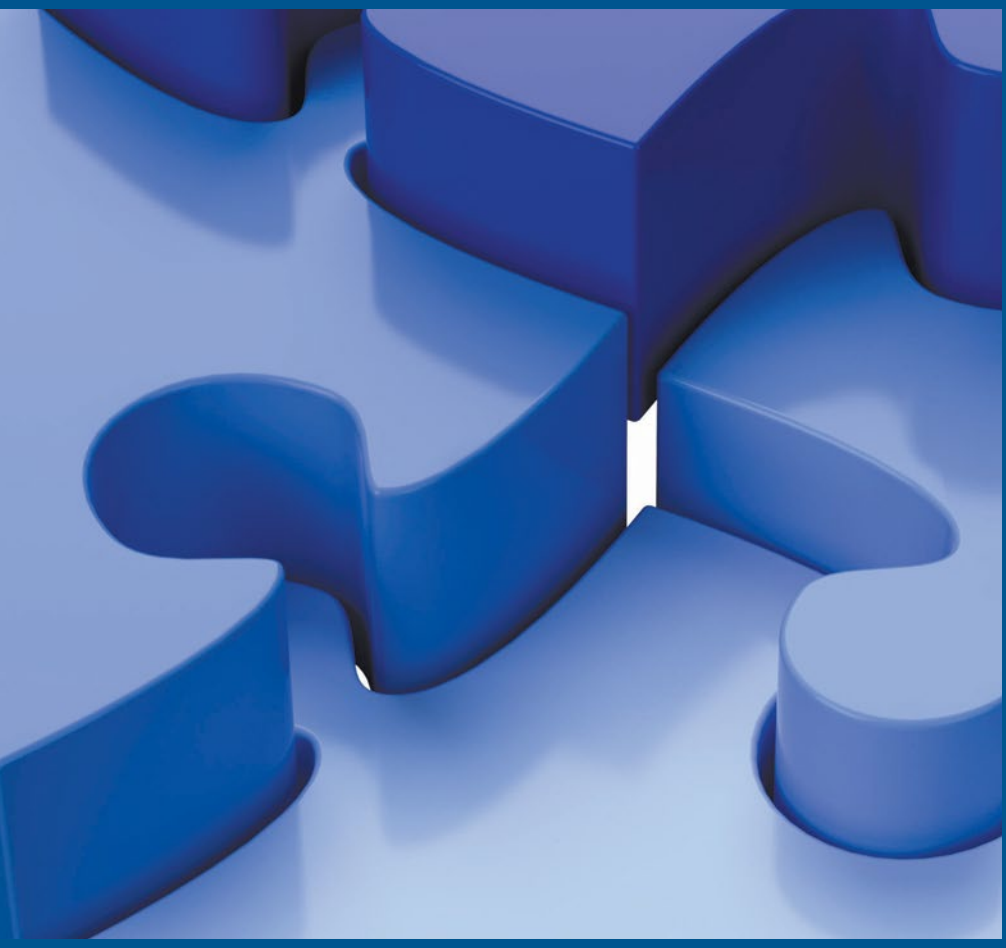
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING THE FOUR SKILLS IN ELT

Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing



International Perspectives on English Language Teaching

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International Perspectives on English Language Teaching

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International Perspectives on Teaching the Four Skills in ELT

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Introduction

The four language skills are at the heart of current practice in English language teaching. It is now usual in course books to find sections dedicated to listening, speaking, reading and writing alongside the more traditional activities of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. This focus on skills is the result of a confluence of factors, including: communicative competence as the main aim of language teaching and learning; improved understandings of genres and their importance in social practice; and theoretical insights into how we listen, speak, read and write.

In spite of the focus on skills, research-based volumes that deal with all four are relatively rare. This volume not only extends our knowledge and understanding of skills teaching, but does so from a truly international perspective with chapters from 16 different countries. It is therefore a timely publication, as well as a very welcome addition to the *International Perspective on ELT* series.

There have been extensive discussions in the literature on integrated skills, but in their initial chapter, the editors make a strong case for treating each skill separately, based on practicality, accessibility and convenience for the reader. It is also true to say that individual skills are often emphasised even when doing mundane tasks and activities in daily life, such as watching TV or reading a book. In academic life, where many of these studies are situated, the focus on individual skills can be even greater and require special attention to ensure success. The organisation of the book by skill—listening, speaking, reading and writing—is therefore appropriate.

A real strength of this volume is not only its geographical diversity but the range of teaching and learning settings represented. These chapters address skills teaching across all educational levels, primary, secondary and tertiary, in both public and private sectors. There are diverse perspectives on a range of contexts, from English for Academic Purposes, adult migrant education and modern foreign language teaching to nurse education.

A number of the chapters present innovative ways of developing familiar aspects of skills teaching, including genre (Pang and Burri on discussions and Hayik on descriptive writing), process writing (Villas Boas), bottom-up listening skills (McAuliffe and Brooks) and using authentic texts (Vraštilová).

Others focus on teachers and their beliefs and practices. Santos and Graham compare listening practices across different contexts (UK and Brazil) while Renandya and Hu look at teachers' beliefs about the usefulness of different listening strategies. Tante examines the innovative approaches to teaching speaking of primary school teachers in Cameroon, while Roach gives an account of his social practice approach to reading.

Two chapters give accounts of investigations into the effectiveness of skills instruction. In a nurse education context, Tweedie and Johnson show listening is a more important skill than either students or teachers believe and provide recommendations to improve instruction. Kozar focuses on learner satisfaction in Skype lessons in order to develop recommendations for effective speaking instruction.

There is also a series of chapters that links skills teaching to other aspects of language learner development. Thus, both West's and Pham and Iwashita's chapters focus on developing learner autonomy through reading and writing, respectively, while Lam encourages self-reflection through writing. Both speaking (Chappell) and reading (Murtiningsih and Hapsari) are used to develop students' criticality and critical thinking.

Drawing on their extensive experience and their international standing, Anne Burns and Joseph Siegel have brought together scholars and practitioners with a wide range of perspectives. Their insightful commentaries that open and conclude the volume and their selection of authors and chapters greatly enhance our understanding of skills learning and teaching globally.

Sue Garton
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Teaching the Four Language Skills: Themes and Issues

Anne Burns and Joseph Siegel

Introduction

This introductory discussion prefaces the chapters in this volume by surveying some key theoretical and practical insights into the teaching of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, a sequence that we choose deliberately in this book for its well-recognised reflection of how language acquisition takes place in the 'real world' of naturalistic communication. Our aim is not to provide a comprehensive review of the literature but to reflect some of the current strands of theoretical thinking about the topic of this book, and to complement these ideas with what can be gleaned about how skills are taught in different language programmes and contexts from the contributions of the various authors.

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Fundamental Considerations

Most English language teachers around the world, and readers of this book, will immediately recognise the widely used concept of the four 'macro' skills in language teaching. This concept has stood the test of time, not only as a way of categorising and conceptualising these 'core' areas of communication, but also frequently as a way of labelling and naming how language teaching is programmed and assessed in innumerable institutional contexts. Readers are likely to be very familiar with labels such as 'conversation', 'academic writing', 'reading comprehension' or 'listening skills' to describe classes and courses that segregate and focus on a particular language skill area. Moreover, language is often assessed on an individual skills basis, as in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) Speaking or Listening Tests, or in standards frameworks such as the increasingly internationally adopted Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which may also often underpin decisions to teach skills in separate classes. In the field of language teaching research, too, there are innumerable theoretical and practical publications focusing on one or other of the four skills, and we ourselves as editors of this volume are 'guilty' of adopting this singular stance in our own work (e.g. Goh and Burns 2012; Siegel 2015).

It needs, of course, to be recognised that much recent thinking contests the idea of the separation and segregation of the four language skills, on the self-evident basis that communication simply does not occur in this way in the real world. One has only to consider daily tasks, such as conducting a transaction at a bank, going to a movie, interacting with friends or colleagues or using social media where listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are intimately connected and dynamically employed, to know that the divisions are artificial.

One well-known move away from this segregation into separate skills in the field of language teaching is the widespread idea that, collectively, listening and reading may be described as 'receptive' skills (those to do with receiving communication), while speaking and writing are often explained as 'productive' skills (those to do with producing communication) (e.g. Harmer 2015; Scrivener 2012). Another is the idea that listening–speaking, and reading–writing, are 'reciprocal' skills (e.g. Nation 2009; Nation and Newton 2009) that interact in actual use, and therefore should be considered as complementary and interconnected in second language teaching (e.g. Grabe and Zhang 2013; Hirvela 2013; Newton 2016; Rost 2001). While in the past listening and reading were sometimes described as 'passive skills' and speaking and writing as 'active skills', it is now more widely recognised that all language skills are 'active', in the sense that they require different types of cognitive and social processes, that are used in different ways (Richards and Burns 2012).

However, even more significant than these various perspectives, is the view that the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing should be 'integrated' (e.g. Hinkel 2006, 2010). This idea is not particularly new, even though it may still seem quite revolutionary in some quarters of language teaching (Nation and Newton 2009). As far back as 1978, drawing on a discourse-based perspective on language and communication, Widdowson argued for the integration of skills teaching, particularly in the case of English for specific purposes. This view was preceded by the 'situational approach' that had characterised earlier teaching principles between the 1950s and 1970s, that had recommended that, although the emphasis should be on speaking, all four skills should be taught (Hinkel 2010).

The situational approach highlighted real world contexts, such as 'at the post office' or 'at the restaurant', where functional language for particular purposes could be identified and taught. This approach was accompanied by the 'PPP', or presentation–practice–production teaching method, which is still alive and well today in many classrooms worldwide. The emergence of communicative language teaching from the late 1970s changed the predominant focus on language learned as form followed by function to one where meaning and use should be the main drivers for new learning that could be transferred to the world beyond the classroom. It set the scene for a challenge to the concept of isolated language skills teaching, with its emphasis on pattern drills from the lens of native speaker norms that still survives to this day. A more recent manifestation of methodological arguments for integrating skills and seeking meaningful production of language is the move towards task-based teaching and learning (e.g. Ellis 2003; Nunan 1989; Willis 1996). Rost and Wilson (2013) note both advantages and disadvantages of integration. One advantage is that it allows different skills to interact to strengthen language acquisition, and meet students' own learning styles and preferences. Another is that it creates variety and relieves the concentration required to focus on only one skill. On the other hand, non-integration can provide intensity and greater depth of learning, as well as allow for focusing on a skill where learners may have a weakness and need more concentrated attention to areas such as grammar, vocabulary, accuracy or fluency (see Hinkel 2010).

Nonetheless, as we noted earlier, the categorisation of the core language skills into four major areas persists, and is likely to continue. It is for reasons of convenience, not to mention accessibility and practicality, that we therefore conceptualised the various sections and chapters in this book in relation to these four skills areas. Our assumption in doing so is that many readers will want to dip into examples and illustrations of practice for a particular skill that they may be able to adapt to their own teaching

contexts. Readers will notice, however, as they progress through the book that many of the authors also refer to the importance of integrating other skills, even as they focus on one in particular, and they often provide illustrations of how the innovations they describe integrated in actual practice with more than one skill. Our own position in this debate is that, while not denying the importance of integrating skills, it is valuable to pay detailed attention to practices that carefully and thoughtfully promote the learning of one particular skill.

Skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing

Considerable advances have been made in understanding the knowledge, skills, strategies, products and processes that are characteristic of the different skill areas. Here, we have scope to touch only very briefly on some of the main findings and practical implications for each, as a backdrop for the chapters that follow.

Listening

The importance of paying systematic attention to listening development, in comparison with reading and writing, 'or even speaking', has often been overlooked in language teaching and in instructional materials (Vandergrift and Goh 2012: 4), as it may be assumed that if learners 'listen a lot' they will learn by osmosis (Cauldwell 2013; Richards and Burns 2012). Attention needs to be paid to both top-down and bottom-up listening speech perception processes (Newton 2009), although Lynch and Mendelsohn argue that 'if…top-down listening is important, bottom-up listening is indispensable' (2010: 184), and note that attention to the need for bottom-up listening has increased in recent years. Top-down processes refer to global or contextual knowledge and to previous experiences that enable a listener to infer the overall messages and meanings of incoming speech, as well as familiarity with the way language is structured in different genres of discourse. Bottom-up processes, on the other hand, relate to how a listener makes sense of the continuous stream of connected speech, including sounds, word boundaries, linked elements, reduced forms and prosody, or patterns of stress and intonation (Field 2008; Lynch and Mendelsohn 2010; Rost 2001).

Newton (2016: 431) reminds readers that 'skilled listening is of course, more than successfully segmenting the speech stream'. He cites Vandergrift

(2007: 193) who notes that learning to listen in another language involves 'the skillful orchestration of metacognitive and cognitive strategies'. Indeed, over the last two decades more attention has been paid to the development of metacognitive and cognitive strategies (Vandergrift and Goh 2012). Metacognitive strategies involve thinking about how to manage the processes and skills of listening through planning, monitoring comprehension, paying focused and selective attention to certain language features, and evaluating and checking interpretations, while cognitive strategies are directed towards thinking that involves predicting and inferencing, contextualising and elaborating, translating, transferring and summarising.

Field (2008) critiques what he sees as a pervasive 'comprehension approach' to teaching listening, whereby learners are required to identify the 'correct' answers to comprehension questions. This approach is likened to testing listening rather than teaching listening as it requires learners to focus on memorising rather than interpreting and responding to incoming information. He recommends a 'diagnostic approach' which involves pre-listening, listening, and then post-listening where intensive micro-listening activities focused on bottom-up processing are introduced to bridge gaps in learners' understanding of the information they hear (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X41JsxPFIds for an example of how an Australian teacher used this approach in the classroom). Teaching should also focus on different types of listening where learners are able to be both listener and participant (Lynch and Mendelsohn 2010; Richards and Burns 2012; Rost and Wilson 2013). In one-way listening, such as monologues or movies, the listener has a 'transactional' or transfer-of-information role that is non-reciprocal. Two- (or more) way listening is where the listener occupies an 'interactional' role and is involved in an exchange-of-information where listening and speaking are reciprocal. Moreover, listening classes should involve both pedagogic (e.g. dictation, comprehension responses, dictogloss) and authentic (e.g. interviewing, improvising, extensive listening) tasks as well as a range of different types of 'listenings', cross-cultural, social, affective, contextualised, strategic, intertextual and critical (Flowerdew and Miller 2005).

Speaking

Speaking is a highly complex interactive skill that has the added complexity of being very anxiety-provoking for learners of another language (Woodrow 2006). Thornbury (2012) points out that there is the very obvious gap for L2 learners of limited knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and phonology. In addition, speaking is highly dynamic as learners must be able to produce

language 'on the fly' without the benefit of the planning and reflection associated with other skills, particularly reading and writing. In addition to learning the linguistic features of the language, speakers must manage a combination of accuracy, fluency and complexity so that they can meet the heavy processing demands of spontaneous talk. Goh and Burns (2012: 67) argue that speaking is a 'combinatorial language skill'. To develop speaking competence, learners must acquire knowledge of the language systems and the genres of discourse, the core skills of speech production and communication strategies that enable them to manage and negotiate rapid communication (see Thornbury 2012 for a similar overview of essential components of speaking).

Knowledge of the language systems includes knowing the sounds and intonation patterns that allow for intelligible exchanges between speaker and listener, the vocabulary (individual and multiple word units and lexical chunks) that carry the content of the message and the grammatical structures that bind utterances together (Burns and Seidlhofer 2010). In addition, speakers must recognise culturally and socially patterned streams of discourse that help them to anticipate the kinds of speech events they are dealing with so as to create meaningful exchanges with others. They also need to know how to use speech pragmatically and interculturally so that they can respond in appropriate ways and engage effectively in encounters with speakers across different cultures, knowledge that has become increasingly important in an interconnected and globalised world where English is a lingua franca (Seidlhofer 2011). Competent speakers also need skills in producing fluent speech, which relates to speech rate, numbers of pauses between syllables and utterances and articulation, as well as speech that is sufficiently accurate for comprehensibility and intelligibility. Moreover, speakers have to manage rapidly constructed interactive speech, through knowing, for example, when to take turns, how to build on previous utterances, how to ask for clarification and how to repair breakdowns in communication. Finally, speakers must use communicative strategies to keep the flow of speech moving and to compensate for gaps in linguistic knowledge or communicative skills. Speakers may use strategies such as finding other ways to express meaning (circumlocution), paraphrasing or avoiding some communicative messages altogether.

Thornbury (2012) notes that approaches to speaking instruction are often eclectic, using for example combinations of drills, information gap activities and informal discussions, or role plays. However, he recommends a more systematic three-tier approach to speaking instruction, that combines cognitive-skill learning theory and sociocultural theory, consisting of

awareness-raising (alerting learners to features of speech), appropriation (rehearsing and practising targeted features) and autonomy (performing different types of spoken genres). Goh and Burns (2012) also recommend a systematic 'holistic' approach that they call the teaching–speaking cycle, consisting of seven steps: focusing attention on speaking, providing guided input and planning, conducting speaking tasks, focusing on discourse, skills and strategies, repeating speaking tasks, encouraging reflection on performance and facilitating feedback on learning.

Reading

Reading is generally viewed as *the* foundational skill for success in academic learning (e.g. Carrell and Grabe 2010; Janzen 2007), as suggested in the distinction that is sometimes made between 'learning to read' and 'reading to learn'. Learning to read involves mastery of both bottom-up and top-down skills. Freebody and Luke (2003) argue that in the process of developing these skills learners need to adopt four 'reader roles', enabling them to move towards becoming fully competent and skilled readers. The first two roles, which denote the bottom-up and top-down skills, respectively, are 'code breaker' (decoding letter symbols and graphics), and 'text participant' (using background and personal experiences to bring meaning to the text). However, recent advances in research have recognised that reading is both a cognitive (bottom-up/top-down) and a sociocultural process. In relation to the latter, Freebody and Luke (2003) add two more reader roles: 'text user' (being aware of the text's cultural and social purpose and how to make use of the text), and 'text analyst' (being able to think critically about the messages in the text, to identify underlying ideologies or biases and to develop one's own interpretations).

Reading is not necessarily improved simply by reading more text. As for other skills, readers benefit from developing metacognitive (planning how to approach a reading text, estimating what one already knows about the content, monitoring comprehension and evaluating progress towards understanding) and cognitive (skimming, scanning, reading for gist) strategies. In the classroom, teachers can focus explicitly on the use of such strategies to give students confidence in reading and to assist them to increase their use over time.

Recent approaches to reading development have also highlighted the importance of distinguishing whether L2 readers have a language problem or a reading problem. Language problems in reading can be supported by assisting learners to develop a wide vocabulary (Nation 2006, 2015),

including the strategic use of dictionaries where necessary (Grabe and Stoller 1997). Reading development can be greatly improved through intensive reading, where learners have a specific learning goal in mind and focus on the skills to develop it (e.g. summarising meaning) and extensive reading (Day 2015) which also assists 'reading to learn', where learners select texts for their own enjoyment and read as widely as possible both within and outside class. Day (2015) notes that there is an increasing interest in reading pedagogy in using a combination of intensive and extensive reading as a blended approach. Teachers also need to consider using fluency activities, which are as important in reading as in speaking, in order to strengthen vocabulary development, reading rate and general language acquisition. Teacher modelling and reading aloud, repeated reading, choral reading, partner reading and readers' theatre where students perform a play by reading scripts are all activities that can promote reading fluency.

Writing

Writing, like reading, is fundamental for academic success. Being able to write involves a complex mixture of linguistic and textual knowledge as well as strategic knowledge and sociocultural awareness. In relation to linguistic knowledge, one of the main problems for many writers, both in first and second language writing, is knowing how to shift their writing from the forms of language that are used in speaking to the more formal requirements of the written medium. Writing is not simply a matter of speech written down, as research over the last two decades has clearly highlighted (Biber et al. 1999; McCarthy and Carter 1994). This research draws attention to variations in register across speech and writing and shows how they have different ways of structuring information flow and rhetorical and syntactic features, and of drawing on the grammatical and lexical systems (see also Thornbury 2012). A useful concept for conceptualising the shifts that occur across spoken and written language is 'the mode continuum' (Derewianka 2014), which shows how language use in different spoken and written contexts affects language form (Burns 2016). Teachers can use the concept of the mode continuum to scaffold their learners' writing towards more formal written discourse, and to teach learners the importance of features such as internal reference, and nominalisation in writing. Understanding the 'macro' features of written discourse is also vital to successful writing and research in genre theory (Hammond and Derewianka 2001) which has contributed to understanding of how different kinds of fictional (e.g. narrative, dramatic script, poetry) and non-fictional

(e.g. expository essay, discussion, recount) texts are constructed rhetorically. Knowing the schematic structure of the genres they are creating can help learners manage the flow of argumentation across the whole text.

Linguistic and genre knowledge are directed at the products of writing. Research, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, that investigated writers' composing techniques and strategies highlighted the cognitive processes that successful writers use to create texts, such as planning, reviewing, revising, rereading and editing. This research led to widespread adoption of the pedagogical approach known as 'process writing', which focused more attention on learners' self-discovery of fluency and creativity as developed through several drafts of writing and conferencing with teachers and peers to receive feedback. One consequence of this approach was that teaching did not always focus sufficiently on the quality of the written product as it 'neglected accuracy in favour of fluency' and created a 'false dichotomy' between process and product teaching (Reid 2001: 29).

However, simply equipping learners with the discourse knowledge and strategies used by good L1 writers may not in itself sufficiently enhance writing. Learners also need sociocultural knowledge to understand how writers take into account social factors, such as topic, audience, purpose and cultural norms. Studies in contrastive, or 'intercultural', rhetoric have raised awareness that it cannot be assumed that L2 patterns of discourse and argumentation will be transferred from L1 (e.g. Connor 2004). Teachers may need to spend time exploring different cultural beliefs and assumptions, and using techniques such as modelling texts, providing explicit practice in presenting arguments for a particular audience or highlighting differences in rhetorical expectations.

An area that has recently received increased attention in writing research is error correction (e.g. Ferris 2002). Correction can come from teachers, peers or through self-evaluation and can focus on global or specific errors through direct or indirect feedback (Ellis 2009 provides an extensive discussion of forms of feedback). Learners can also be asked to specify what forms of correction they would prefer (Lee 2005).

Skills Teaching, International Perspectives and Innovation

As we have already suggested, the teaching of the macro skills of language across the world is pervasive and permeates virtually every type of English language programme offered internationally (Hinkel 2010). One of our purposes in this book is to illustrate this diversity. Readers will notice that the

contributions range across all sectors of education from elementary to tertiary and include courses targeted at general skills development in English as well as those for specific, academic or vocational purposes. In addition, the authors originate from every continent, thus providing a broad picture of current concerns and creative practices in teaching the four skills.

While the focus of the chapters is on practice and ideas for practice, we were also seeking to show how practice was embedded in research (and particularly in local practitioner research). Thus, another intention of the collection is to indicate how global theoretical ideas might be localised for experimentation through situated research that seeks to meet the demands of particular teaching contexts. Contributors to this book were also asked to submit examples of their work that could be considered innovative or had implications for innovation in their particular teaching contexts. In respect of these various underpinnings for the book, a number of themes can be drawn out as illustrated in the chapters that follow. We focus in particular on five areas that seem particularly salient to us as editors.

Bottom-up Processes and Metacognition Need to Be More Widely Addressed in Skills Teaching

Many of the chapters in the book highlight the importance of paying greater attention in the teaching of the four skills to explicit instruction in bottom-up processes as well as metacognitive strategies. Santos and Graham (Chap. 2 on listening) note the lack of attention to metacognition highlighted in their data from secondary school teachers in England and Brazil. They recommend that teachers learn more about and teach the interactional features of listening, rather than focusing on listening comprehension, and in the process enhance learners' metacognitive strategies for listening. A further recommendation is that teachers evaluate the materials they are using to judge their effectiveness in developing these areas. McAuliffe and Brooks (Chap. 3 on listening), working with undergraduates in Japan, reviewed the traditional and mainly 'top-down' comprehension-oriented approach used in their previous courses using principles that adopted much greater attention to decoding sounds and developing strategies for listening. Pang and Burri (Chap. 8 on speaking) draw attention to both areas in their discussion of their use of Edward de Bono's framework of the 'six thinking hats' for international students preparing for entry to a tertiary institution in Canada. They argue that their approach equips

learners with structured and supported ways to develop these two important skills areas.

The Extent to Which Skills Teaching Is Effective Is Mediated by Teachers' Beliefs, Experiences and Professional Opportunities

Several of the chapters highlight the (positive and negative) impact that teachers' experiences and beliefs about teaching a particular skill have on their practices. Three chapters in particular, Santos and Graham (Chap. 2 on listening) Renandya and Hu (Chap. 3 on listening) and Tante (Chap. 6 on speaking) illuminate this issue by showing what was learned from research conducted with teachers, in classrooms in England and Brazil, China and Cameroon respectively. While acknowledging the inevitable impact of local political, educational and institutional priorities and constraints, they all argue for more constructive and continuing professional development for teachers. Such initiatives should expose teachers to recent theory and research so that they can become more skilled at drawing their practices from what is currently known about developing the language skills, using knowledge about both process and product, as well as metacognitive strategies. In this way, pedagogy would become much more than simply covering the ground of the syllabus. Three chapters by West (Chap. 12 on reading), Pham and Iwashita (Chap. 15 on writing) and Lam (Chap. 16 on writing) go further by raising awareness of teachers' responsibility to deepen their understanding of learning theory so that they are in a position to encourage and support autonomous and self-reflective forms of language development. In this way, learning and teaching can become more balanced and learner-oriented and more effective in meeting students' individual needs.

Innovative Teaching of Language Skills Is Contextually Based and Locally Interpreted

Innovation is often considered to mean introducing a completely new and startlingly different idea or behaviour—one that has never been used before. The chapters in this volume show that innovation in teaching language skills is relative: what is new in one context may not be so new in another, and 'newness' is related to how much something is current or familiar in a particular school or classroom. Some chapters in this volume do indeed introduce

ideas that have yet to gain wider currency in the language teaching field. For example, Chappell (Chap. 7 on speaking) outlines his concept of 'inquiry dialogue', where teacher talk is directed towards encouraging students to think, inquire and interpret. Chappell's approach, developed in Australia, could be applied to the teaching of all skills and not just speaking. Kozar (Chap. 9 on speaking) introduces the idea of teaching conversational English via Skype, which was used in an online course for adult learners in Russia, while Tweedie and Johnson (Chap. 5 on listening) in Qatar address intelligibility in teaching vocational English as a lingua franca, where the consequences of miscommunication may be life-threatening. All three present ideas for pedagogy that may be unfamiliar or outside the experience of many teachers.

Others, however, refer to pedagogical practices that are already well known in the field and have been familiar in some classrooms for many years. For instance, Tante (Chap. 6 on speaking) discusses how some primary school teachers in Cameroon, who had little opportunity for professional development and worked within a prescriptive curriculum, used activities well known in communicative language teaching. Yet in their context, these were creative and learner-centred attempts to involve their students in more constructive learning. Similarly, Murtiningsih and Hapsari (Chap. 11 on reading) moved beyond the traditional reading comprehension approach used in their context in Indonesia to encourage their students to engage more critically in reading, and at the same time to improve their language skills. Meanwhile, Pham and Iwashita (Chap. 15 on writing) introduced their Vietnamese students to indirect corrective feedback to encourage self-correction and greater learner autonomy. The use of authentic children's literature in elementary classrooms is also not new, but was not a familiar practice in Vraštilová's context of the Czech Republic. In Chap. 10, she shows how she introduced the teachers she was training to creative ways to integrate children's literature in the language classroom.

Local Innovations in Skills Teaching Involve Creativity

Innovative teaching occurs, not because the approaches are new, but because teachers and teacher educators have the courage and persistence to think creatively and to initiate or extend teaching strategies that are 'outside the box' in their context (see Jones and Richards 2015; Maley and Peachey 2015 on creativity in language teaching). One example is Lam (Chap. 16 on writing) who offers a creative angle on portfolio assessment, what he calls the 'showcase portfolio approach', which was introduced through practitioner research he supported in Hong Kong in a high school environment where the focus

on writing skills was highly product-oriented and test-driven. Villas Boas (Chap. 17 on writing) shows how, over the years, an institution in Brazil, which catered for learners of various age groups, worked creatively to respond to new theoretical developments in teaching writing, but in a way that was finely tuned to local philosophies and needs. In doing so, they also saw a need to take a wider 'skills-integrated' perspective on the development of writing programmes. All of these authors give a new and creative twist to theoretical ideas about skills teaching that may have been in circulation for some time; what is different is that they experiment with how they can be applied in new ways in their context.

The Teaching of Language Skills Needs to Be Embedded in Sociocultural Practices

Several chapters illustrate that the teaching of a particular language skill is not a 'technical' matter of focusing only on knowledge, skills and cognitive process. Learning and using English is a political, cultural and social process in which learners' needs for these skills are underpinned by how they provide affordances and opportunities now and into the future. The chapter by West (Chap. 12 on reading) is one example. West took a 'community-building' perspective to go beyond an individualistic and cognitive approach to developing a particular skill. The activities he developed for reading skills enhancement in a Hawai'ian academic English classroom introduced his students to critical and dialogic reading approaches as well as to social perspectives on learning autonomy. Roach (Chap. 13 on reading), teaching adult immigrants in New Zealand, also emphasises that reading is not just a skill to be taught in class, but is urgently needed in his learners' daily lives and for their successful integration into their new society. He shows the importance of the sociocultural notion of talk around text in promoting their ability to read more effectively. Hayik (Chap. 14 on writing), taking a somewhat different perspective on sociocultural practice, notes that learners need to be prepared for 'an interconnected world'. Her teaching of first year college Arabic-speaking students in Israel led her to seek literature that was culturally and socially relevant to them and could provide motivation as well as models to enhance their descriptive writing. These sources for her students' writing took her well beyond the traditional practice of relying on course books in her context.

Structure of the Book

As readers will now be aware, this volume provides a collection of international illustrations of each of the four core language skills. So that readers can easily access the contributions on these skills, the book is divided into four sections that focus on one particular skill, each of which consists of four chapters. In this introductory chapter, we have aimed to draw attention to some of the ways that the four skills have been perceived and categorised in English language teaching, and have provided brief accounts of theoretical and practical ideas about each skill and the ways they can be taught that have developed over recent years. We have also highlighted several themes that may be useful in guiding readers' reflections as they read the chapters.

Each chapter that follows offers a localized description of a particular facet of teaching the skills, with a view to offering connections to other contexts as well as to overall principles and 'take-away' messages for that particular skill. The practices described and analysed within each chapter are not intended to be 'ideals' or 'models' for teaching a particular skill, but rather exemplifications of issues that are salient for teachers in different parts of the world, who teach in different kinds of programmes. Moreover, while these chapters are research-based in each case, and thus provide evidence, they are not research reports. Instead, they are accounts of practice, underpinned by current theory and the authors' research (mainly practitioner- and classroom-based research), where the focus is on the way a skill is conceptualised and taught in the local context and what this might mean for other teachers and learners. Thus, the majority of contributions to this book are from the perspective of practising teachers, who may also be teacher researchers, or those who work closely and collaboratively with teachers in intact classrooms, who can offer 'teachers' stories' (Jalongo and Isenberg 1995) from the classroom.

Our concluding chapter draws out key themes and messages from the volume as a whole with a view to looking to the future in relation to the learning and teaching of the four skills. It offers suggestions on how readers might interpret and reflect on the various pedagogic perspectives in the book as well as consider their own classroom practices. The final chapter also discusses the nature of pedagogic change and the systems that may support adoption of innovative teaching practices.

Conclusion

The orientation in the book is based on our shared beliefs as editors that to develop a more robust theoretical base for language teaching, the English language teaching field needs a far more extensive literature from practising teachers about what the teaching of the four skills (and other areas of language teaching) looks like from an 'emic' or insider perspective (cf. Larsen-Freeman 1990). Our hope is that the chapters in this book have contributed to making such an advancement. In each chapter also, at our request, authors have offered 'Questions for reflection' which draw on the key issues they have raised in their discussion to take the conversation further. It is our hope that these questions will not only allow readers to engage their own thoughts and observations about their own teaching situations, but that they will be a springboard to trying out or investigating some of the ideas in their local teaching contexts.

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Part I

Listening

2

What Teachers Say About Listening and Its Pedagogy: A Comparison Between Two Countries

Denise Santos and Suzanne Graham

Introduction

About two decades ago, listening was described as 'the Cinderella skill in second language learning' (Nunan 1997: 47), receiving little teaching or research attention compared with other language skills. Research carried out over the past 20 years or so has yet increased knowledge about the factors that contribute to successful listening comprehension in a second language (L2). However, we still know little regarding teachers' beliefs about, and stated practices in, that skill, or about the extent to which these align with research-based perspectives on what might lead to more effective second language listening development.

In this chapter we explore teachers' stated beliefs and practices about listening and its pedagogy drawing on questionnaire data from two different settings: we start by briefly outlining results we obtained in a study with 115

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foreign language teachers in England (reported in Graham et al. 2014), and we then comment in more detail on findings from a similar study with 40 Brazilian EFL teachers. Our main focus is to comment on the data from Brazil with the data from England being used for comparison. From these data we draw out implications teachers can consider for the teaching of listening.

We take a cross-national perspective in the exploration of listening for several reasons: first, to identify the commonalities between groups of language teachers in different parts of the world, and therefore to assess the extent to which research-based perspectives are being taken into account in different contexts. In addition, by looking at the differences across contexts we hope to gain a better understanding of the impact of local priorities and constraints in listening pedagogy. Differences may also help us identify gaps that should be addressed in particular contexts. Finally, these insights can potentially help us to devise globally relevant, yet simultaneously locally sensitive, recommendations for helping teachers to develop effective listening pedagogy. As we have argued elsewhere (Graham and Santos 2015: 4), understanding L2 teachers' beliefs and practices relating to listening is 'a necessary precursor to making suggestions for how to address any gaps in teachers' pedagogical understanding and practice; and offering practical activities for addressing those gaps'.

Teaching Listening: Findings from Research

Recent research into L2 listening and its pedagogy has focused on how the following three key areas impinge on successful listening: (1) the presence of and interplay between bottom-up and top-down processes; (2) the application of strategies—here defined as 'ways of listening that are planned and consciously adopted to improve comprehension and communication as well as cope with listening difficulties' (Goh 2014: 73) in listening performance, for example making and verifying predictions or listening out for key words; and (3) the use of metacognition (that is, thinking about thinking and learning). We provide a brief overview of each of these areas and their relationship next.

Successful listening involves skillful integration of bottom-up processes entailing attention to smaller components of what is heard (sounds, words, sentences) and top-down processes including activation and retrieval of prior knowledge about contextual features characterizing the listening event (its topic, genre, participants, register and so on). An important factor in this discussion is that neither top-down nor bottom-up approaches are inher-

ently good or bad, or better or worse than each other, which leads us to the conclusion that listening pedagogy should not focus solely on either aspect of listening. However, there will be occasions when listeners should be able to, for example, discriminate sounds or recognize specific words and they must be prepared for that. Similarly, although the potential benefits of top-down strategies are generally acknowledged, research has demonstrated that inflexible and random application of prior knowledge may hinder comprehension (Macaro et al. 2007); that occurs, for example, when listeners draw their conclusions based on expectations supported by world knowledge even when what they hear does not match such expectations. Thus, what seems to characterize successful listeners is their ability to apply top-down and bottom-up strategies depending on the listening demands. It remains unclear, though, what balance of top-down or bottom-up approaches teachers, in general, promote in their classes.

Likewise, little is known about teachers' beliefs and practices regarding learners' listening strategy development in spite of indications from research pointing to improved listening performance and increased confidence facilitated by instruction in the use of these strategies. While there has been variation in the extent to which interventions involving learners' strategy development have led conclusively to improved outcomes, greater success has come from studies that have involved a metacognitive and reflective component (e.g. Graham and Macaro 2008; Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari 2010).

Indeed, and moving on to the third area mentioned earlier in this section, the profiles of successful and unsuccessful listeners developed over the past 30 years or so (e.g. as summarized in Macaro et al. 2007) have consistently highlighted the role of metacognition as a distinguishing factor between the two groups, with the former tending to plan, monitor and evaluate their listening more effectively than the latter. There is also evidence that development of metacognitive awareness is possible through post-listening reflections and discussion, as shown in studies such as Goh and Taib (2006) with young EFL learners. Again, however, there is limited research on the extent to which teachers generally attribute importance to the development of metacognition in listening.

Altogether, the points raised so far highlight the importance of teaching listening as a *process* and not as product; in other words, learners should be encouraged not simply to listen and answer comprehension questions, but rather to understand what listening involves, to reflect on difficulties and contemplate solutions, to discuss the application of knowledge from particular listening experiences to future listening events.

Stated Beliefs and Practices About Listening in England: An Overview

In our investigations looking at high school L2 (French, German and Spanish) teachers' beliefs and practices in England (see Graham and Santos 2015; Graham et al. 2014), we found little attention to listening as a *process*. Instead, *listening effectively* in that context seemed to be associated with successful task completion rather than skill development, with an emphasis on *clarifying task demands,* justified by a need to ensure learners do *what is expected* and *find the right answer*. Post-listening procedures tended to emphasize checking the number of right answers and identifying how those results match the expected levels of attainment from the English National Curriculum.

While teachers in England seemed aware that learners might have problems with the bottom-up aspects of listening, they reported little attention to listening activities that might develop bottom-up skills in learners. In addition, we found little evidence of listening strategy development or metacognitive activities fostering learners' reflection about their listening. The emphasis on product rather than process seems to stem from the weight given to achievement levels and assessment in the English educational system. This conclusion made us wonder about the extent to which different priorities in different countries might contribute to shaping listening pedagogy. With that in mind, in the next section, we provide an overview of key priorities in the Brazilian educational system as a background for our discussion of what we found out about a group of Brazilian EFL teachers' views on listening.

Learning English in Brazil: The Place of Listening

The learning of a foreign language is mandatory in Brazilian schools in the final seven years of compulsory education (student age 11–17), and English is the predominant choice. In addition, English tuition is offered by a large number of language institutes as an extracurricular activity. Both private and state schools (but not language institutes) are expected to follow curriculum guidelines articulated in the Brazilian National Curricular Parameters (Brasil 1998, 2000).

Regarding listening development, at the time of writing there are no specific aims for different stages of learning, but the guidelines emphasize the overarching idea that listening practice must address the socio-interactional features of human encounters (who speaks, to whom, when, with what purpose, etc.). Recommendations for the operationalization of those priorities include: exposure to a wide variety of genres and accents; activation of prior knowledge (of the world, of the language learnt, of textual organization including turn-taking rules and speaking rights) prior to the listening; reflections about paralinguistic characteristics of the listening passage (e.g. what can be inferred by intonation or tone of voice), as well as extralinguistic features (e.g. who has the right to speak or take the turn).

Standardized tests of English at the end of compulsory education do not include listening assessment—their focus is on reading, as is the case in most university entrance exams. Although there are no wide-ranging statistics about Brazilians' proficiency in oral comprehension in English, a recent report by the British Council (2014) suggests that listening is perceived as an area of weakness by many Brazilians.

In order to explore Brazilian EFL teachers' views about listening, we asked a group of teachers to answer a questionnaire (slightly modified from our study in England) about their beliefs and practices regarding the teaching of the skill. Most of the teachers who responded were experienced teachers with nine or more years of teaching experience and most worked in just one educational setting. Overall they represented a wide variety of teaching contexts, including language institutes, private and state schools, universities, continuing education and private tuition. Thus, we believe we had access to a wide range of teachers' voices and were therefore able to identify patterns that may characterize the teaching of English more broadly in the country. In what follows we comment on the themes emerging from our questionnaire, in particular in response to an item in which we asked respondents to list the three or four of the most important procedures they usually followed when they asked their students to listen to an audio-recording in class, and to justify each procedure. Each of these themes will be discussed in light of the three key areas in listening research presented earlier in this chapter.

What Brazilian Teachers Say About How Listening is Taught

Interplay Between Top-down and Bottom-up Practices

When asked to outline frequent procedures in their teaching of listening, teachers tended to list procedures corresponding to the order of the pedagogical sequence adopted while teaching, as in the example below:

> Procedure 1: We talk about the topic of the listening;
> Justification 1: To familiarize students with the topic, and with some vocabulary.
>
> Procedure 2: They listen to the recording;
> Justification 2: To have a general idea of what the listening is about.
>
> Procedure 3: They read the questions and then listen to the recording again;
> Justification 3: To try to answer/complete blanks.
>
> Procedure 4: They listen to the recording one more time;
> Justification 4: To check their answers.

Procedure 1 and Justification 1 point to an emphasis on the topic of the listening passage in the early stages of a listening pedagogical sequence. Indeed, this initial *focus on context* (i.e. a top-down approach to listening) seems to characterize most of the responses. It finds resonance in another fairly frequent procedure that emerges, namely *focus on meaning*, which may reflect some of the Brazilian curriculum guidelines referred to earlier.

A focus on meaning can be identified in Justification 2 above ('general idea') and it is also articulated in other statements such as 'Listen once first just for understanding' or 'Make sure [the students] can understand the overall meaning'. This focus is also reflected in teachers' comments about playing the audio-recording once with no interruptions (as in Procedure 2 above) or, conversely, in fairly frequent mentions of pausing or replaying the audio. The purpose of these pauses and/or replays seems to be to create opportunities for listeners to deal with 'the difficulty in understanding' or with 'answering the activities'.

Teachers thus seem to be moving from a top-down approach in early procedures to a bottom-up emphasis when they attempt to break the task down, a movement which Field (2008: 15–16) calls 'narrowing in'. Although teachers seem to be giving students opportunities to apply both top-down and bottom-up practices while listening, there is no evidence that

learners are being taught to judge independently what processes (i.e. either top-down or bottom-up or a combination of the two) are at stake in a particular task. It is thus unclear whether such guided teaching prepares them to trigger different processes autonomously in response to different listening demands in out-of-classroom listening.

Strategy Development

As we found in England, questionnaire responses in Brazil did not point to systematic work on learners' listening strategy development. Granted, prediction-making was sometimes mentioned as an important procedure to be followed in classroom listening tasks, such as predicting the topic of the passage, the specific vocabulary to be heard, or possible answers to the given comprehension questions. However, there was little evidence that teachers also asked learners to verify any predictions made, during or after the listening. On the rare occasions when prediction verification is mentioned by Brazilian teachers, the focus seems to be on mechanical checking rather than on metacognitive reflection which might also help learners to consider the potential benefits of predictions while listening. These two statements illustrate teachers' approaches respectively: 'Students discuss whether their predictions were right or wrong'; 'While listening to the recording, learners are requested to check their predictions'.

In other words, prediction-making appears to be reported as steps to be taken but not necessarily as ideas to be reflected upon by learners. A similar pattern occurs regarding preparation for vocabulary that learners might hear: a typical statement made by teachers is 'Revisit and/or pre-teach vocabulary before learners listen to the audio recording'. Arguably, teachers are describing the preselection of relevant vocabulary and the carrying out of some work around it: in that case, students would be guided to identify key vocabulary in a particular task without necessarily being taught how to distinguish for themselves what is relevant while listening.

The Role of Metacognition

Comments from our Brazilian teacher respondents indicated that they encouraged lower level rather than higher level (or metacognitive) practices as precursors to listening activities: those practices aimed at getting learners' ready for listening especially in connection with the activation of prior knowledge. As one teacher explained, 'If they activate their previous

knowledge, they will be able to recognize words or expressions while they are listening'.

As a whole, while there is no clear indication of encouragement of metacognitive practices prior to the listening by the Brazilian teachers we surveyed, some comments such as 'Teacher reads the instructions aloud and students discuss the questions in pairs' do open up possibilities for metacognitive development triggered by collaborative work. Indeed, we found frequent mentions of pair or group work that might lead to collaborative, metacognitive thinking about the ways learners listen. However, these mentions of collaboration seem to focus simply on checking, as in: 'Before discussion in plenary I ask students to check their answers in pairs'.

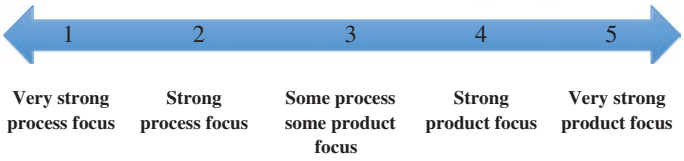
These are valid attempts to bring learners together in their listening experience, and to potentially create opportunities for sharing the challenges encountered when listening as well as for jointly considering ways of dealing with them. Nevertheless, such discussions need to consider 'how' learners listen (rather than just 'what they got right or wrong') if they are to help students develop metacognitive awareness about how they listen in English and about what they need to do in order to listen better.

We found little mention by teachers of discussions about the problems encountered while listening; a rare example is given below about listening to connected speech:

> Once I had a group who couldn't understand that the customer at a restaurant was complaining about a hair in his soup simply because the speaker put all the words together like this: 'there was a hairinit'. At the end of the listening, students wondered what was this animal or insect called 'hairinit'.

We find this example insightful because it brings the learners' voices to the surface and reveals what might go on in their mind while listening: what they find challenging (the difficulty here seems to lie in speech segmentation), what they do not understand (and why not). However, for opportunities like this to be really meaningful and lead to learners' listening development, additional steps need to be taken: the teacher would need to help learners identify the cause of their difficulties and then offer strategies and practice opportunities to overcome them.

The teacher in this last example seems to be taking an initial step along what might be viewed as a continuum between a wholly product-focused approach to listening, and an approach firmly focused on process. When we analysed each Brazilian teacher's complete set of procedures and



Advice focus	How to listen well	How to manage task
Topics	Strategies	Task demands
	Communication	Exams, tests
	Student autonomy	Teacher control: pausing, eliminating difficulty
Feedback	How task handled	How many correct, marks, level

Fig. 2.1 Process vs. product focus in listening pedagogy (adapted from Graham et al. 2014)

justifications using a scale of 1–5, we found that most were firmly at the 'strong focus on product' end of the continuum (see Fig. 2.1).

This focus on product is seen in the following example (where *P* is *procedure* and *J*, *justification)*:

P1: Briefly talk about the topic of the listen (sic);
J1: To prepare the students for the listening exercise.

P2: Present new vocabulary;
J2: Provide tools for the students to [do] the listening exercise.

P3: Play the audio CD;
J3: Students listen to the audio CD.

P4: Ask some comprehension questions;
J4: To check students' comprehension.

A fair number of respondents, however, were further down the other end of the continuum, showing 'some process, some product' focus, as in this example:

P1: Warm up tell students about the main subject;
J1: To get them 'prepared' for the listening.

P2: Ask students to give their own opinions;
J2: To arouse interest and interaction in class.

P3: Ask students if they understood the purpose of the activity;
J3: Check understanding → vocab + grammars patterns.

In other words, while a focus on product predominates, some teachers may be at a point where, with further opportunities for professional development, they might be able to build on the beginnings of a process-oriented approach that we see in some responses.

Summary: Convergences and Dissonances Across Contexts

Overall, responses from England and Brazil both overlap and diverge. For most teachers in both countries the main purpose of carrying out listening activities in the classroom was to teach learners how to listen more effectively, but the two groups of teachers seem to conceptualize *listening effectively* in different ways.

In our data from England, *listening effectively* seemed to be interpreted in classroom practice as *answering comprehension questions correctly.* In the Brazil data there is no such emphasis; instead we detect a focus on *comprehension* or *understanding* (albeit vaguely defined) orchestrated around a movement from top-down to bottom-up practices which is absent in the data from England. Typical pedagogical practices in the two settings can be summarized thus (Table 2.1).

These sequences do not suggest systematic attention to the development of listening strategies or to metacognition about listening. In the Brazil data, pedagogical sequences may indicate some attention to strategy development (e.g. by focusing on predictions; by fostering post-listening collaboration) but there is no clear evidence that these steps have the longer term goal of fostering learners' autonomy as L2 listeners. Pre-listening activities (typically involving the activation of prior knowledge) mostly focus on the immediacy of the task at hand and there is no mention of discussions about why predictions are important or how listeners can make the most of them. Moreover, on the rare occasions when verification of predications is reported, it is

Table 2.1 Typical pedagogical sequences in Brazil and in England

Brazil	England
1. Teacher guides students' activation of prior knowledge about the topic 2. Teacher revises or pre-teaches relevant vocabulary 3. Teacher plays audio and students listen for general idea 4. Teacher plays audio again and students listen for details 5. Students check answers in pairs or groups	1. Teacher checks students' understanding of task 2. Teacher plays audio 3. Teacher checks how many answers have been completed 4. Teacher plays audio again 5. Students swap answer sheets 6. Teacher asks for answers and students respond 7. Teacher checks how many correct responses each learner has

unclear whether the procedure is restricted to checking the accuracy of the predictions or whether it is accompanied by metacognitive awareness-raising about the role of prediction-making, monitoring and verification throughout a listening event.

The same comment applies to post-listening procedures involving student collaboration in the Brazil data: students are being asked to collaborate quite frequently, but such collaborative work appears to be aimed more often at checking answers than at discussing how they got to those answers, how they dealt with difficulties, what *listening lessons* they have learnt for the future. Arguably, the lack of emphasis on such lifelong skills in Brazilian education policy (at least regarding listening development) might explain these omissions. In a sense, such 'pseudo-collaborative' practices mirror the teacher-centred checking done in England; moreover, they illustrate quite well a point made by Cazden (1988: 124) regarding that fact that socializing the 'seating' does not necessarily lead to socializing the learning.

To summarize, there are differences characterizing teachers' beliefs about listening in Brazil and in England and these differences may be partly due to local demands, especially regarding priorities in their respective educational policies. There are, however, striking similarities across the two countries: in both, while resorting to a wide repertoire of procedures in their listening lessons, teachers seem to approach listening as a product placing an emphasis on listening comprehension involving an immediate task. Any evidence of work on listening aiming at the development of listening skills that may help learners not only in the *here and now* of a task but also in future listening events (i.e. on *teaching listening*), is rare (although occurring more in the Brazil than the England data). When listening strategies are mentioned in both contexts they tend to be tackled as procedures to be followed, illustrating what Oxford

(2011: 181) describes as 'blind/covert strategy instruction'; that is, strategies are part of the teaching 'but are not explicitly or overtly mentioned'; nor are they discussed or reflected upon as part of learners' awareness about listening.

In the next section, we discuss the implications of the points discussed so far, outlining practical recommendations for L2 listening pedagogy. These are relevant for contexts beyond Brazil and England; it is likely that the curriculum expectations and challenges faced by teachers in these countries will be mirrored elsewhere.

Implications for L2 Listening Practice

For each of the key areas below, we outline some suggestions that teachers may wish to consider in light of their respective contexts.

Analysis of Local Demands

Local demands in the form of educational policies, assessment and students' needs, inter alia, are likely to have an impact on how listening is taught. However, those demands are also likely to create tensions (e.g. a focus on exams may lead to *teaching for the exam*; lack of exams may lead to inconsistent performance). Ideally, teachers should raise their awareness of which aspects of listening development such local demands neglect and try to make up for them. Questions that might guide these reflections include: Do local demands focus on listening as a product (i.e. is there an emphasis on exams, results, tasks) or as a process (i.e. is there a focus on learning 'how' to listen)? What is typically done in response to the local demands and what is achieved from these practices in the short and long terms? And what is *not* achieved?

Participation in Global Conversations

Teachers might learn to think outside the box in respect to listening by exchanging ideas with colleagues worldwide: chances are these colleagues will face similar challenges yet have come up with creative and successful ways of dealing with them. Global conversations might also help identify local, innovative approaches to teaching that might be adopted in one's own context. There are many ways of participating in these professional

conversations, including participation in conferences, webinars, online forums, social media, etc.

Teacher Awareness-Raising About Beliefs and Practices

Teachers can write down and reflect on the procedures they usually follow when carrying out listening activities and justify those procedures. Procedures and justifications can be interpreted against the process–product continuum we outlined earlier. Questions to be asked during this activity might include: Do I tend to prioritize task completion or listening development? Do I tend to focus on the here and now of a listening task or am I contributing to the development of autonomous listeners? Am I more concerned with 'what' my students answered or with 'how' they have listened?

Materials Evaluation (and Adaptation)

Teachers can ask themselves: What listening skills and knowledge does this activity presuppose and/or develop? What skills and knowledge does it neglect? What do I want to teach my students? The answers to those questions should orient any materials adaptation needed (see also Graham and Santos 2015; McAuliffe and Brooks, this volume).

Continuing Professional Development

Teachers' responses in both contexts we researched indicated that most had received relatively little pre- or in-service training in how to teach listening (see Tante, this volume, for a discussion of continuing professional development related to speaking skills). Our findings suggest that such development would be of benefit to teachers particularly regarding the role of strategy development and metacognition in listening pedagogy (for more details and practical suggestions see Graham and Santos 2015; Vandergrift and Goh 2012, respectively).

Conclusion

We believe this chapter provides important insights into the role of contextual factors in how listening is conceptualized by teachers and how listening pedagogy is realized in classrooms, but also illustrates a high degree of commonality across contexts. Such insights contribute to the task of finding ways of helping teachers to become more confident and proficient in developing the listening skills of their learners.

Questions for Reflection

1. In this chapter we reported some procedures teachers claimed to follow when teaching listening as well as how they justified those procedures. How have you reacted to these procedures and justifications? To what extent do they relate to your own procedures and rationales?
2. Where do you situate your own beliefs and practices regarding listening on the process versus product continuum presented in the chapter? If you had to choose one aspect of this chapter that made you stop and rethink your beliefs and practices about listening, what aspect would that be and why?
3. What is the role of strategies in the way you teach listening? To what extent do you think you help develop learners who are 'strategic listeners'?
4. To what extent do you feel that the curriculum and assessment frameworks in which you teach influence your beliefs and practices regarding listening? How might you work around any negative influences such frameworks might have on how you teach listening?

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3

L2 Listening in China: An Examination of Current Practice

Willy A. Renandya and Guangwei Hu

Introduction

Once a neglected skill, listening has in recent years attracted the attention of both researchers and practitioners. Second language (L2) researchers have now acknowledged the key role that auditory input plays in language acquisition, believing that exposure to such input is an important requirement for learners' language development. Similarly, the teaching of listening has received greater attention in recent years (Field 2008; Richards 2009; Vandergrift and Goh 2012). Listening now occupies a prominent place in many language programmes, often taught as a stand-alone course or integrated with a speaking course. In addition, high-stakes tests (e.g. school leaving examinations, university admission tests and international standardized proficiency tests such as IELTS and TOEFL) often include a listening component.

Given this increased research and pedagogical interest in L2 listening, one would expect teachers to be in a much better position to draw pedagogical insights from research and use these to design instructional procedures

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that would benefit L2 learners and help them become better L2 listeners (see Santos and Graham, this volume). This, however, may not always be the case for three reasons. First, teachers may not have access to the professional literature and consequently may be unaware of recent developments in L2 listening. Second, even those who keep up with the literature may find conflicting views about the main factors that affect the processing of spoken text and about how best to teach L2 listening (Wang 2010; Wang and Renandya 2012). As a result, they may feel bewildered and unable to choose between these various views. Third, contextual factors such as paucity of suitable listening materials and lack of access to online resources may constrain teachers from trying out new ways of teaching listening. Many teachers, as noted by Field (2008) and Siegel (2014), continue to use traditional methods of teaching L2 listening that focus more on the product than the process of listening. One such method which is still widely used in L2 classrooms is known as the comprehension-based approach where students listen to a recording multiple times and are then required to answer a set of comprehension questions as if they were taking a listening comprehension test.

Not surprisingly, L2 learners continue to find L2 listening to be one of the most difficult skills to learn (Vandergrift and Goh 2012). Those at the lower end of the proficiency scale find L2 listening particularly hard. Many have reported that they are unable to cope with the fast rate of speech, cannot recognize words they already know in print, have difficulty segmenting words in connected speech and, as a result, fail to form a coherent representation of the meaning of the text (Zeng 2007). Even those at the more advanced levels sometimes find listening to be demanding, as is the case with college English teachers from China with whom we have been working for several years. These are teachers whose overall English proficiency is quite advanced but whose listening skill seems to lag behind other skills such as reading, writing and speaking. In the general proficiency test that we administered as part of the admission requirements to the postgraduate programme they were applying for, they tended to perform well on the reading, speaking and writing components, but scored poorly on the listening segment.

In this chapter we begin by describing the kinds of problems that Chinese college English learners encounter when listening to spoken English. These include both lower level (e.g. speech rate, word recognition) and higher level (e.g. failure to make schema-based inferences) listening problems. These problems are related to the processes of listening rather than to the products, with the latter being typically focused on in comprehension-based teaching approaches. We then outline pedagogical strategies that Chinese college English teachers believe are useful to help their students overcome various

listening difficulties. In the final section, we present a set of pedagogical recommendations grounded in current research for teaching listening in China and other similar L2 learning contexts, in particular in places where English is taught as a foreign language.

Why Is Listening Difficult?

Listening is one of the first language skills that L1 users acquire naturally in the early years of their lives. They develop their ability to comprehend oral language 'seemingly without effort and attention' (Siegel 2014: 22). This, however, is not often the case with L2 learners of English, especially those who learn English in a foreign language (EFL) context like China. These EFL learners get more exposure to written than oral language because the English language curriculum is typically heavily biased towards literacy rather than oral skills. As Stephens (2011) pointed out, 'These students typically demonstrate literacy skills that are superior to their oral skills' (p. 312).

What kinds of difficulties do students often encounter? L2 learners have reported both lower level and higher level problems (Goh 2000). Lower level problems are associated with inefficient processing of the language features of spoken text (e.g. sound and sound blending, word boundaries in speech and complex grammatical structures), whilst higher level problems have more to do with failure to make relevant connections within and between utterances to comprehend the intended message of the text. A consensus is lacking amongst researchers about which of these two types of problems contributes more to L2 learners' inability to comprehend spoken text, but there is growing evidence that comprehension failure is often associated with lower level processing problems (e.g. Field 2009; Goh 2000; Wang 2010; Wang and Renandya 2012).

In a study of university students from China who were learning English in Singapore, Goh (2000) used Anderson's three-phase theoretical framework (i.e. perception, parsing and utilization) to categorize their listening problems. Her study revealed that most of the difficulties were lower level processing problems associated with the first two phases of perception and parsing. Similarly, Zeng (2007) reported that the majority of listening problems (see Table 3.1) that his college EFL students in China encountered most frequently had to do with lower level processing such as rate of speech, word recognition, unfamiliar words, complex sentences and unfamiliar pronunciation (see McAuliffe and Brooks, this volume, for a listening programme designed to address these difficulties).

Table 3.1 Top ten listening problems

Sources of listening problems	%
1. Speaking rate	100
2. Distraction	95
3. Unable to recognize known words	90
4. New vocabulary	85
5. Missing subsequent input	80
6. Nervousness	70
7. Sentence complexity	60
8. Background knowledge	55
9. Anxiety and frustration	45
10. Unfamiliar pronunciation	40

Source Zeng (2007: 46)

In a more recent study, Wang and Renandya (2012) asked 301 students and 30 teachers in China about the sources of listening difficulties using a 38-item questionnaire, which represented five groups of factors: text-related factors (e.g. speech rate, vocabulary load), processing-related factors (e.g. quickly forgetting what is heard), listener-related factors (e.g. anxiety), task-related factors (e.g. types of post-listening tasks) and environmental factors (e.g. lack of access to listening materials). The results are summarized in Table 3.2. As can be seen, both the students and teachers indicated that text- and processing-related factors caused the most problems, a finding that confirms earlier studies conducted by Goh (2000) and Zeng (2007), whose

Table 3.2 Top ten items perceived to be the most difficult by teachers and students

Rank order	Student perception ($N = 301$)		Teacher perception ($N = 30$)	
	Variable	Mean	Variable	Mean
1	Complex sentences	3.81	Fast speed	3.83
2	Phonetic variations	3.78	Complex sentences	3.57
3	Missing subsequent information	3.69	Missing subsequent information	3.53
4	Speaker accent	3.68	Long sentences	3.50
5	News broadcast	3.59	News broadcast	3.50
6	Long sentences	3.53	Speaker accent	3.47
7	Background noise	3.47	Background noise	3.47
8	Catching the details	3.42	Word recognition	3.30
9	Fast speed	3.38	New words	3.30
10	New words	3.37	Phonetic variations	3.30

Source Wang and Renandya (2012: 85)

research participants also attributed listening difficulties mostly to language-related variables (e.g. speech rate, word recognition, new vocabulary, sentence complexity and phonetic variations).

As the results reported above show, micro listening problems are so widespread that Field (2009) concludes that 'a disturbingly large number of larger-scale problems of understanding actually have their origins in small-scale errors of word recognition' (p. 14). Because of this, Field (2008) and others (e.g. Renandya and Farrell 2011; Wilson 2003) have called for listening teachers to pay more attention to lower level, bottom-up processing problems. Field (2009) provides examples of how simple words and phrases are often incorrectly perceived by L2 learners: *burst* may be heard as *birth*, *invent* as *prevent*, *the church where she was buried* as *the church where she was married*. What is often puzzling and also frustrating to L2 learners is that they can readily recognize and decode these words in print but fail to do so when they hear them in speech.

The Teaching of Listening in China

As in other EFL contexts it is only fairly recently that oral skills have started to gain popularity in China. In recognition of the increased importance of listening in developing college students' oral language skills in English, the weighting of the listening section of the compulsory CET (College English Test) Band 4 was increased from 15 to 35% in 2008 (Li 2013). Consequently, listening now receives more instructional attention in college English classes.

Until recently the teaching of listening has largely reflected more traditional methods (see Li 2013; Wang 2010) characterized by the following features:

- An emphasis on the product rather than the process of listening, with the main pedagogical aim being to help students extract meaning from the text;
- Use of inauthentic scripted materials devoid of features typically found in naturally occurring conversational/spoken language;
- Test-oriented listening practice whose main purpose is to prepare students for the CET test;
- Overuse of the comprehension-based approach, which puts students on the perpetual cycle of (i) listening, (ii) answering comprehension questions and (iii) checking answers.

It is worth noting that these features are still commonly found in other similar EFL contexts where English is not used for genuine communicative purposes. Siegel (2014), for example, found that in Japan the comprehension-based approach was still popular with the English teachers he observed in his study. Overall, the literature seems to indicate that this situation is also quite common not only in Asia but also in other EFL countries in the world (Vandergrift and Goh 2012).

More recently, however, newer and more diverse methods of teaching listening have started to gain some traction (e.g. methods that are more process-oriented with a strong metacognitive focus such as those suggested by Vandergrift and Goh 2012). As a result of greater exposure to newer ways of teaching listening, teachers are more willing to explore and implement L2 listening pedagogy that reflects current scholarship in L2 listening theory and research. What is interesting here is that the types of listening problems that students face remain largely the same (i.e. mostly lower level processing problems), but teachers seem to be more open to consider a wider range of pedagogical options (see Wang 2010). This trend was evident in Wang and Renandya's (2012) study, in which in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 teachers to find out what they could do to help students overcome the listening difficulties summarized in Tables 3.1 and 3.2. These teachers offered a range of instructional strategies, as discussed below.

Speech Rate

Although many of the interviewed teachers realized that the ultimate goal of L2 listening would be to comprehend authentic texts for effective communication, they acknowledged the fact that their students started at a lower base and needed structured support to cope with the fast rate of speech. The majority suggested slowing down the speed so that students can hear the individual words more clearly. They also recommended that students should be encouraged to adjust the speed of their listening text according to their preference when they do their independent listening practice. The availability of digitally mediated listening materials (e.g. podcasts) has made it easier for students to manipulate the speech rate and choose a speed that they find the most comfortable. Another suggestion was to get students to view the script before they listen to a text spoken at a normal rate, which both students and teachers in the study found useful for overcoming difficulties associated with speech rate and other listening problems such as word recognition and phonetic variations.

Phonetic Variations

Phonetic variations, many of the teachers in the study believed, seem to be the main culprit for students' word segmentation and word recognition problems. Phonetic variations refer to different ways individual words or groups of words are pronounced in connected speech (e.g. *going to* is often pronounced as *gonna*). The majority of the teachers felt that class time should be devoted to focused instruction on problem areas. This can take the form of an awareness raising activity (i.e. sensitizing students to the particular speech phenomenon) or focused practice (i.e. practicing how to pronounce words in connected speech).

Word Recognition

Students are often unable to recognize words they already know partly due to their unfamiliarity with the way words are pronounced in connected speech, and partly due to their own incorrect pronunciation. Many of the teachers pointed out that some students were unable to recognize some words they heard because they pronounced those words differently from the speakers in the recording. Thus these teachers felt that improving students' pronunciation would help to develop and strengthen students' word recognition skills. A number of the teachers suggested a mixture of instructional procedures involving reading aloud, repetition, shadowing (listening and repeating immediately) and teacher correction to help students with their pronunciation problems.

Unfamiliar Vocabulary

All of the teachers agreed that unfamiliar vocabulary would be one of the main sources of listening difficulty. The majority suggested pre-teaching key vocabulary items before letting students listen to the recording. Some recommended that students preview the new words the day before they come to class so that teachers can devote classroom time to other comprehension-enhancing listening activities. They also suggested that additional vocabulary learning activities should be developed at the post-listening phase in order to reinforce what students have learned.

Complex Sentences

Speech that contains long stretches of utterances and embedded clauses is perceived to be difficult. This phenomenon is interesting because spoken language generally contains shorter and simpler utterances. However, in the context of the study reported in Wang and Renandya (2012), 'the listening materials in many coursebooks … were prepared passages read out by native English speakers with predetermined scripts' (p. 94). Whilst scripted materials are not without value, they do not represent authentic speech and should be used sparingly. To help students cope with scripted texts a number of the teachers recommended making the written script available to the learners to alleviate the difficulty of decoding complex syntax. These teachers also recommended repeated listening as a way to help students become used to listening to complex sentences present in speech.

Processing-Related Problems

When asked about how students could handle processing-related problems (e.g. being distracted, easily forgetting what is heard), some of the teachers recommended teaching listening strategies, in particular those that can help students become more aware of their processing problems and enable them to plan, implement and evaluate their success or failure in overcoming their problems. Research into metacognitive listening strategies has shown some promising results (Vandergrift and Goh 2012), and some of the teachers seemed to be keen to incorporate listening strategies in their teaching. Others, however, had some reservations about the effectiveness of teaching listening strategies, believing that strategies would be useful only for the more advanced students. These teachers believed that lower proficiency students would need more practice in lower level processing (e.g. word recognition and fluency practice via repeated listening) to build up their basic listening skills before they are taught listening strategies.

Pedagogical Recommendations

The discussions above show that teachers are generally aware of the kinds of listening problems that L2 listeners face, understand the sources of these problems and are increasingly well informed about the range of pedagogical

options for teaching L2 listening. To further improve their students' listening ability they could consider an even wider range of pedagogical options that reflect current scholarship in L2 listening pedagogy. Discussed below are pedagogical practices that L2 listening experts (e.g. Chang 2016; Field 2008; Richards 2015; Vandergrift and Goh 2012) believe should feature more prominently in the L2 listening classroom.

Listening as a Process

For many years the focus of L2 listening pedagogy has been on the product of listening with comprehension as the key objective of instruction. The success of a listening lesson has often been described in terms of the number of post-listening questions students are able to answer correctly or incorrectly. Little attention has been paid to the process of comprehension, that is, how students process the various interrelated elements of listening and arrive at their unique comprehension of the text.

Current L2 listening pedagogy encourages teachers to pay attention not only to the product but also the process of listening. By focusing on the process (e.g. how students infer meaning when the listening input is not clear or when they lack relevant prior knowledge), teachers are in a better position to support learners who might experience processing problems at the perception, parsing and utilization stages of listening. They can also teach students metacognitive listening strategies (e.g. directed attention, selective listening) to help them to plan, manage and evaluate the listening process. Such listening strategies help students think about the process of listening, reflect on and become more aware of the factors that affect their comprehension, understand the skills and strategies they could use to solve their listening problems, and thus facilitate the comprehension of spoken discourse (Goh 2000).

Listening as Comprehension and Acquisition

Listening has traditionally been associated with the teaching of comprehension skills. Classroom practices are typically organized around activities believed to aid understanding of oral discourse. This traditional view of listening is still widespread in many L2 contexts. Whilst the view of listening as comprehension has served useful pedagogical purposes, there is a need to consider listening from a different perspective, one of listening as acquisition

(Richards 2009). An L2 learner's oral competence is only as good as his/her listening ability. Viewed in this way, listening is one of the two main sources of language input (i.e. reading and listening) that can be exploited to facilitate learners' language proficiency development.

In order to facilitate students' language acquisition processes, teachers can design listening activities that promote the noticing of language features, in particular those non-salient language features (e.g. tenses, plurals, non-count nouns) that students would not normally pay attention to unless these are highlighted during lessons. Afterwards, students can be encouraged to use these just noticed language items in speaking and/or writing activities. There is considerable research evidence that noticing activities can help learners restructure their existing linguistic system and further their L2 development (Richards 2009).

More Focused Practice of Problematic Text Features

As was mentioned earlier, lower level perception problems are often cited as one of the main sources of listening comprehension breakdown. Students often say that they cannot understand the text because they are not able to 'catch the words', although they know these words in their written form. Since problems at the perception stage can have negative knock-on effects on the subsequent processing of the text, perception-related problems will need to be systematically addressed in the classroom. Wilson (2003) has called for teachers to give more attention to spoken text features such as sound assimilation (e.g. *tuck it in* becomes *takitin*) and re-syllabication (e.g. *went in* becomes *wen tin*) that often cause problems. Regular focused practice of problematic text features using dictogloss, for example, can sensitize L2 learners to their listening problems and promote greater awareness of how they themselves can do more focused practice independently outside the classroom. In dictogloss, students first listen to the text for a general understanding. They then listen again and jot down key words, which they use subsequently to reconstruct the original text. During the reconstruction stage, students are encouraged to pay attention to some language features that have caused them problems in the past. Deliberately encouraging the students to notice these problematic features means they will be more likely to do more independent practice and become more able to deal with these features in future listening lessons.

Increased Use of Authentic, Media-Based Listening and Viewing Activities

The increased use of the social media has dramatically changed the way people use language for communication. Media-based communication differs from traditional communication in that the former is more interactive and multimodal (see Kozar, this volume). The multimodal nature of modern communication, which involves both verbal and non-verbal elements (sound, still and moving images), has made media-based listening and viewing more enjoyable and comprehensible as well, thus making it ideal for language learning purposes (Richards 2015). L2 listening teachers, therefore, should make use of multimodal, media-based materials for their listening lessons. The ER Central website (http://www.er-central.com/listening-library/) provides media-based listening materials and activities that EFL teachers from around the world might find useful. The materials are graded according to levels of difficulty and also organized by categories (e.g. fiction and non-fiction, children and adults).

By bringing more authentic, media-based listening and viewing activities into the classroom, there is a greater chance that learners will see the link between classroom-based language learning and out-of-class language learning, and will hopefully continue learning beyond the classroom by doing independent listening/viewing activities in their free time. Such extensive listening is not only intrinsically motivating but is also indispensable to the development of fluent L2 listening.

Greater Attention to Developing Listening Fluency

As is the case with L2 reading where fluency is a key to the development of comprehension skills, fluency is a necessary condition in L2 listening too. Fluency refers to one's ability to read and listen to text smoothly and effortlessly. Just like in reading, the basic building block of fluency in L2 listening is word recognition skills. When learners can recognize words and word groups fairly quickly without expending much cognitive effort, they are said to have developed fluency in reading and/or listening. As the development of fluent listening takes time, L2 learners will need to do extensive listening through narrow listening practice (i.e. listening to materials of the same genre), shadowing (i.e. listening and repeating immediately) or other

extensive listening activities (for examples of such activities, see Chang 2016; Renandya and Farrell 2011). For classroom-based learning, teachers can do frequent dictation activities (see Vandergrift and Goh 2012 for a variety of interesting dictation activities for classroom use) and engage students in repeated listening practice in the whilst- and post-listening phases of the lesson.

Engaging Students in Out-of-Class Listening and Viewing Activities

The success of language learning, according to Richards (2015), is due to two factors: what happens in the classroom and what learners do outside the classroom. Whilst the classroom can provide the initial groundwork for learners' language development, educational researchers now acknowledge that classroom-based language learning can only provide limited learning opportunities. Richards (2015) contends that 'The opportunities for learning or 'affordances' available in the classroom are hence quite restricted, consisting of a restricted range of discourse and literary practices' (p. 6). Because of this, learners will need to continue learning beyond the classroom where they can enjoy much richer discourses and be exposed to a wider variety of language features and functions that occur in meaningful and authentic communicative contexts. There is growing evidence suggesting that students who get regular exposure to comprehensible language by watching English language movies on TV or the Internet have good listening and speaking skills compared to those who do not (Richards 2015). Because of the richer affordances that out-of-class language learning provides, L2 listening teachers should make more concerted efforts to encourage students to do independent listening/viewing activities outside the classroom.

Conclusion

To conclude, effective L2 listening is a twenty-first century language skill that is indispensable for effective communication and mutual understanding and has a vital role to play in enhancing the quality of life, creating new opportunities and alternatives. As such, it is a skill that requires adept pedagogical choreography. L2 listening teachers must have a clear understanding of learners' difficulties and sources of problems. Based on this understanding, they need to orchestrate their learning materials and activities to engage

their students in focused instruction targeting their specific problems in the classroom. Furthermore, they need to design listening activities that involve their students in extensive listening outside the classroom and in real-world use of listening skills for genuine communication. Finally, they also need to foster their students' strategic competence in managing and controlling their learning process and in capitalizing on affordances both in and outside the classroom. The pedagogical recommendations we have presented in this chapter should be useful for English teachers in China and for those working in other similar contexts in the world.

Questions for Reflection

1. What learner characteristics need to be taken into account when we decide how to teach L2 listening?
2. What contextual factors should be considered when pedagogical decisions are made in an L2 listening classroom?
3. What are some of the variables inherent to L2 listening tasks that may influence how listening should be taught and learned?
4. In what ways can research on L2 listening inform pedagogy in the L2 listening classroom?
5. In what ways is the teaching of L2 listening similar to and different from the teaching of other language skills?

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4

The Development of a Listening Course for Japanese University Students

Michael McAuliffe and Gavin Brooks

Introduction

Listening presents significant challenges in foreign language learning contexts as the cognitive processes that have been identified as essential to the skill are difficult to teach directly. Current research in second language (L2) listening pedagogy suggests that these difficulties are unlikely to be adequately addressed by 'traditional' comprehension-based instruction (see, for example, Cauldwell 2013; Field 2008). An important insight from such research is the contribution made by bottom-up processes.

This chapter describes the development of a listening course for lower proficiency Japanese university students (i.e. with TOEFL scores below 410) which aims to develop these bottom-up listening processes. The course uses what we have termed a 'sheltered' listening approach, which allows students to engage the types of bottom-up processes that are essential to listening comprehension. This chapter outlines the rationale for the course and describes the materials employed. It also explores the benefits of this type of listening instruction for other teaching contexts.

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Theoretical Considerations

The characteristics of spoken language make L2 listening a particularly difficult skill. Listeners need to identify words and phrases in real time, a process which involves successfully adjusting to and processing wide variations in rate of speech and accent, as well as modifications in stress and intonation patterns (prosody) and in sounds (phonology) (for detailed accounts, see Cutler 2012; Lynch 2009; Shockey 2003). In addition, listeners need to use their prior knowledge of those words and phrases as well as their background and ongoing (schematic) knowledge of the text to make sense of the message. Because of the heavy demands of these processes, listening is widely considered to be the hardest of the four skills to learn in a foreign language setting (Renandya and Farrell 2010).

Flowerdew and Miller (2005) cite three influential models that explain general listening processes: the bottom-up model, the top-down model and the interactive model. According to the bottom-up model, listeners are able to comprehend what is said by combining phonemes, the smallest units of sound, to make ever larger, more meaningful units of language such as words, phrases, clauses and sentences. Top-down models stress the importance that contextual and schematic knowledge play in the listening process. Interactive models accommodate both processes operating simultaneously and interdependently. That is, in order for a listener to understand speech, both bottom-up and top-down processing are employed, though how they are used varies depending on purpose, competence and other factors (see Santos and Graham, this volume, for further discussion of bottom-up and top-down processing as they relate to listening).

Field (2008) uses the terms 'decoding' and 'meaning building' to describe the range of bottom-up and top-down processes that make listening possible. Decoding refers to the process of 'translating the speech signal into speech sounds, words and clauses, and finally into a literal meaning' (p. 125). Meaning building, on the other hand, involves 'adding to the bare meaning provided by decoding' (p. 125). This process includes drawing on contextual knowledge such as world, topic or cultural knowledge and personal experience as well as on co-textual knowledge from the text. For expert listeners decoding is automatic and effortless. The challenge for weaker listeners is to develop decoding skills so that the processes involved become more automatic, enabling greater attention to be paid to the construction of meaning. Rost (2002: 20) provides a useful summary of the central role decoding plays in successful listening:

> Recognising words in fluent speech is the basis of spoken-language comprehension. The two main tasks of the listener in word recognition are identification of words and activating knowledge of word meanings. Misunderstanding or non-understanding of words in speech, whether through faulty identification of word boundaries or inadequate knowledge of word meanings, is the major source of confusion in language comprehension, particularly second-language comprehension.

Thus, the two main challenges for the development of an L2 listening course are as follows:

1. To provide practice in identifying words in the speech stream so that listeners can develop this essential skill.
2. To provide opportunities to apply this skill in situations that require the deployment of complementary skills such as the use of textual, topic and world knowledge.

Context

The listening course described in this chapter was developed and implemented in an academic English programme at a private university in Kansai, Japan (School of Policy Studies English Language Program 2015). In the programme, there are 12 full-time English language coordinators whose roles include developing and coordinating one course per semester and approximately 35 part-time instructors who deliver courses to 1100 undergraduate students. All courses are created in-house by the full-time coordinators. Typically, a course is written by one full-time coordinator in consultation with colleagues. Depending on level and skill, each coordinator is in charge of a team of between 4 and 20 or more instructors who teach between 9 and 30 classes, with about 20 students per class. Each of these classes is taught using the same materials and assessed using the same tests. At the close of each semester, feedback is solicited from the instructors who taught the course and improvements are made by the coordinator. The two co-authors were separately in charge of developing and coordinating one lower level and one higher level listening course. This chapter describes the lower level listening course.

Students in this programme are required to complete four semesters of English in their first two years. In each of their four semesters, students take one listening course, one speaking course, one reading course and one

writing course, each comprising 12–14 lessons of 90 min each. Upon entering the programme students are separated into a lower or higher stream based on their TOEFL score. Whilst the higher stream provides instruction and practice in academic English, the lower stream, with TOEFL scores in the range of 320–410, focuses on the development of basic language proficiency. The listening course described in this chapter was designed for the first year of this lower stream, which all lower stream students are required to take in both the spring and autumn semesters.

Problems and Challenges

Prior to the introduction of the course under discussion listening lessons were based on a 'traditional' approach to teaching listening that focused on top-down skills. A typical lesson comprised the following stages:

- A pre-listening stage to engage interest, establish context and pre-teach important vocabulary.
- A listening stage that involved listening to a text, completing comprehension questions and checking students' answers to these questions. These texts were a combination of authentic texts and simplified versions of authentic texts.
- A post-listening stage comprising, for example, a discussion of ideas from the text, personal responses to the text or summaries of the text.

This approach gave rise to a number of problems. First, these classes tended to become an unsatisfactory hybrid of other skills in which the topic and content of the listening text rather than whether and to what extent the students had understood it became the main focus of the lesson. Second, instruction was typically limited to tests of comprehension, and there was little or no opportunity to explore why answers were right or wrong. Most importantly, there was no systematic building of the processes that support listening, which meant that features unique to listening that were causing students the most problems, such as rate of speech and the changes of sound in words that occur in the stream of speech, could not be addressed.

There was a consensus amongst the full-time coordinators that the approach was not effective, and the need for a greater emphasis on decoding skills was recognised. Cauldwell (2013), Field (2008) and Siegel and Siegel (2015) suggest a range of innovative listening exercises that focus on developing decoding skills. However, a number of practical problems presented themselves when considering the introduction of these types of discrete

decoding exercises in our context. First, a high degree of attention and motivation would be demanded of the students. Also, integrating discrete exercises effectively within the texts where decoding problems had arisen would be difficult. Since the conventional approach to listening was shown to be ineffective, but using alternative methods such as discrete decoding exercises was considered impractical, the coordinator of the course decided to adopt an alternative 'sheltered' approach to listening.

Developing the Listening Class

Sheltered Listening

The central tenet of a sheltered approach is to create conditions so that the decoding processes identified as essential to listening are prompted by the great majority of the listening exercises. In contrast to many approaches to listening, the course provides students with listening texts that are simple and semantically transparent. Students are not required to carry out challenging high-level meaning building such as making inferences or using contextual or extra-textual clues to clarify meanings. Also, they are unlikely to encounter more than a few unfamiliar words. This approach enables them to devote most of their attention to decoding. As students become better at decoding they develop greater confidence in their ability to understand spoken English, which in turn fosters a more positive attitude to listening. In this chapter we use the term 'exercise' to refer to a piece of work that has a specified correct answer; students usually complete an exercise working alone. In contrast, where the term 'activity' is used it refers to a phase of a lesson in which students draw on their own experiences and ideas and may share these with other students.

Designing the Course

The course was designed in accordance with the following five principles:

1. Using familiar topics
   These topics include School Days, Where I live, Travel, Food, Friends and so on. Each topic forms the basis of a two-lesson unit. The choice of topics is based both on the coordinator's judgment as to which topics are likely to be linguistically and thematically accessible and on feedback from students.

2. Restricting the listening texts to a very simple, familiar genre
   The course uses an interview genre comprising five or six questions and responses of limited length (typically no longer than a few short sentences). The fact that the same genre is used throughout the course allows students to focus solely on the content of the interviews rather than devote attention to understanding the structure of the discourse.
3. Controlling the vocabulary
   To ensure that the vocabulary is controlled, the interviews were scripted by the coordinator and the vocabulary was checked against frequency lists from the British National Corpus and the Corpus of Contemporary American English. By restricting vocabulary in this way, students are more likely to be successful at identifying words in the speech stream and thus develop their decoding skills. It also means that any difficulties students have with word recognition are more likely to arise from perceptual problems than a lack of vocabulary knowledge, enabling remedial work to focus on these perceptual difficulties. Finally, important high-frequency words are used multiple times within units, and where possible across units, allowing students to get multiple exposure to different phonetic forms of the words. Words that are the focus of listening exercises in the spring semester course are within the top 1000 words of one or both frequency lists; for the autumn semester course, this focus extends to the top 1500 words.
4. Using authentic or authentic-sounding speech
   Despite the tightly controlled lexis and the use of scripts, when recording the interviews, every effort was made to ensure that features characteristic of authentic, natural spoken language were preserved. The course coordinator, a native English-speaker, took the role of the interviewer. Native or near native-speaker teachers and students took the roles of the interviewees. Whilst both the interviewer and interviewees spoke from the scripts, all of the participants were encouraged to speak naturally using their normal rate of speech and without modifying their delivery. This led to the creation of texts that are rich in features typical of casual or authentic speech, including disfluencies, variations in rate of speech and prosody as well as the phonetic modifications such as elision (omission of a sound), reduction (shortening or weakening of a sound) and redistribution (movement of a syllable that blurs word boundaries), that words undergo in such conditions. In addition, the interviews contain a range of accents: North American, Australian, British and Japanese, which further exposes students to the wide range of phonetic realisations of high-frequency words.

5. Presenting listening exercises that prioritise decoding
   For each interview, the students are required to complete four separate listening exercises. First, they listen to the whole interview and answer a number of comprehension questions in order to familiarise themselves with the content of the text as well as the accent and rate of speech. Next, they listen to eight to ten key utterances excerpted from the interview and count the number of words in each utterance. The purpose of 'listen and count' is to focus students' attention on word recognition without having them transcribe what they hear. Third, students listen again to the same utterances, and this time they complete a gap-fill exercise where they are required to provide a specified number of missing words (typically two or three). The gaps were chosen to foster recognition of high-frequency words that are likely to undergo phonetic modification such as elision or reduction in the speech stream. Finally, students listen and read along with the script.

For each of the first three listening exercises, students listen at least twice; for the final exercise, students listen at least once. In total, when students have completed all the exercises for one interview, they are likely to have listened to the key parts of the text as many as seven or more times, moving from introductory questions through a series of incremental decoding exercises. During class the teacher controls how many times students listen to the exercises, but for homework students are free to listen as many times as they wish. Although listening to the same text this number of times is intensive, the intensity is necessary for gains to be made in developing better decoding skills. Hulstijn (2001), for example, advocates the use of exercises that induce repeated encounters with the same content in order to develop automatic word access in both reading and listening. The likelihood of this repetition becoming tedious is reduced by ensuring each exercise is different and by providing immediate feedback after each exercise.

Teaching Sheltered Listening

In the week before the start of each semester, the course coordinator provides the team of instructors with a teacher's book containing information about course objectives, administration and grading procedures, and detailed lesson plans. At the beginning of the semester, students are given a printed course pack of materials as well as access to the interviews and exercise recordings hosted on the university's server. Each of the nine listening

classes uses the same materials, and instructors are required to follow the lesson plans and administrative and grading procedures for each lesson closely, ensuring that students cover the same in-class work and homework and are graded with the same tests. In addition to the interview activities, each two-lesson unit includes an extensive listening component as well as a focus on key topic-related vocabulary. The following teaching plan is for those activities related to sheltered listening.

Lesson One

Topic lead-in and activation: Each instructor introduces the students to the topic using their own example. In the case of the topic 'Friends', the instructor tells the students about one of her own friends. She then asks the students questions about this friend, eliciting answers and writing language that is relevant to the topic on the board. Students then participate in the same activity by writing brief notes about one of their own friends and sharing this information with a partner. The aim of this part of the lesson is not only to introduce the topic but also to prime the students for the type of information that they will be listening to. Both the teacher's example and the student activity anticipate the content of the listening text.

Listening: Students listen to the first interview of the unit and complete the four listening exercises described in the previous section: comprehension questions, listen and count, fill the gaps, and listen and read. The questions asked in the interview are either identical to questions used during the lead-in or are questions that are closely related to the content of the lead-in.

Homework: Students listen to two or three more interviews. These additional interviews consist of the same interviewer asking the same questions on the same topic to two or three more interviewees. The answers they give, whilst differing in detail from those of the first interview, cover many of the same grammatical and lexical features that are found in the first interview. The exercises that accompany these additional interviews are also identical to those of the first interview. This enables the exercises completed in class to act as a model for the listening exercises that students are required to complete for homework. Students are encouraged to listen as many times as they feel necessary. This homework also functions as preparation for a short assessment in the next class.

Lesson Two

Listening test: This assessment is based on the homework and makes up 50% of students' final grades. It requires them to complete similar exercises to those that they completed for homework.

Decoding awareness-raising: Finally, teachers focus on an aspect of the homework that the coordinator has identified as likely to be problematic for students. This focus is based on difficulties faced by students in previous listening courses as well as typical decoding problems experienced by Japanese learners of English. Teachers are encouraged to focus on these anticipated areas of difficulty, though are not restricted to them. When developing these awareness-raising activities, the coordinator was aware that a significant number of teachers did not have a strong background in either theories of listening processes or phonetics and phonology, so it was important to provide clear information about typical areas of difficulty at the start of the course. To provide an example: the teacher writes on the board a phrase or sentence with a gap from the text. The students listen again to the phrase or sentence and are encouraged to discuss and identify the missing word(s). Once the answer is either elicited or provided, the teacher then draws the students' attention to the relationship between the sounds and the words that they represent and highlights further instances of this type of phonetic modification in the text. This helps to raise students' awareness of this relationship and usually takes up no more than 5–10 min of class time. These kinds of brief explorations of common phonetic modifications are repeated regularly over the two semesters. They serve to sensitise students to the complicated relationship between sounds and words, and can help to illuminate particularly frustrating aspects of their English learning experience.

The Complexities of Decoding

Although the exercises pay considerable attention to helping students decode sounds, students may still face difficulties even after they have listened to a sentence several times during their homework practice. Below is a sentence taken from the listening test for the topic 'Friends'. During the test, the students listened to the utterance, 'And he taught me how to cook' three times. They were asked to complete the utterance: 'And he taught me _____' and were told that the gap required three words.

From a sample of 37 students in two of the nine listening classes, there were 26 inaccurate answers including three answers which were not completed. The remaining 23 incorrect answers all successfully identified the word 'cook', although most identified it erroneously as a noun. The most common incorrect answers were 'other cook' (three instances), and 'at the cook' and 'about the cook' (two instances each). This example shows the difficulties that the students at this level face when trying to decode parts of naturally spoken English. First, high-frequency words or phrases are particularly vulnerable to the distortions of speech, and many may go unnoticed for a long time if attention is not drawn to their spoken form. Second, L2 listeners who are unable to decode effectively are likely to misunderstand authentic speech in a way that top-down processes are unable to compensate for: there is little that contextual or other forms of schematic knowledge can do in such cases to compensate for the inability to identify what was said.

Implications for Other Teaching Contexts

Whilst the course described in this chapter focuses on a large monolingual Japanese university programme, students with low-level listening scores (e.g. TOEFL scores below 400, or at A1 and A2 CEFR levels) in all contexts are likely to require intensive practice with decoding. The decoding exercises described here can be built into any listening course if two important considerations are taken into account: the texts and the listening exercises.

First, the texts need to be within the scope of the students' current language proficiency in terms of genre, topic and lexical content to ensure that students can attend to decoding. Students should clearly understand how the texts are structured, what they are about, and be familiar with all or almost all the words. In addition, as far as possible the texts should preserve features characteristic of natural spoken language such as those described earlier. Second, the exercises need to be designed to focus on key words or phrases. The exercises described here are incremental in nature, starting with conventional comprehension questions, then focusing increasingly on decoding using three types of exercises: 'listen and count', which requires students to count the number of words in a phrase or utterance, 'fill the gap' and finally 'listen and read', where students read along with the transcript. Teachers can also use a number of other decoding exercises. One example is 'odd one out', where students are presented with four words or phrases, three of which are from the utterance that they listen to and one which is not. Another activity that can be used is 'spot the difference', where

students listen to an utterance and compare it to a written version, which may be identical or contain a small difference. A third possibility is 'listen and repeat', where one student of a pair listens to a recorded utterance and then tries to repeat it to their partner, who has access to the correct written version and so is able to check their partner's understanding and correct for any perceptual difficulties they may be having. For other decoding exercises that focus on specific aspects of bottom-up listening, see Siegel and Siegel (2015).

Teachers may feel that sheltered listening presents challenges in terms of the time and resources required to create the materials. Certainly both the interview texts and the exercises that exploit them cannot be created overnight. However, from our experience this approach is to be recommended for a number of reasons: it addresses a need; it includes challenging, achievable and measurable listening activities; and it enables the development of a systematic and coherent listening course. Finally, for foreign language learners who would benefit from exposure to authentic speech but for whom the combination of linguistic and phonetic complexity poses a significant barrier, a sheltered approach provides a practical solution.

Conclusion

This chapter started with a brief overview of three listening models: bottom-up, top-down and interactive. Drawing on Field (2008) in particular, a case was made for adopting an interactive model as a theoretical listening framework in which the processes of decoding and meaning building operate in a complementary fashion to support efficient comprehension. The course described in this chapter provides an example of how these processes might be combined in order to meet the needs of a particular group of students. We would argue that L2 listening instruction and materials would benefit from drawing explicitly on this distinction, making clear to students the rationale for the different types of listening, and providing proportionate amounts of practice according to level and need.

The approach to decoding we have described is designed to ensure that students are able to practice by means of 'sheltered' listening. Although it might seem a deliberate and painstaking process, it enables both students and their instructors to focus explicitly on the main areas of listening difficulty. In addition to highlighting decoding as a formal instructional component, the development of this approach raises two matters of particular relevance to L2 listening pedagogy: the importance of lexical knowledge

and the role of repetition. The position adopted in this chapter is that prior knowledge of the lexical items in a listening text is an important component of any course that aims to provide a focus on decoding. If the aim is for students to practice matching the phonetic signal to a phonemic representation held in long-term memory, then the practice component will break down if a student does not have sufficient linguistic knowledge. Courses that prioritise decoding must take the students' language level into account, especially as it pertains to lexical knowledge.

Perhaps most importantly, if students are to improve their listening, they need to engage in repeated listening. A central feature of the activities described above is that students are required to listen to the same text and parts of text a number of times, each time with a different purpose. In addition, they listen to multiple texts on the same topic with significant repetition or overlap. The challenge for any course developer is to contrive circumstances such that each repetition is both purposeful and engaging. We have attempted to show how such circumstances can be achieved through the use of incremental exercises on the same text, and through the repetition of the same sequence of exercises on a number of closely related texts.

Questions for Reflection

1. Is a listening teacher mainly a 'facilitator' and 'motivator', providing interesting content and encouragement to students, or is there a role for intervention and instruction? How might teachers best intervene and instruct in order to support listening?
2. What types of decoding problems are lower level students likely to experience when listening to naturally spoken English? What types of awareness-raising activities could a teacher use with his or her class to help students overcome these difficulties?
3. If repetition is a key component of listening practice, how can it be made as engaging as possible?
4. What are the potential benefits and drawbacks in exposing low proficiency level students to a wide range of English accents?
5. Is there a place for authentic listening texts (i.e. texts originally created for an audience of expert or native listeners) in low level listening classes? What might this role be?

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5

Listening Instruction for ESP: Exploring Nursing Education Where English is a Lingua Franca

M. Gregory Tweedie and Robert C. Johnson

Introduction

Listening has been referred to as the 'Cinderella' of the four macro-skills (Flowerdew and Miller 2005: xi) because it is frequently overlooked in language pedagogy. In healthcare scenarios, however, the accurate communication and comprehension of information via oral/aural means is potentially, and quite literally, a matter of life and death. One might expect, then, that this would thrust listening skills to the forefront of instructional priorities when preparing healthcare professionals for work in English as a lingua franca (ELF) context. However, findings from a departmental needs analysis at a Canadian university's Bachelor of Nursing program in Qatar revealed that both students and instructors felt listening was not a problematic skill impeding student success in the program. As teacher-researchers at the institution, we believed that this assumption should be tested out more thoroughly and therefore we conducted a study, which we report in this chapter. Findings from the investigation, it is argued, suggest more deliberate attention to listening instruction is needed at

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the institution. We believe the same is true, not only for the host institution, but also for any English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program preparing students for professions in which accurate oral/aural communication is vital.

Background

In the Arabian Peninsula, the predominance of expatriate healthcare workers and the present and historical roles of English in their countries of origin (as well as in the host nations) has made English the de facto language of communication between patients and care providers, and amongst medical professionals (Maher 1987). In such a context, in order to deliver safe and effective patient care, intelligibility amongst speakers of different varieties of English is of critical concern.

When speakers of one variety of English try to communicate with individuals of a different English-speaking group, there are more likely to be communication difficulties. English users in Nepal, for example, may utilize phonological or lexical features unfamiliar to speakers of Egyptian English (and vice versa). In the ELF context of many Arabian Peninsula clinics and hospitals such situations are likely to be daily occurrences given the multinational nursing labour force (Almutairi and McCarthy 2012; El-Haddad 2006).

In such ELF educational contexts, it may be more useful to consider the traditionally defined classroom skill of 'listening' under a broader concept of 'intelligibility'. A starting point for defining intelligibility begins with what Nelson (2011) calls the 'Smith Framework' (p. 21). This tripartite framework (Smith 1992; Smith and Nelson 1985) refers to intelligibility (word and/or utterance recognition, involving the sound system), comprehensibility (word/utterance meaning, or locutionary force), and interpretability (the meaning behind the word/utterance, or illocutionary force). In our study, for example, one nurse says to her colleague, 'blood pressure irregular'. If the second nurse has any problem in recognizing the words or utterance, perhaps due to inexperience with the speaker's accent or to differences in syllable stress, or hearing 'regular' instead of 'irregular', the intended meaning could be lost due to intelligibility. Even if every individual word is understood, comprehensibility requires the listener to understand what is meant by these words presented together in this particular order. If the listener expects the adjective before the compound noun 'blood pressure', for example, having it come afterward might interfere with their understanding of the speaker's utterance. Finally, interpretability has to do with understanding the intended meaning of the speaker. For example, is the speaker trying to

convey information about a patient's typical condition or inform the listener of a new symptom? Or is the speaker attempting to indicate an emergency requiring immediate action from the listener? Difficulties with any of the three aspects of intelligibility can clearly lead to communication difficulties between healthcare professionals which may impact patient care and safety.

Illustrating the Issue

The ESP program in which we taught afforded an opportunity to investigate intelligibility in a healthcare setting. Instruction took place at a nursing education institution in the State of Qatar offering undergraduate and graduate nursing degrees with English as the medium of instruction. We were particularly interested in two areas. First, to what extent might nurses from different English language backgrounds encounter intelligibility difficulties as they discuss matters of patient care? Second, if such communication problems do occur, to what extent might they impact patient safety?

Listening to a Health Assessment Scenario

Assessment scenarios, which often take the form of medical role-plays, have been utilized in nursing education generally and in health assessment in particular as a means of developing integrative and critical thinking skills (Carter and Dickieson 2010). The scenarios also offer the benefits of reduced stress for the students and avoidance of the risks that could be incurred if actual patients were used (Zunzarren and Rodriguez-Sedano 2011). The content of the particular scenario we used was created with the assistance of a senior nursing researcher; it was designed so that a lack of linguistic intelligibility in the situation could potentially expose the patient to risk. It was also one that nurse practitioners would encounter frequently in the course of hospital duty, involving the handover of patient care from one nurse ending a shift to another nurse beginning a shift (see Appendix).

The handover scenario was completed by two female student volunteers, both of whom were experienced, practicing nurses. Student A self-identified her 'mother tongue' as Tamil, Student B as Arabic. One student had completed the English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) program at the institution prior to beginning her nursing degree, whilst the other met the requirement for direct entry into undergraduate nursing studies. The institutional requirement for direct entry into the program is a Test of English

as a Foreign Language Internet-based test (TOEFL iBT) score of 80 or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) band of 6.0.

The resulting discussion was transcribed and formed the basis for listening comprehension questions to be answered by other student participants, all of whom had already completed the program's health assessment course and came from a variety of linguistic backgrounds. Question construction followed Buck's (2001: 114) 'default construct' for listening in that tasks were designed to involve the processing of realistic spoken language in real time and the comprehension of both equivocally and unequivocally stated content, in other words, whether the content was stated explicitly or to be inferred. A senior nursing instructor was consulted to verify that the questions developed reflected areas of critical importance for safety in patient assessment in general as well as dealt with issues germane to the particular medical scenario discussed in the recording. Questions in the first section followed the same chronological order as the role play content and focused on content comprehension (as opposed to unimportant or unrelated details), which is a central feature of listening assessment construct validity (Rost 2002).

The recording was also played individually to three female nursing instructors at the institution. All possessed advanced degrees in nursing and were speakers of Canadian English, reflecting the institution's instructor profile. Because of their medical knowledge and multiple years of clinical and instructional nursing practice, these experts were in a position to comment on the potential impact on patient safety of any communication problems which occurred in the recorded healthcare scenario.

Outcomes

The 14 nursing students who completed the listening comprehension task all reported they had understood the information exchanged between the nurses either 'easily' (n = 7) or with only 'some difficulty' (n = 7). The high levels of perceived intelligibility were generally aligned with high levels of actual intelligibility as most comprehension questions were answered correctly. However, where intelligibility issues did arise, they were often on matters of critical import to patient safety. Of the fourteen participants: four did not get the patient's age correct; five interpreted the patient's blood sugar level as 'normal' or 'good' when the recorded nurse stated it had not been taken; and 13 reported that the patient had a 'regular' pulse when in fact the nurse stated it was irregular. Continuing to use the 'Smith Framework', we

will now discuss these outcomes through the lenses of intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability.

Intelligibility: Word Recognition

Despite complaints from the nursing student participants regarding speaker accents, word recognition overall accounted for only a minor impact on intelligibility of the recorded scenario as evidenced by comprehension question responses. However, there was a disconcertingly pervasive misrecognition of the content relating to the patient's irregular pulse, with 13 out of 14 participants hearing 'regular' heart rate instead.

In contrast to the students' responses regarding word recognition and intelligibility, however, all three nursing instructors, reported a number of word recognition difficulties in the recordings when it came to medication names, dosages, and frequency (see Santos and Graham; McAuliffe and Brooks, this volume, for discussion of bottom-up listening processes).

Comprehensibility (Word Meaning and Locutionary Force)

None of the nursing students listening to the scenario recognized any lexical imprecisions on the part of the participants. For example, use of terms such as acting 'funny' or 'crazy' (rather than something more appropriate and precise, such as 'disoriented') to describe patient behaviour is not medically accurate or particularly helpful for nurses taking over patient care. Whilst none of the nursing students picked up on such misuses, all three nursing instructors immediately expressed concern upon hearing these expressions and similar lexical inaccuracies, and pointed to the potential effect such imprecision could have on patient care and safety.

Interpretability: Intent or Illocutionary Force

A number of nursing students reported using both linguistic and extralinguistic contextual knowledge to gain meaning from the recorded healthcare scenario. As one Farsi native speaker participant said:

> In general was OK, not very difficult, but the way they pronounce and the accent is little bit made the word meaning to change, but because we had a

> lot of experience in working with Indian nurse, so it became a habit to hear it and I feel it's OK and easy to understand.

However, despite the attempted use of such linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge, a number of interpretation errors were made by the student participants. Some of these were potentially dangerous for patient care; for example, five of the 14 participants made inaccurate inferences regarding a diabetic patient's blood sugar. Further, these errors occurred even though the majority of participants felt 'confident' or 'very confident' they had understood the information conveyed in the recording accurately. This may suggest that the students are largely unaware of these intelligibility issues. It might also indicate that they would not be likely to seek clarification on important information if they were participating in a similar real-life situation.

All three nursing instructors also commented on the need to use background medical knowledge in order to make educated guesses regarding word recognition of important factors such as the names of medications. Two instructors specifically stated that they would have pressed for further clarification if they had been the nurse receiving information about the patient. All three instructors felt that lack of intelligibility, related to phonological or syntactic issues and/or lexical imprecision, resulted in confusion regarding patient condition, medication, and dosage. They believed that these problems could definitely threaten quality of care and safety and was, as one instructor put it, a 'huge issue'.

Implications for Teaching

Based on the outcomes of our study, and the relevant literature, we offer the following recommendations for curriculum development and pedagogical practice at the institution. These recommendations are likely to be beneficial for other institutions as well, particularly those with programs preparing ESP/ESAP/EAP learners for contexts in which precise communication is paramount (see Pang and Burri, this volume, for discussion of speaking strategies for EAP programs).

First, the outcomes may suggest a need for a listening curriculum and explicit instruction in listening in both the ESAP and nursing programs at the institution. At the time of the study, neither program had ever offered courses to enhance listening skills in English. In fact, during the previously mentioned needs analysis at the institution, course instructors and students

themselves identified the main language problems students' encounter in their baccalaureate courses as reading, vocabulary, and writing. Speaking and listening were largely considered, if not as strengths, then as much lesser needs. The outcomes of this investigation, however, indicate that oral/aural miscommunications are not rare and have been noted by nursing instructors as potentially dangerous for patients.

These implications also have broader applicability beyond our institution. Interactions in healthcare contexts using ELF are by no means limited to Qatar or the Arabian Peninsula. International patterns of labour migration move healthcare workers across a global market (Packer et al. 2009), resulting in ELF healthcare contexts similar to ours in many parts of the world. The implications also extend beyond healthcare to any field where immediate and accurate communication is central to safety—international aviation, for example, and other transportation systems, engineering, or any professions in which emergency preparedness is required.

The outcomes also speak to a larger debate in ESP/EAP: whether curriculum content should be of a general nature, focusing on broad skills applicable to professional preparedness and/or academic study in general (generic listening comprehension, for example) or curriculum targeted to very specific work-related or academic contexts. When it comes to language instruction for contexts where accurate and precise communication is a matter of safety, our investigation would seem to underscore the importance of a subject-specific listening curriculum which targets students' future professional and/or academic scenarios, and which addresses real-world specific skills.

This position is in accord with Rost's (2002) call for authenticity and genuineness—that listening materials should reflect real-life communicative situations (see McAuliffe and Brooks, this volume, for an example of listening materials creation). ESP learners preparing for professions such as nursing, which require fast and accurate transmission and comprehension of complex information, would seem best served by a listening curriculum that incorporates authentic materials and scenarios and which focuses on active, interactional listening techniques like clarification, summarizing, and the like. In many cases, however, listening instruction is relegated to 'foundation' or language preparation courses, far removed from participation in actual nursing simulations, which misses an important instructional opportunity for authentic, interactive, and highly contextualized listening.

An example of how instructional opportunities for such 'real-world', interactive listening can be built into nursing curricula already exists in the use of a simulation laboratory, where programmable mannequins or volunteer patients are used to mimic activities from real-life healthcare scenarios.

Widely used in nursing education, simulation training offers 'a unique educational strategy to facilitate the development of skills, competencies and clinical judgment that are mandatory to provide safe, quality patient care' (Decker et al. 2014: 2).

Curricula preparing students for ELF communication in other professions could also incorporate scenarios designed to simulate the real-world situations in which learners are training to be competent. For example, hotel industry students could practice effective ELF communication during fire or other dangerous situations; pilots and flight crews could practice effective communication with other professionals and/or passengers during various situations in which immediate and accurate communication is required. Further, these scenarios could incorporate opportunities to emphasize the importance of clarifying and checking information even if interlocutors are confident they understood correctly the first time. The outcomes of our investigation suggest participants felt confident in their comprehension of the medical information in the scenario even when their understanding was inaccurate, pointing to the need for simulation listening activities which provide opportunities for instructors (and possibly outside observers, such as practicing professionals) to offer formative feedback on communication accuracy, including effective clarification techniques specific to that field.

The third recommendation based upon our outcomes is that the listening curriculum at the institution should incorporate lexical items identified as high frequency in profession-specific corpora and make use of such items in practice scenarios. Participants in the study were noted to reach communication impasses because of a lack of profession-specific lexis; that is, they did not possess or could not immediately access the appropriate terms to communicate efficiently with their colleague. This insight highlights the central role of technical lexis, an often overlooked aspect of listening pedagogy, particularly important in preparing students for professions requiring immediate and accurate communication. Precise description, for example, is at the heart of effective health assessment, and providing such precision where English is a lingua franca adds an additional challenge.

The 'bottom up' development of technical lexical lists for nursing based on frequency use is an expanding area of application from the field of corpus linguistics (e.g. Mohamad and Ng 2013). At our institution, a word frequency corpus has been developed from nursing program texts and used to inform vocabulary instruction in the ESAP program (Kay et al. 2014). Such profession-specific resources could offer a tremendous resource for listening curricula and instruction as well. Targeting high frequency words for

explicit coverage in the classroom—with ample amounts of input, exposure, and practice in accurate use—could help learners overcome difficulties in understanding and accessing these terms both in practice scenarios or real-life situations. In addition, identification and use of such technical terminology could be incorporated into rubrics evaluating student performance in profession-specific scenarios. This would ensure that lexical aspects of intelligibility are assessed by instructors and formative feedback on learner competency is provided. As listening and speaking are not isolated skills, work on the pronunciation of high frequency words—focusing on comprehensibility, for example, of individual phonemes and/or stress patterns of words and phrases—could also help improve intelligibility for both productive and receptive language.

Finally, based on reflections drawn from our local context, we recommend that the teaching of listening skills should aim not just for comprehension of a single 'standard' accent but effective intelligibility across a wide variety of Englishes. Listening curricula and instruction should de-emphasize 'native speaker' accents as the target in favour of comprehension for ELF environments in which future workers will find themselves. For example, on a visit to an outpatient clinic in Doha, Qatar's capital, one of us observed multiple English varieties utilized in the following interaction: an Indian pharmacist deciphered the instructions of a Filipino doctor to a Qatari patient mediated through a Sri Lankan nurse. ESP listening curricula, in our experience, rarely focus on the skills needed for intelligibility in an ELF interaction such as this. Wherever possible, learners should be provided with ample opportunities to work with colleagues who use a variety of Englishes and accents.

Observation of a traditional listening classroom typically reveals a quiet, largely teacher-fronted affair: often a single recording is played to the class, whilst students work individually, frantically filling in gaps on a page of comprehension questions. We envision ELF listening classrooms differently. Learners work in groups, formed to reflect their use of differing varieties of English. Groups discuss or role play real-world scenarios from the target profession. The teacher circulates amongst the groups providing feedback on intelligibility, monitoring, and guiding learners towards active listening skills like clarification and summarizing. Student success in this kind of listening instruction means understanding and being understood and not just correctly completing gaps on a piece of paper. In listening classrooms preparing learners for ELF contexts, accents are not seen as something to be 'corrected' or 'reduced' (unless they interfere with intelligibility) but as a learning resource.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the outcomes of an investigation on listening intelligibility in an ESAP program preparing students for an English-medium nursing baccalaureate program. Language-based communication errors such as those involving names of medications, dosages, and frequency, were found to occur and had the potential, in the opinion of nursing instructors, to impact patient safety.

Based on these outcomes, four recommendations for listening curricula and pedagogy were put forth. First, the results highlight a previously unrecognized deficiency amongst students at the institution, underscoring the need for curricular and instructional attention to listening. Further, this need is likely to exist not just in nursing but in any ESP or EAP program in which learners are being prepared for professional contexts where precise and efficient use of English is necessary.

Second, it was suggested that any listening curriculum developed for professional communication should incorporate authentic materials and simulate real-world scenarios within which future professionals will be expected to perform. These should extend beyond traditional receptive practices in listening instruction to involve a focus on active, interactional listening techniques. Even when students appear confident that they understand what they heard the first time, encouraging them to clarify and summarize important information back to the co-interlocutor is valuable.

The realization that our participants were prone to intelligibility/comprehension problems because of a lack of (or inability to access) appropriate terminology led to the third recommendation, that profession-specific word frequency corpora be utilized to inform both the curriculum and the pedagogy for listening instruction. This would allow for the explicit targeting of high frequency words in the classroom with abundant input, exposure, and practice to promote the accurate use and comprehension of these terms in simulations of real-world tasks and in contexts future professionals will encounter.

Finally, we suggest that the teaching of listening in ELF contexts should not be overly focused on the comprehension of target 'native speaker' accents. Rather, students should be assisted towards comprehension and intelligibility across a wide variety of Englishes, as these are the contexts in which they will need to perform as future professionals.

The incorporation of the elements we have suggested into curriculum and pedagogy would benefit ESP listening instruction in general. The development of effective communication becomes of critical importance, however,

when learners are preparing for professional contexts in which safety and health are imminent concerns, such as healthcare, air traffic control, and engineering. Intelligibility problems in these professions do not result just in lower grades but potentially put lives at risk.

Appendix: Health Assessment Scenario

Shift Change

You are giving a shift report to the ongoing staff. Mr. Saddi is an 84-year-old with congestive heart failure who has developed pulmonary edema and has also acquired C-difficile in the hospital and has become dehydrated. Medications include furosemide (Lasix) 20 mg PO qd, digoxin 125 mg PO qd, potassium chloride (K-Dur) 20 mEq PO qd. He has vomited twice today, and you are not sure he kept his pills down. He is also stating that he 'feels funny and I'm seeing halos around the lights—I wonder if I am going crazy'.

You report on the following:

- admitting diagnoses
- report vital signs (BP 180/82, P 92 R 26)
- urinary output hourly over the last eight hours
- auscultation: diminished air entry, inspiratory crackles throughout (review what this could be)
- cough is moist and non-productive
- tachycardic
- pulse irregular
- recent lab values show potassium level increasing
- disorientation
- patient opening eyes in response to touch

Questions for Reflection

1. To what extent does listening instruction in your program emphasize receptive skills? Interactive skills?
2. How consistent is the focus in your program with the professional learning needs of your students?

3. To what extent does your program use 'the native speaker' as the target model for listening instruction? What practical steps could you take to broaden listening instruction to include a variety of Englishes?
4. In what ways does listening pedagogy in your program address the three areas of intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability? Are there any ways you could extend what is currently included for these areas in your listening instruction?
5. Few programs have access to medical simulation labs, flight simulators, or other similar resources. What could you or your program do to create some realistic experiences simulating students' future professional contexts?

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Part II

Speaking

6

‘I Can Talk About a Lot of Things in the Other Language but not in English’: Teaching Speaking Skills in Cameroon Primary Schools

Achu Charles Tante

Introduction

This chapter focuses on how speaking skills in English are typically presented in primary school classrooms in Cameroon. In order to illustrate this aspect of language teaching in this national context, vignettes are drawn from an examination of two English language course books commonly used in Cameroon as well as classroom observations and teacher interviews. Implications are then discussed and suggestions for enhancing the practice of teaching speaking skills to ESL primary school pupils in Cameroon and other similar contexts are made.

Background

Cameroon is considered to be an English as a second language (ESL) context, and the expectation is that pupils will become effective and efficient users of English in all facets of their daily lives, including instruction and communication from pre-nursery to university levels. Primary education lasts for six years and the pupils’ starting ages generally range from 4 to

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7 years and finish between the ages of 9 and 14. The curriculum consists of 17 subjects (for example, English, Mathematics, French, Moral Education and Human Rights) and is taught in English by a single teacher who also assesses pupils' progress. The educational system is centralised despite the government's avowed policy of devolving power to local councils. The learning context in most primary schools is characterised by overcrowded classrooms with large numbers of learners from a multiplicity of ethnic and L1 backgrounds.

Of late, there has been dissatisfaction in Cameroon about the oral competence and performance of learners across the educational levels (Ngefac 2010). Primary pupils in particular find it difficult to speak in English, let alone maintain smooth interaction without code-switching to their mother tongue (Ngefac 2010). Observation and experience would suggest that English speaking ability is limited for a number of reasons: problems with grammar and pronunciation, insufficient vocabulary, inability to participate in sustained conversation and slow speaking rate, amongst others. Several research studies (see Fouda 2014; Kuchah 2013; Tante 2007) and extensive experience also suggest that weak speaking skills in English are due to a lack of curriculum emphasis on oral development, teachers' limited English proficiency, examination systems that do not emphasise oral skills, class conditions which do not favour oral activities and limited opportunities to practice outside of class. Most of these factors affect the teaching of speaking in the national context of Cameroon, although other reasons have also been put forward for these obstacles including high pupil–teacher classroom ratios, a dearth of resources and inadequate teacher preparation (Tante 2007).

The English Language Syllabus

The national English syllabus lists areas of competency and performance for each skill and age range. For speaking, it indicates communicative purposes involving authentic academic material. More specifically, the primary syllabus contains vestiges of a notional-functional as well as a communicative-based design combined with cross-curricular content, probably because learners are not only studying the language as a subject but also using it during instruction across the whole primary curriculum and sometimes for sustained out-of-school communication.

The general goals related to speaking at primary level are stated thus:

The English Speaking Cameroonian Primary School pupil after 6 years of schooling will be able to:

- *communicate his/her feelings, ideas and experiences both orally* (my emphasis) and in writing, listen attentively to utterances, stories, news items, instructions, poems and songs, and respond correctly to them orally and in writing;
- *communicate correctly his/her ideas, feelings and experiences orally* (my emphasis), (National Syllabus 2000: 1).

Sample 1 shows the syllabus for pupils aged approximately 6–8 years old.

Sample 1 Extracts from the national speaking syllabus for ages 6–8 years

Oral/Aural language activities (Listening, Speaking, Reading)	
Objectives	Content/Sample structures
Listening and Speaking *[Listening]* Pupils will be able to: • Listen and understand basic English words and sentences, (statements, questions, requests, comments)	• Basic English words (700 words)
• Listen to and identify English phonemes	• English phonemes
• Pronounce all the phonemes of English in words	• Basic English words
• Express needs	• Peter wants to go out.
• Use correct word order in simple phrases	• Simple phrases and sentences
[Speaking]	
• Carry out sound and word building correctly	• Sounds and word building
• Take an active part in simple language games	• Language games

As Sample 1 shows, the objectives state what learners 'will be able to' do, whilst the content/structure indicates the kind of activity that is related to the objective. The syllabus seems to reflect the idea of authentic oral interaction in its aim to develop pupils' basic functional sub-skills. However, one potentially confusing aspect of the syllabus for teachers is that the main heading for this framework reads 'Oral/Aural Language Skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading)'. There does not appear to be a logical reason for the inclusion of reading under this heading and it is not explained in the syllabus preamble. At times the objectives appear confused, such as when those like 'express needs' and 'use correct word order in a simple sentence' are placed under the heading of listening rather than speaking. Furthermore, the

syllabus does not provide any guidelines that teachers can use to realise the objectives, and procedures for assessment are also lacking.

Speaking in the Teaching–Learning Process

Learning to speak in another language is complex, as reflected in the range and types of sub-skills that are involved in L2 oral production (Richards 2008; Goh and Burns 2012). For instance, speakers must attend at the same time to content, morphosyntax and lexis, discourse and information structuring, the sound system and prosody, plus appropriate register and pragmalinguistic features (see Hinkel 2012; Burns 2013). Apart from the complexity of developing the various knowledge and skills required for speaking, the syllabus demands outlined for the first 6 years of schooling are themselves very challenging for primary pupils. The teacher must manage this delicate process, which simultaneously entails the beginning of ESL study for these young learners. For most learners, exposure to English must also come from the classroom itself. Even though they are exposed to English outside class, mostly through the media, their actual use of the language is primarily at school.

The two vignettes that follow provide glimpses of what currently occurs in relation to the teaching of speaking in the context of many Cameroon primary schools. Data for the vignettes are based on a research project I conducted which involved investigating the resources used by the teachers and the practices of teaching speaking in primary schools in Cameroon. The first vignette examines two widely used course books and identifies briefly what kinds of instruction for teaching speaking they promote in practice. The second vignette, based on classroom observation, provides insights into how teachers typically implement the teaching of speaking in their primary classes.

Vignette 1: Course Books

The first vignette focuses on two English language course books used during the first and third years of primary schooling respectively. Both course books are amongst the texts prescribed nationally for primary schools by the Ministry of Basic Education. The majority of primary schools select either a complete series of these course books or use course books from both series. They represent two distinct approaches that can be taken to the syllabus

objectives and content for the teaching of speaking skills outlined above. Whilst one-course book is communicative in its methods and strategies, the other is traditional and structural. However, both stress the need for 'continuous assessment' or 'séquence' as it is known in Cameroon. Because they are widely used, both series of course books are familiar to teachers. For each of the course books selected, I first describe the speaking activities in general and then those in the initial lesson in particular. I then comment on the teaching practices the activities seem to encourage and the ways the teachers I observed interpreted them.

Cambridge Primary English

Cambridge Primary English Class 1: Pupil's Book (Paizee et al. 2014) is used with beginner English learners. The main activities for speaking include stories, shapes, colours, timetable, instructions, days of the week, alliteration and tongue twisters, games, songs, word and sentence building, dialogues and giving directions. The visuals, which are in colour, are generally of good quality and aim to capture the context of the activity. At the start of most activities, the book appears to direct the pupils' attention more to the visuals than to the speaking activity but the visuals seem to match well when the focus is brought back to the speaking activity. 'Sequence 1' is the first lesson in the whole series and the first step the pupils take to learn how to speak the language. The topic of 'Sequence 1' is At School and it comprises six sub-topics (Hello, Welcome to Class 1, Please and Thank You, Sit Down and Stand Up, Numbers and Sounds) to be covered in six weeks. It begins with an activity on Sound and Word Building. Other activities on speaking in this sequence include Picture Talk, Rhyme, Greetings, Name Objects, Polite Requests, Follow Commands, Alphabet, Numbers 1–10 and Listen to and Make Sounds. At the end of the six weeks comes a 'séquence' or continuous assessment activity which forms part of a pupil's termly grade results. Continuous assessment is seen as a method of checking pupils' progress on work covered for the six preceding weeks.

In this book, the instructions for the activities seem to encourage teachers to adopt approaches that are mainly audio-lingual and oral-situational but also to use total physical response and some communicative language approaches. For example, the audio-lingual approach is captured in instructions such as, 'Look, listen and say' and 'Listen and repeat'. Observations of the use of this course book showed that most teachers stuck to this approach even after the pupils showed evidence that they were ready to progress.

Also, teachers typically delimited their presentation of the activities to the sample words in the course book. There was little opportunity for pupils to 'play' or 'experiment' with the sub-skills to which they were introduced. Moreover, teachers retained control of the interaction most of the time and some did not acknowledge a pupil's response, even when it was appropriate, if it did not match the examples in the course book.

In oral-situational activities, where pupils were encouraged to talk about a given scenario, a lack of flexibility was observed in the manner in which teachers attempted to initiate interaction with the pupils. Much of the interaction was top-down so that speaking activities were not authentic and tended towards repetition. Teachers rarely made use of pupils' immediate environment or worldview as a basis for initiating, probing, facilitating or sustaining speaking. Consequently, given such an approach, it was not common to find communicative practice occurring in a sustainable manner.

Junior Primary English 3 ANUCAM

This book (Lukong et al. 2012) is used in the third year primary class. In the overall structure of the book, there is little consistency in the way weekly unit and lesson content are structured and limited variety in the speaking activities across the whole series. The course book is thus restricted in providing teachers with a constructive balance amongst the four skills and interrelating the content in such a way as to assist them to teach speaking. Furthermore, it is dominated by the presentation of various grammatical structures. Neither are the visuals used in the book presented in good quality colour, thus reducing the book's attractiveness to pupils. Unit 1 begins with the topic 'Mr Ako's Family'. The first activity is 'Let's Talk' and involves two children chatting about their families. However, the title 'Mr Ako's family' does not link in any obvious way to what the two characters in the visual are talking about, so it is not clear if they are part of this family. Moreover, the visual does not reflect the text of the dialogue, which is mechanical and stilted and fails to introduce students to natural features of interpersonal speech. The second speaking activity is 'Learn the sounds' which introduces the pupils to the alphabet and the phonemes of English. Some of the words used in this activity are beyond the proficiency level that could be expected of children who are between 6 and 8 years old. With the exception of some poems, these are the only speaking activities in the whole series.

During my observations, it was evident that teachers kept closely to the course book and made no adaptations of the speaking activities (see Villas

Boas, this volume, for ideas on adapting and supplementing writing course book activities). They routinely drilled pupils, again using what could be considered to be an audio-lingual approach. Moreover, teachers only occasionally used English, thereby limiting pupils' exposure to the language and to new words and expressions. The overall focus of the instruction seemed directed towards the end-of-course examinations, which are based on the content of the course book. Some teachers commented that interactive work was difficult because most pupils did not have copies of the course book. Consequently, they felt they needed to keep close control over them.

It can be seen that both these course book series encourage practice that is teacher-centred and teacher-dominated with learners given few opportunities to actually use the language orally. However, in order to provide a more extensive illustration of the Cameroonian primary school English language teaching context, in the vignette below I turn to a more detailed description of teaching practices I observed in the classroom.

Vignette 2: Classroom Practices

The second vignette describes some of the most common activities used by teachers to engage learners, generally those between the ages of 4 and 8 years old, in developing their speaking abilities. The descriptions are drawn from 12 classroom observations, two teachers' notes on two teachers' lessons which had been developed from the course books, the researcher's field notes and semi-structured teacher interviews. Most are constructed with reference to the *Cambridge Primary English Class 1: Pupil's Book* because different kinds of speaking activities are sustained throughout that series, which is not the case with the other course book. Descriptors are used to categorise activities that may not be exactly the same but which share some common characteristics. The descriptors are divided broadly into modelling, rhythmic activities and storytelling. In each case, I draw out some of the more innovative ways that teachers were attempting to use these activities.

Modelling Activities

The technique used by the majority of teachers in introducing sounds, words and short simple sentences in English was modelling. Modelling activities were those where the teacher gave model examples in the target language mainly to encourage pupils to imitate aspects of pronunciation such as intonation, pitch and stress patterns. They also included language pattern activities that

demonstrated to pupils how a particular pattern works, for instance, in a short sentence or phrase. The teacher lesson notes in Sample 2 show the sequence of the teacher's instruction from the presentation to the practice phase, in a lesson where the teacher is introducing letters and their sounds:

Sample 2

Teacher presents a piece of card board with /c/
written on it.
She also writes /c/on the board.
Pupils watch teacher silently.
Teacher reads the letter aloud.
Teacher reads the sound together with the pupils.
Teacher asks pupils to pronounce one after the other
Teacher corrects their pronunciation …

Because of a lack of basic audio equipment, the teacher's voice was usually used to fill the gap and to introduce the pupils to the content. Teaching resources for this kind of activity often consisted of flash and word cards, as seen in this example.

Typically lessons with speaking objectives adopted a rote drill formula and did not offer pupils an opportunity to speak meaningfully and naturally. The teacher often dived straight into the activity and thereafter left little room for giving pupils feedback on their progress. As in vignette 1, usually no adjustments or modifications were made to the course book activity. Moreover, many of the teacher-models could be seen as poor exemplars for learning because they were not within pupils' experiences or they were too abstract for their developmental stage. Modelling also seemed to be quite widely used by teachers to assess the pupils' progress. However, at times progress was assessed in writing rather than orally.

Rhythmic Activities

Rhythmic activities involved some form of play, action or psychomotor movements (for example, jumping, clapping, tapping or finger-clicking), accompanied by the use of pupils' voices. The emphasis was on a specific aspect of language such as a particular sound or word, where pupils were expected to repeat regular patterns to beats, movements or activities. Teachers proceeded by first reciting the rhythmic activity a number of times, depending on how quickly the majority of pupils were able to voice the

sounds, letters or words intelligibly. The pupils repeated the items after the teacher before an activity such as a singing a song began. This activity was done with the whole class first after which the teacher divided them into smaller groups to practice and rehearse the rhythmic activity, which later was performed whilst demonstrating and displaying accompanying actions. From observation, rhythmic activities were very popular with learners. Most often, the learners not only demonstrated various actions but also danced to the rhythm of the song, poem or rhyme. Even when they may not have understood all of the words, they could be heard murmuring the rhythmic lines. In some instances, the text of the activity remains unchanged but multiple adaptations were made to the melody, which showed creativity on the part of the teacher. The majority of teachers perceived such rhythmic activities as very useful not only for learning speaking skills but also for motivating language learning and managing the classroom. For instance, as a class management strategy, teachers introduced rhythmic activities to gain the attention of the whole class and to avoid disturbances or drowsiness in the classroom.

Telling and Acting Out Stories

Storytelling was another common activity. Teachers often used pictorial strips to introduce pupils to storytelling narration whilst still observing basic requirements, such as structure, logical development and tense (see Hayik, this volume, for discussion of writing personal stories). Pupils were expected to study the pictures, then try to narrate or describe orally what each frame depicted. Usually, the scenes were familiar to pupils. At times, the children imitated or mimed the action before talking about what was taking place in the picture frame. Some teachers scaffolded the pupils' contributions and elicited their ideas about the picture frames. These activities allowed the children to draw on their experience and use their imagination. Similarly, activities such as greetings, requests and giving directions were generally presented by making use of action, role play, gesture and mime. Pupils were usually excited and seemed motivated to take part in the dramatisation of the action and play various roles depicting a given scene. The teachers believed that these activities encouraged weaker learners because, as part of a whole class activity, they could feel more confident in practising speaking.

Within the difficult teaching contexts in which the teachers worked, there was evidence of various attempts at innovation. In some instances, teachers

showed initiative by using real objects that were brought into the classroom to help learners visualise an example of a sound or a lexical item. Similarly, for some alphabetic and phonic presentations, teachers made use of picture charts to help pupils relate the sounds or words to pictorial displays. Other teachers were observed using various dummy props such as telephones or portable radio sets for speaking activities such as conversation simulations. In such activities, target sounds and words were often elicited by learners from peers and the teacher through activities such as questionnaires and interviews. Another activity some teachers used for modelling entailed guessing; for example, describing sight items in a classroom and having learners try to guess the item.

Attempts to find innovative ways of assessing the pupils were also in evidence. For example, during the last English class for the week, some teachers asked the pupils to summarise the weekly lessons covered. In groups, pupils put their summaries together and afterwards each member of the team participated in presenting what had been covered that week. In these activities, the teachers' focus was more on whether pupils could use key sounds, words and expressions that had been taught than on accuracy. Alternatively, sometimes teachers would leave blanks in dialogues for learners to fill in orally with any relevant items they were familiar with.

Discussion

It can be seen that despite the limitations of the textbook some teachers were attempting to introduce innovations into their practices in teaching speaking. The term 'innovative' in a context such as Cameroon does not necessarily refer to practices that would be seen as 'new' in some contexts but instead indicates practices that were aiming to engage pupils despite challenging teaching and learning conditions. The observations showed that some teachers were moving beyond the textbook by bringing realia into the classroom, which could be used not only as aids in the teaching–learning process but also as objects that could make concepts and ideas more concrete for young learners.

Rhythmic activities also showed signs of positive and innovative practices for teaching young learners, for example, where teachers used the same texts to allow for repeated practice but adapted the melodies or rhythms used, thus allowing for more creativity. Teachers also introduced storytelling activities and scaffolded pupils' ability to construct stories orally through visual supports. Finally, teachers attempted to introduce innovation into the con-

tinuous assessment they were required to do by encouraging collaborative activities that helped pupils synthesise and recall the language they had learned over the course of several lessons with a focus on *using* the language rather than on accuracy. Through such practices, teachers encouraged group work, cooperation and the opportunity for shy or anxious pupils to become more active. As noted previously, these kinds of activities may not be considered new in some English language teaching contexts, but the teachers who were observed using them did so with efficiency and engaged and motivated their pupils.

Implications

Drawing on the findings of the two vignettes, various suggestions regarding the teaching of speaking in Cameroon and similar contexts can be made under four headings: curriculum development, materials development, teacher development and teaching methodology.

Concerning curriculum development, various improvements could be made to enhance the teaching of speaking. One potentially confusing aspect of the current curriculum is that the overall heading reads as 'Oral/Aural Language Skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading)' (see Sample 1). Objectives are then stated in terms of what learners 'will be able to' do, whilst the content indicates activities that could be related to the objective. However, several of the objectives do not seem to align with the skills to which they refer. For example, speaking objectives such as 'Pronounce all the phonemes of English in words', 'Use correct word order in simple phrases' and 'Talk about present, past and future events' are placed under the heading of listening. Teachers using such a curriculum would be advised to reflect, preferably with their colleagues, on how they can best interpret it to meet the actual learning needs of their students. From a policy point of view, the document, published in 2000, would benefit from revision to build on more recent theoretical developments (see Burns and Siegel, Chap. 1) and clearly identify the sub-skills of speaking. A revised curriculum, that engages the views of stakeholders such as teachers and parents could also align the content on speaking with current views of skills teaching such as using an integrated approach.

Good teaching materials are important in ESL/EFL classes in general but even more so when English is also used as the language of instruction. Vignette 1 showed that the course books widely used in Cameroon differ in their content, activities, assessment techniques and the extent to which

they focus on young learners. Some of the content is beyond pupils' developmental age, for example, and unlikely to interest them. The material is also sometimes inappropriate (for example, illustration of the letter 'a' with a picture of an apple, which Cameroon pupils have probably never seen, let alone eaten) and activities and visuals are not well aligned. For young learners, course books need to contain good quality and colourful visuals that are appropriate to their age, readily interpretable from their own experiences and motivating. In revising these course books in the future, materials designers should incorporate much more locally relevant examples and age-appropriate content. Teachers could also consider how they can supplement the textbooks by supplying or asking students to bring in local 'realia', that is everyday authentic objects such as signs, photographs, objects, brochures or maps to supplement textbooks and create more imaginative activities.

Continuing professional development (CPD) would also help to support teachers in teaching speaking and allow them to become more aware of the skills involved (see Akyeampong et al. 2011). As the vignettes suggested, current practice tends to be dominated by traditional methods more characteristic of audio-lingual approaches (for example, drilled repetition and a focus on accuracy) than communicative teaching approaches. There is a need for teachers to gain adequate knowledge about different components of effective speaking and how they are used for meaningful communication. Such developments should proceed from the perceived needs of teachers rather than from top-down assumptions on the part of education authorities.

For instance, in such a programme, teachers could learn in workshops that speaking is a skill consisting of many different micro-skills, each serving a particular communicative function. One aspect could focus on ways to teach the phonological and phonemic systems that could involve creative activities, perhaps drawn from the teachers' ideas themselves. Teachers could also learn about teaching the language of different speech acts such as greetings, meeting friends, asking for directions and about how to scaffold learning so that pupils can practise managing more extended genres such as storytelling, recounting experiences and so on. An even more innovative approach would be encouraging groups of teachers in a school or wider community to carry out small-scale explorations or investigations on the creative teaching of these various sub-skills of speaking. They could, for example, meet once a month to share ideas and success stories. Teachers as well as teacher educators could also explore solutions to situations where insufficient numbers of course books are available for language learning, as was noted in the vignettes. Teachers could discuss, for example, the merits

or otherwise of copying important texts on the chalkboard, photocopying visuals, grouping pupils and using teacher modelling. Strategies such as these would alleviate some of the inherent problems faced in inadequately resourced contexts. Whilst some of these activities are very familiar to teachers and schools in some contexts, in others such as Cameroon they are lacking and are much needed advances in teacher development.

As for teaching methodology, it could be valuable to consider having dedicated lessons for speaking development as well as encouraging teachers to introduce a greater variety of methods and activities. As seen in Vignette 1, at present some lessons seem to focus more on reading or writing even when they are meant to develop speaking. In terms of classroom management, teachers could be shown in professional development sessions how to group pupils for pair, group and project work taking into account mixed abilities and different purposes and activities. They could also be encouraged to use teaching aids creatively, as was observed through the use of realia in some classrooms described earlier. Pupils themselves could be encouraged to suggest ideas or bring in what resources they might be able to share with others.

Regarding the use of course books, teachers' guides and workshops could explore how teachers could use them creatively (Tomlinson and Masuhara 2013) as a tool from which to develop other ideas, particularly in a context where there is a lack of teacher and pupil resources. Teachers should not feel tied only to the prescribed contents, strategies, techniques, methods and approaches presented in their course books. The immediate environment and world of the pupils could be used to introduce alternative examples such as local stories, poems or songs, where children could be given opportunities to 'play' or 'experiment' with the language. These kinds of practices could lead to more effective interaction and greater pupil motivation. The more pupils experience creativity and reflection on the part of their teacher, the more they could learn to take the same approach to their own learning.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges noted in both the materials currently available and the teaching approaches that are widely used in Cameroon, there are encouraging signs that some teachers are working to introduce more innovative approaches such as in the examples discussed above. These examples show that innovations in teaching practices do not have to be large-scale and that even small modifications can make a difference to pupils' experiences in the classroom. In the context of the conditions of teaching English in countries

such as Cameroon, which could be reflected in neighbouring countries in Africa and elsewhere, such small changes are important as they may ultimately serve to stimulate and motivate pupils to learn English more successfully. It is hoped that the examples and recommendations made in this chapter can serve to encourage other teachers and teacher educators working in similar conditions to think creatively about ways to support learners to develop their speaking skills.

Questions for Reflection

1. To what extent are the teaching conditions described in this chapter familiar to you? What particular challenges do these conditions present? What opportunities do they present?
2. What kind of syllabus do you work with for teaching speaking? To what extent do the objectives, the structures to be learned, and the content align?
3. Consider the features of the course books you work with in your context. What kinds of speaking activities are included? Do these activities promote drilling and repetition or do they promote the communicative use of English?
4. In what ways do you modify the course book activities you use with your learners? What are some of the reasons you modify these activities?
5. Apart from those suggested at the end of this chapter, are there other ways that teachers in this kind of context could introduce innovations into their teaching?

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7

Inquiry Dialogue: A Genre for Promoting Teacher and Student Speaking in the Classroom

Philip Chappell

Orientation

This chapter focuses on issues related to the macro skill of speaking in a specific English Language Teaching (ELT) context in Australia. The main issue concerns the opportunities that the international students have to use spoken English whilst in Australia taking English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS). These opportunities are often not as readily available as one might expect. Suggestions are presented for managing the type of talk that goes on in classrooms with a view to improving oral skills development in programmes such as these.

Background

International students face a range of difficulties in adjusting to life in their adopted English-speaking country. Recent research indicates that chief amongst these difficulties is language (Sawir 2005: 569).

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> Of all the social and academic issues and problems facing international students that are cited in recent studies - differences in learning style, culture shock, homesickness, social difficulties - the problem they themselves most often refer to is difficulties with English.

Sawir's (2005) study involved interviews to investigate the 'learning biographies' of students who had transitioned from high school in their home countries to university undergraduate study in Australia. Students reported that a significant reason for their language difficulties was their limited experiences of learning English at high school, describing these experiences as didactic in style, focusing on grammar exercises and lacking in communicative opportunities both inside and outside the classroom. Upon arrival, they did not feel prepared for the demands placed on their speaking and listening abilities in both educational and social contexts (Gibbs and Feith 2015).

In itself, this is important information for ELICOS teachers, as it is for those teaching in similar international student programmes in other English-medium countries, for it highlights the need to induct students into modes of teaching and learning that emphasise processes of building knowledge through spoken interaction (see Pang and Burri, this volume, for ideas about speaking in an EAP program). However, what makes the issue of even greater import is that students do not automatically make use of opportunities for social interaction once they arrive in their country of study. Students of lower proficiency levels tend to have greater problems interacting with their new learning, work and social communities and often congregate in same-culture groups, especially out of class, to avoid loneliness, stress, anxiety and frustration (Mendelson 2004; Sawir et al. 2012).

In Australia, added to this dilemma is the tendency for ELICOS courses to neglect oral language use in social settings outside of the classroom (Ngo et al. 2012). Further, a discussion with any ELICOS teacher about their students' out of class lives will very often raise concerns about missed opportunities to engage in a range of conversations in English that can provide valuable impetus to develop listening and speaking skills.

My own experiences of working in academic management roles in ELICOS, and most recently as a university academic conducting research in ELICOS classrooms, have allowed me the great privilege of visiting many classrooms over the past few years. Despite the pressures that many ELICOS teachers face such as weekly intakes and departures, narrowly defined syllabi based on course books, and the insecurity of casual employment, teachers persevere and do wonderful things for their students. However, one area that presents itself as an opportunity for ongoing professional development

is improving the quality and quantity of speaking opportunities for students inside the English language classroom (see also Tante, this volume).

Classroom Talk: Developing Speaking and Thinking

It is now widely accepted practice in many language teaching contexts to integrate the macro skills into lessons (Grabe and Zhang 2013). However, there is still a clear opportunity to develop pedagogical innovations for improving the quality of the classroom talk between teacher and students as these lessons unfold. Recently, I analysed a large database of second language classroom talk (Chappell 2014a) from lessons that met the criteria for Dogme ELT's conversation-driven methodology, which was born out of teachers' misgivings that their language lessons relied too much on materials and not enough on genuine communication. These materials are said to hinder such communication and take the focus away from learner language, which should constitute a large part of the syllabus (Meddings and Thornbury 2009). The underpinning of Dogme ELT is the conversations between the students and the teacher from which the learner language emerges, which is then the focus of instruction. Despite finding significant amounts of discussion between students, I noticed that much of the talk was transactional. That is, it involved brief interactions with short turns aimed at sharing information rather than developing dialogue. There was also a surprising amount of talk by the teacher that functioned to tightly control what the students could say and do. I refer to this teacher talk as recitation and elicitation (Chappell 2014a: 4), citing Alexander's (2008: 110) definition:

> [t]he accumulation of knowledge and understanding through questions designed to test or stimulate recall of what has been previously encountered, or to cue students to work out the answer from clues in the question.

A kind of talk that was relatively scarce was inquiry dialogue, which is a type of classroom talk that involves longer stretches of discourse structured in a manner that promotes common understanding and inquiry (Chappell 2014a). Inquiry dialogue also encourages wondering about new and alternative viewpoints and meanings, playing with possibilities and building on one another's contributions in order to develop knowledge and mutual understanding. The main purpose of inquiry dialogue is to engage others

in one's attempt to understand an issue. It is therefore different to other more prosaic forms of spoken exchanges involving information. Inquiry dialogue can be an essential part of integrated skills lessons such as those common in ELICOS; for example, by building content and background knowledge before a listening task, by developing shared knowledge and mutual understanding during a writing preparation task, and by expanding understandings after a focused reading task. It can occur as whole-class talk, or in small groups or pairs. Inquiry dialogue is important for extending the opportunities for students to engage meaningfully with each other, developing their knowledge and understandings as well as their oral/aural language abilities.

Inquiry Dialogue and ELICOS Classrooms

I recently analysed data from ten lessons conducted in ten different ELICOS colleges that offer academically oriented courses to adult international students from a range of backgrounds who were preparing for tertiary level study, mostly at the university. Their proficiency levels were relatively high (B2/C1 on the Common European Framework of Reference) and in general they had clearly defined needs centred on achieving a proficiency level in all skills that would allow them entry to their desired university programme. It would not be unreasonable to expect their lessons to include a significant amount of discussion and inquiry dialogue involving the development of content knowledge, which is a common activity in Australian university tutorials and seminars, at the same time as developing greater proficiency in oral/aural skills.

Overall, there was a surprising display of diversity in teaching methodology whilst at the same time an unanticipated amount of uniformity in the patterns of classroom talk, exhibiting a lack of opportunity for students to engage with each other using inquiry dialogue. Recitation and elicitation, involving the rhetorical structures of initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) and initiation-response-feedback (IRF) patterns, were the most common types of talk. These patterns of classroom talk tend to have the overriding purpose of requiring individual students to provide an answer to the teacher's question so that he/she can evaluate it positively or negatively (usually by phatic praise such as 'good' or a negative evaluation such as 'No. Anyone else?') or provide feedback on the answer already known to the teacher (often affirming it and commenting or eliciting further). The data revealed

that it is common for teachers to use both kinds of talk (IRE and IRF) in the one episode such as in the example below.

Initiation	T	What is this 'ed' called?
Response	S1	Suffix
Evaluation	T	Suffix. Very good. On a roll we are. Very good.
Initiation	T	Over observed? [What part of speech is over observed?]
Response	S2	Adjective.
Feedback	T	How do you know? How do you know it's an adjective?
Response	S2	'ed'
Evaluation	T	'ed' good.
Initiation	T	What is 'ed' called?
Response	S2	Suffix
Evaluation	T	The suffix. Good.

There were also instances where the opportunity for inquiry dialogue presented itself, yet the linguistic choices of the teacher revealed other aims. For example, in one lesson after the students had worked in groups discussing possible research experiments they could undertake into social networking, the teacher moved to a whole-class discussion format to enable the students to share their ideas with the class. The teacher stated the aim in an interview prior to the lesson: 'I'm trying to captivate them by getting them to talk and think'.

The students proposed five topics for inquiry. Each of these was a potential inquiry episode where the talk could open up to meet the criteria for inquiry dialogue noted above. Yet, the way the teacher managed the turns at talk prevented opportunities for this to occur. She initiated the inquiry (with one exception), nominated who should talk, narrowed and then closed the topic of inquiry. She also used restatements to clarify what students had said and corrected several errors in pronunciation or word form. There were several overlaps, all initiated by the teacher. This resulted in a different speaking activity with a different pedagogic aim than was expected. The sequence of talk resembled a complex set of IRF and IRE sequences where the aim was most likely to require students to provide a relatively brief answer that would not be the focus of extended inquiry but would coax the students to display their ideas to the teacher and class.

In contrast, in another lesson a different teacher appeared to have very clear aims and managed the classroom talk in such a way that those aims were at least partially met. This activity had the same interaction sequence as the previous one. Small groups discussed whether or not they agreed

it is possible to make loyal and sincere friends on social networking sites. The teacher then moved the interaction pattern to a whole-class discussion, which was quite different in nature to the one described above. In this inquiry episode, the teacher began by initiating inquiry and then gave the students far more control in: executing the inquiry acts of proposing topics and taking turns at talk without her lead, extending the topic of inquiry, making humorous asides, initiating inquiry, narrowing the focus of inquiry, building on one another's contributions and even closing the topic of inquiry (see Episode 1, Table 7.1).

The outcome was far greater involvement of the students in inquiry dialogue evidenced by the significant overlaps in talk, the accumulation of ideas through building on other contributions to the talk and a degree of freedom given to the students to initiate a new turn and propose a new topic for inquiry. By encouraging the students to take the initiative and allowing them to manage the talk by initiating, building on and closing inquiry acts, the teacher provided fertile opportunities for the learning of 'complex and sophisticated interactional work' (Garton 2012: 42).

As is evident in Episode 1, there is an important relationship between classroom language use and teaching and learning goals. When they are in synergy, language learning opportunities are maximised. When there is a divergence between the two, there are missed opportunities for language learning (Walsh 2002). Episode 1 illustrates how inquiry dialogue was achieved at a particular point in time for one class. Inquiry dialogue is a genre of classroom talk that can be developed over time provided the teacher's goals for that episode of the lesson are clear (Chappell 2014b). However, managing the talk of the classroom to achieve a goal-oriented sequence of interactions needs to be achieved through explicit instruction in and modelling of inquiry dialogue. This idea of goal-directed classroom activity focused on oral skills that takes place through inquiry dialogue is explained further in the following section.

A Genre Perspective

Up to this point, the goings on in the lessons discussed in this chapter have been described rather loosely as activities, genres, episodes, sequences of talk and sequences of interactions. There is a benefit, however, in being more explicit and precise about how lessons and elements of lessons are referred to. The use of the term *genre* has not been accidental; in fact, it is a very

Table 7.1 Episode 1: Promoting inquiry dialogue

Classroom Talk	Analysis
Student 5: OK. My opinion is it's difficult but it's not impossible to find a er a good er person	Initiate and propose topic for inquiry (4)
Teacher: Hm Hm	
Student 5: from the Internet. Even if you are in classroom, how do you know if I'm not a [3 attempts to pronounce psycho killer]	
Unknown Students: Psycho killer	
Student 5: Psycho killer [class laughs loudly]	
Unknown Student: I didn't know!	Humorous asides
Teacher: We've all been secretly thinking that since the day we met you. [laughter]	
Student 5: You can you can er see just my just my face and you can see oh my clothes are you I I can see his behaviour OK that's all a simple guy you know	
Teacher: So you so put on an act	Narrow focus of inquiry (4)
Student 3: What's your opinion?	
Student 5: So my opinion is it's possible to find. It's difficult, but it's not impossible	
Teacher: Yes. Even in real life people can put on an act	
Student 6: It's really important the way that one people behave one the person behaves so you can er realise from that if you are just chatting if you have{	Extend topic of inquiry (4)
Student 3: {Yeah it's more difficult	Build on other's contribution
Teacher: {It's more difficult	Build on other's contribution
Student 6: {So you can find friends but not loyal or really sincere friends	Close topic of inquiry—conclusion (4)
Student 3: OK. Another point. What is loyalty? How can you define loyalty? [laughter]	Propose topic for inquiry (5)
Teacher: Oh! That's a deep philosophical question	
Student 3: Yes it is. It's a complicated topic	

useful term when the discussion is centred on types of talk and goal-directed classroom activity.

In Australian language education, genres are commonly referred to as 'staged, goal-oriented social processes' (Martin 1997: 13) to reflect the production of spoken or written text that has a purpose and a desired outcome. Genres are not one-off events; rather, they represent patterns of social activity involving language that have evolved in particular cultures over time (for a discussion of genre-based writing instruction, see Villas Boas, this volume). They provide an 'economy of effort' (Berger and Luckman 1966: 71) whereby people avoid the need to make completely new language choices each time they undertake a socially and culturally established activity. Expected stages of meaning and ways of expressing those meanings unfold in fairly predictable ways to achieve the goals. This is the case for many social activities in which people engage as members of their culture, including, for example, telling stories, recounting past happenings, instructing others in how to do something, explaining how something works, and of course, carrying out many classroom activities. In this sense, it is possible to refer to a 'classroom genre' where activities and interactions unfold in predictable patterns. Indeed, the IRE and IRF sequences are well established in many educational contexts and make up the majority of stages of teaching and learning activity in many classroom lessons. However, this chapter is about moving beyond these typical sequences to expand the potential for students to engage in meaningful and extended episodes of talk; therefore, attention will turn to the genre of inquiry dialogue.

Using the concept of classroom genres provides an opportunity to be explicit about the synergy between the goals of an activity and the type of classroom talk best suited to working towards achieving those goals. Providing a taxonomy of classroom genres and types of talk is well beyond the scope of this chapter but would be a worthwhile research programme to pursue in many ELT contexts. For present purposes, however, it is helpful to consider the implications that goal-oriented classroom activity has for promoting oral skills in classrooms such as those found in ELICOS programs as well as in similar programmes in other international contexts.

Inquiry Dialogue Genre

Spoken classroom genres are identifiable by the different stages of meaning that accumulate whilst the classroom activity is being carried out. These stages are distinguished by a variation in the language used by the teacher and students from one stage to the next. Each stage represents a shift in

the way language contributes to achieving the overall purpose of the spoken activity—the goal of the genre. The product of the activity is the spoken text, which is a short-lived instance of language use, unless it is recorded and transcribed, as in the case of the examples presented in this chapter. Successful enactment of a particular genre is the accomplishment of each of the unfolding, functional stages of the text. Returning to Episode 1, the key stages of this inquiry dialogue are:

Initiate inquiry > *Propose topic for inquiry* > *Develop topic* > *(Close topic)* where > indicates a shift to a new stage and parentheses ( ) indicate an optional stage. This is a 'serial structure' (Martin and Rose 2008) in which each stage depends on the preceding one and where the series is repeated in slightly varying patterns five times. Individual stages can consist of a series of spoken utterances or even a single utterance. An analysis of the rhetorical structure of this activity is presented below. In the interest of space, only the stages are listed. Examples of the type of language each stage consists of are presented in the final column. Inquiry acts are numbered from 1 to 6, and those stages marked with an asterisk (*) are initiated by a student. Those not marked with an asterisk are initiated by the teacher. LRE is a language-related episode involving an intervention by the teacher to clarify meaning, correct an error in grammar, pronunciation, etc.

Ways to Promote Inquiry Dialogue in the Classroom

From the stages of the text in Table 7.2, it is clear that the teacher and students are engaged in a form of inquiry aimed at considering alternative viewpoints to develop knowledge and mutual understanding. Within each rhetorical stage, there is a variety of strategic considerations that the teacher needs to make in order to achieve the outcome of that stage and thus be able to move to the next. Based on the range of successful activities that I have analysed across a variety of classrooms, I can suggest the following procedure for teachers to follow in order to successfully conduct dialogic inquiry in their classrooms. Importantly, notice that the utterances used to extend the talk are often *not* in the form of questions (in the interrogative form). Inquiry dialogue makes extensive use of statements that function to ponder over and explore possibilities (see Chappell 2014a for more details).

Table 7.2 Rhetorical structure of an example of inquiry dialogue

Inquiry act	Rhetorical stage	Example
Initiate inquiry (1)	Initiate New Inquiry	What do you think about …?
Propose topic for inquiry (1)	Propose Topic	I think that …
Clarify concept (restatement)	LRE	(Recast)
Narrow focus of inquiry (1)	Develop Topic	OK. Sure. So you (summarise proposal)
Error correction (grammatical)	LRE	(Recast)
Initiate inquiry (2)	Initiate New Inquiry	And how about (names a student)?
Propose topic for inquiry (2)*	Propose Topic	I don't think … actually, for me, …
Close topic of inquiry—conclusion (2)	Close Topic	Yeah, (concluding statement)
Propose topic for inquiry (3)*	Propose Topic	My opinion is different. I think that …
Extend topic of inquiry (3)*	Develop Topic	But do you think …
Extend topic of inquiry (3)*		
Propose topic for inquiry (4)*	Propose Topic	OK. My opinion is, it's difficult …
Narrow focus of inquiry (4)*	Develop Topic	But what's your opinion? It's really important (re-state proposal)
Narrow focus of inquiry (4)		
Extend topic of inquiry (4)*		
Build on other's contribution*		
Build on other's contribution		
Close topic of inquiry—conclusion (4)*	Close Topic	So, you can (summarise topic)
Propose topic for inquiry (5)*	Propose Topic	OK. Another point.
Close topic of inquiry (6)	Close Topic	It is (summarise and conclude)

Initiate Inquiry (Getting started)

- Ensure all students are familiar with the topic of inquiry. The topic may be generated from an informal talk at the beginning of class (a highly effective way to initiate inquiry dialogue) or it may be built up through other classroom activities such as reading or viewing multimedia.
- Formulate a question or a statement that stimulates students to think about possibilities (e.g. 'What do you think about this lifestyle' or 'I wonder how we could solve this problem').
- Allow time for students to consider their responses.

- Encourage a whole-class discussion. This is important in early stages to allow the teacher to model and demonstrate inquiry dialogue. Different interaction patterns (pairs, small groups) can follow in later lessons once the students are familiar with this type of activity.

Propose Topic for Inquiry (Expanding the opportunities for all students to contribute)

- Encourage a response that motivates inquiry and that does not close off further contributions from others. That is, the response will usually not be absolute but will involve hedging, modality, lack of certainty and the like: e.g. 'It might be a little excessive', or 'I'm not sure, but perhaps we could look at the use of wind farms', or 'I wonder whether people are the problem'.
- It is important that the teacher allows the students time to sort out their thoughts and does not jump in to provide feedback or evaluate the response at this stage (i.e. avoid the temptation to turn this into an IRF or IRE sequence).
- A key step here is to encourage the students to 'bid' for a turn at talk, moving the locus of control from the teacher to the whole group. The teacher can use eye contact, gestures and short commands to encourage group participation and contributions from individuals.
- The teacher manages the talk in this stage, possibly by controlling who contributes when and in what way.
- The focus is on using language to open up the dialogue; thus, the teacher should explicitly model the kinds of statements and questions that achieve this.

Narrow Topic of Inquiry (Focusing the talk on a specific issue—optional stage)

- The teacher (although students can also lead this stage) focuses the topic or theme by summarising, e.g. 'OK, so you think that we should build more wind farms. I wonder how that might help'. The teacher might also focus on linguistic aspects such as vocabulary, e.g. 'OK. There are two things you said there [writes on board: bullet point 'nuclear energy'] Everybody. Oat was talking about energy from the sun. What do we call that?'

Develop Topic (Exploring the topic further)

- Encourage students to wonder about/ponder over other possibilities using previous contributions from others to extend the talk. This is a good time to model how to 'think together' and develop cumulative talk, e.g. 'Jan said we should charge more fees. How about this for an additional idea—we could ….?', or 'Wind farms. Yes, great idea, and also maybe we could develop more hydro plants'.

Close Topic (Concluding/Rounding-off the sequence)

- When the discussion has developed to the point where a new topic should be introduced, the teacher can use signals such as 'OK. Let's move on to talk about …'. Try not to use set phrases of praise such as 'Good' as these become unnecessary signals of teacher control of the talk. Encourage the students to 'bid' for the opportunity to close the topic, e.g. by having them summarise the main point of the previous topic: 'So you say that you can find friends, but not loyal or really sincere friends. OK, I'd like to move the topic to …'

Initiate Inquiry or Propose New Topic for Inquiry

- Depending on how the sequence has concluded, the teacher can either shift the focus entirely to a new context for speaking (which would usually be done in a new lesson) or initiate inquiry for a topic related to the current one.

Conclusion

This chapter presents an innovation in the teaching of speaking in the language classroom. It presents a teaching alternative to classrooms that are beleaguered by excessive amounts of teacher talk and low-quality student talk. Because the talk that goes on in language classrooms is fleeting—here one second and gone the next—it is a difficult resource for the teacher to manage. The main contention of this chapter is that teachers can manage the quality of the talk that occurs in their language lessons by thinking about the overall aims of a speaking activity and related stages of meaning it will move through. Inquiry dialogue is all about keeping the interaction moving forward, building on each other's ideas and developing cumulative talk. There are key rhetorical stages for inquiry dialogue, and through

carefully selecting the most effective forms of utterances that will open up, rather than shut down the talk, the teacher can model and gradually hand over to students the management of the inquiry dialogue.

Questions for Reflection

1. Think about a recent class you observed or taught. How much of the talk was IRE or IRF in nature? What teaching or learning purposes do you think it fulfilled?
2. What difficulties do you think teachers may face in implementing an inquiry dialogic approach in their language classes? Thinking about your own teaching context, what difficulties and challenges might you face? How might you overcome them?
3. Think of a lesson you taught recently. Reflect on the extent to which it included steps for modelling, initiating and sustaining inquiry dialogue. How might these steps have affected the lesson? How might they be incorporated in future lessons?

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8

Teaching Dialogic Speaking Strategies in a Canadian EAP Program

Winnie Pang and Michael Burri

Introduction

English for academic purposes (EAP) has gained considerable significance in preparing students for tertiary studies, yet according to Hamp-Lyons (2011) speaking is generally neglected in training international students at this level. Supporting Hamp-Lyons' argument somewhat indirectly is the fact that Jordan's (2003) widely used book *English for academic purposes* contains very little (if anything) on speaking or listening skills. That is, EAP to date appears to emphasize mostly the mastery of reading and writing skills. This chapter introduces the Six Thinking Hats (de Bono 1993) as an approach specifically designed for teaching dialogic speaking strategies and critical thinking skills to advanced level English language learners enrolled in an EAP program at a Canadian university. After a review of current insights into speaking pedagogy, the Six Thinking Hats approach will be defined and its merits in bringing together and advancing the cumulative wisdom that

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we have thus far will be discussed. Then, the pedagogical application of this approach will be presented step by step.

Research on Teaching Speaking

Even though speaking continues to be under-represented in EAP contexts, with the rise of communicative language teaching (CLT) in the early 1980s, speaking instruction, with its aim of achieving authentic fluent discourse, gained rapid prominence in ELT. In particular, two notions had a profound impact on speaking pedagogy. One is that comprehensible input is critical for second language (L2) acquisition to be successful (Krashen 1982). In response to this argument, Swain (1985) posited that comprehensible output, the negotiation of meaning that involves noticing a communication gap, giving a tentative response and receiving feedback, was also necessary to enhance language acquisition. We would argue that a group discussion where students work toward a consensus is the ideal setting for this negotiation of meaning to take place (see Chappell, this volume, for other ideas on the teaching of speaking in adult language classes).

In the design of CLT lessons that encourage both comprehensible output and input, an ongoing debate has been whether the pedagogical focus should be on form (accurate grammar and intelligible pronunciation) or meaning (fluency). In recent years, however, the English language teaching field seems to have arrived at a consensus that both form and meaning need to be taught in L2 classrooms (Norris and Ortega 2000). While a focus on form facilitates the acquisition of complex language features, fluency or 'the smooth and rapid production of utterances without undue hesitations and pauses' (Gatbonton and Segalowitz 2005: 326) is generally achieved through automaticity. Learners can be assisted in this process if they are given 'prefabricated chunks' (Thornbury 2005: 6) of language to repeatedly practice in communicative tasks, allowing them to gradually connect these chunks into larger pieces of language as proficiency increases. Thus, to enhance both fluency as well as accuracy, Gatbonton and Segalowitz propose a communicative framework called ACCESS (Automatization in Communicative Contexts of Essential Speech Segments) which consists of three distinct phases. First, learners practice pragmatic language functions repetitively in role-playing communicative tasks. Second, the focus shifts toward consolidating the learners' language use by focusing on problematic utterances identified in phase 1. In the last phase, students practice these utterances more freely in theme-based tasks. While this is a useful approach, for us, the shortcomings are the apparent neglect of students' affective needs, the lack

of practice in authentic socially situated situations, and the lack of training in critical thinking, an essential skill for international students in our particular context. Hence, we designed an approach that not only teaches thinking skills explicitly through the Six Thinking Hats but also allows learners to acquire social language skills—the pragmatics—to be able to collaborate with fellow students effectively through the intentional application of the six types of thinking in organized discussions.

Pragmatics includes the use of an appropriate register (level of formality) and politeness during speech acts, which are typically achieved through functional language. Pragmatics is defined by Crystal (1985: 364) as 'the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication'. It has become a pivotal component in L2 instruction to assist L2 speakers in communicating and negotiating meaning effectively in academic contexts. Yet, teaching pragmatics systematically is a complex endeavor because of the cultural, linguistic, contextual, and behavioral nature of speech acts (e.g. greeting, apologizing, praising, and explaining). Designing specific tasks that require students to use pragmatic language communicatively is, therefore, particularly important because an utterance can be grammatically correct yet completely inappropriate depending on the context in which the speech act is performed. It is not surprising that explicit instruction with the objective of enhancing learners' pragmatic competence has gained momentum in L2 teaching (Ishihara and Cohen 2010) and is often desired by L2 learners.

Acknowledging the complexity of learning to interact effectively in an L2, O'Malley et al. (1985) brought attention to the potential of integrating explicit training in metacognitive strategies into L2 pedagogy to facilitate student performance in complex listening and speaking tasks. In their study, such training resulted in students becoming more reflective and analytical of their own learning and more able to personalize the use of the strategies to overcome learning obstacles. Goh and Burns (2012) propose a pedagogical model that includes metacognitive strategies. The model, termed 'the teaching–speaking cycle' (Goh and Burns 2012: 152) begins with metacognitive activities such as having learners take notes as input is provided (e.g. new language is introduced or recycled). A speaking task is then conducted, after which learners' attention is again drawn to the specific language skills and strategies before the task is repeated. Finally, students reflect on their learning and feedback is provided on their performance. This cycle is useful for focusing on form as well as fluency.

Such metacognitive strategies as directed attention, selective attention, self-management, functional planning, self-monitoring, elaboration, cooperation, and questions for clarification (O'Malley et al. 1985: 583–584) enable successful interaction and collaboration with peers. de Bono's (1993) Six Thinking Hats approach enables students to practice such strategies by empowering them to use language to direct their attention collaboratively to one specific focus of thinking at a time, thus enabling them to better elaborate their ideas and manage the discussion to ensure that everybody is able to contribute. While these metacognitive terms are not necessarily explicitly named in our lessons, they are clearly embedded, and they encourage authentic, stimulating discussions, activating the learning of form, meaning, and content.

Local Context

The teaching approach discussed in this chapter was created for the top three of six levels of advanced speaking classes offered in the International Student Entry Program (ISEP) at the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT). ISEP was established in 2008 to equip international students with the English proficiency, academic and critical thinking skills, and cultural understanding necessary to succeed in their regular program of choice at BCIT. ISEP features a skills-based program in which speaking, listening, reading, and writing are taught separately for a total of 25 hours of instruction per week. The speaking course, which is the focus of this chapter, consists of seven hours of instruction per week. The entire program consists of six levels, with level 6 being the highest from which students enter directly into their chosen program. The outcomes of each of the six levels are aligned with the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). ISEP level 6 is aligned approximately with CLB level 9 and CEFR C2, while ISEP level 1 is equivalent to CLB 2 and CEFR level A1. Overall, the curriculum entails a task- and project-based approach to foster collaborative and inquiry-based learning.

Students come to BCIT to establish a career, obtain credentials, or update skills to advance in their career. One of the distinct trademarks of BCIT is its small class sizes, most under 30 students, making a hands-on and collaborative learning environment possible. Students develop strong collaborative skills in order to be job ready by the time they graduate. According to the Student Outcomes Reporting Systems (2014), respondents felt their program provided opportunities for them to develop the skills to speak

effectively (96%), work effectively with others (97%), analyze and think critically (97%), and resolve issues or problems (96%). The results show that students value the great emphasis placed on collaboration in the training programs. However, this learning environment can be particularly challenging for international students who come from more teacher-centered pedagogical traditions.

Observed Speaking Challenges of Advanced Students

In training students to work in groups, we have encountered all of the challenges described above where students struggle with grammatical accuracy and fluency, the lack of which impeded their communication. The following are other challenges we have observed that we have come to reflect on as additional areas also in need of improvement.

At every ISEP level, students are required to design a survey with a well-defined research question, conduct the survey in the city or on campus, and then present the findings in a PowerPoint presentation. Students often lack the strategies and the critical thinking skills to plan, design, conduct, and present a survey report with a partner. The most difficult steps are mutually agreeing on the topic and developing a workable research question.

Students are able to participate well in a structured information gap activity where they ask for and give information; however, when they are simply given a topic to discuss (e.g. whether living with a roommate or living with a homestay family is better) where the goal is to report key points or a final decision, the resulting interaction often approximates a debate genre rather than a discussion. Their natural inclination is to listen for points of disagreement rather than agreement. Participants immediately present opposing views rather than consider and discuss the merits of each contribution. A true consensus is never genuinely reached. At the other extreme, to avoid debating, the discussion may merely involve each person waiting for his or her turn to speak and the 'interaction' is limited to a round robin of short speeches and thus is neither coherent nor focused and hardly interactive.

Another scenario we have witnessed happens when the discussion is dominated by stronger students who endeavor to sustain the momentum of the discussion while the rest join in only when directly invited. Ideas run out quickly and the discussion ends prematurely since potentially fruitful points are ignored or forgotten because they are not properly acknowledged, elaborated on, or summarized and thus become lost opportunities to expand the topic further.

The Six Thinking Hats Approach

The student challenges we have observed could be attributed to a lack of linguistic resources to critically engage with content, a different tradition of schooling in their native language/culture, or some combination of these factors. As summarized above, existing approaches for improving oral proficiency typically promote the use of discourse markers as well as lexical phrases to facilitate coherence and fluency. However, the overarching organization of a discussion is not explicitly taught; thus, without a holistic understanding of the process, students are not empowered to be proactive in a discussion. We have come to recognize the importance of giving our students the linguistic, analytic, as well as paradigmatic tools (i.e. the overall understanding of the structure and expectations involved in a discussion) necessary to negotiate dialogic tasks successfully with native-English speakers in the context of professional training and work. In light of this understanding, the approach designed for these advanced speaking classes draws on theory rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday 1994) as well as the metacognitive strategies explicated by O'Malley et al. (1985). de Bono's (1993) Six Thinking Hats approach forms the metacognitive framework that enables us, as instructors, to teach the structure and functional language employed by competent speakers in negotiating a consensus.

Each of the hats in the Six Thinking Hats approach directs attention to one type, or direction, of thinking at a time. White hat thinking is for gathering information and data on the issue at hand that can be practically obtained. Red hat thinking acknowledges feelings, including opinions based on intuition. Black hat thinking is critical for checking that all the data and proposals are accurate, relevant, and feasible. Yellow hat thinking counters black hat thinking by bringing forward the possibilities and benefits of the data and proposals. Green hat thinking generates new or creative solutions after taking into account all of the knowledge and understanding that has been produced through the rigorous white, black, and yellow hat thinking. Finally, blue hat thinking strategizes, manages, and facilitates the whole process, makes sure everyone is on task, and ensures the discussion is moving forward in a coherent manner.

From an SFL perspective, each hat enables us to direct attention to the stages of this goal-oriented social process (Martin 2009), called the discussion, and to the specific language that is appropriate for each stage of the discussion. White hat thinking, for instance, requires language for asking questions, reporting facts and figures, asking for clarification, and summarizing. Red hat thinking requires language for expressing feelings and opinions.

Black hat thinking requires language for inquiring, forecasting or extrapolating from data, and cautioning. Yellow hat thinking requires language for agreeing, presenting projections of trends, recounting previous experiences, and explaining possibilities. Green hat thinking requires language for presenting proposals or alternatives. Blue hat thinking requires language for reminding, encouraging, summarizing, and redirecting the discussion.

It is expedient for the purpose of language teaching to define the stages involved in the discussion genre (e.g. asking for information, explaining, agreeing, and disagreeing) though they usually occur concurrently in a dialogic context, and as demonstrated above, the six hats facilitate the defining of these stages. The goal is to employ the Six Hats approach to teach specific language that enables students to signal their intention to speak purposefully and to frame their input for grammaticality, clarity, and formality. As for identifying the language expressions to teach, in Table 8.1 we provide examples of lexical bundles and speech gambits. Lexical bundles are identified empirically in corpus-based frequency patterns as expressions used commonly in academic language. They are different from other expressions since they are not complete grammatical units and are not idiomatic in meaning but function like scaffolding for new information (Biber and Barbieri 2007). The speech gambit examples are more idiomatic and are used to signal an intention to speak. In the table, we categorize each of the six hats as a stage in the discussion and match each hat with potentially useful lexical bundles and formulaic expressions.

Table 8.2 gives a list of general speech gambits that can be employed at any stage of the discussion.

The Purpose of the Six Hats Approach

The underlying principle of the Six Thinking Hats is that in a discussion where the goal is to come to a consensus on the best solution for a given situation or problem, it is most productive when the group collaboratively consider all the options until one is agreed upon. This collaboration is achieved by directing their collective attention to one type, or direction, of thinking at a time. This is in contrast to the more common practice of debating an issue until someone 'wins' the argument and everybody else is forced to concede. In this collaborative approach to problem-solving, every participant's attention is synchronously focused on thinking aloud in the same direction. As everyone is wearing the same hat at the same time, not only are confrontational debates avoided, all novel yet potentially worthwhile contributions are explored and taken into account. The process, thus, is more inclusive and all participants are given a voice.

Table 8.1 Samples of functional language used in the Six Hats approach

	Lexical bundles	Speech Gambits
Blue hat Coordinating, Reminding, Encouraging, Summarizing Redirecting	At the beginning of… In the context of… For the most part…	The question we are… The discussing today is… Let's start by… Can anybody think of any other…? Let's get back on track, shall we? Are we ready to make a decision?
Red hat Expressing feelings and opinions	It is not surprising that…	I think that… Well, in my opinion… As I see it,… My gut feeling is that…
White hat Gathering information, reporting facts, clarifying	It is estimated that… One of the most… As a matter of fact… These results suggests that… According to…	I'd like to point out that… We have to remember…
Yellow hat Agreeing, presenting projections, Recounting, explaining	As a consequence of… …can be used to… At the same time… From the perspective of…	One reason why this suggestion would work is… One advantage is that… Another advantage is that…
Black hat Inquiring, forecasting, extrapolating from data, cautioning	On the other hand… It is difficult to… There is no evidence…	I'm not sure I agree with you on that… I can see your point about…but… I see what you mean when you said…but… Perhaps we should consider… I'm afraid that…
Green hat Presenting proposals or alternatives	With respect to… On the basis of… The nature of the…	Don't you agree that…? Why don't we…? Let's… Should we consider…?

The sequence of the hats and how many times students make use of each hat is contingent on the circumstances and whether they are seeking to generate ideas or to appraise those that have already been presented. Only the blue hat should ever be assigned to one person, namely the chairperson. However, for less formal meetings or where members are proficient at using this approach, any member can interject with the blue hat to manage the meeting without a designated chairperson.

Table 8.2 Examples of general discussion gambits

Expressing agreement	That's a good point. I couldn't agree more.
Asking for clarification, paraphrasing and summarizing someone's point for clarity	What you're saying is… I'm not sure what your point is. Could you explain that again?
Clarifying one's opinion	That's not exactly what I mean. Let me put it another way… What I'm trying to say is that…
Summarizing	Our decision is… What we're going to do is…

To facilitate the visualization of the actual discussion process when all of the hats are employed, the following chart (see Fig. 8.1 below) illustrates one possible sequence of using the hats . This sequence can be employed when three solutions are suggested and the task is to determine the best choice of the three for a given context. If solutions are not provided, an extra phase of green hat thinking must follow the initial white hat thinking to generate possible solutions to be considered. Blue hat thinking (represented vertically on the left in Fig. 8.1) is used throughout the discussion to guide it. White hat thinking commences the discussion by clarifying objectives and compiling the relevant

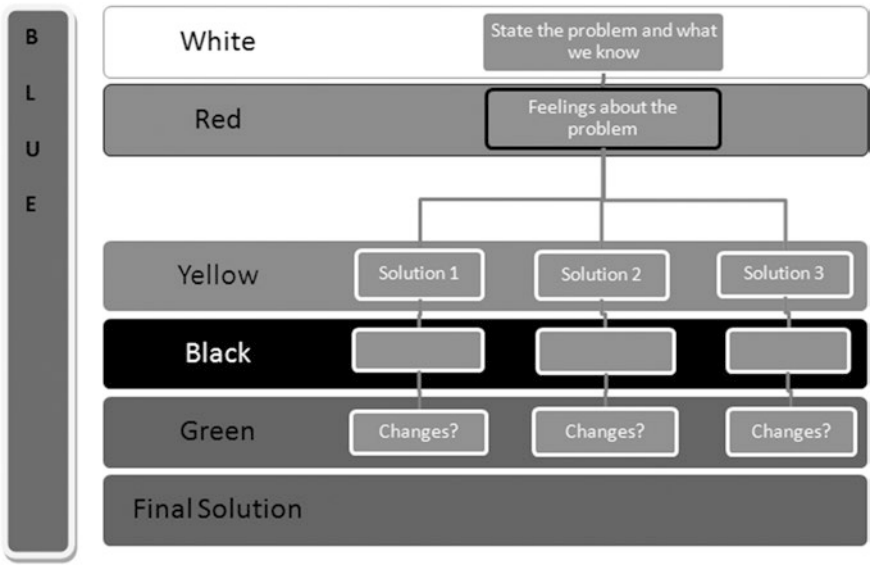

Fig. 8.1 Chart illustrating use of different hats. *Notes*: The chart was designed by our colleague Chris Gradin (used with permission)

information. Participants then proceed to consider which, if any of the suggested solutions, should be adopted. They do this by first sharing their initial inclination (red hat thinking) and then discussing the possible merits (yellow hat thinking), challenges, and risks (black hat thinking) of each. After all suggestions have been thoroughly considered, green hat thinking is once again used to consider how the best solution can be modified to mitigate disadvantages, or whether two or more solutions can be combined, in order to work toward a consensus on the final solution.

Teaching the Six Hats Approach

To familiarize students with each of the six hats when we first introduce them, we follow de Bono's (1993) model and teach and practice the hats in pairs, two hats at a time.

For white and red hat thinking, we design practices that are similar to training students to distinguish facts (white hat thinking) from opinions (red hat thinking) by presenting a list of statements and having students label them correctly. For instance, a statement such as: *the government should do more to stop crime* would be red hat thinking because it expresses an opinion while this statement: *the government has increased the fine for speeding to $300* would be white hat thinking as it expresses a fact. Another practice is to have students consider how they make a personal decision such as choosing a car to buy or choosing a career path. In discussing the aspects to consider such as price, design, potential salary, and personal interests, students practice identifying the white hat thinking and the red hat thinking in the decision-making process.

To demonstrate the analytical benefits of black and yellow hat thinking, we present students with an unconventional solution to a hypothetical or actual problem. For example, if the problem is that students often come to class late or miss class, the novel solution could be to give $5 to every student who comes to class on time. Before they do some serious yellow and then black hat thinking, we ask them to first indicate their intuition on the efficacy of this suggestion. After the discussion, we ask them for their views again to see how many have reconsidered their initial inclination.

To practice the blue and green hat, we have students plan how they will generate possible solutions for a given problem; for example, there are not enough microwaves for students to efficiently heat their lunch. To avoid having students immediately conjure up suggestions that are usually limited in scope, originality, and effectiveness, we ask them to use their blue

hat thinking to plan out the steps that will enable them to generate more creative, yet realistic suggestions (green hat thinking). Usually, this will entail first identifying the types of white hat thinking they need to do: budget, space available, people to contact, and aspects to consider such as scheduling, priorities, or fund-raising. Consequently, students gradually begin to realize the fruitfulness of carefully planned critical thinking.

As each pair of thinking hats is introduced and practiced in small groups and then discussed as a class, the lexical bundles and speech gambits are introduced. While students do the above exercises for each pair of hats in small groups, we circulate and note where students struggle in their application of the hats and also where communication breaks down. These observations are used to introduce or further discuss the language functions during the debriefing, when the whole class comes together again to share their thoughts and experiences. The proficiency of the students and their familiarity with this approach will determine how many of the expressions are introduced and how they are expected to practice and demonstrate that they have successfully learned them. To enhance retention and encourage metacognitive strategies that lead to autonomous learning, we give students corresponding color paper to choose and note down the expressions for each color hat that they want to learn and use as we discuss them, or we ask them to choose from a list (see Tables 8.1 and 8.2).

Application in Advanced Speaking Courses

In ISEP, we use the Six Hats approach to train students to handle discussions on progressively more complicated issues ranging from hypothetical business meetings, such as one where participants discuss the launch of a computer maintenance shop, to discussions on current social concerns such as the feasibility of telecommuting or banning the use of plastic bags. Our final speaking examinations are also conducted as group discussions. Each speaking assignment and examination encompasses three essential components: a hypothetical situation that engenders the discussion, the roles participants should take, and a list of agenda items or issues that require decisions to be made.

One example of such assignments is where the students are a part of a local shopping mall management team that has to decide to which of the three applicants they will rent a vacant shop space. The students may also play the role of a focus group appointed by the local government to give recommendations on whether or not a car sharing company should be allowed

to expand their service in the city. We do our best to design these scenarios based on current social issues in Metro Vancouver and require students to first research the issue to gather relevant information to bring to the discussion. These discussion groups usually consist of four students.

Assessment

Because the expectations of each stage of the discussion are clearly defined and articulated, the evaluation of students' oral competence is facilitated, making feedback more meaningful and objective. Our interactional rubric for the assessment of discussions focuses on six key aspects: content, vocabulary and register (the appropriate level of formality), grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and finally, conversation management skills. We assess students formally using this rubric at least twice in a term, including in the final examination. The instructor sits with each group of students as they conduct their discussion, listens and uses the rubric to assess each participant's performance. After the discussion, each student will receive both verbal and written feedback based on the rubric.

Implications for Teaching

We have found that the Six Hats approach empowers both the students and the instructors. The student challenges described above are mitigated and students grow in confidence since they are now equipped to conduct a discussion where every proposal and contribution is systematically given more thorough consideration through the collaborative application of white, red, yellow, black, and green hat thinking. Discussions become progressively more inclusive, authentic, and well-managed using the blue hat thinking. Most importantly, the teaching and learning of specific language for each stage in the discussion are expedited.

Another important advantage is that this approach can be used by L2 teachers in classrooms without commercially published resources or access to computer technology. As we have found in our context, the discussion topics can easily be adapted to local settings. The approach could also be adapted to facilitate students' learning of paralinguistic features. That is, specific gestures, for example, could be mapped on to the functional language of each hat. Moreover, pronunciation, another essential part of effective oral communication, could be integrated into the technique such as giving emphasis

to practicing certain sounds and working on word and/or sentence stress patterns to denote particular meanings. Discussion conversations could be audio recorded and then analyzed by each speaker for intelligibility (see Tweedie and Johnson, this volume, for more on intelligibility in an ESP setting). Once problematic features have been identified, a pronunciation journal could be implemented for students to reflect on their use of these issues over the course of a semester.

Conclusion

Instructors in our program at BCIT have embraced the Six Hats approach and have made it a part of the core curriculum in speaking courses to effectively train students to gain the skills and confidence to work in groups. We hope that this presentation of our experience will contribute to and further encourage fruitful discussion on creative approaches to teaching speaking skills that take into account all of the needs of the students in acquiring the linguistic as well as the social competency to participate fully in academic and professional settings where English is the primary language used.

Questions for Reflection

1. What are the contexts where your students will most likely need to interact effectively in spoken English, now or in the future?
2. What are the three greatest challenges that your students face in working collaboratively with others in the English classroom?
3. How might the Six Hats approach enable you to systematically address the language learning challenges that your students face?
4. Could the Six Hats approach be used with beginner or intermediate level language learners? If so, how?

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9

Teaching Conversational English to Adult Learners via Skype: A Russian Perspective

Olga Kozar

Introduction and Overview

Technology is changing the way we teach speaking in a foreign language. While a decade ago teaching speaking was undertaken face-to-face or over a phone, now, thanks to the rapid growth of Internet technologies and improved access around the world, English lessons are increasingly being taught via synchronous videoconferencing tools (e.g. Skype or Google Hangout). These tools allow language learners not only to hear but also see each other, exchange text messages, send files and share screens. Language education delivered via these tools has been referred to as language education via video/audio conferencing (LEVAC) (see Kozar 2015 for a detailed discussion). It is predicted that given its flexibility as well as its cost-cutting potential, the next decade will see a large-scale adoption of LEVAC worldwide.

In addition to being flexible and frequently more affordable than traditional 'face-to-face' delivery, another potential benefit of online language lessons is creating a more democratic environment where unequal power relationships are less obvious or less manifested (see also Chappell, this volume). It can be argued that in online classrooms teachers cannot physically dominate the classroom and that the power dynamics may be different in

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online environments since students tend to participate in lessons from their homes, offices and other physical spaces where they may feel more in control than in a typical classroom. To the best of my knowledge, no studies have looked at this aspect of online language teaching yet.

This chapter will consider several conversational lessons that were described as 'highly satisfying' by adult learners from Russia. The aim of the chapter is to identify the factors that may have contributed to this feeling of satisfaction among students and to make recommendations for teachers who wish to teach conversational lessons online.

Background

Speaking lessons are the most popular type of lessons currently taught via video/audio conferencing tools (Kozar 2012). This is not surprising as, compared to other online tools, the video/audio conferencing medium provides productive conditions for speaking practice. Even though it is clear that video/audio conferencing lend themselves to teaching speaking, what is less clear is how teachers can best facilitate online conversational lessons. There are many aspects of online lessons that differ from face-to-face instruction. One difference is what Hampel (2006) calls the 'materiality' of the videoconferencing environment. It refers to how we experience the online environment and how we get things done in it; for example, how we provide feedback or share resources. However, 'materiality' is not the only thing that is different about video/audio conferencing lessons. Teachers and students are also located in different physical spaces (e.g. different cities, countries or even continents), and they can be in different time zones and even seasons. While these differences can sometimes provide prompts for conversation, they can also make it more challenging to find topics to discuss, as teachers and students cannot draw on the shared background knowledge that often lubricates social conversations.

In addition to finding suitable topics to discuss, teachers working in video/audio conferencing environments also need to develop new ways to perform familiar classroom tasks. For example, they need to share content, make notes, communicate feedback and encourage students. Many of these functions tend to be taken for granted in the face-to-face environment but must be adapted for online delivery. For instance, a teacher in a face-to-face classroom can easily judge whether their students are looking at the textbook, whiteboard or their peers. This type of information helps teachers make decisions, provide clarifications and adjust the conversation accord-

ingly. In the absence of clear visual clues in the video/audio conferencing environment, a teacher needs to rely on other means to gauge students' understanding and manage learning.

There are many questions that new online teachers ask. For example, new teachers may want to know what materials are used by teachers whose students feel satisfied with their lessons and how teachers manage conversational lessons. They may also wonder how they should manage technology; for example, to what extent they should use webcam and text chat while teaching conversational lessons. There are some existing studies that can be helpful in answering some of these questions. The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of studies that focused on various aspects of technology such as webcams and text chat.

Prior Studies on Webcams

Studies on the use of webcams in language lessons show considerable differences in how webcams are used by experienced and novice online teachers (Codreanu and Celik 2013). For instance, experienced teachers tend to be more aware of what image they portray via the webcam and actively use it for non-verbal communication with students, which has a positive pedagogical effect.

At the same time, in my own research on the use of webcams (Kozar 2016a), I found that less experienced teachers seemed to underestimate the pedagogical potential of webcams and tended to use them only for socio-affective purposes to 'break the ice' at the start of the lessons. Such teachers used webcams at the start of the lessons with new students and discontinued the use of webcams after 2–3 weeks. Similarly, some students reported being resentful of webcams and avoided their use during the lessons.

While understandable from the privacy perspective, students' avoidance of webcams means that their teachers cannot access students' body language or lip movement to judge whether they are about to speak. This ambiguity can lead to teachers' taking the conversational floor before the student is ready to speak, which can have a negative effect on turn-taking and students' language production during conversational lessons.

Prior Studies on Text Chat

Another factor that can impact students' language production during online English lessons is how teachers use text chat. In another study I conducted (Kozar 2016b), I analysed how written chat is used by language teachers

during video/audio conferencing classes and whether such factors as message characteristics (length, focus, initiation, etc.) influence students' uptake (whether students incorporated the message in their speech). Several interesting findings emerged from this study. First, students' uptake of a message was not related to who initiated the message—the teacher or the student. This is an interesting finding as it suggests that the locus of initiation (who initiated a message) might not be the key factor in whether the message gets taken up by the student.

Furthermore, when the message focus (grammar correction, recasts, new vocabulary) and how the message was delivered (only written or written and oral) were compared for the likelihood of being taken up, it was found that recasts had the lowest chance, especially for the 'written-only' condition, while new vocabulary items that were produced both by speaking and writing had the highest chance of being taken up.

Another noteworthy finding is that teacher typing occasionally distracted teachers from students' language and caused breakdowns in communication. It suggests that online language teachers need to consider carefully how and when they use written chat, and researchers need to conduct more studies to raise practitioner awareness of the effect that teacher typing may have on students. While there are many other technology-related questions that need to be answered, I hope that the brief overview above has provided new online teachers with some insights on managing the technological aspects of this new environment. However, the management of technology is only a small part of what online teachers need to do.

This chapter will focus on a highly important part of online lessons—teacher behaviour during online conversational lessons. The case study draws on research in which I analysed online lessons ranked highly by adult learners. The following paragraphs will provide a description of teachers' use of materials, lesson content, relationship-building during lessons as well as the use of webcams and text chat. I hope this account will serve as a useful point for reflection on what types of lessons are viewed favourably by some adult learners.

Case Study

The case study outlined here involves an online language school that describes itself as a follower of the communicative English teaching approach and explicitly states on its website that students can expect English-speaking practice with error correction. As in many online conversation schools, there is no prescribed curriculum, and the teachers are free to negotiate the content and the method of instruction with their

students. Eight teachers, whose ages ranged from 24 to 68 years, and eight students from this school, who were working together in teacher–student pairs agreed to share recordings of their lessons and answer interview questions. Three of the teachers were Russian, and four were from the US, Canada and the UK. One teacher grew up in South Africa in a Russian-speaking household. All students were adults aged from 20 to 39 years old, and their levels ranged from A1 to B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). All the students in these eight classes marked their satisfaction with their lessons as 10 out of 10 on the internal survey conducted by the school. At the time of this study, pairs had been having lessons for an average of about 10 months.

In addition to analysing eight lesson recordings, I also asked teachers and students about their typical lessons, materials and attitudes towards typing and webcams. My analysis of lesson recordings and their responses are discussed below.

Teachers' Use of Materials

Over half of the teacher–student pairs used learning materials (textbooks or a list of questions) during the lessons. Interestingly, the *type* of materials seemed to be determined by the teachers' background. Specifically, the Russian teachers who grew up in Russia tended to use textbooks, while teachers who grew up in an English-speaking environment seemed more likely to use a list of pre-determined questions as learning materials. This finding is consistent with prior research which shows that non-native speakers of English seem to rely more on textbooks than their native-speaking counterparts (Árva and Medgyes 2000; Medgyes 1986). This may be because non-native teachers seek 'linguistic safety' (Medgyes 1986) and view textbooks as a reliable source of input. Another possible reason is that they could be more familiar with textbooks from their own language learning experience. At the same time, over a third of the pairs did not use any materials and structured their lesson as a conversation between the student and the teacher. This approach seems to follow a 'Dogme' approach which advocates teaching languages without published textbooks and focusing on spontaneous conversations (see, for example, Savignon 1991; Meddings and Thornbury 2009; Thornbury 2000).

Interestingly, despite online materials such as videos or audio podcasts being widely recognized as holding considerable potential for language and intercultural learning (see, for example, Duffy 2008; Levy 2009), teachers who participated in this study did not seem to take advantage of online

resources. While they reported that they used online resources in their teaching, none of the analysed lessons had any instances of online materials. This raises questions about why online teachers, who are themselves using technology to teach, may choose to draw on 'traditional' materials instead of tapping into the plethora of online articles, audio or film.

There are various explanations for why teachers in this study did not use online resources in their lessons. For example, teachers may have been more familiar with textbooks or they may have had limited time and capacity to curate suitable online materials or they may have 'simply mapped traditional practices onto the new medium' (Gold 2001: 32) without making changes to their core teaching practices (Gold 2001: 35)—a tendency which has been frequently documented by many researchers (Bennett and Lockyer 2004; Berge 1998; Shepherd et al. 2007).

Notably, there seemed to be no difference in the reported satisfaction level of students who used textbooks, lists of questions or no materials at all. This suggests that learning materials may not have played a significant role in students' perceived satisfaction with their lessons, and that other factors may have accounted for the high satisfaction level.

Lesson Content and Activities

Unsurprisingly given their focus on conversation development, most lessons were spent conversing. Eighty-three percent of the lesson time was spent on various personal questions such as students' weekends, students' work, sports, family or pets. Some teachers also carried out grammatical and vocabulary exercises.

As with the use of learning materials, there seemed to be differences between the practices of Russian teachers who were born and raised in Russia and English teachers who grew up in English-speaking environments. The most salient difference was that all the Russian teachers included grammatical and vocabulary exercises in their lessons, while all the native-speaking teachers and the bilingual English–Russian teacher, who grew up in an English-speaking country, structured their lessons exclusively as conversation practice.

Use of Webcams

The teachers used webcams in a range of ways, depending on the preferences of the participants. Some participants did not use them at all, while others

used them for some or most of the time. The general opinion among webcam users was that the use of webcams improved the pedagogical quality of lessons and helped to build rapport, especially at the onset of the teaching and learning relationship. However, some participants felt that the use of webcams in every lesson was not required or that they could occasionally not use their webcams when they felt tired or had personal reasons not to use webcams (e.g. had family around). Thus, there was no consistent trend regarding webcam use in the analysed lessons.

Use of Text Chat

As in the case of the use of materials, webcams and the choice of activities, the use of written chat during the lessons differed among the pairs. Some teachers were very active users of written chat and produced multiple messages per minute. Others used the chat more sparingly and sent one message every 4–5 minutes, while two teachers did not use written chat at all. The fact that some teachers made active use of the text chat, while other teachers barely used it, suggests that the use of the text chat is unlikely to have been a decisive factor in students' high satisfaction.

Relationship-Building

While differences could be seen in all the factors outlined above, there was one factor that was consistent across all eight lessons. It was the clear effort on the teachers' part to build rapport and a positive relationship with their students. Analysis of their interactions showed that teachers achieved relationship-building via such strategies as verbal agreements, self-disclosure, verbal mirroring, jokes and humour and assisting the student to save face. Because relationship-building stood out as potentially the most important source of student satisfaction, it is valuable to describe the specific discourse features the teachers used in more detail.

Verbal Agreements

A salient feature of the analysed lessons was the high number of verbal agreements, as evidenced by phrases such as 'I agree', 'that's very true' and 'you are right'. Across the eight lessons, there were 163 phrases demonstrating agreement, while the total number of disagreements was five. It suggests that

teachers focused strongly on building a positive relationship with their students and used every opportunity to express positive responses to student output.

Self-Disclosure

Seven out of eight teachers voluntarily self-disclosed information about themselves and their families without students' explicit requests. The only teacher who did not self-disclose was conducting an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) preparation speaking lesson, and therefore her lesson, while being focused on speaking, was also test-focused. Linguistically, self-disclosure was associated with the use of personal pronouns 'I' and 'my' and such topics as teachers' pastimes, preferences and the behaviour and personality of teachers' family members. For example, one teacher told his student, who had been lamenting the fact that his teenage son did not appreciate what he had, about troubles with his own son. He commented that 'he had been through the same experience' and elaborated for nearly three minutes about his own troubles with his son. Three minutes is a considerable amount of time given that the average length of lessons was 30 minutes.

The reason why self-disclosure may have contributed to relationship-building is that through self-disclosure, especially through drawing parallels between their and their students' experiences, the teachers might have been aiming to reduce interpersonal distance and power asymmetry. Also, the one-to-one context of the lessons may have enhanced the effect of self-disclosure, as prior studies suggest that self-disclosure tends to produce a stronger effect in a one-to-one situation compared to a group context (Collins and Miller 1994). At the same time, teachers' self-disclosure may have also increased their liking towards their students, as people 'tend to match the intimacy level of an initial disclosure (the disclosure-reciprocity effect) and tend to like people to whom they disclose' (Collins and Miller 1994: 461).

Verbal Mirroring

Another feature that deserves attention is teachers' verbal mirroring or repetition of students' words. This behaviour is different from recasts wherein teachers aim to improve students' linguistic expression by providing an alternative linguistic form. In verbal mirroring, the teacher repeats exactly the

same words produced earlier by the student, with the goal of establishing interpersonal rapport. Extract 1 illustrates such an instance. The teacher and the student were discussing the teachers' CV posted on the private school's website. The teacher is making a joke (that he had lied on his CV) and the student is extending the joke by suggesting that the teacher in fact works in a supermarket as a delivery driver. The student uses the term 'loader' which is the direct translation from the Russian job 'gruzchik'—a person who handles heavy items in supermarkets. The teacher accepts this term, although 'loader', in English tends to refer to a type of vehicle rather than individuals working in supermarkets. This example shows that teacher may be more oriented to sustaining a conversation than ensuring linguistic accuracy and correcting the student.

Extract 1: Teacher mirroring

Move	Speaker	Text
1	Teacher 5	Well, the information I gave ** (the school) is a lie [laugh]
2	Student 5	//[Laugh]//
3	Teacher 5	//[Laugh] //Yeah, everything you read is not true //[laugh]//
4	Student 5	//Okay, okay//. You're… you… you… you… you… you had a job uh as uh um you had a job as um (.) uh as **a loader** in supermarket, //yeah? //
5	Teacher 5	//[Laugh]//That's right. I was just **a loader.** That's right

Across the eight lessons, there were 40 instances of verbal mirroring, which was used by all the teachers. In some instances, teachers even repeated inaccurate linguistic forms without correcting them. Such instances in particular point to the importance that teachers in this study seem to have attached to building an interpersonal relationship with their students.

Jokes and Humour

One more interpersonal device found in five of the lessons was the use of jokes and humour. There were 28 instances of playful and joking exchanges between students and teachers. Most of them were initiated by teachers who tried to lift students' mood and introduce playful elements to their lessons. Making jokes is an interesting strategy as it tends to be associated with casual conversation rather than classroom interactions. It is possible that, as with self-disclosure, the use of humour was another way in which teachers tried to reduce the power asymmetry and encourage students to have 'natural' conversations.

Face Saving

Finally, three of the eight teachers exhibited behaviour which can be described as attempts to 'save the student's face' and avoid social awkwardness (Varonis and Gass 1985). Such behaviours included abandoning exchanges that were misunderstood by students, offering alternative expressions to students and mitigating disagreements. For example, one of the teachers, when asking a student about their weekend, said 'So, what—have you listened to any English podcasts this past weekend or did you not have time?' Another telling example was when a teacher chose not to highlight a student's misunderstanding of a question and accepted an answer to a different question. As with making jokes, not highlighting student misunderstanding is closer to the discursive style of casual conversation than to classroom discourse. At the same time, it is possible that the teacher's intention was to 'get the student talking' and any answer, even if it did not address the question, was sufficient to satisfy the teacher in that situation.

Disclaimer

The insights shared in this chapter should be viewed in light of the learning context. Russian learners of English tend to have few opportunities to converse in English, and thus opportunities to have 'friendly' conversations in English are highly sought after. A similar situation is likely to occur in many other countries such as China, Vietnam, Ukraine or Colombia where English may not be widespread and is viewed as a foreign rather than an additional language. I suspect that the same lessons could be less satisfying for learners in English-speaking contexts for example, for immigrants in Australia, the UK or Canada or in popular destinations for English-speaking tourists. Instead of looking for conversation practice and improving fluency, learners in such contexts may be more focused on developing communication for transactional and other purposes or for improving their accuracy.

Implications

There are several implications of this study for teachers who teach, or will in the future teach, conversation classes online.

The study seems to suggest that interpersonal factors such as rapport-building, jokes, agreement and self-disclosure, play a more important role in student satisfaction, compared to the use of materials, lesson organization, the use of webcam and text chat. A critical reflection suggests, however, that even though student satisfaction did not seem to be linked to anything but interpersonal factors, it is important not to equate student satisfaction with lesson effectiveness. While interpersonal factors are clearly important for speaking lessons and teachers should try their best to create a warm interpersonal environment for their students, teachers should also closely attend to learning materials, learning tasks, the use of webcams, text chat and other pedagogical factors as they can enhance the quality of online language lessons.

If you are a native speaker, for example, you may want to consider whether you are taking advantage of language learning materials, as this study showed a tendency of native speakers to use considerably less learning materials compared to their non-native counterparts. At the same time, teachers who learnt English as a second or foreign language themselves may want to reflect on whether they are too dependent on textbooks and other materials and grammatical exercises and perhaps consider a wider range of learning materials with their students.

Another recommendation for online teachers is to be mindful of a tendency to try and recreate a 'face-to-face' classroom while teaching online. For example, most teachers who did use learning materials used PDF versions of popular textbooks and employed them in a similar way that they would be used in a 'traditional' classroom. While understandable, this trend results in underutilizing the potential of the online environment and not making the most of what being connected via the Internet can offer. It is important to expand our teaching repertoire and go beyond mapping traditional practices online.

My key advice to teachers who are currently teaching or looking to start teaching conversational English online is to consider what students tend to lack in their language learning context and structure the lessons accordingly. If, as in the Russian context, students have limited opportunities to converse in English, then self-disclosure, verbal agreement and mirroring, using humour and saving students' face may be very useful for building a positive interpersonal relationship. To develop these skills, teachers can focus on nurturing a relationship with students and remind themselves to sound agreeable and approachable.

If, on the other hand, students have plenty of opportunities to socialize or they are preparing for an examination or are studying for a specific pur-

pose, then the use of personal self-disclosure may not have the same effect and in fact may have a negative effect, as students who study for examination-related purposes have very different expectations from their online language teachers than students who study for general purposes (see Kozar and Sweller 2014 for details).

Conclusion

Language learning via video/audio tools is well on the way to becoming an important part of the educational landscape. It is therefore critical that teachers and teacher educators engage with research on online language education, that more studies are conducted in different educational contexts, and that more practitioners raise their own questions about teaching languages online. Otherwise we risk having a large number of isolated online teachers struggling to make sense of the new teaching environment and the full advantages provided by video/audio conferencing could remain limited.

Questions for Reflection

1. Why do you think interpersonal factors emerged as the most important factors in this context? Will it be the same in your context?
2. Do you think the same dynamics will apply to teaching one-to-one in a face-to-face context? Groups online?
3. How might the techniques described in this chapter be applied to a face-to-face classroom?
4. What steps do you take to ensure positive affective relationships with your students?
5. What are some of the positive and negative aspects of multimodal methods of information (i.e. through speech and writing simultaneously)?

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Part III

Reading

10

Supporting Elementary Students' Reading Through Authentic Literature for Children

Olga Vraštilová

Introduction

In many contexts where English is taught, unfortunately, reading is often limited to texts included in coursebooks that can sometimes seem artificial. Further, they may have been chosen only because they correspond to unit topics that are mostly created artificially for the purposes of the coursebook itself (see Tante, this volume, for more on coursebooks for young learners). Texts like these can lead to boredom for teachers and students alike because of the lack of a meaningful context and no obvious rationale for language learning. However, literary texts can offer much more vibrant options in the foreign language (FL) classroom.

At present, very few literary texts are used in coursebooks in my English language teaching (ELT) context, the Czech Republic. In this chapter, I discuss how I addressed this problem in two classroom contexts and in a teacher education course and argue that literary texts can be used, not only at the elementary school level in this context but also in ELT classes at any school level. They bring enjoyment, motivation and fun to the learning process. Not only can they be shared, discussed and acted out but they are also a source of language experience for students (see Roach, this volume, for further discussion of text choice and impact on reading instruction).

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Background

Research surveys carried out periodically by the *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (e.g. PIRLS 2014) show that the highest levels of reading literacy can be found in countries such as Korea or Finland, where literary texts are often used for teaching purposes. A direct relationship between the level of reading literacy and the use of literary texts in language education is thus suggested. Moreover, Bland (2013) argues that children's literature seems to be good preparation for reading literary texts as adults.

In the past few decades, the use of literary texts in ELT has been advocated in countries where English is the first language (e.g. Ellis and Brewster 1991, 2002; Lazar 2010). Introducing children's literature makes reading enjoyable, as literary texts develop the student's whole personality and they can become an important ingredient of the language learning process. Literary texts can be introduced into the classroom, either as replacements for or supplements to coursebook texts for teaching reading. Drawing the students' attention to literary texts can also potentially lead to encouraging them to read more extensively outside their English class.

However, in the Czech Republic, only recently have researchers recognized this area of research. As a result, the use of literature in ELT has not been systematically adopted. So far, no consistent theoretical background for reading instruction has been agreed upon, nor there is common usage of terminology and definitions of reading subskills. This lack of coherency means that systematic support for pre/in-service English teachers is largely absent, and there are almost no formal courses or further teacher development in the use of literary texts in ELT.

To illustrate this situation further, a recent survey I conducted (Vraštilová 2014) with elementary school teachers in the Czech Republic found evidence that 52% of teachers teaching English at elementary schools had no formal qualifications, and therefore would not have received training in the teaching of reading (see Tante, this volume, for more on professional development for teachers of young learners). Moreover, around 89% of the 104 schools involved in the survey reported having school libraries, but only 49% of these libraries had English books on their shelves. The factors mentioned most often as being hindrances to the use of literary texts in language education were a lack of time within the ELT timetable, a lack of money to purchase books, the low language level and motivation of the learners, and the high number of students in language classes.

In general, it can be argued that, in the Czech Republic, any use of literary texts in English teaching is still likely to be mostly connected with

the learning of vocabulary and grammar, and that awareness of the broader possibilities of exploiting these texts for language development is limited. In addition, in ELT curricular documents, only recently has the emphasis shifted from having elementary students read aloud towards making use of individual silent reading. In the Czech context, reading aloud has been considered valuable for pronunciation, stress and intonation, but rarely does the reader focus on meaning. Moreover, as shown in the research above, school libraries are only slowly starting to develop their English language sections. However, access to graded readers or authentic literature still appears to be very limited.

Children's Literature

Children's literature can be used both as a source of language development and as an aim in itself in ELT. From a linguistic point of view, literary texts can improve all language skills, develop grammar, enhance pronunciation and extend vocabulary. From the instructional point of view, they are motivating, encourage students to exercise imagination and fantasy, promote the skills of sharing, predicting and anticipating, involve emotional responses, provoke reactions and interpretations, and provide cross-curricular links. Also important is the cultural aspect of literary texts, through their connection with the cultural, historical, social and language traditions of a particular nation or group (see Hayik, this volume, who discusses similar themes related to writing instruction). Literary texts can thus extend knowledge of various aspects of the particular nation or culture and help readers to better appreciate literary texts from other cultures. Uncovering and understanding cultural meanings or ideas in literary texts can be very challenging and motivating at the same time. Readers may be encouraged to learn more by reading about cultural issues that were not familiar to them.

As Reynolds puts it '…writing for children is a rich but for long undervalued source of information about culture as well as a contribution to it' (2011: 5). Lazar (2010), however, argues that choosing a culturally suitable text may be quite complicated, and she outlines a list of cultural aspects that should be considered when using literary texts with students. They can be divided into two general groups—linguistic aspects (proverbs, idioms and metaphors) and sociocultural aspects (objects, social structures, customs and traditions, beliefs, values and superstitions, taboos and humour). Referring to this outline can help teachers anticipate potential cultural problems their students may have with a particular literary text. For example, if chil-

dren do not know about Santa Claus, they will not be able to appreciate the main message of Dr. Seuss's (1985) story of the Grinch (e.g. 'Grinchy Claus'), where the Grinch expected 'the Whos' to find out about Christmas 'at a quarter past dawn' (i.e. in the morning). In many countries, including the Czech Republic, Christmas presents are unwrapped in the evening of 24 December.

Teachers also need to consider how to select, exploit, analyse and adapt children's literature. First, it may not always be appropriate to use an authentic, unabridged text. Therefore, it may be necessary to simplify the text taking into consideration two major areas—the linguistic and the cultural. The language simplification aspects include lexis (vocabulary), which could be accompanied by a glossary of expressions that are vital to the meaning of the text; structural, where tenses could be changed or complex modal verb forms simplified to suit learner comprehension. However, I would argue that rhymed texts should remain untouched since it is difficult to retain the meaning or style. Finally, simplifying the development of the storyline can be considered. Garvie (1990: 71–72) suggests listing the main points or 'staging posts' of the storyline and using them as a guide when adapting the text to the linguistic level of the students, so that students can follow.

Second, literary texts often have a multiplicity of interpretations. As Rosenblatt (2013: 929) highlights, '"meaning" does not reside ready-made "in" the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between reader and text'. Teachers can point out to students that individual interpretations of a text by different readers are influenced by their cultural and life experiences. They can ask students to provide their own interpretations of different parts of the text and use their various suggestions to enhance critical reading and thinking skills. Parminter and Bowler (2011: 40) suggest a number of strategies that can be used to assist students to appreciate how texts are perceived and interpreted through an individual reader's life experience through:

> tasks focused on predicting (what the story will be about judging from the title), hypothesizing (how the story will develop), inferring (the allegoric or hidden message of the story), summarizing (the story in one's own words), comparing (the characters, their qualities), deducing (further steps of the plot if based on the repetitive language), transferring information (understanding the message/moral of the story and interpreting it for the reader's own situation), putting oneself in someone else's shoes (how would the reader behave in the same situation), visualizing (the characters/setting from the description in the text), evaluating (the qualities, behaviour, reactions of the characters, the plot, the ending), and so on.

As for the cultural simplification (or clarification) of a particular text, it can be realized in various ways. This process is based on the teacher's knowledge of the students which makes it possible to predict (as Parminter and Bowler put it) what cultural references may need explaining to make the text understandable for today's readers (2011: 37). Similar to Garvie's 'staging posts' of the storyline (above), I would recommend that the teacher should take notes on what cultural aspects of the text may cause problems and decide which of them can be deleted and which have to be explained in order to retain the flavour of the story and the author's style at the same time. Then, the explanation can be carried out through a brief lead-in activity that explains, e.g. the historical period the story is set in and in that way shed light on some potential misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the text itself. Scaffolding during reading can support understanding of unfamiliar aspects of life throughout the reading process (e.g. in E. T. Seton's *Rolf in the Woods*, it may be necessary to comment on the society and the time period in which the story is set and in that way explain to the reader why Rolf had to dye his face with juice from green walnuts). This, for instance, can be done either through explanatory footnotes or a special glossary. Comparison of customs, proverbs, behaviour or religion from the text and from the readers' lives may lead to better understanding of cultural differences.

The situation in my own context, my own research and the recommendations from the literature that have been outlined in the discussion so far led me to undertake two initiatives. The first involved preparing and teaching lessons on children's literature myself to try out some of the recommended approaches. The second involved devising and expanding teacher education courses for in-service and pre-service teachers to enhance their skills in using children's literature in the classroom.

Children's Literature and Classroom Methodology

Trying Out a New Approach to the Teaching of Children's Literature

As Lazar (2010: 1) notes, '…every teaching situation is different, every literary text is different and every theory explaining literature itself or how to use it in the classroom is different'. Therefore, there is no single approach to presenting and using literary texts in the ELT classroom, and every teacher needs to consider his or her particular teaching situation. In the research mentioned earlier (Vraštilová 2014), an analysis of coursebooks used for language teach-

ing showed that reading tasks are usually connected with listening, as they are both receptive skills. Therefore, I decided to prepare two reading lessons which also drew on listening activities, which I tried out by teaching two elementary school classes. The first lesson, using an unabridged version of the story of The Gruffalo (Donaldson 1999), was designed for Grade 5, and the second focused on an edited chapter from Going Solo (Dahl 2008) and was prepared for Grade 9. Below, the plans for each lesson are outlined.

Grade 5

The Gruffalo lesson lasted for 45 minutes, and there were 12 students in the class.

1. The lesson started with a brief introduction of the plan of the lesson. I asked the learners whether their parents read to them when they were little, whether they read in their free time and whether they had any favourite book or author.
2. I showed the learners the front page of the picture book and we went through the glossary prepared for the story, which contained around ten words. Each word was either demonstrated or illustrated by a picture on a PowerPoint presentation on an interactive whiteboard. From the picture and the words, the children tried to predict what the story would be about.
3. At this stage, I read the first half of the story (to the moment when the Gruffalo appears). The learners were seated in a circle around me so that they could follow the pictures accompanying the story. I asked them whether they liked the story and what their feelings were about the individual animals—a mouse, fox, owl and snake. In this lesson, we worked with just the first half of the story.
4. During the second reading of this part of the story, I gave children a chance to join in the storytelling because it contains a lot of repetitive language (e.g. Gruffalo), which they enjoyed repeating. After the second reading, we predicted and discussed the possible continuation of the story.
5. At this stage, children were divided into pairs, and each pair was given a handout of a dialogue between the mouse and the fox/owl/snake. The task was to learn the dialogue and to present it to the class afterwards.
6. We looked at the picture of the Gruffalo on the front page of the book. I read the description of it from the story and the children pointed to the body parts described.
7. The children listened to the story once again with another chance to join in the storytelling at places where there was repetitive language.

The homework from the lesson was to draw a picture of the Gruffalo and bring it to the next lesson.

Grade 9

The Going Solo lesson introduced the chapter in Dahl's book on Dar es Salaam. It was a 45-minute lesson with 18 students in the class.

1. To begin the lesson, each learner received a handout with questions to ask other members of the group. They were instructed to be ready to report the answers of someone from the group. The questions on the handout included: Do you read books in your free time? Have you ever read a book/story in English? Did your parents or siblings read to you when you were a little child? If yes, did you like it? Why?
2. Together, we went through a glossary that contained around 20 unknown words from the text. I read the words and the students repeated. They were then asked to guess where the story took place. I hoped they would be able to judge that it was located in Africa because of words such as 'baobab tree' in the glossary.
3. We then discussed the author, Roald Dahl. Although the students did not know him, they were familiar with the film version of his book Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, which made them curious about the story of his life, covered in Going Solo. I provided them with brief information about his life and the context of the book.
4. I read the chapter and the students followed the handout which contained the text of the story, and which also had tasks connected to the text. They read the text once more on their own, scanning it for answers to the questions. The questions were: How did you feel when you read/listened to the text (frightened, nervous, relieved, etc.)? How would you characterize the narrator? Find concrete words in the text. How would you characterize Salimu? Find concrete words in the text. What would you do if you were Roald Dahl? Does this story remind you of any similar experience of your own when you had to be courageous/brave? Would you like to read more stories from this book/by this author?
5. At this stage, learners were asked to underline all simple/continuous past tense verb forms in the text. They then had to explain how each tense is formed in English and how it is used.

The homework from the lesson was to complete an exercise using past tense forms drawn from sentences of the text read in the lesson. Another task was:

Write a letter from Tanzania to your mother describing the event as if you were observing it.

Feedback from the learners of both grades was mostly positive. The children liked both the stories and the motivation that literary texts brought to everyday ELT lessons. Most of them commented that they would like to read more such texts in their English lessons. The lessons introduced them to shared reading experiences, new language and known grammar structures used in real texts and unusual contexts in a practical English language learning situation.

Having experimented with these teaching approaches and activities in both these classes and found that the learners evaluated them positively, I decided to draw on the literature and on my experience to undertake two teacher training developments. The first was to devise a special course for in-service teachers to give them guidance in the use of children's literature for teaching purposes. The second was to enrich the undergraduate preparation of trainee teachers, which had mainly focused on historical surveys of children's literature, and to deal more directly with how literary texts could be used in the classroom for language development. In the following sections, I will briefly describe both of these initiatives.

Developing New Courses for Teaching Children's Literature

In-Service Teachers

The course for in-service teachers consisted of two modules that included time dedicated to individual reading by the participants and independent work on their projects.

Module 1 lasted for four lessons and was devoted to a brief outline of the history of children's literature. Different genres of literary text for children were outlined (poetry, folk literature, fiction, biographies and informational). Then, participants were presented with ways of adapting or simplifying texts for their learners using the guidelines mentioned above. At the end of the module, the participants were presented with Garvie's (1990) idea of collecting a bank of literary texts over the course of their teaching careers to build up a useful functional resource of texts for classroom use. Garvie also suggests that texts can be systematized according to the topics they cover or structures they include so that the teacher can easily find a suitable text to use in a particular lesson.

Following Module 1, there was a 2-month break for participants to search for appropriate books and to read and present them in relation to their

actual teaching contexts, following the guidelines for adaptation. They were asked to read five books altogether, of which two should be picture books for young learners and three intended for lower secondary learners.

Module 2 was almost solely devoted to reflection on the use of the literary texts by individual participants, through sharing and comparing of ideas and feedback from the learners. It lasted for four lessons, and many interesting and stimulating ideas and text types were mentioned by the participants. One primary level teacher used the graded reader of *Snow White* with her 10-year-old learners. The children knew the storyline from Czech which enhanced their comprehension together with anticipation and prediction of the plot. She reported that after the lesson they were excited about the fact that they managed to read 'a real book' in English without great difficulty. An upper secondary school teacher used picture books with her learners to review and recycle the vocabulary of certain topics. Another teacher working with lower secondary students developed a reading routine with her learners—they borrowed graded readers from the school library, read them at home and completed the tasks in the reader which they then brought to class to show they had read the book.

Feedback from the in-service participants recommended that the course should be made more practical. They felt that the parts of the course that covered the history and genres of literary texts could be studied at home and that in class, more time could be devoted to practical work with the text, for example, choosing an appropriate text for concrete learning situations, evaluating the text adaptation according to the criteria provided and devising accompanying tasks. They suggested that this part of the course could be organized in a local library or a bookshop with direct access to children's literature.

Pre-Service Teachers

In the course for pre-service teachers, the same topics as in the in-service course were spread throughout one semester in twelve 90-minute periods. To get their credits, students were required to choose and read books during the semester and then plan a lesson either around a literary text or one where a coursebook text is replaced by a literary text. Before they began, the students were asked to work with a chapter from *The Witches* by Roald Dahl where they tried to simplify the text on their own. The feedback was quite mixed—some students really enjoyed the process of language simplification, and some did not like it at all and considered it challenging.

The second task was to work with Maurice Sendak's *Pierre, a cautionary tale*. The story is rhymed; therefore, the text remained in its original form,

and the task for the students was to suggest teaching tips for the story. The students enjoyed this activity, and a wide spectrum of tasks connected with the tale were designed (acting it out, gap-filling activity, talking about politeness, predicting what the story is about from the illustrations, anticipating the end of the story and many more). Then, the credit task was realized. The quality of the tasks differed and, to a great extent, reflected the students' interest in the course. At the end of the course, each student received a file containing all the credit tasks submitted so they were leaving the course with a whole set of texts prepared for use in their teaching practice after graduation.

Implications for Teaching

There are several ways in which teachers can increase the use of children's literature in elementary classes. One way, as suggested in the previous discussion, is for teachers to substitute an artificially created text from a coursebook with a real literary text from their own resource bank (Garvie 1990). Such texts are a powerful tool for making language learning more meaningful for students. If students discover that what they learn in their everyday lessons is reflected in authentic texts, they have a greater reason and motivation for learning English. Yet another idea is for the teacher to read literary texts regularly in class. He or she can read a common text to the whole class, perhaps with each student having his/her own text to follow if available. In that way, the students get the pleasure of listening to a story read by a competent speaker of English (Krashen 2004).

Like the English teachers in my context, others might also feel that there is little time to draw students' attention to literary texts, either within English lessons or at home to extend their reading. One solution is to make a list, which can be shared with parents, of readers at appropriate language levels and to encourage students to buy one book each. A list of books and their owners can then be placed on a notice board in the classroom so that students know which books are available. Students can then read their book at home within a given period of time and prepare a written report about it for the teacher. When students finish the book, they can sign the list to signal that the book is available for other readers. The students can then borrow any other book that is available from their peers. Some of these books could include graded readers, which are equipped with a glossary and tasks related to the text.

Teachers can also draw on technology to arouse interest. For example, many students are familiar with communicating with social network 'friends' through abbreviations like LOL, AFK, BRB or OMG. Such students might

also like playing with other words to increase their vocabulary development. One example is Shel Silverstein's (2005: 36–37) simple instructions or 'rittle leminders', such as 'Trush your beeth', 'Hash your wands', 'Stop faking maces' and many more. The students need to think about the spelling of correct word forms, their language knowledge is enriched and they have a lot of fun. Alternatively, Silverstein offers other resources such as the poems 'Kugs and Hisses' (2005: 16), where students can express their feelings; 'Superstitious' (2009: 48), where they can compare superstitions across different cultures; and 'Ations' (2009: 59), which allows for thinking about social interactions.

Another alternative is to combine literary texts with the work students complete on a computer. Students can read texts online and through options provided on the computer can create their own storyline and an ending for the story. If no technology is available, this activity can be carried out in text form along the lines of the so-called gamebooks, for example the series written by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone called 'Fighting Fantasy'. Instead of choosing individual steps within the story to create one's own storyline choosing or writing an ending to it could become a reading task. If it is available, using technology is valuable in schools which do not have English books in their libraries or where buying books is not affordable for the students' parents.

Conclusion

Literary texts offer a productive source for language teaching and learning. They can be used both as a source of language development and to increase literacy skills. The courses I devised aimed to encourage both pre-service and in-service teachers to use literary texts in their English lessons. The lessons I developed show how literary texts can be used to arouse curiosity and interest in reading in elementary school students. Introducing literary texts into ELT classes can potentially lead to an increase in extensive reading by students in their free time. Such texts are rewarding and enriching for all participants in English language classes.

Questions for Reflection

1. What are your views about literary texts being included in language learning materials? How could your learners benefit from such texts?
2. What kinds of challenges could there be for teachers in using literary texts in the English classroom? What kinds of challenges could there be for learners?

3. How effective are the English coursebooks that you use for teaching reading? Do they use varied texts from different kinds of genres?
4. To what extent are literary texts currently represented in your English coursebooks? Do you think there should be more or less use of such texts?
5. What children's literature have you read that would be appropriate to use in your classroom? What activities could be used in conjunction with the texts?

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11

Teaching Reading to Encourage Critical Thinking and Collaborative Work

Sri Rejeki Murtiningsih and Winda Hapsari

Introduction

University-level students in Indonesia, as elsewhere, are expected to undertake independent reading from a great variety of different resources as part of their studies. In order to do so, students need to develop regular reading habits and be motivated to absorb large amounts of information. Not only must they have adequate language proficiency but they must also be able to comprehend and react critically to the texts they read. Building students' ability and interests and assisting them to read critically are indeed challenging, and for these reasons, reading courses have become a required part of many English language programmes for university students in Indonesia.

The aim of this chapter is to present reading activities that we have adopted in Indonesian university reading classes that encourage teachers and students to go beyond basic reading skills in order to incorporate critical thinking while reading (see Pang and Burri, this volume, for ways to incorporate

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critical thinking into EAP speaking classes). The activities involved introducing a popular English novel and other reading materials to English as a foreign language (EFL) students and encouraging them to discuss their reading by working collaboratively with their peers. In order to provide a background for this approach, we first discuss common problems found in EFL reading classes, specifically in the Indonesian tertiary context. The second part of the chapter outlines the innovations we introduced into our EFL reading classes. Although the approach we describe might be well-known and established in some classrooms, we considered these activities to be innovative because they have not been adopted in most Indonesian contexts. Also, students showed positive reactions towards the activities. The last part of the chapter discusses the implications of our innovations that may be applicable in other similar contexts where reading is taught at university level.

Reading in EFL Contexts

For many students learning in EFL contexts, the ability to speak and listen in English may be more motivating than the desire to read (Mori 2002). Moreover, Mori's (2002) research, conducted in Japan, shows that students' motivation to read in English may not be significantly different from that of their motivation to read in their first language. This finding is in line with Yamashita (2004) who argues that students' attitude towards reading in their first language is likely to influence their attitude towards reading in the language they are learning. These studies support our personal experiences of teaching reading classes in Indonesia. Many of our students have stated that their main motivation to learn English is to be able to speak the language, and that they do not consider reading as important.

In the Indonesian context, many students may have been demotivated by the way reading is typically taught in the English classroom (Cahyono and Widiati 2006; Sunggingwati and Nguyen 2013). In junior and high school contexts, the teaching of English in general and English reading in particular is typically conducted in a formal way where the teacher is the main source of knowledge (Cahyono and Widiati 2006; Sunggingwati and Nguyen 2013). In addition, students are trained to understand a reading text and answer related comprehension questions based on their reading which mainly involve a low order of thinking (Sunggingwati and Nguyen 2013). This activity is also typical of the type of tasks that appear regularly in English tests in Indonesia to assess English language skills, as is also likely in many other EFL contexts. Thus, teaching reading at this educational level is usually aimed at getting students to pass the national exam and to receive

grades that are high enough for university entrance. As a result, students are commonly instructed to work individually so they are more prepared personally to pass tests rather than to work collaboratively and think critically about the issues discussed in the texts they are reading.

In addition, many high school graduates do not read Indonesian, let alone English, texts extensively. As a result, when they enter university, they become overwhelmed by the expectations placed on them of being independent readers. They may also lack any contact with the types of texts required at this level. Rukmini (2004) maintains that many new university students in Indonesia are not familiar with the explanation and discussion genres commonly used in reading texts at the tertiary level. Students' unfamiliarity with these genres may be because, as Sunggingwati and Nguyen (2013) state, most teachers in Indonesia rely heavily on textbooks as the syllabus and as a source of teaching methodology. Consequently, students may be exposed only to traditional pedagogic models, which focus on reading short texts and responding to comprehension questions that do not go beyond a low order of cognitive development. In contrast, university students need to be able to think critically about what they read.

Teaching EFL Reading

The way reading lessons are taught at university level will determine whether students' perceptions of reading will change. Widodo (2009) argues that the crucial roles of the reading teacher include the following: (1) choosing suitable and interesting texts; (2) selecting and sequencing reading tasks to develop students' reading skills; (3) giving guidance for and facilitating pre-, while-, and post-reading activities; (4) encouraging students to get involved in group activities; and (5) providing scaffolding for reading activities.

Choosing appropriate texts is one of the important decisions a reading teacher needs to make (Lindsay and Knight 2006). Anderson (2008) suggests that teachers provide texts that are just above the current ability level of the readers, where they should be able to understand 75% of what they read. Similarly, Nation (2007) argues that reading becomes meaningful when only a small proportion of the language features are unknown and also suggests that students should read extensively. Besides selecting suitable and interesting teaching materials, reading teachers need to develop careful lesson plans and to select and sequence tasks that scaffold student ability to read the text and to develop their reading skills more generally. One approach to reading pedagogy (e.g. Lindsay and Knight 2006) recommends a three-stage

approach (pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading), which is a recent development in our context. Well-planned activities at each of these stages help reading teachers organise the lesson and provide step-by-step instructions (Widodo 2009).

The pre-reading stage is used to tap schemata or background knowledge that will be relevant to the while-reading activities in the next stage. Schema theory in reading relates to bridging the gap between students' existing knowledge and the new information in the text (Tracey and Morrow 2006). Lindsay and Knight (2006) maintain that discussing new vocabulary, answering comprehension questions, and brainstorming ideas about the topic can be used in pre-reading activities.

The while-reading stage is the point at which students read the text in order to gain meaning from it. This stage can include reading silently and individually, reading in groups, or reading aloud by the teacher as students follow the text. Harmer (2007) recommends jigsaw reading and reading puzzles as alternatives to reading individually. In jigsaw reading, teachers divide the text into several parts and each student in the group then silently reads one particular part separately. When students have finished reading their part, they form a group to work out the whole story. For reading puzzles, the teacher can mix up two or three similar reading texts and assign students to prise them apart, or have them reassemble an out-of-sequence text.

Following the reading of the text, various activities can be introduced. For example, teachers can check students' comprehension through having them answer questions, where they need to infer information. Sunggingwati and Nguyen (2013) argue that questions should be cognitively challenging and avoid low-level factual information, so that they lead students to provide opinions and interpretations instead. They should also discourage extensive use of straightforward translation of the text. Widodo (2009) suggests that students should be challenged through inference, prediction, and evaluation questions. Such questions promote communication and critical thinking. Besides answering questions, students can carry out a variety of activities such as sequencing the arguments or stages in the text, drawing a picture from the text (Lindsay and Knight 2006), conducting a group discussion about different aspects of the text (Widodo 2009), and providing a different ending to the text.

The post-reading stage is designed to extend the students' understanding of the text from the pre-reading and while-reading stages into other learning activities and can also provide feedback on the skills and knowledge students have developed. This stage can involve other skills like speaking and writing, vocabulary, or grammar development (Lindsay and Knight 2006).

Applying a New Approach in Our Classroom

Using the overall frameworks described above, in our university reading class in Indonesia, we experimented with several activities that aimed to develop students' critical thinking through collaborative work. The class consisted of 38 freshmen enrolled in the English Language Education Department, all of whom had learned English for at least six years in their secondary schooling. The class met weekly during the 16-week semester, but not all the reading activities described below were implemented in every meeting.

Pre-reading Stage

At the beginning of the session, prior to beginning the reading text, as indicated above, it was essential to help students understand the key vocabulary presented. Several activities were used at this stage to increase vocabulary development.

Word Dictation

We instructed our students to read several pages of the assigned book, *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Last* Straw, a young adults' novel written by Jeff Kinney, and informed them that there would be a word dictation activity in the following meeting. The words dictated were all taken from the assigned reading pages, and for each one the students were asked to write them down. We selected this activity because we wanted to encourage our students to pay attention to the spelling and, importantly, to emphasise the orthographic/sound relationship. We read each target word twice, then read the sentence from the book in which the word was located, after which we again pronounced the word. Reading the sentence in which the word was located helped our students to deal with homophones, words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings (e.g. their, there, and they're).

We then asked our students to choose a word and volunteer to take turns to write it on the board to make sure that every student knew the correct spelling of each word. We then discussed the words to see if they wanted to know more about the meaning. We also discussed the parts of speech of each word so that students understood when to use them within a sentence. In this activity, we built on the advice of Nation (2009) who emphasises the importance of spelling in reading, stating that while it is difficult, spelling is one of the most important aspects in developing EFL reading and writing.

This activity also provided opportunities for our students to interact with each other to decide the parts of speech of various words.

Our students reported that they found this activity very valuable. At the end of the semester, when we asked them to write a personal reflection on the reading class activities, most of them wrote that they looked forward to this particular activity. Some stated that the word dictation activity prompted them to read aloud more often on their own time. It also increased their awareness of the spelling of a word and its sound. Some of them also wrote that they had to wait to listen to the whole sentence, so they could decide which word and spelling were intended, which encouraged them to think about meaning. This activity is in line with Welcome and Alton (2015) who argue that skilled readers are able to build connections between the phonological and orthographic systems.

Finding Synonyms or Definitions

This activity provided opportunities for our students to develop their understanding of the meanings of important keywords for better comprehension when reading the texts. For the steps in this activity, we

- wrote definitions/synonyms of key vocabulary from the text on slips of paper and posted them on the classroom walls;
- instructed students to work in small groups;
- gave each group one set of word cards containing the key vocabulary in the text;
- told all groups they should compete to match the synonyms/definitions of the words on the cards; and
- identified the group with the most correct answers as the winner.

The activity also enabled the students to move around and communicate with their classmates. Most students appeared to be motivated to collaborate with other group members to win the competition. This activity boosted students' engagement with the lesson.

'Smurf' the Words

Guessing activities are usually performed individually and through teacher-to-student interaction. However, a guessing-in-context activity can be a way

to encourage interaction among students, and competing with each other in this kind of activity can create excitement and motivation.

In our class, 'Smurf' (guess) the words was an activity that we designed to follow the first two activities we mentioned above. We used the term 'Smurf' rather than 'guess' to add a fun element to the activity. We adopted two different approaches. For the first approach, we took some sentences that contained keywords from the text and wrote them on separate cards for each sentence. We underlined the keyword in each sentence and arranged students into groups, giving one set of cards to each group. We asked each member to read the sentence aloud to the rest of the group and to say the 'code word', 'Smurf', for the underlined word. The rest of the group would guess the word. If no one could guess the 'Smurf' word, the student would read it out. The other approach was to let students volunteer themselves to select a word from the board and create a sentence using that word. They were asked to say the 'code word' instead of the selected word. Other students would then volunteer to guess the 'code words'. Sometimes students were asked to write the sentence on the board to clarify them.

Prediction

Apart from vocabulary activities, getting students to predict what they are going to read is essential during the pre-reading stage (Widodo 2009). Besides getting students to speculate on what the reading text will be about, prediction encourages them to think critically. A teacher's skill in eliciting ideas from the students is crucial. To begin encouraging students to predict, teachers can use, for example, the title of the text, visual images, videos, or a small part of the text itself. Teachers can also use more than one stimulus and encourage the students to collaborate in groups to brainstorm ideas.

To undertake this activity, we

- divided the class into three groups (A, B, and C);
- provided group A with the title of the text;
- gave group B picture(s) related to the text;
- provided group C with a small part of the text (e.g. a few sentences or short paragraph, taken from the first, middle, or last part);
- instructed each group to predict the content, with guiding questions to help their predictions;
- assigned a number to each group member (e.g. A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, B3, etc.);

- asked members with the same number to form a new group (for example, A1, B1, C1 gather into group 1, etc.); and
- requested students to share the predictions from their previous group with their new group members.

While-reading Stage

During the while-reading stage, teachers commonly ask students to read individually. However, students are likely to feel under pressure when they have to read a text in another language, especially if the text is long and there are many unfamiliar words. The previously mentioned activities are meant to alleviate issues such as these.

Besides feelings of pressure, students may be easily bored by having to listen in turn to other students reading aloud individually. This approach may impede students' reading development or result in their disengagement from the lesson. In our class, we attempted some alternative activities during the while-reading stage in order to encourage students' engagement.

Jigsaw Reading

In this activity, we organised our students into four groups in the same way as in the *prediction* activity. We then named these groups the *Expert Group.* We distributed a quarter of a text to each group and informed them that after reading it they would share the information with the members of the other groups. After giving them time to read the text, we encouraged them to discuss the content within the group. We then assigned the members of each group individual numbers, as in the *prediction* activity. The next step was to separate the Expert Group based on the number they were given and asked them to form a new group, called the *Home Group.* They then shared their ideas about the content of the original texts with the new groups. Everyone took notes on the main ideas and details of each part of the text. After this step, we asked everyone to go back to their Expert Group and discuss the new information they had received from the Home Group. We then gave students comprehension questions covering the whole text. Each question was assigned to one particular member of each group. For example, the first question was allocated to members who were number one in each group. Thus, only A1, B1, C1, and D1 students were allowed to answer the first question, and so on.

Since students were only required to read a small, manageable part of the text, they appeared more motivated and seemed to be less pressured. The

opportunity to share the text content using their own words improved their awareness to the point where they did not necessarily need to know every single word to be able to comprehend a text. As they discussed the content of their part of the text, students thought critically about what was necessary to share. This collaborative method of reading was beneficial both from the angles of comprehension and class engagement.

Alternative Reading

This activity provided opportunities for students who had higher levels of English proficiency to help out their counterparts. To conduct this activity, we

- provided two similar short reading texts;
- jumbled all the text parts;
- asked students to work in small groups, each of which received one set of the jumbled text parts;
- asked the groups to separate the text parts and put them in the correct order; and
- gave the students comprehension questions to test out their understanding of the text and asked them to answer the questions in group.

Students also had the chance to discuss the meanings of new words with each other before asking their teacher. Students mostly used their first language for this part of the activity so that they could more easily work collaboratively with each other.

Deleted Text

The final while-reading activity we introduced was the deleted text activity. We provided three versions of a reading text. We deleted 40% of the words for the first version and 20% of the words for the second version. We provided the whole text for the third version. To do this activity, we divided our students into groups of three. We distributed the first version of the text to each group and gave them questions to answer. Because some of the information for the answers was not available in the text, we encouraged them to answer the questions as creatively as possible. When the students had finished this first step, we gave out the second version of the text and discussed how similar their answers were to the original text. We finally distributed the third version of the text so that they could again compare their responses.

This activity was intended to encourage our students to think creatively when they had limited information to answer the questions. We also motivated them to provide more elaborate answers by giving them follow-up questions. This activity provided students with opportunities to freely express their opinions and appreciate others' ideas on the same issue. We also used this activity to evaluate students' comprehension skills.

Post-reading Stage

The post-reading stage is designed to extend the students' understanding of the text from the pre-reading and while-reading stages into other learning activities (Widodo 2009). This stage can involve other skills like speaking and writing, vocabulary, or grammar development (Lindsay and Knight 2006). We used this stage to encourage students to think beyond the reading texts and to give personal reactions to the context of the reading texts. We challenged our students to think critically and deeply at this stage by providing provoking questions. This activity gave students opportunities to share their personal reactions with the class through discussion and debate as well as writing letters, articles, and other responses.

Below are some of the questions that we used to elicit students' personal reactions towards texts they had read:

- Do you agree with what the main character in the text did? Why/why not?
- If you were the main character in the text, would you do things the way he did? Why/Why not?
- Which option do you think gives more benefits (e.g. being the first or last child in the family)? Please state your reasons.
- In the text, the main character's mother decided to punish him. Do you agree with her actions? Why? If you were the father, would you support her decision? Why/why not?
- Do you think the ending of the story makes sense? If you could change the ending, how would you change it?

Pedagogical Implications

In our classroom, we experimented with ways of teaching reading that differed from the previous approaches that the majority of our students had experienced. Our own innovations in teaching reading suggest pedagogical

implications for other contexts where the teaching of reading may still be top-down and teacher-centred.

First, it is important for teachers to gauge the level of students' language proficiency so that they can select texts that are appropriate and accessible to their students. Texts that are at, or slightly higher than, students' current proficiency level will motivate but also challenge them. Second, teachers need to find out what topics students are interested in reading about (see also Vraštilova, this volume; Roach, this volume, about materials choices for reading instruction). In our classroom, we used a young adult book, with themes that would appeal to students who were freshmen and who were not used to reading extensively in English. Also, teachers need to think beyond the textbooks or reading text sources they are provided with and be willing to modify the materials creatively into more engaging activities. Teachers who think critically about how to develop reading lessons containing activities that encourage students to collaborate can develop students' own critical thinking and creativity. Finally, it is important for teachers to take into account and develop good relationships with their students, so that students can become more open to teachers in responding to the reading activities presented. When the relationships between teachers and students remain formal and teacher-centred, involving students in meaningful discussions is more challenging.

Conclusion

Teaching reading in Indonesian contexts, especially in university level, presents its own challenges because most high school graduates are not used to reading different text genres and thinking critically about their meaning. We presented various reading activities we have used successfully with our students, which may be helpful in addressing similar issues in other EFL contexts, especially those that rely heavily on teacher-centred methods for the teaching of reading. The pre-, while-, and post-reading activities we included in our reading classes were able to engage students at various stages of reading and motivated them more than the standard methods. Despite the fact that we implemented the activities for students at university level, we believe the activities can also be adopted for high school students or even younger students, with some modification to suit students' level of cognitive development, language proficiency, and interests.

Questions for Reflection

1. How important is it to get students to think beyond just the comprehension of the reading text? How would it improve students' motivation to read?
2. Which stage of a reading lesson do you think deserves the most emphasis in terms of class time? Is it pre-, while-, or post-reading? Why?
3. To what extent do you use these three stages in your teaching? What changes could you make to introduce them, either completely or partially, in your context?
4. If you were to use the activities described in the chapter in a language reading class, what are some creative adaptations you could implement?

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12

Reading Communities: Developing Autonomy in an ESL Academic Reading Course

Gordon Blaine West

Introduction

Reading fluency in a second language requires hard work and dedication from learners that extends beyond the classroom or a single reading course. Students attend classes for relatively short periods of time, but teachers can help them extend reading fluency by encouraging them to build supportive learning communities. Such communities can provide strong motivation for them to develop learner autonomy and to continue working toward fluency once the class has ended.

In this chapter, I discuss how I drew on critical and sociocultural views to enhance learner autonomy (e.g. Fremeaux and Jordan 2012; Toohey 2007) through community building in an English as a second language (ESL) academic reading course. The approaches described are the result of a practitioner research project (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009) conducted over three semesters during which I taught an intermediate academic reading course at a large university in Hawai‘i.

The discussion focuses on the pedagogical interventions and practical lessons learned as I conducted the study and at the same time taught the class. I outline the concept of collective learner autonomy which was used to underpin the approach, discuss in-class community-building activities, and

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share examples of reading projects that helped learners build communities outside of the classroom (for a discussion of learner autonomy in relation to writing, see Pham and Iwashita, this volume). I end with a discussion of these practices in relation to collective autonomy and share suggestions for ways in which these practices could be adapted to other contexts of English language learning. In developing these ideas for a reading class based on collective autonomy, this chapter calls for a more expansive view of both academic reading and the role of the teacher than is currently adopted in many reading courses.

Collective Learner Autonomy

Developing learner autonomy is a goal of many language programs around the world and the subject of a vast body of research. Much of this previous work has drawn on an understanding of autonomy as closely linked to individual self-sufficiency, placing the focus on the development of individual learner autonomy (e.g. Holec 1981). However, without the support of a community, becoming an autonomous learner, especially in language learning, is a daunting task. In the initiative described here, a collective approach wherein autonomy is seen to be more fully achieved within a group was adopted.

Recently, in contrast to an individualistic view of autonomy, some scholars have argued for a sociocultural understanding (Toohey 2007; Thornbury 2011). As Toohey, reflecting on her study, points out, learners were 'not agentive or autonomous on their own … the social settings in which they participated both imposed constraints on and enabled their agency' (2007: 232). Fremeaux and Jordan argue that 'students learn to be free [or autonomous] by working together to create the collective conditions for freedom' (2012: 121). This view fits with a sociocultural understanding of autonomy as socially situated and emphasizes the need to work intentionally to organize and create communities that have the necessary conditions for autonomy to thrive. Teachers can take an active role in helping students build a learning community as part of their practice.

A collective approach to learner autonomy, therefore, comes from an understanding of language learning as a social process, whereby language cannot be separated from the social and cultural context in which it is used (Lantolf and Thorne 2006). Similarly, reading is a social process because the transfer of information through text requires a social interaction through

time and space between the author and the reader. The way that information is interpreted is also guided by the social and cultural understanding of the reader at the particular time of reading a text, just as those factors influence the author of a text while composing it.

There are many practical reasons for teachers to focus on building collective learner autonomy. First, a focus on community building helps students get to know each other better and contributes to a positive classroom atmosphere. When students are new to a school or area, it can help them build relationships in these new locations. Also, in places where English may not be the language of everyday communication, community-building practices can help students find ways in which English can be relevant to them.

The rest of this chapter will examine how community building can be applied in the teaching of reading specifically. I will discuss community-building practices both in and outside the classroom. First, I will briefly describe the context in which this initiative took place in order to explain my rationale for this approach and to clarify how aspects of the curriculum might be adapted to other contexts. Next, I will discuss the techniques that I developed over three semesters of teaching an intermediate academic reading class.

Building the Classroom Community

The course in which I taught was one that was required during the first semester if students failed to meet a number of exemption criteria (i.e. minimum TOEFL or IELTS scores). I taught several different sections of this course during my time working at the institution. The students enrolled in the course came from a wide range of national and language backgrounds, academic backgrounds (graduate and undergraduate), and interests, and were further divided between long-term immigrants and short-term study abroad students. The only shared characteristic was newcomer status, at least to the university, if not to Hawai‘i. The institution I worked in promoted and encouraged the development of learner autonomy. These specific circumstances compelled my move toward building communities of learners and striving for an understanding of collective autonomy. The first step toward developing collective learner autonomy was to build a strong community among students in the class. I found two themes, choice and cohesion, helpful in understanding the process.

Choice

Nearly all of the major definitions of autonomy include some idea of freedom of choice in learning (Benson 2012). Providing options and empowering students to make choices are necessary to help ensure that learner needs are met. When I took over the reading class, the existing course syllabus contained limited learner choice. The assignments were predetermined and vocabulary tests were the major sources of assessment. In order to change the situation, I began to negotiate the syllabus with students as a way of furthering their control over choices they could make. These negotiations included voting on the course learning goals and outcomes, the grading criteria, and the assignments themselves, and they were conducted not just at the beginning but continuously throughout the course.

When I took over, the existing syllabus had several predetermined, graded assignments. Two examples included: a reading log in which students recorded a sample of the texts (i.e. textbooks for other classes and online news articles) they read during the semester and the strategies they used while reading, and a vocabulary log in which students recorded words they read but did not understand. For those words, they also recorded definitions, L1 translations, and example sentences. The existing syllabus required students to complete several reading and vocabulary logs during the semester. While I believed that these were reasonable assignments, I also felt that the students would benefit from and have more investment in a more personalized approach in which they tried and then negotiated to do the assignments they felt were most helpful to their own learning.

To negotiate a new syllabus, I first asked the students to do one reading log and one vocabulary log so they could understand the assignments as well as the amount and type of work they required. I shared my rationale for why the assignments could help them improve their reading, while also noting that these types of assignments were not necessarily the only ways to improve and that each learner has unique needs. After a few weeks of class, the students formed small groups of five or six to discuss the reading log and vocabulary assignments they had completed. After this discussion, the students voted on how many reading and vocabulary logs they wanted to complete during the semester, or if they would prefer different types of homework. In one class, the students voted to eliminate the vocabulary log assignment because they felt the explicit learning of vocabulary was not helpful to them. Instead, they wanted more focus on reading logs because they felt they helped motivate them to read more and to think about reading strategies.

Grade weightings were also negotiated. Students voted collectively for different assignments and projects to count for different percentages of the class grade. This meant that after voting, the entire class would have the same grading scale. For example, students in one section of the course felt the reading logs were important and should be worth 15% of their final grade, but limited the vocabulary logs to just 5%. Another class I taught felt the homework should be more balanced and voted for the reading and vocabulary logs to be worth 10% each. I always reminded them that it was my role as the teacher to make sure that these changes were within reason, for example, by rejecting a class vote to have attendance constitute 90% of the final grade.

The other major change we negotiated was to eliminate the decontextualised standardized vocabulary tests, which were applied to the whole class despite their different backgrounds and interests. Instead, students were given an opportunity to choose different reading projects by midsemester. Examples of reading projects included: organizing a reading group, doing an ethnography on an academic or other literacy area, tutoring others in reading, or recording an audiobook (each described in more detail below). Students also had the option of crafting their own reading project to work on over the course of the semester. The move to student-created projects helped to increase student engagement in the class and further develop autonomy.

Cohesion

For strong community development, the choice should be balanced with cohesion where students work together and bond while in class (Senior 2006). In this course, cohesion was integrated with the expansion of choices. For example, students were given more control over goals, grading, and assignments, but decisions were reached by consensus.

Cohesion was also developed through reading circles. Students selected articles (one or two pages in length) according to their own interests or academic backgrounds, developed a set of questions, and provided a glossary of key vocabulary in the article, following a process I modeled early in the semester. On the reading circle days, those students who were the leaders brought copies of the articles they had selected and prepared. The class broke into small groups of four or five, each with a leader, who would then facilitate the reading and discussion of their article for one hour. The groups were formed spontaneously on the day of class, with time provided in class

to read the short articles. The reading circles served to further class cohesion because they allowed each student to focus on their own interests and created a space for discussion and sharing of opinions in a respectful manner. They were often highlighted in student evaluations, and in post-course interviews as one of the ways they developed close friendships in the class.

Finally, cohesion was built into the reading projects. After students selected or created their project, they were grouped with others who had chosen the same or similar projects, and group meetings took place twice a semester in lieu of class to discuss progress and ideas. Each group first met together, and then with the instructor for a total of fifteen to twenty minutes. Students were never alone when working on these projects but instead were encouraged to discuss ideas with and find support from others.

Building a Broader Community

Once a classroom community that supports collective autonomy has been established, it is important to extend community building into the broader, surrounding environment (see Roach, this volume, for more on the social aspects of reading). One valuable way to start helping students build this broader community is within the institution where they are studying, but it is also important to look outside to the local communities in which the programs are situated. In the next two sections, I share examples from the reading projects that were used to build students' sense of community: first within the institution and second in the broader community.

Student-Initiated Community Building Within the University

The major way that student-initiated community building within the university was brought back into class was through the reading projects. While students occasionally designed their own projects, most chose one of the project options that I provided. All of these options involved combining a focus on reading with community building. Those that centered on the institution were (1) undertaking an ethnography in a particular academic area and (2) organizing reading groups or book clubs, which are explained below.

Every semester, three or four students, particularly graduate students, chose an ethnography of an academic area, such as biology or sociology. An

ethnography is a systematic qualitative study of a culture, in this case focusing on the culture of an academic discipline by examining texts and writing conventions in that discipline. This idea came from Kramer-Dahl's (2001) work in Singapore with undergraduate students who conducted a critical self-ethnography of their own previously written academic papers. Instead of doing a self-ethnography, however, my students were asked to find at least ten examples of writing (e.g. class notes, teacher's writing on a whiteboard, textbooks, and syllabi) from one or more of their major classes that they could then analyze for important vocabulary, text patterns, and expectations for future reading. The focus on locating so many different examples pushed them to find creative ways to collect different texts. In some cases, students conducted interviews with other teachers and used the interview transcript as a text, emailed teachers to ask for course syllabi, or asked fellow students for samples of notes to compare with their own notes from a class. Throughout the semester, students met with me in small groups to exchange ideas and discuss progress. At the end of the semester, they wrote a report on their findings and shared it with the class.

Some students organized reading groups or book clubs. Although only a few chose this project, in one particular instance it had a major impact. John (all names are pseudonyms) was a student from a less privileged background and was having difficulty both using academic language and adjusting to the demands of the university. He wanted to organize a reading group to help him with readings for his other classes. I worked with him and a classmate, who chose the same project, to organize a group from one of his required history classes, for which there were many readings. Although he attracted only a few participants, he still developed a steady group of three friends from the history class and established a good friendship with the other student doing the same project. These classmates helped to keep him focused and encouraged him not to give up when he felt overwhelmed. A full semester after our class had finished, he reported that he was still meeting to study with these friends.

These examples show how students worked to build communities within the university setting that helped them to become more successful and autonomous learners. They made connections with other teachers and students that they might not have made without undertaking the projects. At the same time, the choice of projects was their own rather than imposed by the teacher. Finally, they were supported in these projects by a classroom community through group meetings and in-class discussions. This classroom community provided a supportive base from which students could expand their networks.

Student-Initiated Community Building Outside the University

Broader community building can include various ways of going beyond the institution: inviting community members, especially local authors, to class; reading local newspapers and writing letters to the editor; or doing activities that involve exploring local linguistic landscapes (Rowland 2013) by bringing in examples of writing from the community (e.g. posters, signs, and advertisements) for analysis.

Other reading projects that were used in the course also encouraged students to interact in a broader way and were important for the short-term study abroad students who wanted to familiarize themselves with Hawai‘i, as well as for recent immigrants who wanted to know their community better. They were also helpful for students with academic interests, such as education or social work. Some of these projects included literacy ethnographies, tutoring at a local elementary school, or recording an audiobook for an ESL program aimed at senior citizens.

Literacy ethnographies, as mentioned earlier in this section, involve exploring texts that appear in or connect to the broader community (e.g. signs, posters, official government correspondence, and graffiti). Literacy ethnographies are similar to linguistic landscape projects in that they focus on community texts; however, they differ in the more systematic analysis of the texts and in the focus on how the texts give clues to the culture of the place in which they are found. Students can analyze them to identify their purposes, the language(s) used, and the types of community interactions that occur through writing. Following Wallace (1999), students who chose this project collected at least ten examples of community texts. They were also encouraged to interview people in the community, including those who wrote the texts or were seen posting texts on bulletin boards, as well as to find out from community members how they read or used the information in the texts. As one student, Lawan, a recent immigrant from Thailand, wrote in her report, through this project ‘people will have an opportunity to understand the habits and ideas. This means that you are not only read the information, but you are also able to use information in to your life.’ She collected a variety of posters, public notices, examples of signs, and even instructions for taking medicine. She also talked to people in her building about how (if and when) they read notices, asked the landlord about where and why he posted notices, and discussed with the pharmacist how to read the instructions on medication bottles.

Another successful and popular project was volunteering at a local elementary school, specifically to help with reading activities for young children learning ESL. This project was of interest to students intending to teach in the future or whose majors focused on education or applied linguistics. When I interviewed five former students a semester after the class had finished, they reported that this was one of the most memorable activities they had completed. Jihyun, an English literature major, had returned to South Korea after her period of study abroad, but had enjoyed tutoring so much that she now volunteers as an English tutor for children in South Korea. Other students reported keeping in touch with the elementary school for the duration of their time in Hawai‘i and even returning in one case to volunteer during the semester after our class finished.

Building these types of connections outside of the classroom is important for students, both as a way of extending their own supportive communities and of analyzing ways in which other people use and interact with language. Learning skills such as how to read instructions on medication (e.g. deciding which information is vital to read and which can be skimmed) are an important aspect of reading. Knowing when and where important notices are posted and who to talk to if you do not understand them is also crucial. Tutoring a young child learning to read helps students gain confidence in their own reading abilities. Several student tutors reported feeling more fluent in reading and better at decoding after tutoring young children in phonics. These students had never received formal instruction in English phonics before, but through teaching those skills, they found themselves applying the concepts more explicitly in their own reading.

Implications for Other Contexts

Community building is highly dependent on local contexts and must be developed differently depending on the location and students. The examples I have discussed worked well in an environment where the students were surrounded by English and were required to read in English in their daily lives. In this section, I present examples of other ways of building communities both in ESL contexts with non-university students and in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts.

One example of community building with adult, non-university learners comes from Wallerstein and Auerbach (2004). Their work focused on how to support adult ESL learners who were working in mostly low-wage jobs.

Community building in that context involved helping students organize colleagues in their workplaces to obtain better working conditions, using the classroom as a supportive community. The texts for reading were chosen by both the teachers and students. Students brought work-related and legal documents to class and teachers helped them to understand this material. Teachers brought in readings on worker's rights and provided accounts of others in similar situations. Students would then collectively discuss and respond to these readings, which often resonated with their broader communities. In this setting, the role of the teacher becomes that of an activist or advocate who works not only to help students improve their language skills but also to achieve greater agency and better living conditions in their new home.

In EFL contexts, building communities is equally important. While the in-class examples from this chapter may be useful in EFL contexts, the projects that connect students to the broader community are more difficult to implement. One of the main ways in which communities can be built outside of the EFL classroom is virtually. Social networking sites, such as Facebook or Twitter, provide obvious examples of sites where students might build virtual communities (see Kozar, this volume, for other ways of using technology for language learning). Black (2005) describes a unique example of virtual community building that is particularly relevant to reading classes: fanfiction sites. Fanfiction is fiction that uses characters and/or settings from other original works of fiction, written by fans of that work. An example might be the Harry Potter series. Fans can write their own stories that feature characters from Harry Potter or are set in locations from the book, like the wizarding school, Hogwarts. Users on these sites read each other's stories, provide reviews, and even offer editing support for those learning to write in English.

Another way of using online resources to help students connect with a broader community is through social movements. Assisting students to find an issue they care deeply about and demonstrating ways in which they can connect with advocacy movements online can motivate them and are a compelling reason to read and interact more in English. One example is from a teacher in South Korea (Wright 2015) who helped her class find social justice campaigns and connect to them by taking part in various awareness-building campaigns. Students worked on issues ranging from environmental protection to providing aid for refugees. Students can join these campaigns by reading about them, posting on social media, and even joining or starting their own local advocacy groups. While many students learn English with a view to working in a globally interconnected business community, joining global social movements to create positive change in the world provides another compelling reason to use English.

One other possible way of building communities in EFL contexts is to have students carry out linguistic landscape projects (Rowland 2013) where they find examples of English in their communities and interview people about their use of English. Many urban areas in non-English speaking countries have signage posted in English and English writing on clothing or products. Having students find examples can help them to realize how often they actually encounter and read English in their own communities.

Conclusion

Reading in a second language is a skill that develops slowly and requires extensive practice. Success in academic reading often lies in developing support networks and communities that will be sustainable regardless of whether a learner is enrolled in a course. It requires the reading and processing of community texts as well as academic texts. Teachers can support longer-term learner success by working to establish communities among students that will outlast their individual classes and by helping students create their own sustainable communities within broader institutions or neighborhoods. Doing so acknowledges that learning to read in a second language is not solely contained within the classroom.

Questions for Reflection

1. Fremeaux and Jordan (2012) state that learners need to work together to create collective conditions for autonomy. In your context, what conditions are needed for learner autonomy? What constraints are there on learner autonomy? How can you structure a reading course to help learners overcome those constraints?
2. In what ways can you work to build cohesion (as defined in this chapter) in a reading course?
3. If you negotiated your reading syllabus with learners, which parts (i.e. grade weighting, assignments, attendance policies, and so on) would you be more open to, or resistant to, negotiating?
4. What are some benefits and drawbacks to having student selected reading projects instead of more standardized exams?
5. Of the examples of reading projects given, which would work in your situation, and which would be more challenging? What other examples of projects you can think of?

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13

Reading as a Social Practice for Adult Migrants: Talk Around Text

Kevin Roach

Introduction

At the heart of this chapter is the idea that teaching reading to adult migrants with English language needs requires an approach that recognises literacy as a social practice. This approach would highlight the social and cultural purposes of reading, emphasise learners' literacy practices and make use of authentic texts in the curriculum (Hood et al. 1996). Discussing the field of literacy studies, Barton and Lee (2011) argue that viewing reading through the lens of social practice shifts the focus from acquisition and the development of individual skills to what one *does* with reading in real-world contexts. They further claim that people live in a 'textually mediated social world' (p. 588) in which reading is a central part of participating in most social activities in the community, at home, at work and for study. Two key contentions are that literacy allows people to fulfil personal goals and make sense of life around them and that reading frequently involves talk about the text. This chapter adopts this kind of thinking and applies it to the reading classroom.

In the context described in this chapter, the teaching of English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) in New Zealand, the term 'adult migrant' refers collectively to those who settle in the country under a number of

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immigration categories, including the business investor and skilled migrant categories, refugees accepted under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Quota Program, and to a much lesser extent, asylum seekers who have gained legal refugee status. Adult migrant ESOL also attracts young adults who may have attended New Zealand schools but do not have the language proficiency to enrol in mainstream tertiary education or academic foundation programmes. Education levels and first language literacy frequently differ between skilled migrants and refugees, and literacy instruction, including reading instruction, needs to take these differences into account (see Cooke and Simpson 2008: Chap. 6); however, the learners I refer to in this chapter are not those with minimal or no first language literacy.

The chapter first outlines a number of theoretical concepts that underpin a social practice approach to reading instruction in one adult migrant programme, in which I have taught. The chapter then goes on to discuss how this approach is brought to life in my own classroom, grounded in four phases of reading instruction. Of significance here is not only the theoretical notion that talk frequently accompanies the reading of written texts (Barton and Lee 2011), but also the idea that such talk, in the reading classroom, offers opportunities for social interaction (van Lier 1996) and has the potential to facilitate text comprehension and second language learning more generally. The penultimate section touches on pedagogical implications and identifies a number of working principles teachers can adopt as 'provisional specifications' (Stenhouse 1975) to see if the approach works for them in their own instructional settings. The concluding section highlights the value of documenting practice-based accounts of teaching in order to understand teaching from the inside (Freeman 2002).

Theoretical Underpinnings

Barton and Lee (2011) claim that literacy, including reading, is not an end in itself but is always part of a wider social purpose (see West, this volume, for additional ideas on integrating reading within communities). The pedagogical use of everyday texts in the classroom thus mirrors adult migrants' social purposes for reading in their lives. The idea that reading instruction should employ authentic texts is not new, although in the wider English language teaching field their use is somewhat contested (Roberts and Cooke 2009).

In adult migrant ESOL, however, a strong case is made for their inclusion in the curriculum since they arguably connect to learners' lives outside the classroom, provide affordances for authentic communication, facilitate

motivation and improve programme outcomes (e.g. Burns 2003; Roberts and Cooke 2009). Feez (1998) also promotes the use of authentic texts in the adult migrant ESOL classroom. She outlines a text-based approach to syllabus design in which the teaching of reading is directly linked to the kind of texts English language learners might encounter outside the classroom. For Feez (1998: 4), the term 'text' means 'any stretch of language which is held together cohesively through meaning'; additionally, the texts themselves relate to a number of genres or text-types. Authentic written texts found in the real world might range from a one word 'Stop' sign to forms, brochures, newspaper articles and texts commonly found in the workplace, such as memos, procedural instructions and reports.

While this perspective is part of the shift to a social understanding of language and literacy, the social practice approach I describe in this chapter falls short of adopting a fully text-based syllabus. Rather, it is limited to one text-type, newspaper articles, and in particular, 'human interest' stories.[1] It also falls short of adopting much of the explicit pedagogy associated with a text-based approach, such as deconstructing and reconstructing the text and linking language to social purpose. Rather, a social practice approach highlights the importance of 'talk around text' (Barton and Lee 2011) and how this can be facilitated in the classroom through social interaction. One common thread, however, is the pedagogical practice of scaffolding, a term explained later in the chapter.

'Talk around a text' (Barton and Lee 2011: 605) refers to the spoken interaction that frequently accompanies reading in non-classroom contexts. Barton and Lee (2011: 606) claim that '[M]uch of the language as spoken by ordinary people in their everyday lives […] is in fact talk about texts', even when a written text may not be physically present. For example, in an everyday social situation, the conversation might turn to something the speakers have read in a novel, newspaper, magazine or online. Although reading can be a silent and individual pursuit, facilitating meaningful dialogue about the text in the classroom provides opportunities not only for comprehension of the text but also for language learning more generally.

Also important is the notion of 'talk is work' (Baynham 2006), the idea that student-initiated dialogue in the adult ESOL classroom affords learner agency. Baynham (2006: 25) explains that such talk departs from routine classroom language by opening up classroom discourse and by allowing learners to raise topics of their own, related to their own lives. While the use of authentic texts allows the outside world to be brought into the classroom, in the form of reading materials relevant to learners' lives, the idea behind 'talk is work' allows learners own concerns to be brought into the classroom as the subject of conversation. Baynham (2006) further explains that this

requires the teacher to be responsive to their students' talk, have a genuine interest in what they say, and on occasion respond appropriately to any 'interruptive moments' (p. 25) that might arise (see Chappell, this volume, who describes an inquiry dialogue approach to teacher–student interaction). Cooke and Simpson (2008: 75) explain this instructional approach as a way of 'relating classroom content to students' lives while retaining the freshness and responsiveness of on-the-spot planning'.

While such classroom discourse could be seen as disruptive, in the context of my own classroom it allows me to facilitate talk around the reading of a newspaper story, affords opportunities for learners to engage with real communication and encourages them to express their own opinions. Since many new settlers frequently report the scarcity of meaningful interactional opportunities in English in the community, outside of work and routine service encounters (Roberts and Cooke 2009) providing opportunities for talk in the adult migrant ESOL classroom is of crucial importance.

One final, related concept of importance is that of 'instructional conversation' (van Lier 1996: 164). While the previous notions of 'talk around text' and 'talk is work' provide a rationale for encouraging authentic dialogue in the classroom, 'instructional conversation' refers to what teachers actually do to facilitate classroom conversation and highlights the importance of scaffolding as a pedagogical strategy. In this sense, scaffolding can be seen as a metaphor for the support offered by teachers to learners to help them achieve something they may not easily be able to do by themselves. The language teacher's role is to listen with a sympathetic ear and to help learners express what they want to say, for example, by eliciting language from learners, filling in any cultural, conceptual or linguistic gaps, and by building on their efforts to communicate. As van Lier (1996) explains, 'instructional conversation' departs from traditional 'lesson talk', in that the teacher and learners respond to the talk as it unfolds, in this case, around the reading of a newspaper story. In a line of thinking similar to Baynham (2006), who advocates opening up the classroom to learners to raise topics of their own, the reading classroom aims to become a site for authentic dialogue.

Bringing the Syllabus to Life for Adult ESOL Learners

Widdowson (1990) claims that only when a syllabus is enacted through methodology can it be realised in the classroom. While the literature above points to the means to embrace a social practice approach, the following sections

offer a practice-based account of how I bring the syllabus to life in the classroom, first by outlining the approach in general terms and second by identifying a number of practices, techniques and behaviours which underpin instructional procedures.

Reading in a second language is a complex activity, particularly if texts are authentic and contain lexical items that may be new to learners. 'Human interest' stories, however, appear to be less complex than many other newspaper texts, possibly due to their narrative structure and the fact they often have an intrinsic value related to learners' own experiences (see Hayik, this volume, who blends the reading of culturally relevant literature with writing instruction). Nevertheless, teachers using such newspaper stories need to be aware of vocabulary demands and select articles that are not excessively difficult. In my experience, the approach is most appropriate for at least intermediate level learners, that is, B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). That said, I have used the approach with learners who have lower English language proficiency but are literate in their first language. In such classrooms, the text needs to be modified, for example, by rewriting it in less complex language, and sufficient scaffolding must be provided during the classroom discussion.

To give a brief overview, the approach follows a number of phases. It begins with a pre-reading phase in which learners are encouraged to formulate their own questions about the text orally, without yet reading the text, from visual clues such as a photograph and caption, and/or the headline. This phase is followed by independent reading of the text and, in phase three, by classroom discussion and text exploration. The fourth phase focuses on follow-up activities. These four phases resonate with the social practice processes that might go on when texts are read outside the classroom and are exemplified in more detail in the next section.

While grounded in the concept of reading as a social practice, the approach I use does not preclude an emphasis on skills; it also lends itself to the development of reading fluency, the learning of vocabulary, pronunciation practice and an exploration of the social purpose of the text. In this regard, the approach is not exclusively concerned with classroom interaction of the contingent, or moment-by-moment kind but also involves planned activities and more routine classroom language. The approach also entails the use of follow-up activities, which include dictation and cloze tasks, summary writing and even extended writing where learners write of their own experiences and responses. I have used stories on settling in New Zealand, for example, to explore culture shock, and my students have written short recounts of their own on the topic, which I have published in booklet form for use by the whole class.

Table 13.1 Examples of texts used

Headline	Synopsis
Stupid teacher loses year's savings	Man recently returned from teaching English in Japan has a large sum of money (in Japanese yen) stolen from an unlocked car while window-shopping
Girl calls 111 to help mother	An adopted Russian child (aged five) calls the emergency number after her mother falls down stairs
Love of culture drives school	Local Arabic-speaking community starts a community school to support first language
Working magic with carpets	An Afghani refugee finds employment restoring expensive carpets, continuing his family tradition

Table 13.1 identifies the headlines of a representative number of stories I have used and provides a brief synopsis of the texts.

Typically, the stories used in my classroom come from the community, regional and national newspapers, but on occasion from local community magazines. Topics are varied but in general relate to peoples' lives in New Zealand. From the perspective of course planning, the texts lend themselves to being grouped into similar topics so that learners can benefit from the recycling of vocabulary and can consolidate their knowledge through reading about and discussing similar topics and issues.

For instance, texts about the lives of new migrants can underpin a unit of work on *Starting a New Life*, although such stories in the news media often position new migrants and refugees in certain ways and need to be read (and discussed) critically. Similarly, the text in Table 13.1 about the adopted Russian child who calls the emergency number to report her mother's accident can become part of a topic on *Health*.

As noted earlier, the reading of the newspaper stories in the classroom affords conversational opportunities for talking about various aspects of the students' own experiences. I find that stories about the lives of new migrants and refugees, in particular, generate considerable classroom discussion, for example, on the challenges of resettlement and culture shock. Likewise, the story about a language teacher losing one year's savings through an act of stupidity can generate discussion about crime in society. Importantly, learners should be allowed to raise concerns related to their own lives. Equally, the teacher needs to be cognisant of not dominating the classroom discussion, or as Walsh (2002: 20) puts it, 'filling in the gaps'.

Table 13.2 Four phases of instruction

Instructional phase	Teaching strategies
Phase One	Establish context Brainstorm ideas to predict the topic Pre-teach vocabulary from the text that emerges from the discussion Elicit questions about the story
Phase Two	Provide text for silent, individual reading Allocate time for scanning and close reading
Phase Three	Elicit answers to questions Open up text for discussion Scaffold learner contributions
Phase Four	Explore vocabulary Practice pronunciation Highlight grammatical structures Invite learners to read text out loud Set homework tasks Provide review tasks

Classroom Procedures

This section extends the discussion of the four phases of instruction briefly outlined above and identifies a number of teaching strategies.

As illustrated in Table 13.2, instruction begins with a pre-reading phase, in which the teacher provides a photograph and caption and/or headline which accompanies the newspaper story. Based on a two-hour lesson, this phase could take up to 30 minutes. The aim here is to brainstorm ideas in order to establish the context, generate interest in the text, predict the topic and identify what learners already know about it. I find this phase is best treated as a teacher-led activity. At this point, taking cues from the discussion, there is an opportunity to pre-teach some of the vocabulary found in the text, writing the words/expressions on the whiteboard with an accompanying explanation.

In setting up the lesson, I also encourage learners to formulate questions they may have about the story orally, and I then write them on the whiteboard for ongoing reference. The generation of questions becomes a collaborative activity where I work with the learners to reformulate the questions if needed. Typically, the questions are framed as who, what, how, when and why. I find that initially encouraging learners to pose questions about the text in this way, without writing them down, focuses their attention on the reading at hand. They may, of course, copy them off the board later, or as often the case, use their smartphones to take a snapshot.

In Phase Two, learners are given the entire text to read, complete with any accompanying photograph, caption or headline. In this phase, reading is a silent and individual pursuit. Time is allocated for learners to scan the text looking for answers to the questions posed collaboratively in Phase One. Additional time is then allocated for close reading. As before, learners are encouraged not to write down their answers to the questions but to rely on their working memory, supported by the prior discussion of the context in Phase One. Some learners may begin to use dictionaries or highlight vocabulary items in the text but should be encouraged to read the text to the end before doing so, to guess the meaning from context and to maximise the goal of reading fluency.

In Phase Three, the questions collaboratively posed in Phase One are addressed through discussion of the text and additional matters are raised. My own preference is for teacher-led discourse (Toth 2011) rather than discussion in pairs or groups, although the caveat is not to let a small number of learners dominate the discussion. I have found that a whole-class activity affords the greatest opportunity for classroom discussion with the teacher, and in van Lier's (1996) terms, best facilitates 'instructional conversation'. Support is particularly important for learners with limited speaking proficiency (but who may be more proficient in other macro-skills, such as reading or writing), or those who are shy to speak up in class. Effective use of the strategies in Phase Three will depend on teachers' knowledge, beliefs and experience but the key concern is to provide opportunities for oral interaction that aims for comprehension of the deeper meanings and implications of the text. For example, asking open-ended questions, getting students to infer from the content and the context and encouraging them to elaborate and justify their responses are more important than posing factual comprehension questions. Not only is reading instruction then connected to the wider social context outside the classroom, through reference to personal experience or opinion, but literacy practices associated with talk around text are also foregrounded. Although located in a pedagogical setting, the reading of a newspaper story in the classroom becomes a social process in which talk is generated and opinions are expressed.

In Phase Four, lexical items and grammar from the text can be highlighted using an overhead or data show projector. I have found learners have a particular interest in phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions. Worksheets from commercial textbooks can also be used to supplement the focus on vocabulary or grammar. Questions about the text prepared beforehand (possibly similar to those collaboratively formulated in Phase One) and vocabulary exercises can also be given to learners to take home for review. Learners are also encouraged to talk about the text with family members at home, although as Barton and Lee (2011) note, such dialogue in the home domain

may occur in the first language, or may be bilingual talk. In subsequent lessons, though, learners could report back to the class on their family discussions/reactions to the text, further ensuring opportunities for authentic English language use in the classroom. Homework might also entail asking learners to write a summary or draft a longer response based on models already covered in a previous class. A story previously read in class can also be reviewed in a subsequent lesson by constructing a short dictation or cloze task, or by inviting individual learners to read parts of the text out loud.

The procedures described above suggest a number of roles for the teacher. The first entails the facilitation of a particular kind of classroom interaction, grounded in meaningful discussion about the text that goes beyond having learners provide just factual information about the text. The second role involves scaffolding and expanding learners' contributions. The third requires the teacher to create an appropriate atmosphere and classroom culture conducive to learning, that is, a relaxed interpersonal climate in which learners are comfortable to interact, listen to others, even to disagree with or challenge others, including the teacher. Arguably, to assume such roles could be challenging for some teachers, particularly those beginning in the profession, as well as for some learners. As noted by Baynham (2006), addressing the affective dimension in the classroom as well as facilitating authentic dialogue has complex and demanding implications for teachers and learners alike, in terms of power, identity and agency, and may be further complicated by the diverse cultural make-up of the class that is often found in the kind of programme I describe. I have found, however, that despite these challenges, learners respond well to this approach and that my efforts to make the reading classroom a safe, supportive and interesting space for learning are well appreciated.

Implications for Teaching

The approach to reading instruction described in this chapter rests on the understanding that people live in a textually mediated social world and that reading, as with the broader notion of literacy, is a social and cultural activity motivated by real-life goals and, most significantly, frequently involves talk around text. By illustrating a particular approach to teaching reading to adult migrants with English language needs, this chapter has aimed to illustrate some of these understandings. This practice-based account contributes to the growing literature that has begun to recognise the social nature of reading. The account is a personal one, not based on the collection and analysis of empirical data, but rather on my own reflections on my practice over time (Farrell 2012).

Based on these reflections, as well as on the key concepts from the literature on reading as a social practice, a number of principles can be recommended to teachers wanting to adopt a similar approach.

- Use authentic texts in the curriculum related to the social and cultural context in which learners live.
- Facilitate talk around text by incorporating meaningful dialogue into classroom interaction.
- Adopt improvisation as a complement to planned instruction, as learning opportunities arise.
- View classroom interaction as a means of giving agency to learners.
- Scaffold learners' contributions by helping them express ideas that may be a little beyond their current proficiency.
- Create a classroom culture that is conducive to learning.
- Encourage reading practices outside of the classroom.

Principles such as these offer guidance for practice. Accordingly, the approach invites teachers to adopt these principles and the procedures they entail in their own instructional contexts, with their own learners, to see if the approach works for them. While situated in a local context, the approach could be productively adapted in a number of ESL, or even EFL classrooms, but has particular resonance for teaching reading in adult migrant settings where English language instruction relates to early settlement goals. The approach also has the potential to inform teacher education by highlighting the social nature of reading, its relationship to reading in a second language, and by identifying a number of pedagogical strategies for facilitating talk around text in the classroom.

Conclusion

The practice-based account described in this chapter highlights an approach to teaching reading in a particular context, that of adult migrant ESOL. The account illustrates the use of authentic reading materials, notably topical newspaper articles, for developing reading skills and for facilitating conversational interaction in the classroom, which thereby offers opportunities for more general language learning. In this regard, the approach does not focus on reading instruction alone but adopts a dynamic perspective that draws on interdisciplinary knowledge and, in part, is predicated on 'the teaching of integrated and multiple skills in context' (Hinkel 2006: 110). As the

account is practice-based, it also allows second language teachers and teacher educators alike to glimpse teaching from the inside, a perspective equally essential for guiding teachers' practices as it is for guiding those who educate teachers. As Freeman (2002: 11) puts it:

> while we might arrive at crudely accurate maps of teaching by studying it from the outside in, we will not grasp what is truly happening until the *people who are doing it articulate what they understand about it* (emphasis added).

The account of teaching reading illustrated in this chapter thus highlights the value of documenting teachers' own accounts of practice with the potential to contribute to the expansion and refinement of disciplinary knowledge.

Note

1. Practitioners should check copyright regulations in their own jurisdictions and/or institutional policies surrounding the use of print-based materials for educational purposes.

Questions for Reflection

1. Is it possible in your teaching context to use topical newspaper stories for teaching reading? What benefits might there be for your teaching and your students' learning?
2. What are some of the issues related to using authentic texts for reading instruction in your context? How might you address these issues?
3. In your classroom, is it useful to integrate other macro-skills into reading instruction? How effective would this be in your context?
4. In particular, how might you encourage talk about a text with your students? What kind of questions could you ask your learners? In your context, how much freedom could you give your learners?

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Part IV

Writing

14

Promoting Descriptive Writing Through Culturally Relevant Literature

Rawia Hayik

Introduction

The teaching of writing is important since, not only does it provide students with academic English capabilities, but it also prepares them for life in an interconnected world that requires them to write for different purposes and to use different genres (i.e., expository, descriptive, narrative, and persuasive). However, producing 'a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing' in one's second language is enormously challenging (Nunan 1999: 271). This is especially so when that language is Arabic, as in the case described in this chapter, which involves Israeli college students whose first language is Arabic. The chapter describes the background to this teaching context and some of the theoretical ideas that were adopted to make changes in approaches to teaching writing to these students. It then presents an innovative pedagogic strategy that incorporates the use of authentic literature with process writing.

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Writing in the Arab Classroom

For Arabic-speaking students, acquiring writing skills in English is highly demanding since the orthographic and grammatical systems as well as the rhetorical conventions (structure, style, and organization) in Arabic are distinct from English. Some of these differences include capitalization (no upper or lower case letters in the Arabic alphabet); syntax (the verb in Arabic sentences precedes the subject, and sentences can exist without a verb); and spelling (some English letters do not exist in the Arabic language, e.g. 'p' and 'v'). Numerous English vowel sounds are also problematic for Arabic speakers since they have no equivalent in Arabic. Unsurprisingly, these differences between Arabic and English are likely to negatively interfere with students' writing (Thompson-Panos and Thomas-Ružić 1983). Various studies demonstrate the types of challenges that first language Arabic users experience when learning to write in English at the university. Analyzing the English writing of 96 Arab university students, Doushaq (1986) found that they had problems in three major categories: sentence structure, paragraph structure, and content. Mohamed and Omer (2000) also found problems in cohesion related to the differences in what constitutes a cohesive text in each language. Palestinian students' writing in Mourtaga's (2004) study exposed repeated writing errors in using verbs, punctuation, and articles.

However, in many Arab high school and university classrooms, writing is mostly taught through guided drills. Students become used to writing a required text and handing it to the teacher in order to receive a grade. Options such as sharing their writing with peers for feedback, revision, and resubmission are almost non-existent. Consequently, as a teacher of a basic writing course offered to pre-intermediate and intermediate level first-year students at an Arab teacher training college in Northern Israel, I often encounter disenfranchised students who are unmotivated to write. In addition to lacking knowledge of vocabulary, English syntax, and writing conventions, students are often unfamiliar with writing process stages (prewriting, drafting, response, revision, proof-reading, and publishing).

Teaching writing in this problematic context necessitates explicit instruction, guidance, and support on the part of the teacher. Finding creative ways to involve students in the writing process alongside providing extensive practice opportunities is essential for developing Arab students' writing. Attempting to increase their motivation to write and to improve the students' writing skills, I decided to provide a basis for writing that went beyond writing drills through reading aloud a culturally relevant book that would inspire them to write similar pieces about their lives. In the sections

below, I detail my instructional steps when using a story about a Palestinian grandmother to scaffold students' descriptive writing about their own grandmothers. The various stages of the writing process are exemplified by samples of students' writing.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Several frameworks influence the pedagogy I have adopted, the first of which is the need to connect the EFL language classroom to students' lives and to provide writing opportunities that are meaningful and relevant to them (Hyland 2007). Instead of merely following coursebooks that contain exercises for practicing isolated writing techniques and language conventions, students also need to write meaningful pieces that relate to their own experiences. Writing skills and conventions can then be taught to students deductively while they are writing and rewriting.

The approach I use is also framed by the assumption that reading and writing are inextricably linked. As the Writing Study Group of the NCTE Executive Committee (November 2004) propose: 'In order to write a particular kind of text, it helps if the writer has read that kind of text. In order to take on a particular style of language, the writer needs to have read that language.' Exposing students to rich literature experiences is essential for helping them produce similar pieces of writing (Calkins 1994). They can use literature as an inspirational resource for borrowing ideas (Lancia 1997; Paran 2006) and using sophisticated vocabulary, imagery, and powerful stylistic elements.

My work is also inspired by elements from the concept of the writing workshop (Atwell 1998) that highlights process writing. Students should be granted sufficient time to go through each stage of the writing process. After outlining their ideas (prewriting), students write their first drafts and share those with an audience (small groups of peers and possibly the teacher). They then revise their initial pieces based on the feedback they receive during the peer and teacher conferencing (see Pham and Iwashita, this volume, for additional perspectives on peer feedback in the writing classroom). If needed, this process of sharing and revising can be repeated until authors are ready to write and proofread their final drafts, and eventually publish their finished work. Instructional mini-lessons throughout the process on issues students struggle with are crucial for their success. Mini-lessons (Calkins 1994) are brief instructional sessions that address writing elements that appeared to be problematic in students' writing. For example, if repeated

capitalization errors emerge in the written pieces of a small group of students, the teacher arranges a mini-lesson with that group to teach them capitalization rules. With a more advanced group whose writing lacks rich, vivid language, the teacher can meet to address that issue and share examples of rich imagery.

In addition to getting acquainted with a process approach and the steps of writing, students need to learn about text forms. Acquainting them with models of writing and providing explicit instruction on the characteristics of specific genres (Hyland 2007) can help them make more informed decisions when writing a specific genre. For instance, when teaching descriptive writing (the focus of this chapter), the teacher can share models of descriptive pieces and analyze with students the unique elements of this genre, for example, detailed descriptions that form a clear picture in the reader's mind of a person, place, thing, or event, often assisted by the use of vivid sensory details, strong action verbs, figurative language (such as analogies, similes, and metaphor), and powerful beginnings and endings (see Vraštilová, this volume, on using authentic literature in reading lessons for young learners).

Teaching Descriptive Writing

I now provide snapshots from sessions of a year-long basic writing course offered to my first-year EFL college students. First, I briefly outline the contents of the syllabus within which the students are expected to work. Next, I detail the steps I took during my writing lessons and the writing process that students engaged in. I then present examples of students' writing, from the drafting stage to the final descriptive pieces, which were inspired by a read-aloud book that provided a detailed description of a Palestinian grandmother.

The course syllabus designed by the college covers writing mechanics (e.g. capitalization, punctuation, organization, and layout of a paragraph), the language system (i.e. grammar, including sentence structure and subject verb agreement), the writing process (i.e. planning, drafting, revising, and so on), and topics (i.e. describing objects, people, and places). Classes met for approximately two hours per week and had about 20 students each. My responsibility as a course instructor was to cover those prescribed topics, decided by the college administration. However, instead of strictly following the syllabus in a linear and deductive manner, I decided to teach the required topics more creatively.

I started the course by asking students to write a short description, which I used to diagnose their weaknesses and needs. Instructional mini-lessons

were then organized to cover the grammatical and stylistic problems that emerged in students' initial pieces of writing (see examples in the next section). More opportunities for practice were provided throughout the course and complemented by individual student conferences with me as well as shared time with peers and/or the whole group to receive formative feedback throughout the process. During the conferences, students became acquainted with possible responses to use that related to editing errors in formatting (e.g. font and paragraphing), punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar usage. Additionally, feedback could relate to stylistic issues through the following questions: Does the paragraph begin with a strong lead? How can the beginning and/or ending be more powerful? Are further details needed to make the description clearer and stronger? What parts can benefit from more imagery or figurative language?

Examples of Writing

The sample in Fig. 14.1 is a short descriptive piece written at the beginning of the year by one student to describe her grandmother. As evident from the example, the student's first draft contained several errors, including spelling (sp.), grammatical (gr.), capitalization (cap.), punctuation (p.), and wrong word use (ww.). Formatting issues also emerged (e.g. starting sentences within the same paragraph on a new line). As explained earlier, such errors are typical of Arabic speakers and were also found in the writing of other students in the class.

Typically, writing teachers in my context only underline errors without guiding students to the type of each error. When checking students' first drafts, I used the coding system outlined above to draw their attention to the nature of the errors and help them make the necessary corrections. Having identified the major types of errors that recurred in most pieces of writing, I then allocated one or two of the following sessions to explicitly teaching and then providing opportunities for students to practice each of these writing features. At the end of each session, students were invited to go over their drafts and correct the feature in focus. For example, after receiving instruction and practice in English capitalization rules, students were asked to review their previous writing and correct any errors they could locate. To scaffold students' revisions, checklists were provided in each session for each focus area. The checklist in the session on capitalization, for instance, required students to check whether they had capitalized the first words of sentences, the pronoun I, and proper nouns such as names of persons, days, months, holidays, geographic areas, religions, and languages.

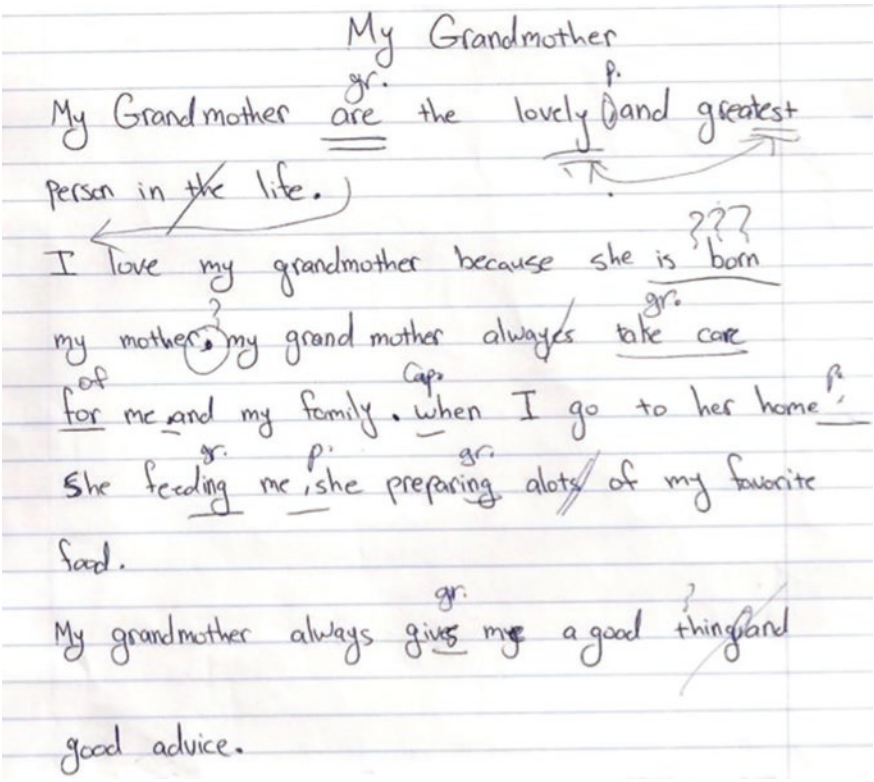


Fig. 14.1 Sample of student work before instruction

However, simply correcting the errors and mechanics did not automatically turn students' writing into powerful descriptive texts. They still lacked important features such as style, cohesion, and rich, expressive language. To further develop their descriptive writing, it was important to introduce models of powerful writing. I selected a storybook that seemed suitable for our context and purpose. Nye's (1994) *Sitti's Secrets* is written by a Palestinian-American to vividly describe the author's special relationship with her Palestinian grandmother, 'sitti' in Arabic. Assisted by expressive drawings on each page, the book portrays a realistic picture of Palestinian life that aligns with Arab students' authentic experiences. Not only was the story culturally relevant and related to a context with which these students could identify but it also served as a model for their descriptive writing (see Vraštilová, this volume, on using authentic literature in reading lessons for young learners).

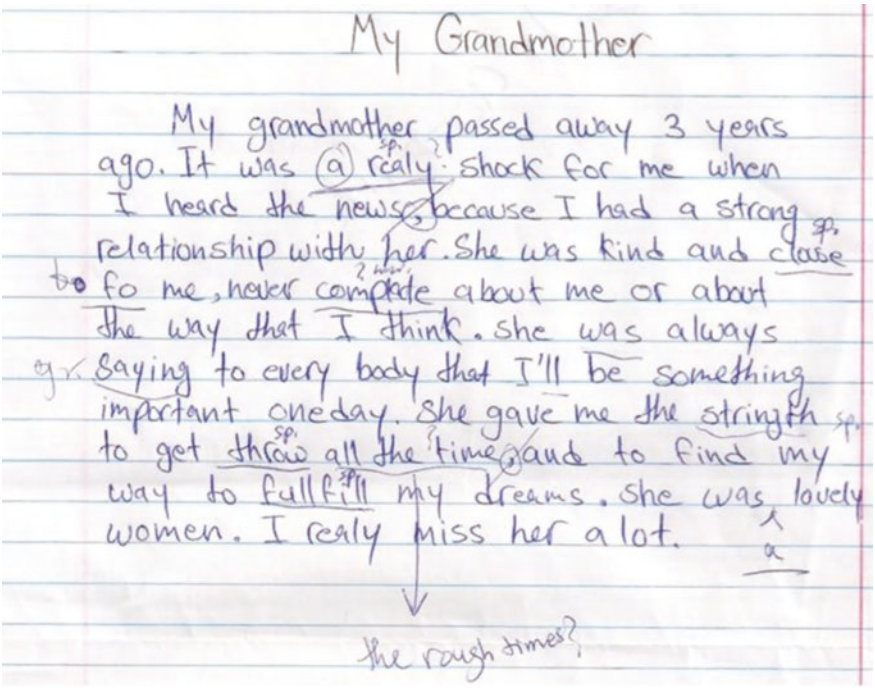
After first reading the book aloud to the students, I then read it again, drawing their attention to the rich imagery and descriptive language

Nye uses to narrate her story. Students also engaged in a workshop on using online resources (e.g. concordancers) for finding richer synonyms to express themselves. The next stage involved inviting them to return to their original written pieces and to add adjectives and further details that would give their writing extra depth. Building on Calkins's (1994) idea, I encouraged them to select one significant detail about their grandmothers and ask: What do I see? Wonder? Feel? Remember? These details would assist them to further enrich their descriptions. The account of the grandmother in the story seemed to trigger students' own associations, and, following Nye's writing, they started crafting more effective and richer texts.

To illustrate this development in writing, when describing her grandmother's appearance, one student originally wrote: 'Her face is soft and full of wrinkles. Her eyes are shiny and green. I love looking at and playing with her hair.' By adding more detail and using descriptive adjectives and adverbs, her revised version became more richly expressive: 'Her wrinkled skin is amazingly soft and smooth. Her sparkly green eyes charm everyone who looks deeply inside them. I love staring into her striped hair and touching her long and soft strands of hair.'

Additional mini-lessons focused on using other techniques such as personification and exaggeration to amplify the effect of students' descriptions. Inspired by Nye's book, students were encouraged to revise their pieces with such techniques in mind, so a sentence like 'She was old but young in heart' became 'She was an old woman, but a young heart nested within her petite body.' Another student developed 'The smell of her great omelets filled the house' into 'The aroma of her divine omelets caressed my tiny nose every time I visited her, filling the entire house with an appetizing smell.' Through these kinds of techniques, the students were able to improve their writing considerably compared with the original versions.

Since students' original versions still lacked strong beginnings and endings, a focus on this issue was the next step in my pedagogic plan. In addition to exposing students to examples of these kinds of beginnings and endings from Nye's book and other sources, I held personal conferences with them to help them enhance their texts. They were also encouraged to discuss their revised beginnings and endings with their peers. Following is an example of how one student transformed the rather shallow beginning and ending in her first draft (Fig. 14.2) into a more elaborate version. Strengthening her style required a combination of personal effort, peer feedback, and instructor scaffolding, suggestions and support.


My Grandmother

My grandmother passed away 3 years ago. It was a realy shock for me when I heard the news, because I had a strong relationship with her. She was kind and close to me, never complete about me or about the way that I think. she was always saying to every body that I'll be something important oneday. She gave me the stringth to get throw all the time, and to find my way to fullfill my dreams. she was lovely women. I realy miss her a lot.

the rough times?

Fig. 14.2 Sample of student work after instruction

The opening in this text was developed into the following version:

> The phone fell from my hands. 'Did she really die? My grandma? My beloved grandma?' For a moment, I felt that my heart stopped beating. For a moment, I felt that an immense part of me died. My eyes were flooded by heartbreaking tears and precious snapshots of our memories together.

The student incorporated my suggestions to include more profound descriptions of her personal feelings and add techniques such as dialogue to strengthen her opening. She also revised the ending for the text. Instead of merely concluding with 'I really miss her a lot,' she wrote more elaborately:

> The old house is still there, but my grandmother is gone. Oh grandma! I will never see you again, but you will always accompany my soul throughout my life journey.

As these examples show, using the read-aloud book as a source for rich vocabulary and style alongside the various explicit and systematic mini-lessons on English writing conventions, stylistic techniques, and strategies assisted students in revising and editing their descriptive writing.

Implications for Teaching

Instead of covering the course syllabus using decontextualized writing drills, teachers can consider how the required writing components can be incorporated into more meaningful and relevant writing tasks for their learners. In EFL contexts that focus on form rather than meaning, it is relevant and motivating for students to write about their personal experiences or characters from their lives, such as their grandmothers. In my context, connecting the writing classroom to my Arab students' own experiences was essential for motivating them to write, and using an English storybook reflecting the Arab way of life added to their pride in their heritage (Nieto 2000).

The good writing teacher is one who provides models of powerful and effective writing. Teachers can use attractive and well-written culturally relevant story books, perhaps selected in consultation with the students themselves. Among the selection criteria teachers can use are that the main characters in the book come from students' own culture and are portrayed in a positive light (e.g. not submissive, abusive, or weak). The book should also be historically accurate and reflect ideas from the perspective of students' own social context.

Such books serve as a resource for conducting writing workshops, where the teacher can cover writing conventions, the way stories can be structured, including rich beginnings and endings, and the types of descriptive language and stylistic components that are needed to make the story engaging. Students can then be encouraged to apply these elements from the selected book in their own descriptions. Through such textual borrowing (Lancia 1997), students learn to adopt and adapt effective elements from the written resource to produce better-written pieces.

Purcell-Gates et al. (2007) argue that from the early developmental years through to graduate courses it is very important for students to understand and use specific genres and their features. Teachers can create activities that require students to analyze the features of the descriptive genre and apply them in writing their own pieces. Providing feedback to students is also crucial for their success. Using a process orientation, teachers can comment on

the students' various drafts and also encourage peer responses. Students can also self-evaluate their writing by comparing it with the source texts they are drawing on. Such approaches to revision help them to develop and refine their texts over time. Since surface-level feedback is not sufficient in moving students' writing to the desired level, it is important for teachers and peers to offer feedback that focuses not only on grammar and spelling but also on vocabulary choices, style, and cohesion. As Pathey-Chavez et al. (2004) propose, quality feedback should also trigger students to develop their ideas.

Conclusion

The teaching ideas and excerpts of students' writing introduced in this chapter exemplify the enriching effects of using literature as a catalyst for writing. My purpose in outlining them is to encourage writing teachers to diverge from traditional paths, especially in EFL contexts where the focus is more on form than meaning, and to provide students with opportunities for holistic and relevant writing tasks. In adopting this position, I am cognizant of the challenges involved in changing the status quo. Teachers who are used to following a prescribed textbook may face difficulties in adapting to students' needs and reality. However, a feasible alternative is to begin the process gradually and to proceed through small steps. EFL writing teachers can start by enriching the syllabus with a culturally relevant story that can motivate students to write. They can then scaffold their students' writing by modeling the writing process and adding further steps to support them. As I found in my classroom, such an approach is highly rewarding for both teacher and students.

Questions for Reflection

1. In what ways do/could you incorporate literature that has 'real' meaning for your students?
2. Are there particular features of the L1 in your context that differ substantially from English? How can they be addressed in the writing class?
3. What are the advantages and potential drawbacks of using a coding system for written feedback like the one described in this chapter?
4. If you find student writing lacks feeling and seems bland, how could you encourage more expressive and vibrant language?

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15

Using Corrective Feedback on Writing to Enhance Vietnamese Learners' Autonomy

Nhu Luan Pham and Noriko Iwashita

Introduction

Language education at the tertiary level in Vietnam is characterised by an approach that encourages absorbing and memorising facts, vocabulary, and language structures rather than one that promotes using and producing language for specific functions and purposes. This approach results in a situation in which students are passive and dependent on their teachers (Dang 2010). These characteristics have mainly been created by the power hierarchy between teachers and learners. Teachers are seen as expert knowledge providers while learners are expected to be passive receivers. These roles are deeply rooted in countries with Confucian heritage cultures, such as Vietnam (for descriptions of other similar contexts, see Renandya and Hu; Lam, this volume). At educational institutions in these countries,

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authority between teachers and learners is not shared, and individuality and creativity are not traditionally encouraged (Harman and Nguyen 2010).

In addition, prescriptive syllabi, whose objectives, activities, and materials are predetermined and can rarely be changed by teachers and students, encourage learners to receive rather than generate knowledge (Le 2013; Nguyen 2009). Recently, to address this problem, the Vietnamese government changed its language education policies to focus on innovative approaches that develop more autonomous learning with more active and independent students. However, actual teaching practices remain teacher-centred because of teachers' lack of understanding about learner autonomy and the powerful impact of traditional teaching environments and beliefs (Nguyen 2014). As a result, learners continue to show low levels of awareness of and involvement in autonomy in practice (Humphreys and Wyatt 2014) (for discussion of promoting autonomy through reading instruction, see West, this volume).

In this chapter, we show how we worked with students enrolled in a university foundation writing course and introduced them to indirect corrective feedback (IDF) on their writing, which led to an increase in learner autonomy (LA). We explore the relationships among IDF, the development of students' grammatical accuracy and learner autonomy, and make practical recommendations that might be useful to other teachers in similar contexts.

Corrective Feedback in Writing

Many teachers are concerned about effective ways of assisting their students with improving accuracy in their writing. This is because teachers encounter the same errors recurring in student writing even after a number of careful checking, correcting, and feedback cycles. An increasing number of studies have investigated the role of corrective feedback (CF) in teaching writing, which is defined as the information provided by the teacher, both directly and indirectly, on learners' non-target-like usage in their writing and is made with the intention of correcting and prompting revision of initial language use (Bitchener and Ferris 2012). Within discussions of the use of CF in teaching writing, the distinction between direct feedback (DF) and indirect feedback (IDF) has received much attention in both classroom practice and research. DF is the provision of explicit target-like linguistic forms to correct errors made by students (Ferris 2003). On the other hand, IDF consists of a teacher's feedback provided through the use of underlining, circles, codes, or other marks to indicate errors in students' writing. In IDF, the correct forms are not provided by the teacher; instead, learners are responsible for self-revising, self-editing, and correcting the errors based on the teacher's codes (Bitchener 2008).

Various CF types and techniques have been studied and applied in different language teaching practices. CF, whether in the form of DF and/or IDF (Bitchener 2008; Chandler 2003; Ferris and Roberts 2001), form-focused and/or content-focused (Ashwell 2000), teacher–learner conferencing (Goldstein 2006), or e-feedback (computer-based CF) (Yeh and Lo 2009), shows a positive effect on L2 writing. Yet, in the context of Vietnam, surprisingly there are hardly any publications on the use of CF and its efficacy or on teachers' experiences and/or reflections on using it. The only exception we could find is a case study by Pham (2015).

IDF and Learner Autonomy in Writing

One of the advantages of employing an IDF technique in teaching writing is that students are encouraged to take responsibility for revising their writing in response to the corrective feedback. Taking responsibility puts learners in charge of and encourages them to become autonomous in their own learning.

The concept of LA is attractive to both teachers and researchers for its facilitative role in promoting learning and has been initiated in many studies. LA was originally defined as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (Holec 1981: 3). Later, Benson (2001: 8) elaborated the concept of LA describing it 'as a natural product of the practice of self-directed learning, or learning in which the objectives, progress and evaluation of learning are determined by the learners themselves'. More recently, Benson (2007) described LA as a learner's ability to use a variety of metacognitive strategies such as initiating, monitoring, and evaluating the learning process. Benson (2001) maintains that LA does not mean learning in isolation. Rather, LA is developed through the interdependence between teachers and learners (see also Chappell; Kozar, this volume, for additional perspectives on teacher–learner interactions).

While working collaboratively with writing teachers to evaluate their teacher's corrective feedback, learners make decisions about learning objectives, materials, methodology, and evaluation, and through making these decisions, a learner can develop his/her autonomy. Moreover, LA can be enhanced through collaborative writing among learners who work towards shared goals as they attend to their teachers' corrective feedback on their writing.

The degree of LA offered in writing classes varies according to the level of interaction and negotiation between teachers and learners in the educational environment. Therefore, it is 'a capacity that learners possess and display to

various degrees in different contexts' (Benson 2013: 123). Degrees of LA also depend 'on the linguistic and communicative demands of a particular task' (Benson 2007: 24), so learners who are highly autonomous in one area may not have the same capacity in another.

Adapted from the general approaches to enhance LA proposed by Benson (2013), the following approaches could be useful to improve LA in writing classrooms using an IDF technique.

1. Resource-based approach: Writing teachers support learners to find and locate accessible resources, such as a series of grammar books for writing development, or a collection of sample writings and newspaper/magazine articles written by competent speakers, which can be either in print or online. Through these resources, learners can identify errors and revise their writing on their own.
2. Technology-based approach: With technology-supported language learning, learners can use a wide variety of professional editing and proofreading software such as StyleWriter4, Writer's Workbench, and RightWriter6.0 to enhance their writing skills. In addition, through the use of digital devices such as computers, tablets, and smartphones with Internet connections, learners can easily create virtual discussion groups for collaborative writing and peer correction without much teacher assistance.
3. Curriculum-based approach: At the beginning and during the writing course, teachers can encourage learners' involvement in setting objectives for improving accuracy in their writing by the end of the course, selecting error correction methods (self, peer, and/or teacher correction), and choosing self-access materials.
4. Learner-based approach: In writing courses, learners are introduced and trained to use different strategies, for example, metacognitive strategies (planning, organising, monitoring, self-reflecting, and directing their own learning process), to become autonomous in incorporating teachers' corrective feedback into their writing to improve accuracy.

LA in writing and IDF techniques are thus well connected, and LA can be enhanced by different approaches and resources, which can be realised through an IDF technique for writing. The next section will describe how IDF was used in a university writing course to enhance the accuracy of student writing and to encourage greater LA.

The Use of IDF

As described above, a passive language learning style appears to be pervasive across educational contexts in Vietnam. Also, many teachers are concerned about the recurrence of the same errors in students' writing. This situation raises the question of how teachers can encourage learners to take more responsibility in improving their skills in writing.

As writing teachers, we sought to understand how IDF could assist in improving writing accuracy and what possible roles IDF might play in the development of LA, through two guiding questions:

1. Is there any improvement in the linguistic accuracy of learners' writing when teacher IDF is incorporated?
2. To what extent does IDF lead to the development of LA?

Participants and Context

The participants in our writing class were 46 second-year university students with pre-intermediate and intermediate proficiency and an overall IELTS band score of 4.0–4.5. The writing course was offered by the Faculty of Foreign Languages at a university in the north of Vietnam. Course content focused on the writing skills of describing and reporting information presented in graphs, tables, diagrams, and flow charts. The duration of the course was 13 weeks, 12 of which were for regular instruction and the final week for assessment. The materials used were either adopted or adapted from a series of IELTS materials.

The IDF Technique

In our study, our focus was on accuracy which concerned morphological, syntactic, and grammatical, but not spelling errors. The first lesson of the semester featured the following activities:

- Pre-test: The students wrote a short essay of about 200 words within 40 minutes. The activity involved describing information shown in a bar chart.
- Introduction to LA: The teacher introduced the concept of LA as it relates to writing skills. This activity included a short presentation by the teacher followed by a whole-class discussion on the definition, benefits, and methods.

- Introduction to IDF: The teacher introduced the purposes of IDF and explained how it would be implemented throughout the course. This activity involved explaining the system of codes (see Appendix 1) and showing the students an example of a learner's essay with errors indicated by such codes.
- Discussion of strategies: The teacher suggested strategies the learners could follow when incorporating IDF and discussed the materials available for reference.

During the course, the teacher provided IDF on each student's text using the system of codes but without providing actual correction. The teacher asked the students to refer to the strategies, listed below, which were discussed in the class:

1. Carefully study the errors indicated by the teacher's codes.
2. Identify the types of errors (i.e. whether the error is verb tense, word order, subject-verb agreement, structures, and so on).
3. Refer to the suggested print and online reference resources for information about that error, and then correct the error if possible.
4. If you still have difficulties, discuss these points with your peers through face-to-face discussion, Facebook, Skype, or other virtual channels to share and receive peer assistance. Then, revise, edit, and correct your errors. You are free to choose peers to work with.
5. Contact the teacher for consultation through email, Facebook, or Skype. The teacher will give advice on where to find information on errors and suggest ways to correct your writing. Revise your writing and write the second draft.

The students completed in-class writing tasks every two weeks following the start of the course, and then took a writing post-test in the final week. We analysed the accuracy of these in-class writings and also compared the pre- and post-tests to evaluate the extent to which the IDF technique had improved writing skills and reduced the recurrence of errors. A questionnaire was also administered in week 13 in order to evaluate the development of LA. In addition, interviews with randomly selected students were conducted after they had finished the course.

Outcomes

There were several noticeable outcomes from our course.

Common Error Categories

We noticed that the most frequently observed errors were word choice, run-on sentences, word formation, prepositions, and determiners. Among these, word choice and prepositions were the error categories about which the students consulted the teacher the most often. This may be because of transfer from the students' mother tongue. Vietnamese words do not change their form, and the word order is the reverse of that in the English language. Interviews with the students revealed that students tend to think in Vietnamese and then translate ideas into English word by word, making errors in word form, order, sentence structures, and prepositions. Learners in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other countries in Southeast Asia, whose languages may share similar features with Vietnamese, might experience similar challenges in writing.

Development of Writing Accuracy

We noticed a steady and significant improvement in the accuracy of student writing during the course. The IDF technique appears to be useful even when students have been used to a traditional teaching approach such as in Vietnam. It required students to attend to and interact more with morphology, syntax, and grammar, and it required time, thinking, effort, and their involvement in the writing process. It is for these reasons that we believe writing accuracy could improve considerably if teachers use IDF in similar contexts elsewhere.

Development of LA in Writing

Interviews conducted after the course also revealed a number of important points. First, after the initial week of the course, most of our students set a clear goal for themselves. They had to find sufficient information about the

errors highlighted in every text and try to correct them before consulting friends or teachers. Second, to avoid recurring problems, they kept records of errors and corrections throughout the course. Third, students freely applied various strategies outside the classroom (correcting for themselves, referring to materials, discussing with peers, and consulting the teacher) as suggested at the beginning of the course. Fourth, through such activities, students' sense of responsibility and awareness of their own role in language learning were developed. Fifth, interactions between peers and with the teacher encouraged the students' continuing efforts towards their goals. These responses indicated that the students were beginning to increase their LA (see Lam, this volume, for how to use portfolios to help learners track their own development).

However, not all students developed their LA at the same rate. Students whose LA developed at a slower rate suggested several interesting reasons. First, they felt rather 'shocked' and stressed by the 'immediate' change to IDF from the procedure they had been used to, and they could not easily adapt. In students' previous writing courses, their teachers identified and corrected their errors for them. In contrast, the IDF technique implemented in this course involved an increased workload, and students had to go through different steps to learn for themselves. Second, although useful reference sources were made available, learners experienced difficulties in finding the necessary information. They sometimes hesitated to contact classmates or the teacher in order to save face.

The Relationship Between IDF, LA, and Writing Accuracy

Analysis of the information gathered during the course showed us that IDF substantially influenced LA and therefore also the development of accuracy. As explained above, because the IDF technique encouraged our students to attend to the errors, and revise and edit their own written output for themselves, it shifted some of the learning responsibility from teachers to students, which is believed to enhance LA. In turn, LA, which is concerned with the ability to take control of the learning process, helped to promote the IDF technique and therefore positively influenced the development of accuracy in writing. During this writing course, LA was developed through the students' interactions with the new learning environment, which included teacher support, peer assistance, and accessible reference sources for self-study. The relationship is summarised in Fig. 15.1.

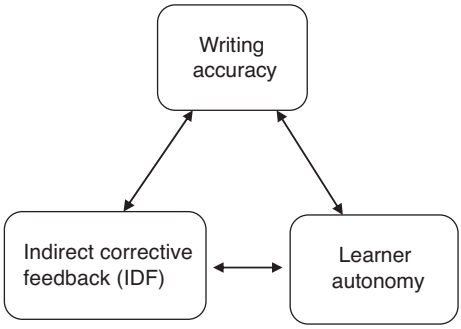

Fig. 15.1 The relationships among IDF, LA and writing accuracy

Implications for Teaching

The changes we made in our university writing course have a number of implications for teachers working in similar contexts. We focus on curriculum and syllabus design, conditions for introducing the changes, and implementation of IDF.

Considering Curriculum and Syllabus Design

Despite the research evidence of the positive effects of IDF on L2 writing, it has not been given adequate attention in teaching contexts like Vietnam and other countries where traditional beliefs are still predominant. From our teaching experience, it is rare to see corrective feedback in general and IDF in particular, included in teaching curricula and syllabi. Teachers in Vietnamese institutions usually give preference to DF that involves less work than IDF on the students' part but overlooks LA and learner involvement. We believe IDF as described in this chapter should be incorporated in writing curricula and syllabi as a potentially useful alternative.

Creating Necessary Conditions

To create the conditions for introducing IDF, teachers should first inform themselves about the concepts, benefits, and methods of both LA and IDF by reading literature such as that cited in this chapter. They also need to familiarise themselves with the different roles teachers need to take up when

introducing IDF and LA, such as facilitator, guide, resource, controller, and counsellor since learners will need to be supported at different times and in different ways. In particular, students unfamiliar with IDF will usually need teachers' support in order to correct their own errors. Second, teachers should set up several ready-to-use discussion channels either face-to-face or online via Skype, email, and social networks such as Facebook (see Kozar, this volume, for ways to deliver instruction using technology).

Third, a system of print and electronic reference resources such as a series of grammar books for writing (e.g. The Little Brown Handbook; Grammar for Writing: Grammar-Usage-Mechanics), a collection of authentic materials, such as sample writings, newspaper pieces, and/or magazines produced by competent writers should be introduced and made accessible to the students. In addition, because of the availability of the Internet and computers worldwide and the increasing popularity of technology, a list of free, user-friendly online tools for development of writing skills should be made available (see Appendix 2 for examples). To maximise the effectiveness of using these tools, tutorial or guide sessions for students would be helpful. Fourth, teachers should familiarise themselves with the system of IDF codes they use and apply them consistently throughout the course. Teachers could adapt the code system provided in Appendix 1 to suit the focus of their own writing courses.

Implementing IDF Techniques

Based on what we learned from our project, we summarise the procedures that teachers can use to help their students become familiar with IDF and LA.

1. Help students to understand IDF
   - Because IDF is an innovation in Vietnam (and quite possibly elsewhere), provide lead-in (introductory) information to prevent students from feeling 'shocked'.
   - Raise students' awareness of IDF by briefly introducing the concepts, benefits, and goals and help them to understand how it contributes to LA.
   - Explain the purposes of IDF and how it is meant to help them.

- Show the IDF codes together with practical examples that illustrate how they are used.

2. Explain the strategies to be used

Because IDF and LA are integrated, teachers need to consider the following:

- Encourage students to set a goal for their learning early in the course (e.g. by the end of week 2). For example, students could aim to reduce their linguistic errors by 50 percent by week 7 and 90 percent by the end of the course.
- Support students to do the tasks and use the strategies described.
- Explain that students are free to select peers to work with, but that group membership should be fixed, with a leader who monitors discussions within the group and reports to the teacher.
- Include online discussions to save time. If necessary, allow students to conduct these discussions anonymously so that they share problems openly.
- Encourage students to keep a learning diary to reflect on and monitor their most problematic error types.
- Ask student at different proficiency levels to collaborate to use IDF and to prepare responses for checking by the teacher.

Conclusion

As described in this chapter, IDF in combination with LA is an innovation in the teaching and learning context of Vietnam. Implementing IDF in our writing classroom showed, however, that it can have a positive effect on promoting both LA and writing accuracy and can work well in this context. IDF encourages learners to work on their own errors in combination with peers, teachers, and materials to enhance learning outcomes. The IDF approach to error correction may also benefit learners in other countries with similar teaching and learning contexts, particularly in the Southeast Asian region where there has tended to be a strong tradition of dependence on the teacher in writing classes.

Appendix 1: IDF Code System

D	Determiner	S/Pl	Singular/plural
SV	Subject-verb agreement	C/UC	Countable/uncountable
VF	Verb form	?	Meaning is not clear
RO	Run-on sentence	AWK	Awkward wording
INC	Incomplete sentence	WO	Word order
PP	Preposition	C	Capital letter
VT	Verb tense	X	Omit
WF	Word formation	^	Something is missing
WC	Word choice		New paragraph

Appendix 2: Sample Proofreading Tools

- https://www.grammarly.com
- http://www.gingersoftware.com/proofreading
- http://www.polishmywriting.com/
- http://www.slickwrite.com/
- http://www.paperrater.com/
- https://www.spellchecker.net/spellcheck/

Questions for Reflection

1. Consider the teaching and learning styles in English language education in general described in this chapter. What are the similarities and differences in your own teaching context?
2. How is writing generally taught in your context? What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of the way it is taught?
3. Is DF or IDF preferred in writing classes in your country? At your school? Identify some of the key techniques that teachers in your context currently use in the classroom to give feedback on writing? How effective do you think they are?

4. Do you think the IDF and LA techniques as described in this chapter could be applied in your context? Why and why not? How could they be adapted to suit your context?

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16

Promoting Self-Reflection in Writing: A Showcase Portfolio Approach

Ricky Lam

Introduction

Teaching writing effectively is a complex activity. It involves knowledge of how written text is composed, effective mastery of appropriate pedagogical skills, and understanding of the principles of current approaches to writing instruction. Among ways of assisting writing development, portfolio assessment has become popular in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts over the past two decades. This chapter aims to illustrate how two writing teachers, one at the secondary school level and the other at the college level implemented one portfolio assessment strategy—the Showcase Portfolio Approach (SPA)—in a largely test-driven and product-oriented writing environment. I demonstrate how student writing development can be supported by self-reflection, drawing on empirical evidence from my research and pedagogical materials used in the teachers' trials of SPA. My overarching argument is that helping students to use SPA to become more self-reflective means they are more likely to improve their writing skills, language awareness and long-term writing development.

This chapter starts with a discussion of various approaches to teaching writing in general, and writing portfolio assessment in particular. I focus

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particularly on how student writing development can be facilitated by self-reflection as emphasized in SPA. Then, this chapter discusses writing instruction within the context of Hong Kong and justifies how SPA can fit into this specific writing landscape. The procedures and rationale of SPA are described prior to the sharing of teachers' and students' experiences in two local writing classrooms. Next, practical ideas for introducing SPA, namely interactive use of reflective journals in comparable educational contexts, are recommended. This chapter closes with a discussion of pedagogical implications, suggesting in particular, that portfolio assessment with a focus on self-reflection can be implemented in an EFL context such as Hong Kong where the metacognitive aspects of writing are rarely taught.

Writing Pedagogy and Portfolio Assessment

There are several pedagogical approaches to teaching writing that are commonly adopted by teachers worldwide. They include the grammar-translation approach, the process approach, the genre approach and a blend of these three approaches (Badger and White 2000). Grammar-translation is seen as a product approach that underscores mechanical mastery of key vocabulary items and target sentence structures, usually in a rote learning manner. The process approach advocates learning writing through meaning discovery by brainstorming, drafting and revising until meaningful texts are composed. The genre approach highlights student mastery of specific text structures and lexico-grammatical features that achieve authentic writer–reader communication in daily discourse communities (see Villas Boas, this volume, for an example of how a process-genre approach to writing can be implemented). Although advances in research have led to the development of these various approaches over time, they have not necessarily been progressively adopted into teaching practice. In certain contexts, the teaching of writing may remain restricted to grammar-translation, owing to a large student population in each class and limited provision of teacher training in writing pedagogy (Lee and Wong 2014).

A procedure that has gained increasing attention as part of more recent approaches to writing pedagogy is portfolio assessment. In language teaching, writing portfolios refer to folders or websites (i.e. electronic portfolios) which include a range of evidence of student learning that documents their growth in writing development through active self-reflection (Genesee and Upshur 1996). Writing portfolios were originally used in first language university-level writing classes, primarily for placement and certification pur-

poses. However, in the past decade, a global assessment reform movement has led to an interest in the learning potential of writing portfolios (Jones 2012). Of particular interest is how they can be used to promote assessment for learning; in other words, to provide feedback information that supports rather than judges learning at the classroom level (Klenowski 2002).

Portfolio Assessment and Self-Reflection

Portfolio assessment is encouraged in writing classes because of its formative potential, which includes its ability to enhance learning (through multiple opportunities to revise interim drafts) and provide rich feedback support (through provision of self, peer and teacher feedback). In a typical portfolio development process, students are expected to collect, select and reflect upon work in progress under the guidance of teachers or other communal resources (Burner 2014). Collection refers to student compilation of learning evidence throughout a school term, such as responses to quizzes, worksheets, homework and parts of project work. Selection concerns students' choices of exemplar works to be documented and showcased in their portfolios. Reflection is about active monitoring and reviewing of the entire portfolio development process, diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses of different aspects of drafts of writing and displaying outstanding work to represent the best performance, selected from a host of artefacts kept in students' portfolios.

Central to the focus of this chapter is the element of self-reflection in portfolio assessment. As discussed, self-reflection is a significant stage where students are encouraged to reflect upon their drafts through rubrics, exemplars, reflective statements, and/or cover letters to identify their writing standards and then set achievable goals to close the gaps between current and desired performances. The act of self-reflection and development of this metacognitive ability is fundamental to enabling students to become less dependent on teacher feedback. Through self-reflection, they can turn themselves into self-regulated learners who can provide internally generated feedback under the auspices of portfolio construction processes and other self-assessment tasks (Lam 2015; Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick 2006). That said, self-reflection on writing remains a challenging skill for second language students to master and for teachers to promote. This is especially so in educational settings, like Hong Kong, where a 'teach-to-the-test' approach focusing on manipulation of test-taking skills and examination-oriented content is highly valued (Lo 2010).

To summarize, among current writing instruction approaches, portfolio assessment is increasingly emerging as a pedagogical tool, which helps consolidate the teaching and learning of writing in the first language and in second language classrooms. However, because of its process-oriented and feedback-rich nature, portfolio assessment may seem somewhat incongruent in an EFL pedagogical landscape where a 'one-draft-one-reader' approach to teaching writing is still predominant. The remainder of this chapter depicts how the use of SPA, incorporating self-reflective journals, can be contextually appropriate in the product-based writing settings of Hong Kong, despite these apparent constraints. To support this discussion, the writing teaching context in Hong Kong is first described, followed by a description of the practical procedures for using SPA, and an account of two case studies conducted in this context.

Context

This section outlines the writing classroom environment generally found in Hong Kong. As in other parts of the world, teaching and learning writing are strenuous endeavours. For many instructors, teaching writing usually equates to examination preparation and explicit instruction in genre structures. For students, learning how to write tends to be demotivating, since many teachers focus on accuracy rather than on other aspects of writing, such as content, register, creativity and thinking skills. Influenced by a testing culture, top-down curricular constraints (e.g. mandated schemes of work) and lack of support from schools (e.g. little continuous professional learning), teachers may feel that they have no room to attempt alternative writing pedagogies such as portfolio assessment. In fact, most EFL writing teachers are influenced by their own 'apprenticeship of observation' (Lortie 1975), adopting instructional practices they formerly experienced as school students as a default teaching model. For many Hong Kong teachers, the default model of a mainstream composition lesson was a product-based approach, which required no brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising or self-reflection.

In many current Hong Kong secondary-level classrooms, formal writing instruction usually includes the introduction of writing topics (question items from either past examination papers or textbooks), instruction in appropriate lexical items and lectures on specific genre conventions (Lee 2011). Such writing instruction tends to be minimal, lasting from 15 to 20 minutes out of a 160-minute lesson. The rest of the lesson is allocated

to composing the writing topic, and resembles traditional examination conditions where students are forbidden to either consult printed or electronic sources or to seek assistance from classmates and/or the teacher. The first draft of student writing is normally considered the final draft, since all writing tasks are expected to be finished in class. Take-home writing tasks are rare. Multiple drafting is not common either. Further, as far as feedback is concerned, teachers' and students' attention is primarily drawn to production rather than to purposeful communication for specific social contexts (see Pham and Iwashita, this volume, for more discussion of various types of feedback on writing). Even less attention is paid to the metacognitive aspects of writing such as self-reflection, which would help students think about how to upgrade their work.

The Showcase Portfolio Approach

Two common approaches to portfolio assessment are the Working Portfolio Approach and SPA. The former is defined as a running record, wherein students include all learning evidence to document growth and writing development over time. The latter refers to showpiece dossiers in which students select and reflect upon those learning artefacts that can best represent their writing performance and achievements in a school term. Both portfolio approaches are embedded in concepts of learner-centred writing where students take on active roles in their writing development, for instance, engaging in multiple drafting, peer assessment and self-reflection. Given these ideas, some EFL teachers may find adopting portfolio assessment a daunting endeavour because both portfolio approaches involve teaching writing in a process-oriented manner, requiring students to write drafts and perform self-reflection.

In a recent project I conducted in Hong Kong, I selected SPA as its underlying rationale and design can be somewhat flexibly fine-tuned to suit product-oriented writing classes such as those in Hong Kong and other equivalent settings. SPA also embraces the fundamental portfolio assessment elements of collection, selection and reflection, and is characterized by systematic documentation of reflective pieces to showcase students' best works and achievements.

Figure 16.1 illustrates how SPA can be operationalized in an EFL product-based writing classroom (see Fig. 16.1). In Step 1, teachers deliver instruction on the various genres in the writing curriculum, such as argumentation, and comparison and contrast, or other genres deemed to be

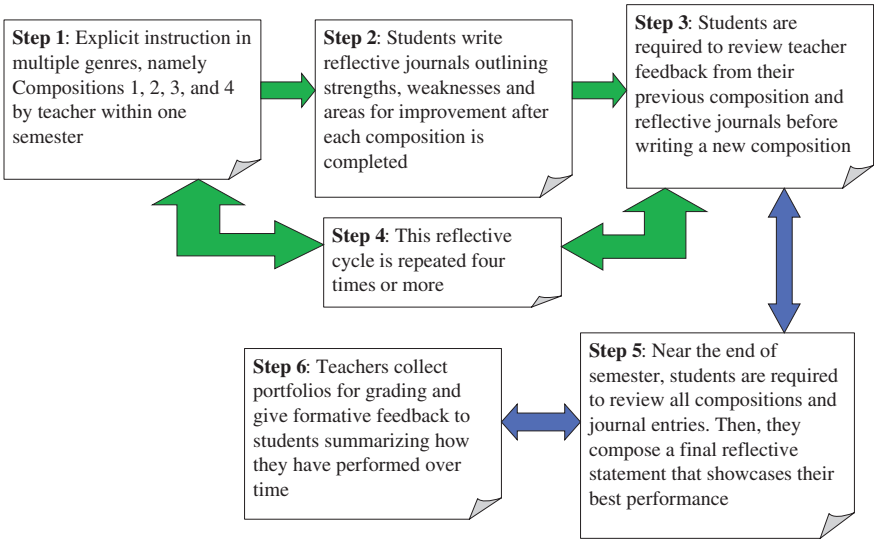

Fig. 16.1 Procedures of showcase portfolio approach

suitable for the aims of instruction. After they have completed their first draft, Step 2 requires students to compose a reflective journal to accompany the draft, outlining its strengths, weaknesses and the areas that could be improved when attempting the next topic. Initially, teachers may need to provide guiding questions for reflection (see examples later in the chapter) but may be able to withdraw this support when students become more skilled in self-reflection.

Step 3 involves students in reviewing the first draft focusing on their teacher's feedback, their copy-editing corrections and their reflective journal entries. They can then begin a new writing task, bearing their reflections in mind. In Step 4, this reflective cycle is repeated several times, depending on the number of writing tasks students need to complete in one semester. For Step 5, near the end of the semester, students are asked to review all their completed tasks and reflective journal entries, and then compose a final reflective statement that summarizes their best performances. They can focus on features of writing such as content, accuracy, organization, coherence and originality, select their best work for each category and provide justifications for their choices. Step 6 involves collection of students' portfolios by the teacher for grading and provision of commentaries, to evaluate how students have performed over time.

The key stages are Steps 2 and 3 where students take a proactive role in reviewing their strengths and weaknesses in writing. Through ongoing self-

reflection on their writing, students are likely to develop the ability to monitor their own work with a critical eye and nurture self-assessment skills that discern the quality of good written work.

Implementing SPA in the Classroom

To illustrate how SPA can be implemented in a product-oriented context, I now present two case studies, one from a secondary school and the other from a college setting. The first case focuses on learners aged between 15 and 16 and the second case investigates learners who are between 18 and 20.

Case Study One

The first case is located in a Grade 10 writing classroom. Frankie, (pseudonym), the teacher introduced SPA because he was collaborating with me in a university–school research project. Students in Frankie's class had above average English proficiency with the overall International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores ranging from 6.5 to 7.0, although students tended to perform better in speaking than in writing. The class was in a Band 1 school, which means that more than 85% of students can learn all subjects, other than Chinese-related subjects, in English. Frankie incorporated a self-reflective element into the eight-week genre-based writing curriculum by asking students to compose a reflective journal after they had finished copy-editing corrections for each writing task. Basically, Frankie followed the workflow of SPA as shown in Fig. 16.1.

During the first cycle of the SPA trial, Frankie reported that the students did not seem to self-reflect very satisfactorily. Selected students simply wrote journal entries such as: '*I like this piece of work as its content is quite interesting*', where there was no explanation or evaluation, and '*I feel that I need to improve my poor grammar*', where there was no identification of a particular grammar pattern. Consequently, at the start of the second SPA cycle, Frankie decided to provide students with more systematic training and to monitor their self-reflective behaviours more closely by annotating parts of their journal entries.

Frankie spent two 40-minute lessons coaching students on composing reflective journals. The training sessions included instruction on the format of the journal, means of diagnosing their current errors and ways to close the gap between the current and desired performance with reference to authen-

tic exemplars. The format for the reflective journal and the prompts to help students complete it are shown below:

Format of Reflective Journal

- A brief summary of your composition
- A critical evaluation of your work regarding two strengths and one weakness which refer to content, accuracy, organization, coherence, originality or other aspects of writing
- A discussion on why these areas are strong or weak
- A recommendation about where you can improve the weakest area in the next composition and how you intend to improve it
- An account about how you feel as an EFL writer when composing and what challenges you encountered when doing self-reflection.

Prompts for Reflective Journal

- Have I achieved the purpose of this piece of writing, namely use of convincing arguments in academic essays?
- Have I followed the schematic structure and linguistic conventions as expected in this piece of writing?
- How can I further improve this piece of writing in areas of length, text coherence, register, vocabulary, readability and thematic development?
- How does this piece of writing compare with my other writing in terms of reader-friendliness, uniqueness and representation of my writing skills?
- To what extent have I achieved the goal(s) set for this piece of writing such as getting it published, obtaining Grade A or above or communicating with my intended audience?
- What improvement plans would I like to make in order to upgrade the quality of my writing?

After the training, Frankie reported that the hands-on experience helped students become more self-reflective in assessing their own work, particularly the strengths. That said, the students still found it challenging to identify their weaknesses, such as content errors that require logical argumentation. Hence, after checking their writing corrections, he decided to annotate parts of students' reflective journals. For instance, one Grade 10 student wrote in her journal in English,

> 'To look back, this essay has some problems, because I always forgot to add -s to verbs after singular subjects. Also, the idea of the second paragraph is not

clear, as pointed out by Frankie'. Frankie then responded in his annotation, 'Right, the second paragraph is not clear because you did not give examples concerning the advantages of building the third runway. In the next composition, remember to add evidence or examples to support the central argument in a paragraph'.

In his annotated commentary, Frankie alerted students to certain weaknesses which should be addressed in the next composition. Frankie's annotations were provided in English and students were encouraged to clarify anything they were unsure about.

Case Study Two

The second case occurred in a mandatory writing course in an associate degree programme. The course was a core subject and adopted a product-based approach. It aimed to equip students with fundamental writing skills in preparation for their major studies such as psychology, English communication or computer studies. Students had intermediate English proficiency with average IELTS scores of 6.5, but generally lacked adequate academic writing skills. After attending a two-hour writing workshop on portfolio assessment, Roger, the instructor, tried out SPA in one of his writing classes. He participated in the same portfolio-based project in which my role was the principal investigator. Following the steps in Fig. 16.1, the course included four writing tasks, namely a newspaper article, a summary, a critique and an argumentation. Students also composed their reflective journals after each task. Text revisions were encouraged but not required. In order to help students develop self-reflective skills, Roger suggested that the content of their end-of-semester reflective statements (Step 5) should underscore two aspects: (1) The reasons for showcasing their best performance (identifying qualities of good work based upon assessment criteria); and (2) The reasons for selecting and rationalizing the best writing task (expressing sound internal evaluations of work). Roger set out the following guidelines:

Procedures

- Read and reread all completed writing tasks and reflective journals
- Revisit your strengths and weaknesses in each task
- Select the best piece by referring to assessment criteria and exemplars
- Rationalize how the selected piece matches with the quality of good work and demonstrate your best performance in the portfolio.

Prompts for Reflective Statement

- Why did I choose this as the best piece?
- How does this piece best fulfil my writing goals set at the beginning of the term?
- How did I come up with the ideas when composing the best piece?
- What problems did I encounter when composing and how did I solve them?
- In what ways does this piece showcase my best writing ability as compared to other pieces?

As reported by Roger, some students produced very comprehensive accounts of their overall performances in the final reflective statement, especially those who frequently referred back to the assessment criteria. However, Roger found that a few students tended to overrate their writing without developing a thorough understanding of the qualities of good work; they simply chose a particular piece because of marks. Students may not have been familiar with grading themselves, as they were used to teachers as the all-knowledgeable assessors, or it might have been the first time for them to evaluate their own work. However, Roger also noted that students' and teachers' conceptions of 'best work' may not necessarily correspond. One student (Zac) chose his summary as his best work as it was almost error-free. Asked why he did not choose other pieces, Zac responded that although he did not oppose other aspects such as rhetoric and creativity, linguistic accuracy was a key quality of good writing.

Having outlined some of the theoretical concepts, procedural steps and practical teaching experiences in applying SPA, I now draw out the broader implications for teaching.

Implications for Teaching

In retrospect, using SPA in a product-based EFL writing context such as Hong Kong can be a double-edged sword. On the plus side, teachers are able to promote metacognition in writing through self-reflection. Potentially SPA can motivate students to become more confident in developing internal assessment judgments that facilitate the production of self-generated feedback for life-long learning. On the minus side, coaching students to be self-reflective could be a tall order, particularly when students are not exposed to similar independent learning experiences and have not been encouraged to take up responsibility for their language development (see Murtiningsih

and Hapsari, this volume, for a similar discussion related to reading instruction). Arising from the case studies, three recommendations can be made for teachers who wish to use SPA to promulgate self-reflection in writing pedagogy.

First, teachers can explain the rationale of SPA to students and let them know how to go about it even within a single-draft writing environment. For instance, if multiple drafting appears to be too drastic a change, the use of peer review, which focuses on error corrections before submission could be a first step towards helping students engage in self-reflective practices. The metacognitive thinking process involved in peer review could enhance the development of internal assessment judgments that support students' self-reflection. Research reveals that peer reviewers benefit both linguistically and cognitively (Lundstrom and Baker 2009).

Second, both case studies show that despite the training provided, some students still found it demanding to compose reflective journals or statements, possibly because most were attempting this specific genre for the first time. Such a metacognitive task takes time and effort to develop. Writing teachers could regularly monitor students' self-reflective processes through use of annotated commentaries, as demonstrated in Frankie's case. While SPA emphasizes learner independence, it is imperative to provide students with input on the language of reflection (e.g. I believe that … / I became aware that … /… has affected how I feel about …). Feedback reminding them where they are in their writing development, such as benchmarking their writing against exemplars or assessment criteria, is also crucial. With timely teacher scaffolding, students can become more confident in reviewing their learning trajectories through self-reflection.

Third, enabling students to be self-reflective does not merely imply a shift in content delivery and classroom hierarchy. To change their mindsets students need to be empowered with choices about the assessment process, since self-reflection inevitably involves numerous decision-making procedures. Learner choice is emphasized in SPA and encourages valid self-reflection, such as when students use an 'inquiry' approach to reading in order to select the best piece to showcase their writing (Yancey 1992). Questions that can be used for such an approach are illustrated in the case studies. In addition, learner choice promotes a sense of ownership towards their writing and raises their language awareness in relation to making informed decisions. To assist students in making legitimate learner choices, teachers could ask them to select their own writing topics and invite them to co-construct scoring rubrics for summative assessments. These metacognitive and affective learning experiences are essential for the development of self-reflective skills.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed how to use SPA to promote self-reflection in EFL writing classes. The use of writing portfolios to support student self-reflective practices has emerged over the last two decades and may not be seen as new in some contexts. However, in many EFL writing contexts the pedagogical constraints that exist (a test-driven culture and a shortage of instruction hours, resources and teacher training), mean that portfolio assessment has to be designed flexibly in order to suit the local needs of teachers and students.

In such circumstances, it is important for self-reflection in writing to become sustainable. After each writing task, teachers can emphasize the importance of self-reflection and its benefits for learning by encouraging students to think about where they are, where they want to go and what is next in their writing development. Producing high-quality self-reflection in writing portfolio assessment requires time, energy, motivation, skills and patience. Nonetheless, if teachers equip themselves to promote self-reflection, students will stand a better chance of benefiting from this important metacognitive writing skill.

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Questions for Reflection

1. In what ways, if any, do you use features of SPA in your approach to teaching writing?
2. In your work environment, what are the major facilitating factors that support the use of portfolio assessment in general or SPA in particular as one form of writing pedagogy?
3. What challenges are there for your students in using self-reflection for writing portfolios?
4. How would you adapt the procedures of SPA to make them more pedagogically suitable and/or practical for writing instruction in your teaching and learning context?

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17

‘Localizing’ Second Language Writing Pedagogy in a Skills-Integrated Language Program in Brazil

Isabela Villas Boas

Introduction

When teachers think about teaching English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL), usually the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing automatically come to mind. In fact, these four skills are always present in integrated-skills coursebooks, but not necessarily with equal emphasis. The focus on writing can range ‘from a mere “backup” for grammar teaching to a major syllabus strand in its own right, where mastering the ability to write effectively is seen as a key objective for learners’ (Harmer 2004: 31).

Just as the emphasis on writing can vary significantly both in international coursebooks and in the EFL curriculum of different language teaching organizations, there is also variation in the approach to teaching writing, the main distinctions continuing to be between the product, process, and genre approaches (Paran 2012). According to Paran, the main approach in many EFL classrooms is still product oriented, and the university context is almost exclusively where genre and process approaches are generally being implemented.

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Most of the studies involving the teaching and learning of L2 writing have been conducted with college-level ESL students, with a smaller set of studies involving college EFL writing, many coming out of Hong Kong and Japan (Matsuda 2006). A few studies have also focused on secondary students in Asia and they have addressed the implementation of process pedagogy in product-oriented writing classrooms, as reviewed by Lee (2010). In all of them, the second language writing classes were conducted in students' regular secondary schools.

Despite this range of research, the number of studies that have focused on writing in private language institutes is virtually nonexistent, which means that second language writing (SLW) scholars are likely to be unaware of how their research and their proposed approaches reach this international teaching audience. This chapter describes how a private ELT institute in Brasilia, Brazil, has adopted and adapted process-genre writing pedagogy in its skills-integrated curriculum. It is hoped that teachers and administrators working in similar contexts can gain insights on how to adapt the process-genre approach to suit their institutions and that SLW researchers can better understand how their work is negotiated in international contexts.

Context

Casa Thomas Jefferson (CTJ) is a not-for-profit Brazil-US binational center in Brasilia, with over 17,000 students and 260 teachers. CTJ offers English classes to students from the age of three to adults, and from the complete beginner to the advanced level. CTJ aims to expand the very limited experience of learning English, mostly part-time, that students receive in their regular primary and secondary schools, which can be characterized as having few contact hours and a methodology that focuses primarily on reading and grammar. Thus, it is common for some families to enroll their children in ELT institutes with more communicative and skills-integrated classes. Besides listening, speaking, and reading, from the beginning there is also a focus on writing in the four-hour-a-week courses at CTJ, with activities that encompass both writing for learning and writing for writing (Harmer 2004). However, it is at the intermediate and advanced levels that a greater focus on process writing takes place, when students produce three pieces of writing per semester, through at least two drafts.

The following section describes how, over time, the process and then the process-genre approaches were introduced at CTJ and how these trends have

been used in the institution to negotiate a pedagogy that is locally appropriate but can inform other similar EFL contexts.

The Process Approach

In the late 1960s, there was a shift in first-language (L1) composition teaching from a focus on product to a focus on process, a consequence of various studies demonstrating that the ways writers produce texts did not necessarily match the models that had been traditionally promulgated. It took some time for these insights from L1 pedagogy to be imported into L2 teaching (Kroll 1991). Dissatisfaction with both the 'controlled composition' and the 'current-traditional' approaches motivated the introduction of the process approach in ESL composition teaching. It was felt that expression of thought was neglected in both of these approaches, which were prescriptive and considered composition to be a linear process (Zamel 1983). Boscolo (2008) suggests using the term 'process approaches', in the plural, since there have been many variations. In its original and 'strong' version, the process approach has the following characteristics: (a) teacher-led classes are minimized and group work is emphasized; (b) students should be allowed to choose topics to write about and to produce several drafts of their writing; (c) the teacher is not a judge, but rather, a facilitator who provides feedback to students in individual conferences; (d) the social dimension of writing is emphasized, as students work in groups and read each other's writings (see Murtiningsih and Hapsari , this volume, for more on learner collaboration).

Although the process approach to teaching writing emerged in ELT in the early 1980s, it was only in the mid-1990s that it caught the attention of CTJ teachers, coordinators, and supervisors. The result was a radical pendulum shift whereby the focus changed from the product and the rhetorical form to the writer and his/her process of creating meaning. Students wrote primarily about themselves and had to produce at least three drafts per piece of writing. The teacher was required to give feedback only on content and organization of ideas on the first draft and to focus on form on the second draft. Quantity was exchanged for quality: students wrote fewer texts, but now in multiple drafts. However, it was very difficult to convince and train teachers to use this approach because it was completely alien to their experiences of learning or teaching writing, both in L1 and in L2. A strong version of the process approach was never fully adopted, but rather, we tried to adapt its core principles to our context, especially regarding the recur-

sive nature of writing and the stages of the writing process that have to be observed in the classroom.

In 1999, a survey was conducted with 59 CTJ advanced course teachers to ascertain the extent to which they followed the pedagogical principles underlying a process-oriented methodology (Villas Boas 1999). The survey found that only 15% of the teachers considered the teaching of writing through a process approach at the advanced level to be effective and consistent. The main problems faced at that time, according to the survey, were the lack of well-defined grading criteria for writing, the inconsistent focus on the generating ideas and planning stages of the writing process, and the almost nonexistent adoption of peer revision as a stage of the drafting process. Teachers' main reason for not adhering to the underlying principles and stages of process writing was lack of time, which related to the difficulty of adopting process writing methodology in a skills-integrated institutional environment, where the focus of the course is not solely on writing and teachers have between five and ten different groups containing up to 18 students each. Also, as the teachers were not specialized in second language writing, they were not necessarily aligned with process writing theory.

The survey results led to the implementation of a standardized writing curriculum, with writing goals for each level in the institution, from the basic to the advanced courses, and the development of rubrics to assess students' writing, which considered both the students' progress and the final product. Because the coursebooks used at the time had a minimal and inconsistent focus on writing, worksheets were developed to help teachers with the planning and revising stages. For the adult advanced levels, peer review sheets for each writing assignment were also developed.

The 'Post-process' Framework and the Genre Approach

The beginning of the millennium saw the teaching of writing reach a more balanced theoretical perspective by way of: the recognition of academic writing as a social act of communication; a combination of process and product; an emphasis on the classroom community and the participation of the student in the construction of his or her writing and that of others; and a focus on the interrelationship between reader and writer (Reid 2001). Atkinson (2003) emphasizes that this sociocultural turn in what he calls the post-process era does not preclude using a process approach to writing. Prewriting,

drafting, feedback, and revising are still regarded as effective classroom activities. Rather than being a paradigm shift, the post-process approach is an expansion and broadening of the domain of L2 writing. Genre-based pedagogy came to expand the notion of L2 writing. It goes beyond the planning-writing-reviewing framework by focusing on the production of different types of texts and the linguistic resources writers need to communicate effectively, rather than merely on writing strategies or processes (Hyland 2007). Hyland argues that genre pedagogies pull together language, content, and context and present students with systematic explanations of how texts exercise their communicative functions.

Influenced over time by all these theoretical trends, CTJ has more recently come to adopt and adapt a process-genre approach to teaching writing whereby:

(1) A process approach is still advocated, but without losing sight of the final product.
(2) Texts of different genres should be used for analysis and as models, with the purpose of linking reading and writing, as well as listening and speaking to support the writing assignment, and of raising students' awareness of the linguistic features that characterize different genres.
(3) Students should be taught rhetorical patterns and conventions explicitly; we cannot assume that they will pick them up incidentally. Students do not learn to write just by writing.
(4) Teachers should plan their instruction so as to encompass all the stages of the writing process: generating ideas, planning, drafting, revising, assessing, and giving feedback. They should also recognize that writers do not go about these stages linearly, but rather recursively.

Applying the Framework

An analysis of the three different coursebooks adopted for the Teens, Intermediate, and Advanced courses at CTJ showed that, despite the fact that the books provide models of texts in the genres students are expected to write, they do not contain genre analysis activities. Only the intermediate-level coursebook provides activities for generating ideas and planning, and none of the coursebooks addresses self and peer correction or provides rubrics to assess specific writing tasks. As a result, course supervisors at CTJ have developed materials to supplement coursebook lessons with the elements of the process-genre approach that are highlighted above (see Tante,

this volume, for another account of teachers supplementing textbooks for primary school learners). The texts used in the reading comprehension section of the book are often used as a springboard for the customized writing lesson, following a process-genre approach (Yang 2010). It is a localized version of the approach that relates to a number of contextual factors, such as the limited class time teachers have to dedicate to writing in a skills-integrated course that places a greater emphasis on speaking due to student interest.

The Teens coursebook is the one that requires the greatest amount of supplementation, as its writing assignments only contain a model and then a writing task, with no scaffolding in between. Thus, worksheets have been developed with these elements:

– Analysis of the model: genre, textual features, use of discourse markers, grammar features, specific vocabulary;
– Support for generating ideas and planning: a variety of tasks for planning, such as brainstorming, freewriting, discussing, and mind-mapping;
– Assessment rubrics: performance descriptors focused on the specific writing task.

Below is an example of how these principles are applied in a writing task for Teens aged 12–14 at the A2–B1 levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Figure 17.1 shows the writing task in the book, which presents a letter to a city official about a problem in the neighborhood. Students are asked to read the letter and then write their own version. There is no genre analysis or prewriting activity.

In order to supplement the coursebook assignment with the pedagogical steps underlying a process-genre approach, the worksheet shown in Fig. 17.2 was developed.

The worksheet allows the students to analyze the letter, focusing on its linguistic and rhetorical structure. They then have the opportunity to brainstorm problems that they could write about, building on previous listening and speaking activities on the topic of 'problems in my community', already presented in the coursebook, as well as on their reading of the text that served as a model. This scaffolding supports them to choose and write about a topic they are interested in.

Next, students write their own letters, drawing on the model. In the subsequent stage, students receive feedback from a peer and the teacher. Peer feedback for this age and proficiency level is usually done by way of a check-

Read a letter to a city official. Then write your own letter about something that changed in your neighborhood and why the official should help.

Ms. Sandy Millen
202 Main Street
Glendale, California 50550

Dear Ms. Millen,

I am writing to tell you about a problem in my neighborhood. There used to be an open field on 2nd Avenue. The kids in the neighborhood used to play soccer there, but now they cannot play there anymore because the city put a fence around the field.

This is a problem because there aren't other places nearby to play soccer and the kids need to play outside. The other soccer fields are in the suburbs, too far away for the kids who live in the city, and there aren't buses to the soccer fields in the suburbs.

Please remove the fence around the park on 2nd Street. Also, please add buses that go to the soccer fields in the suburbs. It would be great if city and suburb kids could play together.

Sincerely,

Tisha Adams

Fig. 17.1 The coursebook writing assignment

list (Fig. 17.3) in which students identify whether the rhetorical and linguistic features learned for the assignment are present in the writing.

The teacher complements the feedback provided by the peer and addresses other problems of language use by using correction symbols. Students rewrite their assignments and receive a mark based on task-specific rubrics (Fig. 17.4).

Despite the adaptations mentioned above, we have encountered a number of contextual challenges related to the teaching of SLW at CTJ. These are now discussed together with solutions that have been adopted.

Challenges in Adopting a Process-Genre Approach

Academic articles on the teaching of the four skills do not necessarily touch on local day-to-day tensions and dilemmas that may underlie the adoption of a certain teaching approach. This section aims to bridge this gap

A. Analyzing the model: Read the letter to a city official **(p. 84)** and answer the questions.

1. Who wrote the letter?
2. Who is going to read the letter?
3. When was the letter written?
4. What is the problem raised in the letter?
5. Where was the open field?
6. What can we infer about where Tisha lives?
7. Why can't the kids play soccer in the suburbs?

B. Most letters have five to six parts. Each part gives different information. Read Tisha's letter again and complete the information below with the words from the box.

date	**signature**	**address**	**greeting**	**message**	**closing**

1. The _____ shows the place where the person lives.
2. The _____ shows the day, month and year that Tisha wrote the letter.
3. The _____ gives the name of the person Tisha wrote to.
4. The _____ is what Tisha wants to tell that person.
5. The _____ ends the message.
6. The _____ gives Tisha's name (in her handwriting).

B. Prewriting: Make a list of problems you find in your neighborhood or school. Then compare the list with your partner. Choose the problem you find the most serious or the one you feel the most confident to write about.

C. Writing: You are going to write a letter to your local government or to your school board about a problem in your neighborhood or in your school. Organize your letter according to the instructions below.

Recipient's address

Date

Greeting

Message:

Paragraph 1: Specify the problem. Talk about how it used to be in the past and how it is now.

Paragraph 2: Explain how this problem affects your neighborhood or your school.

Paragraph 3: Suggest possible solutions to the problem.

Closing

Signature

Fig. 17.2 Customized writing worksheet

Read your peer's letter to a city official or school principal. Check (√) if all the letter components below are present:

( ) There is a heading with the recipient's name and address.

( ) The address is followed by the date.

( ) There is an appropriate greeting.

( ) The first paragraph states the problem clearly and with sufficient details.

( ) The second paragraph explains why the problem affects the community.

( ) The third paragraph gives a suggestion.

( ) There is an appropriate closing.

( ) Grammar and vocabulary are accurate.

Write one or two suggestions for your peer to make the letter even better.

_____

_____

_____

Fig. 17.3 Peer revision sheet

by discussing some of the main dilemmas we have experienced and by presenting solutions we have developed. Readers are invited to compare these dilemmas and solutions to those they may experience in their own teaching contexts.

Tensions Between Writing Approaches at CTJ and Other Schooling

Students attending CTJ are seldom familiar with process writing. A study in the four major K-12 schools attended by our students (Villas Boas 2014) showed that CTJ's approach to teaching writing is in tension with the product and examination-oriented approach adopted in those schools. On the other hand, the same study also showed that a focus on process writing helped students develop as writers in their L1. They transferred the skills and strategies learned at CTJ, such as generating ideas, planning, and revising,

Content and Organization			
	Yes	Partially	No
The first paragraph specifies the problem	3	2-1	0
The second paragraph explains how the problem affects the neighborhood or school.	3	2-1	0
The third paragraph suggests possible solutions.	3	2-1	0
Uses appropriate letter format.	3	2-1	0

Grammar				
	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
Uses verb tenses correctly.	4	3-2	1	0
Uses correct subject-verb agreement.	4	3-2	1	0
Uses appropriate sentence construction.	4	3-2	1	0

Discourse and vocabulary				
	Yes	Mostly	Partially	No
Uses connectors to link ideas.	4	3-2	1	0
Uses correct word form.	4	3-2	1	0
Uses appropriate vocabulary for a formal letter.	4	3-2	1	0

Mechanics			
	Yes	Partially	No
Uses correct spelling and capitalization.	3	2-1	0
Uses correct punctuation.	3	2-1	0

Fig. 17.4 Scoring rubrics

to their regular school writing experiences. In fact, 94% of the participants found that one of the greatest strengths of the writing program at CTJ was having the opportunity to rewrite their compositions.

This lack of familiarity with process writing has led us to scaffold the writing process more explicitly for our students and also raise their awareness of how strategies for planning, drafting, and revising their writing can help them in their academic and professional lives. For every writing task, students experiment with different types of planning strategies, such as mind-mapping, freewriting, debating, and outlining. Figure 17.5 shows an example of a combination of a speaking/mind-mapping activity that was used as a supplementary worksheet to generate and organize ideas for writing.

After revising their writing, students are also invited to compare the first and second drafts and reflect upon their improvement. In the advanced course, students have a course portfolio (see Lam, this volume) in which they keep their writing assignments throughout the four-semester course and are invited to reflect upon their progress as writers. They also receive extra credit for having rewritten all of their assignments.

C. Christopher Columbus discovered America and became a fundamental man in history. Sometimes we know people who have done important things, too, but they don't become famous for that. Think about someone in your family or a friend's family who has done or achieved something you consider great or significant and write about it. Use the space below to brainstorm some ideas:

Examples:
My grandmother got an award for Best Storyteller.
My sister created a group that rescues stray cats and dogs in our neighborhood.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

D. Share your ideas with a partner. Begin your conversation like this:

Student A*: I think I'll talk about my grandmother.*
Student B: *Really? What did she do?*
Student A: *She got an award for best storyteller.*
Student B: *When was that?*

E. At home, talk to your family and do some research. Use a mind map to organize ideas before writing.

D. Write an essay about your important person. Organize ideas in paragraphs as in the model **(p. 68).** Adapt the language in order to use the vocabulary and structures in unit 7. Use the box below to help you.

Vocabulary	*Language focus*
• Verbs (became, discovered, died, introduced, won, invented, took place, traveled, etc.) • People • Places • Dates	• Past tense with IN, AGO, DURING, FOR and FROM.

Fig. 17.5 Generating ideas and planning

Teachers' Lack of Familiarity and Training in Process Writing

During their own education, the teachers did not experience process writing pedagogy, except for those who were themselves students at CTJ. They are

also unfamiliar with this approach because their pre and in-service teacher education would not typically include practice in teaching process writing. Even though they may have attended writing classes in their Language Arts courses, very few teachers would have experienced process writing or learned about it in theoretical terms (Villas Boas 2014).

To bridge this gap, CTJ offers a five-semester, 320-hour teacher development course (TDC) that contains a 32-hour writing component. In this writing course, a process-genre approach is adopted, so that student-teachers experience the approach themselves and are more equipped to use it with their students. In the course, teachers analyze the rhetorical structure and linguistic features of different genres (e.g. formal and informal letters, e-mails, reports, narrative accounts, blog posts, etc.) and produce texts in these genres. They practice different strategies to generate and plan ideas, such as researching and discussing the topic with peers, outlining, freewriting, and working with different types of graphic organizers, and go through the feedback and revising stages, experiencing both self and peer assessment.

Novice teachers at CTJ also go through a one-semester, two-hour-a-week induction course, with workshops on different areas. Teaching writing is one of the topics covered in the course. In addition, in our local TEFL seminar, held every year in July and lasting from two to three days, and in the mini-courses offered during our in-service training, we frequently address issues related to teaching writing. The main topics addressed in recent years have been giving effective feedback, conducting peer revision, designing effective assessment rubrics, and using technology to teach and give feedback on writing. ELT institutes wishing to adopt a process-genre approach would benefit from offering similar opportunities for teachers to learn about and experience this approach so that they can use it more effectively in their classes.

Tensions in Teacher and Student Perceptions of Drafting

CTJ instructors typically teach six groups of up to 18 students each, and as for many teachers worldwide, their time and energy are limited. In a process writing approach, each student produces at least two drafts each. In the past, students received a grade only after they had handed in their second or third drafts, and the rubrics used contained a progress element in which the teacher assessed both the final product and students' performance throughout the drafting process. This amount of feedback placed considerable demands on teachers. Because they knew that their grades would be 'open' until the very end of the process, students also tended to delay handing in

their work. Some students wrote their first drafts in a casual manner, since they would later have a chance to revise them. To address this issue, students now receive a preliminary mark for their first drafts and a deadline to submit a second draft. If they do not meet the deadline, their preliminary mark becomes permanent.

Another initiative that has contributed to facilitating the drafting process both for the students and for the teachers is the use of the Google Classroom application. Teachers can post assignments, communicate with students, and provide feedback on students' writing, eliminating paper work and/or time-consuming e-mailing, downloading, and printing. Teachers and students also use a voice application that allows them to provide oral feedback on the compositions.

Provision of Consistent and Effective Feedback to Students

Despite the great strides made in teaching writing in the past 20 years and the efforts to implement process-genre writing pedagogy in a large institutional program, we are still faced with two major challenges related to providing feedback to students. It remains difficult to guarantee that teachers will provide consistent and comprehensive feedback on content and organization of ideas, in addition to feedback on form (see Pham and Iwashita, this volume, for further discussion of feedback options). We have a mixture of more and less experienced professionals that can result in an unfortunate inconsistency in the way feedback is provided. The Advanced Course portfolio mentioned earlier is a step towards dealing with this problem, as students collect their work throughout the course and teachers can see the kind of feedback provided by their students' previous teachers. Another initiative is to have more experienced teachers mentor the less experienced, helping them to provide effective feedback.

The second major challenge is a wider adoption of peer revision. Teachers and course supervisors are still reluctant to adopt peer revision, despite the fact that its advantages have been documented, and strategies to handle peer revision effectively have been proposed:

(1) Model the activity by revising pieces of writing with the whole class.
(2) Begin by having students give feedback on anonymous writing, as they do not feel comfortable 'criticizing' their peer's writing. After a while, they see that feedback is not necessarily criticism.

(3) Begin with short checklists and expand the tasks gradually, until they can be more open-ended.
(4) Vary the focus and the format of the peer review activity.
(5) Use peer review sheets instead of having students write on their peer's paper.
(6) Be patient. Teaching students how to give and receive feedback takes time. They will be very reluctant in the beginning, as peer revision is not part of their educational experience. If the teacher is persistent, students eventually incorporate it as a natural step in a writing lesson.

More recently, a team of advanced course teachers has been piloting a Google Classroom Project and has started incorporating peer revision more consistently into their writing lessons, experimenting with Google applications for oral feedback as well. It is hoped that this new project will inspire other teachers to incorporate peer revision. Formative assessment has also been a major focus of the institution in the past two years, and courses and in-service sessions have been offered to familiarize teachers with formative assessment tools, such as classroom quizzes, electronic polls to check learning, rubrics, and checklists. Self and peer revision are integral elements of formative assessment, so it is hoped that teachers will adopt them more in their teaching.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, two major elements have been highlighted that can help other English language institutes implement a process-genre approach to writing. The first one relates to how coursebooks can be adapted and expanded in order to build a consistent process-genre writing curriculum, taking advantage of the different genres already present. The second element involves the role of continuing teacher development that has an experiential focus as a key factor in familiarizing teachers with the process-genre approach.

It is hoped that teachers and administrators around the world who have also struggled with the adoption of the combination of process and genre approaches in second language writing instruction in their contexts have gained insights on how to localize the approach to meet the needs of their organization, their teachers, and their students.

Questions for Reflection

(1) Think about how you learned to compose texts in your native language. Was it by way of a product, process, genre, or process-genre approach? Did the methodology used follow the steps mentioned in this chapter? How about when you learned to compose texts in EFL/ESL (if you are a non-native-English-speaking teacher) or another second/foreign language (if you are a native-English-speaking teacher)?

2) How much emphasis was given to second language writing in your teacher education course and/or pre and in-service training? How much did it contribute to developing your expertise in dealing with writing in your second/foreign language classroom?

(3) Analyze the coursebooks used in your program to verify whether they contain all the stages in the writing process discussed in this chapter and focus on the production of different genres. If not, how could you adapt and supplement the activities?

4) How do the challenges described in the Brazilian context compare with those you face or might face in your context? Are there other challenges that were not mentioned here?

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18

Future Directions for the Four Skills

Joseph Siegel and Anne Burns

Introduction

Much language teaching and learning are guided by national syllabi, ministries of education, course book writers, administrative decisions, parental influences and material factors, elements beyond the control of many practicing teachers. At the same time, teaching and learning are transmitted through instruction that will always be localized, based on immediate needs and issues (local students, administrative/governmental/societal frameworks and constraints), as they involve the transfer and development of skills from person to person: teachers teaching learners, learners teaching learners and learners teaching teachers. All of these factors come into play as English language education and speakers of English continue to expand and gain prominence in the globalized world.

After the worldwide whirlwind tour presented in this volume of what the teaching of each of the four skills can look like in several countries, this final chapter takes a step back to examine the notion of 'perspectives' and how readers can benefit from each of the viewpoints expressed in the preceding chapters. It then considers the notion of innovation for the teaching of the

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skills, and, in doing so, it attempts to balance a need for pedagogic transformation with the practicality (or not) of change and innovation. This chapter then considers how the traditional notion of the four main language skills as four separate entities to be individually and specifically addressed in the language classroom may evolve in the future, as more and more language learners put their skills into practice in the ever-internationalizing real, rather than classroom, world. This final perspective on the four skills may help set a course for the future of the ways in which skills are conceived, integrated, planned, taught, learned and assessed.

Perspectives

Perspectives and views collected from teachers, teacher-researchers and teacher educators bring us into the classroom and give us brief glimpses of how the four EFL skills are being addressed around the globe. Drawing on voices from six continents, this volume has demonstrated numerous innovations for the four skills that have habitually created the foundation of the field of English language education and has provided recommendations and pedagogic implications for how these practices can be integrated in similar and divergent contexts. These voices encompass a range of professionals from seasoned teacher educators to classroom teachers, from well-established researchers to budding teacher-researchers and include both those for whom English is and is not a mother tongue, as well as those working in Inner, Outer and Expanding circles (Kachru 1992).

To some readers, certain ideas and voices presented here may be new and innovative while others may be more familiar. However, the fact that this volume sheds light on classroom practices in so many different contexts (i.e. primary, secondary, tertiary, private, continuing language education) means that new doors have potentially opened for readers, and there are fresh looks at how familiar skills are being planned, taught and evaluated in unfamiliar contexts. Although the skills themselves (i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing) will be familiar to practising language professionals, contextual constraints, administrative frameworks and learners' group and individual needs vary across the collection of situations covered in the preceding chapters.

It is important to note, however, that the contents of this volume are 'perspectives', in line with the series title. Perspectives on pedagogy involve one's contextually situated viewpoints and attitudes and do not encourage absolutes, decrees or fail-proof ideas. As Richards and Burns (2012) point out,

every educational situation is unique and will inevitably involve awareness of contextual factors and the ways they impact teaching and learning. Thus, the authors' accounts provide insight and experiential knowledge supported by background and contextual understanding that covers learners, methods, materials and goals within school, community and national structures. As such, learning about how the four skills are taught around the world should not entail heedlessly adopting these innovations without critical thought being given to whether the innovations meet a need within a certain context. Given the range of teaching and learning environments, with myriad constraints and distinctive contextual features, readers are invited to compare the situations and teaching practices described through these perspectives with their own contexts, teacher beliefs and learner objectives. In some cases, this kind of examination may involve wholly adapting an innovative practice. In others, such reflection may lead to partial modification of some of the teaching ideas, and at the very least, readers will expand their knowledge base about what is happening in other classrooms. When it comes to adopting change, either full or partial, various models such as those in this volume can help inform the process and prepare for success.

Putting 'Perspectives' into Action (or not)

Major motivations for pedagogic change in language teaching stem from dissatisfaction with the status quo and disappointment when results do not live up to expectations (Richards and Burns 2012). In order for readers to adopt or adapt any of the pedagogical perspectives and innovations suggested in this volume, one must consider two circumstances: first, the context in which the pedagogic description is set; and second, the context in which the reader operates. It has long been understood that a holistic understanding of an educational context encompasses several sociocultural factors, including at the cultural, administrative and institutional levels (Kennedy 1988). Readers are therefore recommended to first consider whether any change in their teaching situation at any of these levels is needed. Perhaps the answer in some instances is no. In that case, readers have at the very least built on their pedagogic knowledge by exploring various options for teaching the four skills in a number of different contexts. If readers are inclined to trial one or more of the innovations, it is important to think about the age, proficiency level and goals of various learner groups described in these chapters and whether there is comparability with their own situations. Broader national and

educational curriculum and policy frameworks within which the innovations were or will be introduced must also be under consideration.

To avoid possible 'mismatches between an innovation and the sociocultural or educational context', Kennedy (2013: 13) suggests that a number of factors should be considered, many of which could be discussed at length in relation to specific chapters in this volume, should space allow for such detailed discussion. Instead, the following points are highlighted for readers to consider in connection to both the content of this book and their own teaching circumstances.

In terms of the social context in which an innovation may be introduced, Kennedy (2013) indicates that teachers should understand the degree to which a context may be highly structured, the extent to which state power or localization is prominent and the degree of predictability or uncertainty that may be acceptable. When it comes to educational systems, other factors may deserve attention (Kennedy 2013): Is teacher control or learner autonomy expected or allowed? Is it a book culture or does technology have a strong influence on how information is delivered? What are the roles for teachers and how are they defined? As readers reflect on the wide-ranging chapters in this volume, perhaps some of them come to mind when considering these points. Understanding where an innovation originated, as well as how it might impact on one's own context, can help make any transfer of pedagogic ideas from this book, either through direct application or some adaptation, more successful.

Still, it must be remembered that innovation and change take time, and that several iterations, informed by information-gathering and reflection and through subsequent modifications, can increase the chances for success. One way to accomplish this is through action research, which, in its basic form, involves four steps: plan an intervention, implement that intervention, gather information and observe the effects of the change, reflect on the change and use those reflections to improve upon and move the innovation forward (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988; Burns 2010). An action research framework corresponds well with many of the processes and practices offered by contributors to this volume, in that most are small scale, located in real-world teaching situations, are teacher-initiated, represent an expanding role for teachers, and are meant to, first and foremost, improve the lives of teachers and learners (e.g. Burns 2010; Siegel 2012). Any of the teaching ideas presented here, in addition to variations thereof, could be introduced in classrooms and examined through action research.

Skill Integration

This volume has separated the four skills into distinct areas for the relative ease and convenience of organization and explanation. Perhaps these are the same reasons why the skills are often described and listed separately in course titles, national syllabi, textbooks and assessments. However, this type of segregation is just that: relative. The real world presents language users with skill integration through complex tasks and expectations under time pressure that are all difficult and intimidating to replicate in the language classroom. Thus, distinguishing one skill from others makes pedagogic sense in that we can isolate one area to improve, which may overlap or support learning related with another skill. That is, development in one area is likely to impact and supports gains in others. When creating class titles, course materials and steering documents, having four distinct skills make the work simple and straightforward.

As more English users interact in a globalized society outside the classroom, they will need to integrate the language skills in much more complex ways than current pedagogic practices, syllabi and materials suggest. The real world demands tasks like taking a phone call, listening to and speaking to the caller and writing a short memo for a colleague who is out to lunch. Or attending a seminar, which may entail reading pre-event information, listening to lectures, writing notes, participating in question and answer sessions and writing post-event reports. Therefore, the streamlined, and arguably complacent, conception of the skills as four major separate components of language teaching will, increasingly, need to be modified to accommodate the more blended and interrelated uses of language in the real world.

Messages for the Future

The foregoing chapters have examined and described skills from several vantage points: evaluations, comparisons, critiques, innovations and reflections. These episodes provide practicing educators and teachers in training with guidelines and suggestions for how to approach the craft of teaching each of the skills. Reflecting on how the viewpoints and ideas expressed here could be applied to the teaching of any one skill, or combination of skills, in a local context will improve personal and professional practice. The chapters suggest many questions for reflection on one's teaching of a language skill: How, when and why should I evaluate my own practice? How does my practice

compare to others (in my school, to me at different times in my teaching career, to others in the same country, to teachers working with learners at the same proficiency level and to those in other countries)? Am I able to critique, analyse and innovate my own teaching? To what extent can I successfully introduce a classroom innovation, to 'problematize' (Burns 2010) the teaching of a core skill? How should I reflect on and subsequently improve either a teaching practice or my own professional knowledge and experience? It is through this type of personal reflection that the teaching of the four skills will continue to improve and innovate by addressing contextual, institutional and learner needs.

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