"Some Questions Are Sophisticated, So I Have to Answer Them in Sophisticated English": On Quality Talk in Low-Achieving EFL Classes

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Abstract Quality Talk (QT) has been adopted in classroom discussion to facilitate critical-analytic thinking (Murphy et al., 2014) and to create a student-centered learning environment through peer interaction. Classroom discourse is thus indicative in that it indexes how much students have learned. In EFL classrooms, the implementation of QT positions English discourse as both a subject and a medium. The chapter records how the instructor followed the instructional frame and discourse levels of the QT components in low-achieving EFL courses at the university level in Taiwan. The chapter aims at addressing pedagogical concerns which students and instructors may encounter. Specifically, this chapter discusses the implementation of QT from three dimensions: (1) how the students' linguistic/discourse elements were built to engage in English discussion, (2) how classroom materials, other than readings, facilitated QT implementation, and (3) how QT as a new pedagogy was viewed by students.

1 Introduction

Quality Talk (QT henceforth), a social constructivist learning approach which can be traced back to Vygotsky (1978) and which advocates that learning takes place in social context, emphasizes the facilitative role of in-class discussion in achieving higher-level comprehension (Murphy, 2018; Murphy et al., 2018). This pedagogical approach, adopted in a variety of disciplines such as science (e.g., Murphy et al., 2017) and reading (e.g., Li et al., 2016) on a native-language basis, was incorporated in an EFL context in this study. This study reflects on the year-long implementation of QT in two Freshman English courses in a university in northern Taiwan to address the related pedagogical concerns. Drawing from the discussion recordings, the students' feedback and the instructor's observation, this reflection chapter addresses feasibility and difficulty of implementing QT in EFL contexts. It will be presented that English

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serving as both a subject and a medium in EFL classes makes QT implementation doubly challenging and rewarding.

This reflection chapter was inspired by the realization that language barriers could potentially be a hurdle, as shown in one student's feedback in (1) and an extract of in-class discussion from one of the two Freshman English courses in (2) (Chinese Romanization is in italics, and English in bold).[1]

(1) *Some questions are sophisticated, so I have to answer them in sophisticated English.*

(2)

Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
2	Zoe	**Why did Joey and Chandler leave the baby,** ('Why did Joey and Chandler leave the baby,')	**TQ**
3	Elaine	**O?** ('Oh?')	
4	Iris	**In the bus?** ('in the bus?')	
5	Zoe	*En***?** ('hmm?')	
6	Debbie	**On the** ('On the')	
7	Iris	**[On (.) on.]** ('On, on')	
8	Debbie	[*Eh***?**] ('Eh?')	
9	Elaine	**On=**	
10	Zoe	**=In the bus** (.) **on the bus.**	
11	Debbie	[*Eh***?**] ('Eh?')	
12	Zoe	**[On] the bus.**	
13	All	*((laugh))*	
		…(17 turns omitted)…	

(continued)

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[1] The discourse coding follows the coding manual by Murphy et al. (2017). The transcription conventions adopted from Stivers, Mondada, and Steensig (2011) are shown below.

(.)	short pause
=	latching,
[ ]	overlapping
underlined	stress and loudness
((laughter))	Non-speech sounds

(continued)

Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
30	Iris	*Shi* **in** *ma*? *Hai shi* **on**? ('Is it 'in' or 'on'?')	
31	Elaine	**In the bus** *ba*? **On** *dehua* (.) *bujioushi* (.) *dao che waimian? Jiu* **on** [*shi zai*] *biaomian.* ('It should be 'in the bus.' If it's 'on,' doesn't it mean that we are on the top of the bus? I mean, 'on' means surface, right?')	
32	Debbie	[*Keshi,*] *wo yizhi jeude you* **on** [*zhe ge*] *yinxiang.* ('But I somehow vaguely remember it should be 'on.'')	
33	Iris	[*Dui a.*] *Hoaxing shi* **on** *ye.* ('Yeah. It seems to be 'on'.')	
34	Elaine	*Eh*? ('Eh?')	
35	Iris	*Hao xiang she* **on** *ye* (.) *Suiran haishi zai limian.* ('It seems to be 'on,' though they are still in the bus.')	
36	Elaine	*((laughs))*	
37	Zoe	*Haoxiang dou dui ye.* ('Both seem correct.')	
38	Debbie & Elaine	*((laugh))*	
39	Iris	*Dou keyi ba* (.) *yinggai.* ('Then both are fine, I suppose.')	
40	Elaine	*((laughs)) Hao* (.) *na women jiu bu jiujie xijie.* ('OK. Then let's not fuss about minor details.')	
		…(2 turns omitted)…	
43	Zoe	**So** (.) **Joey and Chandler leave the baby** (.) <u>**on**</u> (.) **the bus,** ('So Joey and Chandler left the baby on the bus.')	
44	Debbie	*((laughs))*	
45	Elaine	**On the bus** ('On the bus.')	
46	Zoe	**or** <u>**in**</u> (.) **the bus.** ('or in the bus.')	

A student in (1) reflected on how sophisticated language is required to answer sophisticated questions. A group of students in (2) attempted to settle a grammatical issue regarding "on" or "in the bus." These demonstrate that implementing QT in EFL classrooms poses additional difficulties and that quality of language is not the sole concern. Research has shown that increase in quantity of talk does not indicate higher comprehension (Murphy et al., 2009, 2014) and that quality, not quantity, cultivates critical thinking ability (Croninger et al., 2018). However, when students probably find English difficult and distant, how to remove discouraging obstacles and

to engage them in English discussion deserves an instructor's attention during the QT implementation. Starting from acknowledging potential language barriers, this reflection chapter addresses pedagogical concerns of practicing QT in low-achieving EFL classrooms, including linguistic barriers, multimedia materials, and students' feelings of disorientation.

This chapter contains five sections. Section 2 specifies the students' background, data sources for analysis, and the implementation procedures. Section 3 presents the findings and discussion. Pedagogical implications and the conclusion are presented in Sect. 4.

2 Methods

2.1 Participants

The QT approach was implemented in two freshman English courses for two semesters (36 weeks in total). The students were assigned to classes for learners at Basic English proficiency level according to their English scores at the college entrance exam. The majority of the students came from colleges of education, liberal arts, arts, technology and engineering, and music. The two classes consisted of mainly Taiwanese students and also overseas students from Malaysia, South Korea, Macau, Hong Kong, and Mainland China. Mandarin Chinese is used as a common language among the students. The classroom instruction was chiefly in English, sometimes followed by Chinese. Only data from students who stayed for two semesters and signed the online consent forms were analyzed in this study. Due to privacy concerns, pseudonyms are used.

2.2 Design

The instructor followed and adapted the instructional frame and the discourse elements in QT implementation. Though QT works as a complete pedagogical framework, the implementation was necessarily adapted in response to the pretest and an information sheet the students completed. Most students shared negative comments on their past learning experiences and considered speaking English frightening. Moreover, the pretest showed that the students seldom read beyond the texts. They took essentially efferent stances toward course materials (see Rosenblatt, 1978 for stances toward texts). The instructor took these into consideration and set the implementation goals. The students were expected

1. to distinguish between test questions and authentic questions,
2. to raise and answer authentic questions in English, and
3. to further comment on each other's responses to authentic questions.

QT was incorporated in different in-class activities with repeated demonstrations by the instructor and by the other classmates. The mini-lessons were not used because the instructor could keep the instruction language contextual, and less metalinguistic to adjust to the students' proficiency levels. The discussion format was broken down into smaller tasks. This allowed the instructor to familiarize the students with both discursive elements and the structure of discussion within a controllable time in a class meeting. During the in-class discussion the instructor walked around to offer help but did not intervene much. The procedures in the fall and spring semesters are described below.

2.2.1   Procedure in the Fall Semester

To create a light-hearted learning environment and to motivate the students to discuss, QT was first implemented through introducing sitcom clips and English songs. With visual information, the students were expected to comprehend when they missed linguistic cues. Increased comprehension could prepare them better for later engagement in discussion.

Clips from the U.S. sitcom *Friends* were used for QT implementation. The discourse in *Friends* corresponds largely to naturally occurring communication (Quaglio, 2008). Its' portrait of daily life in apartments and at a café could guide students to learn to take expressive stances (see Rosenblatt, 1978). The clips were played to the students without subtitles several times before they were presented a number of questions from the instructor. In the first half of the fall semester, the students worked collaboratively to answer mainly factual questions in English. The concepts of test questions and authentic questions were introduced in the second half of the fall semester. The instructor divided questions into two groups on the slides and explained how they were different. Two weeks later, the students started to practice raising questions and answering those from peers. The students discussed in groups to come up with one test question and one authentic question during the practice session. The students recorded their discussion and the instructor walked around to offer further guidance. These questions were collected and shown to the class. The students then chose one test question and one authentic question from their peers to discuss. The discussion was recorded.

The introduction of English songs was also separated into two stages. Initially, songs were presented with more emphasis on vocabulary. The distinction between test questions and authentic questions was introduced in the second half of the semester. The students were presented with questions on the slides or handouts. Then, the students took turns to present an English song in a group of four. They were required to prepare handouts with lyrics and questions for comprehension (test questions) and questions for discussion (authentic questions). Examples of their questions are shown in (3a, 3b).

(3a) *What would you do when you face the challenge? To persist or to give up of your dream that hurt you a lot, what would you choose?*

(3b) *What will you do when being alone?*

In the fall semester, the discussion remained formulaic in a question-and-answer pattern.

2.2.2 Procedure in the Spring Semester

Sitcom clips and English song presentations were replaced with comic strips in the spring semester due to the following concerns. First, comic strips allowed the instructor to emphasize speaking as the students learned to describe individual pictures and then to summarize stories in their own words. They needed to generate longer utterances, which were an obvious sign of improvement for the students. This helped build their confidence and further motivated them to engage in discussions. Second, because an enormous amount of information remains unspoken in comic strips, the students took more interpretive control, which prompted more in-depth thinking and discussion (see Murphy & Firetto, 2018; Wei & Murphy, 2018; Wu et al., 2013). Third, though comic strips were expected to pose more challenges to students compared to English songs and sitcom clips, the students could still rely on pictures for comprehension (Hadley & Terry, 2001; Liu, 2004).

In the first half of the spring semester, the students learned to describe single pictures and then a sequence of pictures. The ideas of factual information, inferential meanings, and personal feelings were gradually introduced to the students toward the second half of the spring semester. These instructions aimed at enriching the contents of their discussion. They practiced narrating and expressing how they felt about these comic strips. The students also learned to provide reasons to their statements, to ask and answer hypothetical questions, and to respond to others' answers. The instructor provided expressions and patterns which helped students organize complex sentences. For example, grammar patterns of the subjunctive were reviewed and placed next to comic strips on the slides.

The procedures of QT training were also adapted. The number of students in one group was lowered to 2–3 peers they were familiar with to prompt a higher degree of willingness to communicate, as identified by Cao and Philip (2006), Mullen and Copper (1994), and Wu et al. (2013). Though the design contradicted with the heterogeneous grouping advocated in QT, the instructor expected the students to acknowledge their improvement through sustaining longer speech turns and producing longer utterances in more close-knit interactive situations. Moreover, the allotted time for discussion was extended from 15 to 20 minutes. Furthermore, after their group discussion, the students were encouraged to share their stories with the class. The sharing activity was intended to prepare students for speaking English in front of a larger group. No correction was made by the instructor on the spot so the students learned that errors were acceptable. Nonetheless, mistakes which led to misunderstandings were summarized and corrected later, before the class meeting was dismissed.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Four types of data were collected along the implementation processes: *Information sheets, written data, recording data, and reflection sheets.* These are discussed in turn in the following.

1. *Information sheets.* At the orientation, each student filled out an information sheet (see Appendix A), designed to elicit information regarding their attitudes toward their English proficiency. A total number of 52 responses were analyzed.
2. *Written data.* The students practiced raising questions on activity sheets during class meetings before and at the early implementation stage in the fall semester. A total number of 124 written questions from two in-class activities were collected and only one question was found to be authentic.
3. *Recording data.* The students' discussions were recorded and transcribed for analysis. The study analyzed recordings of two in-class discussions, one in the fall semester and the other in the spring semester.

   (i) Discussion on a clip from the sitcom *Friends* (Season 2, Episode 6). Ross, a father to a baby boy Ben, accidentally ate a kiwi and suffered from a serious allergy. Having to urgently leave for the hospital, he had to ask Joey and Chandler to babysit. When Joey and Chandler took Ben for a stroll, they accidentally left him on the bus. In the end, they found Ben and another missing baby at the Health Services. Unable to recognize Ben, Joey and Chandler decided to flip a coin.

   (ii) Discussion on a Peanuts comic strip on https://www.gocomics.com/peanuts/1988/11/01. Sally and Charlie Brown[2] were waiting for the school bus. Snoopy, also with them at the bus stop, was eager to get on the school bus. Charlie Brown told Snoopy that dogs were prohibited from getting on the school bus. Hearing this, Sally barked.

4. *Reflection sheets.* The students completed a reflection at the end of the spring semester (Appendix B). The students were required to reflect on all the in-class activities. Only feedback directly related to QT was analyzed for the study. They could choose to remain anonymous or to identify themselves. In total, sixty reflection sheets were collected. 37 reflections were returned with names and 23 remained anonymous.

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[2] The instructor mistakenly placed the name "Lucy" next to Sally on the screen in class. The "Lucy" in the transcripts below in fact referred to Sally.

3 Findings and Discussion

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Language Barriers

The tension caused by their relatively low command of English was palpable, particularly in the fall semester. To encourage the students to at least talk around English, Chinese was not entirely prohibited in the discussion. The discussion was found to involve metalinguistic talk mainly in Chinese. The students then collaborated to translate what they had discussed into English, as presented in (4).

(4)

Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
5	Lillian	*Wo zai xiang shuo* **test question** *keyi wen shuo jiushi zuihou weisheme ta yao shuo* **I had the kiwi, run, Joy, run**. ('For the test question, I was thinking we can ask why he said, "I had the kiwi, run, Joey, run."')	
6	Jill	*Keyi a* (.) *keshi gangcai yingpian limian de doukeyi wen ma*? ('OK. Can we ask any question based on the clip')	
7	Lillian	[*Dui a.*] ('Yes.')	
8	Jill	[*Na*] *ye keyi wen shuo na tamen zuihou yong sheme fangshi jueding yao* (.) *daizou nayiwei xiaohai.* ('Then, we can also ask how they decided which baby was Ben.')	
9	Lillian	*Ye keyi a.* ('That will do as well.')	
10	Kyle	*Na yao xie cheng yingwen a.* ('Then we have to write it in English.')	
11	Jill	*En* (.) **what's way** (.) *fangshi* **what's way** ('Erm, how, the way, how')	
12	Kyle	**they** [**choose**] ('they decide')	
13	Jill	[**does**] (.) **do** (.) **did** (.) *yinwei shi guoqushi a* (.) **did** (.) *na liang ge shi shei a*? **Joey and** ('does, do, did, because it's in the past, did, who are they? Joey and?')	
14	Kyle	*Jiu shuo* **they** *jiu xing le ba.* ('We can simply use "they."')	
15	Lillian	*Jiu* **they**. ('Then, "they."')	
16	Jill	*Hao,* **they**. ('OK, "they."')	

(continued)

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Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
17	Kyle	**They choose baby** ('[How did] they decide which baby [was Ben]?')	
18	Jill	**They** (.) **choose** (.) *daizou daizou* (.) **take away** *((laughs)) na bushi nazou ma*? ('they decide to, take, take, "take away." Doesn't that mean to "take way"?')	
20	Lillian	*Jiu* **choose baby** *jui hao.* ('I think just "choose baby" will do.')	
21	Jill	*Yeshi keyi a.* ('I think so')	

As seen in (4), the students discussed in Chinese (turns 1–8) when they tried to provide a test question. Kyle stated that they had to be able to phrase the question in English (turn 10). From turns 11 to 21, they collaborated to translate the question from Chinese into English. During the discussion, three further questions (turns 13, 14, and 18) about language use suggest their insecurity of their English competence, as also seen in (2).

This "discussion first and translation later" strategy was common, leading to significantly reduced discussion in English. As shown in (5a), when answering an authentic question, the group exchanged their opinions in Chinese.

(5a)

Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
3	Hallie	*Ni hui leyi zhaogu nage* **Ben** *ma*? *Wo hui ai, ruguo zhiyou yixiaxia* (.) *yitian dehua.* ('Would you be willing to take care of Ben? I would, if for a while or for a day.')	AQ/CQ
4	Sandy	*Wo jujue.* ('I refuse to.')	
5	Abby	*Wo ye jujue.* ('I refuse to.')	
		…(2 turns)…	
8	Hallie	*Keshi ruguo zhiyou yitian huo jige xiaoshi lie*? ('Not even for a day or for just a few hours?')	AQ/SQ
9	Abby	*Keshi zhiyou tamen qu kanyisheng de naduan* (.) *naduan shijian.* ('But only for the time when they were in the hospital.')	
10	Hallie	*Ha*? ('What?')	
11	Abby	*Tamen kanyisheng kan name jiu.* ('That was a long visit to a doctor.')	

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Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
12	Hallie	*Yinggai shi buhui ba. Ruguo jizhen song yi song zuiduo ye yitian a.* ('Probably still no. If they got to the emergency room, it would take a day at most.')	
13	Sandy	*Yao kanyisheng kan yi tian? Hao lei o* (.) *zhaogu xiaohai.* ('It took a day to see a doctor? Taking care of a baby is tiring.')	
14	Abby	*Shi wo wo hui xian kan nage xiaohai daodi ke bu keai.* ('As far as I'm concerned, I'd see if the baby is cute.')	
15	Sandy	*Yao kan shou bu shou.* ('It depends on how familiar we are with each other.')	
16	Abby	*Guai bu guai.* ('It depends on whether the baby is well-behaved or not.')	
17	Sandy	*Yao kan [shou bu shou.]* ('It depends on how familiar we are with each other.')	
18	Abby	*[Shou bu shou.]* ('Familiarity.')	
19	Sandy	*Dui.* ('Right.')	
20	Abby	*Keshi wo juede buyao bang* (.) *suibian bang renjia zhaogu.* ('I don't think it's a good idea to offer to babysit.')	
21	Hallie	*Keshi ruguo shi ni pengyou de xiaohai lie.* ('But what if it were your friend's baby?')	AQ/CQ
22	Sandy	*Na yao kan pengyou dao sheme chengdu.* ('It depends on how familiar we are.')	
		…(4 turns)…	
27	Hallie	*Na ruguo shi xiongdi lie? Xiang* (.) *dui a xiang* **Monica?** ('If it were your sibling's baby, like you were Monica?')	AQ/CQ
28	Sandy	*Wo di de xiaohai zhilei de.* ('Or my brother's kid.')	
29	Hallie	*Dui a.* ('Yeah.')	
30	Abby	*Na shi ta zhizi ma?* ('Is Ben her nephew?')	TQ
31	Hallie	*Dui a. Zhizi.* ('Yeah. It's her nephew.')	

Hallie first translated the English question into Chinese (turn 3) before they discussed in Chinese. Several questions were also raised in Chinese (turns 8, 21, and 27) regarding whether they would offer to babysit their sibling's baby. After their discussion, their translated responses into English were notably reduced, as seen in (5b).

(5b)

Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
65	Hallie	**If you were Joy and Chandler, would you be willing to take care of Ben?**	AQ/CQ
66	Abby	**No**.	
67	Sandy	**No**.	
68	All	*((laugh))*	
69	Hallie	*Haohao di huida. Ruguo shi keai de xiaohai lie?* ('Take it seriously. What if the baby were cute?')	AQ/SQ
70	Sandy	**No**.	
71	Abby	**Erm no**.	
72	Hallie	*Ku ku* (.) *Shangxin.* ('How sad!')	
73	Sandy	*Jibenshang haishi yao kan jiaoqing.* ('Still, it depends on how familiar we are.')	

The speculation questions in (5a) revealed the students' willingness to discuss. Yet, they retreated to simple English in (5b). This revealed that the students had the motivations to discuss. However, they were not equipped with the language ability with which they could verbalize their thoughts. This suggests that instructors could offer useful expressions and adoptable grammar patterns that the students could refer to, which was what the instructor did in the spring semester.

The instructor constantly mulled over three questions of whether Chinese is allowed during discussion, whether errors should be modified immediately, and whether an overview of related vocabulary is necessary. These are questions without simple answers, especially when learner autonomy and strategies are also taken into consideration. These questions are worth exploring and demand further academic attention.

3.1.2   Course Materials

The different materials expectedly posed different degrees of challenge for both the instructor and the students. According to the students' reflections concerning the most challenging in-class activities, 17 students mentioned comic strips, 7 referred to sitcom clips and two voted for English song presentations. Discussion on comic strips was found the most challenging as the students needed to fill in what the pictures and conversation bubbles did not tell. To check comprehension and to strengthen their interpretive skills, test questions were deployed as guidelines to help students summarize the stories before the students engaged in asking and answering authentic questions. During summarizing and asking questions, the students also learned to listen to others, to collaborate to reach a precise interpretation, and to develop their own strategies.

This leap from sitcom clips which are comparatively rich in contextual information to comic strips which are less explicit took efforts and time. Some students found the activity to be challenging (in 6a and 6b), beneficial (in 6c and 6d), or both (in 6e).

(6a) *I couldn't understand American humor.*

(6b) *I needed to figure out what the comic strips were about first. Some of them were so sophisticated that I didn't quite get it why they were funny.*

(6c) *I needed to express my thoughts in English, and this was what made me improve the most.*

(6d) *Comic strips are interesting. They make me think.*

(6e) *It's easier to remember what I looked up on the Internet when I thought about stories. I could be more fluent when I described what happened in the comics.*

In addition to their feedback, the recording also showed their confusion about inferred meanings in comic strips. Extract (7) explicates that the students read texts at a surface level.

(7)

Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
60	Jill	**Maybe she** (.) **maybe she think** (.) *en* (.) *yinggai shuo* (.) *en* (.) *wo xiang yixia o* ('Maybe she thought, how should I say it? Give me a second.')	
61	Lillian	*Haishi jiushi yinwei ta xue goujiao zhihou* (.) *ranhou nage* (.) **Charlie** *jiu buneng shuo* (.) *gou buneng shangche.* ('Is it because Charlie couldn't stop her from getting on the bus even if she pretended to bark.')	
62	Jill	*((laughs))*	
63	Lillian	*Jiu zhineng liangge yiqi shangche.* ('Then both she and Snoopy could get on the bus.')	
64	Jill	*O you keneng* (.) *na yinggai shuo nage.* **Maybe** (.) **maybe** (.) *en* (.) *deng yi xia* (.) **because Charlie** (.) **Charlie said** (.) **dog** (.) **are** (.) **are not allowed** (.) **[on the school bus]**. ('That could be possible. Because Charlie said, "Dogs are not allowed on the school bus."')	
65	Lillian	**[On the school bus.]** ('On the school bus.')	
66	Jill	**And she** (.) **want to** (.) **know** (.) *e* (.) **when she imitate dog roaring, what's** (.) *e* (.) *fanying fanying* (.) *fanying* (.) *fanying de.* ('She wanted to know how Charlie would react to her barking.')	
67	Lillian	*O* (.) *haishi jiu shi* (.) *kan nage* **Charlie** *huibuhui* **change his mind**. ('or we can say to see whether Charlie would change his mind.')	
68	Jill	*Dui dui dui. Jiu shi yao kan ta de nage* ('Exactly, we can see')	

(continued)

Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
69	Lillian	*Meiyou a.* ('No.')	
70	Jill	*O.* ('Oh.')	
71	Lillian	*Jiu buyao xiang fanying. Jiushi huan ju hua shuo.* ('Then don't think about how to say "react to" [in English].' We can phrase it in a different way.)	
72	Jill	*Na jiushi* (.) *e* (.) **She** (.) **she want to know** (.) **when she** (.) **imitate dog roaring**. ('Then, she wanted to know whether, when she pretended to bark,')	
73	Lillian	**Charlie will** (.) **change** (.) **his mind or not**. ('Charlie would change his mind or not.')	
74	Jill	*O keyi keyi keyi* (.) **Charlie** (.) **change** (.) **his mind or not**. *Hao. Keyi.* ('Good. Whether Charlie would change his mind or not. Ok. Good.')	

Extract (7) showed that comprehension of the comic strips was still challenging and that therefore comprehension check was still necessary. Challenging tasks such as narration also saw the students develop their own strategies. In (7), Lillian urged Jill to rephrase *fanying* "react to" with a different English phrase, rather than struggle for a direct translation.

The students were found to develop their own learning strategies. As shown in (8), Elaine and Debbie collaborated, monitored each other's comprehension, and offered their opinions when they encountered interpretation difficulties.

(8)

Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
2	Debbie	**In the first picture** (.) **we can see that Charlie said sorry to Snoopy and he said that Snoopy cannot go with them. Because** (.) **dogs aren't allowed on the school bus**. ('In the first picture, we can see that Charlie said sorry to Snoopy and that Snoopy couldn't go with them, because dogs weren't allowed on the school bus.')	
3	Elaine	**Then**, **Charlie's friend** (.) *en* ('Then, Charlie's friend, erm,')	
4	Debbie	**Lucy.** ('Lucy.')	

(continued)

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Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
5	Elaine	**Lucy** (.) **Lucy says woof** (.) **The reason she did that is** (.) **is because she want** (.) **she wanted to help Snoopy to go to school with them**. (Lucy said, "Woof." Because she wanted to help Snoopy to go to school with them.)	
6	Debbie	*Bushi ba.* ('I don't think so.')	
7	Elaine	*En? Bu* (.) *bushi ma*? ('You don't think so?')	
8	Debbie	*Wo* (.) *wo juede* (.) *wo de lijie shi* (.) *ta shi shuo* (.) *jiushi yinwei* **Lucy** *buxiang shang xiaoche. Jiushi ta buxiang qu xuexiao.* ('My understanding is that Lucy didn't want to get on the school bus. She didn't want to go to school.')	
9	Elaine	*Hao.* ('OK')	
10	Debbie	*Women jiu* (.) *women jiu jixu* (.) *hao* (.) *suoyi* (.) *suoyi na women gai di san ti* (.) *di san ge jiu shi* (.) **in the third picture** (.) **we can see that Lucy woof because she doesn't want to go to school and she do- and she** (.) s**he woofs so that she couldn't** (.) **erm** (.) **take** (.) **go on the school bus**. 'OK. Then we move to the third picture. In the third picture, we see that Lucy barked because this way she didn't have to get on the school bus.'	
11	Elaine	*O.* 'Oh.'	
12	Debbie	*En. ((laughs))* ('Hmm')	
13	Elaine	*Hao. Zhe yinggai caishi zhengque de lijie. ((laughs))* ('OK. This is the accurate interpretation.')	

When Elaine wrongly interpreted the contents, Debbie interrupted Elaine and offered her interpretation in Chinese at turn 6. Debbie and Elaine swiftly reached an accurate interpretation and switched back to English. Debbie's comment (turn 10) revealed that she was able to listen to Elaine's English critically and offered her opinion immediately. Through talking about comic strips, the students learned to interpret texts on their own. The cooperative nature of learner talk to reach an accurate interpretation has also been discussed by Atwood et al. (2010), who suggested that knowledge is constructed along in-class interaction.

The ability of self-monitoring was also evidenced in their reflection and their acts of repairing in the discussion. A student reflected on how beneficial it was to listen to his/her own recording, shown in (9).

(9) *I can listen to my own pronunciation. I can also detect some problems when I listen to the recording again.*

A pair of students, Iris and Zoe, polished up their narration after their first attempt to summarize the story, as presented in (10a).

(10a)

Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
7	Iris	**In the first picture**. ('In the first picture,')	
8	Zoe	**In this** (.) **erm** (.) **in the first picture** (.) *haishi shuo* **in the morning**. ('Do we say "in the first picture" or "in the morning"?')	
9	Iris	*O* (.) *ye keyi*. ('Oh, great idea.')	
10	Zoe	**In the morning** (.) **Charlie and Lucy are going to school** (.) **and they are waiting for bus**. ('In the morning, Charlie and Lucy headed for school and they were waiting for the school bus.')	
11	Iris	*En.* ('Hmm.')	
12	Zoe	**In the** (.) **at the bus stop**. ('At the bus stop.')	
13	Iris	**And** (.) **and Charlie** ('And Charlie')	
14	Zoe	**saw** (.) **Charlie saw Snoopy** *ranhou ne?* ('Charlie saw Snoopy. And what's next?')	
15	Iris	**And** (.) **and he said sorry Snoopy** (.) **you can't go with us** (.) **does** (.) *o* **dogs are not allowed on** (.) **allowed on the school bus.** ('And Charlie said, "Sorry, Snoopy, you can't go with us. Dogs are not allowed on the school bus."')	
16	Zoe	**And** (.) **and** (.) **when Lucy heard that** (.) **and she pretend as a dog** (.) **she woof a sound**. ('Hearing this, Lucy presented that she were a dog and woofed.')	
17	Iris	**She** (.) **she** (.) **didn't want to go to school**. ('She didn't want to go to school.')	
18	Zoe	**Because she didn't want to go to school** (.) *zheyangzi ma* (.) *na women zhong fushuo yibian*. ('Because she didn't want to go to school. Am I right? Then let's repeat again.')	
19	Iris	*Hao.* ('OK')	
20	Both	*((laugh))*	
21	Zoe	**In** ('In')	
22	Iris	*Ni xian jiang hao le.* ('Maybe you will start.')	

(continued)

(continued)

Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
23	Zoe	**In the morning (.) Charlie (.) Charlie and Lucy are waiting for the bus (.) to school (.) at the bus stop.** ('In the morning, Charlie and Lucy were waiting for the school bus at the bus stop.')	
24	Iris	**And Charlie saw Snoopy and say Sorry Snoopy (.) You can't go with us (.) Dogs are not allowed on the school bus.** ('And Char lie said to Snoopy, "You can't go with us. Dogs are not allowed on the school bus."')	
25	Zoe	**And (.) erm (.) and after that Lucy heard that (.) she pretend as a dog (.) she (.) woof (.) she make a sound (.) she make a woof sound (.) so (.) because she doesn't (.) didn't want to go to school.** ('After Lucy heard this, she barked because she didn't want to go to school.')	
26	Iris	*En.* ('Hm.')	
27	Zoe	*En* (.) **so she pretend as a dog**. *En* (.) *zheyangzi ma*? ('So she acted like she were a dog. Right?')	
28	Iris	*En.* ('Hm.')	

From turns 7 to 17, the two students took turns completing the story. At turn 18, Zoe suggested that they repeat again (turn 18). The repetition indicated their willingness to work on a more polished summary and their development in learning strategies. The finding implied that though comic strips were challenging for the students, they made significant progress. Once the students passed the narration stage, they were relatively at ease about raising authentic questions for discussion, as shown in (10b).

(10b)

Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
71	Zoe	*Dui dui dui. Na wo wen.* **Do you ever done anything to not to go to school?** ('OK. My turn then. Have you ever done anything so that you didn't have to go to school?')	AQ/CQ
72	Iris	**I (.) actually (.) actually (.) I (.) like to go to school.** ('I actually liked to go to school.')	
73	Zoe	**What?** ('What?')	
74	Iris	**Because** ('Because')	
75	Zoe	**What?** ('What?')	

(continued)

Turn	Speaker	Notes	Code/Types
76	Iris	**Because** (.) **because my** (.) **parent need to work** (.) **so** (.) **my home** (.) **so nobody in my home in the** (.) **morning**. ('Because my parents went to work, no one was at home in the morning.')	
77	Zoe	*O.* ('Oh.')	
78	Iris	**And so** (.) **so I can do nothing in my home** (.) **so I like to go to school more.** *((laughs))* ('There's nothing much I could do at home, so I liked to go to school.')	
79	Zoe	*O* (.) **so sad** (.) **but it's ok** (.) **now you** (.) **now you are in university now**. ('Oh that's sad. But it's ok now since you're in university now.')	
80	Iris	*((laughs))*	
81	Zoe	**So you can** (.) **you can play with your friends and study with me**. ('You can have fun with your friends and study with me.')	

Their laughter between turns and the decreasing use of Mandarin in (13b) showed that they were relatively more laid-back than they had been in (13a). These discussion extracts illustrate that the students were gradually gaining the ability to self-monitor because they did not rely on the instructor to acquire new linguistic information or to revise their errors.

Several implications can be drawn about the language barrier and material selections. First, different implementation stages brought distinct challenges. These may not occur in QT in first-language classroom contexts or advanced EFL classes. Second, the selection of materials can result in different hurdles. Lastly, as far as classes at basic levels are concerned, test questions that aim for comprehension check should be considered necessary.

3.2   Discussion: QT vs. Traditional Teaching and Learning

After the year-long implementation, most students responded positively to this new approach. One student remarked that it was interesting to know the other classmates more through communicating in English (shown in 11a). Another student also pointed out that without standardized answers he/she learned to organize her answer in complete sentences so as to make him/herself understood by others (presented in 11b). Still another student stated that answering authentic questions was a helpful practice for them (presented in 11c).

(11a) *It's interesting to know what each other is thinking about and how I can phrase my thoughts in English.*
(11b) *We will be motivated to answer in complete sentences when there is no standard answer.*
(11c) *It takes time to think even if we have to ask and answer in Chinese. It takes more efforts to do so in English. I think asking and answering authentic questions enhance both language proficiency and thinking ability.*

The implementation was demanding, but definitely rewarding to both the instructor and the students.

Nonetheless, another hurdle that both the instructor and the students had to cross concerns the traditional belief of effective teaching and learning. Differing from QT, which prompts students to take initiative roles in learning (e.g., Murphy & Firetto, 2018), the traditional ideology of learning places teachers at the center of learning, as norm providers, evaluators, and interpreters of texts; students are usually receivers with little acknowledged autonomy. Furthermore, the traditional ideology also values tests with standardized answers. A number of students expressed this view that tests help them learn better and that their answers should be commented on by the instructor, as shown in (12a) and (12b) respectively.

(12a) *Still oral exams work the best.*
(12b) *I think the usual practice on comic strips can improve our speaking. But since I have no idea whether I'm saying it right or wrong, I can only say that I practice speaking English.*

While some students picked up the habit of self-monitoring and turning to online resources, several classmates were concerned about not receiving correction from the instructor on the spot. Though most students embraced the arrangement of replacing exams with quizzes and in-class activities for their performance evaluation, several were obviously not used to the new pedagogy.

The instructor was alarmed to learn that several students still favored teacher-led and test-oriented learning, from which they had probably received a limited sense of accomplishment as comparatively low achievers. The progress which the students felt they had made in the past year was insufficient for them to "feel right" about their efforts and improvement. As some reflections were anonymous and without much elaboration, a further exploration through interviews which allow students to reflect more deeply on QT implementation can benefit both instructors and students.

4 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter notes the instructor's first attempt to implement QT in English courses. The purpose of this study is to truthfully record and reflect on the year-long implementation in Basic-Level English courses. More careful deployment and discussion of language-based instruction and material selection in future studies will surely

provide more insight in QT implementation in EFL contexts. The conclusion and implications are summarized as follows:

- This chapter describes and reflects on the implementation of QT regarding language-based instruction, material selections, and the traditional teaching ideology in basic level EFL contexts.
- During QT implementation, the students learned to differentiate between test questions and authentic questions and to engage in English discussion by raising and answering authentic questions.
- As far as basic level EFL learners are concerned, the implementation requires sufficient time to enhance their willingness to communicate, to strengthen their language skills, and to help them see their improvement.
- Test questions for comprehension check should be considered necessary and facilitative in basic level EFL contexts.
- Breaking down the discussion frames into smaller tasks familiarizes students with both the structure and discourse elements of discussion.
- A future research direction lies in the investigation of how linguistic barriers, material selections, and traditional ideology of learning and teaching can be more thoroughly examined in order to minimize their hindrance to QT implementation in EFL contexts.

Appendix A: Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

Please help me know you better.

1. Chinese Name _____

2. English Name _____

3. Email _____

4. Hobbies / Interests (1)_____(2)_____

5. Your dreams (1)_____(2)_____

6. One thing you want me to know about you

_____

7. Your expectation about this course

_____

8. Your past experiences and feelings about learning English

_____

_____

Appendix B: Reflection Sheet

Dear all,
It's really nice meeting you guys. Please answer the following questions. Thank you!
1.   What's the biggest improvement you made in English this year?
     _____
     _____
2.   Do you think you became more confident in speaking English? Why or why not?
     _____
     _____
3.   Which activity do you think helped you the most in improving your speaking skills?
     _____
     _____
4.   Among all the in-class activities and presentations (English songs, sitcom (Friends),
     movie script, comic strips),
     a.   Which one did you find the most interesting? Why?
          _____
     b.   Which one did you find the most challenging/difficult? Why?
          _____
     c.   Which one did you find the most boring? Why?
          _____
5.   About the textbook,
     a.   You found the book easy / difficult / ok.
     b.   _____ readings should be covered (we did five in the fall semester, and four in
          the spring) in one semester.
6.   We spent a lot of time learning to ask and answer *authentic questions* and they are very
     different from *test questions*. Do you think this helped you use and think in a different
     language? Why?
     _____
     _____
7.   Other comments about the course are welcome. ☺ (e.g., Anything you wanted to learn
     but was not covered in class.)

                                                                        Name _____

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