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# TESL

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# Reporter

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# Investigating the Effectiveness of Pair Work on a Conversational Cloze Task in EFL Classes

**Sasan Baleghizadeh**

Shahid Beheshti University, G. C., Tehran, Iran

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The use of pair and small group activities is indeed one of the pedagogical legacies of communicative language teaching. The language teaching professionals who first propounded and then expounded the principles of communicative language teaching (e.g., Johnson & Morrow, 1981; Littlewood, 1981) were of the firm conviction that effective instructional activities are those that would enhance the amount of learner-learner interaction in the classroom. One of the techniques through which this type of interaction is maximized is to have learners do particular activities, such as solving a problem or doing a puzzle, in pairs or small groups. Despite the objection of some scholars who see pair and small group activities as Western communicative pedagogy (e.g., Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996), these activities appear in the majority of modern English language teaching textbooks. The pedagogical as well as theoretical reasons that justify the use of pair work in both foreign and second language classes will be discussed below.

## Literature Review

The use of pair and small group activities that promote interaction among learners is justified both on pedagogical and theoretical grounds. Pedagogically speaking, pair and small group activities promote a positive affective climate wherein students feel less anxious and more confident (Brown, 2001; Long & Porter, 1985), improve the quantity and quality of learner talk (Crookes & Chaudron, 2001; Harmer, 2001), and promote learner autonomy and self-directed learning (Brown, 2001; Nunan & Lamb, 1996). In addition, having learners work with each other allows a teacher to assign different tasks to different groups or pairs in order to manage a mixed proficiency class (McDonough & Shaw, 2003).

From a theoretical perspective, the use of pair and small group activities is supported by the interaction hypothesis (Gass, 1997; Long, 1996) and sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2006; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). The interaction hypothesis suggests that interaction can facilitate L2 development by providing learners with comprehensible input, negative feedback, and opportunities to modify their output (Gass & Mackey, 2006). Types of interactional feedback that may promote learning include comprehension checks,

clarification requests, confirmation checks and recasts (Gass & Mackey, 2007; Long, 1996; Mackey, 2007). In addition to serving as a source of comprehensible input, this feedback can help learners notice gaps between their interlanguage and target-like forms (Schmidt, 1990; Schmidt & Frota, 1986). Interaction also provides learners with opportunities to produce modified output. This output not only allows learners to notice gaps and holes in their interlanguage but also helps them achieve greater metalinguistic awareness and test hypotheses about the rules they have constructed for the target language (Swain, 1995, 1998, 2005).

From a sociocultural perspective, based on Vygotsky's ideas (1978), it has been argued that when a more knowledgeable person supports, or “scaffolds,” a learner socially, cognitively, and affectively during interaction, the learner is likely to develop his or her linguistic as well as cognitive abilities (Donato, 1994; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Since Vygotsky's ideas have mostly been applied in developmental psychology, the more knowledgeable expert has often been regarded as an adult (e.g., a parent or a teacher). However, recent studies in the field of second language acquisition have demonstrated that scaffolding occurs not only in teacher-learner interaction but also in peer interaction in which learners work in pairs or small groups (Donato, 1994; Storch, 2005). The dialogic interaction which emerges as a result of learners' collaborative attempt to solve a given linguistic problem is what Swain (1997, 2000) has called collaborative dialogue. Swain (2000) defines collaborative dialogue as “dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem solving and knowledge building” (p. 102). This suggests that collaborative dialogue involves learners in co-constructing new knowledge of and about language. Collaborative dialogues are usually analyzed through language related episodes (LREs), defined by Swain and Lapkin (1998) as “any part of a dialogue where the students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others” (p. 326).

However, as Storch (2007) rightly observes, “despite the strong pedagogical and theoretical arguments for the use of small group and pair work, there has been relatively little empirical research comparing small group and individual work” (p. 145), particularly when it comes to grammar-focused tasks. In an early attempt to fill this gap, Storch (1999) compared ESL learners' individual and pair performance on two isomorphic versions of three grammar-focused activities: a cloze exercise, a text reconstruction, and a short composition. The study found that pair work had a positive effect on the learners' overall grammatical accuracy but a varying effect on certain grammatical forms. For example, the use of articles in reconstructed texts was more accurate when the activity was done in pairs, but it was not so in the case of the cloze exercise. However, as Storch (2007) comments, the findings of this study should be interpreted with caution because of a likely practice effect caused by having the same participants perform the exercises in pairs and

individually. Moreover, the higher performance of the learners in the collaborative mode may have been due to the longer time they spent on the exercises. As Storch (1999) put it, “the time taken to complete the exercises in pairs almost doubled when compared to the time taken to complete them individually” (p. 370).

In another study, Kuiken and Vedder (2002) investigated pair work of Dutch EFL learners on a dictogloss. They analyzed the transcripts of the pair talk for both simple and elaborate noticing of passive grammatical forms. Simple noticing was defined as instances where the learners identified the targeted passive forms, whereas elaborate noticing was operationalized as instances where the learners discussed the form and then considered alternative forms. The study found that the pair talk data contained numerous instances of elaborate noticing of the passive forms; however, there were differences between pairs in terms of their level of noticing.

More recently, Storch (2007) investigated the merits of pair work on a text editing task in ESL classes. Surprisingly enough, there were no statistically significant differences in the accuracy of texts amended by pairs compared to those amended by learners individually. Moreover, the items related to word forms were amended more frequently than the items related to aspect choices and the use of articles.

Given the small body of studies that have investigated the effect of pair work on grammar-focused activities, there is clearly a need for further research in this respect using other task types. The study reported here aimed to fill this void.

## Research Questions

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effectiveness of pair work for EFL learners by comparing the accuracy of their performance on completing a conversational cloze task in pairs and individually. Thus, the following two research questions guided the study:

- 1) Do learners working in pairs complete the conversational cloze task more accurately than learners who do the same task individually?
- 2) If so, which word categories benefit from pair work?

## Method

### Participants

Forty-two Iranian adult learners (24 females and 18 males) taking an intermediate-level English course at a private language school in Tehran volunteered to participate in this study. They were university students majoring in various fields of study. Their average age was 21 and their TOEFL scores were in the 450-500 range. The participants were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups. Twenty-eight students formed the experimental group and fourteen students formed the control group.

## Task

The task used in the study was a conversational cloze (see Appendix). The reason for selecting this type of a text is that these passages represent features of spoken language and supposedly encourage further interaction between learners. The original conversation was taken from the recording script of a Cambridge IELTS course (Jakeman & McDowell, 1999). The cloze version of the conversation contained 30 gaps and was made by the researcher. The gaps included three different word categories: articles (10), prepositions (10), and coordinating conjunctions (10). These categories indicate that the task was a grammar-focused one.

## Procedure

The participants in the control group did the task individually. In the experimental group, however, they worked in pairs, forming fourteen self-selected dyads (eight female-female and six male-male dyads). Following Storch (1999), in order to promote further joint production, each pair in the experimental group was given only one copy of the task. This made the total number of cloze exercises collected from the control and experimental groups equal with fourteen samples from each.

It should be noted that students in this language school were used to working in pairs as they were studying from the *Interchange* series of textbooks in which there are many instances of pair and small group activities. Nevertheless, the conversational cloze was a new task type for them. This novelty, as some of the participants later reported, was a source of motivation for them to do the task more enthusiastically.

The participants in both groups were allowed as much time as they needed to complete the task. The mean time spent on completing the task for the control and experimental groups was 25 and 30 minutes, respectively. Therefore, on average, the time on task for students who worked in pairs was longer than those who worked individually.

The participants in the experimental group were encouraged to collaborate with each other while completing the task, and the researcher monitored them to make sure that they would speak in English. No attempt was made to audiotape the learners' pair talk; however, the researcher made sporadic notes as he listened to some of the pairs.

## Results

An exact answer scoring system was utilized for marking the task. Each correct answer was given one mark, so the maximum score for the task was 30. Table 1 reports the means and standard deviations of control and experimental groups on the conversational cloze task.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to compare the overall performance of the two groups on the given task. Moreover, separate univariate *F* tests were employed to determine if there was any significant difference between the two groups on any of the three word categories (articles, prepositions, and coordinating conjunctions).



Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics of the Conversational Cloze Task*

Group	n	<u>Total</u>		<u>Articles</u>		<u>Prepositions</u>		<u>Coord. Conjs.</u>	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
<b>Cont.</b>	14	16.78	2.00	4.79	.89	4.36	.92	7.64	1.55
<b>Exp.</b>	14	22.71	1.89	7.36	1.08	7.36	1.39	8.00	1.10

A MANOVA was run indicating the three dependent measures of articles, prepositions, and coordinating conjunctions. The Wilks's Lambda test  $F = 36.37, p = .001$  resulted in a significant main effect for the pair work. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group ( $M = 22.71$ ) and that of the control group ( $M = 16.78$ ). Therefore, the first research question was answered in the positive; namely, learners who completed the task in pairs outperformed those who attempted it individually.

To answer the second research question regarding which word categories would benefit from pair work, univariate  $F$  tests for the three word categories were employed. Table 2 shows the results of these univariate  $F$  tests.

Table 2

*Univariate F Test for Articles, Prepositions, and Coordinating Conjunctions*

Source	Score	df	SS	Ms	F	Sig
<b>Pair work</b>	Articles	26	46.28	46.28	47.06*	.001
	Preps.	26	63.00	63.00	44.96*	.001
	Coord. Conjs.	26	.89	.89	.49	.48

$p < .05$

The univariate test for articles showed that there was a significant difference between the learners' mean scores on articles when they worked in pairs than when they worked individually,  $F(1,26) = 47.06, p < .05$ . Likewise, the univariate test for prepositions resulted in a significant main effect for pair work,  $F(1,26) = 44.96, p < .05$ . Nonetheless, the univariate test for coordinating conjunctions showed no significant difference between the groups,  $F(1,26) = .49, p = .48$ . This means that pair work did not have much of a facilitative effect on coordinating conjunctions.

### Discussion

This study explored the efficacy of pair work in EFL classes by comparing the performance of a group of learners when they completed a conversational cloze task under two conditions: individually and collaboratively. In the individual condition, the learners were not allowed to seek the help of a fellow classmate. On the contrary, in the collaborative condition, they were asked to work in pairs on one copy of the task, listen to each other's comments carefully and come up with answers representing a joint effort. The analysis showed that when learners worked in pairs collaboratively, they were more successful in that they produced more accurate responses. Thus, the first research question was answered in the positive.

The following excerpts, noted down by the researcher as he listened to some of the pairs, are examples of LREs which briefly illustrate how the knowledge co-constructed through collaborative attempts accounts for the better performance of pairs compared to that of individuals.

The following LRE is an instance of a collaborative dialogue in which the learners solve a linguistic problem by talking about language and thereby building knowledge of it. Apparently, S1 has a problem with the meaning of "free of charge." He then suggests preposition "for" to complete the expression after getting its meaning from S2. S2 suggests preposition "of", which S1 subsequently approves of by remembering what he had heard from a former teacher.

S1: And sandwiches are served free . . . charge, what's it mean?

S2: Means free without money.

S1: So free for charge.

S2: No, free of charge.

S1: Yeah, yeah, free of charge, I hear it from teacher.

Let's consider another LRE.

In the next LRE, S1 asks S2 to help her with item number 10. While S2 seems to be confident about the answer through her suggestion of the expression "on board," S1 is doubtful about the meaning of the whole phrase. S2 puts an end to this doubt by reassuring S1 about the meaning of "on board."

S1: What about 10? What's it mean?

S2: And there's a kiosk on board.

S1: On board? What's it?

S2: On board ... means on the ship.

S1: So board here means ship?

S2: Yes, they're talking about ship.

Although this study did not aim to analyze the LREs of the learners' pair talk, the above LREs are typical of what was exchanged between the learners as they completed the task in pairs. They indicate how the knowledge built through a collaborative joint effort results in the better performance of learners who worked with a fellow partner.

As for the second research question regarding which type of words would be more affected by pair work, the study offers interesting findings. As mentioned earlier, the results of the analysis revealed that the difference between the mean score of articles and prepositions in both groups was statistically significant, while in the case of coordinating conjunctions this difference was modest. This suggests that pair work, along with the collaborative dialogue that it generates, helps learners with certain function words or grammatical features. One reason could be the relative complexity of certain grammatical categories and learners' readiness to collaborate over them. Although complexity of grammatical forms is basically related to the developmental stage of the learners' interlanguage, there are certain forms (e.g., articles and prepositions) that English learners seem to have perpetual problem with. Coordinating conjunctions, on the other hand, are not as complex to use, at least for intermediate learners, as articles and prepositions. Thus, given that the coordinating conjunctions required to complete the task were only limited to three forms, specifically *and*, *but*, and *so*, it is little wonder why learners in the individual mode had as good a performance as the learners in the collaborative mode. Regarding articles and prepositions, due to the complexity of the rules associated with them and learners' psycholinguistic readiness to negotiate them, collaborative attempts in tackling the problem were more effective than individual endeavors.

The findings of this study corroborate the findings of Storch (1999) but do not lend support to those of Storch (2007) in that, overall, learners completed the task more successfully in pairs than individually. However, as for different grammatical forms, the present study supports neither of Storch's studies. The learners' pair work on the use of articles in this study seems to have benefited them more than individual work when compared to Storch's studies.

One last point worth noting concerns the time spent completing the task in each group. As mentioned earlier, the learners in the collaborative mode, on average, were five minutes longer on task than the learners in the individual mode. This is different from Storch's (1999) report in which "the time taken to complete the exercises in pairs almost

doubled when compared to the time taken to complete them individually” (p.370). This implies that the findings of the current study are less confounded by time factor, and thus could be more reliably attributed to the given treatment.

### Conclusion

The findings of the present study suggest that having EFL learners work in pairs while doing a grammar-focused task is likely to improve their overall performance with varying degrees of effectiveness on different grammatical features. It follows, therefore, that pair work and collaborative dialogue may promote accuracy for certain grammatical items. Apparently, more complex grammatical items (e.g., articles and prepositions) are better candidates to benefit from pair work than those which do not encompass a wide range of complicated rules. Moreover, learners must be at the right level of language proficiency to enjoy the beneficial effects of collaborative work. In this study, the learners were apparently ready to negotiate forms like articles and prepositions and that is why their collaborative efforts were fruitful. However, given the small number of tokens (only 10) for each grammatical form, these findings are only suggestive and ought to be interpreted with caution. In spite of this, one thing is clear: provided that learners are at the right level of interlanguage development, when they pool their linguistic resources together through joint effort, they are empowered to solve more language-related problems. The collaborative dialogue emerging from peer interaction is beneficial inasmuch as it provides opportunities for learners to focus on form while expressing their intended meaning. Nevertheless, whether engagement in this sort of dialogue results in long term acquisition of L2 forms is an issue that requires further empirical research. For the time being, the findings of the current study, along with those of similar studies conducted in ESL settings, point out that the grammatical output of adult English language learners tends to become more accurate when they work in pairs than when they attempt a similar task individually. This is a welcome opportunity that teachers of other foreign languages can seize and experiment with their adult learners.

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### About the Author

*Dr. Sasan Baleghizadeh is an Assistant Professor of TEFL at Shahid Beheshti University, G.C., Iran, where he teaches applied linguistics, syllabus design, and materials development. His publications include Tales from Rumi and a number of other simplified readers all published by the Iran Language Institute.*

## Appendix

**Read the following conversation and fill in the blanks with ONE suitable word.**

- CLERK: Good Morning, Blue Harbor Cruises. How can I help you?
- TOURIST: Oh, uh, good morning. Um... can you tell me something (1) \_\_\_\_ the different cruises you run?
- CLERK: Well... we run three cruises everyday, each offering something slightly different.
- TOURIST: Let me just get (2) \_\_\_\_ pencil (3) \_\_\_\_ I can make a note of this.
- CLERK: Firstly, there's the Highlight Cruise, ... then we do (4) \_\_\_\_ Noon Cruise and we also have our Coffee Cruise.
- TOURIST: Um ... could you tell me a bit about them? When they leave, how often, that sort (5) \_\_\_\_ thing?
- CLERK: Well, the Highlight Cruise is \$16 per person, (6) \_\_\_\_ that leaves at 9.30 every morning (7) \_\_\_\_ takes two hours to go round the harbor.
- TOURIST: Right ... 9.30 (8) \_\_\_\_ do you get coffee or refreshments?
- CLERK: No, (9) \_\_\_\_ there's a kiosk (10) \_\_\_\_ board where you can buy drinks and snacks. And we do provide everyone with (11) \_\_\_\_ free souvenir postcard.
- TOURIST: Right.
- CLERK: And then there's our Noon Cruise (12) \_\_\_\_ \$42 per person. This is more expensive (13) \_\_\_\_, of course, it takes longer and (14) \_\_\_\_ that price you get (15) \_\_\_\_ three-course lunch.
- TOURIST: Oh, that sounds good ... And what about (16) \_\_\_\_ last one?
- CLERK: That's the Coffee Cruise. Well, that's \$25 each. It takes two and a half hours.
- TOURIST: When does that leave?
- CLERK: At a quarter past two daily.
- TOURIST: (17) \_\_\_\_ presumably the coffee is included?
- CLERK: Yes, and sandwiches are served free (18) \_\_\_\_ charge.
- TOURIST: I think the Coffee Cruise would suit us best, as lunch is included at (19) \_\_\_\_ hotel. Can I book for two people (20) \_\_\_\_ tomorrow, please?
- CLERK: No need to book. Just be down (21) \_\_\_\_ the quay at 2 o'clock. All our cruises depart (22) \_\_\_\_ Jetty No.2.
- TOURIST: Can you tell me where that is exactly?
- CLERK: Yes, No. 2 Jetty is opposite (23) \_\_\_\_ shops. It's clearly sign posted.

- TOURIST: Right ... (24) \_\_\_\_ can you tell me, is there a commentary?
- CLERK: Yes, there's a commentary on all the cruises.
- TOURIST: Is it possible to listen to (25) \_\_\_\_ commentary in Japanese? My friend doesn't speak much English.
- CLERK: It's in English only, I'm afraid, (26) \_\_\_\_ the tour guides usually speak some Japanese, (27) \_\_\_\_ she'll be able to ask questions.
- TOURIST: Oh fine.
- CLERK: Oh and one other thing - I should just mention that it gets extremely hot (28) \_\_\_\_ the upper deck at this time of year, so it's (29) \_\_\_\_ good idea to wear (30) \_\_\_\_ hat. Otherwise you could get quite badly sunburned.

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## Conference Announcements

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**Applied Linguistics Association of Korea 2009 Conference.** December 5, 2009. The Applied Linguistics Association of Korea (ALAK) will be holding a conference on at Chung-Ang University, Seoul, South Korea. The conference theme is "Foreign Language Education Policy in the Korean Context." Web site <http://www.alak.or.kr>

**Hawaii TESOL 2010 Annual Conference.** February 13, 2010. The 2010 Hawaii TESOL Spring Conference will be held at Leeward Community College on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. Presentation proposals are being accepted until December 1, 2009. Web site <http://www.hawaiitesol.org>

**CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching.** February 27-28, 2010. The 6th annual CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching will be held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The conference theme is "One World: World Englishes." The conference brings together classroom teachers of English, future teachers of English, administrators of English language schools and universities, educators with an interest in international language education, donors interested in supporting English specifically and international education generally, ELT-related individuals and institutions (e.g., book publishers, book shop representatives, Ministry of Education representatives, NGO representatives), foreign experts or researchers on Cambodia who wish to network within the ELT community in Cambodia, and interested Cambodian residents. Web site <http://www.camtesol.org>

**44th Annual TESOL Convention. March 24-27, 2010.** Come "Re-Imagine" TESOL, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.. The convention will kick off at 5:30 pm with the opening plenary featuring Howard Gardner. Web site: <http://www.tesol.org>



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# **Lebanese EFL Teachers' Beliefs about Language Learning**

**Rula L. Diab**

Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon

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Although it seems intuitive that learners come to language classes with certain beliefs about language learning, researchers have only recently attempted to identify and examine such beliefs in a systematic manner. Horwitz (1987) defines beliefs about language learning as preconceptions about the nature of the language learning task, and based on her surveys of both English as a Second Language (ESL) students' beliefs and Foreign Language (FL) students' beliefs, Horwitz (1987, 1988) argues that learners' beliefs about language learning may influence the way they use learning strategies and approach the whole language learning process; therefore, exploring such beliefs can guide us to better meet these students' needs, expectations, and goals.

Just as importantly, language teachers themselves may hold certain beliefs about language learning that will have an impact on their instructional practices and that are likely to influence their students' beliefs about language learning (Harrington & Hertel, 2000; Horwitz, 1985; Peacock, 2001; Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Yang, 2000). Indeed, language teachers, particularly those with little experience, may hold misconceptions or unrealistic beliefs about language learning that may be transmitted to their students, either explicitly or implicitly through their instructional practices.

According to Horwitz (1985), addressing the beliefs of prospective FL teachers should be "the first step in their development as foreign language teachers" (p.333). In order to help teacher education methods instructors accomplish this goal, she describes two instruments, the Foreign Language Attitude Scale (FLAS) and the teacher version of the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), which elicits beliefs about second/foreign language learning in four major areas: foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, and appropriate language learning strategies. Horwitz presents responses to the BALLI from prospective FL teachers enrolled in her methods class and concludes that prospective teachers enter the methods class with many preconceived ideas about language learning and teaching, some of which may be unrealistic ones that can interfere with their understanding of and receptivity to the information and techniques presented in class. Therefore, she suggests that a systematic assessment of such beliefs would increase learning and satisfaction in the foreign language methods class.

Before reviewing the literature on teachers' beliefs about language learning, it is important to briefly mention what the research suggests concerning the validity or truthfulness of some beliefs about language learning. Unrealistic beliefs may include over-optimistic expectations about the time required to become proficient in a second language, certain notions about the importance of accuracy and having a "nativelike" accent when speaking a foreign language, and various beliefs about the role of individual differences in second language acquisition such as age and the use of language learning strategies.

Many FL learners and even some FL teachers may hold unrealistic views about the time required to become proficient in a foreign language. In the BALLI, Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988) includes an item asking respondents to choose how long it would take learners to become fluent in a language if they spend an hour a day learning it. Among the choices are less than a year, 1-2 years, 3-5 years, and 5-10 years. According to Horwitz, even though various factors are interrelated and play a role in a learner's acquisition of a foreign language, it is generally unrealistic to expect fluency in a foreign language in two or even three years under the conditions described. Thus, learners or teachers who have unrealistic expectations regarding the time required to become proficient in a foreign language may face frustrations when the language development does not meet their expectations.

Regarding the role of age in second language acquisition, it is commonly accepted that children are better language learners than adults and that the younger learners are, the easier it will be for them to acquire a foreign language. Research evidence, on the other hand, is not so conclusive. In their comprehensive book on the topic, *Language Acquisition: The Age Factor*, Singleton and Ryan (2004) conclude that the available evidence does provide some support for the hypothesis that learners who begin learning a language during childhood become more proficient in the long run than those who begin later in life; however, the available research evidence does not support the claim that younger learners are generally more efficient or successful than older learners. Thus, the popular belief that children are more successful language learners than adults is an unrealistic one that may discourage many adult language learners.

Moreover, most FL teachers have certain beliefs about the importance of having a "nativelike accent" when speaking a foreign language. According to Tarone (2005), "the goal of 'nativelike accent' has always been problematic, and is increasingly being questioned by researchers and educators alike" (p. 494). When considering a global language such as English, the issue of *which* native speaker accent to use as a target is also important to consider (Cook, 2001). Jenkins (2000) focuses on the uses of English as an international language and on intelligibility among non-native speakers of English who do not share the same native language. Based on her research, she argues that in teaching pronunciation it may be more realistic to aim for mutual intelligibility rather than a native speaker model.

Finally, many FL learners and most FL teachers hold various beliefs about the importance of accuracy as opposed to communicative fluency and about the relative effectiveness of various language learning strategies. For instance, the notion that if learners are allowed to make mistakes it will be difficult to get rid of them later on and that learners should not say anything in the target language until they can say it “correctly” may inhibit the learner from taking necessary risks or making guesses. Byrd (2005) points out that based on the needs of each learner, the goals for accuracy and communicative fluency may be different. For example, a tourist obviously has different aims in using a foreign language than a student whose goal is to pass a foreign language exam. Nevertheless, researchers and educators today generally agree that an emphasis on communicative fluency is crucial; however, maintaining the balance between developing such fluency while minimizing learners’ errors and maximizing accuracy at the same time may be challenging (Byrd, 2005). Attempts to do so include focus on form(s), implicit and explicit grammar teaching, and using recasting, among other teaching techniques. The interested reader may refer to Cook (2001) and Byrd (2005) for a thorough discussion of these pedagogical issues, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

### **Teachers’ Beliefs About Language Learning**

Despite the importance of research investigating language teachers’ beliefs about language learning, which might have implications for the design and content of second language teacher education programs worldwide (Peacock, 2001), relatively few studies have followed-up on Horwitz’s (1985) groundbreaking survey of prospective FL teachers’ beliefs about language learning (Allen, 2002); indeed, according to Peacock (2001), there is a “shortage of research” in this area (p. 178). One study that attempted to further the work initiated by Horwitz is Yang’s (2000) survey of the beliefs about language learning of 68 prospective EFL primary school teachers in Taiwan. Based on the results, Yang concluded that teacher education programs should pay attention to any erroneous or unrealistic beliefs prospective teachers may hold and confront such beliefs with new information.

Fox (1993) also examined the beliefs about language learning of 147 FL teaching assistants and concluded that trainers should require teaching assistants to explore their beliefs. Along the same lines, Johnson (1994) examined prospective ESL teachers’ beliefs by analyzing narrative statements made about their beliefs and by exploring their perceptions of their instructional practices during the practicum teaching experience. Based on the findings, Johnson concluded that teacher education courses must create opportunities for prospective teachers to explore their beliefs about language learning and teaching.

In addition, Harrington and Hertel (2000) administered the FLAS and BALLI to 20 prospective FL teachers at the beginning and the end of two foreign language teacher education methods courses. Results revealed that many of the beliefs remained consistent throughout the courses while some beliefs changed significantly, perhaps

largely due to the ideas presented and discussed in the methods course, according to the researchers. Based on the survey data as well as qualitative data from student belief statements, the authors recommend that language teacher educators provide an opportunity for prospective teachers to examine their implicit beliefs about language learning. On the other hand, Peacock (2001) also investigated changes in 146 prospective ESL teachers' beliefs about language learning by tracking developmental changes over a period of three years, but discouragingly, no significant changes were found. Based on the results of this study, Peacock also concluded that considerable efforts should be made to eliminate any unrealistic beliefs prospective teachers may hold before they start teaching.

### **The Present Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs about language learning of EFL university teachers and prospective EFL teachers in Lebanon. More specifically, the study aimed at addressing the following research questions:

1. What are the beliefs of EFL university teachers and prospective EFL teachers in Lebanon about foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, and the effectiveness of various learning strategies?
2. What other major belief areas are held by EFL university teachers and prospective EFL teachers in Lebanon?

### **Procedure**

#### **Participants**

The 31 participants in this study were teachers of English courses ( $n = 12$ ) and prospective EFL teachers enrolled in the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) Teaching Diploma program at an American private institution of higher learning in Lebanon ( $n = 19$ ). The demographic background of the instructors and prospective teachers are summarized in Tables 1 and 2, respectively.

#### **Instrument and Data Collection**

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. First was a 9-item background questionnaire designed by the researcher in order to obtain background information about the teachers. And second was a 28-item questionnaire (see Appendix), which was an adapted version of the BALLI (Horwitz, 1985). Data was obtained by distributing the questionnaire to 30 English teachers, 12 of whom returned completed questionnaires, and administering it to the 19 prospective EFL teachers. In addition, teachers from both groups were also invited to participate in semi-structured interviews, and two teachers from each group volunteered to participate. The interviews lasted from approximately 50 to 75 minutes.

Table 1

*Teachers of English Courses (n = 12)*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male 0%</b>	<b>Female 100%</b>		
<b>Age</b>	20-29 25%	30-39 17%	40-49 33%	50+ 25%
<b>Teaching Experience</b>	No prior exp. 0%	1-4 yrs. teaching EFL 17%	5-10 yrs teaching EFL 17%	11+ yrs. teaching EFL 67%
<b>Educational Background</b>	B.A. in English language and Teaching Diploma in TEFL 0%	M.A. in English language, literature, or in TEFL 42%	M.A. and Teaching Diploma in TEFL 58%	

Table 2

*Prospective EFL Teachers (n = 19)*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male 0%</b>	<b>Female 100%</b>		
<b>Age</b>	20-29 84%	30-39 11%	40-49 5%	50+ 0%
<b>Teaching Experience</b>	No prior experience 32%	1-4 yrs. teaching EFL 53%	5-10 yrs. teaching EFL 16%	11+ yrs. teaching EFL 0%
<b>Educational Background</b>	B.A. English language and Teaching Diploma in TEFL 100%	M.A. in English language, literature, or TEFL 0%	M.A. and Teaching Diploma in TEFL 0%	

## Data Analysis

After summarizing and tabulating the information obtained from the background questionnaire, descriptive statistics (percentages, means, and standard deviations) were computed for the BALLI items. The teachers' responses to the two free response items were also categorized and summarized. In addition, the interview data supplemented the responses obtained from the BALLI in an effort to triangulate the study. Interview transcripts were analyzed qualitatively by developing coding strategies and trying to identify concepts and categories in the data. After preliminary coding categories were established, the transcripts were examined further in order to identify more categories or subcategories. Finally, a set of codes was established and the data were scrutinized and labeled accordingly.

## Results and Discussion

### Descriptive Analyses of the BALLI

In order to allow for a comparison of answers among logically related groups of items, the frequencies of responses, means, and standard deviations are presented according to the four major belief areas outlined by Horwitz (1985): (1) foreign language aptitude, (2) the difficulty of language learning, (3) the nature of language learning, and (4) language learning strategies.

#### *Foreign Language Aptitude*

Consistent with a belief about language learning popular in many countries, the overwhelming majority of the teachers surveyed (97%) either agreed or strongly agreed that it is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language, as shown in Table 3. Since in the Lebanese context, the first foreign language learned, typically either English or French, is first taught to students around age six, these Lebanese teachers seem to believe that this language policy adopted by most Lebanese private schools is an effective one. Moreover, many of the teachers also agreed with the statements that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language (87%) and that Lebanese people are good at learning foreign languages (68%). However, about half (55%) of the teachers agreed and only 19% disagreed that some people have a special ability for learning a foreign language, a belief that can obviously influence teachers' expectations of student success in language learning. As will be seen in the section discussing the influence of teaching experience on teachers' beliefs, more experienced teachers were more likely to hold this belief than novice teachers.

Moreover, only 13% of the teachers agreed with the statement that people who speak more than one language are very intelligent, while 52% were neutral, as shown in Table 3. In addition, most of the teachers (72%) disagreed with the statement that people who are good at math or science are not good at learning foreign languages. Finally, concerning beliefs about the relative aptitude of males and females in language learning, 55% of the teachers disagreed while only 13% agreed with the statement that females are better language learners than males.

Table 3

*Responses to Questions about Foreign Language Aptitude*

ITEMS	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5* SA	M	SD
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	0	3	0	36	61**	4.55	0.68
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.	0	19	26	42	13	3.48	0.96
16. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	16	39	32	13	0	2.42	0.92
22. People who are good at math or science are not good at learning foreign languages.	23	49	23	7	0	2.13	0.85
24. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.	10	26	52	10	3	2.71	0.90
25. Lebanese people are good at learning foreign languages.	0	0	32	55	13	3.81	0.65
26. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.	0	0	13	58	29	4.16	0.64

*Notes:*

\* 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. Numbers in table are percentages for each response.

\*\* Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, and thus may not add up to 100.

*The Difficulty of Language Learning*

Most teachers (84%) either agreed or strongly agreed that some languages are easier to learn than others, and half of them rated English as an easy or very easy language while the other half rated it as a language of medium difficulty, as shown in Table 4. Interestingly, none of the teachers surveyed seem to believe that English is a difficult language. Moreover, most of the teachers (61%) agreed and few (7%) disagreed with the statement that it is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one. Since in the Lebanese context the majority of students study two foreign languages, namely English and French, this finding suggests that these teachers believe learning English or French as a foreign language facilitates learning the second foreign language later on.

In order to discuss these findings more effectively, a comparison will be made to a study investigating Lebanese students' beliefs about learning English and French. In a survey of 284 Lebanese EFL students, Diab (2006) also found that the overwhelming majority (96%) of the students surveyed believe in the concept of a language learning difficulty hierarchy. Moreover, 66% of the students rated English as an easy or very easy language, while only 1% of the students surveyed rated it as a difficult language. According to Diab, since almost all of these students have studied at least two foreign languages, mainly English and French, this finding indicates that these students hold strong beliefs about the relative difficulty of learning these two foreign languages. Eighty-one percent of the students in Diab's study agreed that it is easier to learn French before learning English, a belief consistent with the popular view in Lebanon that learning the "difficult" language of French at an early age and later learning the "easy" language of English is likely to guarantee proficiency in both French and English. Thus, it is also likely that the Lebanese teachers in the present study believe that learning French before English is "easier" or "better"; consequently, these teachers would have different expectations for students coming from an English-medium versus a French-medium background. Indeed, as revealed in the responses to the open-ended items, one teacher pointed out that French-educated students perform differently than their English-educated counterparts; more specifically, they outperform them in the English class. In the interview, this teacher commented that "it's annoying that most French-educated students do better in communication skills courses than English-educated students."

Finally, the majority of the teachers surveyed (80%) disagreed that it is easier to develop speaking skills than listening comprehension, as shown in Table 4; consistently, 68% agreed while only 13% disagreed that it is easier to read and understand a language than to speak and write it.



Table 4

*Responses to Questions about the Difficulty of Language Learning*

ITEMS	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5* SA	M	SD
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	0	0	16	45	39**	4.23	0.72
4. English is: 1) a very difficult language, 2) a difficult language, 3) a language of medium difficulty, 4) an easy language, 5) a very easy language.	0	0	50	37	13	3.63	0.72
8. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	0	7	32	58	3	3.58	0.67
11. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? 1) less than a year, 2) 1-2 years, 3) 3-5 years, 4) 5-10 years, 5) You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day.	3	23	37	10	27	3.33	1.21
17. It is easier to speak than understand a language.	32	48	10	7	3	2.00	1.00
21. It is easier to read and understand a language than to speak and write it.	0	13	19	55	13	3.68	0.87

*Notes:*

\* Unless otherwise stated in the item, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. Numbers in table are percentages for each response.

\*\* Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, and thus may not add up to 100.

In response to the question, “If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language very well?”, teachers’ responses ranged from less than a year (3%) to the assertion that one can not learn a language in one hour a day (27%). Discouragingly, 23% of these teachers believe that it would take one to two years to become proficient in a language under the conditions described and 37% believe it would take three to five years. Thus, some of these teachers seem to underestimate the time required in learning a foreign language, implying that they might expect students to become proficient in a foreign language in an unreasonably short period of time. Taken together with the finding that half of these teachers believe that English is an easy or very easy language and none of them rated it as a difficult language, these results suggest that some of these teachers may have unrealistic expectations concerning students’ development and attainment of proficiency in their English classes.

### *The Nature of Language Learning*

The teachers surveyed are employed in a private institution and had themselves probably attended private English- and French-medium schools in Lebanon, which are known to provide strong foreign language programs and generally use communication-based approaches to language teaching. Therefore, it was not surprising that they revealed encouraging views of the nature of language learning. For example, as shown in Table 5, most of them disagreed that learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning vocabulary words (75%), grammar rules (68%), or translating from Arabic (97%). Moreover, 61% agreed and only 13% disagreed that learning a foreign language is different from learning other academic subjects. Finally, about half of the teachers surveyed believe it is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak a foreign language, while 23% were neutral, and 29% disagreed with this statement.

It is also worth mentioning that three (out of eight) teachers who responded to the open-response items emphasized the importance of exposure to the language and interaction with others in foreign language learning: “It is all about exposure and immersion. If learners have to speak (or read or write or listen to) the language and if they are exposed to it in its different forms they will learn it.” One teacher also stressed that it is necessary for students to know about the foreign culture: “It’s not enough to learn a foreign language. One has to keep oneself up-to-date with the foreign culture that is changing and emerging so quickly these days. It’s cultural literacy that one has to enhance and encourage.”

Since teachers who believe that vocabulary words, grammar, and translation are very important parts of language learning are likely to devote much of their teaching time to vocabulary lists, grammar rules, and translation, it is encouraging that most of these teachers did not express such limited views of the nature of language learning, suggesting that they would endorse language learning strategies that are commonly associated with communication-based approaches to language learning.

Table 5

*Response to Questions about the Nature of Language Learning*

ITEMS	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5* SA	M	SD
6. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak a foreign language.	0	29	23	39	10**	3.29	1.01
12. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.	10	65	10	16	0	2.32	0.87
15. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.	10	58	16	16	0	2.39	0.88
18. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.	0	13	26	58	3	3.52	0.77
19. Learning English is a matter of translating from Arabic.	52	45	3	0	0	1.52	0.57

*Notes:*

\* 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. Numbers in table are percentages for each response.

\*\* Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, and thus may not add up to 100.

*Language Learning Strategies*

As revealed in Table 6, the teachers surveyed generally minimized the importance of accuracy and emphasized communicative fluency instead. For example, 93% of the teachers disagreed that students should not say anything in the target language until they can say it correctly, 84% agreed that it is ok for students to guess if they do not know a word in the foreign language, and 64% disagreed that if students are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning it will be difficult to get rid of them later on. Most of these teachers (77%) also believe that it is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.

Table 6

*Responses to Questions about Language Learning Strategies*

ITEMS	1 SD	2 D	3 N	4 A	5* SA	M	SD
5. It's important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent.	3	29	32	32	3**	3.03	0.95
7. You shouldn't say anything in the language until you can say it correctly.	32	61	3	0	3	1.81	0.79
9. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.	0	10	13	48	29	3.97	0.91
10. It's o.k. for students to guess if they don't know a word in the foreign language.	0	3	13	61	23	4.03	0.71
13. It's important that students repeat and practice a lot.	3	0	0	45	52	4.42	0.81
14. If students are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning it will be difficult to get rid of them later on.	16	48	13	19	3	2.45	1.09

*Notes:*

\* 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. Numbers in table are percentages for each response.

\*\* Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, and thus may not add up to 100.

Nevertheless, as shown in Table 6, the teachers overwhelmingly (97%) agreed that it's important that students repeat and practice a lot, and they were fairly divided in their opinion regarding the importance of speaking a foreign language "with an excellent accent," suggesting that some of them seem to place great value on pronunciation. Finally, it is important to mention that three (out of eight) teachers who responded to the open-response items emphasized the importance of reading as an essential strategy or skill that we need to foster in students: "Reading is one of the best ways to learn, the earlier one starts the better – a language grows on you!" Interestingly, one teacher highlighted the importance of reading in one's native language in foreign language learning: "I believe that cultivating the habit of reading in one's own native language will facilitate embracing the 'other culture' and therefore learning its language. I therefore encourage learners of English to expose themselves to different kinds of readings in their native and non-native languages." This particular insight falls in line with research evidence emphasizing the importance of native language literacy in predicting and even promoting proficiency in a second language (Dornyei, 2006).

### **Analyses of the Interview Data**

The five major categories or belief areas developed from the qualitative analyses of the interview data were: (1) the importance of learner variables in language learning, (2) the difficulty of language learning, (3) the influence of environmental factors in language learning, (4) the importance of accuracy in language learning, and (5) characteristics of successful language learners and teachers.

#### *Importance of Learner Variables in Language Learning*

The teachers who participated in the interviews seemed to agree that motivation is an important variable influencing language learning while gender and intelligence are unimportant ones. However, as shown in the following excerpts from the interviews, the teachers were divided in their opinions on the importance of age, aptitude, and personality.

- *Age, no [it doesn't play a role in language learning]!*
- *I have to agree that the earlier one starts the better but I have no explanation.*
- *Not aptitude, because it's like saying we should give up on the ones who don't have it.*
- *Aptitude, yes [plays a role]! I think that some people are endowed with this flair for learning languages, but it's not a big factor.*
- *It [Personality] can [play a major role in language learning], confidence plays a major role...*
- *[Personality may play a role], definitely more than gender; but not a very important factor.*

Moreover, interestingly, one practicing teacher pointed out that knowing about one's own native language helps in learning a foreign language while one prospective teacher stated that one's native language may hinder foreign language learning, more specifically may prevent the learner from attaining the right "accent."

- *If you know a lot about your native language, syntax, diction, this helps in learning the new language, even when the two languages are not similar, like English and Arabic.*
- *Arabic can hinder learning the right accent in English. I've often heard students say "I can never have the right accent because I'm a native speaker of Arabic."*

### *Difficulty of Language Learning*

As shown in the following excerpts from the interviews, the teachers who participated in the interviews were not in agreement regarding either the existence of a language learning difficulty hierarchy or, in contrast to the survey data, whether English is an "easy" or "difficult" language. Interestingly, the prospective teachers believed that that some languages are more difficult than others while the practicing teachers refused this belief. One teacher also pointed out that the difficulty of a foreign language depends on what languages the learner already knows.

- *Yes [some languages are more difficult than others]! I cannot learn French, because of the verbs, how to conjugate... English is not that hard.*
- *No, not really [some languages are not more difficult than others]... different, but not more difficult.*
- *English, which is considered one of the easiest languages, is very difficult. There's a non-existing threshold for English: it undergoes so many cultural and idiomatic changes, the threshold is always beyond reach. I sometimes discuss this with my [English] 100 students, how the language is always changing.*
- *Not in the absolute [we cannot generalize that some languages are more difficult than others], because they're all acquired as native languages by children, but for a given individual, of course there are easier languages to learn, for example Spanish will be easy for me, [because] French in this community is used a lot.*

### *Influence of Environmental Factors in Language Learning*

As shown in the following excerpts from the interviews, the teachers unanimously believed that language input and exposure is essential for foreign language learning, and one practicing teacher emphasized the importance of reading, in either the native or the target language, as an essential strategy for improving the latter.

- *[Language input] is important, the more they've exposed to the language, the better. NOT necessarily in an immersion program!*

- *Reading is most effective... reading literature, reading comics, anything...*
- *Having books at home, in either the native language or target language, and cultivating a habit of reading and discussing mature things from personal experience not from teaching... [can help language learning]*

Moreover, the teachers emphasized that practice, particularly oral communication outside the classroom, is essential in language learning:

- *Oral communication, practice with peers, friends [is very important for language learning]...*
- *[Practice is] important, if they talk to people in English themselves, it would be very beneficial.*
- *[Practice is] very important ... communication, everyday, watching movies, listening to English songs... Beyond class, they should integrate it with their lifestyle...*

Finally, as shown in the following excerpts, the teachers also discussed the role of error correction in language learning. One prospective teacher believed that error correction is inappropriate outside the classroom, and the practicing teachers stated that it could be either positive or negative inside the classroom, depending on the classroom activity and the purpose of the utterance. One prospective teacher also pointed out that students generally prefer and expect that corrections come only from the teacher, an important observation since it implies that these teachers are not likely to use peer correction for fear that their students may have negative attitudes towards receiving feedback from peers.

- *It [error correction] can be helpful in the classroom, outside the classroom a person may be offended...others may put you down and that may influence your learning negatively.*
- *It should be up for the teacher to decide whether it's positive or negative to correct; if it's negative for emotional reasons, you can wait until later. Every time there is assessment of the situation...*
- *Some of it [error correction] is inevitable and it's related to the purpose. If they're brainstorming, I don't care about errors then. If we're having a class discussion, I don't care about their pronunciation, because I'm interested in WHAT they're saying. In presentations, 3-4 minutes, we comment on delivery and the language. I think it's important then, to show what they're doing wrong. In written work, I keep the errors until the end. If the error interferes with meaning, I correct it. If it's a high frequency mistake, I correct it, for example, "informations," many times I correct it.*
- *And many times I try to involve the whole group, so the correction doesn't come only from the teacher, but often they want it ONLY from the teacher. Again, I think it's cultural in terms of school culture and maybe home culture, authority figure...*

### *Importance of Accuracy in Language Learning*

Data from the interviews also revealed that the teachers, particularly the instructors, hold realistic and encouraging beliefs about the importance of having “an authentic accent” and the emphasis on communicative fluency as opposed to accuracy. The prospective teachers who participated in the interviews, however, believed that “accent” is not important “at the beginner level” and may therefore expect students at higher levels to attain an “authentic” accent.

- *At the beginner level it [accent]’s not so important. You have to make mistakes to learn from them. [Students say] “I want an authentic accent,” but content is more important than accuracy.*
- *[Accent is] not as important as fluency, getting your message across, less or more important in certain situations. For example in social or academic settings it’s more important than ordering a hamburger! It becomes accuracy for image, not just for grammatical accuracy.*
- *I think it [the importance of “accent”] is a matter of how you see yourself, related to your identity and how others see you. Do you want to be a native speaker of English or not? It also depends on how you’re going to use the language. In a professional business context, as a tourist...If I want to act, I need voice training, accent training. From the perspective of students and the community, that’s the first thing they see, the easiest aspect to detect, but again, which accent? I think there’s more tolerance now for different accents.*

### *Characteristics of Successful Language Learners and Teachers*

The final category that emerged from the qualitative analyses is the teachers’ beliefs about the characteristics of successful language learners and teachers. Regarding learners, the teachers emphasized that motivation, flexibility, risk-taking, exposure to the target language—culture and literature in particular—and hard work and practice are all essential ingredients in making a learner successful. As for successful language teachers, the prospective teachers stated that they should be patient and fair, general characteristics that could apply to teachers of any subject. The practicing teachers pointed out several interesting characteristics they believe a good language teacher should possess:

- *[A good language teacher should be] sensitive to students’ needs, not to have any fixation in any language learning strategy, be flexible... Be up to date in linguistic requirements, exposure to the language, how language is changing as a living creature... Be knowledgeable!*
- *[A good language teacher] should love languages. Open-mindedness! I believe that mistakes of students are very educational for the teacher; they could open the teachers’ eyes as to what to do differently. Creativity, some imagination, and definitely always hard work!*



## Limitations

Before drawing conclusions based on the findings of this study, a number of limitations should be mentioned. First, findings based on this sample of Lebanese prospective and university EFL teachers obviously cannot be generalized to all EFL teachers, and the response rate of the practicing teachers (12 out of 30) may not be sufficient to make generalizations. Secondly, the general shortcomings of self-report measures should be mentioned, mainly the ability and willingness of participants to respond accurately and conscientiously to questionnaire items and interview questions. Finally, it is important to point out that the four interviewed teachers were self-selected; nevertheless, based on their background variables, they seem to be typical members of each group. More specifically, the two practicing teachers both had more than 11 years of experience teaching EFL, one was in her forties and the second older than 50, and one had an M.A. degree in English language and the second an M.A. degree in literature along with a teaching diploma in TEFL. As for the prospective teachers, both were in their twenties, one had no prior experience teaching EFL, and the second had two years experience. As shown in Tables 1 and 2, these background variables make the four teachers fairly good representatives of each group.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the beliefs about language learning of EFL university teachers and prospective EFL teachers in Lebanon. Keeping in mind the above mentioned limitations of the study, three main conclusions can be drawn based on the findings. First, the Lebanese teachers in this study hold a variety of beliefs about language learning, some of which may be conducive to the language learning and teaching situation, such as the teachers' beliefs about the nature of language learning, while others may constitute an impediment to successful language learning and teaching, such as some of their beliefs about the difficulty of learning a foreign language. In addition to the descriptive analyses based on the teachers' responses to the BALLI, qualitative analyses of the interview data revealed five major belief areas. Thus, the findings of this study support the general contention that language teachers may hold certain beliefs about language learning that may have an impact on their instructional practices (Harrington & Hertel, 2000; Horwitz, 1985; Peacock, 2001; Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Yang, 2000).

Therefore, language teachers should make an effort to become aware of their beliefs about language learning and of the influence such beliefs may have on language learning and teaching situations. Activities such as completing the teacher version of the BALLI followed by holding informal discussions concerning various beliefs about the nature of language learning and what constitutes successful language learning and teaching may provide a valuable opportunity for EFL teachers, particularly those with less teaching

experience, to become aware of different opinions. For instance, some teachers in this study seemed to underestimate the time required to become proficient in a foreign language, and one prospective teacher stated during the interview that students prefer and expect that corrections come only from the teacher. Therefore, future teacher education workshop sessions for the particular teachers in this context should address these particular beliefs. If teachers' responses are discussed openly, those holding unrealistic beliefs or expectations concerning students' learning and preferences will realize that some beliefs they have taken for granted may not be held by other teachers.

Similarly, in line with previous research investigating teachers' beliefs about language learning (Fox, 1993; Harrington & Hertel, 2000; Horwitz, 1985; Johnson, 1994; Peacock, 2001; Yang, 2000), the findings of this study suggest that teacher education programs encourage prospective teachers to explore their beliefs, pay attention to any unrealistic beliefs or misconceptions prospective teachers may hold, and confront such beliefs with new information and knowledge. The interview data in this study revealed that prospective teachers believed that advanced language learners should have an "authentic" accent; such an unrealistic belief can be easily addressed if language teacher education programs and language teacher-training workshops include a session addressing prospective teachers' beliefs. TEFL methods class instructors can also use instruments such as the BALLI, preferably at the beginning of the semester, as a teaching instrument and a discussion tool in order to systematically assess prospective teachers' beliefs about language learning. Ideally, methods instructors can use the information obtained about the prospective teachers' beliefs to modify the course content and presentation most effectively for that particular group, focusing on any particular unrealistic beliefs teachers may hold and confronting such beliefs with new information.

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### About the Author

*Rula Diab is Assistant Professor of English at the Lebanese American University. She is interested in language learners' beliefs, preferences, and attitudes, particularly regarding second language writing. Her research has appeared in System, TESL Reporter, TESL Canada Journal, TESL-EJ, and the English Teaching Forum.*

## Appendix

### Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory-Teacher Version (Adapted from Horwitz, 1985)

**Part II.** Below are beliefs that some people have about learning foreign languages. Read each statement and then decide if you: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree. Questions 4 and 11 are slightly different and you should mark them as indicated. There are no right or wrong answers. We are simply interested in your opinions.

REMEMBER:

- |                    |                       |                                |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| (1) strongly agree | (2) agree             | (3) neither agree nor disagree |
| (4) disagree       | (5) strongly disagree |                                |

1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.  
1    2    3    4    5
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them learn a foreign language.  
1    2    3    4    5
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.  
1    2    3    4    5
4. English is:
  - a) a very difficult language
  - b) a difficult language
  - c) a language of medium difficulty
  - d) an easy language
  - e) a very easy language
5. It's important to speak a foreign language with an excellent accent.  
1    2    3    4    5
6. It is necessary to know the foreign culture in order to speak a foreign language.  
1    2    3    4    5
7. You shouldn't say anything in the language until you can say it correctly.  
1    2    3    4    5

8. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.  
1 2 3 4 5
9. It is better to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.  
1 2 3 4 5
10. It's ok for students to guess if they don't know a word in the foreign language.  
1 2 3 4 5
11. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent?
- a) less than a year
  - b) 1-2 years
  - c) 3-5 years
  - d) 5-10 years
  - e) You can't learn a language in one hour a day.
12. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words.  
1 2 3 4 5
13. It's important that students repeat and practice a lot.  
1 2 3 4 5
14. If students are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning it will be difficult to get rid of them later on.  
1 2 3 4 5
15. Learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules.  
1 2 3 4 5
16. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.  
1 2 3 4 5
17. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.  
1 2 3 4 5
18. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other school subjects.  
1 2 3 4 5
19. Learning English is a matter of translating from Arabic.  
1 2 3 4 5
20. If students learn to speak English very well, it will help them get a good job.  
1 2 3 4 5

21. It is easier to read and understand a language than to speak and write it.  
1 2 3 4 5
22. People who are good at math and science are not good at learning foreign languages.  
1 2 3 4 5
23. Lebanese people think that it is important to speak a foreign language.  
1 2 3 4 5
24. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.  
1 2 3 4 5
25. Lebanese people are good at learning foreign languages.  
1 2 3 4 5
26. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language.  
1 2 3 4 5
27. Do you have any other opinions regarding foreign language learning and teaching?
28. Do you have any other opinions regarding learning and teaching English as a foreign language?

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# Chinese Students' Perceptions of the Practice of Peer Review in an Integrated Class at the University Level

**Lan Wang**

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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In the past few decades, teaching writing has witnessed a great change from product-driven to process-driven approaches (Elbow, 1973; Paulus, 1999; Raimes, 1993; Zhang, 1995). The traditional practice in which only a teacher provides feedback on students' writing has shifted to include students' comments during the stages of draft revision (Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Nelson & Carson, 1998; Paulus, 1999). Thus, asking students to work in pairs or with a small group of class peers to review and provide comments on one another's writing, also known as peer feedback, has been used widely in writing class. Peer review has become a popular pedagogical technique, particularly in English second language (ESL) writing classrooms. Numerous studies have discussed this writing practice, including its pros and cons from different perspectives (Guénette, 2007; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992; McGroarty & Zhu, 1997; Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Rollinson, 2005; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996). The overall opinion toward the peer review activity seems positive because of its advantages and effectiveness compared with teacher- and self-feedback.

However, in recent years, it is common to see that native English-speaking students and international students, particularly graduate level students, take the same courses and sit in the same mainstream classrooms. In addition to writing courses, professors of other courses also apply peer review practices when giving their students written assignments. Thus, peer review activity has been employed in mixed classes. Unfortunately, few studies have discussed whether this writing practice is equally effective in an integrated group with both native and nonnative English speaking students.

It is urgent for professionals and researchers to investigate this writing practice in an integrated class and to find out whether in such a class the problems that have been addressed in homogenous classes remain. It is also necessary to anticipate whether this practice can produce some new problems or raise some new concerns. Therefore, this study attempts to examine the plausibility of peer review in an integrated class and share the findings with teachers and researchers who are interested in this research issue.

## Literature Review

Quite a number of studies have found that peer review in L2 writing classes is useful because it encourages students to implement peers' comments in revision and results in overall improvements in writing quality (Berg, 1999; Mendonça & Johnson, 1994; Rollinson, 2005; Yang, Badgar, & Yu, 2006; Zamel, 1985). For example, in the study by Nelson and Murphy (1993), they examined the influences of peer feedback in ESL students' revision and found that 50% of the students made significant changes in their content after revision. Mendonça and Johnson (1994) also investigated the influence of peer feedback on ESL writing and they reported that about 53% of revisions made in students' drafts resulted from peer feedback.

In order to explore whether less mature English as a foreign language (EFL) writers benefited from peer feedback, Tsui and Ng (2000) examined 27 secondary school students in Hong Kong. The results of the survey and interviews indicated that the learners incorporated high percentages (78%) of their peers' comments into revision. These studies prove that peer review plays an important role in writing. Moreover, the research also suggested that peer feedback helped contribute to the development of learner autonomy.

In addition, studies also indicate that student writers improve and gain writing skills from their peers. In the meantime, student writers build critical, rhetorical, and linguistic awareness by reading peers' written texts (Arndt, 1993; Berg, 1999; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Lockhart & Ng, 1995). Lockhart and Ng (1995) found that peer review could enable students to gain an awareness of audience and improve their own writing skills. Berg (1999) also noted that peer feedback offered chance for critical reasoning. In other words, reading peers' written texts, to some extent, helps student writers to learn writing skills from each other; it enables them to compare their own writing with peers' so that they can avoid making similar mistakes.

Furthermore, some studies have explored the aspects in which peer review was helpful. Carson and Nelson's (1996) case study of a group of Chinese students indicated that the students were reluctant to initiate comments on their peers' essays because Chinese culture valued harmony in a group. In this sense, Chinese students apparently tried to avoid providing direct criticism or negative feedback and carefully monitored their comments in order to prevent the embarrassment of their peers. Likewise, in their study, Villamil and Guerrero (1996) also pointed out that due to different cultural norms, some students might be reluctant to provide direct negative feedback. Rather, they prefer to offer mitigated or positive comments for their peers.

In their follow-up microethnographic study, Nelson and Carson (1998) examined the same subjects in order to investigate their expectations from their peers. The researchers found that in addition to teacher's comments, the students valued peer feedback, particularly the negative comments, which could help them identify their problems. The



researchers also noted that these ESL students viewed grammar and sentence-level comments to be ineffective. Obviously, the results of their studies indicate that students think the feedback in regards to identifying each other's problems is helpful. However, they do not perceive error correction on the sentence-level to be that important.

On the other hand, Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger (1992) studied how ESL students actually responded to each others' papers and noticed that most of the ESL students overweighed grammar correction. Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger's study shows that ESL students think that providing grammar correction is a main task of peer review. It seems that Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger's findings differ from Nelson and Carson's (1996) results. Yet, Paulus (1999) argued that "the inexperienced writers tended to make surface level changes, while experienced writers could make meaningful-level revisions to improve the essay quality" (p. 265). Paulus's explanation helps us, to some extent, to understand the inconsistent results between Nelson and Carson's (1992) study and Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger's study (1992).

Although the above discussed studies indicate that peer review benefits L2 writing, some researchers doubt the effectiveness of peer feedback compared to teacher feedback, especially its influence in L2 writing classes (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Linden-Martin, 1997; Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Yang, Bager, & Yu, 2006). For example, Zhang (1995, 1999) claimed that L2 learners mistrusted their peers' feedback in terms of language proficiency and concluded that peer feedback is not effective for nonnative speakers and students would overwhelmingly prefer teacher feedback to peer feedback. According to Saito and Fujita (2004), students may not be capable of rating peers' writing due to their own ineffective linguistic competence. Some studies (e.g., Sengupta, 1998) even found that because the traditional role of a teacher has been deeply rooted in students' minds, students do not trust peers' comments and think peer review is "a waste of time" (p. 22).

In responding to these claims, Jacobs, Curtis, Brain, and Huang (1998) argued that although teacher feedback was important, peer feedback was significant too because of its unique scaffolding function. In their study, Jacobs and his colleagues elaborated that even though the students thought teacher feedback was important, 93% of the participants held that peer feedback was helpful in the revision process; the students wanted to receive feedback from peers. Thus, the researchers proposed a "middle path," which was to combine teacher, self, and peer feedback together in the process of writing. Likewise, from a different angle, Saito and Fujita (2004) in their study found that in a Japanese university, an EFL setting, teachers and peers rated students' writing in similar ways. This result indicates that peer feedback is as valuable as teacher feedback.

Moreover, some researchers even hold the opinion that teacher feedback has little impact on students' writing. Studies indicate that students themselves can make improvements in the content of revision without teacher feedback. The evidence shows

that some students prefer to receive peer feedback only and treat teacher feedback as less valuable (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Leki, 1990; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998). Peer review can even be equal to teacher feedback in terms of revision quality (Caulk, 1994). Also, peer feedback has been found to be more effective than self revision (Berger, 1990). These studies demonstrate that peer feedback is beneficial and students think it is helpful with writing improvement.

When discussing peer review, the major concern is the quality of peer review. The problem is that some of the untrained students are not able to provide appropriate feedback; they cannot decide what types of feedback to provide. Therefore, they may focus only on lower level concerns, which are grammar errors, word choice, or punctuation. Others may pay too much attention to higher order concerns, such as the topic, the content, or the organization of the whole piece of writing. Moreover, some of these students only provide positive feedback or surface level comments; others seem too straightforward and prefer to provide only criticism to peers. Consequently, vague, unrelated, overly critical, or complementary comments are found in peer feedback (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Villamil & Gurrero, 1996). Thus, researchers have begun to explore possible solutions to overcome the problem of ineffective peer feedback and started attaching the importance to peer review training in order to help students become effective evaluators (Berg, 1999; Hansen & Liu, 2005; Min, 2006; Stanley, 1992).

Although peer review has revealed some problems, overall, its advantages outweigh the disadvantages. It helps develop and reinforce students' writing skills and critical thinking abilities, it enhances language learning, and it provides opportunities for students to practice their abilities of social interaction. In addition, peer review also offers students the chance to read authentic texts written by their peers. Receiving feedback from multiple sources, students can improve and examine their own writing, reducing their own apprehension and gaining confidence as well. Owing to all these advantages, peer review has become a popular practice in L2 writing classes both in ESL and EFL settings.

## Research Gap

In recent years, with an increasing number of international students coming to study in the United States, native English-speaking students and international students can be seen sitting together in the same writing or other mainstream classrooms (Zhu, 2001). Even though peer review has been employed either in these classes including writing classes and other classes for writing assignments, very few studies discuss this practice in such integrated classes with both native and international students. Among the few studies regarding a mixed group of students, the major concerns they addressed are the issues of cross-cultural interaction and awareness (e.g., Ibrahim & Penfield, 2005; Reichelt & Silva, 1996).

Little research has been done to examine the plausibility of peer review in this mixed setting. Hence, it is necessary to investigate whether peer review performs equally well in an integrated class as it does in a L2 homogenous class. It may also help instructors decide whether or not to implement this practice in their integrated classes. Given these needs, this study attempts to determine how peer review is performed in an integrated group and examine nonnative speakers' perceptions of peer review. The following questions are to be addressed:

1. What are nonnative students' perceptions of peer review in an integrated class?
2. Do students have the same attitudes toward the feedback given by their native and nonnative English-speaking class peers?
3. In what aspects do students benefit from peer feedback provided by native and nonnative class peers respectively?
4. What are the major similarities and differences between the feedback given by native and nonnative speaking peers?

## Methodology

### Participants

To recruit participants, I used purposeful selection of the sample of convenience. I began by focusing on some Chinese students who I knew or heard that they had had peer review experience in an integrated class respectively. By means of telephone call or email contact, I explained the purpose of the study and asked if they had ever received peer feedback given from both native and nonnative English-speaking class peers in a writing class or on their writing assignments. Among them, eight respondents had these experiences and expressed an interest in my study. In order to get a thorough impression, I carefully chose five of them based on the following reasons. First, these five subjects came from different age groups with divergent academic backgrounds. Second, they expressed a strong will to share their personal feelings and stories of peer review. Lastly, the participants were from two different universities rather than one.

Five Chinese students, including two males and three females in different programs from a Northeast university and a Midwest university in the United States, participated in this study (see Table 1). Among them, three graduate students from either the Northeast university or the Midwest university had taken integrated writing courses such as College Writing, Research Writing, or Technical Writing as required by their program. In their classes, they had peer review activities with both native and nonnative English speakers. The other two had offered and received peer feedback on their writing assignments in their previous classes.

The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 50 years old. The length of residency in the United States varied from two years to four years and eight months. Their averaged paper-

Table 1  
*Identification of Participants*

Participants	Gender	Age	Length of Residency	Major	Degree Program
Yan	female	50	4 years 8 months	English Literature	PhD
Wili	female	29	3 years	TESOL	PhD
Lin	male	38	2 years 3 months	Technical Writing	MA
Chuya	female	26	3 years	Accounting	MA
Tian	male	20	3 years	Finance	BS

based TOEFL scores were about 600 out of the total of 677. Their TOEFL scores indicate that the five participants are at the advanced English proficiency level. All of them had peer review activity experience in a mixed writing class and received both native and non-native class peer feedback on their writing assignments. Pseudonyms are used for participants' names in this study.

### Procedure

The qualitative interviewing method was employed for data collection because of the small number of participants. A set number of questions including six demographic items, five close-ended questions, and four open-ended questions were prepared (see Appendix). The general interview guide approach was used (McKay, 2006; Patton, 2000). To be specific, I asked each participant the same questions, though the order of the questions and the phrasing of the questions differed in each interview. However, the actual interviews were conducted in a less formal conversational manner, aiming at encouraging the participants to express themselves freely. Since the participants were all native speakers of Chinese, the participants' L1 was used during the interviews to reduce the potential hindrance caused by the English language and to create a comfortable atmosphere so that the participants could express themselves freely.

I then arranged the time and places with each participant respectively for the face-to-face or telephone interviews. Three face-to-face interviews were conducted at comfortable

places without interruptions. The face-to-face interviews allowed each participant to produce more extensive and in-depth responses. Since two participants were from another university, I used a telephone interview with them. These two telephone interviews were conducted at the participants' convenience. During the course of each interview, I took notes of the central facts, key points, stories, and comments provided by each participant. I also asked them to clarify or further elaborate their viewpoints when needed. Each interview lasted approximately thirty to forty minutes.

Moreover, in order to gain more thorough and clear opinions from the participants, I conducted by telephone two follow-up interviews in which I found some significant information was missing or unclear, or the participants raised new ideas or major concerns (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Each of the follow-up interviews lasted approximately twenty minutes.

To do the data analyses, I used the retrospective narrative analysis, which focuses on stories told by participants (Grbich, 2007). I decided first to use the case-analysis approach, which focuses intensively on each participant's case, followed by a cross-case analysis approach, which involves organizing the responses according to the topics raised in the interviews (Patton, 2000). Through carefully examining the notes that I took, I highlighted each individual's case, key events, as well as some issues they discussed.

Next, based on the participants' narratives, when I found the participants shared similar opinions, I grouped them into a category to stress the similarities in order to identify the central ideas as well as the emerging themes. That is, the process of data analyses ranges from description to interpretation and to theory (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). By doing so, I could capture the participants' positive and negative attitudes toward peer review and summarize the pros and cons of this writing practice in integrated classes from the participants' perspectives based on their experiences as well as some concerns they raised.

## Results

### Individual Cases

#### *Yan's Case*

Yan is a doctoral student in the program of English Literature. One of her peer review experiences is with a Korean classmate on a writing assignment. In Yan's case, both classmates were nonnative speakers of English. Because Yan and her peer were English majors, their focus of peer feedback is more on higher order concerns, such as content and organization. Both of them took the peer review activity seriously and treated it as a learning opportunity for themselves. Thus, they reached an agreement of not providing only positive feedback to each other; rather, they must point out problems in each other's papers and provide solutions to them. In order to fulfill their promises, they set aside time

for meaning negotiation when finding confusing points in each other's papers. In this manner, they both perceived that peer feedback was very dynamic and productive.

Based on this experience, Yan stated that "peer review can be an effective way for revision and quality improvement if it is done appropriately." Yan also added that "the effort will be paid off eventually if people really treat each other's writing seriously." Yan further explained that she and her peer both received an "A" with positive comments from their professor in this assignment. Yan intentionally attached importance to meaning negotiation with peers, particularly when the peers do not speak the same language and share the same culture.

However, Yan described a phenomenon that she frequently noticed during the peer review activity. That is, more often than not, her peers, no matter native or nonnative, provided positive feedback only. This did annoy her much because "good words do not help me in revision at all, though I need them because I think I am a kind of good writer." That is why Yan and her Korean classmate decided that apart from providing positive comments, they must provide negative comments to each other as well. Moreover, they had to provide solutions to those writing problems. To Yan, identifying each other's problems is the main purpose of the peer review activity.

#### *Wili's Case*

Wili is also a doctoral student but in a TESOL program. Unlike Yan's story, Wili began her unpleasant story with a native English speaking peer. In one of Wili's classes, students were required to read a peer's paper and provide feedback. Wili happened to have a native English speaking peer. So, she wrote her comments on this native speaker's paper. Unexpectedly, this classmate was "mad" about Wili's feedback. She doubted the quality of Wili's feedback because she did not trust the comments provided by a nonnative speaker. She expressed her dissatisfaction directly by erasing all Wili's comments in front of Wili and complaining, "I do not like people marking anything on my paper." This unpleasant experience made Wili give up pointing out native speakers' writing problems or errors. When telling me this story, Wili argued that "in China, I was also an English professor. I know what I put on her paper and I have my reasons to do so!"

Apart from this unpleasant story, other peer review experiences recalled by Wili are more pleasant. Wili believed that she had benefited mainly from reading peers' writing instead of reading peers' feedback. As a nonnative speaker, Wili realized that her weakness was using the target language. So, she read the essays no matter if they were written by native or nonnative speakers in order to learn how her class peers use the language. Wili admitted that reading others' writing helped her to avoid making the same mistakes in her own writing. In addition, she considered native speakers' writing a rich source of authentic language. Thus, she claimed that through "reading native speakers' language, a nonnative speaker can improve his or her own linguistic competence." According to Wili, peer

review is particularly effective for nonnative speakers not only because “it offers opportunities for nonnative speakers to read authentic language” but also because “it helps enrich nonnative speakers’ cultural experiences.” Moreover, Wili also noticed that most of the native English speakers were equipped with the ability to provide their peers with better word choices.

Although Wili admitted that reading peers’ writing was beneficial and native speakers could be helpful in her vocabulary use, she did not think reading peer feedback was helpful, nor did she find much difference between the feedback given by native and nonnative class peers. Her arguments were that “a writer has already had his or her own ideas in mind. So, it is hard to offer something that the writer will likely accept.” What is more, Wili said that “it is even useless when the feedback is just complimentary or at the surface level.” Ironically however, although Wili thought positive and surface level comments provided no help for revision, the unpleasant experience with the native speaking peer warned Wili to learn to be uncritical even though she felt guilty because she could identify some major problems in her peers’ writing. Thus, Wili expressed her puzzlement and began to doubt the value of peer review in an integrated class.

#### *Lin’s Case*

Lin, a MA student in a technical writing program, shared with me one of his experiences with peer review. He once got a native speaker’s comments on his word choice. His native speaking peer pointed out the different uses between the word “cold” and the word “chilly” and helped him distinguish the subtle meaning of these two synonyms. Now, Lin is able to use them appropriately. Base on this peer review experience, Lin expressed his favor for native speakers’ feedback, particularly the feedback on lower order issues, such as word choice, grammar, sentence structure, and even documentation style. Lin highlighted that native speakers could think of better sentence structures to replace his awkward ones. In contrast, Lin said that he got used to reexamining the suggestions provided by his nonnative peers on the linguistic issues. His reason was that “English is native speakers’ mother tongue; native speakers have the absolute advantage in vocabulary and sentence structure use compared with nonnative speakers.” Lin’s perception of native speaking peers’ linguistic abilities clearly explained why he favors native peers’ suggestions on linguistic issues.

Further, Lin told me about the change of his attitude from aversion to acceptance toward the issue of content help. Lin explained that although he strongly believed that native peers were good at offering linguistic help, in the beginning he did not believe his class peers, including native and nonnative, could really help him with his content or rhetoric. He thought that “each writer has his or her own strengths and concrete ideas. It will be hard to persuade the writer to make any changes.” However, after reading the feedback provided by his class peers, he found that some of the comments were helpful.

Since then, he began to accept peers' critiques gradually and tried to incorporate them in revision. Lin also reported the benefits of reading peers' papers, "I could learn their strengths through reading their papers." To Lin, peer review benefited him in many ways, particularly the feedback provided by his native peers on a linguistic level.

#### *Chuya's Case*

Chuya, as an MA accounting student, held different opinions from Lin's perspective. She believed that nonnative speakers could be equally helpful in the same way as native speakers on linguistic issues. Her arguments were that "nonnative-speaking peers paid special attention to sentence-level issues, such as grammar, punctuation, and format." She further said that nonnative peers were really good at grammar check because they could always catch flaws in her paper and indeed did a better job than native speaking peers. Chuya did not perceive any differences between peer feedback given by her native and nonnative speaking peers.

Yet, her major concern was the quality of feedback. Chuya noticed that sometimes the feedback, no matter from a native or a nonnative speaker, was unclear and even unacceptable. One example was that Chuya "did not know whose ideas to follow when receiving different opinions from my peers" because "[she] received two native speakers' feedback but found their comments were opposite to each other." Chuya further explained that "My strengths that one peer mentioned were exactly the weaknesses that the other peer pointed out." Facing such a dilemma, Chuya chose to ignore the peers' comments. Rather, she took teacher feedback instead when I asked how she solved this situation. This experience made her feel disappointed with peer review even though the feedback was given by native speaking peers.

On the other hand, she expressed satisfaction with one of her nonnative peer's suggestions. According to Chuya, her nonnative class peer could provide not only constructive comments on her content, but also sentence-level help regarding grammar. This good experience with a nonnative class peer reinforced her belief that nonnative speakers could provide high quality feedback in terms of content. Chuya also pointed out the power of culture and claimed that "cultural diversities largely influence people's perceptions." Therefore, "it is hard to provide objective opinions to anyone who is from a different culture." Her argument is that "a paper might be considered an excellent text in a peer's viewpoint but not good or even poor when evaluated by another peer who comes from a different cultural background." Chuya's remark indicates that due to different cultural norms or beliefs, people from different cultures will have different or even opposite attitudes toward the same written text.

#### *Tian's Case*

Compared with the other interviewees, Tian, the only undergraduate student among the five Chinese participants, did not favor peer feedback from native English speakers at



all. During the course of the interviews, Tian directly stated that he preferred peer feedback from nonnative speakers simply because “nonnative speakers learned English themselves, thus, they can easily find out my problems.” Moreover, Tian also expressed his need for grammatical correction and said “my nonnative classmates always pay attention to my grammatical errors and offer correction at once.” In addition, Tian doubted some undergraduate native speakers’ linguistic abilities because “[he] could easily detect a lot of grammatical errors in [his] native peers’ writing.” This fact increased Tian’s suspicion of native speakers’ English qualifications and reinforced his belief that nonnative speakers were good at identifying and correcting sentence-level errors, compared with his native speaking peers.

When asked who was more helpful with the higher order concerns in writing, Tian stated that “because students are from different countries and cultural backgrounds, offering feedback to other class peers may cause confusion even potential problems.” What annoyed him the most was that some of his classmates even directly changed his ideas. Accordingly, Tian also said if he had to choose a peer for feedback, he would prefer to have a nonnative speaker of English, and the best choice would be a peer who shares the same cultural background with his. To this end, Tian thought peer critiques, especially from native speakers, were ineffective because these peers had difficulty understanding his ideas even though he tried to explain his ideas to them. Thus, Tian held a negative attitude toward peer feedback activity in a mixed group.

## Discussion

In general, the participants did not think peer review activity was effective enough in a mixed group based on their own experiences. Yet, even though they could list the problematic situations caused by peer review based on their own justification, all of them disagreed that this writing practice should be abandoned. Rather, they all expressed their desire to keep it. They admitted that peer review, to some extent, could help improve their writing in different aspects.

Examining peer review practice from each participant’s viewpoint, I could also extract that they had their own preferences for the feedback given by native and nonnative class peers. For example, Wili and Lin shared similar views—they both preferred native speakers’ advice on the linguistic level, particularly the feedback on vocabulary and sentence structure. Moreover, they both mentioned that reading peers’ writing enabled them to learn and reflect on their own writing. In the meantime, it enriched the opportunities for the nonnative English speakers to learn authentic English from their native speaking peers.

Although both Wili and Lin seemed to favor native speaking peers’ feedback on linguistic aspects, their level and concerns remained different. Obviously, Lin welcomed native speakers’ feedback largely, and his attitude even changed from repulse to reception

toward peer review practice. Wili, however, seemed to favor reading peers' writing rather than reading their feedback. In addition, she disliked the practice of offering flattering feedback, but she had to accommodate herself to the situation. The dilemma prompted Wili to reconsider the peer review practice in a mixed class.

Unlike Lin and Wili, Chuya and Tian did not see a major difference in feedback provided by their native and nonnative peers. Rather, their conventional wisdom dictated that they could get linguistic help from nonnative peers. They argued that nonnative speakers learned English step by step and had accumulated solid knowledge of English. Thus, their linguistic abilities should equal those of English native speakers'. Likewise, Yan's rewarding experience with her Korean peer demonstrated that nonnative speakers could offer effective comments like native speakers in terms of content and organization. Thus, Chuya and Tian consider nonnative peers' feedback equal to native peers'. When asked about their preference of choosing between a native or nonnative speaker for peer feedback, the answer, with one accord, was that it depends on the peer's ability, not his or her mother tongue. The quality of the feedback was most important, though reading native speakers' papers for authentic language learning was also valued.

Chuya's hesitation with accepting native peers' comments, her decision to take teacher feedback, and her satisfaction with a nonnative peer's suggestions, left her in a puzzled state. Thus, she expressed her uncertain attitude toward peer review in a mixed group. What is more, Tian's unchanged viewpoint for nonnative peer feedback and his suspicion of native speakers' qualifications in English, together with the early mentioned impolite reaction by a native speaker to Wili's feedback, highlight a trend in the data. To these Chinese students, feedback from a peer who is of the same or a similar cultural background was less problematic; it was hard for them to understand or adapt their native peers' comments. According to Chuya and Tian, culture has a major influence on writers' texts and way of thinking. Their belief seemed to reinforce Yan's opinion that meaning negotiation is significant particularly when the two parties do not share the same language or culture. This situation creates a new concern: the plausibility of review peer in an integrated class.

Another situation that made the participants uncomfortable was reading flattering feedback. They believed that reading positive comments was not as helpful as reading negative comments, which could identify their problems. Therefore, they treated negative comments seriously and quickly went through or even ignored the positive comments. Chuya, Yan and Wili mentioned a similar annoying situation: their native speakers deliberately avoid critical comments in order to not hurt nonnative speaking peers; on the other hand, some of the nonnative speakers only point out unserious flaws in their writing. Thus, peer feedback seemed meaningless in such way. Yet, they also acknowledged that positive comments were indispensable. To them, positive comments

recognized writers' hard work and could deliver confidence to the writers. In this sense, apart from receiving true compliments rather than superficial flattering words, they also welcomed constructive criticism.

When asked about providing feedback to their class peers, they all said they treated their peers' writing seriously and provided feedback carefully. The reasons for doing so were that first, since English was not their native language, they would like to provide feedback on global issues (e.g., main idea, content, rhetoric) not on local issues (e.g., word choice, grammar). Following this vein, Chuya, Yan, Lin, and Wili mentioned that their strategies were maintaining their peers' original language use unless there were serious errors being found. The participants also stated that they were extremely careful with their own language when offering feedback to their peers, especially to native speaking peers. Wili and Lin even said they did not correct native speakers' errors though they could detect them.

## Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that first, nonnative speakers hold a neutral attitude toward peer review in a mixed group. They think it is necessary though it is not as effective as they expected due to some problems and limitations. Second, as far as the helpfulness of peer feedback is concerned, they admit that both native and nonnative speaking peer feedback can be helpful but in different ways. Third, the participants weigh the feedback given by a native and a nonnative speaker equally because they do not perceive any major differences. Fourth, peer review activity is satisfactory in some ways; it is also distractive sometimes in other ways. Fifth, there are some differences between the activities held in an integrated group and a homogenous group. Cultural influences and mutual communication seem to be particularly important in such integrated classes.

Obviously, the participants benefitted from peer review in the following four respects. First, they had opportunities to interact with their class peers, which is different from the interaction with teachers. Second, working collaboratively with class peers from different countries or cultures helped enrich their life experiences and improve their writing skills. Third, by reading peers' feedback, they could gain useful ideas in their revisions at different levels. And fourth, reading authentic language by their class peers enables them to reflect on their own writing, thus helping them identify their own strengths and weaknesses. These major advantages embodied in mixed groups are similar to those found in L2 homogenous groups. These findings are in line with some research on peer review and reinforce the common belief that peer review is a useful tool in writing (Hanson & Liu, 20005; Mendonça & Johnson, 1994; Tsui & Ng, 2000).

However, the study reveals some constraints of peer review in mixed classes. The first concern is the mistrust of peers' language proficiencies, especially of nonnative speakers' linguistic competencies. This finding matches the findings of Linden-Martin's

(1997) and McGroarty and Zhu's (1997) studies of L2 writing classes. Wili's experience with a native speaker and Lin's uncertainty about his nonnative classmates' linguistic competence echo the issue. In this regard, the study also reveals that students may provide weak, unclear, or overly critical feedback (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998), or even counterproductive feedback which caused discomfort and uneasiness among peers. Wili's unpleasant story, Chuya's experiences of her native peers, and Tian's belief, better reflect this stance. Likewise, this phenomenon is captured in L2 classes as well (Liu & Hansen, 2002). The problems boil down to one concern, the quality of feedback.

In fact, in a mixed group, factors such as students' language competencies, cultural norms, and personal preferences directly affect the quality of feedback. Studies have already found that different cultures organize ideas differently (Connor, 1996; Kaplan, 1966). Other studies, however, put forward that L2 writers' lack of English proficiency, not cultural differences, may cause differences in their written texts (Mohan & Lo, 1985). Therefore, training students to be effective evaluators is more crucial in a mixed group than it is in a homogeneous L1 or L2 classroom, though the issue of evaluation training has been discussed largely in homogeneous L1, ESL, and EFL classrooms (Berg, 1999; Hansen & Liu, 2005; Stanley, 1992). What is more important, according to this study, is that meaning negotiation should be taken into account in training, especially meaning negotiation among students coming from different cultures. My study clearly indicates that in a mixed group, the lack of meaning negotiation may lead to distraction, even interference sometimes.

Next, although the study indicates that native speakers possess high linguistic competence in general, it also shows that nonnative speakers are able to provide moderate help in terms of language use. One of the participants only trusted his nonnative speaking peers regarding grammar use and error correction. This finding reinforces some of the previous claims by some researchers that nonnative speakers are good at providing sentence-level feedback, especially grammar suggestions (Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Paulus, 1999). Likewise, their opinions of major similarities between native and nonnative peer feedback reflect that in general, the participants think native and nonnative speaking peers are equally helpful in content critique and rhetorical suggestion. However, they hold different opinions of who are more helpful in lower order concerns: some of them think native speakers are more qualified than nonnative speaker; others think nonnative speakers are more helpful.

In regard to the major differences between native and nonnative speakers, the five participants' opinions vary. One issue is that due to language proficiency, sometimes, nonnative speakers' feedback is ambiguous or surface level. On the other hand, native speakers do not have linguistic barriers, but their opinions may be different from nonnative speakers'. Thus, some of them want to impart their thoughts into nonnative peers' writing

or even change the writers' original opinions completely. In another extreme, however, some students consciously avoid offering criticism but are very generous in providing positive feedback. A typical example is that some nonnative speakers from Asian countries are good at providing feedback without direct criticism.

One possible reason for why nonnative speakers offer positive or moderate feedback on peers' writing is due to the nonnative speakers' limited language ability; they cannot identify the problems, let alone provide a valid critique. Therefore, they prefer to afford affirmative feedback in their peers' papers. Another likely reason is cultural norms. For example, Asian cultures highlight harmony in groups, thus, these nonnative speakers try to avoid conflicts with group members and choose to give only encouraging feedback. Some research on L2 writing has discussed the reasons and claimed that if it is caused by nonnative speakers' limited linguistic proficiency, feedback is ineffective (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Linden-Martin, 1997, Zhang, 1995).

However, if the reason is because of cultural practices, it is in line with some study results that nonnative speakers monitor themselves carefully in order to not precipitate conflict within the group (Allaei & Connor, 1990; Nelson & Carson, 1998). Moreover, some of the participants (i.e., Chuya and Tian) believe that the source of the problems that occurred in the integrated classes is the dissimilarity of cultures. No doubt, Confucian culture highlights teacher authority. This may be another reason to understand why some Chinese students mistrust peers' feedback (i.e., Chuya, Lin, and Tian). This finding seems to reconcile with some studies, which hold the same viewpoint (Hinkel, 1999; Scollon, 1999).

From another point of view, the study also manifests that language and culture are interwoven together. It is easy to detect from the study that having little basic knowledge of an author's culture, it is often hard for a reader to catch the author's ideas and fully understand the meaning of the written context. The likely condition that "cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" can be seen (Pratt, 1991, as cited in Harklau, 1999, p.125). Hence, facilitating cross-cultural communication and understanding seems to be the prior step for instructors to conduct before peer review practice in an integrated class. To ESL students, apart from second language acquisition, second culture acquisition proposed by Lantolf (1999) seems equally essential.

Moreover, the participants express their consistent and firm attitude when touching upon the issue of their future expectations of peer review in an integrated class. That is, they would like to keep this activity, but expect their class peers to provide honest comments by pointing out their weaknesses as well as correcting their grammar errors because they believe that corrective feedback leads to accuracy of language use and eventually improves the quality of writing. In this connection, their suggestion echoes Nelson and Carson's (1998) claim that nonnative speakers favor the comments on their

problems. It also replicates the outcome of Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger's (1992) study that grammar correction is the priority of peer feedback from student writers' perspectives as well as Chandler's (2003) study result that corrective feedback can improve written accuracy.

Lastly, it seems apparent that the participants did not perceive too much difference between the peer review practice in a homogenous class and an integrated class. However, they admitted that peer review activities seem more challenging in an integrated class than in a homogenous class. For the former class, peer review requires nonnative speakers to go beyond language. It entails their language proficiency, familiarity with the western writing rhetoric, critical thinking ability, and cross-cultural understanding.

### **Limitations**

Needless to say this study has some limitations. The major restriction is the limited number of participants within a single ethnic group, Chinese. Next, it is easy to determine that the five participants' ages as well as their academic experiences and fields are not identical. The different status of the participants is likely to contribute to their different attitudes. Moreover, the data are simply based on each individual participant's verbal report and my interpretation. The participants' viewpoints may change when they gain more experience with peer review. With these deficiencies, there is no possibility to generalize nonnative speakers' perceptions based on this single study. However, the study, as a source of reference, illustrates a basic picture of how peer review occurs in integrated classrooms.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

On the whole, this study shows that nonnative speakers hold an acceptable attitude toward peer review in an integrated class and perceive it as fundamentally sound. At the same time, these nonnative speakers weigh their native and nonnative speaking peers' feedback equally, though they acknowledge that native and nonnative speaking peers have their own strengths respectively. In general, in integrated classes peer review can be labeled useful though it has some problems. The major potential problem is the quality of feedback, which is closely connected with one's language proficiency and culture. Thus, training students to become effective evaluators and providers of feedback is vital.

This study provides some pedagogical suggestions for those writing instructors who are using or intend to use peer review in their integrated classes. First, instructors must be aware that even though peer feedback is useful, using it in a mixed class is more complicated than using it in a L1 or L2 homogenous class. Factors, such as language proficiency, cultural background, individual needs, ways of thinking, manners of offering feedback, the focus of feedback, and students' self-esteem and emotional feelings will directly affect the quality of feedback. In turn, these factors will influence students'

attitudes toward and perceptions of peer review practice. Regarding these factors, writing instructors should try to investigate the source of the problems respectively and try to provide solutions to them (Liu & Hansen, 2002). In order to do so, writing instructors must pay attention to cognitive, sociocultural, and linguistic dimensions, which are represented in integrated classes.

Since the study shows that the effectiveness of peer review in mixed groups largely depends on students' language proficiencies and mutual understanding, it is important to train students to be open-minded, polite readers so that they are able to offer high quality and a quantity of feedback in an appropriate manner. In addition, guiding students to establish a trustworthy relationship and making students aware of the importance of intercultural communication are equally vital. Therefore, creating a non-threatening and trustworthy learning atmosphere for students is important.

Moreover, the main task for instructors before making a decision on whether to employ the activity of peer review is to think of what ways peer review can benefit students with various levels of language proficiencies and diverse cultural beliefs. For example, teachers should realize that L2 speakers' writing is distinct from L1 writers'; it is also necessary for them to recognize that among the group of L2 writers, each individual's writing also differs from one another. Thus, as Silva (2006) suggests for L2 writing classes, teachers in integrated classes should highlight the point that during peer review all students should be respected and understood equally and their writing must be evaluated fairly.

In addition, teachers should help English native speakers to understand that expecting their nonnative speaking peers to write perfectly in English is far from realistic because second language acquisition is a long and slow process. What is more, teachers should work out a set of approaches or strategies for both L1 and L2 students to make sure that students can gradually understand each other's ideas and expand their knowledge growth in cross-cultural communication. To sum up, teachers need to lay emphasis on improving students' linguistic and cross-cultural awareness in an integrated class. Only when instructors do so can the peer review activity at the university level function effectively.

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## About the Author

*Lan Wang is a doctoral student in the program of Composition & TESOL at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She has more than 10 years EFL teaching experience at the university level in China and 3 years ESL and writing center tutoring experience in the U.S. Her research interests are SLA, L2 writing, and writing center theory and practice.*

## Appendix

### Perceptions of the Practice of Peer Review in an Integrated Class

#### Part I. Demographic Information

Put checkmarks or write down your answer at the spaces provided below.

1. Current Degree Program: \_\_\_ BA/BS \_\_\_ MA/MS \_\_\_ PhD \_\_\_ Others
2. Gender: \_\_\_ Male \_\_\_ Female
3. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Major/Department: \_\_\_\_\_
5. TOEFL scores: \_\_\_\_\_
6. How long have you been staying in an English speaking country? \_\_\_\_\_ year  
\_\_\_\_\_ month

#### Part II. Statement Section

Please respond for each of the following statements based on your own personal experiences.

1. I like/ dislike having peer review activities in an integrated class.
2. I experienced peer feedback from native and nonnative speakers of English before, and perceived peer review activity is helpful /to some degree helpful/ not helpful with my writing.
3. I feel comfortable/uncomfortable/ no difference in reading feedback from native and /or nonnative class peers?.
4. I prefer to have a native-speaking peer /a nonnative-speaking peer / both a native and a nonnative-speaking peer/ no preference, if I have an option to choose a peer to give feedback on my writing,

5. I find peer feedback, offered by native and/or nonnative speaking peers, is helpful with the lower order concerns (e.g., sentence structure, grammar, word choice, spelling, punctuation, documentation style, etc) or/and the higher order concerns (e.g., content, organization, thesis or main ideas, introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion, etc).

### **Part III. Open-ended Questions Section**

Please answer the following questions with as much detail as possible.

1. What are the similarities and differences between a native- and a nonnative-speaking peer feedback?
2. Is there any difference between a peer review activity held in a homogenous class and an integrated class?
3. In the future, what are your expectations of peer review in an integrated class?
4. Any other comments on peer review in an integrated class?

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# Making English Lessons Engaging Through Video Materials Supported With Advance Organizers and Prediction Activities<sup>1</sup>

**Winnie Lee**

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

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An increasing volume of literature has confirmed that video as an instructional tool has great pedagogical value. It has the advantage of exposing learners to authentic language input and providing a cultural context for language learning (Chung & Huang, 1998; Herron, Corrie, Dubreil, & Cole, 2002; Sherman, 2003). Apart from fostering language and cultural acquisition, video is also found to be able to enhance students' affective attitudes to language learning. Classroom learning experience is made more active and interesting because of the sensory impact and the element of authenticity found in a video programme (Sherman 2003; Wen, 1989), resulting in students' better attention engagement, stronger motivation for learning, and increased self-confidence (Secules, Herron, & Tomasello, 1992; Herron et al., 2002; Sherman, 2003; Weyers, 1999).

In spite of the appeal that video holds for students, there are arguments that video materials will not necessarily lend themselves to producing positive learning outcomes without some sort of teacher intervention through the use of advance organizers (Chung, 1999; Chung & Huang, 1998; Herron, 1994; Herron, Hanley, & Cole, 1995; Swaffar & Vlatten, 1997). This is because video materials are not only linguistically, but also culturally, a challenge to students. In order to make the video input comprehensible to students, some sort of teacher intervention or scaffolding is necessary. As pointed out by Lively, Harper, and Williams (1998), "The very essence of the input text being imbued with native culture is what makes accessing the language in authentic documents so difficult for students" (quoted in Herron et al., 2002, p.37). Teachers are thus urged to intervene or "mediate" the video viewing activity by using advance organizers, specifically, providing students with support for new vocabulary, grammar and cultural information embedded in the video (Hennessey, 1995; Herron et al, 2002; Secules et al., 1992; Sherman, 2003). The purpose of this article is to examine whether the combination

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of two advance organizers (using pictures to introduce characters and pre-teaching vocabulary) with prediction activities can increase student engagement in the video activity. It is hoped that through this, insights into how to choose and deliver advance organizers to students can be obtained.

## Literature Review

### Advance Organizers

*Advance organizers* is a term first used by Ausubel (1961) to describe the process of linking the upcoming unfamiliar material to what is already known to the learner. He hypothesized that the learning and retention of unfamiliar but meaningful verbal material could be facilitated by the advance introduction of relevant subsuming concepts. He further explained that “if new material is incorporated into cognitive structure in so far as it is subsumable under relevant existing concepts, then appropriate and stable organizers should enhance the retention of the new materials” (Ausubel, 1961, quoted in Hanley, Herron, & Cole, 1995, p. 57). The theory of advance organizers is well-supported by cognitive research in the first language (L1) and second language (L2); it claims that if learning is to be effective and permanent, it has to be meaningful and involves learners’ active mental processing of relating new knowledge to existing background knowledge (Hanley et al., 1995).

Since the introduction of the advance organizer theory, different types of advance organizers have been used in classrooms to enhance reading and listening comprehension. The list of effective advance organizers has included pictures, verbal descriptions, key vocabulary pre-teaching, pre-questioning techniques, and cultural background cues, and recently video has been added to the list (Herron, 1994; Omaggio, 1993). There have been suggestions that advance organizers are a type of pre-reading, pre-listening, or pre-viewing activity which aims to prepare students for the reading, listening, or video-viewing tasks by providing them with background knowledge and language input (Stoller, 1992; Tagleber, Johnson, & Yarbrough, 1988). In this study, the terms advance organizers and pre-viewing activities will be used interchangeably.

### Using Advance Organizers in Reading and Listening Comprehension

A substantial body of research has been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of advance organizers on reading and listening comprehension (Ausubel, 1961; Hanley et al., 1995; Muller, 1980; Omaggio, 1979; Taglieber et al., 1988). Generally speaking, the findings from these studies show that providing learners with advance organizers such as pictures, key words, or scripts, prior to the listening or reading of a passage helps them to comprehend the aural or textual input. Nonetheless, no definite conclusion has been drawn on which types of advance organizers may be the most effective. Omaggio (1979) suggested that pictures could aid foreign language comprehension while Muller’s (1980)

study showed that pictorial aids were less effective at higher levels of proficiency. Taglieber et al. (1988) argued that vocabulary pre-teaching was not as effective as visual support and prequestioning, but Chung and Haung's (1998) video research findings showed that pre-teaching vocabulary was more effective than providing character background information.

### **Using Advance Organizers in Video Materials**

Recently, with the increasing availability of video technology for classroom use, more and more teachers are turning to video for language instruction. In order to provide teachers with more information on how to make the viewing experience enjoyable and fruitful, research studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of using advance organizers to introduce videos in L2 and FL classrooms.

Herron (1994) examined the effects of providing summary statements of a video—an advance organizer—on students' listening comprehension of a foreign language fictional narrative video. The results showed that the advance organizer group did significantly better than the control group, confirming the effectiveness of advance organizers on video comprehension.

Herron et al. (1995) conducted a study on beginning FL learners to compare effectiveness of two advance organizer conditions: summary statement only and summary statement with accompanying pictures. Students' comprehension and retention of information was found to be significantly greater for the group that received the summary statement with pictures. But whether the same result can be obtained if this is conducted on advanced learners deserves our attention as Muller's (1980) findings showed that pictorial cues produced better effects on beginning rather than advanced FL learners.

Chung and Huang (1998) compared the effects of three aural advance organizers on a group of low-intermediate and low motivated Chinese students. It was found that the students who were pre-taught vocabulary comprehended the video better than those given information about the characters. Additionally, those provided with vocabulary pre-teaching and character information performed the least satisfactorily. Chung and Huang attributed the poor performance of the combined condition group to their low attention span and low motivation, suggesting that for low proficiency and low motivated learners, the advance organizers should be concise instead of thorough.

In sum, it can be said that like the findings of advance organizer research in reading and listening studies, the effectiveness of advance organizers in the video research was confirmed. But as for which type of advance organizers could better prepare students for video viewing, the results were inconclusive, suggesting that certain advance organizers may suit one group but not another. In order to obtain more empirical data about ways to select and deliver advance organizers which meet students' needs and interests, research studies on whether advance organizers can increase student engagement should be

conducted. As pointed out by Kinzie and Matveev (2008), student engagement is the time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities and is the single best predictor of learning and personal development.

### **Using Prediction Activities in Listening Comprehension**

Prediction is found to be another effective pre-listening activity that can facilitate listening comprehension. Prediction involves “using a context-implication strategy in which the listener projects schematic expectations onto the text” (Rost, 1990, p.136). A significant amount of research conducted by second language listening researchers indicates that throughout the listening process, effective listeners activate their background knowledge to enhance comprehension by making and confirming predictions and hypotheses, primarily from their world and linguistic knowledge, to construct the intended meaning of the speaker (Buck, 2001; Danks, 1980; Lund, 1990).

It is also believed that prediction can develop students’ higher order thinking skills. McNeil (1987) claims that a prediction activity is not only able to activate students’ background knowledge and help to create a mental picture about the topic, but also arouse their curiosity, stimulate their creativity and engage their attention in a comprehension task. It also makes the whole comprehension process contextualized and purposeful because students have to pose questions and identify a goal to confirm their predictions (Anderson, 1994). Because of these positive effects, prediction activities have become one type of commonly-used pre-listening activity in both the audio-listening and video-viewing lessons (Rost, 1990). Voller and Widdows (1993) used questions to guide students to predict the characters of a video they were going to watch, and after watching one major scene, students had to predict what would happen next. This prediction activity received very positive comments from the students attending the lesson.

In summary both advance organizers and prediction activities have separately been shown to be effective aids to video comprehension. Both share similar characteristics such as pedagogical functions and the stage of a lesson in which the activities are conducted. Nonetheless, research studies conducted to investigate the effects produced by the combination of these two activities appear to be scarce. The current study aims to examine whether the combination of advance organizers with a prediction activity could make a lesson engaging, which could then arouse students’ interest in the video and facilitate comprehension. To test the effectiveness of this treatment method, two research questions guided this study:

1. Do both average and low proficiency students hold positive attitudes towards the use of videos in English classrooms?
2. Can the combined treatments of providing character information through pictures, pre-teaching vocabulary, and using prediction activities, increase the emotional, behavioural, and cognitive engagement of both average and low proficiency students?



## Research Methodology

### Participants

One hundred and thirteen twelve-year-old F.1 (Grade 7) students from a secondary school in Hong Kong took part in this survey. They were grouped into four classes according to their first term English Language examination results: two classes of average proficiency (Classes A and B: 27 students each) and two classes of low proficiency (Class C: 37 and Class D: 22 students). The teachers, who had taught these students before, all agreed that the average proficiency classes had better learning attitudes than the low proficiency classes.

### Instruments

#### *Target Video*

*Wallace and Gromit in a Grand Day Out*, an instructional video package published by Oxford University Press, was used in this study. It is a cartoon story about two cartoon figures taking a trip to the moon. This was chosen because it had been tried out in other F.1 classes, and many students found the video interesting.

#### *Video Previewing Activities*

Two types of advance organizers, using pictures to introduce the characters and pre-teaching vocabulary, plus a prediction activity were used before watching the video. The reason why vocabulary teaching and character introduction were chosen was because the past literature showed that both were able to aid video comprehension, albeit with conflicting results on the level of effectiveness. Besides, with careful activity design, both of these activities could be integrated into one meaningful activity. For example, the introduction of target vocabulary can be incorporated naturally into the pictorial character introduction process, so vocabulary teaching can become contextualized. For the prediction activity, we hoped that through the activity students' curiosity about the video would be aroused, their attention engaged, and creative thinking developed. Furthermore, it was anticipated that the target vocabulary could be elicited during the prediction activity and class discussion on students' predictions.

#### *Student Engagement Self-Report Questionnaire*

*Schooling Issues Digest* (2005) classifies student engagement into three types: behavioural engagement (classroom participation, involvement in learning tasks), emotional engagement (affective attitudes to the lesson such as motivation and interest), and cognitive engagement (investment in learning, learning goals, intrinsic motivation, self regulation, being strategic). A student engagement self-report questionnaire based on this student engagement construct was used to assess whether students were engaged in the previewing activities. The questionnaire contained seven items, each marked on a 5-point

Likert scale. Four questions were on affective engagement (Q #1, 5, 6, 7), one question was on behavioural engagement (Q#2), and two questions were on cognitive engagement (Q #3, 4). The questionnaire was translated into Chinese to ensure students had no comprehension problems.

### *Classroom and Video Observations*

Classroom and video observations were conducted on the four classes for analysis. There were two different types of observations performed: live classroom observations and post-lesson video observations. The focus was on the participants' engagement levels during the previewing activities (the two advance organizers and the prediction activity).

A classroom observation checklist adapted from the Collaboratives for Excellence in Teacher Preparation [CETP] (2003) was used for the observations. The checklist provided the following guidelines for analyzing classroom and video observations: (a) type of instruction, (b) cognitive activity, and (c) student engagement levels. "Type of instruction" refers to how the pre-viewing activities are presented while "cognitive activity" refers to the type of activities that can demonstrate students' cognitive engagement levels. For example a knowledge receipt activity which requires students only to sit passively listening to the teacher is considered cognitively less engaging than an activity that requires students to apply or construct knowledge. This was included in the checklist because, according to *Schooling Issues Digest* (2005) and Ahlfeldt, Mehta, and Sellnow (2005), cognitive development is one of the factors found to be related to student engagement in classrooms. The cognitive demands of the activities will affect students' engagement levels during the lessons. Altogether five types of cognitive activities were suggested in the checklist and they were:

1. Other (e.g., classroom disruption)
2. Receipt of Knowledge (lectures, worksheets, questions, observing, homework)
3. Application of Procedural Knowledge (skill building, performance)
4. Knowledge Representation (organizing, describing, categorizing, expressing opinions)
5. Knowledge Construction (higher order thinking, generating, inventing, solving problems, revising, etc.)

During the observations, the observer(s) had to determine which type of cognitive activities the previewing activities were. Then, the whole class was assessed as either of low, mixed, or high engagement based on the criteria outlined in Table 1.

The Head of the English Department was invited to conduct the video observations and the cognitive activity classification together with the author. As for the classroom observation, it was done by the author herself.

Table 1  
*Criteria for Assessing Student Engagement*

	<b>% of Students</b>	<b>Attitudes</b>	<b>Participation</b>	<b>Task Involvement</b>
<b>Low Engagement</b>	Below 40%	look very bored, inattentive	not willing to participate in the learning tasks; not volunteer to answer questions	off-task e.g. doing, their own things
<b>Mixed Engagement</b>	41%-79%	attentive, look enthusiastic and involved	participate actively in the learning tasks volunteer to answer questions	on task
<b>High Engagement</b>	Above 80%	attentive, look enthusiastic and involved	participate actively in the learning tasks volunteer to answer questions	on task

Two qualified ELT teachers with at least one year's English teaching experience were invited to co-teach a forty-minute lesson by using the treatment method suggested above—a combination of the two advance organizers and a prediction activity. Since there were four classes, the same lesson was conducted four times, and the teachers were reminded that the same treatment method should be used in these four classes regardless of the students' proficiency.

#### *Previewing Activities*

Since high student engagement is linked to increased levels of student success (Dev, 1997), making the materials interesting and engaging was one of the major considerations when planning how the pre-video viewing activities were presented. The following is a brief description of how the activities were delivered by the two teachers in the experimental lesson.

Advance organizers of character and vocabulary.

In order to make the presentation of the two advance organizers meaningful to students, a context of ‘meeting your friends’ was provided. The teacher told the students two guests, Gromit and Wallace, were joining the lesson, and then showed their pictures to the students. A class discussion about Gromit and Wallace (e.g., appearance, hobbies) was then held, and students were asked whether they would like to make friends with them. Through this discussion, target vocabulary was elicited and introduced.

Predicting the video content and pre-teaching vocabulary.

After introducing the characters, the teacher told the students that Gromit and Wallace were going on a holiday. They were asked to guess their holiday destination. For low ability classes, choices were provided to ensure they could express their opinions. Students’ predictions (e.g., names of countries, space, planets) were written on the blackboard, which was then followed by vocabulary teaching.

*Classroom and Video Observations*

The author randomly selected two of the classes for classroom observation, Class A (low proficiency) and class C (average proficiency), and conducted live observations herself. While for the other two classes, Classes B and D, the author and the English Panel Head conducted the observations via video recordings.

*Student Engagement Self-Report Questionnaire*

The student engagement self-report questionnaire was administered immediately after the lesson.

**Data Analysis**

*Classroom and Video Observations*

An adapted classroom observation checklist was used for both classroom and video observations to determine which type of cognitive activities the previewing activities were (CETP, 2003, see the section ‘Classroom/video observations’ under ‘Instrument’, p. 8-9).

After the video observations, a discussion was held between the English Panel Head and the author where discrepancies were found in the video observation evaluation results of Class D. The video of this class was watched again until there was agreement between the two observers. Based on this standardization information, the author made adjustments to the observation results of Classes A and C.

*Student Engagement Self-Report Questionnaire*

Descriptive statistics (means and SD) from the five-point Likert Scale Student Engagement Self-report questionnaire were computed. An independent t-test was conducted to determine whether there were any significant mean differences in the seven items of the questionnaire between these two groups.

## Results and Discussion

Both the classroom and video observations showed that the pre-viewing activities were found to be confined not only to receipt of knowledge (e.g. students listened to lesson introduction and instruction), but also knowledge of representation (e.g., students were asked questions about the pictures), and construction of knowledge (e.g., students had to do prediction which is considered high order thinking). Thus the experimental lesson, on the whole, was considered interactive and engaging.

Generally, the students in the Average Proficiency Group performed better than the Low Proficiency Group in the three types of engagement suggested by *Schooling Issues Digest* (2005): emotional, cognitive, and behavioural. They showed more interest in both the lesson introduction and pre-video viewing activity. They were more willing to volunteer to answer the questions and make predictions, and were eager to find out whether their predictions were correct. Table 2 shows a summary observation report of these four classes.

Proficiency level was a possible reason explaining why the Low Proficiency Group appeared to be less engaged than the Average Proficiency Group. In fact, like the Average Proficiency Group, many students of the Low Proficiency Group also showed interest in the pictures about the characters, indicating both groups had similar emotional engagement levels at this stage. However, when a class discussion was held about the characters, they appeared to lose interest as they all kept quiet and looked bored, indicating low emotional, cognitive, and behavioural engagement levels. Their low proficiency level might account for this reaction. Most likely the Low Proficiency Group had difficulties in taking part in the class discussion due to their limited vocabulary or difficulty expressing themselves resulting in their lack of interest and reticence.

The same problem occurred when the students in the Low Proficiency Group were asked to predict where Gromit and Wallace went for their holiday. The students who were called upon to answer the questions had difficulties in pronouncing the words and expressing complicated ideas. It seems that their reticence and passiveness was caused by pronunciation and expression problems which stopped them from participating in the activities, suggesting that the teacher needs to provide more scaffolding to the students before doing an open class discussion.

Contrary to Ahlfedlt et al.'s (2005) research findings that students tended to have low emotional, cognitive and behavioural engagement in the teacher-centred activities, the students from the Average Proficiency Group were found to be very engaged and involved in the lesson introduction and instruction parts in which the teacher mainly did lecturing. It is interesting to note that the engagement performance of the Low Proficiency Group confirmed Ahlfedlt et al.'s argument because most of them looked bored and inattentive in these two parts. Students' learning attitude could be a probable

Table 2

*A Classroom and Video Presentation Report*

<b>Objectives and Procedures</b>	<b>Type of Instruction</b>	<b>Cognitive Activity</b>	<b>Student Engagement of Low Proficiency Group</b>	<b>Student Engagement of Average Proficiency Group</b>
Introduction: Give an overview of the lesson	Presentation	Receipt of knowledge	Low engagement- - 80% of the students were not listening. Teacher shouted to the students to engage their attention.	High engagement: - Above 80% of the students appeared to be attentive.
Advance organizer A: Character introduction and vocabulary introduction - Teacher introduced the two guests by using the pictures. - Teacher held a class discussion with students about Gromit and Wallace, through which target vocabulary was elicited/ introduced.	Presentation with class discussion	- Receipt of knowledge - Knowledge of representation	Low engagement - Many students appeared to show interest in the two pictures. - When being asked about the characters, they were all quiet. The teacher had to use name calling strategy to get responses. Students appeared to have difficulty in pronunciation and idea expression..	High engagement: - Above 80% of students appeared to show interest in the two pictures. - When asked about the characters, students were eager to answer questions. Some raised their hands and some shouted out the answers.

<p>Advance organizer B: pre-teaching vocabulary and predicting the video content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher asked students to predict Gromit and Wallace's holiday destination.</li> <li>- Students' predictions were written on the blackboard, followed by vocabulary teaching.</li> </ul>	<p>Presentation with class discussion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Receipt of knowledge</li> <li>- Knowledge construction</li> </ul>	<p>Mixed engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teacher needed to use the name calling strategy and provide prompts to make students speak up</li> <li>- On the whole the learning atmosphere was not enthusiastic.</li> <li>- Only the names of a few countries such as 'Japan' were elicited.</li> </ul>	<p>High engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students were eager to make guessing. Name calling strategies needed not be used.</li> <li>- They showed interest in the prediction activity and were eager to find out what the answer was.</li> <li>- Quite a lot of vocabulary was elicited.</li> </ul>
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factor to account for these different results. According to the teachers who had taught these two groups of students, the average proficiency classes were more motivated than those from the low proficiency classes. This suggests that highly motivated students tend to be more tolerant of teacher talk than low motivated students. Furthermore, it suggests that there should be a difference in activity design and selection for these two groups of students.

### Student Engagement Self-Report Questionnaire

Table 3 presents the results of the descriptive statistics (means and SD) of the five-point Likert scale Student Engagement Self-report questionnaire and results of the independent t-test. For all seven items on the questionnaire, the means of the two groups were generally above 3.5, suggesting that the pre-viewing activities were on the whole effective. However, the means of the Average Proficiency Group were found to be consistently higher than those of the Low Proficiency Group (range of means for Average Proficiency Group: 4.48-3.87; Low Proficiency Group: 4.31-3.49) confirming the classroom and video observation results that the average proficiency students tended to be more involved in the previewing activities emotionally, behaviourally and cognitively.

Table 3  
*Student Engagement Questionnaire Results*

	Average Proficiency group ( <i>n</i> = 54)		Low Proficiency Group ( <i>n</i> = 59)		Independent <i>t</i> -test: Sign
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<b>Emotional Engagement Item</b>					
Q1 I like the pre-viewing activities.	4.15	0.998	3.66	0.863	0.006*
Q5 The pre-viewing activities were interesting	3.93	1.079	3.53	1.056	0.049*
Q6 The video. "Wallace and Gromit in a grand day out", was interesting	4.48	1.077	4.31	1.118	0.396
Q7 Use of video can increase my interest in learning English	4.30	1.057	3.98	0.991	0.107
<b>Behavioural Engagement Item</b>					
Q2 I participated actively in the pre-viewing activities.	3.96	1.027	3.71	0.811	0.150
<b>Cognitive Engagement Item</b>					
Q3 The pre-viewing activities could develop my creativity	3.96	0.931	3.49	1.023	0.012*
Q4 The pre-viewing activities could help me understand the video	3.87	0.953	3.49	1.057	0.048*

Pre-viewing activities refer to use of pictures, pre-teaching vocabulary and prediction.

\* Significant at 95% confidence interval of the difference



An Independent t-test was conducted to determine whether there were any significant mean differences in these seven items between these two groups. It was interesting to notice that significant mean differences were only found in the emotional and cognitive items about the pre-viewing activities indicating that the average proficiency students perceived themselves to have higher emotional and cognitive level of engagement than the low proficiency students in these activities. No significant mean differences were found on the other three items in the questionnaire, which were related to the use of video in classrooms. This result was considered encouraging as it suggests that these two groups of students, regardless of their proficiency, held similar positive opinions about using video as instructional materials, further confirming the past research findings that video has a strong appeal to students.

In conclusion, video, if properly chosen, can serve as a motivator to increase students' interest in learning. The combined treatment of advance organizers (using pictorial cues to introduce characters, pre-teaching vocabulary) and prediction activities are on the whole able to increase student engagement. However, these positive effects were found to be stronger on average proficiency students than low proficiency students. The main reason for this seems to be related to the instructional methods used to deliver these previewing activities rather than the activities themselves. In order to ensure low proficiency students can benefit in similar way, the strategies of conducting these combined previewing activities have to be modified to suit their levels.

### **Pedagogical Suggestions**

Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that when using videos materials in classes, teachers should consider using not only advance organizers, which aim to provide students with background information and language input about the video in the previewing stage, but also a prediction activity, which requires students to predict what they are going to watch in the video. The reason for this is that prediction not only requires students to actively engage in a cognitive activity of knowledge construction, but also stimulates their imagination and arouses their curiosity, which can then enhance their participation, attention engagement as well as comprehension and interest in the video. It is believed that activities like this would particularly suit low-motivated students who need interesting materials to engage their attention.

The instructional strategies used to deliver the advance organizers and prediction activity deserve our attention. In order to ensure students do not turn to wild guessing when predicting, advanced organizers should be used before a prediction activity. The provision of some background information about the video will enable students to do the prediction more confidently and enjoy the activity more.

A theme-based approach could be adopted to present the advance organizers. A topic close to students' life experience could be chosen. With such a topic, a well-defined

context can be created for a teacher to present the advance organizers, and this stage may extend to a discussion allowing students to express their opinions and make predictions about the video and enabling vocabulary to be introduced.

The above treatment method may pose a challenge to low proficiency students as they are required to participate actively in the advance organizer discussion activity and the prediction activity. They may have difficulties in expressing their ideas due to limited vocabulary, pronunciation problems, and other linguistic limitations. The following three suggestions are made in order to overcome this problem. First, any key vocabulary that incidentally appears during the discussion should be written on the blackboard for pronunciation teaching and pronunciation practice. Second, if time allows, a prediction activity should be done in groups first before a class discussion. The group discussion provides a more anxiety-free environment for students to develop confidence in speaking, which will make them feel more ready for participation in open class discussions. And third, in order to ensure students are on task, worksheets should be provided to guide students to do the prediction sharing in groups before doing a class discussion, which is then followed by video viewing (see the Appendix for an example of this suggestion).

It is undeniable that the methods suggested above will use a lot of class time, and require teachers' meticulous lesson planning which is also time-consuming. But considering the benefits these activities can bring to students, the time and effort are certainly worth spending.

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### **About the Author**

*Winnie Lee is a Senior Instructor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction of the Faculty of Education at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her research interest focuses on teaching methodology, materials design, test design, and autonomous learning.*

## Appendix

### Video Comprehension Worksheet

#### A. Prediction Activity (individual work)

Spend two minutes predicting what Gromit and Wallace will bring to the moon. Put your answers in the space provided. (If you have any vocabulary you don't know, ask your teacher / classmates for help).

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#### B. Idea Sharing (groups of three)

Share your predictions with your group members. Jot down your group members' ideas in the space provided. Use the language expressions provided in the table below to help you to do the sharing.

Classmate A: \_\_\_\_\_

Classmate B: \_\_\_\_\_

Classmate C: \_\_\_\_\_

*Suggested language expressions:*

A: What will Wallace and Gromit bring to the moon?

B: I think they will bring \_\_\_\_\_ to the moon. How about you, C, What do you think?

C: I think they will bring \_\_\_\_\_.

#### C. Teacher Led-class Discussion

Teacher holds a class discussion with students on their predictions. Through this, target vocabulary can be introduced/elicited. If necessary, go through the vocabulary with students and teach pronunciation before video viewing.

#### D. Comprehension Worksheet:

You are going to watch the video, "Wallace and Gromit in a grand day out". When watching the video, check whether your predictions are correct. Then complete the worksheet below.

*What have Wallace and Gromit brought to the Moon?*

In their bags, we can find ten items and they are:

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## Conference Announcements

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**Inaugural APEC-RELC International Seminar.** April 19-21, 2010. SEAMEO Regional Language Centre in Singapore. In this 2010 seminar, APEC and SEAMEO RELC have come together to organize an event that will look at how language and economy are closely intertwined. The Seminar will look at the learning of languages and its relationship with the global economy. The theme is “Language Education: An Essential for a Global Economy.” Web site [http:// www.relc.org.sg](http://www.relc.org.sg)

**MATE-TESOL Haiti Conference.** June 24-25, 2010. MATE-TESOL will be holding a conference from at the Haitian American Institute, Port Au Prince, Haiti. The theme for the conference is “Strengthening English Language Learners Success.” E-mail: [jean-francois\\_vilmenay@yahoo.com](mailto:jean-francois_vilmenay@yahoo.com)

**English Teachers Association of Israel International Conference.** July 12-14, 2010. The ETAI International Conference will be held at the Ramada Hotel in Jerusalem. The theme is “linking through language.” The conference will focus on effective ELT at all stages and all levels The opening plenary will be given by David Crystal. E-mail: [jakar@gmail.com](mailto:jakar@gmail.com)

**Peru TESOL Conference.** July 31 to August 2, 2010. Peru TESOL will be holding a conference at the Universidad Catolica Santa Maria, Arequipa, Peru. The conference theme is “an intercultural approach to the teaching of English as a foreign language.” Web site [http:// www.perutesol.com](http://www.perutesol.com)



## Tips for Teachers

### Call for Tips

Have you or your colleagues found creative ways to . . .

- Cope with large multi-level classes
- Adapt high tech ideas for your low tech classroom
- Use prescribed teaching materials
- Scaffold for success when materials are difficult and expectations are high
- Minimize the negative backwash of high stakes testing
- Bridge the divide between home and school
- Achieve big results with small changes

OR

Do you have an activity that works every time?

If you can answer 'yes' to any of the above, please consider sharing your experience, or offer to collaborate with your colleague to share his or her experience as a 'Tip for Teachers' in the next issue of the *TESL Reporter*.

For details about how and where to submit your 'Teaching Tip', please see 'Notes to Contributors' inside the back cover of this volume of the *TESL Reporter*. Note that any submissions that cannot be accommodated in April 2010 will be considered for future issues.



## *Faces—Characters in Search of Authors*

### **Review by Dana Kampman**

Al Yamamah University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

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*Faces—Characters in Search of Authors*. Patrick R. Moran. 2008. Brattleboro: Pro Lingua Associates. ISB 13:978-0-86647-277-7; ISBN10:0-86647-277-0. (Photocopyable Resource), 116 pp. \$22.00

Have you ever seen someone intriguing and wondered, “Hmm, what’s her story?” The book *Faces—Characters in Search of Authors* gives you and your students the chance to stare unabashedly, ignite your imagination, find your words, and create one of a kind characters and stories. Patrick Moran has compiled a book of 50 faces waiting to be brought to life. The fifty hand drawn faces equally represent gender and five age groups. The faces intentionally lack detail. They are visually appealing yet void of color, makeup, jewelry, and facial expressions. The illustrations purposefully offer no hints at identity, nationality or cultural affiliation, thus allowing for endless possibilities and ultimate learning.

In the Teacher’s Guide, which is part of the book, Moran describes classroom activities that allow students to use language to bring the 50 faces to life. The Teacher’s Guide is divided into eight organized sections from “Creating the Character” to finally creating a “Cultural Identity.” Each section is packed with practical ideas for the classroom. The activities emphasize imagination and play while offering opportunities for learning languages and exploring cultures. Student authors partake in dialogues, discussions, and role-plays not as themselves but as a fictionalized character. This may lower inhibitions and create a relaxed playful environment for learners to engage with the material. From initially creating a brief biography of a person to debating topics, student authors are taken on a journey that allows them to build rich characters and extensive vocabulary and language. Furthermore, teachers are supported by Moran’s concrete illustrations of student work. The examples help the teachers carry out the suggested activities by visualizing the final products.

Moran had teachers and language learners in mind when creating this easy to use, versatile book. The book focuses on all four skills, is adaptable to all levels and languages, and elicits student-generated material while blending language and culture learning in a fun interactive way. *Faces—Characters in Search of Authors* is not meant to be a one-off activity. The faces are meant to be vehicles that precipitate a wealth of learning



opportunities. Moran has packed an incredible amount of language learning opportunities into his drawings of 50 faces. *Faces—Characters in Search of Authors* offers endless classroom possibilities for language learning and culture exploring.

### **About the Reviewer**

*Dana Kampman is currently teaching girls at Al Yamamah University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She has her MA in TESOL from SIT (School of International Training).. Dana loves people watching.*



## Notes to Contributors

The *TESL Reporter* is a refereed semiannual publication of the Department of English Language Teaching and Learning of Brigham Young University–Hawaii, and is dedicated to the dissemination of ideas and issues of interest to teachers of English to speakers of other languages worldwide.

**Articles:** Manuscripts (fully refereed) should be typed and double spaced throughout, generally not exceeding twenty-five pages. Each manuscript should be accompanied by a cover sheet with the title; author's name, position, and address; and a short (less than 50 words) bio-data statement. Identifying information should not appear elsewhere in the manuscript in order to insure an impartial review. Authors are encouraged to follow APA style and review past issues of the *TESL Reporter* for matters of style. Any tables, graphs, or illustrations should be sent in camera-ready form whenever possible.

It is expected that manuscripts submitted to the *TESL Reporter* are neither previously published nor being considered for publication elsewhere. Upon publication, authors will receive six complimentary copies of the issue in which their article is published. Manuscripts are generally not returned to authors. Authors should retain a personal copy.

**Tips For Teachers:** Manuscripts (chosen at the discretion of the editor) should be typed and double spaced throughout, generally not exceeding eight pages. Editor invites submissions in either paper or electronic format, preferably as a Word attachment to an e-mail message. Each manuscript should be accompanied by a cover sheet with the title; author's name, position, and address; and a short (less than 50 words) biodata statement. It is expected that manuscripts submitted to the *TESL Reporter* are neither previously published nor being considered for publication elsewhere. Upon publication, authors will receive three complimentary copies of the issue in which their "tip" is published. Manuscripts are generally not returned to authors. Authors should retain a personal copy. Submissions should be sent to Jean Kirschenmann, c/o Center for English Language Programs, Hawai'i Pacific University, 1188 Fort Street Mall Room 133, Honolulu, HI 96813, USA. Email: [jkirschenmann@hpu.edu](mailto:jkirschenmann@hpu.edu)

**Reviews** of recent textbooks, resource materials, tests, and non-print materials (films, tapes, or computer software) are also invited. Potential reviewers who indicate a particular area of interest to the review editor will be contacted concerning recent titles in that area. Requests for review guidelines should be addressed to the review editor. Authors of published reviews will receive two complimentary copies of the issue in which the review is published. Reviews can be sent to Review Editor, Amanda Wallace, BYU–Hawaii #1940, 55-220 Kulanui Street, Laie, HI 96762, USA, or by email to: [amanda.wallace@byuh.edu](mailto:amanda.wallace@byuh.edu)

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**Abstracts** of articles published in the *TESL Reporter* appear in *Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts*.

**Submission** of manuscripts can be sent to: Editor, *TESL Reporter*, BYU–Hawaii #1940, 55-220 Kulanui Street, Laie, HI 96762, USA, or by email to: [mark.wolfersberger@byuh.edu](mailto:mark.wolfersberger@byuh.edu)

