exhibited the highest mean (M=3.72). Of the seven learning goals, *To express my thoughts and feelings*, was the most important reason for developing writing skills, for it received the mean value of 2.45. The second most important reason was *To meet my academic requirements* (M=2.85). The least important reason for developing writing skills was *To get an opportunity to work in a foreign country* (M=5.03). In rank ordering of the seven learning writing goals, the goal with the lowest mean shows the highest value attached to it (i.e., 1=most important (M=2.45), 7= least important (M=5.03))

#### 4.1.1 The relationship between the four motivational variables and the means of writing strategy use

Table 4.2 below depicts the relationship between the four motivational variables and the mean of writing strategy use. The motivational variables scores are measured by a five point Likert scale similar to that of writing strategy use measurement.

**Table 4.2. Relationship of motivational variables with writing strategy use**

Variable	Writing strategy Mean (1 to 5)				
(Pq2) Level of enjoyment in writing	Extreme dislike 3.35 N=4	Dislike 2.99 N=20	Neutral 3.17 N=123	Enjoyment 3.38 N=297	Extreme enjoyment 3.54 N=42
(Pq1) Perceived writing ability	Poor 2.95 N=17	Fair 2.94 N=25	Average 3.21 N=141	Good 3.40 N=260	Very good 3.64 N=43

(q38) I write a composition in a class with confidence and at ease.	Never true of me 2.76 N=22	Usually not true of me 2.99 N=75	Somewhat true of me 3.21 N=165	Usually true of me 3.45 N=181	Always true of me 3.72 N=72
(q39) How important is it for you to develop your writing skills in English?	Not Important N= 0	Slightly Important N=0	Somewhat important N=0	Important 3.64 N=8	Very important 3.20 N=27

The inter-correlations between the motivational variables and the mean use of writing strategies shown in Table 4.2 indicated that the respondents whose level of enjoyment in writing rated 4 (Enjoyment) were found to be medium strategy users, whereas the respondents with extreme enjoyment of writing were found to be high users of writing strategies (M= 3.54). In other words, students who rated their level of enjoyment as extreme were greater strategy users than the students with lower levels of enjoyment.

Those respondents whose perceived ability rating was 4 (Good) were found to be medium strategy users (M=3.40), but those with the highest rating for their perception of ability in writing were found to be high strategy users (M=3.64).

Furthermore, in relation to the third motivational variable, it was found that the respondents whose level of perception of confidence in writing rated 4 and 5 were higher writing strategy users (M=3.45 and 3.72 respectively) than were the students with lower confidence. From this, a linear relationship between the rating for perceived proficiency and the frequency of strategy use was evident. This means that students with the highest perceived proficiency were found to be the most frequent strategy users.

With regard to the perceived importance of writing skills, a different trend was observed; the respondents who reported writing skills to be important to them (4/5) were

found to be higher strategy users (M=3.64) compared to the majority of respondents who felt that writing was very important to them (5/5) ( M=3.20).

#### 4.1.2 Correlation of motivational variables with writing strategy categories

To provide a clearer picture of the analysis of the responses to the research question, *Does motivation have an effect on the use of writing strategies?*, Pearson correlation coefficients analysis was used to determine the relationship between the three variables and the use of the five writing strategy categories and the results are displayed in Table 4.3 below.

**Table 4.3. Correlation between motivational variables and writing strategy category use**

		Confi- dence q38	Level of Enjoyment in writing a text	Perceived Ability in essay writing	Meta- Cognitive Strategy Category	Rhetorical Strategy Category	Other Category of Strategy	Social/ Affective category	Cognitive Strategy Category
q38 Confidence	Pearson Correlation	1	.232(**)	.358**	.433 (**)	.500 (**)	.065	.598 (**)	.499 (**)
	Sig.(2- tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.110	.000	.000
	N	670	628	628	600	652	615	650	643
Level of enjoyment in writing a text	Pearson Correlation	.232 (**)	1	.336**	.267 (**)	.250 (**)	-.061	.241 (**)	.294 (**)
	Sig.(2- tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.140	.000	.000
	N	628	663	662	572	613	586	611	604
Perceived Ability in essay writing	Pearson Correlation	.358 **	.336**	1	.272**	.308**	-.011	.298 (**)	.357**
	Sig.(2- tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.789	.000	.000
	N	628	662	663	572	613	586	611	604
Meta- cognitive Strategy Category	Pearson Correlation	.433 (**)	.267 (**)	.272**	1	.677 (**)	.186 (**)	.631 (**)	.656 (**)
	Sig.(2- tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	600	572	572	608	585	560	586	579
Rhe-torical Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.500 (**)	.250 (**)	.308 **	.677 (**)	1	.046	.630 (**)	.685 (**)

Category	Sig.(2-tailed)	.110	.140	.789	.000	.264		.000	.036
	N	652	613	613	585	653	602	634	629
Other Category of Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.065	-.061	-.011	.186 (**)	.046	1	.147 (**)	.086 (*)
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.110	.140	.789	.000	.264		.000	.036
	N	615	586	586	560	602	621	600	595
Social/Affective category	Pearson Correlation	.598 (**)	.241(**)	.298**	.631(**)	.630(**)	.147 (**)	1	.678 (**)
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	650	611	611	586	634	600	650	626
Cognitive Strategy Category	Pearson Correlation	.499 (**)	.294(**)	.357**	.656(**)	.685(**)	.086(*)	.678 (**)	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.036	.000	
	N	643	604	604	579	629	595	626	644

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

On the basis of results of Pearson correlation coefficients analysis shown in Table 4.3, item 38 was found to have a significant correlation with most of the categories of writing strategies. The highest significant correlation, however, was seen between item 38 and social and affective category ( $r=.598$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Similarly, there was a significant correlation between level of enjoyment in writing and the use of the four writing categories. There was also a statistically significant correlation between the level of enjoyment and perceived writing proficiency level ( $r=.336$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Perceived ability in essay writing was also found to be significantly correlated with the four categories of writing strategies and item 38. Of these, *perceived ability* showed the highest correlation with item 38 ( $r=.358$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Learners with higher perceived writing ability were more likely to have higher perceived confidence than learners with lower perceived writing

ability. Similarly, students with higher level of enjoyment of writing have higher perceived proficiency level than students with lower level of enjoyment. These findings are consistent with the findings of Charney, Newman and Palmquist (1995, p.311), who reported that “Students who enjoyed writing more were also more likely to assess themselves as good writers” ( $r=.58$ ,  $p < .0001$ ).

#### 4.1.3 Rank order of reasons for developing writing skills

The participants were asked to order the seven reasons for developing writing skills based on the importance they attach to each from most important to least important (see q3 in Appendix 2). Table 4.4 below indicates the number of subjects who chose each reason as their first priority, the mean rating, standard deviation, and ranking of the seven reasons for learning writing.

**Table 4.4. Reasons for developing writing skills by first choice of subjects, mean rating, standard deviation, and ranking**

Reasons for developing writing skills	Number of Respondents by 1 <sup>st</sup> choice	Total No of respondents	Mean*	SD	Rank
To get prepared to meet the future demands of writing in professional settings	118 (19.6%)	603	3.35	1.82	3
To meet my academic requirements	153 (25.1%)	610	2.85	1.59	2
To get an opportunity to work in a foreign country	26 (4.5%)	573	5.03	1.95	7
To express my thoughts and feelings	244 (40.1%)	609	2.45	1.71	1
To pursue my postgraduate	19 (3.4%)	560	4.58	1.61	5

studies in the future					
To master the English language written system	69 (12.2)	565	3.93	1.93	4
To achieve high grades in the writing course and others	33 (5.9%)	555	4.84	1.82	6

\*In rank ordering of the seven learning writing goals based on mean rating, the goal with the lowest mean shows the highest value attached to it (i.e., 1=most important (M=2.45), 7=least important (M= 5.03)).

As seen from Table 4.4, 40.1% of the 609 respondents stated that the most important reason for developing their writing skills was *to express their thoughts and feelings*. This reason has also received the lowest mean rating on a scale of seven (M=2.45, SD=1.71). Please note, however, that the lowest mean here is interpreted as the most important choice (see the description given below Table 4.4).

Twenty five percent of the 610 respondents reported that the most important reason for developing their writing skills was *to meet their academic requirement*. This was also rated as the second most important reason for learning writing with a mean rating of 2.85, SD=1.59. 4.5% of the 573 respondents reported that they wanted to develop their writing skills in order *to get an opportunity to work in a foreign country*. This was ranked seventh with a mean rating of 5.03, sd=1.95.

Table 4.4 shows a higher percentage of the respondents (about 40%) who considered *to express their thoughts and feelings* as the most important reason that intrinsically motivated them to develop their writing skills. However, the majority of the respondents (about 60 %), were instrumentally motivated, for they considered the other six reasons as the ones most important to them. So it is possible to conclude that the majority of the respondents' dominant reason for developing writing skills was due to utilitarian values,

such as for academic and work purposes and mastering the English written system.

#### **4.1.4 The relationship between reasons for developing writing skills variables and the means of writing strategy use**

The effect of intrinsically and instrumentally oriented writing goals on the use of writing strategies was examined and the following strategy use mean value was obtained.

**Table 4.5. Mean of writing strategy use for the reason for developing writing skills by first choice of subjects**

Reason for developing writing skills	Mean of writing Strategy use	N
To express my thoughts and feelings	3.31	171
To meet my academic requirements	3.24	122
To get prepared to meet the future demands of writing in professional settings	3.45	86
To get an opportunity to work in a foreign country	3.40	23
To pursue my postgraduate studies in the future	3.30	13
To master the English language written system.	3.41	48
To achieve high grades in the writing course and others.	3.18	24

The assessment of the relationship between the reasons for developing writing skills and the use of writing strategies revealed that the highest mean score of 3.45 of strategy use was exhibited by those respondents whose most important reason for developing their writing skills was *to get prepared to meet the future demands of writing in professional settings*, which stands as one of the indicators for an instrumental motive. Thus, the

respondents with such an objective were high writing strategy users. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that students whose dominant reason for developing their writing skills (which is associated with practical gains) were high strategy users. The findings of rank ordering questions on both learning writing goals and the influence of these goals on the use of writing strategies, suggested that the majority of the students were instrumentally motivated to learn writing. That is, they learn writing because they require it mainly for academic and work purposes.

## 4.2 Qualitative data on attitudinal variables

To identify the respondents' attitude towards learning writing, their responses to the questions were closely examined and summarized, recurring patterns/themes were categorized and the frequency count of the themes was computed in order to draw possible interpretations and inferences.

### 4.2.1 EFL students' attitudes towards writing

With a view to assessing their attitudes towards writing, the respondents were asked to rate their level of enjoyment in writing a text on a five point scale ranging from extreme dislike to extreme enjoyment. As seen in Table 4.6 below, 68.9 % of them were found to have positive attitudes towards writing because they enjoy writing.

**Table 4.6. Level of enjoyment in writing a text**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Extreme dislike	5	0.7	0.8	0.8
	Dislike	29	3.9	4.4	5.1

	Neutral	172	23.4	25.9	31.1
	Enjoyment	400	54.3	60.3	91.4
	Extreme enjoyment	57	7.7	8.6	100.0
	Total	663	90.1	100.0	
Missing	System	73	9.9		
Total		736	100.0		

To assess the respondents' attitude towards writing thoroughly, one interview question: *What is your feeling towards writing?* was also addressed to them and their responses are summarized in the table below.

**Table 4.7. Attitudes of EFL undergraduate students towards writing**

Attitude	High achiever	Low achiever	Total
Positive	19 (76.0 %)	16 (76.2%)	35 (76.1%)
Negative	2 (8.0 %)	3 (14.3%)	5 (10.9%)
Neutral	4 (16.0%)	2 (9.5%)	6 (13.0%)
Grand total	25 (100%)	21(100%)	46 (100%)

As shown in Table 4.7 above, 35 (76.1%) of the 46 respondents replied that they have a positive attitude towards writing, 6 (13%) said that they have a neutral attitude towards writing and the remaining 5 (10.9%) were found to have a negative attitude towards writing.

According to Wenden (as cited in Gan, 2004) attitudes consist of three aspects. The first is a cognitive aspect which encompasses beliefs or perceptions about the objects or situations. In this case, it refers to the beliefs that the learners have towards native English speakers and their own culture. The second is an evaluative aspect which is related to

either liking or disliking the objects or the situations. The third is a behavioural component which may influence learners to exhibit or adopt a particular learning behaviour. In line with the second aspect, 35 of the 46 respondents of the present study reported that they have positive attitudes towards writing; that is, they like learning writing. This is clearly evident from their statements: “I like writing, for I get pleasure when I read my own writing” (high achiever). And “I like writing because I can express my own thoughts *and feelings*” (high achievers). From these statements, it is also possible to infer that these students are intrinsically motivated in writing tasks because the writing activities are enjoyable and satisfying to them (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

On the other hand, 5 of the respondents reported having negative attitudes towards writing. They hate writing, for they find it challenging. This attitude is evidenced by the following two statements: “I hate writing because I face difficulties in generating ideas” (low achiever). “I do not have adequate experience in writing; as a result, writing is difficult for me” (high achiever). This negative attitude towards writing seems to have emanated from lack of practice which hindered particularly low achievers from performing writing tasks.

The statements of the other 6 respondents who claimed to have neutral attitudes towards writing appear to be similar to those with negative attitudes. Three of the statements are shown below:

I did not have much experience in writing (low achiever).

I had poor background in writing (low achiever).

I do not have experience in writing; it is difficult for me (high achievers).

From the statements above, one can safely infer that lack of practice and experience in writing is a common problem among most of those respondents with negative and neutral

attitudes towards writing. From the evidence given in the third statement, high achievers also share this problem. But this might be ascribed to their ambition to reach the highest level of proficiency in writing through hard work. The anxiety caused by lack of experience in organizing thoughts during writing is evident from the following statement: “When I start writing I am worried about my ideas” (high achiever).

#### 4.2.2 Satisfaction with writing course results and ways of teaching writing

The quantitative data obtained from the subjects on the two variables was analyzed and summarized in the table below.

**Table 4.8. Relationship between Attitudinal variable and writing ability**

Variables	Ability groups	Yes	No	Total	Chi-square test		
					value	df	Sig (2-sided)
Satisfaction with writing course results	Low Achievers	65 (32.2%)	137 (67.8%)	202	13.512 (a)	2	.001
	Average Achievers	79 (39.9%)	119 (60.1%)	198			
	High achievers	98 (50.3%)	97 (49.7%)	195			
Total		242 (40.67%)	353 (59.33%)	595			
Satisfaction with ways of teaching writing	Low Achievers	135 (69.6%)	59 (30.4%)	194	.039 (b)	2	.981
	Average Achievers	136 (69.0%)	61 (31.0%)	197			
	High Achievers	135 (69.9%)	58 (30.1)	193			
Total		406 (69.52%)	178 (30.48%)	584			

a 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 79.31.

b 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 58.83.

As proved by the number of respondents of the first variable, 353 of the 595 (59.33%)

respondents were not satisfied with the results of their writing course. Of these, 137 were low achievers, 119 were average achievers and 97 were high achievers. Generally, chi-square test results, with ability levels as dependent variable, indicated that there was statistically significant difference in their response to the variable ( $\chi^2=13.51, df=2, p<.001$ ). That is, the majority of the low and the average achievers were not satisfied with their exam results of the course compared to the high achievers. Only 65 (32.2%) low achievers and 79 (39.9%) average achievers were found to be satisfied with their course results, whereas 50.3% of the high achievers were satisfied with their results. From this result, it might be possible to infer that the majority of low and average achievers are not satisfied with exam results.

#### **4.2.3 Qualitative data on satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the exam results**

The qualitative data obtained from the open-ended question on the reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the exam results indicated that 5 major and 31 sub-themes were identified as factors that reveal the respondents' dissatisfaction in the exam results. Of these, the most frequently mentioned was *student related problems* (72 times) and the next frequently mentioned was *grade related problems* (63 times). Of the 31 individual problems, the most frequently mentioned as the major source of dissatisfaction was obtaining *unexpected grade* (33 times) (see Appendix 4).

Here are examples of student related causes for dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the courses:

I did not prepare myself for the exam (average achiever).

I did not have adequate knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (low achiever).

When I was in high school I did not learn about writing and when I was

taught at the University I was very confused (average achiever).  
I did not get opportunities to practice writing and develop my writing skills (low achiever).

Each of the above statements indicates the respondent's realization of his shortcomings (See Appendix 4 for more examples).

On the other hand, 9 major motives that include *obtaining expected grade, development of knowledge and skills, effective ways of teaching, good background, hard work, interest in the course, practising writing, good exam and interesting topics for easy writing* were identified as indicators of the positive attitude of the respondents. Of these, *obtaining expected grade* was the most frequently mentioned reason for their satisfaction with the exam results (85 times). The second most frequently mentioned reason for satisfaction with the exam result was developing the required knowledge and skills of writing (50 times).

One of the interesting findings of the present study is that in both sets of the variables influencing the development of negative and positive attitudes getting *unexpected and expected grades* received the highest frequency counts. This implies that grades are the most influential factors in the development of either negative or positive attitudes towards writing. Dornyei (1994) himself emphasized the importance of evaluating students' satisfaction over course results, as this can be rewarding in terms of developing positive attitudes or enjoyment towards writing. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers need to consistently check on their students' reaction to grades received. Secondly, teachers should also ensure that students feel that they developed the required knowledge and writing skills from the writing course because, as findings indicated, if they do so they will be more motivated to undertake writing activities happily and be committed to

improving their writing competence. The statement from one of the respondents reflects this feeling: “Even if the result was not enough, I learned useful writing techniques that I will use in the future” (high achiever).

With regard to satisfaction with grades, high achievers were not easily satisfied with their results unless they got what they had expected. Findings indicated that 50% of the high achievers were not satisfied with their writing course results, probably because they might have got B’s. This is evident in the following statement: “I was not happy with my result, for I got only B, but I had done well enough to get an A” (high achiever). This is in line with Dornyei’s (1994) expectancy, which he identified as one of the four motivational factors related to the course. That is “the perceived likelihood of success” can have greater impact on the student’s attitude.

#### **4.2.3.1 Evaluation of ways of teaching writing**

The third attitudinal variable that can be used to assess and determine the respondents’ attitude towards writing is their evaluation of ways of teaching writing. In response to the question, *Were you happy with the way you were taught writing?*, the majority of the respondents (n=406, 69.0%) replied affirmatively and about 30% responded negatively.

#### **4.2.3.2 Qualitative data on evaluation of ways of teaching writing**

The evaluation made by the respondents on the ways of teaching writing courses is summarized in Appendix 5, where both the factors that contribute to the development of negative and positive attitudes towards ways of teaching writing are shown. With regards to factors contributing to developing negative attitudes, 15 factors were identified and classified into three major categories of themes. Of these, the first factor, *Not developing*

*the necessary knowledge and skills of writing* received the highest frequency count (28 times out of the total 82 counts) and the second one, *Incompetent/unqualified teacher* received next higher frequency count.

On the other hand, 21 factors, classified into four major categories, were identified as factors contributing to the development of positive attitudes towards ways of teaching writing. Among these, *Developing writing knowledge and skills required in academic and professional setting* received the highest frequency count (76 out of 308 of the total counts). The second and the third factors that obtained 53 and 33 counts were *Interest/Enjoyment* and *For self expression* respectively.

The presence or the absence of the first factor can have positive or negative effects on one's attitude. This implies that learners are highly motivated by the usefulness and effectiveness of the knowledge and skills they acquire from their writing classes. In other words this will instrumentally motivate them to further develop their writing competence.

Relevance, which is one of the components of Dornyei's course specific category, is considered as an important motivational variable for the development of a positive attitude. For example, one respondent mentioned that: "The course is essential to get prepared to meet the demands of writing in academic and work place settings and also to be able to express ideas in a good manner" (average achiever). The motivation derived from perceiving the value of the course to their career development enables learners to persistently exert the necessary effort to acquire knowledge and develop writing skills.

#### **4.3. Quantitative data on the relationship between attitudinal variables and writing strategy use**

In Table 4.9 the mean of writing strategy use and the number of responses given to the

two attitudinal variables are presented.

**Table 4.9. Relationship between attitudinal variables and the writing strategy use by mean**

Variable	Strategy use mean (1 to 5)	
	Yes	No
Were you happy with the way you were taught writing?	3.50 (N=324)	3.17 (N=142)
Were you satisfied with your writing course (Sophomore English) exam result?	3.35 (N=206)	3.31 (N=262)

The relationship between the level of satisfaction, as evidenced by the positive and the negative responses given towards ways of teaching writing, and writing strategy use, indicated by the overall means of strategy use, shows the existence of a difference in strategy use between the two groups. That is, the mean writing strategy use of the respondents who were happy with the ways they were taught writing ( $M=3.50$ ,  $SD=.56$ ) was significantly higher ( $t=4.14$ ,  $df=285.6$ ,  $p<.001$ ) than that of the respondents who were unhappy ( $M=3.17$ ,  $SD=.53$ ).

On the other hand, the mean difference of writing strategy use between the respondents who were satisfied with their course results ( $M=3.38$ ,  $SD=.58$ ) and the ones who were dissatisfied ( $M=3.31$ ,  $SD=.54$ ) was found to be insignificant ( $t=1.26$ ,  $df=425.9$ ,  $p=.210$ ). This implies that there might not be a significant relationship between writing strategy use and the positive or negative attitude towards course results, for both groups of respondents were found to be medium strategy users (Yes= $M=3.35$  and No= $M=3.31$ ).

### **4.3.1 Identifying factors influencing the use of writing strategies and their contribution to development of writing competence**

*What writing strategies are most helpful for you in developing your writing skills?*

The primary objective of this question was to reveal different motives that influenced the development of the respondents' writing skills. With regard to these, the responses of the interview group were recorded and read carefully and the following major motives were identified.

- Encouragement (from parents, family members, teachers, friends and classmates)
- Personal efforts
- Practising writing
- Effective teaching
- Usefulness
- Confidence

The motivational factors identified above were found to influence the development of respondents' writing skills and they can be categorized into the major dimensions of motivation used by Shoaib and Dornyei (2004).

The first factor, *encouragement* from parents, family members, teachers, friends, and classmates belongs to *Significant-Other-Related Dimension*. The second motivational factor, *personal efforts* can be associated with *Self-Concept-Related Dimension*. The third and fourth factors, *practising writing* and *Effective teaching* belong to *Goal-Oriented Dimension* and *Educational-Context-Related Dimension* respectively. Finally, the last two *Usefulness* and *Confidence* fit into *Instrumental Dimension*, and *Self-Concept-Related Dimension* respectively. Each of these will be discussed and illustrated in the following section.

#### **4.3.1.1 Encouragement**

*Encouragement* was mentioned 14 times as the most important factor that contributed to the development of the respondents' writing skills (by 7 high achievers and 7 low achievers). Most of these respondents disclosed that while they were in the elementary and high schools, they were greatly encouraged by parents, family members, teachers or friends to develop their writing skills. Of these, teachers were mentioned most frequently.

For example, the following excerpts reflect the influence of significant others:

Family Members (4): I was encouraged to develop my writing skills by my brother while I was in lower grades. As a result, I used to read different books and tried to summarize what I had read so as to practise writing (high achiever).

Parents (3): I started writing letters when I was a grade 7 student because my mother advised me to develop my writing skills for it was useful for my future high school and university studies (high achiever). I was encouraged by my father to develop my writing skills while I was in the lower grades (high achiever).

Teachers (6): I was encouraged to develop my writing skills by my high school teachers, but I did not exert any effort to do so (low achievers).

Friends (1): I was informed about the importance of writing by my friend (low achiever).

These quotes show that motivated students tend to use different writing strategies to achieve their writing goals (i.e., letter writing, reading different materials, and summarizing). Representing external factors, significant others were found to be the sources of students' motivation and this finding is in line with the social constructive view of motivation (Williams and Burden, 1997). In addition to this, the responses of the high and the low achievers further revealed that the low achievers lack the determination to exert sufficient effort in order to develop their writing skills: "I was encouraged to

develop my writing skills by my high school teachers, but I did not exert any effort to do so” (low achievers), whereas the high achievers were committed to continue developing their writing skills using different writing strategies (see the first statement above under family members, as an example). The other interesting finding that can be inferred from these responses was that the high achievers reported to have begun to become aware of the importance of writing skills while they were in the lower grades. This further testifies to the importance of the significant others in language learning as confirmed by several researchers such as Lunt (2000), Williams and Burden (1997).

#### **4.3.1.2 Personal effort**

This motivational factor was mentioned 16 times by 12 high achievers and 4 low achievers during the interview session. These respondents believed that the development of writing skills is mainly attributed to personal effort. But the low achievers were less committed to exert effort to achieve their goal. Unlike these, the high achievers were found to have exerted the required effort for developing their writing skills. This difference in the amount of effort exerted by the two groups is evident in the following statements:

Personal effort is needed to develop one’s writing ability (high achievers).  
I did not make conscious efforts to develop my writing skills while I was in lower grades; I have just begun to think about the development of my writing skills lately at the university (low achiever).

The response of the higher achiever reflects his awareness and strong belief in making necessary efforts to develop his writing competence.

#### **4.3.1.3 Practising writing**

This factor was mentioned 25 times (by 12 high achievers and 13 low achievers). Although practising writing was mentioned to be useful to develop writing skills by both groups of respondents, the low achiever group was found to be inconsistent with it. They exhibited less commitment to purposefully practising writing than did the high achievers. This is evident from the responses below:

Practising writing purposefully is the best strategy that helps me to develop my writing skills (high achiever).

I believe that practising is good to develop one's writing skills, but I do not practice purposefully to develop my writing skills (low achiever).

I practised writing adequately, for I had been advised by my father that writing is very important (high achiever).

#### **4.3.1.4 Effective teaching**

Effective teaching was mentioned 3 times (by 2 high achievers and 1 low achiever). This factor is regarded as influential in engaging students' motivation to writing activities. It is generally agreed that if the students are provided with writing activities that are meaningful and interesting to them, they will be happy and encouraged in performing the writing tasks given to them and helped to understand and value the role of effective teaching in enhancing their skills. This is evident in the following statements:

Effective teaching is crucial to help students develop their writing skills and teaching writing should be stressed in the high school like many private schools do (high achievers).

Effective techniques of writing should be taught (low achiever).

While I was in high school, one teacher taught me writing very well, his ways of teaching and the activities he gave us made me love writing (low achiever).

The statements also illustrate that the high and the low achievers equally value the role and significance of effective teaching in developing their writing competence

#### **4.3.1.5 Usefulness**

This factor was mentioned two times by the high and the low achievers:

Since English is an international language, I can exchange information in writing with people from different parts of the world (high achiever).

I did not know the importance of writing while I was in the lower grades (low achiever).

The response of the low achiever indicates that he was not aware of the usefulness of writing until he joined the university, where the students are required to produce essays in their sophomore classes. This instance substantiates the dynamic nature of motivation which was discussed by Shoaib and Dornyei (2004) and indicates that motivation changes over time and students, as they mature, tend to develop an interest in a particular activity when they realize its use and importance to their achievement. The response of the high achiever indicates that his awareness about English as a global medium of communication, urges him to become committed towards developing his writing skills. This conforms to ‘International posture’ identified as one of the motivational variables in learning English in an EFL context by Kormos and Csizer (2008).

#### **4.3.1.6 Confidence**

This motivational variable was mentioned 3 times. But surprisingly, it was mentioned only by the high achievers.

I am more confident in my writing ability than in my speaking ability (high achievers).

I always feel at ease when I write something (high achievers).

By and large, the above six factors were mentioned by the respondents as the main sources of motivation that initiated and sustained their efforts towards developing their writing skills.

## **5. Conclusions**

In conclusion, the study presents, first, the analyses of the relationship between motivational and attitudinal variables on one hand and writing strategy use on the other. Subsequently, the study draws conclusions from findings and finally, it states its limitations and implications for future research.

### **5.1 Motivational and attitudinal variables and writing strategy use: Results of quantitative data analysis**

The results of the analysis done on the quantitative data collected revealed that the respondents who had the highest mean results in motivational variables (*level of enjoyment, ability level in essay writing and level of confidence in essay writing*) tended to employ writing strategies most frequently. This finding is similar to the outcome of the studies conducted by Valler et al. on motivation (as cited in Amare, 2001), which concluded that learners with greater motivation demonstrated a higher level of enjoyment and satisfaction while learning, due to the prevalence of suitable learning environments (for example, teachers, classmates, schools). This implies that the more students are motivated towards writing, the higher the use of writing strategies which in turn leads to the development of improved writing competence.

Similar to the results obtained through descriptive analysis, the Pearson correlation coefficient analysis revealed that the learners with highest results in the three motivational variables (*perceived confidence, perceived level of enjoyment and perceived ability*) were found to have employed writing strategies most frequently.

The results obtained from the quantitative analysis undertaken on the relationship between writing strategy use and level of satisfaction with ways of teaching writing indicated that the respondents who were happy with the ways of teaching writing were found to have employed writing strategies more frequently than those students who were unhappy. Moreover, based on the results obtained from the analysis done on the relationship between writing strategy use of an individual and his or her attitude towards ways of teaching, it can be concluded that an individual with a positive attitude is likely to employ writing strategies frequently to accomplish writing tasks.

## **5.2 Motivational and attitudinal variables and writing strategy use: Results of qualitative data analysis**

Qualitative analysis techniques were used to analyze data obtained from the respondents on their attitude towards writing, their level of satisfaction with the course results and the ways of teaching writing. The frequency counts and the percentage of the responses of the interview group revealed that the majority of both high and low achievers have positive attitudes towards writing. From this result, it was difficult to draw conclusions regarding the influence of attitudes on writing strategy use, for no significant difference in the mean of writing strategy use was observed between respondents with positive and negative attitudes towards writing.

The analysis made on the responses given regarding the relationship between the level

of satisfaction with the course results and the results revealed that 31 factors contributed to the development of negative attitudes towards writing, whereas 9 major factors added to the development of positive attitudes. On the other front, in both the sets of the variables influencing the development of negative and positive attitudes, obtaining *unexpected grade* and *expected grade* received the highest frequency count. From these, it is possible to conclude that the grade which students scored is the most influential factor in determining their attitude towards writing.

The analysis of qualitative data obtained on the ways of teaching writing yielded various factors that contributed to the development of both negative and positive attitudes towards the ways of teaching writing. Therefore, it can be concluded that inability to develop the necessary knowledge and skills of writing is the major factor that contributed to the development of negative attitudes. In contrast, acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills of writing is the major factor for the development of positive attitudes towards writing. Based on this, it is possible to conclude that students are likely to give value to ways of teaching that help them acquire the required knowledge and skills in writing.

The qualitative analysis made on the data collected about the factors influencing writing strategy use yielded six motives: *encouragement*, *personal efforts*, *practising writing*, *effective teaching*, *usefulness*, and *confidence*. Of these, *practising writing* and *personal effort* received the first and the second highest frequency count respectively. *Encouragement from significant others*, which received the third highest frequency count, was found to be an influential motive that led high achievers to use different writing strategies to develop their writing competence. Indeed, the low achievers were also reported to have been encouraged by the significant others, but the possible reason for not developing their writing skills was due to lack of commitment to exert adequate personal

efforts. In contrast, high achievers demonstrated strong commitment to continuously improve their writing skills using different writing strategies.

Generally speaking, based on these findings of the study, it is possible to draw the following conclusions about the writing behaviour of the undergraduate students at Jimma University.

- Undergraduate students with strong motivation demonstrated high levels of enjoyment, confidence, perceived ability, and positive attitudes towards effective teaching methods.
- Those students, who obtained expected grades, practised writing, exerted adequate personal effort and who got early encouragement from significant others were found to be high writing strategy users.
- The majority of the undergraduate students were instrumentally motivated when learning writing. This motive has been found to be one of the main driving forces in developing writing skills of learners in the EFL context.
- Writing strategy use is individual and it is dependent on the desires to learn writing and to expend the effort to do so on the part of the individual, until that desired goal is achieved.

As a whole, the findings of this study suggest that EFL teachers need to know students' attitudes and motivations to improve their writing. This is because, as seen in the study, there are different variables associated with attitudes and motivation of learners. These variables should be considered by EFL teachers while teaching writing in order to improve students' learning of writing and enhance their motivation.

The fact that motivational factors are many and multifaceted has made it difficult to consider all of them in the context of the present study. As a result, it is assumed that this

may negatively impact the quality and comprehensiveness of the results obtained from the assessment carried out to determine the relationship between the respondents' motivation and the type of writing strategies used

### **5.3 Limitations of the study and implications for future research**

In designing the research instruments, attempts were made to maximize their reliability and validity. For instance, the writing proficiency of the subjects was assessed using both the writing proficiency test and the perceived rating of writing ability level using close-ended questions. Although all the necessary measures were taken on writing proficiency test designing and rating, the results obtained from this instrument did not match the results obtained from a self-rating questionnaire (perceived rating). However, this requires further research to identify the underlying reasons for the discrepancy between the results obtained from the two instruments used for testing. Due to some cultural and social factors, the instrument used for self rating may have limitations in bringing about the desired outcome in the Ethiopian context

The fact that the questionnaire and the proficiency test were time consuming resulted in disinterest towards accomplishing the task as per expected standards. For instance, the writing proficiency test was administered for the duration of 70 minutes and the completion of Questionnaire Part I and II for another 30 minutes. Consequently, during the assessment, some of the essays were found to be carelessly written. Such a problem could have been overcome if some sort of incentive was given to motivate the respondents.

Another limitation of the study relates to the inability of generalizing the results obtained beyond the subjects. Since the study was based on data obtained from students

at one university, generalization of the findings is limited to these participants only. Therefore, a more comprehensive study with a large sample size from different contexts should be replicated using both quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to test whether the results are similar and consistent among different samples of undergraduate EFL students.

### **Acknowledgements**

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## Appendix 1

**Code No. of the Questionnaire** \_\_\_\_\_

Dear students,

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the writing strategies of undergraduate University students at Jimma University with the objective of identifying effective writing strategies that can be recommended for application and use in teaching students to improve their writing competence. Therefore your frank and thoughtful responses to the questions are appreciated and crucial to meet the research objectives.

While taking part in this project, you will be required first to complete a questionnaire on your writing strategy use and also take a writing proficiency test.

### Personal Details

Identification card number (ID.Card. No) \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: Male \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Mother tongue:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Department/School

\_\_\_\_\_  
Grade Obtained in Sophomore English

### Part II

**Directions:** The following are statements about writing experience. Each statement is followed by five scale responses of which one is chosen that indicates the frequency of strategy use with reference to that particular statement. Each frequency option is defined

as follows:

1. Never true of me =the statement is not true of you at all. (100%)
2. Usually not true of me = the statement is most of the time not true of you.
3. Some what true of me = the statement is about half of the time is true of you (50%)
4. Usually true of me = the statement is most of the time is true of you.
5. Always true of me = the statement is true of you always (100%)

Please tick (✓) under the option given that best describes your real writing experience. Remember since there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ writing technique, all what you are required is to be honest to choose the one that best describe your personal writing experience or strategy.

### Writing Strategies Questionnaire

Item	Writing strategies	Never true of me	Usually not true of me	Some what true of me	Usually true of me	Always true of me
1	Whenever I write an essay or any other piece of writing, I go through the following stages: planning, drafting, revising, and editing.					
2	I spend more time on planning and organizing (outlining) the ideas I want to include in my writing.					
3	As I go on writing, my plan or outline will be revised and modified when new ideas come to my mind.					
4	I start writing an essay when ideas on the topics and ways of organizing them are clear to me					
5	In order to generate ideas for my writing, I usually discuss the issue with a friend or classmate.					
6	In order to generate ideas for my writing, I usually engage myself in brainstorming or reading relevant materials.					
7	When I write an essay, I quickly put down whatever ideas come to my mind.					

8	I keep a diary in which I regularly write my day-to-day experiences (thoughts, feelings, happenings, etc.).					
9	I read English newspapers, magazines, or fictions for pleasure.					
10	I read newspapers and write my reflection on one important issue that interests me.					
11	I write a lot to develop my writing skills and monitor and evaluate my progress.					
12	When I write a text, if I face shortage of ideas, I will try to rewrite what I have already written.					
13	When I write a text, if I face shortage of ideas, I read other materials that may inspire me for generating new ideas.					
14	I revise my writing in order to improve its contents by adding points, deleting irrelevant points, and moving texts from one place to another as appropriate.					

Item	Writing strategies	Never true of me	Usually not true of me	Some what true of me	Usually true of me	Always true of me
15	I revise my writing in order to improve its paragraph organization by checking whether each paragraph develops one main idea and fulfils its function as an introductory, or a body, or a concluding paragraph and by reorganizing paragraphs to achieve the good flow of ideas.					
16	I revise and edit an essay two or more times before I hand it in to my teacher					
17	After finishing my draft, I leave the editing task for some time to do it with a fresh mind.					
18	To revise my writing, I read it aloud to be able to check whether it really communicates the messages I want to convey or whether it gives sense.					
19	To revise my writing, I read it aloud to be able to identify problems related to lack of connection between ideas or transition from one idea to another; use of inappropriate words, grammatical errors, etc.					
20	To revise my writing, I will use a check list containing the following questions: Is the content adequate? Are the points arranged logically? Are all the points discussed relevant and clear?					
21	After completing writing and revising my first draft, I edit errors in grammar, sentence structure, word choice, spelling, capitalization, punctuation and appearance.					
22	After revising and editing my essay thoroughly, I ask a friend or my classmate to read and comment on it.					
23	I am actively involved in group work at all stages of writing. My involvement in group					

	work especially in revising and editing other people's work enables me to develop my skills of critical reading, revising and editing including improving the quality of my writing.					
24	I revise my writing not only after completing the first draft but also while planning, writing and editing.					
25	I learn from my mistakes by reflecting on them and making systematic notes of the corrections.					
26	To produce a piece of writing in the classroom, I go through the following stages: first, I read a model text to imitate or learn from its linguistic features (mainly the appropriate use of vocabulary, sentence patterns and cohesive devices). Next, I do controlled and guided writing exercises to develop my skills and finally, I write freely on a given topic.					

Item	Writing strategies	Never true of me	Usually not true of me	Some what true of me	Usually true of me	Always true of me
27	I start writing an essay or any other formal text before deciding what to include and how to organize it.					
28	When I write a text, I give a high priority to its grammatical accuracy than any other of its aspects; that is, I try my best to make my writing free from any grammar and mechanics mistakes.					
29	When I write a text, I use a dictionary or a grammar book to check the correctness of spellings, grammar or word choice.					
30	I write the first draft of an essay and then I just hand it in without revising and editing it or with little revision and edition.					
31	When I write an essay, I do not have any particular target audience in mind.					
32	To produce a particular type of text (e.g. a letter or a report) in the classroom, I go through the following stages: first I read and analyze a model text. Next, I do exercises on the linguistics and organization features of the model text. Finally, I write the text in question.					
33	When I write an essay, I have my teacher, classmates or other readers in mind as an audience.					
34	I write a text to achieve a particular purpose. Consequently, I incorporate the features (vocabulary, grammar and organization) commonly found in texts similar to it so that it can meet the expectations and needs of target readers.					
35	I write a variety of text types that include essays, reports, letters, emails, notes, messages, term papers, articles, notices or stories.					
36	Before composing a text, I engage in concept mapping (showing a visual representation of related ideas or concepts on a particular topic)					

	to identify issues and secure the organization of my writing.					
37	When I write a text, I use effective linking words and other cohesive devices and methods of organization in order to ensure clear and logical relationships between and among sentences in a paragraph as well as between and among paragraphs.					
38	I write a composition in class with confidence and ease.					

## Appendix 2

Code No. of the Questionnaire \_\_\_\_\_

Dear students,

This questionnaire is designed to investigate the relationship between writing strategy use of undergraduate University students and their motivation to learn writing Therefore your frank and thoughtful responses to the questions are appreciated and crucial to meet the research objectives.

### Personal Details

Identification card number (ID. Card. No) \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: Male \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Mother tongue \_\_\_\_\_

Department/School \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Obtained in Sophomore English \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions: Answer each of the following questions based on the instructions. For the questions that require written answers, provide your answers in the space provided.**

Pq 1. Rate your ability in writing an essay. Put a tick in the appropriate box.

Very good    Good    Average    fair    poor

Pq2. Rate your level of enjoyment in writing a text. Put a tick in the appropriate box.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme dislike | <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoyment         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dislike         | <input type="checkbox"/> Extreme enjoyment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral         |  |

Pq31-37. What are the reasons for developing your writing skills? Put a number (1, 2, 3,...) in the box to show the order of importance of the reasons for learning writing. Start with the number 1 that represents your most important reason.

- To get prepared to meet the future demands of writing in professional settings.
- To meet my academic requirements
- To get an opportunity to work in a foreign country.
- To express my thoughts and feelings.
- To master the written system to English language.
- To pursue my postgraduate studies in the future.
- To achieve high grades in the writing and other courses.

Others please specify

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Pq10. Were you satisfied with your writing course (Sophomore English) exam result? Put a tick in the appropriate box.

- Yes                       No

Why, explain

---

Pq11. Were you happy with the way you were taught writing? Put a tick in the appropriate box.

- Yes                       No

Why, explain

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### Appendix 3

#### Writing Proficiency Test

***Instructions:*** Assume that Jimma University intends to identify the major problems student face in the teaching-learning process and find ways and means to improve the quality of education it offers. As part of this endeavor, you are required to write an essay about 300 words on the topic “**The Major Problems Student Face in the Teaching and Learning Process at Jimma University**” using the blank sheets of paper attached. In your essay, please include possible solutions you may think are useful to overcome the problems. **Please note that the information you give will be confidential and shall not be disclosed to the third party.**

**The essay is used to assess your writing proficiency and will be evaluated as per the following evaluation criteria:**

- Adequacy and relevance of the content (35%)
- Correct grammatical patterns and variety of sentence structures (25%)
- Development and organization of ideas (20%)
- Use of appropriate words (diction) (15%)
- Correct use of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization (5%)

Please provide information on the following:

ID. Card No \_\_\_\_\_

Department/ School \_\_\_\_\_

**Time Allotted: 1:10 hours**

## Appendix 4

### Factors contributing for dissatisfaction and satisfaction with the exam results identified from open-ended questions

Major and minor themes	Fre- quency	Typical Example
<b>Causes for dissatisfaction</b>	240	
<b>Teacher's related problems</b>	55	
▪ unfairness	14	Our teacher was partial during evaluation (low achiever). The teacher gave me unfair grade; he did not care to identify who deserved what (average achiever).
▪ Intimidation/discouragement	5	The teacher discouraged us by saying that no student was found to have written an effective essay (high achiever).
▪ Lack of commitment	9	The teacher did not teach us well, he came to class four times in a semester (high achiever).
▪ Inattentive marking of exam papers	7	The instructor did not read my essay carefully and gave me unexpected grade (high achiever).
▪ Incompetent/unqualified	18	The teacher was not competent and I did not develop my writing skills (average achiever).
▪ Overcorrection	2	I was not satisfied with it because of overcorrection (average achiever).
<b>Grade related problems</b>	63	
▪ Unexpected grade	33	I worked hard, but I did not get the expected grade (average achiever).
▪ Poor grade	13	The teacher gave me poor grade (low achiever).
▪ Unsatisfactory grade	14	I worked very hard and did the exam very well but my result was not satisfactory (low achiever).
▪ Scale problem	3	I got unsatisfactory grade for a matter of 2 marks deficient from the cut point (average achiever).
<b>Course related problems</b>	27	
▪ Vast	2	Since the course was very vast, we did not learn it properly (average achiever).
▪ Boring	1	A lot of reading materials which are difficult to cover with interest.
▪ Difficult	13	The course was difficult to manage, so I did not get a good grade (high achiever).
▪ Theoretical	3	I learned the theory only (low achiever).
▪ Incomplete	2	Something was missing from the course that it could not help us to develop our writing skills (average achiever).
▪ Inadequate time	4	The time allotted for the course was not enough. As a result, I did not develop the required knowledge and skills in writing (high achiever).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unfavorable context</li> </ul>	2	The course was good but the environment in which we learned the course was not favorable (average achiever).
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Major and minor themes	Fre- quency	Typical Example
<b>Exam related problems</b>	23	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inadequate time allocation</li> </ul>	10	The time allotted for the exam was inadequate (high achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unrelated to the content covered</li> </ul>	6	There was a difference between the exam and what we were taught (average achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Uninteresting topics for essay writing</li> </ul>	2	The topics given for essay writing were unfamiliar and not interesting (low achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Difficult</li> </ul>	5	The exam was very hard and the teacher did not teach us properly (high achiever).
<b>Student related problems</b>	72	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inadequate preparation</li> </ul>	10	I did not prepare for the exam (average achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inability to generate and organize ideas</li> </ul>	6	I have no ability to generate ideas and organize them (average achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Inadequate grammar and vocabulary knowledge</li> </ul>	9	I did not have adequate knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (low achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poor background in writing</li> </ul>	6	When I was in high school I did not learn about writing and when I was taught at the University I was very confused (average achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poor hand writing</li> </ul>	3	Since my hand writing was not good, my result was not satisfactory (low achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not developing the right skills (lack of practice)</li> </ul>	22	I did not get opportunities to practice writing. As a result, my writing skills remain undeveloped (low achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Feelings of anxiety in the exam</li> </ul>	2	While doing the exam, I was under stress and sick because the exam was difficult (average achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not doing the exam well</li> </ul>	7	I did not do the exam well, for I made mistakes (average achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Poor relationship with the teacher</li> </ul>	1	I had poor relationship with the teacher (average achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not good at writing</li> </ul>	6	I am not good at writing (low achiever). I do not like writing (average achiever).

Major and minor themes	Fre- quency	Typical Example
<b>Causes of satisfaction</b>	176	
<b>Grade</b>	85	
▪ Satisfactory	16	Although I have different shortcomings to overcome in the future, I am satisfied with my result (high achiever).
▪ Deserving	31	I got what I deserved. I really liked the course and I worked hard; it is one of the important courses given in the University (high achiever). I was satisfied because I did not give much attention to the course, so I got what I deserve (high achiever).
▪ Good grade	38	I got a good grade based on my work (high achiever).
<b>Development of required knowledge and skills</b>	50	I have gained adequate knowledge and skills in writing (average achiever). Even if the result was not good enough, I learned useful writing techniques that I will use them in the future (high achiever).
<b>Effective ways of teaching</b>	12	I appreciated the way I was taught writing (high achiever).
<b>Good background</b>	3	I had a good background in learning English and I am interested in the course (average achiever).
<b>Hard work</b>	8	I had been working so hard to improve my writing skills and I did it (high achiever).
<b>Interest in the course</b>	6	The course is essential and interesting (high achiever).
<b>Practising writing</b>	1	I practiced writing adequately by writing letters, essays and reports (high achiever).
<b>Good exam</b>	4	The exam was good, it needed all the points you have known before and after learning the course (high achiever).
<b>Interesting topics for essay writing</b>	7	I was satisfied with my writing course because the topic that the teacher gave us to write on was very close to our heart (high achiever).

## Appendix 5

### Factors contributing to dissatisfaction and satisfaction with the ways of teaching writing identified from open-ended questions

Major and minor themes	Frequency	Typical Example
<b>Causes for dissatisfaction</b>	82	
<b>Teacher related factors</b>		
▪ Lack of commitment	7	Our teacher was not dedicated enough to teach us writing (high achiever).
▪ Incompetent/unqualified	9	I was taught by the teacher who was not well acquainted with the subject matter (high achiever).
▪ Giving no feedback	3	No comment was given on my writing (high achiever).
▪ Autocratic	1	The teacher was tyrannous (low achiever).
▪ Ineffective teaching methods	5	The teacher did not give us opportunities to practice writing; as a result we did not develop our writing skills (average achiever).
<b>Student related factors</b>		
▪ Not developing the necessary knowledge and skills of writing	28	The course did not enable us to develop our writing skills (high achiever).
▪ Disliking writing	4	I do not like writing because I do not have good grammar and vocabulary knowledge (average achiever).
▪ Poor background	4	I did not learn how to develop my writing skills in high school (low achiever).
<b>Course related factors</b>		
▪ Boring	3	The course was boring and the teacher was undemocratic (average achiever).
▪ Inadequate time	2	The time allotted to the course was not enough (high achiever).
▪ Incomplete	6	The course was insufficient to provide me with the necessary skills (average achiever).
▪ Not understandable	1	The concept of writing is not conceivable to me (low achiever).
▪ Theory oriented	7	Writing can not be developed by learning it theoretically; we have to practice it always. But what is being practiced in the class as I noted is loading lots of theoretical ideas and handouts (high achiever).
▪ Inconducive atmosphere	2	There were many students in one class, being crowded while learning a writing course (high achiever).
▪ Difficult	1	Writing is very difficult; most of us have problems in writing effective texts (average achiever).

Major and minor themes	Frequency	Typical Example
<b>Factors contributing to the development of positive attitudes in ways of teaching writing</b>	<b>308</b>	
<b>Usefulness of the course</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing writing knowledge and skills required in academic and professional settings</li> </ul>	76	The course is very essential to get prepared to meet the demands of writing in academic and work place settings and also to be able to express ideas in a good manner (average achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To communicate with foreigners</li> </ul>	2	I am happy to develop my writing skills so that I can communicate with foreigners effectively (average achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To be a good writer</li> </ul>	9	I will become a good writer and I may get an opportunity to work in a foreign country (average achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For self expression</li> </ul>	33	To express my thoughts and feelings, developing my writing skills is crucial (high achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To develop critical thinking skills</li> </ul>	4	Writing is important to develop critical thinking skills (low achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ English is an international language</li> </ul>	4	Since English is an international language, the course enables me to communicate with different foreigners. So I have the interest to be a well skilled writer (low achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is a key to success in life</li> </ul>	20	I was happy to learn how to develop my writing skills. Writing ability is a key to success in life (low achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For self evaluation</li> </ul>	1	The course enabled me to evaluate myself in essay writing (high achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing knowledge and sharing with others</li> </ul>	7	Writing skills enable me to build my knowledge and communicate my ideas with others (high achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To improve writing skills that build self confidence</li> </ul>	5	Developing writing skills makes me a perfect and confident man (average achiever). I became knowledgeable and confident in writing (high achiever).
<b>Teacher related attributes</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Knowledgeable</li> </ul>	9	I was very happy with the way I was taught writing, for I was able to improve my writing skills, since the teacher was talented and smart (average achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Well qualified</li> </ul>	11	I was happy with the skills and ways of teaching writing of the instructor (high achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Committed to teaching writing</li> </ul>	7	My instructor taught me writing with great devotion and interest (high achiever).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Employed effective strategies for teaching writing</li> </ul>	24	The teacher taught me in an organized way. It was effective and attractive; it made me love the subject (high achiever).

Major and minor themes	Frequency	Typical Example
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<b>Effective ways of teaching writing</b>		
▪ Guidelines for effective writing	3	The guidelines for writing effective texts can help us for our future career (high achiever).
▪ Student centered	2	Since the method employed in teaching writing was student centered, it made students work hard (average achiever).
▪ Theory coupled with practice	5	Our teacher taught us the theory and helped us practice adequately. He gave us a lot of writing assignments and writing tasks in the class (high achiever).
▪ Practising writing	25	I got opportunities to practice writing. As a result of this, I have improved my writing skills (average achiever).
<b>Students related factors</b>		
▪ Interest/Enjoying writing	53	I am happy with the way I was taught writing; it enhanced my skills of organization, developing my own point of view and correcting mistakes in writing (average achiever). When I express my thoughts and ideas in writing, I feel satisfied (high achiever).
▪ Good at writing	1	I am naturally gifted with writing ability (average achiever).
▪ Good background	7	I was taught through out the high school by native speaker teachers (high achiever).

## **The Effect of Electronic Portfolios on Promoting Egyptian EFL College Students' Writing Competence and Autonomy**

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### **Bio Data:**

Ahmed Mahmoud Aliweh earned his Ph.D. from the State University of New York at Buffalo. From 1991-2000, he worked at Imam University, Saudi Arabia. He also taught at Sultan Qabous University for two semesters. His interests include online learning, intercultural communication, writing, and strategic competences.

### **Abstract**

As a response to the ongoing developments in Egyptian Higher Education which call for the implementation of more innovative technology-assisted methods of teaching, and out of the universal paradigm shift that emphasises learner autonomy and perceives learning as a lifelong process, this study examines the effects of electronic portfolios, as a non-traditional tool, on enhancing Egyptian EFL college students' writing competence and autonomy. The study was conducted on sixty fourth year college students (23 males and 37 females). The participants were randomly assigned to either an experimental group, or a control group, of 30 students each. Whereas members of the control group developed traditional paper portfolios, members of the experimental group used the Internet and online resources to develop and present the same essay portfolios. Two instruments were developed and used to assess the impact of the electronic portfolio: a) the Writing Competence Rating Scale; and b) the Learning Autonomy Scale. Results of the ANCOVA analysis reveal that online portfolios did not yield significant effects on students' writing competence and learning autonomy due to the interference of various extraneous variables which are the least controllable in online research. Further interpretations and study limitations were discussed.

**Keywords:** Electronic Portfolios, Writing Competence, Learning Autonomy

## **Introduction**

As we move forward through this rapidly evolving information age, the integration of information and communication technologies into education has become “an imperative” (Warchauer, 2002; p. 455). Therefore, electronic literacy (mastery of basic technology skills) has become a prerequisite for college graduates in this era. Without necessary electronic competence, these graduates “will find themselves at a disadvantage educationally and occupationally” (Seaman, Wilkinson, and Buboltz, 2001; p. 87). As such, there is an overwhelming demand for the incorporation of modern technologies into education at all levels. This is most evident in higher education where many institutions around the globe are racing toward the incorporation of online courses into the curricula of various academic fields (Desai and Loso, 2003). Thus, many institutions have begun “to enrich their once interpersonal lecture classes using e-mails, discussion groups, and personal web pages” (St-Pierre, 2001; p. 96).

Obviously, this is due to the acknowledged potential of the information-rich environment instructional technologies offer for education. In fact, these technologies “have opened new avenues for assisting both teachers and learners” (Dixon and Johnson, 2001; p. 40). Among other benefits, modern technologies offer easy access to a plethora of data through various means, especially the World Wide Web. Also, information and communication technologies have facilitated interaction between teachers and learners through both synchronous and asynchronous channels. Consequently, this has helped learning and instruction to surpass the limitation of time and space.

Clearly, the impact of information and communication technologies on education “is certainly felt at all levels, from preschool to the college arena” (Seeman, et. al., 2001; p. 81). Consequently, technology has become “an important factor of change in education”

(Alvarez and Rico, 2006; p. 13), and, as Cambiano, et. al., (2001) aptly put it, education today “is searching for a new meaning for the teaching and learning process” (p. 21).

This vivid influence encompasses both teachers and learners who have to “modify their epistemologies to construct knowledge with and from more robust modes of representation” (Dickenson, 2001; p. 39). Thus, the influence of technology in education is manifested in the shift toward adopting new forms of course delivery which conceptualise learners as knowledge creators, rather than as passive recipients. Accordingly, the roles of both the teacher and the learner have drastically changed and the authoritarian relationship has given way to a more democratic, humanistic, and constructivist orientation where the two sides act as partners.

Clearly, education in Egypt is not immune to the strong influences which technologies have brought to other educational systems worldwide. This change has been manifested by the officially announced policy of the Ministry of Higher Education to implement drastic measures which aim at bringing about educational reform in various institutions throughout the country. In fact, the ongoing reform policy has two characteristics: First, the shift toward multi-modal electronic resources which aims to replace the obsolete paradigm characterized by mono-source textbook curricula, domineering lecturers, and passive recipient learners. Of course, this necessitates the incorporation of modern instructional media; especially computer facilities, which help maximize students’ learning potential. Second, at the heart of this reform policy lies the focus on student-centred approaches and practices which aim at achieving greater learner autonomy. Obviously, this objective has a high priority in order for students to take the initiative in their own learning and acquire the critical thinking skills necessary for academic life.

In line with the ongoing developments in Egyptian Higher Education which aim at the

implementation of more innovative technology-assisted methods of teaching that help foster learners' autonomy, and out of the universal "paradigm shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred instruction" which sees learning as "a lifelong process rather than something done to prepare for the exam" (Jacobs and Farrell, 2001), this study attempts to assess the potential of electronic portfolios as a "non-traditional tool that "seems to show the greatest promise in enhancing diverse dimensions of learning and in promoting learners' autonomy" (Chen, 2006; p.69).

In fact, electronic portfolios provide both teachers and parents with an accessible archive of authentic work which manifests students' "deep learning" and "ownership" of the tasks. Moreover, electronic portfolios can offer a structure for students "to reflect systematically over time on the learning process and to develop the aptitude, skills, and habits that come from reflection" (Zubizarreta, 2004; p. 15).

Also, electronic portfolios can help promote writing competence. In order to successfully complete their portfolios, learners experience various self-engaging activities through which they become active participants in the writing process; students are held accountable for topic selection, development, reflection, organization, as well as publishing. As such, electronic portfolios have the potential of enhancing students' writing competence. However, research exploring the use of electronic portfolios for developing writing is quite scarce (Song and August, 2002, Ushioda and Ridley, 2002, Sullivan, 2004, Barrett, 2005a, and Barrett, 2008). As such, many researchers recommend the use of this technology-based tool so that it can be later affirmed through research whether or not the educational objectives to which reformers aspire are actually being attained. To cite one, Barrett (2005b) states that "the time is right to study the potential of electronic portfolios to engage students in active participation in assessing and managing

their own learning” (p. 23). To be more specific, she calls for an examination of the role of electronic portfolios in supporting student learning, engagement, and collaboration in order to better understand what works, especially with adolescent learners and their teachers. Therefore, investigating the impact of this new medium is needed “to record evidence of students’ progress toward meeting standards (Barrett, 2005b; p. 7). Thus, through more informative research on the use of electronic portfolios, “we can realize the true potential of using technology to both improve and showcase student achievement across the curriculum” (Barrett, 2008; p.10). As a response to such research calls, this study attempts to examine the potential of electronic portfolios for enhancing students’ writing competence and autonomy.

## **Background**

This section sheds light on the fundamental concepts relevant to portfolio design and implementation in the educational arena. Specifically, it highlights basic issues such as portfolio definitions, purposes, components, and advantages, as well as the major distinctive features of the *electronic* portfolio. It also reviews previous research relevant to the use of electronic portfolios in foreign language programs.

### *The Electronic Portfolio*

According to the National Learning Infrastructure Initiative (2003, cited in Barrett, 2005a), the electronic portfolio is:

“A collection of authentic and diverse evidence, drawn from a large archive representing what a person or organization has learned over time, on which the person or organization has reflected and designed for presentation to one or more audiences for a particular rhetorical purpose”.

An electronic portfolio makes use of modern technologies to create and publish a document that a certain audience can access and read through the computer. Also, through electronic technologies, students and teachers can collect and organize portfolio artifacts into various types (e.g. audio, video, graphics, and text). Moreover, they can use hypertext links to organize the material and include evidence of accomplishing appropriate outcomes, goals or standards.

Electronic portfolios have several advantages: 1) organizational flexibility, 2) display flexibility, 3) ability to connect content to standards, and 4) use of communication tools, (Davies, 2002; p. 2). Besides, electronic portfolios require minimal storage space and, therefore, students do not need massive storage systems. Also, electronic portfolios can be easily accessed by prospective employers online. In addition, electronic portfolios can contain multiple media; e.g., visual, audio, and text. Furthermore, electronic portfolios are easy to upgrade; their content may be updated from time to time to fit students' needs, interests and objectives throughout the course. And finally, electronic portfolios allow cross-referencing of student work through hyperlinks (Ali, 2005).

### *Portfolio Components*

According to Barrett (2005b), a portfolio has three general components; content, process, and purpose. These are described below:

**1) *The content*** includes the evidence (the learner's artefacts and reflections). An example might be writing samples, assignments, or activities undertaken over time and selected to showcase students' writing proficiency development.

**2) *The process*** includes the tools used, the sequence of activities, the rules set by the institution, the reflections constructed by the learner, the evaluation criteria, etc.

3) *The purpose* refers to the reasons for which this tool was developed. A portfolio could have various purposes; assessment, learning, professional development, and marketing etc.

Yet, based on the portfolio purpose, educators give a special emphasis to the following two types:

a) *Assessment (Summative) Portfolios*

The focus here is on the *product* or outcomes exemplified in documents aggregated over time to meet the expectations of a particular institution as in the case of graduation or certification. Thus, assessment portfolios reflect “the viewpoint of the evaluator” (Darling, 2001; p. 108), and as such, students perceive these portfolios as “something *done to them* rather than something they *want* to maintain as a lifelong learning tool” (Barrett, 2005a). In other words, the learners do not seem to have the strong sense of learning *ownership*.

b) *Learning (Formative) Portfolios*

The major purpose of this type is to foster learning and document growth over time. Unlike the previous type, the focus is on the *process* of learning. In other words, this tool “embodies the pains students experienced throughout the journey of recording, reflecting, and analysing their documents” (Darling, 2001; p. 108). Therefore, the items included reflect learners’ perspectives, not outside standards and, as a result, students develop a strong sense of *ownership* as this tool turns to be “a story told by the learner’s own voice” (Barrett, 2005a).

### **Previous Studies**

A review of relevant literature reveals that most empirical studies which investigated the incorporation of electronic portfolios in various educational domains have focussed

mainly on using this tool for assessment. To cite a few, Cambiano, Fernandez, and Martinez (2001) administered a survey on 58 college students in order to examine how they differ in 1) the process of developing and conducting traditional and electronic portfolios, 2) methodology, and 3) evaluation. Study findings indicated significant differences between the experimental and control groups in the processes of developing and conducting traditional and online portfolios. On the other hand, no significant differences were reported on methodology and evaluation. Though this study stopped short of elaborating on these differences, it concluded that “electronic portfolios can be used to visualize students’ performance and certify their progress. They can be utilized as tools for teaching, learning, and evaluation” (p. 24).

Also, Wilson, Wright, and Stallworth (2003) found that students prefer using electronic portfolios to self evaluate their conceptual knowledge and show their ability to connect learning. As a result of assessment through electronic portfolios, students became more engaged and their personal theories, beliefs, and practices came together in a cohesive bond. Students reported that portfolios provided them with the opportunity to showcase their artifacts and bear responsibility for their learning.

Brown (2004) used online surveys to identify graduate students’ responses to the electronic portfolio assessment. His study showed that authentic assessment through electronic portfolios was useful for facilitating reflective thinking that resulted in self-regulated learning. Therefore, he concluded that electronic portfolio assessment is not only a valid measure of skill and concept attainment, but is also a reliable tool for predicting future career performance.

Wickersham and Chambers (2006) conducted a study on 26 graduate students (majoring in secondary education) in order to identify the effective strategies that can be

utilized to design and develop electronic portfolios for the assessment of learning. After three semesters of implementation, a survey was administered to explore students' perceptions concerning the benefits and challenges of electronic portfolios as assessment tools. Data analysis revealed that there has been an overall continual improvement for items within three learning outcomes; 1) organizational skills, 2) self-knowledge, and 3) knowledge and skills transfer. Moreover, this authentic assessment tool helped students promote reflection and self efficacy. Through journaling exercises, the participants were better able to express their ideas and look back on past assignments to observe their progress. Study results also showed students' preference to electronic portfolios as opposed to traditional assessment tests. Electronic portfolios allowed a broader expression of learning, immediate feedback on progress, and more authentic assessment. They also helped document students' growth and "personalized" learning through offering "a relevant personal journey and diverse types of evidence needed when measuring the depth and breadth of their performance" (p. 368).

However, few studies have addressed the emerging issues of electronic portfolio implementation in foreign language learning. For example, Chang (2002) administered an evaluation questionnaire to 35 students in a pre-service teacher education program in order to identify the impact of a web-based portfolio on learning processes and outcomes. Study results revealed that the web-based portfolio system helped students obtain more feedback from their peers than from their teachers. Accordingly, peer feedback became a necessary component of web-based learning activities.

Also, Dhonau and McAlpine (2005) reported the results of a piloted foreign language program that required students to produce a CD-Rom portfolio as part of a second language Methods course. The CD-Rom was part of a package presented during an

accreditation review. Although the creation of the CD-Rom was for institutional review, it also led to fostering interaction among the faculty and the students and helped raise standards for better institutional accreditation.

Chang, Wu, and Ku (2005) examined the perceptions of 37 eighth grade Taiwanese students towards introducing electronic portfolios in teaching English as a foreign language. Study results indicated overwhelmingly positive reactions among the participants who hailed the use of this tool in Taiwanese schools.

Similarly, Kocoglu (2008) conducted a descriptive study which investigated the perceptions of Turkish EFL student teachers' perceptions toward using electronic portfolios as a learning tool. The results of student teachers' interviews indicated that electronic portfolios helped the participants collect study material, stay up-to-date with innovations in the digital world, find relevant careers, and support their professional development through working collaboratively. However, a few student teachers underestimated the effectiveness of electronic portfolios for promoting reflective thinking.

On the other hand, Rossi, Magnoler, Giannandrea (2008) reported that electronic portfolios are effective for enhancing reflection among both teachers and students. The researchers used surveys and quantitative log tracement data to examine 200 electronic portfolios over a three semester period. Study findings indicated that electronic portfolios are useful for promoting adult in-service training. Electronic portfolios helped meet the needs of the participants and provide them with formal and informal recordings of learning activities. However, the researchers cautioned that these benefits might be hampered by lack of motivation, activity overload, and rigid portfolio structures.

Chi-Hua (2008) used electronic portfolios as part of an online writing system that supports non-native students during their writing process. The central premise of that

system was that learners need relevant resources when writing in an online environment. Therefore, the proposed system provided students with a friendly supportive writing environment through: 1) writing practice, 2) peer review, and 3) electronic portfolios. This last component included a learning record and a learning journal which students could check and retrieve, both original and revised drafts, for comparison. In this way, students made use of electronic portfolios to reflect on their writing processes and problems.

Finally, Gary (2009) conducted a qualitative study which explored the realistic problems and challenges facing various stakeholders (developers, administrators, students, as well as teachers) during the implementation of an electronic portfolio system in a language center in Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The study offered various suggestions in response to stakeholders' concerns regarding the use of electronic portfolios for: 1) supporting life-long learning, 2) archiving, 3) showcasing selected artefacts, and 4) recording professional development.

From the above, it is obvious that electronic portfolios are increasingly drawing the attention of EFL researchers and practitioners in various institutions worldwide. As a new tool, its design, development, implementation, and evaluation need to be thoroughly investigated in order to maximize its benefits in foreign language programs.

### **Learner Autonomy**

As explained earlier, a major characteristic of the portfolio is that it is student-centered. In other words, the learner is fully engaged throughout the portfolio development process; that is to say, in the identification, reflection, analysis, and presentation of the artifacts included in this tool. Thus, the learner has to take responsibility for developing his

portfolio. Consequently, portfolios have the potential for boosting “learner autonomy” (which has become a buzzword over the last two decades), (Little, 1999, cited in Chiu, 2008). Nowadays, learner autonomy is perceived as “an unquestionable goal and integral part of language learning methodologies throughout the world. Large amounts of time, energy and money are spent on its promotion and implementation” (Reinders, 2000; p. 2).

Learning autonomy also relates to the prevalent paradigm shift which emphasizes the role of the language learner as an active participant who has “a choice as to the what and the how of the curriculum,” and at the same time, “should feel responsible for his own learning,” (Jacobs and Farrell, 2001).

Learning autonomy refers to “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (Holec, 1981 cited in Reinders, 2000; p. 3). This ability includes the “capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action” (Little, 1991; p. 4). Thus, autonomy requires “action” on the part of the learner when he takes responsibility for planning, monitoring, and evaluating his effort. Consequently, autonomous learners “define their goals and create their own learning opportunities” (Nunan, 1997; p. 145). Besides ability and action, consciousness seems to be an important part of the autonomy process. This involves the consciousness of making choices about what to learn and how to learn it and the consciousness of progress, etc. As such, “one cannot make informed choices about what to learn or select appropriate strategies without being conscious of it” (Reinders, 2000; p. 11).

Thus, the term “autonomy” has come to be used in at least five ways: 1) for situations in which learners study entirely on their own; 2) for a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning; 3) for an inborn capacity; 4) for the exercise of learners’ responsibility for their own learning and; 5) for the right of learners to

determine the direction of their own learning (Thanasoulas, 2000).

From this, the autonomous learner takes the initiative in his own learning. He adopts an active role in approaching the learning task, rather than simply reacting to stimuli of the classroom teacher. In other words, “the autonomous learner is not one to whom things merely happen; he is one who, by his own volition, causes things to happen. Learning is seen as the result of his own self-initiated interaction with the world” (Thanasoulas 2000).

### **The Study**

Though writing is a major skill that most EFL programs at Egyptian universities give a high priority, many students encounter serious difficulties when developing standard essays of different genres and rhetorical patterns. Students’ incompetence may be partly due to lack of practice and enthusiasm for writing. As a complex and recursive skill, writing requires steady engagement in appropriate activities in order for the learners to fully experience the various aspects of this discourse. For this reason, this study aims to boost Egyptian college students’ writing competence through the incorporation of electronic portfolios into face-to-face instruction. In addition, as a technology-based tool, the electronic portfolio has the potential for enhancing students’ learning autonomy. Thus, in order to examine the impact of electronic portfolios on these variables, this study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What effect does the development and presentation of an electronic portfolio have on students’ overall writing competence?
2. What effect does the development and presentation of an electronic portfolio have on students’ learning autonomy?

## **Method**

### *Sample*

This study was conducted on sixty fourth year college students (23 males and 37 females) majoring in English as a foreign language at the College of Education, Tanta University. The participants were randomly assigned to an experimental and a control group, 30 students each. The participants had studied literature, linguistics, as well as various education related topics. As for writing instruction, the participants had been studying the essay as a mandatory subject over the previous three years through which they handled various types of genres; descriptive, narrative, expository, etc. Accordingly, members of the two groups were required to hand in a portfolio which contained at least five final drafts of different essays handled throughout the term. To this end, members of the experimental group were able to use the Internet to develop their portfolios in on-campus computer labs. Meanwhile, members of the control group developed their paper-based portfolios during traditional face-to-face classrooms wherein they had no access to computer facilities. Finally, the same material, techniques, activities, and strategies were used for the two groups by the same instructor (this investigator) who implemented the *process approach* throughout this course.

### *Implementation*

The electronic portfolio adopted for use in this study had a *learning* purpose, (not an assessment one); namely, to help students experience the writing process on their own, through planning, setting objectives, gathering relevant data, carrying out objectives, and reflecting on the writing process through revision and reformulation of the whole piece of writing. Thus, since the main focus of this study was to have students experience writing

as a complex and recursive process, the electronic portfolio served as a vehicle for showcasing learning growth relevant to essay writing. Hopefully, this helped support a “sense of ownership” and created “an environment of reflection and collaboration” among the participants (Barrett, 2004).

### A Framework for Portfolio Development

Barrett’s (2005b) widely acknowledged model for portfolio development was adopted for use in this study. This model comprises two types of skills; a) *portfolio skills* and b) *technology skills*. These are explained below:

#### a) Portfolio Skills

According to this model, the portfolio development process has five stages:

1. *Collection*: Students gather artifacts (in this case, relevant material to essay writing) that show their successful endeavors and growth opportunities in their day-to-day learning.

2. *Selection*: Students identify the artifacts which act as evidence in the meeting particular objectives and standards.

3. *Reflection*: Students evaluate their own progress over time. They review the successes as well as the gaps in the portfolio development process.

4. *Projection*: Students compare their reflections to particular standards and performance indicators in order to fulfil future learning objectives. In this way, a portfolio becomes a tool for lifelong learning.

5. *Presentation* Students fulfil their commitment to share their portfolios with the public; peers, friends, or parents. To this end, they store their portfolios in an appropriate

medium, e.g., a computer disk, a hard disk, a web server, etc. As a time to celebrate achievement, this stage helps encourage collaboration and development of lifelong learning through the feedback students receive from their peers.

#### b) Electronic Skills

The second component of Barrett's model for portfolio development required learners to master certain technology skills necessary for functioning within the electronic medium. Acquiring these skills was a prerequisite in order to convert the artifacts into digital format. Among others, learners had to acquire file management skills (i.e., the naming, organizing, attaching, copying and pasting of files). Also, they had to be familiar with the use of web browsers, e-mail programs, word processing, and concept mapping (Barrett, 2008; p. 19).

To attain such skills, members of the experimental group received necessary training at a computer lab which had an Internet connection, a server, a whiteboard, and a printer. Also, relevant assistance was provided by an experienced computer technician who was on duty to help overcome technical difficulties.

#### Computer Lab Activities

Members of the experimental group were engaged in the following activities:

1) *Getting to know the computer lab*: These participants were informed about course objectives, requirements, portfolio concepts, purpose, audience, and format. Also, they were assigned personal accounts and passwords to use when logging onto the computers.

2) *Navigating Internet Explorer*;

3) *Signing Up for a Yahoo Mail Account*;

4) *Joining a Yahoo Discussion Group*: Since *reflection* is a major component of portfolio development, the participants needed a forum for exchanging views, comments, and feedback with their peers. To this end, the moderator started a free Discussion Group on Yahoo. The use of online discussion group assignments helps “create a secure and nurturing learning environment that appeals to a wide variety of students; and that supports both a sense of collective purpose and individual construction of complex responses” Cobb, 2000; p. 32). Therefore, members of the experimental group had to subscribe to this forum in order to post their drafts and exchange feedback. The participants had to learn how to post files, send an e-mail, respond to a comment, etc. Thus, by the end of the program, the participants had exchanged more than 334 messages and comments, i.e., about 11 messages per participant. (for more detail about the Discussion Group logon to: <http://groups.yahoo.com.group/writingactivities>).

5. *File Management Skills*: Most importantly, the participants were taught how to open, copy, paste and attach files. They were also shown how to organize files into folders which are the major components of the electronic portfolio.

#### Practicing the Writing Process Online

Adhering to the above model, the participants handled their essays from a *process* perspective which conceptualises writing as a “recursive” process wherein the learner “jumps between one sub-process and the next, and back and forth within the text...” (Archibald and Jeffery, 2000; p. 2). Adopting this perspective is in full harmony with recent assertions that the incorporation of electronic portfolios is “ideally suited to programs that use a curriculum influenced by the writing *process* (italics added). Portfolios can accommodate and even support extensive revision ... help examine

progress over time, and encourage students to take responsibility for their own writing” (Song, and August, 2002; p. 50).

Teaching writing as a process entails five stages; prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Archibald and Jeffery, 2000, Tompkins, 2000, Tsui and Ng, 2000, Jung, 2001, and Carter, 2007). The next section illustrates how members of the experimental group undertook the various stages of the writing process when developing their electronic portfolios.

### 1 Pre-writing

The participants were engaged in gathering ideas and materials relevant to the topic through Internet engine searches and information quests. They had to navigate web sites to attain data relevant to their essays. They were required to extensively read whole papers, identify relevant information, and make use of certain pieces when writing their topics, e.g., Sources and Solutions of Environmental Pollution, Advantages and Disadvantages of Life in a Big or in a Small Town, etc.

Yet, a common problem occurred at the beginning of the course; namely, the participants abused the information they acquired through search engines by simply cutting large portions of texts and pasting them into their essays. Due to repeated warnings from the moderator, the participants came gradually to realize how to paraphrase the acquired information into their writing.

### 2. Drafting

Here, the main focus is on the meaning; that is, putting ideas on paper. Therefore, “mechanics and surface structure such as spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure

should not be a concern. This stage is centered on recording ideas” (Carter, 2007; p. 69).

Thus, the participants made use of the information gathered from info-quests to write their first drafts which were posted on the Internet Discussion Group site.

### Peer Feedback

As explained earlier, the major intent of starting this Discussion group was to encourage reflection through exchanging feedback with peers. For this reason, each participant had to offer feedback to another classmate once a week. In order to avoid flattery, the participants used pseudonyms when joining the Discussion Group. This was thought to encourage the participants to offer serious and in-depth comments without evoking feelings of anger or embarrassment, as may have been the case if real names had been used. In reality, only the investigator kept a list of students’ real names as well as their pseudonyms, for course evaluation considerations.

At the beginning of the course, most students’ feedback focused on surface features and mechanics, e.g., grammatical errors, spelling, and punctuation, even though the participants were frequently reminded that handling such aspects should be postponed to the editing stage.

### 3. Reviewing

At this stage, the participants were required to go through the content of their writing, looking for improvement. Based on the feedback they received from the instructor and their peers, they had to clarify, add, delete, or even reformulate the whole draft in order to fit the intended purpose, tone, and audience.

### A Revision Checklist

The moderator developed a 15 item checklist which was verified by three EFL professors in order for the participants to review their performance when developing their first and second drafts. This checklist addressed all aspects of essay writing; the format, content, organization, development, style, grammar, as well as the mechanics. The checklist was posted on the Group web site so that the participants could easily access it when needed.

#### 4. Editing

This was the time for students to polish their final drafts by examining the mechanics and the surface features; e.g., sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, writing format, etc. The participants could make use of the spelling and grammar checkers of the Word processing program when editing their essays.

#### 5. Publishing

As a sort of recognition of their writing accomplishments, the participants had to share their topics with their peers through publishing their essays on the group's web page. To do this, the participants had to save their essays into files and then copy and paste these files into a folder entitled *My Portfolio*. This folder contained five essays which students developed, selected, reflected on, and presented as evidence of their progress throughout this course. A typical student portfolio had to start with a title page that had the student's name, class, academic year, and topic. Next was the content page which contained the students' topics and reflection notes, (for more information about samples of students' electronic portfolios log on to: <http://groups.yahoo.com.group/writingactivities>).

## **Instruments**

Two instruments were used in this study; the Writing Competence Rating Scale, and the Learner Autonomy Scale. These are highlighted below.

### *1. Writing Competence Rating Scale*

In order to examine the impact of developing the electronic portfolio on students' writing performance, members of the two groups had to take pre-tests and post-tests; the participants had to write a standard five paragraph essay on a) Reasons for Studying English (pre-test) and, b) Qualities in a Friend (post-test). Then, the investigator developed an analytic rating scale to assess students' writing competence. This scale addressed the writing content, organization, and accuracy.

Face validity of this scale was examined by three EFL professors whose comments and suggestions were adhered to. Then, as suggested by Conor and Mbaye (2002), students' essays were analytically rated by two senior MA candidates who scored students' essays according to three criteria; content, organization, and accuracy. Rating scores ranged from 1 (the lowest) to 4 (the highest). Inter-rater reliability was also verified before rating students' essays; Pearson correlation coefficient alpha was .72; (for more details about this instrument, see Appendix A).

### *2. The Learner Autonomy Scale*

Due to lack of autonomy scales that specifically address the writing process, the investigator carefully examined previous studies which identified characteristics of autonomous language learners (Thanasoulas, 2000, Ushioda and Ridley, 2002, Usuki, 2002, Wu, 2003, and Sert, 2006). Based on findings of these studies, autonomy scales

should specifically address learner self directed strategies, their perceptions of the learning process, especially the roles of both the teacher and the learner, and the various resources students access throughout learning. Accordingly, the current 5 point Likert scale has two alternate forms; one form was used as a pre-measure and the other as a post-measure. The autonomy scale comprised the following dimensions; a) use of self directed strategies (items 1-12 in both forms), b) perception of the learning process (items 13-21 in both forms), and c) seeking a variety of learning opportunities (items 22-30 in both forms).

To verify their internal consistency, these autonomy surveys were piloted on 40 non-participating students during the first week of the term. Reliability analysis yielded moderate coefficient alpha scores; .71 and .70 for the pre-and the post-forms, respectively. Moreover, face validity of the autonomy scales was ratified by three EFL professors whose feedback helped reformulate the dimensions stated above.

## **Results**

Students' responses on the two scales explained above were statistically analysed by administering the *ANCOVA* test in order to examine the impact of students' electronic portfolios on their writing competence and autonomy. Relevant data for study variables are reported below.

*Q.1.* What effect does the presentation of electronic portfolios have on students' overall writing competence?

Relevant data of *ANCOVA* analysis of students' scores for writing competence are provided below.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and the ANCOVA Test of Between-Subjects**

*Effects; Dependent Variable, Post Overall Writing Competence*

Mean		St.D		Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta Squared
Exp	Cont	Exp	Cont							
10.1	10.0	1.3	1.1	corrected model	1.134	2	.567	.376	.688	.013
				Intercept	160.972	1	160.972	106.800	.000	.652
				Overall Pre	.930	1	.930	.617	.435	.011
				Group	1.003	1	1.003	.665	.418	.012
				Error	85.911	57	1.507			
				Total	6157.25 0	60				
				corrected Total	87.046	59				

*a* Computed using  $\alpha = .05$   $N = 60$

*b*  $R$  Squared = .013 (Adjusted  $R$  Squared = -.022)

Table 1 shows that the means were 10.1 and 10.0; the standard deviations were 1.3 and 1.1 for the experimental and control groups, respectively. The ANCOVA test yielded  $F(1-58) = .665$ ,  $p > .05$ . Apparently, electronic portfolios had no significant effects on students' overall writing competence.

#### *The Effect of Electronic Portfolio on Learning Autonomy*

Q.2: What effect does the presentation of the electronic portfolio have on students' learning autonomy?

Students' responses on the Autonomy Scales were statistically analysed, and the results are reported below.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and the ANCOVA Test of Between-Subjects**

*(Effects; Dependent Variable: Autonomy-POST)*

Mean		St. D		Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta Squared
Exp	Cont	Exp	Cont							
98.7	98.4	12.7	9.4	Corrected Model	10.224	2	5.112	.040	.960	.001
				Intercept	7074.024	1	7074.024	55.829	.000	.495
				Autonomy	8.874	1	8.874	.070	.792	.001
				GROUP	2.559	1	2.559	.020	.887	.000
				Error	7222.359	57	126.708			
				Total	590353.000	60				
				Corrected Total	7232.583	59				

*a* Computed using alpha = .05; N = 60

*b* R Squared = .001 (Adjusted R Squared = -.034)

In Table 2, the means are 98.7 and 98.4; the standard deviations are 12.7 and 9.4 for the experimental and control groups, respectively. Results of the ANCOVA test are  $F(1-58) = .020, p > .05$ ; and this indicates no statistically significant differences between the two groups concerning learning autonomy.

## Discussion

The first question of this study examined the effect of the development and presentation of electronic portfolios on students' overall writing competence. As reported above, data analysis revealed that electronic portfolios had no significant effect on this variable. This

result is consistent with a myriad of previous research findings which indicated that there is no significant difference in the learning outcomes of students enrolled in web-based instruction and those attending traditional face-to-face classes (Fallah and Ubell, 2000; Johnson, et. al, 2000; Carey, 2001; Green and Gentermann, 2001; Carlisle, 2002; Press, 2005; and Frydenberg, 2007).

Along the same lines, Carey (2001) reports that “to this date, most research indicates that there *is little difference* in the performance of students taking online courses and students taking face-to-face classes.” Also, Carnevale (2001) maintains that “the delivery mode we know for a fact does not impact the learning. It is the design of the instruction that impacts the learning, and also what the students bring to the instructional situation.”

Thus, Keefe (2003) concludes that

the no significant difference effect is arguably the most enduring phenomenon in the literature. It supports using technology in education, not because it increases teaching effectiveness...but because it is cheaper and more convenient (p. 39).

Yet, several factors might have contributed to this finding. Most importantly, research studies which incorporate online activities are susceptible to several “extraneous variables” (Phipps and Merisotis 1999) which were not within the control of this study, and might have eroded the impact of electronic portfolios on students’ writing competence. According to Lockee (2001), online learning is “a very complex process... There are so many important variables that do impact learning and should be analyzed and considered; e.g. cognitive styles, learning styles, instructional strategies, and different teaching methodologies for teaching particular levels of objectives and different domains” (p. 1). As Felix (2001) maintains, these variables are “the least controllable” in

experimental research designs investigating the web (p. 343).

In this study, for example, outside classroom practice, especially for members of the control group who had computers at home, might have been an interfering variable that impacted study results. In other words, it is not unlikely that quite a few participants of the control group used their home Internet connections to gather data through information quests and research engines in order to use when developing their essays in classroom. Though they were frequently warned against such activities, barring these students' outside access to computers was not within the control of the examiner, and this might have contributed to the "no significant effect" on writing competence.

Conversely, lack of computer access among some members of the experimental group might have been a serious impediment that limited their online participation. Though provisions were made for members of the experimental group to use on-campus computer labs, some participants could not afford the time to accomplish their assignments due to schedule overload, and therefore, had to pay for off-campus Internet cafes. Apart from the financial burden, this might have been a serious obstacle, especially for conservative female participants. Thus, as Joffe (2000) states, "inadequate computer/ Internet access renders programs useless" (p. 1).

Another equally important factor that might have led to this "no significant effect" is that students' *abuse of technology* resources, especially Internet searches, might have destroyed the attainment of significant effects on students' writing competence. According to Brown (2006), "one of the most common roadblocks to the use of digital sources is the indiscriminate copying and pasting of information to students' research papers" (p. 39). As stated earlier in the *Implementation* section, it was noted that some members of the experimental group stuffed their essays with information they just copied

from search engines and pasted into their documents. By so doing, these participants had not yet abandoned the dominant obsolete role of knowledge consumption. Besides, this malpractice runs against the major requirements for effective portfolio development: namely, knowledge construction, reflection, and ownership. To meet these conditions, the learners should have undertaken the painstaking exercise of careful selection and evaluation of resources before adapting relevant data to their documents. As such, it is no wonder then that “many [writing] teachers experience less than satisfactory results from their students. Research papers requiring library and Internet resources for search projects are often superficial in content and lacking in valid conclusion statements” (Brown, 2006; p. 39).

Finally, since developing an electronic portfolio is a time and effort demanding process, it might have been unfeasible to bring about a significant impact in a twelve week period. As Phipps and Merisotis (1999) point out, measuring such effect requires “investigating the whole academic program, not just an individual course” (p. 11).

The second question of this study explored the effect of electronic portfolios on developing students’ autonomy. Again, no statistically significant differences between the two groups were reported. This result does not seem at odds with previous research findings on this issue. As McCarthy (2000) points out, “training in itself does not certainly entail autonomy development among learning; providing the learner with opportunities to practice autonomy both inside and outside classroom is necessary for the effectiveness of autonomy training programs (p.2).

However, this finding could be attributed to various factors. Most prominently, the Egyptian educational context at large seems antithetical to learner autonomy; it is teacher dominated, textbook centered, and exam driven. As such, this system encourages teacher

reliance and offers few, if any, opportunities for inquiry and reflection. Therefore, “it is not realistic to expect to achieve autonomous language learning in more teacher dominant contexts...; the majority of students lack necessary critical thinking skills to cope with the requirements of academic life such as the skills to plan, conduct, and evaluate research” (Sert, 2006; p. 185). Again, “given this situation, it is not surprising that students have failed to overtly demonstrate a great deal of autonomy” (Holden and Usuki, 1999; p.191-192).

Besides, the time factor could be accountable for the above finding. Previous research has shown that learner autonomy takes a long time to develop, (Thonasoulas, 2000 and Yumuk, 2002). Therefore, removing some barriers that impede students from acting in certain ways does not necessarily guarantee that they will, once and for all, break away from the old habits of behavior and thinking. Thus, since old habits do not die so fast, a twelve week period might have been inadequate for the participants to abandon their long held learning beliefs and practices which foster teacher dependence, authority control, textbook reliance, rote learning, and memorization of prescribed syllabuses. Again, quitting such learning habits, especially at the very last semester of university instruction, might have been unfeasible in this relatively short period of time.

Also, inability to develop autonomy might be ascribed to “loneliness” which might have hindered students from coping with learning activities in this setting (Reinders, 2000; p.25). It seems that this factor might have been at work in this study where students’ were held accountable for the development and presentation of their own portfolios. Yet, to conclude that these students’ prefer working in groups rather than working alone in this web-based environment remains an issue which was not explored in this study.

Finally, this result might be attributed to lack of technology-based skills among the participants. As explained earlier, the development of the electronic portfolio is a complex process that requires some basic technology skills (e.g., e-mailing, file management, hyper-linking, etc). Since technology is relatively new to the Egyptian educational arena, the vast majority of the participants were novice computer users, and, therefore, they had to frequently seek the assistance of both the moderator and the technician to cope with course requirements. Based on anecdotal evidence, this might have diminished opportunities of practicing independence and taking charge of learning tasks throughout portfolio preparation. Consequently, instead of focusing on portfolio content, it seems that the participants shifted attention to technology skills. As Barrett (2008) indicated, the focus should “not be on the technology, but on the learning”...and this might have led to “the lowest levels of portfolio implementation [because] content and reflection are more important than technology in implementing electronic portfolios” (p. 9).

Closely related to this is the authoritarian atmosphere prevailing in computer labs, especially on the part of technicians who, out of their undue worry about the computer, did not allow the participants much freedom to experiment with the lab facilities. Again, such an atmosphere is not conducive to promoting learning autonomy.

### **Implications and Conclusion**

The findings of this study have several implications for the implementation of electronic portfolios in Egyptian educational institutions for both *learning* and *assessment* purposes. Most importantly, English language teachers should adopt electronic portfolios as effective means for promoting students’ writing competence. Introducing learners to

this viable tool enables them to experience hands-on writing activities, especially in the web environment which teems with multimodal online resources that students can use to gather writing input through hyperlinks, cross references, group discussions, and feedback from both peers and teachers. Moreover, the inclusion of portfolios in writing classes has the potential of offering learners authentic opportunities to practice self assessment and a sharing of authority between teacher and student; students can select the work on which they will be evaluated, reflect on their work, seek advice from teachers and peers, and take control of revision. Thus, “evaluation becomes a positive force to encourage growth, maturity, and independence, rather than a means of pointing out differences. A power shift can occur because teacher and students are united in a common effort to improve students’ writing instead of adversaries in an unequal contest in which one player (the teacher) controls the outcome from the beginning” (Richardson, 2000; p.120) .

Portfolios can also enhance students’ active participation in the EFL classroom. They “can provide students with: a) an opportunity for a more personal and comprehensive relationship between students and teachers, b) a chance for students to know themselves better, i.e., their strengths and weaknesses, and, consequently, monitor their future actions and performances, and c) an opportunity for students to relate their opinions to those of others, thus helping them to assess several viewpoints, keep an open mind to diversity, and even construct, widen, and reconstruct their own knowledge” (Nunes, 2006; p. 330).

Also, study implications include a shift toward learner autonomy. In order to encourage learners to take more responsibility, current teaching strategies and curricula that promote teacher dependence should be revised, if not abolished. The introduction of autonomy in language learning requires drastic changes in syllabuses, teacher training programs, as

well as learners' attitudes. To this end, language programs should shift the emphasis from the "content" to the "processes" of learning, (Nunes, 2006). In other words, rather than focusing on knowledge retention through memorization and rote learning, there should be a shift toward learning strategies that foster self-directed activities and reflective skills; e.g. group activities, self assessment assignments, peer assessment, etc. (Jacobs and Farrell, 2001).

Closely related to this, the activities should require the students to take responsibility for planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning. For example, language programs "should introduce task-based learning activities; e.g., group presentations, language games, online discussion groups, e-mail projects...etc. In this way, "teachers can transfer the locus of control to learners and help them become autonomous" (Chiu, 2008).

To conclude, the current study revealed that students' development of online portfolios did not yield significant effects on students' writing competence and learning autonomy. However, these results should be approached with caution due to the relatively short duration of the study as well as to the interference of several extraneous variables that are the least controllable in online research. Therefore, a replication of this study on a full academic year is recommended in order to make possible generalizations. To this end, future research should combine both quantitative and qualitative techniques "in order to better understand the complex mental processes and strategies involved in electronic portfolio implementation. Also, the perceptions of both learners and teachers of electronic portfolios is another area that is worth examination. Furthermore, future research should address the optimal conditions of classroom management in a high-tech-environment because "not everyone is cut out to teach in this type of classroom" (Mastin, Polman, and

Beyer, 2001; p. 65). Therefore, strategies, conditions, and the varied roles of effectively moderating technology-assisted environments entail in-depth investigation. In addition, future research should explore the optimal conditions of employing electronic portfolios to promote learning autonomy relevant to various language skills. Also, as Dornyei, (2001) notes, “little work has been done in the L2 field to devise and test motivational strategies systematically” (p. 51). Therefore, investigating motivational strategies pertinent to foreign language learning is a new and intriguing area. Last, but not least, since technology changes the way we think, research is badly needed to assess the impact of technology on the learner’s thinking. Put another way, “since technological tools mediate thought, does this mediation heighten traditional thinking in any way, or does it change the nature of the question of inquiry and expression altogether?” (Gibson and Barrett, 2002; p. 15).

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## **Appendix A**

### **Writing Competence Rating Scale**

Dear Raters;

The following essays were written by a group of EFL college seniors as part of a study undertaken to assess their overall writing competence. You are kindly requested to rate these essays according to the criteria below:

*Content:*

- 4: The essay has a clear central idea that directly relates to the assigned topic. It contains an abundance of evidence and details that fully support the topic. All sentences are related to the assigned topic.

- 3: The essay has a central idea that is reasonably well developed. It contains most details needed to support the topic with few minor details missing. It also contains very few irrelevant sentences.
- 2: The essay has a central idea that is partially developed. It contains some details relevant to the assigned topic. Other equally important details are missing. It also contains several irrelevant sentences
- 1: The essay has a central idea that is poorly developed. Very few details, if any, support the topic. Substantive details are missing. Most sentences do not relate to the assigned topic.

*Organization:*

- 4: The essay has a clear plan that contains all major parts of a standard essay; an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. All paragraphs are logically ordered and interrelated through appropriate transitions and discourse signals.
- 3: The essay contains basic parts; yet, it needs a little more elaboration and coherence through the use of more accurate transitions and discourse signals.
- 2: The essay has a plan that is partially coherent. Some paragraph are not logically ordered and contain few transitions and connectors.
- 1: The essay does not have a clear plan. Basic parts of a standard essay are missing. Transitions and discourse signals are nonexistent.

*Accuracy:*

- 4: The essay contains no grammatical or mechanical errors. Words, phrases, and idioms are accurately chosen to address the assigned topic.
- 3: The essay contains very few grammatical or mechanical errors which do not obscure the meaning. Most words used are accurate and felicitous.
- 2: The essay contains some sporadic serious grammatical and mechanical errors which irritate the reader. The writer uses some words which sound awkward and monotonous.
- 1: The essay contains too many serious grammatical and mechanical errors. It also contains several inaccurate words and phrases which obscure the reader's effort to comprehend the meaning.

## Appendix B

### *Scale of Writing Autonomy (Form A)*

Dear Student;

Please mark one of the following choices where *N* stands for ( never) , *R* ( rarely), *S* (sometimes), *O* (often), and *A* (always).

<i>When writing English,</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>A</i>
1) I know clearly what I am writing about.					
2) I ask someone to thoroughly explain what I should include in my essay.					
3) I make my own way in writing.					
4) I depend on myself to understand what I am going to write about.					
5) On my own, I identify ideas relevant to my essay.					
6) I make use of what I learned before to improve my writing.					
7) I choose the setting relevant for writing on my own.					
8) I start writing only after I look at other people's work.					
9) I decide my own standards, techniques, and procedures.					
10) I try various writing styles that match task requirements.					
11) I question the usefulness, relevance, and accuracy of what I include in my essay.					
12) I analyze what I write in order to make sure that I am handling the task properly.					
13) I revise what I write in order to improve my writing performance.					
14) I depend on myself to identify writing difficulties.					
15) On my own, I seek effective solutions to my writing difficulties.					
16) When I face writing difficulties, I wait till someone offers help.					
17) I ask the instructor to provide me with all bits and pieces I should include in my essay.					
18) I strictly follow the directions dictated by the instructor.					
19) I write about challenging and difficult topics					
20) When I need help, I depend mainly on the instructor.					
21) I ask the instructor to correct every single error I make.					
22) I consider the instructor to be just a facilitator					
23) The instructor decides what we write about; the topic, ideas, the quantity, quality, etc.					
24) The instructor knows best what I should or should not write about.					
25) I fully depend on the instructor to revise my essays in order to identify problems and fix them.					
26) I depend on my colleagues to provide me with relevant writing resources.					
27) I depend on the classroom textbook as the sole source for writing.					
28) I go to the library to gather information relevant to my writing.					
29) Even outside school, I try to obtain relevant writing material.					
30) I use the Internet to search for material I can use in my writing.					

### *Scale of Writing Autonomy (form B)*

Dear Student;

Please mark one of the following choices where *N* stands for ( never) , *R* ( rarely), *S* (sometimes), *O* (often), and *A* (always).

<b><i>When writing in English,</i></b>	<b><i>N</i></b>	<b><i>R</i></b>	<b><i>S</i></b>	<b><i>O</i></b>	<b><i>A</i></b>
1) I am well aware of my objectives.					
2) On my own, I identify the ideas relevant to my essay.					
3) I start writing immediately without waiting for help.					
4) I ask other students to show me what I should write about.					
5) Before I start writing, I read up on several topics relevant to my essay.					
6) I am well aware of various characteristics and requirements of good writing.					
7) I choose certain topics to write different types of essays on my own.					
8) I write on topics that are challenging and difficult, even if I do not find enough information					
9) I vary my styles and techniques according to the different writing tasks.					
10) I keep a diary of the effective techniques and procedures I use in my writing.					
11) I decide the relevant place and atmosphere for my writing.					
12) I do my best to include the information I learned in various courses into my essay.					
13) I examine what I write to fit the topic of my essay.					
14) On my own, I carry out necessary changes that help improve my writing.					
15) I depend on myself to identify various types of problems I face in writing.					
16) I develop my own checklist to evaluate my writing performance.					
17) I regularly ask someone to help me figure out writing difficulties.					
18) I consult various writing texts and resources to find effective solutions to my writing difficulties					
19) I depend on my classmates to correct my writing errors.					
20) I ask the instructor to provides me with minute details I need for writing.					
21) I literally follow the directions the instructor provides and write accordingly.					
22) I ask the instructor to correct every single error I make.					
23) I go back to the instructor before I make any changes in my writing.					
24) I ask the instructor just to give me clues about how to improve my topic.					
25) I depend on myself to obtain relevant writing material.					
26) I ask my classmates for basic material I need in writing.					
27) I use only the classroom text to develop my essay.					
28) I try various resources when writing my essay.					
29) I refer to library references for writing material relevant to my essay.					
30) I make use of online resources to develop my essay.					

## English Test-Taking Strategy Use and Students' Test Performance

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### **Abstract**

This paper reports on a study of English test-taking strategy use and its effect on students' test performance at the tertiary level. After administering an 83-item survey to 526 students in three different study years at a university in Beijing, the study revealed that (1) the students had a medium use of English test-taking strategies. The most frequently used were compensation strategies, followed by affective, metacognitive, social strategies, cognitive and memory strategies; (2) the most often used individual strategies mainly fell

into the metacognitive category, while the least often used individual strategies largely belonged to the memory category; (3) different categories of English test-taking strategies and overall strategy use were all significantly positively correlated with one another; (4) students' test performance was significantly correlated with compensation and social strategies; (5) twenty-one strategy items, most of which were metacognitive strategies, significantly correlated with students' test performance; (6) significant difference emerged in the use of memory strategies among students in different study years. Based on these findings, some educational implications are discussed.

**Keywords:** English Test-Taking Strategy Use, Test Performance, University

## **Introduction**

Tests have become a powerful tool for decision making in our competitive society, with individuals of all ages being frequently evaluated with respect to their achievement and abilities. Consequently, how to perform better on tests has become a big concern for students and teachers in almost all areas. As a result, strategies to enhance test performance have been discussed in various teaching and learning settings and some are actually employed by learners during tests. Even so, not much research has been done in this area, especially in SL/EL testing situations. Though it is often said that Chinese learners are good at using strategies to better performance on tests, research in this area has been even scarcer.

Situated in a Chinese EFL context at the tertiary level, the present study aimed to explore the frequency of English test-taking strategy use by Chinese undergraduate non-English majors, its relationship with students' test performance, and differences among students in different study years.

## **Literature Review**

Research on study strategies has captured the attention of numerous language researchers and educators during the past few decades. Widely agreed is that language learning strategies are “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, and more transferable to new situations” (Oxford, 1990, p. 8). To better understand and research on language learning strategies, researchers have tried to categorize the strategies into various groups. For example, Rubin (1981, 1987) identified strategies as those contributing to language learning success either directly (e.g., inductive inferencing, practice, and memorization) or indirectly (e.g., creating practice opportunities and using production tricks). Synthesizing earlier work on good language learning strategies in general, Oxford (1990) proposed a language learning strategy system which classifies strategies into six categories: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. Memory strategies relate to the storing and retrieval of information (e.g., ‘I use new English words in a sentence so I can remember them’). Cognitive strategies are “unified by a common function: manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner” (e.g., ‘I use the English words I know in different ways’) (Oxford, 1990, p. 43). Compensation strategies “enable learners to use the new language for either compensation or production despite limitations in knowledge” (e.g., ‘To understand unfamiliar English words I make guesses’) (Oxford, 1990, p. 47). Metacognitive strategies “allow learners to control their own cognition” (e.g., ‘I look for people to talk to in English’) (Oxford, 1990, p. 135). Affective strategies are concerned with the regulation of feelings and attitudes (e.g., ‘I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English’), and social strategies are those which take account of the

fact that language is a form of social behavior, involving communication with other people (e.g., ‘I practice English with other students’).

Employing different classification models, many researchers have found that high achievers, distinguished by their grades in certain content areas, grade point averages, or achievement test scores, tend to use effective study strategies more frequently than do low achievers (Bremmer, 1999; Kitsantas, 2002; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995; Oxford & Nyikos, 1989; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Sundre & Kitsantas, 2004; VanZile-Tamsen & Livingston, 1999).

In language learning situations, learning strategies help learners acquire language knowledge or vice versa, as evidenced above. During tests or in language use situations, strategy use is related to the ongoing working memory in association with the short-term memory regarding the language to retrieve necessary declarative (knowing what), procedural (knowing how) and conditional (knowing when) knowledge in the long-term memory to solve task difficulty (Gagne et al., 1993). The strategies used during tests should be looked at when researchers are attempting to explain variation in a specific language test performance because they are directly related to test score variation.

Test-taking strategies originated from the concept of ‘test-wiseness’ which is defined as “one’s capacity for using test characteristics and formats and/or test-taking situations to raise test scores” (Millman et al., 1965, cited in Ritter & Idol-Maestas, 1986, p. 50). According to Cohen (2000), language test-taking strategies consisted of both language use strategies and test-wiseness strategies. He further defined them as those test-taking processes that the candidates have selected and are conscious of to a certain degree (Cohen & Upton, 2006). Meanwhile, Jimenez et al. (1996) referred to test-taking strategies as operations or steps used by test-takers to facilitate the retrieval of

information and classified them into four groups—reader-initiated strategies, text-initiated strategies, bilingual strategies and interactive strategies. Deanna (2002) believed that cognitive and metacognitive strategies were involved in doing reading comprehension tests and that the former could be grouped into key words, deduction, reasoning and reconstruction; and the latter, could be categorized into planning, monitoring and evaluation (as Oxford (1990) did).

All the definitions, though worded differently, have in common strategies that are somehow related to what test takers do and might do to solve test problems. To explore the relationship of test-takers' use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to EFL reading test performance, Phakiti (2003) employed both quantitative and qualitative data analyses. 384 students enrolled in a fundamental English course at a Thai university took an 85-item, multiple-choice reading comprehension achievement test and filled in a cognitive–metacognitive questionnaire. Then, eight of them were selected for retrospective interviews. The results suggested that (1) the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies had a positive relationship to the reading test performance; and (2) more successful test-takers reported significantly higher metacognitive strategy use than less successful ones.

In order to investigate test-taking strategies on multiple-choice comprehension tests, Xiao (2006) recruited 204 Chinese first-year undergraduates. The researcher found that comprehension strategies were the most frequently used when the students were dealing with content items and discourse items as were memory strategies when dealing with pragmatic items. The study also revealed the most often used strategies were elimination, key words, returning to the text, guessing, monitoring, translation, and using background knowledge. The other two findings were: (1) strategy use was affected by passage

difficulty; and (2) more successful students used more metacognitive strategies than less successful peers. In a study on the effect of computer delivery on reading test performance and test-taking strategy use via questionnaires and interviews, Zhang (2007) found that the most frequently used strategy reported by 181 second-year Chinese university students was underlining and marking when taking paper-based reading comprehension tests.

More related to the present study is Purpura's (1997) research on the relationships between test takers' reported cognitive and metacognitive strategy use and patterns of performance on language tests. Administering an 80-item cognitive and metacognitive strategy questionnaire and a 70-item standardized language test to 1,382 students in Spain, Turkey and the Czech Republic, and using structural equation modeling as a primary analytical tool, Purpura found that metacognitive strategy use had a significantly positive and direct effect on cognitive strategy use but had no significantly direct impact on SL test performance. The researcher also discovered that cognitive strategy use had no significant, direct effect on reading ability, but influenced reading indirectly through lexico-grammatical ability. To be specific, the comprehending processes had no significant, direct impact on reading or lexico-grammatical ability, and the retrieval processes yielded a small, but significant positive effect on lexico-grammatical ability; while the memory processes had a significantly direct negative effect on lexico-grammatical ability. Alternatively, the more test takers invoked memory strategies in a speeded test situation, the worse they performed on the test, while the less they utilized them, the better they performed. These findings further confirm the implication that relationships between strategy use and second language proficiency are extremely complex, and at times very subtle, given the multidimensional nature of the constructs

involved and the number of possible interactions that could occur between and among various variables (Chamot, et al., 1988; Wesche, 1987).

As reviewed above, not many studies targeted language test-taking strategies. These few studies indicate that high achievers also reported to use more test-taking strategies than low achievers and that the use of certain strategies such as understanding the task and guessing after eliminating choices are positively related to test performance (Kim & Goetz, 1993; McLain, 1983; Parham, 1997; Phakiti, 2003). A study with Chinese university EFL students may be of significance to contribute to the related literature and better understand these relationships. Deploying statistical procedures to analyze data, the present study attempted to investigate the use of English test-taking strategies and its effect on students' test performance in a Chinese EFL context. To achieve this purpose, the following research questions were formulated:

- (1) What is the broad profile of overall English test-taking strategy use and of each of the six strategy categories?
- (2) What are the most and least often used individual test-taking strategies?
- (3) How are these English test-taking strategies related to one another and to students' test performance?
- (4) Is a particular English test-taking strategy item related to students' test performance?
- (5) Is there any difference in English test-taking strategy use among students in different years of study?

## **Research Method**

This paper reports on part of a study which investigated students' perceptions of a school-

based English proficiency test and strategies they employed during the test.

**Context.** Tsinghua University, under the direct jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, China, is one of the best institutions of higher learning in China. Students admitted to Tsinghua are normally highly motivated and their scores on the National Matriculation English Examination range from 120 to 150 (the total score is 150). At this university, English courses are compulsory for freshmen at the first term but become selective later on. The Tsinghua English Proficiency Test I (TEPT1), developed by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the University and authorized by the Ministry of Education in 1999, has existed for over 10 years (since 1996) and is correspondingly more difficult than the College English Test (CET) Band 4 (a nation-wide English proficiency test which is mandatory for undergraduate non-English majors to obtain the degree certificate). As an exit and proficiency test for non-English majors, similar to but more difficult than CET band 4, the TEPT1 consists of two components: written (85 points) and oral (15 points) tests, the written component of which has four parts: listening comprehension (30 points), reading comprehension (30 points), translation (10) and writing (15 points). The test is administered on the 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each 18-week term and students decide when to take the test during their 4-year university career.

**Participants.** This study recruited 526 (411 male and 115 female) participants with an average age of 19.4, among whom, 157 were first-year students, 153 second-year and 216 third-year students.

**Instrument.** As previously documented, few language test-taking strategy instruments have been developed. In order to develop such an instrument, 15 students in different study years who had already taken the TEPT1 were randomly selected to be informally interviewed about what strategies they had employed during the test prior to the study

without any predesigned prompts. Based on the results, and with reference to the test-taking strategies suggested by Ellis (2005) and Pauk (2005), an 81-item English Test-taking Strategy Inventory (ETSI) on a 5-point Likert scale (‘Never or Almost Never Used’ to ‘Always or Almost Always Used’) was finally designed. Using Oxford’s (1990) strategy system as the base model, as it has won wide acceptance and there is no generally accepted classification model of test-taking strategies in the literature, we designed the ETSI to cover: (a) test-taking memory strategies (TMS), (b) test-taking cognitive strategies (TCogS), (c) test-taking compensation strategies (TComS), (d) test-taking metacognitive strategies (TMetaS), (e) test-taking affective strategies (TAS), and (f) test-taking social strategies (TSS). The detailed information of the instruments used in this study is presented in Table 1. The TEPT 1 test results exposed a degree of difficulty of .731 for the test.

**Table 1: Characteristics of Instruments** (Participant N = 526)

Name of the instruments	No. of items	Reliability	Mean item-total correlation (p = .01)
Test-taking Strategy Inventory (TSI)	81	.922	.673
Test-taking Memory Strategy (TMS)	7	.738	.631
Test-taking Cognitive Strategy (TCogS)	16	.748	.458
Test-taking Compensation Strategy (TComS)	9	.737	.575
Test-taking Metacognitive Strategy (TMetaS)	42	.837	.374
Test-taking Affective Strategy (TAS)	3	.358	.659
Test-taking Social Strategy (TSS)	4	.498	.632
TEPT1 2005	67	.893	.735

*Background information.* The background questionnaire was designed to obtain information about the participants’ name, gender, and grade level.

*Performance in English.* Students' performance in English was measured by their scores in the TEPT1 2005, which were collected when all the marking was finished.

**Procedure.** The written part of the TEPT1 2005 lasted for two hours on the 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday morning of the first term of the academic year 2005-2006. The oral test was held thereafter in the form of a 1-minute teacher-student conversation and a 5-minute student-student conversation. As soon as a student finished the oral test, s/he was asked to fill in the questionnaire and a 60-item Perspective on the TEPT1 in about 20 minutes. Altogether, 547 questionnaires were collected, of which 526 were valid for statistical analyses.

**Data analysis.** To measure its reliability and validity, reliability scores and mean item-total correlations of the survey and its subscales were computed. Then, the survey was analyzed in terms of mean and standard deviation to examine how frequently participants used the strategies during the TEPT1 2005. Meanwhile, ten most and least frequently used individual strategies were identified respectively to explore what strategies were the most/least popular with students during the exam. Subsequently, correlation analyses were conducted to investigate relationships between English test-taking strategy use and students' test performance. Finally, a one-way ANOVA (Duncan's test) was conducted to explore differences in English test-taking strategy use among students in different study years.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Factor analysis of the ETSI***

A factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on the English Test-taking Strategy Inventory (ETSI) to investigate if the statements formed clusters matching

different hypothesized views. The analysis yielded six factors: (a) test-taking memory strategies (TMS), (b) test-taking cognitive strategies (TCogS), (c) test-taking compensation strategies (TComS), (d) test-taking metacognitive strategies (TMetaS), (e) test-taking affective strategies (TAS), and (f) test-taking social strategies (TSS) (Table 2), which is consistent with the view held by the researchers based on Oxford's (1990) model.

Seven items (1-7) were included in interpreting the first ETSI component—TMS, which accounted for 18.47% of the total variance; sixteen items (8-23) were included in interpreting the second ETSI component—TCogS, which accounted for 14.91% of the total variance. Nine items (24-32) were included in interpreting the third ETSI component—TComS, which had in common a sense of making guesses and/or overcoming limitations in speaking and writing and accounted for 6.74% of the total variance; forty-two items (33-74) were included in the fourth ETSI component—TMetaS, which accounted for 51.83% of the total variance. The fifth ETSI factor—TAS included three items (75-77), which accounted for 2.25% of the total variance; and the last ETSI factor—TSS included four items (78-81), which accounted for 5.8% of the total variance. The results are reported in Table 2.

**Table 2: Varimax Rotated Loadings for Factor Analysis of the UCS (N = 526)**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. I reviewed a lot before the test.	.72					
2. I memorized ... before the test.	.61		.28			
3. To prepare for the test, ... notes regularly.	.61		.37			
4. I used high technology ... before the test.	.42	.12			.13	

5. I created flashcards ... before the test.	.52		.32			
6. I memorized ... before the test.	.50		.35	-.15		
7. I dumped information ... as I received it.	.34		.31		.12	
8. I practiced a lot before the test.		.70	.17			
9. I practiced speaking English ... before the test.		.49	.11	.30		
10. I practiced writing ... before the test.		.65				
11. I created ... before the oral test.		.43	.48	-.13		
12. I practiced writing ... before the test.		.59	.27	-.16	.17	.11
13. I practiced translating ... before the test.	.53	.11			.16	.16
14. I looked for the central idea of each question.		.25	.44	.11	.19	
15. I directly got to ... during the test.		.43		.15	.28	
16. I used both general ... writing during the test.	.14	.24		.28	.29	-.16
17. I jotted down information ... during the test.	.16	.56	.16		.14	
18. I highlighted some ... reading during the test.		.49	.20			.14
19. When writing ..., I jotted down ... in the margin.	.11	.36	.53			
20. I analyzed the ... into Chinese.		.40	.20	.14	.15	.17
21. I broke up run-on ... during the test.		.33	.29	.24	.10	.17
22. I eliminated certain answers ... during the		.40				.26

test.						
23. I didn't jot down any notes during the test.			-.12			
24. I exchanged with English ... for the test.	.47		.23		-.13	
25. I used my linguistic knowledge ... during the test.	.11		.71		.17	-.10
26. I used my background knowledge ... during the test.	.12		.70		.12	
27. I made guesses ... during the test.			.76			
28. I used my background knowledge ... during the test.			.72			
29. I tried ... a word or phrase.		.11	.44	.17	.22	
30. I used my background ... the cloze test.	.12	.14	.59			.11
31. I used my linguistic ... the cloze test.	.16	.12	.60			
32. I used body language ... during the oral test.		.20	.26	.31	-.28	.22
33. I developed a timetable ... stuck to it.				.68		
34. I read old exam papers before the test.		.22	-.22	.61		
35. I knew ... before I took it.	.43	.15	-.13	.16	.19	
36. I tried to predict ... before the test.	.64		.31	-.12		
37. I attended ... classes before the test.	.13	.21	-.21	.23	.16	.11
38. In ..., I looked for main topics and key ideas.		.15	.17	.50	.12	.19
39. I estimated the time ... before the test.	.65		.14	-.17	.13	
40. I tested myself ... before the test.	.51		.19	.17	-.10	
41. I finished my studying the day before the	.34			.12		

test.						
42. I created study checklists before the test.	.52	-.20	.43	-.14		
43. Before the test, I avoided ... my preparation.	.26		.27			
44. I got familiar with the test room before the test.	.33	-.13	.28	.23		
45. I gathered ... before the test.	.21	.21		.48		.21
46. I arrived at the test room on time.		.34	-.32	.25	.30	
47. I scanned the test first ... completing it.	.12		.36	.30		
48. I read test directions carefully during the test.	.12	.37		.40		
49. I outlined my ideas before writing during the test.	.33			.44		
50. I planned and organized ... during the test.	.36			.55		
51. I selected a title ... to help me organize my ideas.	.21	.11	.12	.51		
52. I tried to make ... during the test.		.21		.20	.22	
53. I paragraphed my writing during the test.		.40		.38	.19	
54. I wrote a topic ... during the test.	.22	.18	.24	.34		
55. I tried to make ... during the test.		.40	-.12	.39	.26	
56. I listened to directions ... during the test.		.40	.10	.15	.34	
57. I listened to keywords ... during the test.		.59	-.14	.23	.33	
58. I listened to clues ... during the test.	.11	.12		.60	.26	
59. I looked for keywords ... during the test.		.11		.30		
60. I looked for clues ... during the test.				.70		

61. I tried to make ... like Chinese.	-.13	.46	-.12	.30		.13
62. I tried to better understand ... Chinese.		.61		.31		.10
63. During the oral test, I used ... organize ideas.		.34		.34	.19	.19
64. I listened to ... during the oral test.	.44			.38	.19	.14
65. I made ... to finish the oral test.	.11	.20	.29	.45	-.14	
66. I made ... during the oral test.	.13	.23	.18	.41		.11
67. I read questions carefully during the test.		.47		.26	.16	
68. I double-checked ... the test.	.25			.45	-.18	
69. I answered ... the written test.	.13	.15	.10	-.29		.19
70. I wrote legibly during the test.	.10	.25		.40	.11	.16
71. I will summarize my performance after the test.	.11	.21	.11		.17	.75
72. I will list what ... after the test.		.21		.13	.17	.78
73. I will list what ... after the test.	.11	.21		.14	.15	.79
74. I will forget about the test soon.	-.20		.11	-.16		.41
75. ... I tried to get a good night's sleep.	.19	.26			.62	
76. I breathed deeply ... before and/or during the test.	.20	.18	.14	.10	.49	.18
77. I approached the test with confidence.			.20	.53	.22	-.10
78. I exchanged ... prepare for the test.	.18		.19	.15		.63
79. I formed a study group ... before the test.				.23	-.18	.64
80. I listened to ... during the oral test.		.33		.13		.59
81. I supported ... during the oral test.		.28		.12		.64

The loadings displayed in Table 2 indicate each item within a subcomponent of the ETSI was highly correlated with that subcomponent: items 1 to 7 highly positively related to TMS with coefficients ranging from .34 to .72; items 8 to 23 highly positively correlated with TCogS with a coefficient range of .11 to .70 (with the majority being higher than .40); items 24 to 32 highly related to TComS with coefficients ranging from .23 to .76; items 33 to 74 highly correlated with TMetaS with a coefficient range of .12 to .70 (with more than half being higher than .30); items 75 to 77 highly positively related to TAS with coefficients ranging from .22 to .62; and items 78 to 81 highly positively correlated with TSS with a coefficient range of .59 to .64. This signifies that these six strategy categories were important subcomponents of the ETSI, which is further confirmed by the significantly high coefficients between the ETSI and its six components—TMS ( $r = .661$ ,  $p < .01$ ), TCogS ( $r = .873$ ,  $p < .01$ ), TComS ( $r = .71$ ,  $p < .01$ ), TMetaS ( $r = .959$ ,  $p < .01$ ), TAS ( $r = .599$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and TSS ( $r = .63$ ,  $p < .01$ ), as presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Correlations among the ETSI and its Subscales (N = 526)**

	TCogS	TComS	TMetaS	TAS	TSS	ETSI
TMS	.618**	.230**	.546**	.277**	.394**	.661**
TCogS	1	.570**	.750**	.476**	.451**	.873**
TComS	.570**	1	.643**	.402**	.411**	.710**
TMetaS	.750**	.643**	1	.564**	.575**	.959**
TAS	.476**	.402**	.564**	1	.337**	.599**
TSS	.451**	.411**	.575**	.337**	1	.630**

**Notes:** \*\* =  $p < .01$

As seen from Table 3, the six strategy categories were also significantly positively correlated, with a majority of the coefficients being higher than .40. This suggests students who used one type of strategy more frequently during the TEPT1 2005 tended to utilize more often other categories of English test-taking strategies.

***Broad profile of overall English test-taking strategy use and of the six strategy categories***

When reporting the frequency of English test-taking strategy use, we employed Oxford’s (1990) key to understanding mean scores on SILL-based instruments whose scale range is 1 to 5:

- **HIGH USE** = 4.5 to 5.0 (always or almost always used) and 3.5 to 4.4 (usually used)
- **MEDIUM USE** = 2.5 to 3.4 (sometimes used)
- **LOW USE** = 1.5 to 2.4 (usually not used) or 1.0-1.4 (never or almost never used).

As reported in Table 4, the mean overall strategy use was 3.06 on the 5-point Likert scale, which suggests “medium” use (sometimes used). The mean score for each of the six strategy categories also fell in the medium-use range. Among the six categories, the most frequently used were compensation strategies with a mean of 3.40, followed by affective strategies with a mean of 3.35, and metacognitive and social strategies with means of 3.14 and 3.11, respectively. Cognitive strategies came next with a mean of 2.95 and memory strategies were the least often used with a mean of 2.27.

**Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations Indicating Test-taking Strategy Use**

(N = 526)

Strategy category (most used to least used)	Frequency of strategy use	
	Mean	Standard deviation

Compensation	3.4	.56
Affective	3.35	.79
Metacognitive	3.14	.43
Social	3.11	.69
Cognitive	2.95	.53
Memory	2.27	.72
ETSI	3.06	.43

This finding about overall test-taking strategy use conforms to that of Lan and Oxford's (2003) study on English-learning strategy use of Taiwanese students though it is slightly different from that of Bremner's (1999) results of Hong Kong university students. Nevertheless, in all studies, participants were found not to use memory strategies frequently. This was unexpected in that Chinese learners are generally believed to rely much on memory in learning and taking tests (Yang & Weir, 1998; Zou, 1998, 2002). This might be partially due to the fact that not much memory was needed to prepare for or take the TEPT1 2005 which functioned as a proficiency test, and thus, did not have a specific focus to be tested. This, however, might also indicate an emerging change in the pattern of test-taking strategy use among Chinese university students, which deserves further investigation.

***The most and least often used individual strategies***

As noted from Table 5, ten individual strategies were identified to be the most frequently used by Chinese undergraduate test-takers. Of these ten strategy items, the majority belonged to the metacognitive category and all were in the high-use range with means ranging from 3.80 to 4.21. To be physically prepared, the participants arrived at the test

room on time (mean = 4.21). During the test, they used background knowledge of the topic to help guess and deduce “what the speaker said while doing listening comprehension” (mean = 3.80) and “while reading” (mean = 3.80), looked for keywords “while reading” (mean = 3.92) and listened to keywords “when doing listening comprehension” (mean = 3.89). When doing the writing task during the test, these participants tried to make their writing coherent and cohesive (mean = 3.87) and make as few mistakes as possible (mean = 3.84). During the oral test, they listened carefully to the teacher for instructions (mean = 3.82) and to their partners (mean = 3.80) so that they could accomplish the test more successfully.

In short, these undergraduate non-English majors generally were accustomed to arriving at the test room on time, looking for clues, guessing from the context, and resorting to background knowledge during a written English test. When in an oral test, they were also aware of the importance of cooperation between partners by listening to them carefully.

**Table 5: The Ten Most Frequently and Ten Least Frequently Used Strategies**  
(N = 526)

<b>The ten most frequently used strategies</b>				
Strategy No.	Strategy	Mean	Category in which this strategy is classified	Comment
46	I arrived at the test room on time.	4.21	metacognitive	high-use range
59	I looked for keywords while reading during the test.	3.92	metacognitive	high-use range
57	I listened to keywords when doing listening comprehension during the test.	3.89	metacognitive	high-use range

61	I tried to make my translation more like Chinese.	3.88	metacognitive	high-use range
52	I tried to make my writing coherent and cohesive during the test.	3.87	Metacognitive	high-use range
55	I tried to make as few mistakes as possible when writing during the test.	3.84	Metacognitive	high-use range
62	I tried to better understand the sentence according to its context when translating it into Chinese.	3.82	Metacognitive	high-use range
64	I listened to the teacher for instructions carefully during the oral test.	3.82	Metacognitive	high-use range
26	I used my background knowledge of the topic to help guess and deduce what the speaker said while doing listening comprehension during the test.	3.80	Compensation	high-use range
28	I used my background knowledge of the topic to help guess and deduce while reading during the test.	3.80	Compensation	high-use range
80	I listened to my partner carefully during the oral test.	3.80	Social	high-use range
<b>The ten least frequently used strategies</b>				
Strategy No.	Strategy	Mean	Category in which this strategy is classified	Comment
3	To prepare for the test, I kept up my homework and reviewed my notes regularly.	1.20	memory	low-use range
24	I exchanged with English teachers about how and what to prepare for the test.	1.75	compensation	low-use range
11	I created summary notes and 'maps' before the oral test.	1.91	cognitive	low-use range
42	I created study checklists before the test.	1.91	metacognitive	low-use range
6	I memorized model texts/essays before the test.	1.99	memory	low-use range
36	I tried to predict examination questions	2.00	metacognitive	low-use

	and then outlined my answers before the test.			range
5	I created flashcards for words, phrases and sentence structures, etc. that I needed to memorize before the test.	2.07	memory	low-use range
33	I developed a timetable to prepare for the test and stuck to it.	2.07	metacognitive	low-use range
43	Before the test, I avoided speaking with other students who had not prepared to avoid distraction from my preparation.	2.07	metacognitive	low-use range
44	I got familiar with the test room before the test.	2.12	metacognitive	low-use range

Among the ten least often used individual strategies, all were distinctly in the low-use range with a mean range of 1.20 to 2.12 and most fell into metacognitive and memory categories, see Table 5. For example, the students seldom used the following strategies during the test: “kept up homework and reviewed notes regularly” (mean = 1.20); “exchanged with English teachers about how and what to prepare for the test” (mean = 1.75); “created summary notes and ‘maps’ before the oral test” (mean = 1.91); created “study checklists” (mean = 1.91); “predicted examination questions and outlined my answers” (mean = 2.00); “developed a timetable” (mean = 2.07); “avoided speaking to unprepared students” (mean = 2.07); and “got familiar with the test room” (mean = 2.12).

As such, the least often used individual strategies included memory strategies like reviewing notes and memorizing model texts/essays, which was not out of our expectation. TEPT1 2005, as a proficiency and exit test, was generally not restricted to the content taught during a term but more concerned with what test-takers were able to do with English. Knowing this well, test-takers would neither keep up homework nor review

notes regularly to pass this test, as they usually did to prepare for term exams. It was the same with memorizing model texts/essays in that test-takers must know how to write any type of English composition. Probably for the same reason, these test-takers would seldom discuss with their course teachers about how to prepare for the test, create summary notes or make study checklists before the test. Meanwhile, means of such strategies as 36, 33, and 43 indicate that these participants did not attach much importance to the preparation for the test. This was quite surprising because the TEPT 1 played a crucial role in determining whether they could be granted the degree of certificate on time. However, it might also be because the participants had no idea of how to prepare for a proficiency test that did not have a specific achievement target.

Additionally, most participants reported other individual strategies, though not listed in Table 5, as not being very frequently used, such as “memorized words, phrases, grammatical points, and sentence structures” (mean = 2.20), “practiced writing by modeling good essays” (mean = 2.28), and “double-checked answers” (mean = 2.18).

***Correlation between English test-taking strategy use and students’ test performance***

Correlation analyses were run to investigate the relationship between English test-taking strategy use and students’ test performance, the results of which are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Correlation between English Test-taking Strategy Use and Students’ Test Performance (N = 526)**

	Listening	Reading	Translation	Writing	Written test score	Oral test score	overall score
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Listening	1	.511**	.504**	.192**	.779**	.422**	.791**
Reading	.511**	1	.518**	.088*	.721**	.267**	.713**
Translation	.504**	.518**	1	.208**	.668**	.315**	.671**
Writing	.192**	.088*	.208**	1	.621**	.104**	.596**
Written test score	.779**	.721**	.668**	.621**	1	.377**	.991**
Oral test score	.422**	.267**	.315**	.104*	.377**	1	.499**
Overall score	.791**	.713**	.671**	.596**	.991**	.499**	1
TMS	-.019	-.030	.022	-.025	-.027	-.071	-.036
TCogS	.069	.082	.077	.006	.076	.010	.071
TComS	.062	.105*	.050	.046	.096*	.040	.094*
TMetaS	.015	-.012	.033	.000	.007	.036	.010
TAS	.023	.002	.010	-.014	.005	.009	.005
TSS	.074	.008	.011	.034	.051	.095*	.060
ETSI	.037	.029	.047	-.002	.033	.021	.032

**Notes:** \*\*  $p < .01$  \*  $p < .05$

As shown in Table 6, students' test performance was found to significantly correlate with certain categories of English test-taking strategies in the present study, as found in numerous existing studies (Kim & Goetz, 1993; McLain, 1983; Parham, 1997; Phakiti, 2003). Compensation strategies were significantly positively related to students' performance on the reading test ( $r = .105$ ), the written test ( $r = .096$ ) and the overall TEPT 1 2005 ( $r = .094$ ) though the coefficients were not high. Social strategies were significantly positively correlated with students' performance on the oral test ( $r = .095$ ). It might be because the oral test required much cooperation between test-takers, which compelled students to employ more social strategies to help them complete the test more successfully. When working on other parts of the test, students could independently resort

to other types of strategies they knew. However, regression analyses yielded no powerful predictors for students' test performance among the measured variables.

It is worth noting that correlation analyses of English test-taking strategy use and students' test performance yielded different results for participants in different study years. As summarized in Table 7, for first-year students, English test-taking strategy use seemed to have exerted great impact on their performance in the TEPT1 2005. Cognitive, compensation and social strategies, and overall English test-taking strategy use were significantly positively correlated with first-year students' performance in the listening, reading, translation and written tests of the TEPT1 2005 and the overall TEPT1 2005; metacognitive strategies significantly positively correlated with their performance in the translation and oral tests of the TEPT1 2005. For second-year students, no significant correlations occurred between English test-taking strategy use and students' test performance. For third-year students, only social strategies were highly related to their performance in the oral test of the TEPT1 2005. For these students, the use of other test-taking strategies seemed to have had little effect on their performance in the proficiency test. This might be partly attributed to the fact that the first-year students, who are fresh out of middle school, which is very exam-oriented in Mainland China, were generally more skilled at employing various strategies when taking tests. It may also be due to the fact that first-year students were required to take credit-bearing English courses while many of their second-year and third-year counterparts declined the option to do so, and as such had forgotten how to employ these strategies.



***Correlations between English test-taking strategy items and students' test performance***

When exploring relationships between English test-taking strategy items and students' test performance, we only included the written and oral test scores of the TEP1 2005 and the overall test score while ignoring scores in discrete parts (listening, reading, translation and writing). The analyses revealed that 21 strategy items that were significantly correlated with students' test performance.

**Table 8: Correlations between Test-taking Strategy Items and Students' Test Performance (N = 526)**

Items	Written test score	Oral test score	Overall test score
9. Practiced speaking English in different situations before the test (cognitive).	.091*	.099*	.099*
10. Practiced writing answers to sample questions before the test (cognitive).	.101*		.101*
11. Created summary notes and 'maps' before the oral test (cognitive).	-.096*		-.093*
14. Looked for the central idea of each question (cognitive).	.118**		.111*
30. Used background knowledge to complete the test (compensation).	.090*		.086*
31. Used linguistic knowledge to complete the test (compensation).	.127**		.123**
34. Read old exam papers before the test (metacognitive).	.161**		.162**
44. Got familiar with the test room before the test (metacognitive).	-.101*	-.120**	-.111*
53. Paraphrased writing during the test (metacognitive).	.097*	.133**	.110*
54. Wrote a topic sentence for each paragraph when writing during the test (metacognitive).	.095*	.115**	.105*

55. Tried to make as few mistakes as possible when writing during the test (metacognitive).	.106*	.137**	.118**
57. Listened to keywords when doing listening comprehension during the test (metacognitive).		.100*	.087*
58. Listened to clues while doing listening comprehension during the test (metacognitive).	.087*		.090*
63. Used the information on the card to help generate and organize ideas during the oral test (metacognitive).		.110*	
65. Made a good use of past experiences to finish the oral test (metacognitive).		.176**	
69. Answered easy questions first during the written test (metacognitive).	-.092*	-.163**	-.110*
71. Will summarize performance after the test (metacognitive).	-.096*	-.113**	-.107*
76. Breathed deeply to calm down when becoming nervous before and/or during the test (affective).		-.122**	
77. Approached the test with confidence (affective).		.159**	
80. Listened to partner carefully during the oral test (social).		.122**	
81. Supported and helped partner during the oral test (social).	.100*	.160**	.116**

**Notes:** \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$

As noted in Table 8, eight individual strategies had a significant relationship with students' performance on the written and oral tests and the overall TEPT 1 2005. Strategy 9, "practiced speaking English in different situations before the test" (cognitive); 53, "paragraphed writing during the test" (metacognitive); 54, "wrote a topic sentence for each paragraph when writing during the test" (metacognitive); 55, "tried to make as few mistakes as possible when writing during the test" (metacognitive); and 81, "supported

and helped my partner during the oral test” (social) were significantly positively related to students’ performance in the written and oral tests and the overall TEPT1 2005. Namely, the more frequently a student used these strategies, the better s/he performed on the proficiency test. Meanwhile, strategy 44, “got familiar with the test room before the test” (metacognitive); 69, “answered easy questions first during the written test” (metacognitive); and 71, “will summarize performance after the test” (metacognitive) were highly negatively related to students’ performance in the written and oral tests and the overall TEPT1 2005. In other words, a more frequent user of these metacognitive strategies tended to perform worse on the proficiency test.

In addition, seven individual strategies were highly related to students’ performance on the written part and the overall proficiency test. Strategy 34, “read old exam papers before the test” (metacognitive); 10, “practiced writing answers to sample questions before the test” (cognitive); 14, “looked for the central idea of each question” (cognitive); 58, “listened to clues while doing listening comprehension during the test” (metacognitive); 30, “used background knowledge to complete the test” (compensation); and 31, “used linguistic knowledge to complete the test” (compensation) were all significantly positively correlated with students’ test performance, while strategy 11, “created summary notes and ‘maps’ before the oral test” (cognitive) was significantly inversely related to students’ test performance.

Meanwhile, four individual strategies significantly correlated with students’ performance in the oral test: strategy 63, “used the information on the card to help generate and organize ideas during the oral test” (metacognitive); 65, “made a good use of past experiences to finish the oral test” (metacognitive); and 80, “listened to the partner carefully during the oral test” (social) were positively correlated with students’ oral test

performance. Strangely, strategy 76, “breathed deeply to calm down when becoming nervous before and/or during the test” (affective) seemed to have exerted a negative effect on students’ performance on the oral test. This might be concerned with students’ level of anxiety/confidence. If a student felt confident during the oral test, s/he would not need to breathe deeply but rather behaved naturally; whereas if s/he felt anxious, s/he might purposefully breathe deeply to calm down, which could negatively influence his/her test performance.

In general, most of these individual strategies were concerned with planning and fell into the metacognitive category, which had a significant relationship with students’ test performance, especially students’ performance on the written test. This might be due to the fact that more metacognitive strategies were included in the survey. Social and affective strategies appeared to be more related to students’ performance in the oral test. Memory strategies seemed to have little significant effect on students’ performance either on the written or oral test.

***Differences in English test-taking strategy use among students in different study years***

To address the differences in English test-taking strategy use among students in different years of study, the analysis of one-way ANOVA was conducted. The results are reported in Table 9.

**Table 9: ANOVA Results of English Test-taking Strategy Use**

Measures	F	P	F*	Level (Mean)			Location of Sig. difference
				Year 1 = 166; Year 2 = 224; Year 3 = 157			
				Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	
TMS	7.95**	.00	2.77	2.09	2.32	2.38	Years 1 & 2; Years 1 & 3

TCogS	1.10	.33	2.77	2.90	2.97	2.98	/
TComS	1.64	.19	2.77	3.47	3.38	3.37	/
TMetaS	.20	.82	2.77	3.13	3.16	3.13	/
TAS	.69	.50	2.77	3.32	3.42	3.34	/
TSS	.50	.61	2.77	3.07	3.10	3.15	/
ETSI	.60	.55	2.77	3.03	3.08	3.07	/

**Note:** F\* → Critical F value for Duncan's test at .05 level (Black, 1999).

According to Table 9, students in all study years had a medium use of the strategies except memory strategies, which were in the low use range. Third-year students reported having used memory, cognitive, and social strategies the most frequently during the test, whereas their first-year counterparts used these strategies the least frequently. Second-year students reported having utilized metacognitive, affective, and the overall strategies the most often while their first-year peers employed them the least often. Meanwhile, first-year students seemed to have had the greatest use of compensation strategies, while their third-year peers reported having had the lowest use of them. However, post-hoc tests revealed significant difference occurred only in the use of memory strategies among students in different years of study: first-year students deployed memory strategies significantly less frequently than their second-year and third-year counterparts, while second-year and third-year students did not differ significantly from each other in terms of memory strategy use. This significant difference might be again largely due to the fact that first-year students who had more access and exposure to English were more skilled at using English and taking English tests, while their second- and third-year peers who had much less exposure to English had to resort to memory more to pass the exam.

## **Conclusions and educational implications**

The present study investigated Chinese EFL learners' test-taking strategy use, its effect on students' test performance, and strategic differences among students in different study years. It was found that the six strategy categories were important subcomponents of the English Test-Taking Strategy Inventory (ETSI) and that the participants had a medium use of English test-taking strategies. Like their counterparts in other EFL learning situations (Lan & Oxford, 2003; Oxford & Ehrman, 1995), these learners resorted to frequent use of compensation strategies to cope with the challenges found in the EFL testing situation. These challenges might have made the test more difficult. On the positive side, they were using some affective strategies to help them reduce the anxieties and stress found during the test. It is also encouraging that these test-takers deployed social strategies to cooperate with each other to finish the test, especially the oral test.

The study also revealed that students who used one category of English test-taking strategies more frequently tended to use the other five categories of strategies more often. This indicates teachers should encourage EFL learners to use effective English test-taking strategies whenever possible, with the aim of more efficient learning and better outcomes. Teachers can start by raising students' awareness of the English test-taking strategies they have already been using. To help students better understand the strategies and strategy use, it is "perfectly fine to employ the native language for explanations" (Lan & Oxford, 2003, p. 375). Nevertheless, it is also necessary to teach students to know simple strategy names in English, such as "Use background knowledge" and "Look for clues", which is also a type of English learning.

As to the relationship between English test-taking strategy use and students' test performance, the present study revealed significant correlations (though low) which

emerged between compensation and social strategies and students' test performance. Social strategies were especially highly related to students' performance on the oral test. Some metacognitive strategies (especially planning strategies) were particularly significantly correlated with students' test performance. This suggests English test-taking strategy use could indeed affect students' test performance, at least certain aspects of performance in English. This further attests to the importance of raising students' awareness of the broad range of English test-taking strategies and instructing them how to use these strategies effectively. For example, EFL learners can be encouraged and trained to pay more attention to planning when working on a test.

Additionally, it was found that learners in different study years all had a medium use of all categories of English test-taking strategies except memory strategies, which was little used by all participants. This may imply individuals may have different preferences for using strategies and so may learners in different study years. Thus, it is important for EFL teachers and learners to recognize that some English test-taking strategies may be more suited to some learners than to others. Consequently, teachers may plan their instructions more powerfully and students can receive what they need to the greatest degree. Just as Vandergrift (1997) claimed, "the growing interest in learning strategies reflects an awareness that students can, and need to, develop tools to become more effective and autonomous language learners (p.387)".

Finally, though numerous studies have been conducted on language learning strategy use and its relationships with individual learner characteristics, not much research has been done in the area of English test-taking strategy use, which merits further investigation in that it may greatly influence learners' test performance. The findings of this study also lend support to further research in this area. First, we need to know the

extent to which the specific patterns of English test-taking strategy use we found in Beijing would occur in other geographical and cultural settings. Also worthy of further investigation is the relationship of English test-taking strategy use and test performance among students in different study years. Though not many significant correlations were found between English test-taking strategy use and test performance of the whole participant sample, many were found between English test-taking strategy use and first-year students' performance in English.

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## **Developing Pragmatic Competence: Challenges and Solutions**

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### **Abstract**

With all the progress made in pragmatic knowledge description, instruction and assessment, foreign language teachers still face many challenges in teaching it. These have been discussed in the voluminous literature on teaching and assessing pragmatic competence. In this paper an attempt is made to investigate teachers' perceived challenges related to their pre-service education program, in-service training, textbooks, teacher guides, tests, and opportunities for learners' exposure to natural language use outside the classroom. Analysis of data reveals that teachers face difficulties related to almost all those dimensions. Suggestions for helping teachers overcome those difficulties are proposed and recommendations for further studies are made.

**Keywords:** Pragmatic Competence, Developing, Teaching, Testing

## **Pragmatic competence defined and characterized**

Since Dell Hymes (1972) coined the term communicative competence to refer to our knowledge of language in reaction to Noam Chomsky's restricted notion of linguistic competence, many attempts have been made to identify and characterize the components of communicative competence (Canale and Swain, 1980, Bachman, 1990, Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). In all these attempts, pragmatic competence has always been identified as a major component of communicative competence, albeit under different components: Hymes' sociolinguistic competence, Canale and Swain's sociolinguistic competence, Bachman's pragmatic competence, and Celce-Murcia et al's actional competence. A comparison of these models of communicative competence is beyond the scope of this paper. However, such a comparison is now available in many sources (see for example Celce-Murcia et al., 1995 and Jorda, 2005).

Indeed, the voluminous literature on teaching different aspects of pragmatic competence teems with such comparisons of different models of communicative competence. Hymes' sociolinguistic competence refers to the ability to use forms appropriately in social situations; something which was excluded by Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance. Canale and Swain's sociolinguistic competence is similar to that of Hymes. They expanded the notion of communicative competence to include discourse competence and strategic competence. Bachman (1990) grouped linguistic competence and discourse competence (textual competence) together under one category she called organizational competence. She identified pragmatic competence as the second major component of communicative competence defined as the knowledge of the components that enable us to relate words and utterances to their meanings, the intentions of language users and relevant characteristics of the language

use contexts. To Bachman, pragmatic competence consists of: (a) *Lexical knowledge*—the knowledge of the meanings of words and the ability to use figurative language; (b) *Functional knowledge*—the knowledge of the relationships between utterances and the intentions/ communicative purposes of language users; and (c) *Sociolinguistic knowledge* refers to knowledge of the relevant characteristics of social contexts in which those utterances are used. In Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) model of communicative competence an attempt is made to show how the different components of communicative competence are related. Pragmatic competence is defined as knowledge of language functions that are classified in such a way that reminds us of the persistent problem of classifying speech acts in a systematic way, and one that was attempted by both Austin and Searle a long time ago.

There are many definitions of Pragmatics as a branch of linguistics. For example, Levinson (1983) devotes a whole chapter to this issue reviewing a lot of definitions. Yule (1996) defines it as the study of those aspects of utterance meaning that are determined by the social contexts in which they occur. Given the multitude of topics often dealt with in the literature of pragmatics, he argues that, at that time at least, it looked like the wastepaper basket of linguistics. Rose and Kasper (2003) define pragmatics as:

“...the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context. Communicative action includes not only using speech acts (such as apologizing, complaining, complimenting, and requesting), but also engaging in different types of discourse and participating in speech events of varying length and complexity (p.2).”

In addition, Leech and many other leading figures in Pragmatics identify two components of pragmatic competence: Pragmalinguistics and Sociopragmatics. The former refers to the ability to make appropriate choices from a large range of linguistic forms and

pragmatic strategies such as directness/indirectness and routines in the realization of communicative acts. The latter refers to the social assumptions or principles underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative acts. As such, Sociopragmatics is essentially about appropriate social behavior in a certain speech community. In addition, the study of L2 learners' pragmatic knowledge is known as Interlanguage Pragmatics. Jorda (2005) points out that:

“Interlanguage pragmatics is a relatively new subfield within the second language acquisition research area. It is concerned with the pragmatic competence and performance of second and foreign language learners; thus, studies in this field focus on the non-native speaker's use and acquisition of pragmatic knowledge in/of the target language (p.64).”

Eun and Tadayoushi (2006) sum up the development of research in Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP). The earliest Interlanguage Studies focused mainly on what Cohen (1998) calls Contrastive Pragmatics. Pragmatic intuitions and performance of different groups of second/foreign language learners having specific first language backgrounds were described and compared with those of Native Speakers. Gradually, the scope of Interlanguage Pragmatics has become broader to include developmental studies (i.e. studies focusing on the development of learners' interlanguage competence). More recently, researchers have also started to investigate classroom instruction of pragmatic knowledge. This, then, is the focus of this paper.

### **Rationale for classroom Pragmatic instruction**

Until very recently, many people believed that pragmatic knowledge need not be taught explicitly. Even in 1997, Kasper raised the question, “Can Pragmatic competence be

taught?" Many arguments can be made for teaching pragmatic knowledge in foreign language classrooms despite the challenges that are enumerated later.

### **1. Direct instruction of this aspect of knowledge of language in L1 context**

Many prominent figures in Interlanguage Pragmatics have pointed out that this aspect of knowledge in particular receives a lot of attention by parents when they teach their children how to behave linguistically in social situations (Cohen, 2008, Eun, & Tadayoushi, 2006, Rose & Kasper, 2003). Following Kasper and Schmidt, Eun, & Tadayoushi, (2006) note that:

“... unlike syntax, parents and peers “actively” instruct the appropriate use of language to a child. In other words, even in L1 acquisition, pragmatic competence is commonly treated as a special entity which develops through informal instructional events, such as caretakers’ provision of negative feedback, and even of explicit statements about sociopragmatic rules or pragmalinguistic resources, in response to children’s pragmatic infelicities (p.167).”

In the same vein, Schmidt (1993) asserts that:

"Unlike the acquisition of syntax, semantics, and even some sociolinguistic rules, when it comes to speaking politely adults do not leave it to the child to construct the rules on his or her own. Here, they take an active, even energetic part in directly instructing their children in the use of the various politeness devices (p.28)."

If parents/caretakers provide informal explicit instruction on this aspect of knowledge of language, it might be argued that classroom pragmatic instruction is also necessary in a foreign language learning context.

## **2. Tendencies of negative and positive pragmatic transfer in foreign language learners' performance**

Cross-cultural and contrastive ILP studies reveal that there are many pragmatic universals. In other words, there can be both similarities and differences between English pragmatic norms and those of Arabic in the sociopragmatic component. The same thing applies to English compared with other languages. Many people talk now about pragmatic universals. Therefore, it is often argued that the adult learner might have a lot of pragmatic knowledge at his/her disposal. However, ILP studies reveal that positive transfer does not occur automatically (i.e. without instruction). In fact, negative transfer can occur. Rose and Kasper (2003) assert:

“Unfortunately, learners do not always capitalize on the knowledge they already have. It is well known from educational psychology that students do not always transfer available knowledge and strategies to new tasks. This is also true for some aspects of learners' universal or L1-based pragmatic knowledge (p.2).”

## **3. Lack of exposure to real life use of language outside the classroom as well as paucity of study abroad trips**

Unlike L2 learners, foreign language learners are rarely exposed to the use of language in natural settings. Furthermore, studies focusing on the effect of study abroad projects on learners' pragmatic competence reveal that mere exposure, without explicit instruction, has a very slow effect on the development of learners' pragmatic competence. Cohen (1998) argues that exposure to speech acts behaviors alone does not necessarily lead to their acquisition. These sociocultural strategies and sociolinguistic forms are not easily learned, and this applies to less frequent speech acts as well as more frequent one

**4. Most instructed researchers of pragmatic development have adapted the new version of Long's Interaction Hypothesis and his distinction between focus-on-form and focus-on-forms together with Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis as a rationale for teaching pragmatics as well as a guideline for designing their proposed treatments**

Roughly speaking, the early version of the Interaction Hypothesis states that the only necessary condition for instructed language acquisition is through exposure to input that is made comprehensible through negotiation of meaning and not just negotiation of input as Krashen's comprehensible input states. Negotiation of meaning refers to modifications in the structure of conversation whereas negotiation of input is confined to modification of form. Swain's Comprehensible Output Hypothesis and Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis have made Long accept a role for a sort of incidental focus on form in instructed L2 acquisition. The former makes it necessary to engage learners in tasks that require them to produce language. This, it is argued, pushes learners to extend their current Interlanguage System and generate more comprehensible input in the feedback they receive (see Ellis, 2005). Therefore, Long makes a distinction between focus on forms in which forms are graded and sequenced and the teaching of forms is planned and intentional; and focus on form in which form-focused instruction incidentally occurs in classes dominated by communicative tasks that enhance the negotiation of meaning.

Schmidt (1993) argues that noticing is essential, not only for acquiring forms, but also for acquiring pragmatic knowledge. According to his Noticing Hypothesis, exposure to pragmatic knowledge in natural settings or inside the classroom may be necessary, but not sufficient for making input intake. Thus, learners' attention should be drawn to certain features. Complete subliminal learning, it is argued, is simply out of the question. As Schmidt (1993) puts it:

"Simple exposure to sociolinguistically appropriate input is unlikely to be sufficient for second language acquisition of pragmatic and discoursal knowledge because the linguistic realizations of pragmatic functions are sometimes opaque to language learners and because the relevant contextual factors to be noticed are likely to be defined differently or may be nonsalient for the learner. Second language learners may fail to experience the crucial noticings for years (p.35)."

Ellis (2003) makes use of Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis in his Consciousness Raising model. According to Ellis, form focused instruction results in raising learner's awareness of the feature in question. Awareness-raising triggers two cognitive processes. One is noticing the feature in question within the available comprehensible input and the other is comparing this feature to his/ her current interlanguage system. Once the learner reaches the stage at which s/he is ready to acquire it, this feature is internalized or becomes intake.

The implication of current theory of L2 acquisition is that learners need to be engaged in communicative tasks that provide them with comprehensible pragmatic input as well as explicit pragmatic instruction that raises their awareness of pragmatic features that may not be salient to them in communicative tasks such as role plays.

### **Effectiveness of instruction in second language pragmatics**

As pointed out above, pragmatic instruction is the most recent paradigm of research of ILP. In the last few years, many classroom-based studies aiming at establishing the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction have been conducted. A number of reviews of many of those studies are now available (Belz, 2007; Cohen, 2008; Eun, & Tadayoushi, 2006; Rose, 2005). In addition, several PhD studies focusing on pragmatics instruction in

foreign language classrooms have been conducted in the last few years (e.g. Jernigan, 2007; Vellenga, 2008; Mwinyelle, 2005; Reuda, 2004; Sawako, 2007; Vellenga, 2008), and several papers have been published in journals (e.g. Jiang, 2006; Liu & Zhao, 2007). Most of those studies focus on the teaching and testing of certain speech acts.

Eun, & Tadayoshi's, (2006) review of research on the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction is especially interesting because research synthesis using meta-analysis usually requires very rigid procedure for selecting and analyzing studies which meet specific selection criteria. To conduct a meta-analysis review, the issue in question should have enough data sources to be able to be investigated by many researchers. The two reviewers assert that there were two earlier claims in the literature regarding the adequate availability of studies focusing on instructed pragmatic development, whereas Kasper and Rose (2003) claimed that it was still premature to conduct a meta-analysis as there were not enough studies to consider. Another earlier review reported that there were more than two dozen studies on instructed pragmatic development. Since the review started in 2003 with 34 relevant published studies, it is expected that the number of published studies must have increased significantly since that time.

Out of the total number of studies investigated (34), only 13 studies met the criteria set for the analysis. Eun, & Tadayoshi, (2006) sum up the findings of their meta-analysis:

"Results of the meta-analysis revealed that direct instruction made a notable difference over no instruction, and that explicit instruction was in some cases more beneficial than implicit instruction. Further analysis yielded suggestive but inconclusive evidence that the type of outcome measure may increase the observed learning benefits, and that compared to short-term pragmatic instruction (i.e., less than five hours), long-term instruction (i.e., more than five hours) is likely to result in larger instructional effects (p.165)."

They also make a number of comments related to the studies reviewed. For example, most of the studies reported the positive effect of formal explicit instruction on pragmatic competence. Thus, pragmatic instruction facilitates the acquisition of certain pragmatic features that are difficult to acquire only through exposure. They further add that "Many interventional pragmatics studies feature techniques on the most explicit end of the continuum, and typically include teacher fronted instruction on pragmalinguistic forms or sociopragmatic rules (p.169)." As such, they classify the treatments used in teaching pragmatics into two categories: explicit vs. implicit treatments. The former are usually characterized by "a complete disclosure of the goal of the lesson", "frequent use of metalanguage", "unidirectional information flow from teacher to learners", and "structural exercises". The latter type of treatments are characterized by "the use of consciousness raising activities", the use of self discovery of target features in given input through the analysis of native speaker output in spoken or written form, and the use of group-based consciousness raising activities as advanced organizers preceding exposure to comprehensible input tasks to maximize the possibility for noticing. Another interesting type of consciousness raising activity used by many studies is known as retrospective analysis of self-elicited data or audio- or video-recordings of learners' own production in performing production tasks such as pair conversations, role-plays, writing tasks and previous group discussions. These are viewed as some sort of reflection enhancing tasks. Summing up the extreme end of implicit instruction in pragmatics, Eun, & Tadayoushi, (2006) note that:

"Instructed pragmatics studies at the very end of the implicit pole hardly involve external manipulation of learners' attention to target forms. Most often realized as the implicit counterpart of the explicit experimental conditions in type-of-instruction studies, purely implicit instruction

conditions are largely characterized by sole exposure to authentic language data..., no direction to guide learners' attention to language form of interest, no use of metalanguage, and absence of any type of consciousness raising activities (p.171)."

In other words, the purely implicit treatments will consist mainly of pragmatics-based communicative tasks with no attempt to draw the learners' attention to specific linguistic features.

### **Challenges faced in teaching and testing pragmatic competence in a foreign language learning context:**

#### **1. Paucity of pragmatics courses in both pre-service teacher education programs and in-service professional development ones**

Since most foreign language teachers are non-native speakers of English, they need to be well-prepared for teaching this aspect of knowledge of language. Unfortunately, however, courses on pragmatics are usually electives if they are included at all in pre-service education programs as it is the case at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). But the situation in many parts of the world is not much better. Cohen (2008) cites many studies about the degree to which teacher education programs prepare teachers for teaching and testing pragmatic knowledge. Most programs investigated rarely provide information about pragmatics or pragmatic knowledge instruction and assessment. However, most MA programs in Applied Linguistics seem to include a pragmatics component. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the only exception to this in the Gulf Region is Imam University in Saudi Arabia. In 1996, the researcher was entrusted with teaching a pragmatics course to undergraduate students majoring in English. It was a core course and not an elective as it is the case in the current EFL student teachers' curriculum. The

situation is not very much different in in-service professional development programs. The extensive review of related literature for the purpose of this study yielded only two sources on professional development workshops on pragmatics (Bartels, 2005; Yates & Wigglesworth, 2005).

## **2. Challenges related to ELT materials and Pragmatics**

The explicit treatment of pragmatic phenomena in prescribed textbooks and their accompanying teacher guides is very infrequent. It is true that there are attempts to include a few mini-dialogues for a few speech acts that students are required to practice. However, those mini-dialogues are often very contrived and decontextualized. A few attempts have been made to investigate pragmatic knowledge in ELT materials (Boxer, 2003; Boxer & Pickering, 1995). These attempts show that materials used in EFL contexts rarely include authentic input and that, in most cases, available information may not be true to real life use of language in social situations. Following Bardovi-Harlig, Cohen et. al., Belz (2007) asserts that "...In general, textbooks cannot be counted on as a reliable source of pragmatic input for classroom language learners (p.48)". Belz also argues that research indicates that:

"...language textbooks (1) include little information on L2 pragmatics, (2) lack explicit discussions of conversational norms and practices, and (3) contain inauthentic language samples that are based on introspection rather than genuine language use (p.48)."

## **3. Paucity of exposure to real life language use outside the classroom**

The paucity of exposure to real life language use outside the classroom is probably the chief distinction between L2 contexts and foreign language learning contexts. Also, it is

always cited as a rationale for the necessity of explicit instruction in pragmatics in foreign language learning contexts. For example, Jorda (2005, p.65) argues:

"Contrary to Boxer and Pickering's (1995) assumptions about the unrequired teaching of sociopragmatic aspects in a foreign language setting, we believe that these features are of the utmost importance in these particular language learning contexts. Unlike second language learners, subjects learning a foreign language do not have many opportunities to be exposed to natural and authentic language use. If we do not provide them with sufficient sociocultural and sociolinguistic information, we are increasing their difficulty in understanding and producing politeness issues in the target language (p.65)."

#### **4. Challenges related to testing pragmatic knowledge**

Testing pragmatic knowledge has always been a persistent problem both in contrastive pragmatics research as well as instructional pragmatic development. The most widely used technique in testing pragmatic knowledge is known as the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and its variants. Originally used in Contrastive Pragmatics studies, a situation is first described and then the respondent's reaction is elicited. The most commonly used versions of DCT are multiple choice rejoinders [see Jianda (2007) and (2006) for procedure to develop a Multiple Choice Discourse Completion Test of Chinese learners' pragmatic proficiency]. Rose & Kasper (2003) argue:

"Especially in instructional contexts where formal testing is regularly performed, curricular innovations that comprise pragmatics as a learning objective will be ineffective as long as pragmatic ability is not included as a regular and important component of language tests (p.8)."

Tests, in general, are well known for their backwash effect on both teaching and learning. If no attempt is made to test this aspect of knowledge or include it in tests, the instructional effect is bound to be minimal. This is because teachers teach to the test and

learners learn to the test.

Many authorities in instructed pragmatic development have also tried to identify the challenges faced by teachers and researchers in this area. Belz (2007) notes that:

“These aspects include (1) the availability and authenticity of instructional materials, (2) the exposure of classroom learners to broadened discourse options and the provision of opportunities for the performance and practice of L2 pragmatics in meaningful interactions, (3) the longitudinal documentation of developmental pathways for L2 pragmatic competence, and (4) the efficacy of particular pedagogical interventions in L2 pragmatics instruction (p.46).”

In the same vein, Cohen (2008) notes that in his extensive review of teaching as well as testing pragmatics, more questions than answers provided. However, he attests that these challenges should not deter teachers from introducing pragmatic instruction in their classrooms.

### **Purpose of the study**

The present study aimed at identifying the degree to which teachers are aware of the challenges they face in teaching pragmatic competence in Oman. The two main questions of this study are:

1. What are the challenges faced by teachers in teaching pragmatic competence in Omani schools?
2. Are there any statistically significant differences between the perceptions of teachers who took the undergraduate pragmatic course and those who did not?

## **Method of research**

A questionnaire was designed for eliciting Omani teachers' perceptions of the challenges faced in teaching pragmatic competence. First, the researcher reviewed relevant literature as pointed out earlier. Second, semi-structured interviews with six Omani EFL teachers and one supervisor were held. For each category of challenges, there was one major open-ended question, followed by clarification checks and attempts to elicit any further perceived challenges. The aim was not only to identify the different challenges that can be subsumed under each category/ dimension, but also to be aware of the language used by teachers in talking about these issues. The initial draft consisted of 32 statements. It was then submitted to three colleagues who are interested in this area for feedback about the relevance and clarity of each statement. Acting upon their feedback, the number of statements was reduced to 18 and very few modifications in wording were made. Ninety copies were distributed to Omani teachers teaching grades 5-12, but only 47 forms were returned.

## **Analysis of data**

As the questionnaire had a three point scale, it was decided to consider the mean values between 1 and 1.66 to mean “of low adequacy” or “of low frequency”, the mean values between 1.67 and 2.33 “of moderate adequacy or frequency”, and the mean values between 2.34 and 3 “of high adequacy or frequency”.

### **1. Challenges related to teacher education programs**

Table 1 displays teachers' perceptions of the adequacy of their teacher education programs for raising their awareness of pragmatics, the comparison of L1 and L2

pragmatic norms and strategies, norms of politeness, teaching and testing pragmatic knowledge.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviation for TE Programs

Statements	Means	SD
Awareness of pragmatics as a branch of linguistics	1.64	1.64
Comparing English and Arabic Pragmatic norms & strategies	1.68	1.68
Learning norms of politeness in face to face interaction	1.74	1.74
Teaching pragmatic knowledge	1.74	1.74
Designing/ selecting activities for teaching pragmatic knowledge	1.23	1.23
Designing tests of pragmatic competence	1.19	1.19

It can be seen from Table 1 that teachers believe that their teacher education program has made been moderately adequate with regard to the second, third and fourth variables. Mean values for those variables ranged between 1.68 and 1.74. This can be attributed to the fact that many teachers reported that they had attended a course on Pragmatics in their teacher education program (N=21). They considered their teacher education programs to be of low adequacy with regard to the other three variables.

## 2. Challenges related to textbooks

Table 2 shows teachers perceptions regarding the adequacy of certain aspects of textbooks and teacher guides (TG).

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviation for Textbooks

Statements	M	SD
Textbook & TG explanation related to pragmatic knowledge	1.51	.505
Textbook and TG activities for practicing pragmatic uses of language	1.45	.583

Textbook consciousness raising-activities	1.23	.428
TG guidance about how to teach Pragmatic knowledge	1.36	.486
Textbook audio-/video-recordings of samples of pragmatic uses in natural settings	1.53	.620
TG guidance about testing pragmatic knowledge	1.23	.428

Teachers consider textbooks and teacher guides of low adequacy with regard to all six variables. This is consistent with the views expressed in the literature and the findings of previous research.

### 3. Challenges related to tests

Table 3 displays teachers' perceptions regarding the adequacy of tests covering this component of knowledge of language and non-native teachers' ability to design tests of pragmatic knowledge. Mean values for these two variables related to textbooks and teacher guides range between 1.23 and 1.51.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviation for Tests

Statements	M	SD
Test items focusing on pragmatic knowledge	1.28	.452
Ability of non-native teachers to test pragmatic knowledge	1.30	.462

Once again, teachers view tests of pragmatic competence as well as their ability to design tests of this component of communicative competence as being of low adequacy.

### 4. Challenges related to exposure to pragmatic knowledge outside the classroom

Table 4 displays teachers' perceptions regarding the frequency of their exposure to pragmatic knowledge of language outside the classroom.

Table 4: Means and SD for Exposure to Pragmatic knowledge outside the classroom

Statements	M	SD
Exposure to pragmatic uses with native speakers in Oman	1.32	.471
Exposure to pragmatic uses during a study abroad program	2.00	.590
Exposure to pragmatic uses in online chats with native speakers	1.38	.491
Exposure to pragmatic uses through e-mail in a Connecting Schools Project	1.23	.428

Except for the exposure to those uses during a study abroad program, teachers view other opportunities for exposure to pragmatic knowledge to be of low frequency, as mean values range between 1.23 and 1.38. This finding can be attributed to the fact that some teachers reported that they had had the chance to join a study abroad program (N=13).

To investigate the effect of studying pragmatics in their teacher education program on their perception compared with those who had not taken that course, the independent sample t-test was used. No statistically significant differences between the two groups' perceptions were found in any dimension except the first. Table 5 compares the means of the two groups with regard to the first dimension.

Table 5: Independent samples t-test for attending Pragmatics course

	Have you studied pragmatics?	N	M	SD	t	Sig
Awareness of pragmatics as a branch of linguistics	Yes	21	2.19	.402	8.460	.000
	No	26	1.19	.402	8.459	.000
Comparing English and Arabic Pragmatic norms & strategies	Yes	21	2.10	.539	5.008	.000
	No	26	1.35	.485	4.952	.000
Learning norms of politeness in face to face	Yes	21	1.86	.655	1.146	.258

interaction	No	26	1.65	.562	1.127	.267
Teaching pragmatic knowledge	Yes	21	2.14	.478	4.579	.000
	No	26	1.42	.578	4.673	.000
Designing/ selecting activities for teaching pragmatic knowledge	Yes	21	1.38	.498	2.202	.033
	No	26	1.12	.326	2.108	.043
Designing tests of pragmatic competence	Yes	21	1.38	.498	3.220	.002
	No	26	1.04	.196	2.973	.006

Except for learning norms of politeness and teaching pragmatic competence, there are statistically significant differences between the perceptions of those who attended the Pragmatics course and those who did not in favor of those who attended it at the level of 0.001.

### **Proposed solutions to those challenges**

#### **1. Recommendations related to teacher education and teacher professional development**

Many students majoring in English at SQU choose the Pragmatics elective. Given the importance of this course, it has been recommended to be a core course and not an elective. Furthermore, teaching and testing pragmatic competence need to be included in undergraduate methods courses. Language teachers' professional development programs can also help teachers upgrade their undergraduate knowledge of pragmatics as well as their repertoire of skills in teaching and testing it. Few attempts are reported in the literature to initiate and investigate the effectiveness of in-service **pragmatics workshops** (Chavez de Castro, 2005, Yates & Wigglesworth, 2005). Teachers themselves should attempt to make optimal use of the Connecting Classrooms Project to

encourage natural interaction with native speakers. They can also make use of self-access pragmatics sites available at the moment on the Internet. For example, CARLA has already initiated a project to provide teachers with self-access sites for the learning and performance of L2 pragmatics.

Omani researchers may also be encouraged to conduct contrastive pragmatics studies since these analyses can act as a source of information about the similarities and differences of L1 and L2 pragmatics. They should also be encouraged to investigate classroom pragmatics instruction assuming that the treatments designed by researchers specifically for the Omani classrooms will be of great value for teachers and measures used in those studies can also be emulated by teachers. To date, very few contrastive pragmatics studies or classroom pragmatic instruction studies have been done in the Arab world.

Great progress has been achieved in the field of pragmatics in the last few decades. However, the language used in pragmatics literature may be far removed from ordinary teachers. Indeed, more teacher-friendly pragmatics texts are badly needed. Thus, teachers are in need of what might be called "Pedagogical Pragmatics".

It was pointed out above that the distinction between implicit and explicit teaching of pragmatics is similar to focus-on-form and focus-on-forms. Engaging learners in communicative tasks in which they have to acquire pragmatic knowledge with some sort of incidental explicit comments on their use of language in social situations constitutes the type of tasks used in the implicit teaching of pragmatics. The explicit teaching of pragmatics refers to engaging learners in consciousness raising tasks that raise their awareness of both the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features and strategies associated speech acts for example. These include the analysis of natural data and

comparing L1 and L2 norms of pragmatic behavior. It should be pointed out that these methods constitute two extreme ends of a continuum and that many recommended classroom methodologies constitute a blend of both explicit and implicit strategies.

It is the contention of the researcher that pragmatics should be integrated into classroom instruction focusing on other components of knowledge of language and not taught separately. In fact, there are already several models that have been developed for whole-lesson based pragmatics instruction. For instance, Cohen (1998) proposes a five-step lesson of this kind:

1. Diagnostic assessment of the students' awareness of the speech act in question;
2. Model dialogues illustrating the speech act in use;
3. Evaluation of a situation: having students to decide in pairs or small groups, whether a speech act realization is appropriate;
4. Role play activities; and
5. Feedback and discussion focusing on similarities and differences between speech act performance in the target culture and the first culture (p.90).

In addition, these steps are also reflected in CARLA sites for learning pragmatics.

Martinez-Flor & Uso-Juan (2006) review some more frameworks for teaching pragmatics and propose, "A Comprehensive Pedagogical Framework to Develop Pragmatics in the Foreign Language Classroom: The 6Rs Approach". The name of each step starts with "R": Researching, Reflecting, Receiving, Reasoning, Rehearsing and Revising, and is described in more detail below:

1. **Researching:** After a brief explanation of the speech act in question, learners are provided with a data collection worksheet and are asked to collect natural instances of the speech act in question in their mother tongue.
2. **Reflecting:** Learners are provided with another consciousness raising worksheet in which they are required to analyze their L1 samples and required to compare their data with their partners to gain access to a wider sample.

3. **Receiving:** Learners then receive explicit instruction on the pragmalinguistic forms that realize the speech act in question. Then, they are asked to compare them with those used in L1 sample.
4. **Reasoning:** This stage involves consciousness raising activities in which they have to reason and understand the sociocultural factors that determine the use of each realization of the speech act in question.
5. **Rehearsing:** Having become aware of both the linguistic realizations and the sociopragmatic factors that determine the use of each, they are engaged in two types of production activities in which they can rehearse that knowledge: controlled production activities and then free production ones.

It should be noted that this framework builds upon most previous attempts to plan and implement classroom pragmatics instruction. The framework is designed to be used for students at the university level. It might be useful for teaching pragmatics to student teachers of English. At this stage, it might be possible to teach pragmatics separately as the model entails. In pre-university stages, these activities may not necessarily occur in one lesson or a group of lessons. Instead pragmatics instruction tasks need to be integrated with other components of the entire course.

## **2. Recommendations related to ELT materials**

Given the limitations of input available in textbooks as indicated by the research referred to above and the perceptions of Omani teachers related to this dimension, it might be argued that new sources of ELT materials for teaching pragmatics should be produced. Several available resources are mentioned in the literature. For example, the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) has three websites dedicated to L2 pragmatics: A general one; one focusing on Japanese; and a third one focusing on Spanish (Cohen, 2008). Cohen also points out that there are many sites for both teachers and learners to learn pragmatic knowledge independently. Almost all classroom

pragmatics instruction studies can provide useful materials for teaching as well as testing pragmatics. One of the most interesting open sources consists of thirty lessons collected by Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor (2003). These materials can help English learners use socially appropriate language in different social situations and cover topics such as conversational management, opening and closings, requests, refusals, compliments, and complaints. In addition, Keller and Warmer (1988) provide an excellent source on the use of conversational gambits. Finally, Belz (2008) provides many other sites in which learners can interact with other learners from different cultures in what has become known as Telecollaboration.

### **3. Recommendations related to testing pragmatic competence**

Rover (2004) points out that although pragmatic competence is considered to be a major component of communicative competence, little attention has been paid to testing it in the literature. But like task types used in classroom instruction of this component of knowledge of the target language, teachers can also benefit from tests developed by researchers of classroom pragmatic development. Rover has already developed and validated a web-based test battery for testing pragmatic competence that meets two major criteria in testing: practicality and difficulty. Tada (2005) used video prompts for testing pragmatic production and awareness. However, the more expensive the test, the less practical it will be. Developing an adaptive test, means that different items have to identify different levels of proficiency of the test takers. In the same volume, Cohen (2004) makes similar and cautious comments about testing pragmatic competence:

“More recently, the field has evolved such that there are now more rigorous batteries of instruments for assessing speech act ability. While these batteries have primarily been used for research purposes, the potential use of portions of such instruments in language classrooms is

open for investigation. An important consideration is one of feasibility, since some of the subtests may be too labor intensive to make them practical for the classroom (p.299).”

Given the fact that excluding this aspect of knowledge from final tests will have a detrimental washback effect on teaching and learning processes, including a pragmatic component in Omani tests should be attempted.

### **Conclusion**

The main conclusion of this study is that pragmatic competence in foreign language contexts is both teachable and testable, yet neither aspect is attended to enough in the L2 teaching and learning context. Despite the challenges identified in the literature and perceived by language teachers, there are many solutions available at the moment to get over those challenges.

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## **Appendix**

Dear Teacher/ Senior Teacher of English,

This study aims at identifying the difficulties you might face in teaching your students a very important aspect of knowledge of English known as pragmatic knowledge. Pragmatic knowledge can be roughly defined as the ability to use language forms appropriately in social situations. As teachers of English we face many difficulties in teaching this aspect of knowledge. Such difficulties can be classified into four categories: difficulties related to your teacher education program or relevant in-service training, difficulties related to textbooks and teacher guides, lack of exposure to real life use in natural situations outside the classroom and difficulties related to testing this aspect of knowledge.

You are kindly requested to respond to the following questionnaire.

Thanks for your co-operation.

The researcher

**Personal information**

**Have you studied a course on pragmatics in your undergraduate teacher education program?**

Yes  No

**Gender:** Male  Female

**Have you ever been involved in a study abroad summer course?**

Yes  No

**Region:**.....

No	Statements	Adequate	Fairly	Inadequate
	<b>Have you been taught any of the following items in any of your undergraduate courses or in-service training courses? To what extent have pre-service and/ or in-service teacher education programs helped you:</b>			
1	Become aware of pragmatics as a branch of linguistics			
2	Compare English and Arabic pragmatic norms and strategies			
3	Learn norms of "politeness" in face to face interaction			
4	Teach this aspect of knowledge of English			
5	Design or select activities for teaching this aspect of knowledge of English			
6	Design tests of this aspect of knowledge of English			
	<b>To what extent do Omani English textbooks and teacher guides include each of the following?</b>			
7	Explanation related to this aspect of knowledge of English			
8	Activities that help students practice performing those uses of language			
9	Activities that help them analyze natural samples of those uses of language and draw their attention to the different ways of performing them in different situations			
10	Guidance about how to teach those uses of language			
11	Audio or video recorded samples of those uses in natural situations			
12	Guidance for teachers as to how to test those uses of language			
	<b>How would you rate each of the following?</b>			
13	Questions included in Omani tests about this aspect of knowing English?			

14	Ability of non-native teachers of English to test this aspect of knowledge of English?			
<b>To what extent have you and/ or your students been exposed to those uses of language in natural situations outside the classroom?</b>		<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely/Ne</b>
15	In conversations with native speakers in Oman			
16	With native speakers in an English speaking country during a study abroad program			
17	With native speakers in online chats			
18	With native speakers in a "Connecting Schools Project" organized by the Ministry of Education through e-mail			

Do you face any other difficulties in teaching and/ or testing this aspect of knowledge of English not included in this table? If yes, please write them here. You can use Arabic if you like.

## **Discourse Markers in the ESL Classroom: A Survey of Teachers' Attitudes**

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### **Bio Data:**

Loretta Fung is currently editor of Academic Voice who founded a web-based initiative that offers language and research support to students and researchers in higher education. She also teaches EAP at Nottingham Trent International College, UK. She received her BA in Modern English Language from Lancaster University, MA in ELT and PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Nottingham. She taught English in Hong Kong and worked as ELT materials developer and project manager at the University of Hong Kong. Her research interests are in ELT pedagogy, corpus linguistics, discourse analysis and computer-mediated communication. She has published in a number of peer-reviewed journals that include *Applied Linguistics*, *Multilingua*, *Language and Literature*, and *Linguistics and the Human Sciences*.

### **Abstract**

There has been increasing research on the study of discourse markers (DMs) in terms of their pragmatic use. However, their pedagogic use in the ESL classroom has received less attention. This paper explores the attitudes of Hong Kong teachers towards the pedagogic values of DMs using a questionnaire (N=132), a reliability test, factor analysis, and interviews (N=3) with NS and NNS teacher-informants. Both the quantitative and qualitative results indicate a very positive perception of the pragmatic and pedagogic values of DMs by the subjects, where students at the intermediate-advanced level are challenged to acquire DMs for both receptive and productive purposes. The findings also

reveal the underrepresentation of DMs in existing teaching materials and in subjects' teaching. The study proposes the need to develop learners' linguistic awareness of this aspect of spoken features to facilitate communication and suggests that DMs can be included as part of the lexical input in the ESL/EFL syllabus. The results have implications for utilizing corpora to exploit the polyfunctionalities of DMs in different contexts and across registers, modifying existing teaching materials and promoting professional involvement in preparing learners to develop more effective communication.

**Keywords:** Discourse Markers, Attitudes, Pedagogic Use, ESL Classroom

## **Introduction**

Hong Kong was a former British colony and the sovereignty was returned to China in 1997. Under the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), the policy of 'one country, two systems' is practised and the acquisition of biliteracy (written English and Modern Standard Chinese) and trilingualism (spoken English, Cantonese and Putonghua) is promoted. Hong Kong's historical background as a British colony, the impact of economic force and the position of English as an important lingua franca for international communication in the new global information society have tremendously increased the pragmatic value of English. Despite the coercive implementation of mother tongue education in 1999, empirical evidence has indicated a strong positive instrumental orientation to English (Tung & Tsang, 1997; Flowerdew, Li & Miller, 1998). In fact, parents, government, business and educators seem to be at one in their attitudes in promoting and perpetuating the dominance of English in the territory. It is against this linguistic background that Hong Kong teachers' attitudes towards English discourse marker (henceforth DM), a pervasive feature in authentic spoken language, is studied.

Most previous research on the study of discourse markers, either DMs in English or in other languages, has focused on their meanings and their corresponding pragmatic use

(e.g. Schourup, 2001; Matsui, 2002; Tree & Schrock, 2002; Müller, 2004; De Klerk, 2005; Overstreet, 2005; Wang & Tsai, 2005), and on how they create coherence (Schiffrin, 1987; Redeker, 1991; Risselada & Spooren, 1998). While the proliferation of research has attested that DMs contribute to the management and development of a discourse and perform important structural and interactive functions (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1990, 1999), research on their pedagogical significance in the ESL classroom is rather limited (*cf* McCarthy & Carter (1997); Romero Trillo (2002); Müller (2004); Fung & Carter (2007); Hellermann & Vergun (2007)), whereas teachers' attitudes towards them is virtually non-existent. The present study seeks to fill the research gap on the attitudinal side by investigating the attitudes of Hong Kong English teachers towards the use of DMs in the ESL classroom through addressing the following questions:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the role and usage of DMs in the curriculum? Do teachers perceive that their students can understand a spoken discourse better with knowledge/awareness of DMs?
2. To what extent should DM be represented in the teaching of spoken discourse, as a reception clue or a production agent, or both?

## **Literature Review**

### *Discourse markers*

According to Carter and McCarthy (2006),

“Discourse markers are words and phrases which function to link segments of the discourse to one another in ways which reflect choices of monitoring, organisation and management exercised by the speaker. The most common discourse markers in everyday informal spoken language are single words such as *anyway, cos, fine, good, great, like, now, oh, okay, right, so, well*, and phrasal and clausal items such as *you know, I mean, as I say, for a start, mind you*” (p. 208).

In other words, DMs are textual devices used to organize and hold turns and to mark boundaries in a discourse (Stenström, 1994, p. 13). As suggested by Schiffrin (1987, p. 31), they are ‘sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk’. Drawn principally from grammatical classes such as conjunctions, adverbs, prepositional phrases, minor clauses and interjections, DMs are uttered with the primary function of bringing to the listener’s attention a particular kind of linkage of the upcoming utterance with the immediate discourse context (Redeker, 1991, p. 1168). They have ‘a core meaning, which is procedural, not conceptual, and their more specific interpretation is “negotiated” by the context, both linguistic and conceptual’ (Fraser, 1999, p. 931), thus helping to contribute to a coherence-based process of interpretation (Risselada & Spooren, 1998). (*cf* Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad and Finegan (1999), Swan (2005) and Carter and McCarthy (2006) for full descriptive accounts of DMs.)

### *Basic Criteria*

In general there is not a clear consensus about the definition of DMs and words and phrases treated as DMs are often ambiguous. Despite this, the following features are generally agreed upon by most researchers as the basic criteria. But it should be noted that any criterion alone is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the verification of DM status. Instead, a combination of criteria needs to be taken into consideration.

#### Connectivity

DMs are ‘sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk’ (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 31). They signal relationships between immediately adjacent ‘units of talk, or the relationship of the basic message to the foregoing discourse’ (Fraser, 1996 p. 186), thus,

performing a coherence building function on a local level.

#### Optionality

DMs are optional. The removal of a DM does not alter the grammaticality of its host sentence (Fraser, 1988) and it does not enlarge the possibilities for semantic relationships between the elements it associates. This criterion of DMs does not render them irrelevant, but the connectedness of the utterances becomes less explicit in the absence of DMs.

#### Non-truth conditionality

DMs do not affect the truth-condition of the proposition expressed in an utterance (Blakemore, 1987; Hansen, 1998). This means that they do not add to the ‘content’ or ‘proposition’ of the utterance. A DM does not create meaning (Fraser, 1990) and will not affect the conceptual meaning of the utterance.

#### Initiality

DMs predominantly occur initially (Schiffrin, 1987), yet they may occur utterance-medial or utterance-final. Fraser (1999) claims that almost all DMs occur in initial position, fewer in medial position and still fewer in final position. The following extract of a post office service encounter illustrates the various positions of DMs:

<1> From here approximately *well you know* not counting weekends *but*

<2> *So* it might get there by next Wednesday. (CANCODE data)

[Note: CANCODE stands for Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English. It is a five-million word computerized corpus of spoken English developed at Nottingham University in 1990s. It is made up of recordings from a variety of settings in the countries of the United Kingdom and Ireland. The corpus is organized to give information on participants, settings and conversational goals.]

## Multigrammaticality

DMs come from different grammatical classes. They can be adverbs (*now, then, therefore*), verbs (*look, say, see, listen*), conjunctions (*and, but, also, nevertheless*), sequencing conjuncts (*first, next, finally*), or non-finite clauses (*to be frank, to be honest, I mean, you see, you know*). According to Hansen (1998), they are intermediate between grammatical and lexical items.

The value of DMs in teaching has been documented. DMs can contribute to understanding of written text (Jung, 2003), listener perceptions of coherence (Tyler, Jefferies & Davies, 1988; Basturkmen, 2007), oral fluency (Hasselgren, 2002) and comprehension of lectures (Chaudron & Richards, 1986; Dunkel & Davis, 1994; Flowerdew & Tauroza, 1995), where the lack of contextualization markers seems to contribute significantly to L2 learners' misunderstanding of academic monologues (Jung, 2006). However, the common perception of DMs as signs of dyfluency has rendered their place in the formal language classroom insignificant (Romero Trillo, 2002). The misuse of certain DMs found in a comparative study of Japanese, Chinese NNSs and British NSs has pointed to the needs to prioritize the teaching of the pragmatic and grammatical functions of DMs (Shen, 2006).

As far as the Hong Kong context is concerned, there are a few corpus-based studies of DMs. Bolton, Nelson and Hung (2003) focus on connector (termed DM in this study) usage in the academic writing of British and Hong Kong university students and found that both groups overuse a wide range of connectors. Contrarily, the study by Fung and Carter (2007) has indicated an underrepresentation and a highly restricted use of DMs in classroom discussions by intermediate-advanced learners of English in secondary schools. Lam (2006) asserts the value of DMs in spoken interaction based on her study of *well* in

TV shows and challenges the prevalent misconception that DMs are a sign of fluent speech.

The study of teachers' beliefs is central to educational practices and can provide insights into teaching. While most current research on DMs are learner performance based, teachers' views, knowledge and experiences have not been given much attention. In an attempt to fill this research gap, the present survey focuses on Hong Kong secondary teachers' perceptions and aims to explore the actual scenario in the local educational context. It is significant in revealing how DMs are perceived by teachers and the extent they are represented in the ESL classroom, which points to a gap in pedagogy where DMs can be included as part of the lexical input in the English syllabus.

## **Methodology**

### *Design*

The present survey aims at understanding teachers' thoughts, perceptions, knowledge and experiences related to and arising from DMs through a pluralistic approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods. The survey is based on a questionnaire composed of 48 items (see Appendix), supplemented by a semi-structured in-depth interview of three teacher-informants who completed the questionnaire. While the quantitative component provides a broad picture of their perception, the qualitative component helps to elaborate responses in a more detailed manner. A combination of both methodologies reveals some potential contradictions in teachers' beliefs, and the areas in which teachers need further clarification and support. The two-stage design is intended to enhance the validity and credibility of the overall analysis, by producing data on different aspects of the research questions to build up a rounded and credible overall picture (Mason, 1996; Patton, 2001).

## *Subjects*

### Questionnaire

Owing to the scope of the research and the fact that DMs are an aspect of pragmatic competence which are more readily acquired by competent learners of English, the present research focuses on the attitudes of senior form English teachers who taught intermediated-advanced pupils in English as Medium of Instruction (EMI) secondary schools in Hong Kong. To ensure that the research procedure was systematically conducted, four questionnaires were sent to all the EMI schools (114 in total at the time when the research was conducted). Therefore, a total of 456 questionnaires were mailed out to the head teachers who were invited to randomly select four senior form teachers (Form 4-7, i.e. Grade 10-13) to complete the questionnaires.

Table 1 (see Appendix), which shows the demographic background of the respondents, includes information about gender, nationality, first language, teaching experience, ELT training and their language expertise. With all the 132 returned questionnaires, 82.6% of the subjects were females and 17.4% males. Most were local teachers (81.8%), with the rest of them mainly native speakers of English from the UK (6.1%), Canada (3.0%), Australia (1.5%), the USA (1.5%), India (1.5%), New Zealand (0.8%), Malaysia (0.8%) and elsewhere (3.0%). As far as their first language is concerned, 77.3% were Cantonese speakers, while 18.2% were English speakers and a minority of 4.5% spoke other languages as their first language. Nearly 60% were experienced teachers of English who had taught English for over 10 years. 25.8% had five to nine years' teaching experience and 14.4% were young teachers who had taught English for less than four years. Most of the subjects had received ELT training (93.9%), and only 6.1 % had not been trained. As far as their qualification or expertise is concerned, 77.1% had English or an English

language-related subject as the first degree, and 23.8% possessed a master's qualification in TESL/TEFL. 84.1% took up over 17 periods of English lessons every week. In sum, the figures reveal that the subjects were predominantly female, non-native speakers of English who were experienced, trained and well-qualified local English teachers. Since all the EMI schools are subject to the streaming policy of the Education Department, where students with a good command of English and good academic performance are allowed to study all subjects except the Chinese language and Chinese history in English, the respondents in fact represent teachers of this batch of elite pupils in the territory. Moreover, usually the most experienced and well-qualified teachers are assigned to teach senior classes in Hong Kong. I believe that the attitudes of this group of teachers not only significantly reflect the mindset of local teachers, but also indicate the 'threshold' of their pupils, of which most had a reasonable command of English in comprehending and acquiring DMs.

#### Interview

In the belief that language expertise accounts for the appropriate assessment of the treatment of DMs, only experienced teachers were chosen for the follow-up interviews. The selection was made more objective with the representation of one male and two female subjects, with one non-native speaker from Hong Kong and two native speakers from the UK and Canada.

Table 2 (see Appendix) shows the profile of the candidates in detail. Candidate A was a local female teacher who was very experienced and had taught in secondary schools in Hong Kong for over 20 years. She received teaching training in Hong Kong and obtained a master's degree in Language Studies from Britain. She endorsed the important role DMs play in spoken discourse and agreed that her students should identify with the native

speaker norm. Candidate B was a female teacher from Canada. Graduated as a Home Economics teacher, she had no relevant degree in English though she had received teacher training in language and education. She had taught in Hong Kong for 14 years and took up private tutoring after school and also served as a materials writer for a local publisher. Her crude orientation indicates that neither did she regard DMs as important language features nor did she support following the native speaker norm. She gave DMs a very low priority in the curriculum and did not support the inclusion of DMs in teaching materials. Candidate C was a male English teacher from Britain. He was as experienced and well-qualified as Candidate A, and had a master's degree in TESOL. He had also taught in Saudi Arabia and Zambia. The school in which he was teaching is very reputable and has an intake of very high calibre students. Similar to Candidate A, he affirmed the roles of DMs and supported following the native speaker norm as the model of speech.

### *Instrumentation*

The whole questionnaire, which focuses on the linguistic, pedagogic and cultural aspects of the use of DMs, derived from a draft questionnaire containing 60 items. The questionnaires were monitored and trialled by 20 ELT practitioners from Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and England who offered comments from an insider's point of view and provided feedback regarding the strengths and shortcomings of the overall questionnaire design. The draft questionnaire was revised based on their comments and finally modified and revised to 48 items.

As indicated in the Appendix, four short extracts selected from CANCODE were used to define the form and role of DMs. Based on a comparison task, the participants had to

compare the effect DMs have on the spoken exchanges when they are present (Script A) and when they are deleted (Script B). Also, their general attitudes towards the use and the role of DMs were explored with the 14 items in Section 1. Section 2 deals with the general attitudes of teachers towards the teaching of DMs. Section 3, which contains nine multiple choice demographic questions, was used to elicit the background information of the subjects. Altogether 132 questionnaires were returned, with a modest overall return rate of around 29%.

The five-point Likert scale, a useful instrument in revealing teacher belief systems (Karavas-Doukas, 1996, p. 194), was adopted to elicit teachers' opinions. The scales were anchored at one end by 'strongly agree' and at the other end by 'strongly disagree', with a mid-3 score expressing uncertainty towards the statement. The questions were pre-coded from 1-5. For positively worded statements, a high score reflects a strong endorsement of an attitude statement, while a low score reflects a weak endorsement.

The follow-up interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. I coded the data manually in the categories that arose from the questionnaire survey.

## **Results**

Statistical analysis of the survey data was carried out using SPSS v 10.0.5 for Windows. Methods used in this study include reliability analysis and factor analysis. The former groups different items together by conceptual thinking, while the latter groups the items through mathematical calculation. The strength of applying the two methods lies in mapping the reliability of different groups of items with the factor solution as a means to counter-check the categorization of items.

### *Reliability test*

First of all, Cronbach alpha was performed on all the 45 items (excluding Items 9, 19 and 32 which did not correlate highly with other items) using SPSS to check for internal consistency. Both the reliability of each subsection and the overall reliability were calculated. The questionnaire produced Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging from 0.61 to 0.89 as indicated below, with an overall moderately good reliability of 0.83.

Q1-14	Linguistic value of DMs ( $\alpha=0.79$ )
Q15-18	Representation of DMs in reality ( $\alpha=0.74$ )
Q20-29, 33	Pedagogic relevance of DMs ( $\alpha=0.89$ )
Q30-31, 40-42, 46	Integrative value of DMs ( $\alpha=0.80$ )
Q34-39	Attainment level expected ( $\alpha=0.64$ )
Q43-45, 47-48	Cultural and psychological aspects of teachers' attitudes ( $\alpha=0.61$ )

### *Factor analysis*

Factor analysis is 'a set of statistical procedures used to explore the underlying variance structure of a set of correlation coefficients' (Brown, 2001). In the present study, factor analysis was performed to determine the degree to which all the 45 variables could be reduced to a smaller underlying variance structure. Table 3 (see Appendix) indicates the seven factor loadings of the teacher responses after Varimax rotation, with those smaller than 0.39 being suppressed for the sake of clarity (*cf* Comrey's (1973) criterion of fair loadings). Table 4 (see Appendix) groups all the items into their corresponding factors, with their mean scores, standard deviations and factor loadings illustrated.

As observed from Table 4 (see Appendix), Factor 1 received significant loadings from

ten variables (Q20-25, 27, 33, 38, 39). This factor corresponds to the pedagogic orientation of DMs in relation to their linguistic value, and therefore, it was labelled as reflecting the **pedagogic value of discourse markers**. The teachers in the study mostly disagreed that *DMs are only small words in conversation and it is not worth the time to teach them* (Item 23 mean=3.86, 5=strongly disagree) and that *DMs are redundant and sub-standard features in speech and there is not much teaching value* (Item 25 mean=3.98, 5=strongly disagree). Likewise, they also disagreed that *DMs do not carry specific meaning and there is not much teaching value* (Item 24 mean=3.90, 5=strongly disagree). On the contrary, they endorsed that students should exploit DMs to improve their speaking and listening skills (Item 22 mean=3.95, 5=strongly agree), and to create and develop linguistic awareness of them (Item 20 mean=3.92). They ranked it important for students to incorporate DMs in their speech as an essential skill for public oral examination (Item 27 mean=3.67). To the extent of the strong consensus towards the teaching value of DMs, the results indicate an apparent contradiction. This was shown in Item 39 *My students do not need to speak with DMs as frequently as most native speakers do, but only need to progress to a speaking proficiency level capable of fulfilling their communicative purpose* (mean=3.48, 5=strongly agree). An ambivalent attitude was shown in Item 38 *Students should be left at their discretion to learn to speak with DMs in the future when other interaction opportunities arise*, with its mean falling on the uncertain level (mean=3.07). This explains the negative factor loadings with regard to these two items. Despite this, it is clear that the subjects favoured teaching DMs at upper secondary level as indicated in Item 33 (mean=3.58, 5=strongly agree).

Factor 2 (Q30, 31, 40-42, 46) received strong loadings from six variables which focused on identification with native speakers' use of DMs. The factor was therefore

labelled as **identification with the native speaker norm**. The factor loading indicates a tendency for teachers to adopt an exonormative speaking model. The subjects upheld quite strongly that *Students should be taught how native speakers use DMs and follow their way of using them* (Item 30 mean=3.70, 5=strongly agree). However, they were less consistent when *Students should be taught to speak like a native in order to become competent speakers* (Item 31 mean=3.05). While showing uncertainty in Item 46 *It is justifiable to require my students to use DMs like native speakers of English* (mean=3.04), they did not agree that *It is realistic to require my students to use DMs like native speakers of English* (Item 40 mean=2.70). While justifying the claim to learn to speak like a native speaker, the teachers were aware they may never attain this target. Nevertheless they expressed uncertainty over which native speaker variety should be adopted as the speaking model in Hong Kong. They were uncertain whether the British model should be adhered to (Item 42 mean=3.05, 5=strongly agree), but definitely disagreed about an adherence model to the American one (Item 41 mean = 2.71). In essence, while confirming most teachers' orientation to an exonormative speaking model, they tended to vacillate between the justification for this rationale and the reality of adopting the native speaker norm as the speaking model. This certainly merits further investigation which is beyond the scope of the present paper.

Factor 3 was defined by eight items (Q1-3, 7, 12, 26, 28, 29), suggesting that knowledge of DMs is related to success in communication, in the workplace and in academic settings which are dominated by native speakers. Therefore, this factor represents the **pragmatic value of discourse markers**. There was consensus towards this factor as indicated by the small magnitude of the standard deviations (0.63-0.91). On the communicative side, teachers agreed that DMs can help display to listeners the speakers'

attitude (Item 3 mean=4.36, 5=strongly agree), improve communication (Item 1 mean=4.33), process information in listening (Item 2 mean=4.21), yield a softening and facilitative effect on talk (Item 12 mean=4.06), and display the sequence of a speaker's mental thoughts (Item 7 mean=3.61). On the practical side, with the knowledge and awareness of what DMs are, students were perceived to be able to understand native speakers better in their future workplace (Item 29 mean=4.02), to be more able to follow a university lecture, especially when conducted by native speakers (Item 28, mean=3.83), and to perform better in public examinations (Item 26 mean= 3.77).

Factor 4 indicates significant loadings from another eight items (Q4-6, 8, 10-11, 13-14) which attempt to countercheck the usefulness of DMs in a negative way, therefore reflecting the **dispensable value of discourse markers**. Although the pragmatic values of DMs from both the communicative and practical dimensions were asserted in Factor 3, Factor 4 indicates a tendency that DMs are dispensable. On the one hand, results for Item 6 *It is still an effective listening strategy to focus closely on the key words in talk without referring to DMs* (mean=2.53, 1=strongly agree), Item 13 *Without DMs the conversation is still coherent and interpretable* (mean=2.5, 1=strongly agree), and Item 10 *I can still understand the conversation using other linguistic clues rather than referring to the DMs* (mean=2.27, 1=strongly agree) suggest the subsidiary role DMs play in a spoken discourse. On the other hand, consistent with the highly important role of DMs perceived in Factor 1, the subjects did not agree that DMs are redundant conversational devices (Item 14 mean=3.71, 5=strongly disagree) and that DMs are not very useful in guiding listeners to understand the conversation (Item 4, mean=3.69, 5=strongly disagree). They also disagreed that DMs neither help to orientate the listener to the overall idea structure and sequence in talk (Item 5 mean=3.27, 5=strongly disagree), nor help to signal

relationships between ideas in talk (Item 11 mean=3.22, 5=strongly disagree). Similarly, they thought a conversation would become disjointed and incoherent without DMs (Item 8 mean=3.27, 5=strongly agree). Therefore, the view that DMs are dispensable yet important is affirmed by these findings.

Factor 5 indicates four variables (Q15-18) which reflect the representation of DMs in the upper secondary school curriculum in Hong Kong, both in terms of the listening and speaking materials used and in their actual teaching. Therefore, this factor was labelled as the **representation of discourse markers in ESL classrooms**. The wide variation in the standard deviation (SD=1.06-1.12) indicates a less consistent view, with the teachers failing to assert if DMs had been presented as both a speaking and listening skill in most oral and listening materials that they used (Items 16 & 15, mean=3.28 & 3.15, 5=strongly agree). They were even less certain if they had highlighted DMs in their oral and listening lessons (Item 17 & 18, mean=3.02 & 2.92). In contrast to the consistently high evaluation of the pedagogic and pragmatic values of DMs, there exists a large gap between the perceived importance and the actual representation of DMs in classroom.

Factor 6 received loadings from four variables (Q34-37) which distinguish teachers' preference to teach DMs either for receptive and productive purposes or simply for reception. Therefore, this factor was labelled as **prioritizing teaching discourse markers for receptive purposes**. First of all, they tended not to prioritize teaching DMs mainly for listening purposes at upper secondary level (Item 35 mean=2.74, 1=strongly disagree). Consistent with this attitude, they did not agree that *It is too ambitious to expect students to learn DMs for both listening and speaking purposes at secondary level* (Item 34 mean=2.47, 1=strongly disagree). While holding the view that both the receptive and productive skills of using DMs should be enhanced, with regard to the timing for

instruction, teachers were cautious that *DMs as an aspect of speaking skill should be delayed until awareness of DMs as a listening skill has been grasped* (Item 27 mean=2.88, 5=strongly agree), yet they disagreed that *DMs as linguistic devices for both listening and speaking purposes should be introduced at the same time at secondary level* (Item 36 mean=2.27, 1=strongly agree).

The five variables loading on Factor 7 (Q43-45, 47-48) reflect the attitude relating to the acceptance of the Hong Kong variety in using DMs. This factor was represented as **acceptance of the local usage**. The two items that the teachers agreed on most are Item 45 *We should help students to recognize and accept different national and regional uses of DMs* (mean=3.87, 5=strongly agree) and Item 47 *It is necessary to expose students to different varieties of using DMs for purpose of comprehension, though not of production* (mean=3.82, 5=strongly agree). Apparently they seemed to adopt an open attitude towards the recognition and acceptance of different varieties despite the fact that they were mainly exonormative (Factor 2). They also agreed that *It is not necessary to stick to the native speaker norm of using DMs because English language teaching should seek relevance to local culture while trying to enable global transaction* (Item 48 mean=3.40, 5=strongly agree), acknowledging that it is natural to use DMs with local colourings. However, when coming to the more specific issue of whether we should respect and accept a Hong Kong style of using DMs (Item 44 mean=3.11, 5=strongly agree), an ambivalent stance prevailed. It is even harder to judge if *It can be regarded as a wrong usage when Hong Kong learners use DMs differently from native speakers* (Item 43 mean=3.07). In sum, the subjects seemed to possess a global concept that different national or regional varieties should be respected but the extent to which the Hong Kong variety should be accepted is yet to be resolved.

### *Scale orientation*

After yielding the 7-factor solution, a more detailed analysis was conducted in order to depict the level of endorsement of each orientation. To obtain the scale orientation, the mean score for each multi-item scale (i.e. the aggregated index) was computed. This was calculated by summing up all the item scores based on the items loaded on each factor (Table 4, see Appendix), which was divided by the number of items in each scale. Then an aggregated single attitude index (henceforth labelled as a Scale) was constituted which helps to define the overall intensity of each attitude Scale. Table 5 (see Appendix) illustrates the mean and standard deviations of the seven Scales.

Overall, the results show a strong orientation in Scale 3 (pragmatic value, mean=4.03, Figure 1; see Appendix) and Scale 1 (pedagogic value, mean=3.69, Figure 2; see Appendix) where the subjects regarded DMs as highly useful linguistic devices that are desirable in classroom instruction. In the context of the colonial influence and inputs from a British model of English as in Hong Kong, the results surprisingly indicate a modestly positive attitude for Scale 7 (acceptance of the local variety, mean=3.43, Figure 3; see Appendix), as reflected by the relatively homogeneous response and the small standard deviations they each have (Scale 3 SD=0.5, Scale 1 SD=0.4 and Scale 7 SD=0.54, Figures 1-3).

Despite this, there emerged a relatively neutral orientation for Scale 2 (identification with the native speaking norm, mean=3.04, Figure 4; see Appendix), Scale 4 (dispensable value of DMs, mean=3.04, Figure 5; see Appendix) and Scale 5 (representation of DMs in ESL classrooms, mean=3.1, Figure 6; see Appendix), indicating that the subjects held a less assertive view or a relatively ambivalent attitude towards the issues under discussion.

Although factor analysis indicates a positive relationship between the pragmatic and dispensable value of DMs which should apparently hold a reverse relationship, the weak mean score of Scale 4 (mean=3.04) suggests marginal support for their dispensable value. This elucidates the ‘optional’ characteristic of DMs for not directly contributing to the propositional meanings of utterances, and confirms my belief that, although DMs are small words and look trivial, they nonetheless play an important role in spoken discourse.

Furthermore, the high standard deviation in Scale 5 (mean=3.10, SD=0.81, Figure 6; see Appendix) presents the most diverse opinions regarding the representation of DMs in teaching materials and in their actual teaching. This denotes a gap in the representation of DMs, in contrast to the perceived significance of linguistic and pedagogic values as justified empirically in the present survey. The lowest mean score in Scale 6 (prioritizing teaching of DMs for receptive purposes, mean=2.59, Figure 7; see Appendix) and the tendency of the score distribution on the lower range suggest minimal support for teaching DMs only for receptive purposes at upper secondary level.

Owing to the scope of the paper, only Scales 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6, which are directly related to applicability within an ESL classroom, will be cross-referenced and discussed in light of the opinions of the three teachers interviewed.

## **Discussion**

In the following, the similarities and differences of the informants’ responses and relationships between teachers’ stated beliefs and practices are discussed. Observations on any unstated beliefs as well as discrepancies from the quantitative results are noted.

### *Pragmatic value of discourse markers (Scale 3)*

In line with the quantitative results in Scale 3, informant A acknowledged the naturalness

DMs can bring to a conversation.

A: I compared to the original version of the script with Script B where the discourse markers have been taken away and I notice there is a big difference. Em I think everybody uses DMs very naturally in their speech without realizing it. So I think em without all these the language sounds terribly unnatural I think.

She also acknowledged the interpersonal and referential roles DMs have in communication where speaker's attitudes and linkage between statements are displayed.

A: I think it will indicate the speaker's attitudes, whether em that hesitations throughout or whether to support the idea or I can feel very strongly DMs not only the words themselves but also the tone in which they are spoken+...  
...the relationship between two statements would not be so clear without those discourse markers... I mean the meaning itself would be in piece because this what will sort of link up the relationships between two statements, or two phrases or the relationship between ah one thing and the other.

An additional quality she raised is the softening effect DMs have, without which the speech would sound blunt and impolite. She also stated that examples like 'well', 'yes', 'but' and 'right' are structurally much simpler and better choices than relatively formal expressions like 'I disagree', 'I'm afraid I don't agree with you here' in expressing disagreement. C furthered the important role of DMs on the cognitive realm by claiming that they are a means to gather thoughts and mark hesitation in speech.

However, the above viewpoints were not endorsed by B who had hesitation in asserting the value of DMs. She claimed that she seldom included DMs in her talk, but her speech did show an extensive use of DMs, as manifested in the use of *I see, well, you know, I mean, yeah, yes, well, but, cos* and *right* in the following:

B: I see well you know I mean I can't think of any British British style. I'm most an American.

B: *Yeah yes yes I see. Well* those ones some of them they would know *but cos*

they know it from very young age. *Yeah* I know the gentleman who wrote it. *Right* I think the word ...

DMs are subtle conversational devices, as discussed by Watts (1989), who has shown how native speakers use DMs unconsciously. Despite B's objection to their linguistic value, she acknowledged the naturalness and informal nature they can bring to spoken discourse, a viewpoint endorsed by A. Similar to C, B agreed that DMs can achieve interactional purposes such as softening or facilitating talk and can encourage continuation of speakership.

B: Anyway I don't think it's necessary BUT I do think that it softens the conversation mm mm I mean here in Hong Kong they use it quite a bit but I think I mean native speakers do use this hm hm and I mean this is not so necessary but you hear that you do really want to continue to speak even more.

Academic benefits form an aspect of extrinsic motivation for teachers to value the pragmatic significance of DMs. Both the quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that being proficient in the use of DMs was perceived to be beneficial to understanding university lectures. Furthermore, the instrumental value of DMs in workplace, business and schooling in which many positions are dominated by native speakers of English was also asserted, all of which suggest a strong extrinsic motivation for teachers to value DMs as desirable items in communication.

#### *Pedagogic value of discourse markers (Scale 1)*

Teachers' positive perception towards DMs logically implies that teaching DMs is likely to yield pedagogic value. This postulation is reaffirmed by the positive orientation of Scale 1 which indicates unanimous support for teaching DMs. Regardless of the light

semantic content of DMs and their dispensable value (Scale 4), the informants by no means treated them as redundant lexical items. Satisfactory L2 performance links communication with DMs, the knowledge of which is in fact a crucial step in the attainment of native-like fluency.

In general, they perceived a need to put DMs into proper focus through explicit teaching. Informant A wanted to draw students' attention to DMs in oral lessons from Form 4 (Year 10) onwards but stressed that care must be taken to maintain naturalness of speech.

A: Em I think it's worth mentioning that we may not need not to elaborate a lot. Em may be in a oral lesson once or twice at least we should mention how these DMs help to convey meanings... And then if they are aware of these DMs, they may borrow these and em try to link up their speeches without sounding having to sound too unnatural or expect silences sometimes dead air sometimes in between their discussion.

C suggested that DMs can be treated as a separate category, though students should not be overloaded with grammatical terminology. However, a discordant voice was heard from B who raised the potential confusion DMs would bring to students:

B: I think it confuses them quite often... and I find the students just more confused I think I keep everything there simple.

In the light of the quantitative and qualitative findings, it is apparent that pedagogic intervention in the form of explicit instruction is necessary to enhance effective communication. Moreover, the findings suggest that DMs can be included as part of the most basic lexical input in teaching syllabuses and materials because they are 'usually quite simple and straightforward and often familiar to learners from their basic semantic

meanings' (McCarthy, 1998, p. 60), through which learners are provided with a yardstick to produce the right pragmatic effect in talk. In relation to this possibility, recent work on pragmatics in ELT in Hong Kong (Rose, 2000; Rose & Ng, 2001) have offered some evidence about the benefits of an instructional approach in interlanguage pragmatics in an L2 context, which underline the advantage of explicit metapragmatic instruction (Kasper, 2000).

*Representation of discourse markers in ESL classrooms (Scale 5)*

While the overall weak mean value in Scale 5 (mean=3.1, Figure 6, see Appendix) suggests that language coursebooks and teachers rarely pay attention to the representation of DMs, the wide standard deviation (SD=0.81, Figure 6) indicates teachers' varied responses to this scale. Having admitted that not much effort had been spent on dealing with DMs, informants A and B raised that DMs have traditionally been undervalued and neglected, especially in spoken language.

A: As far as I know the oral textbooks do not teach discourse markers as such the examples you mentioned. Only in sample dialogues would they include one or two such utterances. The only thing they say about these utterances is for buying time and for developing your ideas.

DMs remain a relatively unexplored area of discourse analysis. Where markers are focused as a teaching point, it is often those associated with written texts that are presented, while those that occur frequently in natural conversations are not taught systematically.

A: For Form 6 students they need to have this knowledge em if they are looking for an appropriate answer, then *oh certainly* it's the first point...em not much attention have been paid.

B: The only place I have seen any reference has been in books for writing these words *however moreover but* in a written text but never for oral never for oral listening. So I haven't any training BUT I have read a book in books with regard to writing English.

Very often teaching emphasis is geared towards conversation as the finished product, rather than as the process that underlies conversational discourse. McCarthy and Carter (1994, p. 75) argue that texts with a more dialogic, interpersonal orientation and spoken discourse markers are likely to thematize a range of more 'personal' features of language. Even with discourse that is transactional in nature (as simple as direction-giving), there are still many other peripheral discourse features which mark interactional functions, the exemplification of which can help learners understand the dynamics of talk. Moreover, as argued by Kennedy (1992, p. 357), '[B]ecause discourse items are not handled well in most dictionaries and grammars, they are not part of traditional language teaching, with consequent effects on the naturalness of learners' English'.

#### *Prioritizing teaching discourse markers for receptive purposes (Scale 6)*

##### Teaching strategies

All informants expressed the necessity of raising learner's awareness as the first step to master DMs. They believed that awareness-raising teaching and learning strategies can go hand in hand to support learners in their effort to communicate effectively. For instance, A and C suggested that awareness can be developed through cross-language reference where learners can be helped to acquire DMs naturally through real life interaction. Similarly, B suggested that teachers, as professionals, first need to have this awareness:

B: ...I think it is necessary for them em to become more aware of it. Whether they use it or not it's another matter.

Despite her oppositional stance, B found it useful to approach this topic using strategies like highlighting, questioning, explaining and identifying. She also argued that it is useful to attend to the conversation of group members in discussion and identify the markers accordingly, if there are. DMs are highly context-dependent language items; students can be involved in activities like language observation, problem-solving and cross-language comparisons to develop greater language awareness and to bring out meanings in a natural manner. (*cf* McCarthy and Carter's (1995) analytical-based Illustration-Interaction-Induction approach)

Level to learn DMs

All the informants held a similar view that learners at higher forms can benefit more from knowing DMs, though some slight variations existed. A proposed that from Form 3 (Year 9) onwards, students are quite capable of learning them.

A: Em not for the lower form I don't think the lower form should be required to do like that. So maybe about Form 3 Form 4 Form 3 to 7 they can be exposed to...

Treating these devices as something that would confuse beginner and intermediate grade learners, B wanted to delay teaching them until students are cognitively more prepared in

A-level:

B: ...there's only a few Band 1 sorry and 1 or 2 schools [Note: All primary school children have been graded into 3 bands since 2001. Band 1 and 2 schools refer to good banding schools with academically better intake of pupils.] or so I mean the publishers don't want it because it's too difficult for Band 3... I would not put too many of them in there now you know em that's a lot of it used for HKCE level.

I: I see your point.

B: The scripts will really confuse the weakest. I think it's probably worth teaching Form 7 students simply because they will be striving a little bit more effort than the Form 5 were.

Discourse markers to be taught

As reported above, B insisted that DMs should not be overused, nor should they appear too much in professional language. She illustrated with the example of *yeah*:

I: You found overuse of the word *yeah*?

B: *Yeah yeah* at the end of a sentence. I think that's quite a that's sort of downtown London phrase maybe. I don't use really use that you know in professional language.

In contrast, C said it would be fun to exaggerate the use of DMs in class:

C: ...if you try to exaggerate the some features you know if you would say something like *WELL YOU KNOW* like that exaggerating a little bit it'll do a bit funny you know they will perhaps you know indicate some interaction pleasure... there's no harm there's no harm in being explicit.

Despite the fact that B held almost diametrically opposing views from the other informants regarding the linguistic and pedagogic values of DMs, she relinquished her initial firm position as she talked further. She pointed out that it would be worthwhile to highlight some commonly used DMs such as *cos*, *right*, *yeah*, *and* and *but*, many of which, as she claimed, have been exposed to children at some younger age. However, she had reservations over teaching relatively difficult ones like *I mean*, *you mean* and *now*. On the contrary, A found it useful to highlight markers like *you know*, *I mean*, *OK*, *right* and *sort of*, which she thought had seldom been touched upon.

So far very little research has been done regarding the incorporation and gradation of DMs in the English syllabus which might have cultural and regional variations, with the

exception of a hypothesized order of acquisition for Norwegian learners by Hasselgren (2002) who proposes three stages: Stage 1 - *okay, just, I think, or something, you know* and *oh*; Stage 2 - *well*; Stage 3 - *right, all right, ah, you see, sort/kind of, like and things/that/everything/stuff* and *a bit*. A workable approach, perhaps, would be to refer to spoken corpora which contain natural occurrences of DMs similar to the extracts from CANCODE (see Appendix) and highlight the most frequent DMs from genres that learners are likely to come across in their everyday encounters. For example, based on the information from CANCODE, a corpus designed primarily for pedagogical purposes, these may include common markers such as *and, yeah, you know, so, but, well, right, I think, just, I mean, like, or, oh, really, sort of, (you) see, because/cos, say, now, OK, actually, anyway, also, then*, etc. These markers can be carefully arranged in slots according to their occurrences, developed into different levels of awareness-raising reading or listening activities and integrated into different teaching units with their roles and usages highlighted in contexts. Though there may not be an absolute need for language learners to imitate the native speakers in every way they speak, it is beneficial for them to understand what DMs are, the roles they play in conversational exchanges, and the reasons why the speaker makes such a choice.

### **Implications and conclusions**

In light of the above findings and discussion, some implications can be drawn which are highly relevant to ESL/EFL teaching professionals.

First, as the task in the Appendix illustrates, learners can be given a transcript from a corpus with DMs blanked out, then asked to compare the differences and fill in the gaps before comparing their choices with the original, and exploring other possible valid

alternatives. Moreover, through a contrastive cross-linguistic analysis of both learner and native speaker corpora, DMs that are represented more or less frequently as compared to a native speaker corpus can be highlighted (*cf* Fung and Carter, 2007). Furthermore, concordancing techniques can be used to show the occurrences of a given marker, with highlighted features of its position and recurrent collocates to make regularities more prominent (*cf* Zorzi, 2001)

Second, contexts determine the respective functions of a DM as well as the way an encounter is developed and is projected to develop. It is therefore necessary to exploit appropriate context to introduce DMs across registers, highlighting the fact that some DMs may occur more frequently in informal encounters, and less or even never occur in a formal context. A corpus of naturally-occurring speech can eliminate the inauthenticity of invented, decontextualized examples, and is a profitable means to illustrate the polyfunctional nature of DMs, the position in which they appear and the type of interaction involved.

Third, the incorporation of DMs in curricula through a gradation of the most common forms is virtually non-existent. There is a need to modify existing coursebook materials and their accompanying activities to add a measure of authenticity and interactivity to teaching spoken dialogues. Unless classroom materials contain the interactional elements characteristic of real speech or the necessary lexico-grammatical knowledge to realize such features, learners will have little chance to develop naturalness in both oral and listening skills that is of importance to socialization outside the classroom.

Finally, the underrepresentation of DMs in teaching has implications for professional development and about language and variety. A major determinant of teachers' use of DMs is whether they have a sound understanding of what they are, the roles they play in

spoken discourse and how they can be properly taught. Teacher education should facilitate uptake of DMs as a significant linguistic feature. In achieving this, access to corpus data, regional variations, and recordings from everyday conversation are potentially effective ways, particularly in Hong Kong where exposure to authentic formal and informal English conversations is on the whole limited.

As with any research involving a small sample, the present study does not claim the generalization of its findings, but is intended to focus on an essential but hitherto largely neglected area of spoken language and suggest the possibility of second or foreign language pedagogy intervention to assist acquisition and use of DMs in the spoken performance of ESL/EFL learners. Owing to its exploratory nature, it is not clear if this would be manifested to the same degree by teachers from a wider cross-section of teaching professionals. To gain more conclusive evidence of the entire population, there is scope for much broader-based data collection and further longitudinal, ethnographic and observational studies.

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## **Appendix     Data sheet and questionnaire**

### **What are discourse markers?**

Please read the following extracts from real language data to determine what are defined as discourse markers (DMs) in this study.

#### **Extract 1**

The speakers are preparing a debate.

Roy:            Erm **okay** this is the basic structure. **And** we've got thirteen points.

Kevin:         Mhm.

Roy:            **So** this is what we'll do. **Firstly** introduce the speakers.

Kevin:         Yes.

Roy:            **Then** introduce the topics of the debate and the main topics. Er **thirdly** we'll give the reasons for actually having the debate in the first place...

#### **Extract 2**

This is from a service encounter in a post office. The customer is asking the clerk how to fill in a form for sending a parcel.

Customer:     What shall I put?

Clerk:         Photograph frame.

Customer:     Pardon?

Clerk:         Photograph frame.

Customer: **Oh right. Okay.** That is specific then.  
Clerk: **Well** you can't put goods or anything like that **you know because** no...  
Customer: **Okay.** Photo frame.

### Extract 3

In a survey of modern family life, the interviewee is commenting the National Health Service in the UK.

Interviewee: **So** it's whatever light you want to perceive it in **I think**.  
Interviewer: **I think** we're still very lucky compared to most western countries aren't we?  
Interviewee: We are. Certainly are **yeah**.  
Interviewer: **Right. So** we move on from health if you're happy with that. **Let's move on** to crime vandalism and accidents. **So** crime experienced by family.

### Extract 4

This is a small talk between friends about Christmas.

Judith: **And it's like** it means a lot to me **you know**. **But I think** Christmas is brilliant a family thing.  
Peter: **You know** when they are all together and it's...  
Judith: We get together. **I mean like** if it snows it's even better '**cos** I just look out the window and let the world go by...

Discourse markers are words or phrases which function to organize and monitor the progress of a piece of written or spoken language. We are familiar with conjunctions like *firstly, secondly, and, or, so, therefore* in written language. In spoken language, the most common ones include *I mean, okay, well, so, actually, right, you know, anyway, and, cos*, etc. Globally, they mark openings (*well, right*) and closings of conversations (*okay*), as well as boundaries of topics (*so, right*). Locally, they link up ideas in a talk and mark relationships between idea units, which may indicate continuation (*and, also*), sequence (*first, next, then*), contrast (*but*), conclusion (*so*), etc. Also they can reflect the attitude of the speaker (*I think, well, actually*), and many of the above usages express a speaker's assessment of the conversational situation as informal. The present questionnaire

primarily refers to discourse markers in spoken language, with the main functions of the most frequent discourse markers summarized below.

<b>Discourse markers</b>	<b>Main functions</b>
<i>Well</i>	Mainly occurs at the beginning of a conversation and indicates a speaker's mental thoughts. Usually it prefaces a negative response and indicates inadequacy of an answer. It also introduces the topic of a conversation and can serve as a delaying device in conversations.
<i>Alright/right /okay</i>	Mainly occur at the beginning of an utterance and serves to mark the boundary of an exchange or topic.
<i>So</i>	Indicates a summary or conclusion of what has been previously said.
<i>And</i>	Marks continuation of speech.
<i>But</i>	Indicates a contrastive viewpoint.
<i>Like</i>	Marks a suggestion or an example.
<i>You know</i>	Is a listener-oriented marker used to check that the listener is sharing the viewpoint, or to appeal to the listener for support. Sometimes it serves as a softener.
<i>I mean</i>	Is a speaker-oriented marker used to modify or clarify the speaker's own contribution. Sometimes it serves as a softener.
<i>Cos</i>	Is the informal form of 'because' used to give explanations.
<i>Yeah</i>	Is the informal form of 'yes' used to show acknowledgment.
<i>Actually/I think</i>	Reflect the attitude of a speaker, e.g. indicating reinforcement.

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### **Comparison task**

Please read the following conversation by native speakers of English. The DMs, which are highlighted in bold in the original extract (Script A), are deleted in Script B. Try to compare the effects DMs have on the spoken exchanges when they are present and when they are omitted. Then indicate your opinions based on the attitude statements in Section 1 by putting a slash (/) in the most appropriate category.

The following dialogue is from an informal meeting in which staff from a publication company are planning the production schedule.

### **Script A (extract with DMs)**

Chairlady: **Oh right and** he's got Workbook Two hasn't he **'cos** he said he would print it out.

Staff A: He's got Workbook Two he's got the fonts he needed **but** he hasn't got the artwork he needed.

Chairlady: **Right okay but** it's all under control.

Staff A: It's actioned.

Chairlady: **Good there's something else I wanted to ask you...** when are you going to start handling reprints **'cos** I need some advice.

Staff B: Erm I won't, I couldn't offer you any intelligent advice until I actually get it...**but** I'm not getting it until June.

Staff A: Linda's coming in June **yeah.**

Staff B: **So** until June.

Chairlady: **So** I have to talk to Hamish.

Chairlady: **Right.**

Chairlady: **So** I have to talk to Hamish.

Staff B: Everything is Hamish **yeah.**

*(CANCODE data)*

### **Script B (extract without DMs)**

Chairlady: He's got Workbook Two hasn't he he said he would print it out.

Staff A: He's got Workbook Two he's got the fonts he needed he hasn't got the artwork he needed.

Chairlady: It's all under control.

Staff A: It's actioned.

Chairlady: When are you going to start handling reprints I need some advice.

Staff B: Em I won't, I couldn't offer you any intelligent advice until I actually get it...I'm not getting it until June.

Staff A: Linda's coming in June.

Staff B: Until June.

Chairlady: I have to talk to Hamish.

Staff B: Everything is Hamish.

## Section 1

++ strongly agree

+agree

? uncertain

- disagree

-- strongly disagree

Attitude Statements	+	+	?	-	--
	+				
1. DMs can oil the wheels of communication.					
2. Knowledge of DMs helps processing information in listening.					
3. DMs can display the speakers' attitude.					
4. DMs are not very useful devices to guide listeners to understand the conversation.					
5. DMs do not necessarily help to orientate the listener to the overall idea structure and sequence in talk.					
6. It is still an effective listening strategy for listeners to focus closely on the key words in talk without referring to DMs.					
7. The sequence of the speakers' mental thoughts can be displayed clearly through DMs.					
8. Without DMs the conversation would become bitty and incoherent.					
9. Relationships between the speakers would sound more distant and formal if there are no DMs in the conversation.					
10. I can still understand the conversation using other linguistic clues rather than referring to the DMs.					
11. DMs do not necessarily help to signal relationships between ideas in talk.					
12. Showing responses with DMs can yield a softening and facilitative effect.					
13. Without DMs the conversation is still coherent and interpretable.					
14. DMs appear to be redundant in the conversation.					

## Section 2

The following statements concern your opinions towards the teaching of DMs in Hong Kong in general. Please consider each statement carefully and indicate your views by putting a slash (/) in the most appropriate category.

	++ strongly agree	+agree	? uncertain	- disagree	-- strongly disagree
<b>Attitude Statements</b>	+	+	?	-	--
15. DMs have been presented as a listening skill in most listening materials I am using.					
16. DMs have been presented as a speaking skill in most oral materials I am using.					
17. I always highlight DMs in oral lessons.					
18. I always highlight DMs in listening lessons.					
19. Students have traditionally been taught to speak in written language form and they seldom display DMs in their speech.					
20. It is necessary to create and develop linguistic awareness of DMs and promote proficiency in the actual use of them.					
21. There is no need to promote spontaneous understanding of DMs as a fluency device in spoken language.					
22. Students should be helped to exploit DMs to improve their speaking and listening skills.					
23. DMs are only small words in conversation and it is not worth the time to teach them.					
24. DMs do not carry specific meaning and there is not much teaching value.					
25. DMs are redundant and sub-standard features in speech and there is not much teaching value.					
26. Students can benefit in public examinations, especially in listening comprehension, if they know what DMs are.					
27. It is important for students to learn to incorporate DMs in their speech which is an essential skill for the public oral examination.					
28. Students can follow a university lecture better in the future, especially those conducted by native speakers, if they know the meanings DMs point to.					
29. Students can understand native speakers better in their future workplace if they know what DMs are.					
30. Students should be taught how native speakers use DMs and follow their way of using them.					
31. Students should be taught to speak like a native in order to become competent speakers					

32. It is an appropriate time to highlight DMs in spoken text at junior secondary level.					
33. It is an appropriate time to highlight DMs in spoken text at upper secondary level.					
34. It is too ambitious to expect students to learn DMs for both listening and speaking purposes at secondary level.					
35. At secondary level, we should prioritize teaching DMs mainly for listening purpose.					
36. DMs as a linguistic device for both listening and speaking purposes should be introduced at the same time at secondary level.					
37. DMs as an aspect of speaking skill should be delayed until awareness of DMs as a listening skill has been grasped.					
38. Students should be left at their discretion to learn to speak with DMs in the future when other interaction opportunities arise.					
39. My students do not need to speak with DMs as frequently as most native speakers do, but only need to progress to a speaking proficiency level capable of fulfilling their communicative purpose.					
40. It is realistic to require my students to use DMs like native speakers of English.					
41. The American way of using DMs should serve as a model for my students.					
42. The British way of using DMs should serve as a model for my students.					
43. It can be regarded as a wrong usage when Hong Kong learners use DMs differently from native speakers.					
44. We should respect and accept a Hong Kong style of using DMs.					
45. We should help students to recognize and accept different national and regional use of DMs.					
46. It is justifiable to require my students to use DMs like native speakers of English.					
47. It is necessary to expose students to different varieties of using DMs for purpose of comprehension, though not of production.					
48. It is not necessary to stick to the native speaker norm of using DMs because English language teaching should seek relevance to local culture while trying to enable global transaction.					

### Section 3 Personal particulars

Please put a slash (/) where appropriate.

1. Gender

<input type="checkbox"/>	Male
<input type="checkbox"/>	Female

2. Where is your native country?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China
<input type="checkbox"/>	UK
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

3. Which of the following is your first language?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Cantonese
<input type="checkbox"/>	English
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

4. Which of the following is your second language?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Cantonese
<input type="checkbox"/>	English
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)

5. Do you hold a first degree in English or an English language-related subject?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

6. Have you received any training in English language teaching?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

7. Do you have a master's degree in TESL/TEFL?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

8. For how many years have you been teaching English?

<input type="checkbox"/>	1-4 years
<input type="checkbox"/>	5-9 years
<input type="checkbox"/>	Over 10 years

9. At present how many English lessons do you take up each week?

(Please take the average if your school practises cycle system.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	1-8
<input type="checkbox"/>	9-16
<input type="checkbox"/>	Over 17

**Table 1 Demographic background of the subjects sampled**

<b>Characteristic</b>		<b>Percentage</b>
Gender	Female	82.6%
	Male	17.4%
Nationality	Hong Kong	81.8%
	UK	6.1%
	Canada	3.0%
	Australia	1.5%
	USA	1.5%
	India	1.5%
	New Zealand	0.8%
	Malaysia	0.8%
Others	3.0%	
First Language	Cantonese	77.3%
	English	18.2%
	Others	4.5%
Years of Teaching	1-4	14.4%
	5-9	25.8%
	Over 10	59.8%
ELT Training	Yes	93.9%
	No	6.1%
English/English-related Subject as a First Degree	Yes	77.1%
	No	22.9%
TESL/TEFL as a Master's Degree	Yes	23.8%
	No	76.2%

**Table 2 Profile of the candidates**

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>Candidate A</b>	<b>Candidate B</b>	<b>Candidate C</b>
<b>Nationality</b>	NNS - Hong Kong	NS - Canada	NS - UK
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Female	Male
<b>Teaching Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Very experienced</li> <li>➤ Teaching over 20 years in Hong Kong</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Very experienced</li> <li>➤ Graduated as a Home Economics teacher</li> <li>➤ Teaching over 14 years</li> <li>➤ Also a private tutor and a materials developer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Very experienced</li> <li>➤ Teaching over 10 years</li> <li>➤ Overseas language instructor</li> </ul>
<b>Qualifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Well-qualified</li> <li>➤ With teacher training</li> <li>➤ With a master's degree in Language Studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ With no relevant degree in the English language</li> <li>➤ With teacher training in language and education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Well-qualified</li> <li>➤ With teacher training</li> <li>➤ With a master's degree in TESL</li> </ul>
<b>Orientation (based on the questionnaire)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Affirmed value of DMs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Did not regard DMs as useful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Affirmed value of DMs</li> </ul>

**Table 3 The 7-factor loadings after Varimax Rotation**

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7
NEED23	.713						
NEED25	.686						
NEED20	.670						
NEED22	.648						
NEED24	.636						
NEED21	.589						
FREE38	-.522						
LEV33	.510						
COMM39	-.408						
REAL40		.735					
INTG31		.718					
JUST46		.702					
INTG30		.625					
UK42		.606					
US41		.536					.416
INSTRU27	.413	.424					
INSTRU29			.654				
Q2			.591				
Q3			.541				
INSTRU28	.451		.540				
Q7			.509		.432		
Q1			.496				
Q12			.408				
INSTRU26			.399				
Q13				.737			
Q10				.674			
Q5				.639			
Q14				.549			
Q6				.546			
Q4				.522			
Q11				.459			
Q8				.455			
GAP16					.732		
GAP15					.724		
GAP18					.680		
GAP17					.595		
ATT35						.754	
DELAYS37						.664	
SAME36						.642	
ATT34						.391	
HKUSE44							.728
NATIVE48							.646
WRONG43							.595
ACCEP45			-.417				.501
EXPOS47							.464

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

**Table 4 An analysis of teachers' attitudes towards the pedagogic use of discourse markers in upper secondary EMI schools in Hong Kong**

Item no.	Statements	Mean (St. Dev.)	Factor loadings
<i>Factor 1</i>			
<i>Pedagogic value of DMs</i>			
23	DMs are only small words in conversation and it is not worth the time to teach them.	3.86 (.81)	.713
25	DMs are redundant and sub-standard features in speech and there is not much teaching value.	3.98 (.72)	.686
20	It is necessary to create and develop linguistic awareness of DMs and promote proficiency in the actual use of them.	3.92 (.77)	.670
22	Students should be helped to exploit DMs to improve their speaking and listening skills.	3.95 (.74)	.648
24	DMs do not carry specific meaning and there is not much teaching value.	3.90 (.70)	.636
21	There is no need to promote spontaneous understanding of DMs as a fluency device in spoken language.	3.53 (.89)	.589
38	Students should be left at their discretion to learn to speak with DMs in the future when other interaction opportunities arise.	3.07 (1.02)	-.522
33	It is an appropriate time to highlight DMs in spoken text at upper secondary level.	3.58 (.85)	.510
27	It is important for students to learn to incorporate DMs in their speech which is an essential speaking skill for the public oral examination.	3.67 (.93)	.413
39	My students do not need to speak with DMs as frequently as most native speakers do, but only need to progress to a speaking proficiency level capable of fulfilling their communicative purpose.	3.48 (.94)	-.408
<i>Factor 2 Identification with the native speaker norm</i>			
40	It is realistic to require my students to use DMs like native speakers of English.	2.70 (1.03)	.735
31	Students should be taught to speak like a native in order to be a member of the local English speaking elites.	3.05 (1.09)	.718
46	It is justifiable to require my students to use DMs like native speakers of English.	3.04 (1.01)	.702
30	Students should be taught how native speakers use DMs and follow their way of using them.	3.70 (.84)	.625
42	The British way of using DMs should serve as a model for my students.	3.05 (.86)	.606
41	The American way of using DMs should serve as a model for my students.	2.71 (.85)	.536
<i>Factor 3 Pragmatic value of DMs</i>			
29	Students can understand native speakers better in their future workplace if they know what DMs are.	4.02 (.81)	.654
2	Knowledge of DMs helps process information in listening.	4.21 (.76)	.591
3	DMs can display the speakers' attitude.	4.36 (.63)	.541
28	Students can follow a university lecture better in the future, especially those conducted by native speakers, if they know the meanings DMs point to.	3.83 (.85)	.540
7	The sequence of the speakers' mental thoughts can be displayed clearly through DMs.	3.61 (.91)	.509
1	DMs can oil the wheels of communication.	4.33 (.66)	.496
12	Showing responses with DMs can yield a softening and facilitative effect.	4.06 (.77)	.408
26	Students can benefit in public examinations, especially in listening comprehension, if they know what DMs are.	3.77 (.83)	.399

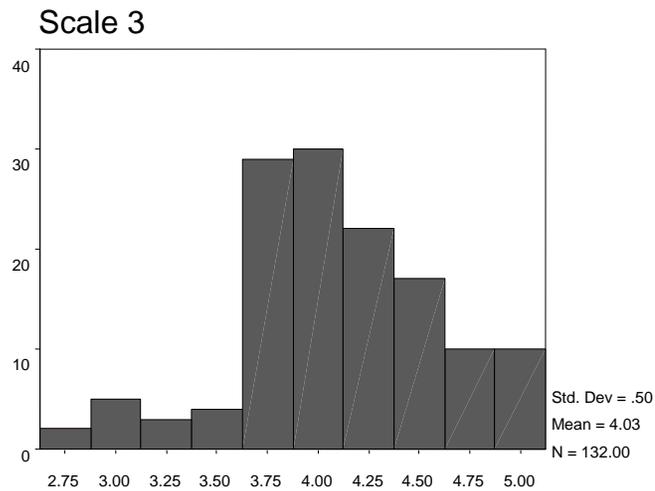
Item no.	Statements	Mean (St. Dev.)	Factor loadings
<b>Factor 4</b> <i>Dispensable value of DMs</i>			
13	Without DMs the conversation is still coherent and interpretable.	2.50 (.88)	.737
10	I can still understand the conversation using other linguistic clues rather than referring to the DMs.	2.27 (.80)	.674
5	DMs do not necessarily help to orientate the listener to the overall idea structure and sequence in talk.	3.27 (1.06)	.639
14	DMs appear to be redundant in the conversation.	3.71 (.89)	.549
6	It is still an effective listening strategy for listeners to focus closely on the key words in talk without referring to DMs.	2.53 (.98)	.546
4	DMs are not very useful devices to guide listeners to understand the conversation.	3.69 (.99)	.522
11	DMs do not necessarily help to signal relationships between ideas in talk.	3.22 (.96)	.459
8	Without DMs the conversation would become disjointed and incoherent.	3.27 (1.08)	.455
<b>Factor 5</b> <i>Representation of DMs in ESL classrooms</i>			
16	DMs have been presented as a speaking skill in most oral materials I am using.	3.28 (1.12)	.732
15	DMs have been presented as a listening skill in most listening materials I am using.	3.15 (1.12)	.724
18	I always highlight DMs in listening lessons.	2.92 (1.10)	.680
17	I always highlight DMs in oral lessons.	3.02 (1.06)	.595
<b>Factor 6</b> <i>Prioritizing teaching of DMs for receptive purposes</i>			
35	At secondary level we should prioritize teaching DMs mainly for listening purpose.	2.74 (.91)	.754
37	DMs as an aspect of speaking skill should be delayed until awareness of DMs as a listening skill has been grasped.	2.88 (.92)	.664
36	DMs as a linguistic device for both listening and speaking purposes should be introduced at the same time at secondary level.	2.27 (.76)	.642
34	It is too ambitious to expect students to learn DMs for both listening and speaking purposes at secondary level.	2.47 (.86)	.391
<b>Factor 7</b> <i>Acceptance of the local usage</i>			
44	We should respect and accept a Hong Kong style of using DMs.	3.11 (.91)	.728
48	It is not necessary to stick to the native speaker norm of using DMs because English language teaching should seek relevance to local culture while trying to enable global transaction.	3.40 (.93)	.646
43	It can be regarded as a wrong usage when Hong Kong learners use DMs differently from native speakers.	3.07 (.93)	.595
45	We should help students to recognize and accept different national and regional uses of DMs.	3.87 (.71)	.501
47	It is necessary to expose students to different varieties of using DMs for purpose of comprehension, though not of production.	3.82 (.81)	.464

Notes

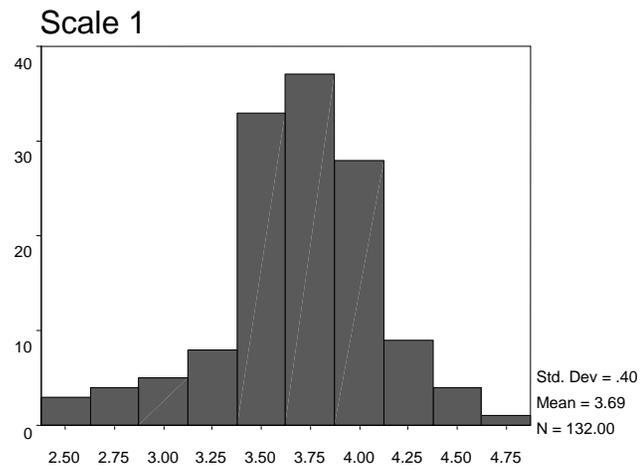
1. Only items with factor loadings greater than 0.39 are shown in the table. The statements are ordered within each factor according to the magnitude of factor loadings.
2. The mean score was calculated on a 5-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5).
3. Scores for negatively-worded statements are reversed, that is, 'strongly disagree' (5) and 'strongly agree' (1).

**Table 5 Mean and standard deviations of the 7 Scales**

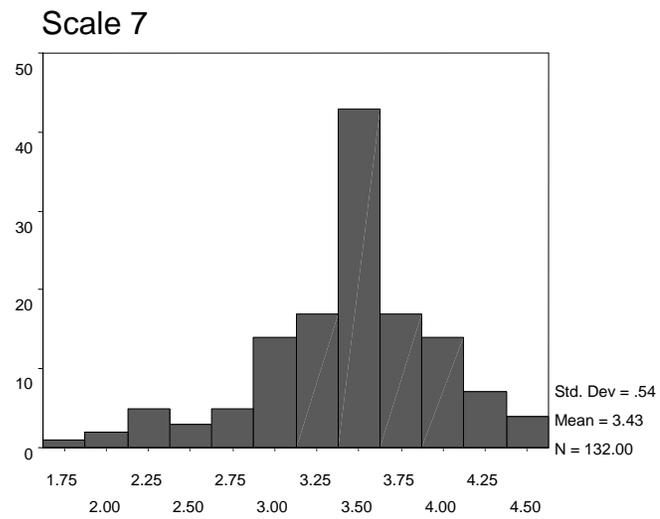
Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SCALE1	132	2.50	4.70	3.6886	.4028
SCALE2	132	1.33	4.67	3.0429	.6669
SCALE3	132	2.75	5.00	4.0265	.4955
SCALE4	132	1.50	4.63	3.0388	.5918
SCALE5	132	1.00	5.00	3.0985	.8148
SCALE6	132	1.25	4.00	2.5909	.5928
SCALE7	132	1.80	4.60	3.4318	.5391
Valid N (listwise)	132				



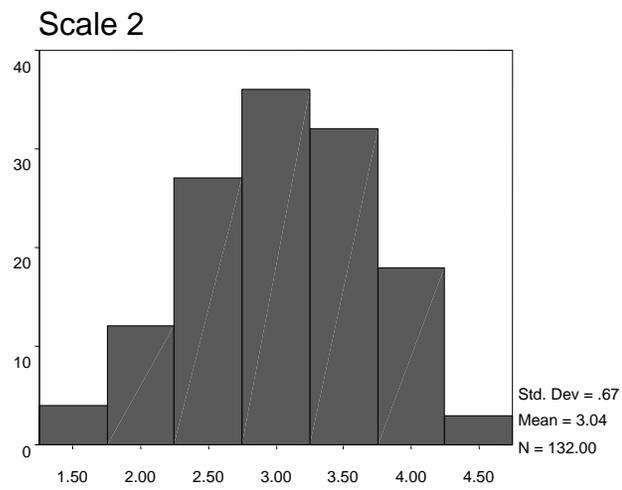
**Figure 1 Scale 3: Pragmatic value of discourse markers**



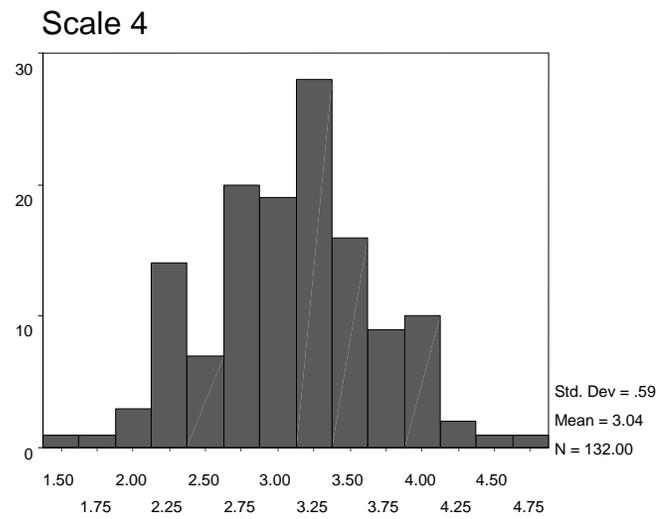
**Figure 2** Scale 1: Pedagogic value of discourse markers



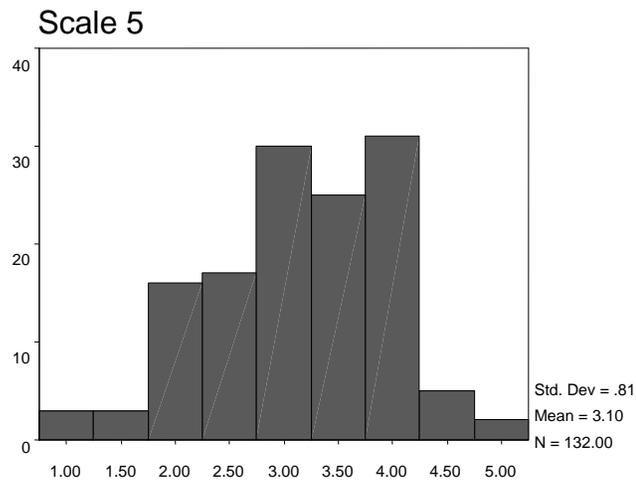
**Figure 3** Scale 7: Acceptance of the local variety



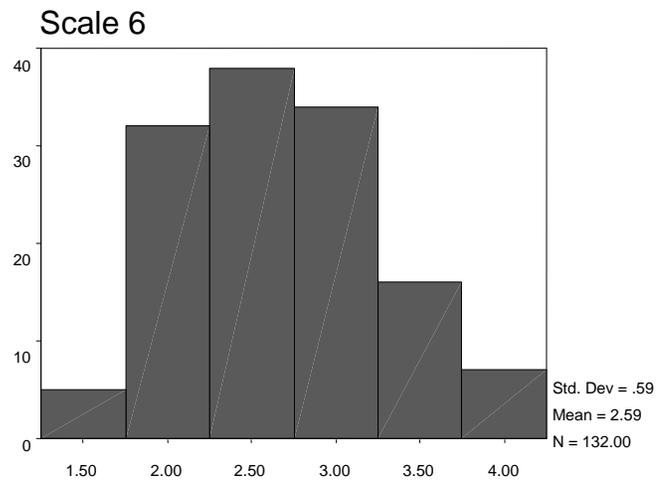
**Figure 4 Scale 2: Identification with the native speaker norm**



**Figure 5 Scale 4: Dispensable value of discourse markers**



**Figure 6 Scale 5: Representation of discourse markers in ESL classrooms**



**Figure 7 Scale 6: Prioritizing teaching discourse markers for receptive purposes**

## **The Relationship between Iranian EFL Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy and their Pedagogical Success in Language Institutes**

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### **Bio Data:**

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### **Abstract**

The following study, in the first place, attempted to examine the relationship between EFL teachers' self-efficacy and their pedagogical success in Language Institutes. In the second place, the role of teachers' years of teaching experience in their self-efficacy was investigated. Finally, the relationship between teachers' age and their self-efficacy was studied. For this purpose, 89 EFL teachers were selected according to available sampling from the different Language Institutes in Mashhad, a city in the Northeast of Iran. Near the end of the term, the teachers were asked to complete the "Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale". Simultaneously, a questionnaire which is called the "Characteristics of Successful

EFL Teachers Questionnaire” was filled in by the teachers’ students (N=779). Through this questionnaire, the teachers' performance was evaluated by their students. The subsequent data analysis and statistical calculations via correlation revealed that there is a significant relationship between teachers' success and their self-efficacy. Furthermore, significant correlations were found between teachers' self-efficacy, their teaching experience, and age. The conclusions and implications of the research are further discussed with reference to earlier findings.

**Keywords:** Age, English Language teaching, Language Institutes, Questionnaire, Self-Efficacy, Teachers' Pedagogical Success, Teaching Experience.

## **Introduction**

Efficacy is essentially individuals’ future-oriented judgment about their competence rather than their actual level of competence. This is an important feature because people regularly overestimate or underestimate their actual capabilities, and these estimations may have consequences for the courses of action they choose to follow and the effort they exert in those pursuits (Woolfolk Hoy & Burke Spero, 2000). For example, Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent and Larivee (1991, cited in Woolfolk et al., 2000) found that children possessing higher levels of efficacy beliefs performed better in solving math problems than those who had lower levels of efficacy beliefs in spite of the fact that both groups had the same levels of skill development in mathematics. Bandura (1982) argued that those students with a higher degree of self-efficacy tend to exert more effort, persevere in difficult situations, choose a course of activities more attentively, and retain more realistic and flexible attributions. While students with low self-efficacy display less persistence and effort expenditure, avoid uncertain and challenging tasks, lack intentionality, and possess attributions that are nonrealistic and maladaptive.

Similarly, it appears teachers’ beliefs about themselves and their capabilities can be

influential in the quality of their performance. Drawing upon the literature on the role of teachers' sense of efficacy in their instructional behaviors, discussed in the following sections, the present study seeks to investigate the relationship between EFL teachers' sense of efficacy and their pedagogical success. As far as exploring such a relationship in an Iranian context is concerned, to the researchers' best knowledge, no such a research has ever been conducted. Definitely the dearth of research in this area provides sufficient reason to conduct further investigation at examining the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' sense of efficacy (Independent variable) and their success (Dependent variable) via a questionnaire specific to EFL teachers and in accordance with an Iranian context.

### **Sources of self-efficacy beliefs**

Perceived self-efficacy, i.e., "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3), can be developed by four main sources of influence. Bandura (1997) postulated these sources of efficacy expectations as: mastery experience, also called enactive self-mastery, vicarious experience, also called role-modeling, social or verbal persuasion, and arousal or physiological and emotional states.

The most prevailing and powerful influence on efficacy is mastery experience through which successfully performing the behavior increases self-efficacy for that behavior. The perception that a performance has been successful enhances perceived self-efficacy and ensures future proficiency and success. In contrast, the perception that a performance has been a failure weakens efficacy beliefs and leads to the expectation that future performance will also be inefficient.

The second prominent influence, vicarious experience, originates from observing other

similar people to perform a behavior successfully. It provides people with ideas about successful manners of action. In contrast, observing people similar to oneself fail lowers an individual's confidence and subsequently undermines their future efforts.

A third source of influence is social or verbal persuasion received from others. Successful persuaders foster people's beliefs in their capabilities, while at the same time, ensure that visualized success is achievable. Negative persuasion, on the other hand, may tend to defeat and lower self-beliefs. The most contributing effect of social persuasion pivots around initiating the task, attempting new strategies, and trying hard to succeed (Pajares, 2002).

Psychological and affective states, such as stress anxiety and excitement, also provide information about efficacy perception and boost the feeling of proficiency. Hence, trying to reduce individual's stress and anxiety and modifying negative debilitating states to positive ones plays an influential role in amending perceived self-efficacy beliefs. Another important affective factor, according to Pintrich and Schunk (2001), is attribution. For example, if success is attributed to internal or controllable causes such as ability or effort, efficacy will be enhanced. Nevertheless, if success is attributed to external uncontrollable factors such as chance, self-efficacy may be diminished (cited in Woolfolk Hoy & Burke Spero, 2000).

### **Teacher's self-efficacy**

Teacher efficacy is defined as "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 22). It has been found to be associated with learners' individual differences such as motivation,

achievement, and efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

A plethora of studies, conducted in L1 context, has demonstrated the relationship between teachers' self- efficacy and their instructional behaviors. Gibson and Demo (1984), for example, indicated a high correlation between teachers' sense of efficacy and their persistence in the presentation of lessons, feedback presentation, and support scaffolding for weaker students. In a similar study, Pajares (1992) found a strong relationship between teachers' educational beliefs and their planning, instructional decisions, classroom practices, and subsequent teaching behaviors. He concluded that "beliefs are far more influential than knowledge in determining how individuals organize and define tasks and problems and are stronger predictors of behavior" (Pajares, 1992, p 311). On the other hand, teachers with a low level of efficacy have been found to be cynical not only of their own abilities, but also of the abilities of their students and colleagues (Siebert, 2006). They also tend to undermine students' cognitive development as well as students' judgments of their own capabilities (Pajares & Schunk, 2001, cited in Siebert, 2006).

Previous studies have also pointed to the role of teacher sense of efficacy in shaping students' attitudes toward school and subject matter, i.e., the higher the teaching efficacy of a teacher, the greater the students' interest in school and learning materials. Beyond shaping students' attitudes, teacher efficacy has been also associated with the degree of personal commitment (Coladarci, 1992, cited in Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 9) and enthusiasm in teaching (Allinder, 1994) exhibited by the teacher.

To determine how teachers' efficacy affects student achievement, Ross (1994), scrutinized 88 teacher efficacy studies and contended that teachers with a higher sense of efficacy are more likely to:

“(1) learn and use new approaches and strategies for teaching, (2) use management techniques that enhance student autonomy and diminish student control, (3) provide special assistance to low achieving students, (4) build students’ selfperceptions of their academic skills, (5) set attainable goals, and (6) persist in the face of student failure(cited in Woolfolk et al., 2000, p.6).”

In essence, the abovementioned studies point towards the perception that teachers’ efficacy beliefs are decisive in constructing an educational atmosphere that incites students’ achievements. Definitely they provide sufficient reason to undertake further investigations in this area within L2 settings and examine the relationship between teachers’ self-efficacy expectations, assessed internally by the teacher himself, and teachers’ success, assessed externally by the students.

### **Definitions of successful teachers**

Brown and Marks (1994), in their book, mentioned that pedagogically successful teachers research their own teaching and the teaching of others and thereby become better informed about the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching performance; effective teachers willingly examine critically what they are doing in classroom. According to Brookfield (1995) successful teachers get right down to business, use a variety of instructional strategies, teach at an appropriate fast pace but stop regularly to check students’ comprehension and engagement, focus on the topic and their instructional objectives, and use humor in keeping with their individual styles. Lowman (1996) stated exemplary teachers are those who are likely to promote high levels of learning in their students while also creating the positive memories of learning. He also put emphasis on teachers’ enthusiasm as characteristics of successful teachers.

As it is observed, there are different definitions for successful teachers. In the present

study, teachers' success is defined and evaluated according to the criteria which have been mentioned in the "Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers Questionnaire" because this questionnaire has been designed based on EFL learners and teachers and TEFL experts' views in Iran towards successful EFL teachers. As Ryans (1967) stated value systems concerning teaching are relative rather than absolute. He mentioned "so far as specific characteristics of the teacher are concerned, what is judged good teaching by one person, one community, or at one time, may not be similarly viewed as good by another person, another community, or at some time later" (as cited in Suwantee,1995, p. 9).

### **Purpose of the study**

Upon what was noted about the facilitative role of teachers' efficacy in their pedagogical behaviors, while taking into account the contribution of teachers' self-efficacy in students' achievements and attitudes, investigating the relationship between teachers' sense of efficacy and their pedagogical success as well as the question of how much teachers' efficacy contributes to the prediction of their success becomes pertinent. In summary, the present study primarily seeks to investigate such a relationship in various language institutes in Iran. It also sought to determine whether there is a relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and teaching experience, as well as age. To this end, the following research questions were posed and investigated in this study:

- 1) Is there any relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their pedagogical success?
- 2) Is there any relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and years of teaching

experience?

3) Is there any relationship between teachers' perceived self-efficacy and their age?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The first group of participants consisted of 89 Iranian EFL teachers. The majority of them were the researchers' colleagues who kindly accepted to participate in the study. The profile of the teachers is as follows: They were between 20 and 45 years old ( $M = 26.87$ ,  $SD = 5.09$ ) with 1 to 20 years of teaching experience ( $M = 5.53$ ,  $SD = 3.5$ ). Out of 89 teachers, 73 were females and 16 males from different socio-economic backgrounds. The majority had majored in the different branches of English [i.e. English Literature (20 B.A, 1 M.A), English Teaching (13 B.A, 18 M.A), English Translation (6 B.A)] and those who had certificate in different majors except English had the necessary supplementary qualifications to teach English.

The second group of participants use comprised of 779 Iranian EFL learners (students of the above-mentioned teachers). They were 604 females and 222 males whose age varied from 14 to 66 ( $M = 22.15$ ,  $SD = 5.73$ ) and came from different socio-economic backgrounds. Their language proficiency varied from elementary to advanced levels and their educational level varied from high school to PhD.

### **Instruments**

#### **Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (long form)**

Reviewing the existing measures on teacher's self-efficacy (such as, Webb Efficacy Scale developed by Ashton, et al., 1982 including 7 items; Teacher Efficacy Scale by Gibson

and Dembo, 1984 including 30 items on a 6 point Likert scale; and Bandura’s Teacher Efficacy Scale, 1997 comprising 30 items on a 9 point scale), the researchers decided to utilize the *Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale* (See Appendix) designed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001), due to its comprehensiveness, integrity, and ease of administration. The Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale, also called the *Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale* (OSTES), encompasses two versions: long form (including 24 items) and short form (including 12 items). The long form – utilized in the present study – comprises three subscales: *efficacy in student engagement* (F1); *efficacy in instructional strategies* (F2); and *efficacy in classroom management* (F3). Each subscale loads equally on eight items, and every item is measured on a 9-point scale anchored with the notations: “nothing, very little, some influence, quite a bit, a great deal.” This scale seeks to capture the multi-faceted nature of teachers’ efficacy beliefs in a concise manner, without becoming too specific or too general.

The total reliability and the reliability of each individual factor – reported by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) – are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Reliability reports of OSTES

	Mean	SD	Alpha
<b>OSTES</b>	7.1	.94	.94
<b>F 1</b>	7.3	1.1	.87
<b>F 2</b>	7.3	1.1	.91
<b>F 3</b>	6.7	1.1	.90

In the present study, the total reliability of the questionnaire was calculated via Cronbach' alpha which was found to be the high value of 0.91.

### **Characteristics of Successful Iranian EFL Teachers Questionnaire**

To evaluate language teachers' performance and success in language teaching, the researchers employed the Characteristics of Successful Iranian EFL Teachers Questionnaire which was designed by Moafian and Pishghadam (2009). Based on the guidelines laid down by EFL professors (N=5), teachers (N=11), learners (N=46) and Suwandee's (1995) questionnaire about the characteristics of effective language teachers, the researchers designed a questionnaire (Likert scale) consisting of 47 items. To measure the construct validity of the questionnaire, 250 EFL learners were asked to fill in the questionnaire, and then, factor analysis (Principal Axis Factoring) was conducted to determine the underlying factors. The results revealed that the questionnaire measures the twelve following constructs as *Teaching accountability*, *Interpersonal relationships*, *Attention to all*, *Examination*, *Commitment*, *Learning boosters*, *Creating a sense of competence*, *Teaching boosters*, *Physical and emotional acceptance*, *Empathy*, *Class attendance*, and *Dynamism*. The results of reliability analysis exhibited that the total reliability of the questionnaire is very high (Cronbach' alpha = .94). In this study, the total reliability of the questionnaire, initially estimated via Cronbach' alpha, was 0.95.

### **Data collection**

The study was undertaken in several private Language Institutes (Marefat, Kish, Kish Air, College, Jihad-e-daneshgahi, and ILI) in Mashhad, a city in Northeast of Iran, between May 2008 and September 2008. The Institutes were selected based on credibility and feasibility criteria. First, these were among the most creditable Language Institutes in Mashhad. Besides, since the researchers have already taught or were teaching in the aforementioned Institutes, they benefited from the warm participation of volunteers and the cooperation of the teachers and their students. Near the end of term, the teachers were

asked to take the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale. They took the questionnaire home, filled it in, and then gave it to the researchers in the next session. Ninety questionnaires were distributed and eighty nine were returned to the researchers. Simultaneously, the Characteristics of Successful EFL Teachers Questionnaire was given to the learners of those teachers. Out of 890 questionnaires distributed, 779 were returned. Through this questionnaire, the teachers' performance was evaluated by their learners. Learners also filled in the questionnaires at home and during the next session delivered it to the researchers. To receive a reliable evaluation by the learners, the researcher explained the purpose of completing the questionnaire and assured the learners that their views would be confidential; and in addition, both teachers and learners' questionnaires were coded numerically and they were asked not to write any name on their questionnaires.

### **Data Analysis**

To ensure the normality of the distribution, descriptive statistics were employed. To determine the role of teachers' self-efficacy in their success a Pearson product-moment correlation was applied to the data. To examine the relationships between teachers' self-efficacy, their teaching experience and age, a Pearson product-moment correlation was performed as well. In order to find out to what extent self-efficacy might have as a predictive power in predicting teachers' success, a regression analysis was run.

### **Results**

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive results of the two instruments- success and self-efficacy questionnaires - used in this study.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of success and self-efficacy.**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Success	89	148	227	193.95	15.09
Self-Efficacy	89	116	208	166.68	18.56

To investigate the correlation between teachers' self-efficacy and their pedagogical success, a Pearson product-moment correlation was applied. The results of the correlation revealed that there is a significant correlation between EFL teachers' success and their total scores in self-efficacy ( $r = 0.478$ ,  $p < .05$ ). It was also found that there is a significant relationship between EFL teachers' success and the three subscales which composes the total self-efficacy scale and the results are as follows: 1) success and F1 ( $r = 0.425$ ,  $p < .01$ ), 2) success and F2 ( $r = 0.429$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and 3) success and F3 ( $r = 0.407$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (See Table 2).

**Table 2: The results of correlation between teachers' self-efficacy scores and their success scores in language institutes.**

	F 1	F 2	F 3	Total Self-efficacy
Success	0.425 *	0.429 *	0.407 *	0.478 *

To analyze the data further, regression analysis was conducted. The results indicated that teachers' total score of self-efficacy is a positive predictor of the dependent variable (teachers' success) (See Table 3).

**Table 3: The results of regression analysis for teachers' self-efficacy and their success.**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	129.179	12.843		10.058	.000
Self-efficacy	.389	.077	.478	5.075	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Teachers' success

Table 4 illustrates the model summary statistics. The results reveal that the model containing the total scores of the self-efficacy test can predict 22 percent of the teachers' success. The R value is 0.47, which indicates the correlation coefficient between teachers' self-efficacy and success. Its square value is 0.22 so it indicates that about 22% of the variation in teachers' success can be explained by taking their self-efficacy into account (See Table 4).

**Table 4: R square table for self- efficacy as the predictor of teachers' success.**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.478 <sup>a</sup>	.228	.220	13.335

a. Predictors: (Constant), Self-efficacy

To determine the role of teaching experience in teachers' self-efficacy, a Pearson product-moment correlation was run. The findings indicated that there are significant correlations between teachers' years of teaching experience and their self-efficacy ( $r = 0.266$ ,  $p < .05$ ), teachers' teaching experience and F1 ( $r = 0.202$ ,  $p < .05$ ), teachers' teaching experience and F2 ( $r = 0.229$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and teachers' teaching experience and F3 ( $r = 0.270$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (See Table 5).

**Table 5: The results of correlation between teachers' years of teaching experience and their self-efficacy scores in language institutes.**

	F 1	F 2	F 3	Total Self-efficacy
<b>Years of Teaching Experience</b>	0.202	0.229 *	0.270 *	0.266 *

To examine the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and their age, a Pearson product-moment correlation was employed. The results showed that there is a significant correlation between teachers' age and their self-efficacy ( $r = 0.347$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Moreover, it was revealed that there is a significant relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and the three factors that compose the self-efficacy scale: age and F1 ( $r = 0.356$ ,  $p < .05$ ), age and F2 ( $r = 0.298$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and age and F3 ( $r = 0.302$ ,  $p < .05$ ) (See Table 6).

**Table 6: The results of correlation between teachers' age and their self-efficacy scores in language institutes.**

	F 1	F 2	F 3	Total Self-efficacy
<b>Teachers' Age</b>	0.356 *	0.298 *	0.302 *	0.347 *

## 5. Discussion

The current study examined the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' sense of self

–efficacy and their pedagogical success in Language Institutes. In this section responses extracted from data analysis have been summarized and presented in a way that addresses the three research questions posed in this study:

*Research Question 1:* The present study sought to investigate, in the first place, if there is any relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their success. The results substantiate the contention that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are useful indicators of teachers' success. That is to say, the stronger the teacher's belief in his/her capacity to successfully accomplish a teaching task, the more likely s/he is assessed as successful from the students' perspective. This is consistent with previous theoretical and empirical studies, though limited in Institutional L2 settings, and quite sparse in the Iranian context. Woolfolk, Rosoff and Hoy's (1990) found that students of teachers with a stronger sense of efficiency beliefs granted more positive evaluations to the teacher. Gibson and Dembo (1984); Ashton, et al. (1982); Woolfolk and Hoy (1990) have also shown that teacher self-efficacy is one of the most important variables consistently related to positive and effective teaching and student learning outcomes.

In the domain of the L2 context, especially Language Institutes where pair and group work and interaction are the norm, it seems that attention to the teachers' sense of efficacy deserves additional considerations, given the fact that one of the subscales of the *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale*, utilized in this study, measures teachers' efficacy beliefs in engaging students.

Considering the role of efficacy in teachers' success, this study has two main distinguishing features. The first distinguishing feature is that this study utilized a questionnaire on teachers' success constructed unique to EFL teachers in particular as

opposed to other types of educators. Thus, an important feature of this questionnaire is the fact that in designing this questionnaire successful teachers have been considered and defined in accordance to the views of three main elements in the processes of teaching and learning, i.e. EFL learners, EFL teachers and TEFL experts. Regarding EFL learners, Suwantee (1995) stated students appear to be the best source to provide rich information concerning teaching performance. They are in a good position to judge the quality of the classroom teaching. Braskamp, Brandenburg & Ory (1984) also pointed out that students are appropriate sources when they are describing or judging the following areas: the instructor's professional and ethical behavior; student-instructor relationship; workload; what they learned in the course; fairness of grading; and instructor's ability to communicate clearly. In terms of EFL teachers, Crandall (1996) considered the development of teaching competences as the professional responsibility of the teachers. In order to achieve this goal he introduced a wide range of activities such as observation, classroom research, and so on. One of the activities that he mentioned was discussion with other teaching colleagues and using their collective experiences (cited in Richards & Renandya, 2002). Regarding TEFL experts, definitely their knowledge and experience shed more light on the way of achieving success in EFL teaching. The second distinguishing feature of the study lies in the juxtaposition of two differently oriented judgments on teacher's success in terms of perception and performance convergence via internal and external evaluations and the finding is interesting since it reveals that teachers' beliefs in their capabilities are in line with students' views about their teachers' performance. In other words, it seems that the teachers' efficacy beliefs determine in part their effective performance in class.

In spite of the findings of the present study concerning the positive role of teacher

efficacy in their success, this role should not be overestimated. For example, in the view of the regression analysis, it was suggested that about 22% of the variation in teachers' success could be explained by taking self-efficacy into account. This is not unexpected when we take into consideration the wide array of other teacher instructional and affective behaviors and beliefs that may shape students' judgments of a successful teacher. Indeed, many researches argued that teaching is a complex process that is influenced by the various elements of teacher quality and attributes. For example, Barnes (1999) considered Language teaching as a dynamic process which depends on the application of appropriate theory, the development of careful instructional designs and strategies, and the study of what actually happens in the classroom. Taghilou (2007) also contended that high quality teaching is dependent on the existence of professional expertise, as well as problem-solving and decision-making abilities.

*Research Question 2:* Regarding the second research question - the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and years of teaching experience - the results indicate a positive correlation between EFL teachers' sense of efficacy and years of teaching experience. In other words, teachers' sense of efficacy tends to increase with additional years of teaching experience. This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that mastery and vicarious experiences have been identified as the major sources of efficacy beliefs by Bandura (1997). The abovementioned result confirm Siebert's (2006) and Woolfolk Hoy and Hoy's (1990) findings that there are significant differences between experienced and novice teachers regarding efficacy. Tsui (1995) also noted that "years of teaching experience in a teaching setting is an overriding factor in molding one's feelings of teaching efficacy" (p.372). Furthermore, this finding of the current study verifies

Tschannen-Moran et al.,'s (1998) contention that part of the value of teacher efficacy lies in its “cyclical nature” (p. 22); i.e., the proficiency of a performance paves the way for a new mastery experience which in turn provides new information that shapes future efficacy beliefs. Thus, higher efficacy prompts greater persevere and diligence which leads to better performance, which in turn creates greater efficacy. In summary, it seems that facilitating the development of a sense of efficacy beliefs from the initial phases of teaching practices does yield enduring results.

*Research Question 3:* This research question aimed to address the relationship between teachers' sense of self-efficacy and their age. The results indicate that there is a positive correlation between these two variables. This means that the older the teachers, the higher their sense of efficacy beliefs are. It is in contrast to Bandura's (1995) postulation that age would not correlate with efficacy due to the various routes in life that cause people to vary greatly in how efficaciously they manage their lives. Imants and De Brabander (1996) also contented that among the factors influencing teacher self efficacy, age does not seem to play any significant role. The contradiction between this study and previous ones can be attributed to this fact that in the present study, the majority of teachers commenced their professions approximately at the same age, i.e., twenty-two, which is considered the typical age of BA graduation in Iranian universities. It means that as they get older, their teaching experience will also increase. This in turn boosts the likelihood of higher sense of efficacy beliefs in teachers.

## **6. Conclusion**

All in all, the yielded results of the present study lead to this conclusion that teachers'

efficacy beliefs are critical in the process of teaching. Thus, if perceptions and beliefs so powerfully influence teaching practices, identifying and manipulating the factors that contribute to the development of teacher efficacy deserve sufficient consideration. The next conclusions derived from the findings of the study support the positive roles of age and teaching experience in enhancing teachers' sense of self-efficacy.

The findings of this research have some implications for teacher trainers and authorities as well as EFL teachers. Teacher trainers are suggested to make teachers familiar with the concept of efficacy and the importance of teachers' beliefs and perceptions in their pedagogical performance. Bearing in mind the four sources of efficacy beliefs stated earlier – mastery experience, vicarious experience, social or verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional states – teacher trainers and authorities are recommended to exploit efficacy-raising practices such as, assigning teachers more manageable classes with competent students of increasing levels of complexity, providing performance feedback that highlights successful achievements, making teachers aware of the weaknesses in their capabilities, and encouraging interactions among teachers with varying range of experience. Furthermore, to make teacher self-efficacy an indispensable construct in teacher education, it seems mandatory to equip teachers with teacher education and preparation programs particularly focused on improving the skills and perceptions of less experienced teachers and those of lower ages, to warrant exponential success and achievement and accordingly greater student satisfaction with teachers in particular and the educational system in general. Accordingly, EFL teachers are advised to hold some regular meetings where those with different ages and teaching experience are encouraged to share their various experience and knowledge. In this manner, according to Vygotsky' mediation theory (Mortiboys, 2005), those with higher

experience and age should play the role of mediators for the rest to gain the necessary efficacy. In consistent with the third source of efficacy beliefs – persuasion from others – teachers are recommended to be aware of and be sensitive to students’ judgments of their performance. Moreover, they should have emotional self-awareness in order to harness and shift debilitating emotional states to facilitative ones. This corresponds to Bandura’s (1997) contention that psychological and affective states, such as stress, anxiety, and excitement also provide information about efficacy perception and boost the feeling of proficiency.

The findings of the study, nevertheless, must be treated with caution. In this study, teachers’ success was assessed only through questionnaire. In a similar study, researchers can make use of other kinds of evaluative tools such as observation, interviewing students, etc. or a combination of different assessment devices to assess teachers’ success in a classroom setting. In the current study, teachers’ gender was not considered. The relationship between teachers’ success and efficacy can be investigated with respect to teachers’ gender. In other words, the research can be done with sufficient numbers of participants in each sex. Since this study was conducted only in Language Institutes, further research is needed to be done in public educational environments such as high schools in order to compare the results.

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## **Appendix**

### **Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (long form)**

## Teacher Beliefs

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.

### How much can you do?

Nothing  
 ↓  
 Very little  
 ↓  
 Some influence  
 ↓  
 Quite a bit  
 ↓  
 A great deal

1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students ?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
19. How well can you keep a few problem students from ruining an entire lesson?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
21. How well can you respond to defiant students?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9)

## **Anxiety and Reading Comprehension Performance in English as a Foreign Language**

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### **Bio Data:**

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### **Abstract**

This study conducted in Taiwanese English as a foreign language reading classes investigated the relationship between language anxiety (LA) and reading anxiety (RA), and if students' reading comprehension performance differs across different levels of LA and RA. The issues of whether students' LA and RA vary with gender and the length of language learning were also explored. The results from two measures of anxiety, and two reading comprehension tests completed by 91 university students showed that RA was related to LA, but they were two different phenomena in foreign language learning. Although reading comprehension performance did not differ significantly with the students in different levels of LA and RA, a general trend of lower LA and RA going with higher performance was identified. In contrast to other studies, no difference was found in LA and RA based on gender. Students' LA decreased with their learning in reading classes while RA showed no differences. These results suggest that students with LA tend to have RA. Decreasing students' anxiety and creating a low-anxiety classroom

environment might help improve students' reading comprehension performance. Since RA seems to be a more stable construct as compared to LA, coping with RA may require more time.

**Keywords:** English as a Foreign Language Learning, Language Anxiety, Reading Anxiety, Reading Comprehension Performance, Gender, Length of Language Learning, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale

## **Introduction**

Learning an additional language is both cognitively and emotionally demanding (Abu-Rabia, 2004). Anxiety, a complicated phenomenon, is a kind of emotion so the issue of anxiety in second language (L2) learning has concerned language educators and researchers for many years. A substantial amount of research has been conducted in this area and suggests that anxiety is an important factor in second language acquisition (Na, 2007; Wei, 2007). However, most of the research centers on the discussion of listening, speaking, and writing. Little attention has been paid to reading. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill the gap and explore the role of anxiety in L2 reading.

## **Literature Review**

### *Language Learning & Anxiety*

Anxiety, associated with feelings of being uneasy, frustrated, apprehensive, or worried, plays an important affective role in language learning (Brown, 2000). Scovel (1978), drawing on Alpert and Haber's (1960) distinction between "facilitative" and "debilitative" anxiety, claims that the former motivates learners to make more efforts to overcome their anxious feelings. The later makes the learner "run away" from the learning task to avoid the source of anxiety. Some early studies suggest the benefits of

“facilitative” anxiety in learning languages. For example, Bailey (1983) found facilitating anxiety is one key to successful language learning. Chastain (1975) and Kleinmann (1977) reported a positive relationship between anxiety and L2 achievement. However, more recent studies (e.g., Abu-Rabia & Argaman, 2002; Cheng, et al., 1999; Elkhafaifi, 2005; Hsu, 2004; Mills, et al., 2006; Sellers, 2000) emphasize the debilitating role of anxiety in the language learning process.

### *Language Anxiety*

Language anxiety is a type of anxiety specifically associated with second/foreign language learning contexts (Young, 1991). According to Horwitz et al. (1986), three components of language anxiety are identified: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. People with communication apprehension are shy about communicating with others and have difficulty speaking in public and listening to spoken messages. In language classes, students are required to communicate with each other and sometimes asked to speak in dyads, in groups, or in public. Students with communication apprehension tend to develop language anxiety. Test anxiety associates with language anxiety because students hold unrealistic expectations on language achievement. Every grade less than excellent, although viewed as a good grade for others, will be regarded as a failure for anxious students. Since tests and quizzes are frequently used in language classes, students with test anxiety may also develop language anxiety. Students’ fear of negative evaluation is similar to test anxiety but more extensive. In language classes, evaluation is not limited to a test-taking situation. It may occur in any evaluative situation, such as group discussions or speaking in front of the classroom. Students who fear negative evaluations from others may also develop language anxiety.

### *Variables Associated with Language Anxiety*

Although students with communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation are apt to develop language anxiety, they may have different levels of language anxiety due to some variables. For example, in Ohata's study (2005), language anxiety varied with five Japanese students because of their different personalities, ages, learning attitudes toward English, and levels of English proficiency. These are some of the variables that lead to different levels of language anxiety. Other variables, such as language proficiency levels, the length of language learning, teacher's role, and learners' gender, are also discussed in some previous studies.

Regarding "language proficiency level", Liu (2006) explored the language anxiety of 100 EFL students at three different proficiency levels. The results showed that students with advanced English proficiency tended to be less anxious. Elkhafaifi (2005) explored 233 graduate and undergraduate students' language anxiety, and found that advanced students had lower language anxiety than beginning or intermediate students. As for "length of language learning", Elkhafaifi (2005) found that the older students (sophomores, juniors, and seniors) who spent more years learning English in school had lower anxiety than younger students (freshmen). However, Casado and Dereshiwsky (2001) compared the anxiety level of first and second semester university students speaking Spanish as a foreign language, and found that students' level of language anxiety seemed to increase slightly rather than decrease with more exposure to the language learning. Regarding "teacher's role", Ewald's study (2007) revealed that teachers' supportive attitude helped relieve students' anxiety. Abu-Rabia (2004) examined whether teachers' attitudes were related to the language anxiety of 67 EFL students. He found that students were less anxious if the teachers' attitude toward them

was more supportive. As for “learners’ gender”, Abu-Rabia’s study (2004) identified gender as a predictor of language anxiety with female students showing higher anxiety than male students. Elkhafaifi’s study (2005) indicated similar findings with females being more anxious than males. Yet, Matsuda and Gobel (2004) investigated language anxiety in 252 university students majoring in English and found no significant effect of gender on students’ anxiety.

In sum, studies examining the variables of language proficiency levels and teacher’s role yield similar results, which are that students with higher language proficiency tend to have lower language anxiety, and teacher’s supportive attitude helps decrease students’ language anxiety. However, inconsistent results have been found in the studies exploring the variables of the length of language learning and learners’ gender. Hence, further exploration of how language anxiety changes with the two variables is needed.

### *Research on Language Anxiety and L2 Learning*

Horwitz et al. (1986) propose that communication apprehension is one of the three components of language anxiety. Because communication apprehension is part of language anxiety, language anxiety is mostly connected with the oral and aural aspects of language use (i.e. listening and speaking). Therefore, these aspects of language learning are frequently examined by previous research. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that writing is also discussed in some studies because it is thought of as a communicative skill like speaking and listening.

For instance, in Elkhafaifi’s study (2005), listening was explored. Listening comprehension scores from 233 students of Arabic as a foreign language and the measures of language anxiety and listening anxiety were analyzed. The results showed

that listening anxiety was positively related to, but distinguished from, language anxiety. Students with higher language anxiety and listening anxiety had lower listening comprehension grades. Mills et al. (2006) examined the relationship between self-efficacy and language anxiety with 95 university students' French listening proficiency. They suggested self-efficacy is defined as personal beliefs in one's capabilities, and found that the students with low self-efficacy were more anxious and, in turn, had negative listening achievement. In terms of writing, Abu-Rabia and Argaman (2002) investigated the role of language anxiety in the English writing achievement of 70 junior high school EFL students. They found that students with higher language anxiety were inclined to have lower writing achievement. In Cheng et al.'s study (1999), both writing and speaking were discussed. They examined 433 Taiwan university English majors to find out the relationship between language anxiety and writing anxiety and how they associated with writing and speaking achievements. The results showed that writing anxiety was associated with, but distinguishable from, language anxiety, and that language anxiety is a more general type of anxiety about learning the L2 and has a strong element of speaking anxiety. Both language anxiety and writing anxiety were negatively related to speaking and writing achievements.

Listening, speaking, and writing have been frequently investigated. Few studies have addressed anxiety and L2 reading (Brantmeier, 2005; Sellers, 2000). According to Brown (2001), affective factors can undergird the acquisition of spoken discourse. Reading is also subject to variability within the affective domain. Ehrman et al. (2003) indicate that affective factors include motivation, self-efficacy, tolerance of ambiguity, and anxiety. More precisely, anxiety counted within an affective domain may have a relationship to the learning of reading. Nevertheless, to date, little attention has been paid to this aspect

of language learning.

### *Reading in L1 vs. Reading in L2*

Of the four skills, reading can be regarded as especially important because reading is assumed to be the central means for learning new information (Grabe & Stoller, 2001). Freese (1997) points out that some students encounter problems when reading. They read the paragraphs in the text but are still unaware of what they have read. Unlike these students, Carrell and Grabe, (2002) claim that proficient readers can employ different reading skills when reading different texts or reading for different purposes. For instance, they search for the information in a manual by scanning for the key words. Reading the newspaper, they skim headlines to see if they want to read in more detail. For studying, they read carefully to integrate information, so various reading skills are employed in different situations. From this perspective, the nature of reading is complex. In addition to the complexity of reading, the reading process is cognitively demanding because learners need to coordinate attention, perception, memory, and comprehension (Sellers, 2000). Different from L1 readers who read in their own native language, L2 readers read in the second language, which increases the difficulties of the reading process (Carrell & Grabe, 2002). Moreover, there are additional factors to consider, such as language ability, learner motivation, and cultural background (Sellers, 2000). Hence, L2 reading is further complicated.

### *Reading Anxiety in Second or Foreign Language*

When L2 readers read second language texts, they are trying to decode unfamiliar scripts, writing system, and cultural materials. If encountering difficulty in processing them, they

may get frustrated with reading, and experience anxiety. The anxiety aroused during the process of reading L2 texts is known as reading anxiety (Saito et al., 1999).

To explore this construct, Saito et al. (1999) used the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), measuring language anxiety related to various aspects of foreign language learning, and Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS), eliciting reading anxiety, to examine native English speakers of 192 French, 114 Japanese, and 77 Russian learners. They found that reading anxiety was related to, but distinct from, language anxiety. In addition, regarding reading anxiety, Japanese learners were the most anxious, followed by French and Russian learners. The learners finding it difficult to read in their target language had higher reading anxiety than those who felt reading as medium difficult, followed by those who perceived it as easy. These results suggest the differentiation of reading anxiety and language anxiety, and indicate that learners' reading anxiety differs from the specific target language and depends on how they perceive the difficulty of the target language. These findings in turn confirm the existence and uniqueness of this construct.

#### *Research on Reading Anxiety and L2 Reading*

Hsu (2004) explored reading anxiety and reading comprehension of 125 junior military college EFL students and found that anxious students tended to recall less content of the text than less anxious students. Similarly, Sellers (2000) also investigated the possible relationship of language anxiety to reading comprehension with 89 Spanish as a foreign language university students. The results revealed that reading anxiety was related to, but distinguished from, language anxiety. The students with high reading anxiety and language anxiety could recall less content of the article.

In conclusion, previous studies on anxiety and L2 learning center on the discussion of (1) the relationship between language anxiety and language-skill-specific (i.e., speaking, listening, writing, and reading) anxiety, and (2) their roles in L2 learning. They suggest that listening, reading and writing anxiety, is related to, but can be distinguished from, language anxiety. Most of them find that there is a negative relationship between language anxiety and L2 performance (In'nami, 2006). Also, language-skill-specific anxiety and performance are negatively correlated, meaning that students with higher listening, speaking, writing, and reading anxiety tend to have lower listening, speaking, writing, and reading performance respectively.

Though most studies conclude that students with higher language anxiety are apt to have lower performance in L2 learning, they seldom revolve around the discussion of language anxiety and L2 reading. There are also few studies examining reading anxiety and L2 reading. Moreover, studies show conflicting results regarding how language anxiety varies with learners' gender and the length of language learning. Little research explores whether the two variables relate to reading anxiety.

### **The Present Study**

In response to the research gap identified in the literature, the present research investigated the roles of language anxiety (LA) and reading anxiety (RA) in EFL reading classes. It addressed the issues of how LA and RA were related, whether students' reading comprehension performance varied with different levels of LA and RA, and how students' LA and RA differed across gender and changed with the length of language learning. Specifically, this study examined the following four research questions.

(1) Is reading anxiety related to, but distinguished from, language anxiety in the EFL

context?

- (2) Is there any significant difference between the reading comprehension performance of the EFL students with high, mid and low levels of language anxiety and reading anxiety?
- (3) Is there a difference in EFL students' language anxiety and reading anxiety based on gender?
- (4) Is there any change in EFL students' level of language anxiety and reading anxiety from the beginning of the semester to the middle of the semester?

## **Methodology**

### *Participants*

A total of 91 first-year college students studying English as a foreign language from two classes in a private university in Southern Taiwan participated in the study. They all enrolled in the first semester reading courses in 2008. Among the participants with the age ranging between 19 and 21, and the mean age of 20, forty-eight (52.7%) were males and 43 (47.3%) were females. Prior to beginning at the university, all the participants had had six years of formal English education in junior and vocational high schools. Therefore, they had roughly similar types of exposure to English before entering the university. Moreover, all of the students in this group were taught by the same teacher, used the same textbook, and took the same reading comprehension tests. Since only a sample of college EFL students from two classes was accessed, and because the researcher knew the teacher who taught reading to them, the sampling strategy used in this study was convenience sampling (Perry, 2005).

### *Instruments*

*The Chinese version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale.* The FLCAS (see Appendix A.1) designed by Horwitz et al. (1986) consists of 33 items measuring LA related to foreign language (FL) learning. Participants responded to a 5-point Likert scale for each item with 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 signifying strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree respectively. Lower scores indicate lower LA and higher scores indicate higher LA. Horwitz et al. reported the internal consistency of the FLCAS as .93 (n = 108). The theoretical ranges of the scale are from 33 to 165. The present study adopted the Chinese version of the FLCAS (see Appendix A.2) from Chiang's study (2006). On this scale, the words "foreign language" were replaced by the word "English" to accord with the participants' foreign language, English. Chiang reported that the internal consistency of this translated scale from Yeh's (1993), Wu's (1995), Cheng's (1998) and his own study (2006) were .94, .95, .95, and .94 respectively. In the present study, the Chinese version of the FLCAS showed the internal reliability with internal consistency coefficients of .95 (Cronbach's alpha, N = 91), which is consistent with previous studies' findings.

*The Chinese version of Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale.* The FLRAS (see Appendix B.1) designed by Saito et al. (1999) contains 20 items measuring RA related to FL reading. Participants also responded to a 5-point Likert scale for each item with 1 indicating strongly agree, 2 indicating agree, 3 indicating neither agree nor disagree, 4 indicating disagree and 5 indicating strongly disagree. Lower scores indicate lower RA and higher scores indicate higher RA. Saito et al. reported the FLRAS showed an acceptable level of reliability with an internal consistency coefficient of .86 (n = 383). The theoretical ranges of the FLRAS are from 20 to 100. Hsu (2004) used the Chinese

version of FLRAS from Huang's study (2001), and reported the internal consistency of the translated scale as .81 ( $n = 114$ ). On this scale, English language was substituted for "foreign language". In the present study, Huang's adapted version of the FLRAS (see Appendix B.2) was also used, and it showed internal reliability with an internal consistency coefficient of .82 (Cronbach's alpha,  $N = 91$ ), which is in accord with the findings of previous studies.

*The multiple-choice reading comprehension tests.* Multiple-choice reading comprehension tests are able to evaluate a reader's reading comprehension efficiently (Wolf, 1993, as discussed in Hsu, 2004). In the study, two multiple-choice reading comprehension tests (see Appendix C.1 and C.2) were administered during the fifth and eighth weeks of the semester. In each test, participants spent 30 minutes reading a dialogue passage of about 300 words extracted from the textbook used in the reading classes, and then answering 20 multiple-choice questions based on the reading. The average score of the two tests was used as the participant's overall reading comprehension performance in the study. Since content validity is determined by expert judgment (Gay et al., 2006), the multiple-choice questions in both tests were reviewed by two professional English language instructors in the private university, and they confirmed that what was taught coincided with what was being tested. Each of the two tests demonstrated acceptable internal reliability with an internal consistency coefficient of .73 (Cronbach's alpha,  $N = 91$ ).

### *Procedure*

At the beginning of the first semester in 2008, after signing the informed consent form, participants completed the Chinese versions of the FLCAS and FLRAS for the first time.

Then, they began to receive reading instruction in English reading courses. The textbook used was *Freshman English* (Juang, 2007), which consisted of six units. Each unit contains two articles. One is a dialogue; the other is a narrative article. Participants took the first reading comprehension test after the teacher finished teaching Unit Two. In the middle of the semester (i.e., the eighth week of the semester), after the teacher finished teaching Unit Three, participants took the second reading comprehension test, and completed the two anxiety assessment scales for the second time. The total data collection period lasted eight weeks.

#### *Data Analysis*

LA and RA discussed in the first three research questions were only based on the second administration of the FLCAS and FLRAS. Both administrations of the FLCAS and FLRAS were considered in the fourth research question in order to compare the level of anxiety measured at the beginning and the middle of the semester.

Using the Statistical Program for Social Science (SPSS) 15.0, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to answer the first research question. As for the second research question, high LA, mid LA, and low LA students were first categorized based on the score of the FLCAS; high RA, mid RA, and low RA students were also classified according to the score of FLRAS. Participants whose anxiety scores were one or more than one SD above the total mean were classified as high anxiety. Those whose scores were one or more than one SD below the total mean were low anxiety. The rest were considered to be mid anxiety. Then, two separate one-way ANOVA were conducted. One tested if there were differences in the reading comprehension performance of the students with different levels of LA. The other tested

if there were differences regarding the performance of the students with different levels of RA. For the third research question, two separate independent t-tests were conducted. One tested if LA varied with gender; the other tested if RA differed based on gender. Finally, two separate dependent t-tests were conducted to test if participants' LA and RA measured at the beginning and at the middle of the semester showed differences.

## **Results**

As for the first research question, the Pearson  $r$  (see Table 1) indicated a significant positive relationship between the two scales. The shared variance ( $r^2$ ) was .46. As far as the second research question is concerned, the descriptive statistical analysis of the FLCAS and FLRAS showed the means, standard deviation (SD), and ranges of LA and RA scores for the 91 participants (see Table 2), and also showed the numbers and percent of the students, and score ranges in each LA level and RA level (see Table 3). The results of the ANOVA presented in Table 4 indicated no significant differences in reading comprehension performance among the students with low, mid, and high LA, or among the students with low, mid, and high RA.

In response to the third research question, the results of the independent t-test showed that there were no significant differences between males and females in their level of LA. The data also revealed no significant differences in RA based on gender (see Table 5). Finally, the results of the dependent t-test in Table 6 revealed significant differences between the first and the second administrations of the participants' LA, with LA measured at the middle of semester being lower than that measured at the beginning of the semester. However, there were no significant differences between the first and the eighth weeks of the participants' RA.

Table 1 Correlation of LA and RA (N = 91) \*\* p < .01

		LA	RA
LA	r	1	.68**
	p		.000
RA	r	.68**	1
	p	.000	

Table 2 Summary of the FLCAS and FLRAS scores

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
LA	91	60	160	118.10	18.80
RA	91	45	90	70.12	9.65

Table 3 Number and percent of the students and score ranges in each LA and RA level

LA Level	Number	Percentage	Score range	RA Level	Number	Percentage	Score range
Low	13	14.29%	60-99	Low	15	16.48%	45-60
Mid	63	69.23%	102-137	Mid	60	65.93%	61-79
High	15	16.48%	138-160	High	16	17.58%	80-90

Table 4 Results of ANOVA (p > .05)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
LA	Between Groups	152.32	2	76.16	.39	.68
	Within Groups	17065.81	88	193.93		
RA	Between Groups	210.22	2	105.11	.54	.58
	Within Groups	17007.92	88	193.27		

Table 5 Results of Independent t-test (p>.05)

Gender	N	LA				RA			
		M	SD	t	p	M	SD	t	p
Male	48	118.77	16.56	.36	.72	71.19	8.22	1.12	.27
Female	43	117.35	21.19			68.93	11.01		

Table 6 Results of Dependent t-test (\*p<.05)

	N	LA				RA			
		M	SD	t	p	M	SD	t	p
pretest	91	120.85	20.14	2.55*	.013	70.8	9.39	.89	.38
posttest	91	118.10	18.80			70.1	9.65		

## **Discussion**

A correlation coefficient of .68 identified in the study suggests that students with a higher level of LA tend to have a higher level of RA. This relationship is significant and positive. The shared variance ( $r^2=.46$ ) implies a reasonable amount of overlap, but a substantial amount of discrimination between the two measures. In other words, the two measures share about 46% of the variance, and approximately 54% of the variance is not common to the two measures. The finding suggests RA is related to, but distinct from, LA, which is consistent with the findings of Saito et al. (1999) and Sellers (2000). The distinguishability of RA from LA implies that they are two different constructs. Since LA is frequently discussed by previous studies (e.g., Elkhafaifi, 2005; Mills et al., 2006), more research should address issues related to RA (e.g., relationship of L1 and L2 reading anxiety) to further understand this construct.

With respect to the relationship between anxiety and reading comprehension performance, the results of the ANOVA found no significant differences in reading comprehension performance among the EFL students with high, mid, and low LA and RA. Although the reading comprehension performance of the students in each LA level and RA Level did not differ significantly, the descriptive statistics presented in Table 7 indicate that students with high LA on average had lower reading comprehension scores than the students with mid LA, followed by the students with low LA. Low RA students had the highest mean of reading comprehension scores, followed by mid RA students and high RA students. The means plots (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) showed a general trend for lower LA and RA associated with higher reading comprehension performance.

One of the possible reasons that the results showed no significant difference might be due to small sample size. Another could be the reading passages used in the two reading

comprehension tests. The reading passage in each test is extracted from the articles in the textbook. The teacher teaches these articles in the reading courses, so the students might be familiar with the reading passage when taking the test. Also, the students can spend extra time studying these articles before taking the test. Thus, the more anxious students supposed to have lower grades might get good grades after their preparation for the test, and this could explain why the reading comprehension performance of the students in each anxiety level does not differ significantly in the study. To obtain significant results, future research should be conducted on a larger sample. Also, future research should consider using a reading text that students are not familiar with in order to investigate the actual reading comprehension performance of the students with different levels of anxiety.

Table 7 Descriptive Data for Reading Comprehension Performance in each LA and RA Level

Reading Comprehension Performance							
LA	N	M	SD	RA	N	M	SD
Low	13	80.58	12.88	Low	15	80.83	13.81
Mid	63	76.94	13.81	Mid	60	76.79	14.13
High	15	76.67	15.23	High	16	76.56	13.07

Figure 1 Means Plot for Reading Comprehension Performance in each LA Level

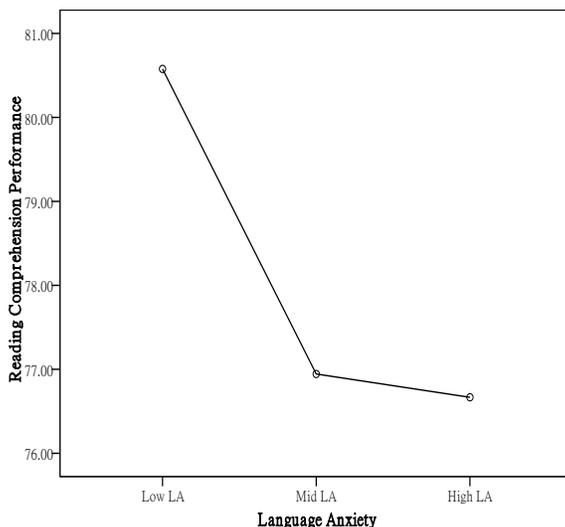
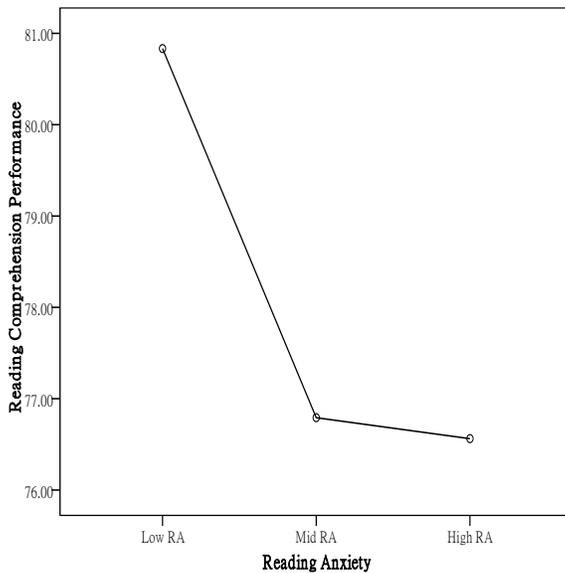


Figure 2 Means Plot for Reading Comprehension Performance in each RA Level



As for the relationship between anxiety and gender, the result of the independent t-test revealed that LA did not differ significantly across gender. This finding contradicts that of Elkhafaifi (2005) and Abu-Rabia (2004), whose studies uncovered significant differences in LA based on gender with females being more anxious than males. Nevertheless, this finding accords with that of Matsuda and Gobel (2005), who found no significant difference in LA between male and female students. The similarity of the present study's findings with those of Matsuda and Gobel might be due to the similar learning context of studying English as a foreign language, culture (Oriental culture), and geographical region (Eastern Asia) the Japanese and Taiwanese participants of the two studies shared. As for reading anxiety, no significant difference was found between males and females. Because previous research has not addressed the issue of the association between gender and RA, specifically, how RA differs across gender is still unclear. Future investigation is warranted to determine whether LA and RA are indeed uncorrelated with gender.

In terms of the relationship between anxiety and the length of language learning, the result of the dependent t-test showed students' LA decreased as they spent more time learning English in reading courses. The finding accords with that of Elkhafafi (2005), whose study showed the older students spending more time learning in school experience lower foreign language anxiety than younger students, but is inconsistent with that of Casado and Dereshiwsky (2001), whose study showed students' foreign language anxiety increases slightly as they progress from the first semester to the second semester. Future research is suggested to investigate whether spending more time on language learning in school indeed leads to less LA. It is noteworthy that there were no significant differences in students' RA measured at the beginning and the middle of the semester. The finding suggests that RA appears to be a more stable construct as compared to LA.

The possible explanations for the inconsistent finding may be due to the exploration of the students' language learning with only eight weeks and the teacher's way of teaching. In the reading courses, the teacher spends much time delivering lectures to explain the content, and analyzing important sentence patterns and grammars. The students are seldom asked to speak English in front of the class or communicate with their teacher and peers in English. Since LA is a general type of anxiety with a strong element of speaking anxiety (Cheng et al., 1999; Horwitz et al., 1986), it might be understandable that, at the beginning of the semester, when the students do not know how the teacher is going to teach reading, they have a higher level of LA. As they understand that oral communication in English is not required in the reading courses, their LA significantly decreases over time. Since the students in the reading courses have more access to the elements of reading such as grammar, sentence patterns, and vocabulary, their RA would decrease with the increasing exposure to and familiarity with reading. However, this

study explored the change of RA only from the beginning to the middle of the semester. The students' RA might not decrease rapidly in eight weeks. In addition, if RA is exactly as what the study identified, a more stable construct, students' RA may decrease slightly, not significantly during the short timeframe. Thus, examining a longer period of language learning is suggested for future research to obtain a significant decrease of RA.

### **Conclusions and Limitations**

The present research uncovers a related but distinguishable relationship between LA and RA. Whereas LA and RA are related, when recognizing the students with LA, the teacher may anticipate the students might have RA as well. Though related, the distinguishability of RA from LA suggests that they are two different phenomena in foreign language learning. This study does not find statistically significant differences in EFL reading comprehension performance of the students with high, mid, and low levels of LA and RA. Nevertheless, it still identifies a general direction of higher anxiety relating to lower reading comprehension performance and vice versa based on the descriptive statistics. Therefore, though not significant, the finding still suggests that L2 teachers should cope with students' anxiety in order to enhance reading comprehension performance and should create a low anxiety classroom environment in order for students to learn reading. In contrast with previous studies' findings, this study does not identify significant differences between males and females in their levels of LA and RA. Students' LA significantly decreases with their language learning in English reading courses from the beginning to the middle of the semester while their RA doesn't decrease during the timeframe. Since RA seems to be more stable as compared to LA, when trying to help the students suffering from LA and RA, the teacher should anticipate that RA does not easily

decrease, and thus coping with it requires more time.

Several limitations are recognized in the study. First, the participants of the study only cover a small population of the private university in southern Taiwan. It is difficult to generalize the findings to all EFL students. Second, the Chinese versions of the FLCAS and FLRAS used are self-reported questionnaires. However, there is a potential limitation of self-reported data because some students might not be willing to express themselves frankly. Thus, the validity of the two scales should be considered. Third, the two scales were distributed at the beginning and the middle of the semester, different results might have been obtained if they were administered at the beginning and at the end of the semester. Finally, some variables such as the allotted reading time, and the type and the length of the reading passage not included in the analysis are possible limitations because they are also related to students' anxiety level. There might be different results if the allotted time or the length of the passage is longer or shorter than 30 minutes or 300 words respectively, and the reading passage is narrative, argumentative, or expository rather than a dialogue. Due to these limitations, suggestive rather than conclusive findings should be considered in the present research.

### **Acknowledgement**

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## Appendices

### Appendix A.1 - Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

		S A	A	N	D	S D
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my Foreign language class.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.	1	2	3	4	5

3	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	1	2	3	4	5
4	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5
5	It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	1	2	3	4	5
6	During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I keep thinking that the other students are better at language than I am.	1	2	3	4	5
8	I am usually at easy during tests in my language classes.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	1	2	3	4	5
10	I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I don't understand why people get so upset over foreign language class.	1	2	3	4	5
12	In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	1	2	3	4	5
13	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	1	2	3	4	5
15	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	1	2	3	4	5
16	Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	1	2	3	4	5
17	I often feel like not going to my language class.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I feel confident when I speak in my foreign language class.	1	2	3	4	5
19	I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	1	2	3	4	5
20	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in my language class.	1	2	3	4	5
21	The more I study for an language test the more confused I get.	1	2	3	4	5
22	I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	1	2	3	4	5
23	I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	1	2	3	4	5
24	I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	1	2	3	4	5
25	Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	1	2	3	4	5
26	I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	1	2	3	4	5
27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	1	2	3	4	5
28	When I am on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	1	2	3	4	5

29	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	1	2	3	4	5
30	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5
31	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5
32	I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	1	2	3	4	5
33	I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepare in advance.	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix A.2 - The Chinese Version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

### 英語焦慮問卷調查表

說明：在這部份，您會碰到 33 條敘述。這 33 條敘述大部分皆涉及您對英語課的感受。對這些敘述的回答，沒有對錯之別。我們只是關心您的感受。每一項目皆有五個答案，請依您的直覺反應回答每一條敘述，並且圈選符合您所選擇的答案的數字代碼。

從 1 到 33 題，請讀完每一條敘述，然後決定您的同意或不同意程度：

		非常 同意	同 意	中 立	不 同 意	非 常 不 同 意
1	在英文課用英文發言時，我對自己一直沒信心。	1	2	3	4	5
2	我擔心在英文課犯錯。	1	2	3	4	5
3	上英文課，知道自己快被叫到時，我會發抖。	1	2	3	4	5
4	當我聽不懂老師用英文在講什麼時，我會害怕。	1	2	3	4	5
5	多修一些英文課，一點也不困擾我。	1	2	3	4	5
6	上英文課時，我發現自己在想一些跟上課毫無關係的事。	1	2	3	4	5
7	上英文課時，我一直認為其他同學在英文方面比我好。	1	2	3	4	5
8	英文課考試時，我通常很輕鬆自在。	1	2	3	4	5
9	當我必須在毫無準備的情況下，在英文課中用英文發言，我會開始驚慌失措。	1	2	3	4	5
10	我擔心英文課會不及格。	1	2	3	4	5
11	我不懂為什麼有些人對英文課感到這麼煩惱。	1	2	3	4	5
12	上英文課時，我可能會緊張到把我知道的東西給忘	1	2	3	4	5

	了。					
13	要我在英文課主動回答問題，令我覺得尷尬。	1	2	3	4	5
14	和以英文為母語的老外說英文的時候，我不會緊張。	1	2	3	4	5
15	當我聽不懂英文老師用英文在糾正什麼時，我會變煩惱。	1	2	3	4	5
16	即使充分準備，我仍然對英文課感覺焦慮不安。	1	2	3	4	5
17	我常常不想去上英文課。	1	2	3	4	5
18	在英文課中用英文發言，我感到信心十足。	1	2	3	4	5
19	我擔心我的英文老師準備好隨時糾正我所犯的每一個錯誤。	1	2	3	4	5
20	英文課快被叫到時，我可以感覺到心臟在怦怦跳。	1	2	3	4	5
21	我準備英文考試準備的越多，就變得越困惑。	1	2	3	4	5
22	為英文課做充分準備，我不覺得有壓力。	1	2	3	4	5
23	我老是覺得其他同學英文說的比我好。	1	2	3	4	5
24	在其他同學面前說英文，我覺得很忸怩不自在。	1	2	3	4	5
25	英文課進度這麼快我擔心會跟不上。	1	2	3	4	5
26	我上英文課比上其他課來得更緊張、不安。	1	2	3	4	5
27	在英文課用英文發言時，我變得既緊張又困惑。	1	2	3	4	5
28	要去上英文課時，我覺得很踏實，且輕鬆。	1	2	3	4	5
29	當我沒聽懂英文老師所講的每一個字時，我就變得很緊張。	1	2	3	4	5
30	為了說英文所必需學的規則那麼多，讓我覺得吃不消。	1	2	3	4	5
31	說英文時，我擔心其他同學會笑我。	1	2	3	4	5
32	身處以英語為母語的老外之中，我或許會覺得自在。	1	2	3	4	5
33	當英文老師問到我沒事先準備好的問題時，我就變得很緊張。	1	2	3	4	5

### Appendix B.1- Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS)

		S A	A	N	D	S D
1	I get upset when I am not sure whether I understand what I am reading in (French, Russian, Japanese).	1	2	3	4	5
2	When reading (French, Russian, Japanese), I often understand the words but still can't quite understand what the author is saying.	1	2	3	4	5
3	When I'm reading (French, Russian, Japanese), I get so confused I can't remember what I am reading.	1	2	3	4	5

4	I feel intimidated whenever I see a whole page of (French, Russian, Japanese) in front of me.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I am nervous when I am reading a passage in (French, Russian, Japanese) when I am not familiar with the topic.	1	2	3	4	5
6	I get upset whenever I encounter unknown grammar when reading (French, Russian, Japanese).	1	2	3	4	5
7	When reading (French, Russian, Japanese), I get nervous and confused when I don't understand every word.	1	2	3	4	5
8	It bothers me to encounter words I can't pronounce while reading (French, Russian, Japanese).	1	2	3	4	5
9	I usually end up translating word by word when I am reading (French, Russian, Japanese).	1	2	3	4	5
10	By the time I get past the funny letters and symbols in (French, Russian, Japanese), it's hard to remember what you're reading about.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I am worried about all the new symbols I have to learn in order to read in (French, Russian, Japanese).	1	2	3	4	5
12	I enjoy reading (French, Russian, Japanese).	1	2	3	4	5
13	I feel confident when I am reading in (French, Russian, Japanese).	1	2	3	4	5
14	Once I get used to it, reading (French, Russian, Japanese) is not so difficult.	1	2	3	4	5
15	The hardest part of learning (French, Russian, Japanese) is learning to read.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I would be happy just to learn to speak (French, Russian, Japanese) rather than having to learn to read as well.	1	2	3	4	5
17	I don't mind reading to myself, but I feel very uncomfortable when I have to read (French, Russian, Japanese).	1	2	3	4	5
18	I am satisfied with the level of reading ability in (French, Russian, Japanese) that I have achieved so far.	1	2	3	4	5
19	(French, Russian, Japanese) culture and ideas seem very foreign to me.	1	2	3	4	5
20	I have to know so much about (French, Russian, Japanese) history and culture in order to read English.	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix B.2 - The Chinese Version of Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale

### 英語閱讀焦慮調查問卷

說明：在這部份，您會碰到 20 條敘述，這 20 條敘皆述涉及您對英語閱讀的感受。對這些敘述的回答，沒有對錯之別。我們只是關心您的感受。每一項目皆有五個答案，請依您的直覺反應回答每一條敘述，並且圈選符合您所選擇的答案的數字代碼。從 1 到 20 題，請讀完每一條敘述，然後決定您的同意或不同意程度：

		非常 同意	同 意	中 立	不 同 意	非常 不 同 意
1	在英語閱讀中，當不確定是否讀懂的時候，我感到懊惱。	1	2	3	4	5
2	在閱讀英文時，我經常懂得單字的意思，但還是不太了解作者在說什麼。	1	2	3	4	5
3	在閱讀英文時，我弄不清文章的意思，因而記不得在讀什麼。	1	2	3	4	5
4	不管什麼時後，我一看到整頁英文就會心慌。	1	2	3	4	5
5	當閱讀不熟悉的英文題材時，我覺得緊張。	1	2	3	4	5
6	在英文閱讀中，每當遇到不懂的語法時，我就感到懊惱。	1	2	3	4	5
7	在英文閱讀中，只要有一個單字的意思我不清楚，就會緊張和困惑。	1	2	3	4	5
8	在英文閱讀中，當我遇到不會唸的單字的時候，我感到不安。	1	2	3	4	5
9	在英文閱讀中，我經常逐字逐字地翻譯。	1	2	3	4	5
10	當我讀完那些陌生的英文字母和符號的時候，我很難記得讀過什麼。	1	2	3	4	5
11	為了閱讀英文，我得學習所有的新字母，這使我感到擔憂。	1	2	3	4	5
12	我喜愛閱讀英文。	1	2	3	4	5
13	在閱讀英文時，我覺得自信。	1	2	3	4	5
14	一旦自己習慣了，英語閱讀就不那麼難了。	1	2	3	4	5
15	學習英文最難的是學習閱讀。	1	2	3	4	5
16	我樂意學說英文，而不願意學習讀英文。	1	2	3	4	5
17	我不在乎默讀，但是要大聲朗英文，我覺得很難受。	1	2	3	4	5
18	我對自己目前已獲得的英文閱讀能力感到滿意。	1	2	3	4	5
19	英美的思想和文化對我而言似乎很陌生。	1	2	3	4	5
20	要閱讀英文，我得知道很多英美歷史和文化。	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix C.1 - Reading Comprehension Test I

班級：

性別：

學號：

姓名：

### Welcome To CSU

#### Wei is working in the cafeteria at CSU.

Wei : What will it be, noodle or rice?

Feng-Yi : Actually, I'm thinking about going to school here. Can you answer some questions?

Wei : Sure, but why ask me? Why not ask an admissions officer?

Feng-Yi : Well, they always tell you great things about the school. That's their job.

Wei : Oh, I get it .You want to know what a real student thinks.

Feng-Yi : Right! So, what should I know about CSU?

Wei : It's a great place! And the cafeteria food is awesome!

Feng-Yi : Come on! I didn't ask a tough question, did I?

Wei : Okay, okay. Well, I'm a junior here in the department of electrical engineering.

Feng-Yi : I've heard this school has many engineering programs.

Wei : Right. And they are well-known for how good they are! I really like our professors.

Feng-Yi : That's great, but I'm thinking of choosing English as my major.

Wei : No problem there. We have a really good foreign languages department.

Feng-Yi : Does that mean I'll have a chance to study in a foreign country?

Wei : Sure! CSU has partnership with schools in countries as far away as Costa Rica and Slovenia. Last year I studied in Vietnam.

Feng-Yi : That sounds like a pretty cool school. Do you have time to tell me more?

Wei : I'm glad you asked! It'll be a relief to take a break from working. Let's go sit down.

Feng-Yi : Okay, as long as you don't mind answering more questions.

Wei : I'm happy to help!

### Reading Comprehension Test: Multiple-Choice Questions

1. (B ) What is Wei's job ? (A) He's an admissions officer . (B) He works in the cafeteria . (C) He's an engineer .
2. (B ) Who studies electrical engineering ?(A) Feng-Yi does . (B) Wei does .

- (C) They both do .
3. (C ) What is Feng-Yi thinking about choosing as her major ?  
(A) Electrical engineering . (B) Foreign languages . (C) English .
  4. (A ) Where did Wei study last year ? (A) Vietnam . (B) Slovenia . (C) Costa Rica .
  5. (B ) All of the student felt that the science test was too \_\_\_\_ ?  
(A) relief (B) tough (C) right
  6. (B ) The toothpaste company formed a \_\_\_\_ with the toothbrush company.  
(A) professor (B) partnership (C) officer
  7. (C ) Rachel said the food in the school \_\_\_\_ made her sick.  
(A) department (B) admission (C) cafeteria.
  8. (A ) We've been walking too much. Let's sit down and give our feet some  
(A) relief (B) though (C) right
  9. (C ) I don't know if got accepted to that university. Maybe I should call the  
office and ask them . (A) department (B) cafeteria (C) admissions
  10. (A ) If you don't understand something in the textbook, talk to your \_\_\_\_ about it .  
(A) professor (B) partnership (C) officer
  11. (B ) If you want to work in business, it's a good idea to learn a \_\_\_\_ language.  
(A) relief (B) foreign (C) though
  12. (A ) Why don't you go to the shoe \_\_\_\_ while I look for a new dress .  
(A) department (B) admission (C) cafeteria
  13. (B ) If you're studying for a long time, you should \_\_\_\_ every hour or two .  
(A) come on (B) take a break (C) work
  14. (C ) You don't want to go outside? \_\_\_\_ ! It's a beautiful day !  
(A) take a break (B) suddenly (C) come on
  15. (A ) Let's \_\_\_\_ lunch in the school cafeteria ? (A) have (B) to have (C) having
  16. (A ) That model is known \_\_\_\_ her bright smile. (A) for (B) to (C) of
  17. (C ) Would you mind \_\_\_\_ seats with me ? (A)change (B) to change (C) changing
  18. (A ) Your name is Tom,\_\_\_\_ ? (A)right (B) don't you (C) aren't I
  19. (B ) You want to be a teacher,\_\_\_\_ ? (A)right (B) don't you (C) aren't I
  20. (C ) I am your friend,\_\_\_\_ ? (A)right (B) don't you (C) aren't I

### Appendix C.2 - Reading Comprehension Test II

班級：

性別：

學號：

姓名：

## **Double Date!**

**Kate and Bill just finished their last class of the week...**

Kate : I'm so glad it's Friday and classes are over!

Bill : Me, too! Jamie and I are going to Cijin Island tomorrow. Do you want to come?

Kate : It's nice of you to ask, but I don't really want to tag along on your date.

Bill : Well, actually, Jamie's cousin Dan is visiting from Taipei, and she has to entertain him.

Kate : Cousin from Taipei, huh ? Is he cute?

Bill : You won't know unless you go with us!

Kate : Okay, okay ... I've never been to Cijin Island, anyway.

Bill : Really ? There are many fun things to do. We can take a ride in a pedicab to see the sights.

Kate : I didn't know there was any place in Taiwan that still had pedicab.

Bill : Cijin is one of the few places they can be found. The pedicab driver can take us to places like Cijin's Matsu temple.

Kate : That sounds interesting.

Bill : After visiting the island, we can come back to Sizihwan on the ferry. We'll have a great view of Kaohsiung across the water.

Kate : Looking at the scenery will be very romantic, at least for you and Jamie.

Bill : We can sit on the beach at Sizihwan and watch the sun go down. It's one of the prettiest things to see in the area, even if you're alone!

Kate : Okay. But there's one thing I have to do before we leave the island.

Bill : What's that?

Kate : I want to stuff myself with some of Cijin's delicious seafood. I've heard it's great!

Bill : It sure is. And the prices can't be beat!

Kate : I'm hungry already. When do we leave ?

Bill : Let's meet at school at ten in the morning.

Kate : Ten in the morning?! Jamie's cousin had better be cute if I'm to get up that early.

Bill : If you don't like him, all the seafood you can eat is on me.

Kate : It's a deal !

## **Reading comprehension test: Multiple-choice questions**

1. (A) What does Kate want to do on Cijin Island?  
(A) Eat seafood. (B) Ride in a pedicab with Dan. (C) Sit on the beach.
2. (C) Where is Jamie's cousin from? (A) Cijin Island. (B) Sizihwan. (C) Taipei.
3. (A) What does Kate say will be romantic?

- (A) Looking at the scenery. (B) Jamie's cousin Dan. (C) Seafood.
4. (B) What will happen tomorrow?  
 (A) Kate will have a date with Bill. (B) Bill will have a date with Jamie.  
 (C) Jamie's cousin will call Kate.
5. (C) We're going to have hot pot tonight, so you \_\_\_ not eat a big lunch.  
 (A) tag along (B) double date (C) had better
6. (B) Helen \_\_\_ cakes when we want out for afternoon tea at the hotel.  
 (A) take a ride (B) stuffed herself with (C) come back to
7. (A) Kevin \_\_\_ himself with cake and bread. (A) stuffed (B) entertain (C) tog
8. (A) I really like this coat, but I don't like the \_\_\_! I can't pay that much!  
 (A) price (B) sight (C) view
9. (C) Most American tourists like to visit \_\_\_ when they go to Japan.  
 (A) price (B) date (C) temples
10. (B) Jennifer wants to go to the pool today, but she doesn't want her sister to \_ along.  
 (A) entertain (B) tag (C) stuff
11. (B) The view from Taipei 101 at nighttime is a beautiful \_\_\_.  
 (A) temple (B) sight (C) pedicab
12. (A) Bill likes riding the train more than flying because he can see more \_\_\_ from the window.  
 (A) scenery (B) price (C) seafood
13. (B) When we visited Shanghai, we rode in a \_\_\_ operated by a local man.  
 (A) temples (B) pedicab (C) ferry
14. (C) History is my least favorite thing to study because I don't think it is very \_\_\_.  
 (A) romantic (B) delicious (C) interesting
15. (C) What can happen if two friends end up being "boyfriend and girlfriend"?  
 (A) Talk about it. (B) They both don't want it. (C) Things can go badly.
16. (C) How can an outside observer tell if a girl likes her guy friend?  
 (A) He's a comedian. (B) He makes jokes. (C) She laughs at all of his jokes.
17. (A) What might a guy who likes a girl do?  
 (A) Make jokes about her being his girlfriend. (B) Just to see what she'll say.  
 (C) Make her jealous.
18. (B) What sometimes happens when boys and girls are friends?  
 (A) They feel pressure. (B) One person ends up liking his/her friend.  
 (C) They hold hands.
19. (C) After \_\_\_ dinner, we can watch a movie. (A) to eat (B) eat (C) eating
20. (A) It's nice \_\_\_ you to help me. (A) of (B) for (C) on

## Learners' Beliefs and the Use of Metacognitive Language-learning Strategies of Chinese-speaking ESL Learners

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### Abstract

This paper reports the findings of a study on the relationships between beliefs about language learning and the use of the metacognitive language-learning strategies (MCLLSs) of Chinese-speaking ESL learners undertaking vocational education in Hong Kong. A survey questionnaire containing items measuring these two areas was administered to 243 Chinese-speaking ESL learners at a vocational institute. Learners' beliefs about language learning were found to be weakly related to the use of MCLLSs. More specifically, *Integrative Motivation* and *Language and Communication Strategies* were found to have the strongest positive relationships with MCLLS use. Results of multiple regression analyses indicate that *Integrative Motivation* is a good predictor of the use of all MCLLSs. Self-efficacy could predict the use of some MCLLSs, and *Language and Communication Strategies* was found to be another predictor of the use of most MCLLSs. This paper concludes with some implications for teaching and directions for further research.

**Keywords:** Beliefs about Language-Learning, Chinese-Speaking ESL Learners, Metacognitive Language-Learning Strategies, Vocational Education, Hong Kong

## **Introduction**

In research on language-learning strategies (LLSs) to date, inadequate attention has been given to metacognitive language-learning strategies (MCLLSs) and how they are related to learners' beliefs about language-learning (BALLs). Beliefs affect the ways ESL learners learn a language. Therefore, we can conclude that beliefs and the use of LLSs are related (Horwitz, 1987; Oxford, 1990). There have been calls to investigate how BALLs are related to LLS use (Horwitz, 1999), but to date we still know very little on how MCLLSs and BALLs are related, especially in the Chinese context. Chinese-speaking ESL learners have been found to possess BALLs (Yang, 1999) and LLS use patterns (Zhang, 2003) which are different from their western counterparts. It is worthwhile to explore how BALLs and MCLLSs are related among this group of learners.

Findings to date on BALLs have been characterized by a lack of standardization. Different conceptualizations have been used to investigate BALLs, and different instruments have been used to measure BALLs (see Kuntz, 1996). This study is an attempt to employ a more representative conceptualization of Horwitz (1985; 1987).

Previous research in these two areas of MCLLSs and BALLs has been focused on university level learners (Sakui & Gaies, 1999; Zhang, 2003). Information on their relationship for learners of other backgrounds, such as learners pursuing vocational education, is lacking. This is especially true in the Hong Kong Chinese context.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between MCLLS use and BALLs of Chinese-speaking L2 learners undertaking vocational education in Hong Kong. This study was driven by the following research question: *How are learners' BALLs related to the use of MCLLS for Chinese-speaking ESL learners undertaking vocational education in Hong Kong?*

## **Review of literature**

Despite the lack of research on the relationship between MCLLSs and BALLs, some previous studies have shown that beliefs influence learners' use of LLSs. Abraham and Vann (1987) compared the LLS use of a successful and an unsuccessful language learner and found that successful learners used more LLSs and used LLSs more frequently. Wenden (1987) found three groups of learners who differed in their beliefs on language learning based on interviews. The first group believed in the importance of using the language, the second group perceived learning about the linguistic aspects such as grammar and syntax as more important and the final group emphasized personal factors in their language learning. She found that the first group tended to employ more communication strategies and to attend more to the meaning and social purpose of the interaction. The second group focused more on the linguistic aspects of their language learning. The final group perceived emotions, self-concept and aptitude as important factors influencing language learning. Apart from the above study, a lot of studies focused on learners' beliefs about the nature of language learning and the efficacy of the strategies they use (e.g., Cotterall, 1995; Elbaum, Berg, & Dodd, 1993; Kuntz, 1996). Palmer and Goetz (1988) found that learners' perceptions of their self-efficacy and the efficacy of LLSs are related to learners' use of skimming, anticipating the test and selective rereading. Oxford (1990) as well as Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) also suggest that beliefs are linked with the use of LLSs. Although the above studies do not specifically focus on MCLLSs, they nevertheless show us that BALLs and MCLLS use are intimately related.

In this study, Horwitz's (1985; 1987) conceptualization of learners' beliefs on language learning has been adopted. Kuntz (1996) commented that the development of BALLI

marked the beginning of systematic research on students' BALLs, and subsequent findings have identified beliefs which are useful for language instruction, curriculum development, textbook writing and programme planning.

Horwitz (1985; 1987) classifies BALLs into five areas, namely *Foreign Language Aptitude*, *The Difficulty of Language Learning*, *The Nature of Language Learning*, *Learning and Communication Strategies*, and *Motivations*. She developed the BALLI (Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory), a self-reported instrument for measuring BALLs, based on the above framework.

Since its introduction, the BALLI has been quite extensively employed to measure not only ESL learners' beliefs about their language learning (e.g., Horwitz, 1988), but also the beliefs of teachers or pre-service teachers with the teachers' version (e.g., Kern, 1995; Peacock, 2001). Horwitz (1999) provides a comprehensive review of the studies using the BALLI. More recently, the BALLI has been employed to measure BALLs in different cultural contexts, such as Korean (e.g., Kim-Yoon, 2000; Truitt, 1995; Park, 1995).

Oxford's (1990) classification of MCLLSs has been adopted in this study because her classification is theoretically more consistent (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002) than other classifications, and is conceptually more sophisticated (Oxford & Cohen, 1992). Ellis (1999) regards Oxford's classification as the most comprehensive one to date, as she built her classifications on earlier ones. She developed her 'Strategies Inventory for Language Learning' (SILL) (Oxford, 1990) to measure LLS use based on her classification. The SILL has been extensively employed in different cultural contexts and in the investigation of how LLSs are related to different learner characteristics, like gender and level of studies (see Oxford, 1996).

The only study focused specifically on the relationships between BALLs and LLS use

employing the BALLI and SILL conducted in the Chinese context was conducted by Yang (1999). In his study in Taiwan, he administered the BALLI and SILL to 505 university students and identified four dimensions of the BALLs: *Self-efficacy and Expectation about Learning English*, *Perceived Value and Nature of Learning Spoken English*, *Beliefs about Foreign Language Aptitude*, and *Beliefs about Formal Structural Studies*. The last dimension refers to the view that language learning is translation and learning of grammar and vocabulary. He suggests that Chinese L2 learners may have a different set of beliefs from Horwitz's sample in the western context. Pearson correlations indicated *Self-efficacy and Expectation about Learning English*, and *Perceived Value and Nature of Learning Spoken English* were closely related to the use of all LLSs. *Beliefs about Foreign Language Aptitude* was found to be connected with functional practice strategies (strategies involving actively seeking or creating opportunities to use or practice English functionally), cognitive-memory strategies and metacognitive strategies. *Beliefs about Formal Structural Studies* was found to be negatively related to functional practice strategies. Findings from canonical correlations, a multivariate analytic method that investigates the degree of relationship between two sets of variables, showed that self-efficacy beliefs and beliefs about the value and nature of spoken English were related to LLS use. In this study, no details on the relationships between BALLs and MCLLSs were given. In another study by Yu (2007), it was found that learners' beliefs relating to different aspects of language learning are significantly related to the actual use of language learning strategies. In a previous study by Banya and Cheng (1997) focusing on how BALLs were related to a number of learner characteristics such as motivation and anxiety, it was found that students who held positive beliefs (as measured by BALLI) used more LLSs and MCLLSs (as measured by the SILL). More specifically, the

*Difficulty of Language Learning, Language Aptitude and Motivation and Expectation* were found to have positive effects on the use of MCLLSs.

As Yang (1999) suggests, Chinese ESL learners may have a different set of beliefs regarding their language learning. Differences in BALL patterns and relationships between BALLs and MCLLS use might also exist among Chinese ESL learners in different contexts. Thus, the BALL patterns and the relationships between BALLs and MCLLS use of ESL learners undertaking vocational education in Hong Kong might be different from Chinese ESL learners [For example, see Yang's (1999) study]. This is because this group of learners has certain learner characteristics which might cause them to have beliefs which are different from learners of other backgrounds, even compared to other groups of learners within the same Hong Kong context. Some examples of these characteristics are their less successful academic results, lower English proficiency, and the fact that they are learning English language of a vocational nature. As Rifkin (2000) found out from his 3-year BALLI study, the type of institution and the level of language instruction are among a number of factors which influence BALLs. What we can see from the literature review above is that there is no information on the BALLs of Chinese ESL learners undertaking vocational education in Hong Kong. Taken together, there are three reasons for conducting the present study:

1. The lack of research focusing on the relationships between BALLs and MCLLSs to date, both in the western and Chinese contexts.
2. The lack of standardization in previous research on BALLs.
3. The lack of previous research focusing on learners undertaking vocational education.

## **Methodology**

### *Participants*

The participants in this study were 10 classes of students randomly selected from a total of 24 classes in first and second year diploma courses in Business Administration at a vocational education institute in Hong Kong. There were about 25 students in each class. A total of 243 students participated in the study.

The beliefs of ESL learners may be influenced by the wider socio-educational environment. Therefore, it is necessary to locate the study participants in the wider socio-linguistic context of Hong Kong. Hong Kong is an international centre of trade, finance and commerce with a population of over six million, 98% of whom are Chinese with Cantonese as the predominant language. Cantonese is common in the daily lives of Hong Kong people and is the 'binding force' of the society. Sin and Roebuck (1996) point out that Cantonese cannot be simply regarded as 'vernacular'. In the monolingual Hong Kong society, English is a foreign language rather than a second language, despite the later claim that English was of increasing importance in the daily lives of Hong Kong people from the 1980s to 1990s (see Bolton, 2000). There has been some evidence of the development of 'Hong Kong English' (Bolton, 2000). However, the evidence is far from prevalent and conclusive compared to the situations in other Asian societies such as Singapore, the Philippines and India. English is typically considered as having a 'value-added' role in Hong Kong society (Li 1999), meaning that English proficiency is always associated with rewards such as better career prospects.

There are two main public examinations at the secondary level in Hong Kong. The first is the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and the second is the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examinations (HKALE). Most candidates take the HKCEE

after their fifth-year of study at a secondary school at the age of about 17. Those who have satisfactory results in their HKCEE are offered places to continue their studies in secondary school for two years (Form Six and Seven). The HKALE is normally taken by a student at the end of his/her two-year sixth-form courses. In both public examinations, English is one of the compulsory subjects, meaning that students have to get at least a pass in order to be eligible to continue their studies. Among those who decide not to prepare for the HKALE, vocational education is one of their alternatives. Students who opt for vocational education are academically less successful and have lower English proficiency compared to their counterparts who decide to study Form Six and Seven. Most of the participants in this study started learning English when they were in primary one, and had been learning English for about 11 years before they entered the vocational education institute.

In year one of the diploma course, which most of the participants of this study are in, English is a compulsory subject, with an approximate instruction time of about 200 hours. The English curriculum is heavily vocationally biased, with students learning the different types of communication needed in the workplace, including speaking, writing, reading and listening.

In sum, the participants of this study were located in the socio-linguistic contexts of Hong Kong in which English is more or less a foreign language to most local people, and has a 'value-added' role associated with external rewards. Participants also had less successful academic results and lower English proficiency compared to other groups of learners of the same age. Finally, they were learning English language of a vocational nature.

### *Instruments and procedures*

The instrument for this study was a survey questionnaire (See Appendix 1) in Chinese comprising three parts. The first part was a Chinese-translated version of the 34-item BALLI (Horwitz, 1987) designed for ESL learners. All items are in the Likert scale format ranging from “1” (“Strongly Agree”) to “5” (“Strongly Disagree”). Several changes were made to the BALLI to suit the Hong Kong context. The first change was that “the Americans” in item 13, 24 and 32 was changed to “people from English-speaking countries” because it is common for Hong Kong people to meet people from other countries in addition to Americans. The second change was that “people from Hong Kong” was used instead of “people of my country” in item 6 and 20 because it is a more popular description in Hong Kong. Finally, “cassettes or tapes” was changed to “audio-visual materials” because it is more common for students in Hong Kong to use computer software or audio-visual materials such as CDs, VCDs, and DVDs in their language learning. The second part of the questionnaire contained nine items measuring MCLLSs taken from Oxford’s (1990) SILL. The Chinese-translated version of the nine items measuring MCLLSs was used in a previous study by Wu (2007) and satisfactory internal consistency was reported. In Wu’s (2007) study, the SILL was administered to 192 students of a vocational education institute, and a Cronbach’s alpha of .878 was reported. The final part of the questionnaire contained items on background information and English language learning in general, which was recommended by Oxford (1990) to be used together with the SILL. As in the case of the nine MCLLS items and the SILL, these items were also translated and used in the previous study by Wu (2007). The survey questionnaire was administered to the ten selected classes at the beginning of their English lesson in the presence of the researcher.

The data collected were analysed with the SPSS. Descriptive statistics on the MCLLS use and BALLs and inferential statistics on their relationships, such as correlations and multiple regressions, were performed.

## **Results**

This section is divided into two parts. The first part introduces descriptive findings on the background information of the respondents and their reported patterns of BALLs and MCLLS use. In the second part, findings on the relationships between BALLs and MCLLS use, as indicated by Pearson product-moment correlations and multiple regressions, are given. The focus of this paper is the relationship between BALLs and MCLLS use. Therefore, the results from descriptive analysis will only be reported briefly. Also, details on how certain learner characteristics in this group (as introduced in section 'Participant') contribute to their descriptive BALL patterns as well as findings from factor analysis will be outlined. Details on these two aspects can be found in Wu (2008).

### *Background information and results of descriptive analyses of BALLs and SILL*

The section reports the biographic information of respondents and their patterns of BALLs and MCLLS use as indicated by descriptive statistics. They are briefly described below.

Among the 243 respondents, 145 were studying in year one (59.7%) and 98 in year two (40.3%). Their mean age was 18.88 (SD=1.48), with the means (SDs) of year one and year two as 18.17(1.238) and 19.92(1.154) respectively. Approximately half of them were males (51.0%) and half were females (49.0%).

The reliability of BALLI, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha, was .768. This shows that

the BALLI has satisfactory internal consistency and is comparable to the value of .878 reported by Wu (2007).

Results indicate that respondents regarded English language learning as important and endorsed the existence of a specialized ability in language learning. Most respondents agreed with the idea that it is easier for children to learn a foreign language and that some people are better language learners than others. However, they did not endorse the idea that women are better language learners and they agreed that everyone can learn a foreign language. They had a low self-efficacy for English learning and regarded English as a subject of medium difficulty. Studying vocabulary and grammar, excellent pronunciation, and repeated practice were regarded as important aspects of English language learning. A high level of motivation prevailed among the respondents, and the level of instrumental motivation was higher than that of integrative motivation. Finally, respondents reported medium use of MCLLSs. These findings reveal the role of their less successful academic results and lower English proficiency in contributing to their low self-efficacy. They also show how the influence of the socio-linguistic context of Hong Kong contributes to their instrumental language-learning motivation.

The BALLI items do not yield a composite score. Therefore, like previous studies, principal component and factor analyses using varimax rotation were performed to determine the underlying structure of the BALLI items. Analyses resulted in four factors, *Importance and Difficulty of Foreign Language Learning*, *Self-efficacy*, *Language and Communication Strategies*, and *Integrative Motivation*. The variance explained (or the eigenvalues, which is the proportion of total variance in all the variables which can be accounted for by that factor) by these four factors are 9.221%, 6.759%, 6.469%, and 6.004% respectively, and altogether they explain a total of 28.453% of the total variance.

We can see that the factor structure obtained in this study is different from that of Yang's (1999) mentioned earlier.

A reliability test of the SILL was conducted, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of .884, which is comparable to the alpha of .878 reported by Wu (2007). This shows that the part of SILL measuring MCLLSs has satisfactory internal consistency.

According to the criteria of Oxford (1990), Paying Attention and Finding out about Language Learning were frequently used by the respondents of this study (with means of 3.57 and 3.48 respectively). The remaining MCLLSs were used to a moderate degree, with means ranging from 2.7 to 3.4. The least frequently used strategy was Organizing (M = 2.69). These findings show that despite the non-existence of LLS/MCLLS instruction in the Hong Kong English classroom, the use of MCLLSs was found to be prevalent, even for this group of learners who are characterized by being academically less successful and having lower English proficiency than their counterparts who are studying matriculation programmes.

#### *Results related to the relationships between BALLs and MCLLS Use*

This section aims to provide answers to the research question of this study: How are learners' BALLs related to the use of MCLLSs of Chinese-speaking L2 learners' undertaking vocational education in Hong Kong? In this section, results from Pearson product-moment correlations and multiple regression analyses showing how BALLs and MCLLS use are related will be introduced.

Results from correlational analyses indicate the existence of weak relationships between BALLs and MCLLS use. Among the weak positive relationships found, *Integrative Motivation* was found to have the strongest relationship with MCLLS use.

The factors *Language and Communication Strategies* and *Self-efficacy* were found to be weakly related to MCLLS use. The item ‘everyone can learn to speak a foreign language’ was also found to be positively related to MCLLS use in general. Results from linear multiple regression analyses show that *Integrative motivation* is the best predictor of total MCLLS use, which confirms the finding that *Integrative Motivation* plays an important role in influencing MCLLS use. *Self-efficacy* and *Learning and Communication Strategies* were found to be predictive of total MCLLS use and most of the individual MCLLSs, although only to a small extent.

#### *Results from Pearson product-moment correlations*

The magnitudes of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the BALLI factors (obtained from factor analyses) and the use of MCLLSs are low. The coefficients range from .129 to .361. The coefficient of total MCLLS use with the four factors of *Importance and Difficulty of Foreign Language Learning*, *Self-efficacy*, *Language and Communication Strategies* and *Integrative Motivation* are .269, .285, .341 and .355 respectively. We can see that the BALL factor having the strongest relationships with MCLLS use in general is *Integrative Motivation*. Despite the weak relationships found, findings nevertheless confirm the previous findings that beliefs and LLS use are related (e.g., Oxford 1990; Schmidt and Watanabe 2001; Yang 1999), at least to a certain extent.

As far as the specific relationships between individual items of each BALL factor and MCLLSs are concerned, all items included in *Integrative Motivation* were found to correlate with MCLLS use as a whole. Item 13 (I enjoy practicing English with people from English-speaking countries I meet) and 32 (I would like to have friends from English-speaking countries) of the BALLI were found to have the strongest correlations

with total MCLLS use (with coefficients .337 and .332 respectively). Despite the existence of a high instrumental motivation among the respondents (which might be an outcome of the “value-added” role of English in the society and the vocational nature of the English language that the participants were studying), the moderate relationship found between integrative rather than instrumental motives with MCLLS use supports the earlier finding by Wu (2007).

It is not surprising to find positive (despite weak) relationships between all items of *Learning and Communication Strategies* with MCLLS use, both in general and with individual MCLLSs. This is because the BALLI items measure beliefs about LLS use and the SILL items measure actual use of MCLLSs. The reason for the weak relationships found is that the BALLI items put more emphasis on cognitive and social / affective strategies, while the SILL items employed in this study focus on the use of MCLLSs. Nevertheless, this finding confirms the contention pointed out earlier in the literature review that beliefs match the actual use of LLSs to a certain extent (Oxford 1990; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992).

The factor found to have the fewest items related to MCLLS use is *Self-efficacy*, in which only three out of the total of five items were positively correlated to MCLLS use. Despite this, item 5 (I believe that I will learn to speak English very well) and 6 (Hong Kong people are good at learning foreign languages) were found to be related to total MCLLS use and the use of most MCLLSs. Their correlation coefficients with total MCLLS use are .385 and .331 respectively. The relationships show that a learner who believed they would learn to speak English very well and were good at learning languages tended to use MCLLSs more often than another learner who did not believe so. This confirms the earlier finding of Pintrich (1989) and Yang (1999).

Item 33 (Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language) was found to have a relatively stronger relationship with MCLLS use in general. Its correlational coefficient with total MCLLS use is .309. The positive relationship of this item with MCLLS use shows that respondents who regard foreign language learning as not requiring specialized ability tend to use more MCLLSs and to use them more frequently. We should remember that most respondents endorsed the idea that there is a specialized ability for foreign language learning. The prevalence of this belief may hinder respondents' use of MCLLSs.

Among the other items not belonging to any factor, the positive correlation found between BALLI item 24 (which measure integrative motivation) and MCLLS use ( $r=.394$ ) is consistent with the positive relationship found between *Integrative Motivation* and MCLLS use pointed out earlier. Given the strong relationship between integrative motivation and MCLLS use already mentioned, it is not surprising to find this pattern. The relationship of these two items with the use of all MCLLSs shows that learners who put an emphasis on the culture and integrating into English-speaking societies are more likely to use MCLLSs (Wu, 2007).

Taken together, the above analyses show that respondents who were motivated by integrative reasons believed in the usefulness of LLSs, had high self-efficacy, and regarded foreign language learning as not requiring any specialized ability were found to use MCLLSs more frequently.

We should remember that results from correlational analyses do not show any cause and effect relationships. This means that the relationships found only show that two variables are either positively or negatively related. The weak, positive relationships found between BALLs and MCLLS use in this study only show that participants who believe more strongly in the different dimensions of BALLs obtained from factor

analyses use MCLLSs more frequently. The lack of strong positive relationships can mean that more frequent MCLLS use causes participants to believe more in the different dimensions of BALLs. In order to obtain more information on cause and effect relationships, multiple regression analyses (statistical analyses indicating cause and effect relationships) of BALLs and MCLLS use were performed.

### *Results from multiple regressions*

A series of linear multiple regression analyses (See Appendix 2) were conducted to determine which BALLI themes obtained from earlier factor analyses are predictive of MCLLS use. Multiple regression is a statistical procedure which enables us to determine the relationship between several independent or predictor variables and a dependent or criterion variable. Unlike correlational statistics, multiple regression statistics show the cause and effect relationships between one and another one or more selected variables. MCLLS use was selected as the dependent factor because these are manifest behaviours learners use in their language learning. BALLs, on the other hand, are internal beliefs and are more stable.

Consistent with the results of the previous section, *Integrative Motivation* was found to be predictive of all MCLLSs except Setting Goals and Objectives. Among the factors which were found to be predictive of the use of MCLLSs, Integrative Motivation contributes the largest number of variances of all MCLLSs except Organizing and Self-monitoring. Its contribution to the variances explain the use of MCLLSs in general. The MCLLS categories of Arranging and Planning your Learning and Seeking Practice Opportunities are both over 10%. On the basis of these findings, together with the earlier findings from correlational analyses, we can conclude that integrative motivation plays an

important role in learners' use of MCLLSs. At the same time, these findings confirm Wu's (2007) finding that integrative motivation is a good predictor of MCLLSs use.

It is worth mentioning that *Self-efficacy* is found to be predictive of total MCLLS use, the MCLLS category of Arranging and Planning your Learning, and the MCLLSs of Organizing, Setting Goals and Objectives, Seeking Practice Opportunities and Self-evaluating. The variances explained by Self-efficacy in these MCLLSs aspects are 6.2%, 6.0%, 8.6%, 2.8%, 4.7% and 4.1% respectively. Despite these small percentages, this finding nevertheless shows the role of Self-efficacy in influencing the use of these MCLLSs. This finding is consistent with the qualitative findings of Graham (2006) that learners with lower self-efficacy tend to ignore the role of LLSs in achieving success in their language learning, while learners with high self-efficacy regarded the use of LLSs as important. Taken together, the weak relationships found between BALLs and MCLLS use in this study show that it is possible that learners holding a particular belief may not necessarily act on it, as Ellis (2008) concluded from his review of the studies focusing on the relationships between beliefs and language achievements. The weak relationships also show that the ways beliefs and actual learning behaviours are related is far more than simplistic. Other factors such as context, time, motivation, and other learner characteristics might contribute to the transformation of beliefs into learning behaviours, as in the use of MCLLSs demonstrated in this study.

Another BALLI theme found to predict MCLLS use is *Language and Communication Strategies*. However, compared to *Integrative Motivation*, its contribution to the variances explaining the use of various MCLLSs was relatively low, at less than 5% except for Self-monitoring. These findings show that belief in the use of MCLLSs results in the actual use of MCLLSs to some extent, as discussed earlier in the literature review.

## **Conclusion**

The answers to the research question in this study, ‘*How are learners’ BALLs related to the use of MCLLS of Chinese-speaking L2 learners undertaking vocational education in Hong Kong?*’ are that learners’ beliefs about language learning were found to be weakly related to the use of MCLLSs. More specifically, *Integrative Motivation* was found to have the strongest positive relationship with MCLLSs use. Results of multiple regression analyses indicate that *Integrative Motivation* is a good predictor of the use of all MCLLSs. *Self-efficacy* and *Language and Communication Strategies* were also found to be predictive of MCLLS use to a small extent.

## **Implications for teaching**

Since the focus of this paper is on the relationships between BALLs and MCLLS use, the implications from the descriptive findings, such as the high to medium use of MCLLS and BALL patterns or the existence of beliefs which are both facilitative and non-facilitative to language learning, will be omitted. This part focuses on the pedagogical implications of the roles of *Integrative Motivation*, *Self-efficacy* and *Language and Communication Strategies* in learners’ use of MCLLSs as found in both correlational and multiple regression analyses. They are discussed below.

The learners’ desire to integrate into English-speaking culture and societies was found to be related to the use of MCLLSs. More importantly, it was found to be predictive of MCLLS use. This implies that heightening learners’ integrative motivation facilitates the use of MCLLSs. The importance of learning about culture and the English-speaking environment is related to the use of most MCLLSs. Raising awareness of the importance of learning about culture can heighten learners’ integrative motivation and, at the same

time, increase learners' use of MCLLSs. However, given the contextual influence of the lack of English use in the daily lives of most Hong Kong people, the 'value-added' role of English in the Hong Kong society and the prevalence of instrumental motivation in English learning (as pointed out earlier in the section 'Participant'), teachers may face resistance in raising learners' interest in the English speaking culture. This phenomenon is reflected by the finding that respondents are not aware of the importance of learning about culture. There is a need to correct these beliefs which are non-facilitative to their L2 learning. As culture embraces a wide variety of aspects, teachers can select the aspects which are attractive to their learners. Some examples are pop culture, food or computer software. The special role of English in the Hong Kong socio-linguistic context is also found in a lot of Asian contexts to varying extents. Therefore, this implication is also applicable to other Asian contexts.

Learners' self-efficacy was found to be predictive of MCLLS use. This implies that boosting learners' self-efficacy can result in learners' increased use of MCLLSs. This is particularly true for the participants of this study who have less successful language learning achievements and unsatisfactory academic results. Graham (2006), based on the findings of her study on metacognitive beliefs comparing learners of contrasting self-efficacy beliefs, suggests that teachers should not only advise learners to try out different LLSs, but also assist them to develop a greater sense of their own agency. However, teachers may face high resistance in boosting learners' self-efficacy. This is because this group of learners has rather less successful academic and language learning achievements in the past and it is not possible to change their self-efficacy beliefs within a short time.

It is not surprising to find positive relationships between beliefs about MCLLSs and actual MCLLS use, because it has been pointed out earlier in the literature review. What

is worth mentioning is that this group of learners had less successful academic results, lower self-efficacy and English proficiency. Despite this, findings show that this group of learners is not only positive in their views towards MCLLS use, but also has a certain level of competency in MCLLS use. Their positive beliefs regarding LLS use and the high to medium use of MCLLSs should be encouraged. This can be achieved by recognizing their use of LLSs and further explaining to them the usefulness of LLS in their language learning. The extent of the applicability of the findings of this study to other Asian contexts is still not certain due to the lack of previous research. Nevertheless, we can speculate that the suggestions for boosting learners' self-efficacy and recognizing learners' use of LLSs and MCLLSs are applicable to these contexts, given the consistency of the findings in this study with those gathered in the western contexts, which were outlined in the literature review (e.g., Palmer & Goetz, 1988).

### **Directions for future research**

This study employed a survey questionnaire to collect quantitative data. The findings were quantitative descriptive data and inferential statistics. Other methods of data collection should be employed in future research so that we can have a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the two variables. Some examples of these data collection methods are teacher interview, student interview and classroom observation. Triangulation of data sources and methods can also be employed in order to give a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under study.

Use of a survey questionnaire containing pre-determined items allows standardization of responses and the easy statistical manipulation of findings. However, it is possible that some responses might not fall under the questions included in the questionnaire items.

Therefore, the collection of qualitative data in future research is highly desirable because qualitative findings can complement the quantitative findings gathered in this study.

It is possible that BALLs change over time. Kern (1995), for example, identified changes in BALLs over a 15-week period. Longitudinal research can capture this type of change. However, to date very few studies on BALLs are longitudinal in nature, and more of this type of research should be conducted.

There is a need to conduct more research in other Asian contexts, particularly involving academically less successful ESL learners. More research in this area is needed in order that the similarities and differences of the characteristics across different Asian contexts can be identified. At the same time, lower achieving ESL learners in Asian contexts can benefit from improved teaching.

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## Appendix 1

### Survey questionnaire

We are carrying out a research on English learning, and would like to get your opinions. There are no right and wrong answers to the questions. Information which you give will be kept confidential and only be used for research purposes. We would be grateful if you could spend 20 minutes to complete this questionnaire.

#### Part I

Below are beliefs that some people have about learning foreign languages. Circle the answers which best describe you. Question 4 and 15 are slightly different and you should mark them as indicated.

		Strongly agree					Stron disag				
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1.	It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.										
2.	Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.										
3.	Some languages are easier to learn than others.										
4.	English is										
	(Pease circle										
	one answer)										
	(a). a very difficult language										
	(b). a difficult language										
	(c). a language of medium difficulty										
	(d). an easy language										

(e). a very easy language

- |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5.  | I believe that I will learn to speak English very well.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.  | Hong Kong people are good at learning foreign languages.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.  | It is important to speak English with an excellent pronunciation.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8.  | It is necessary to know about English-speaking cultures in order to speak English.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9.  | You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning foreign languages.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | I enjoy practicing English with the people from English-speaking countries I meet.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. | It's o.k. to guess if you don't know a word in English.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. | If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language very well:<br>(Please circle) (a). less than a year<br>(b). 1-2 years<br>(c). 3-5 years<br>(d). 5-10 years<br>(e). You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day. |   |   |   |   |   |
| 16. | I have a special ability for learning foreign languages.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. | The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. | It is important to repeat and practice a lot.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. | Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. | People in Hong Kong feel that it is important to speak English.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. | I feel timid speaking English with other people.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. | If beginning students are permitted to make errors in English, it will be difficult for them to speak correctly later on.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. | The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. | I would like to learn English so that I can get to know people from English-speaking countries better.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. | It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. | It is important to practice with audio-visual materials.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. | Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



4. Do you enjoy learning English?

Yes No

5. What has been your favourite experience in English learning?

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6. Do you have other comments on what have been mentioned in this questionnaire?

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**\*\* End of Questionnaire. Thank you \*\***

## **Appendix 2**

### **Findings from multiple regression analysis**

Dependent variable	Independent variable	$\beta^a$	R <sup>2</sup> Change <sup>b</sup>	R <sup>2b</sup>
<i>MCLLS Total</i>	<i>Integrative Motivation</i>	.284***	.133	.133
	<i>Self-efficacy</i>	.187**	.062	.195
	<i>Learning and Communication Strategies</i>	.175*	.023	.218
<i>Centering your Learning<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>Integrative Motivation</i>	.237***	.095	.095
	<i>Learning and Communication Strategies</i>	.196**	.033	.128
<i>Arranging and Planning your Learning</i>	<i>Integrative Motivation</i>	.272***	.119	.119
	<i>Self-efficacy</i>	.193**	.060	.179
	<i>Learning and Communication Strategies</i>	.149*	.017	.196
<i>Evaluating your Learning</i>	<i>Integrative Motivation</i>	.209**	.079	.079
	<i>Learning and Communication Strategies</i>	.199**	.034	.113
<i>Paying Attention</i>	<i>Integrative Motivation</i>	.237***	.095	.095
	<i>Learning and Communication Strategies</i>	.196**	.033	.128
<i>Finding out about Language Learning</i>	<i>Integrative Motivation</i>	.231**	.094	.094
	<i>Learning and Communication Strategies</i>	.209**	.038	.132

<i>Organizing</i>	<i>Self-efficacy</i>	.279***	.086	.086
	<i>Integrative Motivation</i>	.145*	.021	.107
<i>Setting Goals and Objectives</i>	<i>Importance and Difficulty of Foreign Language Learning</i>	.217**	.054	.054
	<i>Self-efficacy</i>	.168**	.028	.082
<i>Seeking Practice Opportunities</i>	<i>Integrative Motivation</i>	.345***	.137	.137
	<i>Self-efficacy</i>	.218***	.047	.184
<i>Self-monitoring</i>	<i>Learning and Communication Strategies</i>	.202**	.067	.067
	<i>Integrative Motivation</i>	.157*	.021	.088
	<i>Self-efficacy</i>	.204**	.041	.106

\*\*\*:  $p < .001$ , \*\*:  $p < .01$ , \*:  $p < .05$

<sup>a</sup>: b coefficient, based on the final model. b coefficients (or regression coefficients) represent the independent contributions of each independent variable to the prediction of the dependent variable.

<sup>b</sup>: R-square Change and R-square value, based on each successive model. A R-square is an indicator of how well the model fits the data (e.g., an R-square close to 1.0 indicates that we have accounted for almost all of the variability with the variables specified in the model).

<sup>c</sup>: Measured by Paying attention. Statistics reproduced for easy reference.

## **Teachers' Intention vs. Learners' Attention: Do Learners Attend to What Teachers Want Them to Attend to in an EFL Vocabulary Class?**

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### **Abstract**

The main thrust of this study was to investigate whether there is compatibility between teachers' intention and learner's attention in a vocabulary class. The focus is on pronunciation, spelling and meaning. Two possible explanatory variables were further considered: frequency and order of occurrence of lexical items in classroom discourse. The study was characterised by a rather 'novel' research methodology adopting a multi-instrumental approach. It relied on uptake to obtain hard evidence of intake. The results showed that: (a) learners seem to attend mostly to meaning, then to spelling and, last to pronunciation; (b) the items most attended to were those which occurred last in classroom discourse; and (c) there was a weak correlation between frequency of occurrence and all three aspects, which suggests that, contrary to most teachers' assumptions, this variable had no significant impact on learners' attention.

**Keywords:** Attention, Vocabulary, Teacher's Intention, Uptake

## **Introduction**

It is now widely acknowledged that knowledge of vocabulary constitutes the cornerstone of foreign language courses. Ideally, in language classrooms, as Stern (1975) noted, ‘it is our ambition to approximate the native speaker’s knowledge of the language’ (p. 305). Regarding vocabulary, when introducing lexical items, teachers want their pupils to approximate the teachers’ own knowledge of the items introduced (i.e., the target lexis), especially where the teacher is the only linguistic model available. Put more explicitly, teachers want their pupils to learn the semantic (meaning), phonological (pronunciation), morpho-graphological (spelling), and the pragmatic (use) aspects of the target lexis. Teachers usually strive to attain this aim by a myriad of ways aimed to attract learners’ attention. Nation (2005) provides a list of these ways: (a) giving the meaning of words in students’ native language, (b) using a known L2 synonym or opposite, (c) breaking the words into parts and giving the meaning of the parts and the whole word (the word part strategy), (d) drawing students’ attention to the word’s morphology (prefix, stem and suffix), (e) getting learners to repeat the pronunciation of the words, and (f) pointing out any spelling irregularity in the word.

However, as Allwright (1984) argued, each lesson is a different lesson for each individual as different things are likely to be drawn by different learners from the same event, independently of the teacher’s intention. This clearly poses the problem of teachers’ intention and learners’ attention. Allwright goes on to suggest that the reality may be that learners do not learn what teachers teach. Worded differently, the reality may be that learners do not attend to what teachers want them to attend to. Such an issue is still timely as it is often assumed that whatever has been present in the input has been

attended to and becomes intake. Is it so? The central question is then: *Do learners learn what teachers teach?*

What teachers teach is known as input and what learners learn is commonly referred to as intake. Since input is generally already planned in the syllabus, it is then something intended to be taught. On the other hand, intake is generally defined, to take Corder's (1967) definition, as 'what goes in' or according to van Patten (1989), 'that subset of the input which the learner actually perceives and processes' (p. 409). Psychology contends that in order to learn the input we must attend to it (though in some cases learning can be incidental). Hence, the foregoing question can be asked: *Do learners attend to what teachers want them to attend to?*

Since, as already mentioned, teachers want their pupils to learn the meaning, pronunciation, spelling, and use of the target lexis, again this question can be translated into: *What aspect(s) of lexis (phonological, morpho-graphological, semantic and pragmatic aspects) do learners attend to most in order to convert input into intake?*

This constitutes the ultimate research question of the project reported here. Attention is then seen as a mediating variable between teaching and learning. This can be represented as follows:



Attention is a complex phenomenon, which can be influenced by a plethora of factors. The research design developed in this study permits the investigation of two possible explanatory factors which are typically classroom variables and which are pedagogic rather than social, psychological or otherwise. These variables are:

1. The frequency of occurrence of lexical items in classroom discourse (i.e. the number of times an item occurs in classroom discourse).
2. The order of occurrence of lexical items in classroom discourse (at what period of the lesson the items have occurred).

Regarding these two issues, personal experience has shown that it is commonly assumed among teachers that the more lexical items are repeated in class the more they have a chance to be taken in by learners. Similarly, it is taken for granted that things mentioned last are more likely to be retained. This research, consequently, seeks to further investigate whether this is so.

#### *Factors which influence attention*

An individual's attention can be affected by a plethora of factors, which are generally divided into external and internal factors. Those pertaining to the language classroom are briefly outlined below.

#### External factors

1. Intensity of a stimulus such as loud noises, bright colours, strong odours, or sizes: attention is generally attracted by a noise louder than the others, an object bigger than the other, an odour stronger than the others, or a divergent movement.
2. Novelty: any unexpected or unaccustomed change in a stimulus makes it prominent and likely to attract attention (e.g. the use of irregular form in texts such as bold type or italics)
3. Changing stimulus: we become accustomed to a permanent stimulus in the same way we get used to the ticking of a clock. To attract attention, teaching aids should be changed. A good example of changing stimulus is given by teachers who use their voices to attract attention by changing the intonation.
4. Colours: the use of colours is another factor which serves to attract attention. Red and white designs have a better chance of attracting attention than black and white.

5. Conditioned and habitual stimuli: stimuli to which one has been accustomed to be exposed are likely to be picked out from other stimuli. The cocktail party effect is an example of this. This refers to the ability to focus one's listening attention on a single talker among a mixture of conversations and background noises, ignoring other conversations (Cherry, 1953). For example, it is often possible to hear one's name over a hubbub or over chatter or conversation at a party.

### Internal factors

1. Interest: clearly, tasks in which an individual has gained interest are likely to draw his/her attention. Attitudes to events or ideas affect the extent to which we pay attention to them.
2. Physical or social deprivations: the direction and intensity of our attention can largely be affected by deprivation pertaining to basic human needs.
3. Fatigue: attention is detrimentally affected by fatigue. A physically tired student or a student short of sleep is obviously less likely to pay attention in class.
4. Arousal state: an optimal level of arousal is needed for attention. Beyond this level, which varies according the external factors mentioned above, attention becomes adversely affected.

### **Methodological issues**

Given the nature of the research question (what aspects of lexis do learners attend to most?) some considerations were to be kept in mind for the choice of methodological orientation. These were:

1. Attention being an unobservable phenomenon, data were to be gathered from the learners' own perspective.
2. The use of some elicitation procedures was required to gather 'mentalist data' in order to investigate what goes on in the learners' minds.
3. The data were to be gathered in the learners' natural environment, the classroom, as unobtrusively as possible.

These considerations comply with the attributes of classroom research. Before considering the research method, it is important to examine how the terms used in the research question have been defined, namely aspects of lexis, attention, input, and intake.

1. Aspects of lexis: This term includes the semantic/pragmatic aspect, the phonological aspect, and the morpho-graphological aspect. The semantic/pragmatic aspect is equated with meaning, the phonological aspect is equated with pronunciation, and the morpho-graphological aspect is equated with spelling.
2. Attend/attention: Attention being a mental process and an unobservable aspect of a learning situation, one possible way of getting to know whether someone has or has not attended to something is by relying on Schmidt's (1990) notion of 'noticeability'. That is, what becomes intake is what a learner consciously notices. If a lexical item (with all or part of its aspects) has been intaken, then it must have been attended to.
3. Input: This term is used to refer to the lexical items which are part of the target lexis (i.e. intended to be taught by the teacher) and those which occur in classroom discourse and are believed by the learners to be new (never encountered before).
4. Intake: In the absence of a satisfactory means of getting at intake (what a learner has actually learnt), the notion of uptake (Allwright, 1984) provides an operational way of getting at what has attracted learners' attention. Uptake refers to what learners claim to have learnt from a learning situation that has just preceded.

## **Data collection: methods and procedures**

### *Subjects and subject selection*

The study took place in a secondary school in Setif, Algeria. The attitude of learners towards the study and the instruments, especially video-recording, was of utmost importance. A negative attitude could undermine the whole project. Standard methods of subject selection such as random sampling could not be applied. One had to select among learners those who were willing to take part in the study and who would not mind the use of video and audio-recordings. Fearing that, due to cultural considerations, some female learners might refuse to be filmed, the subjects were clearly informed that the film and whatever reports and comments they made would be entirely confidential and that they were not in any case to be shown to any person, especially the teacher, nor would they have bearing on their grades.

264 learners were then asked to fill out a preliminary 'permission questionnaire' in which they had to answer the following questions:

Question 1: Would you like to take part in a study?

Question 2: Do you agree on the use of an audio recorder?

Question 3: Do you agree on the use of a video camera?

In light of the results of this questionnaire one freshmen class with the most positive attitude and their teacher were retained. Positive attitude was determined according to the number of students who (1) were willing to take part in the study, (2) agreed on the use of the audio recorder, and (3) agreed on the use of the video camera. Appendix 1 shows the overall results of the 'Permission Questionnaire'. It appears that there was unanimity in only one (class 1ST4). The latter consisted of 39 learners, 20 of whom were girls and 19 were boys aged between 16 and 17. At the same time, another class (where only one female student disagreed on the use of the video camera) was retained for the pilot study. During the videotaping that female learner was kept out of the camera scope.

## **Instrumentation**

Taking again the information above, it was necessary to collect two bodies of data: an account of input and an account of intake. The next step would be to devise means of answering the question 'attention to what?' Methodologically speaking, one has to answer the following questions before any attempt to gather data:

- How can one get an account of input?
- How can one get an account of intake, or rather uptake?
- How can the question 'attention to what' be answered?

Because a word can occur in both the written and the spoken modes and this study is concerned with pronunciation, spelling and meaning, one needs verbal and non-verbal accounts. The ideal procedure to collect input was to videotape the learning situation.

### *Uptake Recall Chart and Uptake Identification Probe Chart*

Uptake was collected by simply asking the learners to try to report the words and phrases that had occurred in the lesson they had just attended. The instrument used was a one-question questionnaire called The Uptake Recall Chart (URC) (see Appendix II). The question was: what words and phrases occurred in today's lesson? Two hours later, each subject was given back his/her own Uptake Recall Chart and asked to answer the question below. These questions were asked orally. The subjects' annotated URC was called the Uptake Identification Probe Chart (UIPC). The questions were

1. Of all the words and expressions you wrote in your Uptake Recall Chart, which were completely new to you? Mark them with an N.
2. Of all the words and expressions you wrote, which do you think the teacher most wanted you to learn? Mark them with a T.

These two instruments were an adaptation of Slimani's (1987). The purpose of the question of the URC was three-fold. First, it served to find out whether the target lexis (items intended to be taught by the teacher) had attracted learners' attention to the extent of being reported. Second, it served to investigate attention to the spelling of the target lexis. Third, it helped in the design of the Target Lexis Chart (see below). Concerning the Uptake Identification Probe, the question (which items were completely new to you?) was meant to find out whether what the teacher believed to be new was also believed to be new or not by learners. The idea behind the second question (which items do you think the teacher most wanted you to learn?) was to find out whether the informants were sensitive to the teachers' intention and plan. The Uptake Identification Probe also gave an opportunity to the learners to add any items that came to memory and to correct the spelling of the items reported.

#### *Teacher interview*

After the lesson the teacher was interviewed about those items. He was first asked to annotate the list indicating what items he believed were completely new to the learners. The teacher was further asked to dissociate between items he had planned to teach (intended lexis) from those he did not plan to teach (unintended lexis). The teacher's interview and the uptake identification questionnaires (Uptake Recall Chart and Uptake Identification Probe Chart) were to serve for the next stage of the research project.

#### *Target Lexis Chart*

Immediately after the collection of the teacher's interview and the uptake identification questionnaires, the latter were scanned to make a list of all the items claimed by learners

to have occurred in classroom discourse and entered into a table. For each item, the different spellings produced by learners were selected. The items annotated by the teacher as new served for the design of the 'Target Lexis Chart' (TLC) which was to serve as a basis for another questionnaire bearing the same name.

The Target Lexis Chart (see Appendix III) consisted of a list of words, which occurred in the lesson and which the teacher annotated as new to which were added some words that never occurred in the lesson. The latter were meant as distracters in order to prod learners into calling upon their memory, to have them really make an effort to try to remember and answer the questions of the questionnaire. Learners were first asked to say which items in the list occurred in the lesson they had attended the same day and which did not. They were informed about the presence of the distracters. They were then told that some words were spelt correctly and that some were not. They were asked to correct the misspelled items in the space provided under each item. Again this was meant to have them make an effort to pay specific attention to spelling. The other questions were related to the teacher's intention, pronunciation and meaning. For each item learners had then to answer four questions:

1. Did it occur in today's lesson?
2. Did the teacher want you to learn it?
3. Do you think that it is spelt correctly? If not, correct it.
4. Do you think that you learnt its meaning? If yes, what does it mean? (Explain it in Arabic, in French or by any other means).

These questions were asked orally one by one. Once all subjects have answered a question they were given the next one. The idea behind the first question was to see whether the respondents had paid attention at all to the occurrence of the items in

classroom discourse. The second question was the same as the second question of the URC (i.e., it was meant to account for attention to the teacher's intention) and served to crosscheck the findings. The third question served to investigate attention to spelling and again the answers were to be crosschecked with those of the first question of the URC. The fourth question was obviously meant to account for attention to meaning. There were 14 items in the Target Lexis Chart: underground, meals, inhuman, human, accurate, store, space, feel, capable, manufacture, capacity, ability, pilot, war.

The next stage of the research project was concerned with attention to pronunciation.

### *Pronunciation Chart*

Learners were invited to see the film of the lesson recorded in the morning. This session was meant to serve as a 'memory jogger'. Immediately afterwards, they were each presented separately with a list of the Target Lexis and were invited to read it out in front of the microphone of an audiocassette recorder. The following table displays the data collection sequence.

**Table 1: Data collection sequence**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>8:00 - 9:00</b>	Video taping lesson	Account of input
<b>9:00 - 9:30</b>	Uptake Recall Chart (URC)	- Account of uptake - Attention to spelling - Annotate target lexis
	Teacher debriefed	Identify new items from teacher's perspective
<b>11:00 -12:00</b>	Uptake Probe Chart	- Further Probe - Identify new items from learners perspective - Informants' sensitivity to teacher's intention

<b>12:00 - 14:00</b>	Scanning Uptake Identification questionnaires (URC + UPI)	Prepare Target Lexis Chart (TLC)
<b>14:00 - 15:00</b>	Target Lexis Chart Administration	- Occurrence of items - Teacher's intention - Attention to spelling - Attention to meaning/ spelling/ teacher's intention.
<b>15:00 - 16:00</b>	Reviewing film	- Memory jogging.
<b>16:00 - 17:00</b>	- Audio recording - Pronunciation chart	- Attention to pronunciation.

## Results

After the collection of the various bodies of data, the first task consisted of transcribing the lesson. It should be noted that the total number of items which occurred in classroom discourse (Total Input, TI) was 99 (see Appendix IV). The total number of items reported by learners was 80. That is, 19 items were not claimed (from item 81 to 99 on Data Sheet I) and constitute what Slimani (op. cit.) labelled as 'lost items'. Among the 80 items claimed 31 items received at most 2 claims. That is, they were claimed by only 5.22% of the learners.

In analysing the data, the purposes of each instrument were considered separately and the questions that each instrument attempted to answer were investigated. Hence, three distinct issues were considered:

1. The issue of attention to aspects of lexis (spelling, meaning, pronunciation) from the Uptake Recall Chart, the Target Lexis Chart and the Pronunciation Chart;
2. The issue of attention to teacher's intention from the Uptake Recall Chart and Target Lexis Chart;
3. The issue of the possible effect of the order of occurrence and frequency of occurrence on learners' attention from the lesson transcript and the other instruments.

In this last instance while analysing the informants' Uptake Recall Charts, an attempt was made to find any relationship between two sets of parameters. The first set was uptake (of each lexical item), spelling, pronunciation and meaning, and the other was frequency and order of occurrence of the items in the lesson. The purpose was to answer the following questions 'is there any relationship between':

1. a- uptake and frequency of occurrence?                      b- uptake and order of occurrence?
2. a- spelling and frequency of occurrence?                      b- spelling and order of occurrence?
3. a- pronunciation and frequency of occurrence?                      b- pronunciation and order of occurrence?
4. a- meaning and frequency of occurrence?                      b- meaning and order of occurrence?

The results obtained from the instruments used are displayed together the table below.

**Table 2: Overall results of the study**

	Uptake Recall Chart (URC)	Uptake Identification Probe Chart (UIPC)	Target Lexis Chart (TLC)	Pronunciation Chart (PC)
Total Input occurrence	21.49 items/ learner = 1.70%			
Target Lexis occurrence	6.69 items/ learner =47.78 %		8.7 items / learner = 62.79%	
New?		45.68 % of learners	11.28 new items/ learner = 80.57 %	
Intended?		30.33 % of learners	10.25 items/ learner = 75%	
Spelling	58.96% of TL correct		7.58 correct items/ 14 = 54.14%	
Meaning			12.48 correct items/14 = 89.14%	
Pronunciation				6.87 correct items/ learner = 50 %

From this table it appears that:

1. The Uptake Recall Chart provided information concerning:

- a. Attention to the occurrence of the Total Input;
- b. Attention to the occurrence of the Target Lexis;
- c. Attention to the spelling of the Target Lexis.

2. The Uptake Identification Probe Chart provided information concerning:

- d. The answers to the question: 'Is it new?'
- e. The answers to the question: 'Did the teacher intend you to learn it?'

It also gave an opportunity to the learners to add any items that came to memory and to correct the spelling.

3. The Target Lexis Chart provided information concerning:

- f. Attention to the Target Lexis occurrence,
- g. The answers to the question: 'Is it new?'
- h. The answers to the question: 'Did the teacher intend you to learn it?'
- i. Attention to spelling and
- j. Attention to meaning.

4. The Pronunciation Chart provided information concerning attention to pronunciation.

There seems to be a discrepancy between the results obtained from the Uptake Recall Chart and the Uptake Identification Probe Chart on the one hand and the Target Lexis Chart on the other in regards to the issues they were meant to investigate in common:

Target Lexis occurrence, 'Is it new?', 'Did the teacher intend you to learn it?', and attention to spelling.

In this regard, except for the difference of spelling which can be considered as not significant, the difference between results of the Uptake Recall Chart and Uptake Identification Probe Chart and from the Target Lexis Chart is noticeable. These instruments failed then to correlate with one another. As already mentioned, this may be explained by the fact that, with the Uptake Recall Chart and The Uptake Identification Probe Chart, learners were engaged in a recognition task. However, this is of no great concern since the Uptake Recall Chart and the Uptake Identification Probe Chart primarily served to the design of the Target Lexis Chart. The results of the latter are therefore more reliable.

Looking at the fourth column of the above table, one can see that there is a measure of agreement between the issues of Target Lexis occurrence, new, and intended. This may be interpreted as evidence that learners were sensitive enough to the teacher's plan. That is, they attended to the occurrence in classroom discourse of 62.79% of the items present in classroom input. Learners think that 80.57% of it was new; and that 75% of the Target Lexis was intended by the teacher. It is interesting to note that concerning spelling, the results from the Uptake Recall Chart and the Target Lexis Chart closely parallel each other. This means that learners tended to reproduce the spelling of the Target Lexis in the Target Lexis Chart in the same way as they had produced it in the Uptake Recall Chart, except for 4.82% (58.96 minus 54.14) of them. It may also mean that, though required to pay close attention to the spelling of the items presented in the Target Lexis Chart, most

subjects did not change their mind. They confirmed the spelling as they attended to it when they first encountered it.

If one were to find out which aspect was given priority by the learners, it would be noticed that the latter were best concerned with meaning since they attended to 12.48/14 items (89.14% of the Target Lexis). Next comes spelling with 7.58/14 items (54.14%) and last comes pronunciation with 6.87/14 items (50%). This is so despite the fact that the study of the effect of the frequency of occurrence revealed that though there is a weak correlation, it seems that it is pronunciation which is more affected by this variable than the other aspects.

Concerning the effect of the order of occurrence, the aspects of lexis which were better attended to were those which occurred last. However, one should look at this suspiciously because other variables, which are beyond the scope of this study, may have influenced this result. To give but one example of such variables, one can say that the nature of the very items which constitute the Target Lexis could invalidate the finding. By 'nature of the items' it is meant that some words can be considered as 'easy' whereas others can be 'difficult'. The degree of easiness or difficulty can be constituted by the number of word syllables, the consonant clusters (for pronunciation), the consistency between spelling and pronunciation (for spelling), and possibly others.

Put differently, and in answer to the research question stated in the introduction, 'What aspect(s) of lexis (phonological, morpho-graphological, semantic and pragmatic aspects) do learners attend to most in order to convert input into intake?' Attention to these aspects can be ranked in decreasing order as follows:

1. Attention to the semantic aspect (meaning) of the Target Lexis: learners attended to 89.14% of this.

2. Attention to the morpho-graphological aspect (spelling) of the Target Lexis: learners attended to 54.14% of this.
3. Attention to the phonological aspect (pronunciation) of the Target Lexis: learners attended to 50% of this.

It is worth noting that the finding that learners prioritize the semantic aspect is consistent with Krashen's claim (1981, 1985) that 'learners go to meaning first'. As there was no strong correlation between the aspects of lexis studied and the variables (frequency of occurrence and order of occurrence), one may conclude with van Lier (1996) that: "... quality of exposure is more important than quantity of exposure" (p.136).

### **Conclusion and pedagogical implications**

The fact that learners allocate less attention to spelling and pronunciation and much more to meaning suggests that there is a need to make them aware of the importance of the two aspects neglected somehow. Indeed, questions such as 'What does it mean?' are far more frequent in our language classrooms than 'How do you spell it?' or 'How do you pronounce it?' The priority given by learners to meaning is not, in my opinion, surprising since in most official examinations proficiency in spelling and pronunciation is often not assessed. Furthermore, this is consistent with the second principle put forth by Ellis (2005, Principle 2) that "instruction needs to ensure that learners focus predominantly on meaning."

Notwithstanding this, language teachers' task is to try to achieve their ambition of getting learners to take in all the aspects of lexis. This could be achieved by gaining learners' co-operation. One possible way of getting their efficient co-operation is by educating students on attention, by helping them develop attentional strategies in the

same way as one does things to help learners learn and manage their learning. To do so, this study has revealed that it is not a matter of repeating or having learners repeat an item that makes them attend to its meaning, spelling or pronunciation. The correlation between these and the frequency of occurrence was low. Similarly, a common belief that the most important things are introduced first to ensure attention to them is denied. The very notion of input presentation is questioned then. In addition to the usual techniques (writing the items on the board, using colours, etc.), it would be advisable to draw learners' attention explicitly to the spelling and pronunciation of the items as suggested by Nation (2005). Some researchers (e.g. Allwright, 1984) point to the negotiation of meaning. This could be extended to spelling and pronunciation and hence encourage learners to negotiate the spelling and pronunciation of lexical items. Despite the inconsistency of the spelling and pronunciation of the English language, teachers could still introduce the rules for these two aspects. For example, the teacher and learners in this project could have gained much if the latter were told that whenever a word ends in 'ture', this string of letters is pronounced /tʃ/ such as in 'fracture', 'vulture', 'adventure', or any other similar word, preferably familiar to learners. In this case the teacher would have drawn learners' attention to both spelling and pronunciation and would have, hopefully, solved the problem once for all. By doing so repeatedly, and whenever possible, learners would surely develop the habit of 'scrutinizing' every word they meet in written form for the first time. Such a strategy could be called the '*scrutinizing principle*' and could be developed as a first possible step towards educating students on attention.

If learners' native language is a Latin language, or if they know a Latin language such as is the case in many countries, it could be useful to train learners to pay attention to the

similarities and differences in spelling and pronunciation between the two languages. That means training learners to ‘discriminate’ between the items which could be called the ‘*discrimination principle*’.

Likewise, we could apply similar strategies to educate attention to pronunciation. Learners could be trained to listen attentively to the teacher’s pronunciation (the linguistic model) without relying too much on the spelling of the word. Such a strategy could be called ‘*The harkening principle*’. The ‘discrimination principle’ could help if learners’ attention is drawn to the differences in pronunciation, where appropriate, between English and another language. In the case of this project many of the Target Lexis items have some similarity with French and yet differ in pronunciation. A good illustration of such a principle can be the case where 13 learners out of 39 (33.33 %!) mispronounced the item ‘pilot’. Had they been made aware that the letter ‘i’ is pronounced in this case differently from French, there would surely have been a lesser number of deviant pronunciations.

The fact that learners tended to produce the spelling of the target lexis in the Target Lexis Chart in the same way as they had produced it in the Uptake Recall Chart calls for some recognition. Only 4.62% (58.96% minus 54.14%) of the respondents did not reproduce it in the same form. It may also mean that, though required to pay close attention to the spelling of the items presented in the Target Lexis Chart, most subjects did not ‘change’ their mind. They confirmed the spelling as they attended to it when they first encountered it. This would allow us to say that there seems to be a tendency towards intaking (or rather uptaking) the spelling of a lexical item in the first form attended to. To put this in a clearer way, we would say that when a learner sees an item in a written form for the first time, that moment is crucial for intake since even when asked to think

over the spellings they produced, the learners tended to confirm their first productions. Consequently, it would be very helpful to learners if teachers cared about spelling at the very outset of the introduction of lexis by having them attend to spelling.

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### Appendix I: Results of the Permission Questionnaire

Classes		1 ST6			1 ST4			1ST9			1 HS3			1 HS2			2HS3			2 M1		
M= Male F= Female T= Total		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
# of Sts		25	13	38	19	20	39	19	20	39	12	26	38	19	18	37	18	20	38	22	13	35
Study	Yes	21	08	29	19	19	38	18	18	36	12	23	35	17	08	25	18	18	36	18	07	25
	No	04	05	09	19	01	01	01	02	03	00	03	03	02	10	12	00	02	02	04	06	10
Audio Recording	Yes	21	08	29	19	19	38	18	18	36	11	23	34	17	08	25	18	16	34	18	07	25
	No	04	05	09	00	00	01	01	02	03	01	03	04	02	10	12	00	04	04	04	06	10
Video Recording	Yes	21	06	28	19	19	38	18	17	35	10	24	34	17	06	25	18	09	27	16	05	21
	No	04	07	11	00	01	01	01	03	04	02	02	04	02	12	12	00	11	11	06	08	14

Learners' attitude per class and sex towards the study and the instruments. (Classes are named according to the level, stream, and number of the class from the same stream. S stands for 'Sciences', T for 'Technology', H for 'Human' and M for 'Maths').

**Appendix II**

**UPTAKE RECALL CHART**

(Original layout)

Name: .....

Class: .....

What words and phrases have occurred  
in today's lessons?

Try to remember as many as you can  
and write them down below.

ما هي الكلمات والعبارات التي وردت في درس اليوم.

حاول أن تتذكر أكبر عدد ممكن واكتبها.

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Thank you for your cooperation.

**Appendix III**

TARGET LEXIS CHART (Original layout)

Name: .....		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Class: .....						
1.	undergrount .....					
2.	meals .....					
3.	inhumane .....					
4.	accurait .....					
5.	cassette .....					
6.	stor .....					
7.	humane .....					
8.	capacity .....					
9.	pilote .....					
10.	speice .....					
11.	feel .....					
12.	is capable of .....					
13.	radar .....					
14.	eibility .....					
15.	war .....					
16.	manufacture .....					

## Appendix IV

### DATA SHEET RESULTS OF THE UPTAKE RECALL CHART

#### Key:

RSM= Right Spelling by Males	RSF = Right Spelling by Females	TC = Total Claims
WSM= Wrong Spelling by Males	WSF = Wrong Spelling by Females	TRS = Total Right Spelling
TCM= Total claims by Males	TCF = Total claims by Females	TWS = Total Wrong Spelling
		FO = Frequency of Occurrence
		N = New
		T = Teacher

<i>Lexical items</i>	RSF	WSF	TCF	RSM	SM	CM	TC	TRS	TWS	N	T	FO
1. Underground	0	1	1	3	5	8	9	3	6	4	8	4
2. Meals	1	5	6	5	3	8	14	6	8	7	7	2
3. Inhuman	8	6	14	4	2	6	20	12	8	6	18	24
4. Accurate	4	3	7	1	1	1	8	5	4	6	2	6
5. Store	4	8	12	3	0	3	15	7	8	9	1	7
6. Space	6	4	10	4	2	6	16	10	6	1	4	8
7. Feel	9	4	13	7	4	11	24	16	8	15	3	5
8. Capable	11	5	16	12	3	15	31	23	8	9	12	15
9. Manufacture	3	6	9	2	7	9	18	5	13	7	1	5
10. Capacity	8	5	13	9	5	14	27	17	10	13	9	16
11. Ability	7	3	10	7	4	11	21	14	7	7	2	5
12. Pilot	7	4	11	5	6	11	22	12	10	4	4	11
13. War	2	0	2	1	0	1	3	3	0	2	0	17
14. Able	9	6	15	11	5	16	31	27	11	22	5	14
15. Information	9	3	12	3	0	3	15	12	3	0	0	9
16. Sentiment	6	0	6	0	0	0	6	6	0	0	4	2
17. Robot	11	0	11	13	0	13	24	24	0	1	8	98
18. Laugh	5	7	12	3	7	10	22	8	14	12	4	1
19. Work	15	1	6	10	1	11	27	25	2	0	4	21
20. Mines	12	0	12	4	0	4	16	16	0	7	2	5
21. Wash	14	0	14	7	6	13	27	21	6	0	2	8

Lexical items	RSF	WSF	TCF	RSM	WSM	TCM	TC	TRS	TWS	N	T	FO
22. Clothes	6	4	10	4	3	7	10	7	7	3	0	8
23. Eat	10	0	10	4	0	4	14	14	0	1	2	9
24. Earth	2	0	2	5	0	5	7	7	0	0	1	2
25. Dishes	7	0	7	3	1	4	11	10	1	4	4	8
26. Hate	3	3	6	5	1	6	12	8	4	1	4	2
27. Factory	3	0	3	4	0	4	7	7	0	0	0	4
28. Cars	2	0	2	2	0	24	4	4	0	0	0	3
29. Think	8	1	9	6	2	8	17	14	13	2	5	4
30. Draw	6	3	9	4	1	5	14	10	4	2	0	3
31. Maps	8	0	8	5	0	5	13	13	0	2	1	3
32. Count	9	0	9	0	0	0	9	9	3	0	2	6
33. Cook	8	2	10	10	0	10	20	18	2	12	4	7

34. Human	9	1	10	2	2	4	14	11	3	1	3	17
35. Capacities	2	2	4	2	1	3	7	4	1	3	1	3
36. Like	5	1	6	4	1	5	12	10	2	1	0	11
37. Identify	9	2	11	4	0	4	15	13	2	2	0	8
38. Planes	7	0	7	5	1	6	13	12	1	2	1	16
39. Gangster	2	0	2	0	3	3	5	2	3	0	2	2
40. Oil	0	0	1	2	3	3	1	2	0	2	1	1
41. Cry	0	0	0	1	2	3	3	1	2	0	2	4
42. Quickly	3	2	5	3	2	5	10	6	4	3	1	9
43. Extract	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	0
44. Place	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
45. Breakfast	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	1
46. Prepare	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	1
47. *Respirate	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1
48. Angry	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	2

Lexical items	RSF	WSF	TCF	RSM	WSM	TCM	TC	TRS	TWS	N	T	FO
49. Food	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1
50. Administra- tion	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1
51. Quantity	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
52. See	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
53. Police-Station	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	4
54. Wanted	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	1
55. Criminals	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	3
56. Money	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	4
57. Bank	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	2	0	0	0	1
58. Exact	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	4
59. Drive	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	4
60. Army	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
61. Travel	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
62. Live	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
63. Plates	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1
64. Cups	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1
65. Spoons	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	1
66. Forks	0	0	0	1	2	3	3	1	2	0	2	1
67. Understand	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
68. Programs	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
69. Lunch	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
70. Dinner	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
71. Speak	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1
72. Bath	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
73. Love	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	3
74. Person	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	9
75. Electronics	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	2

Lexical items	RSF	WSF	TCF	RSM	WSM	TCM	TC	TRS	TWS	N	T	FO
76. Fabricate	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
77. Rioter	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	4
78. Sea	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1
79. Marry	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
80. Sing	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1

LOST ITEMS												
81. Computer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
82. Heart	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
83 Water	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
84 Soil	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
85 Gold	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
86 Gas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
87 Petrol	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
88 Fish	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
89 Silver	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
90 Metal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
91 Thieves	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
92 Domain	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
93 Machine	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
94 Dance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
95 Write	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
96 Make	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
97 Article	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
98 Newspaper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
99 Analyze	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

## **Second Language and Cognition: Conceptual Categorization of Count/Mass Nouns in English with Japanese University Students**

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### **Bio Data:**

Yuko Yamashita lectures at Kurume University and is also a doctoral student at Kyushu University. She obtained an MEd in TESOL from the University of Sydney in 2008. She has taught English as a foreign language in Japan for several years. Her research interests include second language acquisition, vocabulary learning and teaching. The research reported here was done as part of her MEd TESOL studies.

David Hirsh lectures in TESOL at the University of Sydney. His research focuses on vocabulary studies, language assessment and academic acculturation. Recent publications include *Teaching Academic Writing* (University of Michigan Press, 2009, with Paltridge et al.) and articles in *Reading in a Foreign Language* and *French Review of Applied Linguistics*.

### **Abstract**

This paper reports on a study designed to explore the conceptual basis of count/mass noun distinction with Japanese students. It focuses on the perceptual cues used to match pictures with count or mass noun phrases, when there is the effect of distance, size, and clarity between pairs of pictures. The study tests the cognitive individuation hypothesis in which count nouns are conceptualized as individuated things whereas mass nouns are

conceptualized as non-individuated things in the mind of speakers. Participants in this study were 103 students from a university in Japan. They completed picture tasks consisting of 22 pairs of novel pictures with a phrase indicating a novel count or mass noun. The results indicate that participants relied primarily on the perceptual cue of distance and clarity to match pictures with count or mass noun phrases. They made the majority of choices consistent with the cognitive individuation hypothesis, when there were two effects (size and distance, or distance and clarity). The study provides insights into effective ways to enhance Japanese speakers' application of conceptual knowledge when making count/mass noun distinction in English and potentially informs future studies in second language and cognition and EFL pedagogy.

**Keywords:** Count/Mass Noun Categorization, Japanese EFL Users, Aggregates, Cognitive Individuation Hypothesis, Perceptibility

## **Introduction**

“Teacher, why can’t we categorize rice as a count noun in English? We can count rice in Japanese.” This is a common question of Japanese students who eat rice three times a day and are able to count rice within the Japanese grammatical system. Common forms of noun categorization are the count/mass noun distinction system used in English and Arabic and the classifier system used in Chinese and Japanese. German and French encode both number and gender as part of the inherent properties of nouns. In the early twentieth century, Sapir and Whorf proposed that human cognition, the way people see the world, is affected by language and culture (see Whorf, 1956). In the last decade, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been revived and there is ongoing research investigating how language and culture influence cognition (e.g., Jarvis & Odlin, 2000; Levinson, 2003; Nisbett, 2003; Pavlenko, 2002). The current study focuses on the conceptual basis of count/mass noun distinctions with Japanese speakers and explores whether their conceptual categorization of count and mass nouns in English differs from that of native

English speakers as indicated in previous research (e.g., Bloom, 1994; Bloom & Kelemen, 1995; Wisniewski, Imai & Casey, 1996).

### **1.1 Language and cognition: Count/mass noun distinction and the concept of individuation**

The relationship between language and cognition has been of great interest for second language acquisition researchers. According to Whorf (1956), language plays an important role in shaping cognition of concepts. In this view, human concepts can be influenced by the acquisition of grammatical categories in different languages. In the last decade, the extent to which a learners' L1 conceptual structure influences their second language has received growing attention in the field of cognitive psychology. Studies have explored different perspectives such as the concept of space (e.g., Levinson, 1996, 2003), the concept of time (Boroditsky, 2001; von Steutterheim, 2003), the concept of color (Roberson, Davies, & Davidoff, 2000) and the concept of emotion (Pavlenko, 2002).

The current study explores the relationship between language and cognition, focusing on count/mass noun distinction and the concept of individuation. The concept of individuation is illustrated in the process of people drawing a mental boundary around an apple and viewing the apple as an individuated object, distinct from other apples. Through the process of individuation, people can count an apple with apple-sized units. Langacker (1987) suggests that people focus on the boundary of entities in order to construe count nouns and do not see the boundary of entities in the case of mass nouns.

Psychologists have long discussed how people conceptually distinguish count and mass nouns in their mind beyond grammatical categorization. In the domain of psycholinguistics, a cognitive individuation hypothesis predicts that count nouns are

conceptualized as distinct, countable, and individuated things whereas mass nouns are conceptualized as non-distinct, uncountable, and non-individuated things in the minds of speakers (Bloom, 1990, 1996; Langacker, 1987, 2008; Link, 1983, 1998; Wierzbicka, 1998). Previous studies evaluated the cognitive individuation hypothesis with native English speakers in different domains (Bloom, 1994; Bloom & Kelemen, 1995; Middleton et al., 2004; Wisniewski et al., 1996). Bloom (1994) found that native English children interpreted a count noun describing a series of sounds as individual sounds, whereas they interpreted a mass noun describing a series of sounds as non-individuated sounds. In the domain of superordinates, Wisniewski et al. (1996) investigated native English speaking university students and found that mass superordinates (e.g., furniture, clothing) refer to non-individuated groups of objects whereas count superordinates (e.g., vehicles) refer to individuated groups of objects. Further, Middleton et al. (2004) explored the domain of aggregates which refers to relatively small, homogeneous things which tend to occur together (e.g., sugar, rice, beans) with English university students and found that count aggregate such as sugar refers to individuated groups whereas mass aggregate refers to non-individuated groups. These studies support the cognitive individuation hypothesis in the context of native English speakers.

## **1.2 Numerical classifier language and the concept of individuation**

The numerical classifier system is one type of classifier system. In numerical classifier languages, classifiers for nouns occur as morphemes in order to indicate the quantity of the entity. Numerical classifier languages are found in the region of South-East and East Asia, i.e. Thai, Japanese and Chinese. In Japanese, there are approximately 70 numerical classifiers which Japanese speakers use widely in the daily life (Denny, 1979). When

Japanese speakers think it is important to quantify an entity, they attach a numerical classifier to a noun, as in the case of '*ringo - 2 ko no ringo*' (apple - 2 portions of apple). The Japanese numerical classifier is attached to a noun based on mixed semantic properties of the object, including biological taxonomy, size, shape, and function (Uchida & Imai, 1999).

Studies examining patterns in two or more languages have explored whether language influences the construal of individuation. Studies generally support the view that humans possess innate knowledge of individuation. For example, Lucy (1992) compared individuation in non-linguistic tasks for speakers of English and speakers of Yucatec Maya who live a traditional life in the Yucatec peninsula. The Yucatec Maya language possesses the numerical classifier system and does not distinguish individual/non-individual entities. Lucy found that English speakers relied primarily on the perceptual cue of shape to conceptualize individuation of objects, whereas Yucatec Maya speakers relied primarily on the perceptual cue of material composition in order to construe individuation in non-linguistic tasks. Lucy reasoned that English speakers rely more on the perceptual cue of shape to conceptualize individuation of objects, whereas Yucatec speakers rely more on perceptual cue of material to categorize objects with the numerical classifier system. Thus, conceptual categorization shaped by English or the Yucatec language influenced the perceptual cues to signal individuation in non-linguistic tasks. Further, a series of studies by Japanese researcher Imai and her co-researchers (see Imai, 1999; Imai & Gentner, 1997; Imai & Mazuka, 2007) investigated Japanese speakers who also use a numerical classifier system. Imai and Mazuka (2007), for example, investigated how Japanese speakers and English speakers classify entities as individual things and as non-individuated things. The results indicate that both English speakers and

Japanese speakers distinguish between individuated objects and non-individuated substance. The results further indicate that English speakers relied on the perceptual cues of solidity and boundedness to construe entities as individuated objects, even when the visual perceptual cues were weak or ambiguous. Japanese speakers, on the other hand, did not rely on these perceptual cues to construe entities as individual or non-individuated things. The researchers suggest that Japanese speakers do not usually rely on the perceptual cues of solidity and boundedness to categorize objects within the numerical classifier system. This finding suggests that conceptual categorization as shaped by the Japanese language influences the perceptual cues used to categorize entities, in particular when the visual perceptual cues are weak.

Published studies with Japanese participants to date have focused on the perceptual cues of shape and materials in order to distinguish individuated objects and non-individuated substances. The current study investigates three perceptual cues using picture tasks: the effect of size (large, middle, or small), of distance (close versus distant), and of clarity (clear versus blurred) in order to build on the findings of previous studies. The study aims to investigate which of these three cues, size, distance and clarity, Japanese participants rely on in order to match pictures with a phrase indicating either a count noun or a mass noun.

### **1.3 The domain of aggregates**

Count and mass nouns in English are distinguished through a variety of domains, such as objects/substance, mental events, sounds, and aggregates. The current study focuses on the domain of aggregates, the domain most widely investigated to date, which refers to relatively small, homogeneous things which tend to occur together (e.g., rice, salt, beans,

and popcorn).

*Count/mass noun distinction in the domain of aggregates*

In the domain of aggregates, Wierzbicka (1988) suggests that the key factors to conceptually distinguish count and mass nouns are the perceptibility of each element and human interaction with each element in daily life. Table 1 shows the description of count/mass aggregates based on perceptibility and human interaction.

**Table 1** Description of aggregates based on perceptibility and human interaction

	<b>Perceptibility</b>	<b>Human interaction</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Mass nouns</b>	Size: small Distance: close to each other	People do not usually interact with separate elements	rice sand sugar
<b>Count nouns</b>	Size: relatively small Distance: each element could be separated from the other	People sometimes interact with separate elements	noodles peas beans

Wierzbicka, (1998, p.555-559)

Wierzbicka (1988) developed a hypothesis which predicts that perceptibility leads speakers to conceptualize things as individuated things or non-individuated things and, as a result, they match individuated things with count nouns whereas they match non-individuated things with mass nouns.

Let us take an example of rice and beans. With regard to the size of each element, each single bean is bigger than a single grain of rice. In daily life, people normally eat rice when it is cooked and see each element sticks together. People normally see each element of beans separately, whether it is raw or cooked. Wierzbicka (1988) suggests that size and distance increase perceptibility of each element of the aggregate. Each element of beans is more perceptible and thus people construe it as an individual group, whereas each

element of rice is less perceptible and thus people construe it as a non-individual group. The current study builds on Wierzbicka (1988) to include the perceptual cues of distance and size in the pairs of aggregate pictures in the research design.

*Japanese numerical classifier system in the domain of aggregates*

In the domain of aggregates, several kinds of Japanese numerical classifiers are attached to nouns. Table 2 shows the categorization of aggregates based on the Japanese numerical classifier system. Shape, function and size are considered to be the basic semantic properties to categorize aggregates with the Japanese numerical classifier system. As shown in Table 2, *tsubu* is used for relatively small roundish objects (e.g., rice, grapes), whereas *ko* is used for large roundish objects (e.g., candies, stones) which are larger than the entities with classifier *tsubu*. Downing (1996) investigated the usage of 154 classifier forms with Japanese-speaking adults. Tanihara, Yen and Lee (1990) found that the prototypical features of *ko* are small and concrete with a definite shape (e.g., eggs, clams).

**Table 2** Categorization of aggregate based on Japanese numerical classifiers

<b>Numerical classifier</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>ko</b> (個)	relatively small objects solid objects (general classifier)	candies, stones, coins, dice, chocolate balls
<b>tsu</b> (つ)	small, inanimate, concrete or abstract (general classifier)	stones
<b>tsubu</b> (粒)	small, round objects smaller than the objects with classifier “ko”	rice, grapes, gems, coffee beans
<b>joo</b> (錠)	medicine	pills
<b>tama</b> (玉)	global masses small, round objects	pearls, noodles,
<b>saya</b> (莢)	beans in the pod	beans, peas

(Downing, 1996)

One area of investigation is the conceptual basis of count/mass noun distinction between individuated objects and non-individuated substances in both studies of children's conceptual development and cross-linguistic studies (e.g., Imai & Gentner, 1997; Lucy, 1992; Soja, Carey, & Spelke, 1991). Middleton et al.'s (2004) study explored the conceptual basis of count/mass noun distinctions in the domain of aggregates with native English speakers beyond the prototypical distinction between objects and substances. Middleton et al. (2004) evaluated the cognitive individuation hypothesis with a series of experiments by testing Wierzbicka's (1988) prediction in which perceptibility and human interaction direct native English speakers to conceptualize things as individuals or non-individuated things and result in them matching individual things with count noun phrases, and matching non-individuated things with mass noun phrases. The test instrument for the current study adopts Middleton et al.'s (2004) picture tasks consisting of novel aggregate pictures with a phrase indicating a novel count or mass noun. Use of picture tasks enables a direct examination of whether perceptual cues, such as size, distance, or clarity of each element, which are considered to predispose the conceptual basis of count/mass noun distinction, affect participant choice for count or mass noun phrase (Wierzbicka, 1988). As Imai (1999) pointed out, perceptual cues are powerful indicators for categorization, as people can categorize entities by just looking at them. Studies which explored different concepts, such as the concept of time (Boroditsky, 2000), spatial representation (Munnich, Landau, & Doshier, 2001), and the representation of emotion (Papagragou, Massey, & Gleitman, 2002), used picture tasks as the research instrument to show that speakers of different languages often perceive the same visual stimuli in a different way. By using picture tasks, the current study evaluates the cognitive individuation hypothesis by testing Wierzbicka's (1988) hypothesis and

examines the extent of consistency in the use of perceptual cues (e.g., distance, size, and clarity). Thus, the research questions are as follows:

1. What are the perceptual cues Japanese university students rely on to match pictures with mass noun phrases or count noun phrases, when there is the effect of distance, size, or clarity between pairs of pictures?
2. To what extent do Japanese university students make choices which are consistent with Wierzbicka's (1988) hypothesis in which participants choose less perceptible elements to match with mass noun phrases, whereas they choose more perceptible elements to match with count noun phrases?

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Participants**

Participants were 103 Japanese university students from the Department of English Language, in a private university in Japan which has a good reputation for language education and international exchange programs. The English language entry requirement into the program of English is set at a higher level than for other areas of study. Participants were aged 19 - 25 years old. Japanese students usually start to learn English in junior high school and have thus been learning English for around six years before entering university. However, they generally have few opportunities to use English for communication outside the classroom as English is a foreign language in Japan. This situation would apply broadly to this participant group. Participants are considered to have similar educational backgrounds and their English proficiency is at upper-intermediate level. They were informed that the results of the task would not be shared

with their teachers or affect the overall assessment of their studies. They took part in this study outside of class time, at the beginning of the semester.

## 2.2 Design and materials

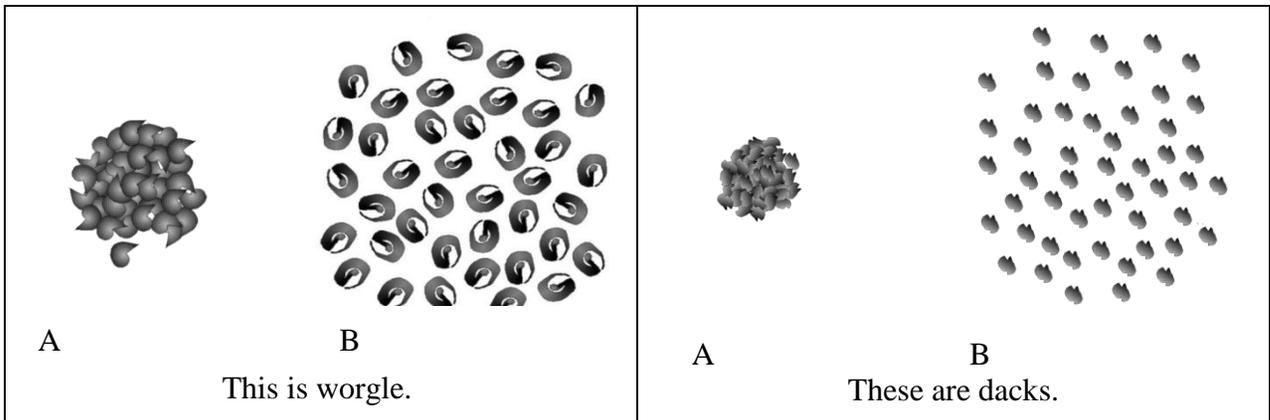
### *Novel pictures with a phrase indicating a novel count or mass noun*

Pairs of pictures were adapted from Middleton et al.'s (2004) study and modified for the current study. The pairs of novel aggregates show relatively small, homogeneous things close together. Each novel aggregate was composed of 40 elements (e.g., 40 grains of rice in an aggregate) and each element was a simple black and white shape. The existing instrument of Middleton et al.'s (2004) study had only two effects: distance and size. The middle size of elements and the effect of clarity (e.g., clear, blurred) were added into the instrument in the current study. As shown in Table 3, each element of the aggregates in the current study varied with regard to distance, size and clarity, in order to influence perceptibility of each element. Distance has two stages of degree: distant and close; size has three stages of degree: large, middle, and small, and clarity has two stages of degree: clear and blurred.

**Table 3** Three variables in pairs of pictures

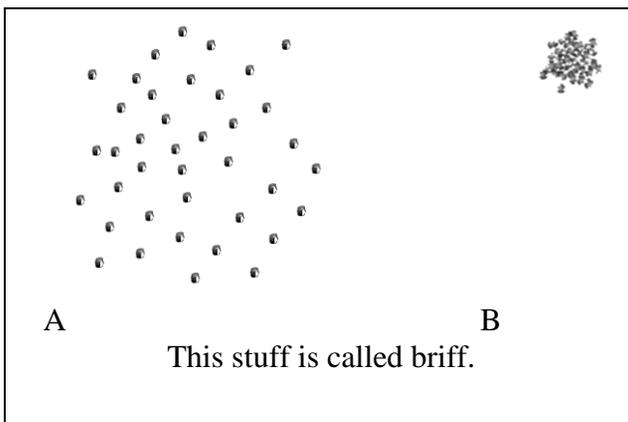
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Perceptibility</b>		
	<b>More perceptible</b>		<b>Less perceptible</b>
<b>Distance</b>	Distant		Close
<b>Size</b>	Large	Middle	Small
<b>Clarity</b>	Clear		Blurred

Figure 1 shows the examples of pairs of pictures in which distance is varied between pairs of aggregates. For example, picture A shows an aggregate with large-close elements on the left and an aggregate with large-distant elements on the right.



a. Close-Large versus Distant-Large

b. Close-Middle versus Distant-Middle



c. Distant-Small versus Close-Small

*Figure 1* Pairs of pictures in which distance varied between pairs of aggregates

*Phrases indicating novel count/mass nouns*

Table 4 shows examples of phrases indicating novel count or mass nouns, which appear below the pairs of picture. Novel nouns which are not true words (e.g., worgle, furgle) were used so that the learners have no prior knowledge of the word and it removes any variability of prior word familiarity. Phrases indicating novel nouns were adapted from the study of Middleton et al. (2004).

**Table 4** Examples of phrases indicating novel count/mass nouns

<b>Mass forms</b>	<b>Count forms</b>
This is worgle.	We call these hurgs.
We call this stuff furgle.	These things are shubs.
This stuff is called grundel.	These things are called pammels.
This stuff is shub.	We call these norps.

*22 pairs of pictures with phrase indicating count/mass nouns*

This study paired the pictures to form 11 contrast pictures with mass noun phrases and 11 contrasting pictures with count noun phrases. As shown in Table 5, the contrasting pictures were divided into four categories to manipulate the three conditions, size, distance, clarity, or two manipulating conditions. 22 contrasts of the pictures were randomly matched with mass noun phrases or count noun phrases, which appeared below the pairs of the pictures in the test instrument.

**Table 5** Pairs of novel aggregate pictures

<b>Manipulating conditions</b>	<b>Pairs of imaginary pictures</b>
Distance	Distant-Large versus Close-Large Distant-Middle versus Close-Middle Distant-Small versus Close-Small
Size	Large-Distant versus Middle-Distant Large-Distant versus Small-Distant Large-Close versus Middle-Close Large-Close versus Small-Close
Clarity	Clear-Close versus Blurred-Close Clear-Distant versus Blurred-Distant
Strong effect	Large-Distant versus Small-Close-Clear Distant-Clear versus Close-Blurred

### *Retrospective interview*

5 out of 103 participants were selected for retrospective interviews. Table 6 shows information of the five participants in the retrospective interviews. The selection of the participants targeted those who made a majority of choices consistent with Wierzbicka's hypothesis. Each participant was presented with their own answers for the picture tasks and the researcher asked each participant the reason for their choices.

**Table 6** Information of the five participants in the retrospective interviews

Name	Age	Gender	Consistency of choice (%)
Student A	24	Female	63%
Student B	24	Female	68%
Student C	23	Male	59%
Student D	25	Female	73%
Student E	22	Female	90%

Interview data was analyzed by the authors according to the responses provided by each student. Participants' explanations in response to their choice of pictures were classified into three categories of students identified: (1) Perceptibility; (2) Pronunciation sound and (3) Language. In the first category, perceptibility is divided into three sub categories, according to three effects on perceptibility: size, distance and clarity. In the second category, pronunciation sound focuses on the explanation of the sound of novel words (e.g., dack, worgles) affecting their choices. In the third category, language effect focuses on the explanation of English language use such as "this" or "these" affecting their choices. Examples of these three categories are displayed in Table 7.

**Table 7** Classification scheme and examples of qualitative data

Category	Sub-category	Examples
1.Perceptibility	Distance	There is distance between each element.

		Each element is close together.
		Each element is close together, and thus it looks like a single body.
	Size	Each element is small. Each element is larger in this picture.
	Clarity	There is the boundary around each element. There is no boundary around each element, and thus each element is not perceptible.
2.Pronunciation sound		“dack” is similar to “duck”, and thus it makes me choose this picture.
		The sound of “worgle” makes me choose this picture.
3.Language		“This” would refer to a single element of an aggregate. Each element is perceptible, and “this” can be used to point out a single element of an aggregate.

### 2.3 Procedure

This study was carried out during April 2008. The participants were instructed in Japanese by a senior student in order to ensure that they understood what they were to do. They were each given an envelope including a practice task, a picture task instrument, and an answer sheet numbered 1-22. The practice task was conducted in order for participants to familiarize themselves with the task format of matching pictures with a phrase indicating count or mass nouns. Participants were instructed that they would see a pair of imaginary aggregate pictures with a phrase indicating imaginary count or mass nouns. It was explained that aggregates are small, homogeneous things that tend to occur together and they were given examples of aggregates (e.g. sugar, rice, beans, buttons, and leaves). They were instructed to read the phrase and consider which of the two pictures the phrase best describes. They were to mark "A" if they thought the phrase best describes the picture A on the left or mark "B" if the phrase best describes the picture B

on the right. After the practice task was checked and any questions were answered, the experimental task was conducted. The participants were not allowed to go back and change their answer so that they did not have time to think about the imaginary pictures in detail. In order to elicit their conceptual categorizations, they were informed that they should choose A or B quickly without a great deal of thinking. They were to put the experimental task back into envelopes after they answered all the questions so that they did not go back and change their answers. The senior student who assisted this study walked round the classroom and checked that participants answered all the questions. The task took approximately 15 minutes to complete. 103 completed answer sheets were collected.

### **3. Results**

#### *Choice of pairs of the pictures for count/ mass noun phrases by overall participants*

Participants' choice of pairs of pictures for count or mass noun phrases was explored by descriptive statistics. Appendix 1 shows the percentage of overall participants' (n=103) choice of pairs of pictures in order to match with count/ mass noun phrases. When there is the effect of distance, a majority of participants (75.7% for large elements, 84.5% for middle elements, and 74.8% for small elements) chose close elements to match with mass noun phrases whereas a majority of participants (71.8% for large elements, 87.4% for middle elements, and 75.7% for small elements) chose distant elements to match count noun phrases with regardless of size difference of each element in the pairs of pictures. When there is the effect of clarity, a majority of participants (71.8% for distant elements, 70.9% for close elements) chose clear elements to match with count noun phrases regardless of distant difference of each element in the pairs of pictures. Further, when

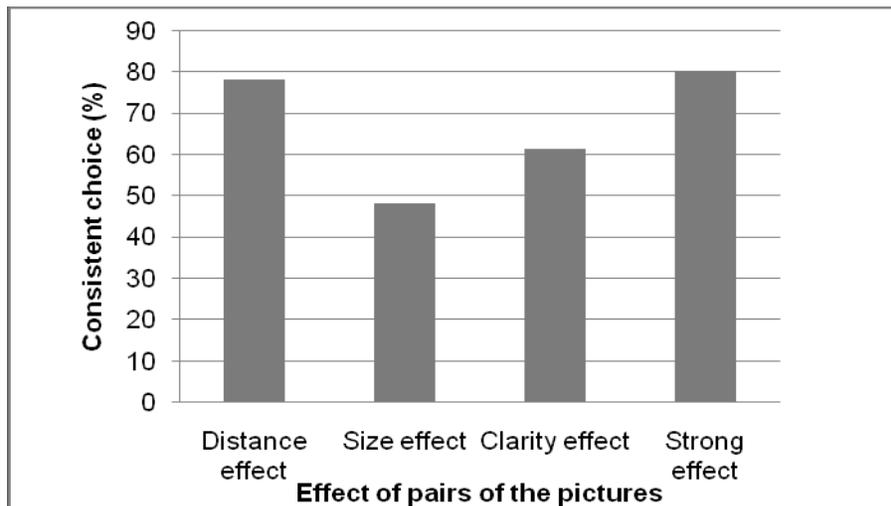
there is the effect of distance and size, 80 participants (77.7%) chose distant-large elements to match with count noun phrases whereas 81 participants (78.6%) chose close-small elements to match with mass noun phrases. When there is the effect of clarity and distance, 89 participants (86.4%) chose clear-distant elements to match with count noun phrases whereas 76 participants (73.8%) chose blurred-close elements to match with mass noun phrases.

*Choice consistent with Wierzbicka's (1988) hypothesis*

This study further investigates to what extent the findings were consistent with Wierzbicka's (1988) hypothesis in which speakers match less perceptible elements with mass noun phrases, and more perceptible elements with count noun phrases. The current study scored participants' choice as 1 for a consistent choice, and 0 for an inconsistent choice. When a participant made consistent choices for both count and mass nouns, the score was 2; when a participant made consistent and inconsistent choices, the score was 1; when a participant made inconsistent choices for both count and mass nouns, the score was 0.

As shown in Table 8, Japanese participants made 78.0% of choices consistent with Wierzbicka's hypothesis, when there is the effect of distance between pairs of aggregate pictures. The portion of consistent choice was significantly higher than chance responding,  $t(204)=11.21$ ,  $p<.05$ . They made 48.2 % of choices consistent with Wierzbicka's hypothesis, when there is the effect of size between pairs of aggregate pictures, which was not higher than chance responding,  $t(204)=-0.92$ ,  $p>.05$ . They made 61.2 % of choices consistent with Wierzbicka's hypothesis, when there is the effect of

**Table 8** Proportion of choice (%) consistent with Wierzbicka's (1988) hypothesis



clarity between pairs of aggregate pictures, which was significantly higher than chance responding,  $t(204) = 4.59$ ,  $p < .05$ . They made 80.0% of choices consistent with Wierzbicka's hypothesis, when there is strong effect between pairs of aggregate pictures: the effect of clarity and distance or size and distance, which was significantly higher than chance responding,  $t(204) = 12.69$ ,  $p < .01$ . Overall, participants made a majority of choices consistent with Wierzbicka's hypothesis when there is the effect of distance, clarity, and strong effect.

*Supplemental data from retrospective interview*

Qualitative data from the retrospective interview reveals the five participants' thinking processes to match pairs of pictures with count/mass noun phrases. Table 9 shows the reasons why they matched each picture with count/mass noun phrases. When there is the effect of distance between pairs of each picture, all five participants frequently chose pictures based on the perceptibility, distance effect, 27 out of 31 times mentioned (87%). When there is the effect of size, all five participants frequently depended on the

perceptibility, size effect, 13 out of 29 times mentioned (45%). Here it needs to be indicated that they did not make a distinction between count or mass noun phrases, according to the size difference. For example, student B commented that an aggregate with smaller elements can be categorized into both count and mass noun. They also depended on the perceptibility, distance effect (4 out of 29 times mentioned). Two participants depended on the pronunciation sound of novel word (e.g., worgle, furgle). For instance, student A mentioned that the pronunciation sound of “weg” affected the choice of the pictures. Three participants depended on the phrase included in the pictures. In the interview, three students mentioned that “this” in the phrase below the picture could refer to a single element of an aggregate. When there is the effect of clarity, all five participants frequently depended on perceptibility, clarity effect, 14 out of 21 times mentioned (67%). When there is the strong effect: size and distance or distance and clarity, they frequently depended on perceptibility, distance effect. No one mentioned that they depended on the size effect. In summary, in response to the research question 1, supplemental retrospective data from interviews suggested that participants frequently depended on the perceptual cues of distance and clarity when matching pictures with count/mass noun phrases. When there is the effect of size, they did not frequently depend on the effect of size. The pronunciation sound or English language itself also affected their choice of pictures.

**Table 9** Qualitative data from retrospective interview

Perceptibility effect between pairs of pictures	Reasons for choosing pictures	Number of participants mentioned	Number of times mentioned
Distance effect	1.Perceptibility: Text justification		
	Distance	5	27
	2.The pronunciation sounds	2	2
	3.Language	1	2

Size effect	1.Perceptibility: Text justification		
	Size	5	13
	Distance	3	6
	2.The pronunciation sounds	2	7
	3.Language	3	3
Clarity effect	1.Perceptibility: Text justification		
	Clarity	5	14
	Distance	2	4
	2.The pronunciation sounds	2	3
Strong effect	1.Perceptibility: Text justification		
	Distance	5	9
	Clarity	2	2
	2.The pronunciation sounds	1	2
	3.Language	1	1

#### 4. Discussion

The current study analyzed the data in terms of the proportion of choices (%) consistent with Wierzbicka's (1988) hypothesis in which participants match less perceptible elements with mass noun phrases, whereas they match more perceptible elements with count noun phrases. Middleton et al.'s (2004) study analyzed data in a similar manner. It is possible to compare the findings in both studies. Table 10 shows the findings of the current study and Middleton et al.'s (2004) study.

**Table 10** Findings of the current study and Middleton et al.'s (2004) study

Perceptual cues	English speakers (Middleton et al. 2004)	Japanese speakers (current study)
<b>Distance</b>		
Less perceptible (close)	mass nouns	mass nouns
More perceptible (distant)	count nouns	count nouns
<b>Size</b>		
Less perceptible (smaller)	count or mass nouns	count or mass nouns
More perceptible (larger)	count or mass nouns	count or mass nouns
<b>Clarity</b>		
Less perceptible (blurred)	not examined	mass nouns
More perceptible (clear)	not examined	count nouns

<b>Distance and size</b>		
Less perceptible (close & small)	mass nouns	mass nouns
More perceptible (distant & large)	count nouns	count nouns
<b>Distance and clarity</b>		
Less perceptible (close & blurred)	not examined	mass nouns
More perceptible (distant & clear)	not examined	count nouns

As shown in Table 10, when there is strong effect, by manipulating two conditions, size and distance, Japanese university students in the current study and native English university students in Middleton et al.'s (2004) study made a majority of choices consistent with Wierzbicka's hypothesis. When there is only one effect, distance or size, both Japanese university students and English university students in Middleton et al.'s (2004) study relied on the perceptual cue of distance and did not rely on the perceptual cue of size.

There could be two possible explanations for these findings. Firstly, Japanese speakers conceptualise entities the same way as English native speakers, that is, they have general knowledge that individual/non-individual distinction correspond to count/mass noun distinction, thus offering support of Wierzbicka's hypothesis. Saalback and Imai (2005) investigated Japanese speakers (Japanese has a numerical classifier system) and German speakers (German does not have a numerical classifier system), and found a similar performance between these groups. They suggest that the Japanese numerical classifier system might not have a strong effect on Japanese conceptual structure, as Japanese use numerical classifier mainly when they need to enumerate objects. How frequently Japanese speakers use their grammatical categorization might be important in influencing their conceptual categorization in English. Thus, the findings of the current study might

suggest that the conceptual categorization of Japanese university students might not be shaped by the Japanese numerical classifier system and might be similar to that of English speakers. These findings are in accord with results in other studies with native English speakers, where Wisniewski et al. (1996) evaluated the cognitive individuation hypothesis in the domain of superordinates, and Bloom and Kelemen (1995) investigated the process of acquiring new words. There would be value in further studies to apply the cognitive individuation hypothesis to other non-native English speaker groups in the domain of aggregates to further test Wierzbicka's hypothesis.

Another possible explanation for the findings in the current study is that Japanese students might have learned a new way of categorizing mass or count nouns and they might apply their knowledge when they match pictures with count or mass noun phrases. English language learning might force them to categorize in this way, since all the sentences are in English. Jarvis (2007) cautions that researchers need to investigate whether or not language itself influences categorization by using verbal tasks that involve picture categorization with English phrases. A study of this type could examine groups of learners at different proficiency levels to isolate language knowledge as a variable (Athanasopoulos, 2006). Other variables which future studies could take into account include length of residence in an English-speaking country, and age of first L2 learning (Athanasopoulos & Kasai, 2008; Cook, Bassetti, Kasai, Sasaki, & Takahashi, 2006). Future studies could also utilize additional non-linguistic measures, such as judgment tasks between pictures and rating similarity on a Likert-type scale.

The current study has important implications for future English language teaching in EFL contexts. Larsen-Freeman (2002) insists that grammar is not rule-governed but more flexible according to the context. This flexible feature is apparent in the case of 'noise'

which can act as a count noun (e.g. *The coffee machine is making unusual noises*) and as a mass noun (e.g. *There was too much playground noise to hear the bell*), depending on context. The difficulty for EFL learners with a context-governed classification for count/mass nouns is that there may be limited opportunities in EFL settings for learners to encounter different contexts of count/mass noun use in daily life. The current study could provide teachers and learners with a pedagogical tool for distinguishing between count and mass nouns through the use of pictures embedded into teaching materials. These pictures could be sensitive to context where appropriate, as in the case of ‘noise’. For count noun pictures, the boundary of each element should be delineated so that elements appear separately. For mass noun pictures, the delineation between elements should be presented as less distinct. Use of such pictures as presented in this paper may provide learners with a meaningful conceptual framework for classifying count and mass nouns. Within a confined scope and with a clear focus, the current study thus provides important implications for future studies in second language and cognition and for future English language teaching in EFL contexts.

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**Appendix 1** The percentage of overall participants' choice of pairs of pictures

<b>Pairs of the pictures</b>		<b>Mass nouns</b>	<b>Count nouns</b>
		Percent /Frequency	Percent/Frequency
Effect of Distance	Close-Large	75.7% (78)	28.2% (29)
	Distant-Large	24.3% (25)	71.8% (74)
	Close-Middle	84.5% (87)	12.6% (13)
	Distant-Middle	15.5% (16)	87.4% (90)
	Close-Small	74.8% (77)	24.3% (25)
	Distant-Small	25.2% (26)	75.7% (78)
Effect of Size	Large-Close	60.2% (62)	41.7% (43)
	Small-Close	39.8% (41)	58.3% (60)
	Large-Distant	65.0% (67)	56.3% (58)
	Small-Distant	35.0% (36)	43.7% (45)
	Large-Close	30.1% (31)	46.6% (48)
	Middle-Close	69.9% (72)	53.4% (55)
	Large-Distant	71.8% (74)	67.0% (69)
	Middle-Distant	28.2% (29)	33.0% (34)
Effect of clarity	Clear-Distant	65.0% (67)	71.8% (74)
	Blurred-Distant	35.0% (36)	28.2% (29)
	Clear-Close	38.8% (40)	70.9% (73)
	Blurred-Close	61.2% (63)	29.1% (30)
Strong effect	Distant-Large	21.4% (22)	77.7% (80)
	Close-Small	78.6% (81)	22.3% (23)
	Clear-Distant	26.2% (27)	86.4% (89)
	Blurred-Close	73.8% (76)	13.6% (14)

## **Innovating Writing Centers and Online Writing Labs outside North America**

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### **Bio Data:**

Dr. Bee-Hoon Tan is an associate Professor at the Putra University, Malaysia. She obtained her PhD from Massey University, New Zealand. Her research interest is language learning technology. Her recent publication includes an edited collection titled *Theoretical and Practical Orientations in Language and Literature Studies*. She is the chief editor of *The English Teacher* from 2008.

### **Abstract**

This study highlights the writing difficulty of tertiary students in ESL or EFL contexts. It describes two successful innovations, writing center and online writing lab, initiated by North American institutions of higher learning to intervene in the writing crisis. Enquiries on initiative efforts by a few Asian and European universities in innovating writing centers and online writing labs are conducted through their websites, practitioners' reports, and e-mail interviews. The purpose is to learn from their common and differing practices to inform faculties who are interested in setting up their own institutional writing centers and online writing labs. Based on the Asian and European writing centers investigated, several generalizations can be drawn that may provide some insights for innovating writing centers and online writing labs in Asia.

**Keywords:** Writing Center, Online Writing Lab, Innovation, Writing, EFL

## **Introduction**

The importance of writing ability cannot be overstated be it writing in the first or the second language. Students generally demonstrate the extent of their learning through writing. Faculties too primarily evaluate students through students' writing. Hence, students who are poor with written expression are often at serious risks of failure in an academic study program.

Yet, despite all the emphases given to writing instruction, students' writing remains a constant complaint in both English as the first and the second language educational situations. The series of articles on *Johnny or Jane Can't Write* and the concrete data for the NAEP's writing assessment (Manzo, 1999) affirm the predicament in the context of English as the first language. The empirical study in an ESL context (see Tan, 2008) attests to the same adversity of undergraduates' writing in English. Causes of students' poor writing abilities are also as numerous as the practical reasons for writing well. In addition to the ineffective lecture method in teaching writing mentioned earlier, other causes are traceable to large class sizes, especially in the ESL/EFL contexts (Warschauer and Ware, 2006). As a result of inadequate teacher attention, a reductionist approach to writing treats writing as a separate skill from reading, speaking and listening skills, and it fosters a writing pedagogy that is teacher-centered. Consequently, students do not have the chance to select their interested writing topics and correcting surface errors in writing becomes overly emphasized (Clippard, 1998). One more reason may be the disintegration of print culture and the onset of visual TV, popular music (McLuhan and Fiore, 1967), video games, multimedia, computers, and movies. The new media of the audio-visual society may have shifted the attention of students away from focused reading and writing,

and thus leads to a decline in their overall writing ability.

Against this backdrop of the writing crisis, writing centers (WCs) in North America have contributed to improve the writing ability of and the positive attitude towards writing for most students (Griswold, 2003; Langston, 1996; Ronesi, 1995). Consequently, the use of WCs as an intervention approach to writing problems of student writers has sparked interest of many education institutions, domestic and international alike, into developing a WC for individual institutional use (Mullin, 2000). As the application of WC and its virtual counterpart, online writing lab (OWL), are relatively new in most Asian countries, a study of WC and OWL innovations outside North America may help faculties in adopting and adapting an appropriate model for institutional applications. This study also investigates similar innovations in some European countries, for the purpose of comparison.

From the late 1990s, cases of innovating WCs outside North America have been heard of in a few Asian and European countries. In Asian countries such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Korea, the infusion of WCs and OWLs has been effected by Westerners who took up a teaching or professional contract at the institutions. For example, Ted Knoy at the National Chiao Tung University of Taiwan (see [http://www.cc.nctu.edu.tw/~tedknoy/html/w\\_eng.htm](http://www.cc.nctu.edu.tw/~tedknoy/html/w_eng.htm)), Julia Gardner at the National University of Singapore (see <http://www.usp.nus.edu.sg/writingcentre/>), and Adam Turner at the Hanyang University of Korea (see <http://hanyangowl.org/mod/resource/view.php?id=21>).

A thorough web search through an online list of universities in Thailand and Philippines and an exhaustive check through the full list of public universities in Malaysia did not return any hit based on the search term *writing center* or its British spelling. However, the possibility of WCs and OWLs or their prototypes of the sort

existing in these Asian countries cannot be ruled out, given that universities and colleges of these Asian countries have sent faculty members to pursue doctoral studies in North America, and these overseas postgraduate students are likely to bring back ideas about WCs and OWLs. Another possibility could be the exposure to WC and OWL literature, as the field has existed since the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

For the purpose of comparing North American and non-North American WC innovations (confined to only Asia and Europe), three WC innovations in Hong Kong, and one each in Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, and Korea are discussed before considering WC innovations in Europe.

### **Writing Center Innovations in Asia**

A few universities in some Asian countries, e.g. Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore have some kind of organized support to help their students learn the art of academic writing. The writing support is usually subsumed under a broader service, e.g. a self-access centre or a learning centre. Some of these writing support systems have gone online to disseminate information about the physical centers, or to provide downloadable writing references.

Two WC innovations in Hong Kong have been reported (Hayward, 1994). The Baptist College in Hong Kong started the WC known as Writing Enhancement Service when the teaching staff found that their students had problems with writing their term papers and theses despite going through a first-year EAP course. The WC employed four full-time tutors to provide voluntary help in all aspects of writing for students who were writing up projects in their major fields. Although the WC was generally successful, it faced some major problems. Students tended to ask for proofreading help, or help with other skills

such as listening or speaking. Some teachers used it as a “dumping ground” for students who were generally weak in English.

The WC at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) was established as part of its Independent Learning Centre (ILC) for several reasons. Housing the WC in the ILC helped save tutorial time. Students could work independently in areas where they could work by themselves by referring to available resources such as writing models and guidebooks. This arrangement helped students see tutors as someone “who helped them to help themselves”. In addition, counselors at the ILC could direct weak students to relevant resources at the centre. The WC in the ILC also helped to attract students who were normally only concerned with academic writing to visit the ILC, and thus opened their eyes to the other services of the ILC. These students would then function as informants about the ILC to other students. Most importantly, the presence of the WC in the ILC sparked interest followed by commitment in improving academic writing by students and faculty staff across all departments at the CUHK.

Today, universities in Asia that had started some form of writing support initiatives years ago have generally extended this kind of support online, and the CUHK is no exception. Its English WC website at <http://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk> stresses that the WC does not provide proofreading service, and the tutors will help on style, and not the content of writing. The website also gives the opening hours of the WC, and other services such as self-access and CALL language resources provided by the ILC.

Another university of Hong Kong, the University of Hong Kong (HKU) has developed very impressive online writing support in its English Center (see <http://ec.hku.hk/>). Although HKU does not have a name like WC or OWL, its online writing support is provided via two online self-access and fully guided websites known as The Writing

Machine and The Writing Turbocharger. The Writing Machine helps students master the process of writing academic essays based on 10 online self-help sections on writing skills such as writing the introduction, paragraph development, referencing skills, proof-reading and editing, while The Writing Turbocharger shows students how to tap potentials from using ICT in writing better essays right from their very first essay in university. This systematic guide teaches writing skills alongside computing skills.

In language learning technology, numerous innovations have been initiated out of the enthusiasm of individuals, and not from top management directives. For example, in the old days of CALL, a British professor named John Higgins designed a number of English language software programs from his strong personal interest in this area. Similar personal interest and commitment prompted Ted Knoy to design the very first Chinese OWL when he was a faculty member at the National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan. His OWL website is bilingual, in both English and Chinese. Other than providing online resources such as downloadable guides for various writing skills in particular technical fields (that seems to be his stronghold) and advertisements for various language skill courses; its unique feature is the online tutoring request submission form. He extends this free service to anyone and invites the submission of manuscripts for his online tutors to provide general comments within 48 hours.

In addition to the writing support initiatives discussed in the preceding sections, the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) website currently shows only one link to a tertiary WC in Asia (see <http://writingcenters.org/owcdb/index.php?mwa=id:18>), that is the Japanese WC at Osaka Jogakuin College. Another better known Asian WC, the Korean WC at Hanyang University of Seoul, surprisingly, is not listed. The Japanese WC reflects the features of an Information OWL described by Koster (2002), and its physical

WC resembles the Extracurricular WC described by Hilgers and Marsella (1992). Out of its eight writing resource links, one is to the IWCA homepage and a listening practice site, the rest are all grammar resources with two links that provide explanation in Japanese (see [http://www.wilmina.ac.jp/studylink/Writing\\_Center/index.htm](http://www.wilmina.ac.jp/studylink/Writing_Center/index.htm)). The homepage encourages students to visit the physical WC, located in the Self-Access and Study Support Center, to improve their writing. A possible reason for the Appointment link in Japanese is perhaps to make it more visible to students. In the Index panel, the Writing Plagiarism Guidelines and FAQs are in both English and Japanese. This bilingual OWL might be good for Japanese students with very limited English to get started.

Efforts to start a WC at the University of Tokyo have also been initiated since mid-2005. It was reported that a Japanese professor invited a North American WC practitioner to provide consultancy in establishing a WC at the University of Tokyo (Diamond, 2005).

The website of the National University of Singapore WC also has a simple design, reflecting that of an Information OWL too (Koster, 2002) (see <http://www.scholars.nus.edu.sg/writingcentre/>). The information given includes the writing center's philosophy, the scope and nature of peer tutoring, the opening hours of the WC, event and workshop announcements, the work duties of a writing assistant, an application link for the post of a writing assistant, FAQs, feedback from users, and links to academic writing resources, conventions and styles, dictionaries, concordances and other WCs. The WC offers free individual face-to-face peer conferencing to only undergraduate students who are following the University Scholars Program (USP). Hence, the WC is Cocurricular (Hilgers and Marsella, 1992). The USP program of the National University of Singapore aims to nurture "the intellectual, leadership, and personal potential of promising students" through "a rigorous broad-based multidisciplinary

curriculum and exciting local and overseas research and beyond-the-classroom learning opportunities” (USP, 2005). The USP WC does not offer phone or online a/synchronous conferencing. Students from various semesters and working at various stages of their writing assignments can make an appointment through e-mails to consult a Writing Assistant. The Writing Assistants are selected from USP students who are either in the first or second year, and who have performed well academically especially in the Writing and Critical Thinking Module. The short-listed applicants will be trained and they normally work three paid hours per week. The WC also conducts workshops of writing concerns occasionally.

Different from the WC at the National University of Singapore that serves only undergraduates of a specific program, the Korean WC at the Hanyang University Center for Teaching and Learning serves both faculty members and graduate students. According to the website, the WC offers “free individual help editing English writing for content, organization, flow, logic, and style.... Important differences between Korean and English writing style can also be explained.” (<http://ctl.hanyang.ac.kr/writing/>). Like the WC at Singapore, the Korean WC too does not proofread a paper for minor errors in grammar or spelling either. The WC also does not correct assignments or coursework. Instead, its OWL provides proofreading tools for users to self-check their work. Users can either submit their work on paper or by e-mail before they confer face-to-face or via e-mail with the WC director to discuss their writing. The WC does not seem to employ peer tutors, and it is more of an Extracurricular WC (Hilgers and Marsella, 1992).

As compared to the Singaporean OWL, the Korean OWL is more sophisticated in terms of static contents and interactive tools. It reflects the Interactive OWL model Koster (2002) describes as it has a Writing Tips Bulletin Board to display answers to users’

questions, and enlist editing via e-mail. Besides a good variety of online writing tools (including some worthy of mention such as the Visual Thesaurus, the concordance and the bilingual Korean-English dictionary), the OWL also has a rich array of linked and self-created resources to help with writing for journal research papers for various disciplines, theses or dissertations, college or job applications, essays, letters, and e-mails. The WC also conducts workshops, and the workshops' PowerPoint (PPT) files and handouts plus other PDF and RTF files are uploaded to the OWL.

The unique features of this ESL WC/OWL include some bilingual resources in both English and Korean, for example, the directions for receiving WC services. This application of bilingualism is also practiced at the Japanese OWL. The Korean OWL also has graphic organizers to aid mental mapping, for example, a visual Thesaurus. Furthermore, the director practices contrastive rhetoric to help his clients see the nuances between English and Korean writing.

### **Writing Center Innovations in Europe**

About WCs in Europe, the European Writing Centers Association (EWCA) provides some links to the members' websites or OWLs (see [www.ewca.org](http://www.ewca.org)). The EWCA was founded in 1998 and accepted as a regional affiliate of the IWCA in 2000. Initially the EWCA consisted of American tertiary institutions operating in Europe such as American College of Thessaloniki, American University of Greece, and American University of Paris, but it now has members in most European countries. Interest on the application of WC as writing support reached its height when EWCA organized a Peer-Tutors Training Workshop in 2002 held at Halkidiki, Greece. The workshop was conducted by two WC experts from the USA, namely Paula Gillespie and Harvey Kail (Challenger et al., 2003).

A positive result of the workshop was an increase in the number of WCs in Europe. Three of these WC initiatives are discussed here for establishing some differences between North American and non-North American WCs or OWLs.

The University of Antwerp in Belgium has an OWL but not a physical WC (see [http://extranet.ufsia.ac.be/calliope/En\\_Calliope.html](http://extranet.ufsia.ac.be/calliope/En_Calliope.html)). The reason given for the absence of a WC is that students only have a limited number of writing assignments, thus maintaining a physical WC might not be as cost-effective as maintaining an OWL (Opdenacker, 2003). This Belgian OWL is called Calliope, and its design and development started in 2001 (Opdenacker, 2003).

The main purpose of Calliope is to serve students of the Faculty of Business Economics, who are required to take business, academic or technical communication courses in four languages including Dutch, English and French plus either German or Spanish (Opdenacker and Van Waes, 2003). Hence, the WC is Cocurricular (Hilgers and Marsella, 1992) in that it complements courses taught by the Faculty. The Calliope prototype is being designed for the fore-mentioned five languages, with the first three in use at present while the German and Spanish sites are still under construction (as of August 2005). The designers intend to develop Calliope to complement and not to replace classroom teaching. They propose that more complex interactive group tasks are best conducted in class, while more personal self-access types of skills can be learned from Calliope (Opdenacker and Van Waes, 2003).

To cater for different learning styles based on the guided problem-solving modular approach, each self-access module comprises three components: Theory, Practice, and Case study (Opdenacker and Van Waes, 2003). The Theory component is the subject matter of the what, how and why of a writing task, for example, “press release” is

explained. The Practice component is made up of exercises for students to work on, for example, rewriting a press release in plain English. A model answer will appear by clicking the “Key” button for students to check and compare their answers. The Case component presents a real-life case and questions that require the mastery of related sub-skills to solve a problem. Students are free to start from any of the three components ([http://extranet.ufsia.ac.be/calliope/En\\_Calliope.html](http://extranet.ufsia.ac.be/calliope/En_Calliope.html)).

An overview of Calliope shows that it belongs to the category of a simple Interactive OWL (Koster, 2002) as users have the chance to interact with the online modules and receive feedback by comparing their answers with the model answers. However, there is an absence of interaction via e-mail or any other form of asynchronous or synchronous tools.

The WC of the Central European University (CEU) is called the Center for Academic Writing (see <http://www.ceu.hu/writing/mission.htm>). Unlike the Belgian Calliope that only serves students, this WC serves faculty and both graduate and undergraduate students across disciplines. Students can make an appointment for an individual one-to-one consultation within an Academic Writing course conducted by the WC (in this respect, it is a Curricular WC as defined by Hilgers and Marsella, 1992), or they can meet a writing consultant for help with a writing assignment, a term paper, a thesis, an article for publication, or any career-oriented writing such as a resume or a job application letter. In this respect, it is an Extracurricular WC (Hilgers and Marsella, 1992). The appointment can be made by physically signing up at the WC or via e-mail.

However, the OWL does not conduct e-mail or online consultation. Hence, it is an Information OWL (Koster, 2002). The online self-access resources have information about discipline-specific writing, writing the various parts of a research paper, citation

styles, critical reading techniques, research proposals and theses, revising and editing, time management, oral presentations, concordances, grammar and punctuation, and international language tests (CEU Center for Academic website, 2005).

The WC also conducts language courses in Hungarian, French and German for staff and students. It also collaborates with the University's Special Extension Program to train teachers in the region to teach writing skills. The website has an exit feedback form to collect and analyze data from users (CEU Center for Academic website, 2005). From this perspective, this WC is also an R&D WC (Hilgers and Marsella, 1992).

The WC at Sabanci University, Istanbul, Turkey, administers four well-defined writing programs for staff, graduate and undergraduate students. The Undergraduate Program aims to "strengthen students' writing skills in interdisciplinary studies" (see the OWL at <http://www.sabanciuniv.edu/writingcenter/undergrad.php>) through workshops, individual writing tutorials with academic or peer tutors, a writing contest, and an online Writers' Forum. The themes of the workshops are decided through student needs assessment and consultation with the faculty. Such themes present include a writing process series, a rhetorical styles series, word power, effective presentations, a creative writing series, and essay exams. The online support materials are comprised of handouts, worksheets, charts, PPT slides for each workshop, and additional practice materials for each tutorial (Sabanci University WC Website, 2005).

For the Graduate Program, the aim is to teach research principles and scholarly writing, and to foster a community of writers. Activities include an adjunct course conducted by the faculty, workshops on expository and persuasive essays, 'netiquette', presentation skills, report writing; individual tutorials for writing dissertations, and online support materials such as the Handbook for the Preparation of Dissertation and the Manual for the

Preparation of Project Reports (Sabanci University WC Website, 2005).

The third program, the Academic and Career Advising Program, aims to help staff and students with their overseas university applications or job applications. Activities include study groups for graduate entrance exams such as the GRE and the GMAT, workshops for computer-based TOEFL, and tutorials on writing a CV, application letters, interviewing, and English proficiency assessment (Sabanci University WC Website, 2005).

Lastly, the Administrative English Program is a four-week summer intensive course that aims to “reinforce the bilingual characteristics of the University (see <http://www.sabanciuniv.edu/writingcenter/administrative.php>). The course is designed based on feedback from a needs questionnaire and a placement test for the administrative staff. For the Beginners level, the focus is more on spoken and reading skills, and for the more Advanced level, the focus is on writing skills. In addition to the administration of the four writing programs, the OWL has various archived materials in PowerPoint and multimedia formats, a Bulletin Board for announcements, FAQs, Useful Links, Workshop Evaluation, Essay Feedback Checklists, English Plays, and a recommended Reading List. Due to the presence of the Online Forum and the Bulletin Board, the WC website fits into the description of an Information OWL (Koster, 2002), and the WC plays all the four roles of the Extracurricular, Cocurricular, Curricular and R&D.

### **Comparing North American and Non-North American WCs and OWLs**

Both North American (for example, Harris, 2004; Breuch, 2005) and non-North American (for example, Opdenacker and Waes, 2003) WC advocates have expressed the difficulty in producing a representative model of a WC or an OWL. After careful

analyses of four Asian and three European WCs through their websites or OWLs, it is clear that every WC or OWL is as different as every individual human. Therefore, it is difficult to decide on the features that constitute a North American or a non-North American OWL, and to pinpoint the differences. After all, the North American WCs and OWLs are also being used to support ESL and EFL learners from all over the world.

Nevertheless, some generalizations can be made. The most obvious is that the non-North American OWLs are either monolingual (in English or the native language), bilingual or multilingual, while the North American OWLs are 100% monolingual and English. The OWLs in Asia are either monolingual (usually English, for example, the Singaporean OWL) or bilingual (English and the native language, for example, the Chinese OWL in Taiwan), while those in Europe are usually bilingual or multilingual. This serves to confirm that away from the native country, the WC approach has also been used to teach writing in other languages.

Another possible difference is that most North American WCs use peer tutors, but the Asian and European WCs seemed to use more academics or faculty members than peer tutors. The third possible difference might be the absence of e-mail and real time tutoring in Asian and European WCs. The fourth might be the lack of local content as most of the Asian and European OWLs seemed to organize their online static resources through establishing links to the North American OWLs. The reason might be that most of these WCs have been developed recently, from the late 1990s or early 2000s, and they need time to develop local content and to incorporate technology incrementally in their local WCs.

On the other hand, from the similarity perspective, most Asian and European OWLs declare the policy of no proofreading just like the North American OWLs do. Most of

these non-North American WCs offer face-to-face individual tutoring, themed workshops, and a rich collection of online support materials. Some of the European WCs play an active role in R&D and staff development aside from supporting students' writing process. A final similarity is that most of the non-North American WCs also have academic writing as the main focus; although, a number of them do also include oral presentation, reading and writing for career purposes in their list of functions.

### **Lessons from Asian Writing Centers**

As part of the enquiry, and because very little published material is available on Asian WCs and/or OWLs, contact was made with a number of the Asian WC directors or coordinators by email questionnaire to gain insights into their experience of introducing and developing a WC and/or OWL in their tertiary contexts. In addition, the problems and constraints they experienced and the limitations in the process of innovation were a focus of interest, together with more successful aspects of the innovation process and of the WC itself. The following discussion is based on in-depth personal communications with three Asian WC directors. For reasons of confidentiality, the names of the directors are not revealed here.

Of these three Asian WCs, the earliest established was the City University of Hong Kong (CUHK) WC in 1994. The idea was initiated by a faculty member of the English Language Teaching Unit and supported by the university management. From September 2005, the CUHK WC became an independent entity by ending its affiliation to the English Language Teaching Unit, and it is now a component of the Independent Learning Center (ILC) of CUHK. According to the WC director of the CUHK, an average of 500 students use the WC services every year. The writing problems students sought help for

are mainly related to resumes, application letters, personal statements, and academic writing. Thus far, the WC has not conducted any form of formal evaluation. As part of the on-going effort in promoting autonomous or independent learning, students have been encouraged to identify and rectify their mistakes in writing. This self-learning factor has complemented the WC counseling, and students were found to become autonomous learners based on informal observation. On the whole, the CUHK students who visited the WC to seek help liked the advice and materials recommended by the WC consultants. However, the students felt pressurized when they were asked to edit their own writing because they expected the consultants to proofread their work. In overcoming this problem, the WC has to reiterate that the consultants do not function as editors but resource persons who help them edit their work and solve their own learning problems.

The second Asian WC was from the Korean WC at the Hanyang University of Seoul (HUS). The WC and its website were established in March 2004. The initiative came from its current director, who was a westerner employed by the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at HUS. The WC is funded by the CTL, which is a separate entity from the Department of English. Being the only writing consultant at the WC, the director could only serve an average of one graduate or faculty client per day. The writing conference is usually intensive and may take up to two hours per conference. The intensive conference covers both higher and lower order concerns of writing. Most WC clients were initially only interested in getting “correct expressions”. Some of them changed their views on writing after the WC conference experience. Similar to the WC of CUHK, the WC of HUS has not been able to conduct any formal assessment due to the lack of human resources in tracking hundreds of clients. However, judging by the repeated visits and a high increase in publication rate, the WC might have made some

positive impact on the clients' writing.

The writing consultant of HUS felt that his application of a corpus analysis approach in WC conferencing, (I.e. Analyzing language expressions used in published journal articles in disciplines such as engineering and medicine) was convincing in getting his clients' trust of his expertise in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The genre-based approach has enabled the writing consultant to see the difference in various types of research writing and provide a good source of authentic examples to better serve his clients who major in various disciplines. Another positive aspect of the WC support was the small group workshops offered on specific writing skills. In the last academic term, about 25-44 faculty and graduate students attended five such workshops organized for them.

The main problem faced by the WC of HUS was similar to that experienced by the WC of CUHK, and that is, clients' demand for proofreading or grammar check. The director of the HUS WC explains the difference between the WC approach and a grammar check to his clients. Another problem experienced by the HUS WC was the absence of administrative personnel to support the WC director's work, for example, in tracking the WC usage and justifying the WC work.

In addition to the above responses, the director of the HUS WC commented that ESL tertiary students in Asia generally lack support for helping them write in English. Such a support mechanism was greatly needed given the fact that Asian tertiary students did not usually have a good foundation in writing in their first language, such as Korean or Japanese (see also, for example, Kobayashi and Rinnert, 2002; "Interdependence Hypothesis" in Cummins, 1980). The director also commented that a WC is better positioned in a learning support center than a department of English. Firstly, students weak in writing were also found to be weak in learning strategies, and by being a part of a

learning support center, related problems to writing such as learning could be tackled as well. Secondly, the director had personally observed a lack of confidence in the English Department's competence in tutoring writing in the sciences. On top of the above, the director commented that a traditional classroom approach to writing was not effective in helping students write in English compared to the WC approach. Furthermore, a non-directive peer model of conferencing was more difficult to implement in an Asian context than a directive apprentice model.

The third and the last Asian WC was the WC of the National University of Singapore (NUS). It became operational in January 2003. The WC is affiliated to the Writing and Critical Thinking domain of the NUS University Scholars Program (USP). According to the current NUS WC director, the Writing and Critical Thinking domain was modeled after the Expository Writing program of the Harvard University. Logically, the WC of NUS is also modeled after the WC of Harvard. At the initial stage of setting up the Writing and Critical Thinking domain, the NUS faculty worked closely with Professor Nancy Sommers, who was the then director of the Harvard Expository Writing program. Professor Nancy Sommers was probably the first person to suggest that the UPS of NUS establish a WC. The Dean of the UPS supported the initiative, and a faculty member, Dr. Julia Gardner, volunteered to set up the WC. Since its establishment, the WC at NUS has always been a part of the USP and it is funded by the USP. The director of the WC usually also coordinates the Writing and Critical Thinking domain.

With regard to usage, the WC of NUS conducted about 160 conferences over a period of about 20 weeks in the 2005 academic year. Some of these conferences were conducted for students who sought help repeatedly. Students who enrolled in the USP tended to seek help with higher order concerns in writing such as thesis, motive, structure, evidence and

analysis. Similar to the WC of CUHK, the WC of NUS has so far not done any formal measurement on the improvement in writing of students who use the WC. However, the anonymous evaluation forms students filled in after conferences suggest that the experience was highly positive. Examples of such positive comments from student clients can also be viewed at <http://www.scholars.nus.edu.sg/writingcentre/feedback.html>.

The director of the NUS WC felt that students' writing improvement was a joint effort and could only be realized when the WC worked closely with the writing faculty, who prepared the writing modules. The WC does not have problems in terms of technical, IT, or administrative support. At present, most students who visit the WC tend to seek help with their assignments for their first-year writing modules in the USP. The WC staff also plans to promote the WC as a place for other writing classes through more outreach and publicity.

Referring to the contexts of these three Asian WCs, the National University of Singapore WC seems to be closest to Malaysia as the status of English is that of an important or second language, that is, ESL. The contexts of Korea and Hong Kong are more towards EFL, where English is not as widely used as in Singapore and Malaysia (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998). However, the Singaporean WC serves only one specific group of students enrolled in the University Scholar Program, who need help in academic writing and critical thinking. The Hanyang University of Korea WC serves both graduate students and faculty members from the disciplines of engineering, medicine, sciences, mainly with writing journal articles in English; and the director acknowledged that Korean undergraduates are required to write very little in English and even in Korean (Turner, 2006). The City University of Hong Kong (CUHK) WC serves all students. The WC proposed for Malaysia intends to serve undergraduates initially as this is the group

that needs writing support the most, before extending the service to graduate students and faculty members. In this aspect, the CUHK WC model should be the closest fit.

Most of these Asian WCs are located in and administered by a bigger entity. For example, the Korean WC is part of the Center for Teaching and Learning, the CUHK WC is part of the Independent Learning Center, and the Singaporean one is an adjunct service to its USP program. Therefore, in terms of management and cost-effectiveness, the proposed Malaysian WC may gain from being situated in a bigger entity such as a Student Learning Center (which is quite a common student support service practiced by New Zealand universities). The advantage of situating a WC in a bigger entity is that the writing support becomes more visible to the student population, and being part of a bigger entity also ensures adequate funding (Hayward, 1994).

Concerning tutoring, the Korean and Hong Kong WCs employ teaching staff as writing tutors, while only the Singaporean WC trains students who have excelled in the USP program as tutors. The director of the Korean WC commented that a peer tutoring model is not possible for Korean culture as “age differences of even a year must be respected”, hence tutors are seen as tutors and the interaction is that of a teacher and a student; and not between peers (Turner, 2006). Another factor might be that, for non-native students of English, tutoring writing in English is a very complex skill, and may not be mastered by students without any teaching foundation and with only a brief period of tutor training. Due to this complexity, most Asian WCs engage faculty members as tutors. This model will also guide Malaysia in considering the appointment of tutors and tutor training.

With regard to tutoring strategies, the director of the Korean WC (Turner, 2006) and the director of the Waseda University WC of Japan (Yasuda, 2006) both commented that a collaborative, facilitative and non-directive tutoring strategy is not likely to work with

their EFL clients who not only have to learn the art of writing but also English. Hence, they expect WC tutors to play the role of experts in telling them exactly what is wrong with their writing (Yasuda, 2006). In considering the tutoring strategy that will work for ESL or EFL clients, the stage of learning of the student can be used as a guide (Vygotsky, 1978). If the student is at the beginning stage of learning to write, a more directive approach will be more effective. For more advanced learners of writing, a facilitative or non-directive approach is necessary to give room for learners to develop their own writing strategies and their own voice (see also Powers, 1993; Williams, 2004).

Both the Hong Kong and Korean WCs reported the problem of students asking for proofreading help, which is in practice against the WC founding principle of improving the writer not the writing. Indeed, most WCs have experienced students requesting proofreading as such reports have often appeared in the Writing Lab Newsletter and the Writing Center Journal (see, for example, Myers, 2003; Purcell, 1998). Logically, the proofreading need would be more acute among ESL clients as they have more language problems. For example, at UPM, faculty members and students are willing to pay for proofreading services in return for an error-free report, article, or dissertation in English. All these are evidence of the genuine need of ESL students for proofreading, and a WC would be counter-productive in resisting the need. Therefore, a WC proposed for UPM must be able to mitigate this “problem”.

In addition to the limited usage statistics reported by the three Asian WC directors in the earlier sections, some glimpses of the Osaka Jogakuin College (OJC) WC utility were obtained from the WC news published on the OJC OWL. The news (OJC WC News, October 25, 2004) reported that 158 students sought help from the WC in the academic year of 2004. As OJC had a total of 752 students, the percentage of students who had

used the WC worked out to be 21%. The bulk of the clientele was from first year junior college (39.9%), followed by second year junior college (34.8%). These statistics are in line with the usage pattern of a North American WC that reported first year students made up the bulk of their clientele (Lerner, 2001). The statistics from the OJC WC also revealed that the type of help most sought for by students were organizing papers (34.4%), grammar and mechanics (21.1%), and vocabulary (17.5%) (OJC WC News, November 20, 2004). While these statistics may be useful for comparative purposes, it is based on just one Asian WC. Therefore, it is not suitable for use in indicating any usage trend in other Asian WCs.

These WCs and their OWLs continue to thrive, and their success can be attributed to several features linked to successful innovations (Markee, 1997; Rogers, 1995). The most important attribute is the perceived relative advantage of the WC and OWL. These WCs and OWLs have been useful in helping faculties and students improve their writing skills; and thereby, contributed to increased publications internationally (in the case of the Korean WC) and improved academic performance (Turner, 2006; Yasuda, 2006). The attribute of compatibility has also played an important role. All of these Asian WCs have been modified in adapting to local culture and practice, and there was no wholesale adoption of a North American WC or OWL model. The adaptation of a WC also gives it a sense of originality, since it is not a complete 'copy' work and as such enhances a sense of ownership. It was also not too complex for these Asian universities to initiate a WC or OWL as they have teaching staff who are well versed with teaching ESL / EFL writing and instructional experts who can help with WC tutor training. There is the element of trialability as the services of the WC or OWL can be incremental, for example, from serving a small group of clients to several groups. In addition, the resources can be added

on as time goes. This incremental feature also contributes to the feasibility of a WC, as it can start small-scale, and hence budgeting and logistical considerations are less complicated.

There is also the aspect of visibility as the physical space of the WC is often publicized by the virtual OWL, and faculties who want students to hand in better written assignments also help in publicizing the WC. The form of an innovation can also determine the uptake. In this case, the WC and the OWL have tangible forms. They can be felt, visited, and utilized. Due to these inherent attributes of a WC and OWL to any adopting institution, the risk of poor uptake can be relatively minimized. It would seem that the future is bright for the initiation of a WC in Malaysia.

While this section has provided only a limited look into Asian WCs that are still under development, this aspect of the enquiry has revealed the uniqueness of each WC in each context. The contribution of lessons from Asian WCs is to continue to provide more background to understand the theory and actual praxis of WCs and OWLs for Malaysian tertiary education.

## **Conclusion**

As WCs and OWLs are new to most Asian countries including Malaysia, concepts and issues pertaining to innovations are investigated. Universities that used to have inertia to change must now be actively innovative to remain competitive and relevant to changing tertiary demographics. Thus, the various principles and attributes of successful innovations should inform the planning, adoption and implementation of any innovation. Lessons can also be learned from the successful transfers of Western curricular innovation to the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia.

From the end of the twentieth century, countries outside North America started to innovate WCs, OWLs, and other related online initiatives for ESL tertiary learners. Interestingly by comparison, North American and non-North American OWLs are not too different. The reason may be that North American WCs and OWLs also serve ESL students.

The online initiatives in Asian universities are evidence to a trend of using the web to teach and support English language development in Asia. In most cases, the online resource complements the physical resource and neither stands alone. However, other than the limited information gathered from the WC websites and the e-mailed questionnaire, there is very limited literature regarding the history, development, utility patterns, problems and challenges of these ESL writing support initiatives outside North America (as these initiatives are still new and undergoing development). Therefore, the present research has to rely mainly on WCs developed in North America to conceptualize a WC framework for universities in Malaysia.

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## **Book Review**

*The Idea of English in Japan: Ideology and the Evolution of a Global Language*

Philip Seargeant, Bristol, United Kingdom: Multilingual Matters, 2009. Pp. xiv + 186.

**Reviewed by Esther Boucher-Yip**

*Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Boston, USA*

*The Idea of English in Japan: Ideology and the Evolution of a Global Language* by Philip Seargeant presents an intelligent discussion for contemporary applied linguists and researchers interested in English in Japan. In this book Seargeant critically examines the relationships people have towards the English language and how it is used and perceived in Japan. The basis for this perception is mostly drawn from how English is conceptualized as a global language in Japan.

The book is divided into nine chapters beginning with the introductory chapter where the author briefly discusses the idea of English as a concept and provides reasons why Japan is an appealing case study for the English as a global language paradigm.

In chapter 2, Seargeant describes the two theoretical approaches in which English is conceptualized in applied linguistics: English as a global language and English as a lingua franca. The author argues that the different conceptualizations of English can act as the basis for different trends within applied linguistics practice and provides brief examples of such trends in Japan. The chapter ends with two specific questions: To what

end are the conceptualizations of English within Japanese society the way that they are? What consequences do the structural dynamics which result in these context-specific conceptualizations have for the generation of the theoretical approaches? (p. 20).

The author attempts to answer the questions raised in chapter 2 in the following chapter (chapter 3) by reviewing the ways in which global English studies have approached the issue of ideology, specifically the language ideologies which provide a framework for the study of the idea of English in Japan. He also provides a historical overview of the politics and the emergence of the world Englishes paradigm. Seargeant then explains the concept of ideology, indexicality and symbolic meaning of languages.

In chapter 4, Seargeant examines the way in which English is framed within the debate about language education in Japan and identifies and analyzes the ideologies of the language that structure both mainstream applied linguistics research and educational policy. He also provides a brief overview of the practice and policy of English language teaching in Japan.

The author continues with his discussion of the conceptualization of English in Japan in the following chapter (chapter 5) and draws a connection between the English language and Japanese culture which is often “discursively negotiated” (p. 66).

In the next three chapters, the author provides conceptual case studies anchored around salient concepts or motifs within the discourse such as the issue of 'authenticity' (chapter 6), the relationship between aspiration and the current status of English within the world (chapter 7), and what does and does not count as 'English' in Japan (chapter 8).

In the final chapter, the author returns to his discussion of the broader concept of English as a global language and the implication of teaching English in the Japanese context.

Readers who are not familiar with the Japanese context will appreciate his examples of how English is used and perceived in Japan as he tries to connect these examples to the wider theoretical framework of his study. A criticism, however, would be that he does not fully discuss the implication for English language teaching in Japan. Nonetheless, Seargeant's study of the ontology of English in Japan and how the language is conceptualized in research paradigms lends a new insight to contemporary applied linguistic thought and adds a new perspective to the current discussion and debate on English as a global language.

## **Book Review**

*Teaching Academic Writing: An Introduction for Teachers of Second Language Writers*

B. Paltridge, L. Harbon, D. Hirsch, H. Shen, M. Stevenson, A. Phakiti, & L. Woodrow.

Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2009. Pp. xi + 187.

## **Reviewd by Atsushi Iida**

*Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, USA*

*Teaching academic writing: An introduction for teachers of second language writers*

discusses the key concepts and issues of teaching academic writing in second language (L2) contexts and provides the reader with some practical suggestions for teaching approaches which teachers of L2 academic writing can apply to their own contexts.

The book consists of nine chapters on a variety of topics relevant for teachers of second language writers. Each chapter is organized in much the same way to help readers gain a greater understanding of teaching L2 students' academic writing by combining the academic concepts the text poses with their own teaching philosophy or experience. To do this, each starts by posing thought-provoking questions concerning controversial issues in L2 academic writing, then offers a discussion of the issues from theoretical viewpoints, and concludes by providing classroom implications as well as tasks and techniques. The first chapter, for example, provides an overview of crucial issues in the teaching of academic writing in L2 contexts in terms of writing in academic settings,

approaches to knowledge, academic literacies, cross-cultural issues, disciplinary differences, discourse communities, and generation 1.5 students.

The remaining chapters of the book continue to follow this pattern as they address special issues in the teaching of academic writing; beginning with chapter 2 which describes the nature of academic writing including the process of academic writing, textual and structural features in academic texts, and the relationship between writers' individual internal processes and external environments in producing academic texts.

The next two chapters discuss issues which instructors need to be aware of when designing their courses. Chapter 3 discusses both theoretical and practical approaches for conducting a needs analysis by explaining the procedures and providing nine different ways to collect information about needs, and chapter 4 explores (from socio-historical viewpoints) how teaching approaches for academic writing have developed providing pedagogical and practical examples of the approaches.

The following two chapters address issues directly related to student success. Chapter 5 clarifies the role of vocabulary in academic writing and discusses how vocabulary can be taught in an academic writing course in order to empower L2 students. And, from intercultural perspectives, chapter 6 carefully looks at the teaching of academic writing as a way to help students develop their L2 linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural knowledge to actively participate in writing classrooms.

The next chapters discuss the negotiation of meaning. Chapter 7 addresses the nature of feedback in L2 academic writing including both teacher and peer response and suggests some ways to provide students with effective feedback on their written texts. Chapter 8 then discusses how to assess students' academic writing as a way to help improve their learning.

The last chapter of this book serves a resource for instructors by providing an annotated bibliography of both books and online sources for teaching academic writing.

Overall, *Teaching academic writing: An introduction for teachers of second language writers* proposes practical approaches for the teaching of academic writing in L2 settings. One of the shortcomings of the book, however, is that it treats the issues of L2 academic writing very generally. Hence, it does not sufficiently address them from both theoretical and methodological viewpoints. Another limitation is that, since it uses the word ‘ESL’ in general; instead, it leaves a significant question of who is included in this category. However, even with these shortcomings, this book is effective for novice teachers of L2 academic writing because it discusses the significance of academic writing being a contextually situated activity. This book is also significant because it offers these teachers many opportunities to build basic knowledge of L2 academic writing from practical viewpoints and to explore teaching approaches which are the most appropriate for their own given L2 writing contexts.

## **Book Review**

### *Language Teacher Research in Australia and New Zealand*

Ann Burns and Jill Burton (Eds). Virginia: TESOL, 2008, Pp. vii +249.

### **Reviewed by Brendan Moloney**

#### *The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia*

Burns and Burton have edited this collection of 13 articles on teaching English titled *Language teacher research in Australia and New Zealand*, but readers should not be misled by the title in that this collection of 13 articles on teaching in the tertiary sector may also apply to other teaching contexts in other parts of the world where teachers want to link research to practice.

In chapter 1, Burns and Burton provide an overview of the collection. As a starting point, the authors establish a framework for viewing the collection of works as that of a reflective teacher practitioner, with the explicit goal of exploring ‘an inquiry-based attitude teaching’. In working within this framework, chapter 2 examines Australian and Hong Kong university collaborations in educating teachers in Australia. Chapter 3 then examines whether or not learning about New Zealand social and cultural issues in pre-university English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes helps students to be successful in their later university studies. The following chapter, chapter 4, uses action research to examine Australian immigrants’ learning of conversational strategies. On a somewhat

different track, chapter 5 explores vocabulary recall and retention for students in Western Australia. More detailed analysis is suggested in chapter 6, which proposes successful strategies employed by students to conquer international tests, and chapter 7 argues that teachers of English should learn more about heritage languages. Chapter 8 goes on to suggest socio-cultural and political impediments to learning English in Sydney, and chapter 9 highlights the importance of critical thinking to post-graduate engineers. The final two chapters raise professional and ethical issues: Chapter 10 examines a teacher's existential problems in teaching English through a self-enquiry study, and chapter 11 examines issues of race, identity, and discrimination in Australia as channelled through a teacher's experience and observations of students learning English. The final two chapters explore literacy: Chapter 12 examines teaching literacy to deaf students in New Zealand through TESOL techniques, and chapter 13 explores the issues of reading comprehension for biology students.

When critically evaluating the text, one can see that the editors are clearly aware of an international audience, but arguably many international readers would find specific rather than generic studies on EAP of more interest. There is not, for example, a single article on Australian or New Zealand Englishes. A shortcoming of this book, therefore, is that there is little consideration (or discussion) of what is distinctive and unique about either New Zealand or Australian teaching. On the plus side, the book has several strong points: (1) It challenges stereotypes of Australian and New Zealand language teaching as being dependent on British or American methodologies and research; (2) it highlights the types and diversity of research being undertaken in Australasia; (4) and it offers a perspective on teaching English as a second language in these regions. Consequently, while there are some limitations to this book, Burns and Burton have indeed brought

together a collection of articles that certainly serve as a preliminary insight into Australian and New Zealand research results on English language education and thus has significance both in Australia and beyond in the field of Language Teacher Education.

## **Book Review**

### *Language Games: Innovative Activities for Teaching English*

Maureen Snow Andrade (Ed). Alexandria, VA: TESOL, 2009. Pp. xii + 283.

### **Reviewed by Colin J. Toms**

#### *The Petroleum Institute, Abu Dhabi, UAE*

Just the other day, I was telling a colleague about a game for teaching directions involving a box of eggs, a bag of potato chips, and a blindfold. As I outlined the directions, I watched his face light up--just as mine must have done when it was first explained to me. Imagine then my own joy when, flipping through the reference chart at the beginning of *Language Games: Innovative Activities for Teaching English*, I came across a rich assortment of exciting games.

“Designed for different student populations . . . in diverse settings (from pre K-12 to college to postgraduate, from local to global from formal to informal)” (p xi), *Language Games: Innovative activities for teaching English* comprises 30 chapters: an introduction and another 29, each of which is dedicated to one, individual game.

The table of contents separates the games into two broad classifications: ‘Skills’ and ‘Beyond Skills’. The first is broken into four sections: Reading and Writing, Listening and Speaking, Vocabulary and, finally, Grammar. The second is also divided into four: Game Templates, Get Acquainted, Content-based Instruction, and Critical Thinking.

Despite this seemingly ordinary format, what *Language games: Innovative activities for teaching English* manifestly is not is a structure-governed, elementary-to-advanced, recipe book of yore. There is more--far more--to each game than a simple level guide and an iconic pair of scissors advising the user where to cut.

Consider one chapter, by way of example, ‘Podquests: Language Games On The Go’, by Hayo Reinders and Marilyn Lewis. Like the other chapters, it is composed of an *Introduction*, which offers an overview of the game and roots it in sound pedagogy; *Context*, a section which broadly delineates the target audience; *Curriculum, Tasks, Materials*, in which the *modus operandi* is outlined; *Reflections* in which insights from the contributor are offered; and, finally, a *References* section for those who wish to read further.

To consider the chapter in greater detail for a moment, the chapter begins with an *Introduction* which describes what a podcast is before citing precedents which can be found elsewhere in both the literature and ELT practice and how they can fit into the curriculum. This is followed by a section entitled *Context*. This section described what contexts the activity has been used with and how readers can adapt it to their classrooms. The third section, *Curriculum, Tasks and Materials* explains how to conduct the activity by describing how it was done in a real world context (e.g. a language school in New Zealand). It then walks the user through the stages of the activity via a series of bullet-pointed explanations and offers a rationale for podcast use and pointers for their creation. The fourth section *Reflections* broadly outlines variables dependent upon local context, student population, technological evanescence and teacher comfort zones. The last section closes the chapter with, as one might find in any scholarly work, *References*, and concludes with brief biographical details of the chapter’s two authors.

Even in so a brief a review as this, it is clear that what *Language Games: Innovative Activities for Teaching English* manifestly is *not* is a photocopiable panacea for careful planning. Each game takes a considerable amount of preparation and planning if it is to be performed effectively in the classroom. And this, perhaps, is the book's greatest strength: It is anchored in sound pedagogical principles.

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## **Guidelines for Submissions**

### **Submissions for the Quarterly Issue**

#### **Submissions guidelines**

The *Asian EFL Journal Quarterly* is a fully peer-reviewed section of the journal, reviewed by a team of experts in EFL from all over the world. The *Asian EFL Journal* welcomes submissions written in different varieties of world Englishes. The reviewers and Associate Editors come from a wide variety of cultural and academic backgrounds and no distinction is made between native and non-native authors. As a basic principle, the *Asian EFL Journal* does not define competence in terms of native ability, but we are a strictly reviewed journal and all our reviewers expect a high level of academic and written competence in whatever variety of English is used by the author. Every effort will be made to accept different rhetorical styles of writing. The *Asian EFL Journal* also makes every effort to support authors who are submitting to an international journal for the first time. While major revisions may be requested, every effort is made to explain to authors how to make the necessary revisions.

Each submission is initially screened by the Senior Associate Editor, before being sent to an Associate Editor who supervises the review. There is no word minimum or maximum.

#### **There are two basic categories of paper:**

\* Full research papers, which report interesting and relevant research, try to ensure that you point out in your discussion section how your findings have broad relevance internationally and contribute something new to our knowledge of EFL.

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When submitting please specify if your paper is a full research paper or a non-research

paper. In the latter case, please write a paragraph explaining the relevance of your paper to our *Asian EFL Journal* readership.

Authors are encouraged to conform to international standards of drafting, but every effort will be made to respect original personal and cultural voices and different rhetorical styles. Papers should still be fully-referenced and should use the APA (5<sup>th</sup> edition) format. Do not include references that are not referred to in the manuscript. Some pieces submitted to the quarterly issue may be reclassified during the initial screening process. Authors who wish to submit directly to the Teaching Articles section should read the separate guidelines and make this clear in the submission e-mail.

**Referencing:** Please refer to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) – Contributors are also invited to view the sample PDF guide available on our website and to refer to referencing samples from articles published from 2006. Due to the increasing number of submissions to the *Asian EFL Journal*, authors not conforming to APA system will have their manuscripts sent back immediately for revision. This delays publication and taxes our editorial process.

Format for all submissions (Please read this before submitting your work)

All submissions should be submitted to: [asian\\_efl\\_journal@yahoo.com](mailto:asian_efl_journal@yahoo.com)

i) The document must be in MS Word format.

ii) Font must be Times New Roman size 12.

Section Headings: Times New Roman (Size 12, bold font).

Spacing: 1.5 between lines.

iii) 'Smart tags' should be removed.

iv) Footnotes must not 'pop up' in the document. They must appear at the end of the article. Use the superscript font option when inserting a note rather than the automatic footnote or endnote option.

iv) Citations - APA style. (See our website PDF guide)

Use the APA format as found in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), 5th Edition, for headings, citations, reference lists and in text referencing. Extra care should be taken for citing the Internet and must include the date the site was accessed.

About APA Style/format: <http://www.apastyle.org/aboutstyle.html>

APA Citation Style: <http://www.liu.edu/cwis/CWP/library/workshop/citapa.htm>

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v) Keywords: All articles must include Keywords at the beginning of the article. List 4-6 keywords to facilitate locating the article through keyword searches in the future.

vi) Graphs and Charts - either in the body of the document or at the end. In certain cases, a graphic may not appear in the text of the web version of the *Asian EFL Journal* but a link to the graphic will be provided.

vii) Paragraphs. Double space between paragraphs. Indent the beginning of each paragraph with three strikes of the space bar except those immediately following a heading, quotation, example, figure, chart or table. Do not use the tab key.

viii) Keep text formatting (e.g., italics, bold, etc.) to the absolute minimum necessary. Use full justification. All lines to be against Left Hand Side Margin (except quotes - to be indented per APA style).

ix) Abstract

The abstract should contain an informative summary of the main points of the article, including, where relevant, the article's purpose, theoretical framework, methodology, types of data analysed, subject information, main findings, and conclusions. The abstract should reflect the focus of the article.

x) Graphs – to fit within A4 size margins (not wider)

Thank you for your cooperation. (asian\_efl\_journal@yahoo.com)

**Please include the following with your submission:**

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Brief Bio Data noting history of professional expertise

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Abstract

Any questions regarding submission guidelines, or more detailed inquiries about less common citation styles, may be addressed to the Editorial Board.

**Book Reviews:**

The *Asian EFL Journal* currently encourages two kinds of submissions, unsolicited and solicited. Unsolicited reviewers select their own materials to review. Both teachers and graduate students are encouraged to submit reviews. Solicited reviewers are contacted and asked to review materials from its current list of availability. If you would like to be considered as a solicited reviewer, please forward your CV with a list of publications to the Book Review Editor at:

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All reviewers, unsolicited and solicited, are encouraged to provide submissions about materials that they would like to suggest to colleagues in the field by choosing materials that they feel have more positive features than negative ones.

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1. Reviews should be prepared using MS Word and the format should conform to 12 pica New Times Roman font, 1.5 spacing between lines, and 1 inch margins.
2. The reviewer(s)' full names including middle initial(s), title, school affiliation, school address, phone number, and e-mail address should be included at the top of the first page.
3. The complete title of the text, edition number, complete name(s) of author(s), publisher, publisher's address (city & state), and date of publication should be included after the reviewer(s)' identifying information.
4. Reviews should be between 500-700 words.

5. A brief biography of the author(s) should be included after the review.
6. A statement that the submission has not been previously published or is not being considered for publication elsewhere should be included at the bottom of the page.

**Organization:**

Reviewers are encouraged to peruse reviews recently published in the quarterly PDF version of the Journal for content and style before writing their own. While creativity and a variety of writing styles are encouraged, reviews, like other types of articles, should be concisely written and contain certain information that follows a predictable order: a statement about the work's intended audience, a non-evaluative description of the material's contents, an academically worded evaluative summary which includes a discussion of its positive features and one or two shortcomings if applicable (no materials are perfect), and a comment about the material's significance to the field.

**Style:**

1. All reviews should conform to the Journal's APA guideline requirements and references should be used sparingly.
2. Authors should use plural nouns rather than gendered pronouns such as he/she, his/her him/her and adhere to the APA's Guidelines for Non-Sexist Use of Language, which can be found at: <http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/publications/texts/nonsexist.html>.