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ARTICLES

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Contents

Major University English Tests in China: Their Importance, Nature, and Development

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Among the world's languages, Chinese has the greatest number of native speakers. Nevertheless, outside of China (and other Chinese-language countries and communities) Chinese is not commonly spoken. For this reason, English is widely studied in China as a language for international communication. As China has grown into an economically powerful and politically influential country over the last few decades, more and more communication between the Chinese and the outside world has required proficiency in the English language. Consequently, English is now studied in China on a grand scale. The English-learning population in China is estimated to be around 300 million (Hong, 2009). That means there are more learners of English in China than native speakers of English in the United States (Sun, L., 2009).

For these reasons, English language teaching and testing constitute an important part of the Chinese education system. The number of English learners and speakers in the People's Republic of China has been growing since the start of China's 1979 Open Door Policy. This policy has led to much international trade by Sino-foreign enterprises and many Chinese students studying abroad. Even more people started learning English when China became a member of the World Trade Organization in 2001, and then again when the Chinese prepared for the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 International Exposition in Shanghai. From being a subject that was ignored and even abolished completely in China during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), English has developed into not only one of the most important subjects at all levels of school, from kindergarten to graduate school, but also a subject on which every Chinese student who tries to get into an institution of higher education will be tested.

Many reports have been written by Chinese scholars and outsiders regarding English language *teaching* in China (Campbell & Yong, 1993; Cowan, Light, Mathews, & Tucker, 1979; Henrichsen, 2007; Liu, 1988; Maley, 1983; McKay, 1994; Wang, 1999; Weng, 1996). In contrast, relatively few articles and books about English language *testing* in China have been published for international readers and scholars (Cheng, 2008; Guo, 2006; Liu, 2010; Yang, 2003). Chinese language educators and researchers themselves did not start serious studies in foreign language teaching and learning until about twenty

years ago, and the history of research on English testing in China is even shorter due to the relatively short history of English tests in the PRC. In addition, because of the isolation of the Chinese from the rest of the world after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, it is hard to find articles published by Chinese in international academic journals before 1980. This was especially the case during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) when China did not have any relations or contact with Western countries.

This situation began to change, however, when China's doors to the outside world opened, and when more and more Chinese started studying or conducting research at western universities. In China also, Chinese language educators and researchers began doing research on language teaching and learning, and later, on language testing. However, publications in international journals of research conducted by Chinese scholars are still limited. Consequently, there is a serious discrepancy between the huge number of English teachers and learners in China and the little knowledge about this situation that has been disseminated to international educators and the outside world. To help remedy that unfortunate situation, this article provides an introduction to and overview of the Chinese system for testing students' English language skills.

High-Stakes English Examinations in China

More than a dozen different, national, high-stakes English examinations are offered in China every year. One thing is common to all of them—no matter which one students take—the remainders of their lives are determined by the results of those exams, especially the college-level English tests. For example, if high school seniors fail to score high enough on the National Matriculation English Test (NMET), they lose the opportunity to get into universities. If college students fail the College English Test—Band Four (CET-4), they will not receive their degrees, which makes it challenging for them to find jobs after graduation and impossible to pursue graduate studies.

The high-stakes nature of these and other tests makes many educational activities in China very exam-oriented. Teachers and students alike are all very driven by them. The teachers focus on helping their students prepare for these tests, and the students focus on passing them.

High-stakes English examinations in China can be classified into two major types: entrance examinations and school completion/leaving certificate examinations. The entrance examinations are given in order to screen candidates desiring to enter high school, university, or graduate school. The major English entrance exams include the National Matriculation English Test (NMET), the Graduate School Entrance English Exam (GSEEE), the English Test for Admission to Institutions of Higher Education for Adults, the Entrance English Examination for Self-Taught Higher Education, the Entrance English Test for TV-University, and the Entrance English Test for Correspondence University.

In contrast, the purpose of the certificate or school-leaving tests is to evaluate the level of English proficiency students have achieved through coursework already taken.

The major certificate tests include the College English Test (CET 4 & CET 6), the Test for English Majors (TEM 4 & TEM 8), the National Professional and Technical Titles English Test, the Cambridge Young Learners' English Test, the Public English Testing System, the Business English Examinations, the *Wàiyǔ Shuǐpíng Kǎoshì* (WSK—an English proficiency examination to select professionals to study abroad), and the National Accreditation Examination for Translators and Interpreters.

Due to length restrictions, this article cannot discuss all of these many high-stakes English tests in depth. Therefore, it will focus on only the four most important and influential college-level English tests in the People's Republic of China. Two of these tests are entrance examinations: the NMET (National Matriculation English Test) and the GSEEE (Graduate School Entrance English Examination). The other two are certificate examinations: the CET (College English Test) and the TEM (Test for English Majors). Each test's nature, historical development, projected future development, and significance to international educators will be discussed. Before that discussion and as a foundation for it, this article will first provide a brief historical overview of English language learning, teaching, and testing in China.

English Language Learning and Testing in China

English was first introduced to China during the Sui Dynasty (581-617 CE) and Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), when the new Silk Road connected China to the outside world and led to "cultural, commercial, and technological exchanges between traders, merchants, pilgrims, missionaries, soldiers, nomads, and urban dwellers" in China and many European countries (*Sīchóu zhīlù*, 2009). For example, when British Christian missionaries came to China during the Tang Dynasty, some Chinese Christians either learned English from the missionaries in China or were sent to European countries to learn English or other European languages (*Yīngyǔ zài*, 2009). During the 1600s, the establishment of the John Company by the British in India helped introduce the English language to China again through business and missionary work. The Westernization Movement (1861-1894) of the Qing Dynasty brought English to more Chinese through diplomacy, the munitions industry, civil industry, and education (*Yángwù yùndòng* 2009). In 1862, the first school of foreign languages in Chinese history, *Jīng-shī-tóng-wén-guǎn* (Beijing Normal Language School; 1862-1900), was started. It was a school established by the government of the Qing dynasty to train translators, diplomats, and other foreign language specialists for the government. It taught only English in the beginning, but later added French, German, Russian, and Japanese (*Jīng-shī-tóng-wén-guǎn*, 2009).

Although English has been taught at schools in China since those early days, it did not become a subject for all students until the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, when English was introduced to all schools. The existing English language tests, however, can be traced back only to 1977 when the National Higher Education

Entrance Examination (NHEEE, the *Quánguó Pǔtōng Gāoděng Xuéxiào Zhāoshēng Tǒngyī Kǎoshì* or *Gāokǎo* in Chinese) was resumed after the ten-year Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), during which higher education was forbidden and English was ignored. During the Cultural Revolution, Chinese students did not learn any foreign languages at school, books published in foreign languages or about western countries were burned, and those who tried to teach or learn foreign languages were criticized as being subservient to foreigners. Before 1966, the NHEEE included a required Russian language examination, but English was optional and not as popular. When the NHEEE was resumed in 1977, an optional English exam was again administered. Nevertheless, the English score was merely taken into consideration (not required) for admission into colleges and universities. In schools, English was listed in the curriculum as one of the required subjects, but because there were no qualified English teachers in most parts of China, most urban Chinese students did not start learning English until the sixth grade, while most suburban and rural Chinese students could not start learning English until the last year of high school. Those students who lived in more remote parts of China never had the opportunity to study English.

Following the resumption of the National Higher Education Entrance Examination in 1977, the next great leap forward in English testing in China was made in 1985 when English became one of the mandatory subjects on the examination. At about that same time, another high-stakes, nationwide English test, the College English Test (CET), began. The College English Test Band-4 and Band-6 (CET-4, CET-6) were introduced to Chinese students in 1987 and 1989 respectively, first among college students and then to all levels of public education. As the importance of the CET grew and became recognized, English began to be taught to children as early as the third grade starting in the mid-1990s (Cheng, 2008) and then from the first grade in the early 2000s. Today, parents send their children to bilingual kindergartens or pay private tutors for their children to learn English starting at age 5 and continuing through age 18 when their children graduate from high school.

Twenty years ago, the Chinese people were keen to learn English mostly in order to learn advanced science and technology from overseas. They do so today for a great variety of academic, personal, and professional reasons (L. Sun, 2009). Along with the rapid development of China's economy, an increasing number of Chinese students have gone abroad to attend universities and graduate schools. With their new prosperity, more and more Chinese citizens travel the world as tourists. In addition, an increasing number of successful Chinese entrepreneurs invest in the outside world, mainly in English speaking countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. For all these reasons, China today has a larger EFL-learning population than any other country in the world.

Exam Orientation and English Tests in China

Chinese education today is often characterized as being examination-oriented. Chinese children, willingly or not, may start taking examinations as early as age 4 or 5 to get into a selective kindergarten, and they never stop taking examinations if they want to get into higher education or aspire to important social positions. "Over the years of primary education (K-Grade 6), secondary education (Junior High Grade 7-9, Senior High School 10-12) and university education (4-year undergraduate), students take numerous examinations at the school, municipal, provincial, and national levels" (Cheng, 2008, p. 16). In China, nine years of education are compulsory, but all students have to pass examinations to move from one level to another. Many take very competitive examinations to get into better schools.

Testing in China also has a very long history. Kējǔ, the first standardized test to select the highest government officials based on merit, started in the Sui Dynasty (605 CE) and continued until the end of the Qing Dynasty in 1905 (Kējǔ zhìdù, 2009). English language testing, however, did not start until 1862 with the establishment of *Jīng-shī-tóng-wén-guǎn* (Beijing Normal Language School). All these early tests were typically small in scale and aimed at selecting officials for the government (Cheng, 2008).

The present national English testing system has a relatively short history. The only current national English test that existed before 1966, was the pre-standardization National Matriculation English Test (NMET, described below), which was an optional part of the National Higher Education Entrance Examination. The rest of the current national English tests did not come into existence until after 1977 when China resumed its entrance examinations for colleges.

The National Higher Education Entrance Examination (NHEEE)

The NHEEE (National Higher Education Entrance Examination or *Quánguó Pǔtōng Gāodēng Xuéxiào Zhāoshēng Tǒngyī Kǎoshì* in Chinese), known commonly as *Gāokǎo*, is the major gateway (though not the only one) through which Chinese students must pass to achieve higher education. It is a multi-part academic examination held annually over a three-day period in early June throughout China, and one of its parts is the National Matriculation English Test (explained in the next section). All secondary students in their last year of high school who want to get into colleges and universities must pass the NHEEE, which is a prerequisite for entrance into all colleges and universities.[1]

[1]Although an increasing number of candidates can be accepted by different levels of colleges and universities, about half the candidates still cannot get into higher education institutions through the NHEEE because of limited enrollment capacities at Chinese universities. For those who cannot get into higher education institutions through the NHEEE, various other exams exist, such as the Admission Tests to Institutions of Higher Education for Adults and the Self-Taught Higher Education Examination System.

The NHEEE or *Gāokǎo* (nicknamed the "Footslog Bridge") is seen as the gatekeeper for formal higher education. It is undoubtedly the most visible and important entrance examination in China. "During the examination season each year, secondary schools, universities, and even government officials at different levels will focus their attention on the examinations that make up the [NHEEE]" (Liu, 2010, p. 35). It is also the most competitive entrance examination in China. Each year, millions of high school graduates and others with equivalent educational credentials try to enter into universities by means of this "Footslog Bridge." The number of the test takers varies but each year has had more candidates than the year before (see Figure 1).

The *Gāokǎo* was discontinued between 1966 and 1976 due to the Cultural Revolution. During those 10 years, the Down to the Countryside Movement in China brought secondary school graduates, the so-called "intellectual youths," to the country to work as peasants in villages throughout China. All except a limited number of higher education institutes in China were closed. Instead of selecting students according to their academic achievements in the entrance examination, the few non-closed institutes selected students who had been working as farmers, workers, or soldiers for over three years and called them "worker, peasant, and soldier college students" (*Gāokǎo*, 2009).

The *Gāokǎo* officially resumed in 1977, but instead of being a national test, it was first designed and administered by the individual provinces. Its resumption was still a history-making event in modern China (*Gāokǎo*, 2009). From 1978 on, it has been a national examination, uniformly designed by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. Since then, millions of students across the country have taken this examination each year.

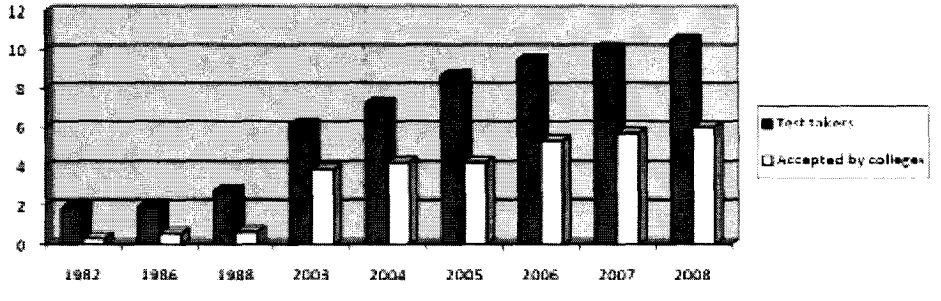

Figure 1: Numbers of *Gāokǎo* Test Takers and Number of Test Takers Admitted to Colleges in China (in millions) (Zhōngguó lìnián, 2008)

Before 2004, a single paper test for each subject of the *Gāokǎo* was used nationwide on the same examination day. The test was and is still organized by examination and admissions offices of the department of education of each province, autonomous region, and directly-controlled municipality on behalf of the Ministry of Education. However, in 2004 for examination security reasons, the National Education Examination Authority (NEEA) was required to develop four forms of the exam for each subject. These different forms were used in different provinces. At the same time, nine provinces were allowed to develop their own matriculation tests. In 2005 and 2006, some more provinces were allowed to do so (Liu, 2010), and today, many major universities are allowed to develop their own matriculation tests.

No matter whether the candidates take a national, provincial, or university matriculation test, the *Gāokǎo* is administered between June 7th and 9th, which used to be between July 7th and 9th before 2003 but was changed to June due to the hot weather in July (*Gāokǎo*, 2009).

The *Gāokǎo* is a multi-part examination, with some parts being mandatory and others optional. Chinese, mathematics, and English[2] are the three mandatory subjects tested in the *Gāokǎo* (*Gāokǎo*, 2009). Physics, chemistry, geology, geography, political education, and history are the other subjects that applicants take depending on whether they want to study sciences or humanities in college (Gāigé kāifàng, 2009). However, for the 2010 *Gāokǎo*, four out of six universities with the right to develop their own matriculation tests in Shanghai announced that only mathematics and English would be mandatory subjects. When questioned why Chinese was no longer included in these versions of the *Gāokǎo*, one of the presidents of these four universities explained that the purpose of this reduction was to lighten the burden on the test takers (Ji & Xu, 2010). It is noteworthy that despite the dropping of some important academic subjects—even the Chinese language—English, in the form of the NMET and explained in the following section, continues to hold a secure position on the *Gāokǎo*.

The National Matriculation English Test (NMET)

The National Matriculation English Test (NMET) or *Gāokǎo Yīngyǔ (Quánguó Pǔtōng Gāoděng Xuéxiào Zhāoshēng Tǒngyī Kǎoshì—Yīngyǔ)* is the English-language component of the National Higher Education Entrance Examination. The NMET is a norm-referenced standardized test whose major function is to select high school graduates for institutions of higher education (Cheng, 2008). The specific purpose of the NMET is to "make inferences about candidates" and their English language ability, which are "used in university admission decisions together with the scores from other university entrance tests" of a few subjects (Cheng, 2008, p. 19). The NMET's historical development can be divided into two main phases: pre-standardized and standardized (Lu, 2008).

[2]Students may also take tests in other foreign languages, such as Japanese, Russian, or French, but English is by far the most common choice.

Pre-standardized Phase (1950-1988)

During the first stage (1950-1966) of the pre-standardized phase, the NMET mainly tested reading, English-to-Chinese translation, and Chinese-to-English translation. The ratio of subjective questions to objective-response questions was 80:20 (*1950 nián*, 2008).

The NMET was stopped for 10 years between 1966 and 1976 due to the Cultural Revolution, and it was not resumed until 1977. The format of the test changed greatly during the second stage (1977-1988) of its pre-standardized phase. The new NMET was composed of 16 completely different types of questions. The ratio between the subjective-response questions and objective-response questions was reversed from 80:20 to 20:80. Initially the NMET score was not counted into the total score of the *Gāokǎo*, but that changed in 1978 when it started being counted.

The Standardized Phase (1989-Present)

In its second standardized phase, the NMET underwent three different stages of development.

MET (Matriculation English Test) Phase (1989-1994)

The MET (Matriculation English Test) was started in Guangdong Province in 1985 and expanded to the whole country in 1989. The total possible score was 100 points. It had five different sections: phonetics (5%); multiple choice (15%); cloze test[3] (25%), reading comprehension (40%), and writing (15%).

NMET Phase (1995-2003)

The *National* Matriculation English Test (NMET) was piloted in some provinces as early as 1991 and offered nationwide in 1995. This test had 150 points in total with five different sections: reading comprehension (50 points), situational conversation and word spelling (i.e., dictation) (20 points), multiple choice (25 points), cloze test[3] (25 points), and writing (30 points). The ratio between subjective and objective-response questions was 55:95 (out of 150 total points). Listening was added to the test around the year 2000, but it was not counted into the total score until 2003.

Second MET Phase (2004-Present)

Starting in 2004, the Chinese Ministry of Education allowed nine provinces to make their own English tests for the *Gāokǎo*. By 2007, another nine provinces were given the same privilege. This decentralization reversed the earlier trend toward central control over the exam. Nowadays more provinces use their own test than use the national MET. The biggest difference between the national and provincial versions of the NMET is whether or not listening is counted in students' overall test score.

[3]A cloze test consists of a passage with blanks that have been inserted for words that have been deleted, either randomly or systematically. Although relatively simple to construct, cloze tests have been shown to be valid and reliable integrative measures of learners' overall language proficiency (Oller, 1973; Oller, 1976; Oller & Conrad, 1971).

To summarize, the National Higher Education Entrance Examination (NHEEE) is by far the most important entrance exam in China today. It is taken by millions of high school graduates each year and wields a strong influence on their future careers. No less important than the overall NHEEE is its English component, the National Matriculation English Test (NMET). It makes English language teaching and learning an essential part of secondary education in China today. The particular language skills it has tested over the course of its historical development have determined to a large degree the emphasis given to these skills in English classes throughout Chinese students' secondary school years. In a study of teachers and students who were preparing for the *Gāokǎo*, Huang (2005) concluded that no knowledge was more important to them than what was going to be tested. When interviewed, both the teachers and the students admitted that they stopped regular English listening practice after the *Gāokǎo* Administration released the news that listening would not be tested that year.

The Graduate School Entrance English Exam (GSEEE)

Like the NHEEE (or *Gāokǎo*), the Graduate School Entrance Examination (GSEE) is an entrance examination administered annually at the national level. The most important difference is that the GSEE is taken by undergraduate students hoping to enter graduate schools (Cheng, 2008). The GSEE has four components, one of which is the GSEEE (Graduate School Entrance *English* Exam). The GSEEE tests English, which is one of two compulsory GSEE subjects (the other is political science) required by the National Education Examination Authority (NEEA) of the Chinese Ministry of Education. The other two subjects tested in components of the GSEE are discipline-related and depend on students' intended fields of study. They are developed by the universities or research institutes the applicants want to enter. The GSEEE is administered in late January or early February each year by the NEEA.

The number of students taking the GSEEE is steadily increasing (see Figure 2), and the challenge of getting into graduate school is becoming much greater than before. This increase is due to the increasing competition in the employment market and the fact that graduate-level study is viewed as a way to postpone job hunting in a challenging market or as a way to improve one's chances of finding a job later (Shen, 2009).

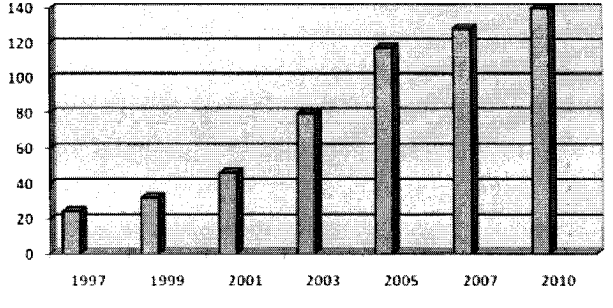

Figure 2: Numbers of GSEEE Test Takers (in 10 thousands) (Shen, 2009; Su, 2009)

The current GSEEE test format was designed in 2004 and first used in 2005 (Liu 2010). It contains three main sections: use of English (10%), reading comprehension (60%), and writing (30%).

Section one, use of English, focuses on control of formal elements of the language in context including a wide range of vocabulary, expressions, structures, and features of discourse relating to coherence and cohesion. Test takers are also required to do a cloze test with twenty multiple-choice items.

The second section is made up of three parts focusing on examinees' ability to read written English. In part one, candidates are required to read four passages and complete twenty multiple-choice questions based on their understanding of these passages. In part two, candidates read an incomplete passage with five gaps and fill the gaps with five of the seven choices given. In part three, test takers are also required to read one passage and translate five underlined sections from English into Chinese.

The third section is made up of two parts. First, the test takers are asked to write a letter, a report, a memorandum, or an abstract of about 100 words based on the information provided. Second, candidates write an essay of between 160 and 200 words based on guidelines given either in English or Chinese.

Taking the various sections and subsections of the GSEEE requires a total of 180 minutes (cloze test 15-20 minutes; reading 70-75 minutes; translation 20 minutes; fill-the-gap 20 minutes; and writing 50 minutes).

Although the GSEEE is taken by far fewer students each year (1,400,000 in 2010) than the number who take the NMET (over 10 million), the GSEEE is still an important "gatekeeper" test. It plays a significant role in determining which students go on to graduate studies in China.[4] The GSEEE's history of development, however, is much shorter than the NMET's. In addition, the fact that the number of examinees is smaller makes it possible for test items and tasks to be more natural and authentic even though they are also more time-consuming to score.

The College English Test—Band Four (CET-4)

The College English Test – Band Four (CET-4) is the most important certificate, or school-leaving, English test in the Chinese university system. It has more test takers each year than any other certificate English test in China—over 10 million a year (*2009 nián gāokǎo*, 2009). Figure 3 depicts the growth in CET-4 takers over the years.

[4]For Chinese students who wish to travel abroad to attend English-speaking universities, the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language, administered worldwide by Educational Testing Service) plays a similar role.

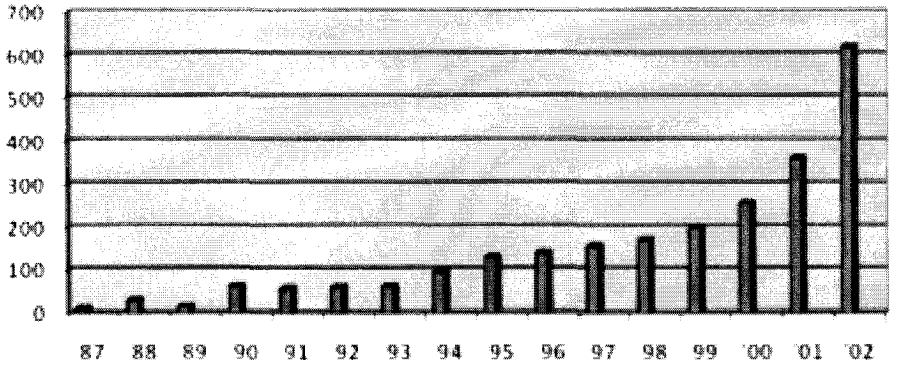

Figure 3: Numbers of CET-4 Test Takers Between 1987 and 2002 (in 10 thousands) (Yang, 2003)

The CET-4's purpose is to examine Chinese college students' English proficiency and ensure that they reach the required English levels specified in the National College English Teaching Syllabi. First offered in 1987, the test was extended to college students all over China in 1988 but was still optional: students could take the Band 4 examination created by each school. But slowly, some colleges started requiring all sophomores to take the CET-4 after they finished the required English courses. Over time, more and more colleges and universities required students to pass the CET-4 to get a graduation certificate or a bachelor's degree. Starting in the mid-1990s, increasing numbers of companies, as well as the government, made the CET-4 certificate an important requirement for hiring graduates.

Nature of the College English Test

The College English Test is a national, large-scale, standardized test administered by education departments of every province, autonomous region, and directly-controlled municipality in China. It is administered biannually, in June and December/January. It is created under the direction of the National College English Testing Committee (NCETC) on behalf of the Higher Education Department of the Chinese Ministry of Education (CET, 2009). The test takers are undergraduates pursuing majors in every subject but English. (For English majors, there is a special test, the TEM, explained in the next section.) These students take the test when they complete their corresponding required English courses. The CET is actually a test battery with three sequential stages: the CET-4 (Band 4), the CET-6 (Band 6), and the CET Spoken English Test (CET-SET).

The term *band* as used in connection with these tests is unfamiliar to most educators outside of China, so some explanation may be helpful here. All Chinese college students are required to study English courses for two academic years, the first four semesters of

their college education. Each semester is counted as one band. Students take final exams for Bands 1, 2, and 3 each semester at their own universities, but they take the CET-4 as a national English achievement test at the end of their fourth semester, or band. After that, teaching and learning English for general purposes is stopped and switched to learning English for specific purposes (ESP) related to the students' academic background. Only those who have completed Band 5 and 6 English courses and have passed the CET-4 with a score at or above 425 may take the CET-6, which is optional and taken by far fewer students. For those reasons, it will not be discussed in any detail here.

CET-4 scores are reported within a range of 290 to 710. The test itself is made up of four parts: listening, reading, integrated skills, and writing. These components, along with their contents, item formats, times, and score weights, are explained in Table 1.

Each of these components of the CET-4 will now be explained in turn. For those interested in seeing copies of the entire CET-4 examination, electronic copies from recent years are available online at http://bbs.dict.cn/viewthread.php?tid=33764

Part One: Listening Comprehension

The listening section of the CET-4 assesses students' ability to understand main ideas, important facts, specific details, and implied meaning, as well as their ability to determine the communicative function of discourse, the speaker's point of view, and attitudes in oral conversations and passages. Passages are spoken in both standard American English and standard British English (*Dàxuè Yīngyǔ sìjí kǎoshì dàgāng*, 2009).

The listening section of the CET-4 counts for 35% of the total score. Fifteen of these percentage points come from the comprehension of conversations, including eight short conversations and two long conversations. Each short conversation consists of one speaker turn followed by a multiple-choice question, while each long conversation has five to eight speaker turns followed by three or four multiple-choice questions. The other twenty percentage points come from three longer listening passages, followed by three or four multiple-choice questions each (for a total of 10 questions), and one compound dictation passage with 10 blanks. In seven of these blanks, students must write the single, exact word spoken in the passage, and in three blanks the missing information is a phrase or clause and can be filled in either word-for-word or in the students' own words. The speed of speech in the listening conversations and the passages is approximately 130 words per minute, and the whole section lasts for 35 minutes.

Part Two: Reading Comprehension

The reading comprehension section of the CET-4 assesses students' ability to acquire written information through reading. This section generates 35% of the total CET-4 score and is composed of two subsections: reading in depth and speed reading.

Table 1

Contents, Item Formats, and Weights of the Different Sections of the CET-4

Section	Contents		Formats		Time	Score
Listening comprehension	Dialogues	Short	MC	15%		
		Long	MC		35	35%
	Passages	Comprehension	MC	20%		
		Compound dictation	Compound dictation			
Reading comprehension	Reading in depth	Discourse	MC			
		Discourse voc.	Banked cloze	25%	25	
	Skimming and scanning		Yes/No Ques.			35%
			Fill-in-blanks, complete sentences	10%	15	
Integrated test	Cloze or error correction		Multiple choice or error correction	10%	15	
	Short answers or translation		Q & A. or Chi. to . Eng. trans	5%	5	15%
Writing	Writing		Short essay		30	15%
Total					125	710

The reading in depth subsection (25%) is 25 minutes long and includes three short passages with 300-350 words apiece. Each passage is followed by items in different formats: multiple-choice, banked-cloze, and short answer. In the banked-cloze format, there are 10 blanks in the passage and students can select one word for each blank from

a list of 15 words given in the word bank. In the short-answer format, students must complete a sentence or answer questions with no more than 10 words based on their own understanding of the passage.

The speed reading subsection (10%) includes both skimming and scanning. Students have 15 minutes to skim or scan one passage of around 900 words. The item formats used in this part are multiple-choice (seven items) and sentence completion or true/false (three items).

Part Three: Integrated Test—Cloze

In contrast with traditional, discrete-point tests, integrated tests do not examine each language skill or component separately. Rather, they test multiple skills and linguistic points all at once. Cloze tests are a widely used and empirically validated type of integrated test (Oller, 1973; Oller, 1976; Oller & Conrad, 1971). On the CET-4, cloze is used to assess students' general language comprehension and proficiency at the word, sentence, and paragraph levels. It contributes 10% to the total score and takes 15 minutes. The cloze passage is about 220 to 250 words long with 20 blanks and content that is familiar to students. For each numbered blank, students are to choose the correct word from a set of multiple-choice options. An alternative format to cloze, used some years, is error correction, which asks students to identify and correct 10 errors embedded in a passage of the same length.

Part Four: Writing and Translation

The writing and translation section assesses students' ability to write a short, expressive composition in English and to translate a printed Chinese-language passage into written English. It constitutes 20% (writing 15% and translation 5%) of the total CET-4 score and takes 35 minutes.

For the writing portion, students are asked to write a composition of no less than 120 words in 30 minutes based on information given to them, for instance a title or topic with an outline, a situation, a picture, or a graph.

For the translation task, students are asked to complete five English sentences by translating the part of each sentence given in Chinese into English in five minutes. In some years, an alternative format for the translation subsection involves writing short answers to questions based on one of the reading passages from part two.

The College English Test—Spoken English Test (CET-SET)

The College English Test—Spoken English Test (CET-SET) assesses the test-takers' competence in English oral communication. This test is given only to students who have passed the CET-4 or the CET-6 at a predetermined score level. For instance, according to the December 2009 CET-SET registration notification, only those who passed the CET-4 with a score of 550 or above or the CET-6 with a score of 520 or above (out of a total score

of 710)[5] in 2008 and 2009 could register for the CET-SET (Oral Exam Registration Notification, 2009).

The CET-SET is composed of three parts. Part one lasts for approximately five minutes and involves three or four examinees and two authorized CET-SET examiners who interact in a small-group, question-and-answer conversation. Part two consists of 90-second personal statements spoken by each examinee and then a 4.5-minute panel discussion. This part lasts about 10 minutes. In part three, the examiners ask more questions to further check the examinees' oral English proficiency for an additional five minutes.

The evaluation of test-takers' performance on the CET-SET is based on the following six criteria: (1) accuracy in pronunciation, intonation, and use of grammar and vocabulary; (2) complexity and scope of vocabulary and grammatical structures employed; (3) contribution made to group discussion individually; (4) consistency in extended and coherent discourse; (5) flexibility in handling different scenarios and topics; and (6) applicability of language used in the specific context (*Dāxué Yīngyǔ sì liù jí kǎoshì kǒushì dàgāng*, 2009).

Effects of the College English Test

To a large degree, the College English Test governs the other English tests as well as the teaching and learning of English in China. *Washback* is a term used to describe the effects of testing on teaching. In brief, "what is assessed becomes what is valued, which becomes what is taught" (McEwen, 1995, p. 42) or, in other words, what is examined becomes what to teach (Yang, 1992). Because of its importance, the CET-4 has brought much positive washback to the teaching and learning of English in China. Gu (2005) found in her empirical study of CET washback that most of the CET stakeholders thought highly of the test, especially its design, administration, marking, and the new measures adopted in recent years. They believed that the positive washback of the test was greater than the negative washback, and the negative washback was due mainly to the misuse of the test by users rather than the test itself. In 2008, Sun and Peng (2009) conducted a pilot study about the washback of the CET-4 on teaching and learning in China. Many teachers and students admitted that because of the test they treated teaching and learning more seriously and prepared for lessons more thoroughly. Overall, most Chinese teachers agree that the design and the proportions of the various parts of content are appropriate and fair for students of different academic backgrounds (Mao, 2009).

[5]Or those who passed the CET-4 with a score of 80 or above or the CET-6 with a score of 75 or above (out of a total of 100 possible) in the years before the new score reporting system.

Wang (2005) believes that the CET has not only brought about fundamental changes in the quality of English teaching and learning in China but has also developed into a complete system. The CET-4 has matured as a "criterion-related norm-referenced test" with high reliability and validity. It would be difficult to find any scientific, large-scale and high-stakes English test other than the CET-4 that could reflect the actual English proficiency of college students and could be as operational as the CET-4.

The Test for English Majors (TEM-4 and TEM-8)

The Test for English Majors (TEM) is an English certificate test designed especially for Chinese university students pursuing an English major and was first administered in 1991. It is administered nationwide by the National Advisory Commission on Foreign Language Teaching in Higher Education. It aims to measure the English proficiency of university undergraduate English majors in accordance with the National College English Teaching Syllabus for English Majors (*Yīngyǔ zhuānyè*, 2009). The TEM has two versions: the TEM-Band 4 and TEM-Band 8. The TEM-4 is administered in May at the end of English majors' second (sophomore) year, and the TEM-8 is administered in March near the end of English major's fourth (senior) year.

The purposes of the Test for English Majors are (1) to assess the language performance of English majors and (2) to examine how well the college English teaching syllabus is working in order to promote reforms in English teaching and learning (Cheng, 2008). The TEM certificate issued by the NACFLT is valid for the examinee's lifetime. TEM-4 and TEM-8 scores are reported at three levels: 60-69=pass; 70-79=good, 80 and above=excellent. Starting in 2003, those who fail to pass the TEM the first time can have one more opportunity to take the test. Nevertheless, those who take the TEM for the second time and pass it can get a certificate labeled "pass" only, no matter how high their score.

Test for English Majors—Band 4

The TEM is a criterion-referenced test (*Yīngyǔ zhuānyè*, 2009). That is, students' performance is evaluated against the criteria stipulated by the teaching syllabus (Zou, 2003). The complete TEM-4 has 40% subjective-response questions and takes 130 minutes.

The TEM-4 is composed of six parts (see Table 2 for their times and weights): 1) writing, consisting of a composition/essay and note-writing, 2) listening dictation for which examinees listen four times to a 150-word passage spoken at a speed of 120 WPM and write it down, 3) listening comprehension which contains short, two- or three-sentence statements followed by 7-9 multiple-choice questions; longer, three-sentence dialogues followed by 7-9 multiple-choice questions; and several short VOA or BBC news broadcasts followed by 7-9 multiple-choice questions, 4) a multiple-choice cloze test which uses a passage of about 250 words with 15 blanks and four choices for each blank, 5) grammar and vocabulary for which there are 25

Table 2

Contents, Item Formats, and Weights of the Different Sections of the TEM-4

Section	Contents	Format	Time	Score
Writing	Essay Note-taking	Writing Writing	35 10	15 10
Dictation	Passage	Dictation	15	15
Listening Comprehension	Dialogues Passages News broadcast	MC MC MC	15	15
Cloze	Passage	MC	10	10
Grammar and vocabulary	Sentences	MC	15	15
Reading comprehension	Passages	MC	25	20
Total			130	100

multiple-choice questions with about half testing grammar and half testing vocabulary, and 6) reading comprehension which involves reading in depth and skimming and scanning.

Test for English Majors—Band 8

The TEM-8 is made up of six parts as well (see Table 3): 1) listening comprehension which contains four sections: talk or mini-lecture, conversation or interview, news broadcast, and note-taking and gap-filling; 2) reading comprehension which involves reading for depth and skimming and scanning; 3) general knowledge about the culture and society of English-speaking countries, English literature, and English linguistics; 4) proofreading and error correction on a reading passage of about 200 words with 10 lines containing labeled errors which examinees correct by adding, deleting, or changing one word or phrase; 5) translation of two approximately 300-word passages, one in Chinese and the other in English, with about 150 underlined words to be translated from Chinese to English and English to Chinese; and 6) writing an argument or an expository essay of about 400 words. The total TEM-8 takes 185 minutes.

Table 3

Contents, Item Formats, and Weights of the Different Sections of the TEM-8

Section	Contents	Format	Time	Score
Listening comprehension	Mini-lecture Conversation and interview News broadcast Note taking and gap filling	Fill-in-blank MC	10 25	25 10
Reading comprehension	Passages	MC	30	20
General knowledge	Passages	MC	10	10
Proofreading and error correction	Passage	Error correction	15	10
Translation	Passages	Chinese to English to Chinese	60	20
Writing	Essay	Writing	45	20
Total			185	100

In its two forms, the Test for English Majors examines Chinese students' abilities in English at a fairly advanced level and in relatively authentic and valid ways. It can do this because the number of examinees (only English majors) each year is comparatively small. Nevertheless, the number of TEM-takers is still so large as to make the testing of English majors' speaking skills impractical. Despite earlier hopes in this regard, the speaking test planned for the TEM has been suspended because conditions are not yet conducive to holding a large-scale speaking test throughout China (*Yīngyǔ zhuānyè*, 2009).

Conclusion

This article has reviewed the four most important English examinations in modern China. Two are entrance examinations (NMET and GSEEE), and two are certificate or school-leaving examinations (CET and TEM). Table 4 summarizes and compares the four tests discussed in this article in terms of each test's audience, possible score, purpose,

Table 4

Comparison of Major English Tests in China

	NMET	GSEEE	CET-4	TEM-4	TEM-8
Test takers	High school graduates	College graduates	Sophomore non-English majors	Sophomore English majors	Senior English majors
Scores	150	100	710	100	100
Purpose	College entrance	Graduate School Entrance	Certificate	Certificate	Certificate
Time (Minutes)	120	180	125	130	185
Cost (Yuan)	Varies from province to province	Varies from province to province	Varies from province to province	¥80 & above	¥80 & above
Time scheduled	Annual (June 7)	Annual (January or February)	Biannual (January & June)	Annual (May)	Annual (March)
Number of test takers (in millions, 2009)	10.2 (2009 nián gāokǎo, 2009)	1.246 (2009 nián kǎoyán, 2009)	17.48 (Anhui, 2009)		
Scoring	By province or area	By individual school	By geographical region	By geographical region	By geographical region
Contents	Listening grammar and structure, reading comprehension, writing	Use of English (grammar and structure) reading comprehension, writing	Listening, reading comprehension integrated test, writing	Listening, grammar & structure reading comprehension, writing	Listening, reading comprehension proofreading (grammar & structure), writing

length, cost, scheduling, number of test takers, scoring venue, and contents. All four of the major, college-level English tests reviewed in this article—especially the CET-4—have developed into super-large-scale standardized tests with their own processes, systems, and standards. This article has provided only a descriptive introduction to these tests. It leaves the following tasks to experts on English language testing in China: (1) providing more detailed information for each test introduced in this paper to people interested in English language teaching in China and (2) conducting more research on the measurement criteria, instruments, and procedures of these large-scale standardized tests in order to make the results of each test more accurate, objective, comprehensive and reflective of the true proficiency of students in actually using the English language (Jin, 2005).

A common shortcoming of all four tests is that none of them tests students' speaking ability, except the CET-SET, which is given to a very small number of CET takers. Given the importance of washback from testing to teaching in China, this deficiency has serious repercussions. Despite the practical difficulties associated with testing students' speaking abilities, this important skill should be tested in the future more than it currently is. China's growing economy and the accompanying improvements in educational funding, facilities, and personnel should make this advancement in English testing possible.

Another potential area for improvement is test scoring, which is done both by machines and by human beings. Certain aspects of the scoring raise questions about reliability. While the objective-response questions are machine-scored, the subjective-response questions are graded by human teachers and are, therefore, subject to inter-rater and intra-rater reliability problems due to factors such as fatigue. Further, the types of educators who score these four major college level English tests are not consistent. To illustrate, the NMET is graded by selected high school and college English teachers of each province who are gathered together in an enclosed place day after day for a period of about two weeks; the GSEEE is graded by English teachers of each individual educational institution; and the TEM and the CET-4 are graded by selected college English teachers of each geographical region working persistently in an enclosed place for two weeks.

To summarize and conclude, the National Matriculation English Test (NMET) is the most important English entrance examination in China, and the College English Test—Band Four (CET-4) is the most influential certificate English test among the many other certificate English tests in China. Nevertheless, all four tests described in this article are important. English teaching and learning at Chinese high schools focus heavily on helping students get high scores on the NMET, prospective graduate students must do well on the GSEEE to achieve their goals, and English courses and teachers at colleges and universities devote a lot of time and energy to preparing students to pass the CET (or TEM). The impact of these four tests throughout China is significant. Expatriate English language teachers and researchers in China will do well to pay attention to these tests'

natures and effects. Taking such factors into account will lead these educators to achieve greater success. This article is intended to constitute a first step in that direction.

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Re-exploring the Knowledge Base of Language Teaching: Four ESL Teachers' Classroom Practices and Perspectives

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Teacher knowledge and the nature of the teacher's corresponding knowledge base have been fundamental concerns of research in language teacher education for the past decade (Irujo & Johnston, 2001). However, studies of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers' knowledge base and its development have been limited in scope, largely confined to empirical work on pedagogical content knowledge. The primary purpose of this qualitative study, a partial replication of Johnston and Goettsch (2000), is to explore the types of knowledge ESL teachers possess and utilize in their classes. Observations of four ESL teachers, as well as interviews with them about their classroom explanations, were analyzed qualitatively. Common data categories were developed via recursive reviews of the data. Both critical and phenomenological perspectives were employed to tap into at the knowledge base of language teaching. The results suggest the following categories as constituting the knowledge base of the four ESL teachers: (1) content knowledge, (2) knowledge of other languages, (3) knowledge of other fields, and (4) knowledge of learners.

Introduction

Teacher knowledge and the nature of the knowledge base have been among the most fundamental concerns of research in language teacher education for the past decade (Johnston & Goettsch, 2000). *Knowledge base* in this paper refers to the accumulated knowledge (e.g. skills and strategies) that teachers use in their teaching. It is important to understand what constitutes this knowledge base in order to maximize student learning and better prepare teacher candidates for the most acute needs of classroom language teaching. The purpose of this study, which is a partial replication of Johnston and Goettsch (2000), is to explore the nature and the sources of the knowledge base that ESL teachers draw on in their work.

Theoretical Framework

The importance of a knowledge base for teaching and the nature of teacher knowledge have long been recognized by teacher educators (Irujo & Johnston, 2001). This recognition

and interest in the nature of teacher knowledge and teacher cognition have comprised a major area of research in the field of general education since the mid-1970s (Freeman, 2002; Mullock, 2006). As Hu (2005) and Johnston and Goettsch (2000) suggest, the main influence on the current attention to teachers' knowledge base is the work done by Shulman (1986, 1987). Shulman's work introduced a new conceptual frame for understanding the knowledge base of teaching, which consists of the following categories: Content knowledge (knowledge of the subject matter); general pedagogical knowledge (knowledge about teaching); curriculum knowledge (with particular grasp of the materials and programs that serve as "tools of the trade" for teachers); pedagogical content knowledge (application of knowledge); knowledge of learners and their characteristics (teachers' beliefs and assumptions about how students learn and what they know); knowledge of educational contexts (ranging from the workings of the group or classroom to the governance and financing of school districts and the character of communities and cultures); and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds (Shulman, 1987, p. 8).

Following their counterparts in the field of general education, researchers in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and applied linguistics have also begun to examine ESL teachers' knowledge base (e.g. Breen, 1991; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Johnson, 1994; Mullock, 2006; Richards, 1998; Richards & Nunan, 1990; Watzke, 2007; Woods, 1996). They have indicated various sources that shape the knowledge base of language teaching such as teachers' prior language learning experiences (Almarza, 1996; Ariogul, 2007; Johnston & Goettsch, 2000), their understanding of second language theories and the nature of language learning (Smith, 1996), or learners' attributes (Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, & Thwaite, 2001).

More recent studies explored different aspects of pedagogical content knowledge in particular. For example, Gatbonton (2008) examined the categories of pedagogical knowledge that novice ESL teachers possessed and compared them with those found in experienced teachers. Although the major categories did not vary for these two groups of teachers, details within these categories were reported to be different. In another study, Ellison (2007) analyzed how two teachers drew on such knowledge to help their students learn the material presented in classroom settings. Other studies looked into the development of pedagogical content knowledge. For instance, while Badawi (2009) investigated the effectiveness of a blended learning model in developing EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge, Hlas and Hilderbrandt (2010) explored the acquisition and articulation of pedagogical content knowledge with a specific focus on the impact of teacher education programs on language teachers' knowledge base.

Still, studies of ESL teachers' knowledge base and its development are relatively inadequate when compared with other fields of education (Borg, 2003; Mullock, 2006).

In addition, most of the studies conducted in the TESOL field are predominantly based on pedagogical content knowledge. There is limited literature about other categories of knowledge base of language teaching. In order to address this gap in the literature, this study aims to explore the types of knowledge ESL teachers possess and utilize in their classes. *The main research question addressed in this study is: What kinds of knowledge do practicing ESL teachers actually have and use in their teaching?*

Method

Participants

The participants for this research were four ESL teachers who varied in terms of their ESL teaching experience: Maria, Robert, Adam, and Christine (pseudonyms). Their ages ranged from mid-20s to early 60s, with language profiles from monolingual to bilingual. Maria and Robert taught in an Intensive English Language Center of a university in the Western U.S. while Adam and Christine taught at a community college in the same area. Further demographic information about the participants is presented in Table 1.

Convenience sampling was utilized in selecting participants. Specifically, participants were chosen because of their proximity to the researcher's work and their willingness to participate. The researcher received the schedules of language teachers working in the institutions from the ESL coordinators. Teachers who were teaching integrated skills (listening-speaking/reading-writing/listening-speaking-reading-writing-grammar) were invited via e-mail. Participants for the study were then selected from those who responded.

Table 1

Demographic Information

Name	ESL Teaching Experience	Degrees	Ethnicity	Languages
Maria	More than 14 years	BA & MA in English Language and Linguistics	Caucasian American	English
Robert	More than 25 years	BA in Psychology; MA in TESOL	Caucasian American	English, Japanese
Adam	5 years	BA in Spanish; MA in Literacy	Caucasian American	English, Spanish
Christine	2 years	BA & MA in TESOL	Chinese	English, Chinese

Setting and Context

The aim of the ESL courses offered at the community college is to help students whose native language is not English to succeed in college and at work. To meet the needs of ESL students, courses in different levels and skill areas are offered: listening/speaking, reading, writing/grammar, and vocabulary/spelling. The classes observed for this study were high-intermediate and low-advanced listening and speaking courses, in which students practiced pronunciation and listening skills based on the academic content. Other classes observed were the high-advanced reading and writing class, which aimed to strengthen the college-level writing skills of students, and the grammar classes, which focused on systematic practice of correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation. In each class, there were 15-20 students coming from various language and cultural backgrounds.

Data Collection

Data for this qualitative study consisted of transcriptions of passages from the teachers' classes, observations including field-notes, and follow-up interviews with the teachers (see Appendix). The teachers were audiotaped as they were giving explanations or were engaged in teacher-centered activities. The teacher observations took approximately 2-3 class hours. The teachers were observed twice at most. Within two weeks after the observations, the teachers were provided with a copy of the transcriptions from their classes and given time to read them through. They were then interviewed and asked to reflect on their specific explanations, such as how they clarified a particular grammar point or defined a new term or word. This semi-structured, one-on-one interview with each participating teacher was conducted at his or her office and audio-taped.

Data Analysis

After recordings from classroom observations were transcribed, teachers' language related explanations, clarifications, and definitions of words were noted in particular. These highlighted sections served as the "knowledge of teachers" and formed the basis for a number of interview questions. Common data categories were developed via recursive reviews of the interview data. Tentative themes were then identified and compared across all four interview transcripts. These themes were saved for further examination, or eliminated when they failed to provide significant data evidence. Additionally, the data were carefully reviewed for negative cases that contradicted a theme or offered alternative perspectives on significant points. Finally, the themes and categories were compared against the framework developed by Shulman (1986, 1987) for further interpretations.

This study adopted both critical and phenomenological perspectives in looking at the knowledge base of language teaching. As suggested by Shank (2006), "we attempt to 'get inside' the meanings and the world of that person" (p. 89) with phenomenological lenses. By using such a lens, I sought to understand the construction and use of teachers'

knowledge from their point of view. This way, I aimed to minimize the researcher's bias and enhance the validity of the study. Several other strategies were used to ensure the validity of the design as well as that of the data analysis techniques. For instance, in-depth interviews allowed opportunities for comparisons to be made and thereby helped refine my ideas so that evidence-based categories could be formed. The triangulation of data sources (e.g., field notes, interviews) also broadened my understanding of the phenomenon and maximized the probability that emergent themes were consistent across different data sources (McMillan & Schumacher 2006). Furthermore, after the interviews, my interpretations of participants' meanings and the explanation of overall process were confirmed through casual conversations with the participants, which McMillan and Schumacher refer to as "member checking" (p. 326).

Results

An interpretive and constant comparison analysis of the interview data and classroom transcripts revealed the following four major categories, which characterized the knowledge base of language teaching as described by the participants: (a) content knowledge, (b) knowledge of other fields, (c) knowledge of other languages, and (d) knowledge of learners. Each category is discussed in the following sections.

Content Knowledge

Content knowledge, in this paper, refers to the sources of teachers' knowledge with regard to grammar, vocabulary, and phonology. Through the data obtained from observations and interviews, the sources of content knowledge were categorized into two groups: (i) previous education and experience, and (ii) external sources.

Previous Education and Experience

The teachers reported that their own school experiences greatly shaped their perception of teaching and their own developing practice. When teachers were asked how they knew what to say when giving an explanation related to a language issue and where this knowledge came from, they all stated that their educational backgrounds and teaching experiences played a significant role in shaping their content knowledge. Their undergraduate and graduate course work in linguistics and TESOL served as the essential source of their content knowledge. In the first example, Maria, in her high-intermediate listening and speaking class, was teaching the pronunciation differences between past tense endings with a focus on allomorphs. The following excerpt is from the beginning of that explanation:

> There are three pronunciations for the English past, uhm regular verb past tense, and basically the pronunciation is determined by the previous sound. Okay, so let me start with this one because it's the most common pronunciation. Everybody, put your hand up on your throat, uhmm, and, uhmm, say /d/. See

> your voice box vibrating? For all consonants that are like that, they are called voiced consonants. If -ed is preceded by a voiced consonant sound, the pronunciation of *-ed* is /d/, okay?

Later on, during the interview, when Maria was asked where this knowledge came from, she explained:

> In this particular case, with the past tense endings, this is actually a common error from [our] English linguistics classes. I didn't know the rule consciously until I was a sophomore in college and that's where the linguistics comes in for me. I draw a lot on my linguistics background ... It is one of the problems that are actually taught classically in an elementary linguistics class to teach what an allomorph is. That is, one syllable has three different ways of being pronounced ... So I just draw on that ... This would have come from undergraduate preparation.

This specific extract indicates how Maria has benefited from her own school experience. The previous coursework has made her knowledge of rules explicit.

Similarly, Christine, who is a non-native speaker of English, tells how she connects her own second language learning experiences with her teaching:

> I can anticipate the difficulties my students will face when learning a new grammatical structure because I had similar difficulties while I was learning the same thing myself. So, I remember how I overcame the same problem and ... to teach it to my students... I try to teach the same thing in different ways.

Christine's personal experience in learning and using the second language helps her become aware of her students' linguistic and cultural needs. She says this awareness enables her to anticipate and act on her students' language problems and find out strategies to overcome those challenges.

Apparently, teachers' experiences and educational backgrounds also form the basis for their mental processes of storing, sorting, and accessing knowledge. For instance, when offering an explanation or answer upon a question posed by a student in class, Maria says:

> I have considerable knowledge of grammar and so I can usually explain the rule quickly off the top of my head – I am not sure if everybody can do that. It has to do with my linguistics background and then experience I think. But I can't think of a sentence off the top of my head. But, in terms of pronunciation, I can usually do it pretty quickly.

Her quote indicates that she stores the knowledge from her educational background and teaching experiences and accesses her formal learning experiences readily.

Adam, in his spelling and grammar class, had no difficulty giving sample words as examples while teaching prefixes and suffixes. When asked about how he stored all those words, he said, "Those are somewhere in my mind, and when it is time, I would just use them." Even though it seems obvious that all teachers somehow store such knowledge, it is important to note that none of them is conscious of the exact ways the content knowledge is stored.

External Sources of Knowledge

These teachers also rely on a variety of outside sources of knowledge, including software programs, grammar books, and textbooks. The content in Robert's low-advanced listening and speaking class was related to psychology. The speaking and listening activities were about abnormal behavior. During his lectures, he defined a number of new terms. When asked about how he provided the exact definitions from the field of psychology, he said:

> I got them from Microsoft Word. You know, it is a reliable source, and not too complicated for my students. I mean, it offers simple explanations or synonyms. And, I think it is important to know how to benefit from technology because I believe it leads to more efficient teaching.

Using Microsoft Word as a constant source, Robert built a lexical corpus, which he used in his teaching. Similarly, Maria emphasized the role of grammar books as part of her knowledge of the subject matter. In addition to grammar books, dictionaries were another source of content knowledge for Christine and Adam.

Taken together, even though they used the materials for different purposes, what was common among these four teachers as seen from their answers is their strong reliance on external sources, as well as on previous education and experiences, in building and shaping their content knowledge.

Knowledge of Other Fields

The teachers also reported that knowing about other disciplines was a part of their knowledge. In other words, they built connections to other content areas and made these content areas relevant to their students' learning. Since the listening and speaking classes were content-based, both Maria and Robert stated that they were not teaching only language but also content. Content, in this sense, refers to a topic in an academic domain such as science, psychology, or literature. Hence, it differs from the content discussed under the previous category, *content knowledge*.

In his listening and speaking classes, Robert was getting ready to start a new chapter titled "abnormal psychology." In the warm-up stage of his class, he did not seem to have any difficulty lecturing on the topic because he holds a bachelor's degree in psychology. He said if it had not been his major, he would have had to search on the Internet or look

to other sources in order to be knowledgeable about the subject. He commented on how he felt comfortable teaching a content area that he is familiar with:

> I do not want to teach something, um, let's say, a content area I am unfamiliar with. Well, everybody would feel uncomfortable teaching something that they don't have enough knowledge about. I always choose a content area I feel comfortable with. You saw how much I enjoyed teaching abnormal psychology because I know what it is about.

In addition to rich explanations regarding the topic, his knowledge of psychology further helps Robert in defining unknown words easily for his students, as in the following example:

> Now, for this class we are going to talk about abnormal behavior. Okay, now...abnormal behavior can be...divided into two groups. One is neurotic behavior. Do you know what I mean by neurotic behavior? Neurotic has something to do with our nervous system and neurotic behavior is a mild mental disorder, characterized by depression, okay, anxiety and hypochondria. Okay? First, do you know what depression is?

Robert moved from explaining one concept to another smoothly and provided definitions including technical terms based on his related background.

Maria is another participant who integrated her knowledge of content with her language teaching. The following description from field notes further supports this. The purpose of the class observed was to help students learn how to look at art critically, comprehend a lecture, expand their vocabulary related to artwork analysis, and improve their speaking, listening, and note-taking skills.

> Maria said they would learn how to analyze a work of art because they would have a field trip the next day to an art museum. She showed pictures and samples of paintings by famous painters by using a projector. Before doing so, on the chalk-board, she wrote: physical properties, subject matter, illusionary properties, formal elements, and viewer perspective. These are the questions students are supposed to ask and find answers to while visiting the art museum. Maria demonstrated how she analyzed several works of art by addressing those categories on the board. The explanation she makes for every painter and painting is really impressive. ... Students seem to really like the variety in the materials used and they participate actively today. I can tell from their expressions (e.g. "wow," "really") that they are interested in and excited about the topic and also they constantly ask questions.

Through her detailed explanations about painters and their paintings, Maria provided a considerable amount of input for her students. Her presentation looked as if it was a

lecture by an art expert. Later on, during the interview, Maria highlighted the importance of knowing other fields. She reported that this expert-knowledge came from her own interest in art. Maria loves art and she reads about the histories of paintings and life-stories of famous painters, which enabled her to make a dynamic presentation in her class and expose her students to rich input. According to her, if a language teacher knows more about the content she is teaching than what is presented in the textbook, she is better in restating her questions, paraphrasing the content, and summarizing the key ideas.

For Christine, knowing about other fields not only shaped her knowledge, but also fostered her confidence. She thought that "teachers, over time, can expand the variety of content areas as they become more confident and competent."

Knowledge of Other Languages

All four teachers stated that knowledge of other languages was a significant source of their knowledge of language teaching. Although Maria and Robert did not speak any language other than English, they were *knowledgeable about the syntax* (i.e., the sentence structures) of some of the languages that their students speak. Robert stated that knowing a language other than English, especially if the language is the native language of the students, would potentially effectuate higher-quality instruction. Teachers seemed to utilize their knowledge of different languages in teaching a wide variety of skills, ranging from grammar to vocabulary. For example, when dealing with students' pronunciation issues, Maria said she refers to Spanish, a language spoken by many students in her high-advanced listening and speaking class. She said:

> I was surprised when I first heard students having problems with pronunciation of the past tense endings. It was initially Spanish speaking students who seemed to have biggest problem with it. Knowing the differences between pronunciation and spelling in English and Spanish, I was able to diagnose the problem.

Apparently, Maria's knowledge of Spanish helped her to not only diagnose the problem but also solve it. She said that she does not speak Spanish but she knows enough about it. She also has syntactic knowledge of Italian, German, and most European languages. Consequently, she knows when an explanation is needed in advance and can readily provide it.

Similarly, knowing various aspects of different languages enables other teachers to know what to emphasize and when to give further examples. For instance, Christine, in her review of the future tense, gave the following examples which include several statements both in the future and the simple present:

> You should say "I will give it to you later." You cannot say "I give it to you, later." Remember that we use the future tense when we talk about our plans in the future. "I have a stomachache. I will see my doctor tomorrow." We don't say "I see my doctor tomorrow."

When asked why she gave example structures in simple present although her focus was future tense, Christine said:

> Because it is what my Hispanic students say. I don't speak Spanish, but I know this is a "Spanish" thing. I mean my Hispanic students use simple present tense when they should use future tense. I show them the right way and the incorrect use on purpose because I know most of them will say it incorrectly, in an incorrect way.

As can be seen, in her grammar class, Christine gives an example to illustrate the right and wrong usage. She did so because she believed her Spanish-speaking students needed this type of input. Two other participants, Robert and Adam, also used their knowledge of other languages in different ways in their teaching. Robert knows the word and sentence structures of Japanese because he lived in Japan for several years and learned the language there. This knowledge, he said, allows him to help his Asian students bridge the knowledge of their first language and use their first language to reinforce their learning of English. Similarly, Adam mentioned that he resorts to his knowledge of Spanish to point out grammatical differences and to help his Spanish-speaking students overcome trouble with English vocabulary.

Knowledge of Learners

The teachers stated that another factor that affected their choice of explanations or examples was the *knowledge of their students,* which refers to their beliefs and assumptions regarding what students know and how they learn. For example, while teaching a new grammatical rule, Christine highlighted the exceptions and pointed out the difference between the written and spoken language. The following excerpt was taken from her lesson on changing the verb tense in reporting statements.

> In informal conversations, people may not change the past to the past perfect form. Here is an example. "I just saw him at the party." "Michelle said she saw him at the party." Not "she had seen him."

Christine said she felt she had to concentrate on that exception. She explained why:

> Because they will come and say, "but this is what my native speaker friend says. She did not say it in the past perfect form." And then they will ask you why. Since I know this, whenever there is an exception to any rule or, a difference between formal versus informal use, I say, okay, listen, here is something different.

From her explanation, it appears that Christine addressed the use of language in informal and formal contexts whenever it was appropriate. She believed that this was what her students, who were in contact with native speakers outside the class, would need. This belief came from her students' questions, which Christine considered an important type of feedback.

Several other participants also pointed out the importance of feedback in helping them determine if an explanation is needed or if their explanation was adequate. This feedback comes in various forms: non-verbal, written, or spoken. Adam said:

> Feedback from students is, actually, a way to get to know your students. Through their feedback, you will know what they like, what they dislike, what they want to learn, what they find interesting, you know. So yes, feedback is really important in helping you get to know your students.

All participants stated that they knew their students both on an individual level and as part of a group. Such knowledge included students' interests, their perceptions, culture, life experiences, motivation, and sense of humor. Robert, who had taught English for 19 years in Japan, said that he knew what his Asian students would consider funny or humorous and told jokes that they were likely to appreciate. He thinks that this helps his students relate to his examples while also making learning itself more fun. The teachers also reported that an understanding of their students' development, growth, and maturity help them see where their students have been, where they are right now, and where they are going next.

Discussion and Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the types of knowledge ESL teachers possess and utilize in their classes. Since Johnston and Goettsch's work (2000) was pivotal to the present study in terms of both concept and design, it is helpful to briefly summarize their findings. Johnston and Goettsch reported that (i) teacher knowledge is primarily shaped by teachers' educational background, "ranging from middle and high school grammar classes to graduate course work in linguistic courses focusing on the structure of English" (p. 446-447), and their teaching experiences and (ii) categories of teacher knowledge are intertwined in complex ways as they are played out in the classroom and in teacher thinking. The current study supports these findings. Like the teachers in Johnston and Goettsch's study, the teachers in this study also stated that their educational backgrounds and teaching experiences played a significant role in shaping their subject-area or content knowledge. In particular, their graduate study and teaching experiences have been shown to form the basis of their initial conceptualization of language teaching, which in turn influenced their instruction.

Here, the current study raises two important questions. First, is whatever a teacher knows about language teaching transmitted into the teacher's mind before she enters the classroom? And second, could it be that a teacher may develop expertise in the course of teaching? The participants in this study have benefited substantially from their own experiences. Therefore, as Hillocks (1999) argues, teacher knowledge is apparently not simply transferred from certain sources to the teacher, but also constantly constructed and reconstructed.

The relevance of knowledge of the learners had also been explored in Johnston and Goettsch (2000) and other related studies. For example, Richards and Farrell (2005) examined it under the category "understanding of learners" (p. 9), which they defined as the "deepening understanding of learners, learning styles, learners' problems and difficulties, and ways of making content more accessible to learners." Johnston and Goettsch (2000) argue that how teachers verbalize their students' learning and the assumptions they might have in their minds would constitute their *knowledge of learners.* The findings of the current study expanded the contents of knowledge of learners. In this study, the teachers' answers indicated that knowledge of learners included a variety of issues, such as students' interests, perceptions, cultures, life experiences, motivation, and sense of humor, which seemed to play a significant role in lesson planning. The findings further indicated that teachers' knowledge of their learners is dynamic, and is constantly updated and made relevant, depending on the cultural group or language group that a teacher comes across.

One new component of the knowledge base of language teachers found in this study is *teachers' knowledge of other languages.* The results of this study show that knowing a language other than English, especially if it is the native language of the students, is likely to result in better instruction because such knowledge enables teachers to compare and contrast different languages and identify the challenges students face in their English learning. This way, teachers can provide more relevant examples or offer more detailed explanations regarding a particular grammar point or new word. At this point, it might be argued that multilingual teachers might have an advantage over monolingual teachers because they know more "content". Yet, this is only an argument and one should keep in mind that such a broad claim should be treated with caution given the fact that the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all teachers and situations due to the small number of participants studied here and the qualitative nature of the study.

A second new component of the knowledge base of language teachers that was found is *teachers' knowledge of other disciplines and/or fields* that supplements their formal TESOL training. Based on the class observations and teachers' answers to the interview questions, it can be seen that when teachers know more about the content that they are teaching (e.g., a topic in science, psychology, or literature), they are more likely to provide more quality input. For example, in Robert's lecture on abnormal behavior, he used a number of technical terms given his expertise in this area, which otherwise he might not have been able to use. What made Maria's presentation more comprehensible and richer was apparently the technical terms she used and the ample content-related information she provided.

It should be noted that a number of linguists, along with Shulman himself, may argue that "knowledge of other languages" is part of linguistics and therefore a part of content

knowledge. They may also contend that "knowledge of other fields" would also be lumped together with content knowledge. In other words, if Robert is teaching English and abnormal psychology, those two subjects will then form the "content" of his instruction. Johnston and Goettsch (2000) emphasize the difficulty of drawing the boundaries of content knowledge. To them, content knowledge refers to "the knowledge teachers have of the subject matter" and further acknowledges that:

> The nature of the "subject matter" of language teaching is in fact an open question. Even in subjects such as physics or history, it is debatable what the "content" of the discipline might be; clearly, then, in the field of language learning, it is even harder to picture the body of knowledge that serves to constitute the field (p. 446).

As pointed out by Johnston and Goettsch, it is difficult to delineate the boundaries of content knowledge in language teaching. Specifically, in most of the content-based ESL classes, what constitutes the content might be a difficult question to answer. Yet, in this paper, I argue that the categories of "knowledge of other languages" and "knowledge of other fields" should be separated from content knowledge, since not all ESL teachers would necessarily possess the knowledge of other languages and/or fields. Content knowledge, then, should be reconceptualized, and it should only refer to the sources of teachers' knowledge on English grammar, vocabulary, and linguistics.

In addition, a number of scholars might argue that knowledge of learners should be examined under pedagogical content knowledge. I argue here that knowledge of learners includes a great variety of issues ranging from culture to individual differences. Therefore, pedagogical content knowledge should be examined as a different category. Shulman's definition of the pedagogical content knowledge further supports this. He states that pedagogical content knowledge includes "an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, presented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (1987, p. 8). In other words, pedagogical content knowledge only addresses the issue of "how to teach," while knowledge about learners refers to the "assumptions about how learners learn and what they know." As such, they are two different categories although they are tightly related or connected given that teachers' assumptions about their learners would affect the way they teach.

The findings further indicate that the knowledge base of non-native teachers did not differ much from that of native speakers. Both groups draw on almost the same sources in constructing, expanding, and shaping their knowledge. Apparently, the ways in which native and non-native speaking teachers develop their knowledge base is a unique contribution of this study to the current understanding of ESL teacher knowledge.

Overall, this study re-explores and re-conceptualizes the knowledge base of language teaching while identifying some new aspects of it via empirical evidence. In this sense, the study shed some new light on the field's understanding of teacher knowledge. The study also hopes to contribute to the improvement of practice in language teacher education.

Limitations and Suggestions

Although the study is based on a relatively comprehensive framework of knowledge base of ESL teachers than the other studies, it still only looks into a small part of the knowledge base of language teachers. It does not explore, for example, other categories in Shulman's model. Therefore, there is a need to further explore other aspects of the knowledge base of language teaching in order to improve the practice in language teacher education. Another limitation is the small number of participants. Additionally, since it is hardly possible to examine what was going on inside the learners' mind, we cannot be entirely certain that the principles that these ESL teachers noticed did indeed come from the sources that they identified and not elsewhere.

Perhaps the biggest challenge of teacher knowledge research and a possible threat to the validity of the current study is the difficulty of determining the sources of teachers' knowledge. It is rarely possible to trace the single origin of any given thought. Hypothetically, a teacher could say that her classroom instruction was rooted in her undergraduate and/or graduate studies, but how do we know for sure that she did not already "know" how to teach language before? How can we truly know what they know? How can they truly know where their knowledge comes from?

There is not likely to be a simple answer to these questions. However, given current research methodologies, we should rely on what teachers tell us. As several researchers have argued (e.g. Cortazzi, 1993), teacher knowledge is largely in the form of narration and is evident in teachers' experiences. Keeping this in mind, through multiple observations and recursive analysis of data, such challenges and limitations were minimized in this study. Still, future longitudinal and narrative studies conducted with different participants and in different settings might offer further credible evidence.

Last but not least, although this study indicated that the knowledge native and non-native teachers possess does not differ much, this finding should be generalized with caution. The reason is that all the teachers in this study either studied or spoke a second language, which is not necessarily representative of all ESL teachers. Given the fact that TESOL field has a large number of monolingual ESL teachers, the participants in this study may not constitute a representative sample in this regard. Therefore, the differences between the knowledge base of teachers who are native speakers of English and that of those who are non-native should be further explored.

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Appendix
(Interview Questions)

Please review the attached transcripts of explanations you gave in your class.

1. Were you satisfied with these explanations? Which aspects of them were you satisfied with, and which might you change if you had a second chance?
2. What knowledge did you draw on in giving this explanation? How did you know what to say?
3. Where did this knowledge come from? From your graduate preparation, experience?
4. How do you judge whether or not an explanation has been successful?
5. In general, what makes a good explanation? How long should it be? How simple or complicated should it be? How do you know that?
6. Where does students' knowledge of L2 come from?
7. What advice would you give to an inexperienced teacher who says she is worried about how to give explanations of grammar and other language points when students ask questions in class?

Participants were also asked about their own training and experience, in particular previous experience of teaching integrated skills. (Adapted from Johnston & Goettsch, 2000)

Facilitating Critical Reading in the Teaching of English for Academic Purposes in a Japanese EAP Classroom

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This article discusses approaches to teaching critical reading for academic purposes and argues that critical reading skills are an important aspect of any course in academic reading. While the context of the present discussion is a university in Japan, which offers liberal arts degrees programs taught entirely in English, the discussions about critical reading and critical reading strategies are generalizable to other contexts, particularly those where English is used as the principal language of higher education. The article first looks into reasons for the need to teach critical reading strategies, specifically to foster an understanding among students that meaning and the construction of meaning is never value-free but is imbued with different worldviews and ideologies that come through different ways knowledge and meaning are generated and represented. The article also looks at how students can be alerted to issues relating to language, power, and discourse as well as the construction, portrayal, and representation of different ideas, identities, and subjectivities in the language classroom.

Background

Theoretical Foundations for a Critical Approach to EAP Reading

In terms of theoretical foundations for critical reading that are useful to classroom practitioners, thinkers in social theory and academic literacies provide useful insights. Fundamental to their work is the notion of the constructedness and socio-situatedness of text, where texts are viewed as constructs of socio-semiotic meaning and action. In other words, reading involves much more than extracting meaning from written text but rather involves the need to make sense of the surrounding world (Kress, 2003). Within this paradigm, readers view a text through a socially located and individual perspective, and in order to comprehend a text, readers must decipher it through the lens of their surrounding social relations and interactions. (Blanton, 1998; Kress, 2003).

In addition, apart from being a socially situated activity, reading is also an interactive dialogic activity involving commitment to a dynamic relationship between reader and text (Blanton, 1998; Spellmeyer, 1998; Wallace, 2002, 2003). We should be aware that readers

"can and should bring their own thoughts and experience to bear" when they are reading, "in order to create a reading of their own" (Blanton, 1998, p. 227-228). In other words, readers use their own thoughts and experiences in order to talk to and interact with a text for the purposes of implication, exploration, and disagreement (Blanton, 1998; Spellmeyer, 1998; Wallace, 2003). Hence, texts are not the sole authority on any subject and students should be encouraged claim authority over texts and to interpret them "in the light of their own experience and their own experience in the light of texts" and to agree or disagree with texts in the light of their life experience (Blanton, 1998, p. 226).

In such reader-text interactions, Wallace (2003) further recognises a dimension of power—noting that reading involves a "shifting and dynamic relationship between text producers, text receivers, and the text itself" (2003, p. 9). Readers can either *animate* texts or they can *author* texts. Readers who are animators unproblematically try to comprehend and paraphrase texts for meaning that they believe is inherent in the text. Readers who are authors, in contrast, are more analytical and draw upon extra-textual knowledge from their individual environment and experiences to create, or author, meaning from texts. Through this process, these readers move beyond everyday comprehension through resistance and critique (Spellmeyer, 1998; Wallace, 2002, 2003).

Thus, from the above discussion, it can be noted that vital to critical reading is the fundamental premise that textual content is never monolithic or monologic but dialogic and socially-situated.

Japanese Classrooms

The above notions of critical reading are to be juxtaposed with what Low and Woodburn (1999) note as being characteristic of Japanese learners—the concern for correctness and wrongness, the concern for definition and exactness, and the resultant anxieties and shame that come upon Japanese learners in the event of discrepancies in detail and exactness. For Japanese learners concerned about correctness, the situated and dialogic nature of texts become concepts which could challenge both teachers and learners. Some classroom practitioners would offer first hand experience of how Japanese learners, with their intolerance of incorrectness and uncertainty, are often not forthcoming with personal (let alone critical) viewpoints, attesting to Low and Woodburn's observations, and hence to the benefits of having a critical element built into lessons.

This is coupled with the Japanese educational culture in which often only the teacher is given substantial authority over what is to be considered legitimate knowledge. Sato (2004) describes how "without their physical presence, teachers enjoy invisible authority—referring to the authority, respect, and control teachers secure.... The explicit hierarchical organization of schools and classrooms bestows teachers with structural authority" (p. 189). The consequence of this is that students coming into tertiary institutions may not be that familiar with the space that a tertiary classroom (especially

classrooms with critical orientations) would seek to give to more independent, if not critical, responses. Sato affirms this in her observation that, "day-to-day classroom life is colorless, and students' perspectives largely remain off the canvas altogether" (p. 14).

Given this, with areas like reading critically, learners and teacher will need to work through an initial stage where learners, in particular, will have to feel assured that expressions of opinion and critical thinking are acceptable and even to be encouraged. Sato, in an earlier paper aptly entitled *Honoring the Individual*, sees good potential for this when she observes of Japanese classrooms that "the cultural veneer of homogeneity is fabricated by standardised practices, and conceals...actual diversity and individuality" (1999, p. 120). She argues that beneath the veneer of conformity, "uniform procedures and forms of behavior reflect outward appearance, not necessarily homogeneity or uniformity...within students' hearts and minds.... Students may practice identical skills...but once learned, these basic skills actually enable them to become more adventuresome" (2004, p. 202-203).

Pedagogical Applications

Engendering the Socially Located Reader

Following Sato's point about adventuresomeness, students in EFL reading classes can be assured that it is important for them to be interpreting, critiquing, and interacting with text rather than seeking a "single correct" interpretation or expect the teacher to furnish them with one. To do this, it is important that the following three considerations be taken into account, especially at the planning stage.

First, reading texts should preferably be about topics near to home, topics that draw ready responses from students, and topics which students are able and ready to demonstrate a degree of critical commitment. Examples of these include articles about the case of a young sumo wrestler beaten to death with beer bottles in a sumo stable during training (Japan Times, 20 March 2008), a famous singer and actor being found undressed at midnight in a public park (Japan Times, 25 April, 2009), or a famous entertainer's experience trying to rent a downtown apartment (Japan Times, 5 December, 2009). As they read such articles, students can be encouraged to draw on their own knowledge and experiences in relation to each article (Eidwick, 2010). Students come with rich individual histories and experiences resulting from their exposure to the institutions where they have been schooled, which is coupled with experiential knowledge they have gathered from sports, neighborhoods, field trips, cyber world interactions, and electronic media. These are all valuable sources to be tapped as they "read into" the article.

Second, students need to be primed to read critically. It would be ideal if students were given open-ended questions focusing on matters for which there will be no pat solutions, let alone fixed answers. Equipped with such a list of questions, the teacher can

draw out student reactions by exemplifying or elaborating on the issues presented or having various dilemmas fleshed out or simulated as real-life situations. In order to further bring to life relevant issues, teachers may also use televised news reports, news clippings, or action snippets from websites such as Youtube.

Third, to reinforce the point that a variety of responses are allowed, and indeed desirable, time can be allocated for students to check online blogs and other websites where they can encounter a wide variety of responses to the issue at hand. This will enable (and more importantly engender) a habit of students feeling at liberty to think through and evaluate for themselves a wide range of reactions in relation to the particular topic.

Metalanguage for Use in the Classroom

To complement the above and thinking in terms of classroom implementation, making available uncomplicated metalanguage is important. Given useful metalanguage, students come away with concepts simple enough for them to gather up ideas and apply them. Johns (1997) argues for teaching a "metalanguage, or a language about language" because it means that students "develop a language about their strategies for completing tasks, thus enabling them to discuss, critique, and reflect upon what they have done and how they have done it" (p. 128). For students in our university, the following key notions were introduced as part of providing them with critical reading metalanguage: (1) viewpoints, (2) motives, and (3) sources and histories. The next section describes each of these three areas and how they can be applied in the classroom using illustrations from the article on the untimely death of a young sumo wrestler.

Viewpoints

Viewpoints is about the need for students to scrutinise and evaluate content from multiple perspectives. The word *viewpoints* is used in line with the aim of keeping the metalanguage uncomplicated. Through viewpoints, students consider matters through the eyes of various participants and come to understand why people think and act in different and unique ways. Through seeing matters from multiple viewpoints, students are given the message that they too can offer their own opinions and perspectives.

In the newspaper report about the death of the young sumo wrestler, many students were quick to center their critique on the victim's plight and position. Typically, students tapped their background knowledge of bullying practices, which they said were common in Japan, and linked them to the violent death of the young wrestler. The fact that he died in mysterious circumstances—made even more dubious by the police claim that he died of heart failure—attracted students to consider matters from the dead boy's viewpoint. Questions raised by the students included why no one came to his rescue, why there were no controls on the part of the sumo stable, and why there were no other observers who could have stopped things from getting out of hand. There were also reactions of empathy: "I think Saito did not have the power to resist. So I think it was very hard." And there were

reactions of sympathy: "I think Saito is very pitiful." And quite a few students pointed out that his life was ended prematurely: "He was only seventeen," "He was young," "He entered the stable as apprentice," and "Seventeen years old is an important age, but he was deprived of his life by his boss."

Besides the victim, the students were also able to look at the matter from the viewpoints of the stable master and the boy's father. With the stable master, the students tried to empathise with the fact that not many young people were entering sumo stables as apprentices and this has been a trend over the last twenty or so years. Stable masters have been fighting hard to keep their trainees and to attract more new ones. More trainees mean more money for each sumo stable. The fact that this young wrestler kept on wanting to leave the stable and even tried to run away as well as his alleged laziness could have been the cause of the stable master's impatience and ire.

As for the boy's father, he was the object of sympathy but also the subject of blame. Students felt that as a father who had entrusted his teenage son to the stable, he would never have expected that his son would lose is life. Students empathised with the father's feeling of loss and regret, and the fact that if he had just lent a listening ear to his son's pleas to leave the stable, he would still have his son alive and well. Some students, however, felt that the father was equally to blame because of his failure to listen to what his son had to say about his life at the stable.

By looking at matters from different viewpoints, students benefited by coming away from the reading exercise feeling that they had been able to uncover new insights, while others came away feeling that the thoughts they had been having about people involved in sumo were more deeply affirmed. With such an exercise, students come away feeling that they have done a thorough reading, where matters are also considered from the standpoint of even the silent or marginalised characters (Yahya, 1994). In the case of the young sumo wrestler, the dead boy's viewpoint became one literally silent viewpoint the students found useful to examine. This supports Apple and Christian-Smith's (1991) call to examine "the treatment and invisibility of oppressed groups in texts" through considering "other voices to counter the lack of serious attention" given to them and the importance of examining the nature of social relations in text (p.17).

Motives

In the passage on the death of the young sumo wrestler, the police and sumo association are characterized as being reluctant to investigate or talk about the incident. In passages of this nature, students can be asked to think about motives, which are concerned with why certain people or groups of people choose to act or behave in certain ways and for what advantage they stand to gain.

In class, students identified the fact that broadcasting sumo tournaments is worth a considerable sum in profits for the broadcasting network with rights to broadcast sumo

tournaments. Hence, they would certainly not be in favour of any sort of bad publicity for sumo. So, in terms of motives, it would be to the advantage of those with a stake in sumo broadcasting not to have such a matter escalate into one that would bring continued bad publicity for the sport.

Students responding to the passage made incisive comments relating to secrecy as an important driving motive: 'this kind of incident has been a secret of the bad side until now," "the Japan Sumo Association must have wanted to hide the problem." Regarding the police response that the wrestler died of heart disease, students expressed their disbelief that the police might have thought it more expedient to have the matter classified as death through natural causes than to enter into further investigation or exposure of the matter. One student stated, "I can't believe the police." Attempts by students to "author" what went on in the mind of the police can, hence, also come under the notion of motives.

Through being encouraged to look at motives, students benefit even as they are encouraged to do what Wallace (2003) terms as authoring the text through deeper analysis and problematizing different reactions and motivations. The important point here is that while reading, students are attempting to delve deeper, or conjecture, into the issue of motives, and in so doing, students engage with matters giving rise to both conflict and dilemma.

Sources and Histories

Sources refers to origins or seats of power which readers can identify and resist through critical reading. These could be people or agencies through which power can be exercised or wielded. *Histories* refers to contextual background and recent events and how they influence matters. Additionally, histories examines how sources of power set in motion or precipitate different eventualities or outcomes which naturalise unequal power relations. Again, readers can pick up on contexts, histories, and eventualities and make critical comments on processes, results, or eventualities that come through such histories.

In relation to the sumo article, the sumo association would qualify as a source. One student made comments directed at the sumo association to the effect that the association had lost public confidence in its handling of the death of the young wrestler: "I would completely lose the trust of the sumo association after this case." The other source identified was the stable master who allowed three other wrestlers to beat the young man to death, and one student had this to say: "I think the stable master and the three wrestlers arrested must repent of his death."

The fact that a tragic eventuality resulted from the actions of the stable master led one student to make the comment that sumo and the sumo fraternity and eldership had hidden secrets behind the scenes all this while. One student pointed out that such secrecy needs to be exposed through closer scrutiny of what actually happened and said that if the father of the dead wrestler had not pursued the matter the case would have been "let go as a

death by heart attack," as was claimed by the police. Several students pointed out that the ultimate loser in such struggles involving power and control is Japanese culture itself: "Can you say that sumo wrestling is a proud sport of the Japanese culture from now on?," "Sumo is a Japanese traditional sport. I'm sad to hear this news," "I was very ashamed because sumo is Japanese traditional culture. I do not believe that people who inherit Japanese tradition should pollute it." Of course, the point here is that students are given the opportunity to locate the sources of power and control, and in so doing, engage more deeply with what they read.

In terms of context, one student pointed out that what is reported is but the tip of the iceberg—beating trainees with baseball bats and beer bottles and burning them with cigarette butts. One other student, showing her background knowledge of sumo in Japan, pointed out that sumo had of late been involved in various scandals including alleged match fixing and drug use while another student quickly put the whole scandal against a larger historical background of a culture of cliquishness and bullying present in Japanese educational institutions and workplaces. Yet another student went even further when she associated the incident as yet another case of dishonesty so often highlighted in the news putting the incident alongside a food labelling scandal that also rocked and outraged the Japanese public.

Looking at sources and histories benefits students, and student responses strongly attest to the notion of the socially located reader—readers that come into the reading exercise as social beings with understandings of backgrounds and histories that enable them to understand perplexities, dilemmas, and conflicts (Kress, 2003). This in turn engenders responses to text that go beyond a mere gleaning of factual information to what Turner (1999) has called a "reading in" process where deeper understandings of centres of power and control become a significant part of attaching deeper critical meanings to text.

Conclusion

Facilitating critical reading means that students will be able to scrutinise and comment on various representations of knowledge and content, including those that are stereotypical or monolithic. Students can also be encouraged to form the habit of doing the same when it comes to their content courses, where faculty would expect them to consider various theoretical or practical issues in depth and from multiple viewpoints. Related to this, Johns (1997) puts it strongly when she talks about the "danger of teaching assimilation to academic cultures and their texts rather than critique, of promoting students' acceptance of what is considered to be the status quo" (p. 18). With critical reading skills in their repertoire, students will be able to more thoroughly engage with text as co-authors and co-constructors of knowledge while appreciating the richness and complexity of text and meaning. Through such an approach to EAP reading, students will also be able to more

rigorously engage with discipline specific knowledge as active and critically savvy and critically conditioned participants. This makes for richer intertextualities and dialogisation in academia and deeper participation in university and community, from which students and the academic community will only benefit.

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About the Author

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The Malaysian Literacy Assessment Project

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Ranking the performance of education systems across the world using international literacy indexes is a trend that is on the rise. International literacy tests such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study are among the most well-known international tests used to assess and monitor the performance of education systems. The prestige of education systems is often being equated to the performance of students in these literacy tests. The importance and function of these tests are now more complex as they do not merely measure the students' abilities but have become a yardstick of an education system's effectiveness and success. The performance of a nation in various literacy and reading tests, and its index in relation to its counterparts, assigns to the nation a level of prestige and recognition that is highly esteemed in the international educational scene. At present, Malaysia does not participate in these international tests on a regular basis nor does it possess its own literacy tests and indexes. Therefore, it is essential that a system be developed that would allow for the measurement of those aspects that constitute literacy which will include not only global elements but Malaysian ones as well. To initiate such a system that will put Malaysia on the map, it will have to start with the design of an instrument to measure literacy (e.g. a literacy test) and another to determine the level of literacy (e.g. an index).

Background

Rating Literacy in Malaysia

Literacy rates in Malaysia have conventionally been derived from data that is bound to the school context such as grade-level reading ability or attendance in the formal schooling system. For example, a 1984 study by Long and Zaidan reported a literacy rate in Malaysia of 74% based on the reading habits of Malaysians. However, the study applied grade-level reading scales to rate literacy without taking into consideration other basic literacy skills (Kadir, 1997). Other Malaysian-based surveys relied on school attendance figures to report a literacy rate of 85% for the population aged 10 years and above (Malaysian Department of Statistics, 1995). Furthermore, the United Nations Development Programme (2008) reported a literacy rate of 91.5% for the Malaysian

population aged 15 years and above, a figure arrived at by taking into account "enrolment at the primary, secondary, and tertiary level." These surveys do not measure basic literacy rates but rather interpret enrollment and attendance in formal schools as a measure of literacy.

What is Literacy?

Traditionally, the word *literacy* has been understood as communicating through printed letters and words that are based on a standard usage (Cope & Kalantzis, 2003; Kress, 2000, 2003). However, the rapid advance of new information and communication technology in this age, often regarded as new media technology, necessitates a reconceptualisation of the term literacy and its meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2003; Luke, 1995). No longer can we apply a linguistic-based theory to deal with the term literacy because new technologies frequently use both images and writing to create meaning in communication. Because of these changes, the science of communication and representation cannot be confined to language alone as "language alone cannot give access to the meaning of the multimodally constituted message; language and literacy now have to be seen only as partial bearers of meaning" (Kress, 2003, p. 35).

A more complete understanding of literacy requires a new theory that needs to take into account the different modes that are available to represent meaning. This is because the written text is inextricably linked with visual, audio, and other modes of meaning creation. Although the written text is still important, texts are now presented in a highly visual form and the meaning of messages is more often communicated through images rather than through the accompanying printed text. These complex yet subtle links between visual images and texts are apparent in various aspects of our everyday lives from websites and television programmes to the advertisements in newspapers and supermarkets. Therefore, the concept of literacy should not be confined solely to printed text but rather encompass ways of effectively communicating in diverse settings (Cope & Kalantzis, 2003).

Literacy in today's era is multimodal and occurs within unfamiliar contexts in which people must search for textual meaning through analysing a text's contexts and purposes (Cope & Kalantzis, 2003; Kell, 2003, Kist, 2000). A current understanding of literacy should include the acquisition of the abilities and skills to negotiate meaning making (Kaur, 2001). Eisner (1997) defines literacy as a way of conveying meaning through and recovering meaning from the form of representation in which it appears. Clearly, the traditional understanding and definition of literacy cannot accommodate the new demands made on the term because texts today are "more than content or form, more than discourse or genre" (Kress, 2003, p. 103). It is therefore quite inevitable that our understanding of literacy has to undergo a paradigm shift away from the traditional because texts today are always more than just language.

The teaching objectives in Malaysian schools are very much motivated by student achievement on examinations. It has grown to become a culture and trend that is worrisome because the notion of academic success is unequivocally hinged on how well the students perform in examinations. Therefore, as our understanding of the term *literacy* in the post-modern era is being broadened to surpass merely the development of an ability to read and write, the objectives of schooling and the curricula need to be reassessed to accommodate how literacy should be currently defined.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2002) defines literacy as the acquisition of "knowledge, understanding, and skills required for effective functioning in everyday life" (p. 11). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2004), literacy is the process of learning that will enable individuals to "achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society" (p. 13). The present definition of literacy should therefore be realistically perceived not just as an ability to read and write, but rather as the acquisition of knowledge and the ability to integrate reading and writing skills in the wider context of the individual's social circumstances. Hence, the focus of the Malaysian Literacy Assessment project reported on in this article is based on the broader concept of literacy that is proposed by the OECD and UNESCO.

Development of the Model of the Malaysian Literacy Assessment

The main objective of the Malaysian Literacy Assessment (MLA) project is to design a test that will measure how well young adults in Malaysia who are approaching the end of compulsory secondary school education are prepared to meet the challenges and demands of daily life and effectively participate in community and society. The concepts that form the basis for the design of the MLA have been adapted from PISA because testing information, literature, and samples were more readily accessible. PISA is conducted by the OECD and was launched in 1997 and the tests are oriented towards an approach to literacy that is concerned with the ability of students to apply skills in analysis, reason, logic, and communication. Here PISA explains its use of the term literacy:

> PISA uses the term literacy to encompass the broad range of competencies relevant to coping with adult life in today's rapidly changing societies. In such a context, adults need to be literate in many domains, as well as, in the traditional literacy areas of being able to read and write (OECD, 2004: 9).

The MLA also focuses on assessment of the ability of young Malaysian adults to apply their knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges and function effectively in the circumstances of the present society rather than their ability to perform in school and national-level examinations that are based on the national curriculum.

The MLA test questions are arranged in levels of difficulty beginning with questions where the answers may be found directly from the text or easily interpreted contextually from charts or tables. There are three sections in the test. Each section contains two problems and presents ten questions following the information/text given.

The first section of the MLA, Reading Literacy Assessment, consists of ten questions regarding two different problems. The first problem requires the students to briefly review Kuala Lumpur's bus system inclusive of their scheduled advertisements. The four questions that follow are two multiple-choice questions and two short-answer questions. The second problem is a short story pertaining to and describing piracy in the Straits of Malacca. The six questions that follow consist of three multiple-choice and three short-answer questions. The students are required to write short answers that must be legible and logical. It is also the intent that these test questions assure student awareness of issues and information not only needed in their everyday lives but that they understand and apply the information given regarding events in Malaysia.

The second section of the MLA, Mathematical Literacy Assessment, contains problems that test students' understanding of the fundamental concepts in the areas of human growth, living space, and travel distance calculations. It is the intent that these test questions assure student awareness of the calculations needed in their everyday lives. These three testing sections are each followed by a series of ten questions. Ultimately, the students should be able to read the information given, be knowledgeable enough to understand what calculation needs to be done and derive an acceptable answer. Their mathematics literacy is tested as they are given a variety of information where they must read columns and rows in tables, understand how to relate the "X" axis with the "Y" axis as well as calculate the relationship between speed, time, and distance.

In the third section of the MLA, Scientific Literacy Assessment, there are two problems presented within the topics of population growth and wildlife and land conservation. They were chosen for their particular popular concerns and international interest. Other topics included are environmental and conservation issues related to the plight of the Penan people of Sarawak and conservation groups such as *Friends of the Earth, Love to Save,* and *Borneo Conservation Trust*. Each problem is associated with current issues of importance that students are or should be aware of in their own country, and ultimately, these issues help students realize that scientific thinking is not just for scientists but is very often needed by all citizens. Their scientific literacy is tested as they are given various pieces of evidence for each problem for which they must come to a conclusion drawn from that evidence. Because of this process, students should be able to communicate their knowledge and understanding of particular scientific topics in order to effectively argue their viewpoints and findings.

Purpose of the Study

The present study aims to find out the extent to which young adults, who are on the threshold of completing compulsory secondary school education, are equipped in selected literacies that will enable them to meet the challenges of daily life and participate effectively in society. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How well equipped in the different literacies are young adults who are approaching the end of secondary school education?
2. What type of literacies are the young adults more competent in?

Method

The test is designed for 16-year-old students who are approaching the end of compulsory Malaysian secondary schooling. The test consists of 30 questions that are a combination of multiple-choice or short-answer questions. The test requires 75 minutes, which is within the teaching session timeframe common to Malaysian secondary schools. The test is available in English as well as Bahasa Malaysian which is the national language, so that students have the opportunity to participate in the language that they are more comfortable with.

Participants

The participants for the test were selected from two secondary schools in Penang, Malaysia. A total of 84 students from four Form-Four arts classes participated in the initial test which was conducted by teachers from the selected schools in separate sessions after being briefed on the procedures. As this is a preliminary study, the students sampled in this test do not fully represent the national population of 16 year-old Form-Four students as they were selected only from the arts stream classes of two urban schools.

Scoring

Marking of the answer scripts was carried out by members of the MLA research team, all of whom are English language teachers with a minimum of 10 years of language teaching experience. Some of the teachers have had experience teaching Science and Mathematics in secondary schools. The marking was done based on the marking guidelines provided for each section. While the multiple-choice questions in the test have either a correct or incorrect answer, partial credit marking is employed for the questions that require more complex answers for which students need to construct their own answers. Raters were advised to ignore spelling, grammatical, and mechanical errors unless the errors substantially impeded understanding of the answers.

Literacy Assessment Scales

Three separate scales were developed for each area of literacy in order to facilitate interpretation of the scores. First, the Reading Literacy Assessment scale is a 5-band scale

with a total score of 100 marks divided between each band. The scores in each band represent levels of proficiency that are related to the difficulty of the questions in the reading literacy section of the test. Each band in the assessment scale is accompanied by short descriptors that explain what is being assessed and the characteristics of expected performance at each band. Each successive band represents the ascending level of difficulty of the selected tasks. The tasks were designed for each level and their assumed level of difficulty was ascertained by experienced English language teachers within the research team. A student with a score of zero marks would be placed in the lowest band (Band 1) whereas one with a score of between 75-100 marks on the highest band (Band 5) (see Table 1). Therefore, a student with a score of between 75-100 marks would be expected to have the ability to cope with similar questions up to that level of difficulty.

The other two scales, the Mathematics and Science Literacy Assessment scales, were constructed along corresponding conceptual underpinnings. The tasks on Mathematics and Science Literacy Assessment scales were validated with the help of Mathematics and Science teachers from secondary schools. Similar to the Reading Literacy Assessment scale, both the mathematics and science scales also contain five bands with total scores of 100 marks divided between each band. Therefore, a student with a score of 0 marks would be placed in the lowest band (Band 1) whereas one with a score of between 75-100 marks on the highest band (Band 5).

Table 1
The Literacy Band Scale

Band	**Marks**
5 Advanced	75-100
4 Competent	50-74
3 Basic	25-49
2 Prerequisite	1-24
1 None	0

The reading, mathematical, and scientific problems in the test contain text and task types that 16 year-old Form-Four level students would have the ability and skill to perform. However, the problems become progressively more complex and require more demanding information processing skills and strategies as they move up on the scale. The difficulty of the problems is not only determined by the structure and complexity of the text but also by what the student is required to do with the text.

Each level on the scale not only represents the requisite skills and knowledge but also allows an interpretation of the level of proficiency of the students. As each level on the scale represents a progression of proficiencies, students at a particular level not only demonstrate the knowledge and skills associated with that level but with those of the lower levels too. Therefore, it is expected that a student who is placed at Band 4 on the scales will be proficient not only at that particular level but also for Band 3 and Band 2 tasks as well.

Results

Reading Literacy Assessment

An analysis of the reading literacy assessment scores indicate that 47.6% of the students participating in the test scored between 1-24 marks and were placed at the Band 2 (Prerequisite Level) proficiency level; 38.1% scored between 25-49 marks at Band 3 (Basic Level), 13.1% scored between 50-74 marks at Band 4 (Competent Level), and 1.2% scored between 75-100 marks at Band 5 (Advanced Level). The indicators of performance are illustrated in Table 2.

The majority of students in the study (85.72%) were placed in the prerequisite to basic levels according to their total scores achieved in this section of the test. Although the skills assessed were focused on reading comprehension and thus related to school-based reading achievement, the skills tested were more strongly associated with out-of-school, functional literacy needs such as following procedures and directions, locating specific items on a schedule, and other applied tasks. The results, therefore, indicate that the majority of the students possess the prerequisite skills to locate and apply information in simple but authentic situations and also to form judgments by relating text information to background knowledge.

Mathematics Literacy Assessment

The mathematics literacy assessment scores showed that 50% of the students participating in the test scored between 1-24 marks and were placed at the Band 2 (Basic Level) proficiency level; 35.7% scored between 25-49 marks at Band 3 (Moderate Level); 13.1% scored between 50-74 marks at Band 4 (Competent Level); and 1.2% scored between 75-100 marks at Band 5 (Advanced Level). The indicators of performance are illustrated in the Table 3.

Table 2

Reading Literacy Scale

(Adapted from OECD 2002, p. 29)

Level	***Indicators*** *(Students should demonstrate one or a combination of the following skills at the levels depending on the type of text and question.)*
5 Advanced	Locate, sequence, or combine information which may be embedded or outside the main text. Demonstrate full understanding of a text, recognise nuances and shades of meaning and make inferences from the text. Use of everyday and specialized knowledge to understand and evaluate a text.
4 Competent	Locate and recognise the relationship between pieces of information. Integrate parts of a text to identify a main idea and infer meaning of word or phrase from context. Demonstrate understanding of a text by comparing and contrasting and drawing on everyday knowledge and also on less familiar knowledge.
3 Basic	Locate less clearly stated information, Identify main idea in a text and apply low level inference skills, Make connection between text and real-life situations, explain answers by drawing on personal experience.
2 Prerequisite	Locate explicitly stated information, Recognize main theme/intention of writer, Make connection between text and daily life applications.
1 None	No Reading Skills.

Table 3

Mathematics Literacy Scale

(Adapted from OECD 2002, p. 29)

Band	***Indicators*** (*Students should demonstrate one or a combination of the following skills at the levels depending on the type of text and questions.*)
5 Advanced	Well versed in mathematical principles, able to manipulate and interpret multi-step problems. Solve problems that require from two or more to multiple operations. Engage logical reasoning.
4 Competent	Possess a good grasp of the mathematical principles. Interpret and solve problems involving a small number of processing steps. Apply key terms to solve word problems, transitivity relations, or inequality exercises.
3 Basic	Complete problems involving simple steps. Recognize and use "part-to-whole" analogies in measurements of time, weight, size, or volume.
2 Prerequisite	Interpret straight forward problems involving simple mathematical operations. Relate simple mathematical operations to daily encounters. Establish basic skills of Mathematics.
1 None	No Mathematics skills.

In this category, the results were almost similar to what was attained in the previous category with the majority of the students (85.7%) being placed in the prerequisite to basic levels according to their scores. As it is essential that mental and informal mathematical tasks be part of the assessment, the categories being assessed here are not focused on school-based mathematics skills. Therefore, school-based assessments may not accurately indicate the level of literacy as the young adults may have developed through informal ways to deal with real-life situations. The results therefore reveal that the majority of the young adults in this study possess the prerequisite levels of mathematical literacy that will enable them to engage in out-of-school situations which require some mental calculations and mathematical operations using formal and informal techniques to handle everyday mathematical tasks.

Science Literacy Assessment

The analysis of the science literacy assessment scores indicate that 41.7% of the students participating in the test scored between 1-24 marks and were placed at the Band 2 (Prerequisite Level) proficiency level; 48.8% scored between 25-49 marks at Band 3 (Basic Level); 8.3% scored between 50-74 marks at Band 4 (Competent Level); and 1.2% scored between 75-100 marks at Band 5 (Advanced Level). The indicators of performance are illustrated in the Table 4.

In the science literacy category, the majority of the students were again placed in the prerequisite to basic levels (90.5%). The results indicate that the young adults are equipped with the prerequisite science literacy skills that will enable them to function effectively in their social environment by using and applying scientific concepts to solve real-life problems in out-of-school situations. It also indicates that the students have the necessary abilities to use the formal scientific knowledge that is learned at school by drawing simple conclusions, correlating text information with existing knowledge, and applying it to situations that are relevant to them in everyday contexts.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations of the study (such as small sample size and the samples were exclusively arts students), a few implications can be drawn, which provide avenues for further research. First, the results indicate that all the young adults tested in the MLA have functional literacy skills, with the majority of them placed in the prerequisite and basic levels which are entry-level skills required in training for future employment, and for meeting real-life economic, social, and health related needs. Second, as the MLA shares similar concepts to PISA, the results also provide an indication of how well students who have completed compulsory education in secondary school are able to extend their knowledge and skills across a range of tasks and competencies that are commonly associated with general and everyday situations within and outside the school context.

Table 4

Science Literacy Scale

(Adapted from OECD 2002, p. 29)

Band	**Indicators** (*Students should demonstrate one or a combination of the following skills at the levels depending on the text, graphs, tables and question.*)
5 Advanced	Use conceptual models in order to make predictions. Demonstrate full understanding of a text, graph or table by giving explanations or their scientific findings. Analyse the design of an experiment and identify the idea tested. Compare data in order to describe results in detail accurately and precisely.
4 Competent	Able to recall the simple facts of the scientific concepts involved (e.g. terminology, names of important items, simple concepts). Use common scientific knowledge in order to derive at simple conclusions that relate to the information given from the text, graphs, and tables.
3 Basic	Identify the main idea of the scientific concepts, not necessarily the end results. Correlate some of relevant information between the text, tables and graphs. Draw basic conclusions based on the evidence given as well as their own knowledge. Make simple computations if necessary.
2 Prerequisite	Draw simple conclusions on examination of the scientific evidence presented. Recognize the main idea of the scientific concepts. Make connection between the text and daily life applications.
1 None	No science skills.

Finally, the results also indicate that the general achievement of students in the three areas tested was well-balanced as students attained almost equal levels of competency across all the three domains of reading, mathematics, and science literacies without any particular domain being dominant.

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Non-Native English Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching, Accents, and Varieties

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The present study contributes to the ongoing systematic inquiry about non-native English-speaking teachers' (NNESTs) issues and concerns, specifically the native teacher fallacy regarding the unfair treatment of qualified NNESTs and the false perceptions of the native speaker as an ideal teacher. The research on NNESTs issues has dealt with teachers' self-perceptions and personal histories, administrative concerns, and student opinions (Braine, 2004; Flynn & Gulikers, 2001; Mahboob, 2004; Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman, & Hartford, 2004). Within this body of research, NNESTs are found to experience an inferior status due to administrator and student preference for native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) (Achimbe, 2006; Braine, 2004; Ellis, 2002; Kamhi-Stein, 1999; Liu, 1999; Mahboob et.al., 2004; Medgyes, 2001; Oda, 1999) and this has led to NNESTs having a poorer self-image and perceiving themselves as incompetent and deficient teachers (Reves & Medgyes, 1994).Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate NNESTs' teaching behavior and their perceptions of their own language proficiency, accent, and awareness of different English varieties.

Native Versus Non-Native Teachers

The existence of the native/nonnative dichotomy has been questioned in the literature because the "native-speaker" construct has not been successfully defined and nativeness is not the major criterion for the description of language competence (Achimbe, 2006; Canagarajah, 1999; Cook, 1999; Davies, 1991; Rampton, 1990). It has been argued that instead of dwelling on the nativeness issue, teachers should be viewed on the basis of their professionalism and NNESTs' language competence should not be considered inferior but different than that of NESTs'.

In terms of NNESTs' teaching behavior, previous research suggests that NNESTs tend to have a lower pragmatic competence and bookish language because most of them have not lived in an English-speaking country for a long period of time (Liu, 2004). They focus on accuracy, form, grammar rules, texts, and formal registers. They schedule more homework and tests, and they correct errors more frequently (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Medgyes, 1999).

Because of NNESTs' use of L1 and translation, there is some level of code-switching in the classroom communication between the instructor and the students and among

students themselves. According to Chen and Hird (2006), in EFL contexts, code-switching during student group work is inevitable because they share the same L1. They tend to reserve the use of the target language for specific tasks, while L1 is the medium for all off-task, off-record communication. Hancock (1997) argues that the use of L1 should not be necessarily deemed as bad. He believes that "on the one hand, L1 interjections are a natural by-product of charge in the interaction, and that charge could not be too easily defused by an inflexible insistence on the L2" (p. 233).

As for teacher-student interaction, Macaro (2001) points out that the prominent reasons for L1 use are giving procedural instructions, keeping control of students, and reprimanding them. He goes on to say that research should focus on developing a code-switching optimality theory which will provide teacher trainers with guidelines on what can be considered good practices of switching to L1 as compared to using it as an easy option.

In terms of teachers' perceptions of English accents and varieties, previous research suggests that inner-circle models (those coming from countries in which English is used as a first language) dominate EFL classes (Matsuda, 2002). Matsuda (2003) found that Japanese EFL classes are based on inner-circle models because of the widespread use of American and British textbooks. Sifakis and Sougari (2005), on the other hand, argue that EFL teachers in Greece view English teaching as norm-bound because they identify the language with its native speakers. NNESTs' norm dependence has been challenged by the argument that students, especially in EFL contexts, learn English not to communicate primarily with native speakers, but to become intercultural speakers by acquiring competence in intercultural communication and English as an international language (EIL) (Seidlhofer, 2004). In other words, EIL does not have a direct connection with Inner Circle countries. Thus, instead of native competence, students need to develop linguistic, pragmatic, and rhetorical competence for multicultural and transnational communication (McKay, 2002). The establishment of intercultural speaker identity (i.e. speakers who position themselves between the target and their own culture) would help eradicate the binary notion of native versus nonnative speakers (Sifakis, 2007; Velasco-Martin, 2004).

The Macedonian Context

Macedonia is one area of the world where English has become the dominant foreign language studied. Over the years, there has been an increasing number of private elementary and high schools as well as private language schools which use English as the medium of instruction for all courses they offer. And recently, English study has become compulsory in Macedonia even though in the past ten years almost all elementary and high school students have studied it voluntarily at some point (Dimova, 2003, 2005). Yet there are still students who attend English classes in private language schools because they believe that their English instruction at school is inappropriate or insufficient. Even though there is currently a strong demand for English in Macedonia, it is expected to

further increase due to the latest socio-political developments of visa liberalization and prospective European Union membership. Macedonians desire English for the purposes of international communication and access to educational, economic, and cultural information. Nevertheless, most English instructors in the country, and in the Balkan region, are NNESTs.

This paper extends the discussion on the issues related to NNESTS' by exploring the following research questions:

1. What are Macedonian NNESTs' beliefs about their English teaching practices?
2. What are Macedonian NNESTs' perceptions of their own English language proficiency and accent?
3. What are Macedonian NNESTs' attitudes towards different English varieties?

Method

To achieve data comparability, the study draws on prior research dealing with non-native English speaking teachers' (NNESTs) teaching behavior and self-perceptions in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts (Braine, 2004; Flynn & Gulikers, 2001; Mahboob, 2004; Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman, & Hartford, 2004). Data collection consisted of structured interviews of NNESTs and classroom observations. Classroom observations were included to validate NNESTs' statements obtained through the interviews. The qualitative design of the present study allowed for a more in-depth exploratory analysis of Macedonian NNESTs' opinions, beliefs, and behavior.

Participants

Participants in the study were 15 NNESTs working in six private language schools in two cities, Veles and Prilep, both of which have about 70,000 inhabitants and are typical mid-size cities in Macedonia and the Balkan region. All private language schools from Veles (n=4) and half of the private language schools from Prilep (n=2) participated in the study. The teachers selected for the study were representative of the Macedonian NNESTs because most of them had the standard pre-service teacher training in Macedonia or the neighboring countries of Bulgaria and Serbia, and many of them taught in both public and private schools. The study followed the research protocol approved by the Institutional Review Board, and school administrators and teachers signed consent forms before their participation in the study.

Schools

The number of participating English teachers from each of the schools ranged from two to six, with a mean of four. In terms of student enrollment, the schools ranged from 140 to 350, but most of them had around 300 students. All participating schools offered English classes for students of all ages and proficiency levels. The English classes in all schools were primarily based on general English although some offered specialized courses like Business English or Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) preparation courses.

Teachers

After locating the private language schools in Veles and Prilep, meetings with the school directors were arranged to inform them about the study and to request their participation. The purpose of these initial meetings with school directors was to learn about the number of English teachers in the school, their teaching schedules, and the type of classes they taught. At least two teachers per school were selected to participate in the study. In most cases, the school directors notified the teachers about the times the researcher would visit to observe their classes. However, the researcher scheduled the interviews with the teachers. It was made clear to all participants that participation was voluntary and that they were free to opt out of the study.

All teachers participating in the study were female (the percentage of male English teachers in Macedonia is low), and ranged in age from 20 to 33. When asked about their L1, they all stated it was Macedonian, except for one teacher whose L1 was Serbian. Their teaching experience ranged between two months and 10 years (mean=4 years, median=4 years). The educational background of the teachers varied. While one of the participants was a college senior, eight had a four-year degree in English language and literature, six of whom majored in English education and two majored in translation studies. Two had a four-year degree with English studies as a minor. Two teachers had four-year teaching degrees (one in German language and literature and one in elementary education), and two had non-teaching degrees (hospitality management and engineering).

In terms of their career, six teachers had worked only in the participating language schools. The other teachers had other work experience. Six had taught English in an elementary school and one in a secondary school. One was a bank administrator, and one was a library administrator. None of the teachers had taught other subjects except for one who had taught German. The participants' teaching loads ranged from a total of 15 to 45 hours a week (mean=29.6, median=35), which included all the classes they taught both in the private language schools and elsewhere. Seven teachers had not participated in in-service training programs and activities while eight stated that they attended different seminars organized by textbook publishers, workshops organized by the Ministry of Education, and seminars organized by the United States Agency for International Development and the British Council in Macedonia.

While in college, six of the participating teachers visited for less than a year English-speaking countries, namely Great Britain (N=4) and the United States (N=2). Some of them went on student worker exchange programs working as au pairs or in restaurants while others visited relatives or attended intensive English programs.

Instruments

A structured interview was designed for teachers. Some interview questions were original and, in order to obtain comparable data, some were adapted from the studies

conducted by Llurda and Huguet (2003) and Arva and Medgyes (2000). The interviews were designed to take between 30 minutes and one hour, but the actual interview length varied depending on participants' responses to questions. The interview included 47 questions divided into five sections: introduction, instructor background, English proficiency, teaching, and opinions about ownership and varieties used in the classroom.

Procedures

One lesson per instructor was observed before the interviews were conducted individually at the instructor's convenience. The observations and the interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed and coded by two raters. The inter-rater reliability was calculated to ensure rating consistency ($r = .915$). The coding scheme the raters used was shaped by the three main research questions that guided the study. Seven coding categories were used in relation to the research question dealing with NNESTs' teaching practices (see Table 1). Three coding categories were developed based on the research questions related to teacher's self-perceptions and attitudes towards different English varieties (see Table 2).

Table 1

Coding Categories for NNESTs' Teaching Practices

Category	Description
pedagogy	specific teaching and learning methods, description of general teaching approaches, techniques, and class structure, and the type of textbooks used in the classroom
listening	teacher's understanding of the listening skill, types of teaching and learning listening activities and frequency of their use
reading	teacher's understanding of the reading skill, types of teaching and learning reading activities, and frequency of their use
speaking	teacher's understanding of the speaking skill, types of teaching and learning speaking activities, and frequency of their use
writing	teacher's understanding of the writing skill, types of teaching and learning writing activities, and frequency of their use
L1 use	teacher's opinion about the purpose, the positive and negative aspects of L1 use, as well as the frequency of L1 use in class
culture	teacher's levels of understanding and knowledge of the target culture(s), frequency and type of cultural references in class, as well as teacher's confidence speaking about it

Table 2
Coding Categories for Teachers' Perceptions of Language Proficiency, Accent, and English Varieties

Category	Description
self-evaluation	how comfortable the teacher is when self-evaluating her English and teaching skills
accents	teacher's awareness of her own accent and the accents of her students, as well as her preferred English accents
English varieties	teacher's opinion about the English variety she teaches, the benefits of that variety, as well as the importance of achieving native-like accents

Findings

The findings from the teacher interviews and the observed classes are divided into two sections below. The first section discusses NNESTs' teaching opinions and practices. The second section presents their perceptions of their own language proficiency, accent, and English varieties.

Teaching Opinions and Practices

First, NNESTs' teaching opinions and practices resembled the descriptions presented in previous research. As is the case with many NNESTs in South America, Africa, and Eastern and Western Europe (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Llurda & Huguet, 2003; Reves & Medgyes, 1994), Macedonian NNESTs claimed to address all language skills even though, in most classes, vocabulary and grammar were the focal skills.

Pedagogy

When asked about their main language teaching principles and practices, only one teacher named the method she used: "I try to combine grammar and communication methods so the students can learn grammar and then use it in communication." All of the other teachers described the types of activities they liked to use or a typical lesson plan. For example, several teachers pointed out that they liked teaching English through different games. They believed that games made their classes more interesting and motivated students to learn. Some teachers valued interactive and task-based activities. According to the teachers' responses, and supported by class observation findings, their

classes usually consist of listening to an audio recorded text, reading the text, identifying new vocabulary, translating the text, and doing the activities following the text, such as grammar, reading comprehension or listening comprehension. The following is an example of a typical lesson described by one of the teachers:

> If we have a text, and in the text there are some grammar rules that are following, I read the text first or I play it on a cassette. Then I try to find if there are unfamiliar words, I write them on the blackboard, and I write the definition, the pronunciation, and the translation. If I can describe the meaning of them in English, I do that, but if I can't, I always use the Macedonian translation. And after that, when I finish reading and translating the whole text, I make the students read the text, and translate the text, of course, and then we talk about it. And after that, I tell them to pay attention to grammar. So, first we have reading, pronunciation, and translation, and after that grammar. (Teacher# 10)

The textbook choices in the observed classes followed the traditional pattern of an inner-circle linguistic selection and a restricted representation of the wide range of English users and uses (Matsuda, 2002; 2003). Most textbooks were norm-oriented providing British, and more rarely American, written and spoken samples and cultural elements. The textbook selection was partly influenced by several British publishing companies (e.g. Oxford University Press, Longman, and Cambridge University Press), who attract clientele from the private school sector via organizing various workshops. In their textbook promotion, the main emphasis rests on material "authenticity" as the selling point. Even though most Macedonians would probably use English for international communication, no samples of other English varieties or nonnative speakers were used in the textbooks.

Listening

According to interview statements, and confirmed by classroom observations, teachers employed various activities depending on the focal language skill. To teach listening, the teachers played tapes, CDs, and DVDs that accompanied the textbooks, or DVDs with songs, cartoons, or movies. Most audio-recordings represented English varieties from the UK and the US. While one teacher reported that she started with pre-listening activities that established the context for the listening, the rest of the teachers discussed only post-listening activities, such as comprehension questions, true or false statements, fill-in the gaps, and put the information in the correct order. Several teachers described the listening activities as mere listening and reading of the text in the book.

Findings from the classroom observations supported teachers' statements that listening comprehension activities were used most frequently because they were incorporated in the textbook learning units. None of the teachers mentioned discussions and questions and answer sessions as activities for listening development although these

activities were observed in the classes. Finally, none of the teachers stated that sometimes their own speech could provide input for the listening activity while such instances were clearly noted during observation.

Reading

The teachers' understanding of the reading skill was an ability to read out loud and then translate different texts. The observations provided corroborating evidence for this because teachers frequently asked students to read texts out loud with correct pronunciation of the words and appropriate intonation. Most teachers used read aloud activities to practice pronunciation, so they infallibly corrected students each time they mispronounced a word.

Even though numerous reading comprehension activities were noted during observation, only three teachers mentioned pre-reading and post-reading activities, such as discussions or reading comprehension questions. The following is a list of reading activities that one of the teachers offered:

> There are many activities. I give them a text and they write questions related to the text, and then they answer the questions. I give them a statement, one or two sentences, and the students write questions about the statement. The statement has to be provocative and I want to lead them to the text. Then they read the text. Before reading the text, I ask the students to write what they know and what they want to know about the topic. Then, I give them the text and ask them to write what they've learned. (Teacher#15)

Speaking

Even though some teachers listed different activities for oral language development, the most frequently observed activities were class discussions and conversations or dialogs. The topics for these discussions were usually related to a text or suggested by students. The dialogs, however, were not spontaneous because students would first write them and then read them out loud. It seemed that most teachers focused on practicing pronunciation, which, as mentioned earlier, was part of the reading activities. Some teachers related speaking to writing or listening, stating that they used discussion as a pre-writing activity (for example, to brainstorm ideas for the writing activity) or as a post-listening activity, that is, to discuss what they learned from the listening activity. One teacher mentioned using several speaking activities:

> I want them to be able to ask questions and answer questions. I want them to be able to re-tell a text based on what they remember, not based on actual sentences and just learning them by heart. I want them to be able to describe something. I want them to be able to, if they don't know a word, to explain it in different words so I can come to the word they are asking for, stuff like that. (Teacher#4)

Writing

When asked about teaching writing, many teachers stated that most writing activities were assigned for homework because they took too much time or because students were not fond of doing them in class. The most frequently mentioned writing activities were dictation and writing the new vocabulary words. Free writing and writing on specific topics were two more writing activities employed in the classrooms. In addition to spelling and new word entries, other writing activities used in the observed classrooms were fill-in-the-gap or complete-the-sentence activities. None of the observed teachers spent time discussing English writing conventions, discourse, or genres because traditionally, with the exception of spelling and grammar, writing has not been explicitly taught in the Macedonian public school system.

Even though teachers believed that all language skills were important and tried to spend time on each during their lessons, grammar seemed to be the most and writing seemed to be the least favorite skill. Listening and speaking were two other skills that teachers agreed to be valuable for their students to acquire because they were necessary for effective communication.

Use of L1

Most teachers felt that the use of L1 was beneficial and they used it to establish rapport with their students or to explain grammar points and difficult concepts. Teachers thought the L1 was most beneficial for younger children and beginning level students because it would be hard to establish any communication in English. However, many teachers warned that L1 in the EFL classes should be present only in moderation because English exposure was essential for learning.

In the observed classes, the amount of L1 use differed among classes ranging from predominantly L1 to predominantly English. What seemed to be common for all classes, though, was the fact that the L1 was used in all off-record communication (including comments, asides, chats, and jokes) among students or teacher and students. Another commonality was that even if teachers used English to address their students, unless it was an English activity, students replied or addressed teachers in the L1. The findings from the classroom observations regarding code-switching corroborated previous research. As Macaro (2001) suggested, L1 in teacher-student interactions was used to establish classroom discipline and to provide procedural concepts. Both teachers and students used English when assuming a different role or for task specific purposes, so it seemed that L1 related to "self" while English related to "other" (Chen &Hird, 2006; Hancock, 1997).

Culture

Limited cultural information was offered during the observed classes, which supports the findings from several earlier studies (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Mahboob, 2004; Reves & Medgyes, 1994). Even though teachers tried to deal with cultural issues more or less effectively, their teacher-as-an-informant perspective prevented them from admitting if they were not sure or did not know (Lazaraton, 2003). It is important to note that the classroom resources (e.g. textbooks, audio-visuals, etc.) for adolescent (10-14) and adult learners contained more inner-circle cultural references than those for young learners (5-9). Even though references to the local culture were included, especially for comparison with the target culture, no instances of multicultural and transnational situations and contexts were observed, which suggests that teachers do not associate these contexts with English culture.

Teachers' endeavors to describe some of the target culture elements in the teaching materials were not always successful. For example, teachers did not provide accurate descriptions of certain behaviors, institutions, and foods mentioned in the texts because they had never experienced the target culture themselves.

Teachers' Self-perceptions of their Language Proficiency, Accent, and English Varieties

Self-Evaluation

Self-evaluation of their English proficiency was difficult for teachers because they struggled between modesty and acceptability of their proficiency. They were asked to rate different aspects of their English proficiency (grammar in use, knowledge of grammar rules, vocabulary, pronunciation, oral fluency, listening, writing, reading, and overall) on a five-point scale (1-very weak, 2-weak, 3-acceptable, 4-good, and 5-very good). However, many teachers rated their skills in increments of .5 or between two points of the scale. Some teachers believed they should measure their English proficiency against inner-circle norms. They suggested that the researcher should measure their proficiency because their self-evaluation may be incorrect, or that they felt they had to justify the scores they gave themselves for different language skills.

Results suggest that most Macedonian NNESTs are confident with their overall language skills with self-ratings between good or very good (see Table 3). Findings partially supported previous research (Llurda & Huguet, 2003) in that even though reading was rated highest, listening and writing were rated higher than knowledge of grammar rules, which is generally considered the best teaching and language skill of NNESTs (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Butler, 2007; Mahboob, 2004; Mahboob et. al., 2004; Reves & Medgyes, 1994). Oral language skills and vocabulary range were rated lowest, which was consistent with previous studies (Butler, 2007; Llurda & Huguet, 2003).

Table 3
Teachers' Self-evaluation by Language Skill

Skill	Average self-rating
Reading	4.9
Writing	4.6
Listening	4.5
Grammar rules	4.4
Oral fluency	4.1
Grammar use	4
Pronunciation	4
Vocabulary	3.86

According to their own ratings, teachers believed that reading (mean=4.9) and writing (mean=4.6) were their best skills. However, the majority thought that writing meant spelling of English words or writing grammatically correct sentences, so they related writing to their knowledge of grammar rules (mean=4.4) and their grammar use (mean=4), which they rated lower than writing. Listening comprehension closely followed writing and rated fairly high (mean=4.5)

The weaker language skills, according to the teachers' ratings, were oral fluency (mean=4.1), pronunciation (mean=4) and vocabulary (mean=3.9). The teachers rated their vocabulary lowest because they used a restricted range of words in their classes, and they did not have a chance to use English in other contexts. Table 3 summarizes teachers' self-evaluations.

Overall, the average self-rated proficiency among teachers was reasonably high (mean=4.3). Most teachers believed that their English had improved since their graduation from university because they were exposed to different English media such as television, magazines, and books, and because they prepared their classes on daily basis. These opinions support the belief that NNESTs constantly work on their linguistic and professional development in order to retain high teaching quality by using many English resources at their disposal (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Miranda, 2003).

Although their self-rating of English proficiency was high, teachers expressed some feelings of uncertainty and inferiority. They listed their lack of confidence, lower range of vocabulary, accented speech, occasional use of incorrect grammar, and exaggerated use of L1 in the classroom as problematic areas. "Maybe we don't have a good accent. Maybe we are weaker in grammar. We're not so fluent in speaking," one of the teachers said. In addition, they believed they had to use the dictionary or other resources much more often than if they were native speakers. A teacher claimed, "Well, if you are a native speaker, you know everything. Sometimes you [NNEST] can't remember a word or something. That's the main disadvantage" (Teacher#2).

More teachers added that they thought they were not as knowledgeable as native teachers because they had a restricted vocabulary range and problems with grammar. The teachers expressed their fear of not being able to answer students' questions or remember a word because some students may still expect an all-knowing teacher figure.

Accents

As far as the accents and varieties were concerned, most teachers described their accents and their teaching practices as norm-oriented, which follows Sifakis and Sougari's (2005) findings regarding teachers' opinions on pronunciation in Greece. The preferred English varieties were inner-circle Englishes, in other words Englishes from the countries in which English is learned and used as a first language (Kachru, 1985). Teachers chose British and American English, the latter being much more popular due to its greater presence in the media. Six teachers characterized their English accent as American, four thought it was British, while two stated it was a mix. As can be seen from the example below, some teachers argued that their accents would change if they were exposed to a different variety of English:

> Well, I have so many. I think I'm changing my accents very easily. I'm very adjustable or adaptable, because now you're talking with American accent and I think I'm doing the same. Sometimes it's more British...But, I think I'm changing the accents because it's a kind of communication or something, I just adjust. Once I talked to a guy who was Italian. We talked in English and, I found myself talking in English with an Italian accent, so..., unfortunately I don't have my own. (Teacher#2)

This teacher raises an important issue as to whether there is a homogenous, local, and recognizable English variety with which Macedonian English speakers can identify. She seems to be reshaping and negotiating her identity by testing and adjusting her intelligibility in different contexts. This adjustment seems to follow the argument that, "NNES accents are to some degree influenced by those of NESs, but they still are negotiated products between an idealized target and their identities" (Kubota, 2006, p. 606).

While this teacher regretted that she did not have her own accent, another teacher identified her English as being "Macedonian with American and European influence," because people had described it as such. She did not mind her accent, and she did not think that having a Macedonian English accent was unacceptable.

Most teachers did not provide specific description of the features that made them characterize their English accent as British, American, or a mix. Their opinions were based primarily on their preference or attitudes towards the variety. A few teachers believed that their pronunciation or spelling determined their accent. As examples of British English the teachers provided the "the mute /r/, at the end of the word" in British, and the pronunciation of *can't* as /kant/ in British and /kænt/ in American English. One teacher made the comment that Macedonians tend to "sound more like the American people, and they don't have that British accent."

English Varieties

The English varieties teachers taught in the classroom did not always coincide with the English variety they used. When asked about the choice of English standards, teachers compared and chose between American and British English. Some teachers claimed that they taught British English in their classes because they used British textbooks and audio and visual materials. Some believed the media imposed American English in their classes, and some believed that they used a mix of British and American.

Teachers' and students' preferences and attitudes towards the two main inner-circle varieties, American and British, influenced their choice. "I try to use British English," one teacher said, "because that is the correct variety." While one teacher used American English because her students did not like British, which "sounds so neat, sounds fake," another teacher argued that the American variety was "closer" and "easier" for students.

Even though their views were norm-bound, teachers rejected the idea that their students should strive towards acquiring a native-like accent. The teachers argued that if their students had good communicational skills in English, the accent would not matter, which seems to relate to Velasco-Martin's (2004) concept of an intercultural, inter-communicational speaker, even though the teachers did not seem fully aware of the English as an international language perspective.

One teacher thought that students were "interested in acquiring the knowledge of the language not the accents." Even though the teachers deemed correct, norm-referenced pronunciation very important, they stressed that the ability to communicate, not the accent, was important for students to acquire:

> If I can understand them, what they are talking about, for me, it's not a problem. I try to correct them or bring to attention the need to pronounce correctly. It's good [if they can acquire a native-like accent], but it's not top priority for me. (Teacher#4)

Even though some students would like to sound like native speakers of English, some teachers believed that obtaining a native-like accent was not feasible in EFL contexts. "I think that no matter how hard they try, not only the students but also the teachers, they can't speak the same for sure...They can't speak like somebody for whom it is a native language" (Teacher#7). This teacher raises the concern about whether teachers should even try to teach the inner-circle norms or whether they should make their students aware of the existence of World Englishes.

Those teachers who thought that students should acquire a native-like accent did not provide specific reasons to support their opinion. "It's not so good when we hear somebody speaking with some, I don't know, hard accent," one teacher said, but she didn't describe what "hard accent" meant.

Teachers' opinions on which accent was more beneficial for the students were divided. Although most teachers discussed inner-circle norms, their attitudes and their descriptions of the models differed, which suggests that the concept of native speaker is obscure and fluid. Seven teachers thought that American English was best for their students because "it sounds softly," "it's closer to the students," and "it's easier to pronounce." These teachers also said that students "are under the influence of the American accent, because of the films, music, and other media," while "British is not so popular." Three teachers believed that British English was best because it "has more rules that students have to learn so that they can learn other dialects more easily later on." The teachers mentioned that "British English is the standard [variety] in all European countries," while they characterized American English as "some kind of a dialect."

Even though most teachers opted either for the British or the American variety, five teachers commented that students should choose the English variety depending on what they find more important or easier to learn. However, when observed, these teachers did not employ any pedagogy that fosters exposure to and awareness of World Englishes.

Conclusions

Findings suggest that Macedonian NNESTs are influenced by the normative varieties through the media, textbooks, and inner-circle organizations such as the British Council and Peace Corps. Many Macedonian NNESTs express English linguistic and cultural inferiority because they believe their ownership belongs to the inner-circle countries. Although most teachers are aware that their students' English differs from the inner-circle varieties, they still maintain that English instruction and assessment have to be norm-oriented. These beliefs affect teachers' pedagogical choices and decisions. NNESTs seem to underplay the language input they provide in the classroom to the advantage of the authentic textbooks and materials, which expose students to native English varieties. Hence, the dominant models in the Macedonian EFL classes depend mostly on the textbook choice.

The findings from this study lead to certain implications about NNESTs in the expanding circle, which has been defined as countries in which English is learned and used for international communication (Kachru, 1985). Even though scholars have tried to demystify the superiority of native speakers and document the expanding role of English as an international language (Achimbe, 2006; Jenkins, 2002; Seidelhofer, 2004), NNESTs are yet to overcome their feelings of deficiency, as well as their lack of English identity awareness. Even though Macedonian NNESTs' rated their English proficiency high, they expressed their uncertainties and feelings of inferiority, comparing themselves to native speakers. In addition, most teachers did not show awareness about their English identity, be it related to the English variety and accent or their pedagogical and methodological practices.

Nevertheless, the results from this study suggest unity among Macedonian NNEST beliefs and practices, which may separate them from other NNESTs. Unlike previous findings suggesting that NNESTs were most comfortable with their knowledge of grammar rules, Macedonian NNESTs rated their reading and listening skills higher than their grammar rule knowledge. Two assumptions that need further investigation arise from this finding. First, Macedonian NNESTs are frequently exposed to English media (TV, movies, music, magazines) that are not dubbed or translated, which helps solidify their so-called receptive language skills, reading and listening. The other assumption is teachers cannot separate the dynamic connection between grammar knowledge and grammar use, so they think their knowledge about the application of grammar rules is not always right.

The homogeneity of Macedonian NNESTs' beliefs and teaching practices provides additional evidence about the specific traits of Macedonian NNESTs. Most teachers' classes were driven by the texts and activities in the course textbooks, and they valued reading and translation. This observation, however, does not necessarily mean that teachers would fall back on the grammar-translation method if it weren't for the textbooks because they explicitly stated that games, interaction, and task-based activities are effective teaching approaches and techniques.

These findings suggest that teacher-trainers and educators may need to pay greater attention to the particular language proficiency and teaching skills with which NNESTs struggle. Raising awareness about English as an international language and the different varieties existing outside the inner circle may also help NNESTs to improve their self-perceptions and re-validate the relationship between the language and its native speakers. Even though teachers may continue to use inner-circle varieties as language models, they may find it useful to expose their students to other varieties, and to reflect on issues and concerns with regard to English as a global language. Moreover, instead of focusing on stereotypical cultural aspects associated with England, Scotland, or the U.S. or avoiding unfamiliar cultural elements, NNESTs may build their identity and gain more confidence if they embed English in more familiar contexts such as international education and communication.

NNESTs may benefit from different pre-service and in-service teacher training opportunities created to address these issues, be they part of the pre-service training programs or through ongoing seminars and workshops. According to Sifakis and Sougari (2005), such training can address the role of English as a language for intercultural communication in the country's current geopolitical environment and beyond.

Finally, due to the descriptive nature of the study and its scope limitation, further research should investigate the possible differences in teachers' perceived proficiency levels and the expected proficiency for successful teaching (Butler, 2004). Last, a careful description of NNES teacher talk, focusing on cultural elements, code-switching, and interaction should be provided to analyze the types of input and the functions of L1 and L2 use in the EFL context.

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Tips for Teachers

Simple as Do-Re-Mi: Using Body Language to Facilitate the Teaching of Songs

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In my work as an Assistant English Teacher (AET) in Japan, I essentially served as a cultural ambassador for the English-speaking world, sometimes visiting as many as 30 public schools a year. My role was to give students a positive, pleasant language learning experience in a lesson led by a native speaker of English. The teachers whose classes I visited frequently asked me to incorporate music into my English lessons. I learned that lessons involving songs are not always as easy or fun as they should be, particularly when the lyrics of the song prove difficult to understand. Teachers often resort to the problematic practice of careful translation, and soon the experience in English becomes just another lesson about English.

Over time, however, I learned that songs whose lyrics can be linked to clear gestures or body language can be directly understood, quickly learned, and easily recalled later on. While I initially used this technique with primary school children, my colleagues tell me that it would work well with beginning level language learners of all ages. These steps describe one possible procedure for using this technique. An illustrated example can be found in the Appendix.

1. Plan ahead the specific gestures that you will use with each word, phrase, or line of the song. This is very important so as to be clear, consistent, and confident when presenting the song to the students.
2. On the day of the lesson, ask the students to stand up while you introduce some new words and gestures to them. Even if they do not yet understand what you are saying, standing and moving helps them relax and feel like responding.
3. Recite the lyrics slowly, phrase by phrase, along with the associated gesture or body language movement. Encourage students to repeat and/or mimic you, but do not force them to do so.
4. Repeat if desired to give initially reluctant students another opportunity to respond.

5. Now add the music. Play the recording or sing the song to show how lyrics, gestures, and music are interconnected. Usually by this time, students are eager to join in.
6. Repeat if desired or if time permits.

A particularly effective song for introducing this technique is "Hello Goodbye" by the Beatles. It works well because it is easy to create transparent gestures for many of the lyrics and because many people are somewhat familiar with the song already. The gestures that I use when I teach this song appear in the Appendix. Other songs to try are ones that already appear in your language teaching textbooks, ones that are popular in your local setting, or ones that you personally know well and would enjoy sharing with your students. There are also many online resources with suggested songs for use with language learners. Your primary challenge will be to think of the gestures to help your students access the lyrics.

Variations, Extensions, and Caveats

1. Consider teaching only the chorus or first stanza of a song rather than a whole song, particularly if the lyrics become lengthy or complex.
2. Although you may feel that a professional recording is better than your voice, recordings can be intimidating if they are too fast. With your voice, you can adjust the tempo to be comfortable for your students.
3. Sometimes, even when students are very eager to repeat the song, I tell them that we will do it again at the end of lesson. It seems to help them remain engaged with other parts of the lesson while they eagerly anticipate repeating the song at the end.
4. If you teach in a context where teachers frequently translate English into the students' native language, it may be difficult to refrain from translating song lyrics as well. However, I have learned that if I am careful and concrete in my choice of gestures, translation is unnecessary.
5. Look for opportunities to use gestures, words, and phrases from old songs when you introduce new ones.
6. Nearly always, there is a way to connect the lyrics, theme, or music of a song to the local culture of your students. For example, body language differs from culture to culture. You or your students may enjoy changing the *hello* and *goodbye* gestures shown in the Appendix to body language that is more fitting or common in their culture. Or, if you teach in a multiethnic setting, your students may enjoy showing each other gestures and body language from their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

7. When it is difficult to think of a gesture for a particular phrase, you can create a word card such as the ones shown here so that students can still associate the words with movement.

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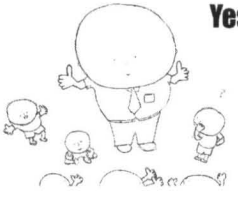
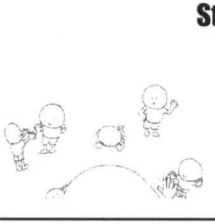
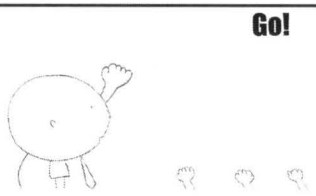
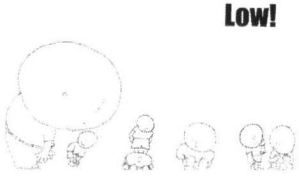
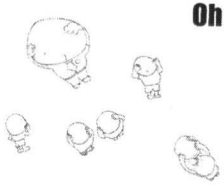
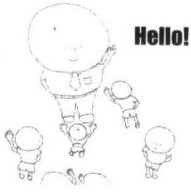
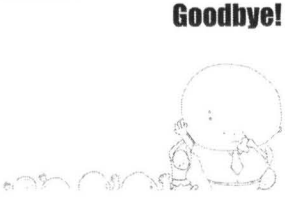
Appendix

Example Gestures for Use with "Hello Goodbye" by the Beatles

Word/phrase and gesture	Example
Yes: Thumbs up	
No: Thumbs down	
Stop: Hold hand, palm out in front of you.	

Appendix *(cont'd)* : Example Gestures for Use with "Hello Goodbye" by the Beatles

Word/phrase and gesture	Example
Go: Pump fist in the air.	
High: Raise hands overhead	
Low: Squat and touch the ground	
Oh no!: Snap fingers and put hands overhead	
Hello: Wave your right (one) hand.	
Goodbye Wave your left (other) hand.	

Activate Your Robot: Enhancing TPR Through Situated Role-Play

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Total Physical Response (TPR) is based on the notion that learning a new language can be strengthened by linking phrases and sentences to physical movement. Simply put, the approach consists of "Do what I say" activities. Typically, the teacher gives a command (e.g., *Pick up a red block.*) and student(s) follow it. TPR is often seen as an engaging and effective approach whereby learners can demonstrate comprehension of the target language long before they are comfortable producing it. TPR commands are also present in the ordinary teacher talk found in any classroom lesson. For example, *open your books to page 33* and *please turn in your papers* are essentially TPR commands. Thus, students are inherently familiar with the form and often need to respond to it.

As engaging and practical as TPR activities can be, many teachers have noted that TPR routines quickly become boring and repetitive, that they are difficult to utilize beyond the beginning level, and that it is sometimes difficult to help students transition from passive listen-and-respond routines to active production of the target language, especially with larger classes. I have found that these challenges can be addressed by making two adjustments in typical TPR routines—using situated role-plays and creating an optional scaffold for target language output.

Role play has long been seen as beneficial in terms of bridging the gap between classroom practice and real world use of the target language. It allows learners to "step outside themselves" and, therefore, feel less self-conscious about their language use. At the same time, many real life contexts, from beginning level to advanced, involve giving and/or responding to commands. I have found that by designing role plays based on such real world routines and providing a scaffold to encourage (but not require) students to participate in giving TPR commands, I can also help them become aware of an extra sense of purpose in their physical responses to TPR commands. Here I describe an example of this type of TPR lesson for beginners, using a role-play featuring robots.

Step 1: Activating Background Knowledge

Assemble posters, pictures, or electronic images featuring famous (or not so famous) robots from films, TV, comic books, or other sources. I use R2D2 and C3P0 from *Star Wars* as they are instantly recognizable and their names are easy to use as models when I want my students to name their own robots (see Step 2 below). Display the pictures so all students can see them or hand them out for students to pass around. Ask students some questions such as *What do you know about robots? What are some other famous robots?*

Give volunteers a chance to tell about robots they have seen or heard about. Finally, tell them that today everyone in the class will be a robot.

Step 2: Naming the Robots

Explain that the first thing they must do is to choose a robot name. Demonstrate by figuring out your own robot name. Although any naming convention can work, I usually use the R2D2 and C3P0 model of letter-number-letter-number by choosing my initials as the letters and the number of letters in each name as the numbers; for example, my name—*Matt Schaefer*—becomes M4S8. Hand out name tag stickers to each student for them to write their robot names on, and ask them to wear the tags somewhere easily visible.

Step 3: Activating the Robots

Explain to students that robots must do whatever they are told and that currently you are the head robot, so they must do what you say. Then, begin issuing commands. These can start very simply with, for example, *All robots: Stand up.* Then continue with whatever level of language is appropriate for the class. Among the commands that I typically use at the beginning level are: *Stand up. Sit down, Turn around, and Raise your right/left hand.* Soon, however, I direct my robots to become a bit more active by commanding them to:

- *Play the guitar, piano, or violin.*
- *Play volleyball, soccer, or baseball.*
- *Eat a hamburger, pizza, or sandwich.*
- *Drink a cup of tea, milkshake, or glass of water.*
- *Cook spaghetti, barbecue a steak, or make a sandwich.*

After giving several commands to the whole class, choose some individual robots to order around using their name tags to call them out. For example, *N6H5, play the piano.* This is an opportunity to use stronger students to model for weaker ones. After being head robot for a while, ask whether any other robots want to be the head robot. Often there will be several volunteers. This shows that some students are ready for production.

Step 4: Programming the Robots

Next, or in a subsequent lesson, put students into pairs, seated, ideally, so that partners are facing each other. Ask them to take out a clean sheet of paper. At the top, they write *Commands for...* followed by the robot name of their partner. Then have them number their paper from 1 to 10 and write ten commands for their partner. Monitor the class while they do this, providing support and language input as necessary. Students can use vocabulary they have already seen or heard in previous lessons, refer to their textbooks, or try to come up with something they have never tried saying in English before. This step can be continued as homework, if necessary.

Step 5: Training the Robots

Finally, when everyone is ready, students take turns giving commands to their partners. If some students are still not comfortable with speaking at this point, they can give their list of commands to another robot who will command their partner robot. What ensues looks and sounds like chaos, but it will also entail a lot of meaningful language practice.

Step 6: Reactivating the Robots

Once the students have created and used their robots, the role play can be used again in subsequent lessons to introduce new phrases and expressions as well as to revise previously taught ones. The possibilities are limitless. Simply announce *Let's play robots*, and the students will know what to do.

Caveats

- If possible, make your robot name tags from sturdy card stock or other reusable paper or plastic, so that they are durable and easy to find when you want to use them later.
- One easy way to revise but also extend previously used commands is to add adverbials or negation, for example: *Cook spaghetti slowly, Turn around three times, or Don't smile.*
- Sometimes I teach students who find it easier to take in new language through print rather than through listening. For groups like this, I usually write their first commands on the board while they are making their name tags in Step 2. In subsequent lessons, they are usually willing to listen and speak directly without depending on reading.
- Some students may produce commands that stretch the use of the imperative. For example, they may say, *Be ten years old* or *Live in America*. However, I have found that their partners nearly always find an appropriate and creative way to respond such commands.

I have found the following TPR role play situations work well with students at an intermediate or advanced level of proficiency.

Developing skills

Playing a musical instrument, trying a new computer game, learning to use a gadget, and getting from Point A to Point B for the first time all involve responding to imperatives. Your students can demonstrate use of this kind of language by role playing a driving lesson. Have them turn your classroom into a town using desks as city blocks. Then, working in pairs, a driving instructor gives a student driver commands such as: *Go straight ahead, turn right at the first corner, turn left at the second light, stop here, park the car,*

and watch out, don't hit that car! Afterward, have students work in small groups to teach each other skills that they know how to perform using their own musical instruments, gadgets, games, and so forth.

On the job training

Many high school students and young adults have part-time jobs. Learning what to do in the workplace often requires following many directions. Create a training session for newly hired servers in a restaurant. The maître d' or head waiter gives directions to the new hires who, in turn, performing actions (and speak) with diners. Example commands could include: *When they finish the soup, take away their bowls. Don't forget to mention the specials. Ask them if they would like dessert.* Encourage students to show each other about their real part-time jobs by creating additional roles plays in which they play the role of trainer.

Acting—the ultimate role play

Acting is all about role play. Have students work in small groups to create a movie rehearsal scene in which a director coaches actors who are just learning their roles. Challenge them linguistically and creatively by using an example similar to this one: *Slowly tip-toe towards the desk. Show both excitement and fear on your face. Pick up the knife and slowly turn it over in your hand. Think about what you will do with it when you see the man who betrayed you. Now, as the door opens, let your jaw drop and your eyes widen in surprise...*

Conclusion

TPR activities become more meaningful when applied not just to classroom situations, but also to authentic contexts in which giving commands naturally occurs. This increases the level of engagement, interest, and motivation and creates the opportunity to expose students to a much wider range of vocabulary and structures. The teacher can also easily set the balance between input and output based on individual classes and individual students within those classes, creating a non-threatening, enjoyable environment that allows learners to experiment, play, and have fun with the target language.

About the Author

Matthew Schaefer is an assistant English teacher in Nagoya, Japan where he is also working on his M.A. in TESOL at the Nagoya University of Foreign Studies. Prior to settling in Japan, he taught English in France, Spain, Italy, and England. He has studied film, music, and literature and enjoys using these subjects to activate his English language students.

Future: English for Results 2

Review by Rick Nelson
Brigham Young University–Hawaii, Hawaii, U.S.A.

Future: English for Results 2. Sarah Lynn and Wendy Pratt Long. 2010. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education. ISBN 13: 978-0-13199148-4; ISBN 10: 0-13-199148-5. 314 pp. $24.67.

Future: English for Results 2 Teacher's Edition and Lesson Planner. Julie C. Rouse. 2010. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education. ISBN 13: 978-0-13199148-4; ISBN 10: 0-13-199148-5. $36.67.

As described in the "To the Teacher" section at the beginning of the book, *Future: English for Results 2* is part of "a six-level, four-skills course for adults and young adults correlated to state and national standards. It incorporates researched-based teaching strategies, corpus-informed language, and the best of modern technology." *Level 2* is identified as "High Beginning," for students with CASAS scale scores between 191 and 200.

The body of the text consists of a pre-unit and 12 units, each identified with a life-skills theme, such as "At Home, "Health Watch," "Job Hunting," and "Parents and Children."

Each unit typically presents nine lessons that offer a consistently-repeated series of language-skill points: Vocabulary, Listening and speaking (about the unit theme), Grammar, Reading, and Life Skills, Numeracy (focusing on the use of numbers in daily life) and Persistence (focusing on keeping students engaged in encouraging study activities, even when they cannot attend every class). Some skills, particularly listening and speaking and grammar, are sometimes presented as lessons more than once in each unit. Each lesson appears as a two-page spread. At the front of the book, a chart identifies the activities and exercises that support each of the skills. At the beginning each chapter, students can find an explicit list of goals for the lesson, such as "Talk about your life and family," and "Complete a customs form" (Unit 2), and "Ask a co-worker to cover your hours" and "Complete a vacation request form" (Unit 12).

In terms of graphics, typography, and eye appeal, the book and each of its pages are beautiful, attractive, and efficient, with a well-considered variety of photographs, illustrations, charts, and text. Each page is easy to read with a good balance of text, graphics, and white space to attract users.

A CD accompanies the text, with numerous listening exercises marked by icons in each chapter.

The spiral-bound *Teacher's Edition and Lesson Planner* offers the teacher a view of each page of the student book, with a facing page offering useful presentation suggestions and watch points.

This text seems most suited for courses that take a broad view of English language study and for courses that wish to present language skills with a "a little bit of everything" approach.

This text may be less well suited for courses that focus narrowly or exclusively on one specific skill, such as grammar or reading.

With good background scholarship, an attractive appearance, good peripheral support and a reasonable price, *Future: English for Results 2* deserves careful consideration.

About the Reviewer

Rick Nelson teaches ESL and TESOL courses at Brigham Young University–Hawaii. He holds a Master's degree from the University of Hawaii. His interests include devising simple explanations for complex grammar points.

Classroom Management

Review by Tadayuki Suzuki, Ph.D.
Western Kentucky University, Kentucky, U.S.A.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT. Thomas S. C. Farrell, volume editor. *TESOL Classroom Practice Series.* Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages. 2008. ISBN 9-781931185-52-3. 177 pp. Member $29.95. Nonmember $39.95.

Classroom Management outlines how ESOL teachers, specialists, and administrators should plan and implement effective classroom management strategies in their instructional settings. Although diversities brought by ESOL learners are often misinterpreted as challenges, these individual differences add various colors and flavors to the classroom. Such diversities are not only unique but are valuable as well. Teachers' correct understanding of classroom management enriches their students' experiences and maximizes their learning outcomes.

In the 15 chapters of this book, the authors describe successful and insightful classroom management strategies based on their classroom teaching experiences and research studies. Each chapter begins with a brief topical introduction of a classroom management strategy and discusses its context and how the strategy may be implemented. Then, all authors conclude their discussions with brief reflections. All levels of instruction (e.g., elementary, middle, secondary and university; ESL and EFL instructional settings) are thoroughly covered; discussions in eight chapters focus on higher education. Although a variety of EFL contexts such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam, China, South Korea, Japan, and Costa Rica are included in this volume, discussions of four chapters relate to Japan. None of the classroom management strategies in this book is restricted to a specific instructional level or cultural context.

The chapters in this textbook focus on effective classroom management strategies that help teachers and students create communication and language-rich learning environments. Purposefully maximizing opportunities for small group activities, efficiently shuffling and rotating members in groups further reinforces leadership roles and collaborative skills in the classroom. Each learner is thus provided a different responsibility. The authors emphasize the critical need for teachers to clearly describe the purposes and objectives of the learning experience in order for students to succeed.

As the strategies described in this book are all evidence-based, the discussions are especially geared toward ESOL practitioners. The authors also maintain that these

classroom management strategies should work effectively in different instructional settings and subject areas despite the fact that in settings, the students' behavioral patterns and academic needs often vary. Figures, tables, illustrations, appendices, and pictures aid in understanding the authors' strategies. The specificities of these supplementary materials vary across the different authors.

Classroom management strategies are not stand-alone, autonomous instructional techniques. As the editor of this volume maintains, the creation of ideal learning environments helps teachers provide their students with efficacious lessons. Efficient preparation and opportunity before instruction is a key to the success of ESOL instruction. Thus, I believe that many readers of *Classroom Management* will benefit from the classroom management strategies and insights shared by the authors of this book.

About the Reviewer

Tadayuki Suzuki, Ph.D., is currently an associate professor of literacy education at Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky. His academic and research interests include elementary and content area literacy, multicultural literature, culturally responsive teaching practices, and teaching ESL.

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.

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