CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching: *Selected Papers* Volume 3, 2007

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Foreword

The 2007 CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching was yet another successful meeting of teachers, professors, researchers, and managers in the English Language Teaching (ELT) profession from the region and the rest of the world. This year, the annual conference was held at the Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), in Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia. The conference aims to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and dissemination of information on good practice within ELT; to strengthen and broaden the network of ELT teachers and all those involved in the ELT sector in Cambodia; to increase the links between the ELT community in Cambodia and the international ELT community; and to showcase research in the field of ELT. The conference theme was "Internationalizing ELT" and almost 900 attendees enjoyed three plenary speakers (Associate Professor Seamus Fagan, Professor JoAnn Crandall and Ms. Mary Jane Hogan), and over 100 presentations including papers, workshops, demonstration lessons and poster sessions from presenters from countries including Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Viet Nam, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Australia, and the United States. The conference was indeed remarkably stimulating and I have taken great pleasure in seeing it through to fruition as the Editor-in-Chief of the CamTESOL 2007 Selected Papers.

For the 2007 CamTESOL Selected Papers, we are pleased to present six papers that deal with some of the practical issues affecting teaching English. While topics range from international assessment standards to new possibilities for utilizing classroom resources and support, the articles all provide valuable insight into the state of the profession and offer a range of recommendations and suggestions for future directions.

The first article, "Assessment and Its Place in International ELT," is written by Mary Jane Hogan, who is an IELTS Principal Examiner in Australia and was a plenary speaker at the 2007 CamTESOL Conference. Her paper discusses the role of standardized international English language proficiency tests within ELT. Hogan begins by reviewing the types of tests used in ELT, and how they can be useful. Hogan also describes the role played by these assessments in setting international benchmarks in ELT. Hogan notes how international benchmarks can improve quality and fairness in ELT education, and how such testing can have a positive impact in the classroom. Additionally, while considering the issue of 'World Englishes', Hogan goes on to point out how an internationally recognized qualification is quite useful to individuals due to the portability of the results.

In the second article, "Developing Elementary Skills with 'Simplified English' Materials: Listening and Speaking," Terence J. McDonough suggests ways to introduce 'Special English' scripts, available through the Internet, into classrooms. McDonough offers ways to utilize these scripts to develop materials in various courses, such as rewriting an interview or replacing basic vocabulary with more advanced words. The scripts can also be used to develop comprehension skills through reading, vocabulary comprehension, listening and speaking activities.

McDonough provides a series of activities based on 'Simplified English' that can easily be replicated in language classrooms throughout Cambodia.

Ben Lehtinen addresses the difficulty students face when making the transition from secondary school to university. In the third article, "Bridging the Secondary School gap: An experienced based writing syllabus for university classrooms," Lehtinen used questionnaires, focus groups, and instructor think-aloud sessions in his study of students and teachers of a first year basic writing course at Kanda University of International Studies in Chiba, Japan. The study's findings illustrate how high school experiences affect students as the enter classes in university, how the opinions of students and teachers about writing may at times be at odds, and how curricula can be adjusted to address these concerns. A number of suggestions are made to help 'build a bridge' between secondary and tertiary study.

"Outside the Egg Carton: Facilitating High School Teacher Collaboration," presented by Peter Collins, explores a collaboration component that was added to Tokai University's in-service Teacher Development Program. Collaboration between teachers is always a challenge in a school environment, particularly in Japan at the secondary level, and the program addressed this challenge by attempting to highlight some of the benefits of collaboration and teaching relevant skills to enable the process. The study identified issues such as resistance from teachers based on time constraints and cultural influences, yet also provided promising feedback from teachers about the benefits of the process.

The final two papers deal with providing self-access opportunities to students in different contexts. In Cambodia, Sonita Ly, Theara Chea, and Visal Sou describe some of the issues that were encountered as the Australian Centre for Education shifted from a traditional library to a Guided Individual Learning Centre in their paper "Guided Individual Learning Centre: A Non-classroom Learning Environment." The authors describe some of the challenges faced with moving students from traditional modes of learning in a typical library to becoming

autonomous learners. The authors describe some of the difficulties that teachers encounter when helping students adjust their traditional view of a library to a more interactive attitude. Lastly, the authors discussed the practicalities of selecting, preparing and purchasing materials as well as working with students and course teachers.

In the second article which deals with self access centers, based on a case study at a university in Japan, "Integrating Critical Thinking Skills into the EFL Classroom," Yukiko Ishikawa, Daniel Sasaki and Shinichi Jason Yamamoto discuss the meaning of critical thinking, its application in educational contexts, and the benefits of integrating critical thinking skills into a language-learning program. Critical thinking skills can foster a learner's analytical thinking and provide them with opportunities to practice communicating in a variety of situations. The authors demonstrate an integrated approach and discuss applications in the self-access center for students in EFL courses.

Putting together an academic volume such as the CamTESOL 2007 Selected Paper requires the assistance of a large number of people. I would like to thank all of those who submitted papers and research presented at CamTESOL 2007 whether their paper was accepted for this volume or not. I would also like to thank all of those who contributed their time and energy in other ways. In particular, I would like to offer special thanks to our Assistant-in Chief, Dr. Robert Richmond Stroupe, and the other members of our International Editorial Board. Last but not least, I would like to state our appreciation to the Associate Members of the Editorial Board, the Editorial Assistants and the production staff, for without them, the current volume would not have been possible.

It has been my great pleasure to be associated with them all.

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Assessment and its place in International ELT

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Abstract
Increasingly, assessment is playing a greater role in the teaching of English in an international context. The dominance of the major international English language proficiency tests, such as IELTS and TOEFL, is having an impact on the way English is taught as a foreign language. This influence should not necessarily be regarded as unfortunate or negative. The use of international benchmarks in teaching, whether of English or of any other subject, can have a very positive impact on improving quality in education at an institutional and national level, and at the personal and individual level, the achievement of an internationally recognized English qualification brings many benefits. In addition, well-designed, international English language tests can have positive washback into the ELT classroom. This paper will explore the exacting standards according to which international English language proficiency tests are produced, and the role of such assessment in setting international benchmarks in ELT.

Introduction
For many teachers, 'assessment' is an area little explored. It has frequently had an unimportant position in teacher-training courses. However, when teachers find themselves in schools, they often discover that assessment is very important in their work, and that educational institutions place great importance on it. Ideally, the best kind of assessment should have a positive effect on how well students learn.

This paper will look at the following questions:
What do we mean by 'assessment'?
What role does assessment have in international English language teaching?

In looking at these questions, the paper intends to clarify the issues rather than to make a specific argument, and to ask questions rather than to give answers. In doing so, I hope to provide ideas relevant to the teaching of English in Cambodia as part of international ELT.

In some ways this is a personal reflection of the presenter: almost everything I know about assessment I learnt by doing it, some in the classroom, some in the course of a Masters in Applied Linguistics, but mostly in the context of working for an international standardized language proficiency test, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), for which I have worked in one way or another for over 16 years. As a teacher and tester, I identify strongly with the point made by Hamp-Lyons that most testers are or were teachers, so we come to the issue of testing from the teacher's perspective (Hamp-Lyons, 2000). The paper will also make reference to some of the standard studies and research.

What is assessment?
Testing and assessment in general is something that people seem to feel very threatened by. When the subject of English language testing comes up in conversation, most people's reaction is to exclaim: 'My English is terrible' – and this applies whether the speaker has English as a first language, or a

second or other language. People feel they are being judged: 'I'll have to watch what I say now'. There is a perception of testing as threatening.

It is worthwhile at the outset to clarify what we mean by assessment, and to ask whether assessment and testing are the same thing (Read, 2006). In this paper, assessment is used as the cover term for all forms of measuring or describing what learners can and cannot yet do, and testing, including formal tests, are one form of this assessment (other forms of assessment include quick quizzes, written assignments, oral presentations, portfolios, observation, self-assessment, peer assessment, 'can do' checklists, and so on). It is useful in this way to distinguish 'tests' from 'assessment', but it is even more useful to be specific as to the purpose of the assessment: classroom forms of assessment including tests serve one purpose, internationally standardized tests used for benchmarking serve another. This paper will mostly focus on one form of assessment, the international standardized proficiency test, and to discuss the international context of this form of assessment, so in order to do this, it is helpful to clarify some types of test.

Types of tests

One way of classifying test types is to look at what the test is used for. Tests may be used for a variety of purposes (Bachman, 1990; Davies, 1999; Hughes, 2003):

- Selection tests: these are used to gain access to a course or institution.
- Placement tests: these tests can help to identify the best class for a learner.
- Diagnostic tests: these tests are used to identify what learners are good at and where they need help – these are often formative tests (that is, they give feedback to both the teacher and the learner to assist in changing a programme of study if necessary).
- Achievement tests: these tests are used to discover how much of a curriculum a learner has achieved mastery of. They usually occur at the end of a course, and are directly related to the course content. They are summative tests in that they are

designed to sum up the learning that has occurred during a course, and often take the form of a grade at the end of a course that can be used to judge the outcomes of a course and to provide accountability to stakeholders.

The boundaries between these four types of test are flexible, so that a selection test, for example, may often be used as a diagnostic or placement test, and an achievement test may also function as a placement test for another course.

The final type of test is designed for a different purpose altogether, although it is often used for any or all of the same purposes as the tests listed above.

- Proficiency tests: these tests measure what a candidate can do and cannot do at a point in time regardless of training. They are not linked to a curriculum or course but are based on a scale that describes abilities at different levels. The candidates are matched to the scale. The best known are the international proficiency tests including IELTS and TOEFL.

Another useful way of describing types of test is to look at how the test is constructed. Test content can take many forms (Hughes, 2003):

- It may be a direct test, and directly test a particular skill (for example, to test whether a candidate can write an essay, the test requires them to write an essay) or the test may be indirect, in that it indirectly tests for something by testing skills assumed to be generalizable (for example, a test of grammar or vocabulary may be used to assess a candidate's ability to write an essay).
- It may contain discrete items – separate test questions mostly unrelated to each other except in that they all test a common feature such as a grammatical structure or comprehension of text – or it may be integrative, in that it requires the candidate to use several language skills in the completion of a set of tasks, as, for example, in a listening test where the

candidate listens to a complete conversation and answers questions on it, using their ability to understand grammatical structures, the pronunciation of sounds and words, the structure of spoken discourse, the nature and purpose of the interaction, as well as some reading and writing skills to complete the task.

- It may integrate skills by requiring candidates to use input from several sources, for example, where a candidate has to read a text then talk or write about it; or it may test different skills separately by focusing on testing listening, reading, writing and speaking skills largely, though of course not completely, separately.

- Test results may compare the performance of one candidate to other candidates so that it is norm-referenced, or it may describe the performance of the candidate against a set of criteria, and thus be criterion-referenced.

- Individual test sections may be objectively rated (against an answer key) or subjectively rated (by trained raters).

- Test items may be objective (where candidates choose from a list of answers) or productive (where they have to write a word or phrase).

- Tests may be paper-based or, increasingly, computer-based (using CD/DVD or the Internet as the mode of delivery), and if computer-based they may be adaptive, where the correctness of a candidate's response will determine the next question they receive.

Thus, there are many possible ways to construct a language test, and as well, there are some essential features of a good and useful language test.

What makes a standardized language test useful?

Bachman and Palmer (1996) defined a useful language test as having the following essential features:

- Construct validity: that the test actually measures an underlying ability and not some other ability (that is, that a test of

reading comprehension actually measures the ability to understand the reading passage and does not measure knowledge of the topic instead).

- Reliability: that results can be repeated, for example, across test versions and raters.

- Impact: that the impact of the test on its stakeholders (the test developers, the primary users – candidates, and the secondary users – receiving institutions and sponsoring bodies) is a positive one.

- Practicality: that the test can be taken with a minimum of trouble to candidates and to administrators, in terms of cost, time, travel, and delay in receiving results.

- Authenticity: that the tasks must be relevant to the environment in which the candidate will use the language.

- Interactiveness: that the tasks should engage the candidate and require them to use their language knowledge and their cognitive processing abilities, and also hold their interest.

As well as having all the features previously mentioned, a good test will focus on what learners **can do** rather than the **deficit model** (in which a test looks mostly at where candidates fail to achieve); a good test will focus on achieving the functions of language and communication (Taylor, 2006).

Assessment and International ELT

At this point we can now ask again: what is the place of assessment in international ELT? Assessment at the level of the classroom and the school, even the region, can have all the purposes mentioned earlier, and take all the forms mentioned earlier and more, but in the international context of ELT, assessment must also relate to something more, and that is the notion of international benchmarking.

What are international benchmarks? Why do we need internationally benchmarked assessments? The reason can be found in what is now a common situation in international education. A frequent question in ELT and international education in general is 'How well does s/he speak English?' If

only there were a simple answer. People say: 'Her English is fine' – but what does that mean? Or: 'He has enough English' – but enough for what? Let me tell you a story, and one that really caused me to wonder how widespread were misconceptions about language proficiency and how sensitive are the issues in this area. A few years ago a teacher at an Australian university posted a question on an Internet forum for teachers. The question asked for information about a particular certificate in language proficiency that an international student had presented, which the teacher had never seen before and she wondered what level of English it represented. Another university teacher replied by saying that he didn't know much about the qualification either, but he asked another question:

> What do people think about just phoning such an applicant to chat in general terms about their interest in working [in Australia] and about their current institution? … five minutes on the phone … should provide a good idea what the person's language competency is like in a general academic context.

This story raises several important questions. Firstly, we have to ask how much value a university could place on an impression of English language proficiency gained in a brief telephone conversation. Secondly, how could a university judge one applicant against another to see which applicant should be admitted? And finally, imagine what this experience would be like for the student, and ask yourself how fair it would be. In such an 'assessment', the student would have no chance to prepare, no chance to try to do their best, no chance to know what kind of questions the caller might ask, yet their whole academic future would depend on the basis of such an 'assessment'.

This is perhaps an extreme example, and is certainly not representative of university teachers in general in Australia or elsewhere, but it serves as an illustration of why international ELT needs international benchmarks of English language proficiency. An international benchmark is a measure of language proficiency that is useful to the stakeholders because all candidates can be measured equally, and the meaning of the results

(the levels or bands or scores) is known and understood. The most common international benchmark tests are the international standardized English proficiency tests, such as IELTS or TOEFL.

International benchmarks are useful to the candidate because:
- The result is portable.
- The result is respected.
- The result is understood by colleges and universities.
- The requirements of the test are known and the candidates can prepare.

International benchmarks are useful to the receiving institutions because:
- All applicants can be fairly assessed on the same scale.
- Decisions about entry-level requirements can be made with full knowledge of what the levels mean.
- These tests help to achieve quality assurance for the university's own programmes.

However, the use of international standardized tests of English proficiency raises some questions.

Washback
The first question raised by the use of international standardized tests of English proficiency is the issue of washback (also called backwash). A good international standardized test can have very positive washback into ELT classrooms, although this is of course not guaranteed.

Alderson and Wall's (1993) definition of washback as the influences of a form of assessment on teachers, teaching and learning (including curriculum and materials) is now generally accepted; all other effects of testing are regarded by most researchers as coming under 'impact' (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Hamp-Lyons, 2000). The best kind of assessment has a positive effect on how well students learn, and this is the ideal situation. However, there have been many discussions in ELT literature about the nature of washback and the degree to which it can be assumed that it is

beneficial. Wall summarised some key points in noting that a test that assists receiving institutions may not be helpful to teachers and learners, and that if we say a test has positive washback we must spell out what that washback is. She asked whether washback is a different phenomenon if it is to the learners or to the wider community, and argued that what was needed was information as to whether learning had been better because learners had studied to a particular test, pointing out that teachers should not jump to the conclusion than a 'good' test would result in a positive influence in an instructor's class, nor can a similar assumption be made regarding a 'bad' test and resulting negative effects (Wall, 2000).

A full discussion of washback from the use of international standardized English language proficiency tests is beyond the scope of this paper, but I would like to make a few general points. In judging whether good washback is more likely than not from a particular test, teachers can look at how well the test content and tasks relate to the target environment of language use. In planning classroom lessons and developing materials, they can look at what students have to do to complete the tasks in a test: what skills do they have to develop. And finally, the least useful way to proceed is to focus classroom activity purely on practice tests – while a certain amount of timed and untimed test practice can increase the confidence of students when they must take a test, test practice on its own can lose the focus on developing a broad range of language skills because the focus of classroom activity becomes simply finding the 'correct' answer.

International test? Or EAP assessment?

Linked to the issue of washback from the use of international standardized English language proficiency tests is whether a different form of assessment would generate better washback than a standardized international test, that is, whether receiving institutions should use tests that are specific to one course or area of study, so that students taking business subjects, for example, should take a business-based language test. O'Loughlin (2006) argues that when assessment is associated with an entire program, more often than not, the assessment can be a useful tool which can

be used to improve the learning outcomes of all students. He gives an example of a course where teachers spent as much time developing assessment tools as they did planning lessons, so that teaching and assessment were integrated – this is 'assessment as learning', and clearly there are situations where this form of assessment is to be preferred. But this is not what we mean by assessment in an international context, and in any case, this is an example of achievement testing, not proficiency testing.

We must ask whether in fact course-specific tests would be more likely to meet the very specific needs of students in their different subject areas. Against this is the growing reality that many students take subjects across disciplines, and many courses deliberately include inter-disciplinary subjects (e.g. Medicine may include counselling; IT may include marketing) (Clapham, 2000). The experience of the IELTS test in its first 6 years of existence is also illustrative of the case against subject-specific assessment. From 1989 to 1995, IELTS could be taken in three different modules depending on the intended subject area of the candidate; however, it was found that no significant information could be gained from discipline-specific assessment that could not be gained from a generalist form of the test, and for this reason among others, the test changed to the two Modules in use today, the Academic and General Training Modules.

It should also be noted that entry-level tests for university entry cannot expect candidates to have knowledge of university-level discourse patterns and expectations. This is unrealistic in an international standardized test, and affects the construct validity as something more than simple language skills are being tested (Clapham, 2000). In an international standardized test, how do we adequately measure the ability to produce a researched essay, a seminar presentation, or group response to an assignment, in any one subject area? These are skills that we expect all our students to acquire during the course of their studies, but they do not have this mastery before they begin.

Ethical language testing

It is increasingly being recognised that international standardized language tests have an impact on the wider community, for example, in their use for immigration purposes, or for professional registration. Over the last 10 years, issues of fairness in testing have received much attention. If we look back at the story told earlier of the lecturer who felt that a quick phone call would be sufficient to assess an applicant's suitability and ability to undertake a course of study, we can see immediately that issues of fairness were being ignored: a 'fair' test must respect the rights of the test taker to understand what the test is, what it does, what the results mean, what assessment criteria are being used, what the grades mean, and allow time for adequate preparation.

An important question here is whether the 'proper' use of an international standardized form of assessment is the responsibility of the test creator or the test user. Some writers (Chalhoub-Deville & Turner, 2000) support the idea that primary responsibility for deciding on appropriateness of scores used to make critical decisions remains with the test user, not the testing agency that creates and administers the test. Test users need to be very familiar with the tests they use, and the meaning of the scores awarded, and relate these to the demands of their academic course after appropriate and thorough investigation. Other writers feel this is still an unresolved question, and that the test creator may indeed have some responsibility for the uses to which their tests are put (O'Loughlin, 2006). Test developers do take account of the uses to which their tests are put, and a change in candidate cohort may lead, after research, to modifications in test content, to increase fitness for purpose (Taylor, 2006).

It is as well to differentiate here between 'critical language testing' and 'ethical language testing'. Hamp-Lyons has explored the question of 'critical language testing' in considerable detail, looking at the role of tests in people's lives (Hamp-Lyons, 2000). She notes that most stakeholders know little about the test they are using apart from seeing a score on the paper in front of them, and critical language testing tries to address this lack of

knowledge. Ethical language testing looks at the responsibility of the language testers, the people or bodies who construct and administer tests. Hamp-Lyons reminds us that most of the people who construct and administer tests are or were teachers; these people are increasingly questioning what they do and how they do it. She describes 'the knife-edge' on which the language testing professional balances: 'we accept that we are answerable for the effects/consequences of the testing activities in which we engage. But we often feel that our control over how tests are used and interpreted is tenuous at best.' She acknowledges that testing bodies are more open than ever before to critiques of what they do and how they do it, and provide more information than ever before about these things, but asks for a greater participation of the test takers themselves and their parents or guardians in such critiques of the test. She rightly points out that the voice of the test taker is the one voice missing from all that is said and written about testing.

Whose English?

Another very important question raised by international benchmark forms of assessment is the question of which English, or what form of English, we are testing – how do we define an international benchmark in the world of English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and World Englishes? There has been much of criticism of international examination boards for refusing to be open to non-native forms in assessment, regarding them as errors (Jenkins, 2006a; 2006b). The criticism argues that international tests reward learners' attempts to converge on native speaker-like forms but penalise all other forms of convergence (for example, adopting a non-native speaker form understood by both parties to an interaction).

While this is a legitimate area of concern, from my experience as a test developer and examiner trainer, much of this criticism ignores the very real work that international examination boards have done in broadening the cultural context of test content, and training raters to focus on effective communication rather than 'correct forms'. International standardized tests have all but abandoned the notion of the 'native-speaker' as part of their criteria of

assessment, as this notion has been steadily discredited in language studies. The term has far more currency outside the world of professional linguists and test designers than within these groups. For Cambridge ESOL examinations, of which the IELTS test is one, the position of the test designers is to make the linguistic content of their tests as 'representative as we can make it of the broad context in which English will be used beyond the test'. The test designers allow more flexibility in spoken mode where variation is normal than in written production 'since conformity to a standard is more common and reasonable' in written mode ("Worlds of English", 2006). Taylor discusses assessment of output and how this takes varieties of English into account: the type of language anticipated from international test candidates should be that which would be most beneficial to them in the highest number of international contexts, rather than a specific, restricted local context (Taylor, 2006).

However, while efforts are made to broaden the definition of the 'English' being tested, there are very good reasons why there will always remain a focus on normative usage in international standardized tests. The main reason I see why international language tests reward candidates who adapt their test responses to a more 'target-like' form (broadly defined) is that the test has to make assumptions about the domain of use of the test taker (the environment where they may find themselves using the target language), and that in that domain of use it would be more generally useful if a target-like, normative usage is adopted, as specific interlocutor forms cannot be anticipated. In most tests, the desired outcome for the language use is to be understood and to achieve some communicative goal or to complete a task – this is more likely to be achieved in a more generalizable way if a normative form is aimed at rather than an accommodated form. As Taylor (2006) points out that Cambridge ESOL tests reward candidates who undertake conversational repair, whereby the test-taker shows an awareness of occasions when their utterances have not achieved the desired communication goal for some reason (which may include use of a regional form, a form used by speakers whose first language is a language other

than English, or it may be learner error) and takes steps to repair the interaction through paraphrase and clarification.

Technology and testing

A very important area in international standardized forms of assessment is the rapidity with which the technology available as the mode of test delivery is changing. Alderson (2000) discussed many of these issues seven years ago, and it is astonishing how much the technology has changed just in those few years. Alderson raised many important questions: in objective testing, how accurate will machine-markable writing and speaking tests be? In an objective test with productive responses, these still need to be rated accurately. Will the number of item types available be restricted, because of the need to be machine-scorable? There are important issues of computer safety, and of the availability of the necessary technology in developing countries. The possibility of lower computer literacy of some candidates is an ongoing factor needing to be addressed (Alderson, 2000). When it comes to washback into test creation, will the technology determine test design rather than other more learner- or stakeholder-centred outcomes? It must also be asked whether productive language skills can in fact be effectively assessed via computer.

On the other hand, there are positives to using better technology in assessment: availability, swiftness of results delivery, the convenience of Internet-based delivery, the ability to use templates for test construction, the ability to access large databases of test items and randomise them. Alderson (2000) points out that computer-based tests have advantages for pedagogy in that they can offer immediate feedback (very good where learning is the desired result rather than a pass/fail result), they can be made more user-friendly, and can offer online support (which can be taken account of in assessment). They may allow for users to drive the test in being able to select easier or harder items for their own learning purposes, and being able to select the language of the rubrics and feedback (Alderson, 2000).

Where do we go from here?

From this point, a few general statements can be made, but more questions have been asked than answers given in this paper. Candidate numbers for international standardized tests continue to rise, and show no sign of slowing down as the uses to which these international forms of assessment are put continues to expand. However, test designers and test users need to consider questions of fairness and ethics in language testing, and to continue to adapt test content and assessment criteria for the dynamism of World Englishes and EIL/ELF. They also need to conduct ongoing monitoring of washback into the classroom of the large international tests, to make sure this washback is positive. Whatever the future holds, we also need to acknowledge that there is no such thing as the perfect test; we need a variety of forms of assessment, because there are such a variety of uses. The balance, difficult to maintain, between international benchmarked forms of assessment and more local forms of assessment, is all-important. Too far either way means the usefulness of the form of assessment is diminished. Assessment and testing are not simple concepts; assessment is very difficult to do well.

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Developing elementary skills with Simplified English materials: Listening and speaking

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to introduce 'Special English' scripts and audio files and show how they can be adapted for classroom use. The paper offers various ideas to foster improved skills in writing, reading, listening and speaking English. The paper first introduces the concept of Special English materials, typically a script of 500 words, then suggests ways to utilize this script in English courses. The author further presents techniques and resources for applying the materials to listening and speaking objectives. These include vocabulary and concept development in listening and several oral English techniques applicable for all levels.

Introduction

We are witnessing the rapid globalization of English language instruction as a result of the increasing supply of Internet-based content. The appeal of Internet-based content is self-evident to foreign language teachers and learners alike. Access to the World Wide Web allows teachers of EFL, at all levels of instruction, to actively mine the Internet for interesting content for inclusion into their lessons. The range of content concerning any field of study is exhaustive but along with such a wide range of choices, the decisions as to what to present to one's students becomes a pressing issue for curriculum planning. EFL instructors wishing to expand the amount of online content in their curriculum may feel overwhelmed at the choices. To address this concern, this paper examines the use of Simplified English (SE) content existing on the Internet for developing elementary level listening and speaking skills. First, online SE content is examined in view of student needs and syllabus design. Appendix 3 presents 18 activities for vocabulary, speaking and listening employing SE content in elementary to intermediate level classes.

This paper concludes that SE content, when coupled with interesting learning activities, can shape an effective and useful approach to EFL instruction.

SE, of which there are several versions, is a so-called "constructed language." With SE, this means that its lexicon, syntax and grammar are fixed at a simplified level by organizations interested in creating a subset of English specifically designed for ease of use by non-native speakers. The key to simplifying a language without weakening its expressive power is the careful elimination of unnecessarily complex linguistic features and standardization with an eye towards simplicity. The remaining rules of grammar and syntax, although constrained, do not violate those of Standard English. In most versions of SE listed below, the number of sanctioned grammar rules is reduced to a maximum of six to ten rules and commonly the word lists contain about 1500 words. Several versions of SE have been developed for general use. These include Simple English adopted by the online dictionary Simple English Wiktionary (Wikimedia Foundation, n.d.b.) and the Simple English

Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation, n.d.a.); Ogden's Basic English (Ogden's Basic English (n.d.); Special English: Learn American English and much more (Voice of America, n.d.) developed by Voice of America Broadcasting (VOA); Basic Global English developed by Grzega (2005); Simplified English (UserLab, 2002); and Specialized English (Basic English Institute, 2007). The latter two are generally used internationally by industries for technical documents. The term Simplified English (SE), as it is used in this paper, basically refers to all of the constructed languages mentioned above. They all aim to make English more understandable to non-native English speakers by using a restricted lexicon and simplified grammar. The issue is not really which SE to choose from because most decisions about what to use will be determined by the suitability of the content.

This paper looks at SE as a medium for English language acquisition in a non-native, English-speaking environment. On the Internet, SE content is regularly produced in matching text and audio files for news, entertainment and many other purposes. It is this marriage of audio and text that makes the Internet such a rich resource for students who otherwise lack easy access to a wide range of native-speaker produced content. SE content in both file formats is naturally suited for EFL instruction. At the moment, content comes in audio files or text files but in the future, we will undoubtedly see the emergence of online video SE content as well. At least one well-established SE content provider, VOA, has inspired instructors to create their own online interactive games and puzzles for learning the content, most notably "Interesting Things for ESL Students" (Kelly and Kelly, 2007). There is even a convenient, online picture dictionary created for Basic English on Wikipedia (Wikimedia Foundation. (n.d.c.).

Students' needs
Another crucial consideration facing teachers is the suitability of SE for meeting the needs of their students. SE is not for everyone. SE material is, admittedly, artificially constrained and may not appeal to teachers trained to value only "authentic" English in EFL instruction. Modern trends in language teaching place emphasis on naturally

occurring English in communicative situations. More and more, EFL textbooks strive to provide material that is "real" with dialogues that include hesitation, elision, colloquialisms, redundancy and other normal characteristics of spoken language. Their purpose is to prepare learners for the real world outside of the classroom. For example, students preparing to go abroad should hear samples of native speaker conversations spoken at normal speed. Recorded dialogs for training the ability to distinguish word boundaries amid the blending and overlapping of sounds in native speaker conversation would also be desirable. Certainly, increasing advanced students' exposure to natural English, in all it permutations is a worthy endeavor, especially for eventual success in a native speaker environment.

While this approach to language instruction has become the norm, there is also a very significant need for content that places emphasis on perceptual saliency, content that does not distract from the message with unnecessary vocal and verbal obstacles. The condensed nature of SE, with its set of simple parameters, is intentionally limited to facilitate comprehension. Over time, the narrow range of language items, presented at above normal rates of repetition, heightens awareness and familiarity and thus aids retention. Research indicates that input becomes intake only when the student notices and distinguishes distinct components of a language (Ellis, 1995). Krashen and Terrell (1983) and others have supported the idea of increasing comprehensible input to high levels at the early stages of language acquisition to facilitate intake and thus language acquisition.

Content
Educators who wish to incorporate SE into their curriculum have several issues to consider first. Some of these deal with the content side and some with the linguistic side of the learning equation. Ordinarily, curriculum planners select course content based on 1) the level of language ability and 2) the functions needed by their students. In a way, SE content removes some of the difficulty of matching the level of the students' English ability because the providers have already taken it into account.

From the student's perspective, SE content, like any course material must appear to have face value. In other words, content must be both interesting and comprehensible to the student. While younger learners might be attracted to stories, young adults may desire content with more practical knowledge. At an elementary level of instruction, the face value of model language takes on increased importance. Students know their own limitations with the foreign language, but dream of fully functioning in the target language culture some day. Regrettably, a low tolerance for unfamiliar language and difficult material can make unfiltered content dispiriting and ultimately destructive to a student's motivation and progress in learning English. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) show that anxiety causes cognitive interference in input processing as well as output. With SE, the reduced speed of delivery and simplified content allow elementary learners to increase their self-confidence and subsequently their motivation.

Normally, at an elementary level, teachers need to focus on building vocabulary, building confidence and building a springboard for integrated skill development. This is where the effectiveness of SE will be most apparent because it will, to a larger extent, satisfy the learners' need for grammatical, syntax and lexicon levels which do not aggravate any anxiety they may be experiencing in the process of learning English.

One could argue that since the linguistic features of SE have been simplified, the cognitive level of the content must therefore be limited as well. There is, however, a vast range of complex subject matter offered daily, in a way only the Internet can provide. Even though transmitted via a filtered, synthetic, simplified structure and at a slower speed of delivery, stimulating content in SE is readily available. Additionally, the content available tends to be up to date and appealing to students who are interested in current events, culture, technical fields and narratives.

However, as with all aspects of the Internet, curriculum and syllabus planners need to be careful. Although the level of online SE may be appropriate,

some content providers may have an underlying agenda in presenting the material. Some teachers would argue that SE content should be politically and religiously neutral. But a quick check of SE content, in many cases, will quickly reveal some religious or political affiliation of the providers. Another issue is the appropriate frequency of using SE for a given group of students. Is it wise to base a syllabus solely on SE? These are questions that each instructor will have to answer before proceeding. The methods presented here reflect the belief that learning activities should present opportunities for negotiation of meaning within the right affective climate to achieve some specific tasks.

Methods
The following section explains techniques for utilizing online SE audio files and scripts for vocabulary building, listening and speaking. Naturally, there may be some overlap among these skill groups within a particular exercise leading to a more comprehensive, integrated language learning activity. For example, listening content could be used for setting up a speaking exercise and speaking exercises entail many task-based, listening activities. The educational and motivational value of games for vocabulary and grammar learning cannot be overstressed. Games make the student feel the words and structures are important and necessary because the game cannot be played without them (Allen, 1983). For the purposes of this paper, a passage from Voice of America's Special English Web page (Voice of America, 2006) was adapted (Appendix 1). This model passage typifies the level and adaptability to methods of instruction detailed later in this paper. The term passage in this paper refers to a model SE audio or text file that will be used in class. SE content refers to online scripts and audio files produced for public consumption by organizations.

Schema activation
Students who have little knowledge of the world outside the sphere of their everyday lives will find difficulty in processing new vocabulary that does not exist in their own personal vernacular (Rivers, 1985). If too many words are unfamiliar for cultural and specialized reasons, we quickly reach the upper

limit of comprehensibility and intake. The passage length and the amount of interest the topic fosters among the students are the two main considerations. It is essential that careful choice of content results in passages that are not so alien that too much time is spent pre-teaching the passage. This is not to downplay the importance of proper schema activation and background information, but too much time can be wasted by a poorly chosen passage.

The teacher should set the stage in the students' minds before attempting to use some passages that deal with topics outside their worldview. This is especially important for listening exercises that are being presented for the first time. By building up a foundation of knowledge through the following techniques, students will be better prepared to catch words and their meanings when they listen to the audio file and their reading skills will improve as well.

Before reading or listening to a file downloaded from the Internet, the teacher should introduce the topic and carefully familiarize the students with new, topic-specific vocabulary and unknown proper nouns. This, along with drawing out vocabulary that the students may already know, will help to activate their mental schema for new information in the passage. One technique called 'group brainstorming,' calls for students to supply words in both their own language and English that deal with that topic. The teacher can conduct this exercise by writing the students' words on the blackboard while guiding their attention towards related words and linking them visually. Students may also work individually or in small groups to create these webs of word associations. Basically, this exercise begins with a blank sheet of paper and students quickly write down all the words they can think of concerning a topic by word association. They follow their train of thought along a vector starting with one word, adding a line to another word and then branching out with more lines to related words and details until they come to a dead end. Then, they return their attention to a new word in the center and connect ideas in more lines going outwards. The result is less important than the process because this is a warming-up exercise.

Vocabulary building

There are word lists that contain the basic lexical items for each version of "constructed English." For example, the core list for Basic English contains 850 words, but as Richards and Gibson (1945) points out, this number swells to about 1100 in actual practice. A more realistic version, Voice of America's Special English (Voice of America, n.d.) covers 1500 core words. Teachers should expand on these core lists, anyway, to cover words with more than one grammatical function, such as related verb and noun forms (e.g., accept and acceptance, allow and allowance). In both word lists, the definitions are intentionally consistent, meaning that all words are defined using vocabulary existing in that word list. Most word definitions are narrowed down to one meaning. Unlike many regular English to English dictionaries, the definitions are not more difficult to understand than the original word being defined. This makes each word list itself an excellent springboard for speaking and listening activities. Appendix 3 introduces tasks for vocabulary building.

Online resources

This section introduces software and Web sites for teacher whose students have access to the Internet. The following Web sites serve as a resource for teachers interested in further exploiting the potential of SE content. These resources are offered here in the interest of thoroughness and many may not be suitable for every teaching environment, even assuming convenient Internet access.

The VOA Special English Web page has several links to outside content providers which merit exploring. By far the most interesting is www.manythings.org (Kelly and Kelly, 2007). This Web site contains many Special English comprehension quizzes and interactive games to practice vocabulary used in VOA SE programs. These activities review material on VOA Special English Programs such as *Science Reports, American Mosaic, This is America, Science in the News, Environment Report, Development Report, Agriculture Report, Health Report* and *In the News* (Voice of America, n.d.).

The Web site www.spotlightradio.net (Spotlight, 2007) is another content provider that uses their own word list to produce radio broadcasts with accompanying transcripts for students who want to both listen to and read the content. Although Spotlight is a Christian organization and is not primarily concerned with teaching English (Spotlight, 2007), the content covers many different topics and the audio files are read at about 90 words per minute in short simple sentences. Podcasts of their programs are also a valuable resource for listening material.

Free online courseware called Moodle (Moodle, 2007) is a full-featured package that would make a convenient educational headquarters for downloaded SE audio files and text files. In addition, the software includes modules for constructing your own exercises, tests and many other activities. Operation requires a server and a dedicated database for handling all the components of the courseware. Teachers whose students have access to the Internet will be amazed at how powerful this courseware can be.

A company called BitDay Studio sells a software program for Windows computers, which claims to make studying VOA online broadcasts more convenient and effective. Titled VOA Special English Assistant v4.21 (2007), this software was designed specifically for VOA SE and will allow the user to manipulate the audio and transcript files with user controls for speed, repetition, parsing and many other features. The license to download the software costs about $10.

Conclusion

This paper examined the utility of online SE content for gaining basic skills in EFL classes around the world. This paper dealt mainly with practical applications of SE for teaching vocabulary, listening and speaking skills. Teaching techniques that leverage students' natural competitive and cooperative tendencies were suggested as ways to exploit the potential that lies within online audio and text files, and interactive Web pages. SE deserves attention from both curriculum designers and individual instructors for both its

comprehensibility and local availability, even in remote corners of the globe.

As a subset of Standard English, the suitability of SE for any particular learning environment is not universal. However, this paper points out how the synergies of the duel medium of SE and online delivery are helpful for EFL educators everywhere searching for a practical and plentiful source of material for instruction at beginner to intermediate levels. Even though, engaging SE content is limited compared to that of Standard English, the amount of online SE content continues to grow rapidly. Because of this online distribution of SE, English is evolving to meet the needs of non-native speakers the world over who require a simplified version at the early stages of their English acquisition. In the world of online EFL, simplified English can serve as a stepping-stone to understanding more about the outside world and, hopefully, more complex language acquisition in the process.

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Appendix 1

Partial Audio Script: Voice of America Special English December 29, 2006
Expanding Ways to Communicate and Have Fun on the Net on American Mosaic

Welcome to AMERICAN MOSAIC in VOA Special English.

I'm Bob Doughty. Two thousand six is almost over. On this special show, Shirley Griffith and I look back at some trends from the past year. The dictionary says a trend is a kind of movement or direction. People around the world used their computers to buy goods, communicate with others, listen to music, see pictures and learn about different places and ideas.

In two thousand six, more people around the world used new ways to communicate and connect with each other through the Internet. We take a look at some kinds of technology that became more popular this year.

A blogger in a Chicago coffee shop

The blog is one form of communication that increased in popularity. Blog is a short way of saying Web log. Through these personal Web sites, people can share their lives, ideas and opinions with anyone on the Internet. Millions of people throughout the world are creating and reading blogs. There are reportedly thirteen million blogs in the United States alone.

People of all ages have their own blogs. For young people, they are a way to show their writings and other forms of self-expression. Blogs also connect people with other people who have the same interests. For example, teachers use blogs to share ideas, experiences and concerns about their work with other teachers.

Many Web sites offer free services to create personal Web pages and fill them with writings and pictures. These sites include *MySpace*, used mainly by teenagers and young adults. *MySpace* is an online community that lets people share messages and pictures with an increasing number of friends. About one hundred twenty million people use *MySpace*. It is the most popular social networking site on the Web.

YouTube is another Internet site that became more popular this year. This Web site lets anyone create, share and watch short videos. People can watch almost anything on *YouTube*: news, sports and entertainment events. Music videos. And videos made by people in their own homes. These include videos of people singing or dancing, or animals doing funny things.

YouTube says that people watch at least one hundred million videos on the site every day. Three young men created *YouTube* almost two years ago as a personal video sharing service. They recently sold it to Google for more than one and one half billion dollars.   (398 words)

Appendix 2

Worksheet based on Voice of America Special English, December 29, 2006

Expanding Ways to Communicate and Have Fun on the Net on American Mosaic

Directions: Search for and circle the words below in the puzzle.

Hidden Words

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Y V V O S T S E R E T N I D Q
R U V E B E W T R E N D D P C
V S S D I C C E T L D F K V O
X H E I L H A N N Y M C B W N
K O T V L N S R E T U P M O C
O P I N I O N E M I T R A R E
S Z S M O L O T N R R D T L R
C R A N N O I N I A U E S D N
I L E M L G L I A L F S P B S
S J L H O Y L K T U T T O X A
U A P F C E I S R P J N R S E
M G O L B A M A E O R E T E D
I R E G A N E E T P W V S M I
M U P X D Y Z T N E M E V O M
S W E N O I T C E R I D G H Q
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Appendix 3

Appendix 3 introduces tasks for vocabulary building. These include finding antonyms, synonyms, homonyms, spelling, word searches, crossword puzzles, word jumbles, and sentence formation with selected words. Because Simplified English has been reduced to a fundamental level, it presents an opportunity for building upon this limited number of words in a systematic and logical manner. Some activities involve the use of a dictionary or thesaurus, so students will be augmenting their personal lexis and working with spelling as well. These activities could be incorporated into a pre-listening or pre-reading activity or assigned for homework after completion of other activities.

Word Card activities

Although they represent an investment in time, effort and material, making word cards will pay off in the long run. Word cards may be hand written or more conveniently produced on a computer. Flash cards have the target words from the word list on one side and its definition on the other side. Another type of card is printed on only one side with a word, a definition, or a picture. One-sided cards can be used in many speaking games to drill vocabulary,

definitions or spelling. The students, where appropriate and feasible, can make the cards by themselves, lesson by lesson, either in class or as homework. Availability of materials and tools will certainly be an issue for some schools.

"Concentration" |Time = 15 |Level = beginner ~ | Mode = 2 ~ small groups|

Concentration is a card matching game that is played with two sets of cards. You need a dozen or more cards printed on one side with the target words and another set with their corresponding definitions of the words. The cards are all laid out in random order face down and students turn over two cards at a time trying to get two that match each other. If the cards match, then the student can pick up the cards. If the cards do not match, then they are turned over again. Students must concentrate to remember where the words and their matching definitions are

ADULTS	IDEAS	SITES
ANIMALS	INTERESTS	SPORTS
BILLION	INTERNET	TEACHERS
BLOG	LIVES	TECHNOLOGY
COMPUTERS	MILLION	TEENAGER
CONCERNS	MOVEMENT	TREND
DIRECTION	MUSIC	VIDEO
ENTERTAINMENT	NEWS	WEB
EVENTS	OPINION	WORK
EXPERIENCES	PEOPLE	WORLD
FORM	POPULARITY	YEAR
HOMES		

located.

"Soccer" (or Football) |Time = 20 |Level = beginner ~| Mode = two teams|

This activity, called Soccer, works well as a flashcard game for beginners. Rather than tie the activity to a particular passage, use this game for a general review of words or definitions. First, divide the class into two rows of students facing you in single file. Place the game board in front of the teams. Put a marker in the center of the game board and flash the first card. The front two students race to say the right word or use it in a sentence. The winner moves the "ball" (marker) down the field one line and both players go to the end of the line.

A point is scored when the ball reaches either goal line. The ball goes back to the center line and the play continues. A good soccer field game board may be downloaded from www.mes-english.com (MES English, 2007).

"Baseball" |Time = 30 |Level = intermediate ~ | Mode = small groups|

Baseball works well as a spelling game but it could be altered to include sentence building or making questions. Two players or teams compete to move a marker around a baseball game board. The "pitcher" picks up a word card from the pile on the table. This "pitcher" reads the word to the other team. The "batter" on the other team must correctly spell the word, if it is a spelling game, or use it in a sentence if that is the task. If the batter makes no error, he or she may move his or her marker to first base. If the batter makes a mistake, it is counted as an "out" and the next player from the same team attempts to get on base by spelling the next target word chosen from the pile. The first team continues their inning until three outs have been committed. Three outs equal one inning, meaning the teams change defensive and offensive roles. Then the other team attempts to get "batters" around the bases to score points by spelling the target words chosen from the pile.

Verb Cards |Time = 30 |Level = high beginner ~ |Mode = small groups | Card preparation required|

The aim of this activity is to practice verb tenses in original sentences. There are two options for which cards to make here: 1) a set of all the verbs in the wordlist, or 2) only cards that appear in recently studied passages. On each card, one side shows a verb in its present, past and past participle tenses. Before beginning, the teacher specifies which verb tense the students will be practicing. The teacher could also reinforce the usage that is currently being studied by encouraging the students to use the verbs in a similar manner and to match the facts as they appear in the passage. Put the cards face down in the center of the table and one student chooses a card from the top. That student must make a sentence in the tense specified by the teacher. Points could be awarded for successfully using the word in

a grammatically correct fashion. The play continues with the opposing team choosing a card from the pile and constructing a sentence with that verb. A good list of 94 VOA verbs used in business is available at www.manythings.org (Kelly and Kelly, 2007).

Worksheets

Word Circle |Time = 20 | Level = Beginner | Mode = pairs / small groups|

This is an easy word search activity. From a selected passage, the teacher should extract target vocabulary and randomly arrange the words order on a page to form a circle. Delete spaces between words so that they all flow together into one round chain of letters. If the teacher has access to Microsoft Word, text can easily be printed in a circle using the WordArt menu. Give one worksheet to each pair/group of students. Their task is to search around the circle for individual, hidden words and write them each out at the bottom of the page.

Opposites |Time = 20 | Level = Beginner | Mode = pairs / small groups|

From a selected passage, the teacher should extract new nouns and adjectives and list them on the left side of the worksheet. Next to the words, insert a blank line for students to write their answers. Students in pairs or groups use a dictionary to find two or more antonyms. This should be a timed activity and the group with the most words is declared the winner. The vocabulary quizzes at www.manythings.org (Kelly and Kelly, 2007) contain several games that test knowledge of antonyms with nouns and adjectives. These could be mined for worksheet content.

Synonyms / Homonyms |Time = 20 |Level = Beginner| Mode = pairs / small groups|

From a selected passage, the teacher should list the adjectives and nouns that have likely synonyms vertically on the left side of a page. To the right of these, print blank lines for student answers. When necessary, students may use a regular dictionary to find the two or more synonyms and write these on

the worksheet. This should be a timed activity and the group with the most words is declared the winner. There are plenty of homonyms, as well, with which to have fun, even within the limited word lists of SE. About thirty SE homonym pairs may be extracted from the vocabulary quizzes at manythings.org. Simply list new vocabulary on the left side of the page and students write the homonyms on the right. Once the worksheet is filled, extension activities include making word cards and playing a game,

Crossword Puzzles |Time = 30 | Level = Beginner | Mode = pairs / small groups|

Teachers wishing to make free crossword puzzles can access www.puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com where they will find several puzzle making tools. The teacher supplies hints such as antonyms, synonyms, and homonyms that appear in a passage that force students to recycle vocabulary. Crossword puzzles make a natural extension of a cloze activity. If each hint has one gap, that word would be a crossword puzzle answer. The hints are written as cloze sentences from the passage or cloze sentences that summarize it.

Hidden Words |Time = 30 | Level = Beginner | Mode = pairs / small groups|

To set up this activity, the teacher chooses words from the passage that need further study. In the puzzle example shown in Appendix 2, the words are extracted from the model passage from Appendix 1. This worksheet was produced online at www.puzzlemaker.school.discovery.com (Discover School's Puzzlemaker, 2005) in a matter of minutes and can be saved in different formats. With such easy and powerful tools available, it just makes more sense to study words in a game-like atmosphere.

Listening activities

The following section describes three listening activities. The purpose here is to introduce content and verify completion of a comprehension task. Necessarily, these are teacher-centered activities, which utilize cloze reading and listening, dictation

and responding in short and long answers. Students use different strategies when processing aural information and the printed text. When the students' attention is focused on the phonemes, intonation and stress to decode the input, this exercise has more to do with bottom-up skill building. With proper schema activation, plenty of inference, deduction and cognition are stimulated as well. In order to fill in the missing words as they are spoken on the audio, aural information is overlaid with the context for a truly integrated activity.

Cloze (Aural) |Time = 20 |Level = beginner ~| Mode = class|

Cloze materials are easily produced on the computer once the text file has been downloaded. Since the passage is already in text file format, the teacher simply needs to paste the text into word processing software and to delete key words or phrases. Even easier would be to go to Sugiura's (1998) Web page (http://oscar.lang.nagoya- u.ac.jp/program/perl/ cloze2.html) and use the online cloze generator. Aural cloze techniques are done with or without a script for students to see (Ur, 1984). When constructing a cloze passage, systematic omissions can focus the students' attention on specific language items. For example, the teacher could omit the unstressed language items such as articles, prepositions, and verb tenses. In other instances, the teacher might omit key vocabulary for that particular passage. Finally, the traditional every-five-words technique is also an option.

To conduct an aural cloze listening task without giving the students the script to read, the teacher should read two or three-sentence chunks of the text with just one fill-in gap for each chunk. The portion to be omitted can be substituted with some nonsense words or by clapping hands once for each syllable in the cloze gap. The students shout out or jot down the missing phrases and the exercise goes on.

Dictation |Time = 20 | Level = beginner ~ | Mode = class|

This activity uses the traditional format, in which the teacher reads the downloaded text file or, better yet, plays a downloaded audio file to the students

who write what they hear. Options here include printing the script exactly as it is spoken or, as a further challenge, telling the students that one half of the sentences are mistaken and one half are correct, either factually or linguistically. Students must determine the incorrect sentences and correct them. Their answers are then verified against the original script (Rinvolucri, 1984). Dictation can also be turned into a game by randomizing the sentences and having the students reconstruct the original order of the passage. This activity works best as a verification step after students have been exposed to the material as homework.

Listen and Respond |Time = 20 | Level = beginner ~ | Mode = class|

Listening comprehension may be verified by hand raising, writing or speaking with short or long answers. Quick checks with a show of hands are non-threatening and efficient. Higher-level students can produce short or long answers to questions prepared by the teacher on the passage either in writing or orally. Long, spoken answers are best delayed until the students feel ready for this stage. The important point is that meaning is conveyed that indicates the students understood what they heard. As in the dictation exercise above, you can give the students a text that contains mistakes and they must listen carefully to the actual audio file, identify the discrepancies while reading their version and finally, correct the errors.

Speaking activities

The six speaking activities presented here aim at increasing fluency and reinforcing the content. They emphasize question-formation about content, recitation, pair dictation, summarizing content, and improving pronunciation. These exercises are best conducted after the students have absorbed the passage through pre-listening, listening and reading activities. Proper preparation will ensure smooth production in later stages of speaking and writing. As luck would have it, the limited and standardized vocabulary of SE translates into less time required for pre-teaching and setting up for these activities. Likewise, passages in SE are simplified enough for a student to act as teacher of other students. This

would be unfeasible where the difficulty of the words and grammar exceeds a certain level. Learners have the audio file with which to model their English, so achieving a smooth sounding intonation and pronunciation is not unreasonable to expect.

Pronunciation Practice |Time = 15 |Level = beginner ~|class / small groups|

Recitation is a useful activity for improving the mechanical language skills. The audio and text files should be presented in unison. Play and pause the recording after each sentence or two and have students read and then look up from the text while speaking. If the students are reading the some or all of the passage not accompanied by the audio, have them complete the reading in a specified time. Although the recorded SE passages are usually spoken at about 90-100 words per minute, students could be asked to listen to one section and repeat it at normal speed. Alternately, this exercise could be conducted as a race between individuals or teams to see who can finish reading first. Finally, have them listen without the text and try to repeat the sentences. The audio files should be made available to the students where circumstances permit.

Tic-Tac-Toe Questions |Time = 30 |Level = beginner ~| Mode = groups of 4 |

The teacher makes a tic-tac-toe grid with 25 (5 x 5) squares or 16 squares (4 x 4). In each square, the teacher writes the first two words of a question (ex. Who is…?, When did…?, Why was…?). These question stems should generally correspond with the factual content in the passage being studied. Give one copy of your Tic-Tac-Toe worksheet to every group of students split into Team A and Team B. Team A starts by putting one of their markers on a square and, using the question-stem in that square, makes a grammatically correct question about the passage. Team B should listen carefully and decide if the question is error free. If Team B can detect any errors, then Team A forfeits the square and removes its marker and Team B gets to choose any square. If Team A's question is judged valid by Team B, they must try to correctly answer the question both in terms of grammar but also factual

content. If Team B's answer is somehow incorrect, the square goes to Team A and they may continue by placing a marker on another square and making a valid question. Each team has the responsibility to listen carefully and to judge the other's utterances. The object of the activity is to be the first team to fill a row with markers in a straight line, vertically, horizontally or diagonally.

Jeopardy |Time = 45 |Level = high beginner| Mode = pairs / small groups|

Named after the popular television quiz show in the United States, Jeopardy, this exercise requires the students to paraphrase some factual information in the passage, either orally or in writing. Students on the other team must come up with the questions that would account for these "answers." First, each team should study the passage and prepare "answers." Next, one side reads their sentence and the other side must make a suitable question. In a second version, the teacher could prepare the answer portions and the students could produce the questions. This game is essentially the opposite of Tic-Tac-Toe questions above. An "answer" and valid response could look something like this example:
Answer: "Blogs, MySpace and YouTube all became popular last year."
Question: "What were some new trends on the internet in 2006?"

Spot the Errors |Time = 30 |Level = high beginner ~| Mode = groups of 3|

The teacher extracts nine sentences from the passage and for each sentence, creates two similar versions that contain a grammatical error such as subject/verb agreement, singular vs. plural nouns, prepositions and so on. These three versions are written on three separate lists. The three lists are then labeled A, B and C. In each group, give list A to one student, list B to another and list C to the third. First, students should then silently read their three sentences and identify which ones are correct and which contain errors. Next they should take turns reading their sentences out loud to each other and discuss which one is grammatically correct. Students must listen carefully to each other to

discover who has the correct sentence. Once the students have agreed upon the corrected sentences, they write them down on a sheet of paper in paragraph form and submit them to the teacher. Finally, the group members should correct the leftover sentences that contained errors.
Jumbled Text |Time = 30 |Level = beginner ~ | Mode = groups of three|

This activity has the students recite a portion of a passage with recitation enough clarity to enable the group to solve a puzzle. A passage is split into sections and the students have to put it back together correctly by careful reading and listening. In order to reconstruct the passage, additional communication opportunities will naturally arise. To prepare the passage, use a word processing application to reformat it to include gaps between sentences or sections. Consideration should be given about the merits of splitting the passage at the sentence level or paragraph level. Using scissors, cut the passage into sections and give one part to each group member. To begin, the group members each take turns reading their section orally without showing it to the others. Their goal is to restore the passage to its original state. This requires careful listening and discussion by the students to determine the correct order of the sentences. When they are finished, they call the teacher over to check if it has been reassembled correctly.

Chain Summarizing |Time = 30 |Level = intermediate ~| Mode = small groups|

In this activity, students in small groups take turns retelling the passage in their own words. Reviewing the important vocabulary in the passage will facilitate this. One student begins by forming a sentence that paraphrases the first part of the passage. Each successive student in the group adds a sentence to the summary, slowly building up a complete digest of the passage. Once the passage can be summarized with some degree of confidence, the next step is to substitute local information for the foreign information in the passage. For example, students can use the key vocabulary from the passage to explain about the topic in their own country or lives. Many VOA passages on health,

agriculture, development and science lend themselves to this type of expansion activity.

Bridging the secondary school gap: An experienced based writing syllabus for university classrooms

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Abstract

The primary goal of this paper is to present conclusions of a questionnaire, focus group study and instructor think-aloud session taken in 2006 involving first year Japanese students and instructors of the basic writing course at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) in Chiba, Japan. It investigates students' transition to, and difficulties encountered in a university basic writing course and instructors methods of teaching writing. After a brief introduction to the university, project findings will be summarized before examining the process of curriculum development and implementation procedure of a two-year writing curriculum at KUIS. Conclusions of this study will propose explicit approaches for university teachers to generate a writing curriculum that enables students to smoothly make the transition from the secondary classroom to a university level writing environment.

Introduction

Before explaining the process of creating the writing curriculum at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS), it is necessary to understand the underlying educational philosophy of the university. The English Language Institute (ELI) at KUIS started as an 'experiment' 20 years ago with the main goals of accommodating different styles of learners, developing learner autonomy and creating a personalized curriculum for each student. Some essential features of this curriculum include flexibility of route, rate and mode of learning as well as allowing choice and developing learner responsibility (ELI handbook 2006-2007, p. 29-32). This approach was radical in the context of Japanese higher education at the time, where the university experience was seen as a vacation period between senior high school (SHS) and career employment.

Some of the 'new' approaches KUIS introduced since its inception include placing students according to their performance on various sections of the Kanda English Proficiency Test (KEPT), using English to teach course content and limiting class size to 25 students per class. Also, materials development became the responsibility and research focus of limited term lecturers and was overseen by tenured professors at KUIS in the first and second year writing courses. It is important to note that the reading and writing skills committee, which has been comprised of limited term lecturers, has been responsible for the Basic Writing (BW) course curriculum and that tenured professors have been responsible for the Advanced Writing (AW) curriculum. Over the years in BW, a textbook has been used; other times original materials have been created, used and re-written. For BW, there has always been freedom and flexibility in choosing the course materials depending on the decisions of the research committee. The first year curriculum

assumes that students have little writing experience in English; therefore, writing must be taught from the creation of a sentence, then the creation of a paragraph, and finally at the end of the first year of instruction, with the creation of an argumentative essay. As for the second year Advanced Writing (AW) curriculum, the guidelines and outcomes were created by tenured professors and taught mostly by limited term lecturers. The second year's main goal has been to develop critical writing skills such as the research paper. Following the second year AW course, students have not been required to take additional writing courses.

Just as Takagi (2001) found in the study of writing instruction in secondary schools, first year students at KUIS come from a variety of academic backgrounds which greatly affects their L2 writing acquisition. Such varied backgrounds as attending an after-school cram school, attending special lectures on writing or having experience studying abroad greatly influence how an individual views and learns writing. As a writing instructor of students and a language education researcher, I saw a need to not only ask instructors of the class for feedback on the class (Appendix 3), but also to create a questionnaire (Appendix 1) and elicit information from students about their various L1/L2 writing experiences and their transference process from a secondary to tertiary writing program. I followed up this study up with focus group discussions (Appendix 2).

It is also important to note that this study was similar to Kobayashi and Rinnert's (2002) report, which focused on high school students' perceptions of their high school L1 writing instruction and how this affects L2 writing. However, my study focuses more on how writing experience during secondary school in L1 and L2 effects students` transfer to tertiary education as well as how a curriculum can be created which utilizes L1/L2 experience, making the transfer easier to a university writing program.

For this study, the needs of the students were elicited by group administering of questionnaires, interpreting responses and following-up with qualitative focus group discussions. The initial stage of creating questionnaires was carefully monitored

before administering to avoid common pitfalls of questionnaires such as irrelevant or leading questions, bias, direction ambiguity, confusion, unstructured ordering of the questions, editing mistakes and questions that respondents are unable to answer (Brown, 2001). After these factors were taken into careful consideration, a questionnaire was administered to students, and from these responses, focus group discussion questions were created for more in-depth feedback from students.

The questionnaire was originally written in English and translated into Japanese. After trialing this translated version, the questionnaire was slightly modified. Following this, BW teachers administered the questionnaire to their students. A total of 272 students completed the questionnaire. As shown in Appendix 1, the questionnaire contained 14 questions that included multiple choice, closed-ended questions. Question grouping was determined using a combination of categories (Rosset, 1982; Patton, 1987) that elicited behavior/experience, abilities, attitudes, solutions, opinions and knowledge. The questionnaire was given during weeks 11 and 12 during the fall semester of 2006 in order to provide a 'snapshot' of student attitudes of their writing experience and transfer in mid-semester. Following this, six focus groups comprising of six students met for 30 minutes and were given conversation prompts based upon responses to the questionnaire, which they could discuss in English or Japanese. The questionnaire questions were broken into four categories.

I.   High School Experience 1-7
II.   Importance areas of writing 8-9
III. Transfer to KUIS – questions 10-13
IV.   Student recommendations – question 14.

Questionnaire and focus group findings

As one can see from the results of the questionnaire (Table 1.1), the first seven questions (student experience) indicated that students had little experience writing in high school L2, most of which was short in length and focused upon essays for university entrance exams. The focus groups stated their writing class in L2 was an optional lesson, and this writing was descriptive in nature with emphasis

Table 1.1.   Summary of results of student questionnaires

Students had 25-25 hours of study in L1 but less than 25 hours of instruction in L2 and, in terms of writing length, their assignments were between 10 and 30 sentences.

An overwhelming majority of students had no outside or specialized training in Japanese or English writing, but those that did reported that they felt this instruction helped them in transferring ability to the tertiary level.

Percentage of students that rated the following as extremely important (4) in L1 writing

Original ideas	26%
Content	39%
Grammar/vocabulary	50%
Structure	40%

Percentage of students that rated the following as extremely important (4) in L2 writing

Original ideas	27%
Content	32%
Grammar/vocabulary	33%
Structure	27%

Students who stated the following were new for them at KUIS

Brainstorming	70%
The writing process	55%
Paragraphs	22%
Thesis statements	26%
Transitions	34%
Categorizing ideas	38%
Evaluating ideas	51%
Organizing ideas	36%
Peer editing groups	80%
Using computers to write	65%
Conversation about my writing	53%
Writing Drafts	31%
Using a writing textbook	39%

Students were asked what kind of L1 writing experience they have had

Entrance test practice	72%
Journals or diaries	71%
E-mails	86%
Blogs	19%
Chat (kei-tai or internet)	70%
Poetry or creative writing	16%
Essays	39%

Students were asked what kind of L2 writing experience they have had

Entrance test practice	65%
Journals or diaries	52%
E-mail	66%
Blogs	6%
Chat	46%
Poetry or creative writing	6%
Essays	25%

Students were asked what kind of essay writing experience they have had

	Japanese	English
Descriptive	□ (75%)	□ (55%)
Argumentative	□ (48%)	□ (17%)
Critique	□ (57%)	□ (10%)
Business	□ (6%)	□ (4%)
Biography	□ (8%)	□ (5%)
Compare and contrast	□ (40%)	□ (17%)
Summary	□ (67%)	□ (42%)
Historical	□ (18%)	□ (9%)
NONE	□ (8%)	

Students were asked what they like to see change in the current BW class

	More	Less
Assignment length requirement	□ (38%)	□ (62%)
Time allowed to complete assignment	□ (74%)	□ (26%)
Feedback from peers	□ (62%)	□ (38%)
Feedback from teacher	□ (54%)	□ (46%)
Computer use	□ (44%)	□ (56%)
Computer training	□ (74%)	□ (26%)

on grammar and structure. A majority of students had little extra-curricular writing and those who did found this helpful before entering KUIS. Concerning questions eight and nine, 50% of students ranked grammar as being the 'most important' and an overwhelming 77% of students ranked structure as being 'very important' or 'most important' in L1 writing experience. Both grammar and structure also were ranked very important in L2, which reinforces students' interdependence and transferability of L1 and L2 writing skills and concepts. When asked which was important in L2 writing, 35% of students ranked 'content' and 'original ideas' in questions eight and nine as 'very important' and 26% stated 'most important,' which were in opposition to the teachers' opinions elicited in the think-aloud session (Appendix 3). Two of the

focus groups agreed that content and original ideas were difficult for them to understand when first studying at KUIS.

In question ten, students perceived concepts such as brainstorming, the writing process, and peer revision groups as new for them. In peer revision groups, students would discuss and justify their writing, which was something they had never done in L1 or L2. The focus groups reported they were first confused about the educational value of such an activity, yet, on the questionnaire, students stated they wanted more peer reviewing (62%) in the classes, compared to teacher feedback collected in the teacher feedback session (54%). The focus group reported the opposite of this, stating they

want more feedback from the teacher, as they do not feel confident in classmate's editing ability.

Questions 11 and 12 investigated what kind of general writing experience students have in L1 and L2. As stated before, students mainly have had writing experience with entrance test practice sessions, journals, e-mails and chat (mobile phone or internet) in both L1 and L2. Though students have experience writing descriptive essays in L1 and L2 (L1 75%, L2 55%), which are a part of BW; 48% of students stated they have had L1 argumentative writing experience, and only 17% of students have had argumentative L2 writing experience. As for the critique, a very small percent of students have had experience with the critique essay in L2 (10%), but 57% of students claimed they have had critique writing experience in L1. During several of the focus groups, students stated they were unclear on the differences between the argumentative and critique essay, which could explain such statistics.

Finally, in BW, computers are used both inside and outside of the classroom. During the think-aloud session, instructors stated they have students who are not familiar with using computers. This was shown in question 14 where 74% of students stated they want more computer training as a part of the BW course. Also, when asked what they would like to see changed in the course for the future, in addition to more computer training, it is predictable that students would answer that they would want more time and fewer assignments in the first semester of the course.

Curricular implementation
Looking at the above results of the questionnaires, focus groups, and instructor think-aloud findings, one can see that instructor and student opinions about writing were at times in opposition. Students thought the BW course would concentrate and develop their grammatical writing skills similar to the style of instruction they had been exposed to previously. However, some university instructors wanted to disregard this grammar and structure,

citing that students have been learning enough of this during their SHS years and there must be more of a focus on content and original ideas. Instructors must realize their students' backgrounds in terms of what kind of writing experience students possess as well as be in agreement on the scope and sequence of the writing course in order to build a bridge from SHS to tertiary studies.

Such a bridge will be made by having the first couple of weeks of BW dedicated to grammar by building on student experience. Students would start by talking about what they are going to write in group brainstorming sessions. This would be followed up by writing descriptive journal entries or e-mails that have a series of imbedded grammar focus tasks. Students would work together to not only correct but also produce language for each other and the instructor would monitor this process. After this, students could be coached in the procedure and explained the justifications for activities such as peer editing. It is critical that every step of these first few weeks be in small group, as Japanese students tend to be very group-oriented, learning more effectively in a small group setting where individual differences of grammatical knowledge can be standardized in a new learning mode and atmosphere. While this is being done, the instructor must repeatedly set forth expectations in terms of content and ideas by example. Neither grammar nor content can be mastered in a year or two year writing course; these two skills must be concurrently developed, and, most importantly, be based upon previous writing experience. Instructors cannot expect first year students to absorb everything during their first few weeks at the university. By building on experience and known genres such as journals or e-mails at the beginning of the academic year, students can rely on their previous experience in the L1 and L2 writing genre but in a new atmosphere, with new expectations, thus making the transition smoother. Lastly, instructors must be careful to avoid overkill on journal writing, as sometimes students are required to write journals for other non-writing classes in addition to a writing class.

Making a bridge also applies for the teaching of new concepts. The writing process, brainstorming,

thesis statements, and idea evaluation such as peer editing were rated by students as being new. An instructor cannot introduce these in classes one or two times and expect students to understand and repeat what has been done as Tsui and Ng (2000) and Conner and Asenavage (1994) concluded. It is better to sprinkle these activities into a class rather than dedicating large amounts of time at the beginning of the semester. As can be seen in Table 1.2, activities such as peer editing need constant modeling, coaching, reviewing and practicing throughout all courses in order for students to not only see the purpose of the activity, but also to develop understanding of its use and proper application in writing.

Table 1.2.   Using peer revision in class

This is a process of using peer revision in a writing class (group or pair work) that I have used before in my writing classes. At first students were reluctant, as these activities are new, but once a routine was established and rationale for using peer revision explained, students accepted and participated in this activity. It is the instructor's responsibility to constantly monitor, model, repeat and give correction where it is needed in this process. The following activities can be used separately or together. The important factor is they must be repeated.

1. Introduce peer editing (15-25 minutes)
    Video -- this could be done by a short video that shows a short excerpt of what peer editing should look like (reader and writer talking calmly, asking questions, clarifying meaning, making changes) and should not look like (anger, one person talking, person saying that no changes are needed etc)
    Role play – Students read an instructor generated play depicting both good and bad versions of editing and talk about which one is good and why.

2. Identify language used in the video or role-play (15 minutes)
    Either the instructor can give the students some language that will be used for peer editing or have students brainstorm ideas of what could be expressed. This should be task related, include language for both the reader and writer and be based upon ideas such as language required for walking through a paper, explaining reasons, clarifying meaning, justifying, etc.

3. Instructor models walking through a paper (15 minutes)
    The instructor 'walks through' or narrates an example paper in front of the class identifying thesis statement, main points, reasons, explaining justifications for reasons, etc. in order to show students how the revision process takes place. After this, students will narrate their own paper to a classmate.

4. Self-reflection time (15-30 minutes)
    At this time students put their paper on their desk so that others can read it. The class is told to walk around and scan other student writings. Following this, student return to their desk and write several strengths and weaknesses in their own writing compared to their classmates.

5. Peer editing with classmates (15-30 minutes per session)
    Using peer revision and editing language learned previously, students meet with a classmate to discuss their writing following the narration procedure learned before. For each session, one person's writing is discussed. The reader should first narrate the writing, explain, justify and clarify anything based upon the reader's response. The reader must identify several strengths and weakness of the paper.

Students also stated that using computers was a new experience, and they needed more instruction. When this was discussed in the Reading and Writing Skills Committee during semester one in a meeting with the Basic English Proficiency Project (BEPP) Committee (a committee responsible for Freshmen English, a class that meets four times a week for 90 minutes), it was determined that BW instructors would be responsible for teaching computer skills. Members of the committees agreed to organize L1 instruction by colleagues in the Media Education Center (MEC) early in semester one. L1 instruction would be used for the sake of expediency and would require an hour for a refresher course with handouts to cover the basics of using a computer. Another option would be for the university to offer a series of workshops in Japanese, at the beginning of the semester during lunch to assist absolute beginners in the use of computers. Either way, responsibility for teaching computer skills must be clearly delegated and proper time be given to teach it.

As students reported, they had little experience writing an argumentative essay in L2, and, as writing an argumentative essay in Japanese is different than writing one in English in terms of directness, more time should be given for this portion of the BW course, as this is a major new area of study for students. The concept of arguing in English and Japanese can be seen as 'at odds' with each other. This also has more serious implications as the English concept of argument leads into the English concept of a critique. Without a firm understanding of these two genres, how can a student be expected to write a research report? As 57% of students reported they had L1 critique experience, but only 10% had L2 experience, much more time must be given to teaching this type of essay if BW is to prepare students for year two AW.

One of the unexpected findings of the questionnaire was that students rated peer editing slightly higher than teacher feedback. This could be either because they like to have feedback from a readily available resource (peers), or students feel more comfortable talking to their classmates than their teachers as they have never had the chance to talk about their writing. Another reason could be because their

instructors have successfully coached students during their peer editing process. As stated before, the focus groups reported they wanted more feedback from instructors, as they did not see value in feedback from peers. A conclusion could be made that while having students peer review, the process must be constantly coached, modeled and monitored in addition to the teacher giving feedback to the class on common mistakes and errors present in the class.

Suggestions for the future

Looking at the teaching of writing in terms of developmental psychology, if a course is to be seen as effective in the eyes of the students, a course must take into consideration their previous experience in order to help foster transference and constantly seek to expand an individual's 'Zone of Proximal Development' in L1 and L2 (Vygotsky, 1978). Under the current system, students spend their first semester writing multiple drafts of five to six descriptive paragraphs. Then, at the beginning of semester two, students have three to five weeks for making the transfer to writing a descriptive essay. Following this, five weeks are dedicated to teaching the argumentative essay, and the remainder of the time can either be spent briefly teaching the critique essay or giving students strategies for taking the KEPT test.

One cannot ignore the fact that the process of teaching the argumentative and critique essays is not just a matter of teaching the format, structure, grammar, and transitions, it is teaching an understanding of a new way of thinking. Students cannot possibly develop their understanding of this process in a mere five weeks. The more time spent on teaching the argumentative and critique essay, the better. A great way to do so would be through genre-analysis, which is currently being developed at KUIS, where students are given an example of the genre, shown the assessment rubric, and told to make an outline of an essay. Developing students' awareness of the genre is critical in order to understand the culture behind the print and what constitutes a valid argument or criticism.

In order to make the curriculum more streamlined and efficient in the teaching of writing, students

would finish the descriptive writing (paragraph and essay) during semester one, as this would be a more natural progression of difficulty in the course. Then during semester two, there would be no need for students to write descriptive paragraphs, and they could move on to higher level writing tasks. Not only have students been writing descriptive paragraphs throughout the first semester, they have had experience with this writing genre in senior high school. Less time should be spent on description, and more time should be spent adequately teaching the argumentative and critique essay to not only better prepare students for AW, but also to prepare students for further academic study.

Conclusion

As an instructor of writing, not only grammar, structure and format of writing must taught, but also the abstract concepts such as making a good argument, logic and reasoning. To dwell on one type of writing such as description, in hope that grammatical accuracy will develop, is an ineffective approach to developing students as writers. It is an instructor's duty to expose students to as many different genres of writing as possible in order for students to practice their writing.

Involving peer editing in writing will make the learning of writing reflective as well as collaborative, which is essential in the learning context of Japan. Students can use their individual strengths and experience to assist their classmates to become stronger writers. At first, students may be reluctant to participate in such an activity, but through coaching, modeling and repetition, they can develop a better understanding of the process and value of peer revision and editing. This is not to say that the instructor should solely rely on peer revision or editing as means of feedback, but keep a balance between instructor and peer feedback.

Lastly, as I found out first hand during the instructor think-aloud sessions, writing and the teaching of writing is a very personal issue for those involved. We all have different definitions of what is good writing. To some, the ideas are the most important; to others, it is how the ideas are put together and presented in a logical recognizable format. Every

instructor has his/her own style and method of teaching. Every student has his/her own style of using writing. As instructors, our mission must focus on expanding a student's usage of writing and get students to write as much as possible. If one wants to become a better speaker, one practices speaking, as so is true with writing, as the old saying goes, 'practice makes perfect'.

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Appendix 1
Survey for KUIS year one writing students

Survey focus: How was the transition from SHS to KUIS in terms of writing readiness and experience?

1) Do you enjoy writing?

   1---------------2-----------------3---------------4
   Not at all   a little   much   very much

2) Overall, how was your transition from senior high school to university writing class?

   1---------------2------------------3----------------4
   Very Difficult Difficult   Easy   Very easy

3) To what extent was your High School writing experienced utilized in Basic writing?

   1---------------2------------------3-----------------4
    Not at all   a little   much   very much

4) How much writing instruction in Japanese did you receive in SHS year three?

   1) 10-25 hours
   2) 25-45 hours
   3) 45-75 hours
   4) 100 hours plus

5) How much writing instruction in English did you receive in SHS year three?

   1) 10-25 hours
   2) 25-45 hours
   3) 45-75 hours
   4) 100 hours plus

6) How would you describe your SHS writing in terms of length?

   1) short   (10 sentences)
   2) medium   (30 sentences)
   3) long   (60 sentences)
   4) very long   (90+ sentences)

7) Before attending KUIS did you receive any extra-curricular instruction in Japanese or English writing (Juku, eikaiwa, bukatsu)

   1----------------2------------------3---------------4
   None   5-10 hrs   10-20 hrs   20+ hrs

   Do you think this experience helped you?
   □ Yes   □ No

8) Rate the importance of the following in your Japanese SHS writing class?

   (1= not important 4=extremely important)

   Original ideas   1-------2--------3---------4
   Content   1-------2--------3---------4
   Grammar and vocab 1-------2--------3---------4
   Structure   1-------2--------3---------4

9) Rate the importance of the following in your English SHS writing class?

   (1= not important 4=extremely important)

   Original ideas   1-------2--------3---------4
   Content   1-------2--------3---------4
   Grammar and vocab1-------2--------3---------4
   Structure   1-------2--------3---------4

10) Check which of the following were new for you at KUIS?

   □ brainstorming ideas
   □ the writing process
   □ paragraphs
   □ thesis statements
   □ transitions
   □ categorizing ideas
   □ evaluating ideas
   □ organizing ideas
   □ peer editing groups
   □ using computers to write
   □ conversation my about writing
   □ writing drafts
   □ using a writing textbook

11) What kind of JAPANESE writing experience do you have?

- □ Entrance test practice
- □ Journals or diaries
- □ e-mail
- □ Blogs
- □ Chat (kei-tai or internet)
- □ Poetry or creative writing
- □ Essays

12) What kind of ENGLISH writing experience do you have?

- □ Entrance test practice
- □ Journals or diaries
- □ e-mail
- □ Blogs
- □ Chat (mobile phone or internet)
- □ Poetry or creative writing
- □ Essays

13) What kind of essay writing experience do you have?

	Japanese	English
Descriptive	□	□
Argumentative	□	□
Critique	□	□
Business	□	□
Biography	□	□
Compare and contrast	□	□
Summary	□	□
Historical	□	□
NONE	□	

14) If you could change something about basic writing what would it be?

	More	Less
Assignment Length requirement	□	□
Time allowed to complete assignment	□	□
Feedback from peers	□	□
Feedback from teacher	□	□
Computer use	□	□
Computer training	□	□

Appendix 2

Please help us improve Basic Writing for next year by discussing your opinions about the following questions for the next 30 minutes.

Say whatever you want, you can speak in English or Japanese, which ever you feel comfortable with.

Thank you!

1. Do you feel your high school writing lessons helped you prepare for KUIS?

2. What kind of writing did you do during high school? For example…?

3. Did you have a lot of writing instruction during high school?

4. What activities were new for you in BW (e.g. peer editing, the writing process, brainstorming, outlining, using computers, etc.)?

5. What was a difficult area for you with the BW course?

6. Do you find it useful to look at your classmates work and offer suggestions?

7. Do you need more time for writing assignments?

8. What would you like to change in the BW course?

9. Anything else…

Appendix 3

Report on Basic Writing Teacher's think-aloud session: May 24, 2006

Members of the Basic Writing curriculum design sub-committee met with Basic Writing teachers and the ELI research supervisor to discuss the BW curriculum and students progress throughout semester one and the potential starting point for the curriculum for semester two.

It was agreed that students need to make the move from paragraphs to essays and start writing essays during semester two as some higher-level sections are bored with the standard textbook descriptive paragraphs. It was suggested that these sections start writing descriptive essays at the end of semester one. This was a point of contention though, as some teachers felt some students still do not understand the principles of grammar or writing a complex sentence, giving justifications and sufficient details.

It was also determined that some classes may not be able to complete all six units of the textbook because of some teachers using three weeks to teach a unit and others completing a unit in two weeks.

Teachers also discussed the use of computers in the classroom. As some instructors are using the on-line course delivery program Moodle as well as having students write assignments using computers, the instruction of this process takes much time for a class that meets once a week for 90 minutes. In opposition to this concern, several instructors saw no reason to teach or use computers in class.

A discussion arose as to what was more important to teach in basic writing, grammar or the process of getting ideas on to the paper. A conclusion was reached that though the focus of the class should not be grammar, it should still be taught because of student shortcomings and inabilities in this field. Original content should also be an emphasis, as students are used to studying grammar from junior high school, several instructors stated that it is more critical for students to focus on content and ideas.

Outside the egg carton: Facilitating high school teacher collaboration

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Abstract

Many high school English teachers in Japan admit that, for a variety of reasons, they seldom meet with their colleagues to set communication goals, plan lessons or collaborate on teaching materials. Tokai University's in-service Teacher Development Program advises and supports teachers in Tokai-attached high schools around the country. Former participants, however, often report on the difficulty of replicating the norms of collegiality introduced in the program. To help teachers explore ways to improve teamwork within their English departments, a collaboration component has been introduced into the program. This paper will outline the contents and organization of this new component, and share participant reflections on how collaboration is advancing their professional outlook and impacting their English departments.

Introduction

The notion of collegiality and its impact on teachers' job satisfaction and students' learning outcomes has been of interest, even since before Lortie (1975) coined the term "egg carton structure" to describe the isolation inherent in many teaching settings. Though every situation is unique, interaction with colleagues – or the lack of it – impacts all teachers, inspiring Little (1990) to pose the fundamental question, "How central or peripheral are teachers' relations with colleagues to their success and satisfaction with students, their engagement in their present work, and their commitment to a career in teaching?" (p. 509)

Conventional wisdom holds that teacher collaboration is a challenging, yet ultimately rewarding practice. McConnell (2000) notes that "Truly cooperating on a lesson plan and its implementation requires a willingness to engage in the give-and-take of mutual criticism…" (p. 211) Johnston and Madejski (1990) advises that teamwork begins at the planning stage, when lesson plans are discussed. When two creative minds consider a task, the resulting creative energy far exceeds each individual's alone. Inger (1993) lists various advantages of collegiality, including job career rewards, reinforced confidence for beginning teachers, and improved student achievement – all desirable aspects of a teaching environment.

The reality of many school settings, however, differs greatly from these somewhat idealized models of teacher interaction. Little (1990) points out that:

> …the texture of collegial relations is woven principally of social and interpersonal interests. Teacher autonomy rests on freedom from scrutiny and the largely unexamined right to exercise personal preference; teachers acknowledge and tolerate the individual preferences or styles of others. (p. 513)

The scenario described by Inger (1993) is a similar one:

> By and large… teacher collaboration is a departure from existing norms, and, in most

schools, teachers are colleagues in name only. They work out of sight and sound of one another, plan and prepare their lessons and materials alone, and struggle on their own to solve their instructional, curricular, and management problems. (p. 1)

This lack of interaction not only complicates individual teacher situations, but is also potentially detrimental to the school and even the field of education. Sandholtz (2000) notes that "teacher isolation has been identified as the most powerful impediment to reform." (p. 39)

To help Japan's high school teachers experience and appreciate the benefits of collegiality, Tokai University's Research Institute of Educational Development (RIED) has introduced a collaboration component into its year-long, in-service Teacher Development in English (TDE) Program. This paper will outline the rationale, contents, and organization of this new component. In addition, selected participant responses gathered from online surveys and an online writing journal will be presented, the numerical and anecdotal data providing insight into teacher perceptions of leadership, professionalism, and departmental dynamics. Though it is difficult to measure the impact of the collaboration component on teacher practices and learning outcomes, the RIED staff have perceived a positive shift in teacher collegiality.

Japan's high school English departments

There is a tendency in some writing on teacher collaboration to generalize about its challenges and benefits, overlooking the culture-specific features of certain settings. While there a growing body of literature on Japan's junior and senior high school teaching and learning situations, there has been relatively little written in English on how teachers in these settings interact with each other outside the classroom. Shimaoka and Yashiro (1990) do warn prospective native English teachers (NETs) that in Japanese high school culture, "…each individual has to refrain from pushing his own will too far so as not to impinge on others' will." (p. 97)

This eticence may, in some situations, mask a level of discomfort; Sturman (1992) points out that:

Some Japanese schools do not have a good atmosphere in the staffroom. In several schools, the Japanese teachers disliked the atmosphere so strongly that they would barely speak in front of the other teachers. (p. 153)

New teachers joining an English department may have little power to improve the departmental dynamics, and for a variety of reasons may actually avoid doing so. Lovelock (2001) observes that the context of Japanese teacher's rooms does little to encourage training or guidance: Senior teachers are hesitant to guide more junior colleagues in their teaching, while more junior colleagues do not want to 'bother' more senior teachers with too many questions. When asked their views on this apparent lack of collegiality, teachers often report a lack of time and administrative support for professional development. LoCastro (1996) supports this view, noting that "…individuals find resistance at their places of employment to their participation in outside in-service training activities." (p. 43) When compounded by insufficient background in educational theory and vague guidelines from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), teachers may become pessimistic about their potential for achieving autonomy or effecting change.

English department meetings, as commonly held at many high schools in Japan, do little to further chances for reflection, either in or on action (Schön, 1983). Collins (forthcoming) found that NETs were often frustrated by the lack of 'real discussion' at department meetings, one reporting that "In six years, not once have the English teachers had group discussions about teaching English. And no teacher has really shared what they are doing in their classes."

The Research Institute of Educational Development While public school teachers in Japan must participate in a certain number of professional development days each year, no such minimum is required of their private school counterparts. With limited incentive, teachers may feel a sense of isolation; in addition, their teaching practices may fossilize. Lamie (2000) recognizes that such

"…teachers have a tendency to perpetuate the methodological status quo." (p. 33) Participating in a peer community not only provides support, but is an important source of inspiration and critical reflection (Sykes, 1996). Tokai University established its Research Institute of Educational Development (RIED) in 1997. The instructors and staff at RIED advise and support English, math and science teachers at 14 Tokai-attached high schools around Japan.

The Teacher Development in English Program

To help these English teachers, RIED launched its Teacher Development in English (TDE) Program. Now in its ninth year, this year-long, in-service program aims to help English teachers at Tokai-attached schools meet the challenges set forth in the Ministry's Action Plan to "cultivate Japanese with English abilities" (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2003). Over the course of the year, participants also explore the latest educational perspectives, define 'learning' and 'teaching' for themselves, and develop empathy for their own students through experiential, project-based learning. The skills they develop through participation include goal-setting, problem-solving, critical thinking, leadership, and team-building. The 2006 Calendar, running from April 2006 to March 2007, features nine monthly Saturday Seminars and a round of Open Classes in December. In addition, participants attend a six-day Summer Intensive Seminar and two days of Reflection Presentations at the end of the year. Generally, each Tokai-attached school sends a different full-time teacher to participate in the program every year. The 2006 participants are comprised of 11 senior high school teachers and one junior high school teacher. Five are 'repeaters,' having taken part in the program before.

TDE 2005 Assignments

In the past, TDE participants expressed some frustration that while they had learned much about planning and teaching practices in the program, they were not able to use the materials they had created in their own future teaching. To address this situation, the 2005 participants were asked to target

a lesson (equivalent to a chapter and taking approximately ten classes to cover) from one of their own textbooks, either English I, English II, or Reading. For this lesson, participants created a spring syllabus and a complete lesson plan. Additionally, they planned and created first and second drafts of lesson introduction PowerPoint slides, text comprehension exercises, target linguistic item explanations, and a communication test. The participants appreciated knowing that they would use their materials with their own students.

In the fall, participants targeted a second lesson, again completing a set of materials to teach in their classes. This time, they also created supplementary readings and worksheets, as well as an activity to extend the communication goals of the lesson. They also planned and created CALL materials, including authoring systems and quizzes.

In addition to the above assignments, participants were asked to videotape a 50-minute class during their spring target lesson, and another in the fall. Both times they submitted a protocol analysis of the class and drew conclusions about their students' learning attitudes as well as their own teacher roles.

Participant reflections on the 2005 TDE Program

An important component of the TDE Program experience is the online writing journal. With a rotating topic leader, participants and RIED staff are able to set their own topics, ask for advice and share ideas about a variety of educational issues. Toward the end of the 2005 academic year, the author posted the question: "How much and what kind of interaction do you have with your colleagues, in terms of goal-setting, planning and creating materials and tests?"

In their responses, some participants wondered what caused the lack of communication within their departments. One chalked it up to Japanese culture, claiming that:

> We Japanese don't have a good skill to have a good communication or real interaction with other people, especially while we have to

build up some consensus on some issues. We have a tendency to speak up only what we think is correct. And we don't want to listen to other ideas.

Another addressed the dynamics of their departmental meetings:

> The persons who attend some meeting unwillingly accept the idea that is suggested in a loud voice or strongly… When some people are modified on their ideas or schemes, they will misunderstand that they are denied their personality.

A third described unease about class visits by colleagues:

> I know it is not for students but I don't want my classes to be observed, perhaps because I don't want to show my weak points to the others. It's OK to observe the other teachers' lessons. I guess my colleagues have almost the same feeling.

Some participants were frustrated in their attempts to share what they were learning through the TDE Program with their own colleagues. One complained about colleagues' dismissive attitudes, saying that:

> After finishing Saturday seminar, most of our teachers don't show their interests about it. Though I sometimes talked about my experiences on this seminar, they just answered, 'Fun.' I am sad.

Not all were pessimistic, however; some felt empowered by their positive experiences in the TDE Program enough to address their department's dynamics:

> I want to break that wall of English department at (our school). We have to change the atmosphere of our school little by little. Someone should start to do it…It may difficult for the teachers to find the time to discuss or talk with colleagues. We can't

make good atmosphere and make good relationship at all. So again I will break it.

As positive as some participants remained, it became clear to the RIED staff that a more structured approach to collaboration would benefit 2006 TDE participants, and that their reflections would continue to provide insights into its success.

2006 TDE Program Collaboration Component

The list of assignments facing participants in the 2006 TDE Program was largely unaltered from the previous year. The difference was that now, each was asked to find a collaboration partner within their own department, ideally a JTE teaching the same course as they were. In cases where the participant was the only one teaching a particular course, they could work with an NET. The partner was expected to collaborate in planning and creating all the spring target lesson materials, and to use them in their own classes, as well. In addition to the video data analysis project, the participant and partner were asked to visit each other's target lesson once and fill out a report. Both class visits were bookended by pre-observation meetings (Randall & Thornton, 2001) and follow-up discussions.

Most of the participants were understandably apprehensive about asking a colleague to collaborate with them. Due to the typically hierarchical nature of high school English departments, some younger teachers were hesitant to request help from older teachers; similarly, teachers who had just been transferred from one Tokai-attached school to another were reluctant to approach their new colleagues. Ironically, for a variety of reasons, some of the older participants were also nervous about requesting help from their younger colleagues.

Participant responses to the Spring Collaboration Component

From the beginning of the year, the 2006 TDE participants have shown themselves to be considerably more vocal than previous groups, willing and able to think critically and articulate their opinions, without becoming overly negative. The author saw their initial nervousness about the collaboration component as another opportunity to

explore the issues surrounding their departments. For the week of April 3 – 13, 2006, the author posted the following topic to the online writing journal:

Some of you seem a little nervous about the idea of collaborating with other teachers in your English department. So here are my questions for this week:

1.   What are the difficulties in planning and creating materials with your colleagues?

2.   What can you – and your colleagues – do to make things easier?

Inger (1993) reports that when teachers work together, "they reduce their individual planning time while greatly increasing the available pool of ideas and materials." (p. 1) Perhaps predictably, however, the time factor was the most common reason cited in participant responses for teachers' lack of collaboration, one participant reporting that:

> Every English teacher has their other responsibilities. Sometimes these responsibilities are urgent and no other teacher can take a role of them; for example students of their classes or clubs. We put our priority on this kind of work. Therefore, it is rather difficult to have a meeting with all English teachers attendance.

This was echoed by another's comment:

> I have only one difficulty in collaborating with my partner. "Time" is the biggest problem… We would like to talk about the teaching plan with my partner after school, but teachers have to do many things, such as participating other meetings, checking students' attitude and other school rules.

A third participant, however, recognized the time factor as little more than an excuse, admitting that, "Anyway we tend to lack communications with other teachers under the pretext of the shortage of time."

Another common thread among participant responses reflected a hierarchy within participant-partner teams. Still, struggling themselves to understand the nature of the collaboration component, some participants voluntarily took on the role of leader:

> My worry is just that (my colleague) is a newcomer to our school (and) is a part-time teacher… I will lead at first I will share the materials. I have to discuss how to teach them before the lessons.

In some cases, partners saw themselves not as full status collaborators, but as assistants, causing the participants some frustration:

> Yesterday the other two English I teachers and I had the second meeting. We had meaningful time, but unfortunately, that meeting was for ME and MY assignments rather than OUR classes or OUR students. They think themselves my "supporters," not my equal partners. At least at the moment, they are still cooperative "supporters." We need a little more time and a few more meetings to change them from "supporters" to "teammates."

Little (1987) notes that "The accomplishments of a proficient and well-organized group are widely considered to be greater than the accomplishments of isolated individuals." (p. 496) In reality, however, teachers who work together are often faced with the need to articulate, defend, and perhaps even compromise their teaching beliefs. Within this type of interchange, a lack of interaction skills can become highly visible. One participant responded that "I think the English teachers at our school tend to lack communication, though we teach English, a subject to communicate with others." Others were more specific about their disagreements, one stating that "…we have very different opinions about how students acquire English or when you say they have acquired English, and it is not easy to change someone else's opinions." Another pointed out that:

> I believe setting a good goal is very important in collaborating with other teachers.

However, even with a good goal I still find it very difficult to work with other teachers since what we expect as the outcome of our lessons are usually different, sometimes the different is too big even to share a material.

One participant was particularly honest, admitting a resistance to collaboration:

Generally I think Japanese teachers… like to teach by their own way including myself. We apt to cling to our own way of teaching…But if it is the matter of his personality, it is very hard to cooperate with, if the teacher hates to communicate with other teachers.

Though many participants seemed daunted at this early phase of the collaboration component, others were determined to maintain a positive, proactive stance:

For the past several days, I have tried to establish friendly relations with them through the discussions about the Spring Syllabus.

Thanks to this assignment, the ties between English I teachers is becoming quite strong little by little, I believe.

Another participant asserted that:

English proficiency of each teacher of English department at our school is different and almost all teachers are in charge of class. They are really busy and they don't have time to spare... But I will never give up at this point. I just try to ask them to collaborate on plans and materials persistently.

Another important feature of the TDE Program is the regular Reflection Surveys, which provide participants a chance to reflect on the ideas and concept gained in the program and comment on their applicability. Participant responses also provide important quantitative and anecdotal data which inform future TDE Program planning. The RIED staff took advantage of the convenient online format to gather quantitative data about the participants' experiences with the spring collaboration component (Table 1).

Table 1.   Reflection Survey responses on Spring Assignment Collaboration

It was easy for me to find a partner to collaborate with me on the spring assignments.

agree strongly	0	(0.0%)
agree	7	(58.3%
disagree	3	(25.0%)
disagree strongly	2	(16.7%)

How much of your Spring Syllabus did your partner create?

51 – 100%	1	(8.3%)
25 – 50%	4	(33.3%
1 – 24%	5	(41.7%)
0%	2	(16.7%)

How much of your Topic Introduction did your partner create?

51 – 100%	0	(0.0%)
25 – 50%	3	(25.0%
1 – 24%	4	(33.3%)
0%	5	(41.7%)

As shown by the data, participants found it difficult to initiate collaboration on their spring target lesson plan. Some partners collaborated on the Spring Syllabus, perhaps seeing it as one of their regular departmental duties. Responsibility for creating the Topic Introduction, however, was left almost entirely to the participants; similar ratios of participant-partner contribution were reflected in later assignments, as well.

These numbers are echoed by anecdotal data generated by the open-ended: "Further comments / questions on your spring assignments collaboration." Inevitably, the time factor arose most frequently in participant responses:

> My partner is so busy that it seems to be difficult for him to think of creating materials. Because of his busy schedule, I feel very sorry to interrupt his work. Also, as I have club activity after school, I work for the assignment… after the club and I was not able to have a time to talk with him.

The uneven contribution by collaboration partners was another recurring theme, one participant reporting that:

> At the end, I collaborate with one teacher, but other two teachers did the same lesson as us. It was very hard to collaborate with other English teacher. Actually, I made most of the plan (and work) and the partner checked these and she made a correction and adjusted them.

This was supported by another response:

> My teaching partners were cooperative (not willingly, though) to collaborate with me on my assignments. I usually asked the teachers to give me a lot of good ideas and suggestions, especially for Spring Syllabus and Spring Lesson Plan. Their advice was very helpful for me. Though I completed (the teaching materials), I gave all the materials I created to share them with my partners for their reference and information.

Reflection on the class visits provided further insight into their collaboration experiences collaboration (Table 2). As the numerical data shows, participants generally found the post-lesson meetings more valuable than the pre-lesson meetings. This may have been due to their relative familiarity with post-lesson meetings, whereas the purpose of a pre-lesson meeting may still have been unclear. Additionally, participants appreciated a colleague visiting their class slightly more than their partners did.

Again, an open-ended question elicited anecdotal data of interest. Most responses were generally positive about the experience, stating, for example:

> I found it so important to visit other class. I could see the helpful points. Some were good and some were not good. If I see the other lessons, I can make my class better. However, to find the class which I can visit is difficult.

Table 2.   Reflection Survey responses on spring class visits

I found it valuable to meet with my teacher BEFORE my video lesson.

agree strongly	1	(8.3%)
agree	9	(75.0%
disagree	1	(8.3%)
disagree strongly	0	(0.0%)

I found it valuable to meet with my teacher again AFTER my video lesson.

agree strongly	4	(33.3%)
agree	7	(58.3%

| disagree | 0 | (0.0%) |
| disagree strongly | 0 | (0.0%) |

I found it helpful to visit my partner's class.

agree strongly	5	(41.7%)
agree	6	(50.0%
disagree	1	(0.0%)
disagree strongly	0	(0.0%)

My partner found it helpful to discuss his / her class with me.

agree strongly	3	(25.0%)
agree	9	(75.0%
disagree	0	(0.0%)
disagree strongly	0	(0.0%)

Other participants tried to get as much as they could from the class visits:

Visiting my partner's class and analyzing the classroom with using video were a great chance for my partner and me. It took a long time to discuss how we improve our lesson, I could have valuable feedback from my partner.

One participant drew connections between the spring TDE assignments, the class visits and departmental dynamics:

> Through the TDE Program, I found it is difficult but very important to have meetings with other teachers and to visit their classes. We teachers get few chances to do so even if we find the importance. As for meetings, some teachers think they are too busy to have meetings, even weekly regular meetings of their department. Some participants must think they don't want to too much trouble them any more just for their meetings or assignments. I hope all the English teachers will realize the importance of talking with other teachers and take more positive attitude toward meetings.

The class reports themselves represented a range of participant involvement in the collaboration component. At one end of the spectrum were participants who either misunderstood the assignment, or failed to complete it. On the whole, both participants and partners tended toward diplomacy, giving comments which were appreciative and tactful, but lacking in constructive criticism. Some, however, took the class visits as an opportunity to reflect meaningfully on their teaching, identifying areas for improvement in their own and their partners' classes.

Summer Intensive Seminar Group Discussion Project

The Summer Intensive Seminar provides participants with the opportunity to advance their performance abilities, English fluency, and reflection skills. 2006 also saw participants undertaking a group discussion project in preparation for their fall target lesson. In the late spring, participants were asked to identify a lesson featuring a particularly challenging topic. They then photocopied the lesson for two other TDE participants, who did an Internet search for materials to supplement the lesson topic. The worksheet they completed for each supplementary reading they found (see Appendix A) provided the scaffolding they needed to analyze the material in terms of appropriateness and discourse.

Three mornings of the Summer Seminar included one-hour group discussions. Each participant took a turn facilitating a three-person "department meeting" for which they had set a practical outcome goal such as, "By the end of this hour, we will have decided the best way to provide background cultural knowledge for this topic," or "We will have set a project which will extend the communication skill of this lesson." Though the discussions were loosely

structured, they tended to follow a pattern: the facilitator announced the hoped-for outcome of the meeting, each member reported on the supplementary materials they had gathered, and the group spent the rest of their time forming an action plan to achieve their goal. Throughout the discussion, the group leader took notes on each member's contribution (see Appendix B). Each discussion session was followed by a brief whole-group discussion at which that day's four leaders reported outcomes and commented on their experiences. Finally, leaders and group members completed reflection sheets on the experience (see Appendix C).

Participant responses to the Group Discussion Project

In the follow-up discussions, most participants admitted that their facilitation experience had been something of a revelation; as previously noted, departmental meetings seldom touch on teaching practices. One participant admitted that:

> We discuss the team-teaching class and decide many things to do. For example, textbook, making grades, a proctor for tests, and so on. We don't have much time to discuss the way of lessons or report our lessons.

Immediately following the Summer Seminar, participants were again asked to complete an online Reflection Survey on their experience (Table 3), the responses to which tended to confirm RIED staff expectations.

Table 3.   Reflection Survey responses on group discussion project

Facilitating a discussion in English was a valuable experience for me.

agree strongly	9	(75.0%)
agree	2	(16.7%
disagree	1	(8.3%)
disagree strongly	0	(0.0%)

My group members were able to help me reach the goal of my discussion.

agree strongly	7	(58.3%)
agree	5	(41.7%
disagree	0	(0.0%)
disagree strongly	0	(0.0%)

I feel that the outcome of my discussion will benefit me in planning my fall target lesson.

agree strongly	10	(83.3%)
agree	2	(16.7%
disagree	0	(0.0%)
disagree strongly	0	(0.0%)

I was able to help my group members achieve the goals of their discussions.

agree strongly	3	(25.0%)
agree	8	(66.7%
disagree	1	(8.3%)
disagree strongly	0	(0.0%)

I am optimistic that I will be able to hold this kind of discussion with other teachers in my own department.

agree strongly	1	(8.3%)
agree	6	(50.0%
disagree	4	(33.3%)

disagree strongly   1   (8.3%)

The numerical data demonstrates the value participants saw in the group discussion experience; it also points to the strong potential Japanese high school teachers have when the situation lends itself to positive and productive interaction. Unfortunately, the numbers also demonstrate a definite pessimism among the participants regarding the possibility of holding a similar discussion within their own departments.

Once more, the open-ended "Further comments and questions on the Group Discussions" question elicited meaningful responses. One participant commented on how the preparation and organization of the members contributed to the positive outcome of the discussions:

> To discuss the lesson was so helpful and I found it important to discuss. Also I surprised that it doesn't take much time to do (but if all members prepared for it). I think it will take much time if we don't prepare before the meeting.

Another volunteered a comparison between the discussions and their own experience collaborating on the spring target lesson:

> The Group Discussions in the Summer Seminar were very helpful for me. In spring semester, two teaching partners and I tried to talk about our teaching as often as possible. However, I always hesitated to ask them to have meetings to discuss more because I am a participant of the TDE Program and we needed to talk for MY assignments. I wish I could have felt free to have more chances to talk with them without hesitation.

Others asserted that they were in the midst of an uphill struggle, but were determined to effect change in departmental dynamics:

> Thanks to my assignments of the TDE Program, I'm trying to build up the teamwork with other English I teachers. However, to be honest, I don't think the English teachers at our school show our real ability as a team for

now... I would like to try to communicate more with other teachers, making the best of the TDE Program this year.

Through the participants' responses to the group discussion project, it became apparent that they were seeing the benefits of collegiality, especially with regards to collaboration and discussion.

Fall cross-content collaboration

Sandholtz (2000) notes that teachers are more likely to turn to each other, rather than to administrators for support, instructional ideas, and help in problem-solving. To help teachers tackle the concepts and practices of cross-content learning, the RIED staff extended the collaboration component into the fall. Participants used the lesson they had discussed at the Summer Intensive Seminar as their fall target lesson. It was hoped, but not required that they would continue working with the same collaboration partners to complete a set of planning and teaching materials, as they had done in the spring. In addition to the high-structured materials, however, they were also asked to revise and use the supplementary materials their discussion group had generated at the Summer Intensive Seminar, and to set a project or activity which would extend the contents and communication goal of the lesson. Participants were then asked to identify a cross-content collaboration partner from another department. The content of the lesson would determine whom they would approach. One participant's lesson, for example, featured a reading passage on the differences between men's and women's brains; he had the luxury of choosing to work with a biology teacher, a social studies teacher, a home economics teacher, or a combination thereof. Their next task was to research what background knowledge their students already had of the lesson topic, and to brainstorm with the other teacher(s) how they could improve the efficiency of their students' learning by spiraling the vocabulary and content in both classes. Additionally, participants were encouraged to invite an NET on at least one day of the target lesson to serve as a 'cultural informant' on the topic (Browne & Evans, 1994).

Each participant was required to schedule an open class, inviting English teachers and cross-content teachers whose schedules would allow them to attend. Sandholtz (2000) points out that teachers' enjoyment in their work is linked to their sense of school community; to help expand the definition of this community, two participants were chosen to hold "Model Open Classes" and follow-up meetings. In lieu of a December Saturday Seminar, the other TDE participants attended one of the two, RIED staff attending both.

Research questions arising from the 2006 collaboration component

The research done so far has produced interesting pieces to a puzzle whose picture grows richer and more complex with further investigation. Following are some of the research questions which have occurred to the author during the course of the 2006 TDE Program and in reflecting on the participant reactions to its collaboration component:

1. What are participants' notions of leadership, teacher autonomy and collegiality?

2. How does the collaboration component impact teachers' professional and personal relationship with their collaboration partners?

3. What impact on departmental culture is the collaboration component having? What other factors is it up against?

4. Do students perceive a difference in their teachers' organization, confidence, and teaching practices?

5. How does the collaboration component impact student learning outcomes?

6. All data collection is done in English; what affect, if any, does this have on the data itself?

Ongoing data collection

Now that the end of the 2006 academic year is approaching, RIED staff will begin to collect data regarding participant experiences with the fall collaboration component; some of it may shed light

on the above Questions for Further Research. For a start, by studying the Open Class Reports as well as the Video Data Analysis sheets, an understanding may emerge of how participants' understanding of autonomy and its impact on learning outcomes has evolved over the course of the year. Program evaluations and the year-end Collaboration Component Survey are both expected to provide quantitative and qualitative data on participants' views of leadership and collegiality. Finally, each participant will give a 20-minute Reflection Presentation in March of 2007 on what they have gained over the course of the year and how they will try to apply it in the upcoming academic year. These will also inform decisions about ways to improve the focus and organization of the collaboration component.

Other possible sources of data include exploratory and reflection surveys distributed to target populations outside the sphere of 2006 participants:

1. For the English department head teachers, whether the contents of the 2006 TDE Program have been shared within the department, and how;

2. For the 2007 participants, whether the 2006 collaboration component had any impact on them;

3. For the 2006 participants, (six months after the TDE Program), whether the TDE Program and collaboration component have had lasting impact on their professional relationships and teaching practices; and,

4. For the students, whether they are aware of their teachers' planning and in-class practices.

Conclusion

Collegiality, particularly teacher collaboration, still seems like a "luxury item" to many of Japan's junior and senior high school teachers. Inger (1993) reminds us, however, that:

> Serious collaboration – teachers engaging in the rigorous mutual examination of teaching and learning – is rare, and where it exists, it is fragile. Yet it can and does occur, and the

enthusiasm of teachers about their collaborations is persuasive. (p. 4)

Inger (1993) stresses that in order for teachers to create a collaborative atmosphere, they need, among other things, administrative support and reward for collegiality, and increased chances for autonomy and leadership roles. While it may be impossible to measure precisely the impact of the TDE Program's impact, the labors of the 2006 participants have the potential to make the egg carton model obsolete in their departments.

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Appendix A: Article Worksheet

Discussion

Leader / Date	
Course / Textbook	
Lesson Title	

Article: Details

Title	
Author / source / URL	
Date published	
Word count	
Notes on the contents	

Interest level (check one)

☐ interesting   ☐ so-so   ☐ boring

Discourse style (check one)

☐ appropriate   ☐ reasonable   ☐ inappropriate

Difficulty level for students (check one)

☐ too difficult   ☐ appropriate   ☐ too easy

Rewriting for students (check all that apply)

☐ OK as it is   ☐ Need to shorten
☐ not worth it!   ☐ Need to simplify vocabulary
                         ☐ Need to add target vocabulary / grammar
                         ☐ Need to improve discourse style
                         ☐ Need to add pictures / graphics

Appendix B: Facilitator: Note-taking sheet
Leader: Discussion Notes

Leader / Date	
Course / Textbook	
Lesson Title	
Discussion Goal(s)	

Name	Report
(Leader)	

Discussion Outcome / Decision	

We were able to meet my discussion goal (check one)

☐ yes   ☐ no

Appendix C: Facilitator: Self-evaluation and reflection sheet
Discussion: Reflection

Group leader	
Topic	
My name	

Leader

	3needs work		very strong4	
1. lesson choice	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
2. clarity of goal	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
3. keeping us focused, moving ahead	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

Group

	3needs work		very strong4	
1. level of preparation	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
2. quality of the materials we reported on	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
3. staying in English	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
4. use of discussion phrases	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
5. equal talking time	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
6. positive attitude	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**
7. my own effort	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

Other comments
For the leader
About the group
What I learned
About the content
About group discussions

Guided Individual Learning Center: A Non-classroom learning environment

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Abstract
This paper will discuss basic concepts and practical experiences regarding shifting a traditional library, where students are left to study without guidance, to a Guided Individual Learning (GIL) Center where students are guided to become autonomous learners using effective learning strategies and useful learning tools. A literature review on self-access and autonomous learning is provided as a theoretical framework for the paper. In addition, this paper will also point out some difficulties that teachers encountered at the GIL Center at the Australian Center for Education (ACE) during the implementation process of transforming students' traditional attitudes towards a learning Center into newly proactive learning attitudes.

Introduction

The last decade has seen very significant growth in English as a foreign language learning. Cambodia is just one among many countries which benefit from being able to communicate in English. Therefore, the learning process itself has become the focus of attention in many of the language schools in Cambodia. The Australian Center for Education (ACE) is an example of one of the language schools in Cambodia implementing changes to the teaching of English in the country. As a part of its mission, ACE has always been enthusiastic to nurture autonomous learning habits among its students. The establishment of the Book Club, Listening Club, and the Guided Individual Learning (GIL) Center on the campus are examples of these activities.

Roles of Independent Learning in Languages Acquisition

Scharle and Szabo (2000) explained that no matter how hard teachers work, or how effective classroom and course books are, students can only learn effectively if they are willing to, i.e., as the saying goes "you can bring the horse to water, but you cannot make him drink". (p. 4) Through our own experiences as English teachers and our network in this field, both Cambodian teachers and their counterparts agree that establishing independent learning routines plays a primary role in helping students learn successfully.

To maximize their language learning effectiveness, Cambodian students need to break through their

cultural barrier of being dependent on their English teacher for their learning outcomes. In this case, establishing a Center where they can access learning resources at their own pace is a significant part of the language schools' missions.

The Self-Access Center: Theory and practice

As illustrated by Sheerin (1989), in a self-access center, students should be able to access audio cassette players and recorders to work on their listening and pronunciation, whilst computers can allow them to improve their vocabulary, access testing software, and type their assignments. Information Technology and Computer (ITC) advancement has lead to the development of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) software that was also recommended by Sheerin (1989). In addition, video and (cable) TV has also given students opportunities to access authentic listening materials such as news programs and others produced by native speakers (Sheerin, 1989). Gerdner and Miller (1999) consider a wider range of elements for self-access centers to provide an effective learning environment for students. They combine the necessary features of a self-access Center into a list including, but not limited to, resources, people, management and materials development.

Up to 2005, ACE maintained a self-access Center (SAC) on campus. It was a traditional model of self-directed learning. It was a modest room, furnished with five tables and around 35 chairs. The SAC, an English language-focused Center, had mostly English learning materials. The collection was book-based and the materials were not often updated. Two computers were available for students to use mainly to type their assignments and to search the Internet. Internet access was fairly limited compared to the needs of the 400 students who were entitled to use the SAC. Students did not communicate with the SAC teachers very much at that time: the teachers interacted very little with students who studied in the SAC, and therefore the center did not meet ACE's previously stated goal of developing autonomous learners. It was decided that the SAC needed to be overhauled and that a GIL

Center based on the Australian model would benefit the more advanced students.

From Self-Access Center to Guided Individual Learning Center

As language learning cannot be solely dependent on the classroom, it is widely believed that language acquisition outside the classroom should help students to learn a language faster and more effectively. In a research project conducted by the National English Language Teaching Accreditation Scheme (NEAS) Australia, Brandon (2004) mentioned two fundamental principles for second language learning: student individuality and internal acquisition capacity. As she describes, a single teaching style cannot satisfy all the students whose personality, intelligence, and educational and cultural backgrounds are varied. Likewise, as students have a natural language acquisition capacity, they learn a great deal that teachers do not teach them, and fail to learn a great deal of what teachers do teach them. Therefore, having a Center where they can access language-learning resources at their own pace is crucial in helping them to become effective learners.

As an objective outcome for the research project, 'Guided Individual Learning', was chosen as an appropriate term and is defined as goal-oriented activities related to meeting students' individual learning needs and supported by skilled teaching staff (Brandon 2004). In other words, as students choose to adapt their preferred learning style, the opportunities in individual learning situations are available accordingly. Also, students are encouraged to activate their "inquisitional creativity" (Brandon 2004, p. 7).

Based on the research presented here, it was determined that a GIL Center model on autonomous learning should serve the following basic goals:

> Develop skills for further study
> Enable students to improve in their
> weak areas
> Give opportunities for students to
> practice, consolidate and/or extend
> input received in class

Provide time for learning or reflecting free from the pressures of classroom interaction

Enable students to study specialized topics that cannot be offered in the normal syllabus

Encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning.

To provide as much assistance as possible to students to fulfill their needs in learning language, the GIL Center manager is responsible for deciding which material is to be used and displayed, and for making sure that the resources are available and appropriate for the Center. As a supporting group, supervising teachers working in the Center must be knowledgeable and skillful and should be able to:

Identify students' learning needs
Suggest appropriate activities
Respond to students' language-related questions, usually covering a range of proficiency levels and course types
Help students use the technology.

The Guided Individual Learning (GIL) Center at the Australian Center for Education (title)
With an attempt to build up independent learning styles among its students and based on existing theory, ACE decided to up-grade its SAC to be the Guided Individual Learning (GIL) Center. The decision to equip the GIL Center with current features was based on research outcomes from NEAS and other literature on self-access practice. However, the practice of those theories has been modified to meet the practical needs and the learning styles of Cambodian students.

For instance, making current issues of newspaper and magazines available to students is mentioned as a Best Practice in Guided Individual Learning (Brandon, 2004); however, utilizing older newspaper cuttings files is not. Because Cambodian students do not usually make full use of back issues of newspapers and magazines, even though we believe that this is an excellent source of learning materials, specific sets of newspaper clippings files have been created and students are encouraged to make use of them. Each newspaper and magazine clipping is supported by a worksheet developed by GIL teachers. In addition, we try to make the cuttings file very selective in terms of topic areas that are usually linked to IELTS preparation, which is an important educational goal for our Cambodian students. Also, we have introduced the 'Listening to Online News Broadcasts' section in the GIL Center, where everyday news from three radio stations, including Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and Voice of America (VOA), is recorded and made available to students in order to provide students as much access as possible to authentic listening materials. These resources are also discussed later in this paper. An additional advantage of such resources is that they are almost free of charge and can be developed and maintained by the GIL Center teachers.

Opened in January 2006, the Center is available to students sixty-five hours a week. There are between five to ten EFL teachers who are named as GIL Center teachers scheduled by the Resources Manager on a rotating basis to supervise the Center. The core roles of these teachers is discussed in detail later in this paper.

GIL Center layout
Situated in a large rectangular room, the Center consists of a Help Desk positioned directly opposite the only entrance to make students feel that they are being welcomed as they enter. Two TV corners at each of the far ends of the room contain two large Cable TVs, VCD/DVD players and Video Tape Players. There are more than 60 comfortable chairs and five large tables. Tables and chairs are placed in two different areas, a quiet area and quiet discussion area. Books, self-study packs and other learning materials are displayed on shelves along the walls that take up three sides of the room.

Facing the Help Desk, there are twenty LCD computers. This position allows teachers to fully monitor the usage of those computers among students. With the computers, students can access

the Internet, type their assignments, practice their listening skills and, especially, access Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) software (as eight of the computers are installed with privacy screens so students do not disturb their neighbors), while twelve others are for surfing the Internet.

There is a comfortable corner that offers an inviting area for students to read newspapers and magazines with their friends or just sit down and have a quiet chat to improve their speaking skills. The GIL Center is specifically aimed at upper-intermediate level students and above, and it provides a wonderful learning environment, is well equipped with a large range of English learning materials, and offers improved student services. All of these improvements have created a completely new learning atmosphere to encourage more students to come and study.

Resources for autonomous learning
Specialized resources for EFL
As the name suggests, the GIL Center aims to provide students with a full range of services focused on helping them to become independent learners. Therefore, most of the books and other materials, including self-study packs and computer learning software, are for English learning purposes and are balanced between the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The Center has an acquisition budget, and every month GIL teachers select new, suitable materials from a variety of bookstores and from international publishers and websites.

Newspaper cuttings file
From newspapers, articles of general and academic interest, including those that frequently appear as IELTS topics, are cut out and laminated. These cuttings are then categorized according to IELTS topics, such as education, environment and politics, using a system of color-coding.

The rationale for this is based on trying to improve students' reading skills and to expose them to new vocabulary in different areas. Worksheets have been developed to enable students to exploit the articles more fully.

Listening to online news broadcasts
The news is recorded daily from ABC, BBC, and VOA radio programs. Each has an approximate length of 5 minutes. The recordings are put on the server from which students can access them at any time and can complete the specially created generic worksheets, which help to focus students' listening and help them remember facts and figures. Furthermore, this material can help students to improve their listening skills by allowing them to become familiar with different English accents, including Australian, British and American.

Worksheets
Different types of generic worksheets have been designed by the GIL Center teachers for different kinds of resources, such as TV and radio programs, newspapers, magazines and books. These worksheets encourage students to listen actively and enhance their ability to retain information after reading or listening.

Computers
There are twenty new LCD computers, featuring new interactive learning software, and 24-hour Internet access.

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) Software
There is a wide variety of sophisticated and user-friendly CALL software in the GIL Center. Students can improve their four macro skills by following a variety of programs including 'Pronunciation Power 2', 'Study Skills Success', 'Listening to Lectures', or 'Read Up Speed Up.' Most of these programs contain interactive activities that are important for improving speaking and pronunciation. 'Pronunciation Power 2', for example, allows students to record their own voices and gives feedback on their speaking and pronunciation.

Internet Service
Students can access the Internet on 12 of the computers whenever the GIL Center is open. They can also use all 20 computers to type their assignments and homework. However, this does not mean that GIL Center Teachers place more focus on, or push students to use computers all the time.

In fact, there is still a large number of students who prefer hard copy materials as references for their work. This is one reason why the school continues to add new books to the Center.

GIL Center teachers

In trying to develop the GIL Center, GIL Center teachers have been providing a helpful service by assisting students in selecting interesting, useful and interactive materials. One of the most important jobs for the GIL Center teachers is to help students gradually change their habits and learning styles when using the learning Center. Commonly, there are students who do not use their time well in the Center and do not have a clear study plan. Some students are not aware of how to improve their learning outcomes as they are totally dependent on teachers for their learning and knowledge, while others are reluctant to ask for help despite knowing what their problems are.

Many Cambodian students think that the best way to improve their writing is by memorizing model texts, so that when they have to write about the same or a similar topic they can quickly write from memory. When students are not familiar with the subject of their given task, their writing is often off-topic. This is a pervasive problem, and one of the GIL Center staff duties is to redirect students away from rote learning. This not only occurs with writing but also with all areas of their learning. This is one of the objectives of the GIL Center that can be generalized to all language schools in Cambodia. By being proactive in the way GIL Center staff perform their duties, with close supervision of what the students are doing while they are in the GIL Center, and by advising students those who might be using inappropriate learning strategies, it is believed that over time these traditional problems can be rectified.

Therefore, GIL Center teachers act as resources in guiding students to relevant materials that are appropriate for their actual abilities. They also act as facilitators, helping students tackle their learning problems. This is part of a NEAS requirement: that all the GIL Center teachers are qualified and well trained in EFL and have experience teaching English. In addition, they are also trained by the

Resources Manager before they become fully qualified to help the students to become independent learners, and help to fulfill the students' needs.

Introduction for new students

When students become eligible to join the GIL Center, they are offered an orientation program. This takes around one hour, including time to complete the induction worksheet. A GIL Center teacher leads students on a tour. The introduction is important for new students as they are given a chance to get to know the GIL Center, the availability of Center resources, and how certain materials and resources are used such as computers, the Internet, self study packs, listening CDs, DVDs, TVs and others.

GIL Center Club

The GIL Center Staff are very keen to help students use the materials and resources as much as possible, and to encourage them to become more independent learners. An initiative the staff has put in place to encourage this is to develop a learning club called the GIL Center Club. There are regular sessions where students come together with one of the GIL Center teachers to receive training on various topics, ranging from demonstrations on how to use new materials to learning strategies. Attending this club is free-of-charge, and all GIL Center members are very welcome. These sessions are offered twice a week. There is a new lesson every week, and suggestions are accepted to run special sessions for other groups of students in the school, or others on topics of students' choice.

Teacher liaison

GIL Center teachers have a good relationship with other teachers at the school. They identify useful materials that teachers could use in their classes, recommend materials to be purchased, or suggest resources for their students to use to supplement their study outside the classroom. Teachers also receive information on new books and materials that are assessed, and, if appropriate, added to the GIL Center.

Advice to students

Students are given advice on their learning problems. The GIL Center teachers help solve students' problems, and guide them to materials suitable for them. They also try to be proactive in identifying student needs by approaching the students. Students are encouraged to consult with the GIL Center teachers and to discuss their weaknesses.

GIL Center evaluation

The GIL Center teachers' efforts have proved successful as shown by the results of a survey in a questionnaire form conducted in December, 2006, a year after the GIL Center was opened. In a questionnaire aimed at evaluating the GIL Center materials and services, the GIL Center staff discovered that, among the 28 students who completed the questionnaire, 18 said the learning materials were very good, and that the services were helpful. In addition, students who had been studying as independent learners in the GIL Center for up to 6 months said they became more confident in language communication skills as they had improved greatly. This was viewed as an important outcome of the work in the Center.

A study based on students' International English Language Testing System (IELTS) results at ACE has also supported the effectiveness of the GIL Center in the school. In order to graduate from the General English Program (GEP) at ACE, students have to score at least 5.0 on IELTS. In 2005, a year before the opening of the GIL Center, 77.09 percent of the all IELTS candidates scored 5.0 or above; and the figure increased to 82.50 percent in 2006. According to the register book on which students record their names before using the GIL Center, a large majority of the students who were to sit for the IELTS had utilized the GIL Center.

It is also acknowledged that there were some criticisms from the students in their questionnaires that were mainly connected to the approachability of the staff. It is a major objective for any self-directed program in language learning that students feel comfortable approaching staff for help. Steps have been taken to rectify this. Continuous training on customer services at the GIL Center has been prioritized as a part of overall training.

Conclusion

While ACE has implemented a successful model, the GIL Center, for independent learning, the emphasis for language schools in Cambodia should be less on the final product and more on the process of developing these independent learners. At this point, few schools can imitate the ACE model completely, but they can certainly implement ideas that have been presented in this paper.

For example, EFL teachers can develop quite useful reading materials from back issues of newspapers and magazines. They need only to carefully select and catalogue those articles for appropriate subject areas. Even though the Internet is not widely accessible in Cambodia, teachers can also download free Podcasts and other listening materials from news websites such as those produced by BBC Worldservice, Voice of America, and ABC Australia. The strength of these materials is that students can have access to three different accents with authentic listening materials produced by native speakers. Teachers who are keen on technology in education can also develop their CALL software from Hot Potato, which is free ware, for their students to use.

Finally, developing self-directed learners who are not only proficient in the four macro skills, but also in their ability to function independently in English, should not be a luxury that only a few schools in Cambodia deem crucial to language education. Promoting a non-classroom learning environment should be part of the learning outcomes for all language schools within Cambodia.

Sonita Ly was the former Resources Manager at ACE Cambodia. She also taught English in the General English Program. She received a BEd in TEFL from the Royal University of Phnom Penh in 2001. Since then, teaching English to students of all age groups has been her profession. She has attended many professional development workshops . Her special interest in English teaching is to help students learn through more efficient and effective

methods and to understand the importance of being able to study independently.

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Integrating critical thinking skills into the EFL classroom

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Abstract
Integrating critical thinking skills into the EFL classroom can help further develop students' communicative abilities and analytical thinking, and allows students to practice communicating in a variety of situations. This article will introduce a summary of an example of the integration and implementation of critical thinking skills into the language classroom at Soka University, Japan, which was presented in a workshop at Cam TESOL 2007. First, the article reviews some definitions of critical thinking and explains critical thinking as measurable skills. Next, the means for integrating critical thinking skills into the EFL curriculum in the program will be introduced. Several examples of implementation will follow. In the conclusion, the article considers some issues raised by the participants in the presentation at Cam TESOL 2007.

Introduction
There are a number of researchers who have attempted to define critical thinking. For instance, Dowden (2002) cites "To think critically, is among other things, to be fair and open-minded while thinking carefully about what to do or what to believe." Scriven and Paul (2004) state critical thinking is:

> that mode of thinking –about any subject, content or problem— in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them . . . in short, [critical thinking is] self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking.

In her learning strategy textbook for college freshmen, Hopper (2003) introduces critical thinking as follows: "A critical thinker is constantly asking questions, trying to distinguish between fact and opinion. Not about memorizing, but analyzing all sides of an issue to find more in the situation than the obvious and makes assertions built on sound logic and solid evidence" (p.37). Among the variety of definitions, Ennis (1978, as cited in Stroupe, 2006) summarized critical thinking simply

as "a process incorporating the skills necessary to decide what to do and believe" (p.3).

These definitions explain the concept of critical thinking in a manner that not only emphasizes the way information is processed and applied, but also stresses the consciousness or awareness of this process taking place. This emphasis or awareness is required by teachers to facilitate critical thinking in the classroom.

Why teach critical thinking?

On the importance of critical thinking in education, Facione (1992) claims that critical thinking is fundamental in a democratic society, stating "Without critical thinking, people would be more easily exploited not only politically but economically" (p.20). Students need to think critically to understand how they are connected to the world around them and are affected by different events occurring in their local areas and in the world. According to Huitt (1998), critical thinking has come to be considered as one of the important topics of schooling in this age of information. With the unlimited access to information through the advancement of technology, the ability to think of ways on how to utilize information effectively and differentiate the reliability of sources is required of students. Hopper (2003) also emphasizes that to be a critical thinker is essential to be a successful college student as students need to go beyond just memorizing the facts and develop tools or skills to be used on the facts or information presented to them throughout their learning.

In terms of the English learning context, the use of questions can enhance learning and critical thinking as Brock (1986) has shown in research conducted on the effects of questions on ESL classroom discourse. She claims that native speakers frequently use questions when initiating topics in conversations addressed to non-native speakers of English. The research showed that the amount of learner output was increased with the use of referential questions and suggested that questions might be one of the most important tools in the language classroom. King (1994), in her experimental research on teaching children how to question, concludes that practice of questions can enhance higher order thinking and engage students

in more complex knowledge construction. Further, she claims that in order for the acquisition of the skill of questioning to take place, a great amount of training or repetitive practice is necessary.

The acquisition of questioning skills described above demonstrates one of the many ways in which learning to think critically takes place in the context of classroom language learning instruction. In fact, critical thinking can be incorporated into any activity within the language classroom if the teacher provides opportunities for students to develop these skills. For example, Devine (1962) claims that how to think critically cannot be taught directly, but it is possible to teach it through critical reading or critical listening activities. Further, he claims that English teachers should be able to teach critical thinking by refocusing and revising existing lessons and units. Critical thinking develops with training and repetition; however, it also requires a vehicle. Critical thinking can be found within and developed through the act of language learning where the listening, speaking, reading and writing tasks are the vehicles that carry students through the process of developing these thinking skills if used conscientiously for that purpose.

Thus, to sum up the points addressed above, critical thinking is essential to be successful as a student and as a working member of society in this rapidly changing environment with an overwhelming amount of information available to us. That is not an exception for English language learners. Therefore, it is important for language teachers to realize the potential and possibility of critical thinking to be taught in the form of concrete skills such as asking questions, and also for critical thinking to be integrated in reading, listening or speaking activities in language classrooms. In order to do so, teachers need to focus on the skills to try to provide ample opportunity for students to develop the capacity to think critically.

Critical thinking as measurable skills

In the 1950s, a group of educators gathered and tried to classify educational goals and objectives as to what the teachers would like their students to know. This is widely known as Bloom's Taxonomy

(as cited in Anderson & Sosniak, 1994). According to the taxonomy, learning takes place in a hierarchy of six levels of thinking from low to high: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Bloom's Taxonomy has long been referred to and cited as educational objectives in schools. Huitt (2004) provides a comprehensible definition for each level with sample verbs to make the concept more concrete.

1. Knowledge level: "Student recalls or recognizes information, ideas, and principles in the approximate form in which they were learned." (write, list, label, name, state, define)

2. Comprehension level: "Student translates, comprehends, or interprets information based on prior learning." (explain, summarize, paraphrase, describe, illustrate)

3. Application level: "Student selects, transfers, and uses data and principles to complete a problem or task with a minimum of direction." (use, compute, solve, demonstrate, apply, construct)

4. Analysis level: "Student distinguishes, classifies, and relates the assumptions, hypotheses, evidence, or structure of a statement or question." (analyze, categorize, compare, contrast, and separate)

5. Synthesis level: "Student originates, and combines ideas into a product, plan or proposal that is new to him or her." (create, design, hypothesize, invent, develop)

6. Evaluation level: "Student appraises, assesses, or critiques on a basis of specific standards and criteria." (judge, recommend, critique, justify)

Similarly, Ennis (1993) criticizes Bloom's taxonomy as "too vague" (p. 179) to guide critical thinking assessment, and elaborates critical thinking as 10 skills that can be assessed in a critical thinking test:

1. Judge the credibility of sources.

2. Identify conclusions, reasons, and assumptions.

3. Judge the quality of an argument, including the acceptability of its reasons, assumptions, and evidence.

4. Develop and defend a position on an issue.

5. Ask appropriate clarifying questions.

6. Plan experiments and judge experimental designs.

7. Define terms in a way appropriate for the context.

8. Be open-minded.

9. Try to be well informed.

10. Draw conclusions when warranted, but with caution (p.180).

In similar attempts to make this taxonomy more applicable to classroom activities, Wakefield (1998) has applied Bloom's Taxonomy and lists a number of verbs in each level as measurable behaviors. For example, student improvement in comprehension skills can by measured by their improvement in summarizing, paraphrasing, and contrasting information. She also provides lists of materials or activities that can enhance learning of each level. This list of behavioral verbs and materials along with definitions of each level of taxonomy is presented in Appendix 1.

Critical thinking skills in an EFL curriculum

Based on Bloom's Taxonomy and Wakefield's applied taxonomy, Stroupe (2006) incorporated critical thinking skills into a university EFL curriculum. World Language Center (WLC), at Soka University in Tokyo, Japan, offers English courses which are divided into four levels according to students' TOEFL ITP scores: Advanced (480+), Intermediate (430-480), Elementary (380-430),

Basic (330-380). Critical thinking skills are incorporated in the syllabus as part of course objectives in each level and are considered as incremental skills to prepare for higher order thinking behaviors as students move up to higher level courses. Appendix 2 shows examples of critical thinking skills development tasks in each level of WLC courses (Stroupe, 2006).

Classroom practice

Using Basic level, an example of the way critical thinking skills are incorporated in classroom practice is presented in this section. Basic level is the lowest level of WLC courses (Appendix 2) and offers two types of communication courses; one course offers two 90-minute intensive classes a week and another course offers one 90-minute class a week. Both courses intensively focus on developing students' communication skills (i.e., mainly speaking) and integrating critical thinking skills are specifically indicated as part of the course objectives in the course description. Below is an excerpt of the course description:

Increase communicative competency

a. Express or exchange information about ideas, knowledge or feelings *(critical thinking)*

b. Express opinions *(critical thinking)*

c. Describe something or someone *(critical thinking)*

d. Explain or give reasons *(critical thinking)*

Improved listening competency

i. Drawing conclusions about who, what and where *(critical thinking)*

ii. Discriminating between emotional reactions *(critical thinking)*

iii. Recognizing topic in a dialogue/sentence

iv. Identifying the speaker

Based on these course objectives, the following are examples of how critical thinking skills are incorporated into classroom practice for the Basic level WLC courses. Measureable behaviors based on Wakefield's application of Bloom's Taxonomy are identified for each example (Wakefield, 1998) (See Appendix 1).

Example 1
When a teacher asks "Do you agree or disagree with…?", students answer usually with "I agree/I disagree" short answers. Keep encouraging students to extend answers with a reason clause starting with "because" until they practice enough and become able to support their answers. Here, students practice agreeing/disagreeing with statements using extended answers, utilizing what Wakefield (1998) labels as "state" (Knowledge level) or "explain" (Comprehension level) critical thinking skills.

Example 2
Students tend to leave things unclear to them without asking teachers; therefore, they need to first practice how to ask questions. Elicit questions that clarify the meaning or ideas such as, "What does ___ mean?" "Could you explain it again?" "How do you say ___ in English?" Here, students practice how to "identify" (Knowledge level).

Example 3
When using a poem or a song as teaching material, have students discuss what the writer is trying to express. Provide a prose like, "Here the writer is feeling…" so that it becomes easier for students to predict or hypothesize the author's intention. Here, students try not only to understand the surface of the text, but also what is behind the text. This learning task is an example of "hypothesize" (Synthesis level).

Example 4
When students work in pairs, they ask each other questions, and one person reports to the teacher what the partner said. Ask the student questions about the partner to encourage students to apply different question strategies to find out more information and report it properly. As such,

students "apply" and "report" information (Application level).

Example 5
Have students adapt a story or create a role-play utilizing lessons, phrases, grammar points and other items to review what was learned. Students practice summarizing or combining the information they learned in class. Here, the students practice "combine", "create", and "role-play" (Synthesis level).

Example 6
When using a role-play from a textbook, create questions that require more critical thinking and guessing from the information in the text, not just comprehension type questions (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Sample Role-Play

Julia:	I'm so excited! We have two weeks off! What are you going to do?
Nancy:	I'm not sure. I guess I'll just stay home. Maybe I'll catch up on my reading. What about you? Any plans?
Julia:	Well, my parents have rented a condominium in Florida. I'm going to take long walks along the beach every day and do lots of swimming.
Nancy:	Sounds great!
Julia:	Say, why don't you come with us? We have plenty of room.
Nancy:	Do you mean it? I'd love to!

Questions:

1. Are Julia and Nancy students? From which sentences can you tell?
2. What is Julia going to do during the break?
3. What is Nancy going to do during the break?

Note: Adopted from: Richards, J. C. (1997). *New interchange: English for international communication: Student's book 2* (p.28). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Question 2 can be answered only from the information in the text (from Julia's sentence "Well, my parents have rented a condominium in Florida. I'm going to take long walks along the beach every day and do lots of swimming."). On the other hand, questions 1 and 3 require predicting using the information from the text to hypothesize possibilities.
Here, students practice how to "hypothesize" (Synthesis level).

The examples above illustrate how Bloom's taxonomy can be applied to basic language activities. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that Bloom's taxonomy is not necessarily sequential or hierarchical. For example, students asking and answering questions about their weekend would be describing (Knowledge) events, explaining or comparing (Comprehension) events, and possibly recommending (Evaluation) things to do. Clearly, various measureable behaviors (knowledge, comprehension, evaluation) from Bloom's taxonomy are present in this activity and in fact, in any language activity if properly facilitated by the instructor. Therefore, repeated practice of the critical skills in different contexts and different levels (of the courses in the curriculum) promotes the acquisition of these skills.

Critical thinking in Self-Access: Chit Chat Club

In order to provide more opportunity for students to practice their speaking and develop critical thinking skills, students can go to the self-access facility of the World Language Center. Along with offering English language courses, the WLC runs self-access facilities that include English conversation programs, foreign language conversation programs, and a writing center. One of the English conversation programs called Chit Chat Club is geared primarily for Basic and Elementary level students (Institutional TOEFL Placement [ITP] Test, 330-430). The main goal of Chit Chat Club is to build confidence in students' communicative ability by providing them with an opportunity for additional English speaking practice outside of the classroom. The program is also closely connected with WLC English courses, which aims to develop critical thinking skills and gradually incorporate more complex thinking skills. Most students who register in Basic/Elementary WLC English courses are required to join Chit Chat Club sessions seven times in a given semester.

A staff member (usually international students who are studying at the Institute of Japanese Language, or Japanese undergraduate students who have experienced studying abroad) sits at a table with five to six students. The program used to offer 45-minute topic-free sessions, however, we began topic-specific sessions focused on critical thinking skills in 2006. Staff members prepare for upcoming topics and skills at monthly staff meetings. Here they have an opportunity to brainstorm questions and methods to practice skills with fellow staff members.

The following are examples of questions the staff have asked in the sessions. In parenthesis, the topic of the week and critical thinking skills focus for the topic are provided:

> Tell us about your favorite food. What does it look like? (Food/ Describing)
> How do you come to Soka University? (Travel/Explaining the Process)

What do you study? How does it relate to your future dream? (Future Dreams & Career/ Relating)
Tell us about the best birthday party you ever had. (Childhood Memory/ Narrating)
What does your name mean? (Name/ Explaining)
What are the differences between university life and high school life? (University Life/ Comparing)
Tell us your favorite sport and least favorite sport. (Sports/ Comparing)
If you could use magic, what would you do? (Wishes & Hopes/ Predicting)
If you got an unlimited credit card for one day, what would you buy? (Money/ Predicting)
Tell your scary story. (Halloween/ Narrating)
When you open the door, what do you see in your room? (My Room/ Describing)
What will happen if children keep playing TV games for many years? (Computer Game/ Finding Causes and Effects)
Tell us about your favorite store. (Favorite Store & Shopping/ Analyzing)
Are you doing anything good for your health? (Stress & Health/ Exemplifying)
Do you agree with having school uniforms? How about your parents? (School Uniform & Rules/ Shifting Perspectives)
What does your father usually do on New Year's Day? (New Year's Day & Customs/ Explaining)

Chit Chat Club provides many benefits for the students. They not only enjoy using English outside of the classroom but also build confidence communicating in English. Students become accustomed to asking the staff and other students questions related to the topics and also asking questions to understand and develop their own ideas further. It should be noted again that some critical thinking skills overlap in different weekly topics. By providing repetitive practice in different contexts and using different topics in addition to the classroom, Chit Chat Club allows students the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills the

acquisition of the skills will take place and transfer these skills to upper level English courses as they progress in the WLC program.

When this was presented at Cam TESOL 2007, two major issues were brought up from the participants. One issue was that teaching critical thinking was still not culturally accepted in Cambodia. As critical thinking is considered to be or is supposed to be "transferable" (Ennis, 1993; Lawson, 1993), if students learn to think critically, it does not mean they do so only in English classes, but also in other classes. As a result, one major concern is that transfer can be provocative in Cambodian education, where some professors tend not to welcome questions from students. As Atkinson (1997) suggests, we need to carefully examine the cultural context in each situation when we implement teaching critical thinking. Another issue is how we assess whether critical thinking has successfully taken place or not. As assessing "thinking" is not a simple task (Ennis, 1993), we have not yet developed a method of assessing the effectiveness of implementing critical thinking skills. Also, a way of measuring how critical thinking skills affect learners' English speech production needs to be developed and further researched.

Conclusion and future considerations

This article has shown the benefits of incorporating critical thinking skills into the EFL classroom and a self-access facility. It has also explained the concept of critical thinking skills and the measurable behaviors of higher order thinking. This paper has demonstrated that critical thinking takes place at all levels of the EFL curriculum. Furthermore, we have discovered that measureable behaviors based on Bloom's taxonomy (Wakefield, 1998; Huitt, 2004) are not exclusive or sequential: they can occur in random order. In conclusion, teachers often facilitate critical thinking in their students indirectly, without being aware of it. However, it is important that teachers raise their awareness of this process in order to manipulate the classroom discourse to enhance the development of students` capacity to think critically. The capacity to think critically is imperative in today's global

environment. Therefore, it is our responsibility as EFL educators to provide opportunities for students to develop this ability to process information efficiently.

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Appendix 1
Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Materials, and Measurable Behaviors

Bloom's Level	Definition	Materials	Measurable Behaviors
Knowledge	Student recalls or recognizes information, ideas, and principles in the approximate form in which they were learned.	Events, people, newspapers, magazine articles, definitions, videos, dramas, textbooks, films, television programs, recordings, media presentations	Define, describe memorize, label, recognize, name, draw, state, identify, select, write, locate, recite
Comprehension	Student translates, comprehends, or interprets information based on prior learning.	Speech, story, drama, cartoon, diagram, graph, summary, outline, analogy, poster, bulletin board	Summarize, restate, paraphrase, illustrate, match, explain, defend, relate, infer, compare, contrast, generalize
Application	Student selects, transfers, and uses data and principles to complete a problem or task with a minimum of direction	Diagram, sculpture, illustration, dramatization, forecast, problem, puzzle, organizations, classifications, rules, systems, routines	Apply, change, put together, construct, discover, produce, make, report, sketch, solve, show, collect, prepare
Analysis	Student distinguishes, classifies, and relates the assumptions, hypotheses, evidence, or structure of a statement or question.	Survey, questionnaire, an argument, a model, displays, demonstrations, diagrams, systems, conclusions, report, graphed information	Examine, classify, categorize, research, contrast, compare, disassemble, differentiate, separate, investigate, subdivide
Synthesis	Student originates, integrates, and combines ideas into a product, plan or proposal that is new to him or her.	Experiment, game, song, report, poem, prose, speculation, creation, art, invention, drama, rules	Combine, hypothesize, construct, originate, create, design, formulate, role-play, develop
Evaluation	Student appraises, assesses, or critiques on a basis of specific standards and criteria.	Recommendations, self-evaluations, group discussions, debate, standards, editorials, values	Compare, recommend, assess, value, apprise, solve, criticize, weigh, consider, debate

Note: Adapted from Wakefield, D. V. (1998, November). *Encouraging Achievement-Gifted Education Resources.* Paper presented to the Governor's Teaching Fellow's, Athens, GA. Retrieved December 15, 2008, from Encouraging Achievement-Gifted Education Resources Website: http://www.greenwood.wa .edu.au/internal/eager/Bloom's%20Dara%20Wakefield.html#anchor8914; Huitt, W. (2004). *Educational Psychology Interactive: Bloom et al.'s Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain.* Retrieved on February 4, 2007, from http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/cogsys/bloom.html)

Appendix 2
Integration of Critical Skills Development Tasks in WLC Course Offerings by Level

Level	Two Khoma[1] Courses	One Khoma Courses	Practical Examples
Advanced 500+	English Communication Advanced: Intensive (Argumentation, international Comparative Education, Human Rights, Art and Peace	TOEFL Preparation: Advanced Intensive	Developing and supporting referenced argumentative essays, judging credibility of a source, comparing and evaluating educational systems formulating new and explaining decision processes and rationales for answering TOEFL questions
Advanced 480+	International Communication (Academic, Business, English Literature, Sociology)	English Communication: Advanced Academic Reading: Advanced Academic Writing: Advanced TOEFL Preparation: TWE	Explaining decision processes and rationales for answering TOEFL/grammar questions, comparing/contrasting literary themes, evaluating main points in an essay with appropriate evidence
Intermediate 430-480	English Program: Intermediate	English Communication: Intermediate Academic Writing: Intermediate TOEFL Preparation: Intermediate TOEIC Preparation: Intermediate	Proposing possible solutions to global problems, identifying and (peer) evaluating paragraph structure, explaining decision processes and rationales for answering TOEFL/TOEIC/grammar questions
Elementary 380-430	English Program: Elementary	English Communication: Elementary Academic Writing: Elementary TOEFL Preparation: Elementary TOEIC Preparation: Elementary	Agreeing/disagreeing with statements (with support), identifying and (peer) evaluating sentence structure, explaining decision processes and rationales for answering TOEFL / TOEIC / grammar questions
Basic 330-380	English Program: Basic	English Communication: Basic (Below 380)	Agreeing/disagreeing with statements (with extended answers), offering options, predicting outcomes of conversations, comparing and contrasting, ranking according to importance (with explanations)

[1]Khoma is the Japanese classification for a 90-minute period; therefore a two-khoma course typically meets twice a week, while a one-khoma course typically meets once a week during a given semester.

Note: Adopted from Stroupe, R. R. (2006). Integrating critical thinking throughout ESL curricula. *TEFL Reporter, 39*(2), 42-61.

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