CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching:
Selected Papers
Volume 2, 2006

Table of Contents

Foreword

Selected Papers

About CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching: *Selected Papers*

Foreword

With the rapid growth of the economy and human resources development in Cambodia, English is fast becoming adopted as the primary medium of communication. In recent years, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of English learning institutions and centers, which have been expanding throughout the country. This remarkable increase in number leads to the challenges of supporting and promoting good practice in English teaching and learning, including evaluating and incorporating new innovations in the field such as recent trends towards student-centered learning). CamTESOL was introduced by key English institutes, centers, and schools in Phnom Penh and has continued to play a very important role in supporting English instructors and English school managers both locally and internationally, who are interested and enthusiastically involved in the development and improvement of English teaching and learning.

The 2nd CamTESOL conference held at Pannasastra University of Cambodia focused on the theme of "Improving the Practice" and included a large number of presentations promoting innovations to English Language teaching. The CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching: Selected Papers, Volume 2, 2006, contains four papers that were considered to offer outstanding insight to improving English Language Teaching practice at the student, teacher/classroom and school management level.

Aimed at improving practice at the student level, the first paper by Keuk Chan Narith and Tith Mab is titled "Learners' attitudes towards strategies for teaching literature at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, Institute of Foreign Languages: A Case Study." This paper explores the impact on the learning of students of their attitudes towards reading literary texts.

At the teaching level, the paper by Stephen Moore and Suksiri Bounchan, entitled "Teaching, Testing and Researching: 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly' dimensions of ELT?" argues that teaching, testing and researching are closely linked. When they are successfully integrated in the classroom, each can inform and provide opportunities to improve the others.

The third paper, "Utilizing a Communicative Teaching Approach: Increasing Communicative Opportunities through Pair and Project Work" by Ingita Panda and Richmond Stroupe also contributes to improving practice at the teaching level. The authors review some of the challenges to implementing student-centered communicative language teaching in the classroom and offer suggestions as to how to utilize pair and project work successfully.

The final paper in this series explores ways of improving the practice at a management level. "ESL Management Meetings: Workplace Role as a Factor in Meeting Discourse" by Andrew Foley analyzes the discourse of management meetings at a language school to identify whether workplace roles as well as cultural factors influence participation in the management process. Foley also offers suggestions to managers in multicultural settings.

On behalf of the CamTESOL steering committee and the host institution of the 2nd CamTESOL, I would like to express my appreciation to all the speakers for their insightful presentations, especially for the presentation topics selected for this volume, and also to participants locally and internationally for their attention and ideas shared during CamTESOL.

Finally, our sincerest gratitude goes to all the other supporters, too many to name, who took part in making this CamTESOL possible.

Kieng Rotana

Pannasastra University of Cambodia

Editor-in-Chief

Learners' Attitudes towards Strategies for Teaching Literature at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, Institute of Foreign Languages: A Case Study

Keuk Chan Narith
Institute of Foreign Languages, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia
< keukrith@yahoo.com>

Tith Mab
Institute of Foreign Languages, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia
< mabtith@hotmail.com>

Abstract

Literature Studies is one of the core subjects at the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL), at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. In this paper, the authors will examine learners' attitudes towards reading literary texts, and teaching strategies introduced to learners. This case study employs questionnaires, reflections, and observations in the classrooms. The authors will finally suggest some strategies for teaching literature in the EFL context in Cambodia.

Introduction

Aiming to teach students English language through literature or literary texts, the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL), at the Royal University of Phnom Penh decided to include the subject of Literature Studies in the curriculum for the undergraduate program. IFL instructors utilized various teaching techniques and activities used in general English language classrooms. These activities vary from very objective tasks to freer tasks. However, tasks we design for Literature Studies aim to help our learners read closely and analyze language elements used so that they could capture the overall meanings of texts.

In the present environment of Cambodian EFL classrooms, most of the activities we have prepared aim to focus learners on reading texts line by line to find answers to questions asked in handouts. We believe that this will encourage them to read the stories required. Most of the tasks require them to work within the texts – on the level of comprehension. Based on our observations, some learners, instead of enjoying reading texts, feel threatened during the Literature Studies sessions as they fail to remember the detailed information in the stories. This, to some extent, is due to the fact that we may treat the literary texts we have selected as a springboard to teaching English language rather than enabling our students to understand the meanings from what they have read and completed in the classroom.

Mckay (1986) examines the important role of literature in language classrooms and suggests that

through the study of literature, linguistic knowledge on both usage and use levels can be developed. She argues that if the students read literary texts with joy, they will be highly motivated to interact with the texts, and henceforth, they will develop their reading proficiency and will also achieve their academic or occupational goals. The questions asked here are how much our learners enjoy reading literary texts and to what extent our students are able to analyze the texts with which they are interacting.

Carter and Long (1991) illustrate some activities that so far have been used in EFL English language classrooms. These activities include jigsaw reading, matching, gap-filling, reading aloud, and paraphrasing. They also suggest some activities such as analyzing metaphor, guided rewriting, and stylistics for advanced learners. These activities aim to encourage the students to closely read the literary texts with which they are engaged.

Short (1996) argues that, for enthusiastic beginning students, who may lack the experience or sophistication of more mature readers, the use of stylistic analysis is an effective strategy to understand the meaning of a text, even without detailed linguistic understanding. According to Short, the goal of the analyses of the language elements used in the texts are not to learn the meaning of the lexical items or grammar structures of the language, but instead, such activities are to encourage learners to make meanings of the texts as a whole by drawing a conclusion after analyzing the language elements in the texts. This leads them to explore the authentic use of language in the real world, as Mckay (1986) points out:

> Literature presents language in discourse in which the parameters of the setting and role relationship are defined. Language illustrates a particular register or dialect embedded within a social context, and thus there is a basis for determining why a particular form is used. As such, literature is ideal for developing an awareness of language use. (pp. 191-198)

In addition to analyzing the language elements used in the stories so that learners can draw on meanings of texts, there are other opportunities for learners to determine meanings of texts. They may be guided to work closely with texts to order to analyze textual evidence or elements so that they will be able to interpret the overall or universal meanings of texts. Tyson (1999) illustrates formal elements such as images, symbols, metaphors, similes, rhyme, meter, point of view, setting, characterization, plot and so on, which could be analyzed to grasp the meaning(s) of texts.

To facilitate learners' comprehension and interpretation of texts, Wallace (1993) suggests a framework for classroom procedures. The framework is divided into three phases: pre-reading activities, while-reading activities, and post-reading activities. In the first phase, learners' schematic knowledge and systemic knowledge are activated. Learners are prepared to discuss some historical facts of the texts they are going to read, and in addition, complete exercises of some difficult lexical items. This will motivate learners to be more involved in the learning processes, and enhance their understanding of the text. The second phase allows learners to work closely with the text and comprehend the meaning. Learners may comprehend the texts well if they are familiar with the content and context of texts (Widdowson, 2001). Finally, the third phase of the procedure allows learners to work beyond the text independently. Learners will utilize higher order critical thinking skills through oral or writing activities, allowing their voice to be heard through their reflections.

Wallace (1993) provides a critical thinking skills model by encouraging learners to ask their own questions, and propose their own statements or hypotheses. The learners work with texts with their own questions and statements more effectively than they would with their teachers' questions. Through the critical approach, learners do not solely find answers to ready made questions and problems but raise further questions in the course of the reading. Moreover, learners should be given more opportunities to explore how the same texts would be organized if they were written by different authors, at different times, or in different settings.

This provides learners with a class-based activity which can help them understand how context and content are determined based on the society in which they exist.

Based on the points outlined here, various strategies were developed and employed in the English language in Literature Studies program at IFL. This paper aims to explore learners' attitudes towards reading literary texts, and learners' attitudes towards teaching strategies the authors have applied. Based on the findings in the study, the authors will also suggest some effective strategies for promoting learners' interests and motivation in Cambodian EFL classrooms.

Method and research tools

The research was conducted in the form of a classroom case study. It took almost one semester (18 weeks) to practice the strategies and collect feedback from the subjects. The case study started in late September 2006 and ended in late January 2007. The authors explored the subjects' attitudes towards reading literary texts (in general) and observed the subjects' attitude to the strategies that were introduced in the classrooms. Classroom observations and questionnaires were used for data collection. Two sets of questionnaires were distributed to collect data on learners' attitudes towards reading literary texts and strategies of teaching literature in the EFL context. One questionnaire was conducted before the subjects started the course, and the other was filled in after the subjects finished four short stories.

The subjects were presented with some teaching and learning activities used by EFL learners in a language classroom. The authors employed other approaches through which the participants were involved in analyzing language elements for images, symbols, and themes. Some models of handouts are presented in Appendix 1.

In addition, in the handouts prepared by the teachers, Wallace's framework – pre-reading activities, while-reading activities, and post-reading activities – is used. In addition to practice on promoting systemic knowledge using some techniques for language classrooms, a stylistic approach (including skills in analyzing linguistic elements to unfold images, symbols, and themes of the texts) was also provided to the subjects. Moreover, the subjects were also asked to create their own statements or hypotheses about the texts they were going to read.

Participants

The authors selected their own students for this case study. The study was done with 116 second year adult EFL college students at the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL), Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The participants were divided into 4 classes, one class of 31 students, one class of 30 students, one class of 28 students and one class of 27 students. The regular teaching time for the subject is three hours per week and is divided into two sessions. The study was done within the Literature Studies 201 course, which is first introduced to students at this level. In this syllabus, four short stories and one novel are covered: *The Hitch-hiker* by Ronald Dahl; *Poison* by Ronald Dahl; *The Happy Prince* by Oscar Wilde; and, *The Rain Came* by Grace A. Got

Data analyses
Exploring Learners' Attitude to Reading Literary Texts: Questionnaire 1

In the first survey, only 88 of 116 responded questionnaires were valid, so 28 questionnaires were discarded (on the basis of vagueness and incompletion). In the second survey, among 116 responded questionnaires only 81 questionnaires were valid, while 35 were discarded from the data analysis.

Eighty-eight, among which 57.95% and 42.05% are male and female learners respectively, questionnaires were included. The majority of the subjects (90.91%) are between the ages of 18 to 25. These students study in morning and evening classes, representing 60.23% and 39.77% respectively. Just over 67% of the subjects have learned English for three to five years, while 15.91% of them have learned English for one to two years and another 15.91% have learnt English since their childhood. Moreover, their experiences in reading books range from less than 100 pages, from

100 to 500 pages, and 600 to 1000 pages, corresponding to 35.23%, 48.86%, and 15.91%, respectively. The majority of the subjects, 84.09%, have not read much in English, less than 500 pages. The subjects ranked the materials they liked to reading from 1 to 5, with 1 equivalent to least preferred, 5 to most preferred (Table 1). The favorite material of the subjects is *short stories,* which accounted for 39.77% of the total group. The second favorite material they read is *English songs* (26.14%).

Table 1.   Preferred Reading Materials

	1	2	3	4	5
English songs	7.95%	6.82%	29.55%	29.55%	26.14%
Poems	22.73%	28.41%	29.55%	12.50%	6.82%
Short stories	1.14%	7.95%	23.86%	27.27%	39.77%
Novellas	10.23%	22.73%	29.55%	29.55%	7.95%
Novels	10.23%	17.05%	28.41%	31.82%	12.50%
Plays	11.36%	18.18%	36.36%	19.32%	13.64%
Dramas	19.32%	31.82%	30.68%	7.95%	10.23%

Another set of questions asked students on what skills they focused in order to comprehend the text they read. Most of the subjects (63.23%) focus on the *meanings of texts* they are reading. The second most common focal point is *vocabulary items* (29.55%). While over 50% of the subjects focus on problem solving in the texts and relevant information to their real lives, the subjects ranked grammar structures and the author background as the least important focal points.

The questionnaire also asked students about the reading strategies they employ when they read. While they are reading stories or texts, the subjects would not stop to check words they do not know in their dictionaries (Table 2). They would try to understand their meanings by reading several sentences to guess the meanings in context. They would then look for anyone they could to ask for more explanation if they could not understand the meanings. Most of the subjects may not question grammar rules used to construct sentences in the texts they are reading. On average, the subjects under investigation predict what might happen in the stories. However, the subjects would not read texts for pleasure. As seen in Table 2, 53.41% of the subjects do not read English materials for pleasure. They may not enjoy reading English texts much; they may read only for academic purposes, which means that they may have employed reading strategies in intensive reading practices only in EFL class activities.

Table 2.   Reading Behaviors

	Yes	No
Do you stop to check up words you don't know when you are reading?	21.59%	78.41%
Do you ask someone you can reach for the explanation of the meaning of words you don't know?	57.95%	42.05%
Do you try to understand the meaning of words you don't know by reading sentences around them for meanings?	93.18%	6.82%
Do you question about grammar rules used to construct sentences in the texts you are reading?	43.18%	56.82%
Do you predict what happens in the story when you read it?	61.36%	38.64%
Do you just read the texts for pleasure?	46.59%	53.41%

Learners' attitude to strategies teaching literature at IFL: Questionnaire 2

As mentioned earlier, the subjects were taught strategies, including skills for use in EFL language classrooms and approaches to reading literature. This second questionnaire was conducted after the subjects completed the tasks and received instruction in the classes in Literature Studies at the IFL.

One hundred and sixteen questionnaires were distributed to the subjects in the classroom after they finished four short stories. Eighty-one questionnaires were valid, while the rest were invalid due to being incomplete and vague.

Of the respondents, 81.48% considered the texts for the course difficult and they had difficulty with understanding the texts, compared to 18.52% of the respondents who indicated that they did not have any difficulty with understanding. Moreover, 65.43% and 48.15% of the subjects who had difficulty with the reading texts revealed that they had difficulty with vocabulary items and the knowledge of literature, respectively, while they were reading and interpreting those texts. When asked what they would do to deal with such difficulties, a number of subjects checked those vocabulary items in their dictionaries (48.15%), while others waited for their teacher's explanation (56.79%). This demonstrates that most EFL learners in this context not only need to learn strategies for reading literary texts and knowledge of literature, but they also need to learn the systemic knowledge of the language. However, in this context, this learning may not take place without reinforcement by teachers. This is partly due to the fact that when students are first exposed to literature studies, they may not initially adapt the learning strategies. Most students in this context do not see themselves as autonomous learners.

Finally, the subjects were asked to indicate their most preferred activities used in the teaching of literature provided in the course (Table 3). The respondents indicated the most preferred activity was 'analyzing linguistic elements for interpreting images, symbols and themes of the stories', which accounts for 40% of the respondents. 'Questions and Answers' is the second most preferred activity, while 'prediction', 'guessing words in context', and 'pre-reading activities' were not commonly preferred.

Table 3:   Learners' Preferences for Teaching Activities

Pre-reading activities	17%
Prediction	28%
Guessing new words in context	26%
Questions and answers	28%
Analyzing language elements to interpret images, symbols, and theme	40%

That the subjects in the study did not enjoy pre-reading tasks may be due to the fact that they already had the texts as compiled by the IFL and some of them had read the texts before they started working on the stories in the classroom. As a result, the 'pre-reading' activities were in fact not as useful, since the students may have already read the materials and would not need to 'anticipate' what would occur in the text. Therefore, the subjects would prefer the questions and answers and analyzing linguistic elements activities as these activities would seem new and interesting.

Discussion

Overall, the subjects are interested in 'analyzing linguistic elements or textual evidence used in the texts they are reading to draw possible meanings of the texts. They need to achieve both systemic knowledge of English language and knowledge of literature. This indicates that EFL learners need exposure to language learning in conjunction with literature. The literary texts should not be displayed as a springboard for EFL learners to learn English language per se. In other words, the activities prepared for learners in Literature Studies sessions should not end with only the focus on linguistic

semantics (language and its meanings). Learners should go beyond this level of focus. It will be better if learners are guided in analyzing linguistic elements to draw overall meanings of texts. Stylistic approach and formalism to teaching literature in the EFL learning context, if applied carefully, will expose learners to the use of English language in real world contexts. Consequently, learners' comprehension and interpretation of texts will be enhanced and promoted.

As analyzing linguistic elements to grasp the overall meanings of text draws the learners' interest in the learning process, this may also help them solve their linguistic difficulties. The subjects in the current study indicated that they also have a problem with the knowledge of literature. In some cases, the analyses of formal elements or textual evidence of texts may be insufficient for learners to draw overall meaning(s) of texts. They may need other sources of key knowledge as tools for interpreting the theme of texts. According to Tyson (1999), teachers should help learners read against the grain. They should provide their learners with some critical theories, which serve as tools for the critical reading of texts. These critical theories could range from Psychoanalytic, Marxism, Feminism, Formalism, Structuralism, Deconstruct, New Historical and Cultural, Post-colonial criticisms and others. More significantly, learners bring different schematic knowledge and background into literature classrooms (Pefianco & Wright, 1991), which lead to a variety of sources of information for interpretation. In other words, the texts the learners are reading are viewed through different literary lens or canons.

Learners should be more exposed to and encouraged to promote their awareness of socio-cultural and historical knowledge or, in other words, schematic knowledge of the world, which can assist them in understanding the meanings of texts. As Widdowson (2001) demonstrates, if learners have little schematic knowledge about the topics with which they are working, they will only rely on themselves to analyze linguistic or systemic features in order to understand the meanings of the texts they are reading. In contrast, if learners have rich schematic knowledge about the topic with which

they are working, they may be less dependent on the analyses of the linguistic features.

EFL learners, to some extent, are not trained to be critical thinkers. One way to encourage students to think critically is to have them create their own statements or form their own hypotheses about the texts before they read. However, in the current study, it was clear that almost no students were able to create their own statements or form any hypotheses about the texts they were going to read. Only a few students could write some questions. The others felt uncomfortable and reluctant to do this activity before they were allowed to read the texts. This may be due to their past experience and practice, which focused on waiting for ready-made questions and materials.

As mentioned earlier, the subjects in this study do not have experience in reading literary texts for pleasure. While they are reading texts, they may be seeking the understanding of the systemic knowledge of the language rather than textual meanings. This also indicates that the selection of texts may be inappropriate. The level of texts selected may be too high. As Mckay (1986) suggests, "The key to success in using literature in the ESL class seems to rest in the literary works that are selected. A text which is extremely difficult on either a linguistic or cultural level will have few benefits" (pp. 191-198).

To further expand the current research and to gain more insight into learners' attitude towards strategies for teaching literature as found in this study, consideration should be given to investigating whether employing a stylistic approach or formalism, as it promotes learners' interest in teaching strategies, would promote learners' learning. Further research could also emphasize the training of using some certain literary criticisms for the EFL learners as tools for interpreting meaning(s) of texts and investigate whether such literary criticisms will also promote learners' interest in reading such texts.

Conclusion

Literary texts should not be used as a springboard for EFL learners to learn only the English language. Any lesson plan, which is designed to promote learners' critical thinking, should not stop at the focus on language as an end in itself. Students should be trained to create their own questions, own statements or hypotheses about the texts they are reading. They should be guided into higher level activities which require critical thinking skills so that they are able to gain both systematic knowledge of the language and meanings interpreted. Gradually done, learners will become more critical readers in literature classrooms in EFL contexts, and potentially more autonomous. Additionally, they may enjoy learning more about literature.

Keuk Chan Narith works at the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL) Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) as coordinator of Literature Studies and lecturer of Applied Linguistics and Teaching Methodology. He holds a Graduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics from RELC-SEAMEO, Singapore, 2000 and an MA in English Language and Literature Teaching from Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines, 2006.

Tith Mab is the Deputy Head of English Department at the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL) Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP). He received his MEd in Teaching Studies in 1999 from the University of Sydney, Australia and a Higher Graduate Diploma in Higher Education Management from Chulalongkorn University, Thailand in 2002.

References

Carter, R. & Long, M. (1991). *Teaching Literature*. London: Longman.

Mckay, S. (1986). Literature in ESL classroom. In C. Brumfit & R. Carter (Eds.), *Literature and Language Teaching* (pp. 191 – 198). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pefianco, I. & Wright, T. (1991). *Making Lit a Hit*. Quezon City, The Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University, Office of Research and Publications.

Short, M. (1996). Stylistics 'upside down': Using stylistic analysis in the teaching of language and literature. In R. Carter & J. McRae (Eds.). *Language, literature and the learner: Creative classroom practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Addison Wesley Publishing Company.

Tyson, L. (1999). *Critical Theory Today. A User – Friendly Guide*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.

Wallace, C. (1993). *Reading.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Widdowson, G. H. (2001). *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford University Press.

Appendix 1: Sample materials

THE HITCH-HIKER
By Ronald Dahl

Pre-Reading

Discuss the following questions before you read the story.

1. Why do you think people hitch-hike?

2. Do you think hitch-hikers are usually successful in their hitch-hiking? Give reasons.

3. Where is hitch-hiking commonly practiced?

4. The following is the exercise focusing on vocabulary items selected from the story. Locate those words in the story and identify their meaning in context. The numbers in the brackets show the numbers of pages in the story.

Definitions
(Examples from a total of 30 items)
a. The rate at which a vehicle increases speed. (1)
b. To make a low sound in the throat, usually as a sign of anger. (1)
c. To make a short low sound in your throat, esp. to show that you are in pain, annoyed or not interest. (1)
d. To make a low continuous sound, esp. when a car engine is in an average speed. (1)
……

i.   To risk a sum of money on the result of a race, contest, etc. (2)
j.   Well-supplied. (2)
k.   Gullible persons (2)
l.   Busybody (2)
m.   Worthless (2)
……
n.   In two parts (3)
o.   To loosen (3)
p.   Showing silent emotion (4)
q.   To make oneself in trouble (4)

5. Read the description of the hitch-hiker's appearance. Discuss what sort of person he is, and predict what might happen to the driver of the car.

While-reading

Read the story, The Hitch-hiker, and answer the following questions.

1.   Describe the car owned by the narrator of the story.

2.   According to the narrator, not all drivers would offer a hitch-hiker a lift. Which driver, driving which type of car would offer a hitch-hiker a lift and which would not? What do you think would be the reasons for this?

3.   Compare the two characters: the driver and the hitch-hiker. Use the following guideline for your comparison: appearance, personality, acts, and speech.

4.   The car was stopped by the police. How did the police deal with the driving which was over speed limit?

5.   The story has proved that the hitch-hiker is really a 'fingersmith'. The word was coined by the hitch-hiker himself. Quote the example from the text which explains his ability.

6.   After realizing all the facts and agreeing that the hitch-hiker was really a 'fingersmith', what did the driver think of the reason(s) why the hitch-hiker went to the horse race if he would not bet?

7.   How did the hitch-hiker reassure the driver about his reason(s) for going to the horse race? What is your view toward this act of the hitch-hiker?

More critical practice (Post-reading)

1.   Ronald Dahl, the writer of the story, wrote a happy ending to the story. Describe this happy-ending and describe your opinion about this happy ending.

2.   The writer of the story, and perhaps most people as well, referred to the car as "SHE" and "HER", not as "HE" and "HIM". What is your viewpoint about the use of such pronoun? Why are they used? What do they mean? Give reasons.

3.   *Symbols and Theme*
      The text provides us with some symbols from which we can form the theme of the story. Work with your group members to draw at least THREE of the themes of the story from the following symbols.

      a. the car
      b. the driver
      c. the hitch-hiker
      d. the horse race
      e. the police
      f. the burning of the notebooks
      g. the use of the pronoun 'she' and 'her' to refer to the car

Teaching, Testing and Researching: 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly' Dimensions of ELT?

Stephen H Moore
Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia
<stephen.moore@ling.mq.edu.au>

Suksiri Bounchan
Institute of Foreign Languages, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia
<sbounchan@yahoo.com.au>

Abstract
This paper explores the relationships between and among English language teaching, testing and researching. Teaching is often viewed as the 'fun' part of ELT; testing as a 'necessary burden'. Researching, on the other hand, is usually seen as beyond the teacher's domain and, therefore, an 'unwelcome intrusion' in the classroom. Good teaching nurtures learning and good testing provides useful feedback on that learning. Good researching improves both teaching and testing. Thus are good teaching, testing and researching inextricably linked. This paper probes the discontent that many teachers feel about language testing and research, and suggests that disinterest in either domain can have detrimental consequences for language learning. Testing that generates positive washback and classroom-based action research that leads to informed teacher intervention are highlighted as two critical links in the teaching, testing and researching 'model' and, indeed, as 'good practice' in ELT whatever the international setting.

Introduction
While teaching and testing (or assessing) are activities that are central to the work of language teachers, it is harder to make the claim that research should also play a significant part in the work of language teachers. Indeed, the authors' own views on the relevance of research to language teachers have evolved over the years, in step with the context of their own work: initially as language teachers they were largely disinterested in research; as postgraduate students they became more interested; and now as university lecturers, the authors are committed to promoting the benefits of research to language teaching professionals (see, for example, Moore, 2007). This paper has been written with a view to de-stigmatizing the commonly held perception of 'research' in language teaching circles, and clarifying how research can complement teaching and testing.

Teaching, testing and researching: The stereotypical views
Although some readers might disagree with the following profile, based on the authors' decades of involvement with English language teaching in many different cultural contexts, we perceive a stereotypical language teacher to be one for whom teaching is fun; testing is burdensome; and researching is a luxury 'extra'. This typical teacher enjoys teaching, tolerates testing but avoids researching. Moreover, we believe that this profile would be typical of perhaps the majority of teachers

in many language-teaching settings, including in Cambodia. Complementing this profile are the perceptions of language learning students. Again, based on the authors' experience, students are likely to view teaching as stimulating (or boring); testing as fear-inducing; and researching as irrelevant. Not coincidentally, these student perspectives can be seen to echo the teachers' sentiments, and this suggests that how teachers' attitudes are perceived by students might have a significant impact on the development of students' own attitudes about language classroom experiences.

It is worthwhile exploring further what factors may be reinforcing these perspectives about teaching, testing and research. Knowing what they are could provide the key to unlocking their constraints on teachers' professional practices.

Reasons why testing and researching are not popular with language teachers

Let us first consider language testing. There are many reasons why language teachers may not like **testing**. Among the most common would be the following:

- It is difficult and time-consuming to design good language tests or assessments (i.e., balancing issues of validity, reliability and practicality).
- Marking tests can be very time consuming.
- Testing may be viewed as an imposition on teachers, especially if it is perceived as excessive and detracting from quality teaching time.
- Testing requires training and a commitment to continuous professional development to maintain good standards. It is not something that is simply learned once and then known forever.
- Testing may not be inherently interesting for many teachers, and it may be easy to defer an institution's testing responsibilities to one or two teachers who *are* interested in it.
- Quantitative and statistical techniques used in test analysis may frighten or confuse teachers.

- Teachers may have pre-conceived ideas of a normal distribution (i.e., 'bell curve') for their student cohort and not see the need to bother with formal testing.
- Test results may be overruled by management (e.g., management may not allow a student to fail), and this can be very de-motivating for a teacher who wants to design good and fair tests.
- Good testing practices might not be recognized by the institution and therefore the institutional rewards for good testing may not be distinguishable from the rewards for bad testing.
- Students who are unhappy with test results can be difficult to handle and/or can create problems for the teacher.
- Teacher-created tests pose risks to the teacher. For example, teachers may lose face if a student can identify a poor question and publicly challenge the teacher about it.

The combination and accumulation of these various factors constitute a considerable barrier to be overcome. It is no surprise therefore that testing is not popular among language teachers.

As with language testing, there are many reasons why a language teacher may not be interested in **researching**. Among the most common reasons would be the following:

- It may be difficult for teachers to see the relationship between research and actual ELT classrooms. Many teachers are happy enough with their status quo. For them, research may be seen as largely irrelevant, or an unnecessary 'luxury'.
- There may be very limited access to relevant research literature. Indeed, it may be too difficult to learn about research.
- Research, especially when it involves statistics, may be impenetrable to the majority of language teachers. Moreover, these teachers might question the validity of using quantitative techniques to measure educational outcomes.
- There may be no 'voice of authority' in the workplace that values and promotes

- research. This means there may be no 'culture of research' possible.
- There may be no obvious reward at the workplace for being interested in research. Any time spent on research may be seen by colleagues as 'wasteful'.
- There may be no time to conduct research or to read about it. Any interest in research that does exist cannot be nurtured.

These various factors influencing negative perspectives on testing and researching may make change difficult but certainly do not make it impossible. Indeed, many language teachers *do* 'go against the flow' and get involved in testing and research. Institutions can support these teachers and encourage others through the provision of professional development (PD) programs that address the various needs of professional language teachers (Bartels, 2005). Within a quality PD program, the positive benefits of developing knowledge and skills related to testing and

researching can be systematically presented and reinforced.

Teaching, testing and researching: Shifting the paradigm

Why should teaching be perceived as 'good', testing as 'bad' and research as 'ugly'? A reconfiguration of these settings might be helpful in challenging stereotypes and therefore in changing teacher perceptions and attitudes. Indeed, the title of this paper questions the view that teaching is necessarily 'good', testing is 'bad' and that researching is 'ugly' (i.e., *worse* than 'bad). Let us consider, therefore, in what way testing and researching could be seen as 'good'. Likewise, let us consider more critically the notion of 'bad' teaching and, indeed, the worst case scenario (i.e., the 'ugly') for all three domains. Table 1 provides some suggestions in response to these questions and challenges.

Table 1.   Reinterpreting Teaching, Testing and Researching

	Teaching	Testing	Researching
Good → Teacher satisfaction	-students participate and learn language; -teacher learns about teaching	-fairness of assessment; -positive washback; -diagnostic value for teaching	-taking valid action to address a significant issue; -useful feedback; -professional development for teaching
Bad → Teacher frustration	-students don't participate or learn; -teacher doesn't learn about teaching	-unfair assessment; -negative washback; -no value for teaching	-taking invalid action to address a significant issue; -useless feedback; -no professional development for teaching
Ugly → Teacher failure	-classroom chaos → harmful teaching	-'good' students fail; 'weak' students pass → harmful assessment	-'wrong' interpretation of results → harmful research

What Table 1 shows overall is that good teaching, testing and researching underlie teacher 'satisfaction'; whereas bad teaching, testing and researching result in teacher 'frustration'. 'Ugly' teaching, testing and researching would mean, quite simply, teacher 'failure'. Within Table 1, there are clear parallels (i.e., mirror images) reflected between the criteria of good and bad teaching, testing and researching; while the 'ugly' dimension can be seen as extending beyond 'bad' to 'harmful'

in each of these domains. What does this configuration of teaching, testing and researching suggest about how teachers' practices might actively avoid falling within the undesirable categories of 'bad' or 'ugly'?

There are many books available on language teaching methodology that deal quite effectively with 'best practice' in the teaching domain (see for example, Larsen-Freeman 1986; Ur 1991; Nunan

2000; Harmer 2001), and teachers do seem able and willing to read them and learn from them. However, in the domains of testing and researching, teachers are more reticent or even reluctant to pursue paths which could assist their performance as effective language teachers. Also, there seem to be fewer 'user-friendly' books to guide teachers in their quest for self-improvement, although Hughes (2003) and Brown (2005) are both highly accessible accounts of language testing and assessment for teachers, and Nunan (1992) likewise provides a clear teacher-friendly account of research methods in language teaching. In what follows we shall focus only on the testing and researching domains and, with a view to the Cambodian ELT context, briefly make one strong recommendation for each of them.

Positive washback: A focus for testing

As shown in Table 1, one feature of good testing is that it provides positive washback (or 'backwash') on teaching and learning. As Hughes notes, "backwash is the effect that tests have on learning and teaching….[It] is now seen as a part of the impact a test may have on learners and teachers, on educational systems in general, and on society at large" (Hughes, 2003, p. 53). Teachers can create conditions for positive washback in their testing practices by following the suggestions provided by Hughes (2003, pp. 53-55):

- Test the abilities whose development you want to encourage.
- Sample widely and unpredictably.
- Use direct testing.
- Make testing criterion-referenced.
- Base achievement tests on objectives.

- Ensure the test is known and understood by students and teachers.

Washback has also been the subject of a significant number of research studies (see, for example, Cheng et al., 2004), which have attempted to measure its impact, but with mixed results. Washback appears to be a simple notion in theory, but it turns out to be a complex issue to investigate in practice (see Alderson and Wall, 1993). Nevertheless, implementing Hughes' suggestions identified above will help toward generating a positive impact on language teaching and learning; Cambodian teachers should embrace them.

Action research:
A focus for researching

While much of language-related research can seem impenetrable and far-removed from classroom reality and needs, there is one kind of research which is particularly well-suited to educational environments: action research. Action research in language education is typically a classroom-based research involving an iterative cycle of observation, planning, intervention and evaluation (see Figure 1). It can lead to improved teaching (and learning) through facilitating appropriate interventions in classroom practices (Burns, 1999; Wallace, 1998). There are many published accounts of this sort of research, often depicted as "teachers' voices", which show how informed interventions have improved the quality of the language learning and teaching experience in specific classroom settings. Interestingly, Watanabe (2004) also recommends action research as an appropriate method for investigating washback in language testing.

Figure 1   Action Research 'Cycle'
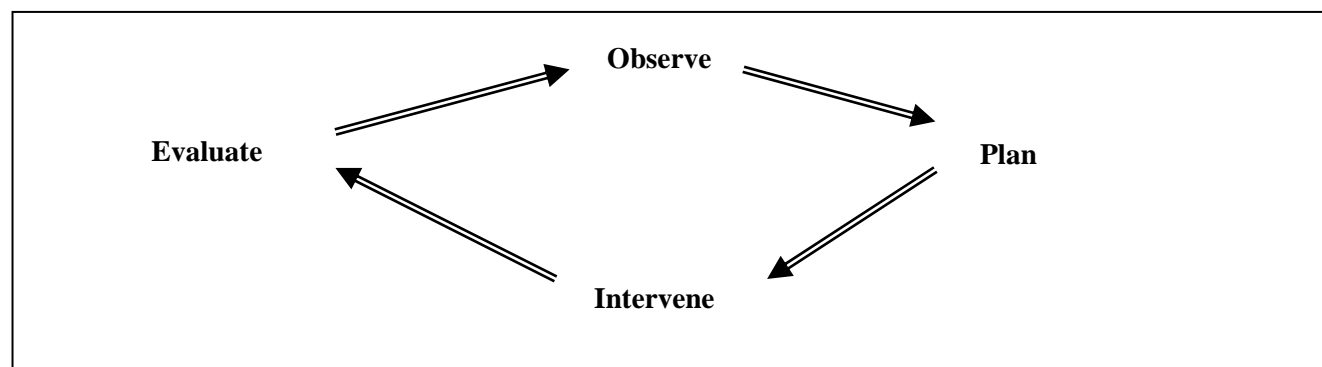
Action research is highly appropriate to the Cambodian ELT environment (Moore, 2006) and Cambodian teachers who adopt it will stand to reap considerable benefits not only in terms of their teaching but also in terms of their students' learning. Let us briefly consider four possible action research projects that could be investigated in Cambodian language classrooms.

1. Classroom management: A teacher might notice that students sitting at the back of the classroom do not fully participate in lessons and tend to disturb other students. An action research study could be conducted in which the teacher investigates the effect of giving task instructions from a position in the centre of the classroom rather than from the front. This could enable students who sit at the back to more clearly hear the instructions and, along with the proximity of the teacher, help encourage these students to get 'on task' rather than talk and disturb other students.

2. Teacher-student interactions: A teacher might notice that during group-work tasks, some groups are much more active than others. An action research study could involve the teacher creating specific groupings of students which are used repeatedly for an extended period of lessons. The groupings might involve combining a strong student, a weak student, and two students at an in-between proficiency level. Improvements in negotiating meaning among student members could be measured and thus the project could have implications for testing as well.

3. Teaching reading: A teacher might notice that students read too slowly in class and refer too frequently to dictionaries. An action research study could involve the teacher introducing a top-down approach to the reading of all texts used in class, and restrict access to dictionaries. Again, student progress could be measured and this project could link with language assessment.

4. Formative assessment: A teacher might notice that he/she has insufficient time to provide feedback to all students on their written work. An action research study could be designed which involved regular peer assessment of student writing. Students would of course need to be taught how to assess one another's writing, based on clear, formative criteria.

These four examples are just a few among dozens of potential action research projects that could be undertaken in Cambodian English language classrooms. They serve to illustrate how action research is a very useful type of research for language teachers to engage with.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to sketch out and simplify some aspects of the complex relationship linking language teaching, testing and researching. To summarize, good teaching is fundamental to nurturing good learning. Testing (or assessment) is equally important for the feedback it gives on learning (and teaching). Researching too has a distinctive and necessary role in improving teaching, testing and ultimately language learning.

Figure 2.   Research Informing Teaching and Testing
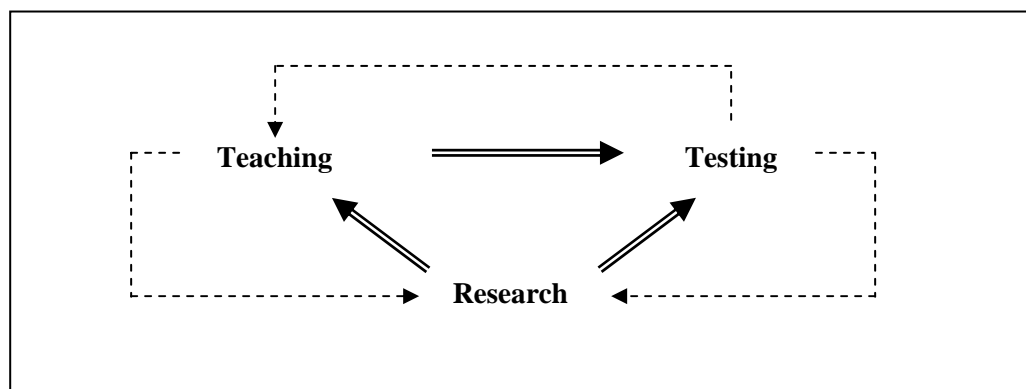
As shown in Figure 2, while teaching leads sequentially to testing; research findings can directly impact both teaching and testing. Moreover, while testing provides feedback to teaching, teaching and testing both provide feedback to research. Thus, these three dimensions of ELT are inextricably linked. Attention to any one of them should therefore involve consideration of the other two as well. A language teacher who aspires to be the *best* teacher he/she can be cannot afford to ignore the domains of testing and researching.

Stephen Moore is a Lecturer in Applied Linguistics at Macquarie University, Sydney. He has been involved in ELT in Cambodia since 1994, initially through English teaching and teacher education, and more recently through research. His research interests span TEFL in Asian contexts, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and language assessment.

Suksiri Bounchan is a Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Foreign Languages, Royal University of Phnom Penh. She has taught across the BEd (TEFL) curriculum, but specializes in Literature Studies. Her research interests include language teacher education, intercultural communication and gender studies.

References

Alderson, J. C. & Wall, D. (1993). Does washback exist? *Applied Linguistics 14*(2), 115-129.

Bartels, N. (Ed.) (2005). *Applied linguistics and language teacher education*. New York: Springer.

Brown, J. D. (2005). *Testing in language programs: A comprehensive guide to English language assessment* (Rev.ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Burns, A. (1999). *Collaborative action research for English language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cheng, L., Watanabe, Y. & Curtis, A. (Eds.). (2004). *Washback in language testing: research contexts and methods*. Mahwah, N. J.: Laurence Erlbaum & Associates.

Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching* (3rd ed.). London: Longman.

Hughes, A. (2003). *Testing for language teachers* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (1986). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moore, S. H. (2006, February). *Improving practice in Cambodian classrooms: A role for action research*. Workshop presentation at the CamTESOL Conference, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Moore, S. H. (2007). Linguistics, applied linguistics and research: The "Axis of Evil" for language teachers? *English Australia Journal 23*(2), 1-11.

Nunan, D. (1992). *Research methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. (2000). *Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers*. Edinburgh: Pearson Education.

Ur, P. (1991). *A course in language teaching: Practice and theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wallace, M. (1998). *Action research for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Watanabe, Y. (2004). Teacher factors mediating washback. In L. Cheng, Y. Watanabe & A. Curtis (Eds.), *Washback in language testing: research contexts and methods* (pp. 129-146). Mahwah, N. J.: Laurence Erlbaum & Associates.

Utilizing a Communicative Teaching Approach: Increasing Communicative Opportunities through Pair and Project Work

Ingita Panda
Soka University, Tokyo, Japan
<panda@soka.ac.jp>

Richmond Stroupe
Soka University, Tokyo, Japan
<richmond@soka.ac.jp>

Abstract
One goal of student-centered language instruction is to increase the communicative opportunities students have during any class session, particularly in large classes, using pair and group work. Communicative language teaching (CLT), which focuses on both the structural and functional characteristics of language learning (Littlewood, 1991), is an approach that is uniquely suited to aid in achieving this goal. Additionally, teachers can engage students throughout a course by using project work with groups, based on topics or issues of interest to students. Nevertheless, while a CLT approach to project based activities can be beneficial to learners, teachers may experience many challenges. This paper reviews the historical influences on the development of CLT, discusses the practical application of pair-work and group work in communicative English language learning curricula, and focuses on presenting guidelines and formats that can be adapted by teachers in various educational contexts.

Introduction
Language teaching, like many fields of study within education, has been influenced by numerous theories and has been guided by various pedagogical approaches. As new theories were espoused, others were 'discredited', new approaches fell out of favor, and 'traditional' theories were revisited, teachers continually made the best use of practices that suited their cultural, social and educational context. More recently, many language teachers have adopted a communicative language teaching (CLT) approach across varying cultural and educational settings. Therefore, it is important to understand the definition of CLT, some of the major influences in the development of CLT, and misconceptions of CLT.

What is CLT?
CLT originated from perspectives of various disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, philosophy and sociology. Its primary focus has been to expand and implement programs and methods that help develop the functional aspect of language use by encouraging and motivating learners to participate in different types of communicative activities in their classes. Savignon (1991) defined communication as "interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning" because it helped integrate competence in grammar forms with

pragmatics. In communicative classrooms, language learners are more active; they exchange information, transmit meanings and indulge in competent communication (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrell, 1997).

Savignon (1991) emphasizes that CLT helps in improving the communicative competence of learners. Unlike traditional teaching methods that are teacher centered, CLT is student led and leads to a general qualitative evaluation of learner achievement against a quantitative measurement of isolated linguistic features (Savignon, 1991, p.266). Communicative competence is defined as competence in three areas of language learning: grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competence. Grammatical competence implies acquiring knowledge of grammar rules and being competent in expressions, spelling and articulation. Strategic competence is being able to express oneself successfully in a conversation and overcoming any difficulties or challenges that may occur which may lead to communication breakdown. Strategic competence can be enhanced by developing skills such as using fillers, going off the point, paraphrasing and circumlocution. Communicative activities that focus on these three skills help learners build their confidence level, improve creative thinking skills and augment linguistic creativity (Dornyei & Thurrell, 1991).

Earlier forms of language teaching focused on helping students produce grammatically correct sentences. This approach promoted accuracy of form, but at the same time, gave rise to an approach that focused on translation (Saraceni, 2007). Linguists criticized this method because it failed to promote meaning, which is essential in improving fluency and effectiveness in speaking, and a precursor to effective communication skills (Saraceni, 2007). Since the 1960's, several linguists have commented on the social aspect of language learning. Hymes (1971) proposed the term communicative competence that defined language as a social behavior, which should be learned in a social context by observing sociolinguistic norms of behavior. Helt (1982) added that communicative competence was "the social rules of language use, the ability to receive, understand, and produce

suitable and comprehensible messages…." (p.256). Savignon (1999) reiterated that communicative competence is important for all language learners and requires an understanding of socio-cultural contexts in which language is used. In the past, learners have demonstrated an inability to communicate in a second language in spite of traditional classroom learning activities, thus indicating that focusing on form alone was inadequate in learning a language and that function is equally important (Fatt, 1991). This focus is related to the expectations of matriculated learners in work situations where they may be asked to make use of their second language abilities. Thus, increasing demands for learners creates the need for learners to be able to exchange their ideas and information, communicate their feelings, express themselves logically, and discuss the meanings of their utterances effectively (Savignon, 1987) Communication should enable learners to negotiate meanings effectively and efficiently. In today's businesses and job market, the importance of communication skills has increased tremendously. The scope of CLT in social context has expanded to all countries over the last four decades (Li, 1998).

Nunan (1991) points out that in recent years, CLT has grown in importance in language teaching methodology. CLT is important in process-oriented second language research and its purpose is to enable students to communicate in the target language (Yu, 2001). CLT methodology grew in popularity among language teachers when they realized that traditional teaching methods were unsatisfactory and inefficient in enhancing the communicative ability of the second language learner (Yu, 2001).

As CLT evolved, the role of the classroom teacher has changed as well. Unlike before, the role of language teacher is not only to transmit information, but also to enable students to communicate effectively. Practitioners soon began to devise new and innovative ways to assist students in the acquisition of communicative skills. For example, Widdowson (1990) observed that the 'natural' way of acquiring a language is slow and inefficient and the purpose of language teaching is to make this process fast and simple. He suggested that language

teachers needed to assist learners with communicative competence by providing them with frameworks, patterns and rules to develop their communicative language skills. Linguists such as Nattinger and De Carrico (1992) recommend the use of lexical phrases in language teaching, as they are pragmatic and functional and have a clearly defined role, so they guide the students in the flow of conversation and assist them in conveying meaning.

However, not all language educators agree with the emphasis on CLT through communicative competence. Eskey (1983) states that content and syllabi have always been an issue of disagreement among language teachers. According to Rivers (1981), teachers can be classified into two categories, namely formalists and activists. The first category, "formalists," focus on different forms present in a language such as phonemes, morphemes, sentences, nouns and verbs; and the second category "activists", view language as an activity that needs to be performed. Nonetheless, both formalists and activists view language learning as teaching learners about different ways of using language to convey meaning. Therefore, a syllabus for a language class should be designed depending on the goals of the course and the focus of teaching. If the focus of teaching is to prepare students to produce sentences with correct structures, then, the formalist approach is favored. However, if the goal is to enhance learners' communicative ability and enable them to express and discuss meaning, then, the activist approach is preferred. The activist approach emphasizes the need to communicate effectively (Hymes, 1972; Savignon 1972).

On the other hand, some linguistics, including Chomsky (1965), have advocated an approach to language learning that integrates the structural approach of the formalists, with the communicative ideology of the activists. Eskey (1983) has noted that, as language teachers, we should be concerned with developing both accuracy and fluency of our students, regardless of the approach that is taken. Littlewood (1991) also supports a wider perspective of language teaching when he argues that language should be considered not only by its structure, (grammar and vocabulary), but also by its

communicative functioning ability. As one linguistic form can convey different functions, in the same way, a single communicative function can be expressed using different linguistic forms. A sentence may have a stable and straightforward structure, but when used in a functional, communicative manner, it may be affected by numerous variables suggesting that speakers must pay special attention to both functional and structural aspects of language. Therefore, it is imperative to combine these two aspects of communication in the language-learning environment in order to facilitate the development of the communicative ability of learners (Littlewood, 1991).

Other scholars are critical of the CLT approach because it prioritizes function over form. There has been ongoing research in the field of language teaching about the importance of accuracy in communication. Eskey (1983) fears that learner's errors may become fossilized if they are not corrected when they make a mistake. Language educators who are activists admit that the communicative approach does not ensure structural accuracy, but they feel that it helps learners to acquire language forms much faster by engaging in realistic communicative functions. Learners may make errors in this process but it is part of the natural way of learning a new language.

Misconceptions related to CLT

CLT has grown extensively as a language practice in the last fifteen years. Though CLT is widely supported by applied linguists and broadly used by many language teachers as an effective teaching approach for language teaching, there are some misconceptions about the role of CLT, its purpose, components and approach:

CLT activities do not teach grammar

Thompson (1996) claims that the recent focus on CLT has led to discovering grammar through communicative activities rather than through explicit learning. A misconception regarding CLT is that grammar is not important and proponents of CLT favor learner self-expression without regard to form (Savignon, 1991). While communication is central in learning any foreign language, it requires

form for its implementation. Form is incomplete without suitable structure, grammar and assumptions that help learners to negotiate meanings with others. Hence, grammatical competence can be defined as a component of communicative competence.

Saraceni (2007) says that the role of grammar in language teaching is gaining importance once again after facing critical reviews from teachers. Grammar alone does not develop communicative skills; fluency and effectiveness play an important role too. Therefore, grammar should be included "within a methodological framework which continues to be primarily communicative" (p.2).

CLT means teaching only speaking
Thompson (1996) says that it is a misconception that CLT only includes activities that primarily involve speaking, listening, and expressing ones views to others. CLT activities include role-plays, pair-work, and information gap activities and focus on 'speaking'; however, communication is carried out not only through speech but also through writing and reading (Thompson, 1996). A more recent pedagogical focus emphasizes an 'all skills' approach or the integration of all skills within a series of activities.

CLT means pair-work, which means role-play
An important component of a CLT classroom is control. Communicative activities start from teacher-led and graduate towards student driven activities. Al-Arishi (1994) has documented the importance and benefit associated with role-playing activities. Al- Arishi states that "role-playing a near perfect ESOL affective domain tool provides or increases motivation, heightens self-esteem, encourages empathy and lowers sensitivity to rejection" (p.338). Even though role-playing activities are artificial in nature and necessitate learners to 'play' characters other than themselves, they remain useful tools for the CLT classroom.

CLT means expecting too much from the teacher
Many novice teachers feel that teachers who employ a CLT approach are expected to supervise all activities in the class constantly as opposed to traditional language teachers who generally dominate in the classroom (Thompson, 1996). Because of these misconceptions, non-native speaking teachers believe they may have to face unique challenges in a CLT classroom. However, recently developed CLT resources are teacher friendly and provide activities, which are explained explicitly and have clear rules and guidelines that focus on enhancing student communication in the classroom thereby lessening the demands placed on the teacher (Thompson, 1996).

Learner expectations of CLT classes
In a CLT classroom, student-expectations may be different from skills taught by the teacher in class. Nolasco and Arthur (1986) have highlighted some points of contention that students in any CLT classroom may have with regard to communicative activities. They are 1) dissatisfaction related to activities introduced by the teacher with which students are not familiar, 2) physical limitations in a CLT classroom, 3) students' emphasis on learning grammar and preparing for exams, 4) lack of confidence among students, refusal or sparing usage of English, 5) a notion that while doing pair-work activities they are independent to do what they want and therefore pair-work is not learning, and 6) students' motivation and energy levels increase during class activities resulting in classes that may be more challenging to manage. Nevertheless, in most contexts, students readily become accustomed to CLT techniques, in some cases more quickly than their teachers do.

Developing a Conducive Learning Environment
As language teachers, we can structure our classrooms in a manner that motivates students. A teacher may apply a number of approaches to use the classroom as a social context for learning language. When teachers use the foreign language for classroom management, it will help students understand that foreign language is a medium to

organize learning activities rather than a subject of isolated study activities. In addition, by using foreign language as a teaching medium for most lessons, teachers are modeling the use of the language, indicating that language is not compartmentalized as structures or functions. Use of the foreign language as the teaching medium does not negate the importance of occasionally using the native language of learners to explain a difficult point or concept. Nevertheless, the focus should be on using foreign language to illustrate that language is used not only as a means to communicate, but also to enable learners to function in a foreign language. Lastly, a focus on intrinsic motivation is an important component of any successful learning experience. Discussing topics of genuine interest for learners is a useful tool for maintaining and increasing learner motivation. It is important that learners discuss relevant issues of interest to them while learning and practicing a foreign language.

Research in the field of learning has shown that the communicative ability of a student develops within the learner. A teacher can offer stimuli and experience but does not have control over a learner's natural process through which they learn language and achieve communicative ability. Therefore, the teacher could create a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Learners' communicative skills can be developed if they are motivated and provided an opportunity to express their identity and relate their feelings to the people around them. They should feel secure and valuable as individuals in their learning atmosphere because a secure learning atmosphere fosters growth of interpersonal relationships between learners themselves and between the learner and the teacher thereby making the class atmosphere safe, encouraging, and accommodating. Hendrickson (1991) believes that CLT should include activities that are interesting to the learners and challenge their linguistic abilities while at the same time capturing their imagination and motivating them to continue to acquire and use foreign language beyond the textbook and classroom. Language teachers should provide diverse, interesting, and abundant communicative activities especially

intended for pair-work and group work communicative activities.

The Role of a Language Teacher

Like changes in language learning theory, the role of language teacher has been seen differently at different times. In the current scenario, language teachers have taken many roles: 1) as a facilitator of learning, 2) as a classroom manager whose responsibility is to manage and check if activities are functional and practical, 3) as an instructor who teaches new language to the students, controls their performance, evaluates and corrects learners when they make mistakes, 4) as a consultant or advisor who monitors the strength and weakness of learners, plans future activities and stimulates their intellect by presenting new language and retaining their interest. Hayes and Schrier (2000) suggest that the perceptions of language teachers have also changed. The new perception is that language teachers assist learners in developing their communicative ability and enable then to express themselves and understand others in social settings. There are many teacher development programs that emphasize language as a communicative process and promote literacy (Hayes & Schrier, 2000).
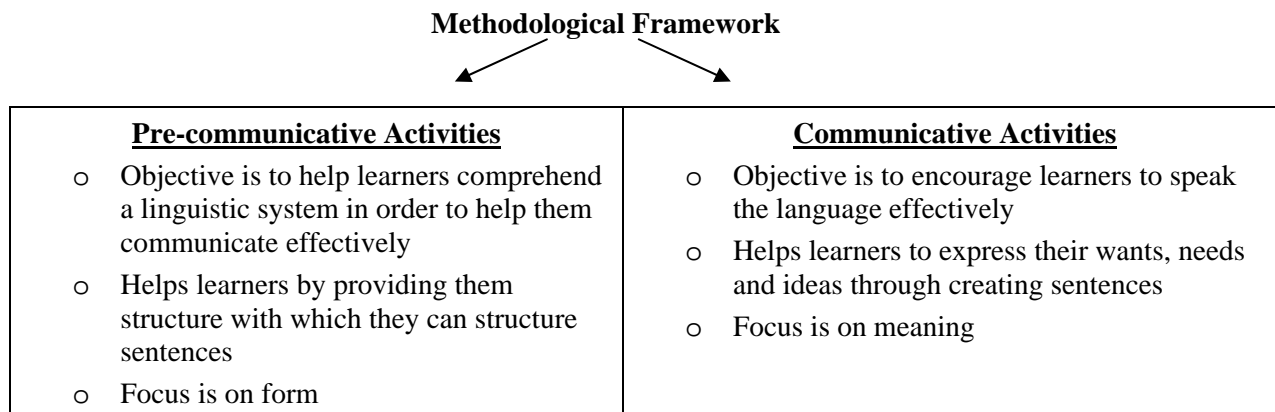
Developing Pre-communicative and Communicative Activities

Learning activities can be categorized into 'pre-communicative' and 'communicative' activities (Figure 1). In pre-communicative activities, the objective is to give learners a fluent command of the linguistic system to help them communicate effectively. These activities focus on form and help learners by providing them with the lower level process of structuring sentences. However, communicative activities focus on conveying meaning; their prime objective is to create situations (pair-work, role-plays, etc.) that require learners to make personal choices and successfully convey information to others while placing a secondary focus on form (accuracy). For example, if learners perform a role-play then successful communication could be measured depending on the meanings of utterances rather than on their linguistic form (Littlewood, 1981). A key point here is that CLT does not require a choice between focus on form or

meaning, the focus shifts from emphasis on form during pre-communicative activities to conveying meaning during communicative activities as illustrated in Figure 1.
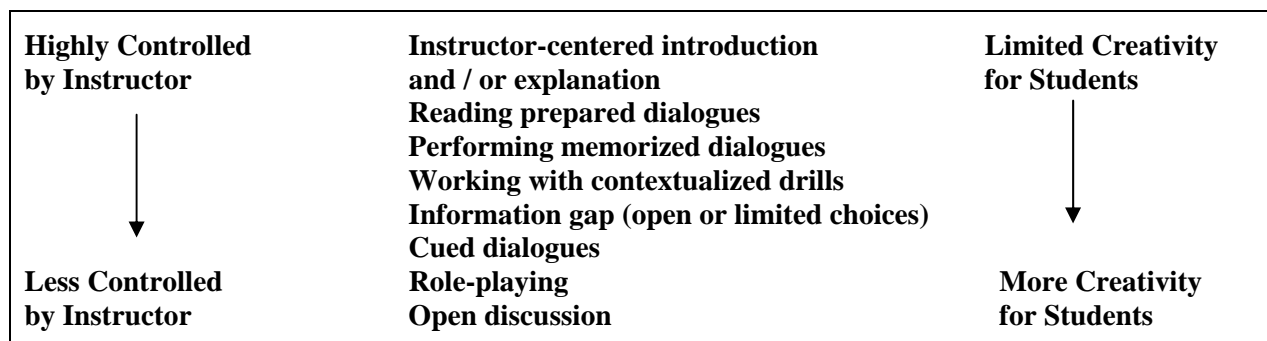
Figure 1.   Pair-work Communicative Activities/ Framework

Methodological Framework

Pre-communicative Activities	**Communicative Activities**
o Objective is to help learners comprehend a linguistic system in order to help them communicate effectively	o Objective is to encourage learners to speak the language effectively
o Helps learners by providing them structure with which they can structure sentences	o Helps learners to express their wants, needs and ideas through creating sentences
o Focus is on form	o Focus is on meaning

In the same way that the focus shifts from form to conveying meaning when moving from pre-communicative activities to communicative activities, so does the locus of control of the activities themselves (Figure 2, Appendix 1). In many activities, there is an introductory phase (presentation), which is initially teacher-centered, where the teacher may be explaining a new target function / grammatical structure (pre-communicative). Students read examples of the new function / structure in a text or dialogue (pre-communicative). At this point, students need not be creative, they are not considering their own ideas, nor are they conveying any unique meaning related to their own ideas; therefore they are still in the pre-communicative phase. As students progress through information gap activities and cued dialogues, they begin making their own choices about content for communication, thereby increasing their creativity (communicative). As the activities becomes less structured (role-plays, discussions), students start making complex choices regarding the meaning they want to convey, thereby moving into the communicative phase. While maintaining focus on accuracy and form, the emphasis is clearly on communicating and negotiating meaning, as is the case in genuine communicative exchanges (See Figure 2.).

Figure 2.   Comparison of Control / Creativity by Activity Type

Highly Controlled by Instructor	**Instructor-centered introduction and / or explanation** **Reading prepared dialogues** **Performing memorized dialogues** **Working with contextualized drills** **Information gap (open or limited choices)** **Cued dialogues**	**Limited Creativity for Students**
Less Controlled by Instructor	**Role-playing** **Open discussion**	**More Creativity for Students**

Knutson (2001) says that "student-student interaction in whole-group settings include; for advanced levels, open-ended class discussions or oral reports; for lower levels, oral exercises to practice vocabulary, grammatical structures, or speech act routines, and directed exchanges"

(p.146). Communicative activities should be of different types (clarifying information, giving instructions, getting help, asking others to repeat information), facilitating greater exchange, negotiation of meaning and promoting an atmosphere catering to social learning. These activities can help students by providing them with opportunities to initiate and prolong communication in a second language. As they are related to 'real life' situations, they assist learners in developing their natural communication skills, which they could use outside the second language classroom (Knutson, 2001).

Project Work

Lastly, project work is an activity that can be done inside or outside class and may be used as short-term or long-term assignments. In project work, students are involved in a number of sub-tasks, which require them to use a number of language skills. Students may pursue these tasks in areas that interest them, or the teacher may focus the activities based on previously discussed themes (for example, travel, family or food). This helps learners in mixed ability groups to determine their own level in comparison to their peers and provides them an opportunity to improve themselves (Nolasco & Arthur, 1988). One benefit of doing project work is that it helps students to learn language independently without the language being taught formally or explicitly in a classroom. It also bridges the gap between language used for study purposes and language used outside the classroom. Projects done outside the classroom help students to develop their social skills, build positive attitudes and provide satisfaction of work well done.

Once students have become confident in using the target language or discussing the topics, teachers may expand the activities by assigning a group work project in which the learners continue to use the target language to communicate. Examples of these are, expanding the use of target language by using it in different contexts, expanding the vocabulary used in the activities by learning through investigating new areas related to the topic and lastly using the target language and other language structures through creative group interaction and communication.

Pair-work activities discussed earlier are somewhat different from project work activities (Table 1). Pair-work is based on one or two activities, possibly in one class period. The theme is provided by the teacher and is usually simple in nature. Pair-work requires only two learners working together to complete the task and does not usually result in a final product, thus, all activities are independent of each other. The same can be said of some forms of group work, where more than a pair of learners is involved, yet the activities are discrete and limited. On the other hand, project work activities completed by a pair or group of students are based on multiple tasks that are completed over time ranging from two or more class meetings to many weeks. They are usually based on a theme that is expanded over many tasks and activities and requires two or more learners working together in order to achieve the goal or purpose of that activity. Another differentiating factor is that, unlike pair-work activities, where students work only with their partners on a single, specific activity, project work requires learners to communicate in numerous activities over time to achieve their final goal, which often is a final product where all group members have contributed equally. The number of learners involved in these activities may range from two (pair work), to two or more, to larger groups (group work), although groups of more than three to five can become unwieldy. However, of greater importance is the distinction between the activities themselves: Pair work activities provide learners with the opportunity to communicate meaning and information through a discrete activity whereas project work provide learners with multiple communicative opportunities through a series of thematically linked activities over time, often culminating in a final product.

What is the teacher's role?

In project work activities, learners complete most of the work outside, bring the completed tasks into class, and share their work with the rest of the learners and the teacher. Hence, the teacher's role involves facilitating (but not controlling) the creative process, assisting learners in developing a study plan to complete all parts of the work, encouraging learners to use the target language, helping them brainstorm interesting ideas / topics to

discuss and include in their project, ensuring that all group members are contributing equally, helping

explain difficult points when they arise and troubleshooting, and assisting groups in overcoming

Table 1. Differences between Pair work and Group / Project Work

Pair work	Group / Project Work
1. Based on one or two activities, possibly in one class period 2. Based on a simple theme 3. Requires only two learners working together to complete 4. Results in a communicative activity 5. Does not usually result in a final product 6. Is not easily developed into a presentation 7. Is discrete (independent)	1. Based on multiple tasks (assignments) that are completed over time: From one week to many weeks 2. Based on a theme that is expanded over many tasks and activities 3. Requires more than two learners working together to complete 4. Requires learners to communicate in numerous activities to achieve the final goal 5. Results in a final product to which all the group members have contributed equally 6. Easily culminated in a presentation of the final product 7. Can be integrated with other language learning activities throughout the group / project work period

difficulties. The teacher is active and facilitates the group work project, directing learners to their ultimate goal.

Conclusion

Second language teaching, like other fields of study, has been influenced by emerging methodologies and theoretical discussions during the last four decades. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as a response to what was seen as shortcomings in traditional language teaching methodologies. Although CLT has gained popularity globally, there remain misconceptions regarding the methodology, including the misunderstanding that, when implementing CLT, grammar is unimportant (grammar remains important but is secondary to communication meaning), that teachers are freed from more taxing teaching responsibilities (teachers take on a role of facilitator rather than purveyor of knowledge), and

that learners will be hesitant to engage in communicative activities (while this is the case initially, as students build confidence by successfully completing level-appropriate

communicative tasks, CLT can actually be motivating for many students). Instructors in different cultural, administrative, or educational contexts may also face unique challenges when adopting a CLT approach. It was also noted that the use of a CLT approach does not dictate the exclusion of an emphasis on form grammar, but rather initially, there is a greater emphasis on form and more of an emphasis on communicating unique and personally derived meaning later. By utilizing communicative activities in a language-learning environment, learners are also under less control of the material or instructor, therefore, are required to be more creative, and as a result, are encouraged to communicate their own ideas and opinions. Such

communicative activities can also be expanded and extended over a longer period into project work, which allows learners to complete a sequence of tasks that lead to a final product. As one reviews the historical development of CLT, it seems that there is not necessarily one second language learning methodology that is perfectly suited to every educational context. Nevertheless, CLT is an effective methodology that can be implemented in varying educational environments if learners, instructors, and administrative bodies are willing to consider alternative approaches to language instruction. If this is the case, then CLT is an approach that can effectively provide learners with the skills necessary to communicate their unique ideas and opinions effectively in a variety of situations.

Ingita Panda completed her Masters in Second Language Acquisition at Soka University, America and has been a Lecturer at the World Language Center at Soka University, Tokyo, Japan, since March 2005. Her academic interests include teacher education and development, educational psychology and research methodologies in second language acquisition.

Richmond Stroupe is the Assistant Director of the World Language Center, and a Professor at Soka University, Tokyo, Japan. He has worked with university and professional language-learners from Japan, the United States, Thailand and Lao PDR since 1989. His academic interests include curriculum development, professional development and international comparative education.

References

Al-Arishi, A. Y. (1994). Role-play, real-play, and surreal-play in the ESOL classroom. *ELT Journal, 48*(4), 337-346.

Celce-Murcia, M., Dornyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1997). Direct approaches in L2 instruction: A turning point in communicative language teaching? *TESOL Quarterly, 31*(1), 141-152.

Dornyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1991). Strategic competence and how to teach it. *ELT Journal, 45*(1), 16-23.

Dornyei, Z., & Thurrell, S, (1992) *Conversations and dialogues in action*. London: Prentice Hall.

Nattinger, J. R., & De Carrico, J. S. (1992). *Lexical phrases and language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eskey, D. E. (1983). Meanwhile, back in the real world…: Accuracy and fluency in second language teaching. *TESOL Quarterly, 17*(2), 315-323.

Fatt, J. P. T. (1991). Achieving communicative competence: the role of higher education. *Higher Education, 22*, 43-62.

Hayes, N., & Schrier, L. (2000). Encouraging second language literacy in the early grades. *Hispania, 83*(2), 286-296.

Helt, R. C. (1982). Developing communicative competence: A practical model. *The Modern Language Journal, 66*(3), 255-262.

Hendrickson, J. M. (1991). On communicative language teaching. *Hispania, 74*(1), 197-198.

Knutson, E. M. (2001). Fostering student-student interaction in a whole group setting. *The French Review, 74*(6), 1138-1151.

Li, D. (1998). "It's always more difficult than you plan and imagine": Teachers' perceived difficulties in introducing the communicative approach in South Korea. *TESOL Quarterly, 32*(4), 677-703.

Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative language teaching: An introduction.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nolasco, R., & Arthur, L. (1986). You try doing it with a class of forty! *ELT Journal, 40*(2), 100-106.

Nunan, D. (1991). Communicative tasks and the language curriculum. *TESOL Quarterly, 25*(2), 279-295.

Rivers, W. M. (1981). *Teaching foreign-language skills* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Saraceni, M. (2007). Meaningful form: Transitivity and intentionality. *ELT Journal, 29*, 1-9.

Savignon, S. J. (1987). Communicative language teaching. *Theory into Practice, 26*(4), 235-242.

Savignon, S. J. (1991). Communicative language teaching: State of the art. *TESOL Quarterly, 25*(2), 261-277.

Thomson, G. (1996). Some misconceptions about communicative language teaching. *ELT Journal*, *50*(1), 9-15.

Widdowson, H. G. (1990). *Aspects of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Yu, L. (2001). Communicative language teaching in China: Progress and resistance. *TESOL Quarterly, 35*(1), 194-198.

Appendix 1
Classroom Examples of Communicative Activities:
Controlled to Less Controlled / Limited Creativity to More Creativity

I.   Instructor-centered introduction: Highly Controlled / Limited Creativity Pre-communicative

As instructors present / explain new structures, concepts, or functions, the class is frequently teacher-centered to facilitate the effective transfer of information / knowledge. Students are passive receivers of information.

II.   Reading prepared dialogues / Performing memorized dialogues Highly Controlled / Limited Creativity Pre-communicative

This activity is sometimes a good place to start. Learners have the opportunity to become familiar with the vocabulary and sentence structures introduced, and are able to ask questions if necessary. While such an activity provides students with security, it does little to initiate communicative competence. In this activity, a teacher exercises maximum control and a learner's creativity is at its lowest.

After introducing a theme for example (how to book a train ticket), the learners may be asked to read, recite or compose their dialogues such as the one presented below. The teacher may give this dialogue to the students and ask them to memorize their dialogues. These dialogues are first presented to the students thereby serving as a springboard for subsequent communicative activities.

Seab: Excuse me. I need some help.
Clerk: Good morning. How may I assist you?
Seab: Good morning. I'd like some information about trains going from Bangkok to Siem Riep.
Clerk: Can you tell me your day of departure from Bangkok?
Seab: I would like to depart from Bangkok on Friday, 22 February.
Clerk: Could you tell me your time of departure?
Seab: I would like to leave Bangkok anytime after 17:00.
Clerk: Could you tell me your date of arrival in Siam Riep?
Seab: I want to arrive in Siam Riep on Monday, 24 February.
Clerk: Could you tell me your time of arrival in Siam Riep?
Seab: I would like to arrive in Siam Riep before 10:00.

III.   Contextualized drills / Information gap (open or limited choices) Controlled / Limited Creativity Pre-communicative / Limited communication

In this activity, the learner's creativity can be exhibited more than in memorized dialogues through selecting minimal options, as the learner is encouraged to create new sentences preset by the teacher. While this is a good practice activity, students are not yet truly communicating independently of the material or the teacher

Student A	Student B
You and your friend have not had an outing together for a long time so you both decide to go for sightseeing during the weekend. There are some cues or hints given below which are a list of general or specific suggestions, that both of you could use to select your preferences or suggestions while talking to each other	You and your friend have not had an outing together for a long time so you both decide to go for sightseeing during the weekend. There are some cues or hints given below which are a list of general or specific suggestions, that both of you could use to select your preferences or suggestions while talking to each other
A: Hi there! How _____ you?	A: (A begins)
B: (B responds)	**B: _____fine!**
A: Are you _____ this weekend?	A: (A responds)
B: (B responds)	**B: No, _____. Why?**

A: Well, how _____ to Siem Riep?
                        Bangkok
                        Vientiane
	A: (A responds)

B: (B responds)	**B: Oh, that's _____.**

A: How about _____ by train?
                        plane
                        bus
                        car
	A: (A responds)

B: (B responds)	**B: Is there a _____ to _____ tomorrow?**
A: I'm not sure.	A: (A responds)
B: (B responds)	**B: Let's go to the _____ and check the schedule.**
A: OK, what _____ meet?	A: (A responds)
B: (B responds)	**B: How about _____?**
A: Where _____?	A: (A responds)
B: (B responds)	**B: How about_____?**
A; Ok, that sounds good. See you tomorrow!	A: (A responds)

IV. Cued Dialogues
Less Controlled / Increased Creativity
Limited communication

After learners fully understand the target language, then Cued Dialogues can be used to help students make the first step in producing their communicative language. For example:

Situation: You and your friend have not had an outing together for a long time so you both decide to go for sightseeing during the weekend. There are some cues or hints given below which

are a list of general or specific suggestions, that both of you could use to select your preferences or suggestions while talking to each other.

Cues are strategies used by learners to compose sentences. These strategies are hints and they may be in the form of pictures or printed words or pictures that help a learner in deciding an answer.

Cues List: Below is a list of suggestions or alternatives that the partners could use for their speech
Sightseeing places:
Ayutthaya, Sukhothai, Siem Riep, Ratnakiri
Mode of transportation:
Bus, Train, Taxi, Airplane, Ferry
Start and Finish Time:
09:30, 10:00, 10:30, 11:00

Based on language presented earlier, and after the learners have become confident through the practice of more controlled activities, the following example may be used for pair work. In the example below, learners are given 'cues' to help them with the production of communicative language, but the exercise is much less controlled, and therefore allows the students to increase their natural communication and creativity.

During role-plays, learners are given only the prompts and must then imagine they are in the situation. Based on the information in the prompt, the learners must determine not only the language function to be used, but also the meaning that they would like to convey. This is most likely personal in nature (personal choice) since there are no specific guidelines that restrict the learners' discussions. Learners at this stage must be familiar and comfortable with not only the language requirements of the situation but also the social requirements of the context in which the discussion takes place. This activity promotes the students natural language learning ability, as they have to produce language creatively for role-play in order to ensure that the meaning is clear to their partner. Role-plays are beneficial to the learner in a number of ways as the learner produces a response in a less controlled manner compared to the specific linguistic prompts. However, the learner is encouraged by the teacher to produce language in response to a partner's responses. The learners themselves create these responses depending on the situations social or functional needs. It encourages their creativity and boosts their confidence level. It also helps the learners to explore and use language forms, which they would have difficulty in using if they were asked to produce these forms spontaneously without any help.

V.   Role plays
    Very Limited Control / Increased
    Creativity
    Communication

Student A	**Student B**
You and your friend have not had an outing together for a long time so you both decide to go for sightseeing during the weekend. You begin the conversation.	You and your friend have not had an outing together for a long time so you both decide to go for sightseeing during the weekend. Your partner will begin the conversation.

VI. Open discussion
Extremely Limited Control / Significant Creativity
Communication

During an open discussion, learners are provided with a topic, which can be quite complex, abstract, or controversial, and asked to discuss the topic is a certain way (agree or disagree, compare and contrast advantages and disadvantages, etc.). Learners must have reached a quite advanced level in order to be successful at such activities. At the same time, teachers must be familiar with the learners so that the topics that they include in the activity are familiar or relevant to the learners, as

they must depend on their own creativity to produce the ideas they discuss. If the learners are unfamiliar with the topic, they will be unable to determine what to communicate. Some examples of specific topics could include:

A. Should the tuition for your university be increased to hire additional instructors?

B. A friend of yours from abroad is visiting your country for the first time and has come to your hometown. What locations would you recommend your friend to see in your hometown?

C. What are the advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad?

ESL Management Meetings: Workplace Role as a Factor in Meeting Discourse

Andrew Foley
South Australian College of English, Adelaide, Australia
<foley63@hotmail.com>

Abstract

The Australian Centre for Education (ACE), Cambodia recently conducted an Australian Government-funded project on improving teaching and learning outcomes in Australian-owned offshore language schools. This paper presents some aspects of that project (FitzGerald, Foley, Klein, Nankervis, & Ngo, 2007). The nature of the decision-making processes of the organization was one area of the project's scope, and the author undertook an action research study to analyze the discourse used by participants in the regular senior management meetings of the school. An important part of this process was to examine the interaction between the participants to try to determine the extent to which workplace role was a factor in the language strategies employed by individual participants.

Introduction

Regular and numerous meetings are a feature of a manager's role in any organization, and educational institutions, such as English language schools, are no exception. The need for a school to discuss, decide on and disseminate polices and procedures, consider teaching issues and initiatives, and coordinate the different areas of the organization make meetings an essential decision-making forum. However, how effective are these meetings? Are they an efficient use of the expensive managers' time? What factors determine the extent to which individuals participate in the meetings, and the nature of their involvement? How might language choices and turn-taking features be influenced by workplace status, role, nationality, gender or other factors?

A discourse analysis study was initiated in the weekly senior management meetings of the Australian Centre of Education (ACE – IDP Education), one of the largest and best-known English language schools in Cambodia, in order to investigate these questions. The decision-making processes involved in these meetings included the presentation of statistics relating to, for example, enrollment and student performance in end-of-term

testing, as well as reports from meeting participants on their area of responsibility in the school, and suggestions and ideas for new initiatives for teaching and learning in the school. Thus, the meetings were important in making long-term decisions regarding school policy and course content, and less directly, the way in which teachers worked. The author of this paper was one of the participants in this meeting group.

The aim of the study was to inform potential decisions to make the meetings more time efficient, more able to represent the needs of the various stakeholders in the school, and to maximize the input of all participants.

Conversation and discourse analysis

This study has based much of its approach on the work done in the areas of conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis. One of the major insights and a basis of conversational analysis is that it sees discourse as a meaning-making device, and seeks to discover the ways in which members of a society produce a sense of social order. Conversation is viewed as exhibiting its own order and structures rather than being an offshoot or corollary of "proper" written language.

The nature of the social context is of primary importance in determining the meanings being made; the meaning of a particular utterance can only be considered in terms of its specific context and purpose, as Schiffrin (1994) notes: "Speakers produce utterances assuming that hearers can make sense out of them by the same kind of practical reasoning and methodic contextualizing operations that they apply to social conduct in general" (p. 250).

An examination of the structural aspects that make up an interaction, such as patterns in turn taking, and the consideration of how participants in talk construct "systematic solutions to recurrent organizational problems" (Schiffrin, 1994, p. 252) are an integral focus of conversational analysis. Thus, the primary tool is a corpus of talk (authentic conversation), and the goal is to search for recurrent patterns of use that address the way the conversation is managed. An important component of these recurrent patterns, according to conversation analysis, is the notion that conversational turns make meaning because they are understood as being part of a sequence.

Critical discourse analysis, such as the work of Fairclough (1989, 1995), provides an extra insight and focus on wider social structures, and their role in the meanings participants make. Critical discourse analysis rejects the notion that participants in conversations are independent actors working cooperatively to achieve goals. What it seeks to examine are the social relations between participants, whether on the basis of power, status, wealth, gender or other factors. It aims to show correlations between variations in linguistic form and social variables such as social strata, relationships, setting and topics. The importance of this for the purposes of this study is apparent when we consider that the interactions are situated in a workplace context, with participants of unequal work status and diverse cultural backgrounds undertaking widely varied workplace roles. "How something is said, meant and done – speakers' selection among different linguistic devices as alternative ways of speaking is guided by relationships including…the social context, e.g.

participant identities and relationships, structure of the situation, setting" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 416).

As Candlin (2002) points out, while much of the work done in professional discourse analysis (PDA) has focused on more generic studies, more recently PDA "has started exploring the complexities, dynamism, and versatility of professional practices in academic, institutional, professional and other workplace contexts" (Candlin, 2002, p. 49). It is hoped that this study can fall within this scope, by examining the language, roles and organizational outcomes of an authentic workplace discourse event.

The Study

The aim of the action research project was to examine the patterns of language use and turn taking of the ACE SMT meetings in order to evaluate the effectiveness of these interactions and to provide some insights for decision-making processes of similar educational institutions. In order to reflect the goals of the larger project, there was a focus on meeting topics related to the consideration of statistical data.

As the basis of this research, recordings were made of several of these weekly meetings, and a discourse analysis-based approach used to examine features of the meeting dynamic, both from the viewpoint of individual participants, and of the functioning of the meeting group as a whole. An important part of the action research project was to reflect on the results obtained, and to suggest ways in which improvements to the meeting group as a decision-making body could be made.

In order to try to gain a better understanding of the specific nature of the discourse used in ACE management meetings and the possible influence of workplace role-related factors, it was decided to focus on examining the functions of each speaking turn of the participants, and match this with a parallel examination of the conversational dynamics of the meeting and the progression and development of each topic.

Data collection

Two ACE Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings were recorded and the discourse of three distinct topics, which varied in length from about two and a half minutes to seven minutes, was considered. These three topics were all related to the performance of students in end-of-term testing. The recordings of the meetings were tracked by function of each speaker turn, and these three turn taking and speaking function tables were subsequently compiled into one table so that patterns of discourse behavior could be examined. The criteria for deciding on the naming and categorization of speaker turn function were maximum usability and practicality. While much of the general approach for this study comes from Eggins and Slade (1997), their system of categories for analyzing discourse structure was considered to be too comprehensive and impractical for the purposes of this study. The functional categories of discourse selected were largely drawn from English as a Second Language (ESL) materials focusing on language skills for meetings, including Goodall (1987), O'Driscoll & Pilbeam (1997), Sweeney (1997) and Hollet, Couter & Lyon (1989).

Meeting participants and structure

One of the key areas of consideration of Critical Discourse Analysis in general, and of this study in particular, is an examination of the workplace roles and relative status of the participants in a discourse event. At the time of this study, the SMT comprised six participants, with the author of this paper among them. In terms of seniority, the Country Director (CDR) was the most senior person in the organization. The School Director (DR) was the most senior person within the ACE school itself and, with the Director of Studies (DoS), was involved in more immediate day-to-day issues of school organization. These three positions were filled by expatriate Australian staff, while the other three members of the meeting group, the Resources Manager (RM), the Officer Manager (OM) and the IT Manager (ITM) were all local Cambodian staff. Thus there was a divide both in status and authority, as well as in cultural background, between the first three and last three mentioned participants. The CDR chaired the meetings with an agenda being

decided upon at the commencement of each meeting through the CDR requesting items from each of the participants. Some of these issues were new, while others involved a continuation or development of a previous topic.

The discourse data was first quantified on the basis of function and SMT participant. The three separate tables, one for each topic considered, were subsequently collated into one table, showing the total number of functions per participant for all three decision-making case studies (Table 1). The resulting Table provides a more comprehensive overall picture for analyzing participant discourse behavior and meeting dynamic. The individual turns in sequence were also compiled, allowing the conversational flow to be tracked for the purposes of considering how meaning is made.

Results and discussion
Discourse Analysis Findings
Meeting interaction of individual participants
What is striking about the discourse analysis data is the difference in the way each participant interacts in the meeting dynamic, especially when considered in tandem with their workplace role. While this was a feature that the researcher was especially interested in, the degree to which it appears that the language choices were related to workplace role and status were surprising.

The two most dominant contributors to the meetings were the CDR and the DR, who had the most senior roles in the organization. However, their form of involvement in the meeting discourse was dissimilar. It is suggested that this contrast is to a significant extent a result of the nature of their workplace roles in general, and of their individual goals as shaped by workplace need, during the meetings, in particular.

The main discourse function utilized by the CDR, the most senior employee in the meeting, was to interrupt or to seek clarification. The CDR was not involved in the day-to-day running of the school, but many important organizational decisions, especially, but not necessarily limited to, those that having financial implication, required his input and approval. Thus, it seemed the CDR was often

Table 1. Meeting behavior analysis discourse functions: Senior Management Team meeting discourse functions combined (three separate extracts)

Macro function	Micro function	DOS	OM	DR	CDR	RM	ITM	Total
Manage topics	Introduce a topic	-	-	-	-	-	3	**3**
	Close the topic	-	-	-	2	-	1	**3**
	Refer to previous topic	-	-	1	2	-	-	**3**
Seek to influence	Give or justify opinion	9	-	16	7	2	7	**41**
	Discuss options	-	-	2	-	-	-	**2**
	Express agreement	3	-	8	4	-	-	**15**
	Express disagreement	-	-	3	4	-	-	**7**
	Be non-committal	-	-	-	1	-	-	**1**
	Refer to personal experience	1	-	1	-	-	2	**4**
	Suggest course of action	2	-	6	6	-	-	**14**
	Summarize	2	-	-	-	-	-	**2**
	Interrupt	5	-	4	19	-	3	**31**
	Deal with interruption	1	-	8	-	-	3	**12**
Question	Seek clarification/opinion	2	-	5	15	-	2	**24**
	Request information	1	-	2	2	-	-	**5**
Make decisions	Make decision	1	-	-	1	-	-	**2**
	Delay making decision	-	-	-	1	-	-	**1**
Other	Provide information	6	-	12	-	-	14	**32**
Total number of turns (121)		**21**	**-**	**40**	**37**	**2**	**21**	
								Functions 202

seeking background and historical information regarding topics that were raised, and furthermore, having the final say, was required to cast a critical eye over any potential courses of action before they were approved.

Apart from interrupting and seeking clarification, which were often achieved in the same turn, the functions prominent in his discourse were expressing agreement or disagreement, suggesting a course of action and, to a lesser (proportional) extent than other participants, giving or justifying an opinion.

The discourse profile of the CDR during the analyzed meeting time is shown in Table 2. Conversely, the participation of DR was predominantly based on giving or justifying an opinion and providing information. Sometimes this was apparent in presenting a topic or position to the meeting, but also in response to interruptions and clarifications sought by the CDR. As the senior manager of the school's daily operations, she was often the person to whom the CDR turned in the meeting when requiring further or more specific information, as can be seen by the large number of times she was required to deal with an interruption.

She was also prominent in suggesting courses of action and expressing agreement or disagreement.

For closer examination, and comparison to the discourse features of the CDR, selected information regarding turn taking is shown in Table 3.

Table 2. Selected meeting discourse functions - Country Director

Function	Frequency
Interrupt	19
Deal with interruption	0
Seek clarification or opinion	15
Suggest course of action	6
Give opinion	7
Express agreement	4
Express disagreement	4

Table 3. Selected meeting discourse functions - School Director

Function	Frequency
Interrupt	4
Deal with interruption	8
Seek clarification or opinion	5
Suggest course of action	6
Give opinion	16
Express agreement	8
Express disagreement	3

The DoS showed a similar form of involvement in the meeting as the DR, but to a lesser extent: approximately half of the turns of either the CDR or the DR. Like the DR, the majority of his turns had the function of giving an opinion or providing information. He was prepared to suggest a course of action and to seek clarification, although to a much lesser extent than the two most senior managers. Interestingly, of all the participants involved in the selected meeting topics, only the two most senior managers expressed disagreement. While this could easily be construed as a natural result of their senior status and position, it should also be noted that both of the senior managers would readily admit to having assertive personalities in their workplace dealings.

Of the Cambodian members of the meeting group, the most significant contributor to the selected topics discussed was the IT Manager (ITM). He introduced all three of the topics for these case studies, as they were based upon empirical data that he was responsible for producing. The ITM was prepared to give his own opinion on the significance

or implications of the data he was presenting, but had to be prepared to deal with interruptions. The other two members of the SMT, the OM and the RM had very limited involvement in the discourse data examined for this study, with no turns and two turns respectively. There are several possible reasons that could explain this lack of involvement. Firstly, both of them were relatively new in their positions and may not yet have had the confidence to assume a more assertive role. Secondly, the areas of responsibility of their respective positions were not directly relevant to the topics discussed, and so they may have thought it inappropriate to be involved in discussions in areas outside their expertise. Finally, local Cambodian staff fill these two positions, and while not feeling intimidated, they may have felt a little overawed being in a meeting in which the expatriate staff had more senior roles and more experience in that particular meeting forum.

Possible influence of cultural issues
In the face of the more dominant senior management personalities mentioned above, the

local staff members of the SMT may have been wary about their contributions to the discussions coming under critical scrutiny, especially with regard to the high number of interruptions that were a feature of the meeting extracts. In terms of workplace role having an effect on meeting participation, it is not just current positions that may play a part, but also factors such as perceived security in job position, experience in formal meetings with expatriates, length of tenure, confidence or comfort in role, and status prior to current position. Taking all this into account, however, the ITM was also a local Cambodian staff member and his involvement was more prominent. With the ITM being male, and RM being female, some effect of gender, and perhaps gender within culture, should not be ignored. Respect for authority and highly developed status and patronage relations are a prominent feature of Cambodian society. This could be postulated as having some degree of influence on the reticence, in general, of local Cambodian staff to contribute more to the meetings.

According to a recent UNESCO report, the traditional Cambodian hierarchical system determines the place, duties and rights of all individuals and dictates that one accepts his/her place and condition without ever questioning the system (Luco, 2002).

> This model, based on the family model and the ensuing rules of obedience and diffidence towards ones elders, is replicated at all levels of Cambodian society. One must not challenge the existing order. People are expected to remain in their place or face punishment. (Luco, 2002, p.20)

It should also be noted that the meetings were held in the office of the CDR, and this setting may also have been a contributing factor in influencing the degree and nature of participation of meeting members. The office was of considerable size, technological devices belonging to the CDR such as laptop computers, several desk phones and mobile phones were all on hand, and a relatively formal

atmosphere was present. While expatriate managers may have experience in such a setting, it could have been a new and unsettling environment for a less experienced manager.

Meeting group composition and turn taking
While previous discussion in this paper has centered on the individual patterns of meeting participation and language choices as a manifestation of workplace role and status, there may also be ways in which the composition of a meeting group differentiated by workplace role results in beneficial outcomes with regards to decision-making. There are a number of features of the ACE SMT meeting group, both in terms of discourse patterns and organization, which may be put forward as significantly contributing to the effective consideration of issues and topics, and to the reaching of decisions which positively impact on teaching and learning outcomes in an educational institution. One of these postulated positive factors is that the members of the meeting group were representative of different areas of the school and organization as a whole, and thus a variety of inputs, points of view and factual information could be brought to the decision-making process. Further, that the members of the meeting group provide a balanced mix between expatriate Australian and local Cambodian managerial staff.

Reflections and implications
A major aim of the project was to provide reflection on the nature of the meeting group, using its discourse features as a tool for making suggestions for improvement. One of the principal areas of concern was the low level of participation of some members of the meeting group, possibly linked to their status as local Cambodian staff. This led to the recommendation of the provision of professional development for local Cambodian SMT members in areas including language skills; knowledge and awareness of meeting procedures and interaction; critical thinking; and assertiveness to build their confidence in a meeting context. A Meetings and Negotiations short course was subsequently offered at the school for high level learners and at least two of the Cambodian members of the meeting group participated in the course and commented that it had been beneficial for them. The school also

occasionally sent staff to overseas conferences and workshops, and deliberately sought to target these opportunities to Cambodian staff members as a way of building their skills and confidence in professional academic contexts.

A second area of concern was the relative domination of the meeting group by its more senior status, and consequently assertive, members. In order to attempt to alleviate this, it was suggested that an agenda was circulated before the meetings, in order to allow participants time to consider topics and have well-thought out positions in advance of the meeting, and further, to have a rotating chair as a way of disseminating the power and authority contained in the formal control of the meeting.

This study demonstrated that participants may be unaware of much of their own interaction in meeting contexts, and that an examination of individual's language choices provides significant insight and opportunity for both individual reflection and organizational improvement. Considerable time and effort is expended in the planning, conducting and following-up of professional meetings, and it is recommended that all organizations regularly evaluate the format, administrative procedures, composition and, most particularly, the linguistic skills that participants possess in order to promote meeting effectiveness.

Conclusion

Great care needs to be taken in drawing direct conclusions from the relatively small amount of discourse data analyzed in this project, approximately 15 minutes in detail of a total of about two hours recorded in total. However, undertaking a discourse analysis of a workplace event, such as the educational management meeting in this particular case, provided a wealth of data regarding individuals and their form of participation in a professional interaction, and the nature of the workplace communication event itself. It allowed some tentative conclusions regarding the influence of workplace role and status on turn taking and language choice, as well as providing evidence in order to make recommendations for improving effectiveness of the professional discourse in question. The author strongly encourages would-be

action researchers to consider their own workplace interactions as a potential source of investigation.

Andrew Foley recently returned to Australia after several years as the Director of Studies of the Australian Centre for Education, Cambodia. He has been involved in ELT teaching and management for over 15 years in the UK, Spain, Australia and in Cambodia. His main interests are in the use of authentic materials in teaching and the potential of discourse analysis as a teaching tool.

References

Candlin, C. (Ed.) (2002). *Research and Practice in Professional Discourse*. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press.

Eggins, S., & Slade, D. (1997). *Analyzing Casual Conversation*. New York: Continuum.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. London: Longman.

FitzGerald, L. J., Foley, A., Klein, A., Nankervis, H. & Ngo, P. (2007). *Empirically Driven Offshore ELT Programs Data Management Manual*. Canberra, ACT: Department of Education, Science and Training Good Practice Project for Offshore Delivery of English Language Teaching.

Goodall, S. (1987). *Meetings*. Hove East Sussex, UK: Language Teaching Publications.

Hollet, V., Couter, R. & Lyon, L. (1989). *In at the deep end*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Luco, F. (2002) *Management of local conflicts in Cambodia: An anthropological approach to traditional and new practices*. Phnom Penh, Cambodia: UNESCO.

O'Driscoll, N. & Pilbeam, A. (1997). *Meetings and Discussions*. London: Longman.

Schiffrin, D. (1994). *Approaches to Discourse*. London: Blackwell.

Sweeney, S. (1997). *English for Business Communication*: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Note: Some sections of this article appeared in a modified form in EA Management Meetings: A discourse analysis study, by the same author in the *English Australia Journal*, Vol. 24 No. 2.

About CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching: Selected Papers, Volume 2, 2006

Background Information

CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching: Selected Papers is a publication of exceptional papers presented at the CamTESOL Conference series. The members of the editorial board select papers that were submitted from each conference in the series. Each paper is blind-reviewed by two editors and accepted by both before final editing and publication. The current publication includes papers presented at the 2nd CamTESOL Conference held on 25-26 February, 2006. Publication will proceed with one volume for each of the past years' conferences (Vol. 3, 2007; Vol. 4, 2008), all published in 2008 and early 2009. Initially, publication of Vol. 1, 2005 is online for public viewing, on the CamTESOL website <www.camtesol.org>, and on CD, which was distributed to participants at the 4th CamTESOL Conference held on 23-24 February, 2008. From 2009, selected papers from each conference will be published on an annual basis.

Editorial staff

Editorial board

Editorial board - Associate Members

Editorial board publication assistants

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that no misleading or inaccurate data, opinions, or statements appear in the CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching: Selected Papers Publications. Articles included in the publication are the sole responsibility of the contributing authors. The views expressed by authors do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Board, the Conference Organizers, hosting institutions, or the various sponsors of the conference series; no responsibility or liability whatsoever is accepted by these groups or institutions regarding the consequences of any information included in the authors' articles.

Notes to prospective contributors

Participants at the CamTESOL Conference series are comprised of local Cambodian and expatriate educators as well as those from international institutions. Submission of papers which present innovative approaches in the conference streams and which would be of interest to both local and international conference participants is encouraged. When preparing their papers, authors should consider the context of Cambodian TESOL where most schools have limited resources and teachers often have to contend with large numbers of students in their classrooms. As a result, the Editorial Board, when selecting papers for the publication, takes into account the local context as well as the areas of interest for international participants. Within the conference streams, successful papers may consider both the interests of the international participants and the local needs of the Cambodian participants.

To submit a paper for consideration, one electronic and one printed copy of the paper should be submitted to the Conference Program Committee by the time of the annual CamTESOL Conference. The electronic copy should be in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format and may be submitted by e-mail prior to the Conference <camtesol.selected.papers@gmail.com>, or it may be presented on CD upon registration for the Conference in Phnom Penh. Papers submitted in only printed form will not be considered for publication.

Papers should not exceed 5,000 words, including references, but not including abstracts or appendices. Papers should be preceded by an abstract of 150 words or less. The abstract should summarize the methodology and major claims or conclusions of the paper.

For more details concerning specific guidelines and formatting, please refer to Selected Papers on the CamTESOL website <www.camtesol.org>.

Copyright and permission to reprint