Volume 8, February 2012

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Foreword

Felicitations to the authors whose papers have been accepted to the February 2012 issue of Philippine ESL Journal! These authors have successfully earned the nod of approval of our knowledgeable reviewers who recommended their submissions for publication and generously offered their review comments that helped improved the quality of the reports.

The current issue brings to the fore five empirical reports which intelligently used different theoretical and analytical frameworks, creatively employed mixed methods, and productively gleaned rich findings that added in our understanding of varied learners across cultures and learning situations. Dr. Pauline Gocheco’s discourse analysis on political campaign ads revealed that people’s allegiance can be gained using the first person plural pronouns and that, in the Tagalog language, speakers’ preference for certain pronouns may show solidarity, politeness, and social distance. Tao Lina’s compendium of her masteral thesis using Sperber and Wilson’s (1995) Relevance Theory framework unearthed children’s ability to answer contextually demanding questions using seven compensatory comprehension strategies: world knowledge and own experience, given information, don’t know, irrelevant, keep silence, tautology, and turn taking. Sovannarith Lim’s report on Cambodian students’ motivational orientation and proficiency gleaned findings that showed no significant relationship between motivation and English proficiency. Motivation serves as an initiator that enhances motivational drive but has no connection with language proficiency. Rodrigo Morales’ paper on selected research articles written by Filipino and Japanese authors once again exemplified the merits of contrastive or intercultural rhetoric: that differences in patterns of conventions between cultures are not happening by chance; they are indicative of the authors’ frame of reference that are deeply embedded in their cultures. Lastly, my paper with Dr. Carlo Magno utilized Error Analysis of student writing in order to investigate the sentence-level errors of freshmen students at three proficiency levels. The study concluded that sentence-level errors have a significant role in essay scores and that the raters still have the grammar accuracy model when checking essays, although it is just considered secondary.
to other aspects of writing such as the ability to address the prompt and organize the ideas logically.

I would like to thank the following reviewers who punctiliously reviewed the submissions and offered helpful comments to the authors: Dr. Aireen Arnuco, Dr. Pauline Gocheco, Dr. Ma. Joahna M. Estacio, and Dr. Corazon Balarbar. They made sure that only the well-written submissions were recommended for publication.

My sincerest gratitude also goes to Dr. Carlo Magno and Dr. Paul Robertson who entrusted to me the managing editorship of this journal. Their efforts to make the journal become above par and their unfailing commitment to help Filipino and other Asian researchers publish their works should not be put into oblivion.

Leah Espada Gustilo, Ph.D.
Managing Editor
Pronominal Choice: A Reflection of Culture and Persuasion in Philippine Political Campaign Discourse

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Abstract
The study investigates the interplay of language, persuasion and culture, as reflected in the usage of pronouns in a political type of discourse such as political campaign advertisements on television. An examination of the linguistic features in a mediated type of discourse may reveal the speakers’ strategies in their attempts of persuasion. For example, the first person plural pronouns can be used by politicians in their strategies to gain the people’s allegiance, while the use of singular first person pronoun may result in exclusion of some groups. The variances in the use of pronouns can shed light on how participants project themselves and others. In the Tagalog language, the preference for certain pronouns reveals social distance, politeness, or solidarity. To serve as the framework, the study adopts Schacter and Otanes’ (1972) categories of personal pronouns; namely, genitive, absolutive, and locative. The corpus consists of 60 political campaign ads shown on television for a national senatorial race. The study shows that pronouns are linguistic features that may render uniqueness in a particular type of discourse that is generally persuasive in nature. Through the analysis of the frequency and usage of personal pronouns in the televised campaign ads, the study provides insights on the benefits of the agentive role of the pronoun, as well as the role of culture, and other speaker motivations in the use of pronouns. Despite the significance of inclusive pronouns such as tayo ‘we’ in persuasive discourse, the study reveals the predominance of first person singular ko ‘I’ in the corpus.

Keywords: pronouns, Tagalog, persuasion, culture, exclusion, agentive role, political discourse

Discourse may be analyzed through its linguistic features. According to Kress (1989), the realization of a linguistic expression and its meaning is achieved through the interplay of three aspects of language: genre, discourse, and text. An examination of the linguistic
features may reveal the speakers’ strategies in their attempts of persuasion. Pronouns, among other linguistic features, can shed light on how participants project themselves and how they express associations with others. Wilson (1990, in Partington, 2003) claims that inclusive pronoun we (speaker and listener) can be used as a strategy to express solidarity; whereas, exclusive pronoun we (speaker and other/s excluding the listener) can be used to share responsibility, that is, actions are not only the responsibility of one individual. The first person pronouns can be used by politicians in their strategies “to gain the people’s allegiance, to have them believe that the decisions that are being made are the right ones” (Wilson, 1990, p. 71, in Partington, 2003). On the other hand, the use of inclusive pronoun we may indicate the exclusion of some other groups, which implies a division between us and them.

Chilton and Schaffner (1997 in Van Dijk, 1977)), in the analysis of the 1994 speech by the British Prime Minister John Major at the 11th Conservative Party Congress in England, illustrated how the use of pronouns, among other linguistic features, enabled the politician to carry out his political strategies that related to the political functions of coercion, resistance, dissimulation, and legitimization. The use of pronouns ‘we’ and ‘I’, aside from the speech acts and other linguistic devices, were investigated. In terms of interaction, the speaker in the text, John Major, displayed particular relationships that were not only linguistic but also social and political. The relationships were manifested in terms of roles as addresser, addressee, and observers; on the other hand, there was the set of political actors with specific interrelationships in the political arena. These relationships were established by the use of pronouns. To indicate saliency of the pronouns employed, the frequency of occurrences was noted. The predominance of ‘I’ as the subject of particular verbs delineated the role of Major as a leader and a man of action, or a truthful narrator. In the study, the pronouns defined the roles of the participants as they “coerce the hearers into certain communication roles and political roles, and they legitimate or presuppose the legitimacy of the speaker” (p. 217). The study showed that the choice of pronouns were good indicators of political strategies employed by politicians.

In another study, Sai-Hua-Kuo (1998) examined the uses of the second-person singular pronoun ‘ni’ (you) by three Taiwanese
politicians in televised mayoral debates from 1998. The study showed how the pronoun usage reflected the politician’s attitudes and relations toward other participants in the discourse. In the two debates studied, it was found that ‘ni’ had two diverse pragmatic functions: in the first, the impersonal ‘ni’, (either address the audience or to refer to an indefinite person) was used to establish solidarity with the audience, while in the second debate, ‘ni’ was used as a referential pronoun to directly address and confront their opponents. There were more occurrences of ‘ni’ in the second debate because, as the researcher claimed, it was the last of out of the five debates and it happened just four days before the elections. In other words, there was a greater urgency for the electoral candidates to engage in attacks as the time may be the last opportunity for the them to engage in any aggressive discourse toward their opposing political counterparts. Furthermore, the researcher attributed the varying usage of ‘ni’ to the ‘distinct communicative styles, e.g. casual or formal’ (p. 53) of the politicians. In summary, the study suggests that the second-person singular pronoun ‘ni’ [you in Taiwan] may be used differently according to the intended goal and the communicative style of the speaker in a discourse.

Green (2007) investigated the use of pronouns as one of the discursive strategies in political speech. The data consisted of four United Nations General Assembly addresses of Malawian President, Dr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, given over a period of four years during his presidency in 2004 to 2007. The study yielded a consistent use of the in-group pronouns such as we, our, and us in the four address sections. As acknowledged in the study, pronominal choices such as the in-group pronouns in political discourse are often strategies for politicians to connect with the electorate. From the data gathered, there was less use of first person pronouns such as I and my. These pronouns were used by Mutharika to highlight his authority and success. According to Green (2007), the minimal occurrences of the first person singular pronouns was a response to ‘the level of solidarity and responsibility’ (p.8) the politician wanted to portray.

Bramley (2008), in her thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Australian National University, argued that pronouns were used to project positive images of the politicians, in the context of the Australian political media interview. The corpus
for this study consisted of 32 Australian political interviews that were recorded between 1995 and 1996, from various public radio and television news programs. The investigation showed that pronouns were employed for various reasons, such as to show affiliation, create distance, or construct different identities of themselves. In summary, the study found that pronouns are a key factor in ‘the construction of reality – a reality that is created and understood in the discourse of the moment’ (p.v).

Jibrin (2003), in her dissertation, analyzed another political genre, the State of the Nation Address (SONA) in the Philippines. The objectives of the study were to understand the manipulative language used in the SONA, and to identify the macro-structure of the SONA and determine how the political strategic functions were realized in the SONA. The corpus consisted of the first two speeches of five Philippine presidents, namely Ferdinand E. Marcos, Corazon C. Aquino, Fidel V. Ramos, Joseph E. Estrada, and Gloria M. Arroyo, from 1966 to 2002. The use of the pronominals ‘I’ showed the active position of the speaker and ‘We’ showed the speaker’s solidarity position in the discourse. The study concluded that the SONA reproduced the power of the SONA through the use of linguistic strategies that elicited approval from the audience (Jibrin, 2003).

Pronouns in political discourse have been studied as outlined above, but none of these studies have explored their use in the context of television-mediated political discourse in the Philippines. To fill a gap on the scarceness of research on pronouns in the preceding context, the present study embarks on a preliminary investigation of pronouns as used in Philippine television-mediated political campaign ads (TPCAs). In particular, the research questions are: a) What are the predominant personal pronouns used in the TPCAs in terms of frequency of usage? b) What are their functions? To address these questions, the analysis proceeds with an examination of the Tagalog pronominal system.

In general, the usage of pronouns, in the Tagalog language, may reveal social distance, politeness, or solidarity. Both the first-person plural exclusive–kami / namin / amin–and the dual plural–tayo / natin / atin–are translated by the English first – person plural (we / us / our / ours). The difference between the two categories is the composition of the groupings they represent. The first – person
plural may also be called the *Exclusive* first–person plural because it excludes the person addressed. On the other hand, the dual plural may also be called *Inclusive* first–person plural because it includes the person/s addressed (Schachter & Otanes, 1972).

**Theoretical Framework**

To serve as the theoretical framework for the study, the Tagalog Pronominal System of Schachter & Otanes (1972) was employed.

Table 1
*Tagalog Personal Pronouns (Schachter & Otanes, 1972, p. 88)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ang form (Nominative)</th>
<th>sa form (Locative)</th>
<th>ng form (Genitive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NON-PLURAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1s[+SPKR, -ADDR]</td>
<td>ako</td>
<td>akin</td>
<td>ko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1D[+SPKR,+ADDR]</td>
<td>kata</td>
<td>kanita</td>
<td>nita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2S[-SPKR, -ADDR-PLRL]</td>
<td>ka / ikaw</td>
<td>iyo</td>
<td>mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3S [-SPKR, -ADDR]</td>
<td>siya</td>
<td>kaniya</td>
<td>niya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PLURAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PE[+SPKR,-ADDR, +PLRL]</td>
<td>kami</td>
<td>amin</td>
<td>namin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1Pl [+SPKR,ADDR, + PLRL]</td>
<td>tayo</td>
<td>atin</td>
<td>natin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2P [-SPKR, +ADDR, +PLRL]</td>
<td>kayo</td>
<td>inyo</td>
<td>ninyo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3P [-SPKR, -ADDR, +PLRL]</td>
<td>sila</td>
<td>kanila</td>
<td>nila</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tagalog pronouns are categorized into three functionally distinct sets: genitive, absolutive/nominative, and locative, as
presented in Table 1. The three sets of personal pronouns may be
described in terms of their varied functions. To simplify, these
functions are described according to the predominant purpose each
may serve, as illustrated in the following examples.

The absolutive/nominative pronoun may have various
functions in a clause. One function is that of a Subject in a monadic
intransitive clause, as in the following example (Gocheco, 2006a):

(1) Lumangoy kami
    swam=ABS.1P.PLRL
    [We swam]

In (1), the absolutive form of the pronoun indicates the focus
and what the focus is doing through the verb form. The absolutive
form of Tagalog pronouns may also serve as Subject in
identificational and classificational clauses.

Similarly, the Locative Pronoun may serve various functions in
a clause. It may indicate location, as illustrated below:

(2) Nasa kaniya ang dokumento.
    LCV 2s DEF document
    [The document is with her]

Lastly, the Genitive/ Ergative Pronoun may be used as a
possessor or an agent in a clause (Reid & Liao, 2004). This may be
illustrated in the following examples (Gocheco, 2006a):

(3) Kaibigan= ko ang nanay= mo.
    Friend=GEN.1s DEF mother=GEN.2s
    [Your mother is my friend.]
(4) Kinuha nila ang kotse.
    Got=GEN/ERG.3PL DEF car
    [They got the car]

Example (3) shows the pronoun ko in a possessive
construction, while Example (4) illustrates the function of a pronoun
as an agent in a clause. Example (4) shows the case relation of the
Genitive pronoun nila as the Agent, which carries the actor macro
role, while kotse is the Patient that plays the undergoer role. Transitive verbs typically have two complements: an Agent, which carries the actor macro role; and a Patient, which carries the undergoer role (Reid & Liao, 2004). The agent (actor) refers to the participant who performs, instigates, or controls the situation, while the undergoer (patient) refers to the participant who does not perform, initiate, or control any situation but rather is affected by it (Foley & Van Valin, 1984, as cited in Reid & Liao, 2004).

The use of pronouns may also indicate social distance or solidarity. The choice of the “T” form (from the French tu) in addressing a one person reflects an equal relationship among the participants, while the “V” Form (from the French word vous) reflects an unequal power relationship: for example, a superior uses T but receives V, while a subordinate uses V and receives T (Brown & Gilman, 1960, in Bonvillain, 2003).

Method

The corpus consists of 60 TPCAs used by the senatorial candidates for the elections in 2007. These were transcribed from television advertisements (ads) with 30 or 60 seconds duration of airing on television during the campaign period of the Philippine senatorial election held on May 14, 2007. There were a total of 37 political candidates who ran for senator: 12 candidates from the government party, 11 candidates from the opposition, 1 independent candidate, and the rest of the candidates from less known political parties. The senatorial candidates competed for 12 senatorial slots for a 6-year term that ends on June 30, 2013. Not all candidates fielded their campaign ads on television; thus, the procurement of data was based on its availability in the medium. No particular mode of selection was needed because 60 was the maximum number of videos accessible in the Internet archives. Most TPCAs were recorded during primetime viewing, which started at 6 pm onwards. These ads were recorded from the two leading networks ABS-CBN and GMA 7 although there was no attempt to identify the specific sources for each since all stations fielded the same pre-recorded TPCAs for each candidate. It must be noted that part of the materials used as corpus were in the form of audio recordings because of the difficulty
of catching each and every TPCA during commercial breaks of television programs. Thus, for a more comprehensive set of materials to serve as corpus, actual video recordings of these TPCLs were acquired from the internet, specifically, the YouTube and subsequently validated through an actual viewing of the video clips aired by a leading television network.

The personal pronouns were traced according to their corresponding forms nominative (ang), genitive (ng), and locative (sa). Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the television-mediated political campaign ads, the occurrences of personal pronouns were segregated according to the different modes of texts: spoken texts (ST), written texts (WT), and Song. The goal was to identify and analyze the predominant pronouns used and the functions they served in the discourse.

Results and Discussion

The interdisciplinary nature of the TPCA presents various opportunities for the participants in the discourse to strategize their actions and usage of linguistic features such as the personal pronouns. Table 2 shows the profile of pronoun usage in the corpus.

As illustrated in Table 2, the first person non-plural, ko is predominantly used in the corpus, with a total of 79 occurrences or 27.7% of a total of 285 occurrences of pronouns in the corpus. The next in frequency count of pronouns in the corpus is the First Person non-plural nominative ako, while the third is the Second Person Genitive form mo. These pronouns are closely followed by the inclusive pronouns, atin, natin, and tayo.

The employment of the personal pronoun ko in TPCAs may provide the following benefits: first, it provides an informal register that simulates face-to-face interactions; and second, it provides a clear representation of actions and plans of the different segments of the target audience (electorate).
Table 2
Frequency Distribution of Pronouns in the Corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRONOUNS</th>
<th>ST</th>
<th>WT</th>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ko (ng.)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ako (ang)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mo (ng)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atin (sa)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natin (ng)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siya (ang)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tayo (ang)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Pronouns*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Pronouns* - include niya (12); kayo (10); kaniya (5); sila (5); iyo (4); kami (94); akin (3) inyo (3); namin (2); ninyo (2); amin (1); ikaw (o); nila (o); kanila (0)

The use of pronoun ko in discourse bears a resemblance to the use of English pronoun ‘I’, which provides a “much closer and more informal rapport with the audience” (Partington, 2003, p. 61). The informal scenario engages the speaker and the electorate in simulated real-life conversations that may redress the lack of face to face interactions in a television-mediated discourse. A projection of a personal relationship between the speaker and the hearer may be illustrated in the following excerpts, which form Frame 1 in the TPCA of the political candidate Francis ‘Chiz’ Escudero (CE). In this scenario, CE talks directly to grade school students in a classroom.

Child 1:    **Gusto ko maging piloto**
[ I want to be a pilot]
(1) Child 2: **Gusto ko maging doktor para magamot ko si lola.**
[I want to be a doctor so that I can cure grandmother]
(2) Child 3: *Gusto ko maging teacher.*
[I want to be a teacher.]

(3) Child 4: *Gusto ko maging senador!*
[I want to be a senator]

(4) CE: *Ako rin*
Me, too.]

Children: Laughter

(5) CE: *Munti man ang pangarap ay mahalaga.*
[However small a dream is, it’s still important.]

Bibigyan *ko* ito sa Senado
[I will give it a voice in the Senate]

(6) Children: *Say Chiz!*

In the foregoing utterances, the use of ‘*ko*’ sets a clear representation of the first-person point of view of a speaker in addressing the co-actors. The relaxed scenario engages the candidate in an informal conversation with young students who may represent the children of the electorate. *Ko* is a linguistic device that enables the interlocutors to simulate a conversation with the electorate. The usage of *ko* reduces, if not eradicates, the distance created by the medium in which actors speak and act on the screen while the electorate view in their own homes or other places out of the television box.

In addition, the excerpts reflect the dreams of the youth in society. In Excerpts (5) to (6), the candidate responds positively to the dreams expressed by the children. The exposition of the ambitions in the preceding excerpts lay out a good scenario for the candidate to inform the electorate that he gives importance to the children’s dreams and that he would be their voice. The whole process unfolds with the candidate not making a long speech of all these dreams and how he would make them come true. Instead the co-actors in the TPCA, through the use of *ko*, did it for him. All he had to do was answer favorably. Thus, the informal and real-life scenario brings the candidate’s advocacy for the youth closer to the electorate.

In its capacity to represent the actual plans and actions of the speaker, it may be helpful to examine the particular plans/actions...
that may be expressed through the use of *ko*. The Tagalog Genitive Pronoun *ko* [my or I] may function as a possessor in a possessive construction and or as an agent (one who performs, instigates, or controls the situation) in a transitive clause. Table 3 shows a profile of *ko* occurrences in the corpus.

Table 3
*Functions of ‘ko’ in Utterances in the Corpus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Possessor</th>
<th>Agent</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows the significantly high usage of the *ko* pronoun as an agent as compared to its function as a possessor. This may suggest the emphasis given on the actions projected by the actors in the TPCA. Some examples of *ko* occurrences, whether as agent or possessor, are illustrated in Table 4:

Table 4
*‘Ko’ as Possessor or Agent*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘ko’ Occurrences</th>
<th>Genitive Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possessor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Sana kaya namin ang tuition <em>ko</em>...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pag graduate <em>ko</em>, sana may trabaho agad.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Sana mapagamot <em>ko</em> (i) ang tatay <em>ko</em> (ii)...</td>
<td>X (ii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Katotohanan. Ito ang gusto <em>ko</em>!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 shows the occurrences of *ko* as possessor in 1, *tuition ko* [my tuition]; 3, *tatay ko* [my father], and 4, *anak ko* [my son]. The table also shows another function of *ko*, that of an agent in the clause. In utterance 3, *Sana mapagamot ko...*, the pronoun *ko* serves as the Agent of the Verb *mapagamot*. Similarly, the use of *ko* in utterances 2 and 5 of the same table function as agents. The use of *ko* as an agent reflects the active role of the speaker as an actor who performs, instigates, or controls the situation. For instance, the speakers in Table 4 are the instigators of action: ‘graduate’ (in 2), *mapagamot* (in 3), and *gusto* (in 5). The significantly high frequency count of *ko* in the corpus suggests a tendency to indulge in expressing personal aspirations and actions as shown in Excerpts 1, 2, 3, and 5 of Table 38.

The complete context of the utterances previously shown in Table 4 is provided in the following excerpt.

(8) TPCA # 13. Escudero, Chiz (CE)
Frame 1: Young musical band members and other assistants
preparing the stage and tuning instruments
(While a guitarist (G1) tunes his guitar)
WT:  *Sana kaya namin ang tuition ko...*  
[I hope/wish we can afford my tuition]
Frame 2: A young female assistant (FA) fixing the lighting
FA:   (talking to a male colleague)
  *Pag graduate ko, sana may trabaho agad*  
[When I graduate, I wish/hope to find a job right away]
Frame 3: A young male assistant (MA) is shown contemplating
with a WT flash on screen
WT:  *Sana mapagamot ko ang tatay ko...*  
[Hopefully, I wish/hope I can have my Father cured]
Frame 4: A young female adult holding a microphone
  G2: (Guitarist 2)
  *Eh, sino naman makikinig sa atin?*  
[Who will listen to us?]
  G1: Suddenly points to CE
  *Si Chiz!*  
[Chiz!]
Frame 5: CE, with back to camera, turns around to face the
crowd as everybody mills around CE
Excerpt (8) illustrates exchanges in conversation in a scenario that is familiar to the youth segment of the electorate. Frame 1 presents a scene in a studio or a place where musical band members are preparing for a show while written text (WT) is flashed on the screen, *Sana kaya naming ang tuition ko.* Frame 2 presents another scene that focuses on a female assistant who talks to male colleague and expresses her hope of finding a job immediately after she graduates. The TPCA moves on to Frame 3 where another youth ponders, while WT shows an aspiration of having his father cured. As if hearing all aspirations, despite the fact that only one was spoken, one of the guitarists raises the question as to who would listen to their needs and aspirations; another guitarist responds by pointing to the political candidate. Finally, Frame 5 reveals the face of the political candidate as he turns and shows his face towards the camera.

The TPCA simulates a scene that may transpire among young musicians and assistants, who may be typical working students in the youth sector of the electorate. In the process of the discourse in (1), three aspirations of the youth were revealed, namely: financial need for education and health purposes, and employment after graduation. The use of *ko* enabled the participants in the TPCA to express personal needs and problems in a natural interpersonal manner. The TPCA in (1) illustrates how the use of Genitive *ko* as an agent offers a clear and personal communication of actions or aspirations of the speaker.

In summary, the use of *ko* offers an informal and personal point of view in the discourse that may redress the distance between the television viewer and the TPCA actor. Unlike other types of political discourse that generally use more formal language, the alienation of some sectors of the electorate, especially the youth, is mitigated, if not, effectively avoided. As compared to the more formal use of the plural form *namin* (our) or *natin* (ours), the dual pronoun *tayo* [us], or the distant third person ‘siya’ [he/she], the pronoun *ko* provides a less formal register in discourse as it projects a personal relationship between the speaker and the hearer. In addition, it gives the TPCA an opportunity to address the different needs and aspirations of the different sectors of the electorate as reflected through a wider representation of the electorate.
A significant factor in the usage of the pronoun *ko* is the speaker who uses it. A speaker in a TPCA may be the political candidate or other actors (co-actors) in the advertisement. As Cook (1992) notes, the speaker in a television advertisement may not always be the sender of the message. As a television-mediated discourse, the TPCA employs a variety of speakers aside from the political candidate to express the underlying message of the political candidate. Table 5 shows how the usage of *ko* is distributed among the participant actors in the corpus.

**Table 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-actors</th>
<th>Political candidate</th>
<th>Third Party</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.0%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend:**

Co-actors – refer to other speakers (aside from the political candidate) such as celebrities, ordinary persons in dramatizations and actual scenes

Third Party – inferred, unidentified or not clearly identified personas in songs or WT

It may be gleaned from Table 5 that a significant percentage of *ko* usage is attributed to co-actors in the corpus. Most co-actors play roles that represent the various sectors of the electorate such as: the working class (female and male employees, jeepney driver, the market vendor, etc.); the family unit (mother, father, and children); and the youth (young music band members, students). This representation is significant as it allows the electorate to identify with the roles that are simulated in the TPCA. In addition, the term co-actors may also refer to the celebrities in the TPCAs. Table 6 presents a summary of the aspirations and actions expressed by the co-actors in the corpus.
Table 6

*Summary of Co-Actors’ Aspirations/Actions in *ko* Expressions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspirations/Actions</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations:</td>
<td></td>
<td>67.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Dreams for a better life</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ambition in life</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Hope for opportunities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Hope for financial security</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Claim</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boast of candidate’s achievement (testimonial)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banter</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit Plan to vote for PC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit received from the candidate (testimonial)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The aspirations of co-actors account for the highest frequency of occurrences. This may suggest the goal of the TPCA to address the aspirations of the electorate, as expressed through expressions that employ *ko*. In a similar vein, the use of *ko* pronouns in testimonials and expressing personal plans and actions provide a simulation of similar concerns of the electorate.

On the other hand, only 25.3% of the total usage of *ko* is attributed to the political candidate. Further examination of the messages and actions of the political candidate expressed through *ko* is summarized in Table 7.
Table 7

Summary of Political Candidates’ Actions/Aspirations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Candidate’s Aspirations/Actions</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan of action</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal claim as individuals</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plea for votes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal achievement information</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity (feeling of team spirit, closeness)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of *ko* by the political candidate enables them to personally reveal their plans of action, personal claims and other propositions, as summarized in Table 7. Some examples of the political candidate’s usage of *ko* in the corpus is provided in the following excerpts.

(9)  
Ipaglalaban ko, at paninindigan ko na gawing five percent ito.  
[I will fight and make sure that it be raised to five percent.]

(10)  
Bibigyan boses ko ito sa Senado  
[I will give it a voice in the Senate]

(11)  
At ang edukasyon, isusulong ko.  
[And education, I will push for it]

(12)  
Ipaglalaban ko po ang mga probinsya., pangako iyan.  
[I will fight for the provinces, that’s a promise.]

Excerpts (9) to (12) are specific plans of action of the candidate. In these expressions, no other persona speaks for the candidate but the political candidate himself. This makes the communication more direct and personal.

Despite the benefit of a direct and clear communication that a political candidate’s statements may bring, there is a noticeable
marked difference in the use of \textit{ko} between the co-actors (57\% usage) versus political candidates (25.3\%). As Biocca (1991) asserts, “the wise politician will avoid authoritarian or coercive rhetoric and will shun the risks inherent in assuming too much personal responsibility for actions and policies” (p. 72).

This may explain the higher frequency of \textit{ko} usage by the co-actors as compared to that of the political candidate. The employment of \textit{ko} expressions by the co-actors reduces the coercive force that may be created if it were the candidate stressing his own personal achievements. Aside from avoiding an ‘authoritarian rhetoric’ (Biocca, 1991, p. 72), this phenomenon may also be related to the reluctance (of the political candidate) to bring attention to oneself because of the Filipino cultural value of \textit{hiya} (Church, 1986). According to Bresnahan (1991), giving or receiving a compliment may be threatening to the value of \textit{hiya}. This may be a predicament for the political candidates since the essence of the TPCA is to convince the electorate to vote for them based on their qualities and achievements that make them worthy of the votes. Thus, to avoid violating \textit{hiya}, another actor (co-actor) acts as the intermediary to compliment the candidate. The use of \textit{ko} by co-actors allows the TPCA to highlight the candidate’s achievements, excellent qualities, and ultimately put forward the message that elevates the candidate’s position.

In terms of frequency, the use of the other pronouns is not as marked as \textit{ko}; collectively, however, the aggregate usage of these pronouns account for 54.2\% of the total pronoun usage, as presented in Table 8.

\textbf{Table 8}

\textit{A Summary of Pronoun Usage}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronouns</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ko</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ako (10.9%), mo (10.5%), atin 10.2%, natin (8.4%), siya (7.7%), tayo (6.7%)</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8 shows that the pronouns *ako* [I], *mo* [you, your], *atin* [ours, us], *natin* [our], *siya* [he/she], and *tayo* [us, we] have relatively lower frequencies of usage as compared to *ko*; nonetheless, their combined frequency of occurrences account for more than fifty percent of the total pronoun usage.

Tagalog personal pronouns may serve various functions in discourse. The pronouns *ako* [I] and *siya* [he/she] are absolutive/nominative pronouns that may be used for self-introduction such as in the identificational nominal clauses in the following excerpts.

(13) *Ako po si Prospero Pichay.*  
    [I am (politeness marker) Prospero Pichay]

(14) *Ako po si Migz Zubiri.*  
    [I am (politeness marker) Migz Zubiri]

(15) *Boarder po ako dito sa Manila.*  
    [I am a boarder here in Manila]

The speakers in Excerpts (13) and (14) are two campaigning political candidates, while the speaker in (15) is a co-actor. Excerpts (13) and (14) illustrate the identificational function of *ako* in the utterances. Excerpt (15) illustrates the function of the pronoun as a classificational nominal clause.

Another function of the Tagalog pronoun *ako* is to relay personal information, which sheds light on how speakers project themselves. As illustrated in the following excerpts, the political candidates, who are the speakers in utterances using *ako*, relay information about themselves.

(16) *Doon ako sa kapakanan ng karamihan.*  
    [I go with the welfare of the majority] ST 227

(17) *Naniniwala ako na pwede tayong mauna sa buong mundo.*  
    [I believe we can be first in the world] ST 244

(18) *Hangad ko ang kabutihan ng ating mamamayan tuwing gagawa ako ng bagong batas.*  
    [I wish for the welfare of our citizens every time I write a law] ST 351

The use of *ako* in Excerpts (16) to (18) illustrates how the speakers (political candidates) are able to express their personal
beliefs, plans, or sentiments that are pro-country. In addition, the use of first person singular ako, like ko, shows a tendency to maintain a personal and informal rapport with the audience. Similarly, the use of the familiar form mo and siya may create an atmosphere that is more relaxed and informal unlike in situations when the ‘V Form’ or the more formal form of pronoun is used such as the deferential pronouns kayo or sila.

The findings also indicate the relatively significant frequency of the dual plural atin (10.2%), natin (8.5%), and tayo (6.7%). These pronouns are also called Inclusive pronouns because they include the person addressed. The use of the dual plural pronouns may also be considered a solidarity strategy, especially when there is an attempt to include the person addressed even if that person is not really included in an action that is attributed to the Subject, represented by the dual pronoun, as illustrated in Excerpt (19).

(19) Ralph Recto:  
_Gumawa po tayo ng batas para mabilis magrehistro at makahiram ng murang puhunan._

[We created a law for faster registration and borrowing of low-interest capital]  ST 212  
(WT is flashed while the political candidate is talking)  
Republic Act 9178 Barangay Micro-Business Enterprises Law (2)  
WT: 1.234

In Excerpt (19), the speaker includes the audience by choosing the pronoun tayo (we) despite the fact that the audience was not a part of the creation of the legal provision. The inclusion of ‘you’ allows the speaker to create a position of solidarity with the audience, which seems to express the idea that the speaker and the audience are involved in the promulgation of the law: with the speaker as the creator of the law and the audience as the ones who benefit from it. It is also an attempt to soften the boastful effect of the statement, which otherwise would be more boastful because the statement clearly heralds the speaker’s own achievement.
Conclusion

Due to the notion that inclusive pronouns generally render solidarity in a discourse, there was an expectation, on the part of the researcher, of prevalence in the use of inclusive pronouns, such as tayo [we] or kayo [you] in the discourse. However, the findings reveal that ko [I] was more frequently used. The predominance of the pronoun ‘ko’ was unexpected but its usage may have its own merits for this type of political discourse. The use of ko may be attributed to the benefits it brings to the discourse. These benefits include two essential elements that may be crucial to the goal of a persuasive discourse such as the TPCA; an informal register that simulates face-to-face conversations and the agentive role that is bestowed on the speaker.

Unlike other face-to-face political campaigns, the TPCA has a quality of physical distance and obscurity due to the massiveness and multiplicity of the audience being addressed through the medium of the television. The use of ko mitigates the distance through its informal register. The use of ko in the TPCA simulates an informal conversation between the candidate and the electorate without the formality that the inclusive pronouns may create in a televised discourse.

Another benefit of the use of ko is the agentive role that it gives to the speaker. Through the pronoun ko, the political candidate is able to clearly attribute any achievements that he/she may want to highlight in the campaign. This is necessary because the speaker is portrayed as the instigator of a particular action in the midst of an array of multiple actors in various scenes of the discourse. The use of multiple actors to represent the family members and the community reflects the Filipino culture of being family oriented and having an extended family of relatives and close friends in the community. However, the number of participants in a TPCA may create confusion especially in terms of reference to the political candidate and the achievements or plans that he intends to highlight in the TPCA. Through the use of the pronoun ko, the political candidate is clearly identified as the initiator of an action. This is an example of how
pronouns enable the politician to create a positive identity that makes the political candidate appear more eligible for the position.

The Filipino values and ideologies may have influenced the discourse in terms of topic and style, but it is important to note that the use of pronouns is pivotal in understanding the nature of political discourse. The use of pronouns in the study provides linguistic evidence that shows how politicians construct a reality that is favorable to them. Thus, despite cultural values of deference, the findings reveal that the goal of persuasion through a positive representation of one’s self weighed more heavily than that of gaining solidarity through cultural values of deference.

References


About the Author

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Explicit or Implicit? Children’s Ability to Answer Contextually Demanding Questions

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Abstract

In communicative situations, it may happen that children can answer the question with certain contextual demand rather than another. In this case, it is pragmatic or situational factor that affects children’s performance. Using Sperber and Wilson’s (1995) Relevance Theory as framework, this study investigated 50, 3-7, year-old Mandarin-speaking children’s ability to use context when answering contextually demanding questions. It likewise examined the types of compensatory comprehension strategy employed by these children when they were in the absence of full comprehension. Results showed that when answering the questions, children progressively applied more complex contextual information to their comprehension process as they aged. Seven types of compensatory comprehension strategies were used by the children: World knowledge and own experience, Given information, Don’t know, Irrelevant, Keep silence, Tautology and Turn-taking. Results could be considered useful for curriculum developers of pre-school and school language programs and for language teachers to strike a balance between being implicit and explicit in materials development and language teaching.

Key words: relevance theory; context; reference assignment; enrichment; implicature; compensatory comprehension strategy

Introduction

In conversation, it is commonly said that young children are more likely to respond to questions rather than non-questions (Hoff, 2001). Children’s ability to answer questions is associated both with
their increasing linguistic and pragmatic ability to deal with questions. In communicative situations, it may happen that children can answer a question of a particular grammatical form in one context but not in another. Further, there is also the case that children can answer the question with certain contextual demand rather than another. In these cases, instead of linguistic form, it is pragmatic or situational factor that affects children’s performance. Development of pragmatic comprehension can be seen as a complex process in which children progressively use context to construct meaning and interpretation. It is quite evident that children are able to take context into account as they begin to communicate (e.g., Maratsos, 1973; O’Neill, 1996). At the very beginning children strongly make use of physical nonverbal context to understand utterance (Strohner & Nelson, 1974), and with increasing age they start to integrate and connect information from other sources as they encounter communicative tasks that require different contextually processing demands (Bucciarelli et al., 2003).

A relatively basic kind of contextual operation in early comprehension involves the identification of referents in context. Maratsos (1973), in her study about nonegocentric communication abilities in preschool children, administered a very simple referential communication task to 24 children aged 3 to 5 years. Each child was randomly assigned to either the normal-vision condition, in which the experimenter could see, or the blocked-vision condition, in which the experimenter could not. A wooden hill with a toy car on top of it was taken out and placed on the table between the experimenter and the child. In the blocked-vision condition, some people and animals were placed on top of the hill and the child answered which one should be put inside the car. Instructions for the normal-vision condition were identical except that the experimenter could see the referents. Results showed that the children were more verbally explicit in communicating to the experimenter who could not see the referents than to those who could see. Maratsos concluded that in a simple experimental communication task, young children could consider important aspects of the listener's situation.

Consistent with Maratsos’ (1973) finding, Bezuidenhout and Sroda (1998, in Foster-Cohen, 2000) examined 2-6-year-old children’s
ability to resolve speaker’s intended referent in light of Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). Children were presented either a control story (The Tortoise and the Hare) or an experimental story. The experimental story included situations where the speaker produced referentially correct and incorrect messages and the listener answered in different ways depending on their interpretation. Two days after, the children were tested in two conditions in order to see how children understood information which was available for the speaker. The experimental story group did not perform better than the control story group. When determining speaker’s intended referent, even 3-year-old children were capable of taking into account information about the speaker’s perspective, suggesting that rather than being egocentric communicators, young children had communicative abilities which broke down if the situation was demanding.

On the other hand, according to Bishop (1997, in Ryder & Leinonen, 2003), at the very beginning children strongly employ physical or environmental context to understand utterance and thus their first communicative attempts are tightly associated with the physical “here and now”. Strohner and Nelson (1974) examined the effect of event probability, nonverbal context, syntactic forms and strategies on sentence comprehension under two experiments. They defined compensatory strategies, or heuristics, as those strategies used in an attempt to appear to understand, in the absence of full comprehension. Experiment 1 was aimed to look for the different strategies that 2-5-year-olds might use in comprehending sentences. At age 2 and 3, the children demonstrated minimum use of syntactic information and maximum use of the probable-event strategy. At age 4 the children applied the actor-action-object strategy as actives were easier to act out than passives in the case of both probable and improbable sentences. At age 5, children typically relied on syntactic information and correctly interpreted sentences. In the second experiment, 89 4-year-olds were tested before and after training session where pictures were used to show both probable and improbable events. When pictures were used to show both probable and improbable events, the actor-action-object strategy was
rarely used. Children’s tendency toward "actor-action-object" strategy depended on the nonverbal context. The findings demonstrated that young children rely strongly on immediate nonverbal contexts, e.g., knowledge of their world (event probability) or pictures, rather than linguistic meaning, when comprehending sentences.

However, even if children start to utilize contextual information already in their first communicative attempts, only after development continues do children begin to integrate and use more diverse contextual information to proceed and enhance comprehension. For example, for indirect utterances, there is differing processing demands according to the pragmatic complexity and children’s performance have been proven to be affected by the processing demands. Bucciarelli et al. (2003) compared children’s performance in different kinds of pragmatic comprehension tasks based on the theory of cognitive pragmatics derived from Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1975). One hundred sixty children aged 2.6 to 3.0 years, 3.6 to 4.0 years, 4.6 to 5.6 years, and 6.0 to 7.0 years (40 children each age range) participated in the study. In each group half of the children were randomly selected to use the linguistic protocol and other half of children to the gestural protocol. Children were shown videotaped stories of everyday interactions. Stories included different types of pragmatic phenomena: directs, simple indirects, simple deceits, simple ironies and complex indirects. Results showed that children’s ability to interpret different pragmatic meanings increased with age. Simple direct requests and simple indirect requests were easily comprehended by children from 2.6 to 7 years. However, it was much more difficult for all age groups to process complex indirect utterances. This suggested that even if these young children were able to utilize contextual information in simple familiar situations, they had difficulties in more complex tasks where they had to consider and connect information from different, more demanding and less familiar sources.

Moreover, a study by Ryder and Leinonen (2003) applies Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), by using questions demanding reference assignment, enrichment, and recovery of implicature to English children aged 3;6 to 5;6 years. A story was read
to them and they were asked these types of questions. Incorrect/irrelevant answers were regarded as compensatory comprehension strategies reflecting how the children used context. The researchers discovered that the ability to use contextual information was related to age. Three-year-old children were able to utilize context when interpreting pronominal reference and showed an emerging ability to answer enrichment questions, but they had not yet developed an ability to answer implicature questions. Comprehension of enrichment and implicature questions developed rapidly after the age of 4. Results also showed that as children developed, change in the types of compensatory strategy reflected increasing ability to use relevant contextual information.

Until now, most of the studies have used children within narrow age range to investigate children’s pragmatic comprehension (e.g. Strohner & Nelson, 1974) and studies on pragmatic development in other languages have been scarce. Mandarin Chinese, different from English, is verb-friendly in that verbs and nouns have equivalent morphological transparency: neither verbs nor nouns are inflected (Li et al., 1993). Thus, the morphology of Mandarin nouns and verbs is equally simple and consistent across contexts of use, whereas the morphology of English nouns is relatively simple compared with that of English verbs. Moreover, Mandarin also differs from English (a non pro-drop language, SVO linguistic structure) in this respect: it allows noun dropping, i.e. the subject of a sentence can often be omitted, creating verb-initial (VO) sentence. It is not clear whether these grammatical characteristics of Mandarin would have an effect on Mandarin-speaking children’s use of context. Thus, it would be necessary and interesting to examine children with larger range of age speaking Mandarin Chinese.

Theoretical Framework

Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Wilson & Sperber, 2004) has been used as the theoretical framework of the present study since the theory guides the hearer towards speaker’s intended meaning on the basis of contextual information and explains how the
meaning is processed.

1 Principles of Relevance Theory

According to Wilson and Sperber (2004), any external stimulus (e.g., an utterance) or internal representation (e.g., a memory) provides an input which is relevant to an individual “when its processing in a context of available assumptions yields a POSITIVE COGNITIVE EFFECT” (p. 608). Such cognitive effect results from the interaction of newly presented (new) and existing (old) information, specifically, new strengthening old, new contradicting (and eliminating) old, or combining new with old to produce a contextual implication. Paying attention to an input is not simply because it is relevant, but it’s more relevant than any other inputs accessible at that time. Degrees of relevance can be assessed in terms of cognitive effects and processing effort, suggesting the following comparative notion of relevance (Wilson & Sperber, 2004, p. 610):

1. Relevance of an input to an individual
   a. Other things being equal, the greater the positive cognitive effects achieved by processing an input, the greater the relevance of the input to the individual at that time.
   b. Other things being equal, the greater the processing effort expended, the lower the relevance of the input to the individual at that time.

Here is an artificial example on comparison of the degree of relevance in terms of effort and effect, using several inputs.

Jenny, who doesn’t like most pets and is allergic to dogs, is standing beside a new pet shop where any of the three notices is being put up: (A) We have pets; (B) We have dogs; (C) Either we have dogs or three plus two is not five. Analysis of the example can be diagrammed as follows:
Following the previous discussion, all three inputs would be relevant to Jenny but the degree of relevance would vary. As far as cognitive effect is concerned, input (A) may lead to the conclusion that *probably, I’ll not go into that shop*; (B) would make Jenny conclude that *Definitely, I’ll not go into that shop*; and (C) will have the same conclusion as that of (B). Thus, (B) and (C) achieve stronger cognitive effect than (1). However, in comparison with (A) and (B), (C) requires an additional effort of parsing and inference in order to work out that the second disjunct *three plus two is not five* is false and the first *we have dogs* is therefore true. Thus, deductively, input (B) would be the most relevant input to Jenny.
As reflected in the above example, there are so many inputs coming into people’s mind and people have to make the most efficient use of the available processing resources: perception, memory and inference in order to reduce the processing effort, increase the cognitive effects, and consequently, maximize the relevance. As a result of biological evolution, people can automatically use maximal cognitive effect for minimal processing effort (Wilson & Sperber, 2004, p. 612):

(2) Cognitive Principle of Relevance

    Human cognition tends to be geared to the maximization of relevance

    Therefore, it is possible for one to predict and influence the mental states of others, at least to a certain degree, in view of the universal cognitive tendency. A speaker may be able to design a stimulus which most attracts the hearer’s attention, retrieve certain contextual assumptions most quickly, and direct the hearer towards an intended effect. This kind of stimulus is called ostensive stimulus, in relevance-theoretic terms. By its definition, Communicative Principle of Relevance comes out (Wilson & Sperber, 2004, p. 615):

(3) Communicative Principle of Relevance

    Every ostensive stimulus conveys a presumption of its own optimal relevance.

    What the Communicative Principle of Relevance says is that ostensive stimulus (e.g., utterances) establishes an expectation of optimal relevance rather than of maximal relevance in the addressee. This is because: A) the speaker may be unable or not have enough time to think of, or not be competent to utter, the most relevant information at that time; and B) the speaker may be unwilling to give, or stylistic preference may prevent the speaker from choosing, the best possible information. Taking these factors into account, Wilson and Sperber (2004, p. 615) propose the presumption of optimal relevance:

(4) Optimal relevance

    An ostensive stimulus is optimally relevant to an audience iff:
    (a) It is relevant enough to be worth the audience’s processing effort;
(b) It is the most relevant one compatible with communicator’s abilities and preferences.

In verbal communication, utterances usually have many possible interpretations compatible with the linguistic information, but all of them are not equally accessible in a given situation and human communication is driven by search for relevance. That is, an utterance should be relevant enough for the hearer to make it worth processing and clear enough so that the speaker can manifest his/her intention. In order to understand the speaker’s intention, the hearer has to utilize information communicated directly and indirectly and the information not communicated at all. Therefore, the linguistic forms of utterances have to be processed and interpreted in these relevant contexts in a variety of ways so as to reach the real meaning of the speaker, including disambiguation, reference assignment, enrichment and recovery of implicature. For better performance of these ways, the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure is suggested by Wilson and Sperber (2004, p. 618):

(5) Relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure

(a) Follow a path of least effort in computing cognitive effects:
   Test interpretive hypotheses (disambiguations, reference resolutions, implicatures, etc.) in order of accessibility.

(b) Stop when your expectations of relevance are satisfied.

2 Pragmatic Subtasks in Comprehension Process

The hearer’s goal is to work out the speaker’s intended meaning, which can be broken down into a number of sub-tasks: disambiguation, reference assignment, enrichment and the recovery of implicature. To illustrate, consider the following exchange:

1) Peter (husband): May I go out for a while?
   Mary (wife): Your dinner’s ready.

To comprehend Mary’s answer, the linguistic expression Your dinner’s ready now needs to undergo a number of processes:
Reference assignment: Your refers to Peter’s.
Disambiguation:’s (present tense) means now/at the moment.
Enrichment: dinner means the dinner that Peter is about to eat; ready
means “ready to eat”.

Thus, the meaning (explicature) of the expression can be summarized as follows: The dinner that Peter will eat is ready now. However, this is not the meaning that Mary intends to express. Hence, based on our world knowledge or prior experience, the following assumptions might be included for reasoning:

2) *When husband’s dinner is ready, wife wants him to eat immediately.*
3) *Going out for a while takes some time.*
4) *Therefore, wife may not want her husband to go out for a while.*

By combining the above explicature with the sets of assumptions, Mary’s intended meaning, i.e. the implicature, is obtained:

*Implicature:* Mary may not want Peter to go out for a while.

As discussed, for reference assignment, the hearer just has to find out the object of reference from the context and no processing beyond the given information is needed. Disambiguation is used to determine which lexical items are potentially ambiguous and for doing so, we need to know the content of their semantic systems. This is not the focus of the present study, thus, disambiguation is not included in this study. The semantic interpretation of a sentence from which ambiguities and referential indeterminacies have been resolved is still something less than fully propositional. In this case, the process of enrichment is needed. In order to recover implicature of an utterance, extra processing is needed by retrieving and integrating contextual information via reasoning.

The present study aims to investigate how 3-7-year-old Mandarin-speaking children answer contextually demanding questions on the basis of Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). This study also aims to examine compensatory comprehension strategies employed by these children in the absence of full comprehension. Specifically, the present study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How accurately do the Mandarin-speaking children answer reference assignment, enrichment and implicature questions?
2. Does age have an effect on the correctness of the three types of questions?
3. What types of compensatory comprehension strategies are used by the children when they are in the absence of full comprehension?

4. Does age have an effect on the use of these strategies?

**Method**

**Participants**

Fifty children (ten children for each age range) were involved in the study: 30 children aged 3 to 5 were selected from Xinyu Peilei Kindergarten, China, and 20 children aged 6 to 7 were chosen from Xinyu No. 4 Elementary School, China. All children were monolingual Mandarin-speaking and lived in the city of Xinyu, China, from varying class families. They were the only child in their families because of China’s one-child policy.

**Materials**

Three scenarios (see Table 1 below) translated into English and accompanying pictures (see Appendix A-C) were adopted from a book by Linlan (2008) which was considered suitable for children aged 3 to 7 by its publisher. Texts/Scenarios were analyzed according to whether the processing involved reference assignment, enrichment, or recovery of implicatures. In addition to the three question types, the children were asked follow-up questions to give explanation for their answers to enrichment and implicature questions. The follow-up question appears in the form of “What makes you think so?” or “Why do you think so?” and was used to see how the children derived their answers to enrichment and implicature questions from context. Thus, the material contained 20 questions in total: four reference assignment, four enrichment, four implicature, and eight follow-up questions. The three verbal scenarios and the three types of questions to be investigated were presented as follows: (not including follow-up questions)
Table 1
Scenarios and Questions Designed Before Pilot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios and pictures</th>
<th>20 Questions and Its Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) The clock is ringing. Wenwen gets out of the bed. He puts on his cloth, brushes his teeth, and washes his face. Now he is having bread and drinking milk beside the dinner table there.</td>
<td>1. Who is having bread and drinking milk? (RAQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. What time might “now” be? (EQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Where might “there” be? (EQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. What is Wenwen having? (RAQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) What a cold day now! Little bear Beibei trembles with cold. His mother brings him a skipping rope and makes him skip outside. Unwillingly, Beibei jumps and he takes off his hat and scarf.</td>
<td>5. Who takes off the hat and scarf? (RAQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Which season might “now” mean? (EQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Why does Beibei’s mother give him a rope? (IQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Why does Beibei skip unwillingly? (IQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) It’s raining, a little ant runs to a mushroom. A snail comes there, too. After a while, a rabbit also comes over. He bangs the mushroom down as soon as he squashes in.</td>
<td>9. Who bangs the mushroom down? (RAQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Why does the little ant run to the mushroom? (IQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Why does the rabbit bang the mushroom down? (IQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Where might “in” be? (EQ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. RAQ=Reference Assignment Question, EQ=Enrichment Question, IQ=Implicature Question

In order to see whether the scenarios and questions were appropriate for the children, a pilot study was conducted prior to the actual experiment. Two 3-year-old children (one boy and one girl) were involved. Results revealed that the questions designed were valid as the children could utilize context when answering them. However, when giving the fifteenth or sixteenth question, the two children showed impatience and distraction. Therefore, in view of high demands for the 3-year-olds in the number of the questions, 20 questions were reduced to 15 questions: three reference assignment, three enrichment, three implicature, and six follow-up questions (not displayed in Table 2):
Table 2
Scenarios and Questions Designed After Pilot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios and pictures</th>
<th>12 Questions and Its Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) The clock is ringing. Wenwen gets out of the bed. He puts on his cloth, brushes</td>
<td>1. Who is having bread and drinking milk? (RAQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>his teeth, and washes his face. Now he is having bread and drinking milk beside the</td>
<td>2. What time might “now” be? (EQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dinner table there.</td>
<td>3. Where might “there” be? (EQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) What a cold day now! Little bear Beibei trembles with cold. His mother brings him</td>
<td>4. Who takes off the hat and scarf? (RAQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a skipping rope and makes him skip outside. Unwillingly, Beibei jumps and he takes</td>
<td>5. Which season might “now” mean? (EQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>off his hat and scarf.</td>
<td>6. Why does Beibei’s mother give him a rope? (IQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) It’s raining, a little ant runs to a mushroom. A snail comes there, too. After</td>
<td>7. Who bangs the mushroom down? (RAQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a while, a rabbit also comes over. He bangs the mushroom down as soon as he squashes</td>
<td>8. Why does the little ant run to the mushroom? (IQ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in.</td>
<td>9. Why does the rabbit bang the mushroom down? (IQ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. RAQ=Reference Assignment Question, EQ=Enrichment Question, IQ=Implicature Question

Procedure

Once permission and assistance were given by Xinyu Peilei Kindergarten and Xinyu No. 4 Elementary School, each child was interviewed individually in a quiet room. Children aged 3 and 5 were interviewed in their kindergarten and children aged 6 to 7 in their school. The children were told that the experimenter would tell them three scenarios and ask some questions and they should listen very carefully. Then, the experimenter verbalized the first scenario, presented to them accompanying pictures, and asked them the corresponding questions. This process was done until the questions about the last scenario were asked. In the course of the interview, two children in the kindergarten might have been very nervous and they kept silence all the time. Thus, they were excluded and another two took their place. The whole interview session was audiotaped and
after the recordings, the audio files were translated into English and then transcribed.

Data Analysis

The correctness of the answers to the three types of questions was assessed using a key to correction provided by Linlan (2008). Then, the experimenter counted the frequency of correct answer to answer the first research question.

Children’s types of incorrect answers (compensatory comprehension strategy) were then recognized and categorized based on the context used to answer the third research question. To illustrate, consider 5) and 6):

5) Experimenter: Why does the little ant run to the mushroom?
   Child: Because… there’s thunder when it’s raining.

6) Experimenter: What time might “now” be?
   Child: …Wind and raining.

In 5), the child used his world knowledge to answer the question incorrectly, so the compensatory comprehension strategy used would be World knowledge. In 6), an irrelevant (thus incorrect) answer was provided by the child, so Irrelevant was taken as the compensatory strategy used.

Statistical Treatment

One-way ANOVA in SPSS11.5 was adopted for statistical treatment and the level of significance was p < .05. To answer the second research question, age group was considered as independent variable while the total correct answers (consisting of correct answers to all questions), and correct answers to reference assignment, enrichment, and implicature questions, respectively, were regarded as dependent variable (four dependent variables in total). ANOVA was also used to answer Question 4 by taking age group as independent variable and types of incorrect answers, i.e., compensatory strategies, as dependent variables.
Results

Research Question 1: Correctness in Children’s Question Answering

Table 3 presents a summary of children’s correct answers to the three types of questions.

Table 3
Summary of correct answers to the three types of questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Correct answers of</th>
<th>RAQ (30)</th>
<th>EQ (30)</th>
<th>IQ (30)</th>
<th>Total (90)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.67%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>93.33%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>86.67%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>83.33%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>93.33%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. RAQ= reference assignment question; EQ= enrichment question; IQ= implicature question; f= frequency; %= percentage; maximum number of correct answers is given in parentheses.

As shown, for each age-group, RAQ produces the highest number of correct answers while IQ the lowest number. The 3-year-olds are able to (18, 60%) answer RAQ and show an emerging ability (11, 36.67%) of comprehending EQ, but they have difficulty to answer IQ. Such similar pattern appears for the 4-year-olds (IQ: 14, 46.67%; EQ: 20, 66.67%; RAQ: 28, 93.33%), with the exception that the emerging ability now falls on IQ. This is the same as the 5-year-olds (IQ: 24, 80%; EQ: 25, 83.33%; RAQ: 26, 86.67%). When answering questions, the 6- and 7-year-old children perform near ceiling (all > 90%). It is worth noting that the 4-year-olds (28, 93.33%) answer RAQ more correctly than the 5-year-olds (26, 86.67%). Moreover, in answers to other question types, remarkable developmental progress occurs between the ages 3 and 4 years, whereas in answers to IQ, the most
remarkable developmental progress takes place between the ages 4 and 5 years, followed by 3 and 4 years.

As far as total correct answer is concerned, its number increases with increasing age. The development progresses most actively between the ages 3 and 4, i.e., over 25% more 4-year-olds answer all questions correctly than do 3-year-old children, after which development progresses more steadily. The age group of 5 years gives nearly 15% correct answers more than the 4-year-olds, while the groups aged 6 and 7 show almost perfect performance when answering all questions with a percentage of 95.56% and 100%, respectively. Thus, a developmental pattern could be found with regard to the 3-, 4-, 5-, 6-, and 7-year old children’s ability to answer questions that show increasing pragmatic complexity.

**Research Question 2: Effect of Age on Total Correct Answers and on Correct Answers to Three Question Types Respectively**

ANOVA was used to make a comparison among age groups in total correct answers and in correct answers to three types of questions, respectively. As computed, there is a significant effect of age (p=.00) for total correct answers. Age group comparisons reveal that a significant difference in total correct answers is evident between all other age groups with the exception of 6- and 7-year-olds (p=.43). Comparison between the 4- and 5-year-olds does not quite reach significance (p = .01).

Results from ANOVA also indicate a significant difference among age groups for reference assignment questions (p=.00), enrichment questions (p=.00), and implicature questions (p=.00), respectively.

For the reference assignment questions, there’s a significant difference between the group aged 3 and other age groups (p=.00, respectively). However, comparisons between the 5- and 6-year-olds and between the 5- and 7-year-olds do not quite reach significance (p = .02, respectively). In addition, there is no significant difference when comparing age groups of 4 and 5 years (p=.21), 4 and 6 years (p=.21), 4 and 7 years (p=.21), and 6 and 7 years (p=1.00).
For the enrichment questions, there is a significant difference between 3- and 4-year-olds \((p=.00)\), 3- and 5-year-olds \((p=.00)\), 3- and 6-year-olds \((p=.00)\), and 3- and 7-year-olds \((p=.00)\). Comparisons between 4-year-olds and other age groups show that the age group of 4-year-olds also differs from the age group of 6 years \((p=.01)\) and 7 years \((p=.00)\).

For the implicature questions, on the other hand, differences between 3-year-olds and other age groups are significant except for the age group of 4 years. Besides, there is no significant difference between 5- and 6-year-old children and between 5- and 7-year-olds.

**Research Question 3: Types of Compensatory Strategy**

Table 4 shows seven types found and corresponding examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. World knowledge and own experience: The child uses world knowledge or his/her own experiences in an inadequate way that does not fit into the particular context of the question | Experimenter: Why does the little ant run to the mushroom?  
Child: Because there’s thunder when it’s raining. |
| 2. Given information: The child uses given pictorial or verbal information to answer the question and the answer is not relevant enough to this particular question. | Experimenter: Where might “there” be?  
Child: Bed. |
| 3. Don’t know: The child gives the answer “I don’t know”. | Experimenter: Why does the little ant run to the mushroom?  
Child: …I don’t know. |
| 4. Irrelevant: The child gives an answer that is not relevant at all to the context of the asked question. | Experimenter: What time might “now” be?  
Child: …Windy and raining. |
| 5. Keep silence: The child gives no reply and keeps silence. | Experimenter: Who is having bread and drinking milk?  
Child: …((keep silence)). |
| 6. Tautology: The child repeats the question or part of it | Experimenter: What time might “now” be?  
Child: “now” is…. |
| 7. Turn-taking: The child uses a routine phrase to | Experimenter: Why does the little ant run to the mushroom? |
answer the question.  
Child: Because....

The last three strategies, *Keep silence*, *Tautology* and *Turn-taking*, are new categories that could not be found in the study of Ryder and Leinonen (2003).

**Research Question 4: Effect of Age Group on These Strategies**

As shown earlier, the 6- and 7-year-old children perform near ceiling, and their incorrect answer categories are therefore not analyzed. Table 5 summarizes incorrect answer categories, i.e., compensatory strategies, used by the groups aged 3, 4 and 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compensatory strategy</th>
<th>3-year-olds</th>
<th>4-year-olds</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World knowledge &amp; experience</td>
<td>21 (39.62%)</td>
<td>16 (57.14%)</td>
<td>6 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given Information</td>
<td>20 (37.74%)</td>
<td>6 (21.43%)</td>
<td>4 (26.67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant</td>
<td>7 (13.21%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>2 (13.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep silence</td>
<td>5 (9.43%)</td>
<td>6 (21.43%)</td>
<td>2 (13.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tautology</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turn-taking</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53 (100%)</td>
<td>28 (100%)</td>
<td>15 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented, more incorrect answers are elicited from younger children in all incorrect answer categories, and the number of incorrect answers within each category diminished with progressing age. In order to compare incorrect answer categories between the age groups, absolute frequency has been converted into relative frequency. For the three age groups, *World knowledge* and *Given information* are the most frequently used strategies, followed by the category *Keep silence*. It is also quite common to give *Irrelevant* answers for 3- and 5-year-old
children. For 5-year-old children, *Don’t know* answer is also employed.

ANOVA was utilized to compute the significance of all compensatory strategies among the three groups aged 3, 4 and 5. Results display a significant effect of the three age groups of 3, 4 and 5 years on *Given information* (*p* = .00) and *World knowledge* (*p* = .01). *Irrelevant* is of not quite significant difference for the three groups (*p* = .04). Three-year-olds differ from 5-year-olds in the use of *World knowledge* (*p*=.00). For *Given information*, age group comparisons between 3- and 4-year-olds and between 3- and 5-year-olds indicate their great difference (*p*=.00 and *p*=.00, respectively). In addition, the age group of 3 years appears somewhat different from that of 4 in the use of *Irrelevant* (*p*=.02).

**Discussion**

The findings of this study provide support for the view of Ryder and Leinonen (2003) that question types derived from Relevance Theory can be used to examine the development of children’s pragmatic comprehension. The youngest age group, 3-year-olds, have the ability to process the least complex pragmatic task (reference assignment) and are beginning to engage in the more complex question types. This finding is consistent with that of the earlier studies that young children are already able to utilize context if it does not demand complex processing and is familiar to them (e. g., Bucciarelli et al., 2003). At the same time, the results that the 4-year-olds shows the emergent pragmatic ability of processing the most demanding pragmatic question type (implicature questions) and that the children with the age of 5 onwards can deal with most of enrichment and implicature questions, reflect the pragmatic complexity of the different question types and the children’s increasing ability to apply more complex contextual information to the comprehension process. An evident developmental pattern for the five age groups in correctly answering the three types of questions suggests that children have an increasing ability to use complex contextual information as they age.

In line with an earlier study among English children (Ryder &
Leinonen, 2003) a similar developmental trend is found for reference assignment, enrichment and implicature questions. The data of the present study indicate that implicature questions are developmentally most advanced, followed by enrichment, then reference assignment. That some 3-year-old children are able to answer implicature questions contrasts with the outcome of Ryder and Leinonen (2003), where all 3-year-old children were unable to answer implicature questions (in the present study they answered over 26% of these questions correctly). An explanation for this could be a different kind of memory load in the implicature questions. In this study questions were based on short scenarios, whereas in Ryder and Leinonen’s study the children had to recall information given much earlier in story. It may also be that in the present study the context of the scenarios was more familiar to the children.

In this study the most significant development stage in the comprehension of contextual meanings is seen between the ages 3 and 4, while for implicature questions it continues until the age of 5. This may be associated with the development of other functions at that age, such as the development of working memory, the development of inferencing skills (Bucciarelli et al., 2003), the ability to direct attention, and the ability to understand the mind of others (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). In addition, the increases of children’s new experiences and world knowledge would also directly produce an effect on their ability to derive meanings from context. Differences in children’s level of experiences may be a reason for the variation found in the age groups of 3 and 4 years. Even though all the 3- and 4-year-old children in this study were in day nurseries, they had different family backgrounds and their experiences of language use in different situations may therefore not have been similar.

In this study, differences among age groups diminish as the children’s age increases, and by the age of 6, it is no longer evident, so that all children aged 6 and 7 are able to utilize context in inferencing and perform near ceiling when answering all question types. Thus, in this study, the number of incorrect answer for children aged 6 and 7, respectively, was very small and only the content of 3- to 5-year-old children’s incorrect answers was analyzed.
The categorization of incorrect answers shows that World knowledge and Given information answers are common to all age groups from 3 to 5 years. Common use of World knowledge suggests that over-generalization of own knowledge is common to all 3- to 5-year-old children. Don’t know answer is especially used for 5-year-olds (it can also be found for 6-year-olds), which might suggest that the older children may be using the answer because they prefer this to the possibility of giving a wrong answer. Don’t know strategy may therefore be one way of minimizing failure. Unsophisticated answer strategy Irrelevant almost decreases with progressing development and it’s very rare in children aged 6 and 7 years. When giving an Irrelevant answer, the children seem to say the first thing that comes to their mind, which may suggest that young children may use a naïve optimism strategy where they suppose that the first thing that comes to their mind is what the hearer expects to hear (Sperber, 1994). In addition to answers classified as Irrelevant, another unsophisticated strategy in which the child appears to show no attempt at utilizing the context and does not even take his/her turn is Keep silence.

Keep silence, Tautology, and Turn-taking are strategies that could not be found in the study of Ryder and Leinonen (2003). This finding might possibly be explained by some cultural factors. First, Chinese educational traditions may affect the use of Keep silence to some degree. Since Confucian educational time, Chinese teachers have been teaching (teaching is just teaching, no more others) students and the students have just been faithfully copying and reproducing what their authorities (e.g. teachers) say and taking it as transmission (Sowden, 2005, p. 227). Very less interaction happens between teachers and students in the classroom and students typically remain silence. This is still the case widely existing in China, so it’s not strange to find Keep silence as these children’s compensatory strategy to the experimenter’s questions. Second, the use of strategies Tautology and Turn-taking might be partially connected with the reasoning routine in Chinese school. For example, many Chinese schools pay attention to the cultivation of logical ability and students would always be filled with such pairs of formulaic expression as “Why? Because...” even if they have not answered that “Why” question yet. However, as the number
of their use is very small (two times in total), no generalization can be produced and more research with larger sample size is still needed.

The 5-year-olds process more advanced contextual information than the other two age-groups, i.e., rely less on *Given information* and more on less obvious contextual information (*World knowledge*), and used less unsophisticated strategies and more sophisticated strategies, albeit not appropriate. Such inappropriateness may be the consequence of children’s overusing their emerging ability to perform complicated contextual operation.

**Conclusion**

That children exhibit a progressive ability in answering the three types of question as they age might be connected with the development of other abilities. Thus, it would be meaningful to investigate pragmatic comprehension associated with other factors like cognitive and social functions in children. It’s also found that children here performed better than those in Ryder and Leinonen’s (2003), especially when answering implicature questions. Different material design (scenario vs. story) might contribute to the result. Furthermore, new strategies *Keep silence, Tautology, and Turn-taking* used in the present study might possibly be explained by Chinese educational traditions. To further understand language and cultural characteristics of pragmatic comprehension development, studies on different languages and different cultures are suggested.

The present study on 3-7-year-olds makes it possible to see developmental changes during their childhood years. Regarding language teaching, this study may benefit curriculum developers of pre-school and school language programs. Texts with multiple interpretations which appeal to the readers’ personal responses should form the basis of future work in language learning and materials development. Importantly, the results of this study may be an indication for language teachers to strike a balance between being implicit and explicit in their teaching. For instruction to focus on the importance of implicatures while overlooking the fundamental stage of inferencing at the level of explicatures would confuse students.
rather than enlighten them. This view supports Krashen’s (1982) comprehensible input+1 hypothesis that language learners only accept comprehensible input that is slightly beyond (next immediate step along) the current level of competence.

References


Appendix A

Appendix B
Appendix C

About the Author

Lina, Tao is currently writing her dissertation paper on Relevance Theory for her Ph. D. in Applied Linguistics at De La Salle University---Manila. She earned her Master’s Degree in English Language Education from the same university. She has presented a paper in international GLoCALL conference and has published articles in reputable journals like Philippine ESL Journal. Her research interests include second language teaching and writing, children’s psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, and cognitive pragmatics.
EFL Motivational Orientation and Proficiency: A Survey of Cambodian University Students in Phnom Penh

Sovannarith Lim
Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Abstract

This study investigated instrumental and integrative motivation (i.e., motivational orientation) of a group of EFL students and possible correlations between motivational orientation and English proficiency. A motivation questionnaire was developed and distributed to 68 Cambodian students, 21 of whom were later interviewed. Instrumental motivation was found to be the main reason for the students to learn English. English in Cambodia is found to promise its learners pragmatic, utilitarian benefits or rewards. However, no correlation between the students’ motivation and English proficiency was found significant. It is concluded that motivational orientation only functions as motivation initiator that subsequently enhances motivational drive and that does not seem to have an ‘on-line’ connection with language proficiency. Research of this kind is useful for the development of EFL/ELT syllabus, but more research is called for in the present context.

Introduction

English language has been a necessary tool for Cambodian learners who prepare themselves to embrace the global economy. As Clayton (2002) puts it, English is a lingua franca throughout the country since the presence of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1993. Since then, English has been one of job requirements in various work places across the country. This has resulted in the growth of the teaching and learning of English in both public and private schools and universities and the use of the language has become and remains remarkably popular.

However, the development of English language teaching (ELT) curriculum in this context faces a number of challenges as research on ELT and English learning itself remain scarce, if there is any. That is, for ELT curriculum to be well developed and implemented to respond to the learners’ needs, it is important that research on what
motivates the learners to choose English is to be carried out. In other words, we need to know whether the learners learn English for social or pragmatic purposes, or they learn it because they want to identify themselves as part of the community in which English is used. These are the areas to be explored in the present study that involved a group of undergraduate students of English as a foreign language (EFL) at the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

In particular, based on previous studies on motivation in foreign and/or second language (L2) learning, the study set out to investigate the role of motivational orientation (and its sub-types—instrumental and integrative motivation) in learning English and to find correlations, if any, between the motivational orientation and EFL proficiency of the participants involved. Two questions guided the study:

1. Is instrumental or integrative motivation that is the major source of the motivational orientation in this EFL context in Cambodia?
2. What is the relationship, if any, between motivational orientation and language proficiency found among the participants in this study?

Conceptual Framework

Since the early 1960s, Robert Gardner together with his colleagues (for example, Gardner, 1985; Gardner, Smythe, & Clément, 1979; Gardner, Lalonde, & Moorcroft, 1985) developed the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) that measures motivational and attitudinal variables in L2 learning. Using this test primarily as a research instrument, Gardner and his associates came up with a powerful, influential and useful framework: the socio-educational model (Gardner et al., 1979; Gardner, 1985; Gardner et al., 1985; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; and more recently, Gardner, 2001b). (For space economy, see Gardner, 2001a, for the chart schematizing the construct of the model.) To Gardner, integrative motivation is seen as a socially and psychologically bound orientation of a second language learner to the target language, the people/community and culture of that target language (Gardner, 2001a). Gardner argued that integrative motivation has significant impact on the achievement in SLA.
The model and especially the AMTB, however, drew criticism from others, for example, Oller, Jr. and Perkins (1978), for its lack of validity although Gardner and Gliksman (1982) counter-argued the criticism and to a certain extent were able to maintain the popularity of the approach. The criticism led to the call for reconsiderations of the model (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). In this respect, Dörnyei (1990) took into account the impact of the contexts of L2 learning (i.e., EFL vs. ESL) and proposed an approach to L2 learning motivation that emphasized the importance of instrumental motivation in an FL context.

The effects of instrumental motivation and integrative motivation in L2 learning can be attributed to the contexts where the learning takes place. While the former is found to be influential in L2 achievement in a foreign language (FL) context, the latter is available and contributes to successful L2 learning in a second language (SL) context. Oxford and Shearin (1994) reinforced the SL-FL learning milieu dichotomy, stating that while SL learning is found in contexts where it is used as a means of daily communication, FL learning is not the language for daily conversations. The latter is only available in classroom contexts.

Dörnyei (1994a) later elaborated on his 1990 model by including bigger constructs of motivation. Figure 1 below presents the new model that conceptualizes motivation and its constructs in FL learning contexts. As the figure shows, instrumental and integrative motivation makes up the Language Level where the former is defined as the intention(s) to learn a foreign language for utilitarian benefits (such as to get a well-paid job and the latter refers to the learner’s orientations to use the target language in passive mode such that to understand foreign movies and pop music (Dörnyei, 1990). The Learner Level is similar to the motivation variable in Gardner’s model as both of them deal with motivational drives (such as the learner’s effort, persistence, needs for achievement etc.). Likewise, the Learning Situation Level in Dörnyei’s model taps similar areas to those addressed by the ALS variable found in Gardner’s approach. However, while Gardner believes motivation is the major affective variable for the success of SLA, Dörnyei appears to place a rather equal emphasis on each variable. Taking all these together, a consensus is found among researchers of L2 motivation (e.g., Dörnyei, 1990, 1994a, 1994b; Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994;
McGroarty, 1996), who assume the social context of L2 learning constraints the presence and intensity of the types of motivation.

In the present study, an attempt is made to conceptualize motivation, language attitude and other sub-variables—which are illustrated in Figure 2. In social psychology, attitude is defined as “a favorable or unfavorable evaluative reaction toward something or someone, exhibited in one’s beliefs, feeling or intended behavior,” (Myers, 1993, p. 112). Ryan, Giles and Sebastian (1982, p. 7) defined language attitude as “any affective, cognitive or behavioral index of evaluative reactions towards different language varieties or their speakers.” As for motivation, it is defined in this study as the social and psychological construct of goal-directed behaviors. It is initiated by goal(s) an individual sets to achieve and is subsequently characterized by the individual’s determining behaviors, efforts, and desires to attain the set goal(s) (Littlewood, 1984; Wilkins, 1974; Gardner, 1985, 2001a, 2001b; Dörnyei, 1998).

According to Crookes and Schmidt (1991), there is a relationship between ‘motivation’ and ‘attitude’. They claim that L2 motivation is associated with the learners’ attitudes, or the attitudes are embedded in motivation. It is the individual’s motivation that reflects his/her attitudes toward the social groups or the environments (Mann, 2006).
Aspects/Dimensions Components/Constructs of Language of Motivation in FLL

**Social Dimension**

**Personal Dimension**

**LEARNER LEVEL**
- Need for Achievement
- Self-Confidence
- Language Use Anxiety
- Perceived L2 Competence
- Causal Attributions
- Self-Efficacy
- Effort, Persistence, & Attention*

**LEARNING SITUATION LEVEL**
- Course-Specific Motivational Components
  - Interest
  - Relevance
  - Expectancy
  - Satisfaction
- Teacher-Specific Motivational Components
- Affiliative Drive
- Authority Type
- Direct Socialization of Motivation
  - Modelling
  - Task Presentation
  - Feedback
- Group-Specific Motivational Components
  - Goal-Orientedness
  - Norm & Reward System
  - Group Cohesion
  - Classroom Goal Structure

*In the original approach, these elements were not included.

**Figure 1.** Components of Foreign Language Learning Motivation (adapted from Dörnyei, 1994a, p. 280)
In light of this, language attitude in this study is determined as the main premise or the highest latent characteristic of a language learner. *Motivation* itself, in this study, consists of two elements—*motivational orientation*, comprising instrumental motivation and integrative motivation, and *motivational drive*, dealing with motivated behaviors such as the learner’s effort, persistence, commitment, attention etc. Dörnyei’s (2000, p. 425) definition reflects such conceptualization:

Motivation provides the primary impetus to embark upon learning, and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process... motivation to learn a foreign language involves all those affects and cognitions that initiate language learning, determine language choice, and energize the language learning process.

![Figure 2](image-url)  
*Figure 2.* Schematic representation of Attitudinal and Motivational Constructs in L2 learning and their relationship with L2 Proficiency
With respect to the above conceptualization and research that will be reviewed below, the present study lists the following terms in an attempt to set its scope and clarify to the extent possible the various important motivational constructs and definitions.

**Motivational Orientation** comprising *instrumental* and *integrative* motivation is hereby operationalized as the primary element of motivation. It is the basic principles for learners to make the decision to learn an L2.

**Instrumental Motivation** refers to the individual’s basic reason(s) to embark on a particular activity for pragmatic, utilitarian benefits. It is perceived as a means to an end. In this study, for instance, instrumentally motivated learners refer to those who choose to learn a particular language in order to help them achieve other rewards such as getting a well-paid job or promotion.

**Integrative Motivation** refers to the individual’s positive attitudes toward doing a particular activity. Integratively motivated learners are perceived to have positive attitudes toward the target language community, value the people and their culture, desire to interact with speakers of the target language and have an interest to be members of that community (Gardner, 1985; Gardner, Smythe, & Clément, 1979; Gardner, Lalonde, & Moorcroft, 1985).

**Review of Related Literature**

A large volume of studies on L2 learning motivation can be found the literature. However, for the purpose of the present study, only closely related ones are reviewed here. These studies are placed into three categories—(1) studies whose findings revealed that integrative motivation is a factor in L2 achievement more significant than instrumental motivation, (2) studies whose findings showed the opposite, and (3) studies that found both types of motivation play rather equal roles in the success of L2 learning.

As for the first group of studies, Gardner, Smythe, and Clément (1979), who investigated motivation and language proficiency among a group of Canadian and American adult students learning French, found that there was an association between integrative motivation and oral proficiency among the Canadian samples, but such a relationship was not found among the American samples.
ones although they were also integratively motivated. Gardner, Day, and MacIntyre (1992), who investigated the effect of integrative motivation to the acquisition of French vocabulary, showed that their participants who reported to be integratively motivated performed better than those who were not. That is, the rate of acquiring the French vocabulary was faster for integratively motivated learners, suggesting that integrative motivation appears to be an effective predictor of successful acquisition of French vocabulary. Other studies that supported this finding include (but not limited to) Gardner, Lalonde, and Moorcroft’s (1985), Gardner and Tremblay’s (1994), Gardner’s (1985), and Gardner’s (2001a, 2001b).

On the contrary, Lukmani (1972), who studied motivation to learn English and the proficiency of Indian students in Bombay, found that both instrumental and integrative motivation had positive relationships with language achievement, but instrumental motivation was more significantly correlated with proficiency than the integrative one. Gardner and Lambert (1972), who involved learners of English in the Philippines, also found similar results. Other more recent studies which are in line with such a finding include Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels’s (1994), Rahman’s (2005), and Liu’s (2007). According to Noels (2001), it is not always the case that successful L2 learners should be integratively motivated to learn the language.

There are also studies that fall into the third category. For instance, Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) found both instrumental and integrative motivations played crucial roles in the students’ language achievement and commented that these two variables facilitate L2 learning, although they appeared to stress that it was integratively motivated learners who were more likely to pursue learning the language. Wilkins (1974) also echoed this comment but implied that integrative motivation might be a better predictor than its counterpart.

In addition to studies that tried to prove the significance of either instrumental or integrative motivation, there are also others that look into causal relationships between motivation and L2 proficiency. For example, Strong (1984) investigated the causal relationship between integrative motivation and the L2 proficiency of Spanish-speaking kindergarten children learning English in the United States and found that, rather than promoting L2 proficiency,
integrative motivation appears to have been caused by a successful L2 learning experience. Likewise, Wilkins (1974, p. 185) claimed that a positive attitude, an expanded characteristic of motivation, appears to be “the product rather than the cause of [language] proficiency, but either way a high correlation between attitude [thus, motivation] and proficiency is shown.”

Motivation has also been found to be a dynamic construct that changes over time (see for example, Dörnyei, 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Shoaib & Dörnyei, 2005). Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, and Mihic (2004), for instance, investigated motivation among intermediate language learners and found that there were tentative changes among motivational variables, but those which were featured are associated with classroom dynamics such as attitude toward the learning situation, teachers and the course, rather than with those that are general in nature such as integrativeness.

The Present Study

The present study examined motivational orientations of a sample of Cambodian EFL undergraduate students and investigated the relationship between their motivational orientations and English proficiency. A set of motivation questionnaire designed in the 5-point Likert scale format addressed the motivational orientations of the students, focusing on instrumental and integrative motivation. It was developed based mainly on the pre-survey conducted online among a group of Cambodian students. Initially, the pre-survey required 32 students to write as many reasons as possible, as to why they learnt English as their foreign language. Then, all of the reasons provided by the students were formed into twenty-two motivation statements that fell under two major themes of motivational orientations. Equally contributed, eleven statements (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 16, 17, 20, and 22) addressed instrumental motivation, and the other eleven statements (2, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, and 21) dealt with integrative motivation.

The reason why the present study did not use a motivation instrument employed in previous studies (such as that in Gardner’s (1985) or that in Dörnyei’s (1994b) study) can be attributed to the purpose of the study itself. In other words, the study reported here focused strictly on the motivational orientation level (within the
motivation constructs) and whether there was any relationship between that motivational orientation and the students’ English language proficiency. In this respect, motivation instruments developed and used elsewhere that covered not only motivational orientation but also other motivational constructs and sub-constructs (as shown in Figures 1 & 2) were not deemed suitable for the present purpose. However, the motivation instrument used in this study was not completely new either; it comprised of motivation statements that resembled those found in other instruments, in terms of their themes.

The study also used a proficiency test (a modified IELTS test) that was designed to measure the students’ language proficiency both before and after the study period. The test was modified by having the speaking section removed. In other words, the students’ English speaking proficiency was not measured, leaving the test to deal with three macro-skills (listening, reading, and writing) which took the students 80 minutes to complete the test. While the listening and reading sections were measured by objective question items, the writing task required the student to write an essay. For reliability reason, the researcher therefore employed a colleague to help rate the written essays. The two raters based their markings on a set of criteria adopted from the Cambridge Practice Test for IELTS (Jakeman & McDowell, 1996).

**Procedure**

The researcher first made contact with the school principal and asked for permission to conduct the study. Once allowed, he personally contacted the teacher who was handling the classes that had been randomly selected. The researcher then requested the students participate in the study.

The self-report questionnaire was distributed to the students, once on the starting day of the semester and another at the end of it; the scores obtained were aggregated to see if it was instrumental or integrative reasons that would explain why the students learnt English. The proficiency test was also given twice over the semester. The first test was administered on the second day of the course (after the motivation questionnaire was distributed), and the second was conducted at the end of the course. All quantitative data (from both
the questionnaire and the test) were coded and encoded into 
computer for calculation and analysis.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted only once, at 
the end of the course, to collect qualitative data regarding the 
students’ motivational orientation and motivational drive. Twenty-
one participants (10 males and 11 females) were randomly selected. 
The interviews were then tape-recorded and transcribed for insightful 
and in-depth interpretations of the findings.

Motivational Drive (including, but not limited to, the learners’ 
effort, persistence, self-confidence) is hereby operationalized as the 
secondary element of motivation. It is the force which makes the 
learners to invest energy and effort to achieve the set goal.

Student Profile

Sixty-eight undergraduate students (from two classes) 
participated in the study. At that time, they were taking their 
Bachelor’s degree in Education, Teaching English as a Foreign 
Language (B.Ed., TEFL) at the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL), 
Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The students comprised 
of both males and females, whose ages range from 17 to 20; this age 
range typically applies to freshmen in almost all universities in 
Cambodia. The table below summarizes these students’ profiles.

Data Analysis

The present study was not intended to explore particular 
motivational factors. Rather, it adopted those found in previous 
studies on L2 motivation and sought to find out if it was instrumental 
motivation or integrative motivation that formed the basis for the 
involved participants to opt for English as their foreign language in 
the present context. Two tailed t-test was then employed for this 
purpose. Pearson (r) was also applied as a statistical treatment for the 
quantitative data to find possible correlations between instrumental 
motivation and integrative motivation (thus, being motivational 
orientation) and L2 proficiency.
Table 1

Participant Profile (M = Mean)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Age (M)</th>
<th>Self-rated English Proficiency</th>
<th>Years of English Learning (M)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>More than 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>More than 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data from the interview transcripts were analyzed qualitatively to see if the subjects’ spontaneous responses of their motivational orientations reflected their self-rated answers provided in the questionnaire. This was done by determining the frequency of the responses. Moreover, the analysis also focused on their motivational drive that might explain the whole findings better.

Discussion

1. Is instrumental or integrative motivation that is the major source of the motivational orientation in this EFL context in Cambodia?

From the questionnaire addressing motivational orientation that was distributed to 68 undergraduate students at the said university, the eleven items, which addressed instrumental motivation, were categorized into three major groups—namely, learning English for future career, further education, and technology accessibility. Table 2 below shows the mean distributions of the three categories and their comprising item(s). Interestingly, among the three major reasons, it was found that learning English for Educational Purpose(s), with the highest mean score (M=4.3 over a 5-point rating scale), was the basic reason for these Cambodian students to opt for English as their foreign language, while learning English for Future Career falls into the second rank, leaving English for Technology Accessibility the third.

There are at least two possible reasons that might account for such a finding. One possible reason that underlies this finding could be the fact that these students might be well aware of the requirement of their future career—the long-term goal. In other words, they might not expect to get a well-paid job immediately after they graduate from their bachelor’s degree program (in English), so further
education (which is made possible for them with the ability to use English) may be able to assure them with a prestigious future career. Such an intention indicates the students’ long-term goal.

Based on the interviews with the 21 students, all the respondents were quite sure that they would continue their study to a higher level (e.g. a master’s course), although it would not be majoring in English. They mentioned that with the ability to use English that they would get after completing the program, they would be able to further their education in other field, such as a master’s in business administration—which ultimately they believed could promise them prestigious, well-paid jobs.

These results support those found in Rahman’s (2005) study, which investigated motivational orientation among a group of Bangladeshi university students. That is, reason to learn English for further education was reported with the highest percentage, followed by the reason to learn English for good future career.

Another reason why the Cambodian university students chose to learn English for high education abroad may be that these students were so enthusiastic about studying abroad—a life experience that is valued by most Cambodian people, especially when the students go to study abroad under scholarship grants. Students who could win a scholarship to study abroad are usually, if not always, highly valued for their academic performance—on which they pride themselves.

The item that addresses learning English for technology accessibility received the lowest rating score, among the three categories. This might be the case because technology accessibility in Cambodia is still limited. In other words, although Cambodia (particularly Phnom Penh capital city) is modernized for the last decade, internet accessibility is widely accessible to most Cambodian students who, with their low socio-economic status, may not be able to afford its expenses. Therefore, interest in using internet-emails might be minimized.

These three categories of the reasons for which the students chose to learn English are instrumental in nature, which is also supported by the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews. That is, when asked why they chose to learn English as their foreign language, most of the interviewed students considered English a means to other pragmatic purposes, for instance to help
them access other materials available in the language, to enhance their future career, etc. Following is an extract from the interviews:

Table 2
Mean distributions of the categories of instrumental motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English for Future Career</strong></td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get a high paid job</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get a promotion at work</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To meet the demand by the workplace</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To become a teacher of English</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To work with foreigners or NGOs</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To do international business</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To travel for official purposes</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English for Education</strong></td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be qualified to study in the U.S./UK</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To score high in TOEFL or IELTS</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To continue education abroad</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English for Technology Accessibility</strong></td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To use internet and emails</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extract 1

**Interviewer:** After you finish your bachelor’s degree, would you still continue to study English, or you study another language, or you simply quit it?

**Student:** I wish to continue my master’s degree in other countries, if I can afford it or if my family can afford it…

**Interviewer:** but what will you study for your master’s degree? English language or some other field?

**Student:** I wish to study other major…in laws, you know.

**Interviewer:** But why won’t you study English?

**Student:** Err…because for four years here, I think it’s enough already, and studying abroad can [help me improve the language]. So I don’t have to study English anymore. I can just try to understand what [is being said, for example].
Extract 2

Student: …because it [English] is very important; we can use English to com… to make conversation and get our job in our future. And er… we can use English language to search some er… some documents, some news on the internet…

Student: I choose to study English because, the first main point is, because English is an international language. I can use it to communicate with other people around the world. Yes, if I continue to study another field, I use English to read the document, even [on] the internet I can use it…

Student: …I don’t study [English] for professional. I just study it to help my other skill...

While students seemed to be very determined that they learnt English for instrumental purposes, there were also instances that indicate learning English for integrative purposes. From the 11 items that dealt with integrative motivation, two themes were identified, namely Cultural Interest and Integrativeness. Table 3 below shows the mean distributions of the two categories and their comprising items.

The first category deals with the learner’s interest in foreign language, culture or the culture of native speakers of the target language. The students, as can be seen in the table, reported that they also learnt English because they are interested in English culture. Such an instance, however, should not be labeled under the integrative motivational variable if the Gardner’s concept of integrative motivation was applied in this study. However, following Dörnyei’s (1990) suggestion, integrative motivation in a foreign language context should be measured by such items as learning English in order to understand English films/movies and pop music, and English literature (i.e., through reading printed materials)—which he called the Passive Sociocultural language contact, due to the lack of direct communication with native speakers or community of the target language. “In broad terms, an integrative motivational orientation concerns some sort of a psychological and emotional identification with L2 community. One way of extending the concept is to talk about some sort of a virtual or metaphorical identification with the sociocultural loading of a language rather than with the actual L2 community,” (Dörnyei, 2006, p. 52).
As reported in the table, this Cultural Interest appears to manifest more than Integrativeness, another category that deals with the learner’s intention to identify themselves with the members of the target language community (Gardner, 1985). However, unlike the one reported in multi-cultural settings (such as Canada), Integrativeness in this study does not seem to illuminate as a significant factor for Cambodian university students to opt for a foreign language, English. This is also a case in other uni-cultural milieux such as Hungary (e.g. Dörnyei, 1994a), Bangladesh (e.g. Rahman, 2005), and China (e.g. Liu, 2007), where direct contact with English native speakers is rare.

Table 3
*Mean Distributions of the Categories of Integrative Motivation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Interest</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have foreign friends</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To understand pop music and films</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because they love the way English sounds</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because most of favorite artists are English-speaking</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To understand English literature</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To understand English speakers’ culture</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To exchange knowledge</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To meet and listen to people who speak the language</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrativeness</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To live in the U.S./UK</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To become a Christian</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To think the way English speakers do</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although there were instances that English was learnt for integrative reasons, specifically as it was learnt because the students loved the language or loved the way the language sounds (as elicited from the motivation questionnaire), when further asked why the students wished to have more direct communication with native speakers of English, the students expressed that it was to improve
their English language in general or their English pronunciation in particular. This means they saw the availability of having direct communication with English native speakers more as a chance for them to learn the language (or to master the L2) than as a chance to identify themselves with the native speakers, where the latter is a characteristic of being an integratively motivated learner. Here, there is an exemplification of an inconsistency: while integrative reason was reported in the first place (in the motivation questionnaire), later report from the interviews suggests a tendency that could not provide any conclusion that these students to a certain extent were also integratively motivated.

Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) point out that the term *integrativeness* cannot really be used to account for the multifaceted construct of motivation in learning an L2. As a result, they suggest *integrativeness* be labeled as the *Ideal L2 Self*—which they refer to the attribute that a person would like to possess and ought to possess. According to Csizér and Dörnyei (2005, p. 29), “if one’s ideal self is associated with the mastery of [an] L2, that is if the person that we would like to become is proficient in the L2, we can be described as having an integrative disposition.” Such an *Ideal L2 Self* appears to be reflected in the following extract:

**Extract 2**

Interviewer: …so do you wish to have more direct communication with native speakers of English?
Student: Of course, of course…
Interviewer: Why?
Student: Err…the first reason is to get the natural tone from them and learn their culture. Sometimes when we are close to them, we can understand their feeling better and can get along with other [nationalities], you know.

The importance of conceptualizing the *Ideal L2 Self* as *Integrativeness* is that an account can be given to the fact that learners are found to have also integrative reasons for learning an L2 in a context which direct communication with native speakers of the target language is rare and which the intention of identifying oneself with other cultural group is less likely. Nevertheless, this might not be the case for the present study since integrative motivation was not
found to be a significant variable for the Cambodian university students to learn English as their foreign language.

Reported in Table 4 below, furthermore, is a comparison of mean scores between instrumental motivation and integrative motivation, using two tailed t-test. This statistical treatment was performed to conclude if it is instrumental or integrative motivation that is the significant source. On the surface level, it seems that the two sources were not much different from one another, as the mean of instrumental motivation is $M_{\text{ins}}=43.4$ while that of integrative motivation is $M_{\text{int}}=37$. However, the two-tailed t-test revealed that the two means are statistically significantly different from one another ($p<.05$), from which it is interpreted that the students in this EFL context were more instrumentally motivated than integratively motivated to learn English as their foreign language.

Table 4

Mean Distributions and t-Test Result of Motivational Orientations ($N=68$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivational Orientations</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$df$ ($p&lt;.05$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental Motivation (%)</td>
<td>43.5 (79)</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative Motivation (%)</td>
<td>37 (31.7)</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$M_{\text{ins}} =$ Mean score of Instrumental Motivation
$M_{\text{int}} =$ Mean score of Integrative Motivation

These findings confirm those found in previous studies on L2 learning motivation—such as the ones conducted by Dörnyei (1990), Rahman (2005) and, more recently, Liu (2007), which investigated L2 motivation in foreign language milieux and which revealed that the students learnt English for ‘instrumental’, ‘pragmatic’, or ‘functional’ purposes. Therefore, a possible conclusion in light of the present findings is that English in Cambodian context, one of the EFL milieux, is learnt as a means to an end. In this case, the learners, or at least those who were surveyed, learnt English so that they became qualified to achieve their ultimate pragmatic goal(s). That is, they learnt English to win a scholarship to study abroad, to work in local and/or international NGOs, to expect a well-paid job in the future, and to access internet. This orientation that is rooted in the nature of
instrumental motivation, according to Dörnyei (1990, p. 65), is ‘organized by the individual’s future career striving.’

Furthermore, that English is learnt for instrumental purposes may also be due to the fact that, at the present time in Cambodia, English competence is needed to respond to the economic growth and regional/global integration—a situation which is also true in Bangladesh and China, as found in Rahman’s (2005) and Liu’s (2007) studies, respectively. An example is the establishment of ASEAN and WTO, in which Cambodia is now one of the members. When different nationals come to work together, a third language which in this case is English is required to fill out the gap and to make the communication possible. It could be said, then, that the importance of or the need to have the ability to use English is seen to have been influenced by a country’s economic development.

On the other hand, that integrative motivation is not the major source for, at least, the Cambodian undergraduate students surveyed lends support from the above-mentioned previous studies. Dörnyei (1990), Rahman (2005), and Liu (2007) all concluded that their Hungarian, Bangladeshi, and Chinese students, respectively, were not integratively motivated to learn English because there was limited contact with English native speakers or community—a situation which is also true in Cambodia. Obviously, the direct communication or contact with English native speakers in Cambodia is very rare, even though it is not unavailable, so with such a circumstance, Cambodian students of English might not wish to integrate or identify themselves with the native speakers. They, however, might have the ideal L2 self of becoming proficient in English so that they are able to understand more about the culture of English speakers in which they are interested.

Interestingly, there were also few students who explained, during the interviews, that they learnt English because it is an ‘international language,’ a reason which was not included in the motivation questionnaire employed in this study. It is not so obvious when discussing such a reason as whether it is instrumental or integrative motivation. McClelland (2000, p. 109 as cited in Dörnyei, 2006, p. 52) comments that learning English as an international language is attributed to the integrative motivation, due to the intention of ‘integration with the global community rather than assimilation with native speakers.’ However, according to Dörnyei
(2006), English as an international language, or what he called the ‘Global English,’ is related to instrumental motivation because most English-speaking countries seem to have indexical reference to technological advancement, such as computing and internet; therefore, learning English as an international language is associated with modern technology accessibility. In this vein, some of the students (who were interviewed) explained that they also learnt English because it is spoken by most developed countries, most people who live in most powerful countries, like the US or UK. Such an explanation appears to provide an implication that advocates the concept of English as an international language in association with modern technology accessibility, as mentioned above.

Table 5
Mean Distributions of Motivational Orientation in Two Phases and t-Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivational Orientations</th>
<th>Phase I (N=68)</th>
<th>Phase II (N=66)</th>
<th>t-Test Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M  SD</td>
<td>M  SD</td>
<td>p&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>43.5 4.6</td>
<td>44  4.5</td>
<td>0.489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td>37 4.7</td>
<td>37  5.1</td>
<td>0.789</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the present study, the motivation questionnaire was distributed to the participants twice, once at the beginning of the academic semester (that is Phase I) and another at the end of it (that is Phase II), so further investigation could be conducted. It was done to examine if there was possibly a tentative shift from one type of motivational orientation to another over one-semester of an academic year. In other words, students who reported in the first place to be instrumentally motivated might later (at the end of the semester) report to be integratively motivated, or vice versa.

Table 5 above presents the mean distributions of motivational orientation in the two phases. As can be seen, the mean scores of instrumental motivation for both phases are almost perfectly the same ($M_I=43.5; M_{II}=44$), while those of the integrative one (for both phases) are exactly the same ($M_I=37; M_{II}=37$)—which could possibly be claimed already that there was no change at all between these two types of motivational orientation. This initial assumption is confirmed.
by the result of a t-test (as also reported in the table), performed to
test if the two pairs of mean scores were statistically and significantly
different from one another. The results show that it is not statistically
significant for the mean scores of instrumental motivation of both
phases to be different, and that the means of integrative motivation
are not significantly different from one another, either. These results
suggest that motivational orientation (either instrumental or
integrative) does not incline to shift from one another, at least over
the time observed in this study. This means that those who reported,
at the beginning of the semester, to be instrumentally motivated
retained their instrumental motivation to learn English, at the end of
the semester. Such finding suggests ‘motivational orientation’ be a
fixed and static, as opposed to dynamic construct.

In a study conducted by Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, and
Mihic (2004), it was only reported that over a one-year observation of
a group of intermediate learners of French, integrative orientation
appeared to decline. That is, at the end of the year the students were
not reported to be as integratively motivated to learn French as they
were at the beginning. It is not known, however, if the students
became instrumentally motivated at the end of investigation year.

In ‘current’ L2 motivation studies, many researchers (for
example, Dörnyei, & Csizér, 2002; Dörnyei, 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Shoaib
& Dörnyei, 2005) try to place an emphasis on the fact that motivation,
as a whole construct, is a dynamic attribute, meaning that it is more
likely to change over time and that L2 motivation research needs to
take account of ‘process-oriented approach’. In Dörnyei (2006, p. 51),
it is stated that “…even during a single L2 course one can notice that
language-learning motivation shows a certain amount of changeability, and in a context of learning a language for several
years, or over a lifetime, motivation is expected to go through very
diverse phases.” However, to them, what is meant by ‘motivation as a
dynamic system’ seems to be motivational drive, which is
conceptualized in this study as the secondary element of ‘motivation,’
which addresses students’ effort, commitment, persistence, attention,
self-confidence, and needs for achievement in learning an L2, and
which is also associated with (as well as influenced by) classroom
environments. Motivational orientation, on the other hand, refers to a
cluster of very basic reasons for one to choose a particular language,
thus being related more to the individual’s internal structural pattern
in making the decision that might be stable over time (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). To put this together, motivational orientation in language learning, by nature, appears to be a static construct whose function is to direct the language learner to his/her set goal(s): it provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 (Dörnyei, 1998, 2000).

It should be noted, however, that the present finding is not to contradict the concept of ‘motivation’ as a dynamic system. Rather, it is expected to help clarify the conceptualization and construct of language learning motivation and its elements. Further discussion, which follows, regarding the relationship between motivation and language proficiency might be able to provide more insight about the earlier claim.

2. What is the relationship, if any, between motivational orientation and language proficiency among these participants?

The data obtained from the questionnaire and the proficiency test were statistically treated using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) to see if there was a possible relationship between the motivational orientation and English proficiency of the subjects participated. Very interestingly, the result shows that there was a very weak relationship between the two variables (r=.0825; p<.05; N=61). That is, while the students obtained high scores on the motivation questionnaire, it does not mean they could perform well in the language proficiency test. Likewise, while some of them scored low in the questionnaire, they appear to score low in the language test, as well. As shown in Figure 5 below, the scatter plots of this investigated relationship were not in a linear distribution, suggesting that the correlation was not found.

Detailed computations (the result of which was reported in Table 6 below) show that neither instrumental nor integrative motivation was found to be correlated with English proficiency of these subjects, as the score of the former is r=.15 (p<.05; N=61) and that of the latter is r=-.009 (p<.05; N=61). It should be noted that the latter result shows a negative direction of the relationship, even though it is not significant. These findings suggest that there is no guarantee for L2 learners who are motivated, either instrumentally or integratively, in learning to achieve high proficiency in the target
language. This finding lends support from Vandergrift (2005), who examined the relationships between motivational orientation and proficiency in L2 listening among 57 adolescent learners of French and who found that motivational orientation (of which three elements were attached: amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation) was not correlated with proficiency in L2 listening. However, while Vandergrift (2005) accounted for the absent correlation between these two variables by the effect of the listening test (that is, his participating students’ performance on the listening test might have been influenced by the difficulty of the test itself), two factors at least are sought to account for the present finding.

Figure 5. Scatter Plots of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r)

Table 6
Correlations between motivational orientation and language proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivational Orientations</th>
<th>Language Proficiency (p&lt;.05)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td>-.009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, the present study was designed to investigate a possible correlation of motivational orientation and language proficiency of the subjects participated. The fact that motivational orientation was not found to be related to language proficiency may be because it
works at the background as a rather-less active factor in L2 learning and does not illuminate during the L2 learning process. Being the primary element of L2 motivation, as distinctive from the secondary one (i.e., *motivational drive*), *motivational orientation* is conceptualized in this study as a cluster of basic reasons to learn a language, which serves as the motivation initiator in the first place and which is less likely to be directly linked to language proficiency—a variable which is more likely affected by rather ongoing and active influential factors, such as motivational drive—for example, the learner’s effort, persistence, attention, self-confidence, needs for achievement, etc. (Dörnyei, 2003a, 2003b; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Julkunen, 2001), during the L2 learning course. Such an assumption is made based partially on the following definition of ‘motivation’ provided by Dörnyei (1998, p. 117, and also Dörnyei, 2000):

Motivation provides the primary impetus [thus, being motivational orientation] to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force [thus, being motivational drive] to sustain the long and often tedious learning process...

Moreover, Dörnyei (2001, as cited in Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005, p. 20) explained that “motivation is only *indirectly* related to learning outcome/achievement because it is, by definition, an antecedent of behavior rather than of achievement” (*emphasis added*). Thus, motivation in the quote seems to be what is conceptualized in this study as *motivational orientation*, and what links to L2 achievement is the *motivational drive*—which Dörnyei referred to the (motivated) “behavior.” Based also on this explanation, Csizér and Dörnyei (2005, p. 20) further provide the following remark:

...studies that look only at the impact of motivation on language proficiency or other L2 achievement measures (such as course grades) ignores, in effect, the mediating link, [motivated] behavior, and suggest a false linear relationship between motivation and learning outcomes.

Another possible account for the absence of the correlation between motivational orientation and language proficiency of the students investigated in the present study lies in the heart of the nature of previous studies on L2 motivation (for example, Lukmani (1972), Gardner and Lambert (1972), Gardner (1985), Mantle-Bromley
(1995), to mention some), whose findings suggested the two variables be correlated. The explanation, therefore, could base on the conceptualization of ‘motivation’ itself. As noted in the introduction, the term ‘motivation’ has been used throughout the literature of L2 motivation research, without precise and consistent concept. It is observed that in previous studies, it is not clear whether the motivational variable(s) investigated is ‘orientation’ or ‘drive’ or both of them being investigated at a time. That is, while some studies investigate one of the two separately, some others examined both of them together and classified them under the same variable, motivation. In Gardner (1985), for example, both items that address the learner’s orientations—based on which the learner decides to choose an L2—and items that address the learner’s motivation intensity were investigated. Therefore, when the relationship was found, it might not be clear enough to see if the orientation or the drive that had the relationship with L2 outcomes or proficiency. This, in short, might be another factor used to explain the absence of the correlation in the present study.

To put this together, motivational orientation appears to act as only motivation initiator for the learner to choose one particular (foreign) language and does not seem to have direct correlation with the target language’s proficiency, while motivational drive which is exhibited through the learner’s motivated behaviors (such as the learner’s effort, commitment, persistence, self-confidence about the target language, etc.) plausibly correlates with the proficiency of the target language. For the latter case, more advocating evidence can be drawn from qualitative data obtained by the interviews with the students investigated in this study. Addressing such motivated behaviors as mentioned above, the interviews reveal that the students inclined to show their strong commitment to complete all language tasks assigned by their respective teachers. For example, one of the questions asked to the students was How much are you committed to doing the homework you received from your English class? and most of the students, if not all, reported that they never (or would never) skip the homework. Moreover, when asked how much persistent they would be to take on the course, in case they failed, none of the students interviewed reported that they would quit if they failed. Instead, all of them inclined to be so persistent to continue studying English that they would not simply quit for their first failure.
What is more interesting, moreover, is that those who reported to be effortful, committed and/or persistent to learning English coincidentally performed well in the language proficiency test. This is meant to note that language proficiency might be correlated with motivational drive, even though in the present study no statistical treatment was performed for these two variables, thus being the limitation of the study.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings their discussions above, the following conclusions could be made: Like any other EFL contexts, first of all, English in Cambodia is learnt because of its pragmatic or instrumental benefits. Cambodian students, or at least those participated in the study, are instrumentally (rather than integratively) motivated to learn English as their foreign language. Instrumental motivation was reported to be the major reasons that Cambodian undergraduates learn English, and it was due to the country’s economic growth.

This conclusion is in line with some current studies on L2 motivation in EFL contexts. One among those is the study conducted by Liu (2007), who found that her Chinese university students were instrumentally motivated to learn English because of the development of the economy. In this similar vein, Rahman (2005) found that English is learnt by Bangladeshi undergraduate students only for utilitarian purposes, such as building good future career, going abroad, etc.

What accounts for this finding is that, in Cambodia, direct contact or communication with English native speakers is very rare or remote; therefore, it may be hard for the learners to have positive attitudes toward or to identify themselves with the L2 native speakers and their communities. Students are only said to be integratively motivated to learn English for ‘passive socio-cultural’ purposes, accessing them through electronic (e.g., television, movies/films, pop music, and internet) and printed (e.g., newspapers, magazines, novels, and literature books) media. To a certain extent, such ‘passive’ contacts with the target language allow the learners to value the L2 they are learning and the culture of the L2 native speakers, and
ultimately wish to master the L2 which represents themselves as the Ideal L2 Self (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005).

Motivational orientation is found to be a fixed construct, which did not change over the time observed. While more and more researchers of L2 learning motivation come to claim that motivation is a dynamic system, prone to changing over time, it is not clear if the asserted motivation refers to motivational orientation or motivational drive. Based on the present study’s findings, motivational orientation alone could be concluded to be a fixed and static construct.

Also revealed in this study, motivational orientation did not have any relationship with the L2 proficiency. It can be concluded, in this regard, that motivational orientation only functions as motivation initiator that subsequently enhances motivational drive. Unlike the motivational drive which might be related to L2 proficiency, motivational orientation is unlikely to have an ‘on-line’ connection with L2 proficiency. This is also meant to note that researchers in L2 learning motivation in EFL contexts should seriously take into account the distinction between motivational orientation and motivational drive so that there would not be claims that might be based on a “false linear relationship between motivation and learning outcome” (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005, p. 20).

Research of this kind informs teachers, curriculum developers and other concerned stakeholders of the reasons why learners decide to learn a particular L2. Such an understanding is valuable when it comes to the development of the course syllabus. While investigating motivational orientation will explain why the learner opts for a particular L2, research should also look into the learner’s motivational drives that keep they motivated in their learning process.

References


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Conclusions in Research Articles: A Filipino-Japanese Contrastive Rhetoric Study

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Abstract

The present study attempted to identify organizational and compulsory moves from two writing cultures. Selected research articles (RAs) written by Filipino and Japanese authors were comprehensively analyzed. It was found that there was intercultural variation in the rhetorical preferences of Filipino and Japanese RA authors. Specifically, Filipino RA authors, on the one hand, seemingly indicated in their RAs’ conclusion sections the probable contributions that their studies might have contributed to the growing body of knowledge; on the other hand, Japanese RA authors, apparently employed in their conclusions a brief account of the main points from the perspective of the overall study, which characterizes their cultural rhetorical pattern called “ketsu.” A number of pedagogic implications were provided for future instruction in teaching ESL/EFL.

Keywords: Research articles’ conclusions, contrastive rhetoric, organizational moves, rhetorical preferences, conclusion model/pattern, research article sections

Introduction

Research articles (RAs) are known to be contributors to the growing body of knowledge in any fields of discipline. Many researchers have devoted more attention to the rhetorical analyses of the different components found in RAs in different fields of discipline such as abstract (e.g. Ping, et. al., 2010; Salager-Meyer, 1992), introduction section (e.g. Swales 1981, 1990; Swales & Najjar 1987), result section (e.g. Thompson, 1993), and discussion section (e.g. Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988).
Sandoval (2010) implied that one of the difficult sections of RA to write is the conclusion part. According to him, some RA authors devote ample time formulating their RA conclusion section because it “provides not only an outline of the study conducted, but also other significant elements such as implications and recommendations (p.1).” In addition, it is in this part that RA authors express the significance of the major findings of their studies, thus giving them the privilege to become credible researchers in their field of specialization. One study that reports on separate Conclusion sections in RAs is Yang and Allison (2003) as they set out how writers in applied linguistics move from results to conclusions. They established three-move scheme organizational moves in all the RAs that they used in their studies with corresponding move’s steps as shown in table 1.

As can be seen in table 1, there are three moves found in the conclusion model namely: Move 1, Summarizing the study; Move 2, Evaluating the study, with three corresponding steps such as Indicating significance/advantage, Indicating limitations, and Evaluating methodology; and Move 3, Deductions from the research with two steps namely: Recommending further study and Drawing conclusion. Furthermore, Yang and Allison (2003) have provided definitions for each move and corresponding examples. These examples highlighted common phrasal or clausal components found in the corpus that they used in their study. The definitions and samples are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Yang’s and Allison’s Conclusion Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOVES</td>
<td>STEPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 1 – Summarizing the study</td>
<td>1. Indicating significance/advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 2 – Evaluating the study</td>
<td>2. Indicating limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Evaluating methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 3 – Deductions from the research</td>
<td>1. Recommending further study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Drawing pedagogic implication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Move 1 – Summarizing the study, this is the move that RA authors use to provide a brief account of the main points from the perspective of the overall study (e.g. *In summary, the research presented in this paper offers a contrastive textlinguistic study of rhetorical differences between texts…*); Move 2 – Evaluating the study, this move functions to evaluate the overall study by pointing out the limitations (e.g. *The present study has raised a number of interesting differences, but a larger corpus is needed to establish how far they can be generalized…*), indicating the contributions (e.g. *What is new in our study is the links we try to find with school performance, and the within family dynamics of the accommodation process…*) or evaluating the methodology (e.g. …She performed extremely well in the experiment, *but it is questionable* whether her *experimental data* represent the strategy she would employ outside of the laboratory); and Move 3 – Deductions from the research, this is the moves where authors extend beyond the results by suggesting what can be done to solve the problems identified by the research, pointing out the line of further study (e.g. *Further research might be profitably conducted within a single discipline to determine the degree of variability according to subdiscipline…*) or drawing pedagogic implications (e.g. *The findings of this study may have some implications for the teaching of EAP….*)” (pp. 382-383).

The present study is anchored on the conclusion model established by Yang and Allison (2003). This linguistic framework has prompted the researcher to conduct the study that would further shed light on the intercultural variation in the rhetorical preferences in the RAs’ conclusion sections written by Filipino and Japanese RA authors, thereby adding a new dimension to the study of conclusion section in RAs in the field of applied linguistics.

As far as rhetorical preferences or organizational moves of written discourse are concerned, contrastive rhetoric studies employing different writing cultures have been conducted. One popular study was done by Hinds (1983) when he found that Japanese employed rhetorical pattern called: *ki-shoo-ten-katsu*: where “*ki*, introduces the topic; *shoo*, develops the topic; *ten*, forms an abrupt transition or a vaguely related point; and *katsu*, concludes the topic.” Another study that commented on the possible influences in writing
in the target language is conducted by Kamimura and Oi (1998, cited in Dayag, 2009), when they compared two writing cultures, Japanese and American students. The former has the tendency to employ emotional/affective appeal when they write argumentative texts, whereas the latter has the tendency to employ rational appeal when writing the same type of text. In addition, Tahagaki (2002) mentioned that Japanese write for accuracy in English (L2), for they focus more on mechanical and grammatical revisions in L2 than in Japanese (L1). For this reason, Japanese do not apparently want to be misunderstood because if misunderstanding occurs, they think of themselves as impolite for not making any possible ways to avoid misapprehension.

Another remarkable linguistic framework with regard to cultural categories of communication was suggested by Lewis (2005). He categorized cultures into three groupings: linear-actives are straightforward and direct in discussion; reactives are fact-driven before reacting to something; and multi-actives are loquacious leading to repeated interruptions. In particular, Japanese culture, according to Lewis (2005), belongs to reactive cultures, whereas Filipino culture belongs to the middle of reactive and multi-active cultures. However, Filipinos are more of reactives and less of multi-actives.

Another interesting study that tackles cultural communication in written discourse is examined by Tsuda (1992). This sociolinguistic research regarding humility in Japanese revealed that Japanese in general refrain from personal compliments because they want to be polite all the time. Therefore, they are predisposed not to write everything, thereby maintaining their politeness. Tsuda (1992) further explained that Japanese likely leave what is unwritten to their readers.

In connection to this assumption, Hinds (1987) found that Asians, Japanese in particular, produce reader-responsible prose as opposed to Anglo-American writing that is writer-responsible. Japanese, according to Tsuda (1992) have the tendency not to express whatever they want to scribble, for they leave to the readers the responsibility to understand what is not written. In relation to this linguistic assertion, Hall (1976) proposed two categorizations of cultures into high context versus low context cultures in order to understand their basic differences in communication style and
cultural issues. This view is supported by Bujtaba and Balboas (2009) categorizing Japanese and Filipino as high-context cultures, thus making the two cultures and other Asian cultures less verbal in writing formal information.

A number of researches on rhetorical moves and preferences on the different sections of RAs have been explored; however, few attempts have been made to conduct contrastive rhetorical studies on the conclusion sections of RAs written by more than one writing cultures. This study is proposed to determine and analyze some selected RAs’ conclusions written by Filipino and Japanese authors for their generic moves and steps that they employed in writing their conclusions. Specifically, this study sought to answer two questions: (1) What are the generic structures or organizational moves found in RA conclusions written by Filipino and Japanese authors?; and (2) Is there a compulsory move in the conclusion parts of all the RAs under study?

Method

A total of 16 RAs were analyzed in this study: eight RAs were written by Filipino authors and another eight by Japanese authors. The said RAs were all singly written in English language and extracted from the field of applied linguistics. Moreover, the duration, within which the RAs have been published, were from the years 2005 to 2010. All RAs were published in international journals. RAs’ conclusion sections under study were subjected to word and paragraph counting to get the average length of RAs’ conclusion sections. As a limitation of the study, the number of pages in which the conclusion parts were written were not considered because all RAs’ conclusion sections did not seem to exceed to two pages. Furthermore, as part of the major contrastive analyses of all the RAs, rhetorical structures or organizational moves and their corresponding steps were analyzed to determine the overall structural components in the conclusion parts or sections of RAs under study, following Yang’s and Allison’s (2003) Conclusion model. Moreover, the researcher asked two intercoders, who are English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and have completed graduate education in English from reputable universities, to code the moves and steps in
the conclusion sections of all the RAs. Furthermore, the intercoders were provided a hard copy of Yang’s and Allison’s (2003) Conclusion model for comprehensive directions and identification of the components found in the conclusion sections. Trial sessions were done by the researcher with the intercoders before giving them two weeks to complete the task. The researcher and the two intercoders met to analytically compare the coded moves and steps in the conclusion sections of RAs under study. The preliminary intercoder agreement was 93% but reached 100% after listening to several justifications and settling some of the disagreements as regards the coded moves and steps found in the conclusion sections particularly written by Japanese authors under study.

**Results and Discussion**

Table 2 presents how long Filipino and Japanese RA authors have put in writing their RAs’ conclusions in terms of the number of words and paragraphs in the conclusion section of their RAs.

The data in table 2 shows that Japanese RAs’ conclusions produced more words with an obtained mean of 450, which almost doubled the number of words produced by Filipino authors in their RAs. Furthermore, the mean obtained as regards the number of paragraphs produced by Japanese authors in their RAs’ conclusions likewise outnumbered its counterpart. These findings suggest that Japanese RA authors may be more prolix in writing their RAs’ conclusions than Filipino authors.

This seeming prolixity of Japanese RA authors may be attributed to meticulousness in every minute detail in the conclusion section and that could be the probable reason why Japanese RA authors under study produced more number of words and paragraphs than Filipino authors produced. Conversely, Japanese production of more words and paragraphs in writing their conclusions when compared to Filipino authors under study did not seem to support Bujtaba and Balboa’s (2009) account, underscoring that “in high-context cultures such as Philippines, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Thailand, Japan, or India, there is a less verbally detailed communication and less written/formal information (p. 1).”
Table 2
Number of Words and Paragraphs in Filipino and Japanese RAs’ Conclusion Sections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Filipino RAs’ Conclusion Sections</th>
<th>Japanese RAs’ Conclusion Sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NW&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>NP&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>536</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>234</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>239</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>212</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNW&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>MNP&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>260</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NW<sup>a</sup> , number of words  
NP<sup>b</sup> , number of paragraphs  
MNW<sup>c</sup> , mean of number of words  
MNP<sup>d</sup> , mean of number of paragraphs

Tahagaki (2002) stated that when Japanese write in L2, they see to it that they are not misunderstood, thus possessing the tendency to seemingly write longer texts in L2 to establish accuracy of their factual views and informed opinions. In addition, this finding may also prove Lewis’ (2005) division of cultural categories of communication, pointing that Japanese are culturally considered “reactives” in communication in such a way that they seemingly “form some proofs or data first before reacting” (p. 89), thereby applying this rhetorical style in the conclusion part of their research papers to be more precise and definitive.

On the contrary, the findings may probably put Filipino RA authors as high-context culture communicators because of the less number of words and paragraphs that Filipino RAs authors produced, thereby supporting Bujtaba and Balboa’s (2009) stance that high-context culture communicators consider “often what is left unsaid is as important as what is said (p. 1).” The less production of words and paragraphs of Filipino RA authors compared with their
counterparts may mean that Filipino RA authors may likely be reader-responsible in this context alone, thus supporting Hinds’ (1987, cited in Dayag, 2009) claim that Asians are reader-responsible.

Table 3 summarizes the averages obtained as regards the moves and move’s steps found in the RAs’ conclusion sections written by Filipino and Japanese authors. As shown in the table, all Japanese RA authors had summaries in their RAs’ conclusion sections. This finding suggests that Move 1, *Summarizing the study*, in writing the conclusion section of an RA is a mandatory section for Japanese RA authors. This interesting result may stem from what Hinds (1983) established after examining rhetorical style in Japanese expository writing which is not seen in English. He further emphasized that “this writing style is termed as *ki-shoo-ten-ketsu*” (Hinds, 1983, p.1). The said rhetorical pattern, employed by Japanese in their writing outputs, seemingly subsist in Japanese writing culture that may be transferred, to some extent, in writing using the target language. The notion of *ketsu*, concluding the topic, may be significant to all of the Japanese RA authors under study.

Table 3

*Average Occurrence of Moves and Move’s Steps in Filipino and Japanese RAs’ Conclusion Sections*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOVES</th>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>Filipino %&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Japanese %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Move 1 – Summarizing the Study</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 2 – Evaluating the study</td>
<td>1. Indicating significance/advantage</td>
<td>100.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Indicating limitations</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Evaluating methodology</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move 3 – Deductions from the research</td>
<td>1. Recommending further study</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Drawing pedagogic implication</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Average occurrence of moves and move’s steps

The said Japanese authors may apparently consider that restatement of the main findings or claims is probably an obligatory
part in the conclusion section of the RAs. On the other hand, the data show that Filipino RA authors obtained a perfect mean in Step 1, *Indicating significance/advantage*, of Move 2, *Evaluating the study*, as compared to Japanese RA authors with obtained mean of 25 percent. One possible point why Filipino RA authors found Step 1 of Move 2 in conclusion sections of RAs as a mandatory part may have connection to what Sandoval (2010) said that researchers, indicating the significance of their studies, attempt to establish credibility of notions, thus making them credible researchers in their own discipline. Conversely, Japanese RA authors may have been preempted or driven by their seeming humility. Tsuda (1992) in his sociolinguistic research about humility in Japanese, he claimed that Japanese in general refrain from personal compliments because they want to be polite all the time. Employing argumentative strategies in writing, Japanese may have the tendency to exploit affective appeal, whereas Americans may have the tendency to exploit rational appeal in composing argumentative texts (Kamimura & Oi, 1998, cited in Dayag, 2009). Four out of eight Japanese RA authors evaluated the methodologies that they employed in their research papers as compared to Filipino RA authors that did not obtain any percentage. This finding may be attributed to Japanese humility as seen when they evaluate their writing outputs more in L2 than in L1 because they want to apparently evade being labeled as presumptuous and to probably appear more respectful specifically when they express their own opinions (Tahagaki, 2002). Cultural assumptions from Tsuda’s (1992) paper provide strong support to this point of view claiming that “humility in Japanese is deeply rooted in their cultures” (p. 5). For both writing cultures, they likely confirm that Step 2, *Drawing pedagogic implication*, of Move 3, *Deductions from the research*, may be very significant by the obtained mean of both sets of authors, thus extending beyond the results by depicting a number of solutions to the problems identified in the research. Moreover, four out of eight Japanese RA authors may find that Step 3, *Evaluating methodology*, of Move 2, *Evaluating the study*, seemingly worth mentioning the restrictions of the methodologies that they employed in their RAs. For Tsuda (1992) Japanese prefer to assess what they do rather than to compliment their attained achievements.
Furthermore, the data show that there are compulsory moves in the conclusion sections found in the RAs written by Filipino and Japanese authors. To reiterate, Filipino RA authors, on the one hand, found Step 1, *Indicating significance/advantage* of Move 2, *Evaluating the study*, in conclusion section as a mandatory move; on the other hand, Move 1, *Summarizing the study*, is found to be a compulsory move by Japanese RA authors.

Finally, Filipino RA authors seemingly indicate the probable contributions that their studies might have contributed to the body of knowledge. However, Japanese RA authors apparently provide a brief account of the main points from the perspective of the overall study, thereby, probably attributing this writing style to their cultural rhetorical pattern called *ketsu*.

In summary, the present study attempted to identify the generic structures or organizational moves found in RA conclusions written by Filipino and Japanese authors and to determine if there is a compulsory move in the conclusion parts of all the RAs. The three-move scheme established by Yang’s and Allison’s (2003) proved valid for Japanese RA authors, whereas for Filipino RA authors, Step 2, *Evaluating methodology*, of Move 2, *Evaluating the study* may not be an imperative part of the conclusion section, thus leaving this specific component less significant than other steps.

There are two compulsory moves found in each writing culture: Japanese RA authors are probably confined to write summaries in their RAs’ conclusion sections attributing this writing pattern to the notion of *ketsu*, whereas Filipino RA authors seemingly opted to indicate significance of their research as a way of indicating their contribution to the body of knowledge. The findings of the present study are categorically inconclusive for the limited number of RAs used for comprehensive rhetorical analyses.

Furthermore, teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL)/English as a Foreign Language (EFL) need to become informed as regards the findings of the present study so that their awareness with regard to the linguistic assumptions embedded in this study may likely be lifted. Developing cultural sensitivity and cultural consideration makes ESL teachers effective to some extent.

In some circumstances, EFL teachers in particular should consider cultural rhetorical variations in assessing the writing outputs.
that EFL learners produce. Evading culture-bound writing rubrics is an effective approach to foster non-discriminatory writing culture in an ELF classroom. Furthermore, ESL/EFL academic writing teachers may provide students a guide on how to write conclusions specifically in RAs, thereby helping many students eliminate their writing dilemma. In addition, providing standard rhetorical patterns in writing research papers may be useful both for EFL and ESL students. Swales and Feak (1994; 2000) proposed useful writing strategies and helpful rhetorical moves and steps in writing research papers found in their two paperbacks namely: Academic Writing for Graduate Students: A Course for Nonnative Speakers of English and English in Today’s Research World. The said paperbacks are intended for non-native learners who find writing research papers difficult and complicated.

Although findings presented by the present study may provide partial explanations as far as organizational moves and move’s steps found in the RAs of two writing cultures, Filipino and Japanese RA authors, are concerned, more research studies are needed in order to further establish intercultural variation in the rhetorical preferences in the RAs’ conclusion sections written by Filipino and Japanese RA authors.

References


**About the Author**

Rodrigo Concepcion Morales, a Master Teacher II, has been in the teaching field for more than two decades. He is the English Language Coordinator of Parañaque Science High School in the Division of Parañaque City and also a part-time assistant professorial lecturer III at the De La Salle–College of Saint Benilde, teaching English courses in the School of Multidisciplinary Studies. He earned his Master’s degree in Teaching English Language at the De La Salle University–Manila under the DLSU-Helenica Foundation Scholarship. Currently, he is writing his dissertation for his Doctor of Philosophy degree in English Language Studies at the University of Santo Tomas, Graduate School.
Learners’ Errors and their Evaluation: The Case of Filipino ESL Writers

Leah Gustilo and Carlo Magno
De La Salle University, Manila

Abstract

The present study investigated the sentence-level errors of freshmen students at three proficiency levels and the aspects of writing that raters focused on while rating the essays. It views errors as valuable information for the following: For teachers, as it clues them on students’ progress; for researchers as it gives them valuable data as to how language is acquired or learned; for learners, as it enables them to reflect on their learning. The data for the present study is based on the data collected for a previous study. One hundred fifty essays written by freshmen college students on their first week of classes in five private schools in Metro Manila (30 for each participating school) were collected, word-processed, and subjected to rating and coding or errors. Most of the findings of the present study corroborate the findings of previous studies on error analysis and essay evaluation—that sentence-level errors have a significant role in essay scores. The raters still have the grammar accuracy model when checking essays, although it is just considered secondary to other aspects of writing such as the ability to address the prompt and organize the ideas logically.

Introduction

Areas of Writing Research

Writing teachers and researchers have always set their teaching and research lenses on the variables that describe successful second language writing vis-à-vis unsuccessful writing. Because of this preoccupation, a plethora of research has been undertaken as regards the role of L1 in L2 Writing (Cumming, 1990; Krapels, 1991),...
L2 writers’ characteristics and proficiency (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994; Victori, 1999; Deane et al, 2008), L2 writing process/strategies (Arndt, 1987; Becker, 2003), L2 writing feedback/evaluation (Ferris, 1995, 1997, 2002, 2003; Goldstein, 2001, 2005) L2 writing instruction (Zhang & Zhou, 2002; Liu, 2003; Chen, 2005; Coombe & Barlow, 2004) and L2 writer’s texts (Zhang, 1997; Hinkel, 1997; Hirose, 2003). In the analysis of L2 writers’ texts, researchers focus on the rhetorical and linguistic features that impact essay scores in different linguistic backgrounds (Becker, 2010; Gustilo, 2011). These studies are significant in that they help us in understanding the complex factors that underlie proficient and less proficient writing.

**Emphasis on Essay Evaluation**

In assessing essays, what do raters consider as more proficient and less proficient writing? Studies have established that factors such as content, rhetorical strategy or linguistic (grammar, spelling, vocabulary) and non-linguistic features (organization, style, content, etc.) can separate less proficient and more proficient writing. These factors, however, are weighed differently by raters depending on their background and experience (Kobayashi, n.d.; Weltig, n.d., Cumming et al., 2002). According to Weltig, ESL (English as second language), EFL (English as foreign language), and ENL (English as native language) raters weigh the aspects of writing differently. On the one hand, the ENL raters put more thrust on the non-language aspects (grammar and mechanics) and consider language-related issues as secondary in judging essays. On the other, ESL and EFL raters focus more on language errors.

**Error Analysis**

As a corollary to this emphasis on essay evaluation, there is no wonder why almost inextricable in the analysis of L2 texts is the focus on errors that learners make in relation to their writing performance (Sarfraz, 2011; Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007; Kitao & Kitao, 2000). Previous studies have indicated that errors do significantly affect raters’ evaluation of the overall quality of essays. For instance, Sweedler-Brown (1993) attributed the low scores of L2 essays for the
original than for the corrected essays to sentence-level errors. Kobayashi and Rinnert (1993) found that the same essays gained higher overall holistic scores when the errors were corrected. Kobayashi (n.d.) also found that language use errors and coherence breaks influenced the English teachers’ (both native speaker and Japanese teachers) judgment in terms of content and clarity but not the Japanese university students’ judgments. The error-free essays were praised as very good, but the error-laden essays were penalized with low scores.

Terms and Definitions of Errors

Making errors is one of the most unavoidable things in the world. In language acquisition, learning, and teaching, error has been referred to and has been defined in many ways. Catalan (n.d.) reviewed the terms and definitions of error in Error Studies and consolidated these definitions using the communicative event framework (addresser; addressee; code, norm, and message; and setting). From the perspective of norm or well-formedness of a sentence, error is regarded as “an infringement or deviation of the code of the formal system of communication through which the message is conveyed” (Catalan, n.d. p. 66). Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982 p. 139 as cited in Catalan) corroborates this definition by saying that error is the “flawed side of learner speech or writing that deviates from selected norm of mature language performance” (p. 7). Errors are alterations of the rules of the accepted norm and are termed as surface errors which may be further classified as omission errors, addition errors, misformation errors, wrong order, spelling error, systems error, and the like. Also the terms overt and covert errors (Corder, 1973; Faerch, 1984, & Medes, 1989 as cited in Catalan, n.d.) may be added in the list. The former refers to errors that are not observable within the surface but implied in the message, and the latter refers to those that are clearly identifiable in the surface (Catalan n.d., p. 8).
Benefits of Error Analysis

Error Analysis (EA) is concerned with the analyses of the errors made by L2 learners by comparing the learners’ acquired norms with the target language norms and explaining the identified errors (James, 1998). Stephen Pit Corder’s (1967) seminal work “The Significance of Learner’s Errors” has given EA a significant turn in that it views errors as valuable information for three beneficiaries: for teachers, it clues them on the progress of the students; for researchers, it provides evidence as to how language is acquired or learned; for learners themselves, it gives them resources in order to learn (Corder, 1967 as cited in Maicusi, Maicusi, & Lopez, 2000, p. 170). With this approach errors are regarded as resources for learning and teaching rather than as “flaws” which connote failure in the acquisition process and, therefore, needs to be eradicated. Despite the criticisms against EA such as complete reliance on errors per se and not seeing the whole picture of the learners’ linguistic behaviour by looking also at the nonerrors (Gass & Selinker, 1994; Maicusi, Maicusi, & Lopez, 2000), EA has contributed comprehensively to Second Language Acquisition Theory and second language writing instruction.

Aim of the Study

The present study aims at investigating the sentence-level errors of freshmen students at three proficiency levels and the aspects of writing that raters focus on while rating the essays. Specifically, the present study aims at providing answers to the following research questions:

1. Do writers with higher levels of writing proficiency commit the same errors that low proficiency writers do?
2. Are there significant differences in the frequency of errors committed by low, mid, and high proficient writers?
3. Which of these errors significantly decrease essay scores?
4. What aspects of writing that affect essay scores did the raters focus on while rating the essays?
Method

The Essays

The data for the present study is based on the data collected for a previous study. One hundred fifty essays written by freshmen college students on their first week of classes in five private schools in Metro Manila (30 for each participating school) were collected, word-processed, and subjected to rating and coding or errors.

Rating

Three independent raters who are trained ESL teachers rated the essays using a holistic scale patterned after the TOEFL writing section and SAT scoring guides (Gustilo, 2011). Kendall’s Tau coefficient of concordance (.71, p<.05) indicated that the raters highly agreed on the ratings they gave on the essays. An average score was given to each essay, which was the basis for classifying the essays into different levels of proficiency (Karasawa, 2003). Essays with 1 and 2 scores were placed in level 1 or low proficiency; essays with 2 and 3 scores in level 2 or mid proficiency; essays with 3 and 4 scores in level 3 or high proficiency.

Survey Questionnaire

The raters were asked to fill out open-ended questions regarding their focus while rating and their perspectives on the different aspects of writing that impact essay scores. Their replies provided data on the qualitative analysis of essay evaluation for the present study.

Coding/Error Categories

Another three English teachers (two ESL teachers and one is a native English speaker) coded the sentence-level errors found in the essays. I prepared a list of errors based on the findings of previous studies (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1996; Sattayatham & Honsa, 2007; Kitao & Kitao, 2000); but the list expanded as more errors were
identified by the coders. The coders had to discuss some of the tricky structures before they were coded as errors.

**Trial Sessions**

Both the rating of essays and the coding of errors underwent trial sessions during which disagreements or questions regarding the rubric used to rate essays and the list of error types were discussed. The raters and the coders also acted as the validators of the instruments used for the present study.

**Data Analysis**

Frequency counts, standard deviations, MANOVA and ANOVA results, and data from regression analyses were used to answer research questions one to three. Excerpts from the essays were used to qualitatively exemplify the errors in three levels of proficiency. Survey replies were used to answer research question four.

**Results and Discussion**

**Research Question 1: Do writers with higher levels of writing proficiency commit the same errors that low proficiency writers make?**

The top five most frequently occurring errors that are distributed in three different levels of writing proficiency are comma (unnecessary or missing comma, missing comma after an introductory clause or phrase, missing comma before a nonrestrictive clause) 16.6 %, Word choice (wrong word form/word choice) 13.5%, Verbs (S-V Agreement, verb tense, verb form) 11.8%, Capitalization 11.3 %, and punctuation and sentence structure (fragment and run on sentences) 9.4 %. All three levels have errors on these aforementioned categories. However, out of the 28 error types identified in the essays, only 24 types appeared in level 3 essays. Level 3 essays have no errors in pronoun-antecedent agreement, wrong punctuation (e.g. question mark instead of a period), missing hyphen, and unnecessary
word. Below are sample sentences with errors. The errors are indicated by an underscore or italics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Sample sentences from Level 1 essays</th>
<th>Sample sentences from Level 2 essays</th>
<th>Sample sentences from Level 3 essays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comma</td>
<td>I cannot understand the people there because they communicated in their native language.</td>
<td>I spoke in my native language even though I know how to communicate in English.</td>
<td>English is important in one’s academic, professional and personal life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnecessary or missing comma</td>
<td>For many years English has been used in the Philippines as a second language.</td>
<td>After ten years of education using English as the medium of instruction we are expected to show ease in using English.</td>
<td>When you have mastered the basics of English grammar you will gain confidence in writing and in speaking the English language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing comma after an introductory clause/phrase</td>
<td>They study in a language center which is operated by noneducators.</td>
<td>I need to have a good command of the English language which has been my goal ever since.</td>
<td>My English teacher emphasized to us that we need to master English which is our tool in achieving academic success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word choice/form</td>
<td>Writing and speaking in English is very difficulty.</td>
<td>The people there take English lessons irregardless of the cost.</td>
<td>We need English so that we can expand ourselves to other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>My classmates speak in Tagalog all the time.</td>
<td>My teacher taught us the basics of the language.</td>
<td>Those who have been studying the English language is expected to have already gained higher levels of competence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV Agreement</td>
<td>Last year, I enrolled in this school because I want to be successful in my future career.</td>
<td>He taught us everyday, with patience and dedication.</td>
<td>Yesterday, Mr. Laroza assigns us a big task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb tense</td>
<td>I concluded that English was very important and is significant in the life every individual.</td>
<td>We wrote reflections and make a role play once in a while.</td>
<td>My high school teacher told us to keep our goals in mind, and he</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cont.

Verb form
I was suppose to submit the essays on time. My teacher was not satisfy with my essays.
emphasizes that we need to be proficient in English.
I have overcome the stress that goes along with learning it.
Needless to say, English rules!

Capitalization
For what I saw from my experience, English is just part of our lives.
So I conclude that English is just like our water and food because we need every single part of our life.

Punctuation and sentence structure: run on and fragment sentences
Some things are better said in English, it sounds formal.
The usage is different, it shows a different structure.
Speaking in English is important. Because it brings you a lot of benefits.

Research Question 2: Are there significant differences in the errors committed by low, mid, and high proficient writers?

Table 1
Means of Error Categories in Three Proficiency Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Categories</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th></th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun endings</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Verb Agreement</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>1.137</td>
<td>1.095</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb Tenses</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift in Verb</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word form</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word choice</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word choice</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun Antecedent Agreement</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun shift</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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As shown in Table 1, the means of level 3 errors are smaller compared with the means in level 1 and 2 errors. For example, in the word choice category, level 1 essays have the biggest mean (3.92), level 2 essays have 3.65, and level 3 essays have the smallest mean. However, the MANOVA results indicated that the three proficiency levels do not significantly differ on error categories as a whole, F(60)=1.15, n.s.

Research Question 3: Which of these errors significantly decrease essay scores?

The data were analyzed by multiple regression, using as regressors are the factors of error categories. The regression was a rather poor fit (adjusted $R^2 = 12.40\%$), and the overall relationship was not significant, $F(30, 104) = 1.63, p < 0.05$). With other variables held constant, essay proficiency levels were positively related to word choice and cap, decreasing by 0.21 for every extra point of word choice, by 0.35 for every extra point of cap. The effect of word choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Category</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun shift</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrasentence</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject omitted</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostrophe</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyphen</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run on</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comma intro clause</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comma nonrestrictive</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallelism</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word order</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong pronoun</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong punctuation</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing word</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnecessary word</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and cap were significant, $t(104) = 2.28$, $t(104)=3.52$, $p< 0.01$. Word choice and errors in capitalization significantly decrease essay scores (See Appendix A for the results of regression analysis).

It is interesting to note that, overall, sentence-level errors did not conclusively predict essay scores. This finding is, perhaps, explained partly by the raters’ survey replies which indicated that, for them, sentence-level errors are secondary factors that influence their ratings of essay. As for the individual error types that emerged as having significant effect on essay scores, this too may be partly corroborated by the survey data—two out of three raters indicated that they tend to focus on word choice and punctuation and mechanics (along with other factors) while rating essays.

**Research Question 4: What aspects of writing that affect essay scores did the raters focus on while rating the essays?**

The three raters were asked to fill out an open ended questionnaire regarding the focus of their assessment and their perception of these aspects when rating essays. The discussion below reports their qualitative responses on the questions:

**Question 1.** When marking students essays what aspects of writing (based on the rubric: content, support to thesis statement/addressing the prompt, organization of ideas, language use and errors) did you tend to focus on?

Rater 1:
I generally focused on what the student is saying about the topic and how he/she can competently organize his/her ideas; on the language part, I look at word choice, subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent usage, and sentence structure.

Rater 2
Ability to address the prompt and support the claims; choice of words and punctuation and mechanics.
Rater 3
I focused on organization of introduction, body, and conclusion; Content-sufficiency of information; subject-verb agreement, punctuation and mechanics.

As seen in the above responses they unanimously indicated that they had focused both on language and non-language aspects of writing. On the language part, they likely focused on the following: word choice, agreement usage, and sentence structure. Punctuations were also given premium by the raters as two out of three indicated it in their replies.

Q 2: How do grammatical errors in the students’ essays affect your marking?

The respondents still have the grammar accuracy model when checking essays, although it is just secondary to other aspects of writing such as the ability to address the prompt and organize the ideas logically. It appears that the effect of errors depends on whether it is grave or minor, as shown in their responses below:

Rater 1: The weight is not as much as the content and the ability to organize the ideas. But grammar has always a certain percentage in the overall rating.

Rater 2: They have a bearing on the essay score but not as much as the content and organization. It depends on the frequency and nature of errors.

Rater 3: Minor errors do not affect my rating; but when they are too many, I tend to give lower marks.

Q.3. What features or criteria do you expect to find in the students’ essays for you to give them a perfect or an almost perfect score?

Again, logical organization, clarity of expression, effective use of language, ability to target the prompt and grammar accuracy are the often-repeated aspects of writing that are given emphasis by the
raters. Two out of three indicated that they still give room for grammatical errors to take place in essays, as indicated in their responses below:

Rater 1: I give high scores to essays that show good organization, good command of the language, and good content. It has to have minimal grammatical and punctuation errors.

Rater 2: Good content; coherent organization; effective use of language; correct grammar and mechanics /correct punctuation usage; effective word choice

Rater: Cohesion—good transitions and effective flow of ideas; structurally organized; enough supporting details; correct grammar and mechanics; intellectually appealing; and college-level vocabulary; minor lapses in grammar

Q. 4. Please provide an explanation why you tend to give value on the aspects of writing you focused on while rating.

The present study, unlike the previous studies, addressed the question as to why raters valued the aspects of writing they focused on when rating essays. It is interesting to note that their grammar accuracy model is evident, but their acceptance of its subsistence as an almost default thing among ESL writers enabled them to treat sentence-level language errors with leniency.

Rater 1: As long as we are dealing with second language learners, there will always be problems with language errors. So I go for their ability to address the prompt and organize their ideas more than their ability to create error-free texts.

Rater 2: Content and organization are more important to me. A student who is given an instruction on how to organize his/her essay may quickly learn how to do it. But asking him/her to undo his/her grammar errors may not be done overnight.
Rater 3. Grammar and Mechanics accuracy cannot be learnt in one setting. That is why we have to give more weight on the students’ ability to address the prompt, give supporting details, and organize them into different parts of an essay.

The qualitative results of the survey corroborate some of the results in the quantitative analysis of sentence-level errors. As discussed earlier, the three proficiency levels do not significantly differ on error categories as a whole, giving us a hint that essays in higher levels of proficiency (2 and 3) seem to have shared almost the same errors with essays in proficiency level 1. This is because the raters seem to have given room for errors even in essays that were rated high. These essays meet the other criteria which are given more emphasis by the raters such as logical organization, clarity of expression, effective use of language, and ability to target the prompt. Word choice significantly decreases essay score apparently because the raters were unanimous in according it an important role in essay score.

Generally, most of the findings of the present study corroborate the findings of previous studies on error analysis and essay evaluation—that sentence-level errors have a significant role in essay scores. However, the present study’s finding that word choice and capitalization errors are the significant predictors of essay scores compared with other error types contradicts the findings of previous research: Sweedler-Brown (1993) concluded that article errors were more damaging in predicting essay scores; Weltig (n.d.) claimed that verb formation errors are more damaging to writing scores than any error types because they cause more problems in the transmission of meaning. More studies are needed to verify these conflicting findings.

In the meantime, ESL teachers have to focus on the troubling results of the present study. It seems that students need to be given more effective strategies on how to enlarge their vocabulary—an important aspect in surviving today’s academic and global world that placed more emphasis on the use of the English language as a major medium for instruction and communication. Next, teachers need to remind students that although punctuation or mechanics errors do not greatly impede meaning in the sentence as compared with other
language aspects, they are regarded as important; and raters may find these errors irritating and damaging to the overall quality of essays.

Equally important is the understanding that although more language teachers and academicians have become open to the place of World Englishes in composition (Canagarajah, 2006) and the descriptivist approach to language teaching, the emphasis on grammar or language accuracy when it comes to the written texts should not be weakened. Although the use of local variety in writing may be allowed, familiarity with the standard usage is still beneficial. There is no harm in being competent in both codes.

Table 2

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References


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