TESL REPORTER

Brigham Young University Hawaii

TESL Reporter

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

ISSN 0886-0661

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TESOL and the Expectations of Intercultural Communication

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This study investigates the role of communicators' expectations of intercultural encounters, at both individual and organizational levels, within the context of higher education in North America. Non-native (n=17) and native speakers (n=11) of English were interviewed to uncover students' conceptualizations of intercultural communication and to describe their expectations of university policies and initiatives to increase intercultural activity. In addition, interpersonal expectations of the students were examined. Analysis of the interview transcriptions suggests that intercultural communication is perceived on a superficial level, that an institution's endeavors aimed at increasing awareness are not perceived as having an effect on behavior, and that low personal expectations may underlie students' willingness to interact with peers from different language or cultural backgrounds. For TESOL professionals, this implies that efforts to increase intercultural communication among speakers of diverse language backgrounds must be re-examined if they are to bring about change, and that participation in a community of learning is not solely the responsibility of language learners.

Nobody really talks to each other;
I mean it really just seems like everybody just gets along . . .
(multicultural U.S. college student)

In the discourse of today's global economy and practically unlimited communication networks, the idea of intercultural communication has woven its way into business, social, government, and community organizations, fueled by a desire to break down barriers, facilitate negotiation, and increase peace. The general expectation is that intercultural communication is good, necessary, and inevitable. To second language professionals, this idea is far from new. We know that effective communication cannot exclude socio-cultural dimensions. Consequently, our profession also has certain expectations of intercultural communication. Our pedagogy assumes that awareness of cross-cultural and linguistic differences, world views, and beliefs and values leads to understanding and change in communicative behaviors. We hope, that as our students acquire more language skills and cultural knowledge, they

become better communicators in intercultural contexts. Ultimately, we want our students to be communicatively competent in the target language and culture. While this goal itself is not unrealistic, there is a somewhat inherent expectation that places the responsibility for effective intercultural communication on language learners, and this expectation is unrealistic.

The reality is that communication is reciprocal in nature, not one-directional. Each participant in an interaction brings certain expectations to the conversation, and in the case of intercultural communication, both native and non-native speakers are responsible for the outcome of the interaction. Thus, it is not solely the language learners who are accountable for effective communication. Native speakers must also be interculturally competent. What each speaker brings to a conversation determines expectations on social and individual levels, and these expectations then shape the communicative act. The goal of this study is to expand our understanding of both native and non-native speakers' perceptions and expectations of intercultural communication.

Expectations of Intercultural Communication

The notion of "expectations" for the purpose of this study, which takes place within the context of higher education in the United States, is applied to intercultural communication on two levels: institutional and interpersonal. The affiliations forged at institutional and interpersonal levels create a network of social relationships and power dynamics that affect language learning in a multitude of ways, ranging from personal encounters to academic policies. Although the overlap and exchange between the institutional and interpersonal are considerable, it is useful to examine these ideas separately in order to dismantle and understand the expectations that surface at both levels.

On the institutional level, intercultural communication is conceptualized as a tangible goal, as something to be achieved in a community or organization. Intercultural communication is manifest in activities of groups that promote peace and multiculturalism, in festivals and celebrations that promote awareness, and in workshops and courses that support diversity initiatives. The expectations are that intercultural communication is good, and that awareness of cultural dimensions will lead to better understanding and improved communication. The intentions of these expectations are, without a doubt, a positive step. However, these expectations limit the notion of intercultural communication to episodic and often decontextualized actions and events.

These institutional expectations impact the field of second language learning and teaching in several ways. First, in the case of college students who are non-native English speakers, university ESL courses are often limited in time and scope. Students are expected to achieve college-level, native-like language skills in one or two semesters

of classes—a formidable task even for native speakers. Second, within the institutional framework of an organization such as a university, the responsibility of intercultural communication is often placed by default on non-native speakers. It is their responsibility to learn about cultural differences and similarities, and ways to negotiate successful interaction. Even the most interculturally competent non-native speakers, however, still run into obstacles when dealing with those who are not interculturally competent. Moreover, ESL teachers themselves take on additional responsibility by trying to inform native-speaking students, staff, and faculty about the dynamics of intercultural communication. Finally, non-native speakers are tacitly expected to carry the burden of providing ways for "others" to become aware of their culture. It is the non-native speakers who commonly, but not exclusively, organize and participate in special events and awareness activities. They are expected to provide a showcase of sorts for others to observe from a safe distance. From this social-institutional perspective, the burden of intercultural communication often lies on non-native speakers and second language professionals.

One way to lessen this burden has been to incorporate the study of intercultural communication into general university curricula. Diversity-focused courses, events, and workshops do offer excellent opportunities for developing awareness, but these efforts are often limited in scope and credit hours. Moreover, the notion of "awareness" itself is problematic. If "awareness" means simply the recognition and validation of the existence of another way of living, eating, worshipping, dressing, or speaking, then changes in attitudes and behaviors are unlikely to occur from exposure to episodic and decontextualized efforts. If "awareness" is broadened to include an interpersonal realization that identity and cultural affiliation play important roles in the negotiation of meaning (Fantini, 2000), then individuals may be more fully engaged in developing a self-awareness that leads to substantive change or transformation.

Transformation in attitudes and beliefs is a more realistic expectation on the interpersonal level where awareness of personal identity and status can influence the expectations people have toward others in their daily interactions. When participating in a target language community, for example, language learners and native speakers may judge each other according to how well their expectations of each other, based on nonverbal cues such as dialect, physical appearance, and level of emotional expressiveness, to name a few, have been fulfilled. Burgoon and Hale's (1988) Expectancy Violations Theory (EVT) describes individuals as having a range of behaviors they consider to be acceptable; if behaviors fall outside the boundaries of these expectations, negative or positive judgments can result. Although EVT focuses on nonverbal behaviors, the notion of expectations has been used to describe the pre-interaction expectations that people hold as they approach intercultural encounters. Gudykunst (1993) posits that when a person's positive expectations of another are

fulfilled, anxiety decreases and the communication becomes more effective due to an increased ability to anticipate or predict another's behaviors. Spitzberg's (1994) model of intercultural communication competence specifies the expectations we have at individual, episodic, and relational levels. On the individual level, what one expects to gain from an interaction (reward value) is important for ESL students as well as the native speakers with whom they are interacting. If neither expect to gain much, then motivation, according to Spitzberg, may decrease. Next, the episodic system recognizes external variables that filter one's impressions of competence. In other words, how might a speaker's perceived competence be attributed to the actual ability of the speaker or to contextual variables such as previous success in similar situations and status within the community? For ESL students, these questions may be strongly linked to prejudice, stereotypes, and levels of credibility in their relationships with fellow students, staff members, and faculty.

Finally, in the relational system, Spitzberg (1994) identifies the aspects of communication that fulfill our needs as social beings. Impressions of competence may increase as needs for autonomy and intimacy are met, as similar values and orientations are discovered, as trust is built, and as networks and social support become part of the relationship. When people are drawn together through mutual attraction, interest, or needs, they may not only have perceptions of greater communicative competency, competency may truly increase due to increased levels of motivation, reward value placed on the relationship, and fulfillment of positive expectations. Overall, expectancies filter impressions of competency. As someone fulfills our expectations of friendliness, trustworthiness, and assertiveness (Spitzberg, 1994, adapted from Pavitt & Haight, 1985), and does not violate our ideal of an effective communicator, our positive impressions of that person will increase. In contrast, if expectations are not met, we may feel threatened or anxious.

Within the context of ESL in higher education, research reveals many differences in attitudes and perceptions among ESL students, native speakers, and those who instruct them. These studies speak to the underlying relational expectations that can reveal themselves in divisive patterns of interaction. In their needs analysis of academic listening and speaking skills, Ferris and Tagg (1996) found that instructors tended to attribute students' difficulties to cultural differences and language deficiencies rather than acknowledging the possibility that their own teaching strategies may need to be examined. Likewise, some students complained about instructors rather than taking personal responsibility. Potentially harmful perceptions were also revealed in ESL students' assumptions that American (native-speaker) students have no interest in them and that international teachers favor students with whom they share a cultural background (Chamberlin, 1977). That students and teachers are sometimes prejudged and disempowered on account of their status as non-native speakers is an unsettling picture of the inaccurate and low expectations that color intercultural interactions

(Amin, 1977; Harklau, 2000; Hoekje & Williams, 1992; Leki, 2001, Lui, 1999; Pennycook, 1998; Tang, 1997).

Research Questions

In an educational environment that does not lack multicultural initiatives, many questions about expectations for intercultural communication arise. Despite efforts to create a good opportunity for developing intercultural communication competence for all students, why do non-native speakers seem to be so separate and socially isolated from native speakers? In a world where diversity, tolerance, and awareness are key words in curricula and policy initiatives, what effect, if any, do these things have on students' perceptions of each other and willingness to engage in intercultural communication? Do the students even think about these things? Is it unrealistic to expect ESL students to interact with native speakers? Before attempting to answer these questions through quantitative measures, it seems critical to explore first the world of the students and their personal expectations of their school and of each other. Thus, the two following questions are the focus of this study.

1) How do institutional initiatives shape the expectations students have about intercultural communication?

2) What are the interpersonal expectations of non-native and native speaking students toward intercultural encounters?

Methodology

Participants and Context

The participants in this study are 28 university students who attend a mid-sized college located just outside a major metropolitan area in the United States. The students range in age from 19-28 and represent 17 self-reported cultural groups. Eleven (6 male, 5 female) of the participants were native speakers of English and 17 (9 male, 8 female) were non-native speakers of English. All were matriculated degree-seeking students in an urban, nonresidential college campus with over a 26% minority population. The college's mission statement incorporates efforts to increase diversity and intercultural awareness at all levels of the organization and has several initiatives in place for recruitment and retention of minority students. Intercultural awareness is visible through specific courses, funds for course development, lecture series, year-long cultural events, and diversity week events. No records of overt protests, demonstrations, or hostile events connected to issues of ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, social class, were found in this investigation. This is not to say that the socio-cultural environment is perfect, only that documented cases of discrimination are rare.

Data Collection

Participants in this study were recruited by the principal researcher from multiple sections of a required public speaking course and campus activity groups. Conversations with students were recorded over the course of 3 semesters by two trained student researchers. Both researchers served as participants in the interview in order to engage students in conversation and increase comfort levels. The researchers followed a set of questions as guidelines to facilitate the conversation, but were careful not to control the direction of the students' responses. The conversations ranged in length from 20 minutes to 90 minutes, depending on the participants' willingness to talk. Each conversation took place in a quiet area on campus, either an office, empty classroom, or study area, and was scheduled only when neither participant was constrained for time. All participants signed informed consent forms and were assured of the anonymity of their identities. After transcripts were completed by a professional transcriber not linked to the university, all recorded data were destroyed.

Analysis

As each transcription was carefully read, patterns in the students' discourse emerged. The units of discourse, measured in terms of ideas, were categorized according to the main idea represented in the unit. As a collective, these transcriptions offer insight into the shared discourse created in this community of students. Although the discourse may not be a direct reflection of their thoughts and behaviors, the transcriptions do reflect the nature of how intercultural communication is talked about, in this particular academic community of students (Denzin, 1997; Fairclough, 1992; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997).

Overall, the patterns that emerged in the discourse were classified into two main categories: institutional expectations and interpersonal expectations. Because the research assistants began the interviews with prompts referring to campus events and activities as a way to open up the conversation, all of the participants discussed, to a different extent, the role of the university in increasing intercultural awareness. Within this part of the conversation, participants were directly or indirectly prompted to offer their own definition of "intercultural communication." The early part of the conversations, then, provide data for the first research question. As the conversations continued, all of the participants expressed their personal opinions and related stories of their own experiences, or lack of experiences. These individual accounts provide a rich source of data for examining the interpersonal expectations of both native and non-native speakers (research question 2). Due to space constraints, excerpts that best represent common responses (more than 65%) or striking comments are presented in the results.

The responses have not been sorted out by gender or native language. The salient issues here are not correlations between groups and attitudes, but the range of communicative expectations that constitute a truly mixed, intercultural environment. In some cases, the excerpts contain content that identifies the speaker as native or non-native, but this analysis does not focus on attributing certain attitudes to specific groups. The individual comments of these students are legitimate voices of the diverse academic community of this particular school and represent the two-way process of intercultural communication. The following results are presented in categories that respond to the research questions. Because several utterances contained overlapping ideas, the results and discussion are presented simultaneously.

Results and Discussion

Research question 1: How do institutional initiatives shape the expectations students have about intercultural communication?

Several patterns emerged in the discourse as students talked about the role of the university in promoting intercultural awareness. First, when asked to elaborate on their understanding of "intercultural communication," all of the responses pointed to a largely superficial conceptualization based on the notion of "diversity." Over 70% of the participants remarked, without hesitation, that a diverse community of people from various cultures is "good." None offered explanations, however, of what "good" means. In addition, the intercultural environment was markedly described by all 28 as characterized by "differences."

> The different ethnicities, the different religions coming together and meeting in one place. I like diversity, it's, I guess it's good to have.

> I see it as a mixture of different cultures, different races, just differences between things.

> It's like when you have a group of people and they're all from different countries and different backgrounds, different cultures, different nationalities.

These conceptualizations of the intercultural environment on campus lacked any mention of interaction, involvement, or communication. The only two expanded conceptualizations mention the ability to express oneself safely and the different ways people think as being part of intercultural communication.

> It should be just like an atmosphere where people can express themselves or be allowed to share, like they can perform their own cultural rituals without facing violence.

> This is like differences between people. Basically, I think it is the way they think. Because in my example I see that I learn this language and even if I know this language, it's still just the differences between the way that I think and the way that people that are born here.

Students' responses that address "diversity" paint a fairly clear picture of how students, both native and non-native speakers, conceptualize intercultural communication on this college campus. They emphasize differences and view their environment as a demographic state rather than an interactive phenomenon. This notion seems to be reinforced by institutional activities and events that promote awareness through displays of customs, food, fashion, and dance by various ethnic clubs and organizations. Students, it seems, interpret institutional efforts as being limited to what Atkinson (1999) refers to as a "received" notion of culture-one that reduces culture to unchanging customs and norms.

> I think I went to [name of event] last year actually. Is that where they have free t-shirts?

> Well, I've never been to [name of event] or anything, but I hear about it and I saw them one time. So, you know, at least they're making awareness.

> A lot of times it's just something that's Irish culture, then only Irish people will go. You know if it's something that's Indian, then only Indian people will go. I mean it's a shame, but that's how it normally is.

> So here, you know, people have clubs, put on their own fashion shows, which are neat. And then it's also fun to smell the different foods that the different groups....so you know, everyone can relate to food. So that's always a great way to bring people together. Especially desserts, you really can't go wrong with that.

The second pattern that emerged in the interviews can be seen as an extension of the first pattern of superficiality: Students acknowledge the positive intentions of institutional initiatives for promoting intercultural awareness, but they doubt any transformative results. Students' comments about activities, events, and curricula designed to increase intercultural communication on campus express a general satisfaction with the goals of the efforts; the students vary, however, in their evaluation of the effectiveness of such efforts. Most students (n=25) concluded that efforts are not enough and that those who benefit are limited to a specific group.

> They all attend, but it doesn't make change. You know, everybody attends, everybody goes. There's lots of events for different minorities. They have Indian Day, they have Asian Day, and the Hispanic Club. They have all these clubs, all these events, and I

> personally think this campus does a lot for minorities and diversifying the campus. There is a lot that's being done. A lot more than I would think. And it's like, good to see, but I don't see any changes within the people themselves.

The most striking theme of these comments, however, is the expression of university efforts being a good thing for those who need it, often with the speaker excluding him or herself from that group.

> I think one class is good. But for some people it might not be enough. Maybe more events. More things to do. [Interviewer: Have you taken part yourself?] Nah, not really.
>
> There's a program like the Asian club, the Latino club, and stuff like that. So that really helps students who are not native.
>
> I don't know, maybe it's good for certain majors or cultures.
>
> I'm not attending anything like this. I think it's good if you attend. I think there's some kind of benefit.

In general, students express a positive tone in reference to the institution's commitment to increasing intercultural awareness. They describe it as something that is beneficial and necessary in today's global-oriented world. When students talk about university efforts to increase awareness, however, there is a consistent use of language that targets the efforts toward "others," i.e., those who really need to be informed. The students seem to place little reward value on their personal participation, as evidenced by those who admit to not taking part, and those who see it as something beneficial for "students who are not native." Embedded in these statements is a subtle (or perhaps what the students see as a politically correct) form of "otherization."

In sum, students expect intercultural communication to be part of the overall experience of higher education, but they do not seem to expect a great personal reward from it. Due to the politicized structure of university systems and the transient nature of student populations, intercultural communication is typically manifest to students through episodic efforts at increasing awareness. Awareness is, of course, a foundation upon which intercultural communicative competence is developed (Fantini, 2000) and should in no way be dismissed as inconsequential. An unintentional by-product of initiatives aimed at increasing awareness, however, may be the lowering of expectations that students have toward these efforts. Students expect the university to provide exposure, but they do not expect this exposure to challenge the intellect, to inspire and motivate change, or to benefit those besides minority group members.

Research question 2: What are the interpersonal expectations of non-native and native speaking students toward intercultural encounters?

On an interpersonal level, students' comments and stories provide much insight into the expectations they hold toward groups, individuals, and change. Without any prompting, an overwhelming number of students (26 our of 28) initiated talk about the patterns of communication among students from various backgrounds. Each description followed a consistent idea: Students from different cultural groups tend to socialize almost exclusively with members of their own cultural affiliation. Moreover, more than 75% of the students describe this self-segregation as "normal," intimating little expectation of change.

> When people go to class, they all go to class. There's all different races in the class. Everyone gets along fine. But when people leave class, you see distinct groups going off together. The Blacks go together, the Chinese go together, the Whites go together. It's not like they hate each other; it's just that's who they hang out with. And all the groups separate as they go. I do it.

> I see it a lot of times. It's not a Black and White thing. You do have your kids who are the Whites are over here and the Blacks over here. Asians here, and Latinos over here. In the classrooms you see that again.

> There are certain places on campus where race, cultures hang out. Over in [building name], yeah, well the Chinese people hang out there, and I don't know why. It's funny how they have certain places that they hang out. That's funny how that happens. And I don't know why it happens.

As the students described this separatism along cultural boundaries, many also made their expectations clear about the necessity for change or people's capacity to change attitudes. In the following excerpts the students' discourse constructs a climate of rather low expectations, not only for change itself, but for the necessity for change.

> I don't know if . . . if everybody's happy then . . . I don't, I don't think people are, I don't know. Maybe people are missing out on other cultures by doing what they do. I don't think it [less separation] would be a bad thing. But I don't necessarily think that it's a necessary thing to do. I don't understand what the advantage would be.

> I don't think we can do much about it because that's the way it is.

> We should all be, you know, together, united. You can be doing it until you're blue in the face, but it's almost like, you know, you could do a

lot to inform others, but that's just the way people are. And you just have to face the facts.

It's so obvious, you know. It's not like a racist thing, but it's just how it is. It's how things are you know, and you basically accept it. I don't find it a problem.

> There's nothing really bad about what's going on, so I don't see why you should change it.

More specifically, individual expectations revealed themselves when students began to tell stories and talk about their circles of friends. Some expressed the expectations that others, namely Americans, do not care to engage in intercultural interactions; while others felt certain that those who speak a language other than English are better off in groups where they can speak that language.

> Oh the Asians. I think it's just the language, the language barrier, because Asians talk Asian to each other. They speak their own language. I don't see Indians mingling with Blacks though . . . or the Hispanics. Asians don't mix with Indians. I never see it.

> Most people don't seem to care. They don't think about it much, most Americans.

> Russians, you know, they basically mingle within themselves. Because a lot of them feel more comfortable speaking their own language because English is their second language, so I would understand that. But on the other side of [name of a cafeteria] everybody's Black, and it's like a clear distinct line you could almost see, and it's kinda disturbing. Then you have Asians always talking to Asians, and you have Indians in the far corner. And it's a clear boundary almost.

This tendency to distinguish by language identity illustrates Spitzberg's (1994) claim that the communicative status, as part of the episodic system, affects interaction. The expectation that those who speak languages other than English prefer to associate only with those who share their language may be true for some, but not all. Many college ESL students in this institutional setting are, in fact, bilingual or multilingual and may be quite comfortable speaking in several languages. Perhaps it is the monolingual student's anxiousness at not being able to understand that partially constructs this wall of unapproachability. Interestingly, in two cases (see excerpts below), students' acceptability was contingent on others not being able to tell they were not American. This brings into question a threshold of acculturation where the expectations are that one

changes identity in order to be accepted. In circles where expectations are as high as this, social networks are only open to those who appear to be "Americanized."

> My friends are mainly White Americans. [Name] is from Russia, but he's been here since he was three. So you don't really see that much Russian in him.

> Nobody can even tell that I'm not American. They don't think of me as any differently than anybody else. So it doesn't make much difference to them.

As pointed out in the relational system (Spitzberg, 1994), people have a need to share values and cultural orientations with others. We find comfort in commonalities and tend to affiliate with those with whom we share backgrounds and, of course, languages. I speculate, however, that linguistic differences, particularly in the setting in question, are not the reason that students are not interacting with each other, but an excuse as to why making an effort might be too demanding and unrewarding. It is easier to say that people "Stick to their own" and that this status quo does not need to be changed. Some students said quite frankly that nothing is wrong, and nothing, therefore, needs to change. Even those who did recognize a need for change resolved that nothing can really be done to change the way things are. This "lost cause" attitude sets a very low expectation for effective intercultural communication at both interpersonal and institutional levels.

Overall, the interpersonal expectations regarding intercultural communication in this population are complex and problematic. At the individual level, for example, students do not place a positive reward value in engaging in conversation or activity with students from outside their own group. A few even mention that they see little need or reward for making such efforts, and those who believe that there are benefits speak only in terms of abstract, collective benefits for all people. No references are made to personal growth or motivation. A level of awareness that brings about change (Fantini, 2000) is lacking. The fact that many of these students have been exposed to diverse communities most of their lives may contribute to their ambivalence toward interacting with others. One student related his story about moving to the United States while in high school and expecting to be treated as a novelty. Instead, he found himself in a school where 40% of the students shared his cultural background and language. Much to his surprise, he was not the center of attention. Being accustomed to diversity, however, does not completely explain the lack of interaction expressed in these interviews.

Implications for TESOL

A good language learner is not defined by linguistic achievement alone, but b participation in various communities and conversations (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Norto

and Toohey, 2001; Toohey and Day, 1999). Language learning involves gaining access to social practice and social relationships, requiring not only language skills but also an understanding of the social norms that govern patterns of communication in various contexts (Kramsch, 1998). University settings are but one of the contexts for language learning in which students are part of a social community that is united by both institutional and interpersonal relationships. Within the vast network of these relationships, intercultural communication is an inevitable part of the language learning experience for ESL students in higher education. Intercultural communication, however, is often shoved into a rubric of cultural knowledge that one must attain, rather than approached as a reciprocal relationship that one must experience. TESOL professionals must challenge the positivist paradigm and examine intercultural communication as a process that exists within a larger system of social practice. Moreover, we must realize that all students, not only those learning English, should be invested in the process.

Looking at intercultural communication as a reciprocal process, we must first attempt to understand the range of expectations by which ESL students may be judged, as well as the expectations that ESL students hold toward others. These expectations will be different in all cases, but the results of this study point out some of the aspects particularly salient to TESOL practice. First, we must question to what degree our pedagogy cultivates a landscape of "differences." When students focus on differences, they come to expect insurmountable barriers, or at least barriers that are best left unchallenged. They know that being aware of differences in good, but they must realize that awareness is only a first step to intercultural competence, not the final outcome.

The next thing to consider is the notion of approachability and how expectations might affect it. Approachability speaks to the questions of how language learners and native speakers might again more access to each other. On an interpersonal level, access can be achieved through human agency (Norton Pierce, 1995; Norton & Toohey, 2001) and use of intellectual and social resources. In conjunction with human agency, however, is the realization that personal expectations can be powerful sources of both misunderstandings and successful interactions. The assumption that a native speaker has no interest in a non-native speaker, or that multilingual students prefer one language over another brings low expectations to an interaction-expectations that may lead to low levels of motivation and lack of interest.

This is not to say expectations cannot change. According to Expectancy Violations Theory (Burgoon & Hale, 1988), low expectations may be confirmed or violated as strangers interact, and the reward value can change. For example, students may find that their expectations are exceeded, leading to a positive outcome. The problem here, however, is that the low expectations seem to keep students from interacting with each other in the first place, and without this interaction, expectations can be neither

confirmed nor violated. Any anxiety and uncertainty (Gudykunst, 1993) regarding intercultural communication will have little chance to be decreased.

Conclusion

The bottom line is that intercultural communication may not be taking place as much as we would hope. Even when ESL students are part of a diverse learning community, the members of this community may think that being "aware" of each other is enough. But superficial "awareness" is the easy part. Motivating students not to restrict themselves to the easy patterns of self-segregation is the challenge. These conclusions are not meant to suggest that students' strong associations with those with whom they share a cultural identity is wrong; affiliation is natural. Identity with a group is a fundamental part of being human. Affiliation among those who share cultural backgrounds and languages can be a source of invaluable networks that offer resources for information, emotional comfort, and social support. As highly advanced communication systems, international trade, and political unrest reshape our communities, however, we cannot afford to accept the status quo and think that "awareness" is enough. TESOL educators and students must insist that the expectations at institutional and interpersonal levels be raised to a level of transformation.

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16 *TESL Reporter 35,2 (2002), pp. 16-36*

The Application of Phonics to the Teaching of Reading in Junior High School English Classes in Japan

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Introduction

Communicating in English is increasingly required for Japanese people as members of an international society. The cultivation of communicative competence is the stated goal of English education in Japan today. It has been three decades since *Mombushô*, the Ministry of Education, established this objective, and over the years attempts to improve English L2 teaching have been undertaken. However, TOEFL results[1] clearly show that the country is far from reaching the Ministry's goal (Ochi, 1999). Takao Suzuki, a noted sociolinguist, concurs that, in general, the English ability of Japanese people is surprisingly low; for example, university graduates who have studied English for eight to ten years cannot even give satisfactory directions to foreign travelers in Japan (1999).

One of the main factors which has contributed to such poor English proficiency among Japanese people is *yakudoku*, a foreign language learning method traditionally used in Japan.[2] *Yakudoku,* which means "translation reading," is a reading method in which English sentences are first translated into Japanese word-by-word, and then the resulting translation is reordered to suit Japanese word order. In the *yakudoku*-style class, which is typical of English study in Japan, a teacher reads the text aloud for his or her students and has them repeat it. Then the students give its word-for-word translation, usually assigned as the previous night's homework and written in their notebook, after which the teacher corrects their translation by offering grammatical explanations and provides a model translation. The goal of the class is to have students understand the exact Japanese translation; therefore, instead of working within the English text, the students concentrate strictly on Japanese translations. The *yakudoku* method is used by the majority of Japanese teachers of English from junior high school[3] to university. Hino notes that according to two recent nation-wide surveys conducted by the Japan Association of College English Teachers, approximately 80% of Japanese teachers of English in high schools and universities used the *yakudoku* method, and by some estimates, 70% of Japanese university students today have been taught to read

English solely with this method (1988). This approach to teaching, however, undermines progress towards internationalization in Japan: "In terms of the teaching of English for communication needed today, *yakudoku* is undoubtedly a serious handicap for Japanese students of English" (p. 52). This is because the *yakudoku* method creates problems for English L2 learning; i.e., in the *yakudoku*-style class, little attention is given to phonetic sounds (Okuda, 1985; Nisato, 1989; Takiguchi, 1995). The essence or true nature of language is voice or speech sounds; without it, language cannot exist. Therefore, learning proper pronunciation is imperative for the study of a foreign language. In terms of English instruction, without having confidence in pronunciation, students not only lose the will to speak, but also confidence in every other aspect of English communication, including listening, writing, and reading (Matsuka, 1981, 1993). In addition, in *Mombushô's* Course of Study Guidelines, which define and control the contents of English teaching in secondary schools in Japan, emphasis is placed on the instruction of proper pronunciation, whereas the teaching of translation into Japanese is not even mentioned (*Mombushô*, 1988). In spite of this, the mastering of *yakudoku* skills is still strongly identified with the goal of learning English in Japan (Hino, 1988). As a consequence, the teaching of pronunciation (i.e., how to make English sounds or how to read English spellings directly with correct pronunciation) has long been neglected in class, and this omission has caused the dual problem of the prevalence of "*katakana* pronunciation" and the rote memorization of long lists of vocabulary items.

Katakana is a Japanese syllabary (phonetic alphabet) used to transcribe words of foreign origin; however, it does not represent the exact English sounds and is actually often far from the correct pronunciation (Sugiura, 1994). Through *katakana* letters written under the text to show the reading, incorrect English pronunciation is promoted. Once this *katakana* pronunciation is acquired, it becomes a lifelong habit, one that is extremely difficult to break. The *katakana* pronunciation of English words, flourishing and used everywhere in Japan, is clearly an obstacle in the quest for proper pronunciation. In short, students cannot read words independently because they do not know the sounds of letters which constitute the words; i.e., they cannot connect the letters of the alphabet with their sounds. Without knowing how to read words, it is difficult to write them. This is simply because they are rarely taught the relationships between letters and sounds. Thus, the only way for students to keep up with classes is resorting to the rote memorization of the pronunciation and spelling of all words. This is the reason why English is often said to be a subject of rote learning in Japan. However, this strategy requires enormous efforts by students and creates a heavy workload so that those who lack the will to learn drop behind easily.

An important responsibility for teachers in Japan is to guide students in learning the association between letters and sounds so that they can read English independently. Because of these problems (i.e., *katakana* pronunciation and rote memorization of vocabulary resulting from the *yakudoku* method), phonics instruction is effective in providing a means of accomplishing these goals. It focuses on phonetic sounds so that students can be provided with instruction in proper pronunciation. Phonics deals directly with letter-sound relationships, as it is a teaching method for reading based upon the correspondence between spelling and sound. Through phonics teaching, students can gain confidence in their pronunciation because they learn the correct sounds that letters or letter combinations represent, so that by connecting them they are able to pronounce words properly. Therefore, *katakana* pronunciation or rote memorization of vocabulary is no longer needed. In short, phonics helps cultivate students' fundamental communicative skills in English in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Phonics is a teaching method developed in America in the 1800s to help children who had difficulty learning spelling by rote memorization. According to the Longman dictionary, phonics is "a method of teaching beginners to read by learning how to pronounce letters, letter groups, and syllables" (1995, p. 120). Heilman adds that "[p]honics instruction is teaching letter-sound relationships, [and its] purpose is to provide beginning readers with a means of identifying unknown printed words" (1998, p. 27). Once children can recognize words by associating written letters with the corresponding speech sounds which they have already acquired, they can read books because they already know the meaning of words. Thus, learning to read means learning to sound out words (Flesch, 1986). Phonics instruction, as pre-reading, is given to children in many introductory English courses in English-speaking countries:[4]

> Phonics is a common method of teaching new learners of English how to read in the United States. Teachers begin teaching phonics to students in kindergarten, age 5 and 6, and continue teaching it until 2nd grade, age 7 and 8. Today phonics is taught for a minimum of 30 minutes every day during the first three years of school. (Patton, 1994, p. 94)

For Japanese students, who know neither English sounds nor word meanings, phonics can also be a useful and necessary teaching method. Phonics is important for Japanese students because it . . .

> . . . teaches [them] how to sound out letters one by one. Through phonics, Japanese children learn (1) how to make correct English sounds (2) how to independently read English words and sentences and (3) how to spell out words they hear. Phonics provides the basics of English for beginning students. (Matsuka, 1992)

However, very little research has been conducted on the use of phonics in classrooms in Japan, and there is only one study which this author is aware of in which the effectiveness of phonics instruction was tested in Japanese junior high schools. In this study, reported by Morinaga, (1983), phonics instruction was given in an "intensive training course" which was not part of regular English classes. By using a phonics textbook which had a relatively small number of example words for each phonics rule (i.e., 450 vocabulary items in total, divided into 18 categories of phonics rules), 20-minute sessions of phonics instruction were given to first and second year junior high students for a total of 13 sessions (i.e., four hours and 20 minutes). Pre- and posttests for reading were assigned in which each student was required to sound out 22 "nonsense words," and evaluation was based on whether the students could read the underlined part of these artificial words which reflected a phonics rule. The percentage of correct answers by first year students improved from 28.9% (pretest) to 59.1% (posttest) and by second year students from 53.4% to 64.5%. However, the phonics rules which were tested were not determined by analyzing the vocabulary in students' English textbooks, and it is not clear how they were taught, nor how the example vocabulary items were used to help them understand the phonics rules. There is also no information on the participants (e.g., how many, or how they were selected, etc.), and the results were not subjected to any statistical analyses. In addition, there was only one comparison made within the treatment group before and after phonics instruction, but no control group was established to verify the absence of extraneous variables. Nevertheless, the results that were obtained from this study are promising despite certain shortcomings in the research design.

The present study has been designed to avoid many of the pitfalls described above in Morinaga's investigation. Rather than testing the effects of phonics instruction in an intensive, short-term fashion, this study focuses on comprehensive, long-term phonics instruction with clearly specified subjects, materials, and procedures. This research aims to show that phonics instruction is a useful and effective teaching tool when used in conjunction with *Mombushô's* curriculum in regular English classes in Japanese junior high schools. The goal of this study is to verify empirically that phonics instruction improves students' reading ability and raises their desire to learn English. Therefore, the following two research questions were tested in this investigation: (1) If students are provided with proper phonics instruction for an adequate period of time at the beginning stages of their English L2 education, will their reading ability show significant improvement? (2) If students undergo this kind of treatment, will they develop positive and enthusiastic attitudes towards their English studies?

Method

Subjects

The subjects of this investigation were first year students (ages 12 to 13) in Yodo Junior High School in Matsuyama. There were 220 students involved in the study, and they were divided into six classes with an average of approximately 37 students per class, equally divided between males and females. The six classes were uniform in terms of academic levels, although individual students varied in terms of their abilities.

In this investigation, one class (i.e., class 2) was used as the control group and did not receive phonics instruction; the other five classes (i.e., classes 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6) were used as the treatment group, in which phonics instruction was provided. The five classes of the treatment group were taught by this author,[5] whereas the control group class was taught by another teacher who knew little about phonics and did not provide any phonics instruction. Classes 1, 3, 4, and 5 in the treatment group (N=142) were assigned pre- and post-instruction reading/listening tests, as was the control group (N=37), although these students did not receive any phonics instruction during the period between the tests. A small group of volunteer students from class 6 of the treatment group (12 out of a total of 37 students) were also assigned pre- and post- instruction reading/speaking tests. In addition, the entire treatment group (N=179) was assigned a questionnaire about their phonics study.

Materials

The Phonics Textbook (See Appendix 1)

A phonics textbook was developed by this author and used in the treatment group classes. These teaching materials deal with the minimum essential phonics rules (i.e., the "sound alphabet," "magic E," "polite vowels," and 21 "letter combinations"),[6] as determined by a vocabulary analysis of the subjects' English textbooks in terms of Matsuka's phonics rules.[7] The textbook includes a brief explanation of each rule and many example words to which the rule is applied; i.e., about 25 example vocabulary items for each rule amounting to about 800 in total. (For further details on this phonics textbook, see Takeda, 2000, and Takeda, 2002).

The Reading/Listening Test, the Reading/Speaking Test, and the Questionnaire

The reading/listening test was a multiple choice pronunciation test, administered orally by the instructor. It was designed to be convenient for use with large groups so that many students could take this test together in the classroom in a short period of time. In contrast, the reading/speaking test, an individual interview-style verbalizing

test, was structured to be more suitable for a small number of students. Both tests consisted of the same vocabulary items; i.e., the reading/listening test required students to choose the correct pronunciation of target items and the reading/speaking test required students to sound them out. These tests presented 30 words which were unfamiliar to students and which were not included in either their English textbooks or the phonics textbook.[8] However, these words reflected all of the most important phonics rules dealt with in the phonics textbook. Namely, each vocabulary item represented an application of one of these rules: items 1~5 on the test paper concerned the "sound alphabet," 6 and 7 "magic E," 8 and 9 "polite vowels," and 10~30 the 21 "letter combinations."

The questionnaire, which was adapted from previous research conducted by Sugiura (1994), included a series of questions which were designed to shed light on students' feelings about the phonics instruction they had received.

Procedures

The Phonics Instruction

The phonics instruction started in the first English class of first year students in Yodo Junior High School in April, 1999. This instruction was conducted in the first 10 minutes of each class by using the phonics textbook, and it lasted until the end of October. The organization of this six-month period of phonics instruction began with the "sound alphabet," which was taught carefully and thoroughly because this is the basis of all phonics instruction. It took one month for students to master this alphabet. Then, the students read short words which could be read entirely by applying only the sound alphabet. This exercise demonstrated the principle that any English words can be read by connecting the sounds of their constituent letters. Letter combinations involving "magic E" and "polite vowels" were then taught through the following steps:

(1) The phonics rule is arrived at inductively by students, i.e., the teacher does not provide explicit instruction on the rule at the beginning, but lets students discover it for themselves. For example, the rule *ch*=/tʃ/ is presented by showing students the word *lunch*, which is familiar to most of them. The teacher asks them, "How do you pronounce this word?" Students reply, "/lʌntʃ/." The teacher says, "Very good! Then, how about the *ch* part only?" Students respond, "/tʃ/."

(2) The teacher provides careful instruction on how to make the sound of the letter combination by demonstrating the mouth shape and movement. Students then practice by sounding it out many times.

(3) Following the directions written in the textbook (i.e., "Try reading the words below according to the following instructions in ①~③. ① Underline the letter combination of each word. ② Read the underlined parts. ③) Read the whole word."), students attempt to read many example words which have the same letter combinations, using their developing "word attack skills."[9]

(4) The teacher checks their pronunciation and corrects them.

By building on the sound alphabet, the students gradually learned all of the essential phonics rules in a step-by-step process in their first six months of English instruction. After finishing the phonics textbook, they were assigned to read new words and new passages in their English textbooks by themselves, with the teacher's occasional assistance. Therefore, the period of "phonics application" which followed their fundamental phonics instruction was considered to be a period of "reinforcement" as their word attack skills developed.

In general, students showed a strong interest in this instruction, and enjoyed reading unknown words by themselves in the sense of "playing a game." They were actually able to read most of their new words correctly. Therefore, the first 10 minutes in every English class were not at all an obstacle to the advancement of the curriculum, but an enjoyable warm-up period which students seemed to find stimulating.

The Assessment

Before and after the period of phonics instruction (i.e., in April and December), pre- and posttests in reading/listening and reading/speaking were administered, and the questionnaire was completed by students along with the posttests. The posttests were conducted about two months after actually finishing the phonics textbook so that the knowledge students had obtained from their phonics instruction could be reinforced and completely assimilated in this time.

In terms of the reading/listening test, for each item, the teacher read the word three times, each time pronouncing the part of the word to which a phonics rule applies differently. One of these pronunciations was the correct one. For example, the word "phut"[10] was pronounced /pʌt/, /fʌt/, and /hʌt/. Students were required to listen carefully and choose the pronunciation which they thought was correct. Before the teacher began reading, students were given a few minutes to peruse all of the items in order to make preliminary guesses about their pronunciation. While the reading/listening test does evaluate the students' understanding of phonics rules, it is not a test of the students' pronunciation. Because the students must first read the test words to themselves before choosing the sounded word, this test does accurately examine the students' reading and listening abilities.

Because the reading/listening test does not examine the students' speaking abilities, the reading/speaking test covers this crucial missing element; i.e., the students' pronunciation. The reading/speaking test was conducted in an individual interview style with a student and two teachers facing each other across a table. The student was asked to pronounce each word printed on the test paper as clearly as possible, one by one, while the two teaches evaluated his or her pronunciation independently. Sometimes, as the need arose, students were asked to read certain words again more loudly or more slowly. Their pronunciation was graded from A to C.

The grading criteria are as follows:

A: The student can read the entire word correctly.

B: Though the student cannot read the entire word correctly, he or she can read the part of the word to which the phonics rule applies correctly.

C: The student cannot read the part of the word to which the phonics rule applies.

Data Analysis

The results of these tests (i.e., pre- and post- reading/listening tests for the control and treatment groups and pre- and post- reading/speaking tests for the additional treatment group) were analyzed statistically to determine if significant progress resulted.

In terms of the reading/listening test, the pretest scores of the control and treatment groups (N=37, N=142, respectively) were compared using a *t*-test, as were the posttest scores. The gain scores between pre- and posttest scores for both groups were also compared using a *t*-test. In addition, the pre- and posttest scores of the treatment group were compared using a matched-pair *t*-test.

In terms of the reading/speaking test, the pre- and posttest scores of the volunteer group (N=12) were compared using a matched-pair *t*-test. [11]

In terms of the questionnaire which was administered to the entire treatment group (N=179), the percentage of each question was calculated and a number of representative student comments were selected to illustrate their attitudes.

Results

The Reading/Listening Test

The results of the statistical analysis of the pretest scores for the control and treatment groups are as follows:

Table 1

Pretest Scores for the Control and Treatment Groups

Statistic	Control Group Pretest Scores	Treatment Group Pretest Scores	Mean Difference	t_{obs}
N	37	142		
M	11.11	10.61	0.50	0.76
SD	3.53	3.55		

$p<.01$

As Table 1 shows, the pretest means scores for the control and treatment groups were 11.11 and 10.61, respectively, a difference of 0.50. Results of a *t*-test for the pretest scores of both groups revealed no significant difference in abilities between the groups prior to phonics instruction ($p<.01$).

The results of the statistical analysis of the posttest scores for both groups are as follows:

Table 2

Posttest Scores for the Control and Treatment Groups

Statistic	Control Group Posttest Scores	Treatment Group Posttest Scores	Mean Difference	t_{obs}
N	37	142		
M	13.68	17.53	3.85	5.45*
SD	3.68	4.34		

*$p<.01$

As Table 2 shows, the posttest mean scores for the control and treatment groups were 13.68 and 17.53, respectively, a difference of 3.85. A *t*-test revealed a significant difference between the two groups after phonics instruction (p.<.01).

The results of the statistical analysis of the gain scores between pre- and posttest scores for both groups are as follows:

Table 3

Gain Scores for the Control and Treatment Groups

Statistic	Control Group Gain Scores	Treatment Group Gain Scores	Mean Difference	t_{obs}
N	37	142		
M	2.57	6.92	4.35	5.45*
SD	4.04	5.26		

*p<.01

As Table 3 shows, the gain score means for the control and treatment groups were 2.57 and 6.92, respectively, a difference of 4.35. A *t*-test revealed a significant difference in the improvement of students' abilities between the two groups (p<.01).

The results of the statistical analysis of the pre- and posttest scores for the treatment group are as follows:

Table 4

Pre-and Posttest Scores for the Treatment Group

Statistic	Treatment Group Pretest Scores	Treatment Group Posttest Scores	Mean Difference	t_{obs}
N	142	142		
M	10.61	17.53	6.92	15.66*
SD	3.55	4.34		

*p<.01

As Table 4 shows, the pretest mean score for the treatment group was 10.61, whereas the posttest mean score was 17.53, indicating a gain of 6.92. Results of a matched-pair *t*-test for the pre- and posttest scores revealed a significant improvement in students' abilities ($p<.01$).

These results indicate that the phonics instruction provided to the treatment group improved students' ability to read in English to a significant degree.

The Reading/Speaking Test

The results of the statistical analysis of the pre-and posttest scores for the volunteer group who did the reading/speaking test are as follows:

Table 5

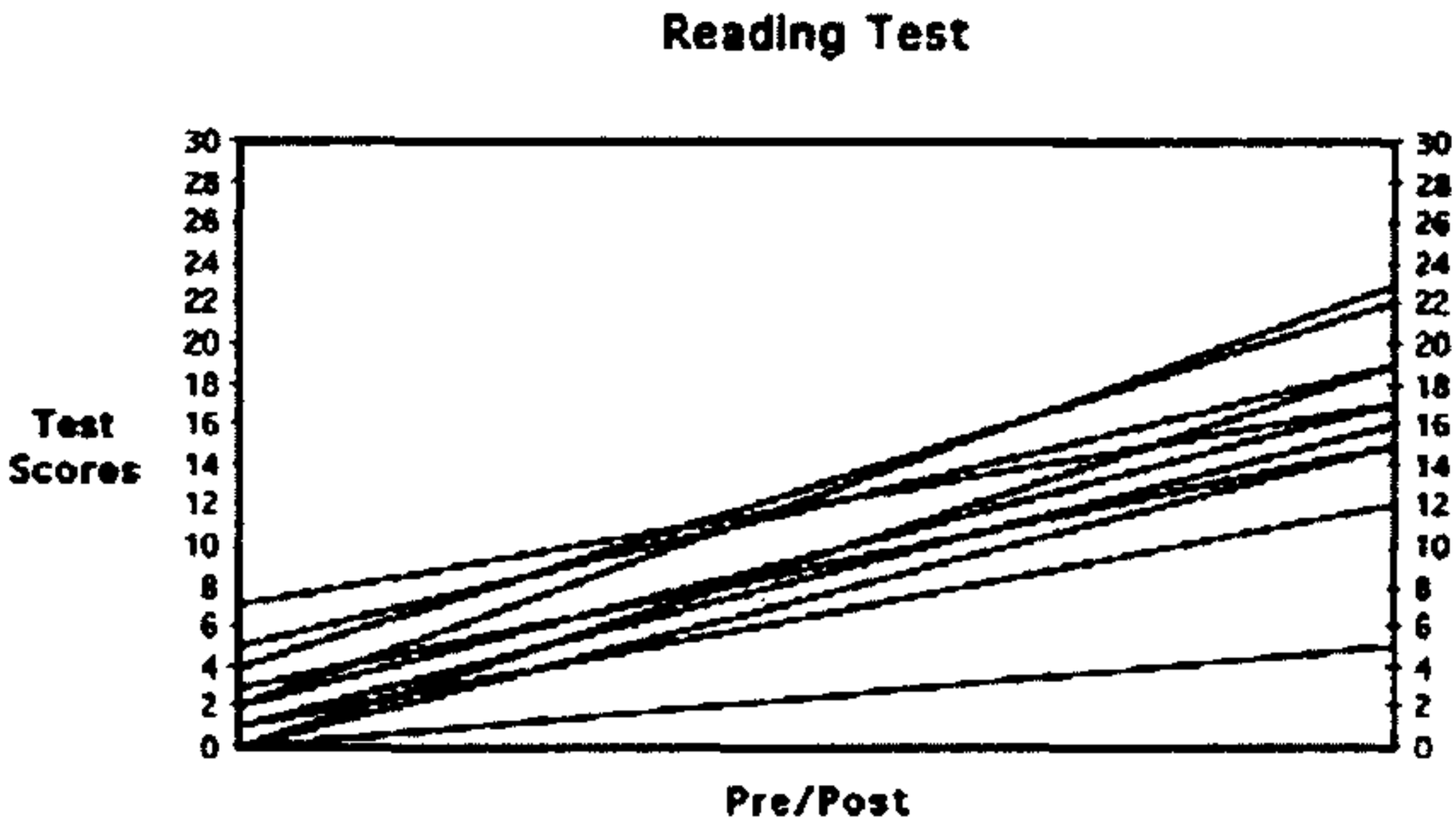
Pre-and Posttest Scores for the Volunteer Group

Statistic	Volunteer Group Pretest Scores	Volunteer Group Posttest Scores	Mean Difference	t_{obs}
N	12	12		
M	2.08	16.08	14.00	11.26*
SD	2.27	4.80		

*$p<.01$

As Table 5 shows, the pretest mean score for the volunteer group was 2.08, whereas the posttest mean score was 16.08, indicating a gain of 14.00. Results of a matched-pair *t*-test for the pre-and posttest scores revealed a significant improvement in the students' ability ($p<.01$). This supports the results of the first experiment, confirming that phonics instruction was a significant factor in enhancing the ability of students to read in English.

The following graph shows the improvement of the reading ability of each of the 12 students who took this test:



Finally, verification of rater judgements in the reading/speaking test was carried out with an interrater reliability study. The following chart shows the high reliability of the posttest scores between the two raters:

	Rater 1	Rater 2
Rater 1	1	
Rater 2	0.98	1

The Questionnaire

The results of the questionnaire are as follows:

1. In terms of our phonics study, put ○ on one of the following statements:
   - •Phonics study has been useful to me. (146/179 81.6%)
   - •Phonics study has not been useful to me. (0/179 0.0%)
   - •I have no special impression about phonics study. (33/179 18.4%)

2. If any of the following statements apply to you with regard to phonics study, put as many ○s as you like:
   - •I am able to read words better than before. (166/179) 92.7%)
   - •I am able to read English textbooks better than before. (137/179 76.5%)

•I am able to remember how to read the words whose pronunciation I have forgotten.	(83/179	46.4%)
•I am even able to read words which I have not yet learned, by guesswork.	(139/179	77.7%)
•I am even able to read sentences which I have not yet learned, by guesswork.	(87/179	48.6%)
•I have developed an interest or desire to read words which I have not yet learned.	(94/179	52.5%)
•I have developed an interest or desire to read sentences which I have not yet learned.	(78/179	43.6%)
•I now understand how to pronounce words.	(126/179	70.4%)
•I now understand how to make English sounds.	(71/179	39.7%)
•My English pronunciation has improved.	(84/179)	46.9%)
•Phonics study has been useful when writing words.	(104/179)	58.1%)
•I am able to memorize the spellings of words better than before.	(89/179)	49.7%)
•I am able to see the spellings of words in my mind's-eye when I hear the sounds of the words.	(48/179	26.8%)

3. Write any opinions or comments you have on your phonics study (sample responses translated from Japanese by this author):

> In the beginning, I did not know how to read English at all, but through phonics study, I gradually became able to read words and sentences for myself. This made me very happy and now I love English!

> Thanks to phonics, I can now read English words by using "English readings" though I relied only on "rômaji[12] readings" before. Phonics is useful not only when reading the English textbook, but also reading English in daily life.

> Phonics study made my English pronunciation far better than before, and now I have a strong desire to read unknown words. I think this is really a great thing!

> I was very surprised that the speed of memorizing the spellings of words was completely different between having learned phonics and not having learned it. I was lucky because I could study phonics!

The results of this questionnaire indicate that virtually all of the students felt that phonics instruction had been useful to them and that their reading abilities had improved. In addition, almost all the students wrote positive and constructive comments on their phonics study.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate whether or not phonics instruction improves students' reading ability and enhances their desire to learn English. Through this investigation, it has been demonstrated that appropriate phonics instruction has a measurable effect on the improvement of students' reading ability and is also responsible for the cultivation of positive and enthusiastic attitudes towards English studies. In addition, the first 10-minute period of phonics instruction in every class for half a year neither delayed the progression of the regular English curriculum, nor was it a burden to the students. This study strongly indicates that phonics instruction can be a useful and effective teaching tool when used in conjunction with *Mombushô's* curriculum in regular English classes in Japanese junior high school.

At present, unfortunately, most Japanese students have difficulty maintaining their desire to learn English which is taught to them through the *yakudoku* method because they have to spend much of their energy and time translating English passages into Japanese and memorizing a great number of vocabulary items by rote. In addition, their *katakana* pronunciation discourages them from reading aloud or speaking English in public. English has long been a "memory subject" in Japan which requires strenuous effort, perseverance, and patience. English is often described as a subject which saps students' energies and motivation in Japan, and this stigma must be eliminated as soon as possible. As we have now entered the 21st century, the Japanese government has declared that communicative competence in English is extremely important for the future of Japan. They say the problem is where and how it should be placed in the present education system. However, the present system of English L2 education in Japan has many problems which must be solved first. One of the most crucial problems is in how English is learned at early levels of instruction; i.e., Japanese students learn English through Japanese, or by replacing it with Japanese, which is the typical feature of English learning through the *yakudoku* method. This way of learning English has delayed the progress of English education in Japan for many years, and it will be impossible to improve English L2 teaching in this country without changing this method and its concomitant attitudes towards learning English.

The key to solving this problem is phonics instruction. When students are able to read and write English letters and spellings directly, *katakana* will no longer be necessary; i.e., they will be able to read English, not with *katakana* pronunciation, but with a correct English pronunciation, and will be able to write English directly in the target language without using *katakana* letters. Eliminating *katakana* will thus bring new attitudes of trying to understand foreign languages as they are. It is imperative to read English with English sounds and to understand the language directly without translating it into Japanese when reading or listening to English. The habit of translating English into Japanese prevents smooth functioning in all language skills (i.e., reading, writing, listening, and speaking) because the translation takes time and stops the natural flow of communication. The implementation of phonics instruction in Japanese junior high schools will have a beneficial effect in changing the goals of learning English to a means of acquiring communicative skills rather than extracting knowledge from foreign culture which has long been the aim of *yakudoku* instruction.

Therefore, discarding the yakudoku method, which is the main tradition of English L2 teaching in Japan, will be the beginning of real English language learning in the pursuit of communicative competence. Phonics can save millions of Japanese students who lose their desire to study English at the beginning stage. They can overcome the most serious obstacles in the introductory period of English learning; i.e., being unable to read and write English because of an inability to connect sounds with letters (Inagaki, 1988; Nakajima, 1995; Teshima, 1995). Phonics instruction should be made compulsory at the introductory stage in English L2 teaching in Japan so that all first year students can attain these skills. Therefore, all English teachers of junior high schools should acquire the ability to teach phonics. In order to realize this goal, a teaching methodology for phonics should be implemented in the teacher training curriculum at university.

Though this study clearly shows the benefits of phonics instruction, because of the small size of the control group and this author's participation in the experiment, this study should be seen only as a first step in examining the effectiveness of phonics in junior high school classrooms. Using this model, further studies should be carried out on a larger scale and in a more controlled environment. It is hoped that this study can contribute to more comprehensive studies of phonics in the future.

Notes

[1] For example, the results of TOEFL from 1997 to 1998 show Japan ranking 205th out of 218 nations in the world and 24th among the 26 Asian nations (Suzuki, 1999, p. 2).

[2] Hino states that *yakudoku* is a deeply rooted sociolinguistic tradition in Japan, which dates back over a thousand years to when the Japanese started to study Chinese (1999, p. 45).

[3] English instruction starts in the first year of junior high school in Japan.

[4] Though phonics is commonly used as a teaching method in America, it is important to keep in mind the continuing debate between advocates of phonics and the "whole language" method. Whole language is not an instructional program, but rather a philosophy which aims to empower children as they learn to read. The concept is vague and assumes that phonics rules will be picked up by students in the course of reading stories. This "reading wars" debate has plagued American schools for decades, and according to Heilman (1998, pp. 20-21), it is a major hurdle in the fight against illiteracy in the United States.

[5] The author of this paper was an English teacher at Yodo Junior High School and a Master's Degree candidate at Ehime University during this empirical study.

[6] The rules used in this research can be defined as follows:

•The "sound alphabet": the most representative or the most commonly used sound of each letter of the alphabet (i.e., /æ/ /b/ /k/ /d/ /e/ /f/ /g/ /h/ /i/ /d_3/ /k/ /l/ /m/ /n/ /ɔ/ /p/ /k/ /r/ /s/ /t/ /ʌ/ /v/ /w/ /ks/ /j/ /z/), by which words can basically be read. Matsuka also calls this the "phonics alphabet."

•Magic E": when a word ends with the letter "e," the vowel just before it is read with its alphabet name and the letter "e" at the end is soundless.

•"Polite vowels": when two vowels sit together, the first one is read with its alphabet name and the second one is soundless.

•"Letter combinations": a combination of two or three letters representing a specific sound as a whole (e.g., ph, sh, th, au, aw, oo, ar, or, air, etc.).

[7] This analysis was based on the vocabulary items in *One World English Course 1~3* (Sasaki, 1993), one of five major English textbooks in Japan, and all 1007 words, except for proper nouns and abbreviations that 1st, 2nd, and 3rd year students study, were analyzed to determine which phonics rules were applied most frequently in textbooks in order to assess which rules should be taught in class. Matsuka's phonics rules and method (1981, 1993) are adopted in this study because she is the leading expert on phonics research and its practice in Japan, and her research institute, Matsuka Phonics Institute, has achieved credible results and has published numerous phonics teaching materials.

[8] Relatively unknown, though authentic, English words were chosen for the test, eliminating the chance of students' prior knowledge influencing their scores.

9 Phonics provides students with the techniques and motivation for "attacking" and deciphering words they are not familiar with, which is called the skill of "word attack."

10 According to the Longman dictionary, the definition of this word is "a dull sound as of something bursting" (1995, p. 1208).

11 In this test, students who received a B were regarded as being able to read the word because they understood the phonics rule which was applied to the key part of the word. Then, the number of A's and B's was counted as a score for each student.

12 *Rômaji* is Japanese written in Roman letters, and is different from English orthography and pronunciation.

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About the Author

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Appendix 1
Sample Pages from the Phonics Textbooks

Phonics

自分で英語が読める！

You Can Read English by Yourself!

( )中学校
Junior High School

1年( )組( )番
1st Year Class Number

氏名( )
Name

フォニックス（音声法）とは、
『文字の音を知って、文字の音をつないで、単語を読んでいく方法』
のことを言います！
Phonics is "a method of reading words by connecting the letter sounds which you learn"!

目　　次
Contents

1 音のアルファベット
The Sound Alphabet

まず、アルファベット 26 文字の『名前』（普通のアルファベット）と『音』（音のアルファベット）を覚えましょう。
First of all, let's memorize the "names" of the 26 letters of English (the regular alphabet) and their "sounds" (the sound alphabet).

a b c d e f g
h i j k l m n
o p q r s t u
v w x y z

★ 母音の文字（5つ）は、どれでしょう。
Which are the five vowels?
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

なお、( )と( )もよく母音の役目をします。
Besides, ( ) and ( ) often play a role as vowels, too.

★ 以下の単語を文字の『音』（音のアルファベット）をつなげて読んでみましょう！ Let's read the following words by connecting the sounds of their constituent letters; i.e., by applying the sound alphabet!

ant (あり)	bat (こうもり)	bus (バス)	cat (猫)	cut (切る)
dad (父ちゃん)	dog (犬)	don (尊称)	end (終了)	fan (うちわ)
fat (肥満)	fox (狐)	gas (ガソリン)	god (神)	gun (銃)
ham (ハム)	hip (腰)	hit (殴る)	ink (インク)	jet (ジェット)
kid (子供)	lip (唇)	man (人間)	nut (木の実)	pal (友達)
pet (ペット)	pig (豚)	rat (ねずみ)	sun (太陽)	tax (税金)
tip (チップ)	top (こま)	yen (円)	wax (ろう)	zen (禅)
film (フィルム)	golf (ゴルフ)	hand (手)	milk (牛乳)	
pond (池)	pulp (パルプ)	slip (滑る)	vest (チョッキ)	
stamp (切手)	trunk (トランク)	zigzag (ジグザグ)		

2 2つのルールと21個の組合せ文字
2 Rules and 21 Letter Combinations

☆ 音のアルファベット通りに読めないときには、次の[redacted]を活用しましょう！
When a word cannot be read completely by just applying the sound alphabet, let's apply the following 2 rules and 21 letter combinations!

※ [redacted]とは文字と音の間のきまり、[redacted]とは独自の音を持つ（2文字または3文字から成る）文字の組合せを指します。
The term [redacted] used here means *the regulation between letters and their sounds*, and [redacted] means *two or three consecutive letters which represent a specific sound.*

[redacted]
Rule 1
Rule 2
21 Letter Combinations

「マジックE」 "Magic E"
「礼儀正しい母音」 "Polite Vowels"

ch	sh	th	th
ck	wh	ph	all(al)
oo	oo	ou	ow
ew	au	ar	or
or	er	ir	ur
air			

マジックEから、組合せ文字のairまで順に一つ一つ学んでいきましょう！
Let's learn them one by one, from "magic E" to the letter combination "air"!

(1) [redacted] 「マジックE」
Rule 1 Magic E

"阿部"という名前をローマ字で書くとAbeですね。でも英語国民はこれを『アベ』と読まずに『エイブ』と読みます。米国の第16代大統領の名前もAbe Lincolnでした。同じように、彼らはEhimeを"愛媛"（えひめ）と読まずに『エハイム』と読みます。

これは一体どういうことでしょうか。どうやら文字と音の間に何か一定のきまりがあるようです。

つまり、[redacted]のです。これを"マジックe"のルールと言います！

When you write the person's name "阿部" in *rōmaji* (i.e., Japanese written in Roman letters), it is "Abe," isn't it? But native speakers of English would not pronounce this spelling /abe/ as we do, but /eib/, as in "Abe Lincoln," the 16th President of the United States. The same thing goes with the spelling "Ehime," the name of our prefecture "愛媛"; i.e., native speakers would pronounce it /ehaim/, not /ehime/. What does this mean? Don't you think there is a certain set of regulations between letters and sounds? Yes, there sure is. Namely, [redacted]. This is called the rule of "magic E"!

それでは、以下の単語を次の①～③の指示に従って読んでいきましょう。
① "マジックe"にXをつけ、そのすぐ前の母音の文字を○で囲みなさい。
② ○で囲んだ母音の文字を読んでみなさい。
③ その単語全体を読んでみなさい。

Well, then, try reading the words below according to the following instructions in ①～③.
① Put the mark × on "magic e," and circle the vowel just before it with the mark ○.
② Read the circled vowel.
③ Read the whole word.

bake base bike bone brake bride cake came cape cave code cone cope cube cute crane clone concrete date dime dine dive dope duke dune drive escape eve fade fame fate file fine five flake flame fume froze game gape gate globe gave gaze grade grape grave hale haste hate haze hide hole home hope Ike Jake Jane joke Jude juke June Kate kite lake lane like line lone make mane mate mike mine mute nine pale Pete pipe pole pope plane plate ride rope sake sale same side Steve stove table take tale tape vine wake wide wine zone

(2) [redacted] 「礼儀正しい母音」
Rule 2 Polite Vowels

[redacted]（2番目の母音は礼儀正しく、1番目の母音に譲って黙っている。）なお、[redacted]（語尾のyとwは母音の働きをする。）これを"礼儀正しい母音"のルールと言います。

[redacted] (The second vowel is polite so that it keeps silent and lets the first vowel talk.) Also, [redacted] ("Y" and "w" at the end of words play a role as vowels.) This is called the rule of "polite vowels."

それでは、以下の単語を次の①～③の指示に従って読んでいきましょう。
① 並列した2つの母音の文字にアンダーラインをしなさい。
② アンダーラインをした部分をルールに当てはめて読んでみなさい。
③ その単語全体を読んでみなさい。

Well, then, try reading the words below according to the following instructions in ①～③.
① Underline the two juxtaposed vowels.
② Read the underlined parts according to the rule.
③ Read the whole word.

aim bail bait brain claim faint gain grain jail Kaiko lain maid mail main nail pail pain rail rain sail vain wait snail Spain stain train Jamaica afraid

bay day ray bray dray fray gray gay hay jay lay clay slay play pray pay May nay say spray stay tray stray way sway Sunday

bee fee Lee see beef beet beep coffee deed deep feed feel heel feet flee free keen green greet peel peep seed sleep steep sweep sweet tree weed week weep

eat meat tea team bead beak beam bean beat beast clean cream dream heat Jean lead leaf leak lean meal mean neat pea peak read sea seal seam seat speak

bow low mow row sow tow bowl blow flow slow crow grow snow know follow hollow pillow yellow narrow sparrow window

(3) [redacted]
21 Letter Combinations

それぞれの文字の組合せとその音を覚えていきましょう！
Let's memorize each combination of letters and its sound one by one!

以下の単語を次の①～③の指示に従って読んでいきましょう。
① 組合せ文字にアンダーラインをしなさい。
② その組合せ文字を読んでみなさい。
③ その単語全体を読んでみなさい。

Try reading the words below according to the following instructions in ①～③.
① Underline the letter combination of each word.
② Read the underlined parts.
③ Read the whole word.

[redacted]unch punch pinch bench chin chip chop chess chest chill chase chime choke chain cheek cheap beach peach reach teach ketchup chocolate chimpanzee

[redacted]sh she ash cash dash dish mash rash rush wish ship shop shut shot shoot sham shame shape shell shush brush blush crash crush English

[redacted]ank bath path math moth both Beth broth cloth month tooth teeth thatch theft theme thin thing think three throw thump

[redacted]s that than the thee them then there their they thy father mother brother these those thine bathe clothe breathe soothe thou though

ro[redacted] lock luck lack lick rick back cock dock duck kick neck socks black clock rocket stock truck ticket check chicken cricket mackintosh

[redacted]o whom whose what when where which why whack whale wheel wheat whim while whine white whole whisky whether whistle

[redacted]honics alphabet dolphin elephant graph Joseph pamphlet telephone phraze photo photographer phenomenon philosophy *Philip Philippine Philadelphia*

[redacted] ball call fall hall mall pall tall wall baseball basketball softball small stall s[redacted]t malt also alter almost always already Albright almighty altogether

b[redacted]k cook gook hook kook look mook nook rook took foot good hood wood woof wool oops brook crook shook stood

b[redacted] boo loo moo woo zoo cool fool food hoop loop moon noon pool room root loot soon tool toot loom broom poon spoon tooth cocoon platoon shampoo

h[redacted]se louse mouse mouth south blouse ouch out bout about doubt trout count foul pouch loud cloud bound found hound pound sound round ground noun announce denounce pronounce mountain thousand

[redacted] cow bow vow how now wow down gown town owl brown crown clown drown tower power powder flower bowwow kowtow chow-chow

n[redacted] mew few Jew Kew NewYork NewZealand news knew blew flew crew screw drew Andrew grew pew phew threw chew chewing gum

[redacted]stralia Paul Paula Laura Austin audio August auto automatic autumn because daub daughter pause sauce sausage astronaut Santa Claus

※ 以下は、すべて【r のついた母音】です!

The following are all "vowels with the letter r"!

c[redacted] card cart part apart depart chart smart start star guitar Tarzan bar jar far farm arm army art ark bark dark lark park mark market March hard yard garden

[redacted] orca organ orthodox cord corn born horn morning for form fork cork pork port sport passport sort short stork storm horse north forth force forty porch torch

w[redacted]d work worker word worm worry worse worst worth motor mirror sensor actor doctor sailor emperor visitor junior senior elevator escalator

h[redacted] herd per perm perch person Harper nerve serve server germ Germany Berlin berg Bert Ernie fern jerk term river tiger butter better letter summer soccer teacher sister brother father mother yesterday

g[redacted] bird first third thirteen thirty dirt dirty sir fir firm stir skirt shirt birl birch birthday chirp circus circle

Th[redacted]sday fur further burst burn turn church curve curtain curl hurl hurt hurdle nurse purse purple turtle Saturn surfing murk murder murmur

ch[redacted] air airport fair hair pair laird Blair Clair flair glair stair upstairs affair repair airy dairy fairy prairie

The Quagmire of Assessment For Placement: Talking Out of Both Sides of Our Mouths

Deborah Crusan
Wright State University, Ohio, USA

My interest in writing assessment stems from perceived injustices I witnessed while teaching English at a small western Pennsylvania community college. The philosophy at the institution in 1989, especially for basic and English as a Second Language (ESL) writers, was that students needed to learn grammar before they could ever hope to write. One of the courses I was assigned to teach—Developmental English I—especially stressed grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and short paragraph writing. The first class meeting of Developmental English I troubled me, for many of the students complained bitterly about their placement in what they referred to as 'bonehead' or 'dummy' English. They wanted to know how they had gotten there; I was unable to tell them, but I promised to investigate.

Upon questioning the Divisional Director of Humanities, I learned that incoming students took a battery of tests in English, math, and science. Depending on their scores, students were placed in either pre-college/developmental or college freshman level classes. I also learned that the English test consisted of approximately 50 multiple-choice items dealing with the mechanics and punctuation rules of English as well as spelling and vocabulary questions. Students did no actual writing on the test. The rationale for using this method of placement was cost and ease of administration; reliability and validity issues also played a part in the selection of the standardized indirect assessment administered to all incoming students.

This testing method seemed hardly fair to me. First, it asked the students to answer questions about writing, rather than asking them to write. Additionally, the test came from outside the institution; the developers did not know the students nor were they apprised of the local situation, the philosophy of the institution, or the teachers who would teach the courses. In my mind, actual student writing would certainly tell more about how these students wrote than answers to decontextualized questions.

The problems with this method of assessment played themselves out in my class. As the semester progressed, I found that many students were better writers than the scores on their placement tests indicted; sadly, it was too late in the term to move them

to a higher-level class. Conversely, some struggled and may have needed even more individualized attention than my class was designed to give. Whatever the case, instances of improper placement existed, creating a large disservice to many of the students in my class.

When I informed the students how they had been placed in my class—based on results of the multiple-choice test they took the week before classes started, many expressed displeasure; some argued that if they had known the reason for the test, they would have done better. No one had bothered to tell them the high stakes involved. Consequently, few of the students had taken the test seriously and ended up in a class that did not serve their needs and cost them financially, emotionally, and in time lost in their academic careers. I quickly learned that if students get no explanations regarding testing, they often perceive such tests as whimsical or trivial. I was left to wonder why no one had asked me my opinion about how students should be placed in my classes. When I asked about the testing situation again, I was told that it had always been done that way, and that I should not get involved in things that really did not concern me. Humbled, I felt naïve and alone. I had yet to discover that "assessment defines goals and expresses values more clearly than do any number of mission statements" (White, Lutz, & Kamusikiri, 1996), so I could argue more effectively for alternative means of assessment.

Fast forward to 1994, when, as a rookie graduate student/teaching assistant and novice ESL instructor at a major research institution, I encountered similar hostility and questions from my university students as I had from the community college students. They demanded to know what they were doing in a basic ESL writing class rather than being placed in a regular ESL composition class that would, in their words, "count for something." I sensed their frustration as I have sensed the frustration of many students when assessment is a puzzlement (Crusan & Cornett, 2002). Further, I was stunned that the same complaints existed at this huge, well-respected university as at the tiny community college where I had taught for five years. Again, I did not know the answer to their questions, but I promised to explore the issue and report back what I found.

Meanwhile, I encountered the following: "Any valid assessment of an individual student's writing ability should include samples of a variety of writing tasks which contain genuine variations in topic, purpose, and audience" (Peyton, Staton, Richardson, & Wolfram, 1990). When I read the Peyton *et al.* article, I was concerned, for in my investigation of my students' demands, I had found that the university in which I was doing graduate work used a multiple-choice grammar test (indirect assessment) to place incoming freshman into composition courses. Once again, I was at an institution that did not use writing to place students in composition classes. Worse still, it was widely

hinted that students whose first language was not English were placed in writing classes arbitrarily by their advisors without any testing whatsoever. According to everything I was reading and learning, I had just confronted what amounted to evidence of inadvertent compliance on my part and duplicity on the part of the university. Nevertheless, it was comforting to discover that I, at least, was not alone in my belief of the inappropriateness of the means of assessment I was encountering.

In my naïveté, I believed that I could reconcile the problem I had discovered by simply exposing the circumstances to those I believed would be sympathetic listeners. However, I have been soundly chastised from many corners. Some influential members of the L2 writing or writing assessment community have argued that they are no longer waiting for quantitative evidence to settle the question of whether a direct (essay) or indirect (multiple-choice) measure is better at assessing writing for any purpose (placement, proficiency, achievement). Countless articles discuss this notion and the majority favor direct assessment when a choice between the two has to be made (Bailey, 1998; Belanoff, 1991; Brand, 1992; Cooper & Odell, 1977; Kroll & Reid, 1994; Patkowski, 1991; Peyton, Staton, Richardson & Wolfram, 1990).

I have been informed that the current writing assessment debate focuses instead on degrees of the authenticity of direct measures: how authentic is authentic enough? Or, more concretely, the debate frequently focuses on the single-draft, timed, impromptu essay score versus a portfolio score. Finally, others debate the value of hermeneutics over more positivistic approaches to evaluating writing (Broad, 2000). Nevertheless, the reality is many university administrators firmly believe in the value (mainly in terms of efficiency and cost effectiveness) of indirect measures and advocate their use at their institutions.

I tell these personal stories to set the stage for the major issue in this paper, which really has little to do with whether direct assessment for placement is better than indirect assessment. That battle has been fought and is purported to have been won (Hamp-Lyons, 1990). The central issue is that indirect assessment for placement still continues; in fact, as late of the early-nineties, it was used at approximately half of America's higher education institutions (Huot, 1994). Through my paper, I wish to begin to make the invisible visible, to call attention to a situation that exists despite the fact that the composition community has recognized the limitations of indirect assessment, and to muster support for change.

I have determined that a problem exists because I have dealt with it at two of the three institutions where I have been a faculty member. And I believe that others are struggling with this issue as well, particularly those who serve alone or in very small groups at smaller institutions and community colleges who are battling to change

writing placement methods to more humanistic forms. This is the material reality. In Fact, Condon (1998) states:

> Unfortunately, holistically-scored, timed writings never represented the majority practice in writing assessment. That position remains rather firmly the domain of the multiple-choice test; even today, SAT-V and ACT/English are the most often used methods for placing first-year college students into composition courses (p. 87-88).

When I question why any university would contradict writing assessment theory, I am reminded that "assessment is a site of contention, where legitimate disputes over educational issues play themselves out" (White, 2001).

These disputes point to political interests and the critical academic issue of who holds the power. Shannon (2001) asserts, "Whatever evidence advocates deem most important to make their case for whomever controls the definitions of these terms [literacy, reading] is not only in for a big payday from subsequent consumption of appropriate commodities, but they are in position to influence, if not determine, what type(s) of literate citizens will populate America." Although the commodities Shannon refers to are reading commodities such as basal readers and "teacher proof" reading systems, his message clearly is that definitions of literacy differ depending on who is doing the defining. The same holds true for writing and its assessment. Whoever holds the power to define writing at a given institution gets to provide input into what kind of assessment will be used to test writing. Ultimately, it should be those who have been schooled in composition theory. Shannon reminds us that it does not always work that way, that those in control are often those who are least prepared to make the decisions that will affect students' and teachers' lives. If those holding the reins of power deem writing to be merely an exercise in filling in the blanks, the assessment chosen to test writing ability will match this definition.

What is placement and why is it important?

One of the most important assessment procedures involves testing students to make placement decisions about applicable writing courses at the college or university freshman level. Johnson (1980) states that "placing students at the appropriate English composition level to increase their chances of success is a recurrent problem at colleges and universities nationwide" (p. 91). From personal experience, I have seen arguments surrounding assessment confounded by intertwined political and academic considerations.

Placement tests commonly categorize students into teaching groups; moreover, they are purported to provide information concerning the examinees' level of language ability

in order to place them in appropriate composition classes. The method of placement used by an institution does more than what it is designed to do; it also reveals an institution's philosophy about writing and the importance the institution places on writing. What can we be saying to our students when we given them a multiple-choice grammar test purporting that it can measure how well they write?

Another issue to consider in the placement of students is test development. In a perfect situation, assessment instruments should be developed locally, that is, developed at the institution where the test will be given. Placement testing is specific to the school setting; as a result, placement tests are often created by institutions to serve their own needs. In that way, the test will measure what the institution needs to measure for its specific classes. Therefore, a placement test that works well at one institution may not necessarily be transferable to another. Additionally, the test should have the ability to place into several different classes (basic, ESL, honors).

The paradox of what do we do and what should we do

Huot (1994) reported on an investigation into the types of assessment institutions used for placement. He surveyed 1080 institutions through a mailed questionnaire which collected date concerning method of placement, composition curriculum and option, satisfaction with the placement in place, procedures and personnel, and administration of placement procedures among other things. In this paper, Huot reasoned that in the short time direct assessment has been accepted, we have made considerable headway into the field of assessment. A mere twenty-five years previous to the study, nearly all placement was done using an indirect measure. At the time of the study, half of the institutions surveyed reported using actual writing to place students into composition classes. Unfortunately, this means that half of the institutions surveyed still used an indirect method as the sole means of placement. My own experience bears this out, first at a small community college, then at a very large university.

Huot's study also revealed that of the institutions using some form of direct assessment, 54% used outside criteria to rate the writing, and 30% used only one rater per paper. What Huot found is a major contradiction between theory and application. In a personal conversation (2001, March), he stated that he strongly believes that the results of his 1994 study remain valid today.

In 2001, the Committee on Second Language Writing submitted a statement (CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers) to the Conference on College Composition and Communication and the Board of Directors of TESOL (Teaching of English to Speaker of Other Languages). Both organizations endorsed the statement, which proposes guidelines on the ethical treatment of ESOL writers in terms of placement, assessment, class size, academic credit, teacher preparation, and teacher

support. The statement calls for decisions regarding placement to be based on students' writing ability. It further states that "scores from direct assessment of students' writing proficiency should be used, and multiple writing samples should be consulted whenever possible" (CCCC Statement on Second-Language Writing and Writers, 2001, pp. 670-671). Evidently, the field is an agreement about what we should do; however, what we state as a group and what we do as individual institutions, administrators, testers, and teachers, are at variance. We cannot look the other way as assessment for placement is played out in ways that do not resonate with the collective understanding of ethical placement strategies.

Who does assessment for placement affect?

Assessment for placement of freshman in composition courses at the university level is regarded as high stakes assessment. The individuals affected are the best takers and the teachers who teach in the program. Theoretical and philosophical viewpoints of institutions and large-scale test developers concerning assessment for placement are well-documented (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Breland, 1983; Greenberg, 1992; White, 1996); however, it is also important to consider the opinions of the two groups most impacted by the assessment measures undertaken by institutions and large testing bureaucracies: the teacher and the student (Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

Of utmost importance is teacher perception of student writing ability and of assessment. Johnson (1999) states: "The assumptions you make about your students have a tremendous impact on the nature of your reasoning and the nature of your teaching practices" (p. 143). She suggests that the teacher must know her students, what is difficult for them, what they already know, what ignites their curiosity. From this, it can be assumed that teachers might care very much about their students' placement and be affected by such decisions in terms of student satisfaction concerning placement and homogeneity of student population in terms of writing ability.

The issue of involvement of the teacher in testing has been raised by a number of researchers (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Larsen, 1987). "By calling for essay testing . . ., teachers have hoped to gain power over assessment and hence over the definition of what is to be valued in education; they have attempted to impose the educational vision in which assessment is a vital support for the learner onto the institutional vision in which assessment is a sorting and certifying device" (White, Lutz, & Kamusikiri, 1996, p. 9). Clearly, we need to make transparent our philosophy of composition through our means of assessment.

Smith (1993) describes an assessment program where scoring guidelines and numerical data were thrown out in favor of procedures which utilized teacher knowledge of students and courses. According to Smith (1993), the results were both

more accurate and much more cost-effective than traditional testing. As an extension of this idea, it can be reasoned that the teacher might be the best determiner of accurate placement of students and also know better than others the true writing ability of students. When informed teachers begin to discover that knowledge is power, they acquire the tools necessary to start convincing those in power to use and develop better types of writing assessment procedures.

Besides the impression on teachers, students are immensely impacted by tests. Bachman and Palmer (1996) argue that "One way to minimize the potential for negative impact on instruction is to change the way we test so that the characteristics of the test and test tasks correspond more closely to the characteristics of the instructional program" (p. 33). If this is so, then we must begin to look critically at assessment instruments that place students in composition classes particularly if those instruments do not correspond closely to the instruction in the class. If writing is the instruction, then writing should be used in the testing (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Brand, 1992). It makes little sense to use assessments which place students in ill-suited classes marginalizing both the teacher and the students.

The issue of involvement of students and their perceptions of writing assessment are often overlooked or no directly addressed. Those involved in testing certainly consider the student when designing the testing instruments, but the student is left out of important decisions regarding how to test and the impact that the assessment of writing has on these students. Student input into all facets of the design, prompts, and assessment criteria is essential.

When developing measures to assess writing ability for placement purposes, test developers should consider what the students want from writing assessment. White (1996) recounts that a student, assigned the topic "Why Write?" as the first paper in a basic writing class responded unforgettably. He wrote, "They make you write so they can getcha!" (p. 21). Unfortunately, this attitude is rampant among students who often view assessment as punitive and arbitrary. White (1996) contends that "writing assessment based on the interests of students and other marginalized groups" would certainly include "assessment that largely ignores surface features of dialect and usage, focusing instead on critical thinking and creativity" (p. 23), notions difficult to assess through a multiple-choice test.

"The most important consideration in any assessment is the purpose, or use, for which it is intended" (Bachman, 2000, p.x). Various marginalized groups among students, including not only racial and ethnic minorities but also groups such as the middle-aged, women, and athletes, tend to see assessment as part of the apparatus that has traditionally worked to their detriment. Patkowski (1991) concludes, ". . . important

placement decisions which can greatly affect the academic futures of students should not be solely made on the basis of a single score on any particular test, but rather should depend on a wider, more "authentic" base of information in order to reduce barriers to the retention of minority language college students" (p. 738). Authenticity pertains to how representative the assessment task is of the actual task (Bachman & Palmer, 1996); in other words, if we are trying to determine how well a person drives a car, an authentic means of assessing that skill would be to have the person actually operate a vehicle, which is usually what one does when taking a driving test.

Clearly, ESL writers are marginalized by indirect tests used to assess writing ability and, because of them, may never gain access to the academic discourse community of the university. ESL students, because they generally have memorized grammar rules very well, tend to score very high on tests like the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). As a result, these students may be placed in composition classes above their ability, possibly preventing them from gaining the academic writing skills needed to succeed a university setting (Greenberg, 1992). Blanton (1987) states that her students are frightened of writing in English because they may not do well enough on exams to be able to move ahead academically and graduate. Such feelings plant the seeds of their own destruction. How frightening must it be when one of our ESL students is placed above ability, becomes frustrated, and leaves, never to have that opportunity to advance?

Even though our students may believe the contrary and at first rejoice that they have been placed in composition classes where expectations might prove to be above their ability at the time, basic or remedial writing classes, ESL included, are not all bad. In fact, several studies indicate that students who have not taken a series of remedial classes drop out of school at almost three times the rate as their peers who have taken remedial/developmental course. Clearly, a strong relationship exists between appropriate writing instruction and remaining in college (White, 1995).

These students, misplaced in higher level composition classes, may also be marginalized by teachers' attitudes toward them. Zamel (1995) contends that many teachers display a "belief that language and knowledge are separate entities, that language must be in place and fixed in order to do the work in the course" (p. 509). Therefore, if such students are placed in these teachers' classes, the teachers may see them as inadequately prepared to handle the coursework. In reality, these teachers may not be conversant or skilled in working with such students. Therefore, these teachers often do not invite ESL students into serious engagement with the course material (Zamel, 1995) because they see the language problems as a sign of a lack of intellect.

On the other hand, native English speakers, because they have not studied grammar in so intense a fashion and may be better at using the language than describing it, may

be underplaced in composition classes. In light of this knowledge, composition is marginalized by placement tests which purport to "measure" writing ability but do nothing more than allow universities to compile statistics which can be passed off as predictors of grades in composition classes (Crowley, 1995; Odell, 1995; Shor, 1992).

In short, then, placement procedures are powerful tools which might affect both ESL and native English speakers academically, emotionally/psychologically, financially, and in their relationships with teachers and with other students.

Walking our talk

As a field, we need to stop putting our heads in the sand. In many ways, we have already taken the initiative through efforts such as the CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers in order to insure that our colleagues get the message that L2 writers are to be "treated fairly, taught effectively, and thus, given an equal chance to succeed in their writing-related personal and academic endeavors" (Silva, 1993, p. 671). Consequently, institutions using inappropriate means of assessment are guilty of promising freedom, the development of human capacity, the social form of higher education with which a person can achieve great things.

Instead, these institutions continue to marginalize certain students to the fringe of the university, outside the discourse community. Simon (1987) proposes:

> That as educators both our current problem and our future project should be an educational practice whose fundamental purpose is to expand what it is to be human and contribute to the establishment of a just and compassionate community within which a project of possibility becomes the guiding principle of social order (p. 141).

One of the primary goals in writing this paper was to trouble the question—to call attention to a situation and possibly to open an ongoing and necessary dialogue concerning the need to consider the state of assessment for placement, especially for ESL writers. Again, I am not talking about the elite, tier one universities although I personally am aware of several that use indirect assessment. Instead, I am talking about two- and four-year institutions where the lone ESL person faces questions of placement methodology and needs ammunition for the battle with administration. There is no easy answer, and I am well aware that the position forwarded in this article is not without its own problems. No monolithic solutions exist. The field needs to take leadership through more research and also through clearly defining objectives and processes. Matsuda (1998) states that "despite the growth of the ESL population, there has not been a corresponding increase in the amount of attention given to ESL students in many writing programs" (p. 99). With that in mind, I propose we entertain several questions.

Among them: What is the nature of the disconnect between theory and practice? Do we practice what we preach? How can we get administrators and teachers on the same page? How can we make assessment part of a process rather than an isolated task?

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Harvey Bank, Chris Hall, Angela Beumer Johnson, Karen E. Johnson, Nancy Mack, Alex MacLeod, and David Seitz for their thoughtful and insightful comments on various drafts of this paper.

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Deborah Crusan is Assistant Professor of TESL/Applied Linguistics at Wright State University, Dayton, OH where she teaches classes in linguistics, assessment, and grammar. Her research interests include the politics of writing assessment, directed/guided self-placement and its consequences for second language writers, teacher education, and International Teaching Assistant issues.

Tapestry: Writing 4

Review by Katharine Fluckiger Ponczoch
Brigham Young University, Utah, USA

TAPESTRY: WRITING 4. M. E. Sokolik. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle, 2000. Pp. 224, ($27.95).

Tapestry: Writing 4 is the most advanced of four texts resulting from a revision of *The Newbury House Guide to Writing*, a series designed to instruct students in academic writing. The *Tapestry* series aims to incorporate the four core skill areas in a conceptual framework for students, using language learning and academic strategies to enhance and motivate learning. Students using this particular text are expected to function at an advanced level.

An elaborate table of contents gives a clear outline of the organizational structure of the book by chapter, though it does not give page numbers where particular items can be found. The book is divided into 10 chapters, each with a writing skills focus, language-learning strategies, grammar review section, and ways to tie these into viable situations students may encounter. These chapters cover finding, organizing, and analyzing information, preparing to write, narrating and describing an event, writing proposals, and persuading an audience. The appendix helps students with writing concerns such as identifying problematic vocabulary, documenting sources, and finding further writing resources.

Many up-to-date interactive techniques are employed in the various student activities in each chapter. For example, in Chapter 2, students are encouraged to use both top-down and bottom-up strategies to analyze each others' work and then to critique their own, by first looking at individual features and then at more general ideas (pp. 36-37). This is used as a technique for revising and editing ones' own writing. Additionally, a practice group activity in Chapter 9 requires students to use information from previous readings to produce materials for an imaginary community project, and then, by answering specific questions, to evaluate how the group worked together (p. 172). Student groups evaluate their work by comparing themselves with others in a class discussion.

The text includes tips and strategies that are designed to encourage student-motivated learning in a variety of realistic settings. Academic strategies such as test-taking tips found at the end of each chapter encourage students to improve their own

performance. For example, students are encouraged to learn from their mistakes by identifying the correct answers and analyzing why they missed particular questions, discussing them with the instructor if necessary (p. 137).

Teachers may use the text rather freely, choosing from a great range of exercises to support student learning. Practice activities range from individual assignments to group projects and incorporate reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills to get the student to utilize a wide range of strategies. The text could also be used by a student for independent study.

Supplementary material includes an instructor's manual and a CNN video that cover both levels 3 and 4. Additionally, a related website offers activities such as quizzes which can be completed by students online and e-mailed to their teacher from the website.

Individual chapters are well-organized and filled with clear explanations and useful applications. Each is integrated with a clear focus and provides several practice and learning activities, the variety of which will appeal to students. Although writing activities rarely provide a significant number of models or examples, the abundant opportunities for application compensate. Teachers and students in an advanced writing class are likely to enjoy using this textbook whether or not their previous writing experience has been with the *Tapestry* series.

About the Reviewer

Katharine Fluckiger Ponczoch received a B. A. in Linguistics from Brigham Young University in 2001 and will finish the certification program in TESOL at BYU in December of 2002. Primary interests include learning style and perceptual preference research.

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Language Centre, Hong Kong Baptist University. December 6-8, 2002. 7th English Conference in Southeast Asia "Changing Responses to Challenging Times," Hong Kong SAR. Contact Derrick Stone, Conference Communications Committee Chair, Hong Kong Baptist University. Tel. 852 3411 5825. Http://www. hkbu. edu. hk/~lcesea.

GELI. December 12-14, 2002. 11th Annual Convention, Havana City, Cuba. Proposal Deadline October 31, 2002. Contact Adita Chiappy, Calle 33 #1470, Apt 11, ef 26 y 28, Nuevo Vedado, Habana, Cuba. Tel. 537-8308014. Fax 537-20882250. E-mail: tcub10@calva.com.

EGYPTESOL. December 13-15, 2002. Conference, "Best Practices in TEFL," Cairo, Egypt. Contact Deena Boraie, Testing Unit Director, English Language Institute, American University in Cairo, 113 Kasr El Aini Street, Cairo, Egypt. E-mail: dboraie@aucegypt.edu. Http://www.egyptesol.org.

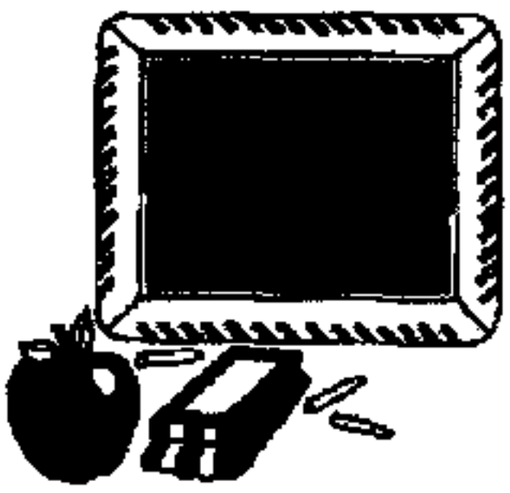
Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliquee (AILA). December 16-21, 2002. 13th World Congress on Applied Linguistics, "Applied Linguistics in the 21st Century: Opportunities for Innovation and Creativity, "Singapore. Contact AILA2002 SINGAPORE in collaboration with Research Communication International, 8 Temasek Boulevard, Suntec Tower Three, #40-03, Singapore 038988. Tel. +65-6332-0855. Fax: 65-6887-3102. E-mail: rescomm@singnet.com.sg. Http://www.aila2002.org.

Thailand TESOL. January 23-25, 2003. 23rd Annual International Conference, "ELT 2003: Culture, Content and Competency," Bangkok, Thailand. Contact Suchada Nimmannit, President. Tel. 66-02-218-6100. Tel/Fax 66-02-218-6027. E-mail: nsuchada@chula.ac.th. Http://www.thaitesol.org.

TESOL Arabia. March 12-14, 2003. 9th International TESOL Arabia Conference, "English Language Teaching in the IT Age, "Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Contact Kathy Bird, Conference 2003 Chair. E-mail:kathy_bird@zu.ac.ae. Http://www.tesolarabia.org/conference/conference.php.

American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL). March 22-25, 2003. 2003 Conference, "The Diversity of Applied Linguistics," Arlington, Virginia. Contact Jim Yoshioka, AAAL 2003 Associate Chair, National Foreign Language Resource Center, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 1859 East-West Rd. #106, Honolulu, HI 96822 USA. Tel. 808 956-9424. Http://www.aaal.org/aaal2003.

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. March 25-27, 2003. LSP 2003, "LSP in Practice: Responding to Challenges," Johor Bahru, Malaysia. Contact the Director, LSP2003, Department of Modern Languages, Faculty of Management and Human Resource Development, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 81310 UTM Skudai, Johor, Malaysia. Tel. 607-5503304/607-5503352. Fax 607-5566911. Http://www.fppsm.utm.my/.



Tips for Teachers

Have you been wondering how to get something published? Do you have an activity that works well every time? Does your colleague have a teaching technique that we should hear about? Tips for Teachers would like to help you publish these ideas. All submissions are welcome. Editorial advice and assistance is available.

When this column reappears in the April 2003 issue, it will also have a new editor. Jean Kirschenmann is Instructor of ESL and TESL at Hawai'i Pacific University in Honolulu, Hawaii. She has been teaching ESL and TESL for 25 years, working in Micronesia, Romania, and China, as well as in Hawaii.

Jean invites submissions in either paper or electronic format, preferably as a Word attachment to an e-mail message. Please see the back cover of this issue for further details.

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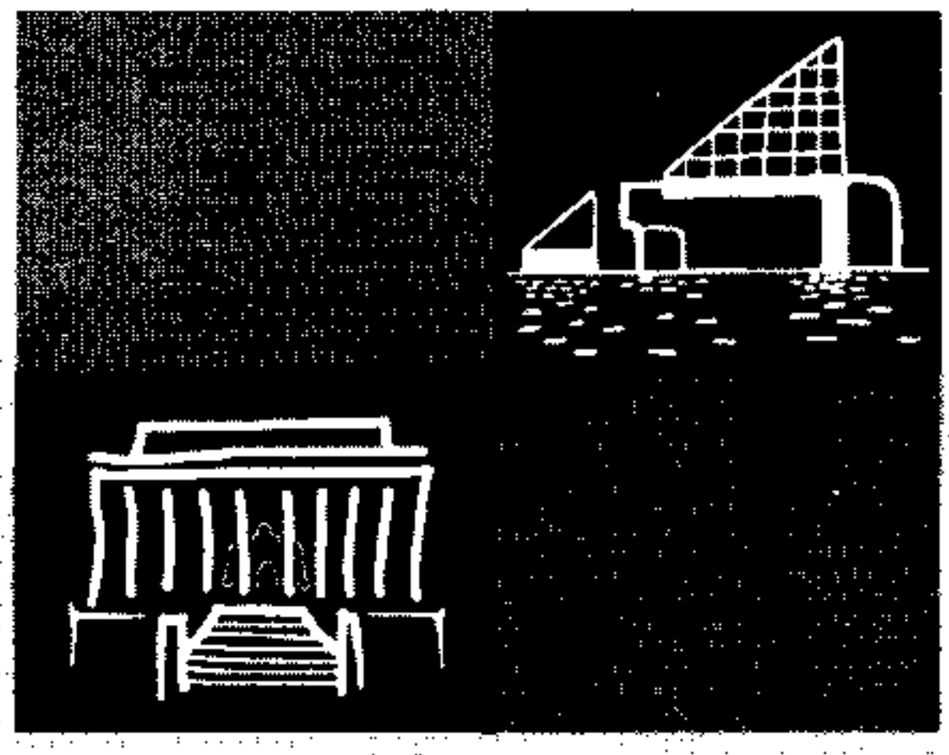

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MARCH 25–29, 2003

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