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Contents

Myths about Teaching and Learning Second Language Vocabulary: What Recent Research Says

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Introduction

Learning a language entails learning numerous aspects about that language, including its pronunciation, writing system, syntax, pragmatics, rhetorical modes for reading and composition, culture, and spelling, but the most important aspect is vocabulary. Recent second language (L2) research reflects this importance, as seen in the abundance of articles during this last decade. This research has looked at methods of vocabulary instruction (e.g., natural context or direct instruction) (Laufer & Shmueli, 1997; Zimmerman, 1997), learners' vocabulary learning strategies (Gu, 1994; Lessard-Clouston, 1994; Sanaoui, 1995; Nassaji, 2003), the development of L2 learners' vocabularies (Laufer, 1998; Schmitt, 1998; Nesselhauf, 2003), the use of L1 or L2 for initial word presentation (Prince, 1995; Grace, 1998), the effect of different practice activities on learning (Joe, 1995, 1998; Folse, 1999), the number of words L2 learners need to know (Hazenberg & Hulstijn, 1996), and which words students need to know (Coxhead, 2000; Liu, 2003).

The findings of these studies cast doubt on common myths about L2 vocabulary teaching and learning (Folse, 2004b). This paper focuses on the following eight myths: (1) Vocabulary is not as important in learning a foreign language as grammar or other areas. (2) It is not good to use lists of words when learning vocabulary. (3) Vocabulary should be presented in semantic sets. (4) The use of translations is a poor way to learn new vocabulary. (5) Guessing words from context is as productive for foreign language learners as it is for first language learners. (6) The best vocabulary learners make use of only one or two effective specific vocabulary learning strategies. (7) Foreign language learners should use a monolingual dictionary. (8) Vocabulary is sufficiently covered in our curricula and courses. In this article, I will present research findings to reject each of these myths.

Myth 1

Vocabulary is Not as Important in Learning a Foreign Language as Grammar or Other Areas

Comprehensible input helps learners figure out how a language works. If the language that a learner is hearing or reading has many unknown words, then that language is not comprehensible and therefore cannot be input. In other words, without vocabulary, comprehensible input is neither comprehensible nor input. Adult ESL learners are keenly aware of their "vocabulary plight." Learners *need* vocabulary and see acquisition of vocabulary as their greatest challenge (Green & Meara, 1995; Meara, 1980).

Two of the most important skills for academic-bound ESL students are reading and writing. The relationship between L2 vocabulary knowledge and L2 reading ability is clear (Haynes, 1993; James, 1996). Huckin & Bloch (1993) point out, "Research has shown that second-language readers rely heavily on vocabulary knowledge, and that a lack of vocabulary knowledge is the largest obstacle for second-language readers to overcome" (p. 154). Haynes and Baker (1993) found the main obstacle for L2 readers not to be a lack of reading strategies but rather insufficient vocabulary knowledge in English. Laufer & Sim (1985) list these areas in order of decreasing importance in reading ability in L2: knowledge of vocabulary, subject matter, discourse markers, and syntactic structure. In sum, Laufer and Sim find that vocabulary is most important, syntax least important.

Paralleling its role in L2 reading, a large L2 vocabulary base can have a significant effect on learners' writing skills (Laufer, 1998) and in listening and speaking tasks (Joe, 1995). Though correlation does not imply causality, empirical studies have shown that good L2 readers, writers, speakers, and listeners know much more vocabulary.

For far too long, the emphasis in ESL has mistakenly been on grammar. Learners can express themselves with poor grammar; in fact, much to the chagrin of ESL teachers, they do this quite frequently. However, with poor vocabulary, communication is constrained considerably. You can get by without grammar; you cannot get by without vocabulary.

As a foreign language learner in Latin America, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Japan, I managed quite well with limited grammar; however, my worst and (in hindsight) sometimes funniest communication breakdown experiences were when I did not know the appropriate vocabulary. On one occasion, I spent a long and trying hour in a small store in Japan trying to purchase flour without knowing the word for *flour* in Japanese. I couldn't draw it. I couldn't explain it. At one point, I even tried saying "pre-bread," but that just produced more looks of confusion. In the end, I left

the store without the flour. I had mastered beginning level polite forms for "Excuse me, where is the _____?" but I did not know the Japanese word for *flour* to fill in that key blank space. Lack of grammar knowledge can limit conversation; lack of vocabulary knowledge can stop conversation.

Myth 2

It is Not Good to Use Lists of Words When Learning Vocabulary

Using lists may be boring for some learners, but there is no evidence to show that learners do not fare well with lists, nor is there empirical evidence that students without lists fare better than those with lists. In fact, some learners prefer rote learning to communicative methods. This preference could be due to their educational background which relies heavily on rote learning, or it could also be due to individual learner differences. Regardless of the reason, students *can* learn from lists.

Using simple vocabulary lists can yield better vocabulary retention than relying on lists with more information, e.g., example sentences. In a study of Hebrew speakers studying EFL, Laufer and Shmueli (1997) compared four modes of presentation, including lists: (1) words presented in isolation, (2) words in minimal context, i.e., in one meaningful sentence, (3) words in text context, and (4) words in elaborated text context. Results showed that less information was better. Retention scores for word recognition were superior when less information or limited context was given about the word (as in modes 1 and 2) and inferior when more information or extended context was given (as in modes 3 and 4).

In another study on the use of lists in learning L2 vocabulary, Prince (1995) examined the role of learners' L2 proficiency and mode of presentation, i.e., L1 translations or L2 context (in a series of L2 sentences). Prince found that less proficient students were able to recall more items when they had learned the words in the translation condition rather than in the context condition. Therefore, this research showed that some students perform better when they were given only a list of L2 words and their translations.

Just because a list can be effective does not mean that teachers should hand a list to students and ask them to learn the list. The content of the list is the target, and it is up to the teacher to come up with ways to present sections of the list to students in interesting, meaningful ways and then provide relevant oral and written practice activities.

Many good lists exist for different types of learners. Very young learners might benefit from the Dolch list, which is a list of 220 sight words, so called because these high frequency words do not follow the basic rules of English phonics and must therefore be recognized by sight, not by sounding them out. The list was prepared in

1936 but is still relevant; it includes mostly function words and is especially useful for kindergarten to middle elementary level students.

Two promising lists for adult learners are the University Word List (UWL) and the Academic Word List (AWL). Published in 1984, the UWL consists of 808 words that occur frequently in academic text materials. The AWL, published in 1998, consists of 570 word families (e.g., *concentrate* also includes *concentrated*, *concentrates*, *concentrating*, and *concentration*) that occur in a wide variety of types of academic text materials. (Both lists can be obtained on the Internet through a simple search.)

Myth 3

Vocabulary Should be Presented in Semantic Sets

Research does not tell us what the best way to organize new vocabulary is, but it certainly speaks to what a bad way is: The commonly used organization of words into semantic groups is not a good technique. In fact, it actually confuses learners and can hinder vocabulary retention. Organization by semantic sets continues, however, because it is much easier for textbook writers and teachers to present vocabulary in semantic sets such as family members, animals, or days of the week than design creative vignettes to accommodate all of the words in a vocabulary list. The bottom line, though, is that research shows that learners remember vocabulary more easily when the vocabulary is presented in thematic sets such as a trip to the beach or my cousin's birthday party.

Here is a simple example of how words from the semantic sets of family members, animals, and days of the week could be distributed into the thematic set of a trip to the beach: *Last Saturday I went to the beach with my brother and cousin. My brother wanted to take his pet bird with us, but my cousin and I talked him out of such a crazy idea. My cousin called his parents to make sure it was all right for him to go with us. Of course they said yes. We had a great time at the beach. We saw lots of people and lots of fish. When we got home Saturday night, we talked about going to the beach again on Sunday. We we really tired, so we decided to get up late on Sunday morning.*

In this very brief passage, which would have follow-up questions that would also promote frequency of vocabulary retrieval for the learners, two days of the week are mentioned (*Saturday*, *Sunday*), two animals are mentioned (*cat*, *fish*), and three family members are mentioned (*brother*, *cousin*, *parents*). This presentation may also be superior because the items presented are higher frequency than other semantic set members (Saturday and Sunday are more frequent than Wednesday and Thursday) and because they are in frequent collocations (*Saturday and Sunday*, *Saturday night*, *Sunday morning*).

The research findings here are quite clear. Tinkham (1993) found that learners had more difficulty learning new words presented to them in semantic clusters than they did learning semantically unrelated words. In a replication using only Japanese learners, Waring (1997) found that learners needed about 50% more time to learn related word pairs than unrelated pairs. Tinkham (1997) found that semantic grouping actually had a negative effect on vocabulary learning while thematic clustering facilitated learning. Similarly, Olsen (1999) found that Norwegian EFL learners were more easily confused when difficult pairs such as *sea* and *see* or *want* and *won't* were presented at the same time.

Myth 4

The Use of Translations is a Poor Way to Learn New Vocabulary

Let me be clear: I am not advocating a return to the translation method. Without a doubt, teachers need to encourage the use of the target language in the classroom for all the obvious reasons. However, when learners first encounter a new word, it is normal for them to translate the word in their head or in their notebook.

The myth is that students must learn new English words in English, as if establishing a mental link with the L1 translation were somehow harmful. Research shows that translation is not only what learners prefer but also more effective than English glosses. Numerous empirical studies have shown the value of L1 translations in vocabulary-learning activities (Hulstijn, 1992; Knight, 1994; Prince, 1995; Chun & Plass, 1996; Laufer & Shmueli, 1997; Grace, 1998; Laufer & Hulstijn, 1998).

Vocabulary expert Paul Nation (1982) concludes that learning vocabulary is faster for many learners if the meaning of the word is given through an L1 translation first. Hulstijn, Hollander, and Greidanus (1996) found that marginal gloss translations of French vocabulary resulted in better vocabulary learning. In a study of Dutch university students of Italian, Lotto and de Groot (1998) found that word retention scores were significantly higher for the students who worked with translations than for those who had pictures. In a study of English speakers learning French, Grace (1998) found that translation is a viable if not preferable option for many L2 learners at the beginning level. Her results showed that students who had access to a glossary in their L1 were more successful at retaining new vocabulary, probably because they had the opportunity to confirm the correct meanings. In an EFL study, Laufer and Shmueli (1997) found that words glossed in the L1 were always retained better than words glossed in English regardless of presentation mode. Finally, Prince (1995) found that less proficient students were able to recall more items when they had learned the words in the translation condition rather than in the context condition. Thus, this research

showed that some students perform better when they were given only a list of L2 words and their translations.

Research is clear: Translations are not bad; translations are in fact a helpful tool in learning new foreign language vocabulary. Our focus now should be on questions such as when (proficiency level) translations are most effective, whether translations work better with certain kinds of vocabulary (e.g., verbs or idioms), and whether translations work better at the initial presentation stage or subsequent review stages.

Myth 5

Guessing Words From Context is as Productive For Foreign Language Learners as it is For First Language Learners

For a native speaker, there may be only one unknown word in a passage, and all of the other words present the native speaker with a context consisting of 100% known words. The L2 learner with the same reading passage, on the other hand, most likely faces *multiple* unknown words that serve as nonclues or misleading clues (Folse, 2002; Folse, 2004b). In spite of their lexical knowledge, native English speakers are not very successful at guessing word meanings from real contexts because helpful context clues are rare in real language excerpts (Schatz & Baldwin, 1986). Therefore, it is unclear why we expect L2 learners, who lack the linguistic luxuries possessed by native speakers, to be successful at this when native speakers are in fact not so good at it.

Of all the myths, perhaps this one causes the most debate. This myth, like many of the others, has its root in the false assumption that learning a second language is a very similar process to learning our first language. These two processes are in fact quite different. In our L1, we did not explicitly learn most of our vocabulary; we acquired our vocabulary through seeing and hearing the words numerous times in many contexts. In contrast, an L2 learner does not have the luxury of encountering a word numerous times. Most adult learners have a very short time to achieve a certain degree of fluency in the L2. They do not have the luxury of the time needed to do the extensive amount of reading necessary to meet academic vocabulary multiple times in natural language.

At the height of the emphasis on communication and "natural approach" techniques, instruction that included language components such as grammar, spelling, and vocabulary and teacher actions such as error correction was greatly frowned upon. Vocabulary was not explicitly or systematically taught; it was assumed that students would automatically acquire whatever material—including vocabulary—that was made available by the comprehensible input. Students (and teachers in training) were encouraged not to focus on unknown words but rather to focus on understanding the gist.

Ironically, a learner must have a large vocabulary to be able to guess the meaning of unknown words from surrounding context clues successfully. This puts lower proficiency students or students with less vocabulary at a distinct disadvantage. In research on the effect of type of written practice exercise (Folse, 1999), I found that learners who know more words are able to use those known words to learn even more words from context. Stanovich (1986) and James (1996) discuss this so-called "Matthew effect," the phenomenon by which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. (The parable from which this is taken appears in Matthew 25:14-30, specifically verse 29.)

In a seminal study, Hulstijn (1992) concludes that using natural context to guess word meanings is a very complex and error-prone process for L2 learners. He found that while learners are more likely to remember the form and meaning of a word when they have inferred its meaning by themselves than when the meaning has been given to them, these same learners are more likely to infer an *incorrect* meaning of an unknown L2 word in an L2 text when no cue has been given to its meaning.

What ESL students need is *not* just exposure to reading materials; they need reading with explicit, planned vocabulary work. In a study of adult intermediate ESL students in a university (n = 38), Wesche and Paribakht (1994) compared a reading-only group with a reading-plus-treatment (i.e, with follow-up written practice exercises) group. While the reading-only group did have substantial gains in word knowledge, the gains were significantly larger in the reading-plus-treatment group and exhibited a greater depth of knowledge of the target words.

Myth 6

The Best Vocabulary Learners Make use of Only One or Two Effective Specific Vocabulary Learning Strategies

The existence of one specific "magical" strategy for learning foreign language vocabulary is a myth. The truth is that there are numerous good vocabulary learning strategies, and there are bad ones, too. What research shows is that good learners use a wide variety of vocabulary learning strategies; however, the good students have developed an individualized set of strategies that works best for their needs and personalities.

In a qualitative study of French-as-a-second-language learners in British Colombia, Sanaoui (1995) found that learners' proficiency level and type of instruction did not impact their vocabulary learning; what mattered was the individual learner's approach toward overall vocabulary learning: structured or unstructured. The good learners had a specific plan or strategy for learning English, including vocabulary, while the weaker students did not. In other words, it does not seem to

matter so much what students do with new vocabulary *provided that they do something and that they do this consistently.*

This finding is corroborated in studies of a wide array of learners, including Sudanese EFL learners (Ahmed, 1989), Canadian ESL as well as EFL learners (Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999), and Hong Kong EFL learners (Fan, 2003). Schmitt and Schmitt (1993) conducted a large-scale study of Japanese EFL learners' strategies. This line of research is practical because teachers can easily train learners to be better vocabulary learners.

In sum, two points should be stressed. First, no vocabulary learning strategy is a substitute for knowing vocabulary. Second, no single strategy is better than another. The most successful learners not only have more strategies at their command but also use them more extensively and more consistently.

Myth 7

Foreign Language Learners Should Use a Monolingual Dictionary.

Possibly due to our field's general aversion to translation, bilingual dictionaries have been frowned upon. ESL teachers often insist their students use an English-English dictionary as soon as possible. Many teachers discourage the use of dictionaries altogether, advising learners to guess at word meaning from context and to use dictionaries—bilingual or monolingual—as a last resort (Knight, 1994). In a survey of 75 teachers' preferences for student dictionaries (Folse, 2001), 37% of teacher respondents favor English-English dictionaries, 32% favor use of context clues, and only 5% allow students to use bilingual dictionaries. Clearly, teachers look down on bilingual dictionaries. Textbooks often reflect this, too. Haynes (1993) notes that ESL reading textbooks tend to promote guessing the meaning of an unknown word from the context over looking up the word in a dictionary. In addition, some textbooks in her survey went so far as to state that dictionary work should be banned from the classroom.

In contrast to teacher preferences and textbook recommendations, research shows that learners who use a dictionary learn more vocabulary than those who rely on guessing from context and that learners who use a bilingual dictionary actually remember vocabulary better than those using a monolingual dictionary. In a study of 293 Japanese EFL students, Luppescu and Day (1993) found that the use of a bilingual dictionary can increase vocabulary learning. The researchers also note that though teachers have definite views on what kind of dictionaries should be used during reading, these views are not based on any empirical evidence. In a study of 105 learners of Spanish, Knight (1994) found that the use of a bilingual dictionary during a reading activity resulted in the learning of more words along with higher reading comprehension scores than relying on guessing from context clues.

Besides the monolingual-bilingual dichotomy, a third dictionary option now exists, especially in EFL markets, namely bilingualized dictionaries. This kind of dictionary is actually a semibilingual dictionary. The L2 entry is followed by an L2 definition, an L1 translation, and an L2 example sentence or phrase. Thus, a bilingualized dictionary provides what a good monolingual dictionary provides, that is, not only a definition but also a collocation, in addition to a translation. Research studies (Laufer & Hadar, 1997; Laufer & Kimmel, 1997) have shown positive results for this type of dictionary.

In sum, there is no research to support the myth that a bilingual dictionary is bad or that a monolingual dictionary is inherently better for ultimate word retention. ESL learners should use the type of dictionary that they feel most comfortable with when looking up the meaning of an unknown English word.

Myth 8

Vocabulary is Sufficiently Covered Enough in Our Curricula and Courses

A perusal of any ESL textbook will quickly reveal that chapters and therefore books are arranged by grammar points. Explicit attention to vocabulary is rare. There may be a grammar box, a pairwork activity, and a pronunciation activity as well as a few questions about the vocabulary in a reading passage, but specific instruction in vocabulary is scant. For instance, when vocabulary lists do exist, they are relegated to the back of the chapter.

So what is currently happening in ESL programs for adult learners? In Folse (2004a), I observed 50 hours of classes in an intensive academic ESL program. The purpose of this investigation was to get a clear picture of the extent of vocabulary instruction in the school's curriculum. Three findings emerged from this study. First, there was no overall plan of vocabulary instruction in the curriculum. Whereas grammar had been taken into account across all levels, words were taught as needed. Many daily class activities did not stretch students' language, and as a result, very little new vocabulary was introduced. Only a few teachers wrote new vocabulary on the board, and most teachers did very little with this vocabulary. Furthermore, there was almost no follow-up practice of the new vocabulary, i.e., little to no recycling. Second, the most common student language question to arise in *all* five daily classes—grammar, reading, writing, speaking, and TOEFL—was vocabulary. Interestingly, even in the grammar class, the most frequently asked language question was not about grammar but rather about vocabulary in the lesson. This finding is especially important because ESL grammar textbooks are almost always written so that the vocabulary is never problematic and that the grammar will stand out more and therefore be easier to learn.

Third, the class where vocabulary was covered most depended on the *instructor*, not the class subject.

Vocabulary is not systematically covered in most curricula. For this reason, ESL learners—even after completing an English course successfully—say in exit surveys that they need much more vocabulary practice and instruction (Flaitz, 1998; Henrichsen in James, 1996; Tan in James, 1996; James, 1996).

Conclusion

Perhaps the recent interest in second language vocabulary research will also mean a rethinking of the way we approach the teaching of vocabulary—including the necessity to teach vocabulary extensively—to our students. For too long, second language teaching has been dominated by an emphasis on communication, but accurate communication depends largely on an extensive knowledge of vocabulary. A good curriculum is based on student needs, and vocabulary knowledge is high on student priority lists. It is time to listen not only to the data from these studies but also to our students who are all too aware of their lack of L2 vocabulary knowledge.

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Teaching With Attitude: A Pilot Study of Cultures and Learning in an ESP Class

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Introduction

Theories and Questions

In the last two decades, there has been increasing interest in the relationship between teaching, learning, language and culture. Two strands of theory and research stimulated this pilot study of the experiences and attitudes of teachers from diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds.

First, from the field of western educational psychology, there is interest in the quality of learning at all levels of education. The model of *deep* and *surface* learning (Biggs, 1987) has inspired many studies aimed at identifying the most successful approaches which foster the development of higher order cognitive skills. Studies of adult students (Marton & Säljö, 1984; Dart, 1995) show that those who conceive of learning in terms of a quantitative increase in knowledge are unlikely to adopt a deep approach to learning, whereas those for whom learning means the abstraction of principles or conceptual development, are more likely to adopt such approaches. Moreover, a strong relationship has been found between conceptions of teaching and learning held by university lecturers, and those same lecturers' approaches to teaching (Trigwell & Prosser, 1995; Kember, 1998). These studies suggest that just as students' approaches to learning are limited by their ideas about learning, so too may teachers' approaches to teaching be limited by their conceptions of both teaching and learning.

The second strand of research relevant to this study is the examination by applied linguists of the relationships between educational value systems, culture and language education. A model of imperialism has been used to analyse the spread of English language teaching (ELT) in the world (e.g., Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994). Here, the power relationship between the *centre* and *periphery* of an empire is equated with that between the centres of expertise, research and training in ELT, particularly in Britain and the U.S.A., and the periphery of third world nations supplying the learners. Pennycook (1994) has pointed out that teaching methods are cultural practices, and are likely to fail when they are introduced to contexts where traditions and norms are very different. For example, there are many reports of English language teachers

encountering resistance when attempting to introduce communicative methods beyond the *centre* context (e.g., Harvey, 1985; Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Watkins, 1998; Cipolloni, 2003).

There have been many attempts to categorise educational philosophies, curricula and methodologies (e.g., Tickoo, 1990), but only the two which inform this pilot study are outlined below.

Models of Language Teaching Cultures

* The integrationist/collectionist model, first proposed by Bernstein (1971), was developed by A. Holliday (1994, 1997, 1999) in his theory of international cultures of language teaching. Holliday, like Pennycook above, found that culture is the point on which the success of teaching and learning turns. His theory proposes two distinct contexts in ELT: Britain, Australasia and North America (BANA) and state education in the rest of the world (TESEP). These are characterized by fundamental differences between the typical interaction patterns of people in classrooms, summarized in the top half of Table 1. However, Holliday also emphasized that two other groups of factors operate in both these international contexts: local and individual cultures of educational institutions, and aspects of national, religious and class cultures.
* Skilbeck's framework (1982) of three different educational value systems: classical humanism, reconstructionism and progressivism, was applied by Clark (1987) to foreign language teaching. While these systems have succeeded each other historically in the west, they are not discrete, but exist contemporaneously, each one having a greater or lesser importance in different educational contexts. Clark's analysis included the implications of each system for language teaching in the areas of syllabus, methodology, assessment, classroom activities, the role of teachers and style of curriculum renewal. These are summarized in the lower half of Table 1 below.

Table 1

Models of International Cultures of Language Teaching

	Categories	Characteristics
Bernstein (1971) Holliday (1992)	1. Collectionist (TESEP)	* strong subject boundaries * didactic, teacher-centered approaches
	2. Integrationist BANA)	* cross-disciplinary * skills-based, collaborative approaches

(Table 1 Cont'd)

	Categories	Characteristics
Skilbeck (1982) Clark (1987)	1. Classical humanist	* subject-centred * transmission of knowledge/cultural values * grammar translation methods
	2. Reconstructionist	* oriented to society's practical needs * skills-based * structural syllabus, audio-lingual methods
	3. Progressive	* development of individual * process oriented-communicative methods

It can be seen that in ELT, classical humanism roughly corresponds to TESEP/collectionist/grammar translation methods, while progressivism corresponds to BANA/integrationist/communicative methods. Aspects of reconstructionism, typified in ELT by structural syllabus and audio-lingual methods, can be found on both sides of the binary models of Holliday and Bernstein.

These models and theories are difficult to test, but need to be evaluated if a series of trial-and-error approaches to ELT curriculum innovation is to be avoided. Do aspects of learners' and teachers' cultural and educational backgrounds predict the effectiveness of particular methodologies? If so, it could be better for English teachers in TESEP contexts to adapt to their institutional culture rather than try to get their students to adopt the foreign learning methods of communicative approaches. Yet some of the practices preferred in the TESEP context (e.g., mass chanting, rote-memory testing), could be seen as limiting students' learning. The linguistic imperialism model seems to implicitly deny any intrinsic differences in the quality or effectiveness of teaching practices, yet a concern for improving the quality of education cannot simply be dismissed as ethnocentric.

An opportunity to investigate these questions in a small way was presented by a diverse group of 12 teachers in an ESP course, English for Teachers (EFT), held in Sydney. The teachers, all advanced learners of English, had studied, qualified and taught in non-English speaking countries before migrating to Australia. They included

both primary and secondary teachers from Burma, Egypt, India, Iraq, Pakistan, Peru, and Uruguay. Their aim was to pass a test of professional English proficiency and gain teacher registration from the state education authority.

Aim

To investigate several factors in the participants' learning and teaching experiences and the relationships between them.

1. their own school education, including English
2. their teaching practice in their countries of origin
3. their conceptions of teaching
4. their conceptions of learning
5. the qualities they most value in teachers
6. their preferred learning activities, as students in EFT

Method

An observation-based questionnaire in six parts was designed to elicit information about the respondents' experiences both as students and teachers in their countries of origin. This questionnaire type was selected as it has been shown to be superior to types based on judgement or attitude in student evaluations of teaching (Eley & Stecher, 1995). It was also considered important to avoid asking the participants to make value judgements about their own schooling or teaching. Statements were constructed about systems, curricula and classroom activities in line with Clark's model (after Skilbeck, 1982). Examples from each of the six sections are given below.

Section 1 Your Experiences as a School Student

B Foreign Language Curriculum *(8 items)*

Think about your classes in English or other foreign languages when you were a school student. Read each statement and decide how often you observed or experienced this happening in your foreign language classes. Tick (✔) usually; sometimes; rarely or never, to best describe the situation in your classes.

4. *Students practiced English by translating sentences, using the grammar rules and vocabulary the teacher presented.*

….. usually ….. sometimes …..rarely …..never

Section 2 Your Experiences as a Teacher

A multiple-choice format allowed selection among three alternatives in line with Clark's model. Information about curriculum aims, teaching program and teaching resources was elicited in this way.

C Class Activities

Read each statement and decide, in your experience of teaching, which activity you spend most of your lesson time doing. Rank them from ***1 (most frequent)*** *to* ***5 (least frequent)****.*

.... explaining subject content to the whole class

.... monitoring and helping individual students as they worked on set tasks

Sections 3 and 4 Your Ideas about Teaching and Learning

Section 3 and 4 required respondents to rank definitions of teaching and learning. These definitions, which constitute a hierarchy, derive from studies of adult students (Marton & Säljö, 1984) and of university teachers (Trigwell & Prosser, 1995). Those lower in the hierarchy tend to be equated with surface learning, and those higher with deep learning. As these definitions can also be calibrated with Clark's classification of language education, it seemed important to discover if this link existed for the respondents.

Below are some definitions of teaching. Think about your own experiences as a teacher and decide which definition has been most true or most important to you. Rank them from ***1 (most important)*** *to* ***6 (least important)****.*

..... A teacher transmits the content or ideas of the syllabus to students.

Section 5 Qualities of an Excellent Teacher

Section 5 attempted to elicit the teaching qualities and practices which the respondents valued most highly. The practices were described in behavioral terms, in an attempt to keep the evaluations linked to classroom reality rather than to an ideal.

Below are some characteristics of good teachers. Think about an excellent teacher you admired as a high school student. Decide which qualities or behaviour were most important in forming your high opinion of this teacher. Rank them from ***1 (most important)*** *to* ***10 (least important)****. If any important qualities are not included in this list, write them in the space provided below.*

..... The teacher had an excellent knowledge of the subject

..... The teacher pointed out the practical applications of everything we learned.

Section 6 Your Preferred Learning Activities in this Course

Finally, in section 6, the respondents were asked to rank ten learning activities used in EFT. This was in order to discover any relationship between their experiences of teaching and learning in their countries of origin, their attitudes to those processes and their own preferences as adult students of English in Australia.

What are the learning activities you prefer in this course? Rank the activities below from ***1 (most preferred)*** *to* ***10 (least preferred)****.*

..... *doing practice tests in class under exam conditions with a time limit*

..... *doing practice tests in class in a group, discussing and comparing answers*

Results

Nine valid questionnaires were completed. The results for each questionnaire are presented below, then the consistency of the individual responses is considered.

Sections 1 and 2

Table 2

Summary of Sections 1 and 2—Student and Teaching Experiences

	Classical humanist	Reconstruct-ionist	Progressive	Mixed
1. Student experiences				
A. school system	7	-	1	1
B. language curriculum	6	3	-	-
2. Teaching experiences				
A. teaching program	4	3	1	1
B. curriculum aims	2	6	1	-
C. class activities	3	4	1	1
D. assessment	4	3	1	1
E. teaching resources	3	1	1	3

It is clear that most respondents had attended schools in the classical humanist tradition. Most had also experienced this tradition in their English classes, which usually consisted of translation exercises.

About half the respondents chose characteristics of their teaching identified as classical humanist, and half chose those identified as reconstructionist. It is interesting

that two-thirds chose reconstructionist curriculum aims, and this may indicate that it is easier to change official policies than class activities. One response was consistently in the progressive tradition. The result for *E. teaching resources* were inconsistent, probably because the available funds were as much a determiner of the school's situation as educational philosophy.

Sections 3 and 4

Table 3 below displays the correlation between the respondents' ideas about teaching and learning. Only the definitions ranked 1. (*most important or most true for you*) have been correlated.

The definitions of both teaching and learning are arranged in a hierarchy from A, the most limiting (reproductive model) to the most sophisticated (constructive model). Definitions E and F for teaching and D and E for learning are those which enable teaching approaches which encourage deep learning by students (Trigwell & Prosser, 1995, pp. 391-2).

Table 3

Summary of Sections 3 and 4—
Ideas About Teaching and Learning Ranked (most important)

Ideas about teaching	**Ideas about learning**				
	A	B	C	D	E
A. A teacher transmits the contents or ideas of the syllabus to students	-	-	1	-	-
B. A teacher transmits his or her own knowledge to students	-	-	-	-	-
C. A teacher helps students to learn the content or ideas of the syllabus	-	-	4	-	-
D. A teacher helps students to learn the knowledge the teacher possesses	-	-	1	-	-
E. A teacher helps students to develop ideas.	-	-	2	-	1
F. A teacher helps students to change their ideas.	-	-	-	-	-

Ideas About Learning

A. Learning is gaining more knowledge

B. Learning is memorizing.

C. Learning is gaining facts, methods and skills which can be stored and used when necessary.

D. Learning is gaining a general understanding of principles.

E. Learning is a process of interpreting reality.

It can be seen that for half the sample, there is a clear correlation between their ideas about teaching and learning, five choosing C or D for teaching and C for learning. This configuration fits with Clark's profile of reconstructionist values (1987, pp. 14-15). Therefore, the reconstructionist conception of learning and teaching was very dominant. These conceptions could limit teachers to approaches which encouraged surface rather than deep learning (Trigwell & Prosser, 1995; Kimber, 1998; Biggs, 1999). However, it is also important to note that all the respondents chose at least one of the higher order conceptions as their second or third ranking.

Section 5

Table 4

Summary of Section 5—The Qualities of an Excellent Teacher

Qualities		1	2	3	Total
1.	excellent knowledge of the subject(s) - CH	3	1	-	4
2.	pointed out the practical applications -R	1	1	1	3
3.	strong personality which attracted students -CH	3	1	1	5
4.	explained work and answered questions clearly -CH	-	1	1	2
5.	set interesting and challenging tasks -R/P	1	2	-	3
6.	kept firm but fair discipline in class	-	1	-	1
7.	made the students think for themselves -P	-	-	1	1
8.	kind, helpful and encouraging to every student	1	2	4	7
9.	gave regular tests on work covered in class -R	-	-	-	-
10.	encouraged them to do individual projects -P	-	-	1	1

Codes
CH - classical humanist
R - reconstructionist
P - Progressive

Overall, the two top ranking qualities of a highly esteemed teacher in these students' experiences were *1 - excellent knowledge* and *3 - strong personality.* While it could be argued that personality factors are independent of educational value systems, a strong personality is seen here as a valued trait for the teacher-focused, transmission strategy classroom, where "strength" is needed to dominate and direct whole-class activity. Therefore, the selection of 3 supports the selection of 1 and together they reflect the respondents' classical humanist schooling. It is interesting that *8 kind and encouraging* was the most frequently selected of all the qualities, but was seen by most respondents as ranking third—a valued support for more important characteristics.

Section 6

Table 5

Summary of Section 6—Preferred Learning Activities

Learning Activities		1	2	3	Total
1.	doing assignments at home by myself	-	-	-	-
2.	computer room or language lab	1	-	3	4
3.	practice tests in class - time limits	3	5	-	8
4.	practice tests in class - group discussions	2	-	2	4
5.	teacher explains correct answers	-	1	1	2
6.	listening to teacher or guest presentation	-	-	1	1
7.	working on set task in small group	-	1	1	2
8.	discussion - whole class and teacher	1	-	-	1
9.	role plays and microteaching	1	1	1	3
10.	individual help from teacher	-	1	1	2

The favorite class activities were 3 and 4 *(practice tests)*, all but one subject choosing 3 - practice tests in class with a time limit—as their first or second preferred learning activity. Fewer subjects chose the social-oriented *4- practice tests in a group, discussing and comparing answers.* This does not correlate with the results in Table 4 (the qualities of an excellent teacher), where *9 (gave regular tests)* was the only one of ten characteristics not ranked in the top three by any subject! This result could well be explained by the respondents' total focus at the time of their English proficiency test, which they were to sit only two weeks after the questionnaire was administered. It is

possible that their responses would have been different for courses not leading to an external gateway examination.

Correlations For Individual Respondents

Table 6 shows the profile, according to Clark's classification, of the individual responses to the first five sections of the questionnaire. The responses to Section 6 have been categorized in terms of a preference for individual, group, or whole class activities, and task or teacher orientation. The table enables the consistency of each individual's responses to be seen.

Table 6

Individual Questionnaire Response Profiles

Subject	Questionnaire sections					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	CH	CH	R	R	CH	indiv/teacher
2	CH	R	R	R	R	indiv/teacher
3	CH	R	R	R	R	group/task
4	CH	CH	R	R	R	indiv/whole/task
5	CH	CH	CH	R	CH	indiv/whole/teacher
6	CH	R	P	R	R	indiv/
7	CH	CH/R	R	R	CH	group/teacher
8	CH	R	R	R	CH	indiv/group/task
9	R/P	P	P	P	P	group/whole/task

It can be seen that each respondent's profile is consistent, showing a classical humanist school experience followed by teaching experiences modified to a greater or lesser degree by reconstructionism. Ideas about teaching and learning are nearly all reconstructionist. Those with a classical humanist teaching experience were more likely to choose classical humanist teaching characteristics as most important in Section 5.

From Table 5, the respondents' preferred learning activities would not appear to be predictable from the pattern of their responses to other sections of the questionnaire. However, it may be significant that the respondent with the strongest classical

humanist profile has a preference for individual and whole class teacher controlled activities, and the only subject with a progressive profile has a preference for group and whole class task oriented activities.

Discussion

It was found that Clark's model fit the sample teacher's education experiences well. While engaged on the task, all respondents appeared to quickly recognize items as relevant or not to their experience and thus completed the questionnaire without difficulty. The results show that all but one of the respondents, from very diverse national, linguistic and religious backgrounds, shared similar student experiences which were clearly in the classical humanist tradition. This supports both Clark's model of educational value systems and also Holliday's theory of international collectionist features of English teaching in the TESEP context.

In line with worldwide education developments since World War II, half the sample showed change towards reconstructionist values and practices in their teaching experiences. Those whose teaching experiences remained largely in the classical humanist tradition were more likely to continue to value most highly those teaching qualities associated with that tradition.

However, turning to conscious conceptions of teaching and learning, all but one of the teachers espoused reconstructionist ideas. Will these attitudes limit both their own learning and their ability to adopt teaching approaches which develop deep learning in their students? Many concerned with improving the quality of education believe so, and Trigwell and Prosser (1995) recommend that explicit attention to attitudinal change to teaching and learning be included in professional development for university science teachers. Similar recommendations have been made in other areas (e.g., Biggs, 1996; Dart, 1998; Kember, 1998; W. Holliday, 2001), and may need to be applied in TESOL education programs, to enable innovative teaching strategies to be successfully adopted in TESEP contexts (Lamb, 1995).

Except for the two respondents who represented the opposite poles of Clark's spectrum of educational values, this study did not show any direct link between earlier experiences as students and teachers and their own preferences for learning activities in their current course. This might show a flexibility towards different learning tasks which does not support Holliday's view (1994) that negative reaction to innovation is predictable in the collectionist context. Such a hypothesis needs to be tested with a larger sample.

The profiles of individual's responses to all questionnaire sections showed considerable consistency in line with Clark's model. Variations for individuals can be explained in terms of the model in the same way as the frequencies of total responses for each section of the questionnaire.

Conclusion

Although the small number of respondents limits conclusions that can be drawn, the study lends further support for Clark's model (after Skilbeck, 1982) as a useful tool in categorizing the educational experiences of both teachers and students. Moreover, support was found for Holliday's claim that the collectionist (classical humanist/reconstructionist) educational culture of TESEP has international similarities despite very different aspects of the respondents' national and institutional cultures.

The issue of the implications of the TESEP educational background for teachers' conceptions of learning and teaching requires further study on a larger scale. If these attitudes are indeed of importance to the quality of learning, such a study could have considerable practical implications for teachers education programs. For example, many BANA TESOL teachers have qualified by completing quite short intensive training courses, which by their nature neglect an exploration of language acquisition processes and the development of attitudes to and conceptions of teaching and learning. When these teachers first encounter TESEP education contexts (as thousands do every year), conflicts and failures often happen (Holliday, 1994). Solutions to such clashes of educational cultures proposed for the TESOL sector include a shift in the focus of TESOL training courses from culture-bound teaching techniques to wider skills in solving classroom problems in a culturally sensitive way (Holliday, 1994). Further, innovative methods can be introduced in ways that provide cultural continuity with accepted institutional practices (Holliday, 1997).

Of course, teachers imbued with communicative methodology encounter similar culture clashes when teaching students with a TESEP background in BANA, in all education sectors, an example being the EFT class who participated in this study. The challenges to Australian educators of rapidly increasing numbers of Chinese students since the late 1980s, for example, have motivated many studies, some included in *The Chinese Learner: Cultural, Psychological, and Contextual Influences* (Watkins & Biggs, 1996). Some of these studies begin to bring together in a fruitful way the two strands of research discussed earlier.

Teachers can help those studying in English speaking countries in both their learning and cultural adjustment by being themselves culturally aware. Improving students' intercultural competence by explicitly teaching students about educational and institutional cultural roles and expectations and facilitating critical reflection of these seem to be very helpful strategies. For example, this can be done in relation to key sociolinguistic norms such as politeness, or plagiarism (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000; Cipollone, 2003). Such critical reflection is indeed just the sort of process that is believed to grow from teachers' own attitudes to teaching. These highly developed concepts and attitudes encourage deep learning in both teachers and students, with the potential to breaking down cognitive and cultural barriers to improve the quality of education for all.

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Conference Announcements

Puerto Rico TESOL. November 18-19, 2004. "Merging All Our Voices as One: Imagine the Possibilities," Caribe Hilton Hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Egyptesol 5th Annual Convention. December 3-5, 2004. "Best Practice in TEFL," Cairo, Egypt

Annual Current Trends in English Language Testing (CTELT) Conference. December 8-9, 2004. Dubai Men's College, Higher Colleges of Technology, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Tenth EFL Skills Conference. January 12-14, 2005. "Integrating EFL Skills: Learning, Teaching and Standards," at the Center for Adult and Continuing Education, the American University in Cairo, Egypt

The 25th Annual Thailand TESOL International Conference. January 20-22, 2005. "Surfing the Waves of Change in English Language Teaching," The Imperial Queen's Park in Bangkok, Thailand

Costa Rica TESOL. January 26-28, 2005. 21st National Conference for Teachers of English. "Towards a Socially Responsible Pedagogy," Centro Cultural Costarricense Norteamericano, San Jose, Costa Rica

The University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education and the Center for Urban Ethnography 26th Annual Ethnography in Education Research Forum. February 25-26, 2005. "Educators Responding to Local and Global Crises," University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
March 2005

California TESOL Annual State Conference. March 3-5, 2005. "Sailing Toward Success," Long Beach Convention Center, Long Beach, California USA

Council of International Schools ESL & Mother Tongue Conference. March 3-5, 2005. "Many Languages, One Message: Equal Rights to the Curriculum," in Rome, Italy

The 11th Annual International TESOL Arabia Conference. March 9-11, 2005. "Teaching, Learning, Leading," at the Al Bustan Rotana Hotel, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

TESOL Spain 28th National Annual Convention. March 11-13, 2005. "Cultures, Communities and Classrooms: Diversity in English Language Education," University of Seville, Spain

Steps Towards Solving the Problem of Plagiarism in Student Projects

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Introduction

It is only in the last twenty years or so that the states of the Arab Gulf Co-operation Council have taken steps to protect intellectual property, and have enacted and enforced copyright laws. The same period has seen an exponential growth in the provision of technical and university education in the Arab Gulf, and the development to the internet.

The Arab Gulf media regularly devote space to stories concerning the confiscation and destruction of bootleg CD's, DVD's audio cassettes and pirated versions of luxury goods, but from time to time, they tackle the wider issue of plagiarism. The *Khaleej Times* of May 22nd, 2003, carried an interesting reprint of a *Newsweek* article (Mnookin, 2003) focusing on the scandal of the *New York Times* reporter, Jayson Blair. Mr Blair resigned when it transpired that he had plagiarized an article from the *San Antonio News-Express*. In the *Khaleej Times,* the story was carried on page 13. On page 14 there was a shorter report stating that a freelance journalist had sold the *New York Post* an article plagiarized from the *National Enquirer*.

Academic Plagiarism

Plagiarism, of course, is not confined to New York newspapers. It is a growing problem in high school and universities in the United States, Europe, and anywhere else where students have easy access to the internet. Indeed, so great is the problem, that a web-search on Yahoo for "academic plagiarism" produced a total of 551,000 different sites. Much of the evidence, however, remains anecdotal, and to some extent, the cause of the problem frequently explains the high rate of detection. It is easy for students to download material from the internet, but if faculty consult a search engine and use exact phrases from a suspect paper, they can often be led straight back to the source.

This was my case when, in June 2001, I helped to assess a number of projects prepared by Arab Gulf students at a military technical college. This work has been described elsewhere (Wissing & Hepple, 2003), but despite the fact the regulations placed a total ban on plagiarism, it continued to occur. In one memorable instance, a student who was writing about Volkswagen cars produced the following:

> . . . orphaned among the ruins of Germany's post-war industrial wasteland, and rejected for adoption by the British, it became affectionately known as "the Beetle."

It is, of course, easy for teachers to become over-suspicious. There is a limit to the ways in which one can state simple facts like "Between 1945 and 1980, global production of Volkswagen cars totaled just over 20 million", but in my example, we have an extended metaphor based on the personification of an industrial product. It was written by a candidate who, at interview, appeared to believe that the Volkswagen had been designed by Adolf Hitler in the mid 1950's. It is a classic instance of project work being turned into "chunks of copying, without understanding" (Cornwall, quoted by Kavanagh, 2003, p. 10) and it is impossible that the words used are the candidate's own.

Even so, the problem of inadvertent borrowing remains, and there are instances where the plagiarism, though direct, is partially sanctioned. In the first of these cases, Cotterall and Cohen (2003) airily dismiss concerns that their teaching of "scaffolding" —the use of set phrases to support argument, particularly in academic essays—might lead to accusations of plagiarism. I wish I shared their confidence. The Armed Forces are accustomed to the use of formulaic phrasing in official correspondence, particularly in the writing of routine letters and signals. Academic writing is a different genre, and one that places a higher emphasis on originality. Any supervisor who reads a series of essays that all begin with the phrase "Before arguing that ...." and go on to urge "it is necessary to consider ...." will inevitably suspect collusion.

Nor am I alone in my concern on this point. As EFL teachers, we should never be complacent about any form of plagiarism, and it is interesting to note that the literature on this topic continues to grow. Hricko (1998) directly addresses the problem of internet plagiarism. Hyland (2001) in a paper entitled "Dealing With Plagiarism When Giving Feedback" accepts that it is happening, but suggests strategies to prevent repetition. Banfi (2003) raises the problem obliquely in a discussion of portfolio work.

Within the Arab Gulf, moreover, the problem of plagiarism has been a particular concern. It was raided by Buckton (2001) at the Excellence in Academic English conference, held at the Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. The problem also received several mentions at the 2003 International TESOL Arabia Conference; indeed, given the conference theme—English Language Teaching in the IT Age—it could hardly be omitted. One plenary speaker (Oxford, 2003) pointed out that the internet has made it easy to steal both other people's music and other people's ideas. From Zayed University in Dubai, moreover, an ongoing collaboration between the English faculty and the academic librarians produced an updated presentation on information literacy and the associated problem of

plagiarism (Birks, Hunt, Madalios, Remondi, 2001) with practical suggestions to guide students safely through the web (Birks, Hung, Mandalios, 2003).

Reasons for Plagiarism

The problem, of course, does not occur in a vacuum. There are a number of causes, some of which may be ore excusable than others.

In the first place, there is laziness, though again there may sometimes be mitigating factors. McCourt (1999) tells the story of one of his New York high school students who was tasked with writing a children's story. Being at the center of a nasty divorce and custody battle, he took the easy way out, rewrite a Dr. Suess story, and was unmasked by a triumphant junior school child who identified the true author. The boy was wrong, but in this case we can sympathise somewhat with him.

Secondly, plagiarism may be an act of desperation. This is almost certainly the case with Jayson Blair, who is depicted as a man with a history of manic depression, drug abuse and alcoholism. Placed under impossible stress as a young reporter in the driven world of journalism, he was unable to cope, and resorted to manufacturing quotations, copying material, and using cell phone and laptops to give the impression that he was covering stories when he had never left the New York Times building.

Thirdly, students may plagiarise simply because they have run short of time. In this case, instructors can help with better mentoring, by giving time extensions, or, best of all, by helping students to plan their time more efficiently.

Fourthly, the plagiarism may actually become inadvertent, stemming from a student becoming over-reliant on published sources. I would suggest that this type of plagiarism has been endemic for years. As evidence of this, I cite an experience from my undergraduate years.

A week before the First Year Examinations, one particularly charismatic faculty member delivered a lecture on the poetry of Richard Crashaw. Unknown to his audience, he had also set a question about Crashaw in the year's Seventeenth Century Literature paper. In the examinations, several candidates answered that question, repeating large portions of the previous week's lecture, sometimes word for word.

In a school situation, their action might have actually gained them marks. At university level, it would have been accepted, if they had been capable of paraphrase, but in this situation they were asking a lecturer to give them credit for what was, effectively, his own work.

Finally, and this is probably the closest to the position of Arab Gulf students, many students plagiarise because they do not realize that what they are doing is wrong. They

may be naive, but in many cases there is no intention to "cheat". In Truffaut's 1959 film, Les Quatre Cent Coups, we sympathise when Antoine, trying his best, writes his own version of a famous short story by Balzac and is then humiliated by his French teacher. Antoine is a working class boy of twelve. Unlike Broadhead and Light, he has no knowledge of the academic prohibition placed on plagiarism, while his teacher responds as if his actions were "a moral issue rather than a cultural norm" (Nelson, 2003).

Birks, Hunt and Mandalios (2003) from Zayed University in the UAE give evidence of similar naivety. In one case, a student downloaded over twenty pages straight from the internet, some eight of which were written in French. Furthermore, when it was explained to one student that it was intellectually dishonest to use an essay that someone else had written, the young woman in question became extremely annoyed. "I'm not stealing", she protested. "I paid for this with my credit card."

The problem here is probably global in scope. In many cases, when we ask students to undertake project work, or even a piece of limited research, we are asking them to do something for which they are unprepared. There is an analogy here with Cameron's (2003) observations on Teaching English to Young Learners, "Children learning to read who are confronted with written instructions to a task have a huge decoding and sense-making job to do before they can begin work on the task itself." (p. 108).

Expatriate EFL teachers come from different educational backgrounds and they do not appreciate the "decoding and sense-making job" that confronts their students when faced with project work. The British National Curriculum urges the use of project work in primary schools, to give students the research skills that they will require at secondary level.

In many countries, even secondary school children receive little or no encouragement to become intellectually curious. "Language teaching. . . .is dominated by a traditional, top-down, textbook-orientated, teacher-led methodology" (Daoud & Al-Hazmi, 2003, p. 335). Students are required to learn what is in their textbooks, and repeat it, to order, in the examinations at the end of each semester. Short-term memory is both encouraged and rewarded. The amazingly high marks achieved in the final secondary school examinations tell their own story. It is impossible for candidates to score 99.5% and above if they are being marked on a subjective or qualitative basis. It is only when candidates are required to present answers that satisfy discrete criteria that these scores can be achieved.

Steps to Action

What follows are ideas influenced, in part, by Cohen and Miller's (2003) course in academic writing. In the intermediate level book they offer supplementary materials

that include opportunities for internet research. I would suggest, however, that these opportunities are equally applicable to print sources.

What is interesting about Cohen and Miller's suggestions is that they are open-ended. Instead of offering easily downloaded concepts like Volkswagen cars, the internal combustion engine etc. they call on students to judge, to evaluate, to compare and contrast. These are high-level skills in Bloom's (1956) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, but they are easily within our students' capability, and they are skills that ought to be encouraged in future engineering technicians.

Step One - Setting a Topic

To begin with, therefore, we should ensure that the topics chosen for student projects exclude information that can be easily referenced or downloaded. Topics should require students to digest information, not regurgitate it to order. For example, students could be given the opportunity to compare and contrast two high performance sports cars, weighing the prestige of the marque against cost, performance, fuel consumption and the availability of spare parts.

Alternatively, students could be given topics that have no "right" answer. Which alternative source of power would be the most beneficial to the Arab Gulf in the 21 Century? Solar power, wave power and wind power all have compelling favourable arguments depending on whether the student lives in the desert, the mountains, or in a coastal region.

Step Two - Locating Resources

Once the topic has been chosen, students should be given positive help in locating resources and learning to select what is relevant from those sources.

There are two linked points here. Firstly, teachers in general, and EFL teachers in particular, are probably more book orientated than most members of even their own societies. To many native English speakers "book" equals what could be dismissed as a thriller, a romance or even a magazine. In general, teachers do not buy their reading matter principally at airports. Many people in Britain, however, buy only one book a year—"a book for the beach".

This problem extends to other countries. At the 1998 IATEFL SIG Symposium at Gdansk, the Heinemann ELT representative surprised her audience by revealing that research figures showing that 38% of Polish households had purchased no books at all in the previous year (Birkenmajer, 1998). This figure is frighteningly high for a country where parents are obliged to buy their children's schoolbooks; where bookshops are plentiful and well stocked; where the

population is almost universally literate and, at that time, was still celebrating the end of 40 years of Nazi/Communist censorship.

The Polish data give us some idea of the scale of the problem we face in less sophisticated societies. When people buy books, they are guided by an almost unconscious kinesthetic that has developed through years of experience. Choice of books depends on the mobilization of unspoken factors—the author; the title; the date of publication; the publisher; the cover; the quality of paper; the bibliography—all these must receive positive evaluation (or, at least, must not be rated negatively) before we will purchase or read.

Many of our students, however, do not have these skills. They may come from bookless homes, or homes where the only books are technical manuals, school texts, or theological works. They may have had limited access to library facilities. Such libraries as they have visited may be little more than rooms full of books, lacking order or presentation.

Step Three - Identifying Relevance

This is the second half of the link. If our students have problems with printed sources, how much more daunting is the task of internet research. On the internet, kinesthetic clues are absent. Anyone can produce a website, and many sites are effectively worthless; "there is hardly anything worth the name to control the quality of academic materials appearing on the Web" (Jayraman 2001, p. 61). Students need to be taught not only how to recognize authoritative print sources, but also how to avoid dependence on biased or misleading websites. "To create information literate adults, it is imperative that students.... Be exposed to a developmentally cohesive and sequential programme of information literacy skills." (Henri & Bonnano 1999, p. 243). It is not good enough to send them to the library and let them get on with it, nor is it good enough to put them on the net and let them surf. They must be taught how to evaluate websites for the source, credibility and timeliness of their information. (Wardschauer, p. 2000).

Step Four - Organisation and Presentation of Findings

Organisation and presentation of findings are again areas where our students require tutorial support, but they are not alone in this. The work on writing scientific articles (Bazerman 1988; Master 1981/1998), theses and dissertations (Dunleavy, 2003) all indicates that English native speakers also require assistance if they are to master the rhetorical conventions of the scientific and social science discourse communities.

Leki (1991/1994) urges the use of the process writing approach, whereby students are encouraged "to experiment with ideas through writing and then share their writing

with their classmates (1994, p. 174). This is an effective beginning. It allows students to sequence their writing, and develop control over "simple rhetorical frameworks . . . . the amplified definition, description of a mechanical part (or body part), description of a process, classification and abstract" (Master 1991/1998, p. 36). The process writing approach also encourages technical accuracy and gives writers a sense of audience.

Hawisher & Selfe (1998) indicate that word processing has already demonstrated that it can improve the quality of student writing, but that we must now attempt to assess how it affects the process of writing and the quality of the final written product. Obviously, spelling and grammar checks automatically eliminate a large number of technical errors, but Bortoluzzi (2003, p. 19) reports that her Italian students found that redrafting their work was also far less demanding "they willingly revised....several times because they didn't have to rewrite the text with each revision."

Under these circumstances, I would suggest that students engaged in project work should be encouraged to draft, write, redraft, revise and save all their work on computer files. These files would then serve a double function. They could be regarded as developmental portfolios, illustrating the writing process, but they could also be available for scrutiny by assessors.

At this stage in the writing process, moreover, students could be taught how to develop their writing by conforming to academic expectations. This particularly applies to the use of direct quotations, but students should also be taught Dunleavy's "Housekeeping issues"—how to list sources and compile a bibliography. At the same time, they should be taught how to follow Hawisher & Selfe's (2000, p. 15) "postmodern literary practices" and list the addresses of websites as an integral part of their bibliography.

Conclusion

What I am suggesting here is simple, but it is not easy. It requires teachers to meet their students and act as language advisors. They must help in the choice of a project topic, help develop a study plan, monitor progress, and generally keep the students on track. The students should be taught to follow a process of discovery, selection, evaluation, organization, and presentation, confident that this process is far more valuable than the final product.

We must be honest here. The projects produced by many students are not intended to be highly original scientific dissertations that extend the boundaries of knowledge. They are intended to show that their authors can synthesise existing information and that they can do so, as far as possible, in their own words.

If we can guide them through this process, and for many it will be a first-time experience, then we will have made a significant contribution to the development of their authorial voices, and a contribution that may be of lasting benefit in their future careers.

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Conference Announcements

Brigham Young University Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER). April 6-9, 2005. Conference entitled, "Business, Language, and Culture: Putting the Pieces Together," Park City, Utah, USA.

The Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) International Conference. May 19-21, 2005. "Language Assessment in a Multilingual Context: Attaining Standards, Sustaining Diversity," DBB Forum, Berlin, Germany.

8th MELTA Biennial International Conference, Malaysia. May 30-June 1, 2005. "English Language Education: Confronting Changing Realities" at Sheraton Subang Hotel & Towers, Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia. E-mail: melta@tm.net.my. Available: http://www.melta.org.net

English Department of National Taiwan Normal University International Conference. June 4-5, 2005. "Teaching and Learning: ESL/EFL Teacher Education and Professional Development."

The 14th World Congress of Applied Linguistics hosted by the American Association for Applied Linguistics. July 24-29, 2005. Madison, Wisconsin, USA

5th Foreign Language and Technology Conference. August 5-10, 2005. "Uniting the World," jointly sponsored by the International Association for Language Learning Technology (IALLT) and the Japan Association for Language Education and Technology, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, USA.

Non-Conventional Content in English Language Lessons: "Death" as an Instructional Unit Application

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Coursebooks, Content, and Constructing Lessons

Most of the commonly used coursebooks for English language learning deal with ordinary topics such as family, hobbies, health, sports, entertainment, food, shopping, and so on, and treat them in a rather uniform, predictable, and light manner. Of course, these topics in themselves can have an important place in English language learning discourse. However, as Klinger (1999) observes, learners are curious about, want to learn about and want to talk about events and items not only in their immediate social sphere and personal lives. He adds, citing Bereiter, that they also can relate "to the larger issues and forces that shape their world: birth, death, good, evil, power, danger, survival, generosity, adventure." Yet, Rinvolucri (1999) remarks correctly: "The EFL discourse world avoids the shadow side of life with little or no reference to death, poverty or war." He justifiably demeans this "EFLese sub-culture" adding: "Ambition, rage, jealousy, betrayal, destiny, greed, fear and the other Shakespearian themes are far from the soft, fudgey sub-journalistic, woman's magaziney world of EFLese course materials."

The safe approach taken in English language coursebooks may be a successful strategy for publishers to sell their books in the principal markets around the world. However, it oddly skirts many meaningful and engaging topics that are universal among individuals and human communities and that compel being addressed particularly in the global context of English as an international language. Maintaining the default strategy of offering only vanilla content relates as well to the matter of linguistic form. Thornbury (2002) neatly makes the point, citing Grady: "Everything is reducible to form. The textbook represents all types of issues and all types of discourse as not requiring much thought or action beyond the decision as to the appropriate grammatical structure." As Thornbury himself adds, "It doesn't really matter what you think, so long as you use the third conditional."

The impact, indeed, is enormous and on a worldwide scale. It seems fair to say that many EFL/ESL teachers, both new and veteran, native-speakers of English and of other languages, tie themselves to coursebooks and the usually mundane methodologies prescribed in the teacher's manuals that often accompany the student's

texts. Many teachers in poorer countries are often hard-pressed with heavy workloads, very large classes, limited instructional resources, little training, and little pay. They may have little alternative to dependence on whatever books they can obtain. Many other teachers in more affluent circumstances simply are not comfortable with the idea of implementing an instructional approach that requires them to develop and construct lesson materials for a large part of their courses. They limit themselves to the content and prescribed instructional methodology of textbooks. Consequently, as Leather (2003, p. 205) points out in her review of coursebooks, "one can sometimes feel that both materials and classrooms have been stripped of anything truly meaningful in life." Furthermore, in this restrictive learning environment, the opportunities for students for language acquisition are inherently lessened.

Content, Language Instruction, and Language Ownership

This article will assert the necessity and value of addressing topics from the real lives of learners in English language classrooms and developing instructional materials and teaching devices for that purpose, as such "non-conventional" content is almost entirely lacking in commercial coursebooks. Yet, many teachers in the front lines of classrooms around the world seek more than pedagogical argument for a particular case to be impelled to implement an unaccustomed instructional approach. Thus, some basic guidelines for the development and construction of topical materials will be outlined. As an example of a practical classroom application of the argument, the article will present in detail a unit of instructional work on the topic of death, one that the author has developed and employed successfully in his college and university classrooms over a number of years. At the same time, as wise teachers will not just gratuitously inject new elements into their instructional repertoire, I will refer as well to the rationale for the particular materials and their mode of employment. The objective is to give teachers an impetus and inspiration for the investment of effort and risk to pursue this kind of lesson-making.

Cummins (2003) has observed that "there is an inseparable linkage between the conceptions of language and human identity that we infuse in our classroom instruction." In the context of the instructional choices we make, he notes that we must examine "the extent to which the classroom interactions we orchestrate build on and affirm the cultural, linguistic, intellectual and personal identities that students bring to our classrooms."

In English language learning environments, I believe that instruction needs to be based on a humanistic and communicative approach within which students have meaningful opportunities to formulate and express their thoughts, opinions, and feelings, and to relate experiences and knowledge, drawn from their own life

experiences and the society in which they live. The aim is to enhance their self-awareness and their awareness of their society and culture, and from there to widen and deepen their understanding of other peoples and cultures and issues on a global scale. For college and university students in particular, the integration of content and language instruction can promote the cognitive foundation, linguistic capacity, and personal confidence and motivation for them to engage more effectively in meaningful communication and discourse on both local and international levels. The instruction is an integral element in their growth and development as mature, thoughtful, responsible young men and women who are well prepared to take their places in society, the workplace, and institutions of higher education.

Using content from students' own lives and their society and culture in the English classroom greatly facilitates, encourages, and motivates their use of the language and self-expression, thereby promoting language acquisition and advancing growth in language proficiency. "The integration of content with language instruction provides a substantive basis for language teaching and learning. Content can provide both a motivational and a cognitive basis for language learning" (Snow, Met, & Genesee, 1989, p. 202).

In this context, learners' engagement also with universal topics and themes genuinely contributes to their sense of ownership of English as an international language. It promotes both their understanding and practice in English to communicate their ideas, feelings, opinions, knowledge and experiences to others, across linguistic, cultural and national boundaries. It is ironic that in some educational settings around the world the opportunity for students to engage in this kind of reflective communication in itself may be largely limited to the English language learning classroom.

Learning English as an international language does not necessarily involve study of the customs and culture of countries such as the United States and Great Britain where English is the native language of a large majority of the population. Ownership of English on the part of non-native speakers means their control of the use of the language for their own purposes, which may include the kind of personal communication just alluded to as well as the pursuit of education and employment opportunities and other life chances within an intensely integrated international order.

Content and Materials Development

While some English language coursebooks surely deserve to be used in our classrooms to some extent, as noted earlier, the content of most of them lacks a full sense of reality and thus limits language input and acquisition, as it fails to provide sustaining interest and relevance that engage both teachers and students in productive

and rewarding language learning efforts. Thus, developing one's own instructional units and the accompanying materials for students' work to fill this void becomes a fundamental element in English language teaching. Not only does it enable teachers to exercise direction and control over the instructional process, but also it is a satisfying and rewarding opportunity for them to utilize their pedagogical expertise and imagination.

Furthermore, as Swaffer (1985, p. 17) avers: "For purposes of the foreign language classroom, an authentic text... is one whose primary intent is to communicate meaning." By this simple and definitive measure, the substantive content of these materials developed and employed for meaningful language instruction can claim an authenticity often lacking in coursebook materials which serve form over substance and at worst involve classroom activities that are performed for little more purpose than students' immediate diversion.

In the preparation of appropriate materials, for conventional and non-conventional topics, determining factors for the choice of subjects and the manner in which they are developed and used include the proficiency levels, maturity, and interests of the learners in the class as well as their training and capacity to engage in meaningful, student-centered, interactive, communicative activities and tasks.

Teachers need to explore a topic with thoroughness, precision, and imagination, from many compelling and meaningful angles in order to prepare instructional materials that are interesting and effective for language learning. The content items must be engaging and provide learners with opportunities to join fully in that exploration along with extensive and varied language use. The materials themselves must be prepared and presented with great care and organized in appealing and easy-to-follow formats. In the construction and presentation of learning materials there is interplay among the nature of the materials, content items, and purposeful language learning activities and tasks the teacher designs for their use. It is essential that teachers have formulated clear learning aims and methods to implement the work assigned to students.

In the context of college and university classes, as well as those for adult learners, in Japan, with students from low intermediate levels, I have developed instructional units for many topics, such as family, education, employment, aging society, gender issues, criminal justice, and immigration and nationality. The specific content within even commonly used topics is very much non-conventional. For example, within "family", some issues that are prominent in the society are explored in a manner and at a depth appropriate to particular classes. These include the use of surnames in marriage, fatherhood, child rearing, birth rate, three-generation families, divorce, and single parent families. Certainly these are not found in conventional English language coursebooks in the marketplace, not to mention a topic such as death, selected as the

illustrative focus in this article. However, I do not engage in advocacy-orientated instruction on either local or global issues. I concur with Sargent (2004) that the one-sided presentation or orientation of an issue toward ends that correspond to the worldview of the teacher lacks instructional integrity.

In preparing materials for these kinds of topics, teachers should think systematically of ordinary human experiences and issues and break them down into simple components the students in their classes can address within the limits of their language proficiency, or reasonably stretched to a slightly higher level. Consider points that are relevant to their lives now and in the future, as well as those that are particular to their society and culture. Some materials will be teacher-constructed, others will be found through investigation of instructional resources and utilized in appropriate ways. Video, poetry, social data, items from the source culture, and discussion outlines are some of the materials I use for the topic of death.

Blanton (1992, p. 291), who advocates a "whole language" approach to college ESL, notes that such a unit of instruction is likely to be successful if it meets the following criteria. Her list provides a thorough summary of what I have sought to achieve with my own instructional unit on death, discussed in the following section as an application of the principle put forward in this article.

1. The unit engages students' interest.
2. It requires students to communicate meaningfully.
3. It surrounds students with language that they can understand.
4. It challenges students to think.
5. It provides students with the opportunity to interact with others.
6. It presents students with text-related tasks to perform.
7. It requires students to listen, speak, read, and write.
8. It is student-centered, while being content-oriented.
9. It integrates language functions and language skills.
10. It increases students' self-confidence and self-respect.

The discussion that follows offers teachers a guide for constructing their own creative and effective English language instructional units on the topic of death itself and other non-conventional topics that involve stimulating and substantive discourse. I hope that it will encourage and inspire teachers to undertake this venture especially into areas that are not part of the content of conventional coursebooks, but that are very worthwhile and productive to pursue.

Death: A Non-conventional Topical Unit of Instruction

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so. *John Donne (1572-1631)*

Death need not be proscribed as a, well, deadly topic for the English language classroom. It may be treated in a manner that is comfortable for students in compelling lesson components that meaningfully involve them and affect successful language learning. This article outlines a multi-dimensional approach on this subject for college and adult learners from intermediate levels of proficiency that integrates all the language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. I have used all of the components in various college classes in Japan with up to twenty students. In advance of using some components, I have advised the class of the nature of the topic and said that any student who might be upset with it should see me privately. However, these lessons have never been a problem for any of my students. Indeed, they have been well received, appreciated for their originality, and successfully carried through. In short, teachers working with students in their customary sensible and sensitive manner need not shun all treatment of the topic of death merely on the face of it. Thus, I confidently share these instructional ideas.

Video and Discussion

Video material engages viewers both visually and verbally, and can promote a deeper and fuller understanding of a particular subject. We are drawn to and identify with characters in a story and experience the emotional as well as the rational aspects of the subject. Video material can have an impact that motivates learners to communicate their own thoughts and feelings about what they have seen as they construct its meaning for themselves.

I may start an instructional unit on death with the video of an episode from a 1980's U.S. TV family drama series called "Our House". It was about a widow and her three children who came to live with her father-in-law. In one episode 13-year-old David receives a severe head injury in a bicycle fall and goes into a life-threatening coma. We see his deceased father appear real in David's mind. He wants to give up life in order to be with his father, who tries to convince David to return to life and his family. The father also appears watching over his wife, David's mother, as she tries to cope with the crisis. In the end, after a very hard personal struggle in his mind, David accepts his father's appeal and comes out of his coma to continue with his life. This warm and affecting story rivets the attention of students and raises several issues about the subject of death. (While this particular video may not be available to other teachers,

they can seek a video, even in the first language of their students if the class is homogeneous, that will serve a similar purpose.)

After watching, students in small groups start on their own to sort out what happened in the story and to give their reactions to it. Invariably, some of the questions that arise are: what happens to us after we die; do we have a soul or spirit that lives on after death, and if so where does that spirit reside; do the deceased have any direct influence on the living; do the living have any obligations toward deceased loved ones; how does one face death. Students return to the discussion in the next lesson with a printed handout I make that outlines and connects their points in order to stimulate and facilitate further discussion. Intermediate level college students are quite capable of expressing some basic, thoughtful remarks on these questions, albeit brief in many cases.

Poetry and Recitation

Poetry is universal among all societies and deals with themes that are common to all cultures and human experiences, such as love, death, nature, despair, and hope. Poetry utilizes all the resources of language and provides rich input to language learning. In this context, "the main objective of using poetry in language lessons is... to find a means of involving the learners in using their language skills in an active and creative way, and thus to contribute to the development of their communicative competence" (Tomlinson, 1986, p. 33).

My careful selection of poems for a unit of instruction on death includes the following: James Russell Lowell's "The First Snowfall", which recounts a father's touching memory of his dead young daughter while speaking to his living child; Edgar Allan Poe's "Annabel Lee", which recounts the memory of the poet's deceased and beloved young wife; and Edward Arlington Robinson's "Richard Cory", which relates with startling surprise the suicide of a town's greatly admired and most prominent citizen.

The study of the poems can integrate structure and meaning. The teacher can introduce each poem in turn with several readings. For each of the texts, small groups can work through assigned reading tasks and activities that explore the themes of the texts, the meaning of particular elements, poetic structures, lexical components, and students' personal responses. For "The First Snowfall", one response item might address the images of the landscape, described in the first 12 lines, after the snowfall, and another their empathy for the father as he "thought of a mound in sweet Auburn / Where a little headstone stood"; for "Annabel Lee", on the mood created in the poem by the poet's use of repetition and rhyme, and their appreciation of "a love that was

more than love" between the poet and "Annabel Lee"; and for "Richard Cory", why a person like him whom all in town "thought that he was everything / To make us wish that we were in his place" might in fact have been in such despair as "one calm summer night, / Went home and put a bullet through his head."

As nearly all poetry gains from being read aloud, oral presentation should be an integral part of the instructional unit. It is a marvelous opportunity for students, working in small groups and reading the text aloud many times and in various ways, to share, discuss, and critique their efforts while developing individual expressive interpretations of the text and its meaning to them. Recitation is also a stimulating and effective practice for students to develop better pronunciation, phrasing, intonation, rhythm, pace, fluency, and voice projection and control. Ample time should be allotted for this practice and presentations before the class.

Writing and Translation

Reading can be integrated with writing through appropriate assignments, providing students with additional opportunities to respond to the texts they have read. The writing tasks could be set up as joint constructions by pairs or small groups or as individual assignments, in either case employing a process mode of production that includes brainstorming, drafting, peer review, and revision.

For "The First Snowfall", students could imagine and write the words the father may have spoken on his visit to his child's gravestone after the winter snow had melted. For "Annabel Lee", they might be asked to imagine how they think the poet might respond to the words of another poet: "Never love with all your heart, / It only ends in aching." For "Richard Cory", they could compose an obituary for Richard Cory that would appear in that town's newspaper. Generally my writing assignments are set modestly at paragraph length.

Writing in the form of translation is another excellent approach. Translation of carefully selected passages from literature in their first language offers EFL students a unique opportunity to explore the dimensions of both languages and to develop their skills and style of written expression in English in ways that often are both different from and beyond the products of standard composition and expression in the second language.

Duff (1989) summarizes well the value of translation in language learning:

> Translation develops three qualities essential to all language learning: flexibility, accuracy, and clarity. It trains the learner to search (flexibility) for the most appropriate words (accuracy) to convey what is meant (clarity). (p. 7)

Rivers & Temperley (1978) describe the translation process in an EFL setting:

> The production of an acceptable translation into English is [for students]...a means for developing sensitivity to the meanings expressed in a stretch of discourse in one's own language and to the different linguistic mechanisms used by the two languages to convey these meanings. (p. 337)

The rationale and a particular instructional methodology for EFL literary translation are discussed at length and in detail in Porcaro (1998, 2001).

Translation of poetry is a unique challenge and a very selective choice of texts is of paramount importance. For the topic on death, I give my Japanese students the poem "Obaachan" ["Grandmother"] by Shuntaro Tanikawa, one of Japan's most popular contemporary poets. It is from the collection *Hadaka* [Naked] in which simple poems are given as the lyrical, evocative voices of children on a wide range of innocent and bittersweet experiences, reflections, and imaginings. In "Obaachan", a child relates his experience at the bedside of his grandmother in the moments before she dies. The translation process takes students into new territory as they consider the subject of death. At the same time, they derive much satisfaction from their writing efforts. Following is a translation of "Obaachan" by a first-year university student from one of my classes.

Grandmother
She opened her eyes wide and seemed to be surprised.
She tried very hard to see something that we couldn't see.
Somehow she looked troubled
and seemed very confused.
She might have realized just now
an important thing that she hadn't known before.
If so, everyone shouldn't have cried
and should have been quiet.
But she couldn't move her hands and legs,
and she couldn't speak.
No one could understand what she wanted.
She was only breathing, as if she was angry,
as if she wasn't breathing by herself.
It seemed that her chest was being pushed by someone.
Suddenly, at that time, her breath stopped.
With a look of surprise on her face,
Grandmother died.

Explaining Local Customs and Issues

Lesson content that deals with local customs and issues draws on students' familiar base of social and cultural knowledge and experience, and supports their sense of ownership of English. For my students, an exploration of things Japanese related to the topic of death could include items such as visiting the family grave site (*ohakamairi*), the summer festival welcoming the visit of the spirits of ancestors (*obon*), Buddhist funeral ceremonies and family altars (*butsudan*), and contemporary issues such as death from overwork (*karoshi*) and the rising number of suicides among middle-age men.

Generally, students may be directed to explain, describe, relate basic information and personal experience, and comment on such local customs and issues in pairs or small groups. Short articles on some matters may be assigned as reading, and relevant writing tasks also could be formulated.

Such lessons can be engaging and productive while also providing an opportunity for genuine two-way teaching and learning. Students may provide the non-native teacher with a wider and deeper understanding of some things from their society and culture while the teacher helps them to advance their proficiency in English to communicate that knowledge and familiarity.

Conclusion

Many and multi-faceted instructional ideas dealing with the topic of death have been presented in this article. They can be adapted for both lower and higher levels of language proficiency within classes. Selected material could be limited to a single lesson or two, or carried over a series of lessons to form a fuller unit of study. Above all, I hope that this article will lead teachers to consider and venture into new and worthwhile areas of content-based English language instruction based on the development of their own instructional units that bring further success in their work and their students' accomplishments.

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Effects of Previewing and Providing Background Knowledge on EFL Reading Comprehension of American Documentary Narratives

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Introduction

The schema-theoretic models of the reading process heavily influences the orientation of educators who deal with acquisition of reading in both first and second language. (Beck & Carpenter, 1986; Bernhardt, 1991; Rowe & Rayford, 1987). According to the Schema-theoretic view, a reader plays a very active role in reading (Adams & Collins, 1979; Anderson & Pearson, 1984), and comprehending a text is an interactive process of how the reader's Schemata, or knowledge already stored in memory, function in the process of interpreting new information. The meaning of the text does not reside in the material itself but in the interaction that takes place between the reader and the text (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Carrell, 1984). In China, it is not rare phenomenon students know every word in sentences, passages and texts, yet have no access to the meanings. To put it bluntly, they can not understand the seemingly understood language forms. Thus, experiencing frustrating difficulties in comprehension. The reason for this is that there is mismatch between the background knowledge presupposed by the writer and the background knowledge possessed by the reader (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983), and this mismatch may elicit misunderstanding and distortion of the meaning of the text for the readers, especially for ESL/EFL readers. Research by Anderson (1978), Steffensen, Joag-Dev & Anderson (1979), Carrell (1987) and Kang (1992) has shown that because of differences in culture or expertise, EFL students experience comprehension difficulty. However, when provided with prereading activities, their comprehension improves considerably (Carrell, 1983; Taglieber, Johnson & Yarbrough, 1988; Chen & Graves, 1995; Zhaojin, 2003). Research has shown that prereading activities such as pictorial context, vocabulary preteaching, text previewing, preteaching unfamiliar vocabulary are effective for both L1 and L2 readers (Pearson, Hansen & Gordon, 1979; Grabe, 1991; Chen & Graves, 1995; Zhaojin, 2003). This study focuses on two prereading activities—previewing and providing background knowledge. Several L1 studies

demonstrate that providing background knowledge facilitates understanding and learning unfamiliar materials (Rowe & Rayford, 1987; Hayes & Tierney, 1982). A few L2 studies which provided cultural background knowledge for readers also brought about significant results. Previewing is another prereading activity likely to appropriate for situations in which texts are difficult and may contain culturally unfamiliar material. Previews are introductory materials presented to students before reading to provide specific information about the contents of the reading materials. Over the past 20 years, the L1 studies were consistent in demonstrating that previews can be effective in facilitating comprehension of short stories and expository passages for elementary, junior high school, and high school students of low, average and high ability (McCormick, 1989; Dole, Valencia, Greer & Wardrop, 1991). The studies by Chen & Graves (1995) and Zhaojin (2003), which investigated effects of previewing short stories provides supportive information on using previews with ESL/EFL students. The use of previews is also supported by related cognitive theories. According to Stanovich's (1980) interactive compensatory model, Reading is an interactive process in which the reader uses both bottom-up and top-down processing of the text. McCormick (1989) argues that previews are helpful because the questions or directions in previews imply what is significant and can elicit predictions and help students relate text information to prior knowledge.

To summarize, previous research suggests that providing background knowledge and previewing are effective for both L1 and L2 readers. The recent research by Chen & Graves (1995) and Zhaojin (2003) shows that previewing was significantly superior to background knowledge in helping EFL students' understanding of American short stories. Because of these positive evidences, providing background knowledge and previewing formed the focus in this study. Specifically, this study investigated the effects of providing background knowledge and previewing American documentary narratives containing uniquely American cultural content since so far, no comparable research has been carried out to examine whether preview and background knowledge differ in their effectiveness for promoting ESL/EFL reading comprehension in documentary narratives. The specific research questions asked in the study are listed below.

1. Did students who received the background knowledge or the previewing treatment comprehend better than those who did not receive these treatment?

2. Is previewing superior to background knowledge for documentary narratives other than stories?

3. Is the facilitative effect of schemata on reading comprehension increased when schemata are enriched?

Method

Research Design

In this study, I used randomized experimental, control groups design as set out in Table 1. By "randomized experimental, control" groups, I mean I randomly selected and grouped 26 students from each of three intact classes into 3 groups (A, B & C). Groups A and B were experimental groups; Group C was a control group. The two experimental groups received prereading treatments before the test, (experimental group A received preview treatment, experimental group B received background knowledge treatment). The control group C did not receive any prereading treatment before the test.

Table 1

Research Design

Groups	Experimental Group	Experimental Group	Control Group
	A	B	C
Prereading Activities	Preview	Background Knowledge	No Activities
Reading	Text	Text	Text
Comprehension Measurement	Test	Test	Test

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

The two experimental groups (Preview Group, Background Knowledge Group) will perform significantly better than the control group in the comprehension test due to the immediate schema-enriching effects of the prereading activities of preview and background knowledge.

Hypothesis 2

Group A (Preview Group) will perform significantly better than Group C (Control Group) in the comprehension test due to the immediate schema-enriching effects of previewing.

Hypothesis 3

Group B (Background Knowledge Group) will perform significantly better than Group C (Control Group) in the comprehension test due to the immediate schema-enriching effects of background knowledge.

Subjects

For this study 78 students were randomly selected from three intact classes of second year non-English majors attending the Agriculture College of Yangzhou University. In order to minimize the priority of background knowledge of majors, care was taken to make sure that the subjects would not be selected from history or geography majors. The English level of selected students is at Band 3 in terms of the National English Proficiency Unified Examination for College non-English majors Syllabus (1991). All students participants have passed Band 3 mimic test.

Materials

Reading Selection

The selected text, which was written by American author, Leo Huberman, was taken from his book *We, the People*, a collection of historical stories on immigration to America. The book was published in 1947. The text "Here They Come" describes the difficulties and dangers of the early immigration of people to America.

As in the research of Chen & Graves (1995) and Zhoujin (2003) care was taken to select texts on a topic unfamiliar to most Chinese students, and one which presupposes culture-specific information that most Chinese students lack, even during the minimal "training" they received as part of the study.

Instrument

The purpose of this study is to investigate the value of providing background knowledge and previewing as an aid in building schemata to improve EFL reading comprehension. Bearing this purpose in mind, I avoided questions for which answers were directly stated in the text when I constructed multiple-choice questions and true or false questions. The reading comprehension questions were intended to encourage students to make inferences both from the text and from their background knowledge re-lating to the text. Therefore, I distinguished between 2 types of reading comprehension questions: textually inferred (bottom-up) and interactively-inferred.

Textually-inferred questions require answers that can be inferred from the text only; interactively-inferred questions require answers that can be inferred from an interaction between the text and previously acquired knowledge.

Procedures

Preview and Background Knowledge were the introductory approaches presented to readers before reading. Preview focused on providing general information about the content of the upcoming text while Background Knowledge focused on providing detailed information about the content of the upcoming text.

Preview Treatment

1. An interest-building part designed to motivate students by making a connection between a familiar topic "the discovery of America" and the topic of the story of immigration during the 18th century.

2. A topic question to provide students with the opportunity to activate what they knew about the early immigrants' journey in the 18th century. This was intended to help students to activate relevant historical knowledge of which they might have been unaware and relate it to the target text.

3. A brief description of the story with purpose-setting questions to help students comprehend the text and avoid undue difficulty when they read.

Background Knowledge Treatment

1. Part one was designed to motivate students' interest and build up their background knowledge by locating some of the most important harbors in west Europe and America on a map of the world so as to provide students with an opportunity to appreciate the distance of early immigrants' voyage to America and to develop initial associations about the difficulties of early immigrants.

2. In the second part, ten words and phrases from the text were classified into three groups to construct background knowledge: (a) key concept expressions, (b) difficult words and phrases, (c) geographic words.

3. Part three was designed to encourage students to evaluate the usefulness of their own ideas by providing suggestive answers to the three groups of words discussed above.

Data Collection

On the day of the test (Dec 29, 2003), the three groups (A, B & C) of subjects were randomly assigned to three different rooms. Next, each group was randomly assigned to three different conditions.

In the Preview condition, according to the directions for administering the previewing in the preview material, the English teacher first gave students introductory information about the upcoming test by posing purpose-setting questions and then guiding students in a discussion.

In the Background Knowledge condition, the English teacher first hung a map of the world on the blackboard and located the Netherlands, England and France for students, pointed out the important harbors of these countries, and finally gave students an opportunity to write down what they knew about four key concept expressions, three difficult phrases, and three geographic words which were important in understanding the text.

In the control condition, there was no prereading treatment before the reading comprehension test.

Data Analysis

Answers to the multiple-choices questions and true or false questions in the test were scored as correct or incorrect. The maximum score for multiple-choice was 5 points (5x1), and the maximum score for true or false was 5 points (5x1). Therefore, in the test, the total score for multiple-choice and true or false questions was 10 points (10x1).

I chose Kruskal-Wallis to test hypothesis 1, hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3. My reasons for choosing this statistical procedure were: 1) the data are independent because they were collected from three separate groups, 2) I am not confident that the data are parametric since the scores taken from multiple choice questions and true or false questions can not be measured using interval scale due to the possibly varying degrees of difficulties among the items. In such cases, a nonparametric comparison of the data seems more appropriate. Therefore, in my study, I used nonparametric statistics (Kruskal-Wallis Test) to test differences and compare the means of three independent groups.

Results

Analysis of data relevent to research hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 is presented in Tables 2 and 3. The Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to test hypothesis 1, hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3 to determine whether there were significant differences among the three groups. The Kruskal-Wallis Test showed that there were significant differences among the three groups, as H=8.043, p=0.018 (significant), df=2, p=0.05, the observed value 8.043 is greater than the critical p value 5.991.

Table 2

The Mean Ranks of the Three Groups (A, B & C) in Test

Groups	Number of subjects	Mean Rank
Group A (Preview)	26	42.46
Group B (Background Knowledge)	26	46.27
Group C (Control)	26	29.77
Total	78	

The post hoc test *Ryan Procedure* was used as a follow-up to ascertain whether the two experimental groups (A&B) were significantly better than the control group (C).

Table 3

Ryan Procedure: Comparison of Critical Values and Z Values of the Three Groups in Test

Groups	Group B	Group C
Group A	c.v.=2.13; Z= 0.538	c.v.=2.13; Z=1.990
Group B		c.v.=2.40; Z= 2.805*

Note: c.v. = critical value *= significant

Table 3 shows that a comparison of Group A and Group C indicates a small advantage for Group A over Group C; the difference however, is not statistically significant as the Z value (1.990) is smaller than the critical value (2.13). Therefore, hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Table 3 however, shows a significant difference between Group B and Group C as the Z value (2.805) is larger than the critical value (2.40). Therefore, hypothesis 3 is supported.

Overall, the data in Table 2 and 3 show a statistically significant superior performance by the background knowledge group over the control group, while there was no statistically significant difference in subjects' performance between the preview group and the control group, although the preview group was still ahead of the control group. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is only partially supported.

Discussion

In contrast to the findings of Chen & Grave (1995) and Zhaojin (2003), who found that the preview group, but not the background knowledge group, had a significantly superior performance over the control group, the results in this study show that the background knowledge group had a significantly superior performance over the control group, but not the preview group. Several explanations could account for this unexpected result:

1. First, the background knowledge treatment provided the students with a map of the world which gave them a geographic visual display of the distance traveled to America by the early immigrants, and helped them to develop an initial association with the difficulties of the early immigrants, which was the key to understanding the upcoming text. Kolers (1973) has proposed that pictures are better than words at depicting spatial configurations. Graphs, maps, diagrams, and flow charts are often particularly effective in conveying the spatial and temporal relationships among concepts.

2. Second, the background knowledge treatment focused students' attention on detailed information which is the key to understanding the upcoming text. However, giving students a global idea to understand the upcoming text was also covered in the preview treatment through the preliminary outline. It could be that in my study, providing more detailed information relevant to test item demands for comprehension favored the background knowledge group.

3. Interesting was the fact that significantly superior performance was achieved when the definition of geographic words such as 'important harbors' and the maps were presented together in the background knowledge treatment. It is possible that the reciprocal relationship between print and pictorial components through highlighting important harbors on the map of the world and providing the definitions of the important harbors in the background knowledge treatment facilitated students' understanding of the location of the important harbors which is actually impossible to state clearly in a verbal definition. My finding also supports the arguments by Mayer & Sims (1994) and Read & Barnsley's (1977) that the contiguous presentation of visual and verbal material made it more likely for the learners to build referential

connections between the visual representation and the verbal representation in short-term memory which resulted in better performance.

4. Last but not least, it could be argued that the preview used in this study was not an optimal one for facilitating students' comprehension. In relation to the contrary findings of Chen & Graves (1995), what can we conclude from this result? Which prereading activity is best for maximizing students' comprehension of a text? A well-known Chinese saying is "we need to get beyond the horse-race mentality" Thus, the question is not which activity is better, but which activity is most suitable for which type of reading. In Chen & Graves (1995) study, the reading passage used by them is the story of O. Henry. O. Henry was famous for inventing plots that build up to sharp, unexpected endings. Therefore, in this case, the preview treatment proved to be more effective due to its role in providing a description of the characters, which made it easier for students to follow the plot and organize information into a coherent mental structure. In my study, the text is documentary narrative and has no clear plot. For this type of text, understanding some key words, concept words and geographic words is more important to gain an understanding of the text. Therefore, the background knowledge, which was constructed in my study to focus on explaining concrete information and visual representations of geographic places, proved to be more effective in facilitating students' understanding of the upcoming text.

Implications and Applications for ESL/EFL Reading Classrooms

Materials Selection and Reading Programs

In my study, the results, in conjunction with Stanovich's findings (1998), demonstrate that the more students know about a topic, the more they get out of a text and therefore, the more motivated they are to learn. Stanovich (1998) calls this the Matthew effect, after a passage in the New Testament that essentially says that "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer." In other words, students with a rich base of domain knowledge do better in reading comprehension. In addition, according to Carrell & Eisterhold (1988) schemata which are repeatedly accessed and expanded, result in increased comprehension. Thus, research suggests that teachers of ESL/EFL select reading materials on the same topic. According to Krashen (1981), any text comprehension depends on some relevant prior knowledge. To some degree, well-chosen texts, can, in themselves, build readers' knowledge base. In China, the important role played by background knowledge of discipline-specific content domains is being increasingly recognized by those involved in teaching English for Special Purposes (ESP). Therefore, another way to organize a second/foreign language reading program is through content-centered instruction. Such instruction would involve a conscious

effort to set up basic theme-English for specific purposes courses for particular academic or occupational groups (e.g., courses for nurses, courses for tax majors).

Key Vocabulary Instruction

Preteaching vocabulary, which is key to understanding a text, has proven effective in background knowledge in the short term context. My finding supports the suggestions of Carrell (1988), that an important part of teaching background knowledge is teaching the vocabulary related to it, and conversely, teaching vocabulary may mean teaching new concepts, new knowledge. Knowledge of vocabulary entails knowledge of schemata in which a concept participates.

However, merely presenting a list of new or unfamiliar vocabulary items to be encountered in a text, even with definitions appropriate to their use in that text, does not guarantee the induction of new schemata (Carrell 1988, p. 243). In the Zhaojin (2003) study, the prereading vocabulary activity was the least effective of all three types of reading activities at all proficiency levels for inducing appropriate schemata. In comparison with the preteaching vocabulary used by Zhaojin (2003), in my study, selecting key concept words and difficult words and phrases has proven an effective means of preteaching vocabulary. Key concept words refer to the words that carry key cultural meanings. For example, if a student does not understand that "passage money" refers to the cost of a long journey by ship, then he/she will find the later discussion of the story about the passengers being bought totally incomprehensible. In this case, preteaching of culture-specific phrases like "passage money" before reading comprehension is absolutely necessary and effective. In my study, difficult words and phrases refers to vocabulary and phrases that I predicted would cause difficulties because of the Chinese students' limited understanding of more archaic English.

Therefore, a related suggestion in preteaching vocabulary in reading pedagogy is that vocabulary preteaching should not be based on lexical difficulty or frequency, as is often the case in China. Instead, vocabulary items selected for preteaching instruction should be specialized vocabulary which teachers predict will cause difficulties for most students, or words that carry cultural meanings relatively unfamiliar to most Chinese students.

Prereading Activities

The existing reading materials for College non-English majors in China include plenty of prereading exercises, usually in the form of prefacing the reading text with information-seeking, or prediction questions for the reader to keep in mind while reading. These prereading activities are intended to motivate students to read for a purpose what follows; for example, to gain the information necessary to answer

questions. These are also intended to get the student to predict what the text will be about. However, even if the prereading exercises perform these two functions, in many reading situations they are too limited to suffice as the only type of prereading activities, and they will not do much toward building background knowledge in the reader.

My findings show the value of background knowledge in the comprehension test when it provides a combination of concrete information and visual representations of geographic places. ESL/EFL teachers are therefore encouraged to design instructional multimedia materials to aid in text comprehension. The instructional multimedia materials could be presented in textual form, visual form, auditory form, or in any combination of presentation modes to build "external connections" (Mayer, 1989). For example, for vocabulary acquisition a picture may be a good choice in depicting an individual word that represents an object mentioned in the text.

Conclusion

In this study, the superiority of providing background knowledge over previewing suggests that background knowledge is better for maximizing students' comprehension of documentary narrative. Further research should explore the differential effectiveness of previewing and providing background knowledge for specific text types (genres of expository or narrative or combination of two). Only through more research that considers different genres covering different contents will we gain a clearer understanding of the effects of previewing and background knowledge on reading comprehension. Nevertheless, a study such as this one both contributes and acts as a stimulus to further exploration of these related topics. My greatest wish is that this study will inspire Chinese EFL teachers to help students to build their background knowledge by providing prereading activities in consideration of different genres of selections to be read. At the same time, I hope this study will remind them to be more sensitive to their students' reading problems arising from a lack of cultural background knowledge and expertise, and more willing to develop their students' content schemata which will benefit them not only while they are in their charge, but long after their scholastic education ends.

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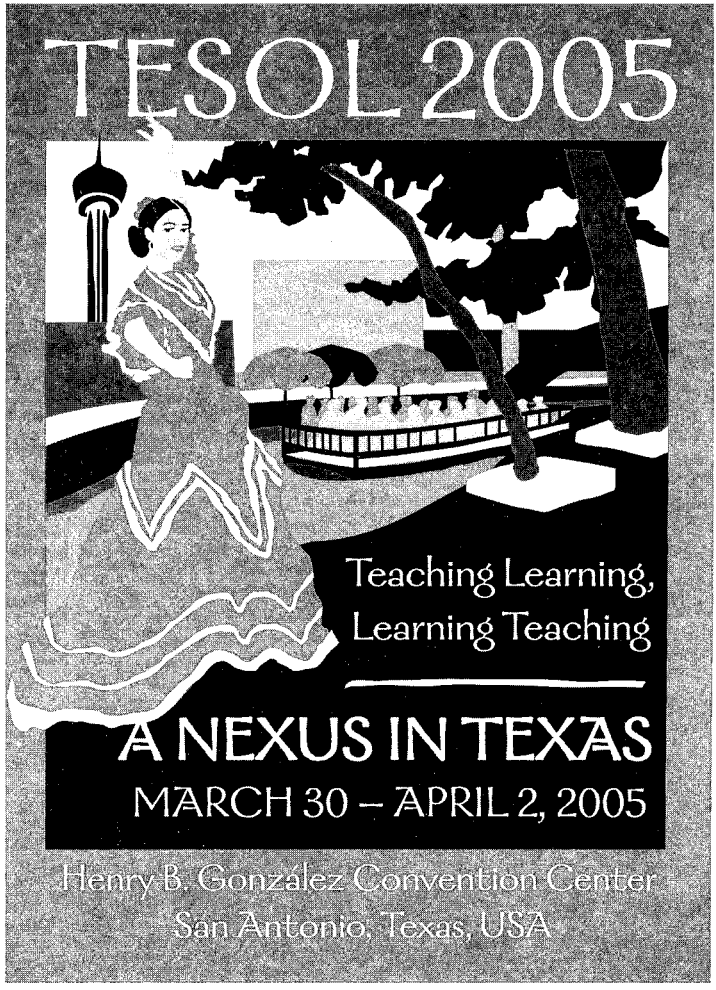

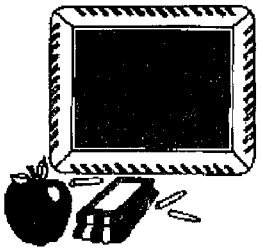

Tips for Teachers

Lifting the Lid on a Treasure Chest of Words with a Thesaurus

Lorraine Lucrecio, Brigham Young University-Hawaii, USA

Advanced ESL learners in university writing classes frequently find themselves in a rut while attempting to expand their vocabulary. Teachers emphasize reading to build vocabulary, but it remains a passive activity for many students. Putting new vocabulary into active use continues to be difficult. In my experience of teaching ESL writing classes, two constant problems are repetition and limited vocabulary. Although grammatically correct, word usage is weak and does not get to the core of what students are trying to convey. They are unable to fully express themselves because of their limited vocabulary.

Dictionaries are helpful, but only to a certain extent. Often they lack information about word usage or collocation. In addition, English language learners often see the dictionary only as tool for passive understanding of unknown words, not for putting them into active use. Publishers are addressing this problem with a growing array of learner dictionaries now available on the market. Another way to address the problem is by introducing students to the use of a thesaurus.

The thesaurus is a native or fluent English speaker's tool to improving writing. We use it to demonstrate our knowledge and to exhibit our skill as wordsmiths. Native speakers know that there is a better way to say something, and we are constantly searching for it through our mental library and our printed reference books. For many writers, the thesaurus is an indispensable tool in this process. I have found the following sequence of activities useful for introducing the thesaurus to my advanced ESL writing students.

Creating a Need For New Vocabulary

To establish a context for needing and learning new vocabulary, I have my students take a personality "test." In actuality, this is a popular game played by American teens just for fun. Directions for the students are as follows.

1. Draw a four-by-four grid on a piece of paper.
2. Label the four columns Color, Animal, Body of Water, and Room with Light.
3. Put the answers to these four questions in the first box in each column.

a. What is your favorite color?

b. What is your favorite animal?

c. What is your favorite form of water? (ocean, river, snow, rain, waterfall etc.)

d. Imagine you are alone in a room with no windows or doors. It is very black and very quiet. A white flash of light zooms past you and disappears. How do you feel?

4. Write three descriptive adjectives below each answer, one in each box. (Common answers include nice, beautiful, big, friendly, cold, scared, etc.). Now, their completed grid should look something like this one.

Color	Animal	Body of Water	Room with light
Blue	Dog	River	Room
Cool	*Happy*	*Quiet*	*Scared*
Nice	*Friendly*	*Beautiful*	*Lonely*
Popular	*Smart*	*Comfortable*	*Worried*

5. When the class is finished, randomly select a few students to share their answers with the class. Then, "psychoanalyze" them by explaining that

a. The color and adjectives represent how you view yourself.

b. The animal and adjectives represent how others view you.

c. The water and adjectives represent your ideal spouse/family relationships.

d. The room with the light and adjectives represent how you feel about marriage.

Introducing the Thesaurus

After the laughing and giddiness cease is the time to introduce the thesaurus. This is most effective if you can have several on hand for students to examine. Explain what they are. Show how to use them. Tell where to find them. This part of the lesson will

depend upon your teaching situation and students. If your students have access to computers, you may want to tell them how to locate the thesaurus under Tools in Microsoft Word, for example. If public bookstores are available, you may want to show what you consider to be the best buy for your students' needs. You may also want to caution students about buying just any thesaurus in the same way that you would help them evaluate dictionaries. Some have too little information, some too much, some too difficult, and so forth. Next, give the students an in-class assignment that will utilize the words they have already written and find related terms. Three related terms per word would suffice.

Using The Thesauri

Now ask students to locate three possible substitutions for each of the twelve words in their table. Working with the words in the grid, students might find these.

Cool	composed, nonchalant, casual
Nice	pleasant, kind, polite
Popular	admired, trendy, fashionable
Happy	ecstatic, jovial, blissful
Friendly	open, welcoming, sociable
Smart	clever, sharp, bright
Quiet	silent, gentle, soft
Beautiful	stunning, exquisite, charming
Comfortable	calm, secure, snug
Scared	terrified, fearful, petrified
Lonely	isolated, secluded, forlon
Worried	apprehensive, nervous, troubled

Putting Their New Words To Use

Now, students have a total of 48 words to express themselves, 36 of them new. They can put these words into active use with any number of extension activities.

1. Following their teacher's earlier example, they can psychoanalyze a partner or themselves orally or in writing, using as many of their words as possible.

2. They can write a descriptive paragraph or essay using some, or all, of the new vocabulary terms.

3. They can transform one column of words from their table into a short story. For example, describe a dream in which you were alone in a room with no windows or doors...

Continuing Practice With The Thesaurus

In subsequent lessons, the instructor can demonstrate how and when referring to a thesaurus can be helpful. For example, during the editing phase of a writing assignment, choose several sentences from current or former rough draft pieces and write them on the board, or display them with an overhead projector. Discuss with the class which words seem trite or overused and might be improved by using the thesaurus. Show them what to do with a think-aloud demonstration. Then, students will be ready to revise their own writing.

Conclusion

Our word *thesaurus* is derived from the Greek word for treasure, and indeed, using the thesaurus opens up a treasure chest of vocabulary for ESL learners. Students say that they enjoy writing more since they have a tool that can help them better express how they truly feel. Some say that they wish they had known about the thesaurus earlier in their study of English. They climb out of their vocabulary rut; their writing improves, and their self-confidence about being able to express themselves in English soars.

About the Author

Lorraine Lucrecio has taught adult EFL and ESL classes in Japan and Utah and elementary ESL classes in her native home, Hawaii. She is currently teaching in the EIL department of her alma mater, Brigham Young University Hawaii.

Politically Correct Speech as Content in a Language Class

Marina Tsehelska, Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University, Ukraine

Today political correctness is no longer a leading topic of discussion. Many words and phrases that first appeared in English due to this movement have now become mainstream. Use of politically correct speech by politicians, academics, and journalists grew out of the campaign for the civil rights of historically disadvantaged groups of people including minorities, women, the elderly, and disabled. As people became sensitive to bias on the basis of race, gender, age, and sexual orientation, for example, they tried to minimize the negative impact of the language that they used to discuss such issues.

Among the first signs of this movement was the attempt by feminists to make English less sexist. This meant, for example, avoiding the usage of male pronouns in cases when the gender of the person is unknown. For example, *Every student has to pass his exams* was replaced by *Every student has to pass their exams* which violates traditional rules of subject-verb agreement, but conforms to new rules of gender neutrality. General terms containing the segment *man*, like *mankind* and *man-made*, were replaced by synonyms like *humankind* and *artificial.*

The subject of politically correct (PC) English links historical, cultural, social, and linguistic issues. Since it also addresses current language usage, it appeals to language learners and teachers engaged in the study of English as it is actually used by native speakers today. Thus, politically correct English can be an interesting and useful subject of study for the ESL or EFL classroom. I have used the tasks that follow to help my students explore this topic.

Task 1

Below are five rules of traditional English usage along with advice about how to avoid traditional male-centered terminology. Read the rules of modern non-sexist usage and revise the examples to make them more politically correct.

1. Traditional rule: Male pronouns *he*, *his,* and *him* are used when the gender of the person is unknown.

Examples: Someone is on the phone. What does *he* want?

A gardener is usually proud of *his* garden.

A child needs to feel that *he* is liked by his friends.

PC rule: Change unnecessary male pronouns to plural forms (*they*, *them*) or combination forms (*he* or *she* and *she* or *he*). In writing, *s/he* is also acceptable.

Examples: Someone is on the phone. What do *they* want?

2. Traditional rule: Words formed with the segment *man* are used when referring to people in general. (Notice, however, that words like *manager* or *manufacture* are not derived from the same morpheme.)

Examples: *Man/mankind* is polluting the Earth.
No *man* has climbed this mountain before.
Who is *manning* the office?
This is the largest *man-made* lake in Europe.

PC rule: Use synonyms that refer to both men and women.

3. Traditional rule: Many job titles or activities are strongly associated with one gender or the other.

Examples:	businessman	chairman	workman
	postman	saleslady	stewardess
	male nurse	policemen	cameraman
	cleaning lady	clergyman	

Examples: A manager has a duty towards *his* workers.
The fall in prices is great news for *housewives*.
A mother should never leave *her* baby alone.

PC rule: Use expressions and pronouns that apply equally to men and women.

4. Traditional rule: Male words frequently precede female words in common expressions. (Although note the common *Ladies* and *gentlemen*.)

Examples:	men and women	boys and girls
	husband and wife	brother and sister
	his and her	he or she

PC rule: Try to balance the order of male and female pairs.

5. Traditional rule: Although not a traditional "rule" of usage, it was not uncommon for words referring to men and women in some situations to be used unequally.

Examples: Ted and Angela are *man* and *wife*.
I have three *girls* and two *men* working for me.
Mr. Lewis and *Miss* Masters are on the committee.

PC rule: Use equal male and female terms.

Attention to PC speech has led to revision of some literary classics including some contemporary versions of the *Bible* in which gender specific references to God have been removed. While most speakers of English would not consider going so far as to rewrite poetry or proverbs, my students enjoy the chance to work with them as a just-for-fun exercise in observing PC conventions.

Task 2

Read this poem by Lord Tennyson and edit it to make it more politically correct.

Man is for the field and wife is for the hearth;
Man is for sword and for the needle she;
He is for head and woman with the heart;
Man to command and wife to obey.
All else is confusion.

Task 3

Although famous, these proverbs are not politically correct. Try to change them.

1. Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.
2. He who cannot obey cannot command.
3. A man's home is his castle.
4. Every man has his hobbyhorse.
5. He is happy that thinks himself so.

The movement for political correctness has both supporters and critics. This makes it a good topic for discussions, debates, and other exercises in critical thinking skills. Below are several topics for further investigation or discussion. They may not be familiar or appropriate for all settings, but they may help teachers think of PC issues that would be relevant to their students.

Tasks For Further Investigation

1. Terms referring to racial, ethnic, or indigenous groups of people. Sensitivity toward race and ethnicity is also reflected in language changes that have been motivated by political correctness. For example, in most common usage today *Asian* has replaced *Oriental* and *Native American* has replaced *American Indian*. However, there is not always universal agreement or understanding about which terms are favored, polite, or neutral in a particular setting. Have your students design and conduct a survey of their classmates, neighbors, and friends who represent the various

racial and ethnic groups in your local population and can serve as informants on this issue. Then, students can report their findings to the class.

2. Terms used to disguise unpleasantness. In an attempt to mask the truth or to hide unpleasant realities, governments or other special interest groups sometimes create euphemisms or expressions to put a more positive light on a situation. If *blind* sounds offensive, *substitute visually* challenged. *Genocide* may be referred to as *ethnic cleansing*. Sometimes, the new terms seem awkward, funny, or even offensive. Again, there is unlikely to be agreement on whether such terms are good or not. Consider this opinion from Dr. Kennth Jernigan of the National Federation of the Blind in the U.S.:

> The blind have had trouble with euphemisms for as long as anybody can remember. The form has changed, but the old notions of inferiority and second-class status still remain. The euphemisms and political correctness do not help. If anything, they make matters worse as they claim modern thought and enlightenment. They attempt to avoid such straightforward, respectable words as blindness, blind, the blind, etc. and imply shame instead of true equality, and portray the blind as touchy and belligerent.

Do you agree or disagree with Dr. Jernigan? Try to explain why. Try to find other similar examples of euphemistic speech.

3. Political correctness in languages other than English. Politically correct changes are also occurring in languages other than English as a reflection of growing tolerance, inclusion, and other changes in modern societies. What examples of politically correct speech can you identify in the native languages of your classmates or community? Create a class list of examples.

4. PC point of view. Which of these two points of view most closely reflects your opinion? Explain, giving examples to support your opinion.

a. PC speech is an important issue in modern society and reflects a growing respect for others.

b. PC speech is just a form of conformism and does not represent a meaningful change in attitudes.

About the Author

Marina Tsehelska is Chair of the English Language and Methodology Department at Kryvyi Rih State Pedagogical University in Ukraine.

Integrating Skills and Strategies in a Content-based Course

Kevin Ballou, Transpacific Hawaii College, USA

As the new resource teacher for our institution's American culture and communication course, my task sounded simple: put a language focus back into a content course that had become an eclectic collection of new student orientation materials, tips for living in the U.S., and information about local and American culture. Teachers had become confused by the seemingly random and hopelessly disorganized materials available for use in the course, and students often commented that they could not see the purpose of the class and did not feel that it was helping them learn English. The process that we followed to re-establish a clearer link between content and language in this course may be of use to others engaged in curriculum development or revision.

Identifying the Problems

First, we decided that we needed to examine more than just the collection of materials that we had been using. We began with our setting. Our school is a small, two-year college in Hawaii whose primary goal is preparing Japanese students for successful transfer to an American, Japanese, or other four-year university program. Students are typically recent high school graduates with minimal English proficiency. TOEFL scores range from 380 to 450. They live with host families for at least their first year in the college. In two years, average students are able to complete an ESL program and an associate of arts degree while preparing for the rigor of third-year university study elsewhere. The American culture and communication course that is the subject of this article is one the first classes that new students take, along with two hours a day of listening/speaking and four hours of reading/writing. Among the problems with the course that we found were uninteresting materials and activities, disjointed lessons, and a heavy emphasis on reading in an already reading-heavy program.

Revising Goals and Objectives.

The ESL program coordinator and I worked together to established some new goals and objectives for the course. The overall purpose of the course would be for new students to experience particular aspects of American culture while they adapted

to life in the United States and improved their communication skills. We decided that the language component of the course should enable students to learn important daily and academic vocabulary and idioms while also using English to develop better oral fluency. The revamped course needed to fit better into our program's curriculum, which starts with extensive oral and written fluency work and is followed by a transition to a more intensive academic focus including essay writing and lecture note taking. We decided to take a more task-based approach to language practice that would encourage students to communicate not only in the classroom, but also with their host families and in the community. The overall outcome that we hoped to achieve was increased student success in the ESL and associate in arts degree programs. We also hoped that students would adjust better to host family life, feel more at ease in Hawaii, grow in their understanding of American culture, and become active participants in the life of our college.

Integrating Content and Language

From a seemingly endless number of possibilities, we chose six broad thematic areas for the content of our course: getting to know your host family, getting to know the college, personal safety and healthy dating, exploring American and Hawaiian culture, and preparing for our academic future. Each area has been developed in one or more units of instruction following the same general sequence of activities. (1) A preparation activity personalizes the topic and activates background knowledge. (2) Input, preferably a video or dialogue, serves as the primary medium for content transmission and as model for a later production task (3) Practice and awareness-raising exercises focus on the skills and strategies that will be needed to communicate in the task. (4) The production task gives students a chance to explore the content while making use of the skills and strategies modeled by the input. (5) Finally, time for feedback and reflection gives students the opportunity to think about and share what they have learned about both content and language use.

Below is a sketch of one of our units called "Getting Involved with Campus Activities" from the thematic area "Getting to Know the College." Students who successfully complete this unit learn about the extracurricular activities offered by the college and have the language and social skills to find out more about a club or sport.

Preparation

Students discuss clubs and activities they participated in during high school and what interests they have now that they are in a new school and country. Afterwards, they read a short section from the Student Handbook about clubs and activities offered at the college.

Input

The class watches a short video of a student talking with a club officer about her club. During the interview, the student gets information such as where and when the club meets and why someone might consider joining this club. The student on the tape models good communication strategies including asking the club member if it is a good time to talk and verifying that he understood the information correctly. As they watch, the students fill-in a gapped script that draws their attention to the target strategies. Students answer questions to check for comprehension of the dialogue. Then, they discuss the strategies that the student used for communication.

Practice

Students practice having a similar dialogue with a partner, attempting to use the target strategies. Afterwards, they brainstorm questions they would like to ask a club officer using the questions from the dialogue as models.

Production

As a homework assignment, the students must approach a club officer, ask if it is a good time to talk, and find out answers to their questions about club membership. To avoid communication breakdown, they are reminded to make use of the strategies practiced in class.

Feedback and reflection

In the next class, students share the content of their interviews, putting the information together in a binder for future reference. They finish by discussing how the interviews went and whether they were able to use the target expressions to sustain the conversation.

Since we finished designing and implementing our new curriculum, course evaluations and feedback from teachers have revealed several improvements. Teachers find the language goals give clearer focus to the course and provide them with better guidance as to how to teach the required content. Students are more likely to say that they are learning English and improving their language skills. Finally, both teachers and students appear to be enjoying the course more. When we realize that it is not necessary to choose between language and content, everybody wins.

About the Author

Kevin Ballou is a resource teacher in the ESL program at TransPacific Hawaii College, a 2-year college located east of Honolulu, Hawaii. His primary interests are curriculum design and use of video materials for language learning.

Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP Model

Review by Alex Poole
Western Kentucky University, USA

MAKING CONTENT COMPREHENSIBLE FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS: THE SIOP MODEL. Jana Echeveria, MaryEllen Vogt, and Deborah Short. Boston, MA: Pearson 2004, 2nd Edition. Pp. xv+237

One option for quickly teaching children and adolescents English is sheltered immersion. In sheltered immersion classrooms, students are taught content through simplified English, with the goal being to learn both language and subject matter. While an attractive choice for US public schools and international schools in non-English speaking countries, few tools have traditionally been available that show ESL and EFL teachers and curriculum designers how to implement such a mode of instruction. This text, however, solves part of this problem by providing a model of a theoretically-based sheltered English program called the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP).

In effect, SIOP consists of a wide range of components, ranging from lesson preparation, strategy instruction, and practice/application opportunities, to how to provide comprehensible input, assess learners' progress, and implement techniques for dealing with reading difficulties. Each chapter contains, at minimum, a summary of the relevant research on the issues at hand, an explanation of the procedures taken in that part of the protocol, and most notably, lengthy examples of how real-life teachers carry out the protocol.

In general, the text's language is straightforward, making it accessible to novice and veteran teachers alike. However, the text contains some drawbacks that teachers and teacher trainers should note before using it. First, the theoretical basis of the SIOP, the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, has been widely criticized, yet little mention is made of such criticisms. In addition, the text's recommendations are sometimes amorphous. For example: The authors call on teachers to create 'non-threatening' environments, yet there is little elaboration on what would constitute such an environment. Furthermore, it is doubtful that most teachers intentionally create hostile classrooms. Finally, some of the authors' recommendations for practical instruction are rather simplistic in that they do not address the complexity of most of today's ESL/EFL teaching environments. They claim, for instance, that when preparing

individual lessons, teachers should take students' first language, English proficiency, cultural background and age into consideration. However, most ESL classrooms, at least in American public schools, have students from a variety of L2 proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds, and thus must address much more than the authors suggest.

While *Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP Model* contains some limitations, it nevertheless should be used as an introduction to sheltered English instruction. Newcomers to sheltered instruction will find it user-friendly and clear; moreover, teacher trainers will find its simplicity appropriate for beginning TESOL courses.

About the Reviewer

Alex Poole is an assistant professor of English at Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA. His interests include focus on form instruction, second language reading strategies, and Spanish-English bilingualism.

Assessment Practices

Review by Nathan T. Carr
California State University, Fullerton, USA

ASSESSMENT PRACTICES. Edited by Christine A. Coombe and Nancy J. Hubley. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Inc. 214 pp. ISBN: 193118507-7 (paperback, $32.95). ($24.95 TESOL member).

Assessment Practices, consisting of 13 case studies, is intended for current and prospective ESOL teachers who are new to the field of assessment. Its main contribution is the way in which the case studies present detailed, concrete descriptions of how assessment is performed in a number of distinct contexts, along with practical suggestions based on the various authors' experience. Six of the case studies deal with assessment in EFL contexts and the other seven with ESL assessment, so most readers should find multiple examples that are relevant to their own situations.

Each chapter consists of an introduction, a description of the context in which the assessment takes place, a description of the assessment itself, an explanation of its distinguishing features, a list of practical ideas, and a conclusion. This organizational structure ensures clarity of description, and also helps ensure a sense of internal coherence in each case study, as well as a sense of general parallelism across all chapters. Each chapter relates to one or more of three themes to at least some degree: multiple-measures assessment, assessment in context, and the cyclical nature of assessment. Taken together, however, these themes subsume almost any testing project imaginable, so it is probably more helpful to consider the five topical sections into which the book is divided: comprehensive assessment, curriculum washback, in-program assessment, end-of-program assessment, and program evaluation. The case studies within a given section do not always take that particular topic as their main thrust, but they are always relevant to it somehow.

Each of the case studies provides at least several useful ideas or suggestions, so I recommend this book for teachers or other test developers seeking ideas for their own assessment contexts. That recommendation must be qualified, however, given that from the perspective of commonly accepted assessment theory, a few chapters contain inaccuracies. An example of this is the assertion in one chapter that validation minimally consists of calculating descriptive statistics, conducting

reliability analyses, and analyzing item facility and discrimination. While reliability can certainly be seen as a necessary condition for validity, validation is generally viewed as ensuring that a test measures what it purports to measure, and that any inferences made on the basis of test scores are justified. While most of the chapters do not contain problematic material, this occasional flaw means that this would probably not be the best choice for someone who is looking for their first book in language assessment. On the other hand, the book could probably work well as a supplementary text in an introductory course on language assessment, where the instructor could point out the few inaccuracies.

About the Reviewer

Nathan Carr is an assistant professor in the TESOL program at California State University, Fullerton. His research interests center on language assessment, and include construct validation, web-based language testing, and test task characteristics and their effects on measurement properties. He has taught English in both the United States and Taiwan.

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THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION SERIES: BECOMING CONTRIBUTING PROFESSIONALS, EXTENDING PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS, SUSTAINING PROFESSIONALISM. Tim Murphey, Series Editor, Waldorf, MA: TESOL Publications, $25.95 per volume.

This series of three brief volumes was a pleasure to review, a "shot in the arm" at the end of a busy term. The series aims to "provide a wide array of choices to teachers for continuing their development throughout their careers" (Vol. 3, p. v). Each book is aimed at a specific group of teachers, Volume 1, Becoming Contributing Professionals, for those starting out in their careers, Volume 2, Extending Professional Contributions for those in mid-career, and Volume 3, Sustaining Professionalism for "seasoned" professionals. Each book is a collection of very short, very readable articles.

As a "seasoned" professional, I started with Volume 3 and was first inspired by a list of 21 things I could do to find inspiration at this point in my career. (I've been teaching for almost 20 years). So, at a glance I could: prepare a teaching portfolio, learn to write grants and manage funded projects, become a published materials writer, write reviews for TESOL publications, take on an administrative position and the list goes on. Now, I've had most of these thoughts before so what I found extremely useful about these articles is that they begin with the writer's or writers' narrative (what got them started on a particular project), describe the teaching context, provide a list of steps undertaken to reach the professional development goal, and finish with a short list of resources, many available on the Internet. Many are projects done in partnership with other professionals, either face-to-face or at a distance.

Notes to Contributors

The *TESL Reporter* is a 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 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) biodata 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.

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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.

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