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A Forum for and by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

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Contents

An Egg-Cooking Approach to Communicative Language Teaching

Anson Yang

City University of Hong Kong

I teach in a TESL department which provides courses for trainees to become secondary school English teachers in Hong Kong. The BA program we offer lasts for three years. Within these three years, trainees take courses in three strands: English proficiency and communication, English language and socio-cultural studies, and theories and practices of teaching and learning English as a second language. In fall 2001, three tutors and I were responsible for the final year Practice Teaching course. The course requires trainees to have eight weeks of lecture, discussion, and microteaching before they are placed in local secondary schools, teaching junior form English (grades 7-9) for five weeks. During these weeks, the trainees are responsible for one English class (40 students) and take up other duties assigned to them by the school, for example, invigilation, class substitution, and so on. In short, these trainees work like licensed teachers, only they are given few contact hours.

Before trainees take the Practice Teaching course, they have taken five other courses which familiarize them with a classroom setting, routine, and language; these courses provide notions of communicative language teaching (CLT). The Practice Teaching course requires students to design class activities with the textbooks prescribed by the individual school, and direct students to complete an integrated language project; trainees also have to write teaching journals and collect data for assignments of other courses. Before trainees start their Practice Teaching, they must submit their detailed lesson plan for all five weeks of teaching. They are advised to prepare thoroughly, but must also be flexible for changes when their students respond to their plan differently. Each lesson plan includes: stage, time needed, objectives, material, procedure, classroom language, students' activity, discourse format, and problem anticipated. Some of these lessons should include CLT elements.

I supervised nine trainees. When I read their lesson plans, I saw that trainees had awkwardly invented grammar games when teaching language structure; they had their students do jigsaw reading whenever there was a reading lesson; and they had students sit together for a meaningless task. Such tasks appeared almost every other day in their lesson plans and could not work, even on paper, for a class of 40 young minds. It dawned on me that trainees thought that group work (because of its dialogic process and

nature) meant communicative language teaching; in order to please me, trainees designed group work for their students. Trainees considered it the only "workable" method in teaching a foreign language. This paper attempts to clarify some misunderstanding seen in my students' lesson plans and microteaching. It also provides two lessons given by my trainees after the clarification.

CLT in a Nutshell

A lot of CLT definitions, characteristics, and case studies have been presented since 1970s. Wilkins (1972) believes that people should learn a second language for performing different functions in life. Larsen-Freeman (1986) complements this idea by adding that all tasks should be done with a communicative intent. Because of these two notions, it is natural to introduce authentic learning materials in class (Nunan, 1991; Dubin, 1995; Widdowson, 1996). CLT also is associated with learner-centered and experienced-based tasks (Richard and Rodgers, 1986; Lo, Tsang, and Wong, 2000), and therefore favors interaction among small numbers of students in order to maximize time for student activities in "negotiate meaning" (Li, 1998, p. 679). But all these characteristics come under the "weak version" of CLT, according to Holliday (1994). In addition to agreeing that CLT's focus is not on language practice but on learning about how language works in discourse, the lesson should focus on the way students communicate with the learning material. Therefore, students completing a task is fore-grounded, and communicating with teach other is back-grounded. In this spirit, teachers do not have to monitor group work closely; classes can actually be conducted as a whole, as long as students are communicating with rich texts and producing useful hypotheses about the language.

Weak and Strong Versions of CLT

The weak version of CLT still dominates in many Asian countries simply because teachers mistake group work and role-play as the sole ideas of CLT (Thompson, 1996). Another reason is the textbooks prescribed for language classes. In Hong Kong, for example, secondary school students in Forms 1 to 5 (grades 7-11) have set books for their English lessons; students meet with the English teacher for about five hours every week, using different textbooks. These books include an all-in-one comprehension book and its accompanying workbook. The book usually has ten chapters to be used in one school year; each chapter includes several weak CLT mini-tasks of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, as well as explicit mechanical exercises for grammar teaching. If teachers go through each task carefully, they will need at least three weeks for one chapter. Therefore, teachers choose the more essential tasks or those easy-to-complete for class lectures. In addition to the all-in-

one textbook, students have a separate listening book, and one or two storybooks; the book list sometimes continues with a grammar book. On top of that, teachers assign and mark composition assignments every two to three weeks. With all these, it is no wonder teachers choose an easy way out by just skipping over some tasks in the textbooks and giving up on designing authentic meaningful tasks for their students.

One of the tasks in *Oxford Junior English* (the most popular English textbook among Hong Kong secondary schools) set for Form 2 students (age 14), requires students to read a short dialogue (six turns) between a Chinese woman and a Chinese supermarket manager. The woman had bought some pre-wrapped vegetables and found that they had gone bad. She returned to the supermarket to complain about it and ask for an exchange. The manager requested the receipt, made the exchange accordingly, and apologized. The task required students to simulate the situation and construct two other dialogues on their own; cue words were given. True, this kind of situation will happen in real life, but how often do Form 2 Hong Kong students shop on their own and upon finding bad merchandize, return to complain about it in English?! Even if students had the problem they probably would ask their parents to do the complaining and certainly not in English. When students see the pictures provided and read the dialogue, all authenticity has disappeared. Likewise, teaching junior students to order a Happy Meal in English in their home country is irrelevant, unless teachers can provide a context where English must be used.

Therefore, in order to have a genuine use of English, an authentic situation must be created for the students. For example, when teaching complaints and clarifying discrepancies, the teacher can introduce a marked English test paper with the total score calculated incorrectly. This will create a situation for the student to approach the English-speaking teacher and ask the teacher to correct the discrepancy. Likewise, reporting loss of personal items, inviting other teachers to a class function, discussing the venue for an outing are all excellent CLT opportunities. The Happy Meal issue can also be addressed: some students may have an English-speaking domestic helper at home; students can describe in greater detail to the helper what kind of fast food the helper can have over the counter. In an IT language class, students can even communicate with each other on ICQ Net Meeting, a channel for users to chat and type instantaneously and simultaneously. Teachers can also collaborate with schools in other countries in the same time zone, so that students in two countries can have interactions on a simple task.

Different Egg Dishes

Although there are definitions and my trainees seemed to have ample input before they taught, they still had a vague idea of what CLT is. To help them understand better, I drew upon the cookbook theory. I told my trainees that CLT is very much like

cooking: they have to show the ingredients and the steps very clearly; sometimes they may also have to state the nutritious value. I asked trainees to think of the ways they wanted their eggs to be cooked (hard-boiled, sunny side up, over easy, omelets, etc). I chose eggs because I was sure all trainees knew one or two ways to cook them. I also supplied the dishes of Cantonese steamed eggs, Shanghai-style fried egg white, and egg-and-milk dessert. I asked trainees to discuss in detail among themselves how their eggs were cooked. A few minutes later, reports were given.

After the reports, I asked students to find the similarities among their cooking methods: they all involved breaking the shell of the eggs, lighting the fire, cooking, and eating. Here is how I drew parallels between cooking and CLT: no matter how one cooks the eggs, there is no getting around some of the essential steps; likewise, the actual reading. listening, speaking, and writing must appear in a CLT activity, no matter how well it is masqueraded. It is important for students to actually eat the eggs (digesting the item taught) rather than just picking the ham out of the omelet (sitting together and playing a game without a focused point or a learning objective). I also told trainees that even if they followed the same procedures to boil and egg, they would get different results every time: the room temperature, the flame, the amount of water in the saucepan, and the while-yolk-ratio would affect the firmness of the egg when it was done. Therefore, trainees should focus on the subject matter, be responsive to the outcome, and have their students complete the task, rather than on the language while delivering a lesson. If a communicative lesson does not work well, a small alteration may produce very different results. It was also pointed out to students that although each egg dish may be tasty, wrong ingredients put together may be disastrous. Therefore, students should consider carefully steps and material in order to prevent having awkward and irrelevant CLT tasks in the lesson. In short, a CLT lesson should be focused, meaningful, and fun.

The Goldfish Lesson

A trainee seemed to capture the "egg" idea and had a consultation with me for his upcoming listening microteaching lesson. He wanted to carry out a 30-minute listening activity; the content was about goldfish. The lesson would be in four stages: realia discussion, vocabulary teaching, game, and recapitulation. In the lesson, other classmates would act as junior level secondary school students. In his microteaching, he brought along two goldfish to stir students' interest and discussed the joy and difficulty of keeping pet fish at home; students happily provided some comments. He also stuck nine A4 size pictures of different kinds of goldfish on the board, using them to teach the colors, shapes, and body parts (e.g., orange, golden, silver, oval, round, dragon's eye, red cap, fin, etc.). When he was sure that his students had digested the

input, he told them to open the book to the listening task. The task involved two people describing different features of four goldfish (already on the board). He divided the students into groups and each group would send one representative for the game. He wanted his students to listen to the tape and when they recognized the fish described, they should rush to the board and write the team name there. Although the game looked simple, these university students enjoyed it. Marks were calculated. Then the trainee asked some students to describe the other five unmarked fish to each other. When the 30-minute lesson was over, class comments were given.

The classmates were glad to see how the class had been conducted. They commented that they did not think the task was on listening when the goldfish were brought in and colors, shapes and all were taught. They thought it was a lesson teaching them how to distinguish different types of fish. Even when the tape was played, they considered it a game; it was when the game was over that the class realized the whole lesson was a listening task in disguise. The class recapped the idea of CLT in the lesson above: They learnt the necessary vocabulary words in a meaningful way, they participated in an opinion sharing session when they talked about the joy and difficulty of keeping fish, they competed in a game. They also realized the actual act of listening and writing down the answer. The class also liked the wrapping up activity task where students were asked to describe the other five unmarked fish, using the vocabulary learnt; such an exercise enhanced students' knowledge.

A Game Prepared by Students

Another trainee delivered her "comparative and superlative" lesson. After fifteen minutes of introducing the idea, the structure, and the form of adjective comparison, she put students in groups of three. Each student was then given eight pieces of small paper. Student A in each group wrote eight different *names* on all his papers, student B wrote *adjectives*, and student C wrote *venues*. Then all pieces were mixed and turned upside down. Students arranged the 24 pieces of paper on their desk in 4 rows of 6. Each student took turns in turning over three pieces; when the three pieces consisted of a name, an adjective, and a venue, all three students had to race and write a complete sentence in either the comparative or superlative form. If the three pieces did not represent the three categories, they would have to be turned face down again. The game continued until all papers were turned.

Although the first 15 minutes were dry and mechanical, it was informational and needed; the rest of the class was highly communicative. This 30-minute lesson was a success because it involved four different CLT activities in one game. The trainee instructed the students to make their own game, and then she gave instructions for the

game, both highly communicative according to Holliday (1994). The game was based on competing to make sentences, which required students to memorize the positions of the words; stop. At last, students in the same group checked the sentences and the winner would come forward. Readers can easily recognize that this task was a game-masqueraded grammar exercise and a lot more effective than mechanical drilling. The real situation here is students wanted to win the game and the game had to be played in English. The notions of being focused, meaningful and fun were a foundation in this game. It was easy to monitor, and little preparation was needed from the teacher who only had to make sure that clear instructions were given.

Conclusion

Teacher education around the world has put emphasis on more use of CLT with more interest in student-centeredness, but to save trouble, new teachers or experienced teachers who have more than one English class may choose to follow the layout and suggestion of textbooks only. Teachers who have grown up in cultures with teacher-centered classrooms, examination and curriculum constraints, and large classes are more tempted to use the weak version of CLT or to give up CLT altogether (Miller and Aldred, 2000). It is ideal to apply CLT throughout an English course, but if a school is confined to using uncreative textbooks, teachers should consider conducting a CLT activity at the proper times to enrich the class. This paper does not attempt to overlook the necessity of role-play or direct teaching methods (for example, teaching grammar) in an English lesson. It simply describes how weak versions of CLT tasks can easily be changed into stronger ones. Examples are provided for using the same text or discussion point, showing that a change of scenarios can bring out the authenticity of the language activity. This paper, however, reemphasizes that CLT has to be focused, meaningful, and fun. It also stresses that such activities need not be group work but should focus on task completion rather than on learning the form intently. In short, teachers should understand that whether a dish is tasty and nutritious or not depends on a lot of variables, but if the cook decides at the beginning already that wrong ingredients will be used in the dish, the dish will be guaranteed a failure. Teachers should remember that their students should be able to appreciate and use the learned items soon after they have been taught, rather than wait until students become old enough to file a complaint or shop in an English-speaking country on their own.

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About the Author

Anson Yang teaches TESL and literature courses in the Department of English and Communication at City University of Hong Kong. His research interests include ELT, popular fiction, and the use of literary texts for EFL teaching.

Extensive Reading With EFL Learners at Beginning Level

Samuel P-H Sheu
Takming College, Taiwan

Introduction

In many SL/FL settings like that of Taiwan, reading instruction at the secondary level is still focused on a close study of vocabulary and grammar (known as the intensive reading approach), but it has been argued that such a type of language lesson is not reading at all (Alderson & Urquhart, 1984; Robb & Susser, 1989). Because students lack reading practice in their learning process, it is not surprising that they have not developed an ability which allows them to read extensively and fluently outside the classroom. This raises the important issue as to whether an alternative instruction method would be more effective. An extensive reading (ER) approach appears to be the most appropriate option for improving students' language proficiency and reading ability. Despite successful research and a growing interest in ER in many Asian countries, such as Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore, extensive reading has not received as much attention as it might in the English teaching circle in Taiwan.

Extensive Reading

Extensive reading is defined as a means of giving students "the time, encouragement, and materials to read pleasurably, at their own level, as many books as they can, without the pressures of testing or marks" (Davis, 1995, p. 329). The important characteristics of an extensive reading programme can be summarised as follows (Bright & McGregor, 1977; Hedge, 1985; Nuttall, 1996):

- Students can access a variety of interesting materials;
- They read a large quantity of printed materials;
- They have freedom to choose or change books;
- They read at their own pace for pleasure or information;
- They can engage in a tension-free and enjoyable learning environment;
- They are giving opportunity to experience real-life reading.

In such an environment, a large quantity of reading practices contributes to English language acquisition, freedom of choice stimulates motivation to read, and interesting

materials foster a positive attitude. Recent research has consistently provided evidence for the effects of extensive reading on language learning at different ages and in many ESL/EFL settings. The reported benefits are manifold, especially in the following five aspects:

- Improvement in reading comprehension (Davis, 1995; Elley, 1991; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989; Krashen, 1993; Lai, 1993; Nation, 1997)

- Development of positive attitudes (Camiciottoli, 2001; Constantino, 1995; Dupuy, Tse, & Cook, 1996; Robb & Susser, 1989)

- Increase in reading speed (Bell, 2001)

- Development of vocabulary acquisition (Cho & Krashen, 1994; Coady, 1997; Nation, 1997)

- Development of grammatical knowledge (Elley, 1991; Elley Mangubhai, 1983; Tudor & Hafiz, 1989)

It should be noted that graded readers have been used as the only type of reading materials in previous research in SL/FL settings. However, there is an argument that books for native English-speaking children (BNESC) should be included in many SL/FL programmes. With the same advantages as graded readers, they provide for similar important factors— "entertainment, information, learning to read, and becoming hooked on books" (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 61). As yet, the effects of BNESC on ESL/EFL learners' language learning are unclear, and research as yet has not addressed this issue.

Research Questions

In short, the present study aimed at to address the following questions:

1. Will ER help beginning EFL learners obtain gains in vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension?

2. Does ER promote reading speed?

3. What impact does ER have on EFL learners' attitudes?

4. What difficulties do the students have during reading?

5. How do the students feel about their achievement?

Since the present study was focused on the effects of ER on EFL learners, I was also interested in students' reflections on the selected books in relation to their reading progress during the experiment. Thus, the present study looked at the following:

6. What are their reasons for choosing which books to read?

7. Are they satisfied with the books they had read?

Method

Subjects

Three classes of Grade-2 students, aged 13-14 years old, at I-Jea Junior High School in Tai-Nan County, Taiwan, participated in the study. They were all native speakers of Chinese (Mandarin) and had a year of English language learning as a foreign language in their secondary education. That is, their English proficiency was at a beginning level and they had only experienced reading 100-word texts in the textbook which are constructed linguistically for second language learners. They had attended four 45-minute English lessons per week for two consecutive semesters (September-January and February-June).

Materials

A class library of 57 graded readers and 55 books for native English-speaking children was set up; the book selection was based on a questionnaire survey on reading preferences completed by 763 junior high school students in Taiwan (Sheu, 2001). Graded readers at beginners' level were chosen, and books for native English-speaking children which were at a similar readability level to the graded reader assessed by Fry's Graph (1977) were selected. A pilot study in which a sample collection of 26 graded readers and 31 books for native English-speaking children were assessed by students to see whether the book selection met their expectations, was conducted. The results of the pilot study showed that the selected books seemed appropriate, and the students were interested in reading them.

To answer research question 1, six parts of the Cambridge Key English Test (KET) were selected and then divided into pre- and post-test (a total number of 20 questions in each test). Each test contained vocabulary (6 matching questions), grammar (7 multiple-choice questions) and reading comprehension (7 true or false questions). All three groups were given the tests before and after the experiment, and the tests were administered in students' normal class time; 25 minutes was allocated.

As to research question 2, Nuttall's (1996) assessment was adopted in this study to measure reading speed. The calculation formula is x (the number of words in the text) divided by (the number of minutes the student spent in reading the text) equals (the reading speed in words per minutes, wpm). Taking text readability, students' familiarity with the topic, and text length into account, six texts were selected from *"New Year Around the World"* (2000) published by Oxford University Press. The texts were also analysed by using the Flesch/Kincaid readability formula in terms of the comparability in text length and text difficulty, and then the six texts were divided into two tests (pre-test and post-test).

A 15-minute questionnaire in Chinese with a brief explanatory letter written in Chinese with regard to the aims of the study, and the procedures to be followed, was administered in the classroom. Questionnaires were conducted before and after the programme to assess students' attitudes toward learning English and reading, and their reactions to the books and the programme, (research questions 3, 4 and 5).

To address research questions 6 and 7, a book record was used for students to write their reasons for choosing books (before reading), time spent on reading and pages read each time (during reading), and reflections on the stories and satisfaction with their choices (after completing a book).

Procedures

The three classes were divided into two experimental classes and one control class. One 45-minute lesson per week was specifically allocated for the three classes. No extra reading was required outside the classroom.

The experimental classes

The two experimental classes exposed learners to two different inputs respectively: reading graded readers (GR), and reading books for native English-speaking children (BNESC). The books were kept in a box in the teachers' room; they were taken into the classes before the periods set for the reading programme and were displayed on tables. The students were free to choose any book they would like to read or to change it for a new one if they wished. When they finished reading or changed a book, they were asked to complete the reading record. If they could not finish reading a book, the book, along with their reading records, were kept in a separate place for them to read during the next reading time. Although dictionaries were made available, students were encouraged to ask peers or the teacher for the meaning of unknown words.

The Control group

In the control group, the teacher reviewed part of previous English lessons that the students had difficulties to understand. Then she gave time to students to memorize vocabulary and grammatical rules, and gave them exercises in the reading textbook, or self-study and practice books. These exercises included gap-fills, multiple choice and true/false items.

Results

Language Proficiency Test

In order to establish the comparability of the three groups, a one-way ANOVA was conducted, and the analysis confirmed that there were no significant differences between the three groups in the pre-test ($F = .145$, $d.f. = 53$, n.s.). Descriptive statistics of the language proficiency and reading speed tests are presented in Table 1. As can be seen, the results of the *t*-test showed that the GR ($t = 5.793**$, $p < .005$) and the BNESC group ($t = 5.988**$, $p < .005$) achieved a significant level of improvement in language proficiency. By contrast, there was no gain in score in the control group. In fact, their post-test score was lower than that of their pre-test ($t = -3.675**$, $p < .005$).

When the students' performance on each part of the test was examined, other interesting findings appeared. The test scores of the GR group had increased and statistically significant levels of improvement could be found in all three parts; whereas, the students in the BNESC group made a significant improvement in the grammar and reading comprehension tests. For the control group, the students did less well in all the three parts on the post-test, and more importantly, there was a significant drop of score in the vocabulary measure ($t = -4.680**$, $p < .005$).

Reading Speed Test

Table 2 shows that there was a statistically significant improvement in reading speed for all three groups between pre- and post-tests reading speeds were counted in words per minutes, wpm). This indicates that both types of treatments (extensive reading and normal reading instruction) are effective in developing learners' reading speed. The statistical results also showed that both experimental groups made larger gains than the control group. Given that the GR group obtained the lowest score on the pre-test, an even more impressive result is that the degree of increase of the GR group was higher than the other two groups.

Table 1

Means of Pre- and Post-Test of Language Proficiency Test, and Results of *t*-tests

	Reading Comprehension	Vocabulary	Grammar	Total Score
GR group				
Pre-test	2.47	3.32	3.74	9.11
Post-test	3.79	4.37	4.47	12.63
Gains	+ 1.32	+ 1.05	+ 0.73	+ 3.52
sd	1.29	1.18	1.33	2.65
T-value	4.435**	3.897**	2.421*	5.793**
BNESC Group				
Pre-test	2.00	3.86	3.29	9.14
Post-test	4.07	3.93	4.50	12.50
Gains	+ 2.07	+ 0.07	+ 1.21	+ 3.36
sd	1.82	1.33	1.63	2.0
T-value	4.265**	.201	2.795*	5.988**
Control Group				
Pre-test	2.43	3.24	3.14	8.80
Post-test	2.14	1.80	2.67	6.62
Gains	- 0.29	- 1.44	- 0.47	- 2.18
sd	1.65	1.40	1.99	2.73
T-value	-.795	- 4.680**	- 1.096	- 3.675**

* = p <.05; ** = p < .005

Table 2

Means of Pre- and Post-Test of Reading Speed Test, and Results of *t*-test

	GR group	BNESC group	Control Group
Pre-test	59.7	98.6	85.2
Post-test	95.8	136.0	118.6
Gains	+ 36.1	+ 37.4	+ 33.4
sd	32.4	25.1	48.7
T-value	6.780**	4.128**	3.820**

** = p < .005

The Questionnaire

Learners' Attitudes

As shown in Table 3, 75.7% of the students in the GR group expressed that they liked the ER programme or liked it very much, compared with 52.9% in the BNESC group and 51.5% in the control group. The table also suggests that the GR group ($\bar{x}$ = 2.79 out of 4) held a more positive attitude than the other groups, though a one-way ANOVA showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the three groups in their attitudes toward the treatment (F = 1.454, d.f. = 99, n.s.).

Table 3

Students' Attitudes Toward the Treatments

	GR group(N=31)	BNESC group(N=34)	Control group(N=33)
I like it very much	3.0%	14.7%	3.0%
I like it	72.7%	38.2%	48.5%
I do not like it	24.2%	41.2%	45.4%
I do not like it at all	0	5.9%	3.0%
Means	2.79	2.66	2.52

The descriptive statistics of students' attitudes toward learning English and reading before and after the experiment are shown in Table 4. In the GR group, there was no change between before and after the treatment. However, the proportion of positive attitudes toward learning English decreased in the BNESC and Control groups after the experiment. Moreover, when a *t*-test was carried out, the results also showed a statistically significant decrease in the two groups. The table also shows a drop in the students' attitudes toward English reading, but there were no statistically significant differences.

Table 4

Attitudes Toward Learning English and Reading (*t*-tests) of the Three Groups

	Means (before - after)	*t*-value	df
Attitudes toward Learning English			
GR group	2.818 - 2.818	.000	64
BNESC group	2.853 - 2.324	-3.369**	66
Control group	2.455 - 1.939	-2.957	64
Attitudes toward Reading			
GR group	2.818 - 2.606	-1.381	64
BNESC group	2.853 - 2.529	-1.894	66
Control group	2.333 - 2.182	-0.926	64

**= $p<.005$

The Two Experimental Groups' Reading Difficulties

Table 5 shows the perceived difficulties that students reported before and after the treatment. The percentages of language problems in the two experimental groups after the experiment increased sharply, (most likely because of a large quantity of reading and their language proficiency). Declines in those who said they had "no interest," found the materials "boring," or said they had "no confidence" after the programme indicates the benefits to students of exposure to a variety of reading materials and reading them extensively. By contrast, in the control group the proportion claiming to have "no interest in reading" and "no idea of how to read" rose. Moreover, 18% of the students in the control group had less confidence after the programme. All these could relate to the limited access and experience which learners have to written English in their normal English lessons. When reading purpose was considered after the programme, most students were unable to associate reading with their daily life, and thus this suggested that reading was perceived as a school subject rather than a reading activity.

Table 5

Difficulties Encountered by the Students in the Three Groups

	GR group(N=31)		BNESC group(N=34)		Control group(N=33)	
	before	after	before	after	before	after
Language problems	48.4%	70.9%	47.1%	73.5%	39.4%	42.4%
No interest in reading	45.2%	32.3%	50.0%	35.3%	36.4%	60.6%
Boring materials	32.3%	16.2%	26.4%	14.7%	24.3%	27.3%
No time/too much homework	32.3%	25.8%	23.5%	20.6%	36.4%	30.3%
No confidence	32.3%	19.4%	32.4%	11.8%	24.2%	42.4%
No idea of how to read	22.6%	16.2%	32.4%	35.3%	36.4%	51.5%
No suitable materials available	12.9%	22.6%	23.5%	35.3%	21.2%	9.1%
No purpose	6.5%	22.6%	8.8%	20.6%	9.1%	30.3%
Lack of background knowledge	0.0%	16.2%	14.7%	35.3%	9.1%	9.1%

Students' Assessment of Achievement

Before the treatment, students were asked to predict what areas of achievement they thought they would improve in, and the areas where they thought they had improved after the experiment. The results are shown in Table 6. The vast majority of the students in the three groups thought that they had extended their vocabulary, while only the two experimental groups said their reading ability had improved. In addition, more than half of the students in the BNESC group thought they had improved their grammar; however, the students in the other groups did not share this view. Given that the two experimental groups reported they established confidence in reading after the experiment, one important finding is that the percentage of the GR group has increased sharply by more than 50% (from 22.6% to 77.4%). Moreover, nearly half of the students in the GR group said that they had learnt about other cultures, whereas less than one third of the students in the other groups held this opinion.

Table 6

Students' Assessment of Achievement

	GR group (N=31)		BNESC group (N=34)		Control group (N=33)	
	before	after	before	after	before	after
Extend vocabulary	32.3%	87.1%	82.4%	88.2%	75.8%	93.9%
Improve reading	71.0%	64.5%	81.8%	67.6%	51.5%	39.4%
Develop a reading habit	32.3%	32.3%	38.2%	29.4%	27.3%	24.2%
Improve grammar	54.8%	32.3%	67.6%	55.9%	42.4%	33.3%
Know other cultures	45.2%	80.6%	58.8%	32.4%	51.5%	21.2%
Establish confidence in reading	22.6%	77.4%	35.3%	52.9%	24.2%	18.2%
Improve listening	51.6%	19.4%	61.8%	32.4%	42.4%	33.3%
Improve speaking	67.7%	16.1%	70.6%	32.4%	60.6%	39.4%
Improve writing	51.6%	12.9%	58.8%	29.4%	42.4%	30.3%

Book Record

Students' Reasons for Choosing Reading Books

As can be seen in Table 7, the topics of the books which were interesting to the students in the two groups was the most common reason in choosing which books to read. While the students in the GR group took interesting cover page of books as the second common reason, the teacher's or their classmates' recommendation was the case in the BNESC group.

Table 7

Students' Reasons for Choosing Books to Read

	GR group (n=217)		BNESC GROUP (n=249)	
	n	%	N	%
Interesting topic	74	34.1	70	28.1
Interesting cover page	42	19.4	44	17.7
The story is short	31	14.3	16	6.4
The book looks good	22	10.1	0	0
I have read the book in Chinese already	16	7.4	4	1.6
It looks special	7	3.2	0	0
Randomly choose	7	3.2	40	16.1
Teacher/classmates recommend	6	2.8	60	24.1
Interesting Illustrations	5	2.3	8	3.2
Learning something new	3	1.4	0	0
vocabulary looks easy	1	0.4	0	0
Learning vocabulary	0	0	1.	0.4
Interesting story	0	0	8	3.2

Students' Reading Process

Table 8 shows the pages that the students read and the time they spent on reading each time. In the first book, the students in the GR group spent 35.4 minutes on reading only 7.3 pages, but in the 7th book, they took 22.5 minutes to read 17.9 pages. For the BNESC group, the students took 18 minutes to read 17.5 pages of the 1st book; however, in 16.8 minutes, they could read 26.7 pages in the 8th book. It should be pointed out that the number of the pages and the amount of the time were developed gradually in the GR group, but they undulated in the BNESC group. This inconsistency in the BNESC group may result from the inconsistency of the actual vocabulary and reading levels of the children books. More analysis is necessary here.

Table 8

Number of Pages the Students Read and the Time Spent on Reading

Book	GR group		BNESC group	
	Pages	Reading time (minutes)	Pages	Reading time (minutes)
1	7.3	35.4	17.5	23.0
2	7.9	32.9	22.0	21.0
3	9.9	30.6	19.8	19.1
4	10.1	32.3	24.2	20.9
5	11.9	31.6	22.2	17.4
6	13.3	26.1	26.6	17.1
7	17.9	22.5	24.9	18.0
8	17.3	18.8	26.7	16.8
9	20.0	18.3	24.8	13.0

Students' Satisfaction with Reading Books

When the students were asked whether they would recommend the books they had read to their classmates, 76.1% of the students in the GR group said that they would do so, compared with 56% in the BNESC group. Table 9 shows that 91.3% of the students in GR group said that the books they had read were excellent, good, or satisfactory; 82.4% in BNESC group said so. As can be seen, a *t-test* revealed no significant difference between the two groups in their satisfaction with the books ($t = .996$, *d.f.* = 448, n.s.).

Table 9

Students' Overall Satisfaction with the Books They Read

	GR Group (N=209)		BNESC group (N=241)	
	N	%	N	%
Excellent	28	13.4%	43	17.8%
Good	57	27.3%	58	24.1%
Satisfactory	110	52.6%`	96	39.8%
Not so good	10	4.8%	32	13.3%
Poor	4	1.9%	12	5.0%
t-value	.966			
df	448			

Discussion and Implications

In the early stages of learning to read, access to a variety of interesting materials is essential for learners to develop a life-long reading habit. However, if they have not acquired sufficient knowledge of the language (second/foreign) and reading skills, ESL/EFL beginners are unlikely to read on their own or continually. Nevertheless, if learners are given the choice of reading materials that appeal to them and the materials are also linguistically appropriate, an extensive reading programme can create a situation where ESL/EFL beginners can read for meaning and pleasure.

Our results indicated that extensive reading is beneficial to EFL beginners, and the type of reading materials students read does have different effects on their language development. Students who were exposed to interesting English books performed significantly better on almost all parts of the language proficiency tests, than those who focused on intensive reading, studying vocabulary, and grammar. When we come to consider the effects of the type of reading materials, an interesting finding was the significant improvement in vocabulary proficiency in the GR group. This served to indicate the success of the natural exposure and repetition of vocabulary as contained in graded readers, in learners' vocabulary acquisition. The BNESC group's gains on the grammar test were surprising. The variety of grammar roles contained in the books for native English-speaking children might contribute to this difference. Further research is needed here. By contrast, those who did not read extensively did less well on the post-test of language proficiency. Most importantly, the significant drop in the vocabulary test scores seemed to prove the insufficiency of the textbook in enhancing students' vocabulary acquisition. On the basis of these results, two implications for the implementation of extensive reading programme could be made.

The Adoption of ER in the School Syllabus

By and large, the results of this study provide support for the importance of adopting extensive reading programmes in the school syllabus. Authorities who focus mainly on one traditional teaching approach, as is the case in Taiwan, Japan, and other East Asian countries, should realise what benefits an ER programme can bring to language learning, and should encourage their learners to read extensively outside the classroom. Moreover, by providing a new way to access written English and a different type of language input from that of normal classes, an ER programme could also create a positive context where learners experience reading as they might do in their daily life. If intensive and extensive reading can cooperate, learners are more likely to benefit and can discover the treasure of reading for themselves.

The Use of Books for Native English-Speaking Children

Having controlled language and information, EFL graded readers have been used effectively in many ER programmes. Moreover, this study has demonstrated that books for L1 learners could make a significant, perhaps complementary, contribution to ESL/EFL learning. With this in mind, organizers or teachers should be aware of the potential of such books for language learning and the rich variety of L1 materials available to them, and then apply them to their teaching wherever appropriate. For attracting learners' attention and maintaining their interest, when books for L1 learners are considered, it is imperative for teachers to take extreme care about the physical features and the level of the language. Compared with the wide range of information about graded readers (see Hill, 1997, 2001; Eastment, 2002) available for teachers survey reviews of the materials for L1 learners will expand our understanding of the potential of such materials.

Students' growth in confidence and their awareness of other cultures were of great interest as shown in Table 6. However, these rewards did not have a positive impact on students' attitude development. Although students were not asked directly why their motivation and attitudes had changed after the experiment, it is possible to speculate on the causes. One reason may be that the programme did not begin by introducing extensive reading strategies. This may have led to a lack of confidence in reading effectively and extensively, and so, students gradually experienced reduced interest in English learning and reading. Secondly, there has been discussion about the usefulness of encouraging activities in ER programmes. In fact, such activities were not used in this study, and thus, students may not have been able to find sufficient incentive to participate in the ER programme. These two causes raise two implications: learner training and encouraging activities.

Learner Training

It is possible that since students may not have acquired adequate skills, they were unable to exercise other strategies which were necessary for extensive reading, and may have relied only on the bottom-up decoding approach they learned in normal English lessons. Inevitably, the more books they read the more difficulties they may have encountered. If it is determined that this was indeed the case, one way of improving this is to have several lessons aimed at facilitating essential strategies for extensive reading before the introduction of an ER programme (e.g., Day & Bamford, 2002), so that students are able to use strategies whenever and wherever necessary. If students could detach themselves from their experience of language practice, eventually, they would be more likely to exercise their reading ability and to experience reading for meaning and pleasure. While students receive grammar-translation based instruction in most of their

normal English lessons, we as teachers have to address this and to encourage students to use new skills in their reading.

Encouraging Activities

Apart from reading records, no other follow-up activities were used in this study. The intention was to see whether reading books for interest only had any positive impact on students' attitudes toward learning English and reading. Even though the books were interesting and the students were happy to be involved in the ER programme, neither their views on learning English, nor their attitudes toward reading changed. It seems therefore necessary to employ activities which could encourage their participation and foster their motivation. These activities might include book reading reports (Leung, 2002; Hayashi, 1999; Lai, 1993), short summaries (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Renandya, Rajan & Jacobs, 1999), creating reading materials (Davidson, Ogle, Ross, Tuhaka & Ng, 1997), discussion (Constantino, 1995; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Elly, 1991), role play or retelling (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Lituanas, Jacobs & Renandya, 1999), wall charts (Lai, 1993), and games (Elly, 1991; Lai, 1993). It is worth mentioning that Jacobs, Davis and Renandya's (1997) book, which includes successful ER programmes from 11 different countries, provides a superb resource on strategic activities to improve ER programmes.

Given the fact that the level of language was slightly difficult for the students, it is also possible to speculate that an inappropriate level of text in relation to the learners' proficiency may have contributed to the decline in students' attitude development. Demanding texts may have compelled them to focus on vocabulary and grammar for comprehension, with the result that ER became a language problem-solving activity similar to that experienced in the English lessons where they were unhappy already. Thus, effective ER programmes rely heavily on the teacher to make good judgment about the purchase and use of appropriate reading materials and rely as well on the teacher's ability to effectively guide students in their choices. Considering that students' answers to what attracted their attention to choose books to read and their rating on book satisfaction proved that the book selection met their expectations, it is undoubtedly true that most series of GR in this study have succeeded in being attractive by using a colourful and glossy appearance. However, although all series have titles which cater to beginners, the students still have the impression that these readers are slightly difficult for them. This indicates a need for materials developers to continue writing more materials for learners at the lower level. Of course, writing or rewriting good stories at this level is a difficult task. One change which has occurred in all Oxford series is to include a glossary which lists words necessary to the story. Background

notes have also been added to enhance relevant schema and top-down reading processes. (Hill, 1997).

Nevertheless, the materials used in this study which were slightly above students' current language proficiency seemed effective in developing students' language proficiency, and this seemed to support Krashen's "*i* plus 1" theory (1985). However, there appears to have been a negative backwash on the development of the students' attitudes toward reading. One way to reduce students' reading difficulties is to provide "*i* minus 1" materials (Day & Bamford, 1998, p.16), containing the level of language slightly below students' current proficiency. Since students can manage the language, they can read for meaning and with confidence—and motivation will be improved. Future research should therefore be conducted on the respective contributions of "*i* minus 1" and "*i* plus one" materials. A comparison of the effects of these two types of reading materials could then provide important information about selecting appropriate books.

Conclusion

This study has shown that ER programmes can be successfully implemented with ESL/EFL beginners in a traditional learning setting where the grammar/translation-based method monopolizes reading instruction. The effects of ER on learners' language development and the functions of creating a reading situation where students are able to choose and read for meaning and pleasure are evident. Obviously, these cannot be achieved by the current intensive reading approaches. Since ER has received little attention in many ESL/EFL teaching situations like that of Taiwan, Davis (1995) is right to remind us as English language teachers of the inadequacy of excluding ER in our teaching situation by saying that

> Any ESL, EFL, or L1 classroom will be the poorer for the lack of an extensive reading programme of some kind, and will be unable to promote its pupils' language development in all aspects as effectively as if such a programme were present (p. 329).

In the early stages of learning to read, access to a variety of interesting materials is essential for learners to gradually become competent readers and develop a healthy reading habit. However, we should also be aware that the level of difficulty of the materials might discourage the students from associating English reading with a pleasurable activity. This tendency could be reduced if students were trained to use effective reading strategies. Moreover, though students were pleased to see the teacher's role in the modeling of reading, with no stimulating activities (i.e. group-discussions and pair reading), reading itself may remain tedious. Adding all these points together, the

more of these conditions are met in an ER programme, the more benefits our students are likely to get, in terms of language development, love of reading, and life-long habits.

Note

1. However, a current study in progress, building on the one reported here, would not appear to confirm this. The causes of attitude change seem to have been the lack of strategy training and encouraging activities discussed above as these aspects were introduced with a positive effect on motivation.

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About the Author

Samuel P-H Sheu is an Assistant Professor in the Applied Foreign Languages Department (AFLD) at Takming College. His research focuses on extensive reading. learner autonomy and curriculum development.

Behind the Picture: Apprehension in the L2 Writing Process

Vicki L. Holmes and Margaret R. Moulton
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

In our combined 43 years of teaching writing, we have observed that all writers, whether they have been taught to do so or not, work through an individual cognitive process on the road to producing a written document. Keenly aware of this, we try to help all students discover a strategic approach to their writing that will work for them. Most writing teachers do the same. In fact, directly teaching a strategic writing process has become a fairly influential model for first language composition programs (Benson & Heidish, 1995), and this model has decidedly trickled down into second language writing instruction (Raimes, 1996).

Although writing process models—as well as the degree of detail contained in them—differ somewhat, the strategic steps in most models include some variations of these tasks: inventing/exploring; planning/organizing; drafting; and revising/editing. (Spack, 1995; Leki, 1992; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Second language writing textbooks are often organized around a recognized writing process with emphasis on critical thinking and rhetorical patterns as well, resulting in what Reid (1993) has called the process/product approach to teaching writing.

We subscribe to the process/product approach of teaching writing. In working with our university non-native speakers, we have often reflected on our own writing strategies in an attempt to help our students find a process that will work for them—given that we also subscribe to the notion that no one size fits all. For example, one of us cleans furiously as one of her initial steps in the process of formulating ideas while the other works crossword puzzles while her ideas begin to take shape. One of us taps into her creative juices early in the morning, often arising at 4:00 a.m. to draft a manuscript while the other typically burns the midnight oil pounding away at her computer keys. We differ greatly on the early stages of the writing process but match up easily on the final stages of editing and revising.

We have researched the writing process as it is described in the literature, and we model it for our students by writing with them in class. We spend a great deal of time and energy on the initial steps, teaching students to generate ideas and to organize their thinking before they begin to write. We do this with even more vigor after having learned from one of our studies (Holmes & Moulton, 1994) that this first step is one that

creates the most anxiety for students. In that study, we worked with a class of advanced ESL writers, inviting them on the first day of class to cartoon the steps they would take in creating a composition from start to finish. Many of the cartoons depicted students with no clue of how to generate ideas. Several drew themselves in complete emotional turmoil, unable to come up with even one word of text (see Figure 1). This study opened our eyes to the emotional and cognitive difficulties students seemed to face. Now, some years later, we wondered if, after having almost completed all the required writing courses in the university's general education core, our second language writers had overcome the emotional difficulties associated with writing.

Figure 1

A Chinese Student Depicts Her Growing Anxiety Over Writing

The Study

To answer our question, we decided to investigate the writing processes of non-native students who were in the final week of their last semester of required writing instruction at the university. In our institution, students must place into the freshman writing program by receiving a 5.0 on the Test of Written English (ETS), or they may successfully complete an advanced ESL writing course. Following placement, students take two courses in composition and rhetoric; both are designed to teach critical thinking, academic writing, and research skills. The writing process underpins all writing instruction in our composition program, so we decided to examine the writing strategies of students who had completed a minimum of two but most likely three or four semesters of academic writing. Thus we would be assured that the students we investigated were thoroughly steeped in the writing process. At the minimum, then, the students had had one year's experience in using a writing process. Some had had far more.

The Assignment

Near the end of the second semester of freshman composition and rhetoric, we asked the students in three classes of second-year composition to draw the strategies they engaged in when asked to complete a writing assignment for English class. Apart from this request, no cues were given. Students were told not to fret about their art work as we were not interested in finding the next Picasso; we were only interested in looking at what they "id" when they needed to write for their English class. No limits were placed on their drawing. Students were given several sheets of sketching paper each and a weekend to complete their drawings.

The Students

Fifty of the sixty students enrolled in the three composition classes submitted drawings depicting their own strategies for writing an academic paper. The nationality of the students in the study was predominately Asian, with 39 out of the 50 representing various Asian nations: Japan (9), Korea (12), China (11), Philippines (3), Thailand (2), Indonesia (1), Nepal (1), and Taiwan (1). The remaining 13 students hailed from Oman, Russia, Italy, Sweden, Nigeria, Hungary, Morocco, Israel, and Poland. Thirty-four of the 50 students were female. The age of the participants ranged from 20 to 43, with a mean of 25. These two statistics—gender and age-reflect the norms for the university as a whole (Office of Institutional Analysis and Planning, 2002). More than half of the participants were seniors (26) while only four students were freshman. The rest of the students were divided between juniors (8) and sophomores (12) with one graduate student. This

is not the norm for the university as most native speakers take freshman composition during their first and second semesters.

What the Cartoons Showed

After collecting the drawings, we examined them, looking for themes that might reveal students' understanding of the writing process and their emotional responses toward writing.   Using Strauss and Corbin's (1990) constant comparative method of data analysis, we discovered four themes related to the writing process, with the students' emotional responses coloring their actions and interpretations.

Finding a Topic

Half of the students—25 out of 50—showed no strategy for finding a topic. Somehow, an idea just arose as they depicted themselves beginning to write their papers. Many used multiple panels to describe themselves at a loss for an idea but, in the next panel, had finished the paper (see Figure 2).

<u>Figure 2</u>

A Japanese Senior's Paper Magically Appears Despite
the Lack of an Idea

Almost 25% of the students depicted the use of the Internet as a means of finding a topic, but because the three classes focused on research-based writing, it was not totally clear whether the students were searching for ideas or for easily available sources. About 22% of the students showed themselves creating their idea from their own thoughts. Two of those students used the word "brainstorming" when trying to think of an idea. The remaining students found their ideas elsewhere: from the library, books, or newspapers; from television; and from talking with friends or family. Of the 25 students who depicted themselves struggling for ideas, 48% were seniors, 24% were juniors, 20% were sophomores, and 4% were freshman. The single graduate student also depicted himself searching vainly for an idea.

Getting Started

Over one-third of the students—18—showed no delay or procrastination but depicted themselves immediately beginning the assignment. The remaining students, however, showed various means of procrastination, delaying tactics, and avoidance (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

A Nepalese Senior Uses Multiple Tactics to Aid Writing His Paper
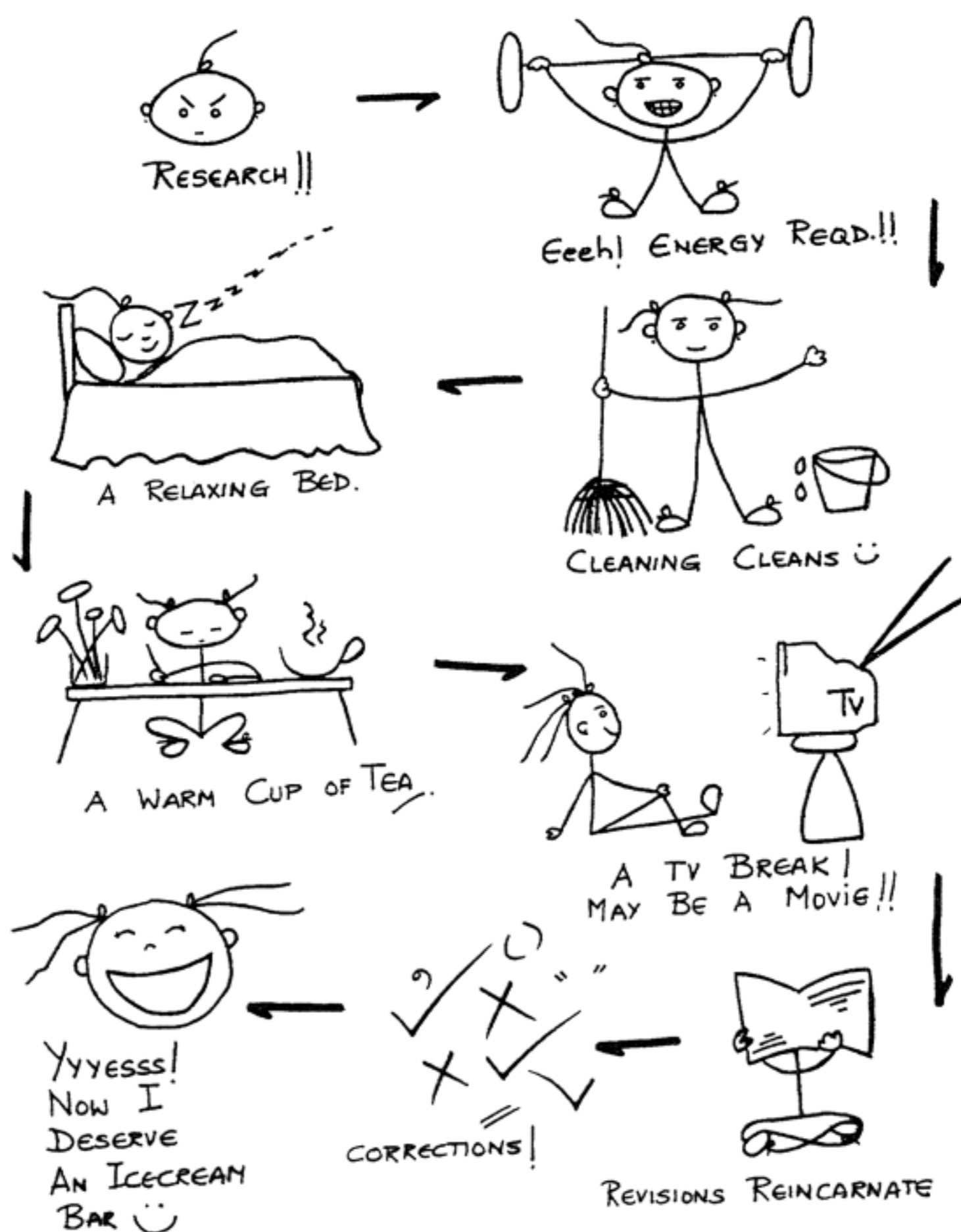
Eleven students showed themselves sleeping rather than writing. Eight students used food as a delaying tactic, sometimes as a need prior to writing, sometimes as a reward between steps of writing. Seven students watched television or movies while five students listened to music rather than write. Other students depicted themselves cleaning or doing laundry, exercising or walking a dog, taking a bath, going out with friends, shopping, paying bills, playing on the computer, and smoking…anything to avoid writing their papers. The number of methods of delay equaled far more than the number of students as many depicted multiple techniques for procrastination.

Organizing and Drafting the Paper

Only eight students—one freshman, one sophomore, one junior, and five seniors—made any reference to organizing their material. Four showed or referred to the "bubbles" of clustering, webbing, or semantic mapping; three referred to a "plan" or "main points;" and one showed both a cluster map first and then an outline (see Figure 4).
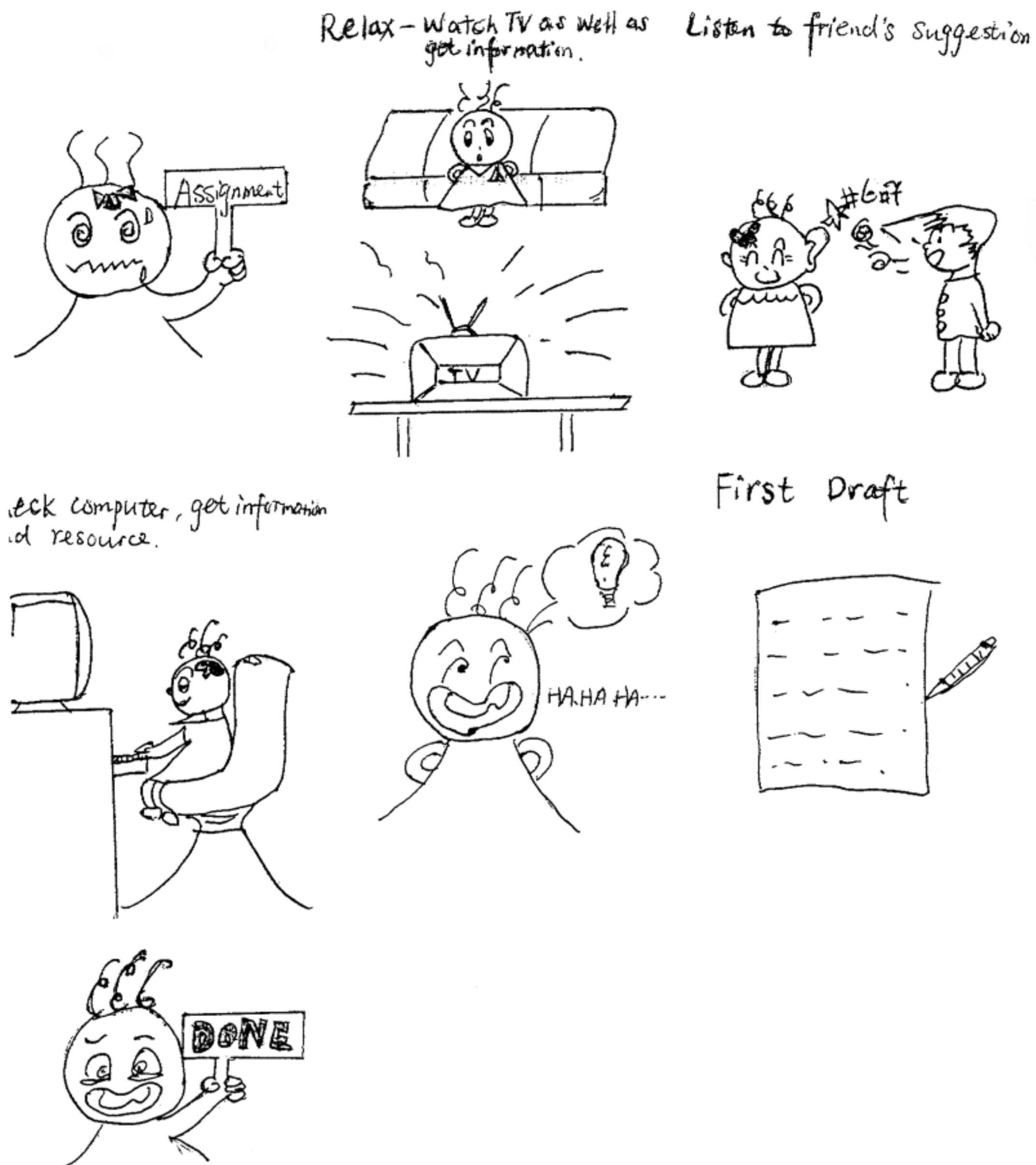
<u>Figure 4</u>

A Korean senior shows both clustering and outlining in her first few panels
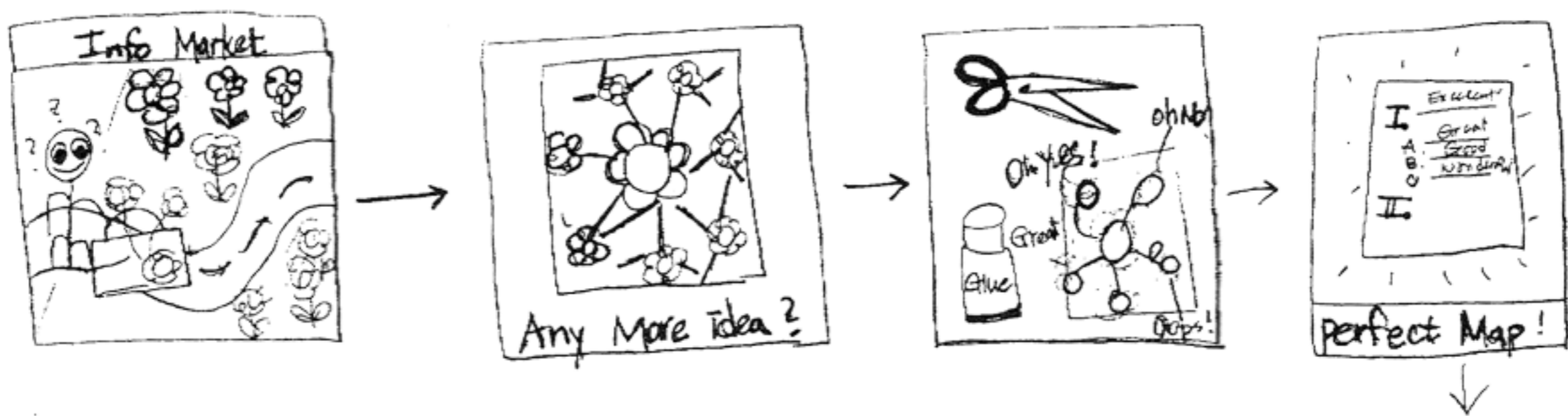
The other students moved directly from their ideas either to drafts or finished papers (see Figure 5). For over half the students (26), the first draft was also the final draft.

Figure 5

A Chinese Junior Moves From First to Final Draft in One Step


Revising and editing

Five students showed themselves editing, revising, or "fixing" their own work, though it was not clear whether there was any differentiation between revising and editing. Six students asked peers to help them revise and edit while three students went for help at the writing center. Ten other students showed themselves writing more than one draft of the paper (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

A Japanese sophomore revises and edits multiple drafts
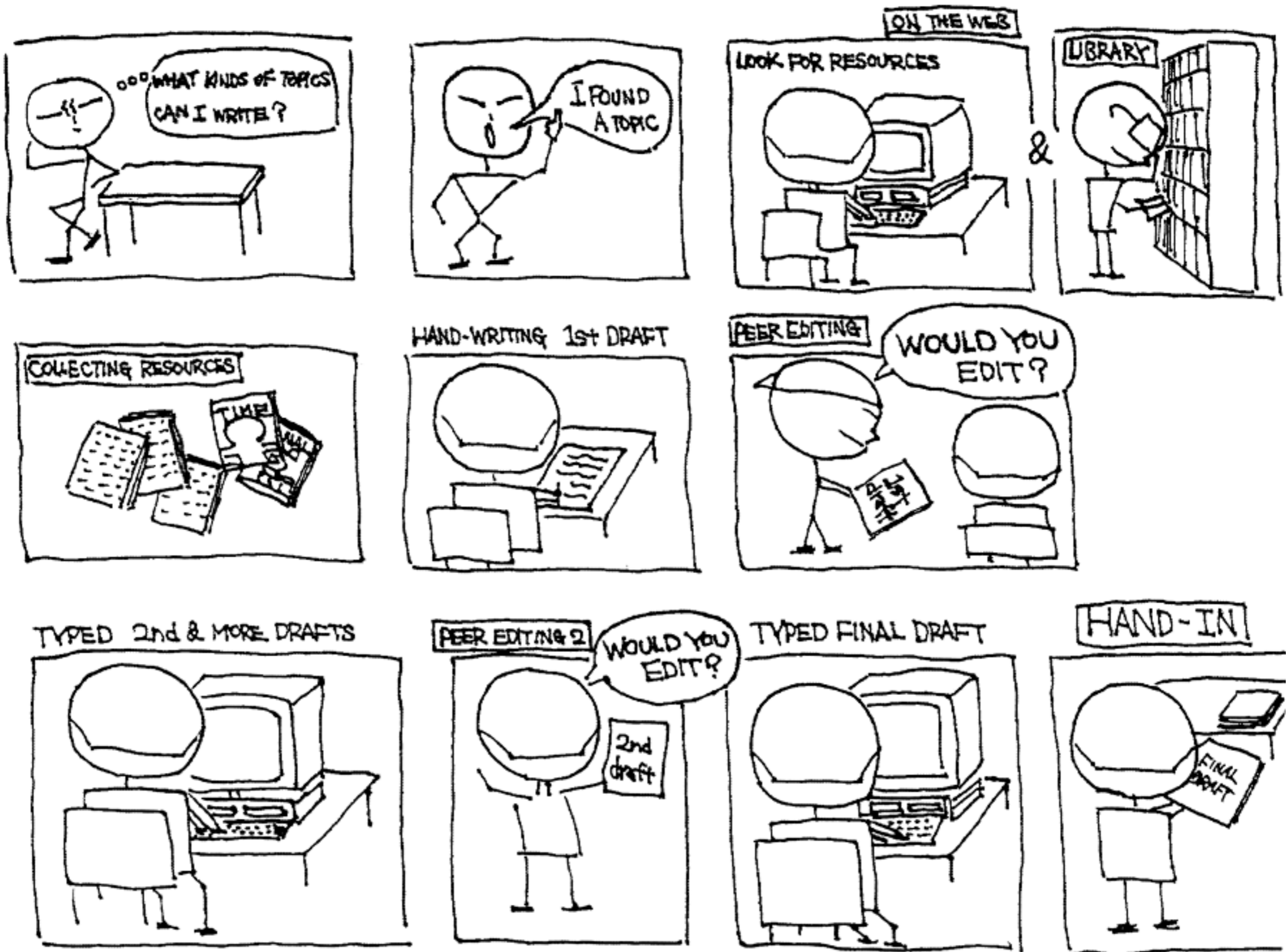
Underlying Emotions

Many of the students depicted their emotions through universal symbols. Clocks or calendars were present in 26% of the students' cartoons, usually accompanied by text or lines that indicated their stress over the writing assignment. Stress also emerged in the middle of night for five students, who showed themselves lying in bed but unable to sleep because of the need to work on their papers. One student drew herself out of the situation by using insomnia as her essay topic while another chose to see it all as a bad dream. Still showing stress, another student sketched the assignment pursuing her while still another depicted himself being tossed into a deep well. Frustration over the assignment was also shown through the tears of one student and through angry smoke erupting from another student's head. Still another found herself eating but not enjoying the food because of the assignment hanging over her head. There were also verbal expressions of anxiety and frustration in nine cartoons. One student used swear words while another used symbols of swearing: "*#&?*!." Two students used the word

"difficult" while another called for "Help!"   One student rebelled, asking, "Who cares?!" as another stated, "I don't wanna do it."   One student drew his writing assignment as a punishment, with the teacher angrily yelling at him and raising a stick against him as the student cried, "I can't do it." Getting an idea or finishing the paper showed more positive emotional overtones.

Eighteen percent of the students used a light bulb and smiles to show their delight when an idea came to them. When the paper was finished, 38% depicted themselves as having big smiles on their faces. Though not necessarily smiling, several other students rewarded themselves upon completion, with a cigar for one, a walk in the moonlight with husband or boyfriend for another, and an ice cream cone for a third student. Relieved to be finished writing but not necessarily happy, four students depicted themselves as bleary-eyed, asleep, or exhausted when done (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

The Final Panels of Various Students Express Diverse Emotions at the Completion of Writing

What the Cartoons Implied

The delaying tactics of the students came as no surprise. Even seasoned writers engage in ritualistic behaviors to avoid facing the empty page as Reeves (1991) has already pointed out. What was a surprise, however, was the fact that the students depicted these tactics in such detail and diversity. In our earlier study of the cartoons of 18 advanced ESL writing students (Holmes & Moulton, 1994), few students showed any delaying tactics although most did show some form of writing apprehension. Yet almost two-thirds of the freshman composition students showed multiple means of procrastination. The prompt given did not encourage them to show non-writing behaviors; it merely stated, "Draw the steps you go through when you are asked to write a composition for this class." Why, then, did so many choose to include their delaying tactics as part of their composing strategies? Why did these students show more avoidance than the earlier students in a lower level of writing class? And how can such revelations assist the teacher?

Another surprise was the students' lack of ideas to write about. Despite the fact that this was a college freshman English class, 68% of the students were juniors and seniors already taking courses in their majors. Presumably, they had specific interests in their chosen fields and were mature enough to have opinions on many topics. Yet half of the students, including 48% of the seniors and 24% of the juniors, showed themselves struggling to find an idea. Perhaps students' past experiences in their own cultures' educational systems still influenced these students. For example, students from Asian cultures are used to writing assignments that are prescribed in style and content (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; McKay, 1989). Similarly, when Russian students are asked to write their own opinions, they are often hesitant to do so as their own culture does not encourage it (Benesch, 2001). Previous educational programming may be in such conflict with American educational expectations that students struggle more to overcome the conflict than to come up with an idea.

A third surprise was the small number of students (16%) who referred to any means of organizing their papers despite having been exposed to multiple strategies in their earlier ESL writing classes and the first semester of freshman composition. While they may have chosen not to depict strategies they used, the small number of students who showed themselves using organizing strategies indicates otherwise. Furthermore, all three of these elements-procrastination, having ideas, and organization-are all part of the pre-writing phase of the writing process. Is this part of the writing process made up of such alien concepts to international students that, despite being taught, it doesn't transfer easily between cultures?

Of more concern than the unexpected prominence of cartooned frames in which students featured themselves delaying and unable to come up with ideas or organize their papers is the undertone of negative emotions associated with writing an academic paper. In fully half of the drawings, students depicted themselves expressing some form of unproductive, negative emotion-be it a frown, a curse word, exhaustion, confusion, frustration, or defeatism. Since we did not follow up with interviews of the students in the study, we will never know completely the source of the anxiety students illustrated in their cartoons. Was it the pressure of time? Was it feelings of incompetence? Was it a "disconnect" with their own thinking processes? Was it some form of incongruence with the expectations of writing in their native cultures versus writing in the American academic setting? Or was it simply a dread that is universal to all writers?

What this study has clarified to us is that we, along with most other teachers with whom we associate, do not give enough attention to minimizing writing apprehension in L2 writers once those students leave our ESL classrooms and enter mainstream academic programs. We assume, perhaps wrongly, that students who "pass" their TOEFL and TWE tests are ready for "prime-time" academics and that because they have been steeped in the writing process they are no longer fearful of writing. The drawings of our second semester mainstream composition students show otherwise and suggest the need for further attention to writing anxiety issues in second language populations.

A review of the literature revealed to us that studies in second language writing anxiety began in the 1980s, which witnessed the seminal work of Rose (1980) and Gungle and Taylor (1989). These studies followed a more prevalent research strand involving the writing apprehension faced by native English speakers initiated by the development of the Daly-Miller Writing Apprehension Test (1975). At about the same time, the teaching of composition was shifting paradigms to focus on process rather than product (e.g., Emig, 1971). Perhaps the confluence of these two movements-the writing process and recognizing student writing anxiety-invited researchers to hypothesize that teaching students the stages of the writing process would mitigate students' fears. Many strategies suggested by researchers and practitioners in both L1 and L2 involved emphasizing the various stages of the writing process to help students overcome their reluctance to write.

While researchers have speculated on the many causes of anxiety that students experience when they write, two causes appear to be at the top of the list. One such cause is students' lack of writing skills (Holladay, 1981; Thompson, 1979). Students who perceive that their grammar and syntax are weak are often reluctant to put words on paper for fear of negative evaluation by teachers. One way for teachers to help students overcome this particular anxiety is to de-emphasize evaluation at the linguistic level and emphasize and nurture development at the content level (Calderonello & Edwards, 1986; Elbow, 1973,

1981; Murray, 1984). This is precisely what the writing process advocates-to write for content, not for sentence accuracy-on the first draft. Another suggestion made by both advocates of the writing process and researchers in writing anxiety is development of a workshop atmosphere (Elbow, 1981; Fox, 1980). Such a student-centered approach de-emphasizes teacher evaluation by making use of peer review from drafting to revising to editing. Researchers have also suggested that during the drafting stage teachers use questions to help students develop their content rather than point out errors or make negative comments (Gungle & Taylor, 1989).

Another common cause of writing apprehension uncovered in the literature is a fear of revealing oneself (Thompson, 1979). Revealing thoughts in writing makes one vulnerable in so many ways-from what is being said to how it is being said. The workshop process, with pre-writing peer discussion groups, allows students to test their ideas before committing them to paper (Reeves, 1997). Focusing on technical writing (Raisman, 1984) can move the student away from issues that may be too personal or too revealing.

While these are but two of the causes of writing anxiety, almost all of the strategies addressed in the literature to combat these and the other causes are part of the writing process. One might assume that teachers who use the writing process would have students devoid of writing anxiety. But our study showed that this is not necessarily the case. Writers who knew and used the writing process still suffered from writing anxiety even though they were aware of "how" to proceed with their writing. Perhaps this can be explained by one of the earlier pieces of literature on writing anxiety, which pointed out that every writer has a certain amount of anxiety (Bloom, 1979); it is a natural part of the writing process and becomes dysfunctional only in the extreme. As L2 teachers, we must be ever cognizant of the fact that our students have perhaps more significant linguistic, cultural, and psychological needs than mainstream L1 students, and may be more apt to suffer from writing anxiety. We need to guide them skillfully but gently into the world of academic writing.

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About the Authors

Dr. Vicki L. Holmes, Associate Professor, is the Director of the English Language Center at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas where she has taught for the last 14 years. Her research interests focus on L2 composition and vocabulary mastery.

Dr. Margaret Moulton, Assistant Professor, recently retired from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas where she taught L2 composition and teacher education. Dr. Moulton continues to engage in research and publication as she perfects her golf game.

Conference Announcements

Asia CALL International Conference. December 2-5, 2003. "Information and Communication Technology and Education," Bangkok, Thailand ; Official Language: English. Contact: Larry Chong, chongld @gyeongju. ac.kr. E-mail:chongld @gyeongju. ac.kr. Http://www.asiacall.org/.

The Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon. December 6-7, 2003. The Second "Language and Change" Regional Conference. Contact Rima Bahous: rbahouse@lau.edu.lb and Nola Bacha: nbacha@lau.edu.lb for details of submissions. E-mail:rbahous@lau.edu.lb.

Thailand TESOL. January 29-31, 2004. ELT 2004: Prioritizing Teacher Development, The Sofitel Hotel, Khonhaen, Thailand. Contact: Chaleosri Pibulchol, President:chal@swu.ac.th or Maneepen Apibalsri, Program Chair: mapiball @ccs.sut.ac.th. E-mail:mapiball@ccs.sut.ach.th. Http:// www.thaitesol. org.

TESOL Ukraine. January 29-31, 2004. IX TESOL - Ukraine Conference. Horlivka State Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages, Horlivka, Donestska Oblast, Ukraine. Contact Person: Valeriy Leshchenko, vul. Rudakova 25, Horlivka 84626, Donetska Obl, Ukraine. Tel. 380-624-244857. Email:vallesh@forlan.ghost.dn.ua. Http://www.tesol-ua.org/.

Nepal English Language Teachers' Association (NELTA). February 27-29, 2004. Tenth International Conference, Kathmandu, Nepal. Theme: "Learner Centredness in Large Classes" Contact: Ganga Ram Gautam, GPO Box: 8975 EPC: 2374 Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel. +9 771 4330243. E-mail:ggautam@wlink.com.np. or Email: ggautam @wlink.com.np.

Illinois TESOL-BE. February 27-28, 2004. "Transformative Teaching." Navy Pier Convention Center, Chicago, Illinois. Contact Alan Seaman, ITBE Convention Chair, PMB 232, 8926 N. Greenwood, Niles, IL 60714-5163 USA. Tel. 312-409-4770. E-mail:convention@itbe.org. Http://www.itbe.org/.

TESOL Greece. March 13-14, 2004. 25th Annual Convention, "Looking Back and Looking Forward: 25 Years of TESOL Greece," National Bank Training Centre, Glyfada, Athens, Greece. Http://www.tesolgreece.com/.

TESOL-SPAIN. March 26-28, 2004. 27th Annual Seminar - Process, Progress and Portfolios: Frameworks for Learning, Madrid, Spain. Coordinator Sarah Jane Hill. E-mail:capitolhill@infonegocio.org. Http://www.tesol-spain.org/.

Contextualizing Language Learning:
The Role of a Topic- and Genre-Specific Pedagogic Corpus

Chau Meng Huat

Chau English Language Learning Centre, Malaysia

Introduction

Jackie F.K. Lee has argued for the use of corpora in language learning in the 2003 April issue of the *TESL Reporter*. Among the benefits suggested of using corpora in the classroom are (1) that it helps students to explore for themselves the correct usage of the target language, (2) that it assists in vocabulary building and (3) that it provides evidence for debatable usages. A stimulating context is thus provided in which the learner develops strategies for self-discovery. Corpora then serve as a useful tool to promote learner autonomy.

While acknowledging the various benefits noted and indeed welcoming concordance technology to take place in the language classroom, this article contends that a general corpus such as that of the World Wide Web Access to Corpora Project (W3-Corpora at http://clwww.essex.ac.uk/w3c, a Website address generously provided by Lee) may prove inaccessible in the first instance to many students, especially those of lower level of proficiency. Further, because they are unfamiliar with concordance lines, complete reliance on concordances from a general corpus may lead to the students running the risk of getting confused. As Fox (1998, p. 39) observes, each concordance line "is discrete, often on a completely different subject, and also most of the lines do not even show whole sentences".[1]

This unfamiliarity with the language and message content is a real concern which requires attention from every teacher before wishing to use the general corpus. This is not to suggest, however, that the general corpus should be relegated to the wings while "traditional" classroom pen-and-paper work takes centre stage. Rather, it suggests an alternative role for the corpus: that of an *additional, valuable* resource for evidence confirmation and language learning—a point which we will return to in the conclusion section.

This article proposes the use of a topic- and genre-specific pedagogic corpus as the main learning resource to address the concern of language and content unfamiliarity.

We will first consider some design issues of the proposed corpus and then discuss some ways to use it in as well as outside the classroom. As we will see, a topic- and genre-based corpus frames language learning within familiar and meaningful contexts, thereby promoting learning opportunities and offering a very good return for students' learning effort.

Developing and Using Topic- and Genre-specific Pedagogic Corpora

The term "pedagogic corpus" was first introduced in Willis (1993) to refer to any materials, written and spoken, to which the learner is or has been exposed. A topic- and genre-specific pedagogic corpus then, as the name suggests, is assembled through a careful selection of texts on a recurrent topic and genre. If we have, for example, decided to collect a corpus for a unit of work based on the topic "English as an international language", we could select eleven topic-related, factual texts to form a factual pedagogic corpus on that topic. If the syllabus for a course consists of twenty units of work, then we will have twenty topic- and genre-based pedagogic corpora of ten to fifteen texts each.

It is crucial that the developed corpora be exploited in relation to tasks framed within a recursive EAR framework. The "E" stands for Exploration. It is a stage at which the learner carries out a series of well-designed tasks that are derived from a particular topic- and genre-based corpus. These tasks could include, for instance, identifying main points, problem-solving, listening to recorded spoken material, pair or group discussion and public speaking, in order of linguistic and cognitive difficulty.

After the learner has processed the particular corpus for meaning through a progressive series of tasks, the corpus will be exploited for focusing the learner on examining the target language. The processed texts then provide valuable input for the learner to notice recurring linguistic features within familiar contexts. This represents the "A" or Analysis stage in the EAR framework. We will look in detail at a couple of language analysis activity types in the section to follow shortly.

The final stage is the "R" or Reflection stage at which students are encouraged to reflect on the learning process with the aim to help them to take control of their own learning. They are guided to reflect on, among other concerns, the texts they have studied, the linguistic occurrences they have come across and the possibility of other options. Possible reflection questions to be posed to them include: *What are the features of the texts that make them typical or look alike? What do you notice about the words, phrases, and tenses in these texts? Do you notice repeated words and phrases*

across the texts? Could you suggest some alternatives to these repeated words from the texts?   (See Chau, 2003, for further, relevant discussion.)

In the rest of this article, we will consider two activity types that can be carried out both in- and out-of-class. We will focus exclusively on the Analysis stage here, although the Exploration as well as the Reflection stage deserves equal, if not more, attention in the classroom to help the learner to acquire the target language.

Exploiting Topic- and Genre-specific Pedagogic Corpora for Language Learning

As already indicated, the value of a topic- and genre-specific corpus is that it familiarizes the learner with the language and message content of a particular topic and genre and situates learning in context. This learning condition is further strengthened when the learner has gone through the Exploration stage. Given the learner's past language experience of the input, the language to which the learner has been exposed thus constitutes familiar and meaningful linguistic data for language analysis work to take place in context.

By way of illustration, we will look at two activity types: focusing on patterns and focusing on collocations. The activities are derived from a topic- and genre-based corpus of eleven texts on "English as an international language" from a number of Malaysian course books. We will see how an eleven-text topic- and genre-specific corpus can offer a wealth of learning opportunities to the learner.

Focusing on Patterns

Previous corpus-driven studies, most notably those by the Birmingham team of corpus linguists that draw exclusively upon the data from the Bank of English corpus (e.g., Francis et al., 1996; 1997; 1998), reveal that there are observable patterns that are associated with particular lexical items in English texts. The patterns of a word, as Hunston and Francis (2000) point out, refer to "all the words and structures which are regularly associated with the word and which contribute to its meaning" (p. 36). They give the following examples of the pattern of verbs with introductory *it* and with a *that-*clause which expresses a reaction to a fact or piece of news:

1   *It* <u>amuses</u> *me that every 22-year-old now wants to own property.*

2   *It* <u>frightens</u> *me that kids are now walking around with guns.*

3   *It* <u>puzzles</u> *me that people are willing to pay any taxes at all to this Government.*

(Hunston & Francis, 2000, p. 264)

Like Hunston and Francis, I believe that information about frequent patterns is of great value to learners and should be incorporated into language lessons for learners to notice how the target language works. After all, the central challenge for language teaching is to develop learners' communicative language ability which includes, among others, the ability to use the language naturally and fluently. Let us now turn to examples of language patterns of some selected words.

Nouns and patterns (1): the case of ENGLISH

Since the topic under discussion is "English as an international language", we can draw our students' attention to the patterns of some useful topic-related words such as *ENGLISH, LANGUAGE, INTERNATIONAL, WORLD,* and *STANDARD.* A search for concordance lines containing the word *ENGLISH* reveals that there are 195 matches or occurrences in the corpus; *LANGUAGE 87*; *INTERNATIONAL 13*; *WORLD 29*; and *STANDARD 22.* These numbers indicate sufficient examples for students to examine the use of each word in the context of the topic under discussion. We can either prepare in advance for the students a set of concordance lines containing all the instances of the words to be examined or ask them to find out, depending on the frequency of the words, all or some of the sentences containing those words. (It is important to note that ten to fifteen familiar texts provide manageable data for language analysis.)

If we consider the noun *ENGLISH,* we will notice that this word behaves as any noun does, as in *English can be considered as a world language.* One frequent pattern, however, emerges: the *noun + preposition + English/the English language* structure. There are 62 of them in total, with 48 occurrences of the pattern *noun + of + English/the English language* and 14 occurrences of *noun + in + English/the English language* in the corpus. Here are some recurring examples of the pattern *noun + of + English/the English language* that students can (and should) be guided to notice:

> a good knowledge of English
> a word of English
> a working knowledge of English
> our (poor) command of English
> the development of English
> the growth of English
> the importance of English
> the knowledge of English
> the role of English
> the spread of English
> the standard of English
> the use of English

> a good command of the English language
> ample command of the English language
> the standard of the English language

While this pattern may be too common to qualify for an entry in a reference grammar, it merits learning effort for students to notice and learn the accompanying phrases in chunks which are in their most natural environment. The students can be required, after examining the phrases, to complete the concordance lines (with these phrases omitted and with more than one acceptable answer in certain gaps), first, taken from the original pedagogic corpus and later, from other resources like the W3-Corpora website maintained by the University of Essex recommended by Lee or the Internet through such search engines as Google (at www.google.com). The following lesson would focus on the *noun + in + English/the English language* pattern (e.g. *proficiency in English, sources in English*) and the use of *ENGLISH* serving the function of an adjective (e.g. *the English Week, English programmes*).

Nouns and patterns (2): the case of LANGUAGE

Let us turn to another example, the noun *LANGUAGE*, which occurs 87 times in the pedagogic corpus. Here is a sample of 25 random concordance lines from the corpus:

makes English merit the status of a world	language. Already English has been accorded this
and learn about the complexities of the	language and the many errors commonly made by
such, the importance of English as a world	language cannot be denied. As the nation strides
in the percentage of passes in the English	language. Concern was raised in the mass media
foreign language if we are to look to another	language for sources. Although many people
must have "output" in order to improve our	language further. What he meant is that we must
The chances of a pupil's exposure to the	language have been greatly diminished or
English than to start off with a foreign	language if we are to look to another language
lingua franca increasingly used as a second	language in important areas of the world', says
realise that English is a very important	language in the world and it is definitely important.
colleges and universities, and is also the	language of administration. The importance of English
who are bilingual. English is also the	language of art and literature. Many great literary
books are all in English. English is the main	language of communication of commercial firms and
the United Nations. It is the language - the	language of commerce and industry, science, arts and
there. Not only has English enriched the	language of these countries, but it has also added a new
is an international language, it is also the	language of science and technology. Proficiency in
role of the national language as the official	language of the country remains unquestionable
who feel that English is an important	language that can propel the nation towards develop

in Bahasa Melayu except for the English language. Thus the opportunity for using. speaking countries. It is an ideal second language to master because it is used in business natural result of the emphasis on the national language to create a national identity for Malaysians the store of knowledge in the national language. What should really be of concern to complexities the many different parts of the language which make it difficult to understand by of English. It is the most widely spoken language. You need not worry that you will not be and origins. If you are good at the English language, you will find the doors of English, Canadian

Given these familiar, concordance lines, students can be required to identify the patterns of *LANGUAGE.* A simple question like "What most frequently comes after language?" or "Is there any same category of words that often come before language?" can elicit encouraging responses. As we can see, *LANGUAGE* is frequently followed by the preposition *of* and a noun. This is the pattern **N** *of* **n** (noun followed by *of* and noun), as follows:

> the language of administration
> the language of art and literature
> the (main) language of communication
> the language of commerce and industry
> the language of these countries
> the language of science and technology
> the (official) language of the country

Like most other nouns, *LANGUAGE* frequently follows an adjective, forming the pattern **adj N** as follows:

> foreign language
> important language
> main language
> national language
> official language
> second language
> spoken language

The introductory it + adjective + that-clause pattern

As illustrated earlier, the introductory *it + verb + that-clause* pattern is a common structure in English. This structure also includes the introductory *it + adjective/noun + that-clause* pattern (see Hunston & Francis, 2000, pp. 264-65). We will now look at the introductory *it + adjective + that-clause* pattern that is found in the eleven-text pedagogic corpus. There are eight of them in the corpus, as follows:

4   *It is <u>good</u> that you have realised the importance of English and are willing to work hard to improve it.*

5   *Owing to Malaysia's growing participation in international affairs, it is <u>imperative</u> that those who represent our country are effective in the language in which meetings are conducted.*

6   *English is a very important language in the world and it is definitely <u>important</u> that we become proficient in it.*

7   *However, considering that Malaysians study English from their first year in primary school, it is only <u>logical</u> that it would be easier to promote English than to start off with a foreign language if we are to look to another language for sources.*

8   *It is only <u>natural</u> that Malaysians who wish to be employed must have a working knowledge of English.*

9   *It is <u>true</u> that English is the mother tongue of the people of Great Britain.*

10 *Of course, it is <u>true</u> that the government has sent engineers for training in technologically advanced countries like Germany, Japan and Korea, where English is not the main or even a major language.*

11 *It is <u>undeniable</u> that the standard of English is declining in almost all, if not all, Malaysian schools.*

Again, students can be required to identify these sentences after the teacher has highlighted the introductory *it + adjective + that-clause* pattern in the classroom. Working with a personal computer with a word processing programme would prove very efficient in locating these sentences in the electronic version of the texts, but it is worth repeating that ten to fifteen printed texts which have been processed before for meaning at the Exploration stage present little difficulty to students in searching for this structure.

For further examples on this pattern, any curious students, as suggested by Hunston and Francis (2000), can always be directed to relevant reference books such as Francis *et al.,* (1998). With more practice through different units of work that involve a wider range of topic- and genre-specific corpora, students are likely to develop a greater sensitivity to various patterns of the language as well as the necessary skills to work out the correct usages by themselves.

Focusing on Collocations

A closely related notion of "patterns" is collocation, that is, the tendency of two or more words to co-occur to form a piece of natural-sounding language in speech or in writing. For example, the collocates of *LANGUAGE*, as shown earlier, include *foreign, national, official, second* and *spoken*. The significance of collocation is realized when one considers these stored sequences of words as the essential bases of language learning and use (Ellis, 2001). Here are some examples of the range of collocation for *LIGHT* shown in the Oxford Collocations Dictionary for Students of English (2002, p. ix):

adjective + noun:	*bright/harsh/intense/strong* **light**
quantifier + noun:	*a beam/ray of* **light**
verb + noun:	*cast/emit/give/provide/shed* **light**
noun + verb:	**light** *gleams/glows/shines*
noun + noun:	*a* **light** *source*
preposition + noun:	*by the* **light** *of the moon*
noun + preposition:	*the* **light** *from the window*

In the classroom, we should initially focus on topic-related collocations that consist of very frequent words since it is these words that learners often meet and are likely to employ for productive use. Very frequent words are generally also useful words especially if they fall within the first most frequent 1,000 word families in English. Focusing learners' attention on these first 1,000 words gives a very good return for learning effort because they cover "around 75 percent of the running words in academic texts and newspapers, over 80 percent of the running words in novels, and about 85 percent of the running words in conversation" (Nation, 2003, p. 136).

For illustration purposes, we will look at the collocates of one such word, *KNOWLEDGE,* that occurs twelve times in the present pedagogic corpus (*ENGLISH* and *LANGUAGE*, incidentally, also fall into the group of the first most frequent 1,000 words).[2] Here are the twelve sentences that contain *KNOWLEDGE:*

12 *A very important reason for the use of English is that the world's* knowledge *is enshrined in it.*

13 *Countries in Asia and Africa that were till recently under British rule get their scientific* knowledge *and technological know-how from English books.*

14 *It is the* knowledge *of English that helps these countries maintain their high level of intellectual and scientific training and achievement.*

15 *English is a key which opens doors to scientific and technical* knowledge *indispensable to the economic and political development of vast areas of the world.*

16 *It opens doors to scientific and technical* <u>knowledge</u>.

17 *It is only natural that Malaysians who wish to be employed must have a working* <u>knowledge</u> *of English.*

18 *If you wish to go abroad, be it for further studies or for a tour, you need to have a working* <u>knowledge</u> *of English.*

19 *If you have a good* <u>knowledge</u> *of* English, *you will be able to read and enjoy these great literary works.*

20 *Proficiency in English enables students to have access to current scientific and technological* <u>knowledge</u>, *much needed to help Malaysia become a fully developed nation by 2020.*

21 *It also improves our knowledge of current affairs.*

22 *Proficiency in English may thus be used as a vehicle to progress as it can increase the store of* <u>knowledge</u> *in the national language.*

23 *Since this has now been achieved, Malaysians can once again look to English in order to keep up with the latest developments in the world and acquire a greater store of* <u>knowledge</u>.

Given the sentences above and provided with the range of collocation to be matched with the relevant words, students can be required to identify all the collocates of *KNOWLEDGE* and match the collocational patterns with the identified collocates, as follows:

adjective + noun:	*current scientific and technological/good/ scientific/scientific and technical/working* **knowledge**
quantifier + noun:	*a greater store/the store of* **knowledge**
verb + noun:	*acquire/get/have/improve/increase* **knowledge**
noun + preposition:	**knowledge** *of English/current affairs*

It is useful to encourage students to consult collocation dictionaries as a follow-up activity for further examples and collocations. A look at the entry, *KNOWLEDGE*, in the *Oxford Collocations Dictionary*, for instance, reveals the following additional examples and one new collocational pattern:

adjective + noun:	*considerable/great/vast/sound/thorough/deep/detailed/ extensive/wide/local/direct/first-hand/up-to- date/general/factual/practical/professional/academic* **knowledge**
verb + noun:	*gain/demonstrate/apply/broaden/extend* **knowledge**
preposition + noun:	*in the/to somebody's/with somebody's/without somebody's* **knowledge**

Having completed this initial, "warm-up" in-class exercise, students can then be required, following the same process and repeating the same type of language analysis work as performed earlier, to identify as homework the collocates of other, selected high frequency words. If the class consists of mainly lower proficiency students, the teacher may need to provide them in advance with a framework of the range of collocational patterns (as shown in the entries of a collocations dictionary) of the selected words. Here is an example of such tasks focusing on the word *STANDARD*:

Which words do you think frequently occur with the word standard? *Write them down by searching through the eleven passages and group them into the following:*

adjective + *standard:*
noun + *standard:*
verb + *standard:*
preposition + *standard:*
standard + preposition:

Now add three more words to each group (the more, the better!) by checking in the dictionary. You may want to consider only the first three groups here.

In addition to the language analysis work suggested above, a class that consists of intermediate students or above can be further encouraged to identify, list and keep in a notebook topic-related collocations and classify them as homework according to categories central to the topic. This more challenging task may look like the following:

Complete the following exercise with all the relevant words that you have come across in the eleven texts on English as an International Language*:*

Words/phrases connected with the reasons we need to be proficient in English:

adjective + noun:
quantifier + noun:
noun + noun:
noun + verb:
verb + noun:
verb + verb:
verb + preposition:
adjective + preposition:
adverb + adjective
adverb + verb:
verb + adverb:

Words/phrases connected with the current situation of the standard of English in the country:

    adjective + noun:

    quantifier + noun:

    noun + noun:

    noun + verb:

    verb + noun:

    verb + verb:

    verb + preposition:

    adjective + preposition:

    adverb + adjective

    adverb + verb:

    verb + adverb:

Words/phrases connected with the possible measures to improve the standard of English in the country:

    adjective + noun:

    quantifier + noun:

    noun + noun:

    noun + verb:

    verb + noun:

    verb + verb:

    verb + preposition:

    adjective + preposition:

    adverb + adjective

    adverb + verb:

    verb + adverb:

It should be noted that this task may at first prove time-consuming and cognitively demanding. Personal teaching experience of assigning this task suggests that many students (including some highly motivated ones) may, upon the completion of the task, grumble about having had to carry out the task. After a discussion and feedback session of the work completed, however, most report that they appreciate the value of the task and that it has been a worthwhile and rewarding experience.

Many students point out that through identifying and classifying topic-related vocabulary (a process in which they consciously attend to, among other things, sets of words with similar meanings and/or functions), their vocabulary is much enriched. Some even see this vocabulary enrichment activity as being essential to providing them with the necessary vocabulary to produce a good summary and to effectively express

their ideas when writing on a related topic. Perhaps more importantly, they welcome similar tasks in the following units of learning which draw upon different sets of topic- and genre-specific pedagogic corpora.

Conclusion

It is now well recognized that language learning does not take place in a vacuum. Contextualization is the key word here and it is realized, as proposed in this article, through familiarity with the language and with the message content in known, meaningful contexts. Through sustained exposure to, exploration with, analysis of, and reflection on topic- and genre-specific pedagogic corpora, this familiarity is promoted, developed, and enhanced. Not only is the learner's schema of text structures and central ideas of the selected topics repeatedly reinforced and strengthened, frequent recycling of the common lexicogrammatical features is also ensured.

At the outset of this article, I noted that a general corpus may contain patches of language beyond what the learner can process. This is aggravated by the fact that concordance lines which illustrate such instances of language show only partial or incomplete sentences. Yet at the same time I suggested that a general corpus can serve as an additional, valuable resource for evidence confirmation and language learning. The "trick" here is knowing when to exploit a general corpus to complement the proposed pedagogic corpus.

I have argued that a pedagogic corpus on a recurrent topic and genre provides for learners familiar texts to process for meaning and accessible linguistic data for the study of the target language. I have illustrated the importance of the proposed corpus for contextualizing language learning by suggesting as examples two activity types: focusing on patterns and focusing on collocations. I also contend that because they are familiar with the content as well as the recurring language features of the corpus, learners have little difficulty in carrying out language analysis work even in the form of concordance lines. This past experience with concordances is useful to facilitate the transition to analyzing language data based on concordances from a general corpus.

Given that topic- and genre-based pedagogic corpora consist of only ten to fifteen texts each and that they have been designed as or intended to be *pedagogic* corpora, not *research* corpora, there are admittedly some aspects of the target language that they are unable to reveal to the learner. For instance, debatable usages whose empirical foundation can be traced in general corpora, as shown in Lee (2003), are not available for examination in pedagogic corpora. Also, there will be items that require more exemplification due to their limited instances. This is when general or research corpus is called for as a valuable tool to complement the proposed pedagogic corpus, the core learning resources that promote language learning in context.

Notes

1. To address this problem, Fox suggests spending some time with students to get them used to looking at concordances.

2. Alex Heatley, Paul Nation and Averil Coxhead of Victoria University of Wellington have devised a program known as RANGE which enables users to identify, among other things, the first and second most frequent 1,000 words in English. A free distribution or download of RANGE is available at http://www.vuw.ac.nz/lals.

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About the Author

Chau Meng Huat (chaumenghuat@hotmail.com) teaches students of ESL/EFL from elementary to high schools in a small language school he runs in Malaysia. His work on the use of texts and corpus analysis techniques to raise ESL/EFL learners' consciousness about the target language was initially inspired by the work of Susan Hunston of the University of Birmingham on corpus linguistics and, thereafter, by the students in his classroom. Meng Huat is currently developing ways of extending access to texts as learning resources for students and looking at ways of providing supporting frameworks within which language learning can be promoted.

Conference Announcements

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL). March 31-April 3, 2004. 2004 Annual TESOL Convention, "Soaring Far, Catching Dreams," March 30-April 3, 2004, Long Beach, California, USA. E-mail: conventions@tesol.org. Http://www.tesol.org/conv/index-conv.html.

RELC. April 19-21, 2004. 39th International Seminar. "Innovative Approaches to Reading and Writing Instruction." SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, Singapore. Email:admn@relc.org.sg. Http://www.relc.org.sg.

CA TESOL. April 22-25, 2004. Santa Clara, California, USA. Conference Chair: Kara Rosenberg. E-mail:kararosenberg@earthlink.net. Http://www.catesol.org/.

National Chung Cheng University. April 24-25, 2004. International Conference on English Language Teaching Instruction and Assessment, Min-Hsiung, Chiayi, Taiwan. Contact Ada Tang, admada@ccu.edu.tw. Tel. 886-5-2721108. Fax 886-5-2720495. E-mail:admada@ccu.edu.tw. Http://www.ccunix. ccu. edu.tx/~fllcccu/.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong. May 14-15, 2004 (Nanjing, China), May 17-18 (Hong Kong, China). International Conference on Tertiary/College English Teaching: From Theory to Classroom Practice, English Language Teaching Unit. Tel. 852-26097466. E-mail:eltu-conference@cuhk.edu.hk. Http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ eltu/ conference/2004/.

China English Language Education Association, Beijing, China. May 20-24, 2004. The Fourth International Symposium on ELT in China. Theme: New Directions in ELT in China and Around the World. E-mail:celeaflrp.com. Http://www.elt-china. org/ indexe.htm.

Dominican Republic, West Indies. June 10-16, 2004. Annual Conference for Teachers of English 2004. "Reflective Teaching," Instituto Cultural Dominico Americano, Abraham Lincoln Ave. #21. Santo Domingo, D. R. Contact: Grisel Del Rosario, Tel. (809) 535-0665 ext. 265-264. E-mail:idiomas@icda.edu. do Santiago Location: Avenida Estrella Sadhala, Santiago. Http://www.icda.edu.do/.

Far Eastern English language Teachers' Association (FEELTA). June 10-16, 2004. The Fifth Pan-Asian Conference on Language Teaching at FEELTA 2004, "Sharing Challenges, Sharing Solutions: Teaching Languages in Diverse Contexts," Vladivostok, Russia. Http://www.dvgu.ru/rus/partner/education/feelta/pac5/.
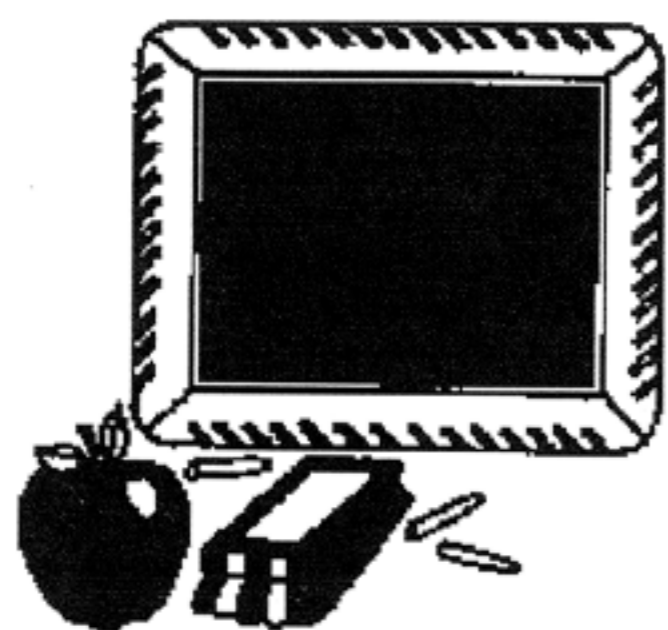
Tips for Teachers

Using Imitation of Television Actors to Overcome Fossilized Speech Patterns

Susan Bégat, Louisiana State University

Prator and Robinett (1985) have suggested that the most "fundamental" way of improving pronunciation in the target language is by imitation of native speakers. However, in conversations with native speakers, language learners tend to focus almost exclusively on the segments and words that are critical to their basic understanding of the message, and they often fail to note the speaker's stress, pitch, intonation, and pause patterns. By helping language learners listen to native speakers with the goal of imitating, rather than merely understanding, we can help them perceive more of the nuances of spoken English and to break out of fossilized patterns. The activity described in this article will heighten the ESL or EFL learner's awareness of the suprasegmental aspects of English, i.e. stress, pitch, and intonation, as well as native speaker pronunciation and pausing. It will also provide students with opportunities to practice imitating the speech of native speakers.

I use this activity with International Teaching Assistants (ITAs) for whom learning to control stress, pitch, intonation, and pausing can greatly improve both their public speaking skills and their general English. However, the appealing subject matter and video component make it an ideal activity for adaptation to a wide variety of age, school, and program settings.

Preparation of the materials

Identify an appropriate segment of a video or DVD recording that features a conversation between just two people. You can also videotape a similar segment from a television program. An ideal segment is three to four minutes in length and does not contain too much slang, jargon, mumbling, "one-liners," or distracting background noise. Transcribe the segment. Double-space the text, and blank out a few words. Then, photocopy it for student use.

Procedure

(The examples mentioned here are from the transcript that appears at the end of this article.)

1.   Preview the general content of the dialogue with your students by explaining who the characters are and summarizing the plot.

2.   Before showing the scene, give students a global listening task. For example, determine what John does for a living, or explain Daisy's response when John proposes marriage. Then, show the tape and let students use the visual and verbal clues to answer these questions.

3.   Change to a discrete language task by giving students a copy of the transcript with a few missing words. Ask students to listen again and fill in the blanks. Replay the tape as necessary.

4.   Identify and discuss any idioms or other vocabulary that may be unfamiliar, such as the use of "how's that?" or "stand in your way". By the end of this step, the meaning of all words and expressions should be clear to the students.

5.   Play the dialogue again and ask students to mark the transcript for pronunciation, stress, pitch, intonation, and pause patterns. In the beginning, you may want to do this step with your students to teach them the marking symbols that you use. To increase students' perception, model the actors' speech, but exaggerate slightly.

6.   After students have marked the transcript, ask them to perform the scene. By this time, students should be able to give the dialogue nearly the same stress, pitch, intonation, pauses, and pronunciation as the professional actors. Allow time for repeated practice of this step if you can.

7.   As a closing activity, ask students to predict what happens next in the film. For example, do John and Daisy get married? Or, what could be the "things" that John doesn't know about Daisy that could make a difference? You can either explain what happens or, if time permits, play a clip to show the answer.

Additional possibilities

1.   To demonstrate how mistakes with suprasegmentals can affect meaning, change the stress, intonation, and pitch patterns in a line of the dialogue. Ask students if they can detect a difference in meaning. This works particularly well with a line that has emotional appeal, such as "I just know I'm never gonna love another woman the way I love you. I need you. I love you. Marry me."

2.   Emphasize native speaker pause patterns by repeating a speaker's lines without pauses. Students can generally perceive the difference in overall comprehensibility.

3.   Depending on class size and time constraints, you might hold a class competition to find the best John or Daisy, for example.

4.   Preparation of a new segment can take up to one and a half hours depending on its length.   Sometimes, I prepare the recording and make preparation of the transcript an extra credit assignment for a student.

5.   Although improved pronunciation is the goal of this activity, students also appreciate the opportunity to practice using authentic vocabulary and common expressions in the context of carefully prepared classroom exercise.

Conclusion

Although setting up this activity may be somewhat time consuming, even a short dialogue, such as the one that follows, can provide a rich source of linguistic input. Once the materials are prepared, they can be used over and over with other classes. Most important, diligent practice with this type of activity can help students break out of fossilized language patterns.   Finally, although the focus of this activity is on improving pronunciation, students also enjoy mastering the use of particular words and common expressions.

Sample transcript

This transcript is from an episode of the *The Waltons* called "The Revelation."

Notes:

1.   Reduced forms of "going to" and "want to" are transcribed as spoken.

2.   Four times in this scene, one speaker repeats the words of the other speaker but with very different meaning and hence with different stress, pitch, and intonation. Students should be made aware of these places.

3.   An excellent example of contrastive stress occurs in this line by John: "You're only part of my life now, I want you to be all of my life."

Scene (at a table in a restaurant)

John to the waiter: Thanks very much.   We'll have two glasses of red wine.

Daisy: So how was your day?…

John: Well alright, I was up at 5:00 this morning working on the book because I had to be at the wire service at 11:00…and I typed like a tiger until 10:30 and then came to pick you up.

Daisy: Well, I was thinking today how much my life has changed since we met.

John: How's that?

Daisy: Well…from the very first day back there in Scottsville you were there when I needed a dancing partner. (pause) What was that song they kept playing over and over again at the marathon?

John: Whispering!

Daisy: Whispering.

John: It was so late. We were dead tired. Hanging on to each other trying to keep going.

Daisy: We were a good team.

John: We're still a pretty good team. (pause) I love you.

Daisy: Me too.

John: Daisy, let's get married.

Daisy: Not just yet.

John: Why not? Daisy, if it's the career you're worried about…don't…I mean I'm proud of you in that. I'm not going to stand in your way.

Daisy: Things are pretty good the way they are.

John: I know they're good the way they are and I wouldn't change any of that but…it's killing me when I have to leave you at night. I wanna be with you when I'm sleeping, when I wake up in the morning…all the time. You're only a part of my life now. I want you to be all of my life.

Daisy: I feel like I'm that already.

John: I just know I'm never gonna love another woman the way I love you. I need you. I love you. Marry me.

Daisy: John, there are *things* you don't know about me.

John: Well, there are things you don't know about *me*!

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About the Author

Susan Bégat, an instructor in the English Department of Louisiana State University, has taught English, ESL, EFL, and French in the U.S. and France. Currently, she works in the Spoken English Program for international teaching assistants at LSU-Baton Rouge.

Txt wd a twst 4 tch lang nd lit

Lydia P. Escober-de la Rosa, University of Eastern Philippines

Working with text messages is similar to working with the Gestalt concept of "closure," that special ability of the mind to create a structural whole from fragmented parts. Our students put this ability to use when we ask them to complete a text that has been transcribed as a cloze procedure, a common language class activity.

In most classrooms, cell phones are considered a rude and useless interruption. If we think about their use from another point of view, however, we can see the potential for exploiting them as language-learning devices. One advantage is that since cell phone use involves both the mind and the body, users do not become easily bored. Another advantage is that text messages require writers to think quickly and to be brief and precise. The activities described below illustrate several techniques for using cell phones to develop English reading comprehension, spelling, and note taking skills.

Setting the stage

Before using the activities described below, the teacher should conduct a session in which some characteristics of texting and rules for its use are discussed. He or she will also need to ascertain how many phones are available and who might need help in learning to use one. During this lesson, students should try these tasks.

1. Practice decoding simple words that fall into categories like body parts (ayz, noz, irz, and hndz) or phrases used in greetings and leave takings (gud am, gud pm, gud nyt, and gudby).

2. Discuss texting etiquette. For example, using all capital letters is the texting equivalent of using loud and angry speech and is therefore rude.

3. Practice focusing on content words rather than function words because storage space is limited in the cell phone. This is the same skill that our parents used when they paid by the letter to send a telegram years ago. This form of language is sometimes called "telegraphese".

4. Practice transcribing a text message into its full standard form.

Spelling Texts

In this activity, students recreate the full standard form of text messages given to them by the teacher. If your class is small, you might give each student different messages. If your class is large you might have three or four variations with several students working on each one. Typically, I give each student three messages to work with. First, students work individually to transcribe the messages in standard form. Then, they compare notes with classmates who had the same set of messages. They

might find errors in their work, differences of opinion, or more than one plausible interpretation for a particular message. Questions can be discussed in class or individually. If time permits, some students might be asked to write their original text and standard forms on the board for discussion. In marking these exercises, I typically expect correct spelling of homophones since the messages provide sufficient context.

Text Charade

This is a flashcard vocabulary game with a simple adaptation for the cell phone. In the flashcard version, teacher and students first have to make a set of small cards with action words. The game is best played in small groups, each of which gets a set of action word cards. A player draws a card from the stack and demonstrates the action without speaking. The group tries to identify the word. If they can, the actor gets a point, the word is removed from the stack, and person who guessed the word pulls the next card. If the group cannot guess, the card is returned to the stack and play continues. With the cell phone variation, one or more people text the words to the group(s) instead.

Text Message Projects

One project that I have used is the creation of classroom collections of text messages in their original and standard form. Students work individually to collect text messages. Then, in groups, they sort, organize, and transcribe their messages. After careful checking and editing, each group binds its collection in final form creating a sort of bilingual dictionary built from their own language experience and interests. They enjoy reading and rereading the messages that they have collected as well as the ones from other groups. This project can be on-going throughout the school year.

Whisper-a-Text

This activity works well for hearing, reading, discussing, and even memorizing shorts poems. Some that have worked well include Robert Frost's "Dust of Snow," William Carlos Williams' "this is just to say," Natividad Marquez's "The Sea," or Angela Manalang Gloria's "Querida." Haiku also work well.

Students should sit in rows with several students, up to 10, in each row. The last student in each row holds the cell phone. The teacher forwards the texted poem to the students with the phones. Without showing the poem to anyone else, they whisper it line by line to the student in front of them who, in turn, whispers it to the next student, and so on, until it reaches the one in front. The student in front, records each line as he or she hears it. As soon as all the lines have been whispered and recorded, the texted poem is written on the board. Then, the final versions are compared with other groups and with the original.

Any deviation from the structure of the original texted poem is an opportunity for discussion. Afterward, the class can discuss the content of the poem itself.

Text me a question

In this activity, students use their cell phones to send texted questions about their homework assignments to their teacher during his or her office hours. The teacher can explain that only relevant questions submitted during office hours will be answered. Any form of access that makes it easier for students to talk with their teachers is worth using, and many students find it easier to ask questions in this way than to call or visit their teacher. In a variation on this activity, the teacher might not respond to questions immediately but might say that the first 5 or 10 questions submitted will be answered in the next class. This can be a particularly good incentive for students in literature classes or other classes with demanding reading assignments.

Caveat

While not everyone in the English speaking world has ready access to cell phones yet, it is a growing phenomenon, and even classes outside a cell phone network area can be introduced to texting. This can be an especially valuable exercise in places where computers are still lacking. The resourceful teacher can introduce texting with a picture of a cell phone showing its parts. She can also discuss the language used in texting and share her phone with students showing them her outbox full of messages. Students can learn how to retrieve and read messages even if they cannot send them. Later, when the opportunity presents itself, the teacher can take students on a field trip to a place covered by a network. With a few borrowed phones, students can experience the speed with which telephone and texted messages can reach other people.

Conclusion

Texting activities can be integrated appropriately into a wide variety of English language courses. The sample activities described here are intended to help teachers think of other possibilities that might be even more relevant in their own setting.

About the Author

Lydia P. Escober-de la Rosa teaches language and literature at the University of Eastern Philippines, Northern Samar. She attended universities in the Philippines, Hawaii (U.S.A.), and Singapore. Her current interest is research on indigenous literature.

Creating Learning Opportunities with Peer Teaching

Amy Delis, Brigham Young University, USA

We may master a skill by practicing it, but as an old saying goes, we truly understand a concept when we have to teach it to others. I have tried to put this adage into practice in my ESL and EFL classes with a wide variety of peer teaching opportunities, particularly with short student presentations.

I have found that student presentations can help me achieve the objectives of my class and can help my students reach new levels of understanding about what they are learning. Short, guided student presentations can be used to preview a new chapter or topic, to review work done previously, or to lead practice of a particular skill or strategy.

Student presentations can be used to help prepare the class for an upcoming chapter, unit, or topic by:

- Providing needed background information for a new chapter or topic
- Providing an overview or outline of an upcoming chapter or unit
- Demonstrating a skill or task that will be practiced later on
- Previewing the form, meaning, and/or function of a particular grammar principle

To illustrate, I have used student presentations to help advanced ESL reading students learn about the cultural and historical setting for a novel they are going to read. When my class read *The Hiding Place* about a family's experience during the Holocaust, I provided my students with some background information about World War II, life in Europe in the 1940s, concentration camps in Poland, and so forth. My students studied the information and then presented it to their classmates.

Student presentations can also be used for a variety of review activities including:

- Reviewing vocabulary or grammar principles at the end of a unit
- Demonstrating strategies
- Teaching a review game in preparation for a test
- Conducting a review lesson in preparation for a test

I frequently use review presentations in reading and writing classes. For example, when I taught a beginning level reading class, I asked a few of my students to each demonstrate one of the reading skills we had learned to review a story we had read. "One student identified main ideas; another led the class in imagining alternative

endings to the story; a third student demonstrated how to discover the meanings of words through context clues."

As useful as student-led preview and review activities can be, class time is limited, and I cannot use them as frequently as I would like. Recently, I have found it most useful to have students in my writing classes work in small groups to make short presentations on the form, meaning, and usage of troublesome grammatical points.

Over the years, I have learned some valuable lessons about how to make student-led presentations more effective. I offer these guidelines for someone who might want to try peer teaching for the first time.

Tailor the assignment to fit the class. Often this means adding structure and clarity to the assignment.

Provide time for students to practice or ask questions. One week before their presentation date is ideal.

Give specific guidelines for preparation. For a grammar presentation, for example, I tell my students to have a one-page handout showing their name, a definition or statement of the principle, and examples. Their presentation must include form, meaning, and usage of the point under discussion.

Give specific criteria for evaluation. A checklist is often helpful in this regard. Students should see the checklist before they make their presentations. In the grammar presentations described above, students earn full credit if they have a handout, explain the form, meaning, and usage of the principle, and hand in a self-reflection paragraph (explained below) in the next class period.

Show the class an example presentation. I do the first presentation and show the basics for getting full credit. It is especially important to demonstrate that you can say something important in a short period of time.

Provide helpful teaching hints for the students. I advise them about articulating carefully, monitoring their speed, using visual aids, involving the whole class, and practicing.

Have students write self-reflections. Generally, I ask for one typed paragraph with a clear topic sentence and supporting details answering questions such as: How did you feel during the presentation? What was the most valuable thing you learned from preparing for this assignment? Was it helpful to work in groups? What did you like best from your presentation? What could you have done better?

There are many benefits of student presentations, some of which I did not anticipate when I first began using them.

- Presentations add variety to classroom routine.
- Presentations give the teacher an opportunity to work on a different level with individual students, in a more collegial way.
- Students have practice in purposeful public speaking skills.
- Students have practice understanding a wider variety of English accents.
- Students have practice in being leaders.
- Students learn to work together in a closer way than simple pair work activities can accomplish. They often create lasting friendships.
- Through writing self-reflections, students have more accountability and achieve greater metacognitive awareness of both their learning and their teaching.
- Students appreciate you more as a teacher!

I've seen the benefits of student-led presentations in test results as well as in student comments and reflections. Although my own use of student presentations has been limited primarily to reading and writing classes, I'm sure that they could be equally successful in speaking and listening classes as well.

About the Author

Amy Delis has an MA in TESOL from Brigham Young University and for the past five years, has taught adult ESL classes in Utah and Hawaii, as well as elementary school EFL classes in China. She is currently teaching at the English Language Center at BYU in Provo, Utah.

SMARTHINKING

Review by Justin Shewell

English Language Center, Provo, Utah

SMARTHINKING. Houghton Mifflin.

With economic slow-down spreading across the globe, more and more teachers are finding the number of students per class increasing, and the amount of time they can spend with each student decreasing. This creates a problem and often causes students to have a negative image of their program and its instructors because they don't receive the personal instruction they deserve. A new service provided by Houghton Mifflin offers an excellent solution to this problem.

The service is called *SMARTHINKING™*. Working in partnership with SMARTHINKING.com, the service provides live tutors, called "e-structors," who are available to answer students' questions and tutor students in nine disciplines, including English as a Second Language. The service is available for the following ESL books, all published by Houghton Mifflin: *Grammar Links Basic, Blueprints 1: Composition Skills for Academic Writing, Blueprints 2: Composition Skills for Academic Writing, Great Essays, Great Paragraphs, Great Sentences for Great Paragraphs, Grammar Links, and Top 20: Great Grammar for Great Writing*. Access to the service is included with the purchase of these books by students or institutions. Passkeys, or passwords, are printed at the back of each book and can be used to access the service at http:// www. smarthinking.com/partners/houghton/buyindex.cfm.

The service is available for live tutoring on Sunday—Thursday, from 2 PM to 5 PM and 9 PM to 1 AM Eastern Standard Time. Students can logon to the website and get live, one-on-one help with homework assignments, writing questions, or other related questions. Students can also submit questions via email 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and receive answers from e-structors within 24 hours. The service includes a "whiteboard" which both the e-structor and the student can see, allowing for real-time instruction using both visual and textual input.

At a glance, the service appears very useful. Not only is it accessible from any internet-ready computer, but it allows students to interact with real teachers, giving the individual classroom teacher more time to deal with other demands. Also, the service is available for books in accounting, chemistry, college survival, developmental writing, economics, English, mathematics, and Spanish. This might be extremely useful for ESP

programs. The only major drawback to the service is that it is text-based chat, which might pose some problems for lower-level students or those with poor English typing skills.

More information is available at the following website: http://www. college. hmco. com/instructors/ins_smarthinking.html. Instructors interested in evaluating the service should contact Houghton Mifflin at 1-800-733-1717. Those outside the United States should contact the Houghton Mifflin representative in their area for information on evaluating the service. Demonstration sessions are available in Accounting, Chemistry, Economics, Math, Online Writing Lab, and Spanish.

About the Reviewer

Justin Shewell holds a B.A. in TESOL from BYU-Hawaii. He teaches at the English Language Center and is a graduate student at BYU. He has taught English in Korea and the United States.

TEACHING ENGLISH TO STUDENTS FROM CHINA

Review by Peter Chan and Joyce Tan
Brigham Young University—Hawaii

TEACHING ENGLISH TO STUDENTS FROM CHINA. Edited by Lee Gek Ling, Laina Ho, J. E. Lisa Meyer, Chitra Varaprasad, & Carissa Young. Singapore University Press 2003. Available in the U.S. from the University of Hawaii Press, $20.00. Pp. 192. ISBN 9971-69-263-5

This book is a collection of articles written by teachers at the Center for English Language Communication of the National University of Singapore, addressing specific issues pertaining to teaching English to students from the People's Republic of China (PRC). The foreword states that authors of the book have over ten years of experience in teaching more than six thousand Chinese students who are from a wide range of academic backgrounds—from secondary school students to postgraduates. Hence, this book is useful to those whose work is related to teaching English to students from the PRC. For the most part, this book achieves what it intends in helping language educators "get to know PRC students better," and design teaching materials to specifically meet PRC students' needs. It can help readers avoid some common stereotyping about PRC students and springboard into more effective instruction.

Chapter 1 is especially helpful in giving a historical overview of English teaching in China for the past century —its changing English language policies for college students, the predominant use of the grammar-translation model over the communicative approach, and its present focus on developing strong reading skills to gain information. Chapters 2 to 4 advocate using learner diaries as a reflective tool to enhance metacognitive awareness and discover learning strategies. Each of these chapters suggests different ways of introducing and using learner diaries, reporting through email or a weekly reflection paper. The purposes for writing these diaries also varies—to check grammar, help students to think about their learning strategies, or establish good rapport with students. Chapters 5, 7, and 8 review the use of instructional methods such as group work, oral strip stories, and children's literature in teaching Chinese students.

Chapter 5 is especially advantageous in clarifying some of the misconceptions related to Chinese students' attitude towards class participation. It corrects the misconception that Chinese students tend to avoid confrontation in order to maintain group harmony. In surveying 165 students from China and based on her own teaching experience, Meyer finds that PRC students are willing to state their disagreements with peers openly and they also welcome group work tasks and feedback. She indicates that these students can be forthright in their expressions due to the increased exposure to Western ideas and cultural influences. These are accurate findings because even within China, Western-style classroom participation and discovery activities are becoming more common as the government encourages teachers to be more creative in their instruction.

As mentioned throughout the book and most thoroughly examined in Chapter 6, studies reported in this book were conducted in Singapore—a multiracial society with Chinese as the dominant race (over 70%) but who use English as the lingua franca. Thus, the findings and even writing style reflect the local context. However, academics from other native English-speaking countries should still regard this quality work as a valuable reference. Chapter 9 informs readers, particularly those who are not familiar with China, about the different pronunciation problems between the Southern and Northern Chinese. The last two chapters are thoughtful investigations of the importance of learning strategies in second language acquisition and their results may be generally applied to the acquisition of second languages other than English.

Overall, this soft-cover, 192-page book is informative, accurate, and pragmatic in its approach. Although many of the learning and teaching strategies mentioned can be used for any L2 learner in the world, we particularly recommend this book as an important source of knowledge for those who are teaching ESL students from China.

About the Reviewers

Peter Chan is an Assistant Professor of Instructional Technology at Brigham Young University—Hawaii, and his research interests include using technology to assist language learning. Joyce Tan teaches ESL at Brigham Young University—Hawaii. Her professional interests include ESL curriculum design and effective pedagogy.

Active Skills for Reading: Book 3

Review by Nobuo Tsuda
Konan University, Japan

ACTIVE SKILLS FOR READING: BOOK 3. Anderson, N.J. Boston, MA: Thomson Learning, Inc. 2003. Pp. 202, $19.00.

Active Skills for Reading: Book 3 is the intermediate level of a four-book series designed especially for adult ESL/EFL students. The author states, "Reading should be an active, fluent process that involves the reader and the reading material in building meaning." The main purposes of this book are to help the learner activate prior knowledge, cultivate vocabulary, improve comprehension, and develop reading fluency.

There are sixteen units in the book and each unit consists of two chapters, both containing a passage related to the topic of the unit. Chapters begin with "Getting Ready" or "Before You Read," which contain photos or illustrations and some discussion questions. The purpose of these sections is to activate students' prior or background knowledge concerning the unit topic. For example, the topic of Unit 1, Chapter 2 is procrastination. One of the discussion questions asks, "Do you ever put off studying or doing assignments, or do you usually do things right away?" (p. 7). Most of the topics are up-to-date and most likely relevant to the life experiences of many ESL/EFL students. In addition, discussion questions are very stimulating and are designed to build students' interest in reading the passage. "Getting Ready" or "Before You Read" is followed by other activities: "Reading Skill," "Reading Comprehension," "Vocabulary Comprehension," "Vocabulary Skills," "Think About It" and "What Do You Think?"

The "Reading Skill" section of the first chapter of each unit introduces a variety of reading strategies such as predicting, scanning, skimming for the main idea and identifying meaning from context. In the second chapter of each unit, the "Reading Skill" section focuses on reading fluency by increasing reading speed and comprehension. The author believes that when students consciously learn and practice specific strategies, they will eventually acquire essential skills.

One of my favorite aspects of the book is that the author handles vocabulary very well in the "Vocabulary Comprehension" and "Vocabulary Skill" sections. The book features very useful and appropriate vocabulary related to the unit topic. In addition,

the book focuses on various strategies such as recognizing the meaning of words in context, using synonyms, using prefixes and suffixes, and using the context to infer the meaning of vocabulary. When I actually tried out these strategies in class, students seemed to learn the target vocabulary very naturally. Although some exercises were a little challenging for some students, they seemed to feel a sense of accomplishment after learning the new vocabulary. The only problem in the vocabulary section is a minor typographical one: Some students found it difficult to distinguish which words were italicized in the vocabulary lists.

The last section of each unit, "Think About It" or "What Do You Think?" consists of a few discussion questions. The author says, "The aim of this activity is to get students to share their ideas and opinions about reading topics, and to discuss the issues raised in the reading in more detail." I believe this section enables students to think more deeply about the topic, share their opinions, use some of the new vocabulary they have learned in the chapter, and feel a sense of closure.

In my opinion, the book is well organized and the strategies are explicitly stated so that students find it easy to identify the objectives of each chapter. However, since the organization is the same throughout the book, some students may find lessons monotonous after they go through several chapters. In order to avoid repeating the pattern of classroom activities, teachers may want to bring in supplemental materials or do something creative to maintain students' interest in the book. Nevertheless, I think that *Active Skills for Reading: Book Three* is one of the best reading textbooks available for ESL/EFL intermediate students who want to develop their vocabulary as well as enhance their reading comprehension, skills, and fluency.

About the Reviewer

Nobuo Tsuda is an Associate Professor of the Institute for Language and Culture at Konan University, Kobe, Japan. His main interests are L2 reading and curriculum evaluation.

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.

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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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