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THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE

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Foreword.

Welcome to the summer edition of the Philippine ESL Journal. This is the inaugural edition and we thank the sister journal, the Asia EFL Journal for providing key articles to begin the journals life. We are also proud to be connected to De La Salle University in Manila, where the finest educational traditions can be found.

We are also proud to promote the TESOL certificate course run by the Asian EFL Journal and supported by Anaheim University in the USA. This is without doubt the most professional course I TESOL training you can undertake. Already 100s of Philippine teachers have availed themselves of the course.

The Philippines has become the Mecca for English language learning. Although most will not recognize this fact, over 300,000 students from Asian countries come to the Philippines to learn English from Filipino teachers every month, and the surge increase. This journal is the first attempt to track what is becoming a new wave in English language learning.

In this edition we have 6 articles for your reading. The topics we cover are of importance to classroom teachers in the Philippines. In coming editions we will look at articles dealing with the one on one teaching style so common in ESL classes across the Philippines and the implications for teacher student from this unique scenario only found in this ESL zone.

We look forward to your submissions and continued support

Dr. Paul Robertson
Publisher
Philippine ESL Journal

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Three Ways to Motivate Chinese Students in EFL Listening Classes

Xiaoying Wang
Beijing Foreign Studies University, China

Biodata

Xiaoying Wang, (M.A. & M.Ed.), is an associate professor at the School of English and International Studies of Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), Beijing, China. Her research interests are classroom assessment, student motivation, and theories and practices of EFL teaching and learning.

Abstract

This paper is a report of an action research project conducted in a listening course for the second-year English majors in one university in China. After finding the existing teaching practice in the listening course not quite interesting and rewarding to my students, a new teaching plan was designed to motivate students in practicing listening. The plan consisted of three parts: providing students with explicit knowledge about the listening process, listening skills and the

general process of improving listening skills at the beginning of the course; modifying ways to manage each session so that each session is a purposeful and growing experience for students; adding two ways to assess students' learning: news report following a strict format and journal writing. Based on the data obtained from classroom observations, students' journals, interviews with students, and students' response to an open-ended questionnaire at the end of the term, students developed a fairly high degree of motivation towards practicing listening.

Key words: action research, EFL listening, student motivation, journal writing

Background information of the listening course

Listening is one of the basic language skill courses offered to our undergraduate students for their first-two years of university life. With 10 parallel classes for each grade, teaching is basically synchronized across classes; that is, all the listening teachers for one grade are required to teach the same textbooks and go through the same listening materials at more or less the same pace. Each class is composed of students with mixed abilities.

Since I started teaching at my university, I have taught the listening course many times. By tradition and by my own sense, I always tried my best to handle a listening class conscientiously, making sure most students could understand a listening piece before moving on to the next one. However, during the first few times teaching this course, I had many frustrations because I often found many of my students were not motivated in class. There were always students absent from class, and even for those who came to class, some of them were often absent-minded, and some would even doze off in class. Later, after talking with some of the students, I realized that students found the class boring and didn't feel they had learned much in class. Since most students had access to the teacher's book from which they could get the answers and background information for all the listening materials we used in class, they didn't feel it necessary or important to be attentive in class. Frustrated by such feedback from my students, I decided to introduce some changes into my listening course so as to motivate my students.

Review of literature

In order to solve this problem, I set myself two tasks for a literature review: finding out what is motivation and what are the strategies that a teacher can use to motivate their students; and how those strategies have been integrated into EFL listening courses.

Definition of motivation

Research has found that motivation is concerned with both a person's behavior in carrying out a task and the reasons for carrying out that task (Maehr & Meyer, 1997). In terms of behavior, it is a kind of "personal investment" which is reflected in the "direction, intensity, persistence and quality of what is done and expressed" (Maehr & Meyer, 1997, p.373). In terms of underlying reasons, motivation is concerned with "why anyone does or does not invest in any particular activity" (Maehr & Meyer, 1997, p.380). Many motivational constructs have been identified that are believed essential in influencing people's personal investment, such as task-oriented /egooriented goals, attributions about past success or failure, perceived self-efficacy, etc. (Cf. Dornyei, 2001). These constructs have supplemented the traditional social approach of intrinsic/extrinsic motivation in language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

Strategies for motivating students in classroom

Researchers have found that both individual factors, such as interest in the subject matter, perception of its usefulness, general desire to achieve, self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as patience and persistence (e.g., Sass, 1989), and situational factors, such as those aspects of the teaching situation that enhance students' motivation, may affect a given student's motivation to learn (Dornyei & Csizer, 1998; Lucas, 1990; McMillan & Forsyth, 1991; Sass, 1989). The two sets of factors actually interact with each other and work together to influence student motivation in the classroom, as the interaction paradigm suggests (Maehr & Meyer, 1997). Being very much concerned with what a teacher can do in classroom to enhance student motivation, I focused mainly on situational factors, which primarily fall into the following three aspects.

It has been found that if teachers help students set specific, short-term, achievable goals for learning, students will be motivated to learn (Locke & Latham, 1990), because very general or unrealistic goals tend to disappoint and frustrate students. McMillan and Forsyth (1991) suggested that making students' learning goals in line with their existing needs may be a good strategy for motivating students, because in this way, students could see the value and relevance of this course to their own development. This will make their learning more meaningful and purposeful, and they tend to exert more effort to achieve their goals.

It has also been found that if teachers can make students active participants in learning, students will be motivated to learn (Lucas, 1990). More specifically, it is concerned with the quality of classroom activities and the way these activities are presented and administered. It is suggested that the teaching materials should have relevance to the learning goals and be of appropriate difficulty level to the students concerned, a variety of learning tasks should be presented properly with realistic goals and effective strategies in reaching those goals, and students need to complete those tasks by doing, making, writing, solving, creating rather than just passively listening (Ames, 1992; Dornyei & Csizer, 1998; Lucas, 1990; McMillan & Forsyth, 1991; Sass, 1989). When students find a learning task interesting, engaging, meaningful, and useful, they tend to be highly motivated to carry it out.

In addition, it has been found that if teachers can provide students with opportunities to see their own progress and experience successes, students will gradually build up their self-confidence and be more willing to work hard (Dornyei & Csizer, 1998; Frosyth & McMillan, 1991). More specifically, teachers may first set realistic expectations for their students, then assign tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult, and finally give timely and informative feedback that supports students' beliefs that they can do well and help them see their own progress. In this way, students will gradually build up their self-confidence and be more willing to continue to work hard (Dornyei & Csizer, 1998; Frosyth & McMillan, 1991; Stipek, 1988).

Motivating students in an EFL listening class

With regard to teaching an EFL listening course at the tertiary level in China, researchers have examined how tolerance to ambiguity might affect English-major students' listening comprehension (Zhou, 2000), various factors influencing listening teaching and their functions (Mo, 1999), obstacles in English listening comprehension and teaching strategies (Li, 2005), the effect of syntactic simplification on English-major students' listening comprehension (Su, 2002), and stylistic features of authentic listening materials (Mo & Chen, 2000). It can be seen that all these articles are concerned mainly with how to make teaching and learning of listening skills more effective. A search of the key English Language Teaching journals in China revealed few articles that are especially devoted to motivating students in an EFL listening class. Though it can be assumed that effective teaching methods should enhance student motivation, I decided to start from the motivating strategies suggested in mainstream psychology and see how they could be integrated with my own teaching context.

The study

I carried out some changes to the way of managing my listening class during the fall term of 2001, during which time I taught the listening course to one class of second-year English majors. There were 24 students in my class with mixed abilities, and we met once a week, each time for two hours. We used *Listen to This* (Book II) (He et al., 1993) as our textbook. Bearing the motivating strategies and my own teaching context in mind, I made the following three changes to my teaching: devoting the first session for needs analysis and goal setting, changing ways for managing each session, and changing ways for assessing students.

Devoting the first session to needs analysis and goal setting

Before I introduced this first change into my teaching, I often started teaching from the textbook immediately after a short "getting-to-know-each-other" activity for the first session. Usually I would introduce myself first, and then students took turns to give a very brief self-introduction. It wouldn't take more than half an hour, and then we would start to deal with the listening exercises in the textbook. After learning the importance of giving students a clear purpose and goal at the beginning of a course, I decided to devote the first session helping my students' to find out their own learning needs, learning expectations, and see the value of this course.

Therefore, for the first session, I spent the first period providing students with explicit knowledge about the listening process, listening skills and the general process of improving listening skills obtained from research results in this area (Mendelsohn & Rubin, 1995; Rost, 1990, Rost, 2001). I pointed out to them that listening is a goal-oriented activity, involving both "bottom-up" processing and "top-down" processing (Mendelsohn & Rubin, 1995; Rost, 1990). As an integral part of communicative competence, successful listeners not only "attend to data in the incoming speech signals" at phonological, grammatical, lexical and propositional levels but also "utilize prior knowledge and expectations to create meaning" (Rost, 2001, p. 7). In listening, because we listen in real time and our short-term memory is limited, the characteristics of spoken language such as fast input, unfamiliar accent, unknown words, complex sentence structures, etc., might all pose difficulties to listeners, especially to a foreign language learner (Rost, 1990). Then, I introduced to them some effective listening strategies and pointed out to them that it takes time and effort to make improvement in listening. After that, I gave every student a copy of a list of the possible difficulties in EFL listening (Appendix one) and organized a class discussion asking them to reflect on their own listening processes and to pin down the difficulties they have encountered.

Changing ways for managing each session

Before I introduced this second change into my teaching, my teaching generally followed the textbook, although at the beginning of each session I asked two students to report two recent pieces of news respectively to the whole class. My way of handling the textbook was like this: I usually played the listening materials, asked students to do the related exercises in students' textbooks, and then checked answers. When some students couldn't answer a question correctly, I usually played that part of the tape again and explained those difficult points. Sometimes we would listen to the same part for three or four times. After making sure most students had understood a part, I would play the listening material for the next part and we would go through the same cycle again. It seemed that the teaching objective was to finish the exercises in the textbook. Since many students had the teachers' book that contained all the answers to the exercises in our textbook, they didn't listen attentively in class, and when asked to answer a question, some of them would simply read answers from the teacher's book. Obviously, they were coping with my questions rather than making use of the exercises.

To make each session purposeful, engaging, and well structured for students, I divided each session (2 hours) into four parts: skill training, news, conversation or story, and lecture. Skill-training usually came first in each session so that when doing the following tasks, students would purposefully practice the skills they had just learned. Regarding the listening materials, news was recorded from the recent broadcasts (VOA or BBC), and the materials for the other parts were taken either from the textbook or other resources and I tried to make them relevant to the topics they were discussing in their oral class or the topics they were writing in the writing class at the same time. I also tried to arrange the materials in such a way so that they became increasingly difficult in terms of input speed, vocabulary, or sentence structures as we went through a whole session. During the class time, students were not required to do exercises in the textbook. Usually before listening for the first time, I gave them some background information about the material they were going to listen to, and then gave them two or three general questions to guide their listening. Then they were asked to take notes during the listening. After that, I gave them a few minutes to discuss the questions based on their notes. Then we listened to it again, but this time they had to answer a few more questions which were more specific. I usually allowed them to discuss first before I called a student to give the answer. If it was a difficult piece, I usually asked them to discuss which part was difficult and why. For example, it might be weak forms of some words, stress, difficult vocabulary, sentence structure, accent, background knowledge, etc. Most questions required students to work out a summary or general idea, but some did need specific details. Sometimes I would organize a discussion about what they had listened to and asked students to speak out their own opinions.

Changing ways for assessing students

In order to promote learner autonomy and personalize the learning process as well as to help students see their continued progress and gradually build up their confidence, I used news reports plus journal writing to assess my students, in addition to the traditional assessment methods which included dictation, mid-term and final exams, and evaluation of students' classroom performances.

I decided to ask students to follow a strict format in news reports (Appendix two) because in the past, although students were asked to do news reports in class, many of them didn't do this task conscientiously. I sometimes found some students simply copied down some pieces of news from newspapers or the Internet and read them aloud in class. Obviously, they didn't benefit from this exercise.

In order to force my students to really listen to news broadcasts, I asked them to listen to news three times a week and follow the required format. It didn't matter much if a student couldn't write down many words in their notes. But if there were no notes but some complete sentences about certain pieces of news, I would not give him/her a good mark because I suspected that he/she didn't listen to the radio but copied that news from somewhere.

I decided to try journal writing because previous research suggested that journal writing can be both a reflective tool and a communication tool (Loughran, 1996; Morrison, 1996; Norton, 1998; Peyton & Reed, 1990). Therefore, it can be a personal writing place where students may reflect on their own learning experience, describe their feelings and reactions to the class activities and express their thoughts about the new way of learning. In addition to being a reflective tool, journal writing may also offer a safe place for a written dialogue between the teacher and students where the teacher may provide individualized feedback to every student. Furthermore, it has been used in different subject areas and to people of different age groups. Considering all the advantages of journal writing as well as the characteristics of my students, I thought it might be worthwhile to try this method, although it was totally new to me, in my listening course to satisfy the different needs of all my students in this mixed-ability class and to motivate them to work hard.

For journal writing, there were two parts: reflections on in-class activities and their outside-class listening practices. For in-class activities, I asked students to write about their feelings about the listening materials, the listening activities, and their own performances. I sometimes asked them such questions as "How do you feel about the listening materials we had today? Are they at the right difficulty level for you? What are some of your difficulties?", "How interesting or useful do you find the tasks we did today? Would you like to do more of this kind of tasks in future?", or "How well did you perform on today's tasks? Are you satisfied with your own performance? Why or why not?" For students' outside-class listening practices, I asked students to write down how well they could understand the news they listened to, what problems they had and what they planned to do next. I especially encouraged them to keep a record of any progress they made no matter how small it was. I hoped that by requiring students to do this kind of reflection, it might to some extent force them to become conscious of the listening process and their own way of making progress. Every time students came to the classroom, they should bring this exercise-book which contained both their news report and journal writing. I would randomly collect eight students' journals, give feedback, and return to them the next day. I assessed students' news report and journals according to how conscientious they were.

Data collection and analysis

The full period of data collection covered the whole term. During the term, I used the following four ways to help me see the effects of my interventions:

Classroom observation

My observation falls on three aspects: students' attendance, classroom behavior, and performances on the listening exercises. If they really wanted to learn and valued the opportunity of having a teacher help them to improve in class, they should be more willing to attend the class, they should be more attentive when listening, and they should do each exercise carefully and be honest to themselves, to others and to the teacher. My observation was noted down in my teaching journals after each lesson.

Students' journals

I required students to write a journal each time after they listened to the news to reflect on their listening processes, and write another journal entry after each listening session to reflect on their classroom performance, on the class activities, and the listening materials. I randomly collected 8 journals every week.

Informal interviews with students

Throughout the whole term, I conducted informal interviews with my students during class breaks. My major concerns were their opinions of the new way of teaching, new way of assessing, and how useful they thought it was to reflect regularly on their learning. Information obtained from my students was also included into my teaching journals.

Open-ended questionnaire

One week before the final test, I asked my students to give written answers to an open-ended question (What do you like and/or dislike about this course, including classroom activities, after-class homework and journal writing?) in order to find out their opinions on the course and their suggestions.

Data analysis

I started the analysis as soon as I got students' first journal assignments, and my analysis went on as I went on with my teaching. After the first three or four journals, I worked out a general code list which included the following codes: students' attendance, students' classroom behaviors, students' learning behaviors after-class, students' feedback on the new way of teaching, and the effects of the new way of teaching on students. As more data was collected, more specific codes were included within these general codes. When the same code appeared again and again, I made a note, indicating its importance. Throughout the whole term, I had 18 teaching journals, collected students' journals six times for each student for the whole term, and had 24 responses from my students to the open-ended questionnaire. According to the recurring codes, the following five major themes emerged from the data.

The findings

Students became more attentive and conscientious in class

Through my class observation, I could see the difference in my students' classroom behavior and performance when they were in second year compared to that of their first year, for I taught the same class when they were first-year students. First, class attendance was higher compared with that in the previous term. In the previous term, in most cases there were three or four students absent and many students were late for class. But during that fall term, only two students were absent only once throughout the whole term, because they were ill, and there was a student from another class who attended many of my lessons. During the class hours, nobody dozed off, although we had our class in the afternoon. They were active in taking notes, discussing with their partners, and checking their understanding. Nobody referred to the teacher's book when we listened to some materials from the textbook. Seeing this attention and conscientiousness on my students' part, I felt quite rewarded and thought my efforts were not in vain.

Students became more enthusiastic about practicing listening

In addition to their attentive behavior in class, my students also did a lot of practice after class, as shown from their news reports and journals. From the randomly collected journals, I could see that all my students finished the tasks as required, and about 1/3 of them even listened to the radio more than three times a week, and each time more than half an hour.

Students' practicing became more purposeful

At the beginning of the course, most students' journals were filled with all kinds of problems they encountered during their listening practices. A typical journal was like this, "*It's difficult for me to follow the news report. There are many new words, the speed is fast, and some sentences are too long for me to understand. I can't note down everything I have heard.*" To help students make their practice more focused, I advised them to choose the appropriate materials for themselves and tackle one problem at one time. Later, through students' journals, I found that the top students listened to VOA or BBC at the normal speed, the average students listened to VOA special English or CRI, while the struggling students listened to the Intensive Reading texts.

Students' journals also reflected that they were more able to concentrate on one problem at one time. At the beginning, a common problem among many students (20 out of 24) was the conflict between listening and taking notes. If they were busy taking notes, they would miss the following parts, and consequently failed to get a general picture of what the material was about. However, if they just listened without taking notes, they felt they had understood every word, but once asked what it was about, they forgot everything. For this common problem, I explained to them that many factors might have contributed to this problem, such as difficult vocabulary, lack of background knowledge, fast input, unfamiliar with the type of materials listened, etc. I also tried to focus on one of such factors during my skill-training session each time. Sometimes, I devoted several weeks focusing on one factor. Later, through students' journals, I found that two students set themselves the goal of learning five new words each day, three students set the goal of improving their pronunciation, especially *liaison*, two students said they would learn more political words, and one student said he would read more news. All of these showed that they began to understand themselves better, understand their own difficulties better, and could make their practicing more purposeful.

Students realized the importance of persistent practice

Through students' journals as well as the informal interviews with some of my students, I found most of them realized the importance of persistent practice in spite of the difficulties they were having then. Three students told me that before they became conscious of their difficulties in listening, they often felt frustrated because they thought they had practiced a lot but couldn't see any progress. After they became clear about their own difficulties, and after I told them the stories of some successful interpreters, they became more patient with themselves and were more determined to work hard and practice more. This change was also reflected in three other students' journals. Here is one journal entry from one student:

> *I always find listening the most difficult[y] in my English study. New words, the speed of speaker and the complicated sentence structure usually block my way of understanding. I know this is because I haven't got enough practice. Practice*

makes perfect. So I must look for opportunities myself to listen more. I think with continuous practice, listening will become more and more natural. I will feel at east when I listen to English then.

Students liked this way of teaching

From students' responses to my open-ended questionnaire at the end of the term, I learned that the majority of students were satisfied with this course. Eight students mentioned the first session of this course and found it enlightening because it helped them to see what they should learn and how to learn. Six students mentioned the teaching materials and classroom activities, thanking the teacher for carefully choosing and arranging the listening materials, and the classroom activities were also well organized. The majority of students (15 students) especially liked the journal writing part, saying through this form of communication, they could get helpful feedback from the teacher. Here are two typical comments made by two students:

I like this new way of teaching in this course. We would not let textbook control us. Instead, we based on some other materials and grasped the main idea of these articles to improve our listening. I think this is a good way, scientific and effective.

I like journal writing. It helps me to see clearly of my own problems. There are so many difficulties for me and sometimes I feel frustrated. But your feedback has encouraged me to continue. Thank you for your feedback.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my efforts to motivate my students in my listening course were, to a large extent, effective, as shown from both their learning behaviors and their underlying reasons for their behaviors. In terms of their behaviors, both in-class and outside-class, the data showed their study became more focused, and they put more effort into practicing listening and they were more persistent and patient with themselves. According to the definition given by Maehr and Meyer (1997, p.373), my intervention brought about fairly high motivation on my students' part.

In terms of their reasons for their behaviors, the data showed that my intervention helped them see the relevance and value of this course to their own needs. According to the Expectancy-Value theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), when they attached higher value to this course, their motivation was enhanced. The data also showed that they were engaged in the classroom activities in general, which reflected that they had higher situational motivation (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). In addition, the data showed that they tended to consider efforts as the reason for improvement in listening skills. According to attribution theory (Weiner, 1984), when my students attributed improvement to efforts, something internal and within their control, it showed that my students were motivated in listening practicing.

Afterthoughts

In general, I feel teaching the listening course that term was quite rewarding, although there were some disappointments as well. The feedback I got from my students, both from their behaviors in class and from their journals and questionnaire responses, was very encouraging to me. In retrospection, I find I have learned a few important lessons from this experience, and there are still a few areas that should be improved in future.

First, I have learned that to motivate students in a listening course, it is important to help students understand their own listening process and difficulties, and help them set specific goals for themselves. Such kind of understanding and goal setting are important for both advanced students and struggling students. Once students know what they are striving for and how to achieve their goals, their efforts will be more focused and lasting. Practicing listening should not be a blind process.

Second, I have learned that classroom teaching is only part of students' learning process. Students do a lot of learning after class. Therefore, to make classroom teaching more effective and useful for students, teachers should try to make each lesson purposeful and well structured. Class hours are the time when students' problems are called to attention, tackled, and advice is given for further practice. Teachers should also try to create a cooperative environment in the classroom so that students feel relaxed while learning. A listening class is not everything and should not be a test.

Third, it is a worthwhile effort to try journal writing in a listening course. It provides the channel for the teacher to understand and help each individual student, and this individualized communication can be quite motivating for most students. Therefore, it is particularly useful for a mixed-ability class.

However, in my action research, I find there are also a few places that should be improved in future. First, I need to improve my data collection methods. For this research, I didn’t have a class observation checklist for my class observation. I didn’t record my interviews with my students, but based my data on notes and memory. Because of my open-ended questions, students’ responses were varied and not all of them touched upon all the questions. Although I knew my students very well, the findings would be more solid if I could provide some hard data. Therefore, in the future, I will pay attention to my data collection methods to make them as valid and reliable as possible. Second, I need to consider carefully how to evaluate students’ journals and how to give feedback. For this research, the evaluation of students’ journals was based on whether students had done them or not. But when I actually read students’ journals, I discovered qualitative differences among them in terms of their reflections as well as their language. How to demonstrate this difference remains a problem for me. When giving feedback about students’ journals, I am not sure whether I should correct students’ mistakes in their journals. I can see that the limited writing ability of some struggling students was restricting them from expressing their real feelings and thinking, but I worry my correction might undermine their confidence in continuing to write.

On the whole, this action research was a fruitful experience for me. In the future, I will continue to try my best to understand my students and to make my teaching interesting and useful to my students.

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Appendix One: Possible difficulties in EFL listening:

1. Fast input: the speaker speaks too fast (weak forms and linking)
2. Unfamiliar accent
3. Unknown words that may block your understanding (when you can't guess its meaning from the context).
4. Long sentences
5. Complex structures
6. Text with a higher information density (news)
7. Synthesize scattered information / summarize the main idea
8. Listening strategies:
    a. predicting
    b. selective listening
    c. rephrasing
    d. recognizing main ideas
    e. recognizing main ideas and supporting details
9. Taking notes: (can't find key words, can't write fast enough)
10. Unfamiliar background information
11. Others:

Appendix Two: Form for your news report

I. Date:
II. Time: (e.g., 8:00 – 8:20am.)
III. Source: (e.g., VOA or BBC)
IV. Notes: 1.
2.
V. News report based on the notes: (in sentence form)
1.
2.
VI. Improvement: improving your news report by referring to other resources such as the internet, or the newspaper.

THE PHILIPPINE ESL JOURNAL
THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE

Developing EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence: A gap to be filled?

Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa,
University of Queensland, Australia

Bio Data:

Nguyen Thi Mai Hoa is a PhD Candidate in the School of Education at the University of Queensland. Her research activities focus on English language teaching and EFL teacher education. She has experience teaching English, TESOL Methodology and training EFL teachers at the College of Foreign Languages, Vietnam National University and has engaged in research at the University of Queensland where she was funded for her PhD in Education. Aside from her MA in TESOL at the University of Queensland, she also successfully completed her Master in Educational Leadership and Management at International RMIT.

Abstract

As English has become an international language, teaching for linguistic competence cannot be separated from teaching for intercultural competence. However, intercultural communication has not been paid due attention to in English language teaching (ELT) in Vietnam. This partially leads to the fact that Vietnamese students of

English may master English in terms of its grammar and linguistics but have many problems in intercultural communication. This article aims to respond to the call for more attention to intercultural communication in ELT to develop students' intercultural communicative competence. The article stresses the increasingly important role of intercultural communication in ELT and the necessity to develop students' intercultural communicative competence. The three domains of intercultural communicative competence have been identified with an aim to draw attention to move the learning of intercultural communication beyond its cognitive domain. A variety of learning and teaching activities are put forward to be integrated in EFL teaching and learning with an aim to improve the current situation of EFL teaching and learning in general and in Vietnam in particular.

Introduction

Culture, an integral aspect of language learning, sometimes fades into the background in the language classes in Vietnam. The emphasis tends to be placed on the development of the basic skills, i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Many Vietnamese teachers believe in the "teaching language first, and introducing culture later" approach discussed by Omaggio (1993, pp. 357-358). The question raised with this theory is how language can be taught without culture. Language is communication, but not without an understanding of the culture. This leaves little time, if any, for cross-cultural or intercultural lessons, which partially leads to the fact that students may master English in terms of its grammar, lexis, phonology, but have many problems in intercultural or cross-cultural communication which can be defined as

> an act of communication undertaken by individuals identified with groups exhibiting intergroup variation in shared social and cultural patterns. These shared patterns, individually expressed, are the major variables in the purpose, the manner, the mode, and the means by which the communicative process is affected (Damen, 1987, p.32).

Many researchers (e.g., Ortuno, 1991; Alptekin, 1993; Coffey, 1999; Martinez-Gibson, 1998; McKay, 2000) have shed light on the importance of cultural information in language teaching. They stress that communication is an interrelationship between a language and its people and if cultural information is not taught as a part of communicative competence, complete communication cannot happen. Besides, with the emergence of English as the chief medium of international communication in Vietnam, there is a need and desire for proficiency in English to communicate with people of other countries. Whenever two people from different cultures meet and use English to communicate with each other, they will use it in culturally distinct ways. Therefore, it is apparent that teaching intercultural interaction competence in English may well be among the most significant undertakings of the future. It stands to reason that culture needs to be integrated into the teaching of all language skills so that learners can learn to speak, but also to write, in culturally appropriate ways for specific purposes.

Meanwhile, the quality of English teaching and learning is still a concern to many Vietnamese educators. A document released by the Department of Secondary Education, within the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, stated that "the demand for English language teaching and learning is ever increasing…but the curriculum contents and textbooks are out of date…Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning English is unsatisfactory" (Tran, 2001, p.15). In Vietnam, most classrooms have been teacher-centred or teacher-fronted (Sullivan, 2000). This is also supported by Kennett and Knight (1999), and Walker, Tao and Bao (1996, cited in Nguyen, 2000), who hold that teaching methods [in Vietnam] were outdated, relying almost entirely on strict teacher-centred methods and rote learning.

In this context, it can be recognized that there is a need to address these concerns by looking for the application of more effective alternatives, and pedagogy of appropriation for the fact that English is used as an international language in Vietnam. Although there has been a campaign in education to "transform curriculum, text books, and teaching methodologies" (Kim, 2001, p.140), progress has been very slow in teaching foreign languages. In a research study of ELT in Vietnam, Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) suggested pedagogy of appropriation and authenticity, which "reflects an effort to make ELT both efficient for global transactions and relevant to the user's local culture" (p. 211). Therefore, intercultural training should be integrated in ELT, thus preparing "learners to be both global and local speakers of English and to feel at home in both international and national culture" (p. 211).

This paper aims at raising the awareness of the integration of intercultural communication understanding and intercultural communicative competence in ELT in Vietnam.

The position of intercultural communication in ELT for students majoring in English in Vietnam

Although the grammar-translation methods of ELT for students majoring in English is losing its popularity, emphasis still tends to be placed on the development of the basic skills, i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Consequently, the place of intercultural communication has not received the attention it needs.

Despite there being a new emphasis on developing communicative competence, there are no specific teaching guidelines for the development of this for Vietnamese students of English. As a result, intercultural issues seem not to be included in the curriculum in any integrated or significant way. This can be partially shown in an examination of several so-called "cultural syllabi" under consideration (Hue University, Danang University, and Colleges of Foreign Languages, Hanoi National University). Being aware of the link between language and culture, most of the foreign universities/colleges in Vietnam introduce cultural information about the target culture. For example, in the English Department of Hue University, Danang University, Hanoi National University, and other foreign language universities, American culture and British culture are explicitly taught in their program with the purpose of providing students with knowledge on major cultural issues of America and Britain, to get students to practise the four skills while studying the subject, to get them to make some comparisons between the culture of English speaking countries (typically American and British culture) and Vietnamese culture (Department of English, 2002). It seems that culture is embedded in knowledge about the history, geography and institutions of the target language country. Cultural competence in this case comes to be viewed as a body of knowledge about the country. Although students will indeed need to develop knowledge of and about the L2 culture, “this receptive aspect of cultural competence is not sufficient” (Lessard-Clouston, 1997, p. 137). Tseng (2002) also believes that “culture can be learned as a process rather than as a collection of facts” (p. 11). Consequently, it is important that learners should develop strategies which they can apply to further their own learning and to interpret cultural acts in the context in which they occur, not just some information about the target language cultural practices.

Moreover, what is ignored is the fact that nowadays English has increasingly become a means of intercultural communication, so with only the memory of the informational culture of the target culture, students may fail in communication with both native speakers and non-native speakers of English. Therefore, together with the understanding of the target culture, awareness of intercultural communication is indispensable in ELT. The picture gained from the examination of these syllabi is that insufficient attention is paid to the development of intercultural awareness. The aim in the syllabi appears to be primarily to develop cognitive awareness of cultural peculiarity-the stage of “mere cognitive learning” (Bochner, 1982, p. 32), which is discussed in the next part of this paper. The English Department at the College of Foreign Languages, Vietnam National University makes a great step by introducing cross-cultural studies, which cover most of the basic topics of cross-cultural (Vietnamese and Anglicist) communication. Yet it still targets the provision of information about cross-cultural communication. The opportunities for students to develop their affective domain and behavioural skills are limited. This is partly due to the fact that English learning conditions in Vietnam are limited in the classroom. Vietnamese students of English normally have few chances to improve their intercultural communicative competence outside the classroom. They generally have limited access to television or other media coming from outside Vietnam, or to people from other cultures. Opportunities for independent learning are even more limited because of the lack of related available resources and opportunities to be exposed to a foreign environment. All this suggests that the principal learning location is the classroom, which to a considerable degree hinders the development of skills. Therefore, this champions the need for students to master skills in cross-culturally appropriate communication and behaviour. In summary, most foreign language universities/colleges in Vietnam have recognized the role of intercultural communication in enhancing communicative competence. Yet it is usually restricted to culture-specific awareness in the cognitive domain, partially leading to Vietnamese students of English facing difficulties in intercultural communication (Suu, 1990; Thanh, 2000, Nguyen, 2000; Phan, 2001).

Therefore, this paper attempts to echo the need for integrating students' intercultural awareness so that they can successfully communicate in English with not only native speakers, but also non-native speakers in intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication

The term "intercultural communication" is identified in a less complicated way. In general, it refers to communication between people from different cultures (Dodd, 1998; Ting-Toomey, 1999;

Samovar et al, 1997; Damen, 1987). More precisely, it refers to "symbolic exchange processes whereby individuals from two (or more) different cultural communities negotiate shared meaning in an interactive situation" (Ting-Toomey, p. 16). In the "symbolic exchange process", people from cultural communities "encode and decode the verbal and nonverbal messages into comprehensive meanings". This definition obviously emphasizes the influence of cultural variability and diversity on communication. There is no doubt that when two or more people of different cultural backgrounds attempt to communicate, cultural barriers to communication often arise due to the differences in their patterns of life, social style, customs, world view, religion philosophy and so on. This is often the case when the communicators share a foreign language.

Nowadays, intercultural communication plays an important in ELT partly because English assumes the role of an international language which is used extensively by millions of people outside its original geographic boundaries to "convey national and international perceptions of reality which may be quite different from those of English speaking cultures" (Alptekin, 1984, p. 17). As English continues to spread as an international language, the number of second language users of English will continue to grow, far surpassing the number of native speakers of English. It is also the case in Vietnam. Vietnamese learners of English use it to communicate more with the second learners of English rather than the native speakers. It is apparent that "English is the main link language across cultures today" (Schnitzer, 1995, p. 227). Therefore, the goal of learning English shifts to enable learners to communicate their ideas and culture with not only the speakers of English but also those of other cultures. Consequently, the question of intercultural communication is clearly indispensable in English language learning and teaching if the aim is to develop students' communicative competence, which is further discussed in the next part.

Intercultural communicative competence

The term "intercultural communicative competence" deliberately maintains a link with recent traditions in foreign language teaching, but extends the concept of communicative competence in significant ways. Generally, it has been identified by many researchers (Kim, 1991; Schinitzer, 1995; Byram, 1997; Byram et al 2001; Byrnes, 1991; Krasnick, 1984; Baxter, 1983; Hyde, 1998; Meyer, 1991) as the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language. More precisely, it is defined as "the overall internal capacity of an individual to manage key challenging features of intercultural communication" (Kim, 1991, p. 259), to efficiently "negotiate a mode of communication and interaction" by ability to use and adapt language use appropriately in culturally different contexts. The challenging features of intercultural communication can be identified as cultural differences, unfamiliarity, and incompatibility between the interactants. This status of English as a means of international and intercultural communication brings many challenges to teachers and learners of English. It stands to reason that successful communication is not simply about acquiring a linguistic code; it is also about dealing with different cultural values reflected in language use. This lays out the philosophical base for a growing awareness that communicative competence should be conceived as intercultural communicative competence (Baxter, 1983), including not only “the knowledge of basic values and norms; verbal and nonverbal interactional competence in using English in intercultural communication; competence in using language as social action; competence in creating and interpreting linguistic aspects of social reality” (Krasnick, 1984, p. 218), but also “the cognitive, affective, and behavioral adaptability of an individual’s internal system in all intercultural contexts” (Kim, 1991, p. 259).

Learners of English who hope to carry out intercultural interactions effectively must be equipped with this set of abilities to be able to understand and deal with the dynamics of cultural differences because of the inseparable relationship between foreign language learning and intercultural communication.

It is obvious that if a teacher wants to maximize students’ communicative effectiveness when interacting with members of other culture, the students should be also receiving cultural awareness training as an integral part of their English courses. However, teaching or emphasizing cross-cultural awareness in the English language classroom is not an easy task. The next section discusses the contribution of several research studies towards the development of cross-cultural/intercultural skills

The levels of intercultural competence

What are the characteristics of effective intercultural communicators? Descriptions are found throughout the literature on intercultural effectiveness. Baxter (1983) summarizes these, suggesting that an effective cross-cultural communicator needs not only to tolerate ambiguity well but also be able to adapt to “new social conventions and behaviour demands” (p. 307), and then understand his or her own cultural roots and the effect of other cultures on personal behaviour.

Similarly, Gudykunst (1993) also sees the effectiveness of intercultural communication being determined by our "ability to mindfully manage our anxiety and reduce our uncertainty about ourselves and the people with whom we are communicating" (p. 37).

The first thing an English teacher, in particular, and a language teacher, in general, will ask is: Can this be taught? How can the learners acquire this in the language classroom?

A number of researchers (Brislin et al, 1986; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989; Martin 1994; Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; and others) have tackled these questions. In designing cross-cultural training for the development of intercultural communicative competence, they suggest there is a need to address the three areas of cognition, affect, and behaviour.

Cognition

To support cognition, several researchers (Lambert, 1999; Schmidt, 2000) advocate introducing specific knowledge regarding topics such as history, geography, politics, and economics which help the students engage in communicating with people from the host culture. To some extent, this approach can provide students with a certain understanding of specific areas of culture such as the artefacts which the culture uses, so that they have the basis for intelligent conversations with the people of the host culture, and "help decrease stress" (Weaver, 1993, p. 154). However, this aspect of culture does not greatly influence communication. If the interactants do not understand the underpinning rules of behaviours, they are likely to face misunderstandings and failure in intercultural communication. On the other hand, the danger of this approach is that too many facts are presented and there are too many challenges to the students' memory and their tolerance. It can never be sufficient and learning such information can be time consuming and tedious (Brislin and Yoshida, 1994).

Several researchers (Pease, 2000; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Axtell, 1993, Weaver, 1993) suggest another approach to develop culture-specific cognitive awareness by providing learners with a list of basic do's and don't's to a particular culture, which at least helps them at the beginning when they encounter a new cultural environment. This means they would be aware of the pitfalls that they should be wary of when interacting with members of the other cultures. To some extent, this approach can provide students with a certain understanding of specific areas of culture, helping them avoid behaving in an offensive way. However, a number of writers make the point that "mere cognitive learning" (Bochner, 1982, p. 23) will not assist students in developing the necessary skills to successfully negotiate cross-cultural encounters and thereby reduce "the anxiety and the uncertainty" that Gudykunst (1993, p. 37) talks about.

Developing intercultural communicative competence needs to go beyond the mere transmission of facts about a culture and provide knowledge to enhance participants' understanding of how and why people perform certain behaviours and have certain attitudes during cross-cultural encounters. As Brislin et al (1986) point out, "misunderstanding is reduced when people know when, how, and why certain attributions will be made" (p.??). To provide this knowledge, Brislin and Yoshida (1994) suggest that a language program which develops students' awareness of cross-cultural communication should initially concentrate on culture-general cognitive training and should include familiarisation with the major differences in fundamental cultural patterns of attitude and behaviours. Such knowledge refers to specific theories or themes that are commonly encountered in cross-cultural interaction regardless of the cultures involved, such as enunciated in the work of Hall (1976), Gudykunst (1986), and Ting-Toomey (1999) on high and low-context cultures as well as knowledge of how to perform and make behavioural adjustment in intercultural communication.

Cognition can be considered as the first step in any intercultural training. In particular, this stage focuses on knowledge and awareness, aiming to help students understand how their culture influences their interaction with people of other cultures (Gudykunst et al, 1996). To accomplish this in a language program, the language teacher can give lectures or present readings, or listening materials or, as Brislin et al (1986) suggest, foreign language learners should take part in problem-solving activities, and the analysis of critical incidents which can develop their awareness of how behavioural attributions are made during interaction.

Affect

All intercultural interaction involves some degree of stress, adjustment, anxiety and uncertainty in participants due to unfamiliarity and cultural differences. It is understood that participants may face complex emotions such as confusion, and anger. Therefore, several researchers (Brislin & Yoshiba, 1994; Gudykunst et al, 1996; Kim, 1991; Lamber, 1999) have emphasized the higher aims of cross-cultural awareness at the affective level, which is to enable the students to effectively manage their emotional reactions, thus maximising the effectiveness of their interactions with members of other cultures. This leads to the "readiness to accommodate intercultural challenges" (Kim, 1991, p. 269). Sharing this idea, Gudykunst et al (1996), Burleson (1983), and Weigel & Howes (1985) believe that the challenge for intercultural training is not only to provide learners with the necessary awareness of why uncertainty and anxiety occur and to provide them with the "tools and information" to manage that anxiety (p. 75), but also to encourage them to confront their biases and prejudices so that they can more effectively deal with them. Gradually, they can accept the viewpoint that people from different cultural backgrounds have different ways to behave and interpret their behaviours, but that difference does not mean deficiency.

Numerous authors (for example, Baxter, 1983; Brislin & Yoshiba, 1994; Gudykunst et al, 1996) have suggested different kinds of activities to develop learners' cross-cultural awareness at the affective level. Among these, it is worth mentioning case studies, discussions, simulations, role-play, and cultural assimilators involving the use of critical incidents. At this stage, the use of critical incidents is an effective way to understand the viewpoints of culturally different people, prompting discussion concerning the participants' emotional reactions, and developing the ability to identify culturally appropriate behaviours (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Black & Mendenthall, 1990). Meanwhile, a well-prepared simulation or a role-play helps students to put themselves in the shoes of others and experience such emotions, paving the way to understand how culture influences their behaviours and emotions. In these activities, which may be culture-general or culture-specific, the learners are required to consider and discuss either their own reactions or those of others when they take part in observing “posed” cross-cultural interactions. The object of these activities is that participants become aware of the many and varied emotional reactions that may arise during cross-cultural contact and learn, through the discussion stage of the activities, the reason for the emotional reaction given the background, thus providing the basis for the development of cultural empathy and sensitivity (Irwin, 1996).

However, it is not sufficient for a language learner to have knowledge of another culture and some degree of affective identification, because without an understanding of the behaviours and social skills necessary to accompany communication, breakdowns in the process will occur. The next part, therefore, will discuss the behavioural dimension of intercultural training.

Behaviour

Awareness and knowledge to face emotional challenges are not sufficient for success in intercultural interaction. According to several researchers (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Gudykunst et al, 1996), practice in engaging in behaviour must be increased to develop student’s intercultural communicative competence. More particularly, in developing learners’ cross-cultural awareness, the teachers need to help them recognize that changes in behaviours lead to greater probability of success in interaction with culturally different people. In turn, this develops the ability to read the behaviour of other participants in cross-cultural encounters and learn a repertoire of social skills in effective cross-cultural interactions (Cushner &

Landis, 1996). In the behavioural dimension, a student needs "to develop their ability to be flexible and resourceful in actually carrying out what he or she is capable of in the cognitive and affective dimensions" (Kim, 1991, p. 269). In other words, it is the ability to discover, interpret, relate and adapt to the requirements posed by different contexts (Byram, 1997).

It is obvious that if a cross-cultural training integration is to maximize its effectiveness, it needs to incorporate all three domains – cognitive, affective, and behavioral. However, the next question is how to these three domains in EFL teaching to develop EFL learners' intercultural communication understanding as well as their skills to deal with barriers in intercultural communication in the classroom. The following teaching and learning activities are put forward to achieve those aims.

Learning activities

With an appropriate cultural orientation, most learning activities can take on intercultural aspects, offer obvious opportunities for developing cultural and interactional competence in addition to communicative competence (Krasnick, 1984). For that purpose, the following activities are suggested.

Lecture and readings

One common approach to prepare students for intercultural communication at the cognitive level is simply telling students about the things which may cause the greatest problems, i.e., the differences, and provide readings on the subjects (Argyle, 1982; Robinson, 1985).

Cultural assimilators

A cultural assimilator is a brief description of critical incidents of cross-cultural behaviors that would probably be misunderstood by students. After the description of the incident, the students are presented with explanations from which they are asked to select the correct one (Seelye, 1984), followed by possible responses. Cultural assimilators are not only more fun to read but also help the students to identify differences in cultural values. This increases students' understanding of culturally complex issues, which serves to develop their cognitive and affective dimensions. It offers great potential, and is "an effective way of teaching individuals to make culturally appropriate interpretations or attributions of the meaning of other behavior" (Krasnick, 1984, p. 217). It encourages greater sensitivity to differences in cultures.

Cultural capsule

Cultural capsules are brief presentations showing one or more essential differences between cultures, accompanied by visuals that illustrate these and a set of questions to stimulate class discussion. Cultural capsules can be recorded or written.

Self-confrontation

Mini-drama approach as suggested by Gorden, 1970 (as cited in Robinson, 1985). The mini-drama consists of from three to five brief episodes, each of which contains one or more examples of miscommunication. A discussion is led by the teacher after each episode. The purpose of the mini-drama is to provide cultural information and to evoke an emotional response which results in self-confrontation (Argyle, 1982; Gudykunst et al, 1996; Krasnick, 1984).

Role play

In role-play activities, students imagine themselves in an intercultural situation outside the classroom, and perform a role-play about a situation within one's own culture or another culture. Experiencing the situation from different perspectives can contribute to a "clearer perception, greater awareness" and "a better understanding of one's own culture and culture of other people" (Fennes & Hapgood, 1997, p. 109).

Cultural simulation games

Simulation developers state that the purpose of the games is to simulate culture shock. They maintain that experiencing cultural shock prior to field experience will cushion actual shock by increasing awareness of cross-cultural problems (Krasnick, 1984; Gudykunst et al, 1996). Therefore, students can become sensitized to the helplessness of people from different cultural backgrounds when confronted with a totally new and foreign situation. The preparation for intercultural interaction provided by rehearsal and practicing in the games "can make a measurable difference in the stress inherent in these situations" (Fowler, 1986, p. 73).

Discussion

Discussion involves various topics about intercultural aspects, contributing greatly to learner's motivation and critical thinking (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993; Gudykunst et al, 1996). Discussion activity can provide students with good learning atmosphere in which students can cooperate better with one another, learn from the content of discussion and from one another. Discussion activities in the class can be in pairs or in groups.

Inviting Foreigners

People from other cultures and people who are recently returned expatriates are invited into the class to talk about their culture or their experience. This activity is useful in helping students experience real life intercultural interactions (Argyle, 1982). However, this type of activity can be considered optional because it is not always easy to invite people from other cultures to come to class. It is possible that the teacher encourages students to interact with foreigners and recall their experience.

Each activity described has some merits, and it seems likely that a combination of activities would be the most effective. Language teaching, therefore, should use the aforementioned experiential activities such as role-play, simulation, problem-solving, critical incidents, discussions, and so on, which provide learners with opportunities to practise their learned behaviour and so develop their social skills. The acquisition of a repertoire of coping skills for social interaction has the additional value in that, by indicating how to behave, it serves as a means of reducing the stress and anxiety which may be generated in cross-cultural interactions (Brislin, Landis, & Brandt, 1983). Besides, these activities will engage students in using the language interactively, and communicatively for the meaning. These activities, if handled correctly by the language teacher, can develop students' intercultural communicative competence, build up their vocabulary, expand their grammatical accuracy, and develop their communicative competence (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Brislin et al, 1983).

Conclusion

It is obvious that intercultural communication is significantly important in English language teaching in Vietnam as English has increasingly become an international language and Vietnamese learners have more and more chances to be involved in intercultural communication. In response to the call for reform in the field of language teaching and learning in Vietnam, attention to intercultural awareness can be considered as an alternative.

It is clear that the integration of cross-cultural awareness into language teaching is of immense value in developing students' communicative competence. Many research studies in the literature offer insights into how language teachers can incorporate cross-cultural/intercultural dimensions through language teaching practices. It is obvious that if EFL teaching aims at maximizing the effectiveness of intercultural communicative competence, it needs to incorporate all three domains – cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Given the fact that English has become a means of intercultural communication, integrating intercultural communication learning into English language teaching is both necessary and possible.

In conclusion, it is impossible to deny the important role of intercultural communication in ELT in general, and in the context of ELT in Vietnam in particular. The more we believe in its indispensable role, the more we count on the necessity and feasibility of the integration of intercultural communication into EFL curriculum plan to develop students' intercultural communicative competence.

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THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE

Project-Based Learning Activities for Short-Term Intensive English Programs

Patrick Foss, Nathaniel Carney, Kurtis McDonald and Matthew Rooks

Kwansei Gakuin University School of Science and Technology, Japan

Bio data:

Patrick Foss (M.Ed.), Nathaniel Carney (M.A.), Kurtis McDonald (M.A.), and Matthew Rooks (M.A.) teach in the EFL program at the School of Science and Technology at Kwansei Gakuin University in Sanda, Japan. Their research interests include fluency development (Foss), computer-mediated intercultural learning (Carney), meaningful language learning (McDonald), and comprehensible input (Rooks).

Abstract

This paper examines the effectiveness of the project-based teaching approach in a short-term intensive English program for Japanese university EFL students. Four distinct projects are described and

evaluated, and the benefits and limitations of the four projects are given. The paper shows that project-based instruction is a viable and flexible alternative to traditional intensive English coursework.

Keywords: project-based learning, intensive English programs, technology in EFL learning, English for Specific Purposes, curriculum development

Introduction

Short-term intensive English programs held during vacation periods for high school and university students have various benefits, particularly when they are sponsored by the students' own schools and use on-site facilities. They are cheaper for students than study-abroad programs, they maintain student focus on English, and they can enrich student-student and student-teacher relationships. Furthermore, school-sponsored programs can be tailored to specific scheduling requirements and curriculum needs. This latter benefit is particularly useful given the rise in courses focused on English for Specific Purposes and English for Academic Purposes.

Within these short-term intensive English programs, project-based learning can take a central role. A flexible methodology which allows for English skills and subject-based or technical skills to be developed in an integrated way, project-based learning enables teachers and students to move beyond the limitations of the traditional intensive English curriculum.

This paper first gives a brief introduction of a science-focused short-term intensive English program offered by a large private university in Japan. Following this description, the rationale behind using project-based learning is detailed. Finally, the reasoning, descriptions and results of four projects created by students and teachers are given.

Description of the program

The program described in this paper is a seven-day intensive English course for juniors in the science and technology division of a large Japanese university. Begun in 2004, the program is a two-credit elective. Interested students apply in March and are selected for the program based on their sophomore grades and their most recent TOEFL score. (All students take an institutional TOEFL test in December or January of their sophomore year.) In 2006, seventy-five students applied; sixty-five—the maximum number—were selected.

The seven days of the program are not consecutive. The first two days are held on campus at the beginning of August and do not have an overnight component. The final five days are held at the beginning of September at the university's retreat, a wooded campsite with cabins and meeting facilities 15 kilometers from campus. Students and instructors work, eat, and sleep at the campsite for these five days. In between the August and September segments, students do assignments related to coursework on their own and with the other members of the program online, via the free Internet tool, Nicenet (www.nicenet.org). Students receive approximately fifty hours of English instruction over the total seven-day period. For twenty-two of these hours, students work in small groups of eight to ten led by a native English-speaking instructor. The remaining time is dedicated to larger group activities such as lectures, panel discussions, teleconferences, technology training, and communicative teamwork activities.

The overall theme of the course is the relationship between science and ethics. The aims of the program are fourfold:

> a) to present opportunities for motivated students to explore the use of the English language in both academic and informal contexts,
>
> b) to encourage future development of the students' English language skills and educational technology skills once the course has concluded,
>
> c) to give students an opportunity to develop new friendships with
> others who are interested in English language and culture, and
>
> d) to help students enter Science and Technology English classes in the Fall term with a renewed sense of what they need to improve in order to meet their professional English learning goals.

Ideally, all four goals for the program should be achieved during the limited time of the course.

Rationale for project-based learning

In the short-term English language program reported on in this paper, the instructors implemented a curriculum of project-based language instruction in order to achieve program objectives. Project-based language instruction is a flexible methodology allowing multiple skills to be developed in an integrated, meaningful, ongoing activity. Project-based instruction (also referred to as project-based learning, or PBL) has been defined differently by various authors, but perhaps at its simplest, it is "an instructional approach that contextualizes learning by presenting learners with problems to solve or products to develop" (Moss & Van Duzer, 1998, p. 2). Projects are generally thought of "as a long-term (several weeks) activity" (Beckett, 2002, p.

54) which are part of an instructional method which “promote[s] the simultaneous acquisition of language, content, and skills” (Beckett & Slater, 2005, p. 108). A major goal of project-based instruction is comprehensible output (Beckett, 2002), which generally occurs both during the project and as the final product of the project. In terms of the final product, Stoller (1997) outlines several variations such as production projects, performance projects and organizational projects, all of which yield qualitatively different end products.

Project-based instruction allows instructors to teach the four core English skills (along with related cultural elements) while giving both instructors and students freedom in what project they choose and how they carry it out. It is advisable that teachers do not seize full control of projects but rather leave many things to be determined by students (Alan & Stoller, 2005). This element of self-determination may enhance student motivation. Díaz-Rico contends that “because a project is emergent and negotiated rather than fully planned by the teacher, it encourages students to go beyond the minimum standards of involvement” (2004, p. 1). However, due to this “emergent” nature, project-based instruction demands rapid adjustments by the teacher and the faith of the students to succeed. There is an element of unpredictability in project-based instruction; “sometimes a project will move forward in a different direction than initially planned” (Moss, 1997, p. 11). Also, there is no certainty that students will see the same benefits of a project as a teacher does (Beckett, 2002; Beckett & Slater, 2005). Projects can fail just as projects do in the real world if there is a lack of sufficient organization, group cohesion, or determination to reach the project goal.

There continues to be a relative dearth of empirical project-based language learning studies. As Beckett (2002, p. 58) reports, "research on project-based work in L2 education is rare…[with] most of the available literature consist[ing] of anecdotal reports of how language teachers organized project work for the purpose of second-language acquisition." In the five years since her comment, her own work (Beckett and Slater, 2005) is one of the few empirical contributions in this area. Beckett and Slater (2005) carried out a three-week project that involved her 57 university upper-level English language learners using a project-based framework to assess and track their own language learning in the content-based English learning program. Her data revealed that student themselves were impressed with the language learning they could achieve through their projects. This is significant because Beckett noted in 2002 that "[the project-based] approach to teaching may not be appreciated by all L2 learners at all times" (p. 64) because it is unclear that they are learning language through the project (as opposed to rote vocabulary study or lessons with frequent testing). Beckett and Slater's (2005) study emphasized this point that students do not always recognize the different ways project-based and content-based language instruction are leading toward real language development and offered the project framework as a method for helping students recognize and record such progress. Through interview and reflection data, Beckett and Slater (2005) found that a large majority of the 57 students – 79% -- were able to see how the content-based English class led to positive language development through use of the project framework model.

Four different projects

In the project-based learning program described here, all the program instructors are free to design their own individual class projects so long as they fit within the framework of the course. On a practical level, this means that all projects have to:

1. Be at least partly focused on the relationship between science and ethics.
2. Encourage the building of educational technology skills.
3. Encourage the development of the four core English skills.

Following are descriptions of four different types of projects and the relative merits and demerits of each within the context of a short-term intensive English program. These projects are:

1. The Wikipedia Project
2. The Newspaper Project
3. The Small-Groups Video Project
4. The Whole-Group Video Project

The Wikipedia Project

Create a well-formed Wikipedia entry for the university retreat in English as well as a professional 15-minute PowerPoint presentation about the project.

Web-based projects have been shown to demonstrate a multitude of positive language learning attributes: they result in authentic communication, they are flexible in subject matter, and they foster collaborative learning (Kitao, 2002; Kitao & Kitao, 2001). Given these benefits, a project involving the Internet-based encyclopedia Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) seemed an ideal choice for this program. One of the most-visited websites in the world, Wikipedia has now become a mainstay of many Japanese university students doing any kind of minimal research for their EFL classes. Their familiarity with Wikipedia and the website's billing as "the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit" (Wikipedia, 2006) led one instructor to think that students would be intrigued to work on creating an original entry for Wikipedia about the university retreat, the location where they would be living and studying for five days. Its natural setting would allow for investigations into local plant and animal life as well as the ethical issues involved in the development of the camp facilities. Creating the Wikipedia entry and giving the final presentation would also force the students to draw on multiple English and technological skills. Finally, the truly authentic outlet through which the students would be sharing their information about the retreat with the world would serve to increase student motivation and bring an intrinsic meaningfulness to the project.

The project was completed in a step-by-step fashion. In the August segment of the course, students looked at Wikipedia entries and brainstormed ideas for the university retreat entry with other group members. These ideas were narrowed down to the ones the students found most interesting and feasible. Students then formed pairs based on similar interests and began the process of finding resources. Each student was required to find at least two resources for citation purposes. Over the summer break, students were assigned to look through the resources found and post relevant findings on Nicenet. At the retreat, students did the necessary on-site research, wrote their entry section and posted it on Wikipedia, and prepared for the final presentation.

Overall, the students were excited by the opportunity to publish on Wikipedia and worked diligently on the project throughout, often with little direct supervision. The students were also able to successfully complete their challenging tasks of creating the Wikipedia entry and presenting their work to the class within the short time frame of the course.

Some aspects did not go as the instructor had hoped. For example, only one pair chose to research the plant life at the university retreat; the other three pairs chose to research basic details about the camp, its history, and the location and facilities. While these are all legitimate aspects to include, the instructor had envisioned a more scientific project. This example shows how student freedom can be an advantage or disadvantage for project-based instruction. Second, students were unable to find adequate resources in English, which led to more student time using L1 than was envisioned. Third, while posting on Wikipedia is relatively easy (users must register with the site and follow certain clearly outlined steps), site guidelines as to what is and isn't acceptable are complicated, and both a computer program and volunteer editors are constantly patrolling Wikipedia to enforce the guidelines. This created confusion for the students who were in control of posting their own information but occasionally came across warnings, error messages or inserted text. Finally, there was a lack of sufficient time for revision. The students did not have enough time to work on crafting their parts of the entries so they did not make it through enough of the revision process, which led to a less than polished final product.

The Newspaper Project

Learn about the various production aspects behind a newspaper, and proceed to research, design, write, and publish a *Retreat Newsletter*.

Newspaper projects offer numerous opportunities for language learning, particularly for writing skills. Having students create their own newspapers can enhance journalism skills, community involvement, teamwork skills, and critical thinking (Tal & Rishpi, 1998). Reading and creating newspapers can also offer advanced-level students the chance to extend their reading and writing skills beyond typical exercises and into real-world literary scenarios, while also providing a chance to develop post-literacy skills (Schmetzer, 2000). Motivation is also a key factor; when students see how they can interact with the outside world in their second language to help them publish their own literature, they realize the benefits of second-language learning firsthand. It is also a very flexible project. Newspapers can be used with interdisciplinary topics and themes, and they also allow for various levels of English, from intermediate to advanced.

For the purposes of this program, the flexible nature of a newspaper project was ideal in that it could easily be designed to fit within the "Science/Ethics" framework of the course by directing students to appropriate topics. The researching, interviewing, writing, and editing components of newspaper work ensured that all four English skills would be covered, and the design process allowed technological skills to be addressed as well. One of the educational technology goals of the project, for example, was to get students more familiar with the more advanced features of Microsoft Word.

Creating a newspaper involves changing fonts and type sizes, creating headers and footers, drawing boxes and columns, and inserting pictures from digital cameras or via the Internet. Except for changing fonts and type sizes, most students were unfamiliar with these features before the project began.

This project was completed in much the same way as the Wikipedia project. In August, students looked at various examples of English newspapers and made a list of the different elements. Using the "Science/Ethics" theme as a starting point, they then brainstormed ideas for different sections and stories as a group. Over the summer break, each student was required to submit, over Nicenet, 3-5 final article ideas and write a short practice article complete with a picture and caption. At the university retreat itself, final decisions were made on article ideas. Students then spent the majority of the week on researching, writing, and designing the actual newspaper. The final product was eleven pages long, and included a wide variety of sections and articles: a report on the debate over stem cells, an editorial on science ethics, a weather report, a review of the camp cafeteria, additional food and travel articles, reports on the projects of other groups and on retreat activities, a sports page, and reviews of ethics-related books and movies.

Students rated the activity highly and demonstrated a lot of pride in the finished project. Lack of time to do everything the students wanted was the major criticism. For example, eleven pages turned out to be very ambitious. Printing and assembling an 11-page newspaper for every camp member consumed a lot of extra time. Students found themselves racing to complete their articles by the deadline. Students were also interested in publishing the newspaper online with extra articles to appeal to a wider audience, but there ended up being no time for this either. Another complaint was that they had to spend too much time in front of computers, designing, writing, and editing their articles. Finally, the students quickly reached the limits of Microsoft Word and were frustrated that they could not produce more attractive newspaper templates. Adobe's Pagemaker or another more advanced type of desktop publishing software might have been a better choice, but this also would have required more instruction and time in front of a computer.

Two Video Projects: Small Groups vs. Whole Group

Student-produced video drama has always been an excellent EFL language learning activity that requires learner participation in a variety of ways. Now, with the relatively recent advances in digital video technology and concomitant drop in cost of video hardware and editing software, drama has become an even more powerful teaching and learning method in the EFL classroom. Examples and testaments to the usefulness of drama for speaking skills and pronunciation (e.g., Carkin, 2004; Hardison & Sonchaeng, 2005), intercultural awareness and identity formation (e.g., Gareis, 2000; Heathcote & Bolton, 1998; Isbell 1999) non-verbal communicative abilities (e.g., Dickson, 1989), group collaboration (e.g., Elgar, 2002), increasing student motivation (e.g., Heldenbrand, 2003), and all of the above (e.g., Dodson, 2000) are not difficult to find in the literature. Digital video recording, editing, and DVD authoring add to drama's allure, as easy viewing and distribution possibilities enable students to see their own second language-speaking persona and share it with others.

Specifically for this course, the multiple English skills required to produce a video drama and the technology skills needed to effectively use digital video cameras and editing software made this type of project attractive. Many of the students participating in the course had used digital video cameras before, but none had attempted to make a movie in English or use video editing software. Two program groups approached this challenge in two very different ways.

Small Groups Video Project

With a partner, use a digital video camera and computer software to produce a three-minute movie about an ethical dilemma concerning the use of science or technology.

At the start of this project, students were shown a teacher-produced video to serve as a frame of reference. They were also given a brief introduction to the computer-editing software they would be using later (iMovie, as installed on an Intel iMac). They then chose partners and brainstormed ideas. Students were given wide latitude as to the type of movie they could make. The only rules imposed by the instructor were that the story had to have 3-4 characters and that two of the characters were required to have some kind of debate about the dilemma at the heart of the project. (The specific English focus of this group was on debating language.) The main assignment for the summer break was to write the script for each movie. Students collaborated online via Nicenet, where they were able to post drafts and get feedback from teacher and students alike. Students were also asked to study a condensed manual for iMovie to prepare them to use the program later. Much of the teacher role during this stage was to point out usage errors in individual scripts and to work with students on debating language. Once at the university retreat in September, with final scripts in hand, students assigned roles amongst themselves and determined the shooting schedule. This had to be organized very carefully, as there was only one camera and one computer available to the group, and small group time itself was limited. Each group had approximately three hours to film their project and another three hours to edit. When they were not filming or editing, they were acting in another group's movie. In this way, each student was involved in every step of the filmmaking process.

Despite the technical challenges, four movies—one for each group—were produced: one on the ethics of cloning, another on electric cars versus gasoline-engine cars, a third on robot work versus human work, and a final film on electronic surveillance. Students were motivated and engaged throughout the project and excited to show their finished films to the other groups on the final day of the camp.

However, having four groups working on four different films at the same time created easily identifiable problems. During the editing process, for example, the instructor needed to be on hand to deal with technical problems and questions. This left little opportunity for the instructor to work with students who were acting on intonation and pronunciation. The final movies suffer as result. There are periods in each film where the student speaking is not very intelligible. The instructor was also not able to advise students on certain technical aspects of filmmaking (sound, lighting) which would have led to better finished products.

Whole Group Video Project

Create an ethically-themed dramatic film related to the question: What does it mean to be human?

While this project followed many of the same initial steps as the small-groups video project, the fact that the final goal was to produce only one film made it very different. There were two key questions to address. How would drama production tasks be divided among the eight group members? How would unequal speaking roles be divided among the eight group members? In this case, the instructor and students decided on a division of labor approach in which group members assumed control of certain tasks and were relatively not involved in other tasks. In other words, all students would work on one project but be involved in different ways and to different extents. There were six tasks – director, writer, costume designer, and set/sound designer, camera operator, and editor. Two students volunteered for each task. (While some other students did in fact lend a hand in tasks they had not volunteered for, e.g., creating the costumes, some students did nothing at all with costumes or other tasks for which they had not volunteered.) In terms of speaking roles in the drama, the final script had four roles with large parts and four roles with smaller parts. The roles were presented as such, and students chose their roles accordingly. Most students requested smaller roles, but eventually, through negotiation with peers, accepted larger roles. The rationale behind both the division of tasks and the division of roles was the notion that learners are not equal in terms of desires, abilities and interests. A division of tasks and roles allowed, for example, students who liked art to work on costumes and students who liked technical work to do video editing or run the video camera. Students who enjoyed acting and speaking in front of groups could volunteer for longer speaking roles while those who did not could chose smaller roles.

The final film, a drama about animal rights, was thirteen minutes long, and it was well-received when presented to the entire group at the camp. One of the benefits of filming only one drama was that the instructor was able to be on hand at all times for intonation and pronunciation guidance, which led to a more understandable and better-acted finished product than the average small-groups film mentioned above. However, the final film also showed clear limitations of the instructor's division of labor approach. Because there were a limited number of tasks and someone had to be responsible for each, it is quite possible that a student had to be responsible for a task in which he or she had no interest. Likewise, the number of students doing a certain task had to be limited. There could not, for example, be four directors. Therefore, while this approach gave some freedom and catered to students' individual talents and desires, it was decidedly not equal, a fact which could have caused some students to have a better experience than others. A similar argument might be made about the fact that speaking roles were unequal in this drama. While the benefit of this was to allow anxious or shy students an easier role, it is possible that students receiving longer or shorter roles felt slighted when comparing their roles to those of other students. These were issues that did not exist in the Small Groups Video Project as reported above, and they are problems to consider when taking this approach.

Final thoughts

Project-based learning activities for short-term intensive English programs require both students and instructors to plan carefully and adjust to unexpected developments. However, when they succeed, they are satisfying in ways that tests and other traditional modes of assessment are not. By combining English learning with the development of other skills, project-based learning enables EFL students to connect the English of the classroom to their own real-life interests. Another benefit of this approach is the final product. In addition to finishing the program with a grade and academic credits, students also all left with a tangible product of their work. In a world in which cooperative group efforts and achievement of tangible products is often a measure of success and accomplishment, project-based learning prepares students well for real world events. In addition to benefits, evidenced in all the projects here were limitations and unexpected problems. While these shortcomings may have led to less than perfect final products in each of the projects, the need to negotiate such real-life occurrences with other speakers in a foreign language only serves to make project-based learning an even more appealing choice and, indeed, a focal point for intensive English learning.

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THE PHILIPPINE ESL JOURNAL
THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE

A blog as a Tool for Reflection for English Language Learners

Jo Mynard
Koryo International College, Japan

Bio Data:

Jo Mynard has taught English in Spain, Ireland, England, the United Arab Emirates and Japan where she has lived since April 2005. She has an Ed.D. in TEFL from the University of Exeter (UK) and an M.Phil in Applied Linguistics from Trinity College Dublin. She is an Associate Professor of English language at Koryo International College in Aichi, Japan.

Key words: blog, language, reflection, learner autonomy

Abstract

Educators have reported a number of benefits for language learners keeping blogs; however, none of the available research focuses on the potential for a blog to be a medium for reflecting on learning. This paper draws on preliminary data collected from female Japanese college students. Twenty-two students kept voluntary blogs in their

free time throughout a semester they spent studying English in the UK. The students usually wrote about everyday activities, but they also used their blogs to write their reflections about their language learning. In particular, the students discussed feelings about their exam results, occasions when they were disappointed in their spoken English, goals that they set for themselves and ways in which their classroom learning helped them in everyday situations. The findings suggest that blogs could be one tool for educators to use in order to encourage students to reflect on their learning.

Introduction

A blog (or web log) is a kind of online diary that has been reported to be a useful tool for language learners for a number of reasons. Blogs provide authentic writing practice (Brooks, Nichols and Priebe, 2004), an opportunity to recycle language learned in class (Pinkman, 2005), and an alternative way of communicating with teachers and peers. Blogs help students to develop audience awareness (Palfreyman, 2004a; Ward, 2004), to create a collaborative class environment (Barrios, 2003; Huffaker, 2004), and have also been reported to be a motivating learning activity (Brooks, Nichols and Priebe, 2004; Pinkman, 2005; Ward, 2004). Although little research yet supports this claim, there are ways in which blogs also have the potential to promote learner autonomy.

Little (1991) defines learner autonomy as a "capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action" (Little 1991, p4). It is likely that blogs can provide opportunities for students to develop such a capacity. Firstly, while keeping blogs, students begin to demonstrate "independent action" by taking responsibility for ownership of their writing as they are producing a publicly accessible document. This differs from work produced only for the teacher in order to receive a grade (Lowe and Williams, 2004). Ward (2004) reported that second language learners in his study in the Middle East appreciated having the opportunity to review their blogs and correct mistakes they had made. In addition, blogging requires authors to make meaningful decisions. Students own their blogs and have to make decisions about the content they display on them. Ward (2004) asked his students what they liked best about the weblog assignments, and one of the main responses was that the students had the freedom to choose their own topics and express their personal views.

Hand-written journals have long had a place in the language classroom, providing free, unstructured writing practice and a medium of communication for students who have difficulties expressing themselves orally. These journals also give students opportunities to reflect and describe their learning and to develop strategy awareness (Oxford et.al., 1996) and metacognitive awareness (Palfreyman, 2005b). Similarly, blogs may also offer opportunities for students to critically reflect on their learning with the additional motivating factors of writing for a real audience (Ward, 2004) and using technology in a motivating way (Brooks, Nichols and Priebe, 2004; Ward, 2004). Yang et. al. (2005) note that an electronic exchange of ideas with peers can be motivating and can also provide opportunities for strengthening critical-thinking skills.

It is claimed that blogging influences the way you "think about thinking" (Mortensen and Walker, 2002, p. 254). Brooks, Nichols and Priebe (2004) conducted a study with native speakers in a first year composition course in the United States. Over time, as student awareness and interest in weblogging increased, daily reflection appeared to be the defining characteristic of the blog.

Expressing themselves in a private blog allows writers to develop their own voice (Brooks, Nichols and Priebe, 2004; Mortensen and Walker, 2002). An idea expressed in a blog can trigger a train of thought either by the original author or by his or her readers (Mortensen and Walker, 2002). Rebecca Blood is one of the first people to have kept a blog and has produced a history of weblogs. She mentions two unexpected advantages of her own blogging experience. The first is that she learned more about herself through blogging, and the second was that through regular blogging she came to value her own opinion (Blood, 2000). Foreign language students need to draw on previously learned language in order to write a blog entry, which means that they are very likely to be reflecting on their understanding of the language as they compose their blog entries. Limited research has been published related to non-native speakers' blogs that investigate the issue of reflection. This paper offers some observations based on a preliminary study conducted with female Japanese college students.

The study

Background

Throughout the fall semester of 2005, twenty-six female Japanese students of English spent one semester abroad as part of their two-year college program. The students had a pre-intermediate to intermediate level of English and were aged 18 and 19. The students had been accustomed to keeping non-graded, handwritten journals in

English in the first semester. They were invited to continue this practice in the form of blogs during their second semester (twelve weeks), which was spent at a university language center in the UK. The students were told that the blogs should keep people at their college in Japan informed of activities and aspects of their lives in the UK. The blogs acted as an informal way for students to communicate with their teachers and to write about important events. Participation in the project was voluntary, blogs were written during the students' free time and no grades were assigned. Students were given no guidelines in terms of length and frequency of entries expected. Twenty-two out of the twenty-six students maintained their blogs during their stay in the UK. The purpose of the current research study was to establish whether students used these voluntary blogs as a tool for unprompted reflection.

Methods

The purpose of the present research study is not to measure or compare data, but to simply understand more about whether blogs could be a tool that students might naturally use to reflect on their learning. In order to do this, the following research question was established: *To what extent did the students use their blogs to reflect on their learning?*

A category analysis of the content of the students' blogs was conducted in order to identify evidence of reflection in what they had written. The researcher performed the analysis according to the topics discussed by the students in their blogs using a grounded theory approach (see Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In a grounded theory approach, instead of data being placed into predetermined categories, the categories emerge from the data and are coded. This approach meant that one blog posting might contain numerous separate topics.

Findings and discussion

Using a grounded theory approach, the following categories emerged from the twenty-two student blogs over the 12-week period and were logged (table 1 and chart 1).

Code	Topic	Number of topics	% of total postings
FE	Activity with friends	95	26%
HF	Activity with host family	57	15%
J/E	Comparing Japan with the UK	33	9%
ENG	Reflecting on English skills	69	19%
YK	Reflecting on study abroad experience	20	5%
CL	Class activity	35	9%
CT	Class trip	9	2%
SI	Self-introduction	9	2%
F	Future plan	32	9%
Inf	Information or description	9	2%
O	Other	8	2%
	Total	376	100%

Table 1 – Breakdown of topics within students' blog

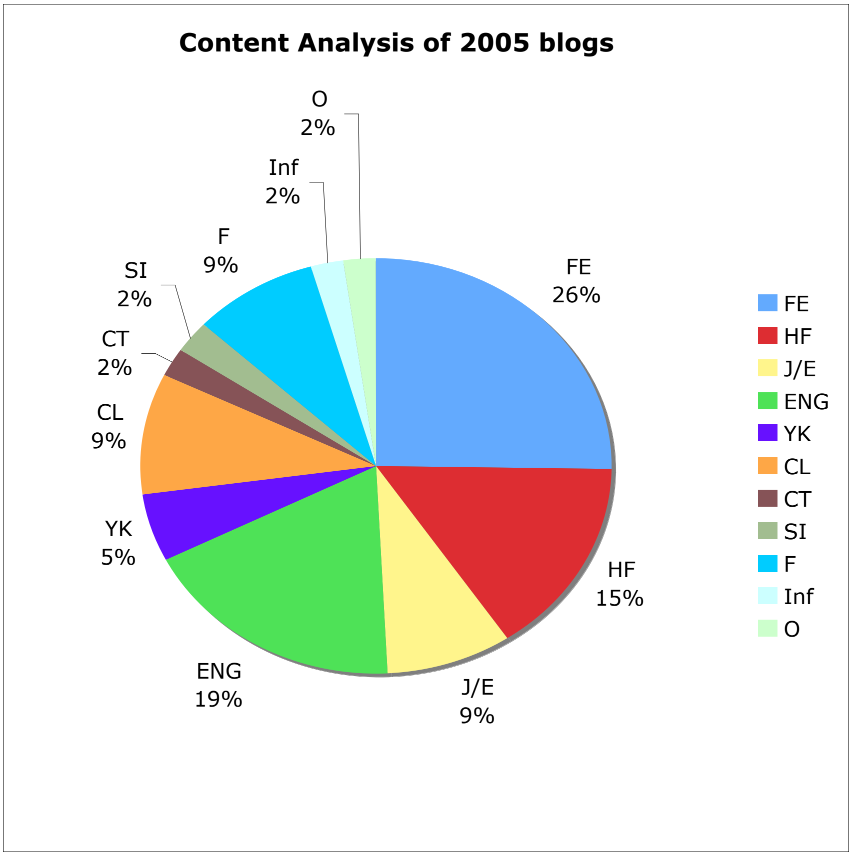

Chart 1 – Content analysis of the blogs

Chart 1 and Table 1 show that 9% of topics were related to class activities and 19% related to reflecting on English language. This does appear to show that blogs could be a comfortable medium for students to reflect on their learning. A breakdown of individual students' contributions (Chart 2) shows that some students were more likely to reflect on their learning using their blogs than others. For example, student number 9 used her blog to reflect on her learning a total of 13 times. Student number 22 did not use her blog as a tool for reflection at all.

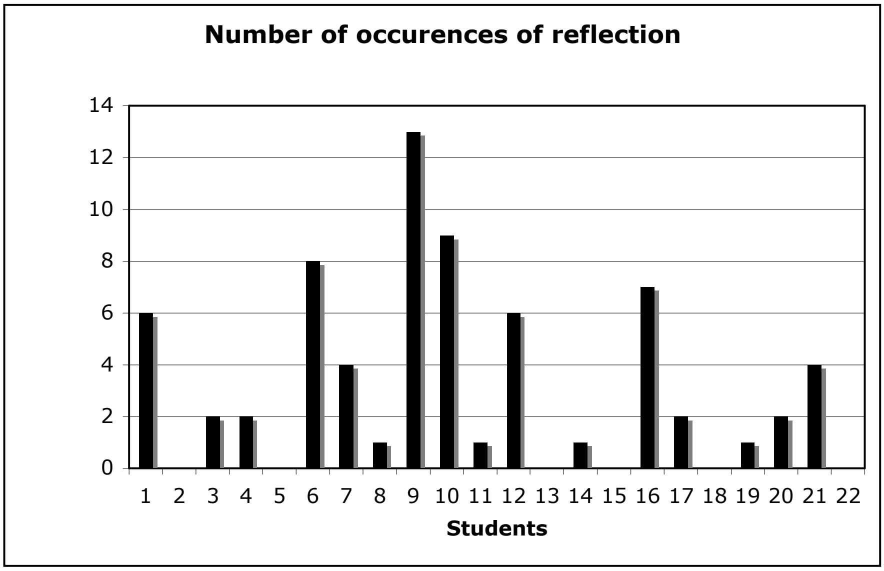

Chart 2 – Individual student entries reflecting on English

The students reflected on their learning at different times. Firstly, a number of students reflected on their learning when given the results of a test like the following examples show: (All the extracts were copied unaltered from students' blogs but the names have been changed).

> In the class, I took the test of TOEIC. It was a reading section which was difficult. I couldn't do well and I'm so dissapointed in myself. I have to study a lot. (Hanae)

> I did a test of TOEIC which I got a little bad score was one point down by comparison with first test. I was shocked..... I hoped that I could had good score! But I decided to do my best again and I want to get good score (Hikaru)

Students also wrote about ways they might improve their English skills like these examples show:

> I talk with Yukiko, we use just English from yesterday!! we aregood girl?! In fact it is sometimes difficult for us but it is interesting too. (Erika)

> I feel I should study harder. I'd like to improve my English much much more (Hanae).

Students also wrote about times when they felt that their language skills were inadequate like in this example (written after giving an account of when the student couldn't explain something to her host family)

> I was really disapointed by the lack of my English abillity. (Akiko)

A further 9% of topic postings related to class activities like the following examples:

> In class, I did some role-plays. For example, I acted as a tour conductor, a ticketing agent, a hotel clerk, a ground staff and ofcourse, a customer. These are really good experience for me.

> Actually, I booked a tour to Paris, so I was happy to have had these class previously (Hanae).

> Iwas busy this week because there were a lot of tests. Presentation was tested this week. I presented the marriage. I investigated as a divorce, rings, and favorite typing and so on. It was necessary to speak the marriage for 15 minutes this time. I wrote what I spoke on paper and it practiced this week because the questionnaire had been finished by the end of last week. but presentation was difficult for me because I`m shy, so it`s hard for me to have confidence....but I didn`t want to fail like last presentation. So I want to inproove! I did my best!? (Hikaru)

The students who frequently chose their blogs to reflect on their learning over the twelve-week period were not necessarily the most autonomous students, or the students with the best abilities in English or the most prolific bloggers. For some reason, these students felt that their blogs were a way to reflect on their learning experience. This observation was noted too late to interview students and investigate possible reasons for this. The other students may have also been reflecting on their language learning just as much in other ways of course. The only tentative suggestion that can be drawn from the observations is that a blog *can* be one possible medium for reflecting on language learning. The students were aware that their blogs are public documents and wanted to communicate particular observations with their friends, teachers and families. Comments they received in return possibly helped them to reflect more deeply on their learning. The question remains however: to what extent should an instructor promote the using of blogs as a tool for reflection?

Conclusions and recommendations

The results of this small-scale study show that the students used their blogs as a medium to reflect on specific aspects of their learning. The students involved in this study wrote about their learning without being prompted to do so. This is a good example of what Little (1991) refers to as decision-making, detachment and critical reflection and certainly a clear indicator that blogs can provide opportunities for students to become autonomous learners. One recommendation would be that in similar blog projects, participants should be encouraged to share their feelings about learning with teachers and classmates, and that readers should be encouraged to write comments on the blogs, prompting further reflection.

Limitations and directions for further research

This is a small-scale preliminary study involving just twenty-two student blogs with no follow-up interviews or questionnaires, and as such makes no generalizable claims. However, conducting a number of small-scale studies of this nature could eventually help educators to achieve a greater understanding of how blogs might be used as a tool for reflecting on learning.

In addition to using their blogs as tools for reflecting on their learning, it is likely that the learners reflected on their English as they wrote their blogs. However, it is impossible to evaluate this claim from the available data. Conducting interviews (in the students' native language) may have lead to a greater understanding of processes students applied when writing their blogs. These interviews should preferably take place as the students write their blogs or immediately afterwards. This study highlights the need for further research in this area.

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Title

Educational Settings and Second Language Learning

Author

Rod Ellis

Chang Jiang Scholar of Shanghai International Studies University and University of Auckland

Bio Data:

Professor Ellis, a renowned linguist, received his Doctorate from the University of London and his Master of Education from the University of Bristol. A former professor at Temple University both in Japan and the US, Prof. Ellis has taught in numerous positions in England, Japan, the US, Zambia and New Zealand. Dr. Ellis, who is known as the "Father of Second Language Acquisition", has served as the Director of the Institute of Language Teaching and Learning at the University of Auckland. Author of numerous student and teacher training textbooks for Prentice Hall and Oxford University Press, Prof. Ellis's textbooks on Second Language Acquisition and Grammar are core textbooks in TESOL and Linguistics programs around the world.

Introduction

A general distinction can be drawn between 'natural' and 'educational' settings. The former arise in the course of the learners' contact with other speakers of the L2 in a variety of situations—in the workplace, at home, through the media, at international conferences, in business meetings, etc. The latter are traditionally found in institutions such as schools and universities but, increasingly, in computer-mediated environments. There will be some learners who experience the L2 entirely in natural settings and others whose only contact with it is in educational settings. Many learners will experience the L2 in both natural and educational settings. The focus of this article is educational settings.

In considering the relationship between setting and language learning, it is important to clarify what is meant by 'setting'. In this respect, Coupland's (2001) distinction between two types of sociolinguistics is helpful. Type 1 sociolinguistics adopts the perspective of sociolinguistic realism, according to which social life is viewed as 'a structured set of social categories which, to some extent, control our social characteristics and opportunities' (p. 2). Type 2 sociolinguistics assumes that 'social life and our entire experience of society is best seen as structured through local actions and practices' (p. 2).

Accordingly, we can view educational settings as both determining how successful learners are in learning an L2 and/or as constructed by the participants (the teacher and the learners) through the social actions that they perform in a particular setting. In the discussion of the different settings that follows both perspectives will be drawn on.

Types of educational settings

Skuttnab-Kangas (2000) distinguished a number of different types of educational settings, which she divides into ‘non-forms’ (i.e. types that do not use two languages of the learner as the media of teaching and learning), ‘weak forms’ (i.e. types that have monolingualism, strong dominance of one language or limited bilingualism as their aim) and ‘strong forms’ (i.e. types that aim to promote high levels of bi- or multilingualism and multiliteracy for all participants). Table 1 summarizes the different types that Skuttnab-Kangas lists under these headings. However, for reasons of space, I will only consider the main ones in detail.

Category	Type	Description	Example
Non-forms	Language teaching	The language of the school curriculum is the learners’ L1; the L2 is taught as a subject only.	Teaching of English as a foreign language in Japan.
	Submersion	Linguistic minority students with a low-status L1 are taught the school curriculum through the medium of a high status L2.	Use of English as a medium of instruction in Anglophone Africa.
	Segregation	Linguistic minority children with a low status L1 are taught the school curriculum through the medium of their L1. The L2 may be	Mother tongue medium schools for the children of

		taught as a subject.	Turkish migrant workers in Germany.
Weak forms	Transitional	Linguistic minority children with a low status L1 are instructed through the medium of the L1 until they have acquired sufficient competence in the L2 for that to become the medium. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) sees this as a more sophisticated version of submersion' (p. 592).	Use of students' L1 in early primary school in Anglophone Africa; L2 English takes over in late primary and secondary.
Strong forms	Mother tongue maintenance	Linguistic minority children with a lower status L1 receive instruction in their L1 with a view to maintaining and developing skills in this language.	The programme in Italian for children of Italian speaking parents in Bedford, UK (Tosi 1984).
	Immersion	Linguistic minority children with a high status language are instructed through the medium of a foreign/minority language in classes consisting entirely of L2 learners.	French immersion programmes in Canada.
	Dual language	A mixed group of linguistic minority and majority students are taught through the medium of the learners' L1 and L2, with the	Two-way Spanish English programmes in the USA.
	Alternate		

	days Plural multilingual	dominant language taught as a subject. A mixed group of linguistic minority and majority students are taught using their L1 and L2 on alternate days. Students with different L1s are taught the school curriculum through the medium of their L1 with an L2 taught as a foreign language in grade 1. This then increasingly becomes the medium of instruction in later years when other L2s are also offered as foreign languages.	The alternate day programme in English and Spanish in Castiloga, California. The 10 European Union Schools in six countries

Table 1: Educational settings

The language classroom setting

'The language classroom' is defined here as a setting where the target language is taught as a subject only and is not commonly used as a medium of communication outside the classroom. In this sense it includes both 'foreign' language classrooms (for example, Japanese classes in the United States or English classes in China) and 'second' language classrooms where the learners have no or minimal contact with the target language outside the language classroom (for example, 'ESL' classes in a francophone area of Canada)

Whereas the second language classroom has been the subject of a number of sociolinguistic studies (see, for example, Miller, 2004 and Poole, 1992), the foreign language classroom has been largely neglected by sociolinguists. Rampton (2006) offered a number of reasons for this neglect. First, in accordance with Type 1 sociolinguistics, the social significance of the target language has been deemed minimal because its speakers are remote from the learners. Second, sociolinguistic enquiry has focused on the interface between the home language and the language of the nation-state (i.e. with language use in majority language settings) and such an interface does not arise in foreign language classrooms. Third, the overarching concern with 'competence' and with the tacit acquisition of language has led sociolinguists to view the 'specialized languages' of the foreign language classroom as of no real interest.

However, the distinction between Type 1 and Type 2 sociolinguistics affords a way of examining the language classroom setting from a social perspective. I will first adopt a Type 1 perspective by considering the differences between the foreign-language and second-language classroom in terms of choice of target, the different roles that teachers and students adopt, and parental support for language learning and the impact that these factors have on what and how well a learner learns. I will then draw on Rampton's (2006) interesting study of how learners of German as a foreign language in an urban school in London appropriated 'Deutsch' for their own purposes as a way of exploring a Type 2 approach to the language classroom.

Foreign-language classroom contexts can be distinguished from second language classroom contexts in that native-like cultural and pragmatic competence is not a high priority in the former (Nayar, 1997). To make it so would constitute a threat to the learners' own ethnic identities and also might not be favourably received by native speakers. Janicki (1985) commented:

It has been noticed that non-natives are likely to face social consequences when their linguistic behaviour complies with sociolinguistic rules saved (by some norm) for the natives. Examples are the usage of obscenities, slang expressions, or very formal pronunciation. It seems that there exists a set of as yet unidentified norms which proscribe the use of some forms on the part of the non-native speaker.

Preston (1981) suggests that an appropriate model for the L2 learner is that of 'competent bilingual' rather than a native-speaker model. This may well be the implicit model of many learners in foreign-language settings.

The role relationships between teacher and student influence learning in a classroom. In the case of traditional approaches to language teaching, where the target language is perceived primarily as an 'object' to be mastered by learning about its formal properties, the teacher typically acts as a 'knower/informer' and the learner as an 'information seeker' (Corder, 1977). In the case of innovative approaches (for example, communicative language teaching) where the emphasis is on the use of the target language in 'social behaviour' a number of different role relationships are possible, depending on whether the participants are 'playing at talk', as in role-play activities, or have a real-life purpose for communicating, as in information gap activities; the teacher can be 'producer' or 'referee' and the learner 'actor' or 'player'. However, Corder noted that even 'informal learning' inside the classroom may differ from that found in natural settings.1 As noted earlier, classroom learners often fail to develop much functional language ability, which may reflect the predominance of the knower/information seeker role set in classrooms.

Parents may play an active role by monitoring their children's curricular activities. They may also play a more indirect role by modelling attitudes conducive to successful language learning. A number of studies have found a positive relationship between parental encouragement and achievement in L2 classroom learning (for example, Burstall, 1975; Gardner and Smythe, 1975). Gardner (1985) argues that parents' influence on proficiency is mediated through the students' motivation.

I will turn now to examine a Type 2 approach to examining language classroom settings. Rampton (2006), drawing on the techniques of interactional sociolinguistics, documented how foreign language learners of German in a London school used 'Deutsch' (i.e. their spontaneous improvizations of German) outside their German classes—in break time, in corridors, and in other subject lessons. Rampton found that the boys he studied made much greater use of Deutsch than the girls but put this down to differences in their interactional dispositions rather than their sex (i.e. the boys used it to show off).

Rampton suggested that the use of German words and phrases served as a resource for the 'voluntary "performance" of exhuberant students intent on embellishing the curriculum discourse in whatever ways they could' (p. 163), for making 'music' out of their linguistic resources and for ritual purposes (for example, thanking and apologizing). Rampton also noted that German did not belong to anyone and therefore served as a racially-neutral language that was 'safe' for linguistically heterogeneous students. Rampton noted however, that the use of Deutsch was a 'passing fad'. In an interview some 18 months after the last classroom recording, the students who had been shown to use Deutsch said they no longer used it and expressed a dislike of their German classes. Thus, whereas Rampton's study sheds light on how students can appropriate elements of a foreign language to enact their social lives in and out of the classroom, it also suggests that such use may not contribute much to their actual proficiency in the foreign language.

Skuttnab-Kangas (2000) noted that foreign language classroom settings are characterized by very varying degrees of success. In countries where the learners' L1 does not function as a lingua franca the teachers are well-qualified and the language curricula are well designed (for example, the Nordic countries and the Netherlands) high levels of proficiency are often achieved. In such countries, learners may also have exposure to some exposure to the target language outside the classroom (for example, through TV). In other countries (for example, the UK, France, Japan, and the USA) the results are less impressive. Ultimately, success in learning a language in a foreign language classroom may depend on to what extent the learners see the language playing a role in whatever identity they wish to construct for themselves.

Submersion

Skuttnab-Kangas (1988) defined a submersion programme as:

a programme where linguistic minority children with a low-status mother tongue are forced to accept instruction through the medium of a foreign majority language with high status, in classes where some children are native speakers of the language of the instruction, where the teacher does not understand the mother tongue of the minority children, and where the majority language constitutes a threat to their mother tongue—a subtractive language learning situation. (p. 40)

Submersion is common in Britain and the United States, where ethnic minority children are educated in mainstream classrooms. Skuttnab-

Kangas (2000) also noted that deaf children also experience submersion education as there are very few schools in the world teaching deaf children through the medium of sign languages.

The characteristics of submersion settings are discussed by Cohen and Swain (1979) and Baker (2006). Right from the beginning, L2 learners are taught with native speakers. This can create communication problems and insecurity in the learners. If L1 support is provided, it is of the ‘pull-out’ kind, which stigmatizes the L2 child and also deprives learners of the opportunity to progress in content subjects. The language teachers are typically monolingual and thus unable to communicate with the learners in their L1. In some cases, the learners are actively discouraged from speaking in their L1. The students’ low academic performance may reflect the low expectations that teachers often have of the students, particularly those from certain ethnic groups (for example, Mexican American students in the United States). Reading material and subject-matter instruction in the L1 are not available, resulting in increased insecurity in the learners. Parental involvement in the school programme is usually limited. There are often problems with the learner’ social and emotional adjustment to school.

For many learners, the disjunction between L1 use in the home and L2 use at school constitutes a painful experience, as Rodriguez’ (1982) autobiography illustrates. Rodriguez was the son of a Mexican immigrant who settled in a mainly white locality of California. At school he was required to use English exclusively. At home Spanish was spoken, until his parents accepted the advice of the Catholic nun teachers at his school to speak English. Gradually, Rodriguez lost the ability to communicate in Spanish, signalling his rejection of his Spanish-Mexican identity. Although Rodriguez was ultimately successful in developing a high level of L2 proficiency, this was achieved at considerable personal and social cost. Rodriguez himself, however, while acknowledging the discomfort he experienced at both school and home, did not question the subtractive model of bilingualism to which he was exposed. In contrast, other learners, do question it and refuse to assimilate (for example, Skuttnab-Kangas (2000) mentioned two case studies of members of the Sami group in Nordic countries in Europe who made strenuous efforts to maintain their L1 and develop literacy skills in it).

Although submersion settings do not invariably result in lack of success in learning an L2 (as the Rodriguez example demonstrates), in general they do not facilitate it and they can lead to L1 attrition. Cummins (1988) identified three characteristics that are important for L2 acquisition; (1) a bilingual teacher who can understand students when they speak in their L1, (2) input that has been modified to make it comprehensible, and (3) effective promotion of L1 literacy skills. Submersion contexts have none of these. Baker (2006) argued that the basic assumption of submersion is assimilation, commenting that 'the school has become a melting pot to help create common social, political and economic ideals' (p. 196).

Segregation

Segregation occurs where the L2 learner is educated separately from the majority or a politically powerful minority, who speak the target language as their mother tongue. As Baker (2006) put it, it 'forces a monolingual policy on the relative powerless' (p. 198). Immigrants or migrant workers who are educated in special schools, centres, or units designed to cater for their language needs constitute an example of segregation in a majority setting. 'Bantu education' in Namibia prior to independence is an example of segregation in a setting where a powerful minority spoke the official language (Afrikaans) as a mother tongue.

Skuttnab-Kangas (1988) claimed that segregation settings produce poor results. She argued that the overall aim of education in these settings is the development of a limited L2 proficiency—sufficient to meet the needs of the majority or powerful minority and to ensure their continued political and economic control. Although some support for L1 development is provided, this is also usually limited. Negative L2-related factors identified by Skuttnab-Kangas include the poor quality of L2 instruction and the lack of opportunity to practise the L2 in peer-group contexts.

However, the case against segregation is not as clear-cut as Skuttnab-Kangas makes out. In certain situations, the provision of separate educational facilities may have beneficial effects. For example, short-term programmes for refugee populations newly arrived in the United States or European countries can help them adjust socially, affectively, and linguistically to the demands of their new country. It can also be argued that the maintenance of minority languages requires at least some segregation. Magnet (1990), for example, drew on the Canadian experience to argue that a minority language will only be viable if its speakers enjoy a 'degree of autonomy and segregation in order to develop in their own way' (1990, p. 295). The advantages of segregation are also recognized by minority communities themselves, as illustrated by their attempts to set up separate schools for their children. In a later discussion of segregation, Skuttnab-Kangas (2000) acknowledged that it has 'a somewhat better record than submersion' (p. 592).

Segregation also has some advantages where L2 learning is concerned. In particular, because the learners are likely to be at the same level of development, it is possible to tailor input to their level. Where the learners have different L1s, the L2 is likely to serve as a language of classroom communication and not just as a learning target. This is likely to broaden the functions that it typically serves. For these reasons, segregation may facilitate the development of 'survival skills' in the L2. However, as Skuttnab-Kangas (2000) pointed out, it has a number of disadvantages, such as the failure to develop high levels of bilingualism and, in some contexts, negative societal consequences. She argued that, in contrast to mother tongue maintenance settings it is distinctly inferior.

Mother tongue maintenance

Skuttnab-Kangas pointed out that mother tongue maintenance can take two forms. In the weaker form, pupils are given classes in their mother tongue, directed at developing formal language skills, including full literacy. In the stronger form, pupils are educated through the medium of their mother tongue. Examples of the former are the programmes for Panjabi established in Bradford, UK (Fitzpatrick 1987) and the Heritage Language Program established in Ontario, Canada (Cummins, 1992). These programmes were all funded by government or regional agencies. However, there is often reluctance on the part of such agencies to pay for community language programmes. Saravanan (1995), for example, reports that it took several years of lobbying to persuade the Singaporean government to support community run classrooms in Hindi, Panjabi, Bengali, and Urdu. In the USA, Chinese heritage community language schools are funded through tuition and private fund-raising (Wang 1996). Examples of programmes where learners are educated through the medium of their mother tongue can be found in the Finnish-medium classes for Finnish migrant workers in Sweden (Skuttnab-Kangas, 1988). Summing up national policies and practices regarding minority language maintenance in Western countries, Skuttnab-Kangas (2000) commented: 'Despite the small recent improvements, it seems clear that Western countries have so far not respected what should be basic linguistic human rights, especially in education, and that the world so far does little to prevent linguistic and cultural genocide' (p. 563).

Mother tongue maintenance programmes are based on enrichment theory, according to which high levels of bilingualism are seen as a cognitive and social advantage. This contrasts with deficit theory, which views bilingualism as a burden and as likely to result in cognitive disadvantage. The results of research strongly suggest that additive bilingualism (the goal of mother tongue maintenance) confers linguistic, perceptual, and intellectual advantages. (See Swain and Cummins, 1979 for a review.)

There is also evidence that mother tongue maintenance settings, particularly those of the strong kind, result in considerable educational success (Skuttnab-Kangas, 1988). They are characterized by positive organizational factors (for example, appropriate cultural content in teaching materials), positive affective factors (for example, low anxiety, high internal motivation, self-confidence in the learners), success in developing full control of the L1, metacultural awareness, and a high level of proficiency in the L2.

Mother tongue maintenance provides support for L2 learning in two main ways. First, it ensures that the L2 is an additional rather than a replacement language and thus results in learners developing a positive self-identity. As Spolsky noted, learning an L2 is intimately tied up with one's personality and being forced to learn an L2 as a replacement for the L1 is a 'direct assault on identity' (1986, p. 188). Mother tongue maintenance, then, is more likely to result in the positive attitudes needed for successful L2 development.

The second way involves a consideration of Cummins' *interdependency principle* (Cummins 1981). This claims that whereas basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) develop separately in the L1 and L2, cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) is common across languages.2 Cummins noted that whereas L2 communicative skills are typically mastered by immigrant learners in about two years, it can take from five to seven years for the same learners to approach grade norms for L2 academic skills. The interdependency principle has been demonstrated in a number of studies. Studies of the Portuguese-Canadian community in Toronto (Cummins *et al.,* 1990), of Japanese immigrant children in Canada (Cummins and Nakajima, 1987), and of Turkish immigrant children in Holland (Verhoeven, 1991) support the importance of L1 academic skills as a basis for successful development of L2 CALP. Swain and Lapkin (1991) also showed that literacy in a community language benefits the learning of a second L2 (in this case, French) as a result of the transfer of knowledge and learning processes. The notion of interdependency is an important one because it suggests that the development of full L1 proficiency confers not only cognitive and social advantages attendant on mother tongue use but also benefits the acquisition of L2 proficiency.

Immersion

Immersion programmes began with the St. Lambert Experiment (Lambert and Tucker, 1972), a French immersion programme for English-speaking children living in Quebec, Canada. Similar programmes were then started in other parts of Canada. Subsequently, immersion programmes sprang up in many different parts of the world, for example in Hungary (Duff 1997), Finland (Bjorklund, 1997), and Catalonia (Artigal, 1997). The term 'immersion' has come to refer to a number of different contexts, which need to be clearly distinguished.

Initially, in the context of the Canadian French immersion programmes, it referred to programmes where members of a majority group (native speakers of English) were educated through the medium of French, the language of a minority group. There are a number of variants of these programmes, depending on whether the programme begins early (for example, in kindergarten) or late (for example, in Grades 4 or 7), and whether it is full (more or less all instruction is conducted in the L2) or partial (only part of the curriculum is taught through the L2). However, as Cummins (1988) pointed out, the term 'immersion' is used to refer to a variety of programmes for minority students. He distinguishes 'L2 monolingual immersion programs for minority students' which provide English-only instruction directed at classes consisting entirely of L2 learners; 'L1 bilingual immersion programs for minority students', which begin with L1-medium instruction, introducing L2-medium instruction some time later; and 'L2 bilingual immersion programs for minority students', which emphasize instruction in and on the L2

but which also promote L1 skills. He also noted that, misleadingly, even submersion programmes have been referred to as 'immersion'. Skuttnab-Kangas (2000) took the view that the term 'immersion' should be reserved for programmes where learners with a high-status L1 are taught through the medium of a low-status L2.
In an attempt to resolve definitional problems, Johnson and Swain (1997) identify a number of core features of immersion programmes. These are:

1. The L2 is the medium of instruction.
2. The immersion curriculum parallels the local L2 curriculum.
3. Overt support for the L1 exists.
4. The programme aims for additive bilingualism (a feature that Skuttnab-Kangas considers pivotal).
5. Exposure to the L2 is largely confined to the classroom.
6. Students enter with similar (and limited) levels of proficiency.
7. The teachers are bilingual.
8. The classroom culture is that of the local L1 community.

Swain and Lapkin (2005) reviewed these features in the light of the dramatic increase in ethnic diversity in Canada's urban centres, which make feature (8) problematic. They also revised their views about restricting the learners' use of the L1, acknowledging that 'judicious use' may be warranted.
The Canadian French immersion programmes have met with considerable success. Genesee (1987) and Swain and Lapkin (1982) reviewed the various programmes, reaching similar conclusions. English-speaking immersion students acquire normal English language proficiency and show the same or better level of general academic development. Furthermore, they tend to have less rigid ethnolinguistic stereotypes of the target-language community, and place greater value on the importance of inter-ethnic contact. These advantages are evident in 'disadvantaged' as well as 'advantaged' children.

Evaluation of the different kinds of programmes shows that in general, total immersion produces better results than partial immersion, and also that early immersion does better than late. The Canadian French immersion settings also lead to a high level of L2 French proficiency, particularly with regard to discourse and strategic competence, where learners achieve near-native-speaker levels (Swain, 1985). However, such levels are not usually reached in grammatical proficiency and, as Hammerley (1987) pointed out, in some cases a kind of 'classroom pidgin' can develop.3 Also, in comparison to younger immersion students (i.e. second graders), older immersion learners (i.e. fifth and sixth graders) have been observed to rely more on their L1 when interacting with each other. Tarone and Swain (1995) suggested that this is because, whereas change from above occurs in early immersion (i.e. learners are predominantly influenced by the superordinate style, represented in this case by L2 French), older learners experience increasing pressure for change from below to perform important interpersonal functions such as play, competition and positioning within their peer group and resort to L1 English because they do not have access to a vernacular style French. Swain and Tarone's argument is supported by Caldas and Caron-Caldas' (2002) study, which reported that two adolescent children in a French immersion programme in Louisiana resisted using French when speaking outside class with their peers.

Overall, however, immersion programmes are very successful in promoting L2 acquisition. There are many reasons for this. One undoubtedly has to do with the fact that immersion settings ensure a plentiful supply of input that has been tailored to the learners' level and is therefore comprehensible. There are also social reasons. The learners' L1 and their ethnic identity are not threatened, so it is easy for the learners to adjust to the immersion setting. Furthermore, the immersion programmes are optional and, therefore, are well-supported by those parents who elect to send their children to them.

Dual language

Dual language programmes are often referred to as 'bilingual minority immersion programmes'. They are common in the United States, where they have been controversial. There has been considerable opposition to bilingual programmes for linguistic minorities, as reflected in the Official English Movement—the attempt to have English designated as the official language of the United States and to ensure that educational resources are directed towards teaching English rather than some other language—see Bingaman 1990.

Cummins (1988) pointed out that the debate has centred on two arguments, both of which are mistaken. Supporters of minority bilingual programmes have advanced the 'linguistic-mismatch' argument, according to which minority children will be retarded academically if they are required to learn exclusively through the L2. This is mistaken because the French Canadian immersion programmes have shown conclusively that early instruction through the medium of the L2 has no negative effects. Critics of bilingual immersion programmes have also advanced the 'maximum exposure' argument, according to which bilingual education is detrimental because it deprives learners of the exposure to the L2 necessary for successful acquisition. This is refuted by programmes which show that minority children who spend less time on English while they are developing L1 literacy skills ultimately do just as well in L2 academic skills as those who are educated exclusively through the L2. Cummins argued that minority programmes that are designed in such a way that they reflect the interdependency principle and the comprehensible input hypothesis have been shown to be successful. Genesee, however, suggested that the success of minority immersion programmes also depends on 'changing the sociocultural fabric of the school' (1987: 168–9). He noted that ways are needed to upgrade the status and power attached to the minority language and to teachers and support personnel who speak it as an L1. Genesee's comment points to the need to consider social as well as organizational factors in immersion education.

Conclusion

In this article, I have considered the relationship between different educational settings and L2 learning. The aim has been to identify the potential learning outcomes associated with different types of settings, defined in very broad terms. It is important to note that there will be considerable variance in learning outcomes within settings as well as between settings. Research to date (with the exception of that investigating the immersion programmes) has focused more or less exclusively on identifying the actual or potential 'learning opportunities' that arise in the different settings rather than investigating 'learning outcomes'.

It is possible to identify a set of general principles that underlie likely language learning success in educational settings. The following is a list of such principles.

1.L1 maintenance—ensuring that learners achieve a high level of both oracy and literacy in their L1 will promote learning of the L2.

2. Perceptions of L1—learning is enhanced when the setting confers status on both their L1 and the L2.

3. Social need—learners learn best when they have a clear social need for the L2. This social need is highly varied, however. (For example, it can derive from the desire for power and status, from the use of the L2 as a medium of instruction, from the importance learners attach to achieving social cohesion, or from the 'gaming' that takes place in peer groups.)

4.Target norms—success in L2 learning cannot always be measured in terms of a set of norms based on a standard form of the language. Learners may be targeted on a nativized variety of the language or on a local dialect. There may a conflict between the norms the students are targeted on and the norms the educational setting promotes.

5. Initial learning—initial L2 learning is more successful if learners have the opportunity to learn within an L1 speaking group (as opposed to a context where they are immersed in a group of native speakers).

Notes

1. This discussion of roles focuses on the interactional roles adopted by teachers and learners in the classroom. Such roles reflect the status of the participants as teachers and students. They reflect the positions which educational institutions expect them to adopt. These are socially and culturally determined. This may be why teachers in some African and Asian countries seem to find it especially difficult to abandon the traditional role of 'knower'.

2. Contrary to Cummins' claim, there is also some evidence that BICS is interdependent. Verhoeven (1991) showed that children's ability to produce context-embedded language in an L2 matches their ability to do so in their L1.

3. Hammerley's attack on the Canadian French immersion programmes has come in for considerable criticism. Collier (1992, p. 87), for example, characterizes his 1989 book as an 'emotional, polemical, one-sided account of his personal views … with scant research evidence cited to undergird his opinions'.

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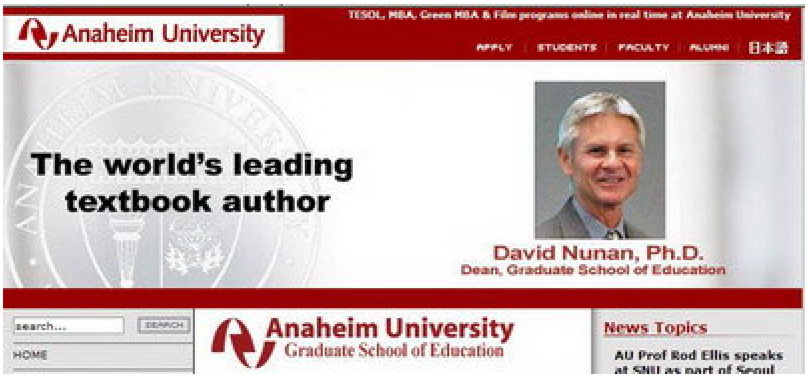

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