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Using YouTube to Encourage Authentic Writing in EFL Classrooms

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Teaching writing to learners of English as Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) is one of the most challenging and difficult tasks for the language teacher. Such difficulty is due to a composite of different factors among which the very complex nature of the writing skill in and of itself is central. Writing imposes huge cognitive, linguistic, and social demands to both native speakers of English and EFL learners, but the demands are truly higher for the latter group (Brown, 2004; Kern, 2000; Nunan, 1999). Another factor lies within the practical conditions in which teaching takes place. EFL classrooms often offer learners limited opportunities to experience authentic writing. In recent years, a number of teachers and researchers in ESL and EFL maintain that the addition of Internet Communication Technologies (ICTs) represents an option that may diminish such limitation to a significant extent (Godwin-Jones, 2003; Ward, 2004; Wu, 2006; Wu & Hiltz, 2004; Zeinstejer, 2008). Most notably, a strong case has been made in favor of distribution lists or online forums, wikis, and blogs. This argument appears to have motivated many EFL teachers to integrate ICTs into their classes. The goal of this article is to include another accessible, familiar, and easy-to-use resource to the ones listed above: YouTube (http://www.youtube.com).

YouTube (YT) has gained enormous popularity in a relatively short time. This online video-sharing social network has been enthusiastically welcomed by EFL teachers because of its potential to provide countless hours of exposure to spoken English (Godwin-Jones, 2007). By browsing videos in YT, teachers and learners can find videos on almost any topic (politics, science, math), spoken in different varieties of the language (standard, foreign accented, etc.) and at different levels of difficulty. However, the potential of YT as a resource to aid EFL writing seems to have seen overlooked. This article provides a pedagogical rationale for the use of YT as a resource to develop writing skills along with descriptions of different teaching implementations based on that rationale.

The Role of Internet Communication Technologies in Providing Contexts for Authentic Writing

The term *authenticity* has been surrounded by both praise and controversy in the TEFL literature. It has been interpreted at the level of input as the use of samples of written or spoken language that were produced in the course of real and meaningful

communication and not for pedagogical purposes (Nunan, 1999). Such view has been questioned on the grounds that this kind of input is all too often incomprehensible for the beginner and intermediate learner (Doughty & Long, 2003; Krashen, 1982). Another perspective of authenticity is at the level of task. Nunan (1989) made the important distinction between everyday or real-word tasks and pedagogical tasks (i.e. tasks performed in the classroom for instructional purposes). At the rise of task-based instruction, Nunan claimed that the effectiveness of pedagogical tasks in language learning depended largely on the extent they resembled real-world tasks. Yet for some authors, reproducing authentic tasks under the artificial circumstances of the classroom is too ambitious and maybe unattainable (Widdowson, 1998). In response to these observations, Ellis (2003) proposed a further distinction of authenticity: situational and interactional. A task is situationally authentic to the extent to which it mimics real-world language-use situations (such as role playing a customer-waiter exchange). A task, on the other hand, that elicits language behaviors (not situations) that are likely to be used to carry out communicative goals in the real world is interactionally authentic although the task in itself is unlikely to occur outside the classroom. An example of this kind of task would be an information gap task in which two participants compare two images without seeing their partner's image. These two notions, Ellis adds, are not two separate distinctive concepts but rather opposite ends in a pedagogical continuum in the curriculum. Finally, Widdowson (1978, 1998) considers that language that is extracted from its original situational and pragmatic context to be reproduced in the classroom is indeed genuine, but not authentic. Authenticity in this view is not an all-or-nothing inherent property of the text, but a relative one that depends on the social and cultural connections between the speaker or writer and the audience (listener or reader). Because genuine texts are not intended for the learner and thus make the learner feel socially and culturally foreign to the message of the text, there would not be the same involvement between author, text, and audience that distinguishes authentic communication (Widdowson, 1978, 1998).

These views of authenticity provide a framework for defining authentic writing. Thus, writing that is produced by learners in the classroom should be done under similar conditions to those faced by writers in the real world and include a meaningful level of involvement among the learner-writer, the message (text), and the intended audience. By reviewing recent literature on ESL/EFL (Brown, 2004; Cumming, Cantor, Powers, Santos, & Taylor, 2000; Hamp-Lyons & Kroll, 1997; Kern, 2000), I suggest there are three essential features that define authentic writing when an emphasis is placed upon communication.

- *Authentic writing occurs for a communicative purpose*. The writer usually has an intention of communicating something. The writer might be motivated out of sheer emotion (as in the case of poetry, for instance) or out of a social requirement or need.

For most people, the second motivation is the most common. Flower and Hayes (1981) called this often external need the "rhetorical problem."

- *Authentic writing is intended for an audience*. As writers have something to express, they usually need to express that something to someone else. The audience might be close and small (an email to a friend) or distant and large (an article in a refereed journal) (Hamp-Lyons & Kroll, 1997). The intended audience determines the choice of key elements of discourse and style as well as imposes higher or lower demands on clarity and specificity (Toh, 2005).
- *Authentic writing is usually integrated with other receptive skills*. Most cognitive views of writing seem to view writing as an isolated process in which begins with the writer's previous knowledge and perspectives about the world. Nevertheless, most writing, and particularly academic/professional writing, begins with knowledge the writer has obtained and processed from other sources (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989; Cumming et al., 2000). Frequently, this integration takes place between reading and writing as the writer takes other written texts as sources of information (Asención, 2004; Grabe, 2001; Hirvela, 2004). However, and given the rapid development of digital and electronic audiovisual media, writing is now frequently integrated with listening as well (Pino-Silva, 2007). Based on this, Cumming et al. (2005) have coined the term *integrated writing* to encompass both reading-to-write and listening-to-write tasks.

Many teaching practices in EFL writing fail to provide these features in their classrooms. Most often, teachers assign the topic, purpose, and a hypothetical audience. Prompts such as this one are common in textbooks and writing courses: *imagine you are a customer at a hotel and there is a problem in your room; write a two paragraph complaint letter*. Such a task resembles a writing task the learner might or might not have to perform in the real world (situational authenticity); but in the immediate situation of the learner, it may not mean much. To begin with, learners are given a pre-packaged purpose, one that does not correspond with their needs or motivations at the time of the task.

Secondly, the intended audience is imaginary—a hotel manager who does not exist for the learners. Some might already have schemata on what hotel managers are like and about complaints in hotels, but many might have never been through such a situation. Actually, the real audience for that piece of writing is usually just the teacher and maybe some learners' peers if peer-review is encouraged. In many cases, learners are aware of this, and thus, they write for these "real" readers. As a general rule, most learners think (and even expect) that teachers focus exclusively on syntax, vocabulary, and spelling and give priority to these aspects over the message. This belief usually results in learners' producing an artificial and unauthentic text.

Finally, writing is happening in isolation. The learner reads the prompt, and it is very likely that before encountering the prompt there were model dialogues and grammar drills or even a model letter with a complaint to the hotel manager. However, the message is expected to come from learners. They are expected to derive form, not meaning, from those models prior to the prompt. They have to make up a believable complaint and merge it with the structures presented along the lesson. In integrated writing, writers construct meaning from their sources and adapt or transform those meanings to generate their own (Hirvela, 2004; Kern, 2000; Pino-Silva, 2007).

By the introducing ICTs into writing classes, learners can meet with most or all of the above-mentioned features of authentic writing. In blogs, for example, as learners write and publish their texts online, they go through the experience of writing for a real and wider audience than just the teachers and classmates (Ward, 2004). In addition, learners can write about topics they identify with and consider relevant for them which in turn helps them connect with that broader audience. The dynamic nature of hyper text enables and facilitates the process of finding external sources to write from (web sites, other blogs). Wikies, while having many applications similar to those found in blogs, include features that enable multiple users to edit and add to one text, fostering collaborative writing (Zeinstejer, 2008).

YouTube and Writing

Nowadays, most people are familiar with YT. It is one of the most popular websites of recent years (Long, 2008). Anyone on the Internet can access YT and watch online videos on almost anything from the more professional (movie trailers, sitcom episodes, news broadcasts) to the more amateur (usually produced by individuals with a home camcorder or even a cell phone). Videos in YT are formatted as flash videos (or .flv) which makes their storage, retrieval, and transportation easier without serious quality loss (Godwin-Jones, 2007). However, YT is more than just another video-based website. It is a social network site (SNS) in which people can join efforts to be active participants in a continuous process of collaborative meaning construction (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The main difference between YT and other SNSs, such as Facebook or Hi5, is that its main means of interaction is video-sharing. While visitors can only watch the videos, members can upload new videos, rank existing videos, create their own "channels[1] ," create a profile of favorite videos, send video replies, and post comments about existing videos (Lange, 2007).

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[1] A channel is a customized personal web site within the network. YT members can subscribe to other members' channels and thus create an inner network inside the wider network. The channel works in a way that it resembles Facebook profiles. A channel can be kept public or private.

The comment-posting feature in YT is the focus of the present work. These brief written comments may display all the features of authentic writing: a) the author of the comment writes about the video content[2] (thus integrating listening and writing); b) if the author has decided to post a comment, it is most probably because of feeling compelled to do so for personal reasons (communicative purpose); c) the author might be writing to the YT member who originally uploaded the video but knows that anyone else who watches that video is likely to read the comment (real audience); and d) since there are no evaluations other than what other YT members might provide in a reply, the viewer focuses on the message and on making that message reachable for the readers rather than focusing on form. Moreover, these comments have been found to be highly socializing factors as strong social bonds can develop over time among YT members through comment posting, video-sharing, and "friendling[3]" (Lange, 2007).

The idea that these comments can have an impact on ESL/EFL writing skills originally comes from the video-based short-comment writing task (VC task) designed, implemented, and studied by Pino-Silva (2007). Roughly put, the VC task consists in showing learners a short videotext, and having them write a comment on its content. The term comment, as used here, refers to a text that is constructed from another text (in this case, an audiovisual one) with the aim of evaluating, expanding, criticizing, or questioning the original (Mayora, 2008). In the VC task, no restrictions on what or how to comment are imposed on learners. They are simply asked to express freely their own ideas about the video content, thus opening a chance for expressivity and fluency (Pino-Silva & Mayora, 2006).

The task of writing such free comments involves the integration of listening and writing as learners are required to comprehend the video, react to it, organize their reactions, and convey them in written language (Pino-Silva, 2007). Pino-Silva adds that by giving the learners the chance to choose what to write about the video and how to write their comments, critical thinking may also emerge from the task.

Moreover, the VC task has both situational and interactional authenticity (Mayora, 2008; Pino-Silva, 2007). It has situational authenticity since writing a comment based on audiovisual material is a situation that happens in the real world and the learner is likely to encounter it. Even before the appearance of YT, some TV networks elicit viewers' comments on their broadcasts via emails or short text boxes on their web sites. Likewise,

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[2] This might not always be the case, since some YT users may comment on visual aspect with no reference to the linguistic content.

[3] *Friendling* is a feature in YT that enables members with a personal profile and channel to keep track of the activities and maintain continuous communicaton with other YT members.

the VC task has interactional authenticity since reflecting on media content and commenting on it (by supporting, complementing or criticizing) is a kind of linguistic and communicative behavior learners will have to face in the real world even when it is not based on video (as writing an argumentative essay based on a book chapter). At the same time, when the learner is asked to interpret the video and becomes involved or identifies with its content, rather than just being a passive recipient of information or a static repeater of it, the video is authenticated beyond mere genuineness (Mayora, 2008).

Although Pino-Silva originally conceived the task to be carried out offline within the context of a technology-enhanced language learning program for high school EFL learners (Antonini & Pino-Silva, 2001; Pino-Silva, 2007), the chances for this task to be implemented online and its potential as an autonomous self-directed-learning task have been considerably enlarged in recent years by the growth in popularity of YT and other video-sharing-enabled ICTs such as video weblogs.

Most websites that elicit comments on video provide a limited number of characters for visitors to leave their comment. YT, for instance, imposes a maximum of 500 characters. Is it possible that by writing texts of such a short extension learners can develop writing skills? According to preliminary descriptive research, the answer seems to be yes. The key may lie in doing it repeatedly and for a sustained period of time. In his article, Pino-Silva (2007) observes that by writing video comments over a school year "students gradually begin to feel comfortable writing in English without fearing being critical, in ways that long argumentative tasks do not appear to achieve" (p.325). As a matter of fact, in a first implementation stage in its original context, learners were given the choice to write either in their native language (Spanish) or in the target language (English). This resulted in a minority of students writing their VCs completely in English, a small group writing in both languages but more often in Spanish than in English, and a majority writing their VCs completely in Spanish. As the school year progressed, the proportion of VCs written in English gradually increased to the point that by the end of a school year the VCs written in English outnumbered those in Spanish (Pino-Silva & Mayora, 2004, 2006; Mayora, 2008). Furthermore, in a study comparing high school EFL learners performance in the VC task to their performance in another video-based writing task under more controlled conditions (longer texts and test-like conditions), Mayora (2008) found that although there were no correlations between the performance of the learners in both tasks, there were considerable similarities in the texts written by the learners at the qualitative level.

These preliminary studies support the idea that by having learners extensively write VCs, they can improve writing skills. This, however, does not imply that other instructional teacher-guided teaching techniques should be abandoned all together. As it is often the case in language teaching, what seems more beneficial is the combination of

the VC task with other writing tasks both in isolation and integrated to other media (Hirvela, 2004; Mayora, 2008; Pino-Silva, 2007).

After having discussed the theoretical and pedagogical rationale that underlies the use of YT for writing, what follows is the description of how to implement it. This description should be taken as a body of pedagogical suggestions instead of a fix set of instructions. Indeed, each teacher could and should make the adaptations considered relevant to the learners' needs and contextual characteristics. As the description proceeds, it will become clear that the procedures do not only foster the integration of listening and writing, but that of all four language skills.

An Instructional Implementation of Video Comment Tasks for Contexts with Easy Access to the Internet

The first implementation to be described is intended for teaching contexts in which both teachers and learners have easy access to Internet either in multimedia-enhanced classrooms (Internet connection, a computer, a video beam, etc.) or a computer lab (a room with a considerable number of computers all with access to the Internet). It is highly recommended that teachers interested in implementing this model join YT and create their own "channel."

An essential first step is to familiarize the learners with the comments. A video must be selected and viewed with the learners in class. The teacher may encourage learners to express orally their first impressions and opinions about the video. Then, learners' attention should be directed to all or some of the comments posted for that video. Learners can discuss as a whole class or in small groups: a) what the comments are like (length, level of formality); b) what aspects of the video they focus on (content, ideas, images); and c) what communicative functions are expressed in them (evaluating, criticizing, giving additional information). Learners' attention should also be directed to the fact that some users do not comment on the video as such but reply to other members' comments either to agree or disagree with them. It would be ideal if the selected video is one that has provoked a relatively large number of comments.

The next step consists of telling learners to draft a comment for that specific video. This can be done on paper and these comment drafts can be later read aloud and discussed in class. After discussing the messages of the comment drafts, teachers might encourage peer editing.

Finally, learners must be instructed to join YT so that they can post their comments online. Some learners might be reluctant to post their comments because they fear that their English is not good enough. That would be a great opportunity to encourage the learners to create a second or even a third draft. It is also possible to have learners with similar opinions to team up and write a comment (hence promoting collaborative learning as well). Once the learners feel satisfied with their comment drafts, they are ready to post

them. It is motivating and satisfactory for them just to see their comments posted online along with many others written by a multitude of native and non-native English speakers. Likewise, their motivation and feeling of achievement could be greater if they get a reply from any other YT member that is not a classmate.

These procedures can be repeated twice or three times more with the learners in class. The videos for further sessions could be selected by them and negotiated between teacher and learners to increase learner-centeredness. Nevertheless, the goal is not that this becomes an in-class routine since YT has the potential of being a vehicle to promote learners' autonomy. After the first teacher-guided and peer-aided sessions, learners must be encouraged to do the video-browsing and comment-posting on their own any time they want and on self-selected[4] videos.

If teachers have their own channel, then they can have students to subscribe to them. This will make it easier for teachers to keep track of what videos learners have watched, which are their favorites, and on which videos they have posted comments. Additionally, teachers can post in their channels a list of recommended or compulsory videos for all learners to watch. In case teachers do not want to create a channel within YT, other simpler devices can be used. For instance, learners can be asked to keep a log or diary in which they write down what videos they have watched, the link to those videos, a draft of their comment, and other relevant information.

An Instructional Implementation of Video Comment Tasks for Contexts with No Access to the Internet

Teachers who read instructional recommendations or teaching techniques that require ICTs often feel frustrated to find that such recommendations are inaccessible for them since they do not have access to computers in their schools. In some countries, in fact, only a few people have a computer with Internet at home. The VC task has the advantage that it is not Internet dependent. As a matter of fact, Pino-Silva's (2007) original design of the task was for offline use.

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[4] A word of caution seems necessary at this point. Deciding if learners are to watch anything they want to will depend on the learners, their age, characteristics and purpose for learning English. ESP/EAP learners will probably prefer to search for videos related to their profession or field. When working with teenage learners the teacher would probably prefer to establish certain restrictions or just more control on the kind of videos learners are to watch (being specially aware of adult, political or other inappropriate materials). Teachers need to set clear guidelines for learners on this kind of material in advance. Another issue is related to the large amount of videos without linguistic content (displaying images and captions and no words). Teachers working with teenagers might prefer to make a list of the videos learners are to comment on and not permit other videos that are not on the list. Again, this will depend on the learners' needs and characteristics.

In this case, the teacher needs to have a collection of off-the-air materials of different video genres, durations, and topics either on VCR or DVD. A sample of comments from YT can be downloaded and printed so they can be handed out to the learners for in-class discussion much in the same way it was described in the implementation for contexts with easy access to the Internet. The videos can be watched on a big screen TV and played on a DVD player or VCR (depending on each context). The rest of the procedures are the same as described above: learners watch the video, discuss it in class, read and discuss the sample comments, and finally draft their own comments for that video. The key difference is that these comments will not be posted online. In order to promote interaction, the comments can be transcribed with no identification and then distributed among the class or to students in another class with more or less the same level. Then, the learners can be encouraged to reply to those unidentified comments and to try to emulate what happens in YT. Exchanging the comments from one class with another will provide a more realistic audience for the students' comments. This procedure can not match the wide audience and authentic conditions of going online to YT, but it does provide more authenticity (skill integration, an audience other than just the teacher, communicative purpose, etc.) than writing letters to unreal hotel managers.

Conclusion

In this article, I am proposing that YT can be a helpful online resource for encouraging authentic writing in EFL classrooms. The support for this lies in a) the features of authentic writing; b) the often cited role of ICTs in promoting realistic communicative practice with the skill of writing; and c) the description of the VC task (Pino-Silva, 2007). After discussing the theoretical rationale for using YT to promote writing, two instructional implementations were outlined: one for contexts in which there is easy access to the Internet and one for those which do not have such access. Both pedagogical procedures aim at the integration of other skills with writing and providing learners with a wide and more realistic audience than just the teacher. Other principles from educational theory such as learner-centeredness, collaborative learning, and learner autonomy are also evoked by these practices. Both pedagogical procedures are feasible for many different contexts and for learners of different linguistic competence and with different goals to learn English. They are not intended to be sets of rigid steps to follow or a method, in the strict sense of the term, but rather pedagogical orientations that can and should be tailored and adapted by each teacher. Once adapted and implemented, teachers should carry out action research to evaluate their benefits and limitations. As a matter of fact, I have based this proposal on YT given how popular the site is among most learners. However, other teachers might prefer other video-sharing sites that they consider more adequate.

To conclude, the content of this article is just one more demonstration that the available technology can be put at the service of the learning process and it can be

exploited in different ways as long as it combines a sound pedagogical base and empirical knowledge collectively produced by teacher-researchers.

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Conference Annoucements

1st TESOL Philippines International EFL/ESL Conference. August 7-8, 2009. Held at the Crown Regency Hotel, Cebu, Philippines. Sponsored by the *Asian EFL Journal*. Web site http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/call-for-papers-Cebu 2009.php).

The 4th International and 40th Annual ELTAI Conference, English Language Teachers Association of India: Managing Mixed-Ability Classes. August, 7-9, 2009. Chennai (Tamilnadu), India. E-mail eltai_india@yahoo.co.in. Web site: http://www. elta.org/

EUROCALL Conference. September 9-12, 2009. (Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, Gandia campus) will focus on New Trends in Computer Assisted Language Learning with a special emphasis on innovative ways of collaborating and working together. Web site http://www.eurocall-languages.org/confs/index.html

LLCMC Conference (The Language Learning in Computer Mediated Communities). October 11-13, 2009. (Honolulu, Hawaii). A pre-conference, CULTURA: Web-based Intercultural Exchanges, will take place October 10-11. Web site http://www.nflrc. hawaii edu/llcmc/call.html

TBLT 2009. October 13-16, 2009. The 3rd Biennial International Conference on Task-Based Language Teaching Tasks: Context, Purpose and Use. Lancaster, UK. Web site http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/events/tblt2009/. E-mail: tblt2009@gmail.com.

A Survey of the Reading Strategies Used by ESL First Year Science Students at the University of Botswana

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One of the major problems faced by speakers of English as a second language is that when they go to college or university, they often find themselves without sufficient academic literacy skills—such as the ability to employ a range of reading strategies in order to distill out the gist—to enable them to navigate their learning more successfully. Over many years of teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP), I have observed that ESL first year students in different faculties of this university, particularly those in the faculty of science, panic when they are faced with masses of textual material to read. They find it difficult to select the main ideas, and this problem appears to arise from the fact that ESL first year science students seem to think that everything that is written is important. They miss the point that some information can be ignored if one is trying, for example, to dig out the main ideas. And yet we do not know for sure the kinds of strategies the students use to abstract the main ideas and the strategies that individual students prefer. This study, therefore, is an attempt to understand how ESL first year science students use different reading strategies, and how they can be helped, if necessary, to maximize their ability to select the required information.

In this study, I use the term strategy as defined by Chamot (2004). She refers to strategies as “the conscious thoughts and actions that learners take in order to achieve a learning goal” (p. 1). I also accept Sewell’s (2003) definition of a strategy as a technique or procedure which a learner adopts intentionally in order to understand the meaning of a text. The point to underscore is that strategies are deliberately used by a learner, unlike skills which are used subconsciously and intuitively (Macaro, 2006). The other point to note about strategies is that, besides cognition, they also involve metacognition, which is a self-monitoring mechanism used by learners to evaluate their encoding processes (Winn & Snyder, 1998; Zhang, 2000). Because metacognition is an internal mechanism, the implication is that in order to identify a learner’s reading strategies, the researcher has to rely on the information supplied by the learners through questionnaires, interviews, and other means. Chamot (2004) advises us that self-reporting often fails to account for the various mental activities the readers go through due to the complexity of trying to unravel

one's hidden thoughts or the front that informants put up in order to hide their personal weaknesses.

Literature Review

Current literature on reading suggests that any robust understanding of a written text depends on the use of a variety of strategies, such as recognizing visual configurations and interpreting and integrating the new ideas with the reader's global knowledge. Much of our knowledge about the strategies used for reading is drawn from psycholinguistic views, which suggest that readers' understanding of a text is determined by their background knowledge of the subject (Ellis, 2001; Kintsch, 1998; Nassaji, 2002, 2003). The psycholinguistic view of reading is itself linked with schema theory which suggests that any coherent understanding of a text involves "combining textual information a reader brings to a text" (Widdowson, 1998).

The assumption about the role of "pre-stored" knowledge (the readers' schemata) should, however, be taken cautiously because it provides a rather static view of the role of knowledge, which is at variance with the idea that human knowledge is dynamic. The role played by background knowledge in understanding a text implies that if existing knowledge is not activated, comprehension will fail. Kintsch (1998) disputes the critical role played by prior knowledge, which characterizes understanding of a text as a linear or top-down process. He points out that it disregards the role of lower-level (bottom-up) processes, such as word recognition, that help to facilitate understanding.

Studies on reading suggest that cognition, or the mental process by which knowledge is acquired, plays an important role (e.g. Green & Oxford, 1995; Oxford, 1996). These studies point to the fact that readers can understand information effectively if they pay attention to the strategic use of cognitive and meta-cognitive knowledge. Gagne, Yekovitch, and Yekovitch (1993) have identified three types of knowledge that facilitate the reading of a text: declarative, procedural, and conditional. Declarative knowledge refers to the aspect of "knowing that" and implies an awareness of the type of information to be read. Procedural information refers to the aspect of "knowing how" and relates to knowledge about procedures, rules, and principles involved in reading. Conditional knowledge, on the other hand, refers to the aspect of "knowing when to apply knowledge and why." As can be seen from this characterization of reading, declarative and procedural knowledge approximates with the use of cognition, whereas conditional knowledge is connected with the use of metacognition. The use of these mental processes is essential for reading a text efficiently.

The role of vocabulary in understanding a text is also increasingly drawing the attention of researchers in applied linguistics. Generally, it has been found that a wide vocabulary facilitates the reading of a text (Gass & Selinker, 2001; Pulido, 2004). These

studies suggest that control of vocabulary enables the reader to decode a text, and that better readers tend to have larger pools of vocabulary.

Recently, the issue of reading strategies has been investigated in order to find out how male and female ESL students use them (Chavez, 2001). Generally these studies have shown that there are gender differences with females tending to use more strategies than males (Green & Oxford, 1995). Gender-centered studies on the use of strategies in Malaysia and China (Sy, 1994) support the view that females in these societies favor more metacognitive strategies than males.

However, Phakiti's (2003) study of gender and strategy use in L2 reading of Thai university students gives a different picture. The study negates the widely held view that females use a wider range of metacognitive strategies. His study showed that there were no differences between females and males in their use of strategies. The point to note about these studies is that they do not give consistent information about the strategies preferred by students in different settings, which suggests that there is still need to investigate the strategies preferred by students from different cultural backgrounds. Hence, this study attempts to broaden our understanding of the reading strategies preferred by ESL students at this university, who learn in a language situation in which English is used for educational purposes while their heritage language is used for ordinary conversations.

Research Questions

This study is aimed at establishing the reading strategies used by ESL first year science students at the University of Botswana, for whom the ability to understand scientific information is pivotal to their acquiring the necessary discourse skills in their respective areas of specialization. The following questions were posited. Given a scientific text to read:

1. What are the reading strategies that ESL first year science students use in order to understand a text?
2. What are the reading strategies that ESL first year science students use in order to locate the main points from a scientific text?
3. What are the strategies that ESL science students use in order to understand unfamiliar words and structures?
4. Are there any differences between high-proficiency and low-proficiency students in the reading strategies they use?
5. Are there any gender-related reading strategies preferred?

Methodology

Subjects

One hundred and twenty students out of about six hundred first year science students were selected using a combination of random and purposive sampling techniques. Altogether there were 40 female and 80 male students who all voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. The gender imbalance between female and male students reflects the composition of students in the faculty of science at this university. The students had completed the first semester of their university studies during which time they had been taught, besides their core science subjects, Communication and Study Skills (CSS) covering, among other skills, basic study skills such as note-making, scanning and skimming, summarizing, paraphrasing, listening, reading, and academic writing skills. On average the students had been taught through the medium of English for about 9 years from the fifth grade onwards and were 18-20 years of age.

The majority of the students (94) spoke Setswana, a Bantu language spoken from the western part of South Africa to Botswana and some parts of eastern Namibia and western Zimbabwe. Only 16 students spoke Kalanga as their first language, a language similar to Shona spoken in Zimbabwe. Seven students spoke other African languages while only three used English as their "first" language.

On average the science students had obtained C, D or E grades in their high school examinations of English, such as the Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) and the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), which are modeled on the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate. These grades are considered low for admission into the University of Botswana but are condoned because the country requires skills in science-related professions. What this biographic information shows is that many students studying sciences at this university have an inadequate level of competency in English, a language they use for their university education.

Procedures

Instruments

For the data reported in this study, a Likert-format questionnaire and a self-reflective questionnaire were used to measure students' reading strategy use (see Appendices 1 and 2). The researcher administered first the Likert-format questionnaire and two days later during the same week administered the self-reflective questionnaire (see Appendix 2). The self-reflective questionnaire was filled in soon after the students had read a text in class for which they had been asked to summarize its main ideas.

Data Collection

The reading text used for this study was about 640 words long. It talked about the technologies that are likely to curb global warming and meet the world's energy requirements, as well as pointing out the limitations of the technologies. The students were asked to pick global points and to summarize them; and immediately after the students had finished writing their summaries, they were asked to reflect on the strategies they had used and to write down the main four strategies they had used to help them understand the text (see Appendix 2: Self-reflective questionnaire).

This was followed later in the week by an interview of 9 purposively selected students, three each who typified 'high', 'average' and 'low' proficiency students. The classification of the students into these three proficiency levels was based on the marks the students had scored in the summarizing task, their high school grades as well as their first semester results in Communication and Study Skills (CSS). The students who scored between 15 to 20 marks out of 20 were classified as high-proficiency. Those who scored between 10 and 14 were considered average-proficiency while those who scored between 1 and 9 were deemed low-proficiency. To ensure inter-rater reliability, the same 120 summary scripts which this researcher had marked were also marked independently by two other lecturers who teach the same course (CSS). Based on the different marks of the students, it was agreed on the categorization of the proficiency levels with 20 students categorized as high, 48 students as average, and 52 students as low.

Pilot Test

Prior to the main data collection, the research instruments had been pre-tested in a pilot study of ten randomly selected science students, who were later excluded from this study to avoid contaminating the results. Based on the responses of the piloted students, the instruments were revised by simplifying unclear question items.

Data Analysis

The results are presented using descriptive statistics (bar graphs and tables) that show how the data are broadly spread and how they are related in terms of one aspect to the other (Leedy, 1997, p. 252). The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 13.0 was used to calculate these measures. As the data were non-experimental in nature, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) tests were not used. Instead the researcher relied on interpretivism, which focuses on deconstructing surface appearances to reveal the hidden meanings of the research phenomena in situ. The findings that follow show the reading strategies the students indicated they use.

Results

Reading Strategies

The reading strategies the students reported to have used were in response to statements 1–15 in the questionnaire (see Appendix 1). In analyzing the students' strategies, the researcher regrouped them into four themes: 1) self-directed attention, 2) scanning and skimming, 3) marginal information-processing strategies, and 4) inappropriate information-processing strategies. The classification of the strategies into these four themes was done merely as a research procedure; but it did not necessarily mean that all the strategies fit neatly into these categories (see Oxford, 1990).

Directed Attention

Self-directed attention (questions 1, 2 and 3) required the students to indicate the strategies they used in order to understand the gist of the text (see Figure 1 below). In answer to the first question, 92 students strongly agreed and 28 agreed that they try to understand first what the text is all about. For the second question, which asks the students to indicate the degree to which they pay attention to the title of a text, the students overwhelmingly indicated that they strongly agree (55) and agree (60) that they first look at the title in order to get the general feel of the text. Regarding the strategy of focusing on key words to get the gist of the text (question 3), 66 and 44 students, respectively, reported that they either strongly agree or agree that they look for key words and phrases that allow them to understand the meaning of the text. This strategy is in keeping with psycholinguistic views of interactive reading which suggest that effective reading involves combining both lower-level visual reading strategies, through word recognition, syntactic and semantic processing, with higher-level strategies that emphasize contextual and background knowledge (Nassaji, 2002, 2003).

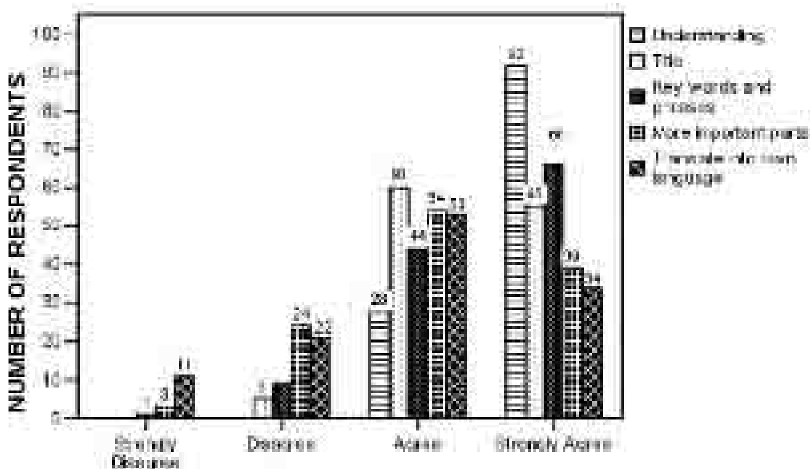

Figure 1: Self-directed Attention and Strategy Use

However, when it comes to determining which parts of a text are more important than others (question 14), a skill that is vitally important for locating the required information, only 39 students indicated that they strongly agree that they use such a strategy, compared with 54 who agreed that they use the strategy. It is not surprising that there were fewer students who strongly agreed that they need to decide which parts are more important than others, because this is a skill that involves the use of higher order thinking skills. The students' limited ability to decide which parts of the text carry the required information confirms the findings of previous studies, particularly those of Schraw (1998), who noted that college students who lack the ability to evaluate their encoding processes miss out essential information, which affects their performance.

Scanning and Skimming

Figure 2 refers to the strategies students reported using for abstracting the main points from a text. These responses refer to questions 4, 5, 6 and 11 of the questionnaire. The students' responses to question 4, which asks whether they first scan and skim, indicates that they generally employ these strategies. The response to question 5, which asks whether they pay attention to the first sentence of each paragraph to get the gist of the text, indicates that 9 students strongly disagreed and 46 students disagreed, which suggests that almost half of the students do not direct their attention to what is signaled by the topic sentence.

Statements 6 and 11, which refer to underlining and making notes of key points, received the highest rating, which indicates that many students preferred these strategies, perhaps because they had already been taught how to use these reading strategies in the preceding semester before they participated in this research task.

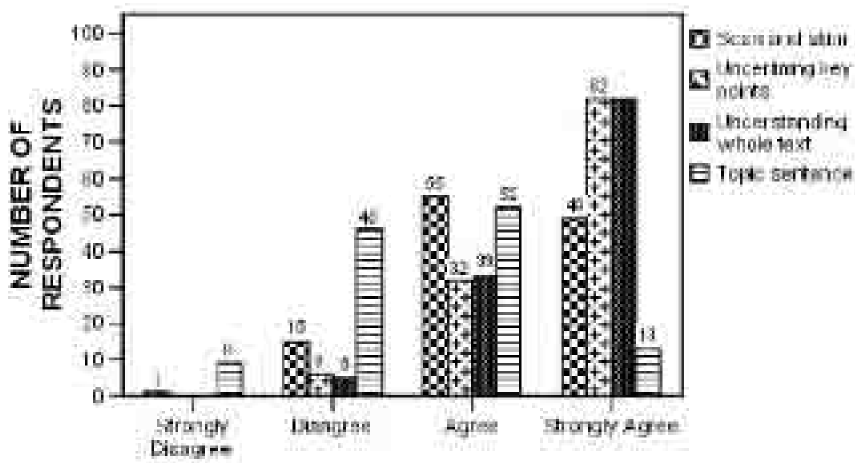

Figure 2: Scanning & Skimming and Strategy Use

The students' responses that they first scan and skim, underline key points and try to understand the meaning of the whole text before summarizing are consistent with Kintsch's (1998) idea of discourse comprehension. He suggests that in reading a text, one first goes through a construction process, whereby the main ideas of the text are constructed through prediction, until the text base is integrated into the reader's global knowledge, forming a coherent mental representation of what the text is about.

Marginal Information Processing Strategies

For operational purposes, statements 9, 12 and 13 are classified as "marginal" reading strategies because they do not necessarily enhance effective reading (see Figure 3). These statements required the students to show the degree to which they focused on words surrounding an unknown word in order to determine its meaning, the extent to which they think about under-the-surface meanings of words, and how they relate the information in the text to what they already know. De Bot, Paribakht, and Wesche (1997) maintain that these strategies are not pivotal to effective reading because readers can still get the gist of a text without understanding the meanings of some of the words in the text including their subtle meanings and without relating the new information to what they already know.

Students' responses to the "marginal" information processing strategies are quite interesting. While 92 students either strongly agreed or agreed that they pay attention to words surrounding an unknown word, the situation is somewhat different when it comes to the extent to which they pay attention to hidden meanings and how they relate the text to prior knowledge. Although 70 students reported that they either strongly agreed or agreed that they thought about the meanings of unknown words, there is a significant

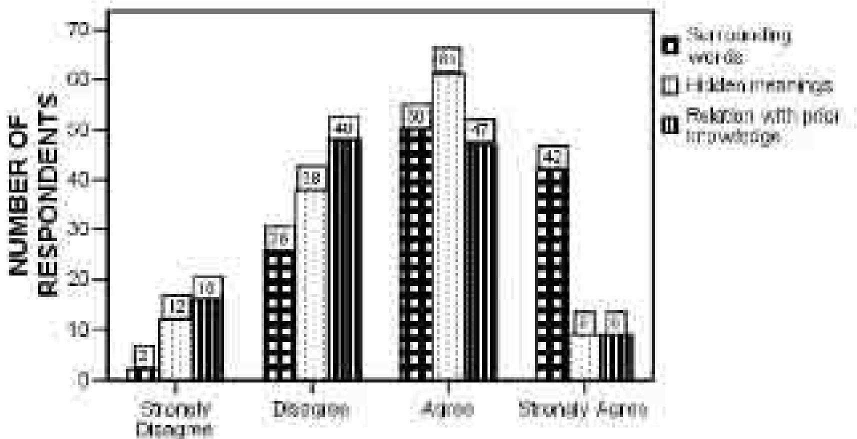

Figure 3: Marginal Information Processing Strategies

number (50) who either or disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, 64 students either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they relate new information to what they already know, while 56 agreed or strongly agreed that they relate new information to previous experiences.

Students' responses to the "marginal" information processing strategies are quite interesting. While 92 students either strongly agreed or agreed that they pay attention to words surrounding an unknown word, the situation is somewhat different when it comes to the extent to which they pay attention to hidden meanings and how they relate the text to prior knowledge. Although 70 students reported that they either strongly agreed or agreed that they thought about the meanings of unknown words, there is a significant number (50) who either or disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, 64 students either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they relate new information to what they already know, while 56 agreed or strongly agreed that they relate new information to previous experiences.

The fact that over half of the students (64) either disagreed or strongly disagreed about the need to connect new information to what they already know suggests that schema theory (Kintsch and Van Dijk, 1978), which claims that the understanding of a text depends on combining background information with background rhetorical structures (Cook, 1997), may not hold water for all readers. The 64 students who reported that they did not relate new information to prior knowledge (here one needs to be circumspect about self-reporting), fall into the category that Scott (2005) refers to as not conforming to the heuristic principle of building from "resident" to "absent" schemata; that is to say, moving from "old" to "new" knowledge, or as it is known in cognitive psychology, moving from "known" to the "unknown".

Inappropriate Information Processing Strategies

The reading strategies reflected in statements 7, 8, 10 and 15 of the questionnaire (see Figure 4) were considered "inappropriate" because they do not foster efficient reading but are often used by students who do not have expertise in reading. (The classification "inappropriate" is used here for procedural purposes but is not a watertight conceptual framework.) On this issue, the researcher acknowledges the fact that although there are inherently no good or bad strategies (Anderson, 2005), there are, however, strategies which Ellis (1987) calls "less facilitative" because they do not easily promote efficient reading. In this study, these are the strategies which involve a focus on examples and details in the text, the meanings of new words, focusing on the individual meanings of sentences and the translation of the main ideas into the students' primary language.

Figure 4 shows the extent to which the students used inappropriate strategies. With regard to the degree to which they focus on details and examples, 70 students disagreed

or strongly disagreed and 50 agreed or strongly agreed that they use these strategies. On the extent to which they focus on the meaning of new words, similar responses were given: 65 students disagreed or strongly disagreed and 55 agreed or strongly agreed. The students' responses illustrate the point made earlier that the use of strategies is a matter of individual preference, and this is perhaps why more than half of them indicated that they do not focus on details and meanings of new words while nearly half of them do so. This suggests that some students find Kintsch's (1998) bottom-up processing (e.g. word recognition) useful for determining the meaning of the text while others prefer to focus on the global issues.

Regarding what the students do at the sentence level, an overwhelming number (99 out of 120) agreed or strongly agreed that they focus on the meanings of sentences while 21 disagreed. While it may be a good idea to focus on the meanings of individual sentences when reading, in this study it was perhaps counter-productive because the students' main task was to single out from a labyrinth of complex ideas the technologies that could be used to reduce global warming and their limitations. Swales (1990) emphasizes this point by suggesting that any meaningful reading should involve an identification of the main issues, the genre and formal structure, all of which enable the reader to comprehend the gist of the text.

Concerning translation, 87 students (as opposed to 33) agreed or strongly agreed that they translate the main ideas into their first languages in order to understand them better. Ellis (1987) suggests that translating ideas from the second language into one's first language is a compensatory strategy which is used when an L2 learner has a problem in understanding the required information. Although translating into one's first language may help to

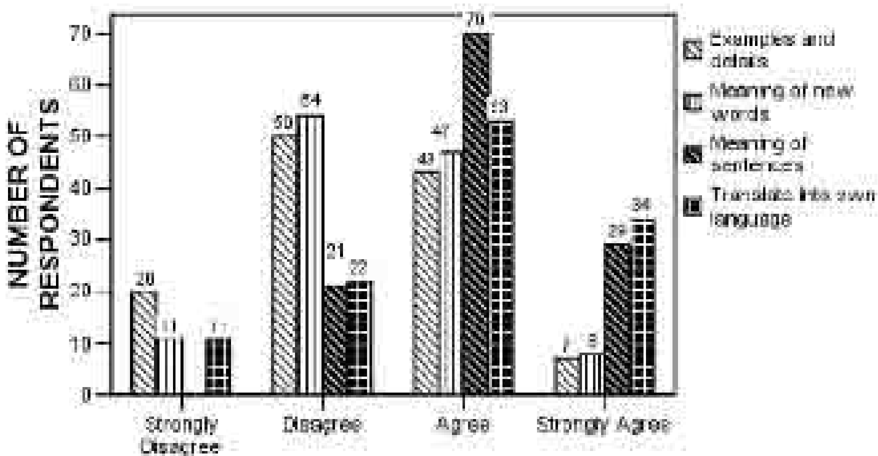

Figure 4: Inappropriate Information Processing Strategies

understand a text, it has three shortcomings. The first is that there is not enough time at college or university to translate all the ideas a student does not fully understand. The second is that students who do not understand the ideas in the second language are likely to translate them inaccurately into their first language. And the third is that translation can make an L2 learner easily regress into the comfort zone of the home language, thereby slowing down the development of strategic competence in the second language.

Students' Self-reported Strategies

An analysis of the strategies the students reported to have used for reading the text shows a remarkable difference between the different levels of proficiency among the students. The self-reflective responses and the information elicited through interviews indicates that, relative to other proficiency groups, high-proficiency students preferred reading strategies such as understanding the task first, scanning and skimming, and noting the required ideas more than average or low-proficiency students (see Tables 1, 2 and 3). This supports the findings of other researchers (Kinnunen & Vauras, 1995; Swanson & De la Paz, 1998; Zhang, 1999, 2000) who reported differences in the use of strategies between proficient and less proficient readers.

The majority of the students from all the proficiency groups, however, reported that they did not pay much attention to the meanings of unfamiliar words in the text, presumably because they had a limited vocabulary. The students' responses further show that there were no major gender-related strategies preferred, except scanning and skimming for which male students tended to use more than females; while more female students reported to have figured out the meanings of new words than males. Overall, the self-reported data in Tables 1, 2 and 3 suggest that there are strategies preferred by students with different proficiency levels; but there is no significant difference in the manner in which they treat new words in order to understand the overall meaning of the text.

Table 1

Self-reported Reading Strategies Preferred by High-proficiency Students

Reading Strategies	Male %	Female %	Total %
Understanding	87% (14/26)	100% (4/4)	90% (18/20)
Scanning & Skimming	81% (13/26)	50% (2/4)	75% (15/20)
Noting	87% (14/26)	100% (4/4)	90% (18/20)
Meaning	13% (2/26)	75% (3/4)	25% (5/20)

Table 2

Self-reported Reading Strategies Preferred by Average-Proficiency Students

Reading Strategies	Male %	Female %	Total %
Understanding	78% (26/33)	47% (7/15)	69% (33/38)
Scanning & Skimming	33% (11/33)	47% (7/15)	38% (18/48)
Noting	58% (9/33)	60% (9/15)	58% (28/48)
Meaning	33% (11/33)	20% (3/15)	29% (14/48)

Table 3

Self-reported Reading Strategies Preferred by Low-Proficiency Students

Reading Strategies	Male %	Female %	Total %
Understanding	48% (15/31)	29% (6/21)	40% (21/52)
Scanning & Skimming	35% (11/31)	29% (6/21)	33% (17/52)
Noting	48% (15/31)	43% (9/21)	46% (24/52)
Meaning	19% (6/31)	24% (5/21)	21% (11/52)

Implications

A number of implications emanate from this study. Firstly, some of the L2 learners' difficulties in extracting the main points (especially the low-proficiency students) suggest that background information in relation to the new information may need to be activated, in order for the learners to be able to process the information more quickly. For example, the ESL readers' prior knowledge can be stimulated by using pre-reading strategies, such as those suggested by Schraw (1998) of "stop, read and think" so that prior knowledge and existing structures can be integrated.

An important implication of this study is that since ESL first year science students of different proficiency levels reported to have used a variety of strategies, lecturers and teachers might find it useful to speak to their students so that they can get feedback on the

strategies the students use in different reading situations. This could be done by asking them to record the strategies they use deliberately. They could also conduct personal interviews with individual students who have problems in understanding their text books, research papers or handouts given in class, so that they can establish exactly the reading strategies their students use. This could help ESL students become more meta-linguistically sophisticated as they would carry out retrospective analyses of themselves as language learners. As the lecturers or teachers interact more frequently with students, it is also possible that they might become more sensitive to students' reading problems, and might begin to appreciate how individual students decipher new textual materials.

An important point that emerges from this study regards the linguistic complexity of the reading materials that are used by ESL students. This study has shown that most of the ESL first year science students, regardless of their proficiency levels, are aware of the strategies they are supposed to use in order to understand what they are reading about. What seems to be the problem is that they find it difficult to understand the texts they read because they are written in an unfamiliar jargon. In order to help the students overcome this problem, there is need to select reading materials so that the students can start with familiar materials that gradually build on their "resident schemata" (Scott, 2005, p. 4) and move on from simple to more complex materials that stretch their imagination.

An equally important implication of this study is that since ESL students reported to have preferred reading strategies that work uniquely for their individual styles, they should be encouraged to use strategies that work for them in different situations. To this end, Cohen (1998) suggests that effective second language pedagogy should include not only task-specific strategies but also a justification of the utility and outcome of the individual strategies. Here, one must concede that individualized pedagogy can be arduous and time-consuming especially where there are large numbers of students involved and teaching time is limited. However, it may be a pragmatic alternative to a situation in which teachers or lecturers do not bother about knowing the strategies their students use because, they assume, students will learn on their own.

Limitations and Recommendations

In a study of this nature which attempts to understand the strategies ESL students use for reading a text, there are bound to be differences in the interpretation of data, particularly where one is dealing with what goes on in the mind of a person. Chamot (2004), for instance, maintains that strategies can only be identified through self-reporting, which may fail to reveal accurately the mental activities involved. Also, there is the problem of trying to classify strategies. In this study, the classifications used are a hybrid of those previously used by other researchers, such as Chamot (1996); Li & Munby (1996) and Oxford (1996, 1999). However, from the first publication of her strategy inventory, Oxford (1990) cautions that particular strategies could be viewed as

related to more than one strategy, such as *planning* versus *directed attention* or *scanning and skimming*. Bearing this in mind, the categories used in this study are more procedural than being watertight.

An issue which future researchers in this area need to monitor carefully is the anonymity of the respondents. In this study the data yielded through the use of a questionnaire, self-reflection and interview tended to give the students a platform for premeditated responses because they had been selected from a larger group, which did not completely hide their identity. As a result, the students tried to look their best by circling reading strategies which probably did not reflect the ones they actually use. Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) caution that in a situation where the identity of respondents is not fully concealed, they often put on a front—in other words, they give information which does not necessarily reflect their best practice, but which they think pleases the researcher.

Also, what needs to be monitored closely is the students' motivation when participating in a research activity. This research task was not an official test, which means that the results of the task did not contribute to the students' assessment of their Communication and Study Skills course. Given the low-stakes nature of the task, it is possible that the students were not sufficiently motivated to do their best and perhaps a high-stakes task, such as a test whose mark contributes to the final grade, might be ideal for studying the strategies the students use for reading.

Conclusion

The results of this study, notwithstanding their limitations, show that ESL first-year science students at this university are generally aware of the strategies to use for reading. In particular, they either strongly agreed or agreed that they first scan and skim a reading text, focus on the main points and ignore examples and details. However, when the data from the questionnaire were cross-checked against the strategies the students reported to have used, some of their claims, especially those of the low-proficiency and some average students, were not sustained. Instead, there were clear differences between the strategies reported to have been used by high-proficiency students and those preferred by low-proficiency students. This confirms the findings of previous studies that have reported on the inability of low-proficiency students to substantiate and evaluate the strategies they use (Nassaji, 2003).

Also, the survey data do not show significant differences in the strategies preferred by each gender, which is contrary to previous research that reported a wider use of strategies by females than males (Chavez, 2001; Green & Oxford, 1995; Kaylani, 1996). The lack of differentiation in the strategies preferred by each gender in this study could be attributed to the fact that the students had a fairly homogeneous science background. In a nutshell, the data in this study suggest that many average- and low-proficiency ESL first year science students at this university find it difficult to distinguish between

important and unimportant ideas despite their claim of being aware of their strategy use while processing a reading text. This suggests that there is need to help the students recognize the power of consciously using reading strategies that work for them as individuals in different contexts so that they can make their learning quicker, easier, more efficient, and exciting.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

READING STRATEGIES USED BY FIRST YEAR SCIENCE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

I am conducting a study on the strategies that you use when you read a text. The study is important because it is likely to give us some idea about how you read and the strategies you use to extract the main ideas. It is also important because it will give us information about the aspects for which you need extra help so that you can navigate your learning more successfully.

Kindly complete this questionnaire,

N. B. A strategy is a technique you use or the conscious steps you take to complete a task.

Now read the following items, and **circle** your response in terms of how best the statement describes what you do when reading a written text.

When you are asked to read a text, such as a newspaper article, passage, handout or your text book,

What you do:	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1. I try first to understand what I am supposed to do.	1	2	3	4
2. I first look at the title.	1	2	3	4
3. I look for the key words and phrases that allow me to follow the meaning of the text.	1	2	3	4
4. I scan and skim through the whole text in order to get a general idea of what it is all about.	1	2	3	4
5. I look at the first sentence of each paragraph to find out what the text is saying.	1	2	3	4

What you do:	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
6. I note and underline the key points and ideas.	1	2	3	4
7. I focus on examples and details.	1	2	3	4
8. I focus on the meaning of new words.	1	2	3	4
9. I focus on words surrounding an unknown word in order to determine its meaning.	1	2	3	4
10. I focus on the meaning of sentences.	1	2	3	4
11. I try to understand the whole text before writing anything.	1	2	3	4
12. I think about "under-the-surface" or hidden meanings of new words.	1	2	3	4
13. I try to relate the information to my experiences or to what I already know.	1	2	3	4
14. I determine which parts are more important than others before starting.	1	2	3	4
15. I translate the ideas into my own language in order to understand them better.	1	2	3	4

Appendix 2

Self-reflective Questionnaire

Think again about the strategies or techniques you used in reading the text on the technologies that are likely to control climate changes and their limitations. Now answer the following question in relation to what you did in order to understand the main ideas of the text:

1. What are the main four strategies you used in order to understand the text?

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

Thank you so much for sparing your time to answer the questions.

Attitudes Towards Peer Review and Reaction to Peer Feedback in Chinese EFL Writing Classrooms[1]

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Writing is a major skill that EFL students need to develop. And the realities of the school setting often cause a student to believe only writing for teachers to be writing that "counts" because teachers are often considered authority figures and the people who give grades (Earls, 1987). Thus, students may be more willing to revise their compositions according to teacher feedback. But for teachers to review each student's paper throughout the drafting process is painfully time consuming. It is especially so with Chinese EFL teachers and learners (Qi, 2004; Wang, 2004). To ease the pain, some suggest that peer review is a good choice which can be applied to the foreign language classroom at any level (Byrd, 1994).

Though numerous studies show that peer review is effective in improving student writing (Althauser & Darnall, 2001; Bean, 1996; Byrd, 1994; DiPardo & Freedman, 1988; Mendonça & Johnson, 1994), this issue has not been adequately researched in China. Situated in a Chinese university EFL writing class, the present study sought to examine students' attitudes toward and reaction to peer review.

Literature Review

In the past three to four decades, ESL writing instructors have become interested in the process approach to writing, which argues that writers create and change their ideas as they write and that writing is recursive (Stewart & Cheung, 1989). Early supporters of the approach claimed that the essential task of writing instructors was to help students develop the skills necessary to come up with ideas, explore ways of expressing the ideas, and examine and refine their writing (Caulk, 1994). A key component of this process approach is peer review (Pennington, Brock, & Yue, 1996).

Though some researchers believe that peer review is nothing more than the blind leading the blind with unskilled editors guiding inexperienced writers in a process neither understands well (Pianko & Radzik, 1980; Roessier, 1983), peer review has been studied and has won numerous proponents (Althauser & Darnall, 2001; Bean, 1996; DiPardo & Freedman, 1988; Moffett, 1968). Classroom teachers also favor peer review because:

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> Dealing with the large quantities of writing necessary for a good writing program calls for an unconventional classroom management whereby students as well as the teacher process the writing. The fact is that a teacher alone cannot process the quantity of writing students need to do to get good at it. If you limit the amount to what you can "correct," you become a bottleneck—an awful thought for any serious teacher (Moffett, 1968, p. 81).

In practice, many studies show that peer review improves student writing effectively (Althauser & Darnall, 2001; Bean, 1996; Byrd, 1994; Caulk, 1994; DiPardo & Freedman, 1988; Glatthorn, 1980; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Mendonça & Johnson 1994; Qi, 2004), though there are studies that have shown the opposite result (Earls, 1987).

In order to compare the effectiveness of teacher and student responses, Earls (1987) conducted a study which involved four intact classes of average-ability high school sophomores. Two classes peer reviewed a first draft of each week's writing assignment, the other two received teacher evaluation of the first drafts, and all classes had the teacher evaluate the final draft of each week's writing assignment. Pretest and posttest writing samples were collected and rated holistically after the 10-week writing unit ended. There were two major findings. First, the teacher-evaluation group wrote significantly better posttest essays than the student-evaluation group. Teacher evaluation of first drafts proved to be an effective approach to the teaching of writing. Second, the students did not write significantly better on the posttest essays than on the pretest essays, which could be explained by the fact that the ratings for the peer evaluation of students' essays were lower than the pretest ratings. Thus, the researcher concluded that teacher evaluation of writing was valuable.

In Caulk's (1994) study, 28 compositions (15 second and 15 third assignments) were randomly selected from a total of 43 students with an age range of 18 to 25. Due to various reasons, each paper had a different number of peer responses. Analyses of the data revealed that (1) the student responses provided students with helpful information for rewriting their paper, but they did not substitute for the teacher's responses and (2) the teacher's comments tended to be general and often aimed at the whole piece of writing, while the student responses tended to be very specific and rarely contained suggestions for the whole piece. Thus, the researcher stated that teacher and student responses could be complementary, which gave students alternative ways to think about the process of revision.

Qi (2004) examined the difference between Chinese college students' attitudes toward and strategies to deal with teacher and peer responses. For this purpose, he collected two first drafts from 33 fourth-year English majors along with their peer responses and revised drafts. In addition, he administered an 11-item questionnaire to the students and interviewed three survey respondents. Analyses of the data revealed that (1) teacher and

peer feedback were similar in terms of frequency, range, and distribution, which was claimed by the researcher due to the announcement that peer response would be assessed, (2) the teacher focused more on grammar while the students paid more attention to the content and word formation, (3) teacher feedback was more effective than peer feedback, (4) the participants implemented teacher suggestions more than those given by their peers in their revised drafts, and (5) grammar and vocabulary accounted for a large percentage in both teacher and student feedback. The researcher also found that the participants preferred teacher feedback rather than student suggestions and that they took a much more serious attitude toward the teacher feedback while few would revise their drafts based on the peer response.

With a focus on the implementation of peer response and comparison of teacher and student feedback, many studies on peer review have revealed that it can be a complementary approach to teacher feedback in ESL/EFL writing classrooms, though teacher feedback proved to be more favored by the students in some studies. Nevertheless, this issue needs to be further researched considering the complex nature of learner characteristics and the writing process itself.

Targeting Chinese advanced-level undergraduate EFL learners, the present study aimed to explore their attitudes toward and reaction to peer review and their correlations with the students' writing performance. To achieve this aim, the following research questions were formulated:

1. To what extent are the students willing to do peer review?
2. What attitude do the students hold toward peer review?
3. How do the students react to peer feedback?
4. What is the relationship between the students' survey responses regarding their willingness and attitude toward peer review and their reaction to peer response and their performance in English writing?

Question one aimed to explore whether the students were consciously willing to review their peers' English compositions and have their own reviewed by peers. Question two sought to examine whether the students considered peer review a valuable and useful process for the reviewers and the reviewees. Question three tried to investigate how seriously the students treated peer feedback, whether they would read the feedback provided by their peers carefully and incorporate it into their revised drafts and whether they believed their peers would do the same. These questions were postulated considering the possibility that a student's willingness to do peer review and positive attitude toward it may not necessarily position them to treat it seriously in their revised drafts, since there is often a reported mismatch between what students believe and what they want to do or actually do (Jackson, 2002; Liu, 2006).

Research Method

Context of the Study

The present study was conducted at a top Chinese university in Beijing in the *English Writing* course, which trained students for and required them to engage in peer review. The course had three classes of the same level with the same teacher and teaching assistant. Each class met once a week for 90 minutes and each student was required to write 6 assignments of different genre for the course. Each assignment was assessed by the teacher and the assistant according to the same criterion and the average became the final grade for the assignment. The assignment scores accounted for 80% of the final course grade. The same process applied to peer review, which was done twice and took up 20% of the final course grade.

Participants

The participants were 84 advanced-level undergraduate EFL learners who were enrolled in the English Writing course and all majoring in Economics and Management. With an average age of 18.3 years old, 69% (58) of the participants had participated in peer review before entering the university.

Prior to the study, all the participants signed a consent form which indicated that the study involved their experiences about English writing. To preserve their privacy, pseudonyms are used when presenting the results.

Instruments

In order to examine the students' attitudes towards peer review and their implementation of peer responses, both survey and semi-structured interviews were used as detailed below.

Survey

To examine the students' willingness and attitude toward peer review, and reaction to peer feedback, a 24-item survey was developed. The survey consisted of the following four parts: 1) previous experience with peer review, 2) willingness to do peer review, 3) attitude toward peer review, and 4) reaction to peer feedback. Each section is described further below. All the items except the first were accompanied by a 5-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

The first section, previous experience with peer review, had only 1 item which asked whether, before entering the university, they had ever had an English composition reviewed by a peer and then subsequently revised it using the feedback.

The second section, willingness to do peer review (reliability a = .923), consisted of 3 items and measured the extent to which the students were willing to review their peers' English compositions and have their own reviewed by peers.

The third section, attitude toward peer review (*a* = .91), consisted of 16 items and indexed to what extent the students believed peer review was beneficial. It reflected students' attitude toward the overall value of peer review (items 5-9), towards peers reviewing one's own English compositions (items 10-16), and towards reviewing peers' English compositions (items 17-20).

The fourth section, reaction to peer feedback (*a* = .83), contained 4 items and examined to what degree learners reacted to peer responses positively. It investigated not only the participants' own reaction to their peers' responses (items 21 to 22) but also their belief about their peers' reaction to peer responses (items 23 to 24).

Semi-structured Interview

To get a more comprehensive insider view of peer review, five survey respondents were invited for a semi-structured interview. Interview questions covered such aspects as willingness to do peer review, attitude toward peer review, and reaction to and implementation of peer responses. Since the students' real English compositions (original drafts), peer responses, and the implementation of the peer responses in the revised drafts were presented and related questions were asked during the interview, part of the interview had the nature of "stimulated recall" (Woods, 1989). In case the interviewees might have difficulty understanding the questions in English or did not like speaking English, all the interviews were carried out in Mandarin Chinese.

Sample Compositions

To examine how the students who were interviewed implemented the peer responses in their revised drafts, the following were collected: the first and revised drafts of the second peer review assignment (a free writing task) composed by the five interviewees and a peer response done by a peer.

Performance in the English Writing Course

To examine the relationship between the students' attitudes toward peer review and reaction to peer feedback and their writing performance, all the students' final scores for writing assignments were collected to measure their performance in the English Writing course (Aida, 1994; Saito, Horwitz & Garza, 1999).

Procedures

The study was conducted during the first 16-week term of the academic year 2007-2008. The questionnaires were administered at the beginning of a normal teaching period in the thirteenth week. By this time in the semester, the students had been trained how to do peer review and had actually done it once as required by the course teacher. The questionnaire was administered just before the second peer review. In the end, 84 questionnaires were valid for statistical analyses (the others were discarded because of incompleteness or absence). The semi-structured interviews were held a week after the

questionnaire was administered, which was just after the second peer review. Conducted in Mandarin Chinese, each interview lasted for about 20 minutes and was audio-recorded. Each assignment score and the final course grades were collected at the end of the term.

Data Analysis

The results of the survey were computed using SPSS (a software widely used to analyze quantitative data) in terms of reliability, frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, mode, median and range to investigate the students' willingness to do peer review, attitude toward peer review, and reaction to peer feedback. Correlational analyses were conducted to explore the relationships between the survey responses and the students' writing performance. The interviews were transcribed, checked twice, and subjected to a thematic content analysis with patterns and significant issues identified and categorized (Krippendorff, 1980). The analyses of the interview data are incorporated into the discussion of the survey data below.

Results and Discussion

Willingness to Do Peer Review

Table 1 summarizes the participants' responses to the second section of the survey, which reflects participants' willingness to do peer review in EFL writing classrooms. As Table 1 shows, the majority of the participants self-reported to be willing to do peer review in the University EFL writing classrooms, which is indicated by thier responses to items

Table 1

Willingness Items with Percentages of Students Selecting Each Alternative (N = 84)

Survey Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
2. I am willing to have my English compositions reviewed by peers.	0 (0%)	3 (3.6%)	5 (6%)	42 (50%)	34 (40.5%)
3. I am not willing to have my English compositions reviewed by peers because we are at a similar English proficiency level.	26 (31%)	50 (59.5%)	5 (6%)	3 (3.6%)	0 (0%)
4. I like to review my classmates' English compositions.	0 (0%)	8 (9.5%)	35 (41.7%)	33 (39.3%)	8 (9.5%)

2 to 4. Question two indicates that 76 of the participants (90.5%) reported being willing to have their English compositions reviewed by peers and 76 (90.5%) reacted negatively to question 3, which was a counterbalancing question and expressed an unwillingness to have their peers review their compositions. However, only 48.8% of them expressed that they liked to review their classmates' English compositions in question four.

Further analysis confirms the willingness of the participants to have peers review their compositions. With 3 items and values of 1 to 5 assigned to the five descriptors of each item respectively, the possible range of tallied scores for this second section of the survey was 3 to 15. The actual range of responses was 7 to 15 and the mean score for the 84 participants was 11.94 (SD = 1.69). Coupled with a median of 12 and a mode of 12, all far above the scale midpoint 9, these data suggest that the participants had a stronger willingness to do peer review with English writing at the tertiary level.

Participants' willingness to do peer review as revealed by the survey data is again confirmed by the interview data. Among the five interviewees, only one expressed an unwillingness to do peer review in that "the students haven't become used to writing in English and it is impossible for them to express an idea clearly in English" (Sun, male). The other four reported a willingness and liked to review each other's English compositions owing to various reasons: (1) reading peers' compositions could remind them of something enjoyable because most of them were about their own life, (2) some mistakes or errors in the compositions such as the inappropriate use of words were fairly funny and ridiculous, (3) it helped correct one's own mistakes, (4) it helped one become aware of something not previously known, (5) it helped one to learn more about ideas and uses of words, and (6) it helped one assess one's own proficiency in English writing. This can be best illustrated by the following self-report, "I feel agreeable when reading my classmates' compositions. During the process, I try to understand their flow of thoughts and identify the mistakes and errors. Meanwhile, I can learn a lot because I have to do some research when coming across something I don't know or understand" (Dai, female).

Attitudes Toward Peer Review

Table 2 summarizes the students' responses to the items implicative of attitudes towards peer review in EFL writing classrooms. Most probably because of the (strong) willingness to do peer review, the respondents were fairly positive about the overall value of peer review, as supported by their responses to items 5 to 9 summarized in Table 2. Though only 13.1% of the respondents believed that peer review was more effective than teacher review (item 6), 77.4% of them held that the former was as valuable as the latter (item 5) and 88.1% agreed with statement 8 "Peer review helps improve one's ability in English writing." By contrast, 94% rejected statement 7 "Peer review does no help to improve one's ability in English writing" and 89.3% disagreed with statement 9 reflective of the uselessness of reviewing their classmates' English compositions.

Table 2

Attitude Items with Percentages of Students Selecting Each Alternative (N = 84)

Survey Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
5. Peer review is as valuable as teacher review.	0 (0%)	7 (8.3%)	12 (14.3%)	39 (46.4%)	26 (31%)
6. Peer review is more effective than teacher review.	5 (6%)	24 (28.6%)	44 (52.4%)	9 (10.7%)	2 (2.4%)
7. Peer review does no help to improve one's ability in English writing.	31 (36.9%)	48 (57.1%)	4 (4.8%)	1 (1.2%)	0 (0%)
8. Peer review helps improve one's ability in English writing.	0 (0%)	3 (3.6%)	7 (8.3%)	62 (73.8%)	12 (14.3%)
9. It's a waste of time to review my classmates' English composition	36 (42.9%)	39 (46.4%)	5 (6%)	4 (4.8%)	0 (0%)
10. My classmates can evaluate my English compositions appropriately.	0 (0%)	6 (7.1%)	19 (22.6%)	51 (60.7%)	8 (9.5%)
11. Peer review helps improve the structure of my English compositions.	0 (0%)	1 (1.2%)	14 (16.7%)	54 (64.3%)	15 (17.5%)
12. Peer review helps improve the structure of my English compositions.	0 (0%)	8 (9.5%)	19 (22.6%)	42 (50%)	15 (17.9%)
13. Peer revew helps reduce grammatical mistakes in my English compositions.	0 (0%)	12 (14.3%)	20 (23.8%)	40 (47.6%)	12 (14.3%)

Survey Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
14. Peer review helps enrich the vocabulary in my English compositions.	0 (0%)	8 (9.5%)	7 (8.3%)	49 (58.3%)	20 (23.8%)
15. My classmates are able to identify the mistakes and erors in my English compositions.	0 (0%)	14 (16.7%)	33 (39.3%)	31 (36.9%)	6 (7.1%)
16. My classmates are able to identify the mistakes and errors in my English compositions.	21 (25%)	49 (58.3%)	9 (10.7%)	5 (6%)	0 (0%)
17. Reviewing my class-mates' English compositions helps inspire me to write in English.	1 (1.2%)	9 (10.7%)	12 (14.3%)	49 (58.3%)	14 (16.7%)
18. Reviewing my class-mates' English compositions helps structure my own compositions.	0 (0%)	6 (7.1%)	12 (14.3%)	54 (64.3%)	12 (14.3%)
19. Reviewing my class-mates' English compositions helps reduce grammatical mistakes in my own compositions.	2 (2.4%)	7 (8.3%)	21 (25%)	47 (56%)	7 (8.3%)
20. Reviewing my class-mates' English compositions helps improve the use of words and sentence structures in my own compositions.	1 (1.2%)	9 (10.7%)	12 (14.3%)	49 (58.3%)	13 (15.5%)

To be more specific, the majority of the participants maintained that their classmates could appropriately evaluate their English compositions, as suggested by their responses to items 10 and 16. In addition, their responses to items 11 to 15 revealed that it was their belief that peer review could help better their writing in English in terms of content, structure, use of words and sentence structures, and grammar. For example, 82.2% of the respondents endorsed item 11 "Peer review helps enrich the content of my English compositions" and 67.9% agreed with statement 12 "Peer review helps improve the structure of my English compositions."

Generally speaking, more than 70% of the students reported that reviewing others' English compositions helped to improve their own in the aspects of content, structure, grammar, and the use of words and sentence structures, as proven by their responses to statements 17 to 20. For instance, 75% of the participants claimed that they could be inspired by reviewing others' English compositions and 78.6% believed that it helped structure their own English compositions.

This finding, likewise, conforms to the finding revealed by the statistical analyses of the attitude data, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Statistical Analyses of the APR (N = 84)

	Mean	**Standard Deviation**	**Median**	**Mode**	**Range**
Attitude toward the overall value of peer review (AOVPR)	19.31	2.38	19	19	11-25
Attitude toward peers reviewing one's own English compositions (APREC)	26.43	3.98	26	25	14-35
Attitude toward reviewing peers' English compositions (ARPEC)	15.01	2.62	16	16	5-20
Attitudes toward peer review (APR)	60.75	8.06	61	62	30-78

As previously described, the APR comprised three subscales—attitude toward the overall value of peer review (AOVPR), attitude toward peers reviewing one's own English compositions (APREC), and attitude toward reviewing peers' English compositions (ARPEC). Thus, a total score of more than 20 for the 5-item AOVPR implies a strongly positive attitude toward the overall value of peer review, a total score of 15 to 20 implies a moderately positive attitude, and a total score of less than 15 signifies a (strongly) negative attitude. A total score of more than 28 for the 7-item APREC indicates a strongly positive attitude toward peers reviewing one's own English compositions, a total score of 21 to 28 implies a moderately positive attitude, and a total score of less than 21 suggests a (strongly) negative attitude. A total score of more than 16 for the 4-item ARPEC demonstrates a strongly positive attitude toward reviewing peers' English compositions, a total score of 12 to 16 implies a moderately positive attitude, and a total score of less than 12 suggests a (strongly) negative attitude.

As shown in Table 3, the mean score of 19.31 and a median and a mode of 19 on the AOVPR, all far more than the scale midpoint of 15, indicate that the majority of the respondents held a fairly strong positive attitude about the overall value of peer review. A mean score of 26.43, a median of 26, and a mode of 25 on the APREC, all well above the scale midpoint 21, imply that the participants were positive about having English compositions reviewed by their peers. Meanwhile, a mean of 15.01 and a median and a mode of 16 on the ARPEC, all exceeding the scale midpoint 12, suggest that the majority of the respondents were fairly confident that reviewing their peers' English compositions was useful and benefited their own writing in English. Finally, a mean of 60.75, a median of 61 and a mode of 62 on the APR, all well exceeding the scale midpoint 48, reveal that the participants on the whole thought fairly highly of peer review in university EFL writing classrooms. All these findings are consistent with the results of frequency analyses of the attitude items presented in Table 2.

These findings are further confirmed by the students' self-reports in interviews. Generally speaking, all the five interviewees reported that peer response was valuable although peer response had some drawbacks when compared with teacher feedback because peers could not identify all the mistakes and tended to praise more than criticize, as found in other studies (Pianko & Radzik, 1980; Qi, 2004; Roessier, 1983; Wang, 2004). According to them, sometimes the teacher would misunderstand them and then change what they had written into something different, which would not happen with a peer reviewer. And it was easier for peers to understand and communicate with each other while occasionally it was difficult to understand the teacher's comments, (i.e., Zamel, 1985). Moreover, they could discuss issues with their reviewers while usually simply accepting the teacher's suggestions without further interaction. Moreover, because peers

often made similar mistakes and shared many ideas, they found it easier to revise their drafts according to the peer responses, as found in Qi's (2004) study.

Four of the five interviewees believed that most of their classmates could evaluate their English compositions appropriately in that they were proficient in English and at similar proficiency levels. As one interviewee reported, "I think so. The class seems to be quite good at English. Sometimes I didn't realize the mistakes, but they can help me identify and correct them. In addition, they can also help me substantiate the view" (Chen, male). Although one interviewee was not so positive, he acknowledged that peers were able to identify grammatical mistakes and phrases and clauses that were difficult to understand. At the same time, three of the interviewees were confident that they were able to point out the strengths and weaknesses of their peers' English compositions because they were so careful when reviewing peers' papers. Two interviewees were not so confident either because of a lack of English proficiency or because of the comparison with teacher suggestions.

In addition, all five interviewees confided that peer review was conducive to bettering their own English writing. It helped them (1) know more about grammar and reduce grammatical mistakes, (2) have an overall picture of others' English proficiency and assess their own, (3) become aware of what had been neglected such as organization of paragraphs and logic, (4) better organize ideas, (5) learn more about the use of words, and (6) learn to write more clearly. This is best supported by the following self-report:

First, I used to be poor at organizing my ideas. Thanks to peer suggestions and discussion with my peers, I can write much more clearly now in terms of the flow of thoughts and organization. The next is about grammar. I often write with mistakes that I fail to notice, but my peers can identify and correct them. This urges me to be more careful when writing again (Dai, female).

In a similar way, the other four interviewees reported that reviewing peers' English compositions could help better the quality of their own in terms of grammar, structure, ideas, and substantiation of views.

In addition, when doing peer review, according to the interviewees, most of the reviewers primarily focused on grammar (especially tense) and vocabulary (especially the use of words), and then on content and structure, just as found in a number of existing studies (Berger, 1990; Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1995; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988).

Reaction to Peer Feedback

Table 4 summarizes the students' responses to the items reflective of reaction to peer feedback in EFL writing class. As seen in Table 4, the majority of the participants reported that they carefully read peer feedback (94% for item 21) and revised their English compositions accordingly (83.3% for item 22). Most also believed that their peers read the peer responses carefully (72.7% for item 23) and revised their English compositions

Table 4

Reaction Items with Percentages of Students Selecting Each Alternative (N = 84)

Survey Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
21. I carefully read peer feedback of my English compositions.	0 (0%)	2 (2.4%)	3 (3.6%)	52 (61.9%)	27 (32.1%)
22. I carefully revise my English compositions according to peer feedback	0 (0%)	8 (9.5%)	6 (7.1%)	48 (57.1%)	22 (26.2%)
23. I believe my classmates carefully revise their English compositions based on my comments	0 (0%)	3 (3.6%)	20 (23.8%)	47 (56%)	14 (16.7%)
24. I believe my classmates carefully revise their English compositions based on my comments	0 (0%)	3 (3.6%)	23 (27.4%)	47 (56%)	11 (13.1%)

accordingly (69.1% for item 24). Moreover, generally fewer than 5% of the respondents disagreed with the four items. These data clearly suggest that the participants were serious about peer feedback and intended to implement it in their revised drafts carefully.

When interviewed, four reported that they usually read the peer feedback carefully and revised their compositions accordingly and that they often discussed with the reviewers if they failed to understand or disagreed with some of the suggestions. Thus, they could benefit most from peer suggestions. These four interviewees also believed that their classmates would react to peer feedback in the same serious manner, in that the mistakes really existed, and their peers often came to discuss the suggestions with them. In contrast, one interviewee was not so positive about the students' reaction to peer

feedback although he admitted that grammatical mistakes and not well-written parts would be corrected and revised thereafter. Since in his eyes the students were not so proficient and professional as the course teacher, they were not able to offer any constructive suggestions more than apparent mistakes and phrases or clauses that needed revising. Consequently, he generally did not take a very serious attitude when implementing peer suggestions, nor did he think his peers would.

Despite the four interviewees' self-reported serious attitude towards peer response, the comparison of peer suggestions and the students' revised drafts presented a different picture. Suggestions about grammatical mistakes and the use of words and phrases were generally implemented, but those on discourse level such as substantiating an idea, reordering the paragraphs, making the clauses more logical and coherent, and rewriting a paragraph were often neglected. When asked about this during the interview, the interviewees presented a surprising explanation that they had allocated little time for writing the composition and even less for the revised draft. Therefore, since they were in such a hurry, they really did not have time to implement all the suggestions into the revised draft, which needed to be handed in soon. Hence, "the idea that the peer may profit from reading and responding to another's writing would not take place" (Earls, 1987: 51). One of them offered one more unexpected excuse that she was inexperienced in implementing the comments probably due to the lack of practice of peer review.

Relationship Between the Students' Survey Responses and Their Writing Performance

To explore the correlations between the students' survey responses and their performance in English writing, correlational analyses were conducted, the results of which are shown in Table 5.

As shown in Table 5, the students' responses to each section of the survey were all significantly correlated with each other with a coefficient range of .434 to .934. For example, the students who were more willing to do peer view tended to think more highly of reviewing each other's English compositions and react to peer responses more seriously. Meanwhile, strangely, the survey responses negatively correlated with the students' performance in English writing with the exception of the RPFQ (reaction to peer feedback) which was positively but insignificantly related to the latter. Though negatively correlated, the coefficients were insignificantly low except the correlation between the AOVPR (overall value of peer review) and the students' writing performance with a coefficient of -.037 ($p < .01$).

Table 5: Relationship between the Survey Responses and Writing Performance (N = 84)

	WDPR	**AOVPR**	**APREC**	**ARPEC**	**APR**	**RPF**
AOVPR	.687*	1				
APREC	.597*	.710*	1			
ARPEC	.547*	.662*	.706*	1		
APR	.676*	.862*	.934*	.870*	1	
RPF	.545*	.614*	.527*	.434*	.584*	1
Performance	-.045	-.037	-.072	-.053	-.064	.072

* = p < .01

Notes: WDPR = willingness to do peer review (the willingness section)
AOVPR = attitude toward the overall value of peer review
APREC = attitude toward peers reviewing one's own English compositions
ARPEC = attitude toward reviewing peers' English compositions
APR = attitude toward peer review (the attitude section)
RPR = reaction to peer feedback (the reaction section)

Conclusions and Implications

The following conclusions can be drawn concerning the study on Chinese undergraduate advanced EFL learners' attitudes toward peer review and reaction to peer feedback.

First of all, the majority of the participants expressed a (strong) willingness to review each other's English compositions, which they felt could benefit them in many ways such as reducing grammatical mistakes, learning more about the use of words, and enriching

their ideas. This might be closely related to the fact that these students were proficient in English and that they had been trained to do peer review.

Probably because of their strong willingness, the respondents were highly positive about the value of peer review. They believed that they could evaluate each other's compositions appropriately and that peer review was beneficial not only to the reviewee but also the reviewer. Though peers sometimes were unwilling to be critical and sometimes unable to point out all the mistakes and errors in a composition, it was easier for them to understand each other, to discuss what needed to be improved and how, and to better learn from each other. And to our delight, no interviewees reported feeling uncomfortable making or receiving negative criticisms of each other's work, as claimed by Roessier (1983) and Pianko and Radzik (1980).

Likewise, the participants reported to be highly serious about the peer responses, reading carefully the peer feedback and revising their drafts accordingly. Nevertheless, it did not mean the participants really did that when implementing the peer responses into their revised drafts. As previously discussed, peer feedback often primarily focused on grammar and vocabulary, and the implementation of the peer responses also enormously concentrated on grammar and vocabulary. The feedback on the discourse level was rarely incorporated into the revised drafts due to reportedly limited time, which was actually due to the limited attention paid by the participants.

Finally, the correlational analyses revealed that the measured variables were all highly significantly correlated with each other but insignificantly negatively correlated with the students' performance in English writing. This might explain why one interviewee scored low on the survey and self-reported to think low of peer review but wrote fairly well in English.

It may be important to train students how to do peer review and help them realize what review really means, as suggested by Wang (2004). This may help students become more willing to do peer review and improve the quality of the feedback. If the feedback is of low quality, few students will treat it seriously (Earls, 1987). More importantly, it is useful to help students be aware of what revision entails because many students are unwilling to revise a paper after it is finished (Sultan, 1988; Wright, 1988). Often, if students do revise a draft, it is "just to 'clean it up' so that they can turn in a neat looking paper" (Wright, 1988, p. 64). This type of rewrite is far from being a revision (Byrd, 1994). Students need to understand that good writing is well-revised writing.

What is also worth noting is that participants were trained to do peer review in the present study; their participation in peer review was both required and assessed; and the participants were fairly proficient in English. All of these reasons might partially explain why the majority of the participants were positive and serious about doing peer review.

Otherwise, the students might have treated peer review differently, which deserves further research.

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Conference Announcements

The English as an International Language Journal. October 14-17, 2009. Supported by the *Asian EFL Journal* and Dokuz Eylul University announce the inaugural International EIL Conference to be held in Izmir Turkey in October 2009.

12th IADA Conference. October 15-18. 2009. "Polyphony and Intertextuality in dialogue." Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona. The deadline for abstract submission has been extended until 31 December 2008. E-mail Cornelia Ilie at cornelia.ilie@gmail.com. Web site http://www.upf.edu/dtf/activita/IADA2009/index.html

MexTESOL October 22-25, 2009. "Social Echoes of ELT." Cintermex Convention Center, Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. Contact Natalia Aguirre Benavides. E-mail naguirreb @yahoo.com.mx. Web site http://www.mextesol.org.mx

Symposium on Second Language Writing. November 5-7, 2009. Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona USA. E-mail sslw@asu.edu. Web site http://sslw.asu.edu/2009/

The First International EFL/ESL Conference. November 5-7, 2009. "ELT in India Today and Tomorrow: Decolonising English Studies." Held at Udaipur. Co Hosted: *Asian EFL Journal* & Rajasthan Association of Studies in English. E-mail asian_efl_ journal @yahoo.com

6th International ELT Conference. November 14-1, 2009. "Reaching Out … for Success" Azerbaijan English Teachers' Association (AzETA) at Baku Slavic University, Baku, Azerbaijan. E-mail: elmira_e40@hotmail.com. Web site: http://www.az-eta.org/

JALT 35th Annual International Conference November 21-23, 2009. Language Teaching and Learning & Educational Materials Expo Granship, Shizuoka, Japan. Web site http://jalt.org/conference

The 14th English in South East Asia (ESEA) Conference. November 26-28, 2009. "English Changing: Implications for Policy, Teaching, and Research." Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines. Web site http://www.ateneo.edu

Globalization and Localization in Computer-Assisted Language Learning. December 8-11, 2009. Lotus Hotel Pang Suan Kaew, Chiang Mai, Thailand. Deadline for proposal submissions June 15. E-mail sonjb@usq.edu.au. Web site http://glocall.org/

2nd International Conference on the Development and Assessment of Intercultural Competence. January 29-31, 2010. The University of Arizona Tucson, AZ. Web site http://www.cercll.arizona.edu/pdf/ICC_2010_Call_for_Proposals.pdf

44th Annual TESOL Convention and Exhibit. March 24–27, 2010. Boston, Massachusetts USA. Web site http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/convention2009/docs/BostonTESOParty Final.pdf

Tips for Teachers

Developing Criteria for Textbook Evaluation

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Despite its central role in most language courses, textbook selection and evaluation is often given little time or attention. Sometimes, busy teachers and program coordinators resort to a cursory examination of books, looking particularly to replicate a desired quality or avoid a problematic feature of their current text. In other situations, decision makers put off textbook replacement because they do not have an effective means of looking at the strengths and weakness of new books. In cases where several teachers must agree upon and use the same textbook, the selection process can be tedious and even contentious. Too often, flaws in newly adopted texts are not noticed until it is too late. Developing or adapting an evaluation checklist can help teachers objectively examine, evaluate, and select new textbooks.

An evaluation checklist can help ensure that we examine textbooks from several angles. Since a textbook often provides a framework or serves as a syllabus for a course, it is imperative that the content match the underlying approach and needs of the program in which it will be used. In a language class, linguistic content may come to mind first, but today, cultural and real world content are often equally important. Good textbooks must also provide support for teachers and clear guidance for students. Finally, there are practical concerns that play a role in textbook evaluation and selection. The evaluation form presented in Table 1 takes into account these four perspectives—linguistic and other content, learner needs, teacher support, and practical considerations. The specific questions displayed in Table 1 constitute a synthesis of points that I have gleaned from a number of sources and adapted for the program where I teach. However, they can readily be revised to fit the needs of other programs or settings.

Table 1

Textbook Evaluation Checklist

Check the appropriate box to show your rating for each question					
Linguistic Content	**Rating <Poor -------------Excellent>**				
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Are grammar items appropriate for the target level?					
Is the range of vocabulary wide and useful enough?					
Are the four skills adequately covered?					
Are the reading passages sufficient?					
Are the listening materials of good quality?					
Are the listening materials as authentic as possbile?					
Are the listening tasks realistics?					
Are the speaking activities realistic?					
Are the writing tasks realistic?					
Can communicative abilities be developed?					
Does the textbook address differences between L1 and L2?					
Is the length of the text appropriate for learners' language level?					
Are different styles and registers of English provided?					
Are examples and texts generally well written?					
Are there activities designed for integrating language skills?					
Is there a glossary?					
Are there appendices or reference sections for grammar information?					
					Total: ______________

Other Content	Rating <Poor --------------Excellent>				
	0	1	2	3	4
Does the textbook support the aims and objectives of the program?					
Does the textbook match any external syllabus requirements?					
Does the textbook provide review of previously learned topics?					
Is the organization of topics clear?					
Does the textbook provide learners with opportunities for individual practice?					
Does the textbook provide learners with opportunities to communicate with each other?					
Are new points of learning presented in an interesting way?					
Will the topics interest students?					
Is there sufficient variety in topics?					
Do the topics expand learners' awareness and enrich their experience?					
Are topics adequately supported or explained?					
Are women and men portrayed equally?					
Can the supplementary materials be tailored to the needs of particular classes or students?					
Does the content relate to the learners' culture, background, and environment?					
Is there a good mixture of text and graphic information on most pages?					
Are there sections for revision or review?					
	Total: ______________				

Learner Concerns	Rating <Poor ------------------Excellent>				
	0	1	2	3	4
Does the textbook fit target learners' needs?					
Will learners perceive the textbook as interesting, useful, and relevant?					
Does the textbook accommodate different learning styles?					
Will the activities give learners a sense of achievement and success?					
Does the textbook provide learners with advice on study skills and learning strategies?					
Are there references, websites, and additional resources for students to try on their own?					
Does the textbook promote learner autonomy?					
Total: _______________					

Teacher Concerns	Rating <Poor ------------------Excellent>				
	0	1	2	3	4
Does the suggested teaching and learning approach suit the learning/teaching situation?					
Is the textbook flexible enough to accommodate teachers with different teaching styles?					
Is the teacher's manual comprehensive?					
Does the teacher's manual include teaching suggestions?					
Does the textbook provide and support basic principles underlying the materials?					
Is an answer key provided?					
Is the teaching sequence appropriate?					
Total: _______________					

Practicial Concerns	**Rating <Poor -----------------Excellent>**				
	0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
Is the textbook affordable?					
Is the textbook easy for students to carry?					
Is the textbook attractive?					
Is the textbook durable?					
Is the textbook easy on the eyes?					
Total: _____________					

To put the checklist from Table 1 into use, follow these steps:

1. Conduct a needs analysis for learners and teachers.
2. Amend the checklist to fit your program.
3. Evaluate the textbooks using the checklist.
4. Tally the points in each category given by individual teachers and enter them into Table 2.
5. Hold a meeting with teachers to discuss the results and make the final decision.

Table 2

Comparing Different Textbooks

	Textbook A	Textbook B	Textbook C	Textbook D
Linguistic content				
Other content				
Learner concerns				
Teacher concerns				
Practical concerns				
Total				

I hope that this checklist, and the suggested 5-step process that accompanies it, can save readers and their colleagues time and energy when they select their next textbook. Readers may also find the checklists in these two sources useful:

Cunningsworth, A. (1995). *Choosing Your Coursebook*. Heinemann. gives a "quick-reference checklist" which contains some of the most important general criteria for evaluation and selection purposes, including aims and approaches, design and organization, language content, skills, topic, methodology and teacher's book.

Hutchinson, T. (1987). *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-Centered Approach.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. This volume may be somewhat dated, but it provides teachers with an analytical chart to evaluate the audience, aims, content, and methodology of a textbook from both a subjective and objective perspective.

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Using Literature and Movies for Integrated Skills Development in English Language Teaching

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This article discusses the use of literary movies, that is, movies based on works of literature such as novels, short stories, or plays, in English language classrooms. Descriptions of several activities that work well with novels and movies are presented, along with some examples and guidelines for their use. These activities may be adapted for use with other works of literature and their corresponding movies. Finally, a list of titles available in both book and movie form is provided.

Literary Movies in the Language Classroom

Raising cross-cultural awareness and developing all four language skills are two crucial goals in many English as Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second language (ESL) classrooms. One way of achieving these goals is through using literature. Using literature in language classes has long been seen as an appropriate means of helping students master all four language skills as well as developing appreciation for the arts, building critical thinking skills, becoming more empathetic person, and increasing cross-cultural awareness. Literature can promote creative, communicative, and pleasurable activities whether one chooses complete works, such as novels, short stories, plays, and poems, or extracts from such pieces. One particularly effective means of incorporating literature in language classes is to use literary works in conjunction with movies based on those works. The most obvious advantage of movies is that they appeal to both aural and visual learners. Viewers can immediately see details of the historical or cultural setting that can be difficult to discern from reading along. For example, a movie based on a classic English novel will present students with a rich picture of the language, culture, and period in which the novel is set. When used effectively, movies promote vocabulary acquisition, generate real communication, and enhance reading, writing. listening, and speaking skills of ESL/EFL learners. With new technology allowing many language teachers to use multi-media resources in the classroom, movies are not as cumbersome or difficult to use as they once were. Depending upon the needs of a program and its students, several variations are possible for using books and movies. Among these are the following:

- using video clips in conjunction with reading the full text of a work of literature.
- reading extracts from a work of literature in conjunction with viewing a full-length movie (broken into segments, of course).

- combining movie clips with reading excerpts from the original work.
- working with full texts and full-length movie adaptations.

Each possibility presents the teacher with different advantages, possibilities, and challenges. In my position at Middle East Technical University in Turkey, I have primarily worked with complete works of literature and full-length movies. These guidelines have proved useful for choosing appropriate movies to accompany the texts that we read:

- The movie should be based on a novel or a story so that the students have texts to read as well as a movie to watch. They can follow the movie easily, enjoy the classroom discussions, and improve their language skills.
- The movie should be suitable to the age and proficiency level of the class. For example, an adult love story, a text with complex literary elements, or passages with long, elaborate descriptions may not be suitable for certain groups of learners.
- The movie should be free of cultural, ethnic, or racial biases unless the teacher wishes to draw attention to such features. This is especially critical and challenging in a multi-cultural classroom where the teacher must be sensitive to the views of all students.
- The movie should be a close version of the written piece. While it is nearly impossible to find a movie that follows the original text line by line, some are so unfaithful to the original text that they do not allow for meaningful discussion and comparison in class.

Sample Activities for Using Literary Movies

Three book + movie combinations that I have successfully used with my students include a murder mystery, *Murder on the Orient Express*; a British classic, *Emma*; and a contemporary American work, *The Accidental Tourist* (see appendix A for additional suggestions). Some common activities that work well with any book and/or movie, including these, are the following:

- preparing comprehension questions to guide and encourage students in their reading of each chapter.
- preparing vocabulary lists, activities, logs, or modified cloze procedures to focus on high use general or academic vocabulary.
- holding classroom discussions about the differences between the movie and the novel.
- asking students to keep a culture journal in which they write their reflections, questions, and assumptions about the country where the story is set.
- asking students to compare their culture with the culture depicted in the book and movie.

- asking students to write personal reactions to certain aspects of the book or movie to see how personal context influences the interpretation and analysis of a text.

Below are sketches of several additional activities that have worked well with the particular books named above. Most of these activities could be adapted for use with other movies and genres as well. The resourceful teacher will, no doubt, think of many other possibilities. All of these activities integrate the various language skills and involve listening, speaking, reading, and writing for engaging, communicative purposes.

Murder on the Orient Express is a famous murder mystery by Agatha Christie. In this story, her hero, the Belgian sleuth Hercule Poirot, helps the police solve the case of Count Andrenyi who is murdered on the Orient Express, a train which begins in Istanbul and travels through Europe. There are twelve suspects most of whom are related to the Count.

Activity 1: Focusing on Point of View

Students watch sections of the movie in class and read the corresponding chapter of the book for homework through the penultimate chapter. In class, they work in small groups to compare the movie and the novel. In addition, each student is assigned to focus on one character, Hercule Poirot or one of the suspects. As they read or watch the movie segments, they pay special attention to and gather detailed information about their character in order to answer three questions. Examples of the notes they might take are given in Appendix B. The questions are:

- What is your name and what is your relation to the victim?
- What is the evidence, if any, against you ?
- Where were you and what were you doing at the time of the murder?

Activity 2: Role Play

Just before reading the last chapter and viewing the corresponding segment of the movie, the students who were assigned the role of Hercule Poirot must try to determine the identity of the murderer. They have been taking notes about suspicious actions, examining the evidence, and preparing questions for the suspects based on what they have seen and read. Now, they follow these steps:

- Walk around the class with an information sheet trying to get as many clues as they can by asking questions.
- Have a short meeting to try to reach consensus about the identity of the murderer. In the mean time, other students also work in small groups to discuss who they think the murderer may be.
- Reveal the identity of the murderer and explain their reasons for this decision. The students whose character is named as the murderer get a chance to defend themselves.
- Watch the last scene of the movie as a class.

Jane Austen's novel *Emma*, written in the 19th century, tells the story of Emma Woodhouse, the younger daughter of a wealthy Englishman. She likes matchmaking, but sometimes things do not go the way she intends them to. When her friend Mr. Knightley tries to prevent her from interfering with other people's lives, they fall in love, resulting in numerous complications.

Activity 3: Writing a Comparison and Contrast Essay

Students read the novel chapter by chapter and watch both an early British-made version of the movie and a contemporary American-made version. Over several class periods, they work through the various stages of the writing process to develop a comparison-contrast essay focusing on the differences and similarities between either the movie and the novel or the two versions of the movie from any angle that they choose.

Activity 4: Attending to Language

This activity helps learners pay close attention to syntactic, semantic, and lexical forms used in a particular situation and to realize that there are multiple ways of expressing similar thoughts.

1. Download the transcript of the final scene from one version of the movie and prepare two forms—one with deletions in Emma's side of the conversation and the other with deletions in Mr. Knightley's side. An example is shown in Appendix C.
2. Divide the class into two; assign the role of Emma to one half and Mr. Knightley to the other half and give them the appropriate version of the transcript.
3. Watch the scene. Students try to fill in the deletions in the lines of their character.
4. Students work in Emma-Emma and Knightley-Knightley pairs to compare notes.
5. Students then work in Emma-Knightley pairs to cross-check and read aloud the transcriptions, trying out the words that they have heard.
6. Students watch the final scene in the second movie version, note the differences in language, and have a follow-up discussion.

Activity 5: Writing a (Portion of) a Screen Play

After completing the book and watching the movie, students work in Emma-Knightley pairs to rewrite a scene bringing the vocabulary, tone, voice, or even the plot to give it a new twist or bring it up to date. They act out their dialogues in front of the class.

The *Accidental Tourist* is a based on a contemporary novel by Anne Tyler and tells the story of travel guide writer, Macon Leary, who suffers numerous personal tragedies. The movie touches on themes including, but not limited to marriage, divorce, love, family, and individuality.

Activity 6: Writing a Travel Brochure:

The protagonist in this tale is a travel writer. With this activity, students try their hand at his occupation, writing a travel brochure or article. As warm-up, the students brainstorm about traveling by answering the following questions in pairs or in small groups:

- What are two essential things you always take with you when you travel?
- What are two unnecessary things you always take with you when you travel?
- What countries or other regions have you traveled to or would like to travel to?
- What kind of traveler are you? Back-packer? Resort hotel type?
- How do you get information about your destinations before you travel? Do you consult travel guides, the Internet, or just wait and see what the place has to reveal?

Then, they discuss what kind of travel guide they would like to write. Working in small groups over several class periods, they choose a real or imaginary destination, plan the content, collect needed information, and then produce their brochure

Afterword

Undergraduate programs in English Language Teaching (ELT) often include literature courses in which the students read short stories, poems, and novels mainly written by famous British and American writers from a wide range of genres and literary currents. They analyze these literary texts, focusing on the sociocultural and historical context of the period in which these pieces were written. They discuss the meaning of literary devices such as characterization, dialogue, setting, imagery, and theme. The focus in these literature courses, however, is usually on textual analysis rather than on presenting teacher candidates with ways in which they can utilize literature in their future language classes. Teacher candidates may conclude that literature is merely a mandatory content class that they need to take in order to fulfill their degree requirements rather than a source of authentic language use and cultural information about the target language that they will be teaching upon graduation. Therefore, pre-service programs with a strong literature component might consider addressing practical techniques, such as those presented above, for using literature in their future English classes. Doing so could equip them with strategies for adding appeal, variety, and content to their language lessons.

About the Author

Betil Eröz received her Ph.D. in second language acquisition and teaching from the University of Arizona. She is currently an assistant professor at the Department of Foreign Language Education in Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey. Her teaching and research interests include qualitative classroom studies, language teacher training, and teaching methodology.

Appendix A

Suggested Titles of Novels with Movies

These works of British or American literature all have more than one acceptable movie versions. However, individual teachers may find the some of the novels to be dated or difficult, so it is important to preview the movies, read the books, and consider the linguistic, sociocultural, and general background knowledge of the students before selecting a particular work for study.

An Ideal Husband, Oscar Wilde
A Midsummer Night's Dream, William Shakespeare
A Passage to India, E. M. Forster
Death on the Nile, Agatha Christie
Great Expectations, Charles Dickens
Harry Potter, J. K. Rowling
Little Women, Louisa May Alcott
Lord of the Flies, William Golding
Oliver Twist, Charles Dickens.
Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen
Sense and Sensibility, Jane Austen
The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald
The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Victor Hugo
The Importance of Being Earnest, Oscar Wilde
The Lord of the Rings, J. R. R. Tolkien
The Picture of Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde
The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne
The Wizard of Oz, L. Frank Baum
To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee.
Wuthering Heights, Emily Bronte

Appendix B

Example Notes for Suspects in the Orient Express

The Suspects	Their Statements
Mrs. Harriet Hubbard Mrs. Armstrong's mother	A strange man hiding in room after 1:00 at night; cried out
Door in room opening into Mr. Rachett's compartment	Found a strange button on her magazine Found the bloody murder weapon in make-up bag
Greta Ohisson Armstrons' Swedish nurse	Didn't leave room until morning Have white nightgown with red dragons on the back Light sleeper
Princess Dragomiroff Russian princess Mrs. Armstrong's god mother Friend of Mrs. Armstrong's mother who was an actress	In bed at the time of murder Some drink and medicine

Appendix C

Transcripts of the Last Scene of *Emma*

Transcript for Students Reading Knightley's Role

Knightley: You don't wish to know what that is? You are ____, I see, to have no _________. Emma, I must tell you ____________, though _______ the next moment

Emma: Oh! Then don't speak it. *Take a little time,* do not *commit* yourself. I stopped you so *ungraciously,* just then. Yes, I will hear you, If you wish to tell me you are contemplating something. Yes, *you may speak* to me as a friend.

Knightley: As a friend! Emma, that I fear . . . No, I have gone too far for ________. Tell me, then, I have no chance ________? My dearest Emma, for dearest you will always be, ______. Say "No" if it is to be said. I can't ______ Emma. If I ______ you less, I _____ talk about it more. But you know ________ you, and you have borne it as no other woman in England _____it. Well, _______ the truth I tell you now. ______ may not have much to _______ them, but you under stand me. Yes, you understand my feelings and ________.

Emma: I can. I do return them. I do love you. *I believe I always have*, though I *didn't know* it until yesterday, I think.

Knightley: Then, will you __________?

Emma: I do. I do. *This is so strange.*

Knightley: I ___________ when you were three weeks old.

Emma: Do you like me *as well now as you did then?*

Transcript for Students Reading Emma's Role

Knightley: You don't wish to know what that is? You are determined, I see, to have no curiosity. Emma, I must tell you what you will not ask, though I may wish it unsaid the next moment.

Emma: Oh! Then don't speak it. ________, do not _________ yourself. I stopped you so _______, just then. Yes, I ________ you if you ________ to tell me you are _______ something. Yes, _________ as a friend.

Knightley: As a friend! Emma, that I fear . . . No, I have gone too far concealment. Tell me, then, have I no chance for ever succeeding? My dearest Emma, for dearest you will always be, tell me at once. Say "no" if it is to be said. I can't make speeches Emma. If I loved you less, I might be able to talk about it more. But you know what I am. You hear nothing but truth from me. I have blamed you. I have lectured you, and you have borne it as no other woman in England would have borne it. Well, bear with the truth I tell you now. My manners may not have much to recommend them, but you understand me. Yes, you understand my feelings and will return them if you can.

Emma: I can. I do return them. I do love you. _____, though I ______ it until yesterday, I think.

Knightley: Then, will you consent?

Emma: I do. I do ________.

Knightley: I held you in my arms when you were three weeks old.

Emma: Do you like me _______?

Addressing Digital Literacy in the English Language Class

Mary Ellis and Anitha Devi Pillai, National Institute of Education, Singapore

Conducting and reporting on a group project is a common assignment in many university courses. Project work simulates the working world, requires critical thinking, and gives students responsibility for their own learning. We have found that assigning group research projects in our academic English program energizes our students, engages them in meaningful work, and creates an authentic environment in which to use their English language skills. On the other hand, locating information and using it effectively in academic reports is a new experience for most of our students. Today, when even experienced researchers report being overwhelmed by the volume and complexity of information that is available to them, it is no surprise that our students are confused about where to begin. They often build their projects by cutting and pasting texts from the Internet into both their written and oral reports without a clear picture of whether the information is credible or relevant and how they should use it. We have learned that in order to ensure a quality product from their group research projects, our students need assistance with their *information literacy* and oral communication skills.

In a paper presented to a United States Presidential Commission twenty years ago, before computers were widely used in educational settings, the American Library Association characterized people with information literacy this way:

> Ultimately, information literate people are those who have learned how to learn. They know how to learn because they know how knowledge is organized, how to find information, and how to use information in such a way that others can learn from them. They are people prepared for lifelong learning, because they can always find the information needed for any task or decision at hand.

Information literacy instruction refers to a shift in focus from teaching specific information sources to a set of critical thinking skills involving the use of information. Since the advent of widespread computer and Internet use, specialized terms referring to electronic forms of information literacy have emerged, including *digital literacy*, *Internet literacy,* and *visual literacy*. They all refer to understanding how information is organized and how to locate, evaluate, use, and document it. Today, lecturers in academic English programs frequently find it necessary to devote instructional time to reaching digital literacy, Internet literacy, and visual literacy. They all refer to understanding how information is organized and how to locate, evaluate, use, and document it. Today,

lecturers in academic English programs frequently find it necessary to devote instructional time to teaching digital literacy skills. Some of the problems our students have encountered in managing information include an over dependence on search engines, inability to judge appropriateness of articles, and copying of sources which results in plagiarism. Their oral presentations frequently show a lack of attention to the impact of visual information and feature the copying and pasting of written material into PowerPoint presentations. We have found the following resources to be useful in addressing the need for improved digital literacy and oral presentation skills in our students while engaging them in collaborative project-based work.

Using Wikis

A wiki is a web tool that allows students to compose, revise, and "publish" information as a group. It functions like a website but with access limited to members of the team and their lecturers. Students use their wikis to comment on their peers' summaries, essays, and reflections. A wiki is a good tool for fostering collaborative writing and serves as a virtual meeting place. This is especially useful in situations where students have difficulty meeting face to face.

Our students have reported that they start writing earlier in the research process with the use of wikis. They were often able to edit their short research notes and wiki comments and incorporate them into their final research projects. They also realized that they did not have to e-mail their work to each other because it was stored online. As their instructors, we found that using wikis enabled us to ensure that everyone was working cooperatively and collaboratively.

Using Webography

One means of helping students learn how to evaluate online materials is to give them pre-project assignments in choosing and evaluating online material. We asked our students to build a *webography*, that is, a web-based bibliography. This task allows them to explore an area of interest while practicing website and text evaluation skills before they need to apply those skills in their own research projects. The assignment followed a classroom discussion of evaluation criteria and a demonstration showing how to apply such criteria to selected sites. Students choose topics, find sites, evaluate them, and post their evaluations on wikis so that their information could be shared with other students.

Language learners need considerable help in learning to prepare effective, informative oral presentations. In recent years, oral presentations have become even more complex as speakers commonly integrate words and images. This can present an opportunity for language learners who have background experience or aptitude in visual or digital media, but it can also present an added challenge for students of limited English proficiency who

must locate, interpret, and effectively integrate images into their oral presentations. The resources listed below have proven to be valuable for our students.

Using Online Videos

There are several popular online video-sharing portals that appeal to students, one of which is *YouTube*. Using *YouTube* videos has generated a lot of excitement in our classes, but more important, it has helped students improve their oral presentation skills. YouTube video clips are short which makes them easy to download. We found several that were specifically designed to teach oral presentation skills including these:

- Presentation Pitfalls: How many errors can you find?
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXILI9Q1jIw&feature=related
- Death by Powerpoint
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqzvb8ELACg& feature=related
- Enhancing your Presentation Skills
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whTwjG4ZIJg&feature=related

Another useful website that lecturers can utilize is Technology, Entertainment, Design, commonly called TED at http://www.ted.com. This site makes freely available over 200 short, 18-minute talks by some of the world's greatest thinkers and most talented individuals. We asked our students to review three presentations from TED and to observe a number of features such as interaction between the speaker and the audience and the projected images used by the speaker to enhance his or her talk. Afterward, one student commented that:

> The three videos have somewhat brought to light my realization regarding my unorthodox method of presentation. I've reflected on my past presentations and have therefore realized that my method is not that feasible to convey the right message to the audience. Professionalism and delivery is very important to get across the whole audience as to much digression and lack of flow in presenting will divert the audience from the point of the presentation itself.

The videos enabled us to break the monotony of the lesson and led to greater student participation in classroom discussions.

Using Other Online Resources

The advent of the Internet age means that teachers have a plethora of resources that would have been unimaginable twenty years ago. Students are particularly receptive to the use of Internet sources that they are able to access and review at any time. Other advantages of using these resources are that lessons preparation time is reduced and class time is used more effectively. We spend less time explaining how to make a presentation and more time showing how. For example, the focus of one lesson on visual literacy sensitizes students

to how text elements and colors can be used to increase the effectiveness of PowerPoint presentations. For this lesson, we also use the notes and slides on visual literacy from the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) website (http://owl. english.purdue.edu/) including Visual Rhetoric, Color Theory, and Using Fonts with Purpose.

Using Online Appraisal of Peer Presentations

Many of our students request some sort of model oral presentation to follow, and we oblige (somewhat). It is not our intention to provide a model for them to copy directly. Instead, we choose to have students watch their peers' oral presentations online and join in an online discussion about them. We uploaded videos to an online student portal. Students are encouraged to look at general points about the presentation (attention to audience, amount of information, etc.), design of the presentation (background, font size, image position and size), and choice and consistency (color, icons, broad and relevant range used).

We showed students video clips of authentic presentations and gave them key guidelines to focus their attention. They were able to identify salient characteristics in the short reflection that they wrote at the end of the activity. Among the observations made by students were these:

Student 1: I noticed that it is highly essential for a presenter to maintain eye contact with the audience. Moreover in a formal presentation it is necessary for a presenter to be familiar with the slides and should avoid referring to notes.

Student 2: The slides should also have good color schemes so that when audience look at the slides it would not be too jarring for the eyes or too light for the audience to see. Slides should also not be cluttered with too many words, as it will distract the audience.

As shown in the quotes above, students were able to identify qualities of a good presentation by watching their peers. The activity enabled us to shift the focus of the lesson from trying to "train" students by providing them with a prescriptive list of *dos* and *don'ts* to having them view presentations much as an instructor, or better yet, a real audience would. This enabled students to consider the effectiveness of their own presentations from the perspective of their audience.

Conclusion

The group research project that we assign is a rigorous one (see Appendix). However, the tools described here have helped our students with both products of their projects—their written reports and their oral presentations. They are more successful in locating and evaluating information and are making better decisions about how to use it. In other words, the use of e-learning tools is contributing to improved digital literacy, which will help them not only with their university life but also in their future careers.

About the Authors

Mary Ellis has a master's degrees in library science and applied linguistics from Indiana University in the U.S. She is a doctoral candidate in the Learning Science Technology academic group of the National Institute of Education at the Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Her current interests include information literacy and academic writing.

Anitha Devi Pillai has a master's degree from National University of Singapore and an honor's degree in linguistics from the University of New South Wales in Australia. She is a doctoral candidate at English Language and Literature academic group of the National Institute of Education in Singapore. Her current interest is in the area of socializing novice writers to critical academic literacy through project work.

Appendix

Group Research Project

Component 1: Written Report Component

At the end of the project, students will produce a report. The final report is a collaboratively written 2500-3000 word research report. The word limit excludes references, citations, and accompanying captions for tables and diagrams. It constitutes 50% of the group research project grade.

Students will be assessed on the:

- Clarity of purpose
- Integration of research and prior knowledge
- Coherence
- In-depth development of main ideas
- Evidence of creativity and/or fresh insight

The report must:

- Include in-text citations and references
- Be clearly paginated
- Be typed, double-spaced in Times New Roman 12 point font or near equivalent

Component 2: Oral Presentation Component

Two weeks after submitting their written group research project report, students will give an oral presentation in the presence of an audience. The oral presentation will be based on the group research project. Two lecturers will assess the oral presentation. The oral presentation makes up 50% of the group project grade.

Students will be assessed on:

- Clarity and fluency of his/her presentation
- Confidence in delivery
- Ability to engage the attention of the audience
- Ability to respond to questions about the project

Groups will be allocated one hour for their oral presentations. Each student is expected to speak for approximately 5 minutes individually and then to participate in answering questions posed by the assessors. Presentations may also include video clips, slide shows, skits, and so forth.

One-on-one with Words

Averil Coxhead, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Early on in my EFL/ESL teaching career, I worked with a lot of students one-on-one. Vocabulary always seemed to be important to these learners even though their individual vocabulary needs were sometimes very different. At university, I teach much bigger classes and my one-on-one time with students is often couched in a conversation about an assignment or a point of clarification from a lecture. Recently I have taken on an informal role as a language advisor attached to a language learning center in my university, and again, I am one-on-one with students and talking about learning vocabulary. What follows are some tips that have grown out of these one-on-one vocabulary teaching experiences, as well as from research conducted by both myself and others.

Tip 1: Invest time in Learning About Your Student's Vocabulary Level and Needs

While I was studying for my postgraduate diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, one of my one-on-one students was a 15 year old New Zealander who was taking extra lessons to boost his reading and writing skills in preparaton for high school courses. Building a larger vocabulary was one of his priorities, but I had never taught a native speaker before and was uncertain about where to begin. We spent the first session discussing his goals, strategies, experiences, and needs for reading and writing. I also gave him the Vocabulary Levels Test (see Schmitt, 2000; Nation, 2001; Coxhead, 2006; and Cobb, n.d. for online versions of the tests), so we had a rough estimate of his receptive vocabulary knowledge. In addition, he wrote a short essay, which gave me a sample of his productive vocabulary. From then on, we analysed vocabulary-based

activities by measuring them against the baseline information we had collected during that initial session. We asked ourselves whether the words that came up in our sessions were important for his studies, whether they were familiar when he was reading but not readily available for use in writing, what strategies he might employ to commit these words to memory, and so on. Had I been tutoring a non-native speaker, I might have been more tempted to assume that I knew what words he knew and what instruction he needed. In his case, because I was less sure of myself, I took extra time to study his needs and to assess his proficiency and in so doing realized how important this step is for all one-on-one instruction. Finding out about my learner helped us both to set and meet our goals. Nine months later, after meeting once a week for an hour, he showed considerable gains in his vocabulary as measured by another version of the Vocabulary Levels Test.

Tip 2: Keep Up To Date With the Field

Earlier this year, a student of Japanese came to an advising session because she was having trouble learning to read Japanese characters (*kanji*). She reported that after taking weekly tests of words based on her textbook, she often could not remember the meaning or form of the *kanji* that she had just worked so hard on the week before. Together, we analyzed her study habits and experience. We found that apart from the weekly tests, she had no other contact with *kanji*. Furthermore, she was merely matching the form of *kanji* to their meanings and trying to produce them under time pressure. I realized that Paul Nation's (2007) "four strands" concept might be very useful for her.

Briefly, these strands are interwoven means of approaching vocabulary study: meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, fluency, and form-focused instruction. The first three are meaning-based, while the last one is language-focused. Nation recommends a balanced program of vocabulary instruction, with equal time on all four. After we talked about Nation's ideas, this student decided to apply them to her own study of *kanji* by trying the following:

1. Developing ways to use her *kanji* in her daily communication, for example, by leaving Japanese messages for her husband who was also learning Japanese. This idea addressed meaning-focused output.
2. Having a Japanese friend write out stories in *kanji* based on her own words and ideas and record spoken versions of them. This strategy provided reading and listening material, or meaning-focused input.
3. Rethinking her approach to studying similar *kanji*. Although she was focused on the form of the *kanji*, she found that she often confused characters that looked similar. Because I was familiar with another of Nation's works (2000), I encouraged her to try learning characters that looked as different as possible, focusing first on the most frequent or useful one, and once that word was stable in her vocabulary, turning her mind to the other.

4. Keeping a daily journal and seeking out a language buddy for conversation time.

These plans addressed the fluency strand.

Talking about the four strands provided some organisation and purpose for this student's learning. It also drew more people into her vocabulary learning circle—her husband, her Japanese friend, and her language learning buddy. Formerly, this learner had been isolated in her language learning efforts even though she had been attending language classes. The concept of the four strands helped break down some of that feeling of loneliness. It is possible that other strategies might have been equally effective in helping her, but the point is that without knowing about the research of others, I would not have been able to use such a principled approach in guiding her.

Tip 3: Focus on Different Aspects of Knowing a Word

An Arabic-speaking learner of English stopped me after a lecture on vocabulary one day. He wanted to talk about how he had trouble using words that he "knew" in his writing. In the lecture, we had discussed Nation's four strands, and he had been thinking about how to work on meaning-focused output. Until then, his main concerns when learning words were meaning and spelling. He wasn't sure what other aspects of words might be useful to know about. Specifically, he had not considered word use. He needed to ask questions such as:

- What words or types of words are frequently used with this one?
- In what contexts are this word commonly used?
- Can you use this word in a sentence to talk about yourself?
- What other words are related to this one? Or, if X is a noun, what is the related verb?

Thinking about aspects of word knowledge, beyond meaning and form, was a way to help this student work towards productive vocabulary use.

Tip 4: Continue to Add Tools to Your Arsenal

Working with websites such as Tom Cobb's *Compleat Lexical Tutor* can be useful for one-on-one teaching and looking at aspects of word knowledge. Cobb's website has a wide range of vocabulary-focused activities, such as concordancing, whereby learners can search for words in different corpora and see examples of the words in use in both spoken and written English. I once looked up the word *haberdashery* with a student because he wanted to learn that word. We discovered that this word did not occur in any spoken or written corpus that we could access online. Seeing the computer come up with no instances of this word in use was a more powerful way to demonstrate word frequency (or lack of it) than asking him to take my word for it when I said that the word was not widely used or worth his time and effort While concordances may not be useful for everybody, they are one way to access vocabulary in context and to explore different aspects of word usage. Recent work on individual differences in learning styles and

preferences makes it clear that we must be able and willing to offer our students choices in the strategies they employ for vocabulary study.

Tip 5: Give Students Frequent Opportunities to Be Involved With New Words

Another problem the same Arabic learner raised was forgetting words very quickly after working with them in class. This forgetting might be caused by too much time elapsing between encountering words, in which case it is important to build in regular meetings with words. In this way, new learning becomes old learning, which means it is harder to forget, or easier to remember. Forgetting can also be caused by a lack of conscious thinking about words, their meaning, and their use. One time-worn strategy for involving students with words that is supported by recent research is using word cards (Nation, 2001).

Typically, word cards are made with stiff paper and are small enough to fit comfortably in the user's hand. On one side the learner records the word, and perhaps its pronunciation and part of speech. On the other side, the learner records the meaning of the word (in L1 or L2), a sentence using the word, related words, and special information about the use of the word such as was mentioned above. The information on the cards is based on the needs of the learner and varies from learner to learner. Word cards can be collected into a box for classroom use or created by individual students for their own use. Once made, word cards can be used in a variety of interactive activities focused on matching, meaning, categorising, common collocations, and so forth.

Conclusion

In this article I have suggested several tips for working with learners one-on-one with vocabulary. Some of these tips involve talking with our learners about research into vocabulary, as well as ways to work on building vocabulary knowledge itself. One of the best features of one-on-one teaching, in my experience, is being able to build a shared understanding and vocabulary for talking about learning together. I believe a slightly adapted old adage fits this approach. These tips are not just about giving a learner a word to help them today. Instead they are about giving them tools and ideas for learning that will help them for life.

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About the Author

Averil Coxhead is a senior lecturer in Applied Linguistics at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. She is the author of Essentials of Teaching Academic Vocabulary. *She is interested in all aspects of vocabulary learning and teaching, including phraseology, using vocabulary in writing, and collocations.*

English for Tourism and Hospitality

Review by J. Perry Christensen
Brigham Young University–Hawaii

English for Tourism and Hospitality. Hans Mol. 2008, Garnet Publishing Ltd. pp. 132. ISBN 978 1 85964 942 8. Price: approximately $35 (about 16 pounds British)

This book is part of Garnet's English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP series). Some other books in the series include: *English for Mechanical Engineering, English for Business Studies, English for Banking, English for Law*, and *English for Language* and *Linguistics*. Unlike other EAP books which are aimed for professionals already working in the field, this series prepares students for future academic studies within their chosen discipline, giving them the necessary vocabulary and academic skills.

English for Tourism and Hospitality contains 12 units composed of 4 lessons apiece. While each lesson is printed on only 2 pages, it contains about an hour's worth of classroom activities. Combined with the given additional activities there are between 50 and 80 hours of classroom material.

The 12 thematic units alternate between focusing on listening/speaking and reading/writing. Lesson 1 of each unit introduces relevant vocabulary. Lesson 2 concentrates on building listening or reading skills. Lesson 3 is an extension of lesson 2 and a preparation for lesson 4. Lesson 4 requires students to apply the new skills they have gained by doing either speaking or writing activities. At the end of each unit is a summary in the form of both a vocabulary and skills bank.

One's first impression by looking at the generous supply of graphics, illustrations, and workbook style format is that the book is for low level English learners. However, the text is targeted, and is most appropriate, for use at the upper intermediate and advanced levels. The pictures and charts actually play an integral part of the lesson, adding realia and building schemata.

The book comes with 2 free audio CDs for use with the listening components. The CD format is a plus, making it easier to import the lectures onto one of many popular MP3 devices. The tracks on the CD are generally between 1 and 2 minutes, with a handful extending over 5 minutes. A transcript of each recording is found in the appendix of each student book. This way, students can self check their lecture notes and make adjustments for future note taking.

The text has a nice international flavor, pointing out the subtleties between British and American English dialects. The lecturers on the audio CD also present a taste of British and American accents as well as male and female voices.

The accompanying teacher's manual is laid out in linear fashion giving teaching notes for each exercise followed by the answer key and transcripts. One doesn't have to flip from the notes section to the answer section to the transcript section as one does with many other teaching manuals. The teaching notes lay out step by step instructions and even suggest what to write on the board. It is an excellent guide for new teachers or a nice reference for more experienced instructors.

The drawback of this text is that it doesn't come with a test bank or assessment pack. In addition, the teacher's manual doesn't make specific suggestions for homework. It appears that all work should be done in class. Also, this book would not be used as a reading text. The readings are generally in a one page magazine format, double columned in a small font. Another shortcoming is that it appears not to provide sufficient material for the students to complete some of the exercises. For example, in a scheme building exercise, students are asked to match items in column A with items in column B. Without some explanation by the teacher about each item, it would be hard for the students to complete the exercise.

On the whole, the book seems to be most useful when used in class under the direction of a teacher as many of the exercises are pair work followed by class discussion. However, the biggest plus to this book is that the students are inundated with field specific vocabulary helping them to be ready for further academic study in tourism and hospitality.

About the Reviewer

Dr. J. Perry Christensen, who also holds an MBA, has been an ESL teacher for 20 years. He has taught in the Pacific Islands of Tonga and Samoa and currently teaches at Brigham Young University–Hawaii.

Notes to Contributors

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