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ARTICLES

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Contents

Developing Vocabulary Acquisition Strategies in the Japanese Tertiary Classroom: An Action Research Study

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In the second semester of 2007, I took over a full-year EFL course at a university in central Tokyo, teaching a group of students taken from the Education and Psychology departments. Where many institutions allow the lecturer *carte blanche* with regard to course content, this university has a prescribed syllabus, to which the previous teacher had added their own requirements. I was thus placed in the difficult position of taking over a class mid-course and balancing the expectations of the students with those of the institution and the demands of their previous instructor.

One of the central requirements of the course was the production of a "vocabulary notebook." The students were told that this had to include ten new words each week and that it would be checked at the end of the semester. Early on, I collected the notebooks and checked them. As the students wished to focus more on fluency development and active speaking during class, this task had been given a low priority by the previous teacher. Accordingly, the teacher had left the content of the notebooks entirely up to the students and only viewed them once, at the end of the semester. As one would expect, what most students had done when pressed for time was to choose the required number of words from a dictionary, more or less at random, and enter them without exercising any form of selection. Often, the work had clearly been done at one sitting. In a few cases, the words were even alphabetically listed, copied directly from a dictionary. Quizzing students on various words demonstrated that they had no retention of previously unknown vocabulary. Whilst they had completed the task as required, they had generally done so in a way which had had virtually no lasting result in terms of the development of their personal lexicons.

Following Barcroft's (2004) argument that current research indicates that the teaching of vocabulary over grammar is a preferable strategy with regard to long-term success in L2 acquisition, I decided that one of my goals would be to turn the vocabulary notebook into a meaningful tool that would enhance the L2 development of students in both a productive and receptive sense. The most appropriate approach for this seemed to be an action research model (Ellis, 1994). Following the initial situational analysis outlined in the prior paragraph, this project has had three cycles each containing the four stages of

plan, action, analysis and reflection: second semester 2007, first semester 2008 and second semester 2008. It should be noted that the reflection stage of each cycle served as the reconnaissance stage of the following one. Between the second and third cycles, a literature review was also undertaken.

Cycle One—Second Semester 2007

Plan and Action

I decided that it was unfair to amplify the complexity of the vocabulary notebook tasks by a significant margin in the first stage. This was because of existing expectations on the part of the students: a sudden and sharp increase in difficulty in one area of the course would be more likely to result in resentment and a negative outcome than a positive. Accordingly, I decided to make a minor change that would add relevance to the vocabulary chosen.

The textbook used by this class had a number of short articles which could form the basis for discussion. It also included between three and seven new words and phrases for study each chapter. I decided to make these the basis of the notebook, stipulating that they had to be included each week. The remaining words were supposed to be derived from the classroom environment itself, although I had no mechanism in place for verifying whether they had done so. As a checking mechanism, I set two tests, one at the midpoint of the semester and one at the end. Both included a vocabulary section using two methods. First, a passage was given into which students had to insert words from a list. Then, students had to write sentences demonstrating their understanding of lexical items. Correct sentences could take many different forms and still be an appropriate response. For example, if the word was *bright*, then the sentences "The sun is bright outside today" and "The stars shone brightly" would both be acceptable.

Analysis and Reflection

As a way to focus students on vocabulary, this phase was partially successful. In post-semester discussions, I found that overall retention of textbook vocabulary was high, although this was largely limited to the form of the word encountered rather than a whole lexical grouping. In addition, it seemed that many students still put little or no thought into the non-textbook words included in their notebooks, and that retention of these was minimal. I tested this informally by asking students to use and define words randomly chosen from their notebooks, which led to my conclusion that textbook-related vocabulary retention was significantly better than non-textbook words. A large number of non-textbook words included in the notebooks were unrelated to activities undertaken in the lessons. Some students even still filled in the "spaces" between text-based vocabulary items with alphabetical lists of words and definitions obviously taken from dictionaries, and almost none of these could be used or defined by students unless they were common

words already likely to be in their lexicon. For example, one student listed the words *cat*, *catastrophe*, and *catatonic* one after another with definitions, but could only define or use the first of these in a sentence. Finally, I was also concerned that the testing and usage of vocabulary was very much teacher centered, so I considered ways in which I could alter the model.

Cycle Two—First Semester 2008

Plan and Action

At the beginning of the next year, I was given a similar class of first-year students doing the same course. I decided that I would try to integrate the vocabulary notebook more closely into the syllabus. Accordingly, I decided to retain the focus on textbook words, using this as a way of keeping a constant element against which I could measure progress. In addition, another syllabus item was a weekly media discussion for which students were required to find an article, write a summary, and discuss it in class with topic questions. Rather than allow students to take the remainder of the vocabulary words from anywhere, I required that they had to use in-class discussions as the basis for choice.

I came up with a class activity that I called "the vocabulary game." Students were arranged into groups of four throughout the semester, and there were a total of eight groups. I matched them randomly and held a competition. Each paired-off group would swap notebooks and test each other on five words chosen by the opposing team. The group with the most points would win. In addition, I did not change my vocabulary testing format, and I examined the notebooks at the end of the semester.

Analysis and Reflection

This set of strategies resulted in an apparent increase in vocabulary retention and contextual understanding. For the first time, I began to see significant lexical variation in test answers. Informal questions in class revealed that, generally, students were tending to remember text-based words well. On the other hand, the choice of words from the media discussions was often arbitrary and this vocabulary was generally poorly retained and employed. This was determined again by discussions and informal testing with students undertaken both during the semester and afterwards. My observations of the vocabulary game also revealed that text-based words that had been studied and used with greater frequency during class were almost always defined successfully but non-text words had a considerably lower success rate. Although it seemed helpful, the vocabulary game took up considerable class time due to the need to set it up effectively and explain how it worked several times. Accordingly, I decided to make some changes to my model for the second semester of 2008.

Literature Review

Before settling on a new plan of action, I decided to spend some time looking at research in the area, both in order to find out strategies employed by others and to attempt to synthesize some general working hypotheses about the nature of vocabulary acquisition in a Japanese university context. I found that there was not only a considerable amount of work that had been done but also a notable diversity of approaches.

As a starting point, Barcroft (2004) identifies five basic strategies for effective vocabulary teaching: 1) teach new words frequently and repeatedly, 2) present words in a meaningful context, 3) limit forced output (such as sentence writing) at first, 4) limit semantic elaboration at first, and 5) gradually increase the difficulty of vocabulary tasks. He notes, however, that strategy number four does not mean that meaning-focused vocabulary learning is not useful. Instead, it needs to be progressive in terms of complexity. I decided to examine each of these five strategies in turn to see what the current literature relevant to my situation offered.

Frequency

How frequently new words should be taught—and the types of techniques most suitable to teach them—is the first issue to consider within Barcroft's framework. Webb (2007) considered the effect of repetition on L2 vocabulary acquisition, focusing particularly on Japanese learners of English. He looked at a number of contexts and asked how often a word needs to be encountered before it is retained. Where his research differs from previous investigations is both in its consideration of separate context types and in its examination of not only meaning but other elements, including orthography, associations, grammatical function, syntax, and form. The most notable gains in all areas took place after three encounters and, although there was improvement in retention and understanding all the way up to ten repetitions, gains became smaller each time with more improvement in productive than receptive knowledge. The final conclusion, unsurprisingly, was that more repetitions will increase retention; however, context has a significant influence.

Context

The second of these categories, the presentation of vocabulary in a meaningful context, is considered by Cain (2007), who looks at whether or not meaning can be derived from situational placement in L2 study. She notes that there has possibly been an over dependence on the "target word" pedagogic technique. This is because word retention can be considered as incidental when set against the overall goal of understanding the general meaning of a passage. Through experimentation, she concludes that the most notable gains in vocabulary take place when a word is

defined after being encountered in a broader passage and the reasoning behind this definition is made explicit by the student. An interesting point is that a combination of repetitive practice and feedback-driven instruction yields the greatest gains.

Rott (2007) examines the effect of frequency and devices such as glosses on long-term language retention. He found that repetition of a glossed word is just as effective for retention as a gloss plus a memory prompt. In addition, usage which stimulates the deeper processing of lexical items is significantly more helpful for long-term retention. Thus, the contextual placement of glossed words is likely to have a more notable effect if combined with a repetitive activity.

Where Rott explores L2 glosses in the context of frequency, Yoshii (2006) looks at the difference in effect between L1 and L2 glosses. As he notes, glosses increase overall language retention, particularly in the case of incidental vocabulary, although there is considerable debate as to whether a gloss in the L1 or L2 is more effective. He notes two models crucial to progress in language acquisition: the *word association* and the *concept mediation* models, which were first identified by Potter, So, Eckhardt, and Feldman (1984). Word association is a translative model, where the L1 mediates understanding in the L2 and the concept mediation model promotes direct mediation of ideas entirely within an L2 context. Moving from the use of word association to concept mediation is a sign of important progress in an individual student's process of L2 acquisition. Yoshii's findings indicate no significant difference between L1 and L2 glosses in immediate recall testing; however, there was less decay in retention in the group who used L1 glosses. He speculates that this could be a function of the language proficiency level of the participants. In addition, his test did not consider the effect of L2 glossing on other skills, such as circumlocution and fluency building.

Limit Forced Output

O'Brien, Segalowitz, Freed, and Collentine (2007) examined the relationship between L2 study and phonological memory. They concluded that phonological memory has a significant impact on L2 acquisition with regard to vocabulary and, additionally, overall oral fluency. This establishes a causal relationship between vocabulary study and fluency development, which is characterized as hesitation reduction and speech fluidity. Where the conclusions of this research were significant for my action research project is in its focus on adult learners, rather than young students. In addition, it argued that a phonological approach is more naturalistic and suggests that the forcing of written output is not the most effective way to proceed in initial contextualizing of vocabulary.

Limit Semantic Output

Semantic elaboration can be either student- or teacher-based. A prescriptivist might argue that the latter is better for the acquisition of correct usage, but recent research indicates that, in fact, the former may be just as useful. Sommers and Barcroft (2007) offer an interesting discussion which postulates that, whilst pronunciation variability may have a negative effect on vocabulary acquisition in an L1, it will actually have a positive one on an L2. Variation in speaker characteristics, style, and rate are found to aid in acquisition of vocabulary and overall retention. Webb (2008) notes that there is a difference between receptive and productive vocabulary sizes in L2 learners, noting that the former is larger than the latter. Partial knowledge ratios are close, but strict scoring leads to a greater division for ESL students. In the case of EFL learners, however, this is less marked, due to the tendency to concentrate more on individual vocabulary items. This is an advantage in production and, possibly, can be used to target fluency goals in the long term.

Gradual Increase in Task Complexity

Pulido (2007) looked at the gradual increase of task difficulty in reading and vocabulary acquisition. Essentially, she found that L2 reading enhances overall contextual understanding and retention of vocabulary, and that this is enhanced by the use of material which is based on familiar topics. She recommended designing tasks which emphasize both macro- and micro-skill use and their graded implementation. An example of this is passage comprehension, in which a longer section of text is used as a contextualizer for individual vocabulary elements.

Analysis and Reflection

Based on this review and the experiences I had had to this point, I formulated five principles. First, words needed to be encountered and reviewed frequently. Second, words needed to be more contextualized within passages. Third, regardless of Yoshii's conclusions, empirical in-class evidence has so far suggested that L2 glosses are more effective, both in terms of individual word retention and skill building. So we would continue with L2 glosses rather than allowing L1 glossing. Fourth, initially, words should be encountered in a naturalistic setting, with gradual emphasis on semantic and forced output built up to over time. And fifth, having students teach each other vocabulary is advantageous for long-term vocabulary retention due to the effect of pronunciation variability. Overall, the general trend in the development of my vocabulary teaching has been towards a combined teacher- and student-centered approach.

Cycle Three—Second Semester 2008

Plan and Action

After considering lessons learned from previous semesters, discussions with other teachers, and the results of my literature review, I decided on a set of ideas for the final

semester of my study. The most significant change was that student presenters of media reports had to include three new words of their own that they would present—read aloud with L2 (English) glosses—at the outset of each discussion. The words would then appear in the discussions themselves, giving students who were listening at least three focal loci as comprehension aids. Because I rotated group leaders so that they presented four times each class, each student would receive a total of twelve new words in class. In addition, I would choose the three most relevant text words each week, which had to be included in the notebook and would form the basis of the vocabulary element of the semester tests. Students could thus complete their vocabulary notebooks entirely in class.

Rather than abandon the vocabulary game, I increased the frequency to each fortnight, in the hope that familiarity would reduce preparation time. As the game could use any words from the whole semester, it became progressively more difficult as the number of possible choices increased. In addition, I decided that the vocabulary notebook would not be assessed at the end of the semester, but would be examined as an ongoing element of weekly study. Students became aware that I could pick up the book and check it at any time.

Results and Discussion

In order to evaluate the efficacy of the different approaches, I compared the results of the vocabulary sections of the tests given throughout the semesters. The overall grades were based on a large number of factors, including in-class involvement, quality of discussion, and completion of various homework tasks, but the tests offer, perhaps, the simplest and most objective variable to examine.

The vocabulary section of the two tests in each semester was marked out of twenty. The general structure was first a paragraph exercise, into which words or phrases from a list had to be inserted (ten words or phrases, worth one point each) and, secondly, a set of five sentences to be written. Each sentence had to utilize the word given. One point was given for using the word correctly and one for grammar. For a sample test, see the appendix.

The skills needed for the two activities are different. In the first place, the students needed to be able to deduce which word to use from context, whereas, in the second place, they had to create the context for the word. In almost all tests, students scored higher marks on the first section rather than the second. Six test cycles are considered here. The first two had 28 respondents, the next two 31 and the last two 30 (one student was unable to continue in the second semester of 2008). It should be noted that the two 2007 tests were taken by one group of students (Group A) and the four 2008 tests by another (Group B). Results are given in percentages to two decimal points (see Table 1).

Table 1
Comparison of Test Results

	Sem. 2, 2007: Test 1 (Group A)	**Sem. 2, 2007: Test 2 (Group A)**	**Sem. 1, 2008: Test 1 (Group B)**	**Sem. 1, 2008: Test 2 (Group B)**	**Sem. 2, 2008: Test 1 (Group B)**	**Sem. 2, 2008: Test 2 (Group B)**
Overall Score	70.89%	73.57%	74.51%	76.12%	79.00%	78.17%
Paragraph	69.64%	73.92%	75.16%	76.77%	79.67%	78.67%
Word use	75.00%	76.42%	76.67%	79.35%	82.00%	81.33%
Grammar	69.29%	70.00%	70.96%	71.61%	74.67%	74.67%
Conversion	2 attempts	6 attempts	21 attempts	32 attempts	48 attempts	41 attempts

Several categories of results are considered here: 1) Overall score for the vocabulary section, 2) Marks for correct placement of words or phrases in a paragraph, 3) Marks for word or phrase use in a sentence, 4) Marks for grammar, and 5) Evidence of conversion (adding or removing inflections, changing tense or word type).

There was a rise of just over 8% in total average test scores over the period, although the last test showed an overall dip of 0.83%. This was probably due to the general fatigue that can set in towards the end of an academic year, and might suggest that the improvement over the course of the second half of 2007 might have been slightly more than is apparent from the results. While familiarity with the test format

might account for some of the improvement, this would only be minor. Other elements, such as the increased number of attempts at modifying lexemes, indicate that a genuine improvement in understanding is taking place. In addition, a significant (greater than 5%) development in the grammatically correct usage of vocabulary items in the appropriate context shows that words were not only being retained, but placed within an overall contextual framework.

As we can see in Table 1, at the close of the second semester, test scores were consistently higher and a greater range of lexical variation was in evidence. In addition, the media discussion vocabulary has been a positive choice. Initially, I had two concerns about teaching vocabulary in media discussions. The first was that students would choose difficult or low frequency words that would be hard to retain. This proved not to be the case due to the need for an L2 gloss. Students tended to choose central words that were easy for them to explain. The second potential issue was that teaching vocabulary in this way would take up too much classroom time. Initially, this was the case but, as the class grew used to this activity, it went faster. One trend that I saw was presenters actually creating a short handout with their words. They explained them briefly, and then left the handout so that group members could record the words in their own time during the presentation.

Some students provided both L1 and L2 glosses. I tended to frown on this, but it still took place from time to time. There was a tendency for L1 equivalents to be given softly once I was thought to be out of earshot, but this lessened gradually as students grew more accustomed to the task. Concern about the amount of time taken by the vocabulary game proved to be unnecessary as well. After practice, it progressed fairly smoothly, taking no more than ten minutes of class time.

Conclusion

The results indicate that there was a gradual movement from a less effective learner-reliant model to a more effective combined teacher-directed and learner-centered one. The progressive development of tasks across the initial situation that served as the basis for reconnaissance and the subsequent three cycles of action research is given below in Table 2.

So far, the evidence suggests that the strategies employed have proven to be effective in enhancing the short-term retention and contextualization of vocabulary. What remains to be seen is the effect of the pedagogical changes on long-term retention. In addition, it would be interesting to find a way of testing the effect of this strategy on overall L2 development. That would, however, require a more complex experimental process and is a project for future research.

Table 2

Progressive Vocabulary Task Development

	Previous Teacher Version (learner-reliant model)	**First Cycle (teacher-reliant model)**	**Second Cycle (teacher-and learner-reliant model)**	**Cycle (modified teacher-directed and learner-centered model)**
Vocabulary Notebook Format	Vocabulary notebook has ten words per week, defined in English and chosen by the student	Vocabulary notebook has ten words per week, defined in English and including the textbook unit words	Vocabulary notebook has ten words per week, defined in English and including the textbook unit words	Minimum ten new words each week in the vocabulary notebook, maximum of fifteen
Media Report Input			Words can be chosen from the Media Reports	Three new words are required in each Media Report, with English definitions, read aloud before the report is given
Textbook Input				Three new words each week from the textbook are given in class
Vocabulary Game			One round of the vocabulary game is played between two groups once per group	Approximately each fortnight, one round of the 'vocabulary game' is played between two groups

	Previous Teacher Version (learner-reliant model)	**First Cycle (teacher-reliant mode**l)	**Second Cycle (teacher-and learner-reliant model)**	**Cycle (modified teacher-directed and learner-centered model)**
Completion of Task	Notebook completed as homework	Notebook completed as homework	Notebook completed in class	Notebook completed in class
Testing		Two semester tests on textbook vocabulary are given, utilizing both insertion and contextual sentence construction	Two semester tests on text-book vocabu-lary are given, utilizing both insertion and contextual sentence construction	Two semester tests on textbook vocabulary are given, utilizing both insertion and contextual sentence construction
Assessment	Notebooks assessed at the end of the semester	Notebooks assessed at the end of the semester	Notebooks assessed at the end of the semester	Notebooks assessed during the semester

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Appendix

Sample Test, Vocabulary Section (semester 1, 2008)

Mid-Semester Test: Impact Issues, Units 1-5 **Page ONE**

Please fit the words or phrases from the following list into the story below.

take it for granted	export	cattle	pollution	scarce
contract	waste of time	literature	attractive	destroy

Many people say that studying something like _____ is really a _____. I know that, if you have a good education, it is easy to _____, but imagine what the world would be like if people weren't educated at all. Because of education, people understand the problems with issues like _____, which could _____ the environment, and know that relying too much on beef from _____ now could lead to food becoming _____ in the future. In a way, we are making a _____ with future generations. By being educated ourselves, we learn to see the world intelligently. When we travel, we can _____ our knowledge as we go. It is an_____ idea.

Please use the following words or phrases in a sentence to show that you understand their meaning. You can change the form of the word or phrase to fit the context if needed.

E.g.:

Bright

The sun was very bright today, so I wore sunglasses. Or The sun was shining brightly, so it was hot.

1. Earn
2. Willingly
3. Employees
4. Heart disease
5. Population

Conference Announcements

The 2nd International ELT Conference on Teacher Education and Development. May 7-8, 2010. Maltepe University, Istanbul, Turkey. E-mail: elt@maltepe.edu.tr

The Ninth Annual Wenshan International Conference. May 29, 2010. The English Department of National Chengchi University will hold the Ninth Annual Wenshan International Conference on the NCCU main campus in Taipei. The theme for this conference is "Meeting the Challenges of Serving the New Generation of EFL Learners". Web site http:// english.nccu.edu.tw/seminar/actnews.php?Sn=9

The JALT-CALL 2010 Conference. May 29-30, 2010. Kyoto Sangyo University, Kyoto, Japan. E-mail: davidockert1@gmail.com. Web site http:// jaltcall.org/call2010/

MATE-TESOL Haiti. June 24-25. 2010. Haitian American Institute, Port Au Prince, Haiti. The theme is "Strengthening English Language Learners Success." E-mail: jeanfranois_vilmenay@yahoo.com

8th Annual The Far Eastern English Language Teachers' Association Conference (FEELTA). June 28-30, 2010. Conference at the Far Eastern State University of Humanities, Khabarovsk, Russia. Conference chair, Natalya Maximova. E-mail: nrmaximova@hotmail.com. Web site http:// feelta.wl.dvgu.ru/File%201.htm

The Australian Council of TESOL Associations (ACTA). July 7-10, 2010. Conference at the Holiday Inn on the Gold Coast. The theme of the conference is "Redefining 'TESOL' for the 21st Century Language Learning and Teaching for the Future." E-mail: sarah.hoekwater@optusnet.com.au. Web site http:// www.astmanagement.com.au/acta10/

The English Teacher's Association of Israel. July 12-15, 201. Conference held at the Ramada Conference Center, Jerusalem, Israel. The theme of the conference is "Linking Through Language" will feature effective ELT in all stages and all levels. E-mail: vsjakar@gmail.com. Web site http:// www.etai.org.il/ETAI_2010.html.

TESOL Chile and IATEFL Chile joint annual conference. July 23-24, 2010. Conference held at the Universidad San Sebastián, Campus Bellavista, Santiago, Chile. The theme of the conference is "Communication, Culture, & Community." E-mail: tesolchile@gmail.com. Web site: http:// www.iatefl-tesol.cl/

Peru TESOL. July 31st to August 2nd 2010. Annual convention held at the Universidad Catolica Santa Maria in Arequipa, Peru. The conference theme is "An Intercultural Approach to the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language." E-mail: perutesoler162 @yahoo.com. Web site http:// www.perutesol.com

The Structural Syllabus: The Golden-Egg-Laying Goose That Should Not Be Killed

Sasan Bleghizadeh
Shahid Beheshti University, G.C.

The structural syllabus has served materials writers and language teachers for a long time. Since the inception of the audio-lingual method in the 1950s, it has formed the backbone of many popular and widely used textbooks such as *English 900* (English Language Services, 1964) and *Lado English Series* (Lado, 1977). In this type of syllabus, grammatical items, graded from easy to difficult, are the point of departure for designing language courses (Nunan, 1988, 2001a; White, 1988). Thus, the structural syllabus is one which attributes a high priority to grammatical features and views "the structure of language teaching as being principally provided by an ordered sequence of grammatical categories" (Wilkins, 1981, p. 83). In practical terms, the structural syllabus is an immediate solution to an important problem that most language teaching professionals are preoccupied with, which is seeking the most appropriate unit of analysis for syllabus design (Breen, 2001; Long & Crookes, 1992, 1993).

Although popular in the 1960s and then criticized in the 1970s and 1980s, the structural syllabus is a golden-egg-laying goose that should not be killed. As argued by Ellis (2002b), such a syllabus ensures a systematic coverage of the grammar of the target language to be taught and provides both teachers and learners with a sense of achievement and satisfaction.

Below we shall look at the major criticisms from both sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic fronts raised against the structural syllabus. This is followed by a practical suggestion for its improvement through the task-supported structural syllabus (TSSS).

The Sociolinguistic Front

In the 1970s, language teaching scholars realized that there is more to language learning than simply mastering grammatical forms. They observed that students who had learned a second or foreign language such as English through purely grammatically centered materials were capable of producing well-formed sentences. However, they were drastically incapable of communicating effectively in real-life settings. As Widdowson (1979) rightly comments:

> The ability to compose sentences is not the only ability we need to communicate. Communication only takes place when we make use of sentences to perform a variety of different acts of an essentially social nature. Thus we do not

> communicate by composing sentences, but by using sentences to make statements of different kinds, to describe, to record, to classify and so on. (p. 118)

It follows from the above argument that to be able to communicate naturally, students ought to be aware of the communicative value of the grammatical elements that they study. In other words, they should know how to *use* a grammatical form rather simply study its *usage* (Widdowson, 1978). For example, a teacher is focusing on grammatical usage when she teaches present progressive by saying that it is formed by adding *am/is/are* to the *-ing* form of a verb through well-known classroom examples like *I am writing on the blackboard* and *She is writing on the blackboard*. However, the teacher is teaching use when she concentrates on the communicative acts performed by this tense, such as descriptions, as in *My daughter is standing next to John*. *She is wearing a white dress*. Therefore, it is argued that taking care of use is as important as, if not more important than, taking care of usage.

Quite similarly, a distinction has been drawn between two dimensions of language proficiency: cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) and basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) (Cummins, 1980). BICS refers to one s ability to communicate successfully in various social contexts. It is obvious that the main shortcoming of the structural syllabus, from a sociolinguistic perspective, is that it merely caters for CALP and takes no heed of BICS. Hence, as Wilkins (1979) genuinely contends, "The grammatical syllabus fails to provide the necessary conditions for the acquisition of communicative competence" (p. 83). That is, it does not equip students with the capacity to know how to use language appropriately and know how to use and react to various speech acts such as requests, apologies, and complaints (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992).

The Psycholinguistic Front

The second major criticism launched against the structural syllabus is concerned with how individuals acquire a second language and therefore has a psycholinguistic rationale. More often than not, the structural syllabus has been implemented through the well-established PPP methodology, which advocates three stages: presentation, practice, and production (Shehadeh, 2005; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996). The presentation stage focuses on a new grammatical item, often contextualized, and introduces it to students. The practice stage gives students an opportunity to automatize the newly presented structure through intensive drilling and controlled practice. Finally, at the production stage, students are encouraged to produce the target structure more freely and spontaneously through communicative activities. However, recent second language acquisition (SLA) research has shown that this is not the way language learning takes shape. Therefore, it is wrong to assume that students will learn language in the same order in which it was taught. As Skehan (1996) observes:

> The belief that a precise focus on a particular form leads to learning and automatization no longer carries much credibility in linguistics or psychology. Instead, the contemporary view of language development is that learning is constrained by internal processes. Learners do not simply acquire the language to which they are exposed, however carefully that exposure may be orchestrated by the teacher. It is not simply a matter of converting input into output. (p.18)

The linear approach to language acquisition posits that students cannot and, of course, should not work on a new grammatical item unless they have completely mastered the one preceding it. For example, students should first master conditional type I before being introduced to type conditional type II. This issue is illustrated by Nunan's (2001b) metaphorical example. According to Nunan, learning a new language is like constructing a wall, the building blocks of which are grammatical units functioning as bricks. The easy grammatical bricks should be placed at the bottom in order to provide a foundation for the more difficult ones. The task for the language learners is to get the linguistic bricks in the right order: first the word bricks, and then the sentence bricks. If the bricks are not in the correct order, the wall will collapse under its own ungrammaticality (Nunan, 2001b).

Thus, contrary to this picture, learners do not learn a new language in this step-by-step fashion. Rather, they demonstrate a U-shaped behavior (Kellerman, 1985). A typical example of this U-shaped behavior, experienced by most EFL/ESL teachers, occurs when learners apparently master irregular past-tense morphology (e.g., went, wrote, came) and then proceed to confuse them with regular past forms, the result of which is the production of wrong forms (e.g., goed, writed, comed).

Hence, dissatisfied with the brick laying metaphor, most SLA researchers have abandoned it in favor of an organic metaphor (Nunan, 2001b; Rutherford, 1987). This metaphor views second language acquisition more like growing a garden than building a wall (Nunan, 2001b). In this garden, some linguistic flowers appear at the same time, but they do not grow at the same rate. This is exactly similar to how interlanguage develops. One might learn several items concurrently, though imperfectly, yet the rate of mastery for each item is different. This rate, however, is determined by a complex interaction of several factors which are beyond the scope of this paper. The important thing to remember is that second language acquisition does not follow a discrete-point fashion: one does not first learn *Rule A* perfectly and then proceed to *Rule B*.

Grammar and Grammar Teaching

The two preceding major criticisms, coupled with a number of other minor objections, persuaded language teaching experts that grammatical items cannot be a suitable unit of analysis for designing instructional materials. Some, who were disillusioned with certain methods and approaches such as audiolingualism or situational language teaching, adopted

an anti-grammarian stance and argued in favor of grammarless classes (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Prabhu, 1987).

A closer examination of the criticisms leveled against the structural syllabus reveals that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with grammatical rules functioning as the building blocks of language teaching materials. Although, as mentioned earlier, learners pass through certain developmental sequences governed by the interlanguage route, formal grammar instruction is likely to help them process the target structure if it coincides with their requisite developmental stage (Lightbown, 2000; Pienemann, 1984, 1999). The fact that language learners cannot use grammatical forms for communicative purposes may imply that they have not received adequate formal instruction. Likewise, the fact that second language acquisition is not orchestrated by mastery of one grammatical item followed by another does not suggest that grammar teaching should be expelled from language syllabuses and textbooks. As Ellis (2006) puts it, there is now convincing indirect and direct evidence, some of which will be examined below, to support the teaching of grammar.

The first argument for teaching grammar comes from immersion programs in Canada. In recent years, many Anglophone students have received their education through French. These students have been exposed to a lot of meaning-focused input in French and their progress has been carefully studied. The results of these studies (e.g., Swain, 1985; Swain & Lapkin, 1995) indicate that although the majority of these students have achieved native-like comprehension skills, their productive skills are still far from native-like norms, suggesting that meaning-focused instruction devoid of any grammar teaching is likely to result in fossilization.

Another argument to support grammar instruction comes from Ellis (2002b), who maintains that, for adult learners, grammar is the central component of language and adults make strenuous efforts to understand it. As he further puts it:

> In an analysis of the diaries written by abinitio learners of German in an intensive foreign language course at a university in London, I was struck by the depth of the learners concern to make sense of the grammar of German. Their diaries are full of references to their struggle to understand particular rules of grammar and their sense of achievement when a rule finally clicked. It should be noted, too, that grammar for these learners consisted of explicit rules that they could understand; it was not the kind of implicit grammar that comprises interlanguage. (p. 20)

Ellis, of course, rightly warns us that not all learners are interested in studying grammar, as some younger learners might be more inclined to study language functionally. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that grammar is an invaluable asset to adults, particularly those with an analytic learning style.

Finally, a very recent argument in favor of the importance of grammar teaching comes from Cullen (2008). Building on Widdowson's (1990) conception of grammar as a liberating force, Cullen argues that "without any grammar, the learner is forced to rely exclusively on lexis and the immediate context, combined with gestures, intonation and other prosodic and non-verbal features, to communicate his/her intended meaning" (p. 1). For instance, the three lexical items *dog*, *chase*, and *cat* can be combined in a variety of ways to signal different meanings such as: a) The dog is chasing the cat, b) The dog chased the cat, c) The dog has chased the cat, and d) A dog must have chased the cat. It is grammar and grammar alone that helps us see the distinction in these sentences through the use of articles, number, tense, and aspect. "[It] generally enables us to communicate with a degree of precision not available to the learner with only a minimal command of the system. In this sense, grammar is a liberating force" (Cullen, 2008, p. 222).

Based on the above justifications and many more that can be found elsewhere (see Ellis, 2006; Thornbury, 1999), it can be safely argued that grammar cannot and should not be sacrificed in language classes.

The Poststructural Syllabuses

The last three decades have witnessed a number of attempts to find a substitute for the structural syllabus. For a long time, syllabus designers experimented with other units of analysis such as situations, functions, notions, topics, and lexis. Nevertheless, these units of analysis were not without their critics (Long & Crookes, 1992; Long & Robinson, 1998; White, 1988), and in many cases proved to share the same faults previously found with the structural syllabus.

At last, attracted by the innovations in the Bangalore project (Prabhu, 1987), a number of scholars voted for the (pedagogic) task as an effective unit of analysis for designing language courses (Ellis, 2003; Long & Crookes, 1992, 1993; Nunan, 2004; Skehan, 1996, 1998, 2003).

But what is a task? According to Nunan (2004), a pedagogic task, i.e. one which requires learners to do things they are unlikely to do outside the classroom, is defined as follows:

> A piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. (p.4)

Implicit in the above definition is the fact that deployment of one's grammatical knowledge is an important element in successful completion of a task, "and that grammar exists to enable the language user to express different communicative meanings"

(Nunan, 2004, p. 4). The interrelation between form and meaning while doing a task brings us to the main point of this paper, the concept of a task-supported structural syllabus. However, before addressing this issue, it is important to clearly define and illustrate a number of tasks and activities which constitute the basic elements of the task-supported structural syllabus.

The first activity refers to *language* or *structural exercises*. These exercises explicitly draw learners' attention to specific grammatical or lexical items (Kumaravadivelu, 1993, p. 80). The following activity is a typical language exercise from *American Headway 2: Workbook* by Soars and Soars (2001, p. 36). This exercise requires learners to use their knowledge of present perfect tense and fill in the blanks with *for* or *since*.

Activity 1

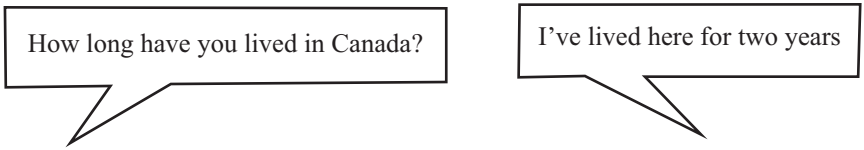
Complete the sentences with *for* or *since*.

1. I haven t seen Keith _____ a while.
2. He s been in China _____ January.
3. I have known them _____ many years.
4. He works for a company called KMP. He has worked for them _____ several years.
5. I m taking care of Tom today. He s been at my house _____ 8:00 this morning.

Next, there are *communicative activities*, which are often done in pairs or small groups and require learners to manipulate one or more structures in a genuine information exchange (Nunan, 2004). Communicative activities are similar to language exercises in that they involve manipulation of a limited number of grammatical items. However, they differ from language exercises in that they provide learners with a choice and freedom of what to say. Seen in another light, language exercises are tightly controlled and there is only one correct answer to each item or question, while communicative activities could be handled in a variety of ways. In the following communicative activity, learners work in pairs and make short conversations using present perfect tense. The second student, however, has a choice of answering with *for* or *since*.

Activity 2

Work with a partner. Make questions with *how long* and answers with *for* or *since*.



1. live in Canada
2. work as a nurse
3. have your car
4. live in this apartment
5. be a soccer fan

The next term to be elaborated on is *consciousness-raising* (CR), which is defined as a deliberate attempt on the part of the teacher to make the learners aware of specific features of the L2 (Ellis, 1993). According to Ellis (2002a), the main characteristics of CR tasks are as follows. First, there is an attempt to *isolate* a specific grammatical structure for focused attention. Second, the learners are provided with *data*, which illustrate the target structure, and with an explicit rule describing the feature. Third, the learners are supposed to utilize *intellectual effort* to understand the target structure. Fourth, misunderstanding of the target structure by the learners leads to *clarification* in the form of further data, description, or explanation. And fifth, learners may be required, though it is not necessary, to state the rule describing the target structure. CR tasks are completely different from language exercises and communicative activities in that they do not require learners to produce a given grammatical feature; rather, they provide learners with an opportunity to discover how a grammatical rule works (Ellis, 2002a, 2003).

The following CR task adapted from Ellis (2002a, p.173) is a typical activity designed to make learners aware of the grammatical difference between the prepositions for and since.

Activity 3

A consciousness-raising problem-solving task

1. Here is some information about when four people joined the company they now work for and how long they have been working there.

Name	Date Joined	Length of Time
Amanda	1975	35 yrs
Bill	1990	20 yrs
Sue	2009	9 mths
Walter	2010	10 days

2. Study these sentences about these people. When is "for" used and when is "since" used?
   a. Amanda has been working for her company for most of her life.
   b. Bill has been working for his company since 1990.
   c. Sue has been working for her company for 9 months.
   d. Walter has been working for his company since February.
3. Which of the following sentences are ungrammatical? Why?
   a. Amanda has been working for her company for 1975.
   b. Bill has been working for his company for 20 years.
   c. Sue has been working for her company since 2009.
   d. Walter has been working for his company since 10 days.
4. Try and make up a rule to explain when "for" and "since" are used.
5. Make up one sentence about when you started to learn English and one sentence about how long you have been studying English. Use "for" and "since."

Finally, there are *focused* and *unfocused* tasks. A focused task is an activity that is designed to provide learners with an opportunity to use a specific grammatical structure while communicating (Ellis, 2003, 2009; Nunan, 2004). An unfocused task, on the contrary, is a task designed to prompt comprehension and production of language for the purpose of communication without aiming at eliciting a particular grammatical feature (Ellis, 2003, 2009). Thus, the borderline between a focused and an unfocused task is that the former involves production of a particular linguistic form, whereas the latter does not. The following activity with fictitious names adapted from *Focus on Grammar: An Intermediate Course for Reference* and *Practice* by Fuchs, Westheimer, and Bonner (1994, p.104) is a good sample of a focused task. It requires learners to solve a problem—deciding whom to hire—and at the same time produce sentences using present perfect tense with *for* and *since*.

Activity 4

A prestigious college is going to hire a new English professor. Look at these two resumes. In small groups, decide who to hire and why. Use for and since in discussing their qualifications. Here are some things to consider: years of teaching experience, number of jobs, number and types of classes, awards, and number of published articles.

Examples:

A: Philip Long has had the same job since he got his Ph.D.

B: Rita Harmer has a lot of experience. She's been a teacher since 2000.

Philip Long	**Rita Harmer**
Education: 2002 Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics (UCLA) Teaching Experience: 2002- present UCLA Courses Taught: Syllabus design Methodology CALL Publications: "Introducing Computers into the English Class" (*The Journal of Linguistics Applied*, 2006) Awards: Distinguished Professor 2005	Education: 2000 Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics (UCLA) Teaching Experience: 2008-present Temple University 2003-2007 Seattle University 2000-2002 UCLA Courses Taught: Second Language Acquisition Academic Writing Psycholinguistics Publications: "Incidental Vocabulary Learning" (*MJLS*, 2001) "Collocations in SLA" (*MJLS*, 2006)

The following activity from *Interchange: Intro* (3rd edition) by Richards (2005, p.55) is an example of an unfocused task where learners read four job profiles and do the related tasks.

Activity 5

Read the following extracts. Which person has the most interesting job? Why?

Lisa Parker has two jobs. She works as a waitress at night, but she's really an actress. During the day, she auditions for plays and television shows. Her schedule is difficult, and she's tired a lot. But she's following her dream.	Lots of teenagers want **John Blue**'s job. He plays video games for eight hours a day. And he gets paid for it! John is a video game tester for a big video game company. Is it ever boring? Never. John almost always wins!
Becky Peck walks in the park every day for many hours – rain or shine. Becky is a professional dog walker. She walks dogs for other people. Sometimes she takes 20 dogs to the park at one time!	**Carlos Ruiz** is a busy man. He plans lessons, grades homework, helps with after-school activities – and of course, he teaches! His salary isn't great, but that's OK. His students like his classes, so he's happy.

A. Read the article. Who says these things? Write your guesses.

1. After I win, I take a break.
2. I don t usually work in the summer.
3. The restaurant closes late around 2:00 AM.
4. After work, my feet and arms are tired!

B. Write a short description of a job, but don t write the name of the job. Then read it to the class. Your classmates guess the job.

A Task-Supported Structural Syllabus

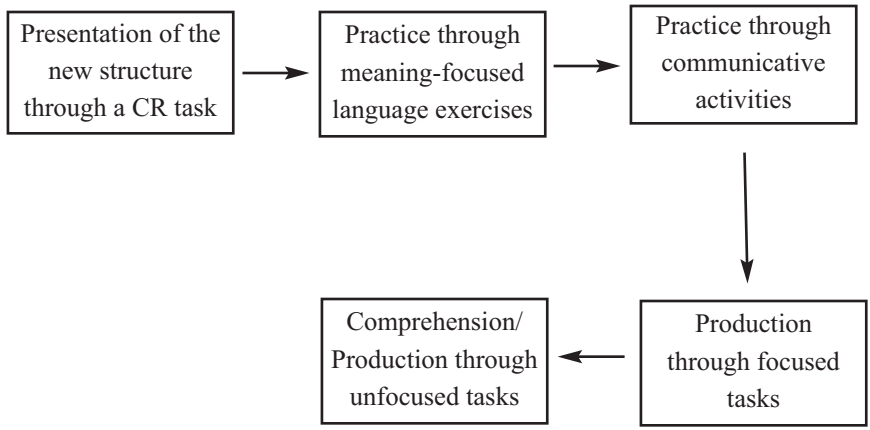
As mentioned earlier one of the serious problems associated with the structural syllabus and its accompanying presentation-practice-production (PPP) methodology is

that it presents language piece by piece and takes grammatical items as point of departure for materials development. However, it was previously argued that grammar is not something to be dispensed with. Fortunately, there is no antipathy between grammar teaching and task-based teaching and they can be easily integrated. This integration can result in what I have called the task-supported structural syllabus (TSSS) after Ellis's (2003) coinage of task-supported language teaching. The idea of integrating grammar teaching with pedagogic tasks is not a new one and has been around for a long time. In a praiseworthy attempt to sort out misunderstandings about task-based language teaching, Ellis (2009) has made a distinction between three syllabus types regarding this integration: a pure task-based syllabus (consisting entirely of unfocused tasks), a grammar-oriented task-based syllabus (consisting entirely of focused tasks), and a hybrid type (consisting of a mixture of focused and unfocused tasks). One might, therefore, wonder how TSSS differs from the grammar-oriented task-based syllabus or the hybrid type. The answer given to this query is that in all the above syllabus types, the primary unit of analysis for course design is the task, while grammatical items in TSSS still play a pivotal role. Hence, each typical TSSS lesson centers on a target grammatical structure supported by various task types (CR, focused, and unfocused). Figure 1 shows the major components of a typical TSSS lesson.

We can see that each TSSS lesson starts with a presentation stage. Nevertheless, it is totally different from that of PPP. The presentation stage in a TSSS lesson comes about through a CR task rather than the teacher's explicit teaching. This allows learners to

Figure 1

Major components of a task-supported structural lesson



discover the rules for themselves through the teacher's support and supervision. Presentation is followed by the practice stage where learners do both language exercises and communicative activities. Traditional PPP methodology requires students to do communicative activities at the production stage, which, as discussed previously, was abortive. The production stage in a typical TSSS lesson, however, requires students to do a focused task through which they both focus on form and meaning. Finally, the lesson comes to an end through an unfocused task in which students do a truly meaning-focused activity regardless of whether the input they receive contains familiar or unfamiliar structures. This unfocused task serves two purposes. The first is exposing students to previously taught structures, hence recycling them. The second is holding new, unrehearsed structures before their eyes. Both of these purposes extricate the structural syllabus from the chronic criticism of being purely linear. Moreover, doing unfocused tasks allows students to learn numerous things simultaneously and imperfectly (Nunan, 2001b), which is in line with recent models of second language acquisition.

The activities that shape a typical TSSS lesson are consistent with three interrelated principles of effective grammar instruction recently proposed by Batstone and Ellis (2009). The first is the Given-to-New Principle, where existing world knowledge should be utilized as a resource for connecting known, i.e. given meaning with new form-function mappings. The second is the Awareness Principle, which ensures the importance of consciousness in language learning. And the third is the Real-Operating Conditions Principle, which states that the process of acquiring form-function mappings will not be complete unless learners are provided with an opportunity to practice them through activities where there is primary focus on meaning, but form is not ignored. These three principles, undoubtedly, are embodied in the activities which appear in Figure 1. The CR task through which the new structures are presented to the learners reflects the Given-to-New and Awareness Principles. Such tasks enable learners to use their existing knowledge to identify the meaning(s) conveyed by a specific grammatical feature, helping them do form-function mapping. Moreover, they allow learners to notice and understand the given structure, hence ensuring the Awareness Principle. Meanwhile, the focused tasks ensure the Real-Operating Conditions principle, as they allow learners to use the given structure in a communicative context where there is attention to both meaning and form.

Conclusion

The arguments throughout this paper are aimed at providing a justifiable rationale for improving the traditional form of the structural syllabus. To this end, the major criticisms often sharpened against the structural syllabus were first reviewed. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the structural syllabus has been traditionally condemned on the grounds that it does not arm learners with the needed means for successful communication. From a psycholinguistic perspective, it has been criticized for depicting a false picture of

second language acquisition, embodying a linear, step-by-step learning fashion. To solve this problem, language teaching experts (e.g., Long & Crookes, 1992) suggested that grammatical items, as the unit of syllabus design, receive minimal attention and be replaced by tasks. Given the importance of grammar instruction in EFL settings, this paper calls attention to a compromise between grammar teaching and task-based instruction. It was contended that it is possible to moderate and modify the structural syllabus through the use of tasks as an adjunct to structure-based teaching, and that it may be possible to clothe structures through tasks (Skehan, 2003). The outcome would be the task-supported structural syllabus in which grammatical structures are first presented through consciousness-raising tasks, then practiced through meaning-focused language exercises and communicative activities, and finally produced through focused tasks. The novelty of TSSS lies in the fact that this chain is completed by an unfocused task with a twofold aim: recycling the previously taught structures and introducing the new structures to be taught later. This last episode extricates the structural syllabus from the often raised problem of linearity.

Let us now see how this could be operationalized through a hypothetical lesson designed to teach the difference between *for* and *since* to a group of elementary students who have recently been taught the present perfect tense. At first, the teacher presents the difference between for and since through a CR task (Activity 3), whereby the learners have to discover for themselves what these two mean and how they should be used. Next the learners are given a language exercise in which they have to fill in the given gaps with *for* and *since* (Activity 1). This is followed by a communicative activity, done in pairs, where the learners have more freedom in using these two forms (Activity 2). Then the teacher asks the learners to do a focused task, whereby they naturally communicate and solve a given problem, using *for* and *since* (Activity 4). Finally, the learners do an unfocused task (Activity 5), where they do not have to use a specific target structure (*for* and *since* in the case of this lesson). It should be noted that this last activity could be a comprehension task, a production task, or both, thematically linked to previous activities (in this case jobs). Thus, whatever form it takes, the goal of this episode is to provide learners with an opportunity to receive further input (preferably authentic) which exposes them to unrehearsed, uncontrived samples of language and allows them to freely communicate in the class.

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The Effect of Oral and Written Teacher Feedback on Students' Revisions in a Process-Oriented EFL Writing Class

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The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of oral and written teacher feedback on pre-intermediate student revisions in a process-oriented EFL writing class. Specifically, the teacher-researcher investigated how her oral and written feedback on the language and content would affect the way students rewrote their first draft (D1) on a given writing topic. This study also investigated how teacher feedback in a process-oriented EFL writing class affected students' opinions about writing.

Process Approach for Teaching L2 Writing

In a process-oriented approach for teaching writing, emphasis is placed on writing as a process rather than as a finished final product. Students write multiple drafts and make substantive revisions on the basis of teacher feedback given between drafts rather than only on the final draft (Raimes, 1991). Grabe and Kaplan (1996) acknowledge the benefits of the process approach, and they state that it fosters: (a) self-discovery and the author's voice, (b) the need to approach writing as a goal-oriented and contextualized activity, (c) invention and pre-writing activities and writing multiple-drafts according to feedback between drafts, (d) various sources of feedback (the teacher, peers, and real audiences) and other teacher feedback delivery systems such as conferencing and audio-taped or e-mailed commentary, (e) content and personal expression as more crucial than final product and grammar usage, (f) the idea that writing is a recursive rather than a linear process, and (g) students' awareness of the notions of the writing process such as audience and plans.

Process writing pedagogies emerged as a result of resistance to the traditional product-focused approach which entailed emphasis on the composed product rather than the composing process (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). It follows from the recent research done on the multiple-draft, process-oriented writing classes in the last fifteen years that, as Ferris (2003) concludes, "Teacher feedback can and often does help student writers to improve their writing from one draft to the next and over time. However, evidence on this is unfortunately quite limited, particularly as to longitudinal analyses" (p. 28).

Since teacher feedback on student writing has to cover all aspects of the student text (content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics), it can take two forms:

teacher commentary responding to content and organization and teacher feedback responding to grammatical issues. One of the first studies done in L2 on the effect of teacher feedback is that of Fathman and Whalley (1990). They analyzed the compositions and rewrites of 72 intermediate ESL college students to find out whether students' revision strategies changed when they focused on the form and/or content of their writing. The results of this study suggested that a majority of the students improved the grammar and content of their revisions, suggesting that rewriting is beneficial. The study also showed that content feedback improved the content of student revisions more than when content feedback was not provided, suggesting that even general comments about content can be effective on student revisions. The provision of grammar and content feedback at the same time improved the content of student revisions nearly as much as when only content feedback was given, suggesting that student writing can improve when form and content feedback are given simultaneously.

As for feedback on grammar, a number of suggestions exist in the literature. Teachers can use checklists of grammar and editing, give verbal feedback on the location and type of the error, underline or circle the error or make checkmarks in the margin to show the location of the error, and give feedback in the margins or endnotes about the general pattern of errors (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998). Paulus (1999) investigated the effect of peer and teacher feedback on student revisions and the effect of multi-draft process on the overall improvement of student essays. She analyzed eleven student essays and classified the types and sources of student revisions according to Faigley and Witte's (1981) taxonomy of revisions by evaluating the first and final drafts of the students' essays and recording students' verbal reports during revision. In the core of Faigley and Witte's taxonomy lies the distinction between those changes that affect the meaning of a text (global changes) and those that do not (surface or local changes). The writer makes surface changes to the text by correcting grammatical and lexical errors in order to convey the intended meaning. In the study, the majority of student revisions were found to be surface-level revisions, but the changes made on the basis of peer and teacher feedback were more often meaning-level changes compared to the revisions the students made on their own.

Many writing teachers believe that one-on-one writing conferences with students are more influential than handwritten comments and corrections no matter what aspect of student writing the teacher and the student discuss, be it content, organization, or errors (Zamel, 1985). The technique is advantageous for a number of reasons. Teachers can save more time and energy than they do when they give written feedback, it has room for interaction and negotiation, and it is an effective means of communicating with students who have an auditory learning style (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998).

The main issues that controlled research on writing conferences have looked at are the evaluation of teachers and students after conferences and the nature of teacher-student

interaction during conferences. From examining the research done by Carnicelli (1980), Sokmen (1988), Zamel (1985), and Zhu (1994) on teacher-evaluations, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) concluded that compared to written feedback, students receive more detailed and comprehensible feedback in one-on-one conferences. Research done on the nature of teacher-student interaction shows that the degree of usefulness of conferences can change (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Research findings suggest that conferences are effective on student writing when students actively participate and negotiate meaning (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990).

The effects of one-on-one conferences on student revisions in writing has been examined by Goldstein and Conrad (1990) and Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997). Goldstein and Conrad investigated three ESL student texts, one-on-one conference transcripts, and revisions to probe into each student's participation pattern and the influence of these patterns on their revisions. The qualitative and quantitative differences found among ESL students from various cultural backgrounds revealed themselves in the nature of the conferences and their effects on student revision. Students differed in their ability and desire to nominate topics for discussion and give each other input, to set the agenda, and to negotiate meaning. Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997) suggest that in the most successful conferences students participate actively, ask questions, clarify meaning, and discuss their writing rather than just accepting the teacher's advice. In cases where oral conferences are successful, they not only lead to revisions in the drafting process, but also have subsequent effects on the improvement of the writing ability in later assignments.

Purpose of the Study

For the present study, the teacher-researcher aimed to equip a class of 20 pre-intermediate students with effective invention, drafting, and revising strategies and help them develop metacognitive awareness of the writing strategies they use during the writing process. The teacher-researcher also aimed to investigate the effect of process-based writing instruction on her pre-intermediate level EFL writing class. Also, she had the intention of finding out to what extent written teacher feedback used together with oral teacher feedback would benefit the revision strategies of a pre-intermediate learner of English across drafts.

Specifically, the research questions used for this study were:

1) Do written and oral teacher feedback have an impact on pre-intermediate student revisions in a process-oriented EFL writing class? If so, to what extent?

2) What are students' opinions on the type and amount of teacher feedback they received between the first and final drafts?

Methodology

Research Context

This study was carried out at an English preparatory program of the School of Foreign Languages at an English-medium state university in İstanbul, Turkey. The school is responsible for giving English classes to all preparatory school students who have been newly accepted to the university after having passed the university entrance exam but have not shown the required proficiency in English in the University's English proficiency test to continue their studies as freshmen.

The teacher-researcher carrying out this particular study has been a teacher of English for twelve years. She has taught in preparatory schools of English language in various universities.

Participants

There were originally 20 participants in this study from a beginning-level class of 20 students (9 female and 11 male aged between 18 and 24) within the School of Foreign Languages at the university. Drafts from only 16 students were included in this study due to one student dropping out of school and three students having low grade point averages.

Implementation of the Process Writing Approach

The study was carried out during the last two weeks of a 14-week spring semester. The researcher, who was also the teacher of the class, adopted the process approach to the teaching of writing in her class of 20 pre-intermediate students. The teacher-researcher met her class four days a week and taught them for a total of 17 hours per week. Seven class hours per week were scheduled for the writing skill. During the first 12 weeks of the spring semester, the students produced seven essays. For each essay, students wrote two intermediate drafts and a final draft, and they received written feedback on both intermediate drafts of each essay. Oral feedback was given on only one essay draft during this time.

The last two weeks of the semester constituted the data collection period for this study. During these two weeks, the students were assigned a writing topic and they produced two intermediate drafts and a final draft, following the same process previously established in the semester. All students received both written feedback on the first and second drafts and oral feedback on the second draft before completing the final draft of this essay. The intermediate and final drafts of this essay constituted the data used for this study. The reason for using the essays from the last two weeks of the semester was to give the students more time and practice with the process-based writing approach.

Data

The data for this study came from student drafts, teacher-student conferences, and a questionnaire.

Student Drafts

The feedback written on students' drafts during the last two weeks of the semester constituted the written feedback data for this study. Written feedback on students' first drafts (D1s) involved both grammar and content feedback. For providing grammar feedback, the teacher-researcher used an error checklist which included error codes focusing on grammatical accuracy, word choice, mechanics (punctuation and spelling), sentence level coherence, and accuracy of clauses. An adapted version of Lane and Lange's (1993) editing guide was used at this stage (see Appendix A for the error checklist). In the D1s, the teacher-researcher identified the location of the error by underlining the error and writing the particular symbol for the error. In the second drafts (D2s), she made checkmarks for the errors that had been corrected accurately and underlined those that had been revised inaccurately by the student. The teacher-researcher blended content and grammar feedback in all drafts.

At the end of students' D1s and D2s, the teacher-researcher gave written commentary in the form of text-specific comments or questions and summary comments on grammar, organization, content, and vocabulary. The teacher commentary was based on the guidelines suggested by Bates, Lane, and Lange (1993).

Teacher-Student Conferences

After students used the written feedback on the D1 to write a D2, the teacher-researcher gave oral feedback to each student through one-on-one conferences. Each conference was approximately 15 minutes long and was held at appointed times outside class hours. The conference was tape recorded by the teacher-researcher and transcribed. Then the transcriptions were analyzed and were used to check the revisions that were made between the D2s and final drafts and based on oral teacher feedback.

In conducting teacher-student conferences, the stages suggested by Reid (1993) were followed: openings, student-initiated comments, teacher-initiated comments, reading of the paper, and closings. Before the one-on-one conference, each student had to fill in a "Revision Planning Conference Sheet" taken from Reid. During the one-on-one conferences, each student started off by commenting on what they thought the best and the weakest parts of their essay were and then went on to ask the teacher-researcher questions about her feedback on the D2. After the student-initiated comments, the teacher-researcher focused on points she felt still needed attention. These points were either form-based mistakes that still existed in the D2 or content-related comments that required further revision by the student. The teacher-researcher did not write any notes on the students' D2s during the conferences, but the students were allowed to take notes as they wished during the teacher's oral feedback.

Thus, the feedback procedures on students' drafts can be summed up in the following way:

(a) First Draft – The writing topic was set as take-home assignment. After students produced a D1, the teacher provided written feedback on it.

(b) Second Draft – In order to produce the D2, students made revisions outside class based on written teacher feedback given to the D1. The teacher then provided written feedback on the D2 and oral feedback during one-on-one writing conferences.

(c) Final draft – Students used the oral and written feedback from the D2 to produce a final draft of the essay.

Questionnaire

To examine students' views on teacher feedback, the students were given a questionnaire (see Appendix B). The open-ended questions in the questionnaire aimed to find the students' views on the usefulness of teacher feedback on their writing performance and their views on the advantages and disadvantages of process approach to the teaching of writing.

Data Analysis

The first research question asked whether written and oral teacher feedback have an impact on student revisions.

Written Feedback

To determine the effects of written teacher feedback on student writing, D1s and D2s were first assessed for grammatical accuracy and then for content quality. To assess D1s and D2s for grammatical accuracy, all the grammatical, lexical, and mechanical errors of all D1s and D2s were counted and assigned a rating for grammatical accuracy. The rating was based on the total number of errors divided by the total number of words in a draft. In this study, the teacher-researcher counted clause-level and word-level errors. Not only incorrect words or clauses were counted, but also missing words were indicated in the drafts.

To confirm the teacher-researcher's error coding, two colleagues reviewed the marked errors in both drafts. The first interrater agreed with the teacher-researcher across 96% of the codes in the D1s and 100 % of the codes in the D2s. The second interrater agreed with the teacher-researcher 95% and 96% respectively.

To determine the types of revisions students made on the basis of the teacher's written feedback between D1s and D2s, a slightly adapted version of Yagelgsky's (1995) coding scheme, which was adapted from Faigley & Witte (1981), was used (see Appendix C for the coding scheme). Changes in the D2s were given a code from one of five categories: surface changes (grammar and mechanics), stylistic changes (lexical or phrasing),

organizational changes (organization or paragraphing) and content changes. The codes were then tabluated to determine for each D2 the number of changes within each category.

In order to determine how much the students reacted to the teacher commentary on content and organization, the teacher-researcher used an adapted version of Ferris' (1997) "Rating Scale for Revisions," which categorizes the revisions as no change, minimal change with positive/negative effects, or substantive change with positive/negative effects. The scale shows the degree to which a student addresses each teacher comment in the revision by making no attempt, a minimal attempt, or a substantive attempt.

Oral Feedback

In order to analyze the teacher's oral feedback in response to the oral feedback part of the first research question, the teacher-researcher analysed the revisions between the D2s and final copies by identifying to what extent the revisions in the final draft were based on the feedback received during the one-on-one conference. Specifically, the teacher-researcher examined whether the student was able to make satisfactory changes in the final draft by going through the conference transcript in detail, noting where the student was helped to notice incorrect revisions based on the teacher's written feedback, and checking for corresponding revisions in the final draft.

Just as a rating was assigned for grammatical accuracy across D1s and D2s, so was it assigned for grammatical accuracy of the final drafts. All the grammatical, lexical, and mechanical errors of all final drafts were counted and assigned a rating for grammatical accuracy. The rating which measured grammatical accuracy according to the written amount was based on the total number of errors divided by the total number of words in a draft. To find out if all sixteen students made any improvement in terms of grammar, lexis, and mechanics from D2 to the final drafts of their essays, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was performed on their D2 and final draft ratings for grammatical accuracy.

To determine the kind of revisions students made between the D2s and final drafts on the basis of the teacher's oral feedback, Yagelgsky's (1995) coding scheme was again used. Final drafts were analysed to determine whether the changes made were surface changes (grammar and mechanics), stylistic changes (lexical or phrasing), organizational changes (organization or paragraphing) or content changes. Within each category, the number of changes every student made between the D2 and final draft was counted.

To assess the effect of oral teacher feedback on the extent of student revisions on content between D2 and final draft, Ferris's (1997) "Rating Scale for Revisions" was again used to analyse the degree to which a student addressed each teacher comment in the revision.The teacher-researcher compared the students' final copies with their transcripts and judged the effect of the revisions as having no change, minimal change with positive/negative effects, and substantive change with positive/negative effects.

The interraters were informed about how to follow the same systematic process during the evaluation of student rewrites as the teacher-researcher did herself. They also used the same error checklist and guidelines for each draft. The interraters reviewed the teacher-researcher's revision codes, and when there was disagreement, they put crosses for each error or comment. In the oral feedback procedures of the final drafts, the first interrater and the second interrater agreed with the teacher-researcher 87% and 65 % respectively.

Results and Discussion

Effect of Written Teacher Feedback

In her written feedback across students' D1s and final essays, the teacher-researcher simultaneously focused on form (i.e., grammatical accuracy of student writing), content, and organization. The mean score of the grammatical accuracy for all students in D1 was .0923 and the mean for the final essay was .0193. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test run on D1 ratings and final draft ratings showed that students significantly improved their grammatical accuracy across their D1s and final essays ($p < 0.05$) confirming the first research question which investigates the impact of oral and written teacher feedback on student revisions. The subtraction of mean of grammatical accuracy ratings of D1s from final essays produced positive results in each and every student ($p < 0.05$) showing a statistically significant difference between the mean of grammatical ratings of D1s and final essays. This suggests all students improved their grammatical accuracy significantly across their rewrites. The students made a significantly fewer number of grammatical, lexical, and mechanical mistakes in their final essays than they did in their D1s as they revised their texts on the basis of the grammar error codes.

Some examples of how students revised their grammar across their rewrites are as follows:

Example 1: WC

A word choice error in D1: "*Next, if they win a university which is outside their hometown, will they attend this university or not?*"

Revised version: "*Next, if they enter a university which is outside their hometown, will they attend this university or not?*"

Example 2:

A preposition, punctuation, pronoun reference, and verb tense error in D1: "*On the*

PREP PUNC PRO REF VT

other hand, beside these advantages_of course_ they experienced some unpleasant situations and feelings."

Revised version: "*On the other hand, besides these advantages, of course, students*

attending a university outside their hometowns experience some unpleasant situations and feelings."

As for the teacher commentary on content and organization, in total, the teacher-researcher noted down sixty-two comments which asked for explanation, description, or addition on the part of the students so that they could improve their content in their final essays. Thirty percent of these comments requested only minimal content revisions, and students were generally successful in making these changes. The teacher found these revisions sufficient in terms of expansion of the topic. In contrast, 24.1% of the comments required the students to produce substantial content revisions. However, the students were less successful in revising content which required major revisions, and the teacher found these revisions generally insufficient.

The following are some examples of student revisions made based on teacher comments that requested only minimal content revisions:

Example 1: (A thesis statement)

"*Students who attend a university outside their hometowns have some advantages and disadvantages to overcome some difficulties because of being far away from their families*."

Teacher comment: The infinitive of purpose does not fit in the main clause in terms of meaning. Please check the thesis statement again.

Revised version: "Students who attend a university outside their hometowns have some advantages and disadvantages."

Example 2: (A concluding sentence from the conclusion paragraph)

"*To sum up, going other towns to study has not only advantages but also disadvantages.*"

Teacher comment: …to study where?

Revised version: "*To sum up, going to other towns to study university or high school has both advantages and disadvantages.*"

The teacher-researcher found these revisions positive and gave a rating of 4 which meant "minimal attempt has been made by student to address the comment, effect generally positive".

The data showed that students made a total of 179 revisions (surface, stylistic, organizational, and content) as a result of the teacher's written feedback. Table 1 shows the type of revisions made on the basis of written teacher feedback. Surface changes accounted for 41.8% of the total and included errors in punctuation, spelling, capitalization, nouns, verbs, and reference words. This indicated that the students were more likely to attend to correcting the grammar mistakes and vocabulary. However, the vocabulary revisions made by the students required further work on the side of the teacher

Table 1
Type of Revisions Resulting from Written Teacher Feedback

Type of revisions	Frequency	Percentages
Surface changes	75	41.8%
Stylistic changes	47	26.2%
Organizational changes	06	03.3%
Content changes	51	28.4%

since the students could not make the appropriate word choice required by the context. They could easily handle grammatical revisions due to the formal instruction offered in the class.

The Effect of Oral Teacher Feedback

All students in the present study produced the final draft of a paper after having received oral feedback in one-on-one writing conferences they held with their teacher. This means, the revisions of D2s were based on oral teacher feedback. The same calculations which were done to assess the effect of written teacher feedback were also used to assess the effect of oral teacher feedback. Oral feedback on form was assessed at a rating based on the total number of errors divided by the total number of words in a draft. The smaller the rating was, the fewer errors per the number of words were found in a given student text.

The mean for the 16 students in D2 was .0193 and the mean for them in D3 was .0037. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test run on D2 ratings and final draft ratings showed that students improved their grammatical accuracy across their D2s and final drafts ($p < .05$). The subtraction of mean grammatical accuracy ratings of final drafts from those of D2s produced positive results in each and every student ($p < .05$), showing a significant difference between the mean of grammatical ratings of final drafts and D2s. This shows significant improvement in all students' grammatical accuracy across their second revision. All students took the teacher's oral feedback on the grammatical aspects of their D2s seriously and made the necessary corrections resulting in a fewer number of grammar, lexical, and mechanical errors in their final drafts.

In total, during the one-on-one conferences with her students, the teacher-researcher orally made twenty-one comments which asked for explanation, description, or addition on the part of the students so that they could improve their content in their final drafts.

As a result of the writing conference, the students made a total of 45 revisions. Table 2 shows the types of revisions made by the students as a result of oral teacher feedback. Of all these changes, content changes accounted for the highest at 37.7%. The one-on-one writing conferences held right after the writing-up of the D2 seemed to be more effective on students' content and lexical revisions than it did on their grammar and organizational revisions.

Students' Opinions on the Writing Process Approach

The first two questions in the questionnaire asked whether the students felt that their teacher's comments and corrections help them to improve their composition skills and asked them to write the reasons. The students felt that their teacher's feedback helped them improve their composition skills, and the majority stated that they noticed their mistakes, corrected them, and learnt not to repeat them. The comments also helped them to understand the use of new words and collocations.

The third question in the questionnaire asked the students' opinions about the effects of the process approach on their writing skills. Forty percent of the students said that they learnt to write more coherent essays with fewer mistakes. Another 40% stated that they learnt how to introduce and develop an essay and write in an organized and planned way. Twenty percent indicated that the approach affected their writing skill in a positive way. Therefore, the students gained insight into the writing process approach which in turn resulted in the students' becoming aware of their weaknesses and strengths as pre-intermediate student writers. For the majority of the students, the process approach was effective for improving their writing ability although they found the drafting process to be time-consuming.

Table 2

Type of Revisions Resulting from Oral Teacher Feedback

Type of revisions	Frequency	Percentages
Surface changes	11	24.4%
Stylistic changes	14	31.1%
Organizational changes	03	06.6%
Content changes	17	37.7%

Conclusion

The results of this study suggest that written teacher feedback positively affects students' grammatical revisions but has a limited effect on content revisions. In terms of grammatical accuracy, all students succeeded in acting on teacher error feedback and thereby accurately revising the grammar of their first drafts to a great extent. Specifically, they were able to interpret the teacher's error codes correctly and make the required grammar, lexical, and mechanical revisions between their drafts. In contrast, the students did not perform in revising their ideas and organization as well as they did in revising their language. The teacher's written feedback on language errors had a more positive effect on the correction of grammatical errors than her written comments about ideas and organization did on the improvement of the content of the rewrites. Only 35% of the teacher's comments were judged as having a positive effect on the content of the D2s.

These two results confirmed Silva's (1993) observation that learners' revisions are often superficial. Learners read over their revisions less, reflect less on them, and revise less. When they revise their texts, the revision is mainly focused on grammatical correction. Furthermore, these results parallel Fathman and Whalley's (1990) study in which all students in the group receiving simultaneous content and form feedback improved their grammatical accuracy and 77% improved their content. In the same way, all students in the present study improved their grammatical accuracy in their D2s but showed less dramatic improvement with their content.

Ferris (1997) states that "Marginal requests for information, requests (regardless of syntactic form), and summary comments on grammar appeared to lead to the most substantive revisions" (p. 330). Conversely, in the present study, student revisions of content that were categorized as substantive and effective by the teacher-researcher were in the minority (only 4.8% of the cases). One possible reason for not being able to make major positive changes in content could have been students' lack of practice in making content revisions as well as limited knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and content, which can inhibit students' writing performance.

Another factor that could account for students' ineffective content revisions is the transfer of L1 writing ability to the L2. A skilled L1 writer is likely to transfer these skills to L2 writing if the writer has reached a certain level of L2 proficiency. Accordingly, those who find it difficult to write in their L1 may not have the skills to help them in their L2 writing development. The fact that the students were fairly unsuccessful in revising their content across drafts could be attributed to their inadequate composition writing ability in their L1. Inadequate experience with composing in Turkish (L1) language classes at high school might have brought about weak revision skills in their L2 writing. In general, students have difficulty elaborating points in a body paragraph and relating them to the flow of ideas in an essay.

A third reason for students' ineffective content revisions might be their limited range of L2 vocabulary. Even if they know how to expand a point, their inability to choose the right word according to context and usage is a hindrance to successful revisions. In short, it is possible that limited knowledge of content and vocabulary constrained the students' L2 writing.

As for the effect of the one-on-one writing conferences held following the D2 rewrites, all students' texts showed gains in accuracy with language revisions constituting 55.5% of all revisions made. The conferences had a significant effect on the grammatical improvement of the students' texts but only a marginal effect on content-related revisions. It can be said that the conferences in this study did not result in successful student revisions on content.

Implications for Language Teachers

Considering that the improvement of student writing between drafts in the present study is due to the nature of teacher feedback, it may be appropriate to propose this kind of teacher feedback to be used to respond to pre-intermediate student writing in a process-oriented writing class. In the present study, two forms of teacher written feedback were used: teacher commentary for content-based feedback and form-based feedback. The two types seem to be complementary. At points where error codes are not informative enough, these can be addressed through a comment. Teachers could do this by numbering the parts that need revision and writing down the corresponding comment at the end of blank space in the student's paper.

As for form-based feedback, error codes are effective in stimulating student response (e.g., Ferris, 1997) and in developing self-editing strategies (Hyland, 2003). The checklist for error codes could reflect what has been covered in grammar in the program. It has been suggested by some researchers that focused grammar instruction on problematic writing errors should accompany writing feedback so that learners can accelerate their development (Ellis, 1998).

As for the teacher's oral feedback, the pedagogical generalization that emerged from this study regarding one-on-one teacher-student conferences is that both the student and the teacher should come to the conference well-prepared. Before the conference, the student should read the draft carefully on which the teacher has given feedback and identify the sections about which the student would like to ask questions to the teacher, number them, and write a relevant question or comment on a separate piece of paper. The teacher should note down the points that the teacher wants to discuss or clarify in advance. At lower proficiency levels, the teacher could hold the conference in the L1, as was the case in this study, to ensure better teacher-student negotiation and student self-expression.

Regarding the responsibility of the syllabus designers in this network, Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) assert that the stages that a writer goes through starting with pre-writing

and ending with publishing of the written text are recursive and overlapping and this process should be used broadly to outline the sequence of any classroom activity. After syllabus designers work out the goals, materials, and writing tasks accordingly, academic calendars showing deadlines for drafts and assignments, peer feedback sessions, and teacher-student conferences should be scheduled so that students can keep track of their progress themselves.

Finally, further investigation on teacher feedback between drafts has to be made to draw a more accurate and comprehensive picture of the effect of teacher response to student writing and the research questions of this study can be posed for student writings of other levels for this aim.

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Appendix A

Error Checklist

	Error code	Explanation	Example
1.	vt	incorrect verb tense	In the last weeks, you did not have much fun.
2.	vt	verb incorrectly formed	I am not go on a holiday this summer.
3.	modal	incorrect use or formation of a modal	I can exercise three times a week when I was younger.
4.	cond	incorrect use or formation of a conditional sentence	If she married that rich man, she would not be living in a pigsty now.
5.	ss	incorrect sentence structure	We want that you come.
6.	wo	incorrect or awkward word order	I have not see yet London.
7.	conn	inocrrect or missing connector	I did not listen to my doctor. I got worse.
8.	pass	incorrect formation or use of passive voice.	the Internet use worldwide.
9.	sv	incorrect subject-verb agreement	She like jogging every Sunday morning.
10.	art	incorrect or missing article	A honest individual is someone you can rely on.
11.	sing/pl	problem with the singular or plural of a noun	A garden usually has flower in it.
12.	wc	wrong word choice	I do not like to borrow my stuff to people.
13.	wf	wrong word form	He was accused of thief.
14.	nonidiom	nonidiomatic (not expressed this way in English)	I feel myself relaxed when I sunbath.
15.	cap	capitalization; capital letter needed	In the past, french was the lingua franca.

	Error code	Explanation	Example
16.	coh	one idea does not lead to the next	The mining industry are able to bring two things to the country. First a large amount of revenue to the country and also jeopardy to the natural environment. Other mines all over the world area good example of this. Therefore, we must have only local companies to mine.
17.	cs	comma splice; 2 independent clauses joined by a comma	The media has a major influence our society, they provide a model for how people should live.
18.	frag	fragment; incomplete sentence	Scientists believe that global warming could produce side effects. For example the changing of the earth's wind patterns.
19.	lc	lower case; word(s) incorrectly capitalized	I like Spring the most.
20.	punc	punctuation incorrect or missing	We also need flour eggs and milk for the cake.
21.	pr agree/ pro ref	pronoun agreement or reference unclear or incorrect	An increase in global temperature would melt the polar ice caps. Thus, it would empty more water into the oceans. They also predict that this ocean rise could flood port cities and coastal land.
22.	ro	run-on (two independent clauses joined with no punctuation)	He has four children two of them go to high school.
23.	sp	spelling	I find the pronounciation of English difficult.
24.	prep	incorrect or missing preposition	He leaves from his office early.
25.	∧	something is missing	a verb, a preposition, a subject

Appendix B

Questionnaire on Teacher Feedback

1. Do you feel that your teacher's comments and corrections help you to improve your composition skills? Why or why not?
2. Would you prefer to learn writing through the process approach in your future writing classes? If you prefer to do so, why? If you do not, why not? Can you write your reasons? (Note: The writing pedagogies of the process approach include pre-writing activities, planning and drafting, rewriting and revising, feedback and revision, editing.)
3. How do you think learning writing through the "process approach to writing" had affected your composition writing skills?
4. What do you think are the advantages and the disadvantages of the "process approach to the teaching of writing"? Please write your comments briefly.

Appendix C

Coding Scheme for Revisions

1. Surface changes (Mechanics) (i.e., corrections of errors)
   a. Punctuation (punc)
   b. Spelling (sp)
   c. Capitalization (cap,lc)
   d. Nouns (sing/ plu, art, prep)
   e. Verb form corrections other than nouns (sv, vf, vt, modal, pass, cond)
   f. Substitutions (pro ref, pro agree)
2. Stylistic changes
   a. Lexical changes (wc)
   b. Phrasing
      i. Syntactic (meaning-preserving rewordings; including adding or deleting words: e.g. to avoid an awkward construction) (wf, nonidiom)
      ii. Structural (meaning- preserving sentence restructuring) (ro, cs, frag, ss, wo)
3. Organizational changes
   a. Organization (within paragraphs; within essay) (coh, conn)
4. Content changes

a. Addition of new material (new subject matter or ideas_as distinct from simply adding new words to tighten a phrase or sentence, as in IIB) to develop subject or clarify points.

b. Deleting material (deleting subject matter or ideas_as distinct from deleting words to make a sentence or phrase tighter).

Call for Tips

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

Cope with large multi-level classes

Adapt high tech ideas for your low tech classroom

Use prescribed teaching materials

Scaffold for success when materials are difficult and expectations are high

Minimize the negative backwash of high stakes testing

Bridge the divide between home and school

Achieve big results with small changes

Or

Do you have an activity that works every time?

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

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

Tips for Teachers

Learning from Each Other: The Power of Personal Narrative in Adult ESL Classes

John Clayton, University of Cincinnati, Ohio

This story begins in a small town in western Tennessee about 25 years ago. At the time, the working men and women in the community were employed primarily on area farms or in one of two large, locally-owned factories. In 1988, when both factories were purchased by Japanese conglomerates, a number of Japanese business executives, their wives, and children were added to what had previously been a roughly 99 percent white Protestant population. The men were assigned to work two year terms in the factories before transferring back to Japan. While they worked, their wives had time to study English at the local Adult Education Center. In 2006, I was hired to teach this class. Since I had previously taught English for two years in rural Japan, I felt well prepared. Also enrolled were several Chinese couples who were owners and managers of the town's only two Asian food restaurants. Though they had lived in the United States for many years, they still felt uncomfortable with many aspects of English and wanted to improve their communication skills.

Within an hour of meeting the class, however, I realized that I was not nearly as well prepared as I had initially thought. By conducting a needs analysis, I learned that English skills and proficiency levels in the two groups of students were almost diametrically opposed. Most of the Japanese students had studied English formally through high school, and all but one had then gone on to complete college degrees. They had had at least six years of English study although typically instruction had followed a very traditional grammar and translation model. Until coming to the United States less than a year before the start of our class, none of them had ever left Japan before or had much interaction with native English speakers. Thus, their speaking, listening, and overall oral communication skills were very limited, but their writing and reading skills were quite advanced. When they found it difficult to respond to a question or take part in a conversation, they often wrote down their questions or frustrations in excellent English and submitted them to me for review. The Chinese students, on the other hand, came from

very different circumstances. They left school after the primary level to work and help support their families, came to the United States while still in their teens, and immediately went to work opening businesses serving mostly American customers. As a result, they quickly developed strong English speaking and listening skills, but had very limited skills in reading and writing.

Separating the results of my needs analysis into two piles on my desk, I was unsure how to proceed. First, there were linguistic issues. On one hand, I had highly educated students with little ability to communicate effectively in class but who could write and read nearly anything I put in front of them. On the other hand, I had a several students with advanced communication skills but who had trouble reading or writing English beyond the elementary level. I also wondered about their personal needs. I was aware of the benefits of having positive group dynamics in my class, so I wanted to help them to work together and get to know each other, but with this group, I was unsure how to make that happen.

Fortunately, I saw that a traditional teacher- or curriculum-centered approach would probably not be the best route to take with this class. It was an ideal opportunity in which to employ transformative teacher practices such as Critical Pedagogy to create a student-centered atmosphere where students not only interacted as equals but also took collective responsibility for articulating our goals and determining our direction as a class. To put these principles into practice, I followed this procedure:

1. I designed a series of simple interviews which functioned as conversation scaffolds. The questions gave students the opportunity and the means to share their personal narratives and life experiences with each other. We began with very general questions such as *Where are you from? Tell us about your hometown. Why did you come to America?*
2. Gradually the students began to take greater responsibility for designing their own interviews or surveys. I answered their questions and provided guidance as necessary, but they set the direction. A useful resource for creating such surveys or interviews is the *Internet TESL Journal*, particularly this link to "Conversation Questions for the ESL/EFL Classroom" at http://iteslj.org/questions/.
3. I created diverse groups intermingling students of different ethnicities, levels of English proficiency, and interests.
4. I gave each group the written interview.
5. I asked students with stronger oral fluency to interview classmates with weaker fluency. The interviewees needed to respond to questions, giving them some much-needed speaking practice, but they did not feel overwhelmed because they were "simply" answering questions.
6. During their conversation, the interviewer took brief notes on what the interviewee said.

7. All students wrote brief reflections of the interview including what was asked and what was answered. This step challenged students with weaker literacy skills.
8. I walked around the class, checking for understanding and facilitating as needed.
9. We met as a class and various groups reported their findings. Other students took notes.
10. I asked several questions about survey or interview results and called on students at random to answer them.
11. Students returned to their small groups to refine their written reflections. Stronger students assisted their classmates with writing, editing, and correcting their papers.
12. We repeated this process over the course of several weeks with different groupings. Over time, each student was able to work with every other student in the class.

Through this routine not only were students able to accomplish English tasks using all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—but they were also able to get to know their peers, understand what they had in common, and appreciate each other's unique skills, challenges, and stories. Indeed, this last component became almost as important as the English lessons themselves. For example, students who lacked formal education began the course feeling that their college-educated classmates were much more advanced, or "better" as English students. Working closely together, however, they were able to see that each of them had strengths in some areas and weaknesses in others and that they could help each other meet their individual and class goals.

Though this was my first encounter with such a uniquely diverse group of English language learners, I am confident that my situation was not unique. Many language teachers throughout the world have highly diverse classes with students of different backgrounds, proficiency levels, general education, socioeconomic standing, and overall goals for learning English. I hope that other teachers can adapt the transformative student-centered procedure described above to foster a sense of camaraderie, motivation, and excitement about learning English as well as to build bridges between various groups of students.

About the Author

John Clayton is an instructor in the Center for ESL at the University of Cincinnati. He has taught in both EFL and ESL settings in the United States and abroad. He is particularly interested in transformative teaching practices such as Critical Pedagogy.

Improving ESL Students' Note-taking Skills

Emilio G. Cortez, Philadelphia School District

Although recent advances in technology mean that course content is delivered in a wider range of modes and media than a few years ago, note-taking remains an important skill for the college-bound student. The professorial lecture is still an important vehicle for disseminating content in many courses. As instructors expand, simplify, and explain course-related topics, students' note taking skills are essential for identifying and retaining the insights and concepts being presented. And whether formal lectures are a feature of a course or not, most instructors provide important information, discuss course requirements, give instructions, and modify assignments in spontaneous, informal, unscripted remarks during class. It is the students' responsibility to somehow capture this information—to take effective notes. Taking good notes can also improve students' listening and writing skills and help reinforce, prioritize, and rephrase information in a personal way contributing to better long-term comprehension.

The note-taking skills needed to succeed in an English medium college or university level course can present cultural as well as linguistic challenges for the second language learner. For example, in settings where course content is mostly delivered from professor to students, taking notes frequently means copying the professor's words from the blackboard into a notebook to be read later. This practice is unlikely to be sufficient or effective in most English-medium lectures.

The three suggestions described below can help address both the linguistic and cultural aspects of academic note-taking skills in your ESL or EFL students.

Suggestion 1: Customizing Input

In addition to the recorded lectures that accompany many course books, it is easier now than ever to customize aural input to meet the specific needs and interests of a particular group of students. Many teachers have been making their own video recordings of televised shows and excerpts of actual lectures for a number of years, but if you teach in a classroom equipped with computer or Internet access, or if you have access to a mini video recorder, you can do much more to create effective customized materials to give your students meaningful practice in improving note-taking skills. For example, you can ask colleagues, who teach courses of general interest or utility to your ESL students, to present live mini lectures in your class or to video record a five-to-ten minute excerpt from one of their lectures that you can use again and again. Other sources of viable excerpted lectures are television or Internet broadcasts of current topics of

interest such as news, sports, or documentaries. *YouTube* is an obvious potential source of appealing, short, authentic material packaged in classroom-ready chunks. Finally you can encourage your students to suggest topics, search Internet video libraries, or even videotape their own material that they would like to study, share, and understand. Giving them this opportunity or responsibility often helps them buy into the process and get more out of an activity than when it is the teacher's choice alone. As an example, one group of my students requested a mini lecture on questions related to the state motor-vehicle licensing examination.

Suggestion 2: Showing, Not Just Telling

With technology like smart boards or data projectors in many classrooms, you can show your students how an efficient note-taker works. Instead of simply *telling* them to use abbreviations, focus on the main ideas, and ignore the minor details, you can *show* them how to do this. You can also discuss why you chose to include or underscore some information in your notes and to ignore other information. In other words, students can hear and see what is in the mind of a fluent speaker as you write and discuss your notes. A variation on this idea is to take notes on a computer at the same time that your students are listening and taking notes but with your projector turned off. After hearing the lecture, students can interact in small peer groups, compare notes, and discuss among themselves which information, facts, or concepts were key points in the lecture. Individual students may volunteer to share their notes with the entire class. Finally, you can reveal your notes and use them to provide feedback and address additional points of concern as needed.

Suggestion 3: Using Teachable Moments to Discuss Note-taking

Note-taking practice need not always be part of a formal lecture-like activity. At other points during your lesson, soon after presenting new information, you can call on students to read their notes aloud to the class. Such immediate, on-the-spot attention to essential information can help students see how note-taking strategies can be applied in contexts other than formal lectures. It can also help you monitor student comprehension of classroom discourse and identify words, phrases, or concepts that may require further explanation. Finally, pausing over such teachable moments can help you evaluate the overall effectiveness of your lesson.

Incorporating these suggestions in your ESL class can make a difference in students' note taking skills as well as enhance their listening, speaking, and comprehension skills. As always, there are caveats. For example, you must be mindful of topics or content that could create social or cultural discomfort for some of your students. Thus, it is important to preview materials before using them in class. Another reason to preview materials is to ensure that they are at an appropriate level of comprehensibility for your students. Finally, be sure to educate yourself about rules governing the use of copyrighted material and broadcasts.

About the Author

Dr. Emilio G. Cortez received a doctoral degree from Temple University. He retired after thirty years of teaching ESL in the Philadelphia School District. Dr. Cortez served on the TESL Reporter *Editorial Review Board and several of his articles have appeared in past issues of the journal.*

Five Easy Ways to Increase Participation and Improve Motivation

Aubrey Olsen, Brigham Young University Hawai'i, Laie, Hawai'i
Elisa Harding Hunt, Higher Colleges of Technology, Dubai, UAE

Nearing the end of the semester? Are you or your students feeling burned out? Do you notice fewer and fewer students consistently coming to class? How can you keep students excited about learning English? How can you maintain a pleasant classroom environment right up until the end of the semester? Here are five simple ideas that will surely help.

One Extra Credit Point

It is amazing to see just how much a student will do for just one point. This strategy can be applied to almost any assignment or activity. For example, sometimes teachers walk into class counting on group participation to carry the lesson. If students refuse to participate, the lesson can fail. In this situation, one extra credit point can be an immediate solution to the problem. If each student who participates is awarded one extra credit point, the teacher will soon have many willing volunteers.

Extra credit points are handy for solving a variety of different problems. If students are consistently late, offer an extra credit point to those who arrive on time. If homework assignments are consistently sloppy, offer an extra credit point for neatly typed work. The beautiful aspect of one extra credit point is that it generally does not have a significant effect on student grades, but if it is labeled "extra credit," students are somehow motivated to jump to great heights for that one single point.

Whiteboard Races

Grammar and editing instruction can sometimes become dull and boring. One way to spice up a mundane verb tense or punctuation lesson is to have a whiteboard race. Before class, visualize how many teams can be comfortably accommodated at your whiteboard. Prepare and print a set of sentences with typical, common, or review grammar mistakes

for each team. Print each sentence in large font on a separate sheet of paper. Then, tape them face down on the board in each team's area. In class, divide the students into teams, and have each team send one member to the board. On your signal, one of the sentences is turned over. The first person to correct the sentence appropriately wins a point for his/her team. Students take turns at the board, but they will all remain engaged if they are allowed to coach their teammate who is at the board.

Pop Quizzes

Near the end of a semester, some students can feel overwhelmed, demotivated, or exhausted and may be tempted to miss class. Others consistently arrive late. Still others may choose not to come all. One way to ensure on-time attendance is with pop quizzes. An unannounced quiz may be given at the very beginning of class. It should be very short—just two or three questions and less than five minutes in duration. This way, by the time stragglers arrive, the quiz is over; and no make-up quizzes are allowed. Students quickly learn that if they want to receive credit for the quiz, they must come to class, and they must arrive on time. Students who are always on-time to class are gratified by the pop quizzes because the questions are very easy. In some respects, grading the quiz is unnecessary or at least of secondary importance. If students are there to take it, they probably earn 100 percent. More important, the main part of your lesson can begin with everyone present.

Mind Reading

Attempting to "read the teacher's mind" is a simple game-like way to help students understand the main idea of a reading passage. It can also be used as a stepping stone in writing summaries. First, distribute or project a high interest, level-appropriate paragraph. One source for such material is the *News of the Weird* website: www.newsoftheweird.com which features incredible stories. (For this reason, teachers need to carefully consider which topics they feel are appropriate for their students, as some of them are quite "racy" or can be difficult for English language learners). Next, have students skim the paragraph. Then announce, "It's time to read my mind! What are the three key words I have in my mind from this story?" Students guess which three words the teacher has picked as the most important. When one of the three words is guessed correctly, the teacher underlines or highlights it. After all three words have been identified, the class discusses why they might be the most important words. When this activity is done regularly, students gradually show improvement. If time permits, students can write a short one-sentence summary of the paragraph individually or in pairs using the three key words.

Ring around the Paragraph

This activity allows students to practice constructing a paragraph in an entertaining way. Before class, prepare one index card per student by writing a unique topic on each

card. Topics can be random and unrelated (for example *lion*, *Coca-Cola, soccer game*, *this classroom*, and *teacher's name*). Vocabulary review words can also be used. Distribute the cards, one to each student. Students sit at individual computers or desks and write a topic sentence about the topic shown on their card. They do the actual writing on a sheet of paper or the computer. When they have had enough time to write their topic sentence, they rotate. Everyone moves one chair to the right. They read the topic sentence in front of them and write a supporting sentence for that topic. Repeat the process of switching chairs, reading, and writing the next sentence several times. Finally, after enough turns have been taken, tell students to write a concluding sentence for the paragraph in front of them. Then, students can return to their original seats and see how their paragraph has morphed. There is usually a lot of laughter.

This activity lends itself to many possible extensions. Teachers can ask for volunteers to read one or two sample paragraphs. Students can critique the paragraphs by looking for coherence and unity. They can check for a clear topic and controlling idea in the topic sentence or fully-developed details in the supporting sentences. Teachers may also ask students to take their paragraphs home and fix any errors in form or organization.

Conclusion

Getting students out of their seats, moving around, and using the target language can increase student motivation and confidence. These activities require little preparation and can be as high tech or no tech as you like or need. The next time the end of the semester rolls around, and you feel like your classes need a little boost, break out one of these activities and get ready for some lively participation.

About the Authors

Aubrey Olsen is a lecturer in the English as an International Language program at Brigham Young University Hawai'i. Her interests include curriculum development, distance learning, systematic vocabulary study, and extensive reading. Aubrey earned a master's degree from Utah State University.

Elisa Harding Hunt is a faculty member in the English department at Dubai Women's College, Higher Colleges of Technology in Dubai. Her interests include the teaching of writing, spelling, and the influence of first language transfer. Elisa earned a masters degree in linguistics from Ohio University.

Using Textbooks Effectively

Review by Jessica M. Davis
Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona

USING TEXTBOOKS EFFECTIVELY. Lilia Savova, volume editor. *TESL Classroom Practice Series. 2009.* ISBN 978-193118559-2.156 pp. Member $29.95. Nonmember. $39.95.

Any teacher can tell you that textbooks are a major component of the ESOL classroom. Many instructors, like me, fall into a textbook rut, not knowing how to supplement or adapt a textbook to better serve the students who use it. Rather than search for the perfect textbook (which, to be honest, does not exist), why not learn how to use the books we have?

This is where *Using Textbooks Effectively* comes in. This text is chiefly aimed at both new and experienced ESOL instructors who are (or are considering) using textbooks in the ESOL classroom. It promises to deliver research-supported practices on the use of textbooks in the classroom, boiling them down to principles and strategies supported by concrete examples. Chapters in this book, however, are not limited to instructors. Program coordinators, curriculum development specialists, and public school teachers and administrators can also benefit from principles and strategies discussed.

Looking at the table of contents, one can see sub-topics such as text authenticity, updating science textbooks, learning to read and speak from the textbook, playing with texts, student and teacher co-constructed texts, curriculum development, understanding textbook design, and working with texts in specific settings. Within these topics, strategies and principles are introduced, tested by research and/or the authors themselves.

This book contains strategies for teachers adapting a textbook (including supplementation, follow-up activities, analyzing and modifying language), as well as strategies for students accessing and processing the information in a textbook (such as previewing, summarizing, and note-taking). While it provides broad application of strategies, it also illuminates these strategies with activities in specific contexts. Although specific scenarios may not apply to all teachers (i.e., science and technology teachers), the illustration of strategies is quite useful. In this way, it addresses the needs of ESOL teachers, science and technology teachers, and ESOL Program Coordinators, among others.

Clearly, this book covers a lot of ground in 150 accessible pages. Clear charts and tables organize information and activities so that a teacher can quickly grasp the material. With specific activities, questions, and worksheets included in appendices, this is more than sufficient for teachers to get started using textbooks more effectively in the classroom. This text, as part of a series on TESOL classroom practices, is an affordable, useful, accessible book that delivers concrete practices, principles, and strategies for anyone involved in the use of textbooks in the classroom.

About the Reviewer

Jessica M. Davis holds a M.A. in TESL from Northern Arizona University, where she is currently an instructor in the Program in Intensive English in Flagstaff, Arizona. She has also taught in China. Her foci include Drama and ESL, content-based instruction, and technology in teaching.

Along These Lines: Writing Paragraphs and Essays

Review by Cui Zhang
Northern Arizona University

ALONG THESE LINES: WRITING PARAGRAPHS AND ESSAYS, 5/E. Biays, J.S., & Wershoven, C. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. 2010. ISBN-10: 0205649297. ISBN-13: 9780205649297. 688 pp. $86.60 (pbk).

The book *Along These Lines: Writing Paragraphs and Essays* (5th ed.) is a textbook specifically designed for teaching writing to beginner writers, including ESL students. Designed based on the process orientated approach to writing, this textbook provides ample practice for the four stages of writing: prewriting, planning, drafting, and polishing. Focusing on the paragraph structure, it walks the students through the four stages of writing with various activities to practice topic sentences and supporting details.

Three major parts constitute the content of the textbook: Writing in Stages, Grammar Focus, and Reading Selections. The section entitled "Writing in Stages" focuses on paragraph writing. Nine types of paragraphs are included, each of which is illustrated with examples and provided with exercises. By the end of this section, essay structure, research method, and MLA style citation are also introduced. The "Focusing on Grammar" section includes explanations and exercises of various grammar points and provides extra grammar practice for ESL students. A set of additional readings provided at the end of the book can be used as sample essays.

This textbook provides great support for classroom instruction by including an instructor's manual and an online writing lab. The manual includes teaching tips and answers to the exercises in the student's book. Students' access to the online writing lab enables them to work on writing projects and track their progress. Learners can also use it as a self-study tool because of the precise instructions and step-by-step practice with each writing project.

Even with these great features, there are a few points a potential consumer might be cautious about. First of all, it might not be suitable for an EAP program because of little academic material involvement. Moreover, only one chapter focuses on research and citation skills. To strengthen students' research skills, an instructor will need to supplement materials to this chapter. Finally, there is ample content in this book so teachers could use it for two semesters or be selective for a one-semester curriculum.

On the whole, this textbook could serve both native speakers of English and intermediate ESL students who are in English-speaking countries. It is valuable for teaching writing to beginning writers with great emphasis on the writing process and student engagement.

About the Reviewer

Cui Zhang is a doctoral student in the Applied Linguistics program at Northern Arizona University. Her interest areas include second language reading and writing. She currently teaches Reading and Writing in Intensive English at Northern Arizona University.

Notes to Contributors

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

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

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

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

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

Advertising information is available upon request from the editor.

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

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