CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching: *Selected Papers* Volume 4, 2008

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

Foreword

The 4th annual CamTESOL Conference on English Language Teaching was held at the National Institute of Education in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on February 23-24, 2008. The theme for this year's conference was "Building Bridges to the World." The conference was attended by over 1000 delegates from 24 countries (including 179 provincial Cambodian teachers). The CamTESOL Conference series provides an important opportunity each year for academic dialogue that serves to strengthen the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Cambodia, the region, and globally. It is a rare opportunity for Cambodian delegates to meet with and learn from international participants while at the same time providing a chance for international educators to gain an understanding of the context for ELT in Cambodia as well as the region. The conference has been an opportunity to showcase successes, learn lessons, and address some of the challenges shared by English language teachers in Cambodia and throughout the world.

The 2008 Volume of Selected Papers includes 16 papers that deal with a range of diverse topics presented at CamTESOL 2008. Firstly, plenary speaker Alan Maley highlights a perhaps disregarded, yet essential element of every classroom. In his paper "You and Your Voice: Use it or Lose it!" Maley discusses the influence of the language teacher's voice as well as a range of ways to respect, appreciate and add value to this important classroom tool.

Technology plays a significant role in building bridges to the world as the global population becomes increasingly 'connected'. ELT classrooms are no exception. Charles Browne, a Featured Speaker at CamTESOL 2008 presents some of the ways that adaptive technologies might be used to teach, review, and test vocabulary with EFL students in his paper "A Research-Based Approach to Developing Portable Technology Software for Testing and Teaching High Frequency Vocabulary."

Additional papers in this volume also address the way in which technology can be harnessed to improve student learning and assessment. George Robert MacLean discusses recent developments in the use of mobile technologies, such as cellular phones, as effective tools for student learning in his paper "Taking the Show on the Road: Cellular Phone Applications for Modern Foreign Language Teaching." In a paper by Simon Smith, Scott Sommers and Adam Kilgarriff titled "Learning Words Right with the Sketch Engine and WebBootCat: Meaningful Lexical Acquisition from Corpora and the Web", the authors describe how a

web corpus builder can be used to create a corpus of texts related to a topic in an intuitive and statistically principled way. Supalak Nakhornsri, in her paper "The Development and Validation of the Authentic English Reading Comprehension Computer-Adaptive Online Test," discusses the development and implementation of a computer-delivered reading proficiency test. The study found some evidence of improved efficacy when compared with the paper version of the test.

Papers presented at the 2008 conference also addressed the intersection of technology, academic skills, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and critical thinking skills. David Adam Stott's paper "Using CALL to Write and Research Academic Essays" introduces empirical data that demonstrates the effectiveness of CALL and offers advice for its effective use within academic as well as a general writing programs. Todd Squires suggests that a framework for curricular learning objectives and higher level thinking skills can be used to ensure that ESP programs are as effective as possible in his paper titled "Evaluating and Improving Vocabulary Learning Tasks in ESP." As awareness of the significance of integrating language skills in EFL classrooms grows, students will be increasingly required to capture and synthesise points and ideas using critical thinking skills. Larry MacDonald, D. Malcolm Daugherty and Richmond Stroupe, in their paper "Integrating the ESL Curriculum: Towards a Cognitive Learning Approach" review some of the progress being made towards developing an integrated skills approach, which heavily emphasizes critical thinking skills, in curriculum development.

The 2008 Selected Papers also presents lessons learned from research and innovations in the South East Asian region. Mai Tuyet Ngo's paper "Management of a University-based English Language Program in Asia's Non-Native Contexts: An Innovative Approach from Vietnam" focuses on the positive effects of program leadership efforts to create working environments that facilitate innovative teaching and learning. Two local papers address issues specific to the Cambodian context. Keuk Chan Narith addresses issues specific to Cambodia in his paper "English Language Variety

in Cambodia." He discusses some of the features of the English used by Cambodian learners and argues that they may present a new English variety. Khan Bophan provides insight into Cambodian English learners' professional writing by exploring a relatively un-researched yet important topic: Cambodian letters of application. His paper titled "Moves and Strategies in Letters of Application by a Group of Cambodian College Graduates" discusses some of the commonalities and discusses the implications for teaching writing.

Three papers offer an important resource for informing and enriching teaching methods in the classroom. Elizabeth Walter-Echols in "Journaling as Writing Practice, Reflection, Personal Expression" provides insight into some of the benefits of student journal writing, from low-stress writing practice to the positive effects on student-teacher rapport. Timothy R. Blair's paper "Reading Comprehension Instruction" discusses the effectiveness of explicitly teaching reading comprehension abilities. Blair reviews research that indicates a clear association between teaching comprehension and student improvement in the area. Suksan Suppasetseree and Kiattichai Saitakham continue the discussion related to learning vocabulary in their paper "English Vocabulary Learning Strategies Employed by Thai EFL University Students with Difference Levels of Language Proficiency." The authors demonstrate how different vocabulary strategies were employed by students based on their level of English proficiency. While low achieving students preferred to use dictionary strategies for learning vocabulary, higher performing students more often used guessing strategies.

The use of authentic materials in the classroom informs the final two papers in this volume. In her paper titled "Active Learning: Harnessing the power of Authentic Materials", Phawani Vijayaratnam considers how the use of authentic materials in the classroom can be useful both to help students improve their language skills as well as in their development of critical thinking skills such as analysing and synthesising information. In addition, Rana Sowath describes ways in which an often underutilised form of authentic material, pictures,

might also be used. In "Warming Up with Pictures" Rana outlines a technique for using pictures in the warm-up phase of a class to heighten students' attention and increase their motivation. CamTESOL 2008 had over 170 presentations including papers, workshops and posters, and selecting the papers for this volume was a difficult process. As the Director of the National Institute of Education, the host for the 2008 CamTESOL Conference, I would like to thank all those who attended the conference, contributed with their presentations, and submitted papers to this Volume. I would also like to thank all those who contribute their time and energy in other ways, including the editorial assistants, production staff and of course, our Assistant Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Richmond Stroupe.

Dr Im Koch

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You and your voice: Use it or lose it!

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Abstract

This article will first draw attention to the importance of the language teacher's voice, and to the current neglect of this precious resource in teacher training courses. The reasons for giving voice greater importance will be set out. The major components and processes in voice production will then be described, and suggestions made for developing them. A final section will deal with the care and maintenance of the voice. A brief list of useful books is appended together with a small selection of activities.

Introduction

The single most important resource teachers have is their voices. Teachers rely on their voices to a prodigious degree, and the long hours of talking on a public stage, the classroom, takes its toll both physically and psychologically. The way teachers use their voice resource determines in large measure, not only the clarity of the information conveyed but, more importantly, the quality of the classroom relationship with students. Yet scarcely any training in the use and care of the voice is given to teachers on training courses. This is an extraordinary omission.

In this paper, I shall first explain just why the teacher's voice is so important. I shall then introduce the basics of the human voice, how it is produced and some of the key factors involved. I will then make a few suggestions about what teachers can do to develop and understand their voices better. Finally, I will offer some guidelines for voice care and maintenance.

Why voice?

There is a tendency for people to think that, because they have been using their voices since childhood, they are expert voice users. So what's the problem? The problem is that taking our voices for granted leads us to neglect them. In the case of teachers, who use their voices so much, neglect is a dangerous thing, and can lead us into forming habits of over-use and misuse, which in some cases can cause permanent physical damage.

The problem becomes clearer if we compare teachers with other professional voice users. Actors, for instance, use their voices a good deal less than teachers, yet they receive rigorous voice training over three or more years, and continue to work on their voices regularly for the rest of their careers, often with the help of a voice coach. Politicians, business executives and other public figures regularly seek out voice training – and pay a large amount for it. Yet teachers get no training, and continue to take their most precious asset for granted, and many of them pay for this neglect in reduced vocal range or volume, chronic hoarseness, sore throats or even total voice loss.

There are other good reasons for paying more attention to our voices:

- Voice is a key marker of identity. In a very real sense, we are our voices. Our individual voiceprints are every bit as distinctive as our fingerprints or our facial features. For example, we unfailingly recognize people on the telephone from the way they sound. It is through our voices that we tell other people who we are, and they judge us by the way we sound. As a

result, it is important for us to become more aware of the auditory impression we make on those we interact with.

- Voice is also a major indicator of how we feel. Others can immediately detect whether we are interested or not, whether we are tired, in a bad mood, happy, or sad. If our mood is off-centre, then so will our voice be. As Patsy Rodenburg, the renowned voice coach remarks, 'As a barometer of life's pressure, the voice is unfailingly accurate.' (Rodenburg 1991)

- If we can develop a confident, natural speaking voice, which can sustain prolonged use without tiring, we have the capacity to influence the quality of our relationships with students. A tired, listless voice conveys a lack of enthusiasm that students immediately detect. A richly textured voice, warm and resonant with confidence and vitality, raises the energy levels of those who come into contact with it. The teacher's voice helps set the atmosphere in the class.

- We should also realize that our voices provide the most important model for our students: a model not just of pronunciation but also of voice quality. A warm, kind, sympathetic-sounding voice will help students form positive associations with the language they are learning. For many students, almost the only model they come in contact with is their teacher. Therefore, it is well worth trying to provide the best model possible.

- One final reason for paying more attention to the voice is that it is the only one you have. If your car wears out, you can buy a new one. If your heart wears out, you can have a transplant. But if your voice wears out or gets damaged, it cannot be replaced, as many teachers know to their cost.

The domino ladder of voice

In voice work all the elements are interrelated. If one goes down, the others follow. As Rodenburg again perceptively remarks, 'The voice is like a finely-woven tapestry, all threads of the work are interconnected.' (1991, op. cit.) So what are these key elements in the production of the human voice?

Relaxation

The basis for all voice production is a state of mental and physical relaxation. However, this is coupled with an alertness and readiness to move into action. Unless we are relaxed, the muscles we need for producing a strong voice will be tense. The neck, the shoulders and the jaw are particularly prone to tension. Tension has a knock-on effect on posture, posture on breathing, breathing on voice.

Posture

The way we stand or sit has a direct effect on our capacity to breathe deeply. Unless we start from a posture that is balanced, we will be making our muscles compensate for being off-centre. This means that those muscles are not available for their real purpose, which is to support breathing. Keeping the body erect and in alignment does not mean standing to attention like a soldier. We need to be erect yet relaxed, always in a state of readiness to move or act. Therefore, we need to be centered in our mind as well as in our body.

Breathing

Poor posture often leads to shallow breathing. Also, shallow breathing – that is breathing only into the upper part of the chest – means we do not have enough air to produce a good, resonant voice. To create a big reservoir of air to support the voice, we need to breathe deeply. This means pushing the diaphragm, the big muscle which runs under the lungs, as far down as we can. We need to 'breathe into the belly' not just the chest. Good breathing is absolutely key to a good voice. After all, breathing is the first, and the last, thing we do in life!

Phonation

Phonation refers to the way we produce raw sound. If we have a good reservoir of breath, we can sustain a long and, when necessary, loud sound. The air comes out of the lungs, up the windpipe and through the vocal chords in the throat. When the vocal chords vibrate, they create sound. If there is too little air, they vibrate less, and the sound they produce is weak.

Resonance

The quality of the sound we produce in phonation is affected by resonance. Resonance is produced by vibrations. The human body vibrates when we make a sound because there are many cavities or vibration chambers in the body. The biggest ones are in the head (full of sinuses and honeycombed bone), the mouth, the throat and the chest. When the sound vibrates in these cavities it produces harmonics, that is variations on the base note. Depending on whether our dominant resonator is in the head, the mouth, the throat or the chest, our voice will sound more high pitched or deep. Because everyone is a different shape, everyone's voice sounds unique. The important point is to ensure that we use the pitch (produced by resonance) that is natural and comfortable for us. If we speak higher or lower than is natural, our voice will experience strain.

Articulation

Articulation refers to the way we chop up the stream of sound as it exits our mouth. The articulators include the tongue, the teeth, the hard and soft palates, the lips, the uvula, etc. For clear communication to take place, it is important for us to articulate clearly, especially in public communication contexts, such as the classroom. No matter how strong and resonant the voice, if it is poorly articulated, the communicative effect will also be poor.

Modulation

Modulation refers to the tone of voice: The quality that affects how listeners perceive the speaker. Does the speaker sound like a kind or unkind person, warm or cold, friendly or hostile, happy or gloomy, enthusiastic or bored, calm or angry, relaxed or tense, and so on? How pleasant is the voice perceived to be? How agreeable or not is it to listen to? Even if all the other components are in place, if the voice is in some way unpleasant or disagreeable to listen to, the listeners will switch off.

What can we do about it?

All this advice is very well but how can we actually improve how we carry out all these interconnected processes? I would suggest three possible ways: by developing awareness and knowledge about the voice; by exercising the voice components regularly; and by incorporating some voice work into our classes.

Awareness

It is first of all important to be aware of these components. If we are not aware that, for example, we often stand out of alignment, or breathe poorly, or articulate in an unclear way, or have an unpleasant nasal voice, we stand no chance of changing such things for the better. A good way of doing this is to consult one or more of the many books about voice. Of course, books cannot do everything but they can give you an orientation. A list of these can be found at the end of this article (Appendix 4). Another way is to reflect on the items in a questionnaire (Appendix 1).

Regular practice

Voice is a physical phenomenon (even though it is closely linked to the mind and to psychological states). It can therefore be improved or maintained by some regular physical exercises. These do not have to be difficult or tiring. It is more important to do them regularly. Many people find it helps to set aside about 30 minutes a day for this. Many of the recommended books also contain suggestions for exercises. You will find a limited number of suggestions in Appendix 2.

Classroom voicework

It is useful to incorporate some activities on voice with students too. Increasingly, they will have to put their voices to professional use, in English as well as in their mother tongue. Voicework also adds variety to the activities in class, and helps develop creative self-expression. A small selection of activities can be found in Appendix 3.

Voice care and maintenance

I have mentioned voice problems several times already, so now is the time to examine them in more detail. The main causes of voice dysfunction are: muscular tension, over-use, misuse, personal lifestyle and environmental factors.

Muscular tension

As we have noted above, the main location of tension is in the neck, shoulders and jaw, though tension elsewhere in the body, such as the lower back can also impact on voice. The effect of these tensions is to constrict the throat and chest, so making it more difficult to breathe and to produce a clear sound. Some of the simple exercises suggested in Appendix 2, such as head rolling, shoulder lift and drop, facial massage, can help relieve these tension hot-spots.

Over-use of the voice

Teachers notoriously talk too much! Too much talking is tiring for the vocal apparatus. The result may be dry, scratchy or even sore throat, loss of volume, loss of expressive range, etc. Being aware of this should help to prevent it. To avoid it, try to introduce silent activities to give yourself a rest. Encourage students to do some of the talking you would otherwise do. Do not speak when there is no need. Above all, do not be afraid of silence. When you do speak, make sure you pause enough: this gives them time to digest what you have said, and gives you time to think about what to say next.

Misuse of the voice

There are a number of ways in which we typically misuse our voices. Any kind of misuse can have short-, or sometimes long-term effects on our voices. The worst kind of misuse is shouting or straining the voice to talk over other people's talk. The best way to overcome student noise is to agree some simple procedures to signal that everyone should stop talking. Putting up your hand is one easy way. As students see your hand up, they also raise hands and stop talking. A small bell, drum or tambourine can have the same effect. Other forms of misuse include hard glottal attack when air pressure builds up behind the vocal chords and is released suddenly like an explosion. The effect on listeners is that you are perceived as over-emphasizing words. The effect on the vocal chords is to damage them. Similarly with 'pushing', when it sounds to the listener as if they are being spoken 'at' rather than 'to'. This causes much tension in the throat. You can avoid it by taking a deep breath, yawning and loosening up the neck and throat areas

Personal lifestyle

An imbalance in diet or sleep can have a knock-on effect on voice. If you are overweight, this will have an effect on breathing and thus on voice too. If you wear tight clothing or footwear, this will have an effect on posture (high-heeled shoes do this), or on breathing (as with tight belts and buttoned up shirts.) If you have a stressful lifestyle, this too will impact on your voice. Substance abuse, whether in the form of alcohol, smoking or drugs, has a dehydrating effect on the throat, and this seriously affects voice production. All of these lifestyle factors can be changed but it requires an effort of will. There is no magic way of giving up smoking, or junk food, or fashionably unsuitable clothes.

Environmental factors

These include air quality, humidity, the acoustic properties of the rooms we teach in, class size, or noise, n short, anything which causes us discomfort or difficulty in being heard. If we teach in a dusty, noisy, echoing room, with too many students crammed into it, which will have a negative effect on voice production. Very dry environments lead to dry throats. Very humid environments impede easy breathing. It is not always easy to control the environment but, as far as possible, avoid noise, dust, and crowded spaces. Drink lots of water, and avoid talking too much.

Conclusion

In this brief article, I have attempted to draw attention to the centrality of voice for teachers, and especially language teachers. I have also suggested that by increasing awareness of the issues, by developing a regular voice exercise routine, and by incorporating activities drawing on voice with students, we can do much to counteract the appalling neglect from which voice continues to suffer.

There are two further concluding remarks to be made. Firstly, we need to realize that voice is a habit. Habits are difficult to change, and the process takes time. There are no quick fixes. To improve our vocal performance will take time and effort. The decision to act is for each individual teacher to make.

Secondly, we need to realize that there is no such thing as a 'good' voice. There is little point in trying to sound like Sir Ian McEwan or others. We all have our own voices. We can make them more effective if we so choose but in our own ways. Perfection is an unrealistic and unnecessary aim. 'Fit for purpose' is a better aspiration.

Alan Maley has worked in ELT for over 45 years. He has lived and worked in 10 countries, including PR China, India, Singapore and Thailand. He has published many articles, reviews and books in the field and is series editor for the Oxford Resource Books for Teachers. He now lives in UK but travels widely, especially in Asia, his second home.

Reference
Rodenburg, Patsy (1991). *The Right to Speak*. London: Methuen

Appendix 1
My voice
This questionnaire is one way of raising awareness of the way we sound.
1. How many different ways have I listened to my own voice?
   ~ on a tape?
   ~ on a video film?
   ~ in my head as I speak?
   ~ on my answer-phone?
   ~ as an echo in the mountains?
   ~ other?
2. Do I tend to talk fast or slow in my own language?
3. When do I tend to talk faster, or slower?
4. Do I tend to talk loudly or softly?
5. When do I speak more loudly? More softly?
6. Do I change the speed / loudness when I speak English? (or another foreign language?)
7. Does my voice sound different in English?
8. Does my voice change in different contexts? For example, when I speak on the phone; when I teach; when I talk to the doctor? Etc.
9. does my voice change at different times of the day?
10. Who is my favourite actor voice (film or theatre? Is there anyone I would like to sound like?

Appendix 2
Some suggested exercises for the voice
This is just one possible short workout to prepare the voice:
- Stand in a balanced position: feet evenly spaced shoulders width apart, head, neck and spine in alignment, knees flexed (not locked.) Slowly raise your arms from the sides to meet above the head as you breathe in. Lower them slowly on the out-breath. Do this 5 times.
- Raise both hands above your head, breathe in deeply, then drop forward from the waist till your head and arms are hanging loosely down, releasing your breath as you go down. Take 5 long breaths while you arte down. Breathe into the bottom of your back: feel your bottom ribs stretching. Then come back up on a long in-breath, uncoiling your vertebrae one at a time, finishing with your neck.
- Raise both shoulders as high as you can, then let them drop back into place. Do this 5 times. Then rotate your right shoulder slowly towards the front. Then the left shoulder. Then rotate the right shoulder to the rear and then the left. Do this 5 times for each movement.
- Do a complete neck roll 3 times to the right and 3 times to the left. As you roll hum a note.
- Stretch your tongue as far out of your mouth as you can. Then raise and lower the tip. Do this 5 times.
- Push your lips out as far as you can, then stretch them as wide as possible to the sides. Do this 5 times.
- Keeping the tip of your tongue pressed hard against your bottom teeth, and tensing your tongue as much as you can, make the sound –eeeeeeee. Then flatten your tongue on the floor of your mouth and make the sound – ooooooo. Do this alternately 5 times.

- Give your lips, tongue and soft palate some practice by rapidly speaking the sounds; p.t.k, p.t.k…. Then b.d.g, b.d..g…. Then k.t.p. k.t.p… Then g.d.b. g.d.b… Then play around with the order of the sounds in each group; t.k.p, p.k.t etc. Do this for about 5 minutes.
- Gently massage your jaw joints (on a level with your ear), then slowly massage downwards to your chin. Do this 3 times.
- Do a very big yawn, right at the back of your throat – 3 times.
- Sit on a chair, feet evenly apart flat on the floor, back and neck in alignment. Breathe in through your nose to a count of 5. Hold your breath for a count of 10.. Release the breath through your mouth to a count of 10. Do this 5 times.

You are ready!

Appendix 3
Some suggested class activities involving voice
Guided relaxation
Students can do this activity either standing or sitting. It works best if students keep their eyes closed so that they visualize the parts of the body as you mention them. Tell them that you are going to talk them through their bodies from toes to head. As you mention each part, they should try to visualize it, then tense it, then release the tension. You should speak in a warm, calm but firm voice:

Feel your toes. Try to feel each one separately. See them in your mind. Now make them tense. As tense as you can. Now release the tension, let them go free. Now feel your feet – the soles of your feet, your heels, the top of your fet. Now tense your feet tightly. Now let them go. Relax them completely….

When you reach the crown of their head, give them a moment to enjoy the complete relaxation of their whole body. If you wish, let them return back down to their toes again but without your voice.

Apart from its value in getting them into a relaxed yet alert state, the activity offers ample practice in the vocabulary of body parts.

Group orchestration of a text
Students work in groups of about 7. Each group is given a fairly short text. Poems work best. Tell the students that they will have 20 minutes to prepare a group performance of the text. They have to make the text as interesting to listen to as possible. Suggest that they could vary the number of students speaking at one time, to vary speed and pausing, volume, pitch, to add gestures or sound effects. Remind them that articulation will be important, and so will rhythm. When theuy are ready, they perform the text for other groups.

This activity leads to a remarkable degree of involvement of students with the text, and to a lot of reflection on how to speak the lines for maximum effect.

Here is a sample poem:

Song of the homeworkers . *Trevor Millum.*

Homework moanwork
Cross it out and groanwork
Homework neatwork
Keeps you off the streetwork
Homework moanwork
Cross it out and groanwork
Homework roughwork
When you've had enoughwork
Homework moanwork
Cross it out and groanwork
Homework dronework
Do it on your ownwrok
Homework moanwork
Cross it out and groanwork
Homework gloomwork
Gaze around the roomwork
Homework moanwork
Cross it out and groanwork
Homework guesswork
Book is in a messwork
Homework moanwork
Cross it out and groanwork

Homework rushwork
Do it on the buswork
Homework moanwork
Cross it out and groanwork
Homework hatework
Hand your book in latework
Homework moanwork
Cross it out and groan groan GROANWORK

Appendix 4
Short reading list

Boone, D. R. (1991). *Is Your Voice Telling On You?* San Diego, California: Singular Publishing Group.

Campbell, D. G. (1989). *The Roar of Silence*. Wheaton, Illinois: The Theosophical Publishing House.

Gallwey, T. W. (1997). *The Inner Game of Tennis*. London: Pan.

Graham, C. (2005). *Creating Chants and Songs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Maley, A. (1999, July). Choral Speaking. *English Teaching Professional*, 12.

Maley, A. (2000). *The Language Teacher's Voice*. Oxford: Macmillan/Heinemann.

Martin, S., and Darnley, L. (1996) *The Teaching Voice*. London: Whurr Publishers.

Rodenburg, P. (1993). *The Need for Words*. London: Methuen.

Rodenburg, P. (1997). *The Actor Speaks*. London: Methuen.

Rodenburg, P. (2007). *Presence*. London: Michael Joseph/Penguin.

A Research-based approach to developing Portable Technology Software for testing and teaching high frequency vocabulary

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, the importance of extensive graded reading and the teaching of high frequency vocabulary has become an accepted part of the Second Language Acquisition literature. At the same time, there has been almost an explosive growth in the use of electronic devices by students. How many words do our students actually know? Is it possible to accurately identify the words that each learner knows and which ones should be studied next? How can online technology be used to efficiently test and teach these words? This paper will discuss both the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of the online testing and teaching of vocabulary for EFL students. Among other things, I will introduce a computer adaptive vocabulary test based on Item Response Theory, electronic flashcards and games based on research in the area of time-intervalled learning and electronic graded reading and listening materials to supplement the vocabulary learning programs.

Introduction

Although there is a large and growing body of research related to Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), (Chapelle, 2003; Ducate & Arnold, 2006; Egbert, 2005; Fotos & Browne, 2004; Hanson-Smith, & Rilling, 2006; Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Trinder, 2006;), one of the biggest challenges facing schools and universities that wish to utilize technology for language learning is the extreme cost involved in setting up and maintaining large CALL facilities. With the ownership rate among students of cell phones and MP3 players now far surpassing that of computers (Browne, Dias, Menish, & Pagel, 2008), developing software for these popular devices seems a logical solution.

Combining previous work in the area of CALL (Browne 2004a; Browne 2004b), with research on the importance of developing learner knowledge of high frequency vocabulary words (Nation, 1990, 2001), and the importance of using graded reading materials with low level EFL learners (Browne,

1996, 1998; Day & Bamford, 1998; Nation, 1990, 2001), the author participated in the development of a variety of online English Language Learning software applications for cell phones and PCs. The suite of programs are capable of accurately and efficiently assessing the learner's English lexical size, identifying which English high frequency words still need to be taught (Culligan, 2008), and then teaching these important words via a time-intervalled flashcard system and learning games, which focus on developing automaticity of word knowledge through spaced repetition (Ebbinghaus, 1964; Leitner, 1972), extensive graded reading, and listening materials. After a brief introduction to the rationale for the importance of developing vocabulary size, the software applications that have been developed to help accomplish this task will be introduced.

The movement towards the teaching of vocabulary

From the beginning of the study of second language acquisition (SLA), the field has seen many swings, from a focus on grammar acquisition to a focus on learning processes. Traditionally, vocabulary learning and instruction were seen as somehow isolated and separate from the mainstream theories of SLA. With the grammar-translation method, and its focus on the syntax of the sentence, it was thought that once the students learned the grammar of the sentences, they would be able to slot in vocabulary and therefore generate language. With the advent of the Audio-lingual method, based on habit-formation, vocabulary was again treated in much the same way. Words were taught as replaceable elements within sentence structures that always were the central focus of language learning. Subsequent research has often attempted to account for SLA by looking at grammatical features in such areas as developmental sequences (Cancino, Rosansky, & Schumann, 1978; Pienemann, 1989), the role of input (Loschky, 1994; Shook, 1994; White, Spada, Lightbown, & Ranta, 1991), as well as the role of instruction (Dulay & Burt, 1973; Ellis, 1992; Sharwood Smith, 1981; VanPatten, & Cadierno, 1993). From the publication of Corder's seminal paper in 1967 to Larsen-Freeman writing in 1991 on SLA research, the study of grammar and its acquisition has almost become synonymous with SLA.

Concurrent with these developments in SLA, yet somehow apart, certain scholars began to study the needs of the learners from a lexical perspective. Many of the questions they asked, and the results they found are still relevant today. These questions included how many words a student needed to know, how these words should be sequenced, and what the student needed to know about these words.

One of the first debates centered on the number of words that a student needed to know. This necessarily led to defining what a word is, and what it means to know a word. While this research primarily focused on first language acquisition, there are obvious implications for SLA as well. The central argument was whether it would be possible to increase a learner's vocabulary by the direct instruction of words and their meaning. If estimates of native speakers vocabulary were very large, then explicit instruction would not be feasible, and early research seemed to indicate that this was the case. Studies cited in D'Anna, Zechmeister, & Hall, (1991) suggested a recognition vocabulary of 155,736 words and over 200,000 words but both studies suffered from methodological problems in defining what a word is. Nagy and Anderson (1984) used six semantic categories to organize lexis from a corpus of high school English and found that students were exposed to 45,000 base words and 88,500 word families. They suggested that teaching children "words one by one, ten by ten, or even hundred by hundred would appear to be an exercise in futility" (p. 328), and that teachers should concentrate on teaching skills and strategies for independent word learning. Later research by Goulden, Nation, & Read (1990) questioned whether native speakers actually knew these words. By designing tests based on the frequencies of the words, the researchers determined that native speakers' vocabulary averages 17,200 words. This number suggests that the learning burden is not as insurmountable as previously suggested. Other research by D'Anna, et al. (1991) found a similar result of 16,785 words.

Vocabulary thresholds for second language learners

Although there are more than 300,000 word families in the Oxford English Dictionary, which is considered to be the largest dictionary of English in the world, research in corpus linguistics has shown that a very small number of these words are actually used in daily life. In an excellent overview of vocabulary research to date, Nation (2001), found that just the 2000 most frequent words of English cover approximately 81-85% of words that appear in general English texts, and that the top 5000 words covers approximately 95% of such texts.

Exactly how many words do second language learners need to know? Several researchers have found evidence for several important vocabulary thresholds beyond which, second language learners are able to function more successfully and

independently. Laufer (1992) compared vocabulary size and reading comprehension scores and found that a recognition vocabulary of at least 3,000 words, which offers approximately 90% coverage of texts, was the minimum threshold for being able to read unsimplified texts (i.e. where there were more readers than non-readers of the text). Hirsch and Nation (1992) found that a 95% coverage level (5000 words) represents another important threshold, and that once this vocabulary size was reached, learners were able to read and comprehend texts without the help of a teacher or dictionaries. Unfortunately, EFL learners in most countries do not have nearly this vocabulary size. In Japan, for example, studies by Shillaw (1995), and Barrow, Nakanishi and Ishino (1999) found that after between 800 and 1200 hours of instruction, Japanese university students had an average vocabulary size of between 1700 and 2300 words, far short of the amount they need to be independent readers and speakers of English.

Assessing a learners' vocabulary size: The promise of computer adaptive tests

Brown (1995) argues that an essential component of any pedagogical program is a needs analysis. Before designing and presenting materials, it is imperative to gather "information to find out how much the students already know and what they still need to learn" (p.35). In order to help students to learn the words they need to learn, the first step then, should be a diagnostic one – identifying each students' vocabulary size, and more importantly, the specific words each of them already knows. Unfortunately, until very recently, the only way to measure a learner's vocabulary size was either to have them check off all the words they knew in a dictionary (quite impractical), or to make a rough extrapolation from random samplings of different frequency bands. The most widely used of such vocabulary size tests is Nation's (1990) Levels Test. Though the Levels Test has proved to be useful as a research tool, it wasn't designed to be able to identify which specific high frequency words were known or unknown, meaning that test results could not directly inform classroom pedagogy.

In response to this problem the author worked with several other vocabulary and statistics experts to develop a computer adaptive vocabulary size test know as V-Check (www.lexxica.com). The free online test, which can be taken with a PC or a mobile phone, utilizes IRT (Item Response Theory) and elements of Signal Detection Theory to quickly assess the number of English words known by learners, as well as their depth of knowledge of those words. IRT states that the probability of getting a correct answer to an item depends on the difficulty of the item and the ability of the student. IRT allows us to be able to measure a test-taker's ability by assessing his or her responses to questions (items) of known difficulty. IRT-based tests are uniquely suited for Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) and have recently been employed by large testing companies such as ETS who use it for the online version of TOEFL. In the case of TOEFL tests, IRT analysis is used to help establish the equivalency of question items used on different forms of the TOEFL test given in various locations.

In our case, we employ IRT in a very different way. With our V-Check vocabulary test and Level Check assessments, IRT is first used to measure and calibrate the difficulty of each vocabulary word (each an item), and to organize a mathematical ogive (an index) of vocabulary items by their rank order of difficulty. From the 20,000 high frequency words we test, any one respondent will typically see no more than 30 actual items during their testing session. Over time, IRT allows us to establish a very precise measure of each item's difficulty for a given population group.

To implement an accurate IRT-based test, widespread sample testing with the desired population is needed before creating the actual test. Among other things, this allows us to create a valid ogive (thousands of vocabulary words that have been organized by rank order of difficulty) for the population. The ogive gives us the ability to both rapidly ascertain each respondent's lexical ability, as well as to statistically predict which specific words are likely known, and not known at each level of ability. In other words, V-Check measures each test-takers' vocabulary ability level with a high degree of probabilistic accuracy and then identifies

the words they know, which more importantly, allows us to identify the high frequency words they don't know.

The V-Check test presents respondents with a series of simple questions known as Lexical Decision Tasks. Research has shown that the Lexical Decision Task approach is one of the most highly reliable and statistically valid forms of vocabulary testing. (Harrington, 2006; Meara, 1992; Meara & Buxton, 1987). One benefit of the Lexical Decision Task is that learners are able to respond to far more items in a given amount of time than in traditional types of vocabulary tests. The approach is thus an extremely fast and efficient way of getting a measure of each learner's lexical ability. In the Section 1 V-Check test, vocabulary words are generated by the computer at varying levels of difficulty and the respondent is asked "Do you know this word?" The respondent gives either a "Yes" or "No" response. After the first item, each next item is then selected to provide the maximum amount of information possible toward establishing an estimate of the student's ability. This process is repeated until a high degree of accuracy is achieved. The amount of time necessary to take the test is variable because the process depends on the responses of the test taker. However, because each item is selected to maximize the information and minimize the error based on an individuals responses, these tests are always more efficient than conventional pencil and paper tests or non-interactive computer tests.

Once a students' level is determined, the Optional Section 2 of the test then proceeds to ask for definitional knowledge of words selected at and around the respondent's assessed ability level. The definitional questions are presented via a multiple-choice format. The test results indicate the number of real words the respondent can correctly recognize, and the percentage of correct definitions that were given at the maximum assessed level of ability. Initial data seems to indicate that respondents who try to stretch too much on Section 1 of the test (in order to recognize more words than they can independently define) receive a score of lower than 90 percent in Section 2. We are theorizing that this is because the words they are being asked to define are above their functional vocabulary proficiency. So far, respondents who are more cautious and precise in their responses on Section 1, answering "Yes" only to words that they confidently know, are usually able to achieve scores of 90 percent or higher in Section 2.

The whole test finishes in 6 to 15 minutes, dependent on the response pattern of the test taker. One of the most unique and useful aspects of the V-Check test is that since the IRT analysis allows us to predict which specific words are already known by the learner, each student who takes the test is able to receive their own personalized list of next most important high frequency words for study.

As can be seen from Figure 1, results with Japanese test-takers has revealed an interesting aspect of EFL word knowledge among Japanese students – they don't tend to learn words in the order of frequency. This particular student score sheet (Figure 1.) is from a first year university student in Japan. It indicates that he knows more than 2400 words, a score not dissimilar to the research results of Shillaw (1995), and Barrow et al. (1999), cited earlier. This sample V-Check score sheet also shows a very large gap of 630 missing (unknown) words from among the first 2000 most frequent words of English. While this student recognizes 2430 total words of English, he is missing many of the most frequently used words, which greatly limits his reading comprehension ability. This profile is typical of the thousands of Japanese students who have taken the V-Check test. Research has shown that knowledge of the first 2000 most frequent words is crucial to gaining basic proficiency in English. The first 2000 words provide up to 85% coverage of written texts (Nation, 1990, 2001). For most Japanese students, learning their missing high frequency words will be of critical assistance in helping to achieve independence as learners. Interestingly, the score sheet also points to the fact that the student knows quite a few lower frequency words (more than 870 words in the 2001-5000 frequency band) and another 180 words that are beyond even the 5000-word frequency level.

Figure 1.   Screenshot Sample V-Check Results Page
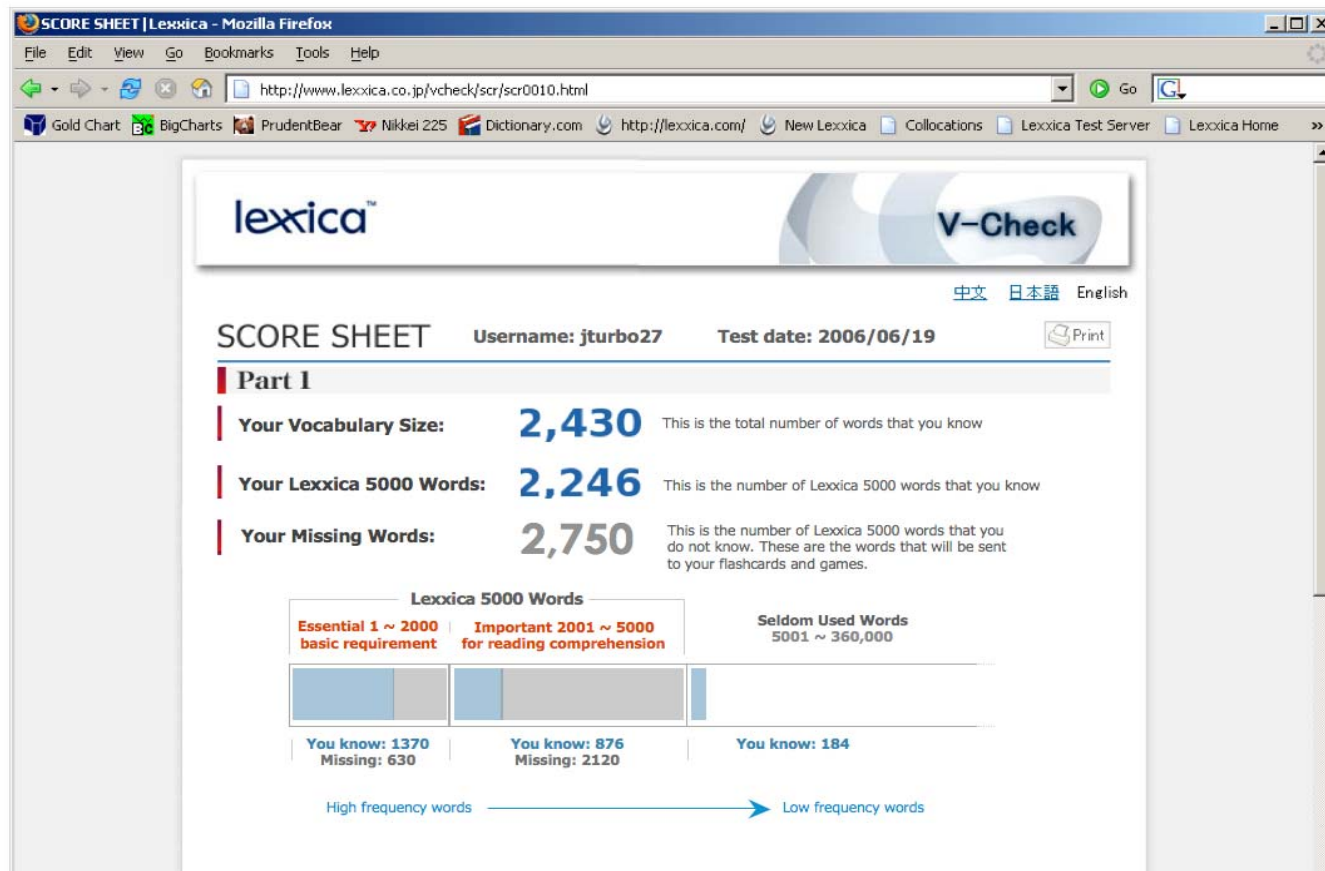
Why do such vocabulary knowledge gaps occur? Although it is not within the specific scope of this article, research by the author and others (Browne, 1996, 1998, 2002, Kitao and Kitao, 1995, Butler and Iino, 1995, Kikuchi, 2006) have pointed to both the extreme difficulty of reading texts used in high schools and on college entrance exams as well as the undue emphasis in general that Japan's secondary education system's places on teaching English in order to pass college entrance exams (rather than for purposes of communication) as contributing factors.

As was mentioned previously, V-Check is unique among vocabulary tests in that it not only estimates a learner's vocabulary size and identifies the gaps in their knowledge, but it is also able to make accurate predictions about which specific high frequency words are known and unknown, making it a useful starting point for developing an individualized vocabulary learning program.

Direct study of vocabulary through flashcards and games

Once a person's missing, unknown, or unclear high frequency words have been identified, how are they learned? Research going back more than a hundred years (Ebbinghaus, 1885; Leitner, 1972; Mondria, 1994; Pimsleur, 1967), has shown that learning new words via a time-intervalled review of flashcards is one of the most efficient ways to quickly increase one's vocabulary size and to move knowledge of these words from short term to long term memory. In their 'hand computer' studies, both Leitner (1972) and Mondria (1994) devised elaborate spaced repetition systems for quickly learning new

words. Use of personal computers was not yet widespread at the time they published their studies, so they recommended the use of packs of vocabulary cards and a shoebox divided into multiple slots, with each slot representing a different time interval for review. Although the results of these studies were very promising, keeping track of the correct time intervals for the review of hundreds of physical cards proved to be too cumbersome and demanding for most learners (and teachers, too). Our fully automated electronic learning applications eliminate the weaknesses inherent in working with paper cards and shoeboxes. We have developed a fully personalized spaced repetition 'Word Engine' which functions autonomously for each individual student. The Word Engine utilizes multiple learning game applications and electronic flashcards, keeping track of every response and interaction regardless of the type of electronic interface (PC or mobile) that the user prefers. The Word Engine selects the new target words and phrases for each learner after checking their Section 1 and Section 2 V-Check scores, or (in the cases where no score sheet is issued) their Level Check assessment. The Word Engine then automatically prioritizes each learner's flashcards and then, through the use of invisible time tags, is able to recycle them via a time-intervalled process similar to that outlined by Mondria (1994) and deliver learners the words that need to be reviewed at exactly the right time intervals.

Figure 2 shows the front and reverse sides of an electronic flashcard for Japanese learners of English (English-English definitions are also possible by changing the settings). The front side of the card reveals the target word 'substitute' along with the question "Do you know this word?". The learner tries to recall the definition, and then checks if they were right or not by clicking the 'Check It' button. If they were correct, and they reply "Yes", the word is automatically retired until the spaced repetition timer calls for it to once again be displayed. If the user did not properly know it, and they replied "No", the word will return to the first time interval slot, and wait its turn to start the process again.

Figure 2.   Two Screenshots of an Electronic Flashcard for the Target Word Substitute
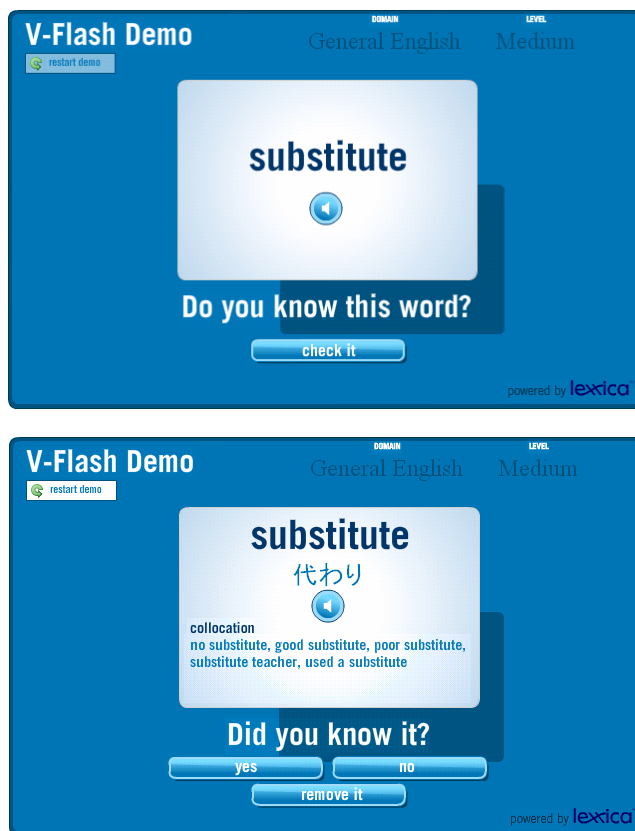
Information appearing on the reverse side of each flashcard is adjustable by the user including the following options.

- Definitions in English (including different 'senses' whenever a word has multiple meanings)
- Definitions in the learner's first language
- Part of speech
- Sound files with native speaker pronunciations of the words
- Frequent collocations for each target word (based on corpus analysis)
- Sample sentences

At this time the Word Engine is capable of testing knowledge of up to 20,000 words, and our database supports learners with the first 8000 most frequent words of general English as well as 3000 additional special purpose words that are specific to academic

testing purposes. For example we have words that are infrequent in general English but are highly frequent on TOEFL, TOEIC, GRE, SAT and Japanese university entrance exams.

Another possible problem with vocabulary flashcards is how to sustain learner motivation. Although it is true that flashcards are a very efficient way to learn new words, using them can quickly become boring if they are the sole method of doing vocabulary review. There is a rich tradition in the ESL/EFL classroom of using games with a communicative purpose in the ESL/EFL classroom to increase and maintain learner motivation (Ersoz, 2000; Wright, Betteridge & Buckby, 1984; Uberman, 1998) as well as lower the learner's affective filter (Asher, 1965, 1977; Dulay, Krashen & Burt, 1982; Krashen 1985). This research led us to create several interactive vocabulary-learning games to develop automaticity (discussed below). The games are fully integrated with our spaced repetition system such that whether a learner reviews new target words with the flashcards or the games, whenever they correctly recognize the meaning of a word, it will be automatically forwarded to the next stage of the spaced repetition process.

Vocabulary size and automaticity

Although there is a growing body of research which has established a relationship between vocabulary size and reading ability (Laufer, 1992, Nation, 1990). However, simply increasing a learner's vocabulary size will not be sufficient since reading comprehension depends not only on the number of words a learner knows, but also on the speed with which they are able to recall each of the word meanings they have stored in their memory. In a discussion of the various processes involved in reading comprehension, Abdullah (1993), in a concise summary of research on lexical automaticity, argues that it appears humans have a finite amount of processing ability and that the automaticity of lexical access can free up cognitive processing capacity which can be devoted to the comprehension of text. In other words, fast decoders of language will have a better chance to be a good reader.

The two games shown in Figure 3, Sight-Words and Sound-Bubbles, are based on the idea of developing automaticity of word knowledge. In Sight Words, learners are delivered unknown (or not fully learned) high frequency words from the Word Engine's spaced repetition system, and are asked to quickly match the word to the correct response (responses appear in the user's native language or in the target language based on user's settings). Points are awarded to the learner/player based on the speed of identification. In Sound-Bubbles, the learner first clicks on a bubble to hear a word pronounced. The player then matches a correct response to each sound bubble. Initial response to these games has been very encouraging.

Figure 3.   Screenshots of the Sight-Words and Sound-Bubbles Vocabulary Games
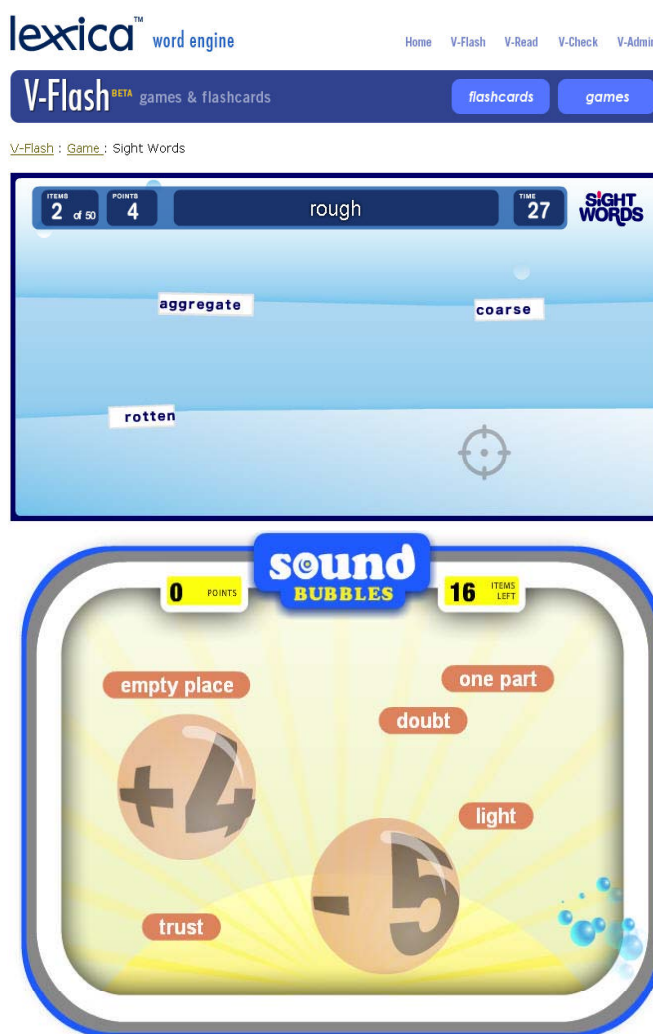
Indirect development of vocabulary size through reading and listening

Extensive reading of graded reading materials has been widely used as a way to increase vocabulary size and to improve both motivation and overall ability in English (Day and Bamford, 1998. Susser and Rob, 1990). With clear evidence that EFL reading materials are far too hard for learners in Japan, (Browne , 1996,1998, 2002, Kitao and Kitao, 1995, Butler and Iino, 1995, Kikuchi, 2006), use of graded reading materials has been strongly promoted in recent years in Japan through organizations such as Start with Simple Stories (SSS, http://www.seg.co.jp/sss/). Until now, most attempts to conduct extensive reading programs have made use of physical books, usually through the creation of graded libraries from which students can borrow books to read at home.

With the amazing growth of the e-book market in English speaking countries (and more recently in Japan), and a virtual 100% cell phone ownership rate by Japanese college students (Browne, Dias, Menish, & Pagel, 2008), we decided to offer graded reading materials that could be accessed online. Although we had first thought to work with major publishers to have them offer electronic versions of their existing books online, the extremely slow process of working out rights issues led us to realize the only way to do this would be to create our own original graded materials. Rather than trying to duplicate the excellent work done by the major publishing houses in creating book-length graded readers, we have opted instead for creating materials on current topics of much shorter length (approximately 1000-1200 words). We are currently on schedule to be able to offer 100 stories at 4 levels of simplification (1000, 2000, 3000 and unsimplified) in 10 different categories that include topics such as Current Movies, Famous Performers, Music, Sports and Food.

Although there has not yet been much published research related on the specific benefits of using graded listening materials, we strongly felt that offering learners recorded versions for all of our graded reading content would be helpful in developing their listening skills. These audio files can be listened to via a web browser, or downloaded into any MP3 player such as an iPod. We are also working to develop applications to teach the most frequent English spoken phrases as well as additional special purpose vocabulary lists designed to help prepare people for success in different careers.

V-Admin: Keeping track of it all

Although all of the software we have developed has been designed for individual learners to self-access in an easy and intuitive way, from the very beginning we realized that cell phone software for measuring and tracking vocabulary development would also be of potential interest to teachers and CALL administrators. To this end, we created the V-Admin administration program.

As can be seen in Figure 4, the current version of the V-Admin program allows a teacher to track student scores on the V-Check vocabulary test. In order for the program to work, teachers must first log in and create their account. They can then create as many classes as they want. Each time they create a class, a code is generated which the teacher gives to their students. When students log in, they are asked if they have a class code. If they enter the code, the student's V-Check scores will be automatically reported to the teacher. The V-Admin is now in the process of being upgraded so that it can also track student progress on all other programs (such as flashcards, games, graded reading materials) as well as generate individualized quizzes based on the words with which a learner is working.

Figure 4.   Screenshot of V-Admin (Beta version)

Conclusion

After several years of research, software development, and extensive testing, our programs have only recently become available for online use by students (and teachers) around the world. The positive reactions and support we have received thus far from learners, teachers, and fellow researchers has been extremely promising. With many schools not able to afford adequate CALL facilities to accommodate all their students, we are hoping that the fact that all of our software can be used on cell phones will help teachers and schools to be able to utilize this modality as a new type of self-access center.

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Taking the show on the road: Cellular phone applications for Modern Foreign Language teaching

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Abstract
Mobile technologies such as the cellular phone are a ubiquitous aspect of modern life. In an environment where financial resources are often strained to meet Information Technology (IT) needs, schools should actively examine and pilot educational applications of mobile technologies such as cellular phones, devices which students have purchased themselves and often are able to make powerful use of without any direction from their instructors. This paper will discuss recent developments in mobile learning, how to incorporate a mobile program in existing curricula, tools, procedures for evaluating student achievements, as well as the results thus far of a study using cellular phones as part of the instruction of prosody and presentation skills.

Introduction
Information Communication Technology (ICT) and mobile technologies such as the cellular phone are an ubiquitous aspect of modern life. Students entering universities today take it for granted that from almost any location and at almost any time they can make telephone calls, send mail, listen to music, take pictures or videos and perform a range of other functions that are made possible by ICT and mobile technologies. Indeed, students are often more adept at employing mobile technologies, such as cellular phones, than many of their instructors. Within such a context there is an excellent opportunity for educational institutions to make effective use of student capabilities in this domain. In an environment where financial resources are often strained to meet Information Technology (IT) needs, schools should actively examine and pilot educational applications of mobile technologies, through devices which students have purchased themselves and often are able to make powerful use of without any instruction from their professors. This paper will consider the use of ICT and what

has come to be known as mobile learning (m-learning), describe a number of mobile devices and their potential applications for the instruction of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) with reference to applications in use, potential applications, and studies to date. Finally, the paper will situate these applications within the context of existing pedagogical principles and identify future issues and considerations surrounding the incorporation of m-learning in education.

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The ICT Revolution
It is now possible for instructors to teach using cutting-edge Information and Communication Technology (ICT) from any classroom with only some basic equipment. ICT is a general term for the use of technology, which subsumes more commonly used terms in language education, such as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). ICT entails not only the use of technology, but also a fundamental change in pedagogy. This section will consider how ICT applies in a language instruction setting, where it takes the form of a teacher-

controlled computer-based multimedia and Internet system, operated from the lecture podium.

Teachers can walk in to any classroom and within minutes be running an electronic whiteboard that is wired for multimedia presentations and sound, as well as be connected to the Internet . These improvements have provided advantages that are as yet uncommon in many educational settings. UNESCO (2002) has described the designing and implementation of ICT-enabled teacher programs as "the key to fundamental, wide-ranging educational reforms." A review of literature concerning the use of ICT has often quoted teachers reporting a renewed interest in teaching, and experiencing pedagogical epiphanies where they discover new and exciting classroom applications for the technology (Miller, Averis, Door, & Glover 2005; Richardson Primary School, 2003). Many of the teachers interviewed after using ICT considered a reversion to a conventional classroom setup as less than desirable (Lee & Boyle 2004; Richardson Primary School, 2003). Much of the literature suggested that the most significant gains resultant from the technology were not from teachers taking training courses or being guided by a technical assistant or administrator, rather it was from "taking the plunge" and using the technology, from active reflection of the results of its use and consideration of further possibilities, and most importantly from teachers communicating with other teachers and helping each other (Kennewell 2003; UNESCO, 2004). More than one publication discusses a point where a sort of critical mass is achieved amongst faculty members, who become avid users of the technology described in this paper (Lee & Boyle, 2004; Kent 2003). It is with this in mind that this paper presents some of the advantages to be gained from adopting an active and engaged approach to recent ICT improvements, with specific reference to m-learning.

How can ICT make for more effective instruction?

It is a common refrain of almost all instructors that there is never enough time to accommodate all the demands of the profession. There is the need to balance a busy teaching schedule, an ambitious

research agenda, the need to stay current in the field, and, in the case of part-time instructors, the need to teach at numerous locations in order to make ends meet. ICT mitigates some of the above by allowing a classroom where an instructor can save valuable time, and more easily accomplish requirements for any effective practitioner, such as:

- keeping a record of what has been done in class
- maintaining responsibility for refining and expanding on previously taught material
- developing the ability to provide a quick review of the previous lesson at the beginning of a lecture, as well as to offer a quick recapitulation of the lesson's objectives and how they were accomplished at the end of a lecture
- minimizing time spent writing on the board with one's back to the students and maximizing the
- amount of time spent interacting with students and assessing the impact of instruction
- making use of technology available to promote a less teacher-centered environment
- creating a more dynamic presentation which appeals to learners on several levels and considers different learning styles
- accommodating the attention span of the 'Millennium Generation' by using shorter, game-like activities and exercises

What is needed and how do teachers take advantage of the technology?

Perhaps the most fundamental application of ICT in education is the electronic whiteboard. In its simplest form, it is possible to run an electronic whiteboard, to run a number of multimedia applications, and to connect to the Internet , all from the lecture podium at the front of the classroom using only a laptop computer and a few peripheral devices. Teachers need nothing more than a working knowledge of MS Word, or a similar word processing program to begin taking advantage of ICT.

To set up an electronic whiteboard, instructors need a notebook that has either a composite, or S video

port. This enables connecting a cable to the notebook, which activates a monitor located in a prominent position. By plugging two cables into a laptop it is possible to display eight to ten lines of text that are clearly visible throughout the classroom and to be wired in to overhead speakers or a portable stereo. It also means that any student who is paying attention is able to read and make note of whatever the instructor has written. No more chalk dust or marker debris! More importantly, instructors can save their notes and make use of them at a later date in a variety of ways, such as curriculum refinement and development, posting the notes on a web page, or sending them to students who are legitimately absent.

It has been noted that instructors who begin using ICT in the above manner soon progress across a continuum that leads them to make more ambitious use of the technology (Lee & Boyle, 2003; UNESCO, 2004). Once again, such endeavors require no more than a working knowledge of programs such as Power Point, and basic computer functions such as uploading digital pictures, copying and pasting images from the Internet , and opening and running the basic media software included on any computer.

Research literature

There is an emerging body of ICT literature that considers how best to employ ICT in education and this is a promising area for further research. Results indicate there is a positive association between student attainment and effective use of ICT pedagogical measures. Reasons for this are well related by Lee (2000), who notes that appropriately implemented use of computer-based technology can support experiential learning, enable pair and group work, promote global understanding, provide access to authentic materials, and encourage greater interaction. The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta) is a leading force in ICT pedagogical research, and its ImpaCT2 (2002) project found that, even while the degree of ICT use was relatively low in language classes, there was a notable difference in the results attained by students who were exposed to ICT-based instruction in this setting. Becta's 2004 report highlights key areas for further research, including

the potential to embed ICT use in MFL teaching, and the impact of ICT on MFL pedagogical practice. Research to date indicates that the diffusion of ICT procedures into a teacher's pedagogy follows a definable pattern. Miller et al. (2005) describe a sample of 10 mathematics teachers' and 13 MFL teachers' use of interactive whiteboards. The study found that teachers go through a series of stages when using ICT technology, which start at *supported didactic*, where the technology is in use but not integral, to *enhanced interactive*, where teachers are using the technology as an integral resource and they are making creative and effective pedagogical innovations. It has been noted in many of the studies (Becta 2002; Lee & Boyle, 2004; Miller et al. 2005; UNESCO 2002) that instructors feel they are on a learning curve, and that they have not yet realized the full potential for use of the technology. Further long-term studies using both quantitative and qualitative research are therefore in order. This is especially so in the emerging area of m-learning.

Mobile learning

Mobile learning (m-learning) is an exciting new consideration in education which is being driven by technological improvements in three areas – increased computing power and memory in handheld devices, better communications infrastructures, and the development of intelligent, user-friendly interfaces. For the purposes of this report, mobile devices will be defined as devices that are small enough to fit comfortably into a pocket or purse, that have software features, and which are used for computing, communication, entertainment, or educational purposes. M-learning will be considered as any type of learning which employs mobile devices to engage in learning and which occurs in an environment that is unconstrained by location. With the exception of Personal Digital Assistants (PDA) and Personal Response Systems (PRS), this report will focus mainly on mobile devices and functions that are commonly used by students in their personal lives.

Mobile phones

There has never been a device that has spread so rapidly and with so many implications as the mobile

phone. A recent report from the International Telecommunications Union (2007) stated that the number of mobile phone subscribers tripled in the five years up to 2005, reaching well over 2 billion in 2005, and it is forecast that this figure will reach 3 billion subscribers in 2008. Over 95% of households in Japan owned cellular phones in 2005 (Ipsos Insight, 2006). A study by Thornton and Houser (2005) found that 100% of 333 participating Japanese university students had mobile phones that could view standard web pages as well as send and receive standard Internet e-mail. Mobile phones vary in their capabilities, but many recent mobile phones feature the principal advantages of PDAs and include a range of functionalities that are more than ample for numerous applications in an educational setting.

Today's mobile phones provide an opportunity to enrich and enliven conventional lessons, and allow for independent and collaborative undertakings. They are unobtrusive and fit back in the learner's pocket after use. Furthermore, they allow teachers to circumvent learners' sometimes low IT skills in the computing domain by employing knowledge of mobile phones that learners have acquired for their own purposes, such as sharing music, sending mail to friends, or playing games. Current model phones, especially 'smart phones,' include an increasing number of the following features in various combinations:

- camera/video
- voice recording
- Bluetooth or infrared file transfer capability
- Internet access
- keyboard/handwriting recognition
- standard word processing database capabilities
- global positioning (GPS)
- external media link/expandable memory slot
- voice over Internet protocol (VOIP) applications such as Skype (2007)
- instant messaging

The above features make it possible for students to realize ambitious projects that not only further their language skills, but also build the student's

confidence, strengthen valuable skills that can be used in the everyday world, and are personally relevant and meaningful for them. As Kosakowski (1998) has noted, "The new technologies allow students to have more control over their own learning, to think analytically and critically, and to work collaboratively. This 'constructivist' approach is one effort at educational reform made easier by technology and perhaps even driven by it" (p. 1).

For the past four years the author has assigned homework to students over summer vacation and the New Year's holiday requiring them to take at least five pictures using their mobile phones. Students make presentations based on the pictures in a context where they have ownership of the material, and they are the 'experts' who decide what is important. The exercises allow them to make meaningful use of their language skills and to communicate with their peers within a framework that makes use of their personal interests, all the while in a manner that allows them to generate and strengthen knowledge connections in the form of their own learning product. Another exercise that makes similar use of mobile phones is short video skits with improvised or prescribed dialogs for groups of multiple students. Such video applications incorporate a social element that promotes interaction, collaboration and negotiation, all of which are important elements for most modern pedagogies, such as Communicative Language Teaching, Cognitive Constructivism, Social Constructivism, Sociocultural Theory and Learner Centered Instruction.

Bluetooth (2007) or infrared file transfer systems and mobile phone voice recorders make a number of other exercises possible that will extend teachers' abilities to monitor student efforts and to give and receive feedback on an individual basis. The author recently performed an experiment where he recorded someone's voice using a mobile phone and transferred it to his computer via Bluetooth technology. The file is five seconds long and occupies 12kb on disc. It took under two seconds to transfer it to the computer. Given these results it is within the realm of imagination to have students record and submit their in-class pair discussions, to set dialogs with open or prescribed topics, and to

assign homework where students recite passages as part of a sound system learning agenda. The author is currently working with another colleague on an experiment in which use of this technology is a key element, and that will assess the impact of explicit instruction of prosodic speech. Using Bluetooth, it is anticipated it will be possible in a class of 48 students to assign a thirty-second dialog transcribed into prosodic speech, have students record it and upload it onto a public folder on the instructor's computer. Using software such as iTunes (2007) or Realplayer (2007) it will then be possible to listen to all of the recordings after class in approximately 24 minutes. If a program such as Audacity (2007) is used, it may be possible to open the files and record feedback nearly simultaneously, and then have the students download such comments from the instructor's computer to their mobile phones and listen to them in the next class. Other applications made possible by Bluetooth include the potential for students to record or write comments or communicate with their teacher in a form that is anonymous, if they wish. The potential also exists to download standard word processing and database files from the teacher's computer when they are made available in a public folder. Another experiment performed by the author achieved a transfer of an Excel (2003) spreadsheet from a mobile phone to the author's computer in approximately four seconds.

Other mobile learning applications that are currently possible if wireless Internet is employed include numerous opportunities for spoken and written communication and study. Thornton and Houser (2005) set a vocabulary development program for their students using web-based short message service (SMS) where 93% of their students evaluated the exercise as a valuable teaching method. Attewell (2005) reported that SMS is being used to good effect for a mini-language course in southern Italy. Improvements in mobile phones also make synchronous and asynchronous collaborative undertakings a distinct possibility in the near future, something that was formerly only possible with a web camera and a computer. Finally, mobile books are a growing form of diversion for commuters and soon should be available at a price that will make them a viable option in reading courses. Torstar, the

world's largest publisher of romance and women's literature, recently announced it will make all its new titles available online for downloading in the coming year ("Harlequin to make," 2007).

There are a number of known issues that should be considered when implementing mobile learning. Viruses are beginning to make an appearance in the mobile world. A virus named Cabir has been recently discovered, and has the potential to infect phones that use the Symbian operating system via Bluetooth (Attewell, 2005). Privacy and data protection are issues that must also carefully be monitored in an m-learning environment. Finally, there have been studies in the past which suggested that low levels of radiofrequency energy exposure might accelerate the development of cancer in laboratory animals, however these studies have failed to be replicated, and more recent studies have shown no adverse health effect associated with mobile phone usage. Both the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the United Kingdom's National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) have issued reports concluding that there is no solid evidence of adverse health effects from exposure to radiofrequency energy while using wireless communication devices for everyday use (United States Food and Drug Administration, 2005).

At least two developments that are likely in the near future make mobile learning with devices such as the mobile phone an even more powerful opportunity. First, mobile phone providers will be able to offer increased speed potential as TV broadcasters hand back the wireless spectrum that analog TV now occupies and providers fill the void. The 700 mHz spectrum will provide faster Internet access than today's cellular or even Wifi networks, all the while working without interruption, even in poor weather conditions (Stephens, 2007). Second, recent reports (Informa Telecoms & Media, 2007) are documenting a gradual shift towards open source operating systems for mobile phones. Up to now, mobile phone manufacturers have been doing everything in-house. This is increasingly being seen as a drawback for them, as it consumes too much time and too many resources. Google is leading an Open Handset Alliance of some 30 technology and

mobile companies which are developing an open source platform that should become available in the near future (Google 2007). Open source operating systems would make it possible for users to download freeware and custom-designed software, which would be universal. In such an environment, it would be increasingly easy to design and deliver mobile educational applications that are a seamless part of the course curriculum and are ready for students to download as part of their course preparation prior to the beginning of the school year.

Other mobile devices

Electronic dictionaries are a part of the mobile learning rubric that have been in use for many years now. Electronic dictionaries also include full encyclopedias that allow students access to a wealth of information. Students can investigate alternate sources of information during content/sheltered content lectures and the devices can be used to promote critical thinking and the exchange of information in the target language between students. MFL instructors can encourage students to make use of such tools to mitigate gaps in understanding by investigating class topics in their L1 using their dictionaries and thus overcoming comprehension issues associated with a lack of background information.

Entertainment devices such as Nintendo's DS lite and Sony's PSP are becoming increasingly common and may also be used as mobile learning tools. They are part of a market that is coming to be known as 'edutainment', and they allow users to study the vocabulary of a foreign language as part of a systematic, graded program that gives the learner feedback about their progress. Programs such as *Eigo Zuke* (2007) are also available for these units that enable study in a game-like format of standardized tests such as the SAT, the TOEIC, and the TOEFL.

Personal Media Players (PMPs) make powerful use of the MP3 format to enable learners to download various files, such as podcasts to further their knowledge as part of formal or informal learning experiences. Many students own MP3 devices and use them to download and listen to music, although

they can be used for study, too. A recent search using Google yielded close to 1.4 million hits for ESL/EFL sites such as ESL Café or eslpod.com, where students can access listening texts of authentic and sheltered learning materials.

Outlook

There is an immediate need to make the industry aware of the needs of educators where ICT and mobile learning is concerned, but those needs may go unidentified until their use becomes more widespread in education. For example, devices such as the PRS described above use a radio frequency kindred to Bluetooth and interface with relatively simple software that could easily be packaged into a cellular phone. However, without input from educational institutions, makers are hardly aware of, let alone concerned with incorporating, such features in to their future designs. Keegan's (2002) statement still rings true:

> [W]ireless technologies and applications are replacing wired ones: e-commerce is moving to m-[mobile] commerce, m-business is replacing e-business … the list of 3G (third generation) wireless services is breathtaking, with applications already developed for refrigerators, business and the home … only in the fields of education and training are there no applications in development or planning. (p. 10)

Modern education needs to integrate ICT and mobile devices into existing teaching practices in a manner that expands them but does not replace them. It should be an opportunity to enliven and activate our students by transforming them from passive recipients of knowledge to enquiring participants who make use of technology to better understand their environment and mitigate the demands it places on them.

Technology cannot exist in a vacuum. To realize its potential, it has to be more effectively incorporated in to the whole education environment and its results should be assessed as part of the entire instructional process, with due consideration of instructional design, content, and teaching strategies

associated with both the technology and the classroom environment. Until educational institutions and teachers attempt to use the resources at their disposal, there will be an increasingly widening gap between educational practices and the reality that is the world outside the classroom.

Conclusion

Prensky (2004) has written that a discontinuity has taken place in the world's most recent generation that has changed the modern context so fundamentally that it may be considered a singularity, from which there is no return. He contends that current students' ubiquitous and constant exposure to technology and their interaction with it have had the effect that they "*think and process information fundamentally differently* from their predecessors" (Prensky, 2004, pp. 1-2, italics in original). Prensky (2004) refers to this generation as "digital natives," as opposed to their "digital immigrant" predecessors, and extends the analogy by using terms such as "digital accent," which closely parallel the native speaker non-native speaker parlance of the MFL profession (pp. 1-2). His point is that it is essential in the years to come for teachers to consider students' perspectives of the world and make efforts to employ technology in the classroom if they wish to keep education relevant. While Prensky's assessment of today's situation is somewhat premature, the technology described in this report would easily be perceived as relevant by students and well received, if it was used competently and in conjunction with clear educational objectives. The technology presented above has great potential for application in modern education and it is easily wed to longstanding principles of sound pedagogy. It has the potential to take learning outside the confines of the classroom, as well as to bring the larger world *in* to the classroom. It is unconstrained by time or space, and promotes a vision of learning that fosters learner-centered instruction, collaboration and life long learning. There is an urgent need for further debate, research, and consideration as to how ICT and mobile technology can be applied in modern education. Today is the time for tomorrow.

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Learning words right with the Sketch Engine and WebBootCat: Meaningful lexical acquisition from corpora and the web

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Abstract

In Taiwan, and other Asian countries, students of English expect and are expected to memorize a lot of vocabulary: Ming Chuan University, for example, relies fairly heavily on vocabulary acquisition and retention in its teaching and testing resources. Oftentimes, lists of vocabulary items to be learned by students do not really belong to a particular topic, or fit it very loosely, because the items have not been chosen in a principled way. The present paper reviews the arguments for incidental learning and direct learning of vocabulary in ELT, and shows how a web corpus builder (WebBootCat [Lexical Computing, Ltd., n.d.]) can be used to build lists of words that are related to a particular topic in an intuitive and statistically principled way. A small number of seed search terms are used by WebBootCat to generate a corpus of texts on a given topic, and this corpus is searched to find vocabulary items that are salient to the topic.

Introduction

In many Asian nations, including Taiwan and Cambodia, educational and career advancement often turns on test performance. Whether it be entrance tests at schools or companies, or language proficiency tests like TOEFL or IELTS needed for study abroad, performance on tests can play an important and life-changing role.

Tutors, textbooks, and commercial cram schools that prepare students for high stakes tests have traditionally relied on the rote memorization of lists of words as a teaching method. This method in various forms has become a standard preparation technique for students who face language proficiency or ability tests. The words on such lists are frequently selected for reasons unrelated to their usefulness. However, it is clearly important which words are chosen to be on these wordlists, and which words are selected to be taught and used in textbooks, if learners are to acquire language that is meaningful and useful.

In this paper, we first review the arguments for incidental learning and direct learning of vocabulary, and consider how they play out in English teaching in Taiwan. We consider one particular textbook, and find that the vocabulary is not systematically selected, with the vocabulary to be learnt not forming a good match either to the topic of the chapter, or to the reading material, or to corpus frequency. We report experiments with WebBootCat (WBC) (Lexical Computing, Ltd., n.d.), a software tool which uses Yahoo! web services to harvest linguistic corpora on user-specified subject areas from the World Wide Web. We use WBC to extract from these corpora key vocabulary that can be used to populate wordlists in textbook writing.

Vocabulary: Incidental and direct acquisition

Studies in the acquisition of vocabulary have identified two principal learning strategies, incidental learning (Nagy, Anderson & Hermann, 1985; Nation & Coady, 1988; Nation, 2001) and direct learning. Research by Nagy et al. (1985) claimed that learning from context is one of the most significant aspects of incidental learning. This laid the groundwork for the belief that *authentic* context is a particularly powerful source of incidental language learning (Krashen, 1989; Pitts, White and Krashen, 1989).

There is little doubt that incidental learning, particularly that acquired through reading, is key to learning the vocabulary necessary for functioning in an English environment. Some researchers, however, have argued that this form of acquisition has limitations, especially for students taking academic courses delivered in English, who need to develop textbook reading skills, and the ability to follow lectures (Chaffin, 1997; Zechmeister, Chronis, Cull, D'Anna & Healy, 1995). These researchers claim that direct instruction of vocabulary and meaning plays a central role. Without this, they believe, long-term retention of new vocabulary is unlikely to follow. The strategy they advocate emphasizes the role of dictionaries and other word reference books; they note, too, that

direct instruction is important in fostering an interest in words.

Direct acquisition studies recognize that vocabulary can be learnt using tools that bring the learner's attention into direct contact with the form and meaning of words, such as dictionaries and vocabulary lists. However, the question of how best to use these tools for direct vocabulary acquisition remains unanswered. In Taiwan, and other parts of Asia, the traditional (and intuitively suboptimal) approach has been simply to memorize the vocabulary item along with one or two possible L1 translations.

The memorization of vocabulary items has become the usual method by which students in Taiwan prepare for standardized tests of English proficiency. Ironically, government policies intended to boost the national standard of communicative language skills have actually encouraged this approach to language learning. Previously, lists of words were presented primarily to students in public secondary schools, but recently official attempts to promote language proficiency have resulted in the widespread use of proficiency tests such as the GEPT and TOEIC; consequently there has been an explosion of test preparation classes. In almost every case, these classes emphasize vocabulary acquisition through the memorization of lists rather than the use of communicative tasks or the presentation of authentic examples.

Typically, these lists incorporate vocabulary selected by employees and teachers of test preparation schools. In more professional situations, the selections are derived from word counts of actual standardized tests. In other cases, the lists are created in a fashion that is more or less arbitrary, with only an unclear match between the items on a given list and the topic it is supposed to represent. Furthermore, items are often demonstrated to students using contrived examples. With such poor models of usage available to students, it is questionable whether even the highest standard of instruction will result in the desired acquisition.

If students are to learn lists of English words, it would be better if the lists at least contain words that are useful and relevant. It is of course the purpose of lists such as the College Entrance Examination Center (CEEC) list (a glossary of 6480 words used to help people studying for university entrance exams, described and listed in CEEC [2002]) to cover such useful vocabulary. However no systematic strategy for doing so is universally accepted. Instead, a variety of strategies have been adopted for reasons of convention. One strategy involves the identification of the most common words in a general corpus of English. The most common words are then judged as the most useful. This approach has been taken in Japan, and in 2003 the widely used JACET list of 8000 basic words was revised substantially on the basis of the British National Corpus (Mochizuki, 2003; Uemura 2005). Su (2006) has explored the relation between (a 2000 word version of) the CEEC list and a range of other lists and corpora. While the list is largely satisfactory (Su, 2006), areas are found in which the corpora and the list do not match.

An essential difference between corpus-derived lists and those compiled manually, whether by individual teachers or government bodies, is that data from corpora is authentic. Such measures as personal intuition or experience of the teacher are far too problematic to produce meaningful results, according to Biber and Conrad (2001). Careful statistical examination of corpus data; however, can help us to construct meaningful, topic-related wordlists.

English vocabulary acquisition at Ming Chuan University

Two of the authors are employed by the English Language Center (ELC) of Ming Chuan University, where the principal task is to teach general English skills to large groups (around 60) of relatively unmotivated university students. English is taught throughout the four years of a typical undergraduate career (in contrast to many Taiwan institutions where one or two years is the norm). There is little evidence to show how much acquisition of English takes place over the four-year period, but certainly there is ample time for boredom to set in students

who are principally interested in the offerings of their home departments.

The ELC students are assessed twice a semester by centralized achievement tests. Much of the teaching revolves around communicative principles and as such the teaching of grammar is not a central theme in most instruction or in the assessment of students. Instead, the main focuses of these tests are listening comprehension, and familiarity with the unit vocabulary items. Students generally do not prepare for listening comprehension assessment. The most common form of preparation that teachers observe is vocabulary memorization. This is done by memorizing unit vocabulary lists and internalizing each item with its Chinese 'equivalent.'

The primary teaching material for these courses is an in-house textbook series called *East Meets West (EMW)*. *EMW* presents some topics relevant to students' lives and potential future careers, and others that are less relevant or useful. There are a number of different types of activity in each unit, but the standard layout involves a reading on a specific topic (written by an ELC teacher), and a collection of about 12-14 vocabulary items selected from the text. These words are chosen for their difficulty and it is assumed that they are new to the students. They are not necessarily related to the unit topic. In addition, units sometimes contain exercises and activities that do not have an intuitive relationship with the topic.

The first unit of *EMW 1* is entitled "Getting started at university", an apparently appropriate topic for beginning freshmen. There is a short reading on the experience of an imaginary freshman called Patricia Lin, reading comprehension questions, pronunciation exercises, pattern practice and listening exercises, along with a vocabulary section. There are also, as in other units, some activities specifically related to the topic: maps of the MCU campus, of use to new students; locations of MCU departments; suggested English spellings of Chinese family names, etc.

The list of vocabulary items from this chapter is shown in Figure 1. In this case, many items seem to have no relationship to "Getting started at

university", or to "university." Only three of the words – all nouns – have an obvious connection to an educational topic. The first verb and the first adjective are also likely to occur more often in educational contexts.

Figure 1.   EMW Unit 1 vocabulary

Vocabulary				
Nouns				
attendance	course	facilities	helmet	
initiative	major	vendor		
Verbs				
accomplish	consider	improve	tease	
Adjectives				
challenging	fortunate	impatient	occasional	protective

The reason for the irrelevant selection of vocabulary lies in its selection method. First, a topic-related text is commissioned (in this case the story about "Patricia Lin") with no requirement to incorporate topic-related vocabulary into the text. Next, items are selected (in most cases, not by the text writer, but by another editor) which are deemed unfamiliar to students or that they ought to learn. Many of the apparently on-topic items which occurred in the texts (*student*, *university* and so on) were ruled out, because the learners would already know them; instead, words from the texts have been chosen seemingly at random. Learners are expected to be familiar with this vocabulary in the midterm and final tests.

This seems an unprincipled approach to vocabulary acquisition. One might argue that a better approach might have been to write a text around a list of pre-determined vocabulary items, related to the unit topic. Creating such a list is not a trivial task, though; it is difficult to determine what sort of vocabulary *should* be included. Textbook writers cannot produce such a list through contemplation and introspection alone. It might be possible to think of a short list of educational terms (*major*, *sophomore*, *classmate*, *campus* and the like), and a reading text featuring that vocabulary could then be commissioned. However, at least two objections could be raised to that approach. First, the list would only include items that belong to the domain in the most transparent way. If, for example, it can be shown that items such as *excited*, *challenging* and

friend occur more often in texts about "Getting started at university" than they do in texts on other topics, they are candidates for inclusion in our lists. Secondly, it would be less straightforward to compile such a list for Unit 2 ("Family and hometown") or Unit 3 ("English learning and you"), to give just two examples. In these domains, only kinship terms and the jargon of TESOL and Applied Linguistics spring to mind, and neither of these would be useful for MCU freshmen. What is needed is a corpus-based vocabulary generation tool.

WebBootCat, a tool for corpus and wordlist generation

Baroni, Kilgarriff, Pomikálek and Rychlý (2006), in a paper that introduces WBC, focused on the tool's utility as an aid to technical translators. Most translators, Baroni et al. (2006) note, make regular use of the web as a source of information about technical terms and usages; however, search engine design is not optimized for their use.

The task described in the paper consists of creating a corpus associated with a particular domain, and generating a list of the terms most salient to the domain. All of this information is extracted from the web. The resulting corpus can be expected to be both up to date (the terminology is current), and to be firmly focused on the domain in question (in contrast to offline corpora, such as the BNC, intended for general use).

The basic algorithm is conceptually simple. First, a search is seeded with one or more words selected by the user. These *seed words* are sent to Yahoo! (formerly Google was used, as mentioned in Baroni et al. [2006]), and all the lexical items are extracted from the returned web pages. A substantial amount of filtering is done to exclude web pages that do not mostly contain running text of the language in question. Measures include rejecting pages containing too many words held on a stop list, and very short and excessively large web pages: a user interface provides control over these filters. The resulting corpus may be used in a number of ways. It can be explored in the Sketch Engine, a leading

corpus query tool (Kilgarriff, Rychlý, Smrž & Tugwell, 2004). The user can also generate keyword lists from it: to do this, all words in the corpus are counted and their frequencies are compared with their frequencies in a general web corpus (the *reference corpus*). A list of the words whose frequencies are most significantly higher in the reference corpus is created. Baroni et al used WBC to generate the list of *keyterms* related to *Machine Translation* shown in Figure 2. Most, but not all, of the terms are indeed related to that domain in some way. Similar lists of vocabulary could also be generated on topics of interest to language learners.

Figure 2.   WBC output
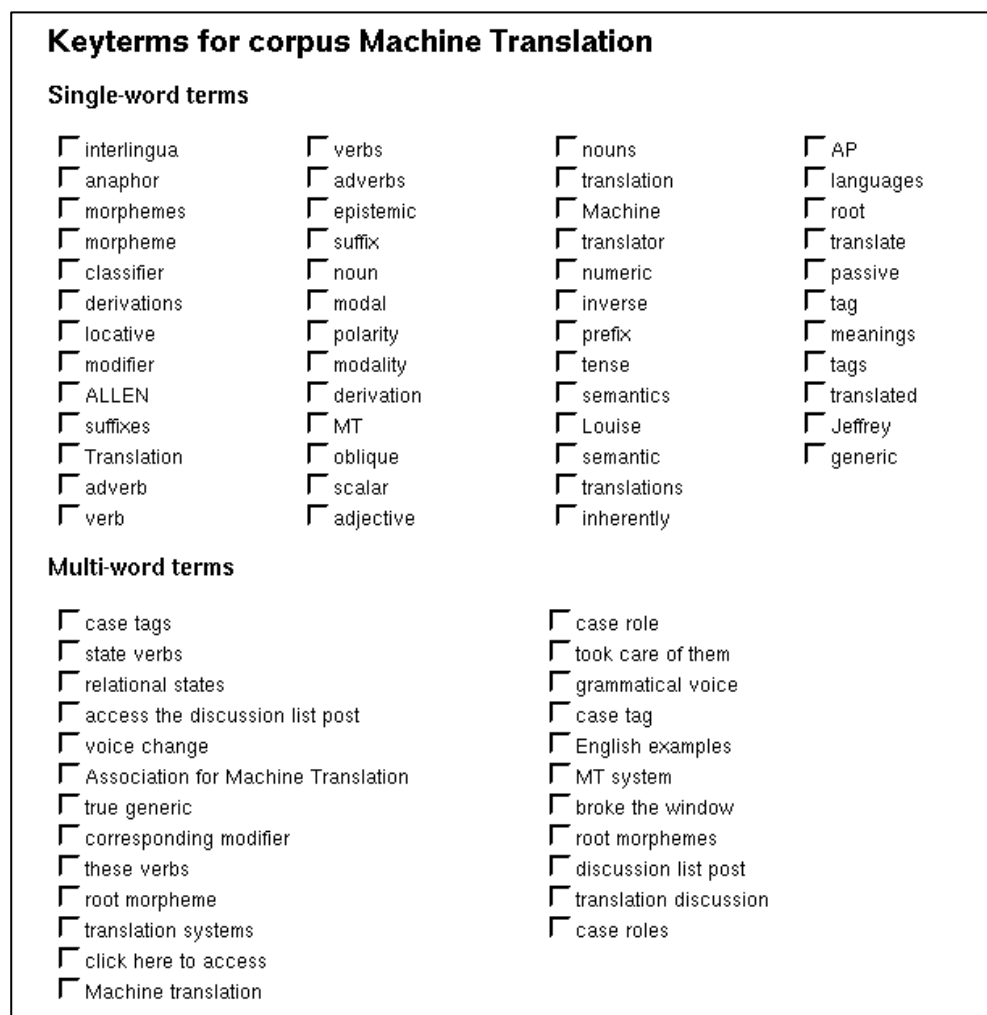
Generating vocabulary lists with WBC

The reader probably will already have compared Figure 2 (the list of keywords related to *Machine Translation*, generated by WBC) with the vocabulary list (Figure 1) on "Getting started at university", developed by ELC curriculum writers, and drawn the conclusion that the former contains many relevant items, the latter precious few. Figure 3 shows the keywords extracted for a query to

WBC, using the seed words *freshman* and *university*, and searching 100 websites that feature those words more prominently than other sites. A glance at the figure shows that almost all of the words extracted are salient for the domain. Many terms such as *graduation*, *SAT*, and *transcripts* are part of the specialized vocabulary of tertiary education; *courses* and *results* probably are not, but are more frequent in that domain than elsewhere.

Figure 3.   WBC keywords for corpus seeded with freshman and university

☑ admission (47)	☑ SAT (19)	☑ enrollment (7)	☐ website (7)
☑ University (44)	☑ academic (16)	☑ graduation (6)	☑ Tests (5)
☑ school (40)	☐ complete (12)	☐ copy (8)	☐ based (11)
☑ Students (29)	☑ ACT (16)	☑ transcripts (6)	☐ fee (4)
☐ required (32)	☐ year (19)	☑ freshman (6)	☑ essay (4)
☐ high (31)	☑ student (13)	☐ completed (11)	☑ schooled (4)
☑ College (33)	☐ Office (12)	☐ note (7)	☑ degree (6)
☐ must (28)	☑ programs (13)	☐ recommended (7)	☐ evaluated (4)
☑ application (30)	☑ program (13)	☑ score (12)	☐ meet (7)
☑ applicants (20)	☐ minimum (14)	☑ teacher (6)	☐ below (6)
☑ submit (24)	☐ official (11)	☐ selected (4)	☐ requirement (6)
☑ scores (19)	☑ courses (13)	☐ first (10)	☐ International (5)
☐ requirements (16)	☑ test (8)	☑ mathematics (6)	☑ applications (4)
☐ Boston (23)	☐ Board (8)	☐ instructions (6)	☐ documents (4)
☑ Admissions (19)	☑ counselor (8)	☑ Education (5)	☐ check (4)
☐ please (14)	☐ Common (10)	☐ consideration (4)	☐ visit (4)
☐ you (45)	☐ should (13)	☑ study (6)	☐ directly (6)
☐ English (16)	☐ State (7)	☐ personal (5)	☑ grades (4)
☐ following (15)	☐ above (11)	☑ laboratory (4)	☑ TOEFL (13)
☐ your (29)	☐ years (16)	☐ Standards (6)	☐ second (12)
☐ considered (14)	☑ GED (9)	☐ writing (5)	☐ sent (7)
☐ information (17)	☑ Arts (9)	☑ history (6)	☐ online (4)
☐ may (19)	☐ contact (7)	☑ Subject (6)	☑ credentials (4)
☐ apply (14)	☑ Studies (7)	☑ secondary (6)	☑ results (7)
☐ language (15)	☑ science (9)	☑ coursework (6)	☐ applying (7)

The second unit of *EMW* is called "Family and Hometown". The title is a reasonable description of the contents of the unit, which are designed to get students to share, using the target language,

information about their backgrounds. The two keywords featured in the unit title seemed a reasonable point of departure for generating a vocabulary list; this was done, and the result is

shown in Figure 5. This may be compared with Figure 4, which shows the vocabulary prescribed for that unit of *EMW*. This vocabulary is barely concerned with the topic – this comes as no surprise when it is known that the list was extracted from a story about one person's life (albeit a very interesting story).

Figure 4.   EMW 1 Unit 2 vocabulary

Vocabulary			
Nouns			
lightning	orphan	porch	region
roots	suburb	tragedy	twin
Verbs			
support			
Adjectives			
agricultural	polluted	urban	

The picture from Figure 5, however, appears just as bleak. Only 10 items have been found: Two of those are the originally specified seed words, and of the rest, only four could be said to relate to the topic. The search was performed in exactly the same way as in the *freshman/university* case, again querying 100 websites.

We should not be too disappointed at such a sparse list of keyterms; *freshman* and *university* are simply much better topic descriptors than *family* and *hometown*. A comparison with a standard Google search is instructive: all but two hits from the first page of a Google search for *freshman university* are official university web pages dealing, precisely, with the issue of "getting started at university". Equivalent Google results for *family* and *hometown* link to all manner of things, including a genealogical site, articles about disabled children and the Tour de France, and advertisements for real estate and a used Barbie Doll set. *University* and *freshman* are more powerful as a pair of search terms (recall from Baroni et al.'s results, given in Figure 1, that the same is true of *Machine Translation*).

Intuitively, the more specific a term is (the less polysemous it is, and the further down a hierarchical hyponym tree it is found), the more powerful it will be. Thus, a term like *person*, which would be close to the top of such a tree, is less powerful than the more specific term *freshman*. *Family* is a polysemous item that can refer to related groups of people or of other entities, and it is high up in the semantic hierarchy. On both counts, therefore, *family* offers less specificity than *freshman*, and consequently is less powerful as a search item.

Figure 5.   WBC keywords for corpus seeded with "family" and "hometown"

WBC Business Corpus

A number of *EMW* units deal with the world of business and international trade, especially in the senior year of the course. A good wordlist in that domain, therefore, would be particularly useful. Rather than generate a new corpus for the purpose of this study, we used an existing, much larger, WBC-generated Business Corpus, of about 10 million words. For comparison, note that the size of the *Machine Translation* corpus created by Baroni et al (1986), used to generate the wordlist given in Figure 1, consisted of around 144,000 words, and the corpora we have so far described averaged about the same size. To generate a larger corpus, a larger number of seed words is selected. The Business Corpus was seeded with 50 words on the basis of their intuitive relevance to the world of business, including *investment*, *capital*, *franchise* and *portfolio.*

The larger the corpus, the more documents salient to the subject area it will contain, and the better our chances of generating a good wordlist. The evidence from the Business Corpus bears these expectations out. Words found in the corpus were ranked by the ratio of the number of occurrences to the number of occurrences in a reference corpus, the 100m word BNC. Thus, given the relative size of the corpora, one would expect a non-business term (a word whose frequency in a business or general corpus is about the same) to be assigned a ratio of about 0.1. In the Business Corpus, around 20% of words have relative distribution ratios of 0.1 or above. The top 100 words are ranked by relative distribution ratio in Appendix 1.

The reader will probably agree that almost all of the terms are of immediate relevance to the world of business and trade. Twenty-six of them are not found in the Taiwan CEEC list; tellingly, these missing terms (marked "no" in Appendix 1) are among the most intuitively relevant to the subject on our list.

It will by now be clear that corpus-derived wordlists are much more likely to succeed in representing a subject area than those compiled manually. If, however, lists such as the CEEC are to continue to serve as a curricular gold standard, it will be useful to learners if vocabulary items are classified as on- or off-list. The learner will then know whether they were exposed to a given item before (or perhaps whether it is likely to come up in an exam).

Recursive bootstrapping with WBC: Generating a second corpus from the first

The seed words for the Business Corpus were chosen by the compiler by introspection and brainstorming. A better approach would be to select seed words from the corpus itself. This is achieved by first generating a corpus using one or two highly salient terms, such as freshman and university. The key term output from that corpus can then be used to seed a second corpus. The keyterms from the second corpus could be used to generate a third, and of course the process could be repeated recursively. The reader may have noticed WBC's invitation, illustrated in Figure 5, to "search again with selected keyterms".

If the reader glances back at Figure 3, where the keyterms from our freshman university corpus are shown, she will see that there is, against each key term, a checkbox. We bootstrapped a new corpus, using as seed words the items that were checked above. Figure 6 shows the keyterms that were extracted from it.

In Figure 6, we have placed a check against the output keyterms that are the same as terms used to seed the corpus, for the reader's convenience (in the actual WBC output screen, such items are highlighted in red). We are encouraged by what new output wordlists of this kind show: it includes a number of new keyterms, such as *educational*, *curriculum* and *undergraduate*, which are salient to the educational domain.

Figure 6.   Recursively bootstrapped freshman university corpus

☑ students (342)	☐ two (102)	☐ process (57)	☐ taken (37)
☑ school (243)	☐ graduate (89)	☑ subject (43)	☐ provide (38)
☑ education (213)	☑ admission (56)	☐ skills (37)	☐ four (37)
☑ test (225)	☐ writing (104)	☑ science (33)	☐ reading (55)
☑ student (138)	☐ grade (54)	☐ including (53)	☑ Admissions (20)
☑ University (231)	☑ TOEFL (109)	☐ through (61)	☐ order (43)
☐ schools (147)	☐ required (88)	☑ submit (38)	☐ questions (43)
☑ score (150)	☐ take (90)	☐ subjects (59)	☐ examination (25)
☑ scores (146)	☐ apply (47)	☐ high (57)	☐ Center (37)
☐ English (142)	☐ may (111)	☐ exam (42)	☐ additional (27)
☑ study (79)	☐ educational (48)	☐ Art (77)	☐ related (49)
☐ your (287)	☐ curriculum (39)	☑ history (62)	☐ primary (29)
☑ program (103)	☐ higher (41)	☐ International (44)	☐ contact (31)
☐ level (105)	☑ Arts (66)	☐ include (38)	☐ colleges (28)
☑ college (79)	☐ available (66)	☐ complete (37)	☐ undergraduate (30)
☐ language (91)	☑ essay (86)	☐ receive (33)	☑ ACT (56)
☐ information (104)	☐ California (59)	☐ math (23)	☑ SAT (43)
☑ programs (70)	☐ each (63)	☑ Studies (52)	☑ applicants (34)
☐ based (100)	☐ three (57)	☐ Office (37)	☐ teachers (25)
☑ courses (94)	☐ research (60)	☑ secondary (47)	☐ used (56)
☐ course (112)	☐ edit (62)	☑ tests (30)	☐ areas (28)
☐ year (111)	☑ results (54)	☐ following (26)	☐ deadline (22)
☐ must (107)	☐ below (35)	☐ Chinese (54)	☐ instruction (31)
☑ academic (53)	☑ grades (32)	☐ Please (26)	☐ specific (28)
☑ application (88)	☑ degree (53)	☑ enrollment (54)	☐ eligible (17)

Multi-word terms

It is possible to expand the WBC corpora by generating multi-word term lists. The *EMW* vocabulary lists currently include only a few phrases, and we should be encouraging our students to learn vocabulary items in the contexts in which they typically occur. WBC can extract multi-word terms of two, three and four words, on the same principles as are employed for the simplex wordlists: the terms must be more frequent in the domain corpus than in the reference corpus. A stoplist of common words is applied, so that terms such as *a student*, no more salient to the domain than the simple *student* are ruled out.

From the corpora illustrated in Figures 3 and 6 (the *freshman university* corpus, and the corpus recursively bootstrapped from it), we generated multi-word term lists. The term list from the bootstrapped corpus is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7.   Multi-word term list from freshman university bootstrapped corpus

☐ high school (36)
☐ test scores (31)
☐ State University (28)
☐ Open Enrollment (24)
☐ art history (24)
☐ based test (23)
☐ Mother Tongue (22)
☐ graduate school (21)
☐ your application (21)
☐ language arts (18)
☐ School of Education (17)
☐ Ministry of Education (17)
☐ Writing the Essay (16)
☐ Intercultural Studies (16)
☐ General Test (16)
☐ higher education (17)
☐ North Carolina (17)
☐ test date (15)
☐ financial aid (15)
☐ Vienna School (14)
☐ Intensive English (14)
☐ School District (14)
☐ regional board of education (13)
☐ regional board (13)
☐ School of Intercultural Studies (13)
☐ TOEFL score (13)

☐ board of education (13)
☐ Study Abroad (13)
☐ required to take (13)
☐ University of California (13)
☐ TOEFL Secrets (12)
☐ Art Building (12)
☐ Elective Programme (12)
☐ written texts (12)
☐ scoring system (12)
☐ Cultural Revolution (12)
☐ Career Center (12)
☐ Rossier School (11)
☐ score recipients (11)
☐ ISD 282 (11)
☐ local or regional board of education
☐ LSAT score (11)
☐ junior colleges (11)
☐ your scores (11)
☐ Junior College (11)
☐ test takers (11)
☐ English Language (11)
☐ secondary schools (11)
☐ college students (11)
☐ law school (11)

The reader will observe that the majority of the terms have a strong association with the educational domain, and indeed with the process of university application: stronger than that found in the simplex wordlist, in fact. We assigned the terms extracted to four categories:

1. **Compounds**: Lexicalized compound terms in the educational domain, such as *graduate school* and *higher education*

2. **Collocations:** Terms which clearly belong to the domain, and constitute a syntactic phrase group, but would not be found in a dictionary or lexicon, such as *scoring system* and *your scores*

3. **Proper names**

4. **Errors:** anomalous entries which are not syntactic units (such as *based test*) or do not belong to the domain (such as *Cultural Revolution*)

In Figure 8, we show the number of terms (from a total of 50 in each case) that we assigned to each of the four categories. It will be seen that the bootstrapped corpus yielded somewhat more impressive results. This corroborates the findings presented above: that corpus is a richer source of terms in the educational domain than the corpus built using only the two seed words *freshman* and *university*.

Figure 8.   Numbers of multi-word terms generated from two corpora
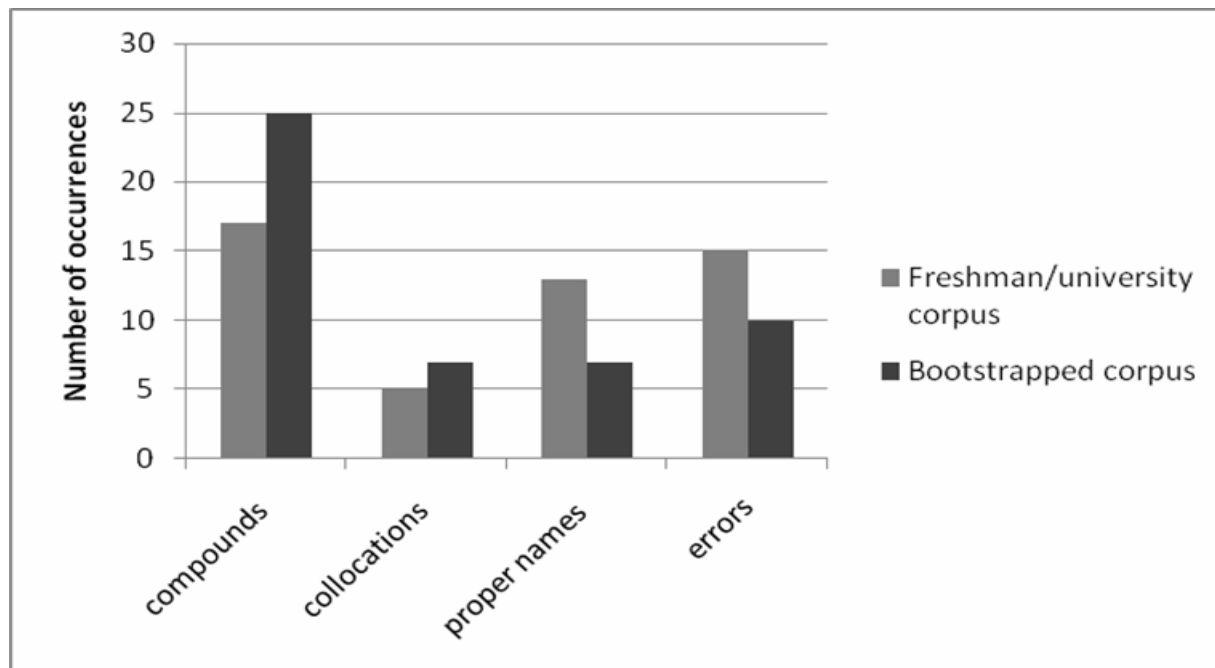
Whether proper names should be included in student vocabulary lists is a matter for debate; some of the terms extracted, such as University of California, are indeed in the educational domain. What is clear, though, is that the collocational items are just as important to learners as the lexicalized compounds. These collocations are part of the "large store of fixed or semi-fixed prefabricated items" which, according to Lewis (1997) are essential for the acquisition of language.

Future work: Automatic cloze exercise generation

At Ming Chuan University, we have found cloze exercises to be a useful learning and assessment tool. We are required to conduct formal English examinations twice per semester, and student numbers are large. Earlier research (Bachman,

1985; Hughes 1981) has indicated that cloze exercises can be used to assess a surprisingly wide range of language skills, including speaking; we lack the resources to examine all our students orally, but cloze provides a practical substitute.

Currently, cloze exercises are prepared by hand. Not only is this time-consuming, but also the deleted item and distracters are chosen in an arbitrary way. A better solution would be to generate cloze exercises whose distracters are semantically related in some statistically demonstrable way. Ideally, the distracters would have features in common with the correct answer, determined by their similar distribution in a corpus, but would not normally occur in collocation with some other word in the sentence. By way of a simple example, take the cloze exercise "It's a ___ day". The correct answer

might be sunny, and the distracters tepid, lukewarm and toasty.

Drawing on the resources of WebBootCat and the Sketch Engine, we will present an algorithm for the automatic generation of cloze exercises. The exercises can be used in class, in the lab, or at home, and could be incorporated into an interactive CALL interface, making students' learning experience more enjoyable and fruitful.

Conclusion

We have shown, in this paper, that it is possible to generate wordlists for vocabulary acquisition that are highly salient to particular topics. These lists are better than existing lists such as those found in the *EMW* textbooks. The direct learning of vocabulary in language acquisition is here to stay, especially in places such as Taiwan and Cambodia where language tests play an important role in decisions that affect the lives of students. We have shown one way to generate vocabulary to be memorized that is relevant to a lesson topic or has high frequency in texts on that topic.

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Appendix 1
Business Corpus, top 100 terms ranked by ratio to BNC frequency

	Ratio	*In CEEC list?*		*Ratio*	*In CEEC list?*
franchise	3.08	no	expense	0.55	yes
license	2.26	yes	terminate	0.55	yes
broker	1.59	no	competent	0.55	yes
commodity	1.57	yes	default	0.54	no
prior	1.3	yes	purchaser	0.54	no
fiscal	1.25	no	purchase	0.54	yes
portfolio	1.05	no	restricted	0.51	yes
bond	1.03	yes	amend	0.51	no
paragraph	0.97	yes	addition	0.51	yes
equity	0.96	no	security	0.51	yes
disclosure	0.94	yes	eligible	0.51	yes
applicable	0.92	yes	corporation	0.49	yes
forth	0.9	yes	obligation	0.49	yes
investor	0.89	no	applicant	0.48	yes
shall	0.87	yes	renewal	0.48	no
transaction	0.87	yes	employee	0.48	yes
entity	0.85	no	fund	0.47	yes
registration	0.84	yes	prospective	0.46	yes
re	0.81	no	seller	0.46	yes
exempt	0.78	no	registered	0.46	yes
faculty	0.78	yes	preferred	0.46	yes
designate	0.77	yes	lawyer	0.45	yes
deem	0.74	yes	counsel	0.44	yes
accord	0.72	yes	dealer	0.44	yes
asset	0.71	yes	shareholder	0.43	no
offering	0.69	yes	delivery	0.43	yes
percent	0.68	yes	portion	0.43	yes
receipt	0.67	yes	enforcement	0.43	yes
prohibit	0.67	yes	sub	0.43	no
trading	0.66	yes	submit	0.42	yes
underlie	0.65	no	hearing	0.42	no
program	0.64	yes	disclose	0.42	yes
behalf	0.62	yes	appointment	0.41	yes
prescribe	0.62	yes	payment	0.41	yes
saving	0.62	yes	specify	0.41	yes

regulatory	0.62	no	jurisdiction	0.4	no
compliance	0.61	no	revise	0.4	yes
investment	0.61	yes	selling	0.39	yes
stock	0.61	yes	compensation	0.39	yes
fee	0.61	yes	administrative	0.39	yes
contractor	0.58	yes	written	0.39	yes
invest	0.58	yes	incur	0.39	no
liability	0.58	no	certificate	0.38	yes
dividend	0.58	no	adviser	0.38	yes
accounting	0.58	yes	hedge	0.37	yes
provider	0.57	no	assign	0.37	yes
specified	0.57	yes	comply	0.37	no
maturity	0.57	yes	retail	0.37	yes
exemption	0.56	no	respondent	0.37	no

The development and the validation of the authentic English reading comprehension computer-adaptive online test

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Abstract

This study examines the development of the Authentic English Reading Comprehension Computer-Adaptive Online Test (ACOM) to investigate students' reading proficiency. Not only was the mode of test delivery (computer-based) investigated, but the test authenticity was also explored. The Target Language Use (TLU) domain of first-year students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology North Bangkok was applied to the test. In terms of the effectiveness of the test, the score obtained from ACOM was compared with that obtained from the paper version. The findings provide some evidence that taking fewer items from ACOM allowed similar results compared with taking all items in the paper version. It can be concluded that taking the computer-adaptive online test did not affect the students' reading score. Regarding the test authenticity, students perceived that the tests were relevant to their real life and tended to have positive attitudes towards the test.

Introduction

Test authenticity is considered one of the three main important features of test design (Jonassen, 1991)**.** Accordingly, it can be said that authenticity is the focus of language learning and teaching. In terms of test development, test writers should construct a test which can be expected to show the influence of current ideas on what constitutes language ability and what exactly we are doing when we use language in our everyday life. Hence, McNamara (2000) mentions that in major test projects, articulating and defining the test construct may be the first stage of test development, resulting in an elaborated statement of the theoretical framework for the test.

In this respect, test authenticity can be determined by the construct of the test. Bachman and Palmer (1996) suggest that construct validity is relevant to the domain of generalization to which our score interpretations apply. The domain of generalization is the set of tasks in the Target Language Use (TLU) domain to which the test tasks correspond. In terms of defining the TLU domain, Bachman and Palmer (1996) mention that the response format is another factor to consider in test design in order to increase test authenticity. Therefore, test design has moved towards what is variously known as alternative or standards-based assessment, which includes judging students' ability to perform more open-ended, holistic and real-world tasks within their normal learning environment. Moreover, in terms of having more authentic tests, Barton's (1994) study discusses the richness of the social world within which literacy events take place, and considers how this should be reflected in test authenticity. In real-life situations, reading will often be accompanied by talking such as reading aloud a snippet from a newspaper in order to discuss political bias or the performance of a football team. Similarly, Alderson (2000) suggests that reading should be assessed within a number of situations.

The authentic reading tests in this study were therefore constructed with reference to the students' TLU domain while the task types allowed more open-ended responses within situations provided. The tasks in these tests correspond with the important attributes of authentic reading comprehension tests (Mueller, 2003). The reading tasks allow the test takers to demonstrate their understanding in more open-ended ways similar to real life. They have a chance to write down their own answers without forced choice, and are scored based on a broader variety of 'correct' answers. The reading tasks selected tend to occur in everyday life before or after students graduate. During an authentic reading test, a test taker, therefore, has a specific purpose for reading such as reading for a job application, recreation or obtaining important data to prepare an academic report. When taking the reading tests, it is assumed that test takers apply their understanding of real world tasks and replicate them meaningfully. Finally, test takers themselves are involved in the test design. The reading topics and the characteristics of reading tasks are obtained from a needs analysis of test takers.

Since computers and the Internet have been widely used, one may see their substantial use to enhance language teaching and learning and, in particular, to increase the authenticity of the language learning experience and of the language that is tested (Ingram, 2003). Madsen (1991) also agrees that computers involved in language test delivery can allow for maximum creativity and communicative expression on the part of the candidate, while making allowance for the still rather primitive state of the art as far as productive language skill correction via computers is concerned. Because of this, delivering tests via computers can increase test authenticity.

With the higher capacity of computers in evaluating test scores, computer-based tests are replacing paper-based tests. Cohen (1994) points out that modern technology has been employed in computer-based testing and in a subtype of computer-based testing, namely, computer-adaptive testing, which involves the use of the computer as a vehicle for assessment instead of paper-and-pencil. Regarding the construction, it is more convenient to create computer-based tests using supported programs.

The computer-adaptive language test is uniquely tailored for each student. Madsen (1991) describes briefly its characteristics and advantages. The adaptive or tailored computer testing accesses a specially calibrated item bank and is driven by a statistical routine which analyzes student responses to questions and selects items for the candidates that are of appropriate difficulty. Then, when a specified standard error of measurement level has been reached, the exam is terminated. The psychometrically sound tailoring process in computer-adaptive tests can provide for a more effective measure of language proficiency.

Item Response Theory (IRT) is applied to analyze the test items in computer–adaptive tests. According to Baker (2001), the central concept of IRT is the notion that persons can be placed on a scale on the basis of their ability in a given area, and that items measuring this ability can be placed on the same scale. Thus, there is a single scale which measures both difficulty and ability simultaneously. It is via this scale that the connection between items and respondents occurs.

The computer–adaptive testing (CAT) possesses many advantages. Madsen (1991) notes the convenience of providing exam results immediately: the benefit of accurate and consistent evaluation; diagnostic assistance to teachers and administrators; relief to test writers; and swift access to banks of test items. Test types other than multiple-choice questions can also be administered such as a cloze test which requires words to be typed into blanks in a prose passage. Furthermore, the tedious problem of deciphering student handwriting is eliminated.

Computer-adaptive tests of grammar and vocabulary have long been available, and recently similar tests of listening and reading skills have been developed (McNamara, 2000). However, in the Thai context, especially at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology North Bangkok, there is no research investigating the effects of the adaptive tests on reading performance. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the effects of different test

delivery mediums (computer-based and paper-based) on test takers' reading scores.

Inevitably, computer-adaptive testing has limitations. Firstly, Madsen (1991) and Kiratibodee (2006) report on test taker anxiety as a drawback of tests delivered by computer. Another drawback is potential bias in computerized exams due to unfamiliarity with new technology. Interaction with the computer may thus be a stressful experience for some. Regarding reading tests delivered by computers, McNamara (2000) raises the questions about the importance of different kinds of presentation format delivered by computers. Thus, questions about the impact of computer delivery still remain.

In summary, test authenticity and test delivery medium may affect test takers' ability. This study will focus on reading tests since the skill of reading is very important, particularly in academic contexts and there are still a limited number of studies investigating authenticity in reading tests. Furthermore, the use of computer-adaptive tests of reading skills is a relatively recent development (McNamara, 2000).

Development and validation of the authentic English reading comprehension computer-adaptive online test (ACOM)

In terms of the development of a reading comprehension test, three stages which included the design, operationalization and administration stages suggested by Bachman and Palmer (1996) were conducted. The ACOM was therefore developed and validated through the following procedures.

Stage 1: Design

The purpose of the ACOM was to assess the reading proficiency of first year students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology North Bangkok. First, the target language use (TLU) domain was defined by distributing the open-ended questionnaire to 10 English instructors and 20 students at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology North Bangkok in the first semester of the academic year 2006. This questionnaire aimed to obtain information about

English reading in real life. The open-ended questions asked about their reading purposes, reading settings, reading topics, and reading materials in real life. The findings obtained from this questionnaire were used to create a questionnaire with closed-type items. Secondly, a revised questionnaire with closed-type items was constructed based on the findings obtained from the open-ended version. According to Tanthanis (2002), the three topics most frequently chosen by male first year students as their most interesting reading topics were sports, computers and technology, and science. The three most interesting topics for female students were language and communication, nature and environment, and health. Hence, the two topics not included in the initial survey questionnaire (language and communication, and nature and environment) were added to the topic list. A total of fifteen reading topics were included in this revised questionnaire. The respondents were asked to identify the purpose of the reading, materials and settings provided for each topic. The purpose of this second questionnaire was, therefore to define the target language use (TLU) domain by determining where, when, why, and what students read.

All five groups selected the following three reading topics most frequently: Jobs, Technology and Entertainment (topics will be capitalized). Therefore, these three reading topics were selected as the reading topics for constructing reading proficiency tests in this study. The three reading topics were further analyzed in terms of their reading purposes, reading materials and reading settings. The reading topic Entertainment was associated with four reading purposes included in the TLU domain of this study: relaxing, reading for pleasure, updating news and getting particular information. Regarding reading materials, journals or magazines were included in the TLU domain. In terms of reading settings, home, library, and movie theatre were included in the TLU domain.

The reading topic Job was associated with four reading purposes included in the TLU domain of this study: finding jobs, applying for a job, updating news, and dealing with other people or companies. Regarding reading materials, newspapers and the Internet were included in the TLU domain. In terms

of reading settings, home, computer room and workplace were included in the TLU domain.

The reading topic Technology was associated with four reading purposes included in the TLU domain of this study: broadening their outlook, updating news, doing research or academic reports, and operating machines or systems. Concerning reading materials, journals, magazines and the Internet were included in the TLU domain. In terms of reading settings, library and workplace were included in TLU domain.

The target group taking this test was first year students who enrolled in English I course in the first semester of academic year 2007. These students were from the Faculties of Engineering, Applied Science, Technical Education, Industrial Technology and Management and Agro-Industry at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology North Bangkok. Most of them were male, aged between 18 – 22.

In terms of the theoretical model of language ability used to establish the test construct, the three levels of comprehension or sophistication of thinking suggested by Mohamad (1999) were used (Table 1). These three levels are presented in hierarchy from the least to the most sophisticated level of reading. These three levels of comprehension were used as the constructs of the reading tests.

Table 1.   Three levels of comprehension or sophistication of thinking (Mohamad, 1999)

Level 1:
Literal - what is actually stated. The following elements are measured:
- Facts and details
- Rote learning and memorization (vocabulary)
- Surface understanding only (word meanings in context)
Common questions used to elicit this type of thinking are who, what, when, and where questions.

Level 2:
Interpretive or inferential - what is implied or meant, rather than what is actually stated. Level two includes the following skills:
- Summarizing the main idea
- Tapping into prior knowledge / experience
- Attaching new learning to old information
- Making logical leaps and educated guesses (predicting outcomes)
- Drawing inferences (reading between the lines to determine what is meant by what is stated / explaining the author's purpose)

Tests in this category are subjective, and the types of questions asked are thought-provoking questions phrased with words like why, what if, and how.

Level 3:
Critical - taking what was said (literal) and then what was meant by what was said (interpretive) and then extending (apply) the concepts or ideas beyond the situation. The skills at this level are:
- Analyzing
- Synthesizing
- Applying

A plan for assessing the qualities of usefulness was included at the initial consideration of the appropriate balance among the six qualities of usefulness: reliability, construct validity, interactiveness, impact, practicality and authenticity (Bachman and Palmer, 1996). However, in terms of the quality of test authenticity, the authentic reading tests were expected to possess a very high degree of this quality.

In terms of evaluating the test authenticity, after the ACOM (paper version) was created, three native instructors were asked to evaluate the authenticity of this test. In Bachman and Palmer's (1996) framework, the relationship between the TLU tasks and the test tasks is most important. Brown (2004) adds some other ways to evaluate the extent to which a test was authentic by asking the following questions:

1. Is the language in the test as natural as possible?
2. Are items as contextualized as possible rather than isolated?
3. Are situations interesting, enjoyable, and/ or humorous?
4. Is some thematic organization provided, such as through a story line or episode?
5. Do tasks represent, or closely approximate, real-world tasks?

Question 5 is the key question, according to the Bachman and Palmer's (1996) definition. The evaluation of test authenticity form was, therefore, established by using these suggestions.

In terms of an inventory of required and available resources and a plan for the allocation and management, the test developer and writer were the researcher's roles. Therefore, the researcher developed the test from the very beginning to the end, from the table of specifications to administration, try-out, and use, and archiving.

Stage 2: Operationalization

The test specification was established by combining three levels of comprehension and TLU domains for the ACOM. (See the test specification of the Authentic English Reading Comprehension Test

and the Inauthentic English Reading Comprehension Test in Appendix 1.)

The reading texts included in the test were selected according to the following steps. First, the reading texts were selected according to the reading topics mentioned in the test specifications (jobs, technology and entertainment). Alderson (2000) suggested that texts chosen in reading tests are usually between 150–350 words in length and the length of the selected texts in this study also fall within this range. After selection, each 150–350 word-length text was evaluated to determine the readability of each text. The Fry Readability Program (n.d.) was used. The program can provide a rough guide and a useful indication as to whether the content of the text is at the right level for the intended students or test-takers. The value obtained from the program is a rough measure of the reading age of the readers and the difficulty of the text. Since the population of this study was aged between 18 and 22 years, the readability level used was 18 years or above.

However, the readability index provides only a rough guide because it cannot take into account the conceptual density of the material (O' Donnel & Wood, 2004), the structural and rhetorical features of the text (Clapham, 1996), and a reader's knowledge and interest (Clapham, 1996; Nuttall, 1996). Moreover, the rough guide obtained is generally used for native readers of English language. The rough measure may not be appropriate for nonnative students. However, Clapham (1996) suggests that in addition to evaluating the readability of a text, reading experts, teachers and testers (who are familiar with the text and with the backgrounds of the students) or test takers who are expected to read the texts should take part in selecting appropriate texts.

The three selected reading texts which were the same length (150-350 words) and at the same readability level (18 years or above) for each topic (Entertainment, Jobs and Technology) were considered according to the test task characteristics mentioned in the test specifications. The following criteria for selecting appropriate reading passages suggested by Day (1994) were also considered.

1. Lexical Knowledge: A number of unknown words is acceptable in a reading passage.
2. Background Knowledge: The passage is on a topic that is known or familiar to the students.
3. Syntactic Appropriateness: A passage contains grammatical constructions that the students tend to know. These constructions are not new or not too difficult for them to recognize or understand.
4. Organization: A passage is well organized.
5. Discourse Phenomena: This includes the arrangement of topics and comments in a reading passage, and considerations of cohesiveness and coherence. The students who read the passage tend to be able to handle the presentation of ideas and arguments in the passage. The cohesion markers and transition devices are within the linguistic competence of the students, and they can follow the line of reasoning utilized by the writer of the passage.

Therefore, both the test task characteristics and the criteria suggested by Day (1994) were used to establish the passage selection form. Three English instructors were asked to select the passage for each test task by using the passage selecting form. The passages with the highest scores were included in the ACOM. The researcher wrote the test items according to the test specification and prepared both answer key and scoring scheme. After the draft ACOM was finished, the test was edited by the researcher's adviser and other experts.

Stage 3: Test administration
The ACOM was piloted four times in the academic years 2005 and 2006. Finally, all the items with particular b-parameter or item difficulty level required to be put in the fixed position of the computer-adaptive flowchart were obtained.

For the item analysis, the three-parameter IRT model was applied. The criteria used for selecting the appropriate items for proficiency tests are the a-parameter (discrimination), which should fall in the range of 0.5 – 2.5, the b-parameter (difficulty) which should be in the range of -2.5 - + 2.5 and the c-parameter (guessing), which should fall in the range of 0 – 0.40. However, with regard to the acceptable range of the b-parameter, Hambleton and Swaminathan (1985) suggest the range of -3.0 - +3.0 in the fixed-branching or pyramidal model of computer-adaptive tests (CAT). This study, which aims at creating a CAT by using this pyramidal model, therefore, uses this range of the b-parameter.

Since the fixed-branching or pyramidal CAT involved the placement of the test items in a branching tree in advance, depending on the response to each item, a more difficult item will be presented next for a correct response and an easier item will be provided for an incorrect response. Not only is the test adaptive, but the sequence of items is also content-based. Figure 1 illustrates the ideal flowchart of the CAT conducted in this study.

The difficulty levels of items obtained from the pilots were not exactly the same as the difficulty levels expected. However, the concept of the pyramidal CAT is to have more difficult items on the rightward direction and easier items on the leftward direction. The items were put in the flowchart by considering their difficulty levels and the contents. It was found that some items could be put in the flowchart while the other items could not.

The test was analyzed by using XCALIBRE for Windows version 1.10. The reliability of the test or KR-21 (XCALIBRE reports KR-21 as test reliability) obtained was 0.875. The range of the a, b and c parameters were 1.50 – 2.50, -1.34 – 3.00, and 0.18 – 0.30 respectively. Because this test was analyzed according to Item Response Theory by using the three-parameter model, a factor analysis was conducted in order to test the unidimensionality assumption. The results showed that there were six separate factors underlying the items measured in the test. Generally speaking, it can be interpreted that each item tests one dimension.

Figure 1.   The flowchart of a content-based CAT

Step

                                Item

1   1 **(a)**

2   2 **(a)**   3 **(b)**

3   4 **(a)**   5 **(b)**   6 **(c)**

4   7 **(a)**   8 **(b)**   9 **(c)**   10 **(d)**

5   11 **(a)**   12 **(b)**   13 **(c)**   14 **(d)**   15 **(e)**

6   16 **(a)**   17 **(b)**   18 **(c)**   19 **(d)**   20 **(e)**   21 **(f)**

-3.0   -2.4   -1.8   -1.2   -0.6   0.0   +0.6   +1.2   +1.8   +2.4   +3.0

     (a)   represents an item measuring facts and details

     (b)   represents an item measuring word meanings in contexts

     (c)   represents an item measuring summarizing the main idea

     (d)   represents an item measuring predicting outcomes

     (e)   represents an item measuring analyzing

     (f)   represents an item measuring applying

▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪▪

       represents the directions for incorrect answers

▬▬▬▬▬

       represents the directions for correct answers

All the items could be placed on the flowchart according to their difficulty levels and their measured contents. The test items are reordered and numbered according to their difficulty levels, from the easiest to the most difficult items (See Appendix 2). Then, three native instructors were asked to check the authenticity of the test by using a test authenticity form. Based on the scores obtained, it can be concluded that the native English instructors strongly agree that the language in each test task is natural, the items are contextualized and the theme in the test can occur in a real situation. Generally, they agreed that the situations in the test are interesting and the tasks are related to real-world tasks. Moreover, the high average score can be interpreted to mean that they strongly agree that the

test is authentic. Because all the items in the ACOM were able to be placed in the CAT flowchart according to their difficulty levels and the contents measured, the ACOM was judged to be ready to be transformed into the Computer-Adaptive Test.

Transforming ACOM (paper version) to a computer-adaptive test (CAT)

The ACOM (paper version) was transformed to a CAT format and uploaded onto the website www.ecatonline.com/ecat. The program was mainly developed with HTML as a tool in the developing process, PHP as the programming language, My as the database, and Macromedia Dreamweaver MX as an editor (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The computer-adaptive test system
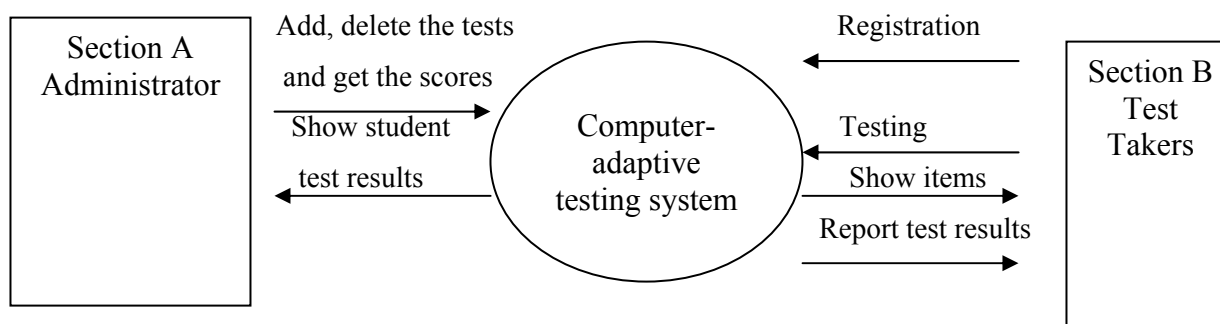
1. The program system
1.1 The system was divided into two main sections: test administrator and test taker sections.
- Section A or the test administrator section allows the teacher to add, delete, and get the test takers' test scores.
- Section B or test taker section provides the test for each test taker.
1.2 The data needed to be stored in the system are the item bank of the Authentic English Reading Comprehension Test, and test takers' data (names and scores obtained from the test).
2. Ways to access the online test
- The usernames and passwords were provided and assigned to each test taker. For the test administrator, another username and password were assigned to access the history of all test takers, including each test taker's test result.
3. The score calculation
- The test takers' ability score (θ) was transformed to raw score by using the data obtained from Test Characteristic Curve (TCC).

Research Findings
The findings from this study show no significant difference between the mean scores obtained from the ACOM and that obtained from the paper version. In terms of attitudes towards test authenticity, test takers reported positive attitudes toward the time length, interactiveness and test authenticity.

Discussion
Since the findings show no significant difference between the mean score obtained from the ACOM and from the paper version, this can signify that the two tests were equivalent. Chalhoub-Deville (1999) point out the importance of conducting comparability studies to detect any potential test delivery medium effect when a conventional test is converted to a computerized test. This is because the presence of a mode effect on reading comprehension test performance would seriously invalidate score interpretation of computerized reading tests. Alderson (2000) suggests that language assessment researchers have to discuss the necessity of examining: (a) the degree to which computerized reading comprehension tests measure the same construct as paper-based tests and (b) the extent to which results of computerized reading tests can be generalized to other contexts.

Due to the comparability of tasks controlled at the beginning of the test construction, it was possible to establish the equivalence of computerized and conventional test forms. The content covered by the two tests was comparable. Using the fixed length CAT in this study, promising algorithms to control content coverage have been implemented.

Bugbee (1996) claimed that if a computer-based test is used as an alternative for a conventional form, then demonstrating high correlation and nearly equal means and variances between the modes may suffice. Correspondingly, the findings indicate no significant difference between the mean scores obtained from the tests delivered by these two modes. It can be said that the mean scores are nearly equal. This can be interpreted as an indication that the computer-based tests in this study can be alternatives for a paper-based test.

In terms of the equivalence of item difficulty parameters obtained in the ACOM and the paper version, Stone and Lunz (1994) found that the text-only items showed a strong trend of parameter estimate equivalence, and items with graphics tended to be less stable than text-only items. Further investigation of the items suggested that the significantly different difficulty estimates obtained across modes seemed to be accounted for by different picture quality as well as by image and character sizes used across the CAT mode. Hence, it can be concluded that the item difficulty parameters in both tests are generally stable since all items were text-only. Accordingly, the finding of no significant difference in the mean scores obtained from the tests delivered by different mediums may suggest that the construct being measured by the tests administered in conventional and computerized forms is comparable. It can be concluded from the findings that the mean scores obtained from the ACOM and its paper version were not significantly different because the tests were comparable. A possible cause might be that both tests were developed from the same constructs, so there is stability of the test difficulty parameter and the similar values of the mean scores.

Regarding test authenticity, test takers tended to report positive attitudes towards the test especially in terms of interactiveness and test authenticity. This might be because of their perception that the reading tasks allow them to demonstrate their understanding in more open-ended ways as in real life. Accordingly, they have a chance to write down their own answers without forced choice. In addition, the answers were corrected by providing more acceptable answers. These reading tasks tend to occur in everyday life before or after they

graduate. During an authentic reading test, a test taker, therefore, has more meaningful purposes for reading such as reading for a job application, recreation or obtaining important data to prepare an academic report. When taking the reading tests, it is assumed that test takers apply their understanding of real world tasks and replicate them meaningfully. Finally, test takers themselves are involved in the test design. The reading topics and the characteristics of reading tasks are obtained from a needs analysis of test takers.

Furthermore, the results obtained from the authentic tests tend to be more valid because the test takers were given greater opportunities to respond to the tasks considered more relevant to their real life. They perceived that they had more chances to have an item correct since there were more acceptable answers, whereas the traditional multiple choice items normally provide them with only limited chances to respond to those items and only one correct answer to each task was acceptable.

In conclusion, well-designed CATs can allow an accurate result similar to that obtained from taking all of the items from long-length paper-based tests. Moreover, applying the TLU domain of the test takers to the test can give rise to a more authentic test. Therefore, test takers tend to perceive that tests are relevant to their real life and have more meaningful purpose in doing it. A teacher who normally takes responsibility to write a test may have to consider the TLU domain in test takers' real life in the test items. Thus, the score obtained is likely to have greater generalisability and be more meaningful. Regarding test delivery, using CAT can help develop more effective reading comprehension tests.

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Appendix 1
Table of Specification of ACOM

The ACOM consists of 3 subtests as follows:

Reading topic: Entertainment		Reading topic: Jobs		Reading topic: Technology	
Task 1: 21 items	Time: 42 Min	Task 2: 21 items	Time: 42 Min	Task 3: 21 items	Time: 42 Min
Total 63 items/ 126 minutes					

Task 1

Read Ability	Authentic Test				
	Context: **- Participant:** Both current students and graduates who want to give an explanation about entertainment news to the others. **- Task characteristics:** Test-takers are required to be able to give some details.				
	Topic	**Text Length**	**Item Type**	**Number of Item**	**Time (Min)**
1. Literal comprehension - Facts and details	Entertainment (unadapted text)	150 – 350 words	Short answer	6	12
- Surface understanding only (word meanings in context)			Short answer	5	10
2. Inferential comprehension - Drawing inferences (summarizing the main idea)			Short answer	4	8
- Making logical leaps and educated guesses (predicting outcomes)			Short answer	3	6
3. Critical comprehension **-** Analyzing			Short answer	2	4
- Applying			Short answer	1	2
Total				**21**	**42**

Task 2

Read Ability	Authentic Test				
	Context: **- Participant:** A graduate who is looking for a job and a graduate who already has a job **- Task characteristics:** Test takers are required to read several job classified advertisements from newspapers. Then they identify the main points of each advertisement, and decide which ad. corresponds to the qualifications given				
	Topic	**Text Length**	**Item Type**	**Number of Item**	**Time (Min)**
1. Literal comprehension - Facts and details	Jobs (unadapted text)	150 – 350 words	Short answer	6	12
- Surface understanding only (word meanings in context)			Short answer	5	10
2. Inferential comprehension - Drawing inferences (summarizing the main idea)			Short answer	4	8
- Making logical leaps and educated guesses (predicting outcomes)			Short answer	3	6
3. Critical comprehension **-** Analyzing			Short answer	2	4
- Applying			Short answer	1	2
Total				**21**	**42**

Task 3

Read Ability	Authentic Test				
	Context: **- Participant:** Current students who are interested in an article related to technology and are assigned to do research or report related to technology. **- Task characteristics:** Test-takers are required to read an article extracted from a magazine related to technological invention. They have to understand the article and use the information obtained to prepare their report.				
	Topic	**Text Length**	**Item Type**	**Number of Item**	**Time**
1. Literal comprehension - Facts and details	Technology (unadapted text)	150 – 350 words	Short answer	6	12
- Surface understanding only (word meanings in context)			Short answer	5	10
2. Inferential comprehension - Drawing inferences (summarizing the main idea)			Short answer	4	8
- Making logical leaps and educated guesses (predicting outcomes)			Short answer	3	6
3. Critical comprehension **-** Analyzing			Short answer	2	4
- Applying			Short answer	1	2
Total				**21**	**42**

Appendix 2
The ACOM flowchart

Text 1

Step						
1			A1 *Item 6* : b=1.39 a= 2.50 c= 0.19			
2.		A2 *Item 5*: b= 1.29 a= 2.50 c= 0.23	B1 *Item 11*: b=2.40 a= 2.24 c= 0.22			
3.		A3 *Item 4*: b= 1.18 a= 2.50 c= 0.20	B2 *Item 10*: b=2.35 a= 2.24 c= 0.22	C1 *Item 15*: b=2.70 a= 2.22 c= 0.28		
4.	A4 *Item 3*: b= 0.72 a= 2.50 c= 0.28	B3 *Item 9*: b=2.33 a= 2.50 c= 0.18	C2 *Item 14*: b=2.68 a= 2.25 c= 0.30	D1 *Item 18*: b= 2.80 a= 2.30 c= 0.29		
5.	A5 *Item 2*: b= 0.01 a= 2.50 c=0.22	B4 *Item 8*: b=2.26 a= 2.50 c= 0.21	C3 *Item 13*: b= 2.55 a= 2.25 c= 0.30	D2 *Item 17*:b=2.75 a= 2.22 c= 0.28	E1 *Item 20*: b=2.98 a= 2.29 c= 0.29	
6. A6 *Item 1*: b= -1.34 a= 1.50 c= 0.30	B5 *Item 7*: b= 2.22 a= 2.41 c= 0.22	C4 *Item 12*:b= 2.48 a= 2.50 c= 0.18	D3 *Item 16*: b=2.73 a= 2.22 c= 0.28	E2 *Item 19*: b= 2.87 a= 2.31 c= 0.28	*Item 21*: b= 3.00 a= 2.30 c= 0.29	F1

Note: The items are reordered so that the item numbers illustrating in this flowchart correspond to the sequence in the complete test.

Text 2

```
Step
1                                          A1
                                     Item 27: b=1.41
                                            a= 2.41
                                            c= 0.27
2.                              A2                      B1
                         Item 26: b= 1.39       Item 32: b=2.14
                                a= 2.50                a= 2.46
                                c= 0.19                       c= 0.26
3.                 A3                      B2                      C1
             Item 25: b= 1.18      Item 31: b=2.12       Item 36: b= 2.34
                    a= 2.50              a= 2.50                a= 2.50
                    c= 0.20              c= 0.19                c= 0.18
4.          A4                  B3                  C2                  D1
      Item 24: b= 0.99   Item 30: b=1.93    Item 35: b=2.28    Item 39: b= 2.68
             a= 2.17           a= 2.12           a= 2.50           a= 2.25
             c= 0.29           c= 0.29           c= 0.21           c= 0.30
5.      A5              B4              C3              D2              E1
  Item 23: b= 0.94  Item 29: b=1.85  Item 34: b= 2.25  Item 38: b=2.56  Item 41: b= 2.83
        a= 1.55         a= 1.63         a= 2.41         a= 2.17         a= 2.30
        c= 0.29         c= 0.29         c= 0.28         c= 0.28         c= 0.29
6. A6           B5              C4              D3              E2              F1
Item 22: b= 0.01  Item 28: b= 1.80  Item 33: b= 2.22  Item 37: b= 2.47  Item 40: b= 2.70  Item 42: b= 3.00
     a= 2.50        a= 2.02           a= 2.07           a= 2.24           a= 2.22           a= 2.42
     c= 0.22        c= 0.18           c= 0.25           c= 0.20           c= 0.30           c= 0.28
```

Note: The items are reordered so that the item numbers illustrating in this flowchart correspond to the sequence in the complete test.

Text 3

```
Step
1                                          A1
                                     Item 48: b=1.39
                                            a= 2.50
                                            c= 0.19
2.                              A2                      B1
                         Item 47: b= 1.34       Item 53: b=1.93
                                a= 2.37                a= 2.12
                                c= 0.28                       c= 0.30
3.                 A3                      B2                      C1
             Item 46: b= 1.32      Item 52: b=1.80       Item 57: b= 2.26
                    a= 1.93              a= 2.02                a= 2.50
                    c= 0.29              c= 0.18                c= 0.21
4.          A4                  B3                  C2                  D1
      Item 45: b= 1.19   Item 51: b=1.78    Item 56: b= 2.22   Item 60: b= 2.68
             a= 2.50           a= 2.02           a= 2.41           a= 2.25
             c= 0.20           c= 0.21           c= 0.30           c= 0.30
5.      A5              B4              C3              D2              E1
  Item 44: b= 0.72  Item 50: b=1.64  Item 55: b= 2.14  Item 59: b= 2.40  Item 62: b= 2.87
        a= 2.50         a= 2.18         a= 2.46         a= 2.24         a= 2.29
        c= 0.28         c= 0.25         c= 0.26         c= 0.22         c= 0.29
6. A6           B5              C4              D3              E2              F1
Item 43: b= 0.01  Item 49: b= 1.56  Item 54: b= 2.12  Item 58: b= 2.35  Item 61: b= 2.70  Item 63: b= 3.00
     a= 2.50        a= 1.71           a= 2.50           a= 2.50           a= 2.22           a= 2.30
     c= 0.22        c= 0.23           c= 0.19           c= 0.21           c= 0.30           c= 0.30
```

Note: The items are reordered so that the item numbers illustrating in this flowchart correspond to the sequence in the complete test.

Using CALL to write and research academic essays

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Abstract
This paper outlines the efficacy of using Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) for writing and researching academic essays in EFL classes. Part one introduces empirical data that demonstrates this effectiveness and recommends its future use in such classes where possible. As an extension to the empirical data, this paper also touches upon issues of course development, which might be applied not only to academic writing classes but also to other reading, writing and CALL courses. Part two presents practical advice regarding effective CALL use in academic writing classes, in particular how to research effectively and to ensure greater academic rigor in the sources. This will also include advice for the teacher on how to deal with problems such as plagiarism and the excessive use of machine translation tools.

Introduction
The most common form of academic writing is the essay, a very demanding genre not least because writing one requires considerable time and effort, in tandem with strong abilities in reasoning, scholarship and literacy. Within the Department of International Relations of the University of Kitakyushu, Japan, Academic Writing is a compulsory specialist subject that requires all International Relations third-year students to submit a 2,500-3,000-word essay on a self-selected theme within the field of international relations. Most, if not all, students in the course have had absolutely no experience writing an extended essay in English, and for intermediate language learners, this genre represents a considerable challenge. The author's experiences teaching this year-long course every year since April 2002 form the basis for this paper.

Earlier classroom research undertaken recommended a number of revisions and modifications to the existing Academic Writing course, the most significant of which was the integration of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) systems into the syllabus.
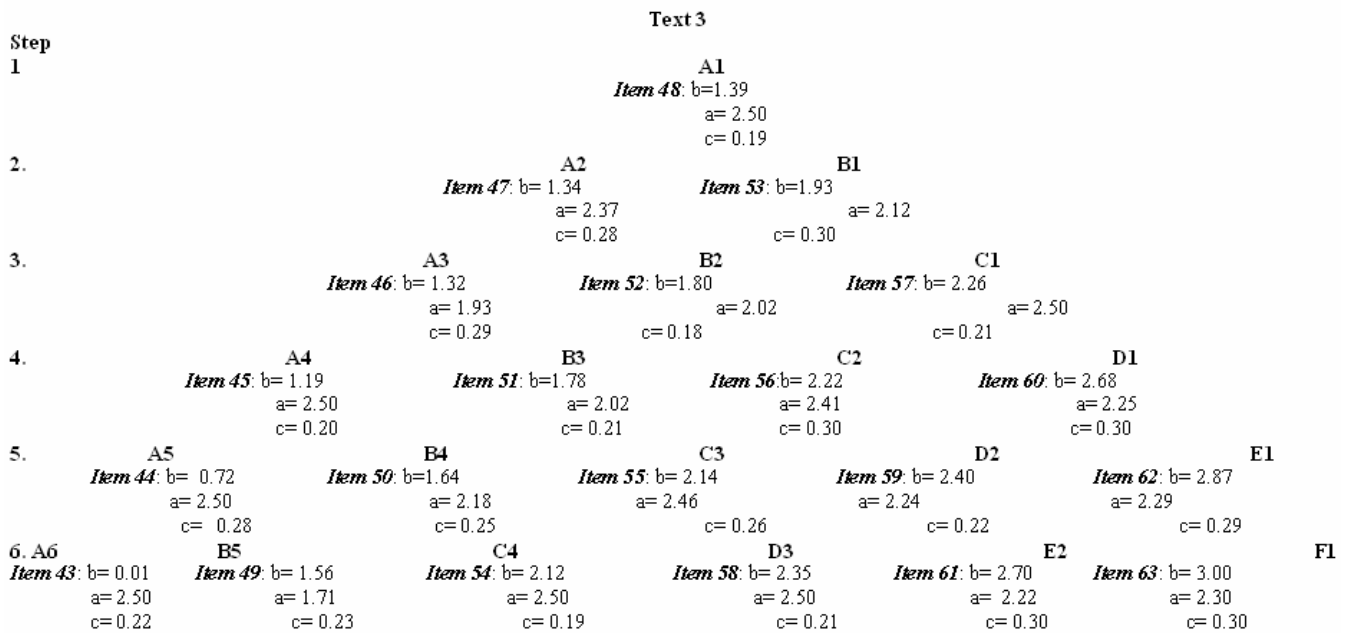
Moreover, it was suggested that future classroom research should be conducted to assess the impact of CALL upon students' research and writing methods (Stott, 2006). This paper reports on some these changes and how they were viewed by the students. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to shed light on how CALL systems have influenced students' essay research and writing techniques by comparing the results from before CALL was incorporated into the curriculum. This article opens with a brief outline of CALL and the related field of autonomous learning, before highlighting the empirical data. Recommendations for course development are made whilst dissecting this data. Finally, some practical suggestions are offered for conducting Internet research in class. As such, the underlying goal of this study is to hone and improve English reading, writing and CALL classes.

Computer-assisted language learning (CALL)
Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is a method of instruction and learning in which teachers and students take advantage of advances in information technology (IT) to present, augment

and appraise class materials and subject matter. Despite the potential of CALL, it could be argued that in some educational institutions this potential is far beyond the scope of this paper but undisputedly, the attitudes of teachers play a major role here. It has been stated that there are in essence three separate scenarios being played out regarding language teachers and CALL (Collis & Muir, 1986). Firstly, for some CALL plays a central role and lessons revolve around computer use. For others, CALL acts as an extra resource for use in conventional classes. Lastly, there remain instructors who believe that information technology makes no significant contribution to language teaching and learning. The author's approach falls somewhere between the first two scenarios with the proviso that CALL is not a panacea that can cure all language learning ills. In short, CALL has its place in the classroom but its exact role and usage depends on the aims and pedagogy of the class concerned.

For the aims and objectives of the Academic Writing course in the Department of International Relations, the benefit of hindsight affirms that the implementation of CALL was long overdue. For, in addition to helping students research their essays, CALL can also assist them in the process of writing it. For instance, when questioned none of the students knew of the existence of a thesaurus. By demonstrating the use of an online version in class, students can quickly realize how such a tool can help build their vocabulary and enrich their writing. This and other simple suggestions regarding online research hint at the potential of CALL in areas such as autonomous learning and critical thinking, essential parts of any academic writing course.

Student feedback on CALL and academic writing

During the course it is stressed that students are free to research in any language but that because English represents around 80% of all Internet web pages, and perhaps a greater percentage of scholarly websites, researching in English is encouraged. To assess the results of using CALL to stimulate the use of English as a research tool, it is instructive to compare the responses to the same question for the

Academic Writing class of 2004-05 to the class of 2005-06. The class of 2004-05, a sample of 71 students, did not use CALL during class time and their results are shown below. The use of CALL in the class promoted researching in English.

Empirical data

A common method of collecting data for use in assessing learner needs is the structured questionnaire and survey, not forgetting the proviso that the results must be treated with some degree of circumspection. This study was conducted in January 2006 with 49 third-year International Relations major students studying Academic Writing, just after they had completed a 2,500-3,000-word essay on any self-chosen topic in international relations. The results displayed in Appendix 1 have been rounded up to the nearest decimal point, which accounts for any discrepancies in the total.

During the course, it is stressed that students are free to research in any language but that because English represents around 80% of all Internet web pages, and perhaps a greater percentage of scholarly websites, researching in English is encouraged. To assess the results of using CALL to stimulate the use English as a research tool, it is instructive to compare the responses to the same question for the Academic Writing class of 2004-05 to the class of 2005-06 (Appendix 1, Table 1A). The class of 2004-05, a sample of 71 students, did not use CALL during class time.

These results testify to the effectiveness of CALL in encouraging students to research in English. The percentage of students who used English as their main research language increased markedly from just 18.3% the previous year to 40.8%. Such results reinforce the University's decision to invest heavily in CALL systems and should further encourage the adoption of CALL where appropriate.

The overwhelming response was in the affirmative (Appendix 1, Table 2A). Perhaps part of the reason is that during the bulk of the second term, students were able to use class time to research and begin writing their essays, thus reducing the burden of

home study. Undoubtedly, using computers is a more efficient way of gathering and compiling information during class time. Of those seven students for whom CALL was no help in researching their essays, five did 1-25% of their research in English and two did 26-50%, suggesting perhaps that these pupils rested at the lower end of the ability spectrum. A more open mind to both asking the teacher for help and towards IT in general will be fostered to counter such negative results.

A large stress was placed on enhancing students' ability to find trustworthy information on the Internet in English. For instance, students are pressed to use PDF files whenever possible as these are more academically trustworthy. As such, web surfing techniques that allowed for the systematic indexing of only certain types of document, such as PDF and DOC files, were taught. The one student (Appendix 1, Table 3A) who answered in the negative did only 1-25% of their essay research in English and commented that, "I couldn't get so much information from the Internet. If I could have, it would have been useful to use computers during class." It seems the problem here concerns choosing an appropriate essay title and theme combined with an effective approach to online research. Even though efficient web search techniques were imparted to the class, it is possible that this student was absent or missed the point. Online research strategies will be further reinforced in future classes.

It was demonstrated to students how straightforward it can be to find information on the Internet and it appears that most took advantage of this (Appendix 1, Table 4A). Of the two students who did not find information by using the Internet, both undertook only 1-25% of their research in English but both still stated that CALL helped them to research in English. Indeed, one of these students even preferred to have all Academic Writing classes in the CALL room.

It is interesting to note the objections of these 10 students to incorporating CALL into all Academic Writing classes (Appendix 1, Table 5A). A closer look at their other responses reveals that only three

of these 10 preferred to have these classes in a standard classroom (see question 8). These three students all did only 1-25% of their research in English, with two finding that CALL did not help them research their essay. However, two of these three also circled 'yes' to the question, 'Do you think CALL helped you to research in English?' Of the other seven who objected to the CALL room being the only location for Academic Writing classes, only one did 1-25% of their research in English, suggesting that those students who conducted more of their research in English prefer the CALL room to a standard classroom, even if they have reservations about using the computer room for every lesson.

Whilst these classes were not specifically designed to improve students' general computer literacy, it might be suggested that greater time at a terminal in an educational environment is likely to generate such results. This is particularly the case when instructing students how to use programs such as Microsoft Word and Internet Explorer more effectively (Appendix 1, Table 6A).

The relatively large class size of around 35 does weigh against the instructor being able to devote much individual attention to each student. However, the majority perceived the CALL room as being a more conducive environment for personalized tuition (Appendix 1, Table 7A). Again, this is a major positive and bodes well for the future of CALL at the university. However, some of the responses suggest that even more personal attention is necessary for some of the less computer literate students.

There is a clear and marked preference for continuing to conduct Academic Writing classes in a CALL classroom (Appendix 1, Table 8A). Of those students who preferred a traditional classroom environment, all three did only 1-25% of their research in English, possibly indicating that either they lacked confidence using computers or they possess lower than average English ability in comparison to their classmates. Paradoxically, two of these students also commented that CALL did help them to write their essay. Furthermore, two of these three did answer in the affirmative to question

number three, highlighting once again the problems of conducting classroom surveys.

Questions nine and ten (Appendix 1, Table 9A and 10A) were included to examine if what students perceived as their strengths and weaknesses, respectively, impacted on the way they approached their essay research and writing. If so, perhaps those students who classed reading as a strength did more of their research in English relative to other students. However, of the 21 students who classed reading as a strength, 11 did 1-25% of their research in their second language. Conversely, this corresponds to 52.4% of this smaller sample, compared to 36.7% for the sample as a whole. Of the remaining 10 students who thought their reading was the strongest of the four skills, three did 26-50% (14.3%) and 7 did 51-75% (33.3%) of their research in English. This compares to 24.5% and 34.7% for whole sample of 49 students, suggesting that their perceived strengths and weaknesses had little bearing on how these students approached their essay research.

Of these five students who considered reading to be their Achilles' heel, three of them were the only people in the whole sample that did 76-99% of their research in English. This suggests that their answer to the above question was a response to the obvious difficulties they encountered doing almost all of their research in English, and is thus very interesting from a psychological perspective. Of the other two, one did 51-75 of his/her research in English and the other did 26-50%, once again indicating that answers to this question had absolutely no impact on the way these students conducted their essay research.

The final question asked, 'What problems did you have writing your essay? Please write freely', thus prodding students to candidly elucidate their feelings about the research and writing process, in order for the instructor to gather feedback and make the classes more productive. In addition, it affords the instructor an opportunity to see what advice was applied and what was ignored by the students, with a view to reinforcing those lessons that seemingly went unheeded. For example, one student wrote that, "It was difficult for me to find good

information", and this student was one of the seven (or 14.3%) for whom CALL did not help their essay research. This suggests, despite a considerable portion of time being devoted to this issue, that the instructor should spend even more time recommending useful websites and effective web search strategies. The implication here is perhaps that the instructor needs to tweak the balance of the syllabus and to take more time to individually help students in this situation. Of course, of fundamental significance here is choosing an essay topic for which adequate information is readily available, and maybe the teacher should even more explicitly stress the vital importance of this.

Of perhaps more concern, however, were the comments of one student who echoed the sentiments of a few others, "I didn't know about the basic styles of writing essays". Even though techniques such as writing paragraphs, introductions and conclusions were an integral part of the course, it is possible that the instructor overestimated some students' abilities, especially with regard to the correct structure of paragraph writing. More specifically, a different student wrote that, "I wanted to study more about the main body", referring to the bulk of the essay in between the introduction and conclusion. Again, greater time can be devoted to this during class.

Discussing essay content, another student wrote that, "It is difficult to write an opinion or view because I cannot use 'I' or 'my'". Despite being a problem for this particular student, this is a satisfying response for the instructor because it demonstrates that some the lessons of the class were applied. Nevertheless, it indicates that more options could be given to students who are wondering how to express an opinion in their essays. This should probably take the form of a handout or electronic document, which can be sent to each computer terminal using the CALL software.

On the subject of constructing the essay, one wrote that, "It was difficult to translate Japanese into English, especially peculiar expressions and slang". Whilst students are free to translate their essays from Japanese into English, it was stressed that this is a particularly time consuming method of essay

writing and, as such, is not recommended. In addition, it was stressed that slang has no place in an academic essay, except perhaps in the rare case of a direct quotation.

Further regarding vocabulary, it was mentioned that some students experienced difficulties with the technical nature of some International Relations terminology. Indeed, it seems that some of these same students even struggle with such terms in Japanese. A possible solution here is to employ the Coxhead academic word list or a modified version thereof (Coxhead 2000). This list contains 570 'words', which have both high frequency and high coverage in academic texts, irrespective of subject area and discipline, but the list does not include any of the 2,000 most frequent words in English.

Lastly, an inherent difficulty of this course is choosing an appropriate textbook and student feedback confirms this. Quite simply, there are very few textbooks on the market that teach foreign learners of English how to write politically themed essays. Whilst a new textbook is needed, another option is to use no textbook and to make the course completely web-based. Such a change would completely revolutionize the pedagogy of this class and is something under serious consideration.

Imparting effective internet research techniques

At present Google and other search engines admit that introducing balance and objectivity into their search results is very difficult. Thus, they cannot stop bias. Useful advice to get better, more trustworthy, results is to encourage students to use PDF and DOC files more. Many academic reports are written in PDF files because they are more difficult to copy and change, whilst others are written as Microsoft Word DOC files.

To find only PDF files enter the following word sequence exactly into Google, English in Cambodia filetype:pdf and this will yield only PDF files. To obtain narrower but more focused results use quotation marks around the subject, "English in Cambodia" filetype:pdf that will yield results where those three words in quotation marks appear

together in that word order. Using quotation marks, such as in "English in Cambodia", on any web search is an effective method to get better search results. Of course, searching with quotation marks also usually provides better results for normal searches where no file type is preferred. Likewise, file type specific searches can be done for DOC files and any other file type. In addition, the 'cached' button the Google search results page highlights the words and sentences you are searching for, and saves time searching for specific information in pages containing a great deal of text. Furthermore, Google can usually show PDF files with highlighted text if the user clicks on 'view as html'. This can save substantial time scanning PDF files for specific information.

Specifically for language learners, a whole host of online dictionaries exist which are free to use. In addition, many students are not aware of the thesaurus, a very important tool for building vocabulary and essential in academic essay writing. Here are some of the most popular examples:
1. Merriam-Webster Online = http://m-w.com/
2. Dictionary.com = http://dictionary.reference.com/
3. One Look Dictionary Search = http://www.onelook.com/
4. Cambridge Dictionaries Online = http://dictionary.cambridge.org/
5. yourDictionary.com = http://www.yourdictionary.com/
6. Cobuild Concordance Sampler = http://www.collins.co.uk/Corpus/CorpusSearch.aspx
7. Virtual Language Centre Web Concordance = http://www.edict.com.hk/concordance/
8. Simple Search of BNC-World = http://thetis.bl.uk/lookup.html
9. Thesaurus = http://thesaurus.reference.com/

Problems with using CALL to write and research academic essays

Despite the advantages of using CALL for academic writing classes, potential pitfalls and drawbacks do exist, although they can be overcome with foresight and planning.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is copying another writer's work without properly crediting the original source so it looks like the copied work is itself original. This is cheating or academic fraud. The advent of the Internet has facilitated plagiarism because it is now so easy to copy and paste from many online files. Since introducing CALL into the author's academic writing classes an increasing trend towards plagiarism from a small minority of students has been detected. This is despite the fact that much time explaining how to credit and cite others' work is spent on class. One possible solution is to promote a greater use PDF files as they cannot easily be copied from, thereby discouraging plagiarism.

Fortunately, the Internet has also made it very easy to catch students plagiarizing. Simply copy the sentence(s) you suspect have been stolen into a search engine and check the results. Again you can use quotation marks to enhance this search. For example: "Gender-based expectations greatly influence the experience of adolescence." Likewise, click the 'cached' button the Google search results page to highlight the words and sentences you are searching for.

Translation machines

A problem for some students is the overuse of translation software, usually online. Whilst sometimes acceptable for short sentences, these machines still do quite a poor job and any essay written using these are usually unreadable. It is effective to demonstrate this to students by translating something from English into their native language.

Relying on Wikipedia

The online encyclopedia Wikipedia is a useful tool but is not 100% reliable as it relies on users generating the content. Some famous cases of wrong information have appeared on this site, for example that David Beckham was an 18th century Chinese goalkeeper! Therefore, many universities will not allow Wikipedia pages to be used as references in academic papers. Wikipedia is a useful reference and a good starting point because many

articles cite their sources. However, students should use Wikipedia as a gateway to other sources and should always check the information they find on it.

Backing up data

It is advisable to always tell students to save their essay and other small files in their email inboxes in light of floppy discs, compact discs and USB flash memory hardware being less than 100% reliable. It is often necessary to explain to students how to send email attachments to themselves.

Conclusions and implications

This paper has reported on many of the changes to the academic writing classes that were recommended in previous research (Stott, 2006). The aim of this article has been to assess the impact of these changes. As demonstrated by the empirical data, the students almost unanimously approved of moving academic writing classes from a traditional classroom environment to CALL. It helped them to research in English, enhanced their general computer skills, and many thought that they could receive more help from the teacher using CALL. Indeed, based on comparisons with data from the previous year, when CALL was not used for academic writing lessons, it is clearly demonstrated that CALL is effective in encouraging students to research in English. The percentage of students who used English as their main research language increased from just 18.3% the previous year to 40.8%. Such a response is a positive result of this ongoing research.

The results also seem to suggest that those students who conducted more of their research in English prefer the CALL room to a standard classroom, even including those who have reservations about using the computer room for every lesson, and confirm the wisdom of the university's substantial financial investment in CALL systems.

In a demanding job market for recent graduates, greater computer literacy will always be desirable. However, whilst previous research hinted at the possibility of incorporating PowerPoint presentations into the syllabus, this change remains unimplemented as the author wanted to assess the

implementation of CALL into the syllabus before altering the method of assessment. Nonetheless, making the students do an academic presentation in English using a computer is still under consideration and might still be introduced for the 2007-2008 academic year. This presentation would count towards their final grade, reducing the pressure of writing the final essay albeit whilst increasing the students' workload somewhat, and would be invaluable experience to show to a prospective employer. Further applying technology, these presentations could be recorded onto video and students encouraged to view the results to improve their general presentation skills.

On the subject of identifying areas for follow-up research, a logical next step would be to look more closely at students' perceptions and experiences of autonomous learning, particularly as such an

approach is a key to improving foreign language ability. In addition, it would be valuable to conduct more research to assess the impact of any further changes in instruction methods, for example if presentations became a part of the course assessment.

References

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Appendix 1

Table 1A.   About what % of your research was done in English?

Research %	1 - 25	26 - 50	51- 75	76 - 99	100
Students	18	12	17	3	0
2005-06 %	36.7	24.5	34.7	6.1	0

Research %	1 - 25	26 - 50	51- 75	76 - 99	100
Students	40	18	7	3	3
2004-05 %	56.3	25.6	9.9	4.2	4.2

Table 2A.   Did CALL help you research your essay?

Yes	%	No	%
42	85.7	7	14.3

Table 3A.   Do you think CALL classes helped you to research in English?

Yes	%	No	%
48	98.0	1	2.0

Table 4A.   Did CALL help you write your essay?

Yes	%	No	%
47	95.9	2	4.1

Table 5A.   Do you think CALL should be used in all Academic Writing classes?

Yes	%	No	%
37	75.5	10	24.5

Table 6A.   Did you learn more about computers during these classes using CALL?

Yes	%	No	%
37	75.5	10	24.5

Table 7A.   Could you get more or less help from the teacher using CALL?

More	%	Same	%	Less	%
31	63.3	15	30.6	3	6.1

Table 8A.   Do you prefer to have these classes in a standard classroom or use CALL?

Standard	%	CALL	%
3	6.1	46	93.9

Table 9A.   What is your biggest strength in English?

	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
Students	21	10	8	10
%	42.86	20.41	16.33	20.41

Table 10A. What is your biggest weakness in English?

	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
Students	5	14	22	8
%	10.20	28.57	44.90	16.33

Evaluating and improving vocabulary learning tasks in ESP

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Abstract

An increasing number of English language programs at the university level are endeavoring to provide their students with specific language skills that they will need in their post-academic careers. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses are appearing earlier in post-secondary curricula, and some university departments are even giving these ESP courses the extra burden of introducing concepts and vocabulary of content courses at the same time or even before students have learned them through their first language. In this paper, it is argued that a framework of curricular learning objectives can provide the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of vocabulary learning tasks and can aid teachers in effectively implementing vocabulary learning activities that commonly appear in ESP textbooks. By using this framework, teachers can ensure that students will develop deep and rich knowledge of specialist and technical vocabulary.

Introduction

Providing students with marketable English language skills is increasingly becoming the focus of English language education at the post-secondary level worldwide. In order to provide real English language skills that are relevant to the students' majors, English teaching faculty are being called upon to integrate English courses from the beginning through the advanced levels into the overall curriculum of many academic departments. If universities are truly committed to establishing English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs at the university level, however, they will need to acknowledge that a sound program of curriculum development is essential for determining what is taught, the activities in which students are involved and the assessment students' progress, all of which must be clearly communicated to all stakeholders.

In order to integrate vocabulary learning into the new curriculum focus of ESP programs at the university level, it is necessary for us as teachers and curriculum developers to firmly ground ourselves in both general curriculum theory and

SLA/TESL theory. This paper is an attempt to demonstrate how vocabulary learning can be tied more directly to curricular goals and objectives, and show how curricular objectives can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of vocabulary learning activities that commonly appear in ESP textbooks. An objectives-based approach to integrating vocabulary activities into the curriculum can also help us to modify weak activities as well as provide us with educational standards when we are making our own teaching materials.

This paper is divided into three parts. First, a framework of educational objectives is presented and then tied to a key study in vocabulary learning within the field of SLA. Second, these objectives are used to analyze the effectiveness of vocabulary learning activities that most commonly appear in ESP textbooks in the field of information and computer science. Finally, ways are suggested to improve these activities within the realm of classroom practice by using the framework of objectives introduced in the first part of this paper.

A curriculum-based approach to vocabulary learning
ESP and the university curriculum

Within the field of ESP, curricular objectives often emerge from the assumptions that teachers and administrators make about how students will use English in their post-academic careers (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). While typical ESP courses in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts are intended for individuals already working in their respective fields, universities in many Asian countries are integrating ESP within academic programs, thus it is not uncommon for students to be learning about the content in their first language at the same time as they are learning the vocabulary for the same content in English (Evans & Squires, 2006). Despite the challenges inherent in this type of approach to ESP, curriculum development at most universities is more often than not limited to selection of a textbook. Having a framework of educational objectives can provide a way of reworking the unspoken curriculum of the textbook without requiring a drastic overhaul in the curriculum. Moreover, if there is institutional resistance to curriculum change, a framework can help to effect change in the classroom teaching of all language skills within ESP.

Ideas about curriculum held by educators and administrators at the post-secondary level in many Asian contexts still adhere to what might be called the traditional view. Curriculum is the set of relatively fixed subject matter that is to be transmitted to students by teachers, and the students are in turn expected to master that information and demonstrate their knowledge of it by answering questions on examinations. In university contexts, the role of the university as a transmitter of information in specific subject domains is appropriate to some extent. However, knowledge of facts is not the only knowledge that a university needs to impart to its students. Since the 1960s, notions about education and the curriculum have challenged this traditional view by expanding the definition of "curriculum" to include the complex combination of subject matter and the planned and unplanned experiences that students have in educational institutions (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2003).

In sum, curriculum includes not only knowledge but also encompasses what students are expected to do with this knowledge. The combination of knowledge and cognitive processing are the basis for classifying learning objectives and must be reflected in the way learning objectives are stated. Below, each of these domains is explained, and then how each of these domains relates to vocabulary learning in a second language is discussed.

The knowledge dimension

In the revised taxonomy of Bloom's learning objectives (Anderson, Krathwohl, Airasian, Cruikshank, Mayer, Pintrich, Raths & Wittrock, 2001), the first dimension is the knowledge dimension. Knowledge is divided into four types: Factual, Conceptual, Procedural, and Metacognitive (throughout this paper the types of knowledge will be capitalized). Factual knowledge includes basic, non-abstract knowledge about the basic elements of a particular field of study. This can include terminology, special terms and subject-specific information. Conceptual knowledge builds upon Factual knowledge and is concerned with how the basic elements in a knowledge domain are organized or classified into categories, including schemas, mental models of information, and how concepts are linked within a discipline. The third type is Procedural knowledge. This type of knowledge can best be characterized as knowing how to do something, including subject-specific skills, techniques and methods. Finally, Metacognitive knowledge includes knowledge of strategies, knowledge of cognitive tasks and self-knowledge, including the student's ability to monitor, control, self-regulate, and reflect upon his/her learning behavior.

The knowledge dimension of vocabulary learning

Of all the studies on vocabulary knowledge in a second language, Nation (2001) provides us with the most exhaustive list of what is entailed in knowing items of vocabulary. These areas of knowledge (each of which include receptive

[listening and reading] and productive [speaking and writing] aspects) include:

1. Spoken form
2. Written form
3. Word parts
4. Connection of form and meaning
5. Concept and referents
6. Associations
7. Grammatical functions
8. Collocations
9. Constraints on use

When these aspects of vocabulary knowledge are fit into the taxonomy of educational objectives we come up with the correspondences that can be seen in Table 1. Knowledge of vocabulary as outlined by Nation (2001) fills in three of the types of knowledge in the taxonomy. The only type that is left out by Nation is the highest level of knowledge, namely Metacognitive knowledge. For the learning of vocabulary Metacognitive knowledge includes knowledge of vocabulary learning strategies, learning processes, and one's own vocabulary knowledge.

Table 1.   Knowledge dimensions for knowing a word

Knowledge Dimensions (Anderson, et al., 2001)	"Knowing a Word" (Nation, 2001)
Factual	1,2,4,5,6
Conceptual	3,5,6,7,8,9
Procedural	1,3,7,9
Metacognitive	

The cognitive process dimension

The second dimension describes the types of cognitive processes involved in learning. While most curricula at both the pre- and post-secondary levels in many Asian contexts focus primarily on rote memorization of knowledge, learning involves more than just remembering.

The first cognitive process dimension is related to the retrieval of information from memory. Remember (throughout this paper the types of cognitive processes are capitalized) includes two

ways of accessing information stored in memory: *recognizing* and *recalling* (throughout this paper sub-categories of each of the cognitive processes are italicized). Understand is the second cognitive process dimension. Understand requires that students make connections between knowledge that they already possess and new information and finding connections between concepts. The types of knowledge-linking activities that fall under this dimension include *interpreting*, *exemplifying*, *classifying*, *summarizing*, *inferring*, *comparing* and *explaining*. The next higher level of cognitive processing is Apply. Objectives within this dimension involve the student's use of various types of procedures, including *executing* and *implementing* procedures to complete a task.

Analyze includes learning experiences that require the student to take a complex whole, break it down into its parts, and show the relationship between the parts and the whole, involving the activities of *differentiating*, *organizing* and *attributing*. When students are required to make judgments based on objective criteria and standards, these activities are part of the cognitive process dimension Evaluate. In general, making judgments can include either *checking* or *critiquing*. Finally, Create is when students are required to take various elements and put them together into a new and unique whole while at the same time adhering to set rules and principles, including the activities of *generating*, *planning* and *producing*.

When knowledge is combined with the different cognitive processes that can work upon this knowledge, we come up with Table 1A reproduced in Appendix 1. Learning objectives are stated by combining one type of knowledge with one type of cognitive processing.

Cognitive processes in vocabulary learning

In addition to the list of features that make up word knowledge, Nation (2001) also discusses three psychological conditions that are necessary for meaningful vocabulary learning. Underlying each of the three conditions is the assumption that learners need to actively engage in learning of vocabulary in

a second language, unlike learning in the first language that is to a large extent implicit.

The first of these conditions involves various features of the target vocabulary being brought to the forefront of the learner's attention for extended periods of time. The second psychological condition is retrieval. Learners must retrieve the vocabulary from memory in order to build strong connections between the word and its meaning. The final psychological condition is generation. This, Nation (2001) explains, is when the learner uses vocabulary items in ways that are different from the ways in which the learner has previously used them.

Unlike aspects of knowing a word, Nation's (2001) psychological conditions do not correspond directly to the six types of cognitive processes in the taxonomy. Nation's (2001) retrieval condition seems to implicate the cognitive process Remember; however, if the vocabulary is being used to do a speaking task, then other cognitive processes will also be engaged. For example, students would need to use Understand when selecting the correct word form or collocation. They might also need to use Apply when using the word for some type of procedure. Higher cognitive process such as Analyze, Evaluate and Create might also be engaged depending upon the specific task requirements. Likewise, Nation's (2001) other two psychological conditions, noticing and generation would also involve a number of cognitive processes.

While Nation (2001) would imply that a vocabulary learning activity that requires multiple cognitive processes is ultimately an activity that promotes richer learning of the target vocabulary, for the purposes of constructing learning objectives for vocabulary in EFL programs it is necessary for each activity to have explicitly stated objectives. Without these, ESP programs will not be able to articulate the outcomes that it expects from its courses and communicate these to students and administrators. Time spent on analyzing the needs of the program and carefully writing objectives will give curriculum developers and teachers more flexibility in designing and revising their programs and avoid being evaluated solely on students' performance on externally prepared standardized exams such as

TOEIC and TOEFL. When there is no explicit curriculum yet in place, the framework can also be used by teachers to ensure that implementation of textbook activities adequately covers the range of knowledge and cognitive process dimensions.

Typical textbook vocabulary learning activities

In this section the major types of vocabulary learning activities found in ESP textbooks are analyzed in light of the taxonomy of learning objectives. For this study, the field chosen was information science and computer science, the field that the author has worked in for several years at the post-secondary level.

Multiple choice and gap-filling

The first of these activities is set up as a definition task: The student must select the correct definition for each of the words. Being able to give definitions of words is an important skill that needs to be learned and mastered not only in ESP courses but in general English courses, as well. Furthermore, Nation (2001) argues that definition is one way in which noticing can occur in learning situations. The example, therefore, ostensibly appears to be an excellent learning opportunity for students to focus attention on the target words.

In practice, however, it is doubtful that activities like this lead to learning of the defined terms or help learners to improve their skill of learning from definitions. The type of knowledge involved in this activity is Factual knowledge, and the cognitive process is Remember (*recognizing*). In actual practice cognitive processing of this activity would be limited to one or two scenarios. The student may already know the word, thus he/she only has to retrieve the word from memory. If the student is using a dictionary, he/she simply has to look up the correct answer. The student could rely on key words as clues in the reading text and the answers to guess which could be the definition.

The gap-filling type of vocabulary activity is also quite common in ESP textbooks. Unlike definition, the sentence stem in the activity should provide a natural context in which the target vocabulary item

commonly occurs. Thus, the student will be exposed to collocations while working through each of the items in the activity. In practice, however, does this activity lead to rich learning of the vocabulary? In many cases, the students are simply required to choose the correct vocabulary item from the list. Students, even those at lower levels of proficiency, can easily complete the activity by a process of elimination without having to pay much attention to any aspects of the words' collocations.

Both multiple-choice and gap-filling types of activities often lead to learners using a very limited range of cognitive processes. At best they may fulfill one or two learning objectives. Students may be better able to retrieve word meanings from memory and thereby strengthen the connections between the words and their meanings (Remembering Factual knowledge) or in the case that they do not know the vocabulary, they can use clues within the sentences or context to guess the words (Remember Conceptual knowledge and/or Understand Conceptual knowledge).

Matching
Another type of commonly used vocabulary learning activity in ESP textbooks is matching. Matching often involves matching a definition with target vocabulary, but it is commonly used for learning of both meaning-related and grammar-related aspects of words. Like the multiple-choice activity discussed above, this type of activity would appear to provide an excellent opportunity for students to learn or practice important computer-related vocabulary as well as practice their skills at learning from definitions.

Unfortunately, this type of activity would also likely fail to provide much opportunity for learning. For example, some prompts include part of the answer in the definition, such as a definition that includes "keyboard" with the intended answer including "on-screen keyboard." In addition, prompts may also give the student a strong hint at the answer; for example, when the word "spoken" is used in the prompt, and is closely related to the word "speech" in the answer. Because of the poorly constructed nature of these types of activities and possible lack of teacher support in the teacher's manual, this

activity may engage the learners for one to two minutes at most, and at best may involve Remembering of Factual and (possibly) Conceptual knowledge.

Table completion
The final type of activity that most commonly appears in ESP textbooks is table completion. An example of such an activity may require students to separate words into two columns based on the part of speech. The rule is given to students before they begin the activity, and thus, the activity is dealing with Conceptual knowledge (knowledge of word parts) and practicing the application of a set of systematic rules (suffixes)—Apply Procedural knowledge.

While this activity appears to have the potential for rich vocabulary learning, in practice it can be completed relatively quickly without much effort. Students only need to look at the ending of the word, refer back to the list and then write the word in the correct column. The purpose of spending time on learning word parts, as Nation (2001) argues, is to quickly allow learners to be able to increase the size of their vocabulary. If the student knows the root word and then learns suffixes and the rules for their application, he/she can quickly expand the total number of words in his/her mental lexicon. The way in which this activity is carried out by the students will only assist in helping students increase their vocabulary if teachers modify its implementation, a topic that will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Summary
The vocabulary activity types that have been discussed above clearly limit the ways in which learners interact with the target vocabulary because these activities are based on standard discrete-point methods for testing vocabulary knowledge that are intended to measure the learner's mastery or proficiency in a single aspect of language (Bachman, 1990). As learning activities, they display a number of drawbacks. First, as they are designed to be completed quickly they do not encourage complex cognitive processing. Second, because students are familiar with these activity

types from encountering them in testing situations, they tend to treat the activities as tests rather than as carefully designed opportunities for learning. Third, all three activity types implicitly suggest that vocabulary knowledge is limited to word forms, parts of speech, and/or definitions. They ignore all of the other aspects of what it means to know a word.

Improving these activities based on learning objectives

Before a discussion about how to use the taxonomy of learning objectives as a basis for improving the classroom implementation of weak vocabulary activities, the relationship between objectives and activities must be clarified. Objectives specify the outcomes of classroom learning experiences. For any one learning outcome there can be many possible means of achieving them. Likewise any one activity may involve more than one learning objective. Thus, the use of the framework of curricular objectives is a heuristic that allows the teacher to select and adapt materials and activities that best suit his/her group of students.

In this section, two of the weak vocabulary activities--multiple-choice and table completion-- are discussed in detail. In suggesting how to improve these activities based upon curricular objectives, the type of word knowledge is covered by the activity will be identified and then the types of cognitive processes that could be involved in the activity will be considered. Finally, two objectives and scenarios for implementing the activities with the curricular objectives are provided.

Multiple-choice activities

With the type of multiple-choice activity discussed previously, it appeared that the intended purpose for the activity was to be a way for learners to practice learning definitions. In order to make this activity more meaningful for students, it will be necessary to clarify what types of knowledge and the types of cognitive processes are being covered. Using these, explicit objectives can be formulated and then the activity can be implemented accordingly.

Learning definitions involves all four types of knowledge, not merely Factual knowledge. Working with definitions requires learners to use keywords in the definition in order to deduce the correct word, thus a definition task will involve students in considering the relationships between words including its collocational and grammatical aspects. In addition, the process of guessing the word is a form of Procedural knowledge--the student must carry out the procedure in the correct order. Finally, students must also be aware of their own knowledge of vocabulary and monitor and evaluate their own ability to apply the procedure of guessing words. Several cognitive processes are also involved in learning definitions. In addition to recognizing and recalling word meanings (Remember), students could be required to explain, compare and classify (Understand), implement (Apply) and check and critique (Evaluate). With these in mind we can now formulate concrete objective statements. Here I will provide examples of two.

Example objective 1
Each student will be able to implement the guessing meaning from context procedure.

In order to implement this objective with a multiple-choice activity, first it is necessary to teach and practice the guessing from context procedure as outlined by Nation (2001):

1. The student decides what part of speech the word is by looking at the word form (morphology and grammar)
2. The student looks at the immediate context within the sentence it appears (collocations)
3. The student then looks at the larger context for clues (associated words and concepts)
4. The student makes guess based upon steps (1)-(3).
5. The student checks the guess.

Once learned, students can apply this procedure to the words in the activity working individually or in pairs or groups. In order to tap into the students' Metacognitive knowledge, the teacher can have one student do the procedure and verbalize his/her thinking and decision making process using a thinking aloud protocol (Ericsson & Simon, 1993).

The monitoring partner listens and evaluates the work of the other student. When the student doing the procedure makes an error, overlooks some contextual information or skips a step, the monitoring student stops him/her and indicates where the student has made a mistake.

Example objective 2
Each student will be able to explain the meanings of words.

Since definition is also an essential productive skill, students can also expand upon this activity by using a 'confederates' technique. In this technique, one student acts as the teacher and explains the meanings of words to another student. Modifications in this technique can be used for implementing this objective while using textbook activities. The activity is first divided in half with one student working through half of the words and another student working through the other half. Once the student understands how the answers were worked out, then the pairs of students explain their set of words to the other student.

Table completion
Table completion activities are commonly used for several different types of categorization tasks. In the example activity students were required to divide words into two groups based upon part of speech. Grammatical aspects of word knowledge are not the only focus for which table completion can be used. In addition, table completion activities more often require students to categorize words in to different semantic categories.

The most obvious type of knowledge to which table completion corresponds is conceptual knowledge. As we recall, Conceptual knowledge involves various types of classifications and categories. Activities such as table completion encourage learning of the different ways in which language can be organized. The example activity is an exercise that is meant to help learners understand the underlying rules of derivational suffixes and a general rule about the structure and morphology of the English lexicon. Other ways of organizing language do not, however, need to be grammatical. Organization can also apply to semantic features of

the language, including associated words and collocations. In addition to Factual and Conceptual knowledge, teachers can also use table completion activities as a springboard to expansion activities that engage the two other types of knowledge. In order to represent visually how they organize vocabulary thematically, students can make a variety of semantic maps. The proper construction of these maps is a type of Procedural knowledge. Activities that encourage learners to reflect upon their own knowledge of the semantic relationships between lexical items would be a form of Metacognitive knowledge.

The types of cognitive processing involved in table completion activities can also cover the entire range. Since Remember, Understand and Apply are closely related with Factual, Conceptual and Procedural knowledge, these three types of knowledge, particularly Understanding Conceptual knowledge, should form the core objectives of these activities. In addition, if the activities are given significant expansion, teachers can also expand the range of objectives to include the three more complex dimensions of cognitive processing. Students could be required to Analyze groups of vocabulary in one subsection of the subject area and show how the concepts/vocabulary fit together or select out and differentiate concepts. Again, students could work together to evaluate the work of other students and comment and critique upon it (Evaluate). Finally, students can use semantic organization of vocabulary as a way of finding creative or alternative solutions to problems (Create).

Example objective 3:
Each student will be able to recognize derivational suffixes

While the some table completion activities conflate a number of discrete learning objectives and thereby gave little attention to the student's need to base higher types of knowledge and cognitive processes on more basic ones, such activities can be improved by first attending to the Remembering of Factual knowledge. Before reading through the explanation of suffixes, the teacher can use the reading passage (or another passage) to draw students' attention to

the suffixes in context. Some steps in the guessing from context procedure can be reviewed and recycled here as students look for textual clues to the target words' parts of speech. Even if students know some of the suffixes, it is a good opportunity for them to review and possibly teach other students.

Example objective 4
Each student will be able to recall derivational suffixes.

Before moving on to Conceptual knowledge, it would be helpful for teachers to give students an opportunity to solidify their ability to retrieve knowledge about derivational suffixes from memory. This could be done as an individual mini quiz—the teacher can give the base word to which the student adds the appropriate suffix—or as a class game with students working in pairs or in small groups. As a review, the teacher can then have students do the activity as printed in the textbook.

At this point in the class, the activity has only been used as a review exercise: The rules printed make explicit the rule that learners have already worked out individually or in groups. The activity may still not be that useful for in-class use and may be best left as a homework assignment that can be reviewed at the next class meeting. Students still have not done much work with Conceptual knowledge or used many of the sub-processes involved in Understand. The purpose of this type of activity is ultimately, as Nation (2001) states, to increase the learner's vocabulary quickly. For example, if the student understands that *–ly* is a derivational suffix that creates adverbs from adjectives, he/she can apply this knowledge to other adjectives and be able to recognize them when he/she encounters them.

Example objective 5
Each student will be able to construct a semantic map showing relationships between computing-related verbs and adverbs.

The original context for the example activity is in a text in which students have already covered the topic of input devices such as scanners, digital cameras and digital video cameras. Students have already studied the basics of computer hardware and software, so this activity could be expanded to review technical and specialist vocabulary that has been covered thus far in the course. First, students can work together in pairs or small groups to brainstorm all the verbs that are used in computing. Then, the teacher can have students write all their verbs on the board. Alternatively, a version of the 'forward snowballing' technique can be used (Jacobs, Power & Inn, 2002):

1. Each student works alone to make a list.
2. In a small group each student takes turns reading his/her list aloud. Others listen and write down words that they do not already have on their lists.
3. The students should negotiate with each other to make sure that the verbs on their group's list are all computer-related verbs.

When the class has a list of verbs, students can create a semantic map (Novak & Gowin, 1984) individually or in pairs:

1. Students can write the computer-related verbs on a large piece of paper at random but with sufficient space between them and circle each of them.
2. Students write adverbs lines drawn to the verbs with which they commonly occur.

Teachers monitor and advise students throughout this process. Students can follow up by actually using their verb-adverb combinations in a speaking or writing activity.

Conclusion
Changes in curriculum at the university level are in many ways more difficult in countries that do not have in place a set of national standards. Because university education is not compulsory, there is not as much need perceived to make learning outcomes explicit to all shareholders or to ensure that learning outcomes adhere to a prescribed list of educational standards. As post-secondary education becomes available for most individuals in society, there is a need for universities and other institutions to provide society with graduates who have skills that can be used immediately in the workplace. This

transitional period will certainly be painful as the former generation of university administrators and faculty attempt to cling to the notion of higher education for the elite. It is up to the new generation to actively take a hand in reforming educational curriculum.

In this paper I have argued that universities should take a principled approach to developing post-secondary curriculum based upon a taxonomy of learning objectives. Even without major changes in the curriculum, I have argued that teachers can use this taxonomy to transform the way that activities, specifically vocabulary learning activities, are implemented within the existing curriculum.

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Appendix 1

Table 1A.   Revised taxonomy of learning objectives (Anderson, et al., 2001)

	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Factual						
Conceptual						
Procedural						
Metacognitive						

Integrating the ESL curriculum: Towards a Cognitive Learning Approach

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Abstract

With the implementation of the internet-Based TTOEFL (iBT), integrating skills has taken on greater significance in many EFL classrooms. Students are now required to capture the main points of written and listening materials and synthesize these ideas in a culminating task utilizing critical thinking skills. In this educational context, constructing courses for individual skills (i.e. listening, speaking or reading) seems inadequate to reflect the current needs of learners. In this paper, we will provide the rationale and theoretical background for an integrated approach to curriculum development in the EFL context, give a working definition of an integrated curriculum that continues to evolve, identify some integrated approaches in use in the EFL context, and reflect on our progress towards developing and implementing this approach. We argue that this integrated approach utilizes cognitive learning strategies and is therefore relevant to EFL contexts.

Introduction

With the increasingly globally competitive international environment, foreign language fluency, particularly related to English, is becoming more important. In developed countries such as Japan or European Union (EU) countries, in emerging economies such as India and Brazil, and in developing countries such as Cambodia and Thailand, foreign (English) language fluency allows for ease in negotiation and information exchange and economic and educational opportunities (Diaz-Puente, Cazorla & Dorrego, 2007; Graddol, 2006; Lamy, 2003; Weber, 1997). In employment and educational settings, increasingly international examinations are being used to assess the effectiveness with which individuals can communicate in English, using and integrating a number of communicative skills, rather than simply showing knowledge of grammatical or understanding of a reading passage. The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) has traditionally required examinees to make use of, or integrate, the language skills they have developed over time (IELTS, 2008). More recently, other international examinations are taking a more integrated approach.

This process of reconsidering language testing can be illustrated with the advent of the Internet-Based TOEFL (iBT) test. Most language teachers are familiar with the traditional TOEFL test in which reading and listening comprehension, and writing exercises are independent tasks. For example, the traditional TOEFL writing task provides a question such as: "It is better for children to grow up in the countryside than in a big city. Do you agree or disagree? Use specific reasons and examples to develop your essay." To respond to this type of essay question, students are required to develop a 5-paragraph essay with a concise thesis statement stating preferably three reasons why they agree or disagree with the statement. This writing task is still part of the iBT test. However, in addition to the traditional essay question, students must also complete another writing task in which they have to read a short paragraph, listen to a short passage, and respond in writing to information from *both* the reading and listening examples. The directions for this task are noted below:

1. Read the passage. Take notes on the main points of the passage.
2. Now, listen to a teacher lecture on a topic. On a piece of paper, takes notes on the main points of this listening passage.
3. How does the information in the listening passage differ from the information in the reading passage? Please write your answer. You have 30 minutes to complete the task.

In order to successfully complete this task, students need to not only read and understand a reading passage of college-level difficulty, but also listen to a short lecture-style listening passage and determine the main idea and pertinent supporting details. Next, in order to address the question, students have to determine how the two resources differ: Do the reading and listening examples provide opposing views of an issue, or additional information about a topic, etc.? Finally, students have to answer the question, in written form, integrating and synthesizing information from both resources into a cohesive response. For those of us who teach TOEFL preparation courses, we know that this can be a daunting task for students.

While this process challenges the TOEFL instructor, the TOEFL iBT has the potential to create backwash which Hughes (2003) describes as the effect that testing has on teaching and learning. While ESL teachers might consider backwash as a negative consequence of testing, i.e., testing forces us to "teach to the test"; on the contrary, as Moore (2007) makes clear, effective testing can produce positive backwash for teaching and learning. This paper considers this possibility, reflecting on the integrated component of the TOEFL iBT as an opportunity to reflect on EFL methodology in general and consider if and how this pedagogical process of integrating information from various resources can alter what we do in the classroom, and in the process, help students prepare for the TOEFL examination.

In this paper, we will consider the theoretical basis for an integrated approach to the EFL curriculum. We will explore some integrated models that are in practice and consider the effectiveness of these models in the context of college-level EFL classrooms in Asia. We will then describe the educational context within which we work and provide an example of an integrated curriculum to illustrate how it can be implemented. Finally, we will provide some suggestions to further develop an integrated approach to EFL curriculum.

Rationale

Often language EFL classes use a segregated approach. Oxford (2001) describes this as a learning environment in which the mastery of discrete skills such as reading and speaking are seen as successful learning. Language learning is often isolated from content as a series of isolated tasks. The grammar / translation method is a clear example of this segregation because this method does not consider the use of language for communicative or academic purposes (Oxford, 2001). Listening tasks are often organized as isolated events as well. In cloze exercises for example, students are asked to listen to a passage and fill in the missing words on a worksheet. During the process, students listen so intently to catch the missing words that they are likely to miss the main point and most important supporting details of the listening passage. As a way to prepare for the iBT in which grasping the main

point of a listening passage is essential, this type of listening activity is woefully inadequate and perhaps counter-productive since it seems that we are training students to `miss the forest for the trees.

Communicative activities can also be segregated learning events as well. Numerous researchers (Littlewood, 1991; Savignon, 1987) have identified Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as the functional, task-based use of language. Clearly, this approach is evident in EFL textbooks and classrooms. However, in our examination of textbooks, we felt that students may learn the proper words and phrases to accomplish the task, but this type of task-based communicative activity does not ensure that students can apply what they have learned to actual communicative situations. In short, the segregated approach to language learning, on its own, has seemed to be inadequate in providing learners with sufficient skills to function in unique, naturally occurring communicative situations.

Integrated curriculum

When considering the transition from a traditional four skills approach to curricula to an integrated skills approach, it is important to understand what differentiates the two approaches. While a four skills approach, as the name implies, includes activities dealing with speaking, reading, writing and listening, most typically thematically connected, an integrated approach goes one further step. In order for curricula to be integrated, the lessons must include activities that require learners to access different packets of information through the use of multiple skills (speaking and reading for example) in order to complete a particular task. Based on this premise, the following working definition of an integrated curriculum can be used as a guide:

> An integrated curriculum is a cognitive learning approach in which the four primary language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) are interwoven through thematic content, facilitated through learning strategies, and synthesized in a culminating activity in which students must respond in written and/or spoken form to information gained from multiple sources (i.e. a reading

and/or listening), using critical thinking skills to compare and contrast, show cause and effect, or otherwise confirm some relationship between the differing sources of information.

In the paragraphs below, we will provide greater detail about the components of the working definition noted above, specifically the meaning and application of: 1) cognitive learning theory, and 2) thematic content.

Cognitive Learning Theory

As noted in the definition, this integrated approach is based on a cognitive learning theory, the central idea being that an organized whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Bigge & Shermis, 1992). The applications of cognitivism to language learning are substantial. Cognitive learning theorists suggest that learning is a process of relating new information to previously learned information through the formation of mental associations (Oxford, 2001). In the EFL context, this implies that retention of learned communication patterns and vocabulary is difficult unless it is connected to previously learned content.

Secondly, cognitivists believe that learning is the result of interactions with the physical and social environment. Individuals should be actively involved in the learning process and thus, motivated to try and make sense of the world around them through problem solving based on restructuring and insight. In the EFL environment, opportunities for interaction with the physical and social environments using English as the medium of communication might be limited to the short amount of time we have students in class. Clearly, providing students a variety of language input in various forms (reading and listening) and reacting to this input through writing or discussion, simulating as much as possible an English-only physical and social environment, will promote retention.

Finally, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a primary tenant of cognitive learning theory. Vygotsky defines ZPD as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through

problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1978, in Walqui, 2006). Vygotsky stresses that maximum cognitive growth or optimal learning occurs when the ZPD is acquired; in other words, when students are cognitively challenged but not overwhelmed by the complexity of the task. Concretely, the learning task should be neither too easy nor too difficult for students.

In sum, a cognitive approach to the integrated curriculum ensures that the curriculum is holistic, encompassing all four language skills; that students are required to make mental associations between information presented in different forms (i.e. reading and listening); that the content helps students interact with their immediate social and physical environment; and that the content is within the cognitive abilities of students. In addition, our working definition requires that content be thematic, an approach that is common in EFL texts.

Thematic instruction

Peregoy and Boyle define thematic instruction as, "a learning sequence organized around a topic offering students opportunities to use oral language, reading, writing, and critical thinking" (1997, pg. 75). Themes provide a conceptual framework in which students can apply their language skills to learn about a particular topic. In our examination of EFL textbooks, we found that at the beginning and elementary level, most texts are social-affective in nature and focus on communication through question/response. While the texts might include short reading passages and short-response writing activities, the focus is typically on listening comprehension and conversational fluency. Themes at this level may include sports and fitness, shopping, travel, and holidays. We also discovered that from the intermediate-level, academic themes emerge. Reading and listening passages are more extensive and the grammar / sentence structures and vocabulary more developed. Specialized academic vocabulary occurs naturally in the text and the nature of the content is often somewhat controversial, requiring students to express their opinions about a social problem. The themes at this level are often based on contemporary social issues from global warming to biogenetic engineering,

from human rights to peace and conflict. In thematic instruction, the selection of an appropriate theme is essential — it must be relevant to students and thus, motivate them to want to learn how to interact with the content in English.

As noted, most EFL textbooks are thematic in content. Therefore, in many ways, this step in the process of integrating curriculum is already accomplished. However, we have found that even though texts are thematic and may include four language skills, they do still fall short of integration because they lack the "culminating activity"; that is the need for students to respond in spoken and / or written form to multiple sources of information that have been gained through different skills (listening, reading), utilizing critical thinking to compare and contrast, show cause and effect, or otherwise confirm some relationship between the differing forms of information.

Approaches to integrating the EFL curriculum

Two integrated curriculum models have informed our research. Chamot and O'Malley's (1996) Cognitive Academic Learning Approach (CALLA) was developed for second language learners in U.S. public schools. CALLA, based on cognitive learning theory, "integrates content-area instruction with language development activities and explicit instruction in learning strategies" (1996, p. 259). The CALLA approach has three interrelated components. First, the content is academic. Chamot and O'Malley (1996) argue that language as a medium permeates all aspects of curriculum. Therefore, it is necessary for students to acquire the linguistic structures and vocabulary needed to perform in academic/professional contexts. Second, CALLA stresses the development of academic language skills. As students progress in the public education system, their need for academic language skills increases substantially as they read science texts, discuss and negotiate in business classes, and write lab reports/business reports. In addition, the CALLA method suggests explicit instruction in learning strategies that can be applied to both language learning and content tasks (Chamot and O'Malley, 1996). Learning strategies can help

students organize and group ideas, listen selectively, and take notes effectively. By mastering learning strategies, students gain power over their learning, skills that will assist them in attaining academic success.

Another integrated methodology that we examined was Walqui`s scaffolding approach termed a "cyclical curricula" (2006). Walqui cites Gardner (1989, in Walqui 2006) to support her argument that when presenting new material, teachers should not expect students to grasp the skills immediately. She argues that the reintroduction of concepts at increasingly higher levels of complexity leads to greater understanding, a cognitive learning theory concept reminiscent of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development. Likewise, as language teachers, we need to provide students with multiple opportunities to interact with the language and the content, utilizing all four language skills. Walqui`s (2006) cyclical curricula provides a structure to accomplish this, thereby providing students with ample opportunity to retain language skills and vocabulary as well as academic knowledge.

Developing an integrated curriculum: The Soka University context

Soka University is located in Tokyo, Japan. With a student population of approximately 8,000, our students exhibit a wide range of English language proficiency. Most communicative language programs are housed in the World Language Center, as well as in courses developed through the collaboration of WLC language teaching specialists and content specialists in various departments. Academic preparation is an important component of many of the communicative language courses at the university.

As instructors who teach iBT preparation courses struggled with the new requirements, we considered how our lower level general English classes could better prepare students for the iBT. During the 2007-8 academic year, we decided to work towards integrating our curriculum based on the iBT model. To simply the process, we decided to first focus on lower-level English communication courses that include beginning, elementary and intermediate

levels. Initially, we evaluated the textbooks in use to determine the degree to which they were or were not integrated. While there was some variation, for the most part, we discovered that our texts were not integrated. For example, as stated previously, even if texts are thematic and utilize the four skills, based on our definition, the texts are not integrated unless they contain an activity that requires students to synthesize and / or consolidate information from multiple sources. As a result of this preliminary investigation, in the fall of 2007, we formed research teams and set about the task of working towards an integrated curriculum.

Based on our preliminary findings, we present the following activities as an example of an integrated lesson. The lesson uses simple thematic content found in many beginning and elementary level ESL textbooks. We have used some simple supplementary activities that require students to access all four language skills and integrate the information gained through these activities in a final, culminating task.

From (segregated) skills based to integrated skills

As mentioned previously, the majority of textbooks usually contain a series of activities based on a common theme focusing on single, segregated skills such as: structure, vocabulary development, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, speaking, or writing. These skills are an important part of the learning process and have their place. Models of these types of activities will now be presented to exemplify what is meant by segregated skills.

Listening exercises

Typically a listening activity will be set up using the familiar format of students listening to a spoken passage or dialogue between two or more people. The students would then have either a cloze activity or a series of listening comprehension questions of some type to answer about the listening. The format of listening comprehension questions (true-false, multiple-choice, written answers) may vary depending on the level of the students.

In this model (Model Exercise 1: Listening), students listen to an extract from an interview about food and eating habits. While the students are listening, they are asked to answer the following listening comprehension question. In this model, all three types of questions are used (Complete script and exercise are provided as Appendices 1 and 2.)

Model Exercise 1: Listening

Lary: Umm…first question: How many meals do you eat each day?

David: Well…some days I eat two, some days I eat one, some days I eat three or four, but usually I eat three.

Lary: OK. How about breakfast? What do you like to eat for breakfast?

David: Well, I'm not a typical American. I don't really like eggs and bacon, and I don't eat cereal very much; but I do like fruit and, of course, I love coffee. So I usually have fruit and coffee for breakfast.

Lary: OK. Uh, how about lunch?

David: I am a typical American when it comes to eating lunches. I usually have a sandwich of some kind. So a lot of Americans have soup and salads and things like that, but I go for a good old sandwich.

Answer the following questions using the information you hear in the interview.

   1. T F David usually eats two meals each day.

2. What does David usually have for breakfast?

   a. eggs   b. fruit   c. cereal

   d. bacon   e. salad f. coffee

3. What does David typically have for lunch?

   ―――――――

This type of activity, though probably more valuable than a cloze exercise in requiring the students to listen for the main point and specific information, still only requires that the students listen and recognize the information presented. The problem with this format is that the questions themselves often point out the main or specific information the students need to listen for robbing the students of developing that necessary skill. Even the written response question is little more than a listening-dictation exercise and does not require in depth listening skills or synthesis of information.

According to our definition of integrated skills (which includes gaining information from multiple skill sources [i.e. a reading and / or listening], and using critical thinking skills to synthesize that information in a culminating activity in which students must respond in written and / or spoken form), this is not an integrated activity. This exercise does not require the students to gain any information outside of the listening itself in order for the activity to be completed. In addition, no information from other skill sources is required. The exercise also entails the use of only the basic critical thinking skills of recognition, identification and selection to complete. Finally, there is no culminating activity in which using a skill other than listening, such as spoken or written language skills, is necessary.

Communicative exercises
Communicative activities have now become commonplace in textbooks, usually consisting of rehearsed conversations needed to complete a task or a series of questions that have the students ask and answer questions related to the topic of the lesson. These exercises aim at developing the students' abilities in oral communication skills toward speaking competence.

In this model (Model Exercise 2: Communication), the latter format is used, requiring the students to ask conversation-partners the questions in the interview in the previous listening exercise (Complete activity is available as Appendix 3.)

Model Exercise 2: Communication

> **Ask two conversation-partners the following questions. Write the answers your partner gives in the space provided.**
>
> 1. What meal is your biggest meal usually?
>
> | Partner 1: | |
> |---|---|
> | Partner 2: | |
>
> 2. What is a typical meal at your home?
>
> | Partner 1: | |
> |---|---|
> | Partner 2: | |

Although this exercise does give the students some freedom in answering, the relative rigidity of the questions in an interview format firmly regulates the flow of communication. An interview is primarily only acquiring information from one source: the one being interviewed. In reality, the interview format, while producing spoken language and allowing for structured practice, is not an effective means to develop more advanced communication strategies for use in authentic communicative situations. Even though this activity also includes writing by the interviewer who records the answer given, this writing is merely another form of a listening-dictation exercise. The communicative and writing parts of the activity are still isolated skills. Likewise, these parts are detached from information outside the confines of the exercise, leading us to the conclusion that this is not an integrated activity.

Reading Exercises

Reading activities usually consist of a passage or dialogue that the students read and then answer questions about main ideas or specific information given in the reading. Other skills often associated with reading exercises in textbooks include: grammar structures, vocabulary, synonyms, and pronunciation.

In this model exercise (Model Exercise 3: Reading), students read a passage about Khmer cuisine and answer comprehension questions about it (Complete reading passage and exercise are provided as Appendices 4 and 5.)

Model Exercise 3: Reading

> **Khmer cuisine** is another name for the food widely consumed in the country Cambodia. It is well known for its exotic and unique flavors.
>
> It is similar to that of its Southeast Asian neighbors but is relatively unknown to the world compared to its neighbors. It has been described as similar to Thai cuisine, though not as spicy. Curry dishes known as *kari* shows its ties with Indian cuisine. Influences from Chinese cuisine can be noted in the use of many different types of rice noodles. Beef noodle soup known simply as *kuytheav* is a popular dish brought to Cambodia by its Chinese settlers. And *banh chiao* is the Khmer version of a Vietnamese imitation of the French crepe.
>
> **Answer the questions using the information from the passage.**
>
> 1. Khmer cuisine is the name for food from what country?
>
>   _____
>
> 2. Which cuisine is spicier, Khmer or Thai?
>
>   _____
>
> 3. What are some countries that have influenced Khmer cuisine?
>
>   _____

Once again, similar to the listening and interviewing activities presented above, this reading exercise does not meet our criteria for an integrated curriculum. The exercise is self-contained, an isolated task. Students can adequately respond to the questions by referring only to the reading passage. There is no need for them to access and synthesize information from another skill source

(i.e. listening or communication) and use critical thinking to organize ideas, compare and contrast, and/or differentiate information gained from these other skill sources to complete the task.

Integrating skills

According to our definition of integrated skills, there needs to be a culminating activity in which the students produce a written and/or spoken synthesis of information from two skill sources. In this next section, several different integrated activities will be introduced using the activities presented previously.

This first activity integrates the full listening activity (Appendix 1) and the reading passage (Appendix 4). The students will use information from both skill sources to complete the following prompt:

> *Using the information from the listening activity and the reading passage, write or speak about the differences between typical meals in the United States and Cambodia.*

This activity requires the students to produce a unique response using information from the skill sources, synthesizing the pertinent information from both to create a cohesive answer. Within a speaking format, students may be asked to speak about the topic for one to two minutes. As a writing exercise, the students may be asked to write either in class or as a homework assignment. Of course, time limits and length of writings may vary depending on the level of the students, the difficulty of the resources, and / or the stage of development in the process of integrating skills. However, the goal would ultimately be to have the students complete the tasks within the time parameters set forth by the iBT. An example of a written response may be as follows:

> Meals in both the Unites States and Cambodia contain similar ingredients such as meat and cooked vegetables; however, there are several differences between the two. One difference is that in Khmer meals rice is often eaten while potatoes are a main part of the meal in

America. We can also see that in Cambodia there are almost always several dishes served in the meal while the one-pot meal seems to be common in the United States. Lastly, in Khmer cuisine, individual dishes having a specific sense of taste, such as sweetness, saltiness, sourness, or bitterness, are incorporated into each meal so that there is a wide variety of tastes available with each meal. This does not seem to be the case with American cuisine.

As can be seen with this response, the writer had to incorporate information from both skill sources to complete the activity. We also notice that the information is compared and contrasted and combined to create the response. The writer also makes some assumptions when information is not explicit in the two sources. These higher-level critical thinking skills are essential for accomplishing the task effectively.

This second activity integrates the information available in the full listening activity (Appendix 1) and the information gathered in the communication activity (Appendix 3). Students must again utilize information from both sources of information to fulfill the prompt.

> *Using the information from the listening and the response of one of your partners from the communication activity, describe the differences between a typical lunch/meal.*
>
> **or**
>
> *Using the information from the listening and the response of one of your partners from the communication activity, compare the responses about who does the cooking in the home.*

An example of a spoken response to the second prompt may be as follows:

> In both David and Thira's families, their mothers seem to be the person who is of charge of cooking for the family. In Thira's home, her mother does all of the cooking for

the family by herself. Her grandmother used to help, but now she is too old and is sick. However, at David's home, the children have to help their mother cook or cook the meals by themselves for the family.

This second activity integrates information from the listening activity and information gathered from the personal interaction of the students in the interviewing / speaking activity. This activity also necessitates the fusion of elements from both resources to accurately respond to either of these prompts. Organizing ideas, comparing and contrasting, and differentiating are all complex critical thinking skills that are utilized in this response.

Other Suggestions for Integrated Activities

Even with the single-skill activities presented in this paper, an integrated activity could be created using information from the communicative activity and the reading passage or by comparing the responses from the two conversation-partners in the communicative section. Adapting the activities found in existing textbooks is the easiest way for teachers to develop integrated skills activities; however, it is not always possible to modify activities adequately. If this is the case, teachers may need to prepare supplementary materials from outside sources.

Conclusion

While integrating skills in EFL texts may be a relatively new approach in text design, due in large part to the backwash produced by the development of the iBT, the concept is certainly not new. Consider our educational experience in the West. In many cases, we as students were asked to read materials before class. During our class, our professors lectured and questioned us regarding the concepts presented in the text, but also in many cases brought in examples from their experience to illustrate and expand on what was presented in the text. During the exam period, many professors would ask us to present our understanding of the concept from the text (possibly in the form of a definition), explain how the concept applies to a particular context (based on additional reading or

information in lectures), and possibly express our opinion on the importance of the concept in written form (essay exam). This is a common and natural approach to education that many of us experienced as students. Through this approach, we were required to integrate the language skills we used (reading the text, listening to the lecture, writing our responses on the essay exam). It is clear that integrating skills is not a novel approach: It is what occurs in natural learning contexts. What is less common, and what is useful for our students now that we are the teachers, is to bring this same approach into our EFL teaching contexts. Adapting or developing materials in order to provide an integrated skills learning environment in our classrooms does take some time; however, whether that be in Japanese or Indian university classrooms, or primary and secondary classrooms in Korea, Cambodia or the United States, the benefits go far beyond simply preparing students for the iBT. Teaching students through an integrated approach provides them with a more 'natural' learning experience, prepares them to excel in academic fields where they will be required to integrate the skills they use, allows them to develop their critical thinking skills, and will further prepare them to be more competent and successful in their future careers.

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Appendix 1
Listening Activity Script

The following is the script of the dialogue to which the students would listen. (The students would not see this script.)

Lary: Hello. My name is Lary, and today I'm going to be talking to David about his eating habits and food. Hi, David.

David: Hello.

Lary: How are you today?

David: Fine.

Lary: Very good. Umm……first question: How many meals do you eat each day?

David: Well……some days I eat two, some days I eat one, some days I eat three or four, but usually I eat three.

Lary: OK. How about breakfast? What do you like to eat for breakfast?

David: Well, I'm not a typical American. I don't really like eggs and bacon, and I don't eat cereal very much; but I do like fruit and, of course, I love coffee. So I usually have fruit and coffee for breakfast.

Lary: OK. Uh, how about lunch?

David: I am a typical American when it comes to eating lunches. I usually have a sandwich of some kind. So a lot of Americans have soup and salads and things like that, but I go for a good old sandwich.

Lary: OK. And what about dinner?

David: Umm………dinner………I usually just eat something light. Umm…I don't cook a lot for my dinner, uh…maybe something like a soup or something……

Lary: OK.

David: Or a stew.

Lary: OK. Uh, what meal is your biggest meal usually?

David: Umm, well I guess my biggest meal would have to be lunch because I don't eat a big breakfast and I don't eat a big dinner.

Lary: OK, so, lunch is the biggest meal.

David: Yes.

Lary: OK. Ah, what is a typical meal that you eat at your home?

David: Well,...because I live by myself, I don't really eat typical meals, but when I was growing up, uhh, there were basically two kinds of typical meals that we had at home. One was a meat, just a plain meat, and then a potato dish and then cooked vegetables on the side.

Lary: Sounds very American.

David: Yah, and the other kind of meal was a one-pot meal, either a stew or chili or something where everything was put together into one dish, and everybody ate out of that.

Lary: Sounds good. Ah, alright, what is your favorite food?

David: Hmm,... I guess I would have to say that my favorite food would be...hmm...lasagna. I really like lasagna, a lot of Italian foods, but I really like lasagna.

Lary: OK. Alright, what food then don't you like?

David: Well, I don't like eggs ..., and I don't like greenbeans. Umm, the reason I don't like eggs is because when I was growing up, we had a farm; and we had eggs every day.

Lary: Is that right?

David: At almost every meal, we had some kind of eggs it seemed, so now I just don't like eggs.

Lary: OK.

David: And I don't like greenbeans because one time when my mother was having a baby; my dad only cooked greenbeans every day, every meal...

Lary: Is that right?

David: we had greenbeans,

Lary: Ha ha ha.

David: so I don't like greenbeans now.

Lary: OK. Umm, so you're an American, right?

David: Yes.

Lary: Alright, what kind of food then is popular in...in the United States?

David: Well,...that's sort of hard to say because there are so many different kinds of food there. It's a very multi-cultural food country. Umm...of course, some people like Chinese; some people like... uh......uh...different ethnic foods. Umm, probably where I was from, pizza would be a very popular food. And most fast foods—hamburgers and hotdogs and ...uh... maybe some kinds of Mexican food—were also very popular.

Lary: Alright, alright then, what is a typical food then in the United States?

David: Hmm...I would say......hmm...typical food, again because it's so multi-cultural, there is no real American food, but if you had to go with typical, I guess you would have to go with the hamburger and French fries or hotdogs...and pizza.

Lary: OK.

David: All those popular foods are also the very typical foods.

Lary: Alright, who usually cooks at your home?

David: Well, when I was growing up, my mother cooked; but we also took turns cooking, the children. We had a large family, so each of the kids had a night that we cooked or we helped to cook with my mother. Umm, now, I live by myself, so if there is any cooking done, I have to do it by myself.

Lary: Well then, can you cook well?

David: Well, I think so. Umm, I don't know that everyone thinks so, but a lot of my friends like what I cook, and I like what I cook so.... and I like to cook. So I think it's probably a hobby if I have one.

Lary: Interesting. Well, you'll have to cook something for me some time.

David: OK.

Lary: Thank you very much, David.

David: You're welcome

Appendix 2
Listening Activity Exercise

Answer the following questions based on the information you hear in the dialogue.
Lary is interviewing David about food and his eating habits.

Circle (T) if the statement is true or (F) if the answer is false.
1. T F David usually eats two meals each day.
2. T F David usually has eggs and bacon and coffee for breakfast.
3. T F A typical American lunch is a sandwich.
4. T F David usually has a big dinner.

Circle the answer or answers for each question. (For some questions there may be more than one correct answer.)

5. Which is David's biggest meal of the day?
   a. breakfast
   b. lunch
   c. dinner
   d. all are about the same

6. What was a typical meal at David's home when he was growing up?
   a. meat and potatoes
   b. meat, potatoes, and cooked vegetables
   c. only vegetables
   d. a one-pot meal

7. What is David's favorite food?
   a. meat
   b. stew
   c. lasagna
   d. all Italian food

8. What foods don't David like?
   a. eggs
   b. stew
   c. potatoes
   d. greenbeans

Write an answer on the line under the question.

9. According to David, what are two popular foods in America?
   _____

10. What some typical foods in America?
   _____

11. Who cooked at David's home when he was growing up?
   _____

12. Who cooks at David's home now?
   _____

13. Is David a good cook?
   _____

Appendix 3
Speaking / Interview Activity Worksheet

Ask two different partners the questions and write the answers given in the space provided.

1. How many meals do you eat each day?

Partner 1	
Partner 2	

2. What do you usually eat for breakfast/lunch/dinner?

Partner 1	
Partner 2	

3. What meal is your biggest meal usually?

Partner 1	
Partner 2	

4. What is a typical meal at your home?

Partner 1	
Partner 2	

5. What is your favorite food?

Partner 1	
Partner 2	

6. What is a food that you don't like? Why?

Partner 1	
Partner 2	

7. What kind of food is popular in your country?

Partner 1	
Partner 2	

8. What is a typical food from your country?
   Tell me about it.

Partner 1	
Partner 2	

9. Who usually cooks at your home?

Partner 1	
Partner 2	

10. Can you cook well?

Partner 1	
Partner 2	

Appendix 4
Reading Passage

Khmer Cuisine is another name for the food widely consumed in the country Cambodia. It is well known for its exotic and unique flavors.

Khmer cuisine is noted for the use of *prahok*, a type of fermented fish paste, in many dishes as a distinctive flavoring. When prahok is not used, it is likely to be *kapĭ* instead, a kind of fermented shrimp paste. Coconut milk is the main ingredient of many Khmer curries and desserts. In Cambodia there is regular aromatic rice and glutinous or sticky rice. The latter is used more in dessert dishes with fruits such as durian. Almost every meal is eaten with a bowl of rice.

Cambodian cuisine also uses fish sauce widely in soups, stir-fried cuisine, and as dippings. Curry dishes known as *kari* shows its ties with Indian cuisine. Influences from Chinese cuisine can be noted in the use of many variations of rice noodles. Beef noodle soup known simply as *kuyteav* is a popular dish brought to Cambodia by its Chinese settlers. Also, *banh chiao* is the Khmer version of the Vietnamese *bánh xèo*.

Typically, Cambodians eat their meals with at least three or four separate dishes. Each individual dish will usually be one of sweet, sour, salty or bitter. Chili is usually left up to the individual to add by themselves. In this way Cambodians ensure that they get a bit of every flavor to satisfy their palates.

Adapted from Cuisine *of Cambodia*, Wikipedia.

Appendix 5
Reading Exercise

Answer the questions according to the information in the passage.

1. What is the name of the fermented fish paste used in Khmer cooking?

   _____

2. What type of rice is used more for desserts?

   _____

3. What are some countries that have influenced Khmer cuisine?

   _____

4. How many dishes are usually served in a meal in Cambodia?

   _____

5. Why do Cambodians serve dishes that have different tastes (i.e. sweet, sour, salty, or bitter)?

   _____

Appendix 6
Integrated Activities

Activity 1:

This activity integrates the listening activity (Appendix 1) and the reading passage (Appendix 4). The students will use information from both sources to complete the following prompt:

> ***Using the information from the listening activity and the reading passage, write or speak about the differences between typical meals in the United States and Cambodia.***

An example of a written response may be as follows:

> Meals in both the Unites States and Cambodia contain similar ingredients such as meat and cooked vegetables; however, there are several differences between the two. One difference is that in Khmer meals rice is often eaten while potatoes are a main part of the meal in America. We can also see that in Cambodia there are almost always several dishes served in the meal while the one-pot meal seems to be common in the United States. Lastly, in Khmer cuisine, individual dishes having a specific sense of taste, such as sweetness, saltiness, sourness, or bitterness, are incorporated into each meal so that there are a wide variety of tastes available with each meal. This does not seem to be the case with American cuisine.

Activity 2:

This activity integrates the information available in the listening activity (Appendix 1) and the information gathered in the communication activity (Appendix 3). Students must utilize information from both sources of information to fulfill the prompt:

> ***Using the information from the listening and the response of one of your partners from the communication activity, describe the differences between a typical lunch/meal.***
>
> **or**
>
> ***Using the information from the listening and the response of one of your partners from the communication activity, compare the responses about who does the cooking in the home.***

An example of a spoken response to the second prompt may be as follows:

> In both David and Thira's families, their mothers seem to be the person who is of charge of cooking for the family. In Thira's home, her mother does all of the cooking for the family by herself. Her grandmother used to help, but now she is too old and is sick. However, at David's home, the children have to help their mother cook or cook the meals by themselves for the family.

Management of a university- based English Language Program in Asia's non-native contexts – An innovative approach from Vietnam

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Abstract:
For many English language teaching (ELT) programs in Asian universities, program leadership is an area little explored though it is essential for their successful planning, design, development, implementation and evaluation. The focus of this paper is how quality English teaching and learning are achieved and managed through effective ELT leadership in an English language program in a non – native context like Vietnam. The paper strongly argues that quality teaching and learning in an ELT program are achieved not only as a consequence of how well teachers teach and how well students learn but through creating contexts and work environment that can facilitate good teaching and learning. The paper also stresses that leadership can be learnt and shared at all levels for the best benefit of an innovative quality ELT program. The purpose of the paper is to showcase the innovative approach of a real ELT program in the Foundation Studies Department, Hanoi University, Vietnam so that practical lessons are critically analyzed and drawn.

"Some innovation springs from a flash of genius but most stem from a conscious, purposeful search for innovation opportunities"
(Drucker, 1991)

Introduction

Managing quality English Language Teaching (ELT) Programs within a business environment is a challenge for many public universities in such countries as Vietnam. Meeting high quality objectives and academic standards while at the same time meeting financial imperatives seems virtually impossible for ELT program leaders. In addition, for a long time, ELT research has seemed to focus more on ELT teachers' professional development and teaching methodologies and learners' learning styles rather than on ELT leadership. A perspective missing from this teaching and learning based view of ELT program is the role of effective ELT leadership in creating suitable contexts and work environments in which both English Language teachers and learners can do their best and the program's deficiencies can be addressed. This paper, therefore, challenges a rather simplistic assumption that the focus on good teaching and learning can automatically result in a successful ELT program. It also challenges the current management practice of many Vietnamese universities copying one another's ELT programs. This paper highlights the important multiple roles of effective ELT program administrators, teachers and learners who together can make context-specific choices during the planning, designing, developing and evaluating process.

Although it is teachers themselves who directly implement an ELT program, its ultimate success depends on whether program managers can create a context in which innovation opportunities can be sought and leadership can be shared at all levels. Through a critical analysis and comparison of old and new ways of managing an ELT program in the Foundation Studies Department (FSD), Hanoi University, over the past three years since its inception, this paper not only provides some practical insights into the management of a university-based ELT program, but also showcases an innovative approach for teachers, ELT program administrators, curriculum developers and other ELT professionals. It is believed that the practical lessons drawn in this paper can be applicable in creating a higher standard of other university based ELT programs in Vietnam and other similar contexts.

This paper consists of four main parts. The first part explores the basic meanings of two key concepts of *innovation* in education and ELT and *ELT leadership*. As the paper highlights the importance of context in which innovation takes place, the second part provides some basic background on the Vietnamese higher education system, public universities and current trends in management of their ELT programs. The third part compares, contrasts, and evaluates the past and present practices of managing FSD's ELT program to highlight FSD's suggested model of innovation. The paper concludes with some practical learning points. It is believed that these lessons learnt can help ELT program administrators and managers by providing them with a greater sense of confidence and willingness to create a higher standard of university-based English programs for their students. The paper argues that not all ELT practices in FSD are the best, but that the institution is trying to be the best, and its progressive practices in Vietnam`s constantly changing and challenging context reflect the institution's specific goal of actively seeking innovative opportunities (Drucker, 1991).

Concept of innovation

Throughout the paper, the two concepts of *innovation* and *ELT leadership* are repeatedly emphasized. It is a good starting point to explore the basic meanings of these two key concepts in order to judge how innovative the existing ELT program in FSD is and to find out what and how to manage an innovative university – based ELT program in Asia's non-native contexts like Vietnam. The definitions of these two key concepts seem to complement each other in the sense that innovation requires leadership and leadership can promote innovation.

Concerning the concept of educational *innovation*, there have been different definitions containing different elements and offering different perspectives over the years. Different definitions tend to stress the roles of different key stakeholders in the success of innovation. Kennedy (1988) stresses the roles teachers can play as implementers in bringing about i*nnovatio*n in educational programs. Other researchers like White (1993), and Stoller (1997) credit educational *innovation* to curriculum designers and developers. Their common basic premise is that innovation is not only a question of introducing new practices of curriculum design and development; it also involves adjusting and changing the behavior and attitudes of people concerned. This paper also highlights the concept of *innovation* as something that simply emerges from efforst made under quite challenging circumstances (Nicholls, 1983; Hamilton, 1996) or something that "stems from a conscious, purposeful search for innovation opportunities" (Drucker, 1991). In other words, *innovation* can therefore be discovered and introduced either by administrators, teachers or students, or even outside consultants. Furthermore, a strong and determined leader, who supports the innovative process from initiation to implementation and diffusion, is required for successful innovation (Stoller, 1997).

Putting this concept into the ELT context, the responsibility for *innovation* must therefore be shared among all key stakeholders of program administrators, teachers, support staff and learners. Collaborative decision-making and mechanisms for

team work should therefore be developed. Also, steps toward innovation can only be taken in such an innovation culture necessitating trust, openness toward experimentation, a desire for self-renewal and the acceptance of possible failure. However, it is worth noting that *innovation* in ELT is grounded in practical considerations, explaining why some innovation can be strongly accepted in some language programs and vigorously criticized in others.

Concept of ELT leadership

Everyone seems to know how necessary and important leadership is but agreement becomes harder when people begin to discuss what it really is. Literally hundreds of definitions of leadership have been offered. Behind each definition, in turn, is a different theory about the source, process, style and outcome of leadership. Several words and phrases stand out when leadership is defined: purpose, direction, individuals, groups, culture and values, shared vision, priorities, planning, change and risk management. This paper supports the definition of leadership as the ability to motivate a group towards goal achievement (Robbins, 2003). In addition, such leadership, rather than remaining centralized with one person, expands throughout the irganization such that all within the organization are able to sense ownership (Smith, 2006). More simply, leadership is the ability to get things done through other people and effective leadership requires achieving goals and influencing others.

From the ELT perspective, ELT leadership should be understood as getting the job of English language program planning, designing, developing and implementing done not only *through or by* people but also *with* them. In other words, shared and distributed leadership toward common goals is the key to a successful ELT program. In fact, ELT leadership in ELT programs does not move aimlessly and it does not and can not cover every aspect of ELT programs ranging from the development, implementation and evaluation of curriculum; materials, and testing and assessment; to teacher development, learner expectations, inputs and attitudes. Instead, it is purposeful and directional and it is based on priorities. Rather than making every effort to improve a bit of everything

at the same time, priorities should be given to particular aspects of the program that need urgent action. Leaders should be flexible enough to understand and work out what is most important for the time being while keeping in mind the vision and mission assigned. In some programs where teachers lack experience, ongoing support for teachers' professional development should be prioritized while in others where curriculum fail to meet students' learning outcomes, more attention should be paid to curriculum reform. Setting priorities right should be the first starting point, followed by the distribution of leadership power among all key stakeholders.

Background
General background on Vietnamese higher education

As the second country after China with the highest sustained economic growth during the first years of the 21st century, Vietnam is currently recosidering its higher education system. The government recognizes the increasing role of English as the language of international communication and the importance of international cooperation to help adapt its higher education system, (notoriously slow in change management) to the rapid pace of its economy. However, managing a quality higher education system in Vietnam is still very challenging at both macro and micro levels. Under-funded public universities, lack of competitiveness, lack of quality control mechanisms and standard certification, and low teacher salaries (60 – 100 USD/month), are the key issues to be addressed at the macro levels. Moreover, at micro levels, the entire higher education system is facing several crises such as out-of-date course curricula, lecturer-dominated methodology, research activities separated from teaching activities, gaps between theory and practice, teachers' lack of focus on formal teaching, and a shift to private evening classes. All these have resulted in a large number of graduates being unable to find a job. Domestically, university courses fail to meet the local labor market demand for students with suffecient social skills, critical thinking, and foreign language skills. Internationally, Vietnamese university degrees are not recognized. As a result, there is a huge demand

for better quality and more practical educational services which acknowledge teachers, and encourage learners' active participation with critical thinking skills and improve foreign language skills.

Background on university – based ELT Programs

English is becoming an increasingly popular foreign language in almost every Vietnamese university. Though English language training is in high demand, many universities are still treating English as just a separate subject with greater focus on the *knowing about English* (English grammar) than on the *using of English* (English language skills). Like other higher education programs, ELT programs in universities are still struggling with the enormous constraints of poor resources, lack of qualified and motivated English teachers, out-of date and ineffective ELT methodologies, inappropriate teaching materials, and insufficient monitoring and evaluation. This results in an unsuitable English language curriculum which fails to meet learners' and market needs. As a consequence, Vietnamese students tend to learn English for the sake of passing tests rather than for communication purposes or their future job preparation.

More seriously, ELT programs in public universities experience the common practice of copying each other's programs. These practices are related to the copying of new modern facilities, new ELT technologies, ELT teaching and learning materials, appropriate teaching methodologies, and assessment systems, which are considered important factors of the success of any ELT programs (Richards, 2005). Most ELT centers in Vietnamese universities look the same as they end up making the same choices regarding premises, technologies, teachers, teaching materials, methodologies and testing assessment systems. As a consequence, the same teachers can be found teaching in several universities at the same time, teaching the same commercial textbooks and repeating their own teaching methods again and again despite their students' different entry and exit levels. Almost every ELT teacher talks about communicative language teaching (CLT) methods without hands-on practice of applying these methods in real classrooms. Universities seem to

ignore learners' different learning styles, strengths and weaknesses, and fail to take into consideration the institution's own context, program aims and objectives, and the roles of program administrators, teachers and learners.

Universities in Vietnam need to find a better alternative to this current copying trend in order to maintain a competitive advantage and long term sustainable development. It is suggested that ELT program leaders should engage their teachers and students in designing, revising, implementing, evaluating, replanning and redeveloping the teaching materials, programs, facilities, methodologies, and testing systems based on the size of the program, staff, learners' entry levels, and the nature and goals of each program.

The Foundation Studies Programs – Hanoi University

The Foundation Studies Department (FSD) program, a one-year English only program, takes place in a setting (Hanoi University) where the university is striving to become an *English medium university*. FSD was established in 2005 to meet the needs of English language training for Hanoi University's first year students. Since its establishment, FSD has had a very challenging mission of providing students with adequate English language skills for English-medium majors and helping the students achieve IELTS scores of 6.0 or above. FSD experienced many constraints. Like other university departments, FSD has to cope with scarce human, physical and financial resources. Moreover, starting from scratch, FSD had to undertake a sequential process of teacher recruitment, material selection, curriculum development, assessment design, teacher training, and development of its own working culture. Due to limited preparation time (only 2 months) and internal and external shortcomings, the FSD program did struggle in its very first year from a lack of facilities and resources, lack of experienced and committed teachers, unsystematic planning and an incoherent curriculum. After three years of development, FSD program has been well evaluated by its teachers, learners, and other major faculties. With the increasing number of students achieving

IELTS 6.0 (from 65% in 2005 to 85% in 2007), FSD has been recognized as a successful department achieving its goal. FSD takes pride in being granted a national innovation award by Ministry of Education and Training in 2007.

Management practices of FSD Programs – Past and present

Over the past three years of its development, the FSD has been experiencing the same challenging institutional and departmental contexts in program are planning, design, development, implementation and evaluation. Institutionally, like all Vietnamese university teachers, FSD teachers still receive low salaries and limited financial support while the private sector offers high salaries, making it hard for FSD to attract and retain qualified teachers. Departmentally, FSD has had the same small number of program administrators over the years despite an increasing number of students with more variety of levels and an increasing workload for teachers. In other words, FSD has been operated in the same resource poor conditions with the same goal of helping its increasing number of students achieve IELTS 6.0.

Despite this less than optimal context, the FSD has witnessed some noticeable changes in its management practices. As can be seen from Appendix 1, there are many improvements between the past and present models of management. Unlike the past practices in 2005 when FSD approaches were strictly top-down with centralized curriculum planning, designing and implementation, the present management practices implemented in 2007 are bottom-up, where program administrators get more involved and teachers are granted more freedom and have a central role in all aspects of curriculum development and implementation. Moreover, by promoting learner autonomy with on going assessments, the current practices tend to be more learner-centered and outcomes more focused than the past teacher dominated and input – based practices.

The key reasons for these positive changes are the results of ongoing course evaluations conducted on all aspects of the program by all different key stakeholders. Realizing the importance of both formal evaluation and informal evaluation, FSD over the years has made every possible attempt to gather and analyze information with the aim of recognizing and promoting its strengths and addressing its weaknesses. By encouraging self – evaluation, peer evaluation, top-down evaluation and students' evaluation in all aspects of FSD programs, problems are identified and promptly addressed. Holding the strong belief that there is a always a better way of doing things, all FSD administrators, teachers, and learners are encouraged to evaluate self and others by critically rethinking what, how and why all things are done in the FSD. In so doing, they develop the habit of being reflective about their own FSD practices, revisiting them and examining them in the light of research and theory.

However, the only drawback of the current management practices in 2007 compared to 2005 seems to be the increased workload for both teachers and learners. More work is created due to improvements in some activities. Yet, in the long term, these practices are believed to be in the best interests of all key stakeholders, especially the students, having a more positive impact on the sustainability of the FSD program which may no longer suffer from inexperienced teachers, weak teamwork, unsystematic planning, incoherent curriculum design and inadequate testing systems.

Practical lessons learnt

The FSD models of progressive practices provide practical implications for successful innovative ELT programs. Studying what makes FSD different now from their past practice can help indicate practical lessons. One of the greatest lessons is that quality English language teaching is achieved not only as a consequence of how well teachers teach and how well students learn, but through understanding of institutional and departmental factors, creating contexts and work environments that encourage a purposeful search for innovation and facilitating good teaching and learning. In order to successfully create such a work environment, the multiple roles of program administrators, teachers and learners are highlighted.

Multiple roles of program administrators

In order to purposefully search for innovation, the role of program administrators is central. The lesson learnt from FSD suggests that language program administrators should play different roles at different stages of program development rather than the simple single role as administrators. These roles can range from leader, organizer, promoter, employer, teaching participant and human resource user, to observer, coach, consultant, monitor and evaluator. The question is which one of these is the most important role. In fact, as can be seen from Appendix 1, they are all equally important, depending on different stages and on the different knowledge and skills of each program administrator. But among those multiple roles, the key role as a participant, involved in planning, designing and implementing, seems to be ignored in top-down administrative culture, while it is evident to be a key to FSD's success and is promoted in the current FSD management practices.

Another question is when to play which role. In order to answer this question, program administrators need to be aware of diverse factors, understand the context, and understand themselves and their team. In other words, it depends on critical analysis of the current situation, and the strengths and weaknesses of self and others. For example, to manage a team of teachers who are inexperienced and unfamiliar with a program, a program administrator should stand out as a leader who leads their teachers. But once their teachers become more and more effective participants, teachers should be empowered to lead and make decisions while administrators should work as observers or coaches. In fact, their willingness to be open to change, responsive, flexible, supportive and participatory is of great importance. The FSD model suggests that all these qualities can help program administrators easily explore innovative alternatives with their teachers, identify early weaknesses as well as the potential for innovation, and quickly align the potential, aspirations, and talents of their staff to the direction of the program, serving as a catalyst for change and innovation. The lesson learnt from FSD also indicates that good program administrators need the habit of looking back, rethinking and reflecting on how and why what has

been done has been undertaken before looking ahead. Innovative program administrators should therefore keep asking themselves the questions of how they can do better, what they are doing now, and how the future will be different from the present.

Multiple roles of teachers

Researches show that "real educational change depends on what teachers do and think" and "the single most important feature of any program is teaching faculty"(Grewer, 2006). In fact, good teachers create good programs and determine the ultimate success of an ELT program. In self-supporting language programs, the nature and quality of the teaching faculty can literally 'make or break' the operation. Therefore, it is important to recognize the importance of teachers and their central role to play in all aspects of curriculum planning. The FSD experience suggests that teachers should be encouraged to play multiple roles as curriculum planners, designers, developers, implementers and self-evaluators. By being directly involved in the whole sequential process, teachers should also be recognized by program leaders as change agents who are in the best position to understand the situation, learn from experience, identify their own learning needs and search for innovation opportunities. Though in some cases teachers might find it hard or even intimidating to be leaders or planners, a supportive and empowering environment is needed to motivate them and recognize their talents.

Nevertheless, not all ELT programs can afford to employ teachers who are qualified and experienced enough to play all those key roles. In an ELT program like FSD, it would be ideal to have all the best qualified and most experienced English language teachers with a combination of knowledge, skills, and personal qualities such as a love for teaching. However, in reality, it is hard to find good teachers, attract them and retain them in the Vietnamese educational context where good teachers have choices to make. Current practices in FSD support the idea that a careful teacher recruitment process with appropriate recruitment techniques should only be the first step to be followed by ongoing support. In fact, committed

and passionate teachers who may lack teaching experience can compensate for poor quality teaching resources and materials if they work in a motivating, empowering, and ongoing supportive context.

Multiple roles of learners

Unlike learners' passive roles in the traditional language program, in an innovative ELT program, they play active roles as key participants in curriculum planning, development, implementation and evaluation. The lesson learnt from FSD`s current practices supports the hypothesis made by Nunan (1988). Thus, like teachers, learners play central roles in most of the decisions about aims, objectives, materials, methodology, management approach, and program effectiveness. In so doing, the program itself can become learner – centered, avoiding the gap between administrator plans, teacher input and learner intake. In order to determine which relevant roles learners should play and can play successfully in each stage of a language program, it is important to be aware of the importance of their beliefs, attitudes and expectations which very much affect the effectiveness of their roles.

Role of a Shared Leadership Context

Once all key stakeholders including program administrators, teachers and learners have their own multiple roles to play, there is a need for a context in which they can all have their own sense of belonging and can work collaboratively and flexibly. A sharing mechanism of power is needed to ensure continued health and existence of an ELT program such as the FSD program. It is therefore in the best interest of all key stake holders for a language program to commit considerable resources of time, personnel and money to creating a supportive culture enabling and encouraging good teaching and learning. Trust, confidence, a supportive atmosphere and support for risk taking – a culture that tolerates risks and failure - must be promoted. In such a positive teamwork culture, each opinion must be valued, whether it comes from a program administrator or teacher or learner; the workload is shared; all information is communicated openly and transparently; and most

importantly, everyone is part of the success of the progam.

Other practical factors under consideration

In addition to the roles played and the climate created which are within the control of language program providers, it is a fact that there are a number of other practical factors that are often beyond their control. These factors including governmental policies, rules and regulations and societal status quo may be barriers to innovation, which in case in Vietnam. However, language curricula must be developed with practical considerations of these factors in mind because, as Richards (2005) suggests, different ELT programs take place in different settings with different human, physical and financial resources, different societal and institutional situations. The experience of the FSD in the past and present practices reflects how important it is for every key stake holder, especially the leader, to have full understanding of practical factors related to the institution, department, and curriculum, and to be sympathetic and realistic about the current practices. It is important, therefore to identify what these factors are and analyze what their potential effects might be when planning, designing and implementing an appropriate ELT program. Failure to take them all into consideration will have a negative impact on the success of whatever innovative ideas or approaches there might be.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a university-based ELT program in the Asian context needs more than teachers and their teaching skills. A university may employ the best qualified teachers in the world but without effective shared leadership in which everyone at all levels gets involved with various roles to play, success and innovation can not be guaranteed. In fact, there is no simple formula for success, no rigorous science, no cookbook that automatically leads to the successful management of a university-based ELT program. Instead, it is an art, a conscious and purposeful search, a deeply reflective process, full of trial and error, victories and defeats, timing

and stance, intuition and insight, that can help bring about opportunities for success.

In this paper, some of the key concepts of innovation and ELT leadership and practical analysis of past and present management practices of an ELT program in the Foundation Studies Department, Hanoi University have been examined in order to draw practical lessons on management of university-based ELT programs. These lessons learnt are related to the awareness and acknowledgement of multiple roles of program administrators, teachers and learners, and the importance of shared leadership contexts. However, what works best in the FSD program will not necessarily work for other programs in other university contexts. The paper limits itself to the description of the leadership roles of all key stakeholders and the analysis of the importance of a continuous purposeful search for innovation of university-based ELT program in Asia's non – native contexts like Vietnam. More follow up studies are therefore needed to further explore *how to* support innovation through leadership strategies, qualities and techniques, to ensure the soundness and coherence of a university-based ELT program, and the satisfaction level of both teachers and students in the language classroom.

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Appendix 1
Past and Present Management Practices of FSD (2005 vs. 2007)

	Management Practices in 2005	Management Practices in 2007	Notes
Contexts in which programs operate	- Same poor resources and facilities constraints - Same number of program administrators and managers - Same expected outcome (Students achieving IELTS 6.0 + adequate English language skills for English based major courses) - Teachers' low salaries - Heavy workloads for both the Board of Management (BOM) and teachers.		
Working environment	Centrally controlled Rule – driven	More open and flexible More inclusive Power and Freedom to all teachers	*FSD teachers rank its working environment as the most positive factor in FSD*
Program Duration	1.5 years	1 year	*For early graduation, the course duration is now reduced to 1 year only (full time study)*
Program Goals	Ambitious and ambiguous	Sound and clearly described, more realistic	*Program goals are documented and well communicated to teachers and students.*
Program Philosophy	Focus on products. Focus on inputs Focus on teachers' methods and approaches Prescriptive and rule - driven	Focus on learning process. Focus on learning outcome Focus on learner differences, learner strategies and learner self direction and autonomy Flexible and adaptable	*The philosophy governs all FSD activities (both academic and non-academic)*
Program Approach	Traditional classrooms only	Blended learning (Applying ICT): classrooms + computer labs + language labs	
Learning process	Individual learning	Collaborative + Individual learning	*More group work, group project and assignments are provided in class and at home*
Management Approach	Centrally controlled Decisions are made by administrators and managers before the program starts Fragmented Tight organizational framework.	Participatory and Empowering Decisions are shared; collective efforts are made by all. Coherent More focus on students More open to change organizational framework ICT application (group email/ forum for teachers)	*Teachers are currently assigned with more tasks, getting more involved and held accountable to all delegated tasks. Teachers are also encouraged to take initiatives*
Curriculum Planning	Only program administrators	Teachers, Learners in negotiation and consultation with program administrators	*Planning and Replanning are practiced in 2007*

Curriculum design and development	Teacher and manager controlled Curriculum not documented	Learner centered Curriculum well- documented	*Learners are put at the center of the whole process of curriculum planning, designing, developing and implementing*
Curriculum implementa-tion	Teachers are key implementers	Both teachers and program managers are key implementers (Dean and Deputy Dean also teach)	
Students' Entry	300 students /academic year Entry levels: Intermediate levels	500 students / academic year Entry levels: Different levels (starter, elementary, lower intermediate, intermediate and above)	*The changes in number of students and their entry level are due to the University's new enrolment policies and establishment of new multi-disciplinary Faculties (Accounting, Banking and Finance)*
Teachers	20 teachers (50%: official; 50% contractual) Teachers as workers only	45 teachers (50%: official, 50% contractual) Teachers as course designers, implementers, self –evaluators, and action researchers	*Increasing number of students results in new recruitment of teachers. FSD teachers have been actively involved in presenting and research paper writing both inside and outside FSD.*
Teacher Recruitment	Interviews + Written essays	Combination of Interviews + Pronunciation Test + Written Essays + Microteaching + Teachers' induction programs	*Since 2007, FSD's experienced teachers are involved in interview panels.*
Teachers' Professional Development	Monthly Workshop (by visiting lecturers) Practicum Course for teachers No peer class observation	Workshops (by department teachers and visiting lecturers) Practicum course for teachers Class observation by peers and BOM. Coaching and Counseling activities Teacher performance appraisals at the end of the course	*Observation plans are made at the beginning of each course* *Observation is promoted as an effective training tool for teacher professional development in FSD's learning culture* *Observation activities are conducted in non-judgmental manner.*
Support for Teachers	Only support right after recruitment and before courses start.	Ongoing support Orientation (adequate materials + course guide + recommended materials and methods + suggested learning activities + procedure for assessments + division of responsibilities for teachers) Monthly working lunch for experience sharing	*All support activities are supported by FSD teachers and for FSD teachers.* *Support is provided on need basis.*

Teachers' morale and motivation	Low	Clear goals, challenging but suitable tasks, good internal communication	*All FSD experienced teachers are retained and well – motivated.*
Support for learners	Workshops for students (initiated and organized by teachers)	Workshops for students and by students + weekly students counseling services (face to face + online)	*Support is provided on a voluntary basis*
Teaching Materials	Suggested and selected by BOM Materials are used for students learning only	Selected, adopted and adapted by teachers (group leaders) Materials are used as teacher training aid. Technological software (English Discoveries Online) is introduced and integrated in blended learning approach.	*Teaching materials are mostly Western textbooks adapted and localized to meet FSD student's needs.*
Tests And Assessments	Exams only All tests drafted and finalized by BOM Teachers are the only markers and assessors	Tests + ongoing assessments All assessments are drafted and designed by teachers/ approved by BOM Learners are involved in self-assessment. Teachers are final markers.	*IELTS test is still used as a proficiency test at the very end of 1 year FSD program.*
Course Evaluation	Twice a course Manual evaluation (Hardcopies of evaluation sheets distributed to students and summarized by BOM All Evaluation results are internally publicized but not welcomed by teachers	Ongoing with online evaluation (instant summative results) Only positive evaluations are publicized and recognized ("best teacher of the course" award) Negative evaluations (individual teachers' weaknesses are supported by BOM) Self evaluation (of both program administrators, teachers and learners) is promoted	*By encouraging teachers to evaluate critically their own performance, evaluation now becomes an integral part of both curriculum and teacher development Evaluation is viewed as not simply a process of obtaining information, it is also a decision making process*
Achievements	Struggling to run the whole program Positive working culture for teachers Positive attitude between teachers and students and English language learning. However only 65% of students achieving IELTS 6.0	A positive collaborative working culture with shared values Strong student body Various student support activities 85% of students achieving IELTS 6.0 Recognition from Hanoi University leaders and Ministry of Education and Training Better reputation for the Department and the program.	*FSD now has a very strong student body which gets involved in organizing all academic and non-academic activities*

English language variety in Cambodia

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Abstract

It is not clear whether English used in Cambodia can be considered another new English variety in an expanding circle. Kirkpatrick (2005) suggested that the added /s/ sounds at the end of words spoken by Cambodians could be seen as another expanding circle of learner features of the language. This paper seeks to understand the characteristics of English language used by Cambodians in oral and written communication through analyses of data obtained from students' essays and conversations at the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL), Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP). The author will also explore the experiences of foreigners (native and non-native speakers of English) in communicating with Cambodians.

Introduction

The popularity of English in Cambodia may increase the possibility of the emergence of a so-called new English language variety – Cambodian English, which has emerged in the transitional period of both formal and informal English language education**.** Young Cambodians learn English because they see a higher possibility of securing well-remunerated jobs and of winning scholarships for overseas education. It is no surprise that the number of English language training institutions has grown exponentially in the last ten years in order to respond to such needs.

There is no absolute tendency in institutions and training centers to follow any one English model - British or American. Students exposed to British English will pick up British English, while those exposed to American English will pick up American English. Similarly, learners who have attended English language training centers and institutions run by Cambodian institutions will pick up another kind of English variety, hybridized between either of the two models, and their mother tongue, Khmer.

Noticeably, English is used more often by young Cambodians in their daily communication, the most common forms being electronic mediums such as instant messaging and emails, in addition to English speaking in language classrooms and some workplaces. The analyses of English used in these settings can reveal a new variety of the language used in Cambodia.

This paper attempts to: (1) understand of the characteristics of English as a new variety spoken by Cambodian university learners; (2) investigate the causes leading to such a language variety; (3) examine the intelligibility of an Cambodian English variety to foreigners, native and non-native speakers of the language; and (4) discuss trends and directions for improving English language training in Cambodia.

Literature review

Though once used during the Cambodian Republic Regime (1970 – 1975), English was not spoken at all during the Genocidal Regime of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, but reemerged in this country with the arrival of United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) for the first National Election in 1993 in Cambodia. This event has

allowed a remarkable increased in the use of English across the country, especially in the areas where UNTAC officials were located. Crystal (1997) suggests that English language becomes a global language because of its power: political power, military power and economic power, of the people who speak it. Dollarization in terms of local and international business transactions and international non-governmental organizations in the country has added to the plurality of English language, and has led to the emergence of Cambodian English variety, though this variety of English may be in a transitional period at present. The classification of English used in different regions into three different circles, such as inner circle, outer circle, and expanding circle, (Kachru, 1992) has broadened the possibility to recognize English spoken by Cambodians as a new variety emerging in the expanding circle. This study is driven Kirkpatrick (2005) who suggests that the added /s/ sound at the end of the words spoken by Cambodians could be seen as another expanding circle or learner feature of the English language.

In order to study a language variety in one country, one must study the language that learners produce, which he calls "interlanguage studies". The functional variations and choices within one language are seen through style, register, domain or field of discourse, code and code switching. Constructivists observe that second (or foreign) language learners, similar to children of their first language, are actively constructing rules of the target language to which they are exposed, and gradually adapting these rules to form the target language system. Thus, the second (or foreign) language learners' language can be analyzed so that some particular forms and characteristics of the target language production can be understood. As Littelwood (1994) states:

> If learners are actively constructing a system for the second language, we would not expect all their incorrect notions about it to be a simple result of transferring rules from their first language. We would expect many of their incorrect notions to be explicable by direct reference to the target language itself. … learners also make many errors that show

that they are processing the second language in its own terms (pp. 22-23).

Littlewood (1994) suggests directions to be considered when second (or foreign) learners' language errors are analyzed. Among these types, four, including overgeneralization, transfer, non-standard errors, and errors due to the effects of teaching, will be used to investigate Cambodian learners' English language variety in both spoken and written forms.

It is believed that when second or foreign language learners are processing information in the target language, they are attempting to generalize the rules of the target language. If they have been extensively exposed to the target language, they are more likely to hypothesize the correct rules and internalize those rules into the interlanguage system. If their exposure to the target language is limited, and to some extent, with insufficient reinforcement and awareness of the false generalized rules of the target language, they may overgeneralize those rules. Littlewood (1994) argues that overgeneralization results from second (or foreign) language learners' existing knowledge about their own native language or a language they have known and used. This phenomenon leads to language transfer employed by the second or foreign language learners. Contextually, such language transfer is affected by their own cultural representations, which, to a certain degree, guides interlocutors in the communication to interpret speakers' messages. Gumperz (1997) suggests that "socio-cultural conventions affect all levels of speech production and interpretation." Cook (2003) states that the success of the interpretation of language spoken and used in communication

> … depends on the degrees to which the participants share conventions and procedures, including those related to paralanguage, pragmatics, and genre. Such conventions and procedures, together with the values and beliefs, which lie behind them, are elements of cultural knowledge, and the people who share them can be thought of as belonging to the same culture. (p. 52)

When two languages are put into contact, according to linguistic relativity, they may code the same incidents utilizing semantic concepts or distinctions peculiar to each language (Adgar, 1997). Thus, each language may reflect different perspectives of the same bit of reality. Adgar (1997) points out that the most interesting problems second (or foreign) language learners have with the goal of communicative competence are 'vertical cliffs'. By this Adgar (1997) means that it is the language barriers, at which the two languages do not have any networks of association in many situations of use, or "it is a particular place in one language that makes it so difficult to connect with the other language". Therefore, when second or foreign language learners learn the target language, namely English, they will operate within the target language system in connection with their native language; and as a result, their interlangauge seems to divert from the target language system.

On the other hand, some observations prove that second or foreign language learners produce errors that are not the result of their interlanguage systems. They attempt to express meanings in the target language even though they do not have sufficient target language competence. In order to get their meaning in the target language across, they may take a risk trying to use any word or phrase in the hope that they will get it right. In other words, learners may not be exposed to sufficient input or evidence in the target language (Littlewood, 1994).

Littlewood (1994) also draws attention to some second or foreign language learners' errors that are the product of teaching and materials. This can be seen in the fact that some EFL teachers provide learners with a wrong model of the English language. Pronunciation in the target language is an example. Moreover, in some EFL learning settings, EFL learners have been exposed to only one English language variety owing to the materials available for English language programs. For instance, the teacher would use only ready-made materials and textbooks in which only British or American English is used. In this case, the learners will internalize a particular target language system to form their interlanguage system. Therefore, forgetting other varieties of English language, they

may see that English is the language of one particular group of people. This will result in trouble and/or failure in communication by interlocutors from diverse cultures and backgrounds.

Method
The researcher qualitatively analyzed the recorded materials from interviews, group discussions, learners' presentations and other means of communication. He also analyzed written materials offered by his students. The study was conducted in one semester (18 weeks) of the English academic program in the English Department, the Institute of Foreign Languages, Royal University of Phnom Penh. The participants who were involved in the study are currently students in years two and three at the Institute. Some foreigners were interviewed in order to determine the intelligibility of the English language variety spoken and used by Cambodians.

The interviews were transcribed and the errors were analyzed by Littlewood's (1994) learning strategies: overgeneralization, language transfer, non-systematic errors, and errors due to the effect of teaching. In addition, the researcher followed the research methods utilized by Thomson (2001) with Japanese speakers. Thomson (2001) explored phonology, grammar, vocabulary, style, and classroom language that are used in Japan. The findings in this current study were used to suggest some characteristics of English language variety in Cambodia, and thereafter, the writer was able to draw both teachers and learners' attention to such language variety in teaching and learning processes. Four transcribed interviews are attached for reference (Appendix 1). For ethical reasons, the participants' names mentioned in the interviews are kept confidential. Thus, the participants are addressed as student A, student B, and so on.

Data analyses
Phonological features
Through observations and interviews with those involved, the author found that the most interesting point about a Cambodian English variety is the phonological factor which seems to be affected by

the non-equivalence in sound systems of the two languages – English and Khmer. The interviews with an Australian teacher, who has stayed in Cambodia for four months, and an American teacher, who has been teaching English in Cambodia for four years, show that most Cambodian learners and speakers of English language find pronouncing [th] and [sh] quite difficult. Instead of pronouncing [ð], they pronounce simple sound as [d], and [ø], or [ʃ] as [s]. Moreover, they are likely not to pronounce the ending sounds of a word and sometimes they would stress wrong syllable in the words in English. As an American teacher said in the interview

> . . . there're two problems for Khmer speakers: one is intonation. So you talk about in Khmer you say [table], this is a table [no stress]. In English we say [**Ta**ble], so we stress [**ta**] and we go down on [ble]. Another one is that Khmer do not pronounce clearly the end of the words. …when I first came here I never knew what they said because I never heard the end of the words. I can't understand what they said.

Student B (Appendix 1, Interview 4) displayed two instances of mistaken pronunciation, one of which is more serious, which could lead to misunderstanding. He pronounced /su∂/ for sure, not /ʃu∂/ (line 10), and he pronounced /hell/, rather than /help/ (line 24). Student B in Interview 2 (Appendix 1) also had this problem (line 16); he pronounced **[su∂]** for 'sure'.

Dropping [s] sound of and adding [s] sound to the ending of words

Kirkpatrick (2005) notices that a Cambodian teacher, who was taking a training course at the Regional English Language Center (RELC), Singapore, pronounced the ending sound /s/ to the words which are not supposed to have the /s/ sound at the end five times out of 76 tokens she spoke. In contrast, Student C in Interview 1 (Appendix 1), out of 236 tokens, dropped 8 ending /s/ sound where the /s/ sound is necessarily needed. For example, she dropped the /s/ sound in words such as *perhaps* (5), *questions* (9), *words* (13), *sometimes* (23, 24),

assignments (30), and *friends* (32, 33). Interestingly, Student B in Interview 3 (Appendix 1) also displayed these two cases. He dropped the ending /s/ sound where /s/ sound is needed and added the ending /s/ sound where the /s/ sound is not necessarily needed, such as in *ins* (8), *a part-time jobs* (12), *a –er- er- teachers* (12), *manys* (21), *reads mores* (22), *tos* (23), *mores* (23), *ands* (24), and *times* (28).

Dropping articles

Likewise, in marking Cambodian learners' 125 reflection papers, the researcher found that the most common errors made by these learners are those involving articles (a, an, the, and Ø article). They dropped the articles where necessary, they used the article unnecessarily, or they used wrong articles. For example, an introduction of one student's reflection paper stated:

> A short story, An Incident, was given me a valuable of life of human being after I read it. The story was set in China more than fifty years ago. The incident was happened at South Gate during the winter of 1917 when rickshaw man was hired for taking a rich man to South Gate. Suddenly, when old woman crossing the road, she had left the pavement without warning to cut across in front of the rickshaw. The main actor is rickshaw man who is the kindly gentleman. Another people are old woman, policeman and man who is hiring the rickshaw, rich man.

Khmer words that are transferred into English

Remarkably, some Khmer words are transferred into English words that are used for more formal communication as found in news report writing. The following extract that was taken from the Cambodia Daily (Vo. 38, Issue 82), the most popular newspaper written in English in Cambodia, shows one Khmer word (a word written in bold) that has been used commonly:

> A **prakas**, or directive, issued three years ago by the Ministry of Environment included

batteries in the list of toxic waste requiring special measures to protect the environment and people's health, the Ministry's Secretary of State said. (p. 25)

The following are some Khmer, non-English, words, which are transferred into English, and commonly used in communication in English: *prohok, kroma, chum reap sour, lok chum teav, samdech, oknha, neak oknha, amok, wat, moto doop, pchum ben, sechkdey samrech, kiosk,* to name a few.

Overgeneralized linguistic features

One interesting point is that in Interview 3 (Appendix 1), Student B used *five and a half* and *six and a half* to mean *half past five* or *five thirty* and *half past six* or *six thirty* (line 15) to talk about his part-time teaching job. This instance can be viewed as the interference of Khmer language when used to express time. In Khmer, Cambodians say *five half* instead of *half past five*. The most interesting instance can be seen in Interview 1 in line 31. Student C overgeneralized the use of *individually*. Perhaps she had been exposed to the extensive use of this adverb in a Teacher Training Program as students work in groups and/or work individually, so she started to form this adverb use by saying that *she lives individually*, rather than *she lives alone or away from her parents.*

Wrong word choice

One teacher of English at the Institute of Foreign Languages described his experience with his student who sent him a text message via his cell-phone saying that he was sorry for submitting his assignment late by encoding 'Thanks for your apology'. The misuse of this lexical item is due to the overgeneralization of the meaning and the use of the word. This student was not clear about the difference between 'sorry,' 'apology,' 'forgiveness,' and so on. He should have said that he was sorry for the late submission, and therefore, this student would thank his teacher for the permission to submit the assignment later than the due date.

Student B in Interview 4 (Appendix 1) made useful remarks that demonstrate the linguistic features in the English language in Cambodia. When asked what he was going to do after graduating from the Institute, he said he was "going to get the *constant studying* overseas" (line 16). When asked which country he would study in, he said "*which one is possible*" (line 20). It is not clear what he meant by "*constant studying*." According to the conversational context, he might have meant he would pursue higher education overseas. This results in ambiguity in decoding the messages during communication. In the second instance, the speaker said "*which country is possible*". We are not sure whether he meant whichever country, it does not matter, or he may have asked his interlocutor for a suggestion.

Tenses

Most Cambodian students and speakers of English are likely to use present simple tense, rather than present continuous tense, past tense, present perfect tense. In some other cases, they tend to switch tenses unnecessarily. Student B in Interview 3 (Appendix 1) used present simple tense in three instances (lines 4, 14 and 15) to mean the action that is happening. The following is an extract taken from one of the students' written reflection papers:

> It shows the responsibility of the rickshaw man. Rickshaw man **didn't find** his own way out because he **is** not selfish person. He **helps** other people when they **are** in trouble. He **take care** the old woman and **helped** her to get up. He **didn't hesitate** for a minute after the old woman **said** she **was** injured.

Active or passive voice

The findings also revealed that the Cambodian students in the sample were likely to use passive and active voices interchangeably. This is quite a common distinction between Cambodian students' and speakers of English.. The following extract was a part of an introduction of one of the students' written reflection papers. He used a passive voice to express the action that should be expressed in active voice.

This story involves an old woman, the rickshaw man and the writer. The main point is the rickshaw man **was hit** old woman but he **was not run** away even the rider still sit in rickshaw.

Subordinate conjunctions

Cambodians are likely to use both 'although/though /even though' and 'but' together in the same sentence. In addition, some of them use 'on the other hand' to add more information to their previous argument or ideas. This is another instance of the interference of Khmer language in learning English. This can be seen in the extract below:

> I think Richard's activities are not good. **Even though** he lives in poor family **but** he should not hide his background to everyone.

Interestingly, an Australian teacher, who has been exposed to Englishes spoken in Asian and Southeast Asian countries for a number of years, expressed that she was able to understand what Cambodians said in English because it was not significantly different from Englishes spoken by other Asian groups. An adviser who had worked for almost two years at the Institute of Foreign Languages stated that:

> . . .it took me quite a long time to understand why my [Cambodian] students used 'on the other hand' to add more ideas to their writing. I now understand that it's because of their mother tongue.

Prepositional phrases as subjects

A very common feature in Cambodian English is the use of a prepositional phrase as a subject of a sentence. This feature is also the result of interference of the native Khmer language. Cambodians drop the subjects of sentences when they are understood in the prepositional phrases. This can be seen in this extract: "**Through his activities** show that he is not honest child."

Intelligibility

A question whether a so-called new variety of English is both regionally and internationally accepted is not necessary, but whether this variety of English language is understood by other speakers of English language during communication events is the most important point for consideration. The interviews with foreigners, both non-native and native speakers of English language, show that at first they found it hard to understand what Cambodians say in English, but later when they got to know more about the English language spoken by Khmer people, they were more successful communicating.

Resulting recommendations for trends and directions of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Cambodia

The present situation and condition of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Cambodia is questionable. There seem to be no clear measures in controlling the quality of ELT. Within the last two decades of English language teaching, those with high English competence teach those with low English competence. To raise the awareness of Cambodians of such interlanguage development is not impossible. In any attempt to deal with this issue, one should understand the causes that have led to such learners' linguistic features of English. These certain linguistic features are caused by language transfer, overgeneralization, non-standard errors, and the effect of teaching.

Most of the features found in the earlier analyses are caused by language transfer (interference) and overgeneralization of the target language. For example, phonological features appear too distant from Standard English (American and / or British English), as those characteristics do not have equivalence in the learners or speakers' mother tongue, Khmer. Some other features, such as incorrect lexical choice, tenses, voices, and the like, have emerged due to the insufficient training or exposure to the language, or they may be caused by the ineffectiveness of teaching or training.

The phenomenon of acquiring or learning a second or a foreign language is seen to have taken place in

the same way as children acquire or learn their native language at home (Littlewood, 1994). Second or foreign language learners, thus, overgeneralize the target language system to which they have been exposed. The overgeneralized interlanguage systems will be reformulated when learners have been extensively exposed to the target language inputs and feedback raised by the teachers and other sources for language input. The quality of teaching and training English to students should be closely monitored so that teachers of English language will be able to facilitate and promote English language teaching and learning in Cambodia effectively. Learners' linguistic errors, which are seen as positive feedback for foreign language learning (Littlewood, 1994), should be utilized to focus on and improve learners' language production, including oral and written communication. Most significantly, Cambodians should be trained with communicative strategies to assist them in succeeding in communication. They should have more exposure to all varieties of English language in the world in order to substantially build up their schemata of World Englishes.

The current study has looked into the possibility of distinctive characteristics of Cambodian learners and speakers' of the English language. In order to be able to decide whether the English language spoken in Cambodia falls into one of the Asian Englishes, more in-depth studies on each particular linguistic feature should be implemented.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Cambodian English has developed remarkable features that seem to diverge from the native English language. All certain features found in the analyses above are phonological features: dropping ending sounds of words; adding [s] sound to the end of words; Khmer words transferred into English language; overgeneralized linguistic features; wrong word choice, tenses, and voice; and problems with subordinate conjunctions, prepositional phrases. These features are recognized as an aspect of learners' language development in the so-called language developmental stage. These features can lead to miscommunication if all are not comprehensible and intelligible to other speakers of

English in any form of communication. Significantly, any practice of English Language Teaching (ELT) should appropriately match the reality of the actual use of English language in Cambodia.

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Appendix 1
Interview 1

1. Student A: How are you today?
2. Student B: I am ok. (calling another student's name) You look so sad today!
3. Student C: Really? (1)
4. Student B: You don't talk much.
5. Student C: Perhap[s] last night I didn't sleep enough. (8)

   (Unclear sound)
6. Student C: I did my assignment for Applied Linguistics subject. (16)
7. Student D: Do you think it's hard for Applied Linguistics assignment?
8. Student C: Yes, it ['s] really hard for me because .er. it ['s] kind of a critique article and –er- I find doubt with some question[s] when I follow the format. (42)
10. Student D: Wow! How much do you read in order to do this assignment to complete this assignment?
12. Student C: First I read the –er- article that the teacher gave –er- one time for means for just reading but the second time –er- for difficult word[s] and the third time for understanding. (74)
15. Student D: Wow! So beside taking the training course here, what else are you doing? For example, you have a job or?
17. Student C: Ah! Yes. I also have a job but now I quit because of I cannot manage the time. (92)
19. Student D: How many hours have you read –er- do you read –er- for your class, for example?
21. Student C: Er- you mean the class here? (98)
22. Student D: The class here.
23. Student C: Ok. –er- mean –er- sometime[s] for the assignment I spend in the afternoon to read it sometime[s] I spend but I cannot finish it because –er- when I get stuck I get heada**che**. (141)
25. Student D: Ok. So do you spend some time –er---er- in the afternoon after reading the sources for your classes talking to your friends by phone or any means of communication?
28. Student C: Er- I can tell you that –erm- I –erm- busy in my study and my work because –erm- you know I in the afternoon I spend time doing some –er- assignment[s] and –er- I also do some my housework because –er- I live **individual-ly** in my house. So I need to prepare everything in my house that's why I cannot have much time to talk with friend[s] or communicate with friend[s]. (212)
34. Student D: Ok. How often do you do you contact them?
35. Student C: Erm- usually only when I am asked to work **individual** and I have the difficulty with the assignment and need –er- their explanation. (236)
37. Student D: Er- how do you communicate –er- you're going to them directly or you write an email or ….(the conversation was cut off).

Interview 2

1. Student A: Hello, (call student B's name).
2. Student B: Yes. (1)
3. Student A: Well, how are you doing so far?
4. Student B: Oh, I'm doing well. (5)
5. Student A: Ok. Very good. Well, I think we haven't met [meid] each other for very long time, right?
7. Student B: Yes. (6)
8. Student A: I'd like to know about your study this year. What ..what.. do you think of your study in year 3?
10. Student B: I think that it is –er- so difficult for me because every subject is very hard to understand.
12. Student A: Is it hard because you're busy yourself or because .. because.. the subject[s] are really difficult to learn?
14. Student B: Hmm, both, I think both.

15. Student A: Do you have to do any choir job at home like cleaning house or cooking?

16. Student B: Yes, sure **[su∂]**. I do a lot of housework in the house, and part-time job no but I hmm ..

18. Student A: Do your parents have a business?

19. Student B: Huh?

20. Student A: Do your parents have any business?

21. Student B: No don't have.

22. Student A: So what does your mother do?

23. Student B: (silent)

24. Student A: What does your mother do?

25. Student B: Urh, she a seller, sell in the market.

26. Student A: What does she sells?

27. Student B: Pork and beef.

28. Student A: Pork seller, right? –Er- what do you like doing in your free time?

29. Student B: I like sit in the class late listening to music and sometime[s] –er- singing.

30. Student A: Singing, ok. Very good to relieve stress. –Er- do you like reading in your free time?

32. Student B: Er- in fact, I don't like reading. That's why my reading is so poor.

33. Student A: Er- why?

34. Student B: I don't know. When I open my book it …how… I don't like. I don't know too.

36. Student A: You know yourself that if you do a lot of reading, you can improve your general knowledge as well as your English?

38. Student B: Yes, I know but if –er- I like listening if they have a cassette that I have to listen … is good.

40. Student A: So do you have any plans for your study this year?

41. Student B: Urh. Yes, I have to pass all exam …

42. Student A: Anything else?

43. Student B: Hmm, to have higher mark[s] than year two.

Interview 3

1. Student A: So let's start. What's your name?

2. Student B: My name (telling his name).

3. Student A: So where are you studying?

4. Student B: Er- I study at IFL.

5. Student A: What year are you in right now?

6. Student B: Oh. I am in year three now.

7. Student A: So have you got any plans for the future after you graduate from IFL?

8. Student B: Oh, yes, I have a plan to be I want –er- to be –er- lecturer in**s** some universitie[s] I want to teach English in universitie[s].

10. Student A: Oh, great! So I wish you can achieve your goals. Er- do you have any work right now?

12. Student B: Er- I just have a part-time job**s** as a –er- er- teacher**s** of English.

13. Student A: Where are you teaching?

14. Student B: Er- I'm teach at (telling the name of the school) –er- just –er- I'm just teach –er- **from 5 and a half and to –er- 6 and a half.**

16. Student A: How long have you been teaching in there?

17. Student B: Nearly one year.

18. Student A: Nearly one year. Regarding to your study at IFL, do you have any difficulties or problems?

20. Student B: Yes. In fact the study always have a difficulty but –er- in –er- my study in IFL I face some of problems such as –er- er- many**s** document[s] I have to read**s** more**s** such –er- more such for example I have to**s** search for more**s** book[s] for develop myself but I think I don't have enough time for me to work and**s** study at the same time.

25. Student A: Ok. Beside your problems at school, how about your family or your problem with your girlfriend?

27. Student B: Oh! My family is ok but now I don't have –er- a girlfriend yet because I don't have times …

29. Student A: You don't have time to devote for her, right?
30. Student B: Yes, so that means now I am available (laughing)
31. Student A: Ok thank you very much.

Interview 4

1. Student A: So good morning!
2. Student B: Good morning, sir.
3. Student A: So what's your name?
4. Student B: Er- I am (telling his name).
5. Student A: (Confirming student B's name).
6. Student B: Yes.
7. Student A: Are you … where are you studying?
8. Student B: I'm studying at the IFL. Now I am the year 3 student.
9. Student A: Good. Er- well, have you got any plans after you graduate from IFL?
10. Student B: Sure **[su∂]**. The first one I'm going to become the professor at IFL it is my first project, first plan –er- what I'm planning to study and graduating from IFL.
13. Student A: Wow, a good great goal. So after you graduate and become, let say, a lecturer at IFL, what are you going to do next, getting married something like that?

16. Student B: No, not yet. I don't hope so. I'm going to get the **constant studying** oversea[s] right? Maybe it is kind**s** of scholarship.
18. Student A: Ah, so which country do you wish to study in?
19. Student B: According to the situation. Er**- can be to another country** – yes- **which one is possible.**
21. Student A: Well, apart from study, in your free time, what do you like doing?
22. Student B: Yeah, in my free time I –er- I like reading book[s] at my study room and watching television mostly talking about something that help**[hell]**[s] to understand about the education in Cambodia and oversea[s].
26. Student A: Oh good. Well, the last question. Have you decided to join the wedding party this evening?
28. Student B: (laughing)

Moves and strategies in Letters of Application by a group of Cambodian college graduates

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Abstract
Effective letters of application play a significant role in determining success of second or foreign language learners in obtaining their intended employment. Letters of application, however, received relatively little attention from researchers and only a small number of studies on this genre have been conducted. The current study analyzed 22 letters of applications for lectureship at the Institute of Foreign Languages, Cambodia. Following the analysis scheme suggested by Henry and Roseberry (2001), the study found that Cambodian applicants wrote their letters with a good observation of the target discourse conventions. No pattern was observed for the move orders among the sampled letters, which differed from one another at both move and strategy levels. Based on the study findings, implications for teaching writing, especially letters of application, were explored.

Introduction
With attempts to help elevate the efficacy of language learning within the Genre Analysis framework, defined as "the study of how language is used in a particular context, such as business correspondence, legal writing, staff meetings, etc." (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, p. 224), many genre analyses in different disciplines and professions in second language (L2) contexts have been conducted. Among the works found in this tradition are the studies which aim to identify "moves" of a genre, defined as "functions (or communicative intentions) which particular portions of the text realize in relationship to the overall task…" (Upton & Connor, 2001, p. 317), which could be beneficial for the target group of learners (Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Swales, 1990; Swales & Feak, 1994; Thompson, 1994). Theses genre analyses contribute their findings to improving the learning of L2 in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) field. One of the most significant approaches used in this group

of genre studies is the often-cited Swales (1990) procedure in English academic and research settings.

Another group of researchers (Bhatia, 1993; Gledhill, 2000; Henry & Roseberry, 1996; Okamura & Shaw, 2000; Upton & Connor, 2001) have been more interested in English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). Bhatia (1993) appeared to be one of the first researchers to investigate this ESP tradition. In addition to identifying moves of the focused genres, this group of analysts has also identified "strategies", the ways speakers or writers use to achieve the identified moves (Bhatia, 1993).

Related research
Bhatia (1993), who viewed letters of application as closely related to sales promotion letters, categorized such letters into promotional genres which also included different forms of advertisements, brochures and leaflets. Based on

functions and communicative purposes of different parts of an application letter, she identified seven moves, most (if not all) of which could be found in a typical application letter – *Establishing credentials*, *Introducing candidature*, *Offering incentives*, *Enclosing documents*, *Soliciting response*, *Using pressure tactics*, and *Ending politely*. In the first move, writers were observed to make references to job advertisements and highlight their strengths, which matched the position for which the applicant was applying. In *Introducing candidature*, three smaller elements could be found. Writers generally offered their candidacy, indicating that they would like to apply for the vacant position advertised, and then provided essential details of the candidacy. For the third move, *Offering incentives*, writers would demonstrate the value of their candidacy, stressing that they would be able to meet the requirements of the job in terms of "qualifications, relevant experience, personal attributes, strength of character, etc…" (Bhatia, 1993, p. 65). Move four, *Enclosing documents,* would function to explain the purpose of an application letter, emphasizing that the letter would be just the highlights of the relevant information about the applicant and could be supported with the documents enclosed. In move five, the applicant explicitly or implicitly verbalizes his or her request for an interview, or what Lesikar (1984, as cited in Bhatia, 1993) suggested was a way in which the author could invite additional correspondence, possibly in order to answer questions. Next, as an optional move, *Using pressure tactics* was observed to be very rare, since this move would pressure the potential employer to make a quick decision regarding the applicant's candidature. The last move, *Ending politely*, would function to express gratitude and goodwill toward the readers. Bhatia (1993) argued that this move was crucial. In addition to the moves, Bhatia (1993), based on her previous study of 200 application letters written by South Asian writers, underscored the potential influence of socio-cultural or cognitive predispositions on different writers in employing specific strategies to self-advertise in letters of application.

Later, to extend Bhatia's (1993) tentative identification of the textual structure of an application letter, Henry and Roseberry (2001) conducted a corpus analysis of forty letters of application for different positions, written by native English speakers from America, Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. Their study focused on two levels of analyses – moves (the first level) and strategies (the second level) used to achieve those moves. The analysis was conducted manually to identify moves in fourteen of the sampled letters. Coding of the recognizable moves was based on the analyses conducted by Henry and Roseberry (2001) and the extensively discussed analyses of six lecturers and their students at an English and Applied Linguistics department. Prior to the training to analyze the fourteen sampled letters of applications, those lecturers and students had already experienced analyzing another genre, *Brief Tourist Information*, using a similar procedure. This experience helped increase the coding reliability. In more detail than Bhatia (1993), Henry and Roseberry (2001) found eleven moves and developed a move-analyzing framework on which the current study bases itself (See Henry & Roseberry, 2001, for the detail categorization of the moves). Interestingly, to observe specific strategies used to realize each move, the Wordsmith Suite was utilized, resulting in identification of most frequent and important words for various strategies.

In the same year, Upton and Connor (2001) conducted multi-level analyses of 153 application letters written by Belgian, Finnish and American undergraduate students who mostly took Business Communication courses or had some lessons in Business Communication. Upton and Connor (2001), guided by Swales (1990), used a coding scheme with some modification to manually detect moves found in those letters. In some similar ways to Bhatia (1993) and Henry and Roseberry (2001), Upton and Connor (2001) found seven moves in their sampled letters (See Upton & Connor, 2001, for the complete explanation of the seven moves and their functions). On another level of analysis, the 153 letters were scanned to create a computerized corpus, which was then analyzed quantitatively by using the concordancing program Wordsmith Version 2.0 (1997). Distinctively, in order to find out cross-cultural differences among the three groups of writers as reflected in their

application letters, Upton and Connor went on to analyze politeness strategies found in two moves (*Requesting an interview* and *Giving thanks for consideration*).

Research objectives

The current study was partly motivated by the observation that letters of application had not received enough attention from genre analysts and little research work had been conducted on this genre (Upton & Connor, 2001). The study also stemmed from the author's interests in finding out the ways recently graduated Cambodian applicants wrote their application letters in English. As far as the published literature is concerned, there have not been any empirical studies partly or fully devoted to analyzing this genre from Cambodian writers' perspectives. The study would, thus, be significant not only in terms of rhetorical findings but also pedagogical benefits for teaching writing to Cambodian students, especially in the contexts of English for Specific Purposes. With these motivating factors, the current study aims to investigate into the following issues:

1. What common and uncommon moves and strategies did a group of Cambodian recent college graduates use in writing their letters to apply for lectureship at the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL)?
2. What linguistic features were commonly found in strategies used to achieve the identified moves?
3. What contexts of Cambodian culture could be observed in the sampled letters?

Methodology

The current study analyzed 22 letters of application for 2003 lectureship at the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL), Cambodia. The writers of these letters were recent college graduates with Bachelor of Education (TEFL)degrees from the IFL earlier that year. With their four-year extensive English training at IFL, the writers were assumed to be advanced learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Application letters were on the writers' curriculum at the IFL and the applicants were assumed to have had abundant training and practice in producing this particular genre.

These letters were selected because they were readily available and could be retrieved from the archives without too much difficulty, and using the 2003 batch letters would ensure that there was a reasonable time gap between the study and the submission of the letters to ensure confidentiality. The letters were scanned and emailed as attachments to the researcher. For confidentiality purposes, any information that could possibly lead to identification of the writers and specific readers of the letters was discarded. Typically, such letters would be written with such addressees as Director of the IFL, Head or Deputy Head of English Department at the IFL. Only the parts starting from *salutations* "Dear (without names or titles)" until *closings* (e.g., Yours Sincerely) were analyzed in the study.

As a requirement, applicants were asked to submit their letters of interest, include their detail résumés, and enclose as many relevant supporting documents as possible. *Letters of interest* were judged to be interchangeable with *letters of application* and the current study, according to the situation described, did not make a distinction between the two types, or rather two names, of letters. However, it is the term *letter(s) of application* that is used throughout this study. The sampled letters were found to vary in length, ranging from being as short as seven sentences to being as long as 22 sentences. This variation would lead to a tentative prediction that some letters would include more moves than others.

Analysis

Analysis was guided by a combined manual coding system derived from the methods used by Henry and Roseberry (2001) and Upton and Connor (2001). The categorization of the moves and strategies as well as other lexico-grammatical features was done by the researcher alone. To partly compensate for the absence of others to categorize these features, the researcher categorized and analyzed each textual element twice with an interval of one day between the first and second analyses. In the case that different categorizations were found in both analyses, the author referred back to the original letters and tracked down the contexts as well as the actual purposes and functions those elements served. Paltridge (1994) noted that "some boundaries between units remain indeterminate,

either because of poor writing, or because the writer deliberately obscures boundaries in order to make the prose more 'flowing.' " Frequencies of occurrences of each move and strategy were counted and lexico-grammatical features were recorded manually to find out which of them were used recurrently and significantly enough to be analyzed fully.

Coding schemes of the study

Guided by Bhatia (1993), Henry and Roseberry's (2001) scheme was the main framework used to identify the moves in the sampled application letters for the current study (Table 1). Because Henry and Roseberry (2001) analyzed application letters by native speakers of English, their coding scheme would conceivably be a acceptable baseline for the current study for comparative analysis. Moreover, they, usefully, suggested an allowable order of these moves in a typical application letter.

Table 1.   Moves of the Letter of Application, their definitions and frequencies

Moves	*Descriptions*
Opening (O)	The writer identifies the target and invites the target to read the letter.
Referring to Job Advertisements (JA)	The writer refers to the advertisement in which the position was named and described.
Offering Candidacy (OC)	The writer states an interest in applying for the position.
Stating Reasons for Applying (RA)	The writer gives reasons for wanting the position.
Stating Availability (SA)	The writer indicates when he or she would be able to take up the position.
Promoting the Candidacy (PC)	The writer presents selected information demonstration qualifications and abilities relevant to the desired position.
Stipulating Terms and Conditions of Employment (TC)	The writer indicates expectations regarding salary, working hours, and other relevant contractual matters.
Naming Referees (NR)	The writer names referees who will support the candidate.
Enclosing Documents (ED)	The writer lists documents enclosed with the letter.
Indicating Desire for an Interview (DI)	The writer states intentions to gain an opportunity for an interview.
Polite Ending (PE)	The writer ends the letter in a conventional manner.
Signing Off (SO)	The writer signs his or her name in a respectful manner, thus claiming ownership of the letter.

Adapted from Henry and Roseberry (2001)

Noticeably, one additional move was included into the coding scheme – *Indicating Desire for an Interview (DI)*. This move was identified by Upton & Connor (2001) and will be identified as an independent move separately from *Polite Ending (PE)*.

Results and Discussion

Expectedly, all 22 letters included O, OC, PC, and SO (Table 2), all of which were found by Henry and

Roseberry (2001) to be obligatory. Two letters, however, did not include a PE but appeared to extensively use other moves instead. In those 22 letters, moves were achieved by different strategies with the use of generally varied linguistic resources, although, in a few cases, they were indicated by formulaic linguistic expressions. Most letters were started with a JC or OC but proceeded with different move orders. As a result, no common move order could be detected among the sampled letters.

Table 2.   Moves of the Letter of Application and their frequencies

Moves	Number of cases of each move which occurred in the 22 sampled letters
Opening (O)	22
Referring to Job Advertisements (JA)	16
Offering Candidacy (OC)	22
Stating Reasons for Applying (RA)	16
Stating Availability (SA)	0
Promoting Candidacy (PC)	22
Stipulating Terms and Conditions of Employment (TC)	0
Naming Referees (NR)	1
Enclosing Documents (ED)	17
Indicating Desire for an Interview (DI)	18
Polite Ending (PE)	20
Signing Off (SO)	22

In many cases, there were no textual boundaries that constrained the development of certain moves, as applicants opted to mix two or more moves together. And it was not surprising that one sentence would contain more than one move. Interestingly, one letter presented the writer's qualifications, related skills and experience as bullets and many incomplete sentences were evident. Dissection of this letter into sentences had to be completed by detecting periods (*.*). As a result, a word phrase was also analyzed as a sentence. As predicted, although it was not always true, different lengths did help determine the number, but not the types, of moves in each letter. To support various claims and propositions, certain parts of the letters will be quoted and presented directly in the following section as they were without any correction or amendment.

Analysis of moves and strategies

Referring to job advertisements (JA)

This move was present in 16 letters and was used in two different ways – separate from or combined with the OC. The fact that this move was strictly confined to the first sentence of a letter indicated that a letter did not have a JA if it did not mention the JA in its first sentence. Only three letters started with a pure identification of sources of information from which the applicants found out about the job vacancy for which the applicant was applying. The other 13 letters appeared to embed a JA in the OC, with the JA playing a subordinate role to support the applicants' preliminary statement of candidacy. The opening sentence from Letter 4 would illustrate this point:

> With reference to the announcement (July 26, 2003) for more lecturers of English at the Institute of Foreign Languages, English Department, I would like to express my interest in applying for an on-contract lecturer.

Offering candidacy (OC)

One letter did not state explicitly the applicant's intention to be a candidate considered for the job being advertised:

> As I enter my final semester here at IFL in pursuit of my Bachelor of Education, I am exploring possible option for employment after graduation.

Understandably, the applicant implied the OC but in a very indirect manner. The writer might have tried to indicate his or her long-term desire for lectureship at IFL. This indirectness, however,

could have been obscured by the selection of lexico-grammatical elements and the applicant's intention might not have been conveyed successfully. In several other cases, the OC was stated in a form of applicants' interests in the lectureship, with or without the explicit follow-up statement of an OC. Letter 8 had its opening as:

> This letter is in response to the announcement on June 26, 2003 seeking 8 lecturers to fill the teaching position at your institute.

On the one hand, this sentence made a reference to the job advertisement. On the other hand, it implicitly suggested the writer's application and thus candidacy for the job. An alternative to this strategy was found in many letters in which the OC was introduced together with the JA, with or without a follow-up sentence stating the OC even more explicitly:

> I read with interest your memorandum or recruitment of on-contract lecturers on June 26, 2003. I am herewith tending for the post of on-contract lecturer at your institute.

There were three cases in which the OC, as an opening of the letters, was stated directly. A good example was "I am writing to apply for the on-contract English lecturer position at the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL)."

Stating reasons for applying (RA)
As found in Henry and Roseberry (2001), not every writer of the sampled letters explained reasons for his or her application, despite the employer's indirect statement in the advertisement to receive a "letter of interest" from the applicants. The absence of RA could probably be attributed to the authors' overwhelming intention to strongly promote their candidacy. This is perfectly true in Letter 13, the longest, which was observed to heavily highlight the applicant's qualifications, skills and experiences, without any reference to reasons for application. Some of the common strategies used to achieve this move included *Indicating benefits for the applicant* and *Showing a match with the applicant's interests*. The latter strategy was much more common, possibly due to cultural perceptions,

as many applicants perceived the former to be of personal benefit for themselves rather than the employers.

Promoting the candidacy
This obligatory move appeared to be most important in most, if not all, of the letters and received so much focus that the applicants devoted many of their sentences and paragraphs to this end, trying to convince the potential employer that they were a candidate worth considering for the job or at least for an interview. As suggested by Henry and Roseberry (2001), the applicants used various strategies to accomplish this move: *Listing relevant skills, abilities*, *Stating how skills, abilities and experiences were obtained*, *Listing qualifications*, *Naming present job*, *Predicting success*, *Giving reasons for leaving present job*, and *Demonstrating knowledge of target situation*. Observably, the sixth and seventh strategies were the least common, with only one applicant giving reasons for leaving his or her job and six others explaining certain knowledge of the target situation. The applicants implied without saying that, once they were accepted by the employer, they would resign from their current job and the employer was expected to understand this. The applicants also might have felt that it would be more appropriate to discuss these issues orally in the interviews.

Enclosing documents (ED)
Seventeen letters pointed out the enclosure of applicants' résumés and/or other supporting documents. Frequently, an indirect reference was made to this move to boost the applicants' elaboration on their credentials, as in Letter 3, "From my curriculum vitae that is attached, you will see that I have been teaching English since 1997…" On other occasions, ED played a more important role as a separate move, as in Letter 11, "A résumé giving details of my qualification and experience is attached.", or was expressed through the simple "Enclosure" or "Enc.". Although ED appeared towards the end of the letter, its fixed position could not be determined.

Indicating desire for an interview (DI)
This is the most common optional move that, in many cases, expressed the applicant's optimism

about the possible future opportunities for interviews. Many strategies were used, but they could loosely be classified into two categories in terms of whether applicants requested an interview or left it to the employer's decision. The former would be expressed, as in Letter 8, as "I would like to have an opportunity to meet with you personally to discuss your requirements for the position", whereas the latter would sound less authoritative, as in Letter 15, "I sincerely hope that you would grant me an interview at any time convenient to you." Worth noting is the fact that, while few applicants chose to indicate a DI independently of other moves, the DI was often combined with the PE, as in the case of Letter 14, "I am looking forward to being granted an interview." This sentence combines "I am looking forward to…", what Henry and Roseberry (2001) called a *Welcoming response* (a strategy for *Polite Ending*), with "…being granted an interview", what Upton and Connor (2001) called a DI. The current study considered this sentence as consisting of two moves – a PE and a DI.

Polite ending (PE)
This move could be achieved in four main ways: *Welcoming response*, *Inviting favorable consideration*, *Thanking*, and *Offering to provide further information*. In most letters, at least two of the strategies were employed, making the ending of the letters serve several purposes. A *Welcoming response* was most commonly used, followed by *thanking*, which almost half of the letters included.

Stating availability (SA), stipulating terms and conditions of employment (TC) and naming referees (NR)
These are three moves that were found to be rare by Henry & Roseberry (2001) and almost non-existent in the current study. None of the 22 sampled letters included a SA nor a TC and only one applicant mentioned a reference to further support his or her candidacy, "Also, I received letter of Recommendation from Newton Thilay Institute where I worked as a teacher of English for more than two years." This very low frequency of NR instances could suggest that NR in application letters may be an uncommon practice, since it is already included in the applicants' résumés. As for

the absence of a SA, there might have been some truth to the assumption that the applicants thought it was too soon to suggest in the letters their availability for the job, when they had not had an interview yet. Regarding the TC, the applicants might have perceived appropriately the differences in status and relation between themselves and their potential employer. The applicants could have considered themselves, to a certain extent, to be of a lower status than the employer, and would not explicitly demand the opportunity to negotiate terms and conditions of the job for which they did not yet have an interview. To the applicants, the TC, instead of helping encourage the employer to see their eagerness and desire for the job, might offend the employer in some way and negatively affect their candidacy .

Linguistic features of PC and PE
Only two important moves received extended treatment and discussion of their linguistic features in this subsection. Expectedly, the richness in linguistic forms of these two moves would yield significant insights into the linguistic features typical of each strategy.

Promoting candidacy (PC)
The analysis preliminarily suggested that the applicants generally made use of lexico-grammatical resources variedly, although some formulaic expressions could be observed. Bhatia's (1993) observation that in application letters, applicants try to promote themselves as they promote products in promotional letters is well supported in the current study as overwhelming focus was observably directed towards the applicants themselves in all of the sampled letters. This case is reflected in the heavy use of subject pronoun *I* to start many of the sentences. The relevant suggestion here is that this practice is common and not problematic, but applicants are recommended not to overuse *I*. It would be desirable to vary their written structures when necessary so as to break the monotony in the letters. The first five of the strategies used in PC were lexico-grammatically analyzed in more detail; the other two strategies were not common enough to be analyzed.

Table 3.   List of moves that can be accomplished by different strategies

Moves	Strategies (Number of cases each strategy occurred in the 22 sampled letters)
Promoting Candidacy (PC)	Listing relevant skills, abilities and experience (20)
	Stating how skills, abilities and experiences were obtained (20)
	Listing qualifications (20)
	Naming the present job (11)
	Predicting success (10)
	Giving reasons for leaving present job (1)
	Demonstrating knowledge of target situation (6)
Polite Ending (PE)	Welcoming response (13)
	Inviting favorable consideration (7)
	Thanking (9)
	Offering to provide further information (5)

Listing relevant skills, abilities and experience
As commonly used as the next two strategies explained below, this strategy was generally realized by the use of simple present tense or present perfect, as in the following structure:

> *I + present simple/ present perfect + experience in + NP*

To positively provide a self-evaluation as suitable for the lectureship, many applicants used the structure:

> *I + think/feel that + I + am + Adj. (qualified) + for NP or + to Verb*

The adjective *qualified* was very frequently used to show the match between the applicant's qualifications and the lectureship. Interestingly, instead of hedging to make claims less emphatic, a few applicants indicated strong solidarity with their statements through the use of adverbs, as in:

> "I strongly believe that I am qualified for the applied position."

> "I am absolutely convinced that I am well qualified to work as a lecturer of English at…"

Although emphatic structures could help show the applicants' confidence and certainty, they could also cause the applicants' propositions to appear overstated and boastful, which may lead to a negative result for the application. Applicants should consider whether to hedge or solidify carefully if the right degree of emphasis is to be achieved. Moreover, instead of using listing conjunctions (first, second, etc.), *also* was widely and frequently used to join phrases and even sentences. Other conjunctions (*Besides*, *therefore*, and *in addition to*) were also present but not as commonly used.

Stating how skills, abilities and experiences were obtained
Contrary to Henry and Roseberry's (2001) findings that past simple was the dominant tense used to describe how they obtained skills, abilities and experiences, Cambodian writers were observed to use a mixture of tenses, in many cases, inconsistently. Whereas a few applicants might have chosen to use present simple and present perfect purposefully to relate their previous jobs to the lectureship for which they were applying, inconsistency of tenses was assumed to result from the applicants' insufficient linguistic knowledge of English tenses. Generally, specific time phrases

("From 1995 to 1999") were used as many times as chronology conjunctions ("During my stay in Australia," "later," and the like) to link one case of narrated experience or skill training to another.

The following quote from letter 10 represents one of the most noticeable structures used for this move, "Nowadays, I have taught English to students who are in level Heady Intermediate and Upper-Intermediate at Institute of American English."

> *(Time phrases) + I + Verb (not necessarily past simple) + NP + place phrases + (time phrases)*

In addition, many applicants chose to present their skills, abilities and experience at different degrees of importance. Adverbial phrases such as *essentially*, *most importantly*, *more significantly*, etc. were quite commonly used when applicants needed to set their significant attributes above the rest presented.

Listing qualifications

Such verbs as "graduated", "completed", etc. were preferred to the verb "have" in presenting professional, academic and technical qualifications, "I recently completed a four-year Bachelor of Education course at the IFL". More creatively, a few writers started their sentences with the qualifications themselves, as in "My Bachelor of Education in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language proves my main qualification which fits this position perfectly." Such an approach could be advantageous in that it not only lists qualifications of the applicants but also explains how the qualifications match the job advertised.

Naming present job

In many cases, "currently" was used together with present continuous, whereas such expressions of long duration as "Since 1999 . . " and "From 2001 until now, . . . " were used with present perfect continuous to indicate the applicants' current employment. The structure "I am a secretary…" was almost non-existent in all the letters analyzed. Most probably, there was a certain level of tendency to describe actions and processes rather states of employment.

Predicting success

In the 10 cases found, "With the combination of…" was very oftentimes used to state how the applicants would be able to contribute to improving the target workplace upon being accepted by the employer, as in Letter 15 "With the combination of experiences, very good practicum results…and particularly my strong desire to do the job, I am sure that I can help make the institute become more prosperous and famous". Moreover, the applicants appeared to either directly express predicting success with a structure like "I am certain that I will be an asset to your institute" or more indirectly with "I am confident that my experience would help me contribute to the work in your institute." Applicants commonly emphasized their confidence with adjectives "confident", "convinced" and "certain." Few, probably as a result of unawareness or unwillingness, used hedging devices to mitigate their claims.

Polite ending (PE)

This move was identified to be more patterned, with a few easily recognizable expressions, but still individualized when a combination of more than one PE strategies was used.

Welcoming response

This is the most frequently used strategy to end the letters politely. The formulaic expressions "I am looking forward to/ look forward to hearing from you" and "I hope to hear from you soon" were common, either used alone or in combination with other strategies.

Inviting favorable consideration

Usually starting with "I hope," this strategy, *Inviting favorable consideration,* was used to seek favorable consideration from the potential employer, as in "I hope my application will receive your favorable perusal and consideration…". This strategy was, in a few cases, combined with other PE strategies with the conjunction "and", as in "…sincerely hope that you would consider my application compassionately and give me the opportunity of an interview."

Thanking

Conventionally, though not true for all the cases, applicants would show their gratitude toward the

readers of the letters for their reading and consideration. This strategy is generally expressed directly with the "Thank you" expressions toward the end of the letter, usually in the last sentence or the sentence before the last, "I thank you in kind anticipation of your response". It should be noted that this quote also contains *Inviting favorable response*, suggesting that *Thanking* could be combined with other PE strategies as well.

Offering to provide further information
Only five applicants made use of this strategy to end their letters. While two applicants included their telephone numbers, others chose to be more vocal through such an implication as "I shall be pleased to provide any further information you may need…"

Contexts of Cambodian cultures in the sampled letters
Cambodian culture could have exerted its influence on the ways the applicants promoted their candidacy and ended their letters in two main aspects – politeness and directness. Interestingly, the fact that not every applicant expressed gratitude for his or her readers at the end of the letter could more logically be attributed to the applicant's intention to make the letter less personal, rather than showing insufficient respect or politeness. In addition, it has been observed that, to some Cambodian applicants, "Thank you for your consideration" tends to denote the meaning of "Thank you for your consideration, anyway", suggesting the applicants' lack of confidence in being accepted for an interview. The applicants who did not make use of this strategy might apparently have thought of this consequence and decided to only end their letters with a *Welcoming response* and/or other strategies.

On the other hand, a line could be drawn between two groups of the applicants, with one being direct in putting forward their propositions and arguments, whereas the other was holding back and adding certain levels of mitigation to their letters. As typical in most Asian cultures, Cambodian writers have generally been observed to insert much indirectness in their writings, for example, to request for an interview opportunity, as directness could be considered to be face-threatening and, in

serious cases, offensive. However, when it came to English application letters written by IFL college graduates, there were many exceptional cases. Presumably, the writers had probably gained much knowledge of the discourse conventions of application letters in English, which enabled them to write their letters with a high level of professionalism and directness, minimizing Cambodian cultural influence on their writings.

Another noticeable feature which most Cambodian writers appeared not to make enough use of is to hedge and distance themselves from their claims and arguments. Most of the applicants in the study heavily stressed their confidence in being able to meet the job requirements and in requesting for interview opportunities. On a separate yet relatable note, Swales (1996), who analyzed application letters written to accompany articles submitted to a social science journal, asserted that non-native writers "were more inclined to use the letter to emphasize their professional status, and to aggravate their request for attention by asking for a response soon or as soon as possible" (in Okaru & Shaw, 2000, p. 3). It could be too early to conclude that strong solidarity in the sampled letters was the result of Cambodian cultural influence. The non-nativeness of the writers could also have been a potential contributing factor.

Conclusions and implications
In analyzing letters of application, knowledge about the use of formulaic expressions and linguistic features typical of certain moves and strategies is vital but insufficient. Functions and communicative purposes are still important extra-linguistic elements that are to be taken into consideration if accuracy in classifying moves and strategies is to be obtained. In other words, formal elements would have to be balanced with their textual functions and communicative purposes in light of the context, situation, and culture.

Following this principle, the current study found that Cambodian applicants wrote their letters with a relatively accurate observation of the target discourse conventions. The 22 application letters analyzed differed from one another at both move and strategy levels. However, although no move order could be observed, those letters contained

most (if not all) of the moves which Henry and Roseberry (2001) identified to be typical of an application letter written by a native speaker of English.

A larger and more obvious difference could be detected when the analysis was directed towards the linguistic features Cambodian applicants employed in achieving the intended moves in their letters. Without considering some grammatical mistakes, those applicants differed from one another, as reflected in their selection of their linguistic resources, in terms of directness and politeness strategies. However, what factors – cultural, professional and/or personal – might have contributed to the differences could only be suggested but not concluded.

What is also interesting is the fact that the use of several formulaic expressions at the sentence level did not result in a formulaic organization of the sampled letters. The differences in organization of those letters conceivably reflected the different ways those writers were taught to write application letters. Apparently, different writers were influenced by different writing conventions: American, British or Australian (or even a combination of the three). From a pedagogical perspective, these differences, in a way, reflected the variation in both content and approaches adopted in teaching Academic Writing at the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL). On the one hand, this mixture would optimize students' creativity and would expose students to the target discourse conventions practiced by multiple discourse community members. On the other hand, this mixture could result in students' unconventional combination of styles, formats, moves and strategies in their writings.

From the study findings, the following pedagogical implications could be drawn. First, students need to be made aware that writing a successful letter in a specific genre, particularly such a professional example such as an application letter, requires specialized writing skills in addition to their general writing skills. One recommendable approach to equipping students with such skills is to teach them how to accomplish the obligatory moves of the target genres through appropriate strategies, using their available linguistic resources. Usefully, rhetorical and lexico-grammatical features could

possibly be taught specifically in accordance with specific moves and genres instead of general contexts. In addition, it would also be necessary to raise students' awareness of the multiple contributing factors that determine the success of their writing. Their purpose, target audience, context of the situation, and context of culture all require special attention. In addition, learners should also know that, in the professional world in which a genre such as application letters is applied in specialized contexts, it is corporate cultures that play the key role. Such subcultures pose great restrictions on the ways students could select their linguistic resources to construct, interpret and use the target genre. It is, therefore, also worthwhile to prepare students for such a challenging task. Using authentic materials together with real task-specific simulations in the classroom would help expose students to their target discourse community and help them acquire conventions necessary for them to construct acceptable genres in their community when they start their professional lives. The principle here is to bring the concepts of discourse community into the classrooms, practice them and bridge the gap between students' abilities and language proficiency to the professional and disciplinary conventions.

As for the Cambodian context, the current study was to be exploratory in both its nature and parameter and was constrained by a number of limitations. First, only 22 letters written by recent college graduates were analyzed and the selection of the letters was far from being possibly bias-free. Second, ideally, inter-coding should have been adopted and corpus analysis should have been conducted so that findings and discussions of linguistic features used in the focused moves and strategies would have had statistical support and thus become more credible empirically. Nevertheless, this small-scale study could motivate further research which could be expected to conduct analyses of application letters and other professional genres written by Cambodian professionals more extensively and on a larger scale, so that conclusions regarding how the target genres are practiced in Cambodian settings and how Cambodian culture influences the practice could be reached with higher levels of confidence.

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Journaling as writing practice, reflection, and personal expression

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Abstract

The dialogue journal is an informal genre of writing that is similar to the personal letter and the diary. By writing journal entries to their teachers and receiving responses, language students practice writing in a low-stress context, to an authentic audience. This paper uses courses the author teaches to illustrate one way of carrying out a journaling project. Illustrations are given to show the range of topics about which students choose to write and how they affect teacher-student rapport. Finally, a brief look at alternative models described in the literature demonstrates the flexibility of the genre. Any teacher who decides to journal with her/his students may be encouraged to design the task in a way that both teacher and students find most useful and rewarding.

Journal writing as an activity for L2 learners is an authentic mode of communication between teachers and learners. To illustrate this, here is a story about a journal entry received from a student who had just entered the English Language Teaching MA program at my university, and who had been in class for no more than two weeks. Although for reasons of maintaining her privacy, her exact words will not be quoted, the thoughts and feelings she expressed will give an idea of how close to the surface of our students' lives are their personal stories—stories that, often enough, we as teachers are never aware of—but that impact their identities as students, and may spell the difference between success and failure in their studies. Journals give them a personal outlet, as this student's very first journal entry, submitted January 22, 2008 and recounted below, shows:

> Like many students in our program, this student came to us from another country in the East Asian region. To participate in the program, she had had to leave her husband and 10-year-old son back in her home country. Never having traveled outside her country before, she is

naturally homesick and is probably having some symptoms of culture shock. She is also worried about how her husband and their son, as her husband has previously not been accustomed to being the caregiver. In addition, her parents are from a poor farming background, and experienced difficulties when she was growing up.

The student's decision to come to earn an MA in English Language Teaching in Thailand might be seen, and indeed she sees it that way, as a declaration of independence, of freeing herself from what she feels is an oppressive and depressing home atmosphere which does not allow her to thrive as a person or develop professionally; however, it is also a decision that is fraught with risks. Will her son be okay? Will she be able to focus on her studies, not knowing if everything is all right at home? Will her husband grow tired of playing the primary caregiver role and pressure her to quit? How vulnerable does her own experience of parent-child relations leave her as a parent, as a budding professional? Her need to reflect on all this must have motivated her to take

the opportunity of a 'free' journal assignment to try to put it all into words.

My relationship to this student is simply that of a first instructor, among others, in our program. I can obviously not play the role of psychotherapist in her life, nor should I respond at this time in any other way than I do to my other journaling students. However, I find it extremely valuable that I have learned her personal story so early in her career as a graduate student. I will be able to more easily recognize the personal stresses that may lie behind any erratic behaviors she may show, and I stand ready to listen to her and support her if she chooses to confide in me further. Journaling may make the difference for this student between success and failure in her MA studies, and may help her smooth her way in a rough patch in her life.

Although it was astonishing to have this student confide in me so early in the course, it is not at all uncommon for students, after an initial shy period, to entrust me with their personal stories. From my point of view, this is an unintended side benefit, but it is one that can be a crucial outlet for the student, for whom to be known as a human being is interwoven with, and at times more important than, proving themselves to be successful students.

Journaling: Beginnings and purposes

Journaling as an activity in many writing classrooms can best be compared with keeping a diary. It is an informal, largely unplanned way of writing that involves students expressing their reactions and feelings about a topic that the teacher has set or, more often, that the student wishes to write about. Susan Talburt (1995) summarizes the main concepts of the "dialogue journal" as defined by some of the main journaling theorists (Staton, Shuy, Peyton, & Reed, 1988; Peyton 1990; Peyton and Reed 1990; cited in Talburt 1995, p. 69-71). Unlike a diary, a journal is intended to be read and responded to by others, usually the teacher, sometimes other students. The subject matter may involve topics related to the course, but there is also usually room for students' personal opinions and feelings. Since others will read the journal, however, the students will generally not include their most private thoughts and emotions. If they do,

it may be because of a crisis preoccupying them, such as the one related above.

Like every other technique for teaching English as a Second Language, there are a plethora of concepts of journaling and many varieties of practical application. Its origins lie in the L1 "expressivist" (p. 88) movement in L1 composition from the 1970s onward (e.g. Elbow 1973, 1981, cited in Grabe and Kaplan, 1996), which emphasized writer self-discovery and creativity and the search for an authorial voice; it developed as a reaction to more traditional writing instruction, in which student tasks were impersonal and product-oriented. Thus even for L1 writers, journals were a way of reflecting on what one wanted to say and having a chance to say it in an informal atmosphere. Journaling thus became a natural first step to generating a piece of writing following a process approach to writing (Zamel, 1982).

The process approach also became standard practice in most L2 writing instruction. Journaling, as a strategy to motivate L2 writers to practice writing in an unstressed atmosphere, was absorbed into writing instruction in the L2 classroom (Worthington 1997), and is now an integral part of many writing courses. Some research has shown journaling in ESL as promoting fluency (Kirby, Liner & Vinz, 1988; Worthington 1997), and as producing a quality of writing that is "much higher for unassigned topics than for assigned ones" (Worthington 1997, p. 2, citing Edelsky 1986), probably because it results from the student engaging in authentic communications he/she considers important to express well.

Students who can and will journal

While the students in our program are at graduate level and are mostly pre- or in-service English teachers, the most common context for journaling is that of the writing class at undergraduate university level. Obviously, students who are asked to write a journal must have a sufficient level of English to be able to express their ideas and feelings independently. However, in principle, students of almost any level may be in a position to journal; naturally, the contents of their journals will vary

according to age, educational background, and previous experience with the language.

University students in Asia generally have had 6-10 years of instruction and have the intellectual maturity to carry out a journaling task. But even middle and high school students ought to be able to enjoy journaling in English once they have attempted it once. Not only do students of this age often keep a diary in their L1, but also many are constantly online chatting and emailing, or sending mobile phone messages in either the L1 or in English. Thus there is already a kind of *schema*, or existing mental pattern, of putting thoughts, opinions and feelings into words, and this can predispose students to writing journals in class. There are many useful Internet sites for school-age children, even very young ones, as browsing Google or some other search engine will show.

Of course, cultural sensitivities need to be treated carefully, and whether today's students in the Asian context are comfortable expressing their very personal feelings to their teachers in writing is a matter of some controversy. There may be other differences between journaling in L1 and L2 that have to be taken into consideration. For this reason, we may want to adapt this genre to our own and our students' purposes.

Journaling in two courses at Assumption University, Bangkok
Explaining journaling to the students
Instructions for journaling are given basically the same in the two courses I most often teach, 'Theory and Practice of Writing' and 'Oral Presentation'. Students are asked to submit one journal entry per weekly class session. They may write by hand in a normal lined notebook, or they may word process their entry and submit it in a simple plastic folder. I ask them to buy two notebooks or two folders, so that while I am reading one entry, they are writing the next one for submission the following week. At class time, we simply exchange folders or notebooks. In our trimester system of 12-week courses, students submit their journal entries from the second week on, and, if they have kept up the weekly rhythm, they need not submit their journal

for the final class. If 10 journal entries have been submitted, students will receive 100% credit for that component of the course. Journal quality or length is not graded or evaluated; that makes for an 'easy A' and a motivation to write.

The students are told they can write as much or as little as they want, as long as they write something each week. It is suggested, but not required, that they reflect on the class work, the readings and any other course components and how they feel about them. I also tell them they can tell the teacher what they really think about the class, and it won't be held against them; they may raise issues about things they don't like or don't agree with, as long as they are polite and constructive. They can also reflect on other matters of concern to them personally, even if they don't relate to the class directly. Very important to the last point: they are told that whatever personal information they divulge will be kept confidential; their secrets will not be told to the class or anybody else. Essentially, then, the students are being invited to reflect on what they are doing in the particular class, in school, and in their lives. For her part, the teacher puts herself in the role of active listener.

Dialogue journals
As an active listener, I must respond to what the students write. Usually, as I read, I find myself making marginal comments, and there is always a general, or sometimes quite a specific, comment at the end. My comments are reactions to what was said, and I keep them positive and constructive, sometimes just an exclamation like "Wow, that was really surprising!" Sometimes I give advice, but only if the student seems to be asking for it: "You could think about trying to…" Because of the response factor, this most common way of journaling has long been called a dialogue journal (Grabe & Kaplan 1996; Hansen-Thomas 2003; Peyton 1990; Peyton & Reed 1990; Peyton & Staton, 1996, 1993; Staton et al., 1988).

It is essential never to be judgmental, certainly not personally about the student, though occasionally I allow myself to agree (or disagree) with a student's opinion about the topic of discussion. My comments are generally fairly short, because of the time factor

involved; however, occasionally I become interested enough about the issue under discussion to write just as much as the student has. One thing that I love about journaling is not only that I get to know my students as people, but that I inevitably let them know me as a person, too, in a setting which is 'safe' for both of us; that is, it does not violate the respectful relationship between teacher and student. It does, however, encourage each of us to go beyond our respective roles in the educational system and to see the other as a human being.

The issue of error correction

The theory of journaling usually advises against error correction in journals because journals are seen as a form of free writing. They are a way of getting students to write more, to write for an authentic purpose (write to communicate), and above all to write in a low-anxiety environment, to lower the "affective filter", to use Stephen Krashen's term (1985, p. 100). Error correction may subvert any or all of these aims. In addition, if need be, it is possible for the responder to draw attention to accuracy in a different and more subtle way. Peyton explains that rather than correcting all errors, the teachers' responses can become a model of appropriate English usage. This allows the students to have an increased level of freedom of expression, without the need to focus unduly on form (Peyton 1993).

However, my graduate students, who are going to become English teachers, often enough explicitly request that I correct their English. It may be that error correction is all they have known during their English study careers. Even if they have not requested it, one sometimes fails to understand what the student is trying to express, because of some grammatical or lexical difficulty. When this happens, I simply put a question mark by the unclear statement, or write: "I do not quite understand what you are saying here." This is certainly kinder, gentler signal to the student that his/her effort to communicate has broken down without their being admonished for it, as so often, perhaps, in the past in their English-learning career. I may also address the problem more directly. The following journal entry spoke to the problem of journal correction and, coincidentally, gave me a

fine opportunity to slip in a grammar correction masquerading as a question. The student's journal remark is cited below. I was able to simply underline the offending word and point out the correct form with a one-word question in the margin.

> In the class, we are discussing how you will check our journal entries. Some prefer to correct our grammar mistakes. Some prefer you to give us the overall comments. All these argues (Arguments?) made me think back what I did before when I checked students' journals (Writing journal, September, 2005).

Lastly, in spite of the resolve not to, sometimes I find myself doing a more thorough editing job on one journal entry only (*not* to be repeated in later ones). After all, these courses are a last opportunity to help the students firm up their accuracy before they go into (or back into) the classroom. It is hoped that the student will see what errors he/she is making regularly in a piece of writing, and that the corrective feedback will serve as a form of awareness-raising or 'noticing', as it is sometimes called (Cross, 2002).

But while there may be a place for error correction in journaling, depending on the context, there is always a fine line between supporting the writer in self-expression and re-imposing a stifling atmosphere on writing which journaling specifically wants to avoid. Journals should always be first and foremost communication, dialogues between teacher and student. After all, we do not correct the language of our email or snail-mail correspondents either, although sometimes we'd like to.

Journaling in Oral Presentation as an affective and reflective activity

What, it may be asked, is the purpose of having students in an Oral Presentation class write journals? Indeed, they sometimes wonder this themselves; after all, the class is about speaking, isn't it? However, it is here that the affective function comes into play the most clearly. Indeed, Oral Presentation class was the source of the

surprising student narration reported at the beginning of this paper.

When preparing for their class presentations, the students often try writing them out first in their journals. Probably they imagine that the teacher will give them tips and advice about how to improve. Unfortunately, the response sometimes comes after the speech has already been given; but even so, it has given the student an extra opportunity to rehearse. Nevertheless, the main benefit comes after the speech has been given in class; then there is a often a strong perceived need to express the emotions connected with giving the speech, the feelings of frustration, inadequacy or embarrassment—in the best case, also pride at an argument well-made. Furthermore, students prove very capable of exercising their powers of critical thinking on their own speech, noting where there were weaknesses, comparing their product with what we read about speechmaking in our text, and vowing to do better with certain elements of organization, expression and delivery the next time around. Sometimes they find fault with themselves by comparison with others; here I have opportunity to point out where the strengths of the speech lay, offsetting the sense of being a failure compared to all other students in the class. Thus, the journal provides a mode of achieving closure on the task just done, and, beyond that, a chance for reflection and critique that can truly lead to improvement in the long run.

What students write in their journals
Colleagues in the Graduate School of English at Assumption University also often have the students write journals. In Theory and Practice of Reading and in Intercultural Issues, for example, where the main activity is the reading and discussion of scholarly articles, students are to reflect on their reading in their weekly journals and to react to the class discussion. When these same students understand that in my class, although I suggest such reflective and reactive activity as well, they are free to discuss whatever concerns them most at the moment, they soon take advantage of their freedom. A number have told me: "I love writing journal the way you do it. I am going to do it in my classes later on, too." When I ask them if they don't journal in

other classes, they say, "Yes, but it's not the same. There, it's work; here it's fun. In the writing class, in particular, the freer range of possible topics provides a model that can easily be adapted to the lower-level classes the students may be teaching later. Thus, their enthusiasm for letting their students experience what they have enjoyed themselves. Appendix 1 provides a selection of the many topics this teacher has been privileged to read and respond to over the last four years or more.

Variations on journaling
Because it is a simple and interactive genre, the journal has morphed into many variations over the years of its popularity. It is used as an expressive and collective device for and by learners at all levels, by graduate students, and by teachers themselves.

Here is a basic journaling format often used in undergraduate four skills classes. With beginning or intermediate learners, journaling is often carried out as a classroom activity, rather than as a homework task. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) write:

> In highly structured approaches, the dialogue journal requires writing every day: at a given time, students regularly open their dialogue journals and write an entry for that day. The journals are collected periodically by the teacher who responds to students entries….The dialogue journal does not have to be a daily routine, but it should be a consistent one if it is to be seen as a genuine means of expression and communication. The writing should occur often enough to be…a regular part of classroom activities. Enough time should also be given to journal writing to ensure that it is not a hurried session squeezed in between other activities or before the end of the class day (p. 295).

The journaling activity is carried out in the classroom to assure that it becomes a regular habit. Lower-level students, in particular, may find it difficult at the beginning to find something to write, but, knowing that the activity is coming up, will soon begin to brainstorm in advance for ideas to write about, and will write more and more easily

over time. Ideally, writing becomes an enjoyable activity that they look forward to each day. However, since in this version the student does not have the freedom to choose when he/she writes, it may be that this way emphasizes the aspect of writing practice more than it encourages true expressive writing.

Further variations are based on the following concepts and are described in some detail in *Appendix 2*.
- Journaling based on assigned topics and reading
- "Learning logs" which traced the students' reflections about the class itself
- Student-to-student journaling planned by the teacher, carried out by the students themselves
- E-journaling using a discussion board format
- A graduate student implemented journal for mastering learning and professional development
- Journaling and discussion with the theme of "culture shock"
- Reflective teaching journals

Conclusion

The use of journals in the EFL context seems to present benefits to both learners and teachers. For learners, it would appear, the aspect of practicing the language in an authentic context is only one of the benefits, although its value should by no means be downplayed. Reflection on content being studied was an important mode of self-study for many students, with a perhaps corrective or encouraging input from the teacher built in.

Perhaps even more important to many learners has been the right to 'speak their mind', mostly positively, but sometimes negatively, about what they are learning, their co-learners, their environment and their conditions for learning, including the teacher. This is an anti-pressure valve which may clear up misunderstandings, that otherwise might tend to become exaggerated and explode. It is just as important for the teacher as for the students. However, for me, it has always been the personal stories, the confessions of weakness

and self-doubt, the tender moments that I learned of and that allowed me to understand the individual student better and thus help him or her to surmount the obstacles they were laboring under and move on.

Those teaching other levels and age groups may find that other benefits accrue from the journaling experience. Considering the flexibility of the journaling genre, as evidenced by some of the ways it has been adapted and implemented for different purposes, it is likely that any teacher who is ready to try journaling with his or her students may find an apt design to fit their purposes. Whatever these purposes are, they are likely to include practice, reflection and self-expression as that is the goal of authentic communication.

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Appendix 1
Examples of students' journal entries

On writing class content: Probably the most frequent topic, two examples must stand for many more.

1. *Journaling in theory and practice*: "In the class, we are discussing how you will check our journal entries. Some prefer to correct our grammar mistakes. Some prefer you to give us the overall comments." To correct grammar or not: The student decides, in defiance of the journaling literature, that it should be done—and regrets correcting the journals of her own students: "It almost killed my time and my life."

2. *Creativity and critical thinking:* "Teaching writing is actually to trains students by stimulating them [to] think critically and creatively." Sitting in an ice cream shop, the student muses on why eating an ice cream is like writing. She concludes: "We love to have the freedom of choices and personal styles no matter what it is, either ice cream or writing tasks."

Writing about problems

3. *Frustration with the course*: At the end of a journal entry, the moment of truth: "Finally, I would like the lecturer to give clear and strong explanation when students have some questions and should explain by simple words for avoiding misunderstanding." In short, the student understands nothing.

4. *I hate writing:* The attitude of many students, two of whom are cited here.
"Since I were in school, the writing assignments were for the purpose of passing the exams. It was not interesting at all….I always feel that I don't use the proper words to write down my ideas."
"I don't know why I don't like writing….Writing a proposal is very difficult but also challenging. And it killed my confidence when I was doing my first proposal draft….I really don't want failed this course….Journal is also the thing I like to do in this class, or can I say I like to do it in Dr. Betsy's class, because I can have a lot of comments and corrections…."

5. *Critiquing the teacher, oneself, other students*:. "To be honest, I'm not sure I understood all of the presentations, or, better say, how some of them were related to process writing. In fact, the activity I chose didn't really seem very suitable for the topic either."

"I have to confess that at times I …used to think…that you underestimate us, as you really explain everything in detail and… treat us like children…." But "I've reconsidered the whole idea of teaching and learning here…considering how multileveled the groups are."

6. *Critiquing the class, tactfully:* "At the beginning of the course, I expected to learn about how to teach students to write but I have leaned how to write instead of that. It is o.k. because I have improved my writing skill, known about genre and many things that will be useful for my thesis."

Oral Presentations
7. *Confronting one's weaknesses:* "I failed again. I was too nervous to forget many words….I wrote all the words on the paper with oral English, because I knew that my language in the first two presentations [was]…not only difficult to speak, but difficult to be understood. After …practice…I could give the speech without the written paper. But I still brought the paper with me…in order to give others a successful presentation. Actually, it was not a helper. I wanted to look at the paper again and again, it was the main reason leading to failure. Because of this, I cried when I got home after class."

8. *Dissatisfaction with the mark:* "Our result is out today. I've got just 23 (out of 25). So, to get %, I multiply it 4, = 92%. I'm not satisfied for this score. So, I make up my mind to try hard utmost. Next time, the score must be higher than the first time….In my mind, I murmured 'I don't want to be inferior to the others. Try, try again. You'll achieve success."

9. *Fear of beginning:* "At present, when I come to Thailand, and study in ABAC, in which all learners come from many other country also study, I must use English language to talk with my classmates,

my teachers, but sometimes … I don't know how to make a correct sentence to tell them what I want to say. I am afraid of making mistakes…In order to be understood by my students I must improve my oral English as much as possible. Be confident of myself, and work hard, bright future will be coming."

Personal troubles
10. *Two friends from China* with no family resources for their study costs try to support each other. One works at an international school several hours from Bangkok and must commute, an exhausting and unproductive way to study. The other works several jobs and shares her earnings with her friend. They both entrust me with their story, I pass it along and a campus job is found for the commuter, who can now focus on her studies.

11. *Mum is the problem:* He is a dedicated teacher, but mum wonders why she sent him to Australia to study. She wants him to get a decent paying job and won't let him alone. He tells his story amusingly, but it's a hard life and impacts his teaching and studies.

Appendix 2
Variations on journals, some examples from the literature

1. *Journaling as reflection on a topic:* At the other end of the spectrum, a study on journaling established a relatively stringent regimen for journaling in a pre-freshman university composition course in America. The students were "encouraged" to write "at least five times a week" for a total of at least 5 pages a week for one 14-week semester. The writing was collected every 2-3 weeks; the teacher then wrote a letter of response to the individual writers and, toward the end of the semester, to the whole class. Journaling was done both in and out of class:
  - In-class free writing on prompts given by the teacher
  - Out-of-class entries about an assigned book on a topic relevant to the students, whereby the students "were to use their journals to

write about themselves and their reactions as readers and writers" (Peyton 1999, p. 299).

Thus in this situation, probably because of the need for analyzable data for the study, students were given fairly precise prompts and directions for how often and how to write their entries. On the other hand, they were encouraged to respond in personal terms to both kinds of prompts. Such a combination of direction and freedom of expression provides students with ready material for reflection, while empowering them to articulate their own thoughts and opinions about it. This results in a kind of journaling sometimes called "reflective journals". The results of the study and the author's reflections on her role and the students' in the course of it, are published in book form (Peyton 1999).

2. *Journaling to get to know the class:* Another teacher (Hansen-Thomas 2003) designed an action (or classroom) research project to gather information about the makeup of a new, first-year university class to whom she had been assigned to teach writing. For one semester, students kept a "learning log," also called a "reflective dialogue journal", which they wrote once a week. They were not graded on accuracy and had to write a minimum of ½ A4 size sheet of paper to get full credit. The teacher collected, responded to and graded the journals monthly. The intended purpose was to gather information about the students' previous writing experience and concept knowledge, including:

- their composing process
- their awareness of the writing process
- their knowledge of academic writing techniques
- their specific writing problems, which could be discussed in the journals and addressed in class (Hansen-Thomas 2003, p. 23)

As often happens with journals, the discussion ranged beyond purely writing-focused issues and gave opportunity to dialogue about many classroom and university related issues. From this, it appears that a very open, positive relationship developed between the instructor and her students. Some of the concerns voiced in the journals were:

- keeping a learning log: some felt it gave them confidence in writing, others considered it "boring", still others worried they were doing it "right"; all admitted it helped recall the class content and gather one's thoughts, and gave a chance to ask questions.
- topics for writing assignments: students commented about the freedom to write what they wanted, felt some topics were harder to pin down than others.
- peer review: students read each other's papers and offered suggestions for improvement. Positive comments: it helped the writer see things not seen before. Negative: The peer is at the same level as the writer and is therefore not equipped to give useful comments.
- grading criteria: the students had never been told what criteria were being used to mark their papers and were happy at this innovation
- speaking in class; debating: students voiced their fear of speaking in class and disagreed about the value of debate, which some felt was "artificial" and "quarreling".
- personal purposes: complaining about assignments, etc.; asking questions: about course content, grammar, the teacher; telling anecdotes about their studies and personal lives; simple summarization of class discussions or readings.

In addition to what the teacher learned about the students, by using the logs students learned

> to focus and reflect on their own writing process and work out problems and stumbling blocks on their own. In some entries the students were actually writing to themselves in the form of a diary….it was apparent that I was not being addressed; instead the journal was used for personal reflection (Hansen-Thomas 2003, p. 27).

Thus it would appear that in addition to discovering the writing abilities and academic needs of her students, this teacher achieved one of the main benefits of journaling that is to get in touch with them as people, as well.

3. *Peer to peer journaling, or "Let's not show the teacher!* I sometimes ponder whether I should be the sole recipient of the gems my students produce in their journals. Although I have sworn to keep the contents, at least any personal ones, confidential, I often feel I'd like to share some of the more perceptive reflections of students about language, their studies, culture and other topics, and sometimes I do make a list which I share in a handout or on PowerPoint, without naming names. Thus I was delighted to find a version of a journaling activity entitled "Let's Not Show the Teacher" (Worthington 1997, pp. 2-7), where the whole journaling enterprise is taken out of the teacher's hands. It is described as a format for teachers who "don't have the time to do teacher-student dialogue journals" (Worthington 1997, p. 2).

Peyton explains that for the teacher-student dialogue to be successful, the teacher must be truly responsive to the student's topics, not just ask questions but also "introduce topics and to write about oneself " (Peyton 1993, p. 4, cited in Worthington 1997: 3). If the teacher's workload does not allow for a true dialogue to develop, the exchanges may become mechanical. Other students, however, should have the kind of time the teacher lacks and a will to communicate with their peers. It is thus suggested that student-student journals can provide the same benefits as the conventional kind, while creating much greater interest. "A true desire to communicate can be created with students happy to participate out of enjoyment rather than compulsion". It is further suggested to make the journal anonymous, to increase motivation "by adding the element of mystery" (Worthington 1997, p. 2) and to encourage freer expression of opinions (Worthington 1997).

The student-student journal exchange (Worthington 1997), was carried out between two classes of the same size and level. Since the partners were in two different classes, they did not necessarily know one another well. Exchanging journals across classes made it easy to keep them anonymous. Pseudonyms were adopted by the students, and with them, often a new persona. For example, students chose names of the opposite gender or names that did not identify gender. Others chose names of things or people of

interest: e.g., Computer, Dance, Nolan Ryan. To assure anonymity of the journals, the same notebooks were used for all students in both classes. They wrote their pennames inside the notebooks, along with their teacher's name and the department, so they could be returned if lost. No identifying mark was to be written on the outside of the cover. Students also had the option of writing on the inside cover that they did not want their teachers to read the journal; in fact, only one student did, but there was much discussion in the journals about the pros and cons: students could keep secrets from the teacher; teachers always want to correct mistakes, etc. There was also much speculation about the identity of the partner, which did indeed heighten the suspense. In addition to some of the expected benefits of journaling (e.g. authentic communication, increased fluency and volume of writing, confidence in one's writing, less worry about criticism of one's writing), Worthington (1997) gives samples from the journals to attest to benefits that resulted from the special student to student mode:

- commonality of interests and a wider range of topics discussed, all of which were of authentic interest to students
- new friendships resulting from the exchange
- genuine joy and happiness in writing
- disappointment if the partner didn't write enough
- development of strategies for negotiation of meaning
- occasional low-stress advice about grammar (student playing the teacher's role)
- encouragement about language learning

Worthington gives suggestions for the logistics of carrying out a student-student journal exchange for teachers who would like to try it (Worthington, 1997). This appears to be a wonderful option for teachers with large classes, a heavy class or administrative load or who simply want to try journaling in a different way.

4. *E-journaling.* This mode of journaling may not be appropriate for academic situations in which IT is not highly developed, but if it can be carried out, it is likely to be a hit with our technology-struck

students. Basically, the idea is an online discussion group, such as the discussion lists provided by TESOL and other organizations. The difference is that the university provides this discussion board locally.

In a version discussed by Bollati (online article, no date), after students have been signed in and instructed in how to use the board, the teacher, who is the site administrator, begins the weekly journaling routine, effectively the journaling portion of an online course, which will last for one semester. In the first week, the teacher gives an assignment of one specific writing task, one free journal topic and three responses to classmates' entries. The writing topic may relate to in-class writing or to a current event; or it may involve a response to a short piece of literature. The free journal writing may cover a range of topics. After the students have completed their e-writing tasks, the teacher opens the second week's conference by summarizing the discussion from the previous week and commenting on interesting aspects of writing that occurred during the discussion: effective language use, well-focused examples, and creative approaches to the topic. She then proceeds to set the new topic for the week.

Some specific benefits of this mode of journaling were found to be the following:
- A greatly expanded authentic audience, since the students write to the whole class.
- Development of a learning community. Students felt closer to each other; learned their classmates' "mindsets" as they would not have in a traditional class.
- Opportunities for quieter students who felt uncomfortable speaking in class. The shiest sometimes became the most talkative.
- Learning to use the computer better and/or more efficiently.

5. *Graduate student "think tank."* A group of seven graduate students entering a preservice TESOL program formed a voluntary study group to help each other absorb and reflect on the demanding material they were faced with (Cole, McCarthy, Rogan & Schleicher, 1998). In addition to meeting

together in person, they discussed the issues in their course via a diskette they passed among them. After one member wrote the first entry, they established an order in which the diskette would be passed on. Each member could either respond to previous entries or start a new topic. Topics went in weekly cycles. This mode of communication was so successful that they carried it through for two full semesters, before turning it into a research project that they published. Some of the benefits that were realized were a discovery-oriented learning process or heuristic, which led to new understandings through shared knowledge in the group; the building of a professional community in which all felt empowered through their mutual support; and building bridges to the profession that they were aspiring to, learning how to present themselves as TESOL professionals and researchers. The published discussion of this variation on group journaling is supported by sound theoretical principles including Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and van Lier's social interaction principles, making the strong point that student collaboration as a mode of learning is highly underutilized and should be built consciously into every learning situation (Cole et al., 1998).

6. *Teaching journals.* The previous discussion leads directly to a kind of journal that goes beyond the scope of this paper, since it involves teachers reflecting in journals on their teaching. Much has been written on this topic, and when I have kept a journal throughout the course of one of my teaching assignments, I have found it extremely useful. A short article by one of my colleagues in Bangkok gives an introduction which explains how to reflect and analyze classroom events and how to write entries that do not just report events but ask evaluative questions that can lead on to improvement (Tait, 2004).

7. *Combating culture shock by journaling.* This project involved using film appropriate film clips and other materials in a course for pre- and in-service graduate students as prompts for journaling and discussion of the issue of culture shock. The idea was to sensitize the teachers to the issues of immigrant learners facing culture shock after resettling in an English-speaking country. However,

the author demonstrates that with so many on the move in our globalized world, teachers themselves are just as likely to be uprooted and to experience culture shock in a new environment, even within the same country (Hess, 2006).

Reading comprehension instruction

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Abstract

The ultimate success of a reading program is the degree to which students can read and understand numerous texts for a variety of purposes. It used to be thought that pronouncing or identifying written symbols was sufficient for reading comprehension to occur. However, identifying words is not reading but is a means for developing reading efficiency. This papers discusses how reading is an active process of constructing meaning from written text in relation to the experiences and knowledge of the reader. Research has demonstrated that only through expert planning, teaching, and guidance will students grow onto mature readers. Two major evidence-based components of reading comprehension instruction are presented in this paper: The explicit or direct teaching of specific comprehension abilities and the design and implementation of an independent reading program. Research has shown that through thoughtful and specific attention to reading comprehension, all students can improve in their reading comprehension abilities.

Introduction

The teaching and learning of reading have never been of more importance in our society than it is today (Au, 2000; Botzakis & Malloy, 2006). The experiences of the human race are recorded and shared through a variety of means, a primary one being through written communication. In our schools, the process of reading is the major vehicle for teaching and learning (Samuels, 2004). The ability to teach reading successfully has always been of paramount importance. The primary task of the teacher of reading is to develop to the fullest in each individual the ability to use language both verbally and nonverbally. The ability to read enables individuals to open up a whole new world of imagination, wonder, information, and excitement. Students should be able to use reading as a tool to satisfy a variety of purposes ranging from reading for specific information to satisfy a job requirement to reading fine literary works for pure enjoyment. The hope is that students will not only use their reading skills at work to compete successfully in the world marketplace, but that they will use them at home and take pleasure from books and informational materials. Students need both to know the "how" of reading and to develop the desire to read and learn on their own (Pressley, 2002).

The responsibility of guiding this journey into the world of reading rests primarily with the classroom teacher. Observation of effective teachers and examination of current research make it clear that the classroom teacher has a tremendous influence on whether individuals are successful in learning to read (Slavin, 2008). Children do not become effective readers by merely growing older. Although life experiences are crucial to language growth, a caring and knowledgeable teacher is needed to direct, guide, and facilitate students' growth in the use of written communication. Today's teachers must not only believe in their professional abilities and power to foster student learning, they must also take into account the growing body of knowledge on the reading process and the effective teaching of reading.

Relevant research: Context and Methodology

The past thirty years have produced significant research on the reading process (Heilman, Blair, & Rupley, 2002). Reading is now viewed as an active process of constructing meaning from written text in relation to the experiences and knowledge of the reader (Dermitzaki, Andreou, & Paraskeva, 2008; Nicholson, 1999). Comprehending or understanding text used to be viewed as a natural extension of word identification or decoding. It used to be thought that pronouncing or identifying written symbols was sufficient for reading comprehension to occur. The focus of reading instruction today is no longer on identifying and interpreting individual words. The ability to pronounce and interpret written symbols—to recognize unknown words—is an integral component of the reading process. Good readers are superior in this ability, while poor readers and beginning readers have trouble with it. However, identifying words is not reading but is a means for developing reading efficiency (Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Collins-Block & Morrow, 1998). Current research on the reading process has concentrated on the comprehension of ideas. Comprehension is the active, internal process of understanding ideas represented in text (Blair, 2007). Simply, reading is comprehension. Effective readers do have to identify and interpret written symbols but the ultimate goal is the comprehension or understanding of the ideas expressed in written symbols.

The active, internal process of understanding ideas represented in text is affected directly by the experiences and knowledge of the reader. In essence, readers construct meaning or make connections from the ideas represented in the text based on their own prior knowledge and experiences (Gourgey, 2001). In a sense, communication occurs between the author and reader, with the reader ultimately arriving at the text's meaning based on his or her own experience. Thus, reading comprehension is the active process of "making sense" of what we read.

The ultimate success of a reading program is the degree to which students can read and understand numerous texts for a variety of purposes. Indeed, reading comprehension is the key to the entire school curriculum. However, successful comprehension for all students is not a reality in our schools. Directly affecting the lack of reading abilities in children is the lack of specific emphasis on reading comprehension. Durkin (1979) documented that even though comprehension was viewed as an important literacy goal; little actual classroom time was spent teaching students how to comprehend text. Durkin's (1997) study provided specific data about the use of class time by elementary school teachers. She reported that teachers spent less than three percent of the time on comprehension instruction. Durkin (1997) reported that teachers spent most of the time asking questions but little time teaching student comprehension strategies.

Emanating from Durkin's (1979) classic study reporting on the lack of classroom time devoted by teachers to actually teaching reading comprehension to students, numerous investigators have concentrated their efforts on developing instructional strategies to increase students' reading comprehension abilities. Indeed, it has been shown that through thoughtful and specific instruction, all students can improve in their reading comprehension abilities. More classroom time devoted to quality reading comprehension instruction results in more learning.

From this literacy research, researchers have demonstrated that reading comprehension can be fostered by specific attention to a variety of individual reader, text, and contextual variables. Of the many variables shown to increase students' reading comprehension, a consensus is building in the literacy field (Fielding & Pearson, 1994, Pressley, 2000) that a successful comprehension program includes attention to the 1) direct or explicit instruction of specific comprehension abilities and 2) provision of multiple opportunities to practice and discuss comprehension abilities through independent reading and reflection.

Reading comprehension is best viewed as a multifaceted process affected by several thinking and language abilities. The ability to comprehend on different levels exemplifies the types of thinking that can be applied to written and oral language (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). The three different levels of thinking applied to reading comprehension are defined as follows:

- Literal Comprehension: Understanding ideas and information explicitly stated in a passage;
- Inferential Comprehension: Understanding ideas and information implied by a passage;
- Critical Comprehension: Analyzing, evaluating, and personally and creatively reacting to information in a passage

In order to make sense of what one is reading and respond in a critical fashion, students must further be shown how to be 'strategic' in their reading. Strategic readers think about their reading before, during and after reading a selection (Paris, Lipson, & Wixon, 1994). Strategic readers establish purposes for their reading, monitor their reading, recognizing when to slow down, speed up, reread, or pause to understand a point. Knowing how one reads, coupled with the ability to "change gears" while reading, is called metacognition.

The first important method to increase reading comprehension is to formally teach specific skills and strategies to students. Successful reading teachers explicitly or directly teach their students what they need to know; that is, they actually explain, model, or demonstrate a desired objective to students through the direct/explicit approach (Blair, 2003). The approach brings together many recommended components of effective instruction, including relating new information to past learning, providing a structure for learning objectives, planning practice and application activities, and having students working cooperatively to master new objectives (Brophy, 1999). Educational research overwhelmingly links this teaching approach with increased student achievement (Rosenshine, 1995). In this approach, students are taught a new skill or strategy (for example, main idea, sequential development), through a planned,

structured teaching cycle. The teaching steps and a brief description of each step are listed below.

1. *Readiness/motivation***:** The manner, in which the teacher motivates the students, develops the background of the lesson, reviews prior knowledge, and communicates the purpose of the lesson to students. There are numerous ways to motivate and to provide background for lessons.

2. *Teaching***:** The manner in which the teacher explains (in a step-by-step fashion, using several examples and counterexamples), models, or demonstrates the new skill or strategy to students is the heart of the direct/explicit lesson. Two major teaching strategies for fostering comprehension abilities are informing and modeling. Informing involves explaining the new strategy in small steps, using examples and counterexamples. Informing further means telling student the 'what,' 'when,' and 'why' of a strategy to help in understanding a generalization. Informing can be done inductively, that is with a step-by-step explanation, proceeding from the simple to the complex, and using examples and illustrations that lead students to a generalization. Or it may be done deductively, first telling students the generalization and then supplying examples to verify it. Modeling involves demonstrating or showing students how to perform a particular strategy. Helping or assisting students to learn a new strategy is called "scaffolded instruction" (Rosenshine & Meister, 1995). Scaffolds are forms of support given to students in learning something new and the timely withdrawal of those supports as students demonstrate mastery. An example of a scaffold or form of support when teaching students to summarize is to give students a sheet explaining how to summarize a story. It is important to modify your efforts in this step of teaching based on students' responses. If the students are encountering little difficulty, you should increase the pace of the lesson. If students are encountering difficulty, you may have to slow

down and reteach the instructional goal in another fashion. Providing occasional restatements and summarizing main ideas are ways to develop and reaffirm intended goals. It is important for you to discover the degree to which the students are catching on and to give them the necessary feedback so that they know what needs improvement.

3. *Guided practice***:** A practice activity on the new skill or strategy that students and teacher complete together to ensure students' initial understanding is a necessary step. This will let you know if the students have understood your initial explanation and have begun to transfer this learning to a new situation.

4. *Independent practice***:** Practice activities in real sentences or in a story on the new skill or strategy that students complete on their own or in a cooperative grouping situation will ensure that the transfer of that new skill or strategy to a variety of situations. It is important to make sure that independent assignments are understandable to students. Depending on the instructional goal, you should still monitor such practice indirectly.

5. *Review and Evaluation***:** Overall summary and review of the intended instructional objective with additional practice opportunities in whole texts are crucial for mastery and transfer of the new skill or strategy. Evaluating a lesson to see if you achieved the prestated goal can be accomplished in a number of ways, for example, by using a worksheet, test, discussion, teacher-made or commercial game, computer activity, or group activity. If students did not achieve the objective of the lesson, it is necessary for you to re-examine your teaching procedure and decide how to reteach the original learning objective. This final lesson evaluation is the best feedback for both you and the students because it lets you know how to teach tomorrow's lesson.

Teachers who use these procedures consistently produce higher than average achievement in their classes (Rosenshine, 2002). It is also important to realize that in each teaching lesson, these steps will need to be modified according to one's students, their grade and age, and their readiness for a particular skill. The key to the success of the direct/explicit teaching approach is student involvement with the teacher. Teachers who command the attention of their students while teaching the lesson objectives are more likely to have students learn than those who do not.

The second area of focus in promoting reading comprehension is the development of an independent reading program. Only through the teacher's careful and expert planning, teaching, and guidance will students grown into mature, independent readers (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Independent reading is when children read books for pleasure and discuss the books with their teachers, parents, and peers. The ultimate goal of teaching reading is to produce independent, critical, flexible readers, who like to read. This goal is highly prized in literate societies. All the best intentions and instructions are lost if students cannot apply their abilities to new situations and do not read on their own. The benefits of independent reading are numerous. Students:

- learn to value reading as both a functional and leisure-time activity,
- improve their comprehension abilities,
- develop their background knowledge,
- increase their vocabulary knowledge,
- master their decoding skills and abilities, and
- become fluent in their reading (Blair, 2007).

Teachers can develop independent reading habits and foster comprehension by 1) reading and discussing good stories and books aloud to students; 2) setting aside 15 to 30 minutes each day for students to silently read material of their own choice and then to discuss the book with their classmates; 3) reading plays or acting out favorite parts or characters from books; 4) creating interest groups around particular topics or books; 5) capitalizing on students' interests in book selection; 6) encouraging

reading at home by explaining to parents the benefits of reading to their children; and 7) periodically inviting a storyteller to your classroom, or telling stories to your students yourself. The key is that independent reading needs to be more than just unfocused, free reading by students. The reading should be purposeful and monitored by the classroom teacher with opportunities for sharing and discussion (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2006).

Both major emphases to improve reading comprehension focus on the teacher. Students' ability to be successful in comprehension depends on the type and quality of instruction. Snow (2002), Chair of the RAND Reading Study Group report on reading comprehension for the U.S. Office of Education Research and Improvement concurs and states:

> Good instruction is the most powerful means of promoting the development of proficient comprehenders and preventing reading comprehension problems. A good teacher makes use of practices that employ his or her knowledge about the complex and fluid interrelationships among readers, texts, purposeful activities, and contexts to advance students' thoughtful, competent, and motivated reading. (xvii)

Conclusion

The ultimate success of a reading program is the degree to which students can read and understand numerous texts for a variety of purposes. Success is achieved through the coming together of a positive attitude, the direct/explicit teaching of specific comprehension skills and strategies, and the provision of multiple opportunities for students to read independently and discuss books with their peers and teachers. No longer can we assume that once a student can decode written symbols, reading comprehension will naturally follow. Such findings have caused educational researchers to hypothesize that the key variable in the learning situation is the teacher (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Indeed, the teacher's expertise in providing reading comprehension instruction is the crucial element in whether students develop into active, strategic readers who comprehend printed language.

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English vocabulary learning strategies employed by Thai EFL university students with different levels of academic achievement

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Abstract

The present study aims to examine English vocabulary learning strategies employed by high and low achieving students (those whose GPA was in the top and bottom 27 percent of the total students, respectively) of English and non-English major students. Questionnaires were administered to 56 English major students at Naresuan University and 60 Engineering students at Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand. Both high and low achieving students groups were chosen to rate the frequency of the use on six vocabulary learning strategies: guessing strategies, dictionary strategies, note-taking strategies, memory strategies: rehearsal, memory strategies: encoding, and activation strategies. The study reported that high achievers of both English and non-English majors most frequently used guessing strategies, while both low achievers of both English and non-English majors preferred to use dictionary strategies for learning English vocabulary. Moreover, the study showed there are some significant differences between high and low achieving groups of English majors in using guessing and dictionary strategies for learning English vocabulary.

Introduction

The English language plays an important role in many countries. It is crucial in international communication. English has come to be accepted as a tool and symbol of a modern technologically advanced society (Nuchsong, 1997). In Thailand, English is not only regarded as an international language but it also plays an important role in Thai education because English is regarded as the most important foreign language and it is commonly taught in Thai schools.

In learning English, vocabulary knowledge is very important because it helps the learners succeed in the classroom. Krashen and Terrell (1983) stated that vocabulary is of prime concern in the L2 setting because it plays a dominant role in classroom success. Dale (1969) stated that vocabulary is a key to concept development. Moreover, Harris (1961, as cited in Promrat, 1998) indicates that words which children can use and understand indicate the development of their concepts and ideas. Therefore, the learner should maintain effective strategies to learn vocabulary in order to be successful in the classroom. Learning strategies are very important

for language learners, empowering them by helping them to cope with the demands of classes and indeed, may help them to continue to learn on their own apart from the class (Freeman & Long, 1991 as cited in Nuchsong, 1997). Nuchsong (1997) stated that successful language learners maintain more strategies in learning a second language than do less successful learners do, and learning strategies are special ways of processing information. Weinstein and Mayer (1986) noted that the goal of strategy use is to affect the learner's motivational or affective state, or the way in which the learner selects, acquires, organizes, and integrates new knowledge. Thus, the results of this study may help the language teacher improve and develop the teaching of vocabulary strategies that support the vocabulary acquisition of second language learners.

Definitions and the importance of vocabulary learning

The mastery of vocabulary is an essential component of second language (L2) acquisition (Avila & Sadoski, 1996). Krashen and Terrell (1983) stated that vocabulary is important during the ESL acquisition process. The popular belief is that one uses form and grammar to understand meaning. The truth is probably closer to the opposite; we acquire morphology and syntax because we understand the meaning of utterances. Acquisition depends crucially on the input being comprehensible. Comprehensibility is dependent directly on the ability to recognize the meaning of key elements in the utterance. Thus, acquisition will not take place without comprehension of vocabulary. Even by moderate estimate, a native English-speaking university freshman has acquired vocabulary at the rate of at least 1,000 words per year from childhood and knows 20,000 to 25,000 words upon college entrance (Nagy & Anderson, 1984; Nation, 1990). Moreover, native English speakers know a great deal about each word, such as its subtlety of meaning, its range of meaning, and appropriate contexts for its use (Zimmerman, 1997).

For second language learners entering university, Laufer (1992) found that knowing a minimum of about 3,000 words was required for effective reading at the university level, whereas knowing

5,000 words indicated likely academic success. Meara (1984), when studying the L2 of university students, found that lexical errors outnumbered grammatical errors by 3:1 or 4:1. Similarly, a survey of L2 students taking university courses found that they identified vocabulary as a major factor that held them back in academic writing tasks (Leki & Carson, 1994).

Students' strategies for vocabulary learning

Vocabulary learning strategies are one part of language learning strategies that in turn are part of general learning strategies (Nation, 2001). Some earlier research focused on rehearsal strategies and addressed questions such as the number of repetitions needed to learn a list of vocabulary words (Crother & Suppes 1967; Lado, Baldwin & Lobo, 1967), the optimum number of words to be learned at one time (Crothers & Suppes, 1967), or the timing of repetitions (Anderson & Jordan, 1928; Seibert, 1927). Overall, rote repetition appears less efficient than using spaced recall and structured reviews (Seibert, 1927; Atkinson, 1972; Royer, 1973); silent repetition and silent writing are less effective than repeating the words aloud (Seibert, 1927; Gershman, 1970).

Gu and Johnson (1996) explained the second language vocabulary learning strategies as metacognitive, cognitive, memory and activation strategies. Metacognitive strategies consist of selective attention and self-initiation strategies. Learners who employ selective attention strategies know which words are important for them to learn and are essential for adequate comprehension of a passage. Learners employing self-initiation strategies use a variety of means to make the meaning of vocabulary items clear. Cognitive strategies involve guessing strategies, the use of dictionaries, and note-taking strategies. Learners using guessing strategies draw upon their background knowledge and use linguistic clues like grammatical structures of a sentence to guess the meaning of a word. Memory strategies are divided into rehearsal and encoding categories. Word lists and repetition are instances of rehearsal strategies. Encoding strategies include such strategies as

association, imagery, visual, auditory, semantic, and contextual encoding. Activation strategies include those strategies through which the learners actually use new words in different contexts, for example, when learners may make sentences using the words they have just learned.

Atkinson (1975) developed a mnemonic technique based on imagery, the keyword method, for learning foreign language vocabulary. The strategy involves two stages. First, the L2 word is associated with a familiar concrete word (the keyword) based on acoustic similarities. During the next stage, the production of an imaginative link between the target word and the keyword is produced (Avila & Sadoaki, 1996). The keyword method is one of the most extensively researched mnemonic strategies.

Differences in strategies for learning vocabulary of good and poor learners

Successful language learners use many different learning strategies often in quite intricate ways, to help them understand and remember new information whereas less effective learners have fewer strategies to apply and use them infrequently or inappropriately (O'Mally & Chamot, 1990). Naiman (1976) noted that successful language learners appeared to use a larger number and range of strategies than less successful language learners. In addition, O'Mally (1985, as cited in Nuchsong, 1997) stated that successful language learners have a wide repertoire of learning strategies and use a series of strategies rather than a single one when engaged in a learning task. Many researchers such as Hyunhee (1991), Rubin (1975), Coady (1979), Liu and Nation (1985), Chamot and Kupper (1989), and Nunan (1991) found that a characteristic of a good language learner is guessing. They used guessing strategies for learning vocabulary. Wen and Johnson (1997) also found that while all learners consistently used guessing as a strategy, it was the high achievers who tend to guess according to the reading context.

On vocabulary learning strategies of less successful learners, Michael (1998) stated that low English achievers used a dictionary to find vocabulary meaning. Nunan (1991) also stated that poor

language learners rely on a dictionary more than good language learners do. Other researchers have investigated whether students with poor vocabularies use different strategies to learn the meaning of words than students with rich vocabularies (Baker, Simmons and Kameenui, 2001). Griswold, Gelzheiser, and Shepherd (1987) tested groups of eighth graders with and without learning disabilities on a sentence completion task after they had studied a list of words. Although students with learning disabilities learned a smaller percentage of unknown words than students without disabilities (36.7 versus 67.4%), the two groups did not differ in the strategies used to learn the words, or in the amount of time spent studying the words. They also found that strategy use did not account for the percentage of unknown words that students learned. The vocabulary learning score was accounted for primarily by the reading and vocabulary skills students had prior to the study, as measured by performance on standardized reading vocabulary and comprehension tests. Thus, students who knew more word meanings prior to studying unknown words learned the meanings of more new words after studying. The results of this study have implications for the timing of vocabulary interventions, and the importance of explicitly highlighting the semantic associations between words as one way to help students build background knowledge.

Another explanation of individual differences in vocabulary development may be that students with poor vocabularies have ineffective strategies for retaining the meaning of words they have learned (Baker et al., 2001). Fawcett and Nicolson (1991) taught twenty-four difficult words to a group of adolescents with reading disabilities and poor vocabularies and a group of adolescents with reading disabilities and rich vocabularies. Once again, students with rich vocabularies learned more word meanings than students with poor vocabularies.

Research methodology

Questionnaires were administered to 56 English major students at Naresuan University and 60 Engineering students at Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand. The samples were chosen

and classified in two groups: good and poor students. Good students are those whose GPA was in the top 27 percent of the total students, and the poor students are those whose GPA was in the bottom 27 percent of the total students. This followed the Chung Teh Fan technique (as cited in Srisopa, 1977). The questionnaire of this study was adapted from the "Vocabulary Learning Questionnaire (VLQ Version 3)" by Gu and Johnson (1996). It was related to the purposes of this study and research questions. It was written in Thai to minimize problems of ambiguity and misinterpretation. Students were chosen to rate the frequency of the use of six vocabulary learning strategies: guessing strategies, dictionary strategies, note-taking strategies, memory strategies: rehearsal, memory strategies: encoding, and activation strategies. Mean scores derived from the scale were calculated and interpreted based on the following criteria; 1.00-1.49 = least use, 1.50-2.49 = rare use, 2.50-3.49 = moderate use, 3.50-4.49 = often use and, 4.50-5.00 = very often use.

Research findings and discussion

The findings were presented and discussed according to the three main purposes. First, to investigate English vocabulary learning strategies employed by English and non-English major students. Next, to explore English vocabulary learning strategies employed by high achieving and low achieving students between the separate English and non-English major groups, and lastly, to compare English vocabulary learning strategies employed by high achieving and low achieving students within the English and non-English majors groups. Each answer is based on the data collected from the students by means of the questionnaire.

The students' employment of English vocabulary learning strategies

The data obtained showed that both English and non-English major students most frequently use guessing strategies, and they less frequently use memory strategies: rehearsal for learning English vocabulary. The findings of this study confirm results in previous research that found that most students use guessing strategies to learn vocabulary. Oxford (1994) stated that globally, students used

guessing strategies for vocabulary meaning. Similarly, Wen and Johnson (1997) stated that all learners consistently use guessing as a strategy when they were reading in context. Moreover, Nattinger (1988) found that guessing vocabulary meaning from the context is the most frequent way that students determine the meaning of new words. The results are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. **Mean rating of English major students' employment of each English vocabulary learning strategy.**

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies	$\bar{X}$	SD
Guessing Strategies	3.82	0.75
Dictionary Strategies	3.77	0.84
Activation Strategies	3.30	0.83
Note-Taking Strategies	3.24	0.87
Memory Strategies: Encoding	3.15	0.91
Memory Strategies: Rehearsal	3.03	0.85

Table 2. **Mean rating of non-English major students' employment of each English vocabulary learning strategy.**

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies	$\bar{X}$	SD
Guessing Strategies	3.65	0.51
Dictionary Strategies	3.58	0.50
Note-Taking Strategies	3.25	0.76
Memory Strategies: Encoding	3.15	0.68
Memory Strategies: Rehearsal	3.13	0.64
Activation Strategies	3.07	0.72

The high achieving students' use of English vocabulary learning strategies

The findings showed that high achieving students from English and non-English major most frequently use guessing, while rehearsal strategies are the strategies which the students from both majors use less (Tables 3 and 4). In addition, the findings revealed that high achieving non-English major students use fewer activation strategies. Many researchers found that good students used guessing strategies to learn vocabulary. Rubin (1975) stated that good language learners are willing and accurate guessers. Moreover, Chamot and Kupper (1989)

found that good language learners use guessing strategies while they are reading in context. Coady (1979) stated that the successful ESL reader employed a psycholinguistic guessing approach. Similarly, Wen and Johnson (1997) also found that high achievers tend to guess according to the context and often guess meaning without consulting a dictionary. Regarding the findings, it can be said that the causes that influence the high achieving students to employ guessing strategies the most are: first, high achieving students may be confident that they are effective learners so they may try to guess word meanings from the context without consulting the dictionary (Knuth & Jones, 1991). The next reason is that high achieving students focused on the comprehension of what they read. Whenever they encountered unknown words, they tried to infer them in the context without looking upon the

Table 3. Mean rating of high achieving English major students' employment of each English vocabulary learning strategy.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies	$\overline{X}$	SD
Guessing Strategies	4.04	0.79
Dictionary Strategies	3.94	0.82
Note-Taking Strategies	3.37	0.91
Activation Strategies	3.32	0.88
Memory Strategies: Encoding	3.21	0.92
Memory Strategies: Rehearsal	3.17	0.85

Table 4. Mean rating of high achieving non-English major students' employment each English vocabulary learning strategy.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies	$\overline{X}$	SD
Guessing Strategies	3.79	0.55
Dictionary Strategies	3.75	0.52
Memory Strategies: Encoding	3.26	0.71
Note-Taking Strategies	3.19	0.86
Memory Strategies: Rehearsal	3.16	0.65
Activation Strategies	3.10	0.68

dictionary. Moreover, high achieving students are ready to learn by trial and error without caring about losing face (Hyunhee, 1991).

Low achieving students' use of English vocabulary learning strategies

According to the data from Tables 5 and 6, the study found that dictionary strategies were most frequently used by both low achieving English and non-English major students and they use fewer memory strategies: rehearsal for learning English vocabulary. Based on the findings, it seems that the low achieving students most frequently use dictionary strategies. This finding agrees with Michael (1998) who stated that low achievers use a dictionary to find vocabulary meaning. Similarly, Nunan (1991) stated that poor language learners rely on dictionaries more than good language learners do. According to the findings, Hyunhee (1991) states that the reasons poor students employ dictionary strategies is because, first, poor students have less self-confidence. When they encounter unknown words they don't try to guess the meaning. They tend to rely on the dictionary or teacher's information. Secondly, poor students depend on the teacher. They do not try to find the word meanings by themselves. Thus, they just wait until teachers feed them knowledge and information. If the teachers don't tell them any word meanings, they will find it from a dictionary. Lastly, the poor students tended to adhere to grammatical rules so that they will not make independent guesses or decisions unless they are certain that the grammar is correct. As a result, they use dictionaries to check their answers.

Table 5. Mean rating of low achieving English major students' employment of each English vocabulary learning strategy.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies	$\overline{X}$	SD
Dictionary Strategies	3.58	0.78
Guessing Strategies	3.54	0.68
Note-Taking Strategies	3.24	0.65
Activation Strategies	3.01	0.75
Memory Strategies: Encoding	2.98	0.87
Memory Strategies: Rehearsal	2.92	0.87

Table 6. Mean rating of low achieving non-English major students' employment of each English vocabulary learning strategy.

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies	$\overline{X}$	SD
Dictionary Strategies	3.59	0.36
Guessing Strategies	3.54	0.38
Note-Taking Strategies	3.35	0.70
Memory Strategies: Encoding	3.31	0.42
Activation Strategies	3.23	0.53
Memory Strategies: Rehearsal	3.18	0.60

Comparison between the high and low achieving students' employment of English vocabulary learning strategies

The results of the comparison of the high and low achieving students' employment of each English vocabulary learning strategy showed that there is a significant difference between the high and low achieving English major students' employment of guessing and dictionary strategies, but on the other hand, there is no significant difference between the high and low achieving non-English major students' employment for learning English vocabulary at the level of < .05. The results are presented in the Tables 7 and 8.

According to data presented in Tables 7 and 8, the high achieving students usage tends to include all of the vocabulary strategies whereas the poor students select a few. This finding agrees with those of the many other researchers (Naiman, 1976; O'Mally, 1985, as citied in Nuchsong, 1997; O'Mally, 1990).

Table 7. The comparison between the good and poor English major students' employment of each English vocabulary-learning strategy (* sig. = < .05)

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Student achievement group	$\overline{X}$	SD	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Guessing Strategies	High	4.04	0.79	3.045	**0.005***
	Low	3.54			
Dictionary Strategies	High	3.94	0.82	2.332	**0.027***
	Low	3.58			
Note-Taking Strategies	High	3.37	0.91	0.565	0.577
	Low	3.24			
Memory Strategies: Rehearsal	High	3.17	0.85	1.050	0.303
	Low	2.92			
Memory Strategies: Encoding	High	3.21	0.92	1.154	0.258
	Low	2.98			
Activation Strategies	High	3.32	0.88	1.154	0.258
	Low	3.01			

Table 8. **The comparison between the good and poor non-English major students' employment of each English vocabulary learning strategy (sig. = < .05)**

English Vocabulary Learning Strategies	Student achievement group	$\overline{X}$	SD	T	Sig. (2-tailed)
Guessing Strategies	High	3.79	0.55	1.427	0.164
	Low	3.54	0.38		
Dictionary Strategies	High	3.75	0.52	1.000	0.325
	Low	3.59	0.36		
Note-Taking Strategies	High	3.19	0.86	-.551	0.586
	Low	3.35	0.70		
Memory Strategies: Rehearsal	High	3.16	0.65	-.047	0.963
	Low	3.18	0.60		
Memory Strategies: Encoding	High	3.26	0.71	-.240	0.812
	Low	3.31	0.42		
Activation Strategies	High	3.10	0.68	-.638	0.528
	Low	3.23	0.53		

Conclusion

Many researchers support the view that vocabulary learning is very important in the classroom because it helps students succeed in their studies. If the students use appropriate vocabulary learning strategies, they will improve their vocabulary. Thus, teachers should introduce each vocabulary strategy and explain to students how each is useful. Moreover, teachers should develop their vocabulary teaching technique to help students learn vocabulary more efficiently and successfully. According to the findings in this study, the guessing strategy is the most appropriate strategy for learning English vocabulary. Students should be trained to be familiar with this strategy. This should be included in curriculum, and students should be provided sufficient practice using guessing strategies.

Beyond the guessing strategy, other strategies: dictionary, note-taking strategy, memory: rehearsal, memory: encoding, and activation strategies are also commonly used. While these strategies can be introduced to ESL students, according to our findings, they are less effective than the guessing strategy.

Further studies should investigate guessing behaviors of high achieving students, particularly in reference to their way of working out the meanings of unknown words. Uncovering these strategies will help us assist low achieving students learn vocabulary more effectively. In addition, this study was conducted only by means of a questionnaire. To obtain more detailed information about learning vocabulary strategies, other methods such as interviews and observations should be included in subsequent studies.

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Active learning: Harnessing the power of authentic materials

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Abstract

This paper will discuss active learning strategies that teachers could employ in the classroom using authentic materials. The first part will define active learning and authentic materials, the second part will discuss the rationale for teachers to develop materials on their own and the final part will try to embed some active learning strategies using the various genre of authentic materials. The activities are specially targeted for schoolteachers from primary to secondary levels. Using these materials will not only help students to improve on their language skills, but their thinking skills as well. More importantly, with proper planning and facilitation, teachers will be able to overcome problems of large classes, motivation of learners and understanding of subject matter.

Introduction

Today's economy requires innovative people with creative ideas and skills. As language practitioners, how do we help students develop these skills? With the above in mind, this paper will discuss active learning strategies that teachers could employ in the classroom using authentic materials. Using these materials will not only help students to improve their language skills, but their thinking skills as well. More importantly, with proper planning and facilitation, teachers will be able to overcome problems of large classes, motivation of learners and understanding of subject matter. The activities included in this paper are specially targeted for schoolteachers from primary to secondary levels. As a lecturer cum teacher trainer, I have used the materials successfully with teachers and students from Thailand, Korea and China who participated in English camps in Malaysia. I believe these activities will also suit the contexts of my Cambodian counterparts.

Active learning

Active learning can be defined as any strategy "that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing" (Bonwell & Elison.1991;

cited by Johnson, 2000). This is any activity that students do in a classroom other than passively listening to the teacher. It is a student-centered and hands-on approach to learning where the student is the prime focus in the teaching and learning process. Some examples of active learning strategies are individual and group brainstorming, and pair and group work. These strategies will be embedded in the sample activities presented here.

Authentic materials

According to Nunan (1999), authentic materials are spoken or written language data that transpires in a real communication setting, and which are not specifically designed for language teaching. Similarly, Peacock (1997) defines authentic materials as materials that were produced to fulfill some social purpose in a community. In the same manner, Wallace (1992) defines authentic texts as "…real-life texts, not written for pedagogic purposes." These definitions correspond with my focus of using authentic materials to expose students to 'real' language in 'real' situations. This is a shift from the rather rigid and controlled language of the classroom.

The need for teachers to develop materials

Students like challenges, enjoyment and excitement in the classroom. This is good as it shows some thinking and learning is taking place. Experience has taught us that mere group discussion, role-play and presentations that are mainly textbook bound can be monotonous, mundane and tedious for both teachers and students.

For learning to be effective and constructive, there should be the element of motivation, curiosity and the desire to excel incorporated in activities planned. The role of the teacher in designing tasks is of utmost importance. Interestingly, in a survey conducted by Barry Tomlinson (2003) among participants at Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (MELTA) National Conference 2003 in Subang, Malaysia, it was not surprising that the main teacher characteristics that received more than one mention were adaptable, knowledgeable about the target language, innovative, positive, motivating, proficient in the target language, enthusiastic, enjoyable and creative. (Tomlinson, 2003) As teachers, aren't these the very characteristics that we want our students to portray in class? Thus, in any classroom situation, the onus is on the teachers to be enthusiastic, positive and creative in designing materials so as to create a stimulating learning environment that is rewarding for both the teacher and students.

Availability of authentic materials

Recently, due to globalization, authentic materials abound. They are readily available, inexpensive, recyclable and appropriate for all levels. A dose of creativity is all it takes for the activities to be implemented successfully in any classroom situation. Although some authentic materials may become outdated quickly, I believe the onus is on the teacher to carefully select materials based on its applicability, adaptability and learner-centeredness. From my personal experience, a great deal of satisfaction is derived in developing materials and designing activities using authentic materials.

Some sources of authentic materials are:
- Authentic listening/viewing materials – songs, TV commercials, movies
- Authentic visual material – pictures, photographs, stamps, postcards
- Authentic printed materials -- the newspaper, supermarket fliers, brochures, restaurant menus, coupons
- Realia – coins and currency, post cards, letters, strings, masks, dolls and any real world objects that could add curiosity and interest.

Rationale for the use of authentic materials

According to Peacock (1997), authentic materials expose students to the language of real discourse, which are of relevance and interest. Furthermore, they are exposed to a wide variety of text types, which may not be found in textbooks. Gebhard (1996) further adds that authentic materials provide teachers with plenty of opportunities to contextualize language learning and help students' comprehension of subject matter. For example, when a lesson deals with understanding a travel brochure, students will naturally concentrate more on content and meaning and this in itself is a good source of language input. Furthermore, students are not confined to only language presented by the teacher.

Students are also exposed to authentic cultural information. This is important especially in today's global village. The rapid movement of people and the constant bombardment of information today have necessitated people to be more open minded, discerning and culturally sensitive to the world around them. The use of authentic materials, I believe, will help students have a broader knowledge and perspective of the world around them. This is shared by Hwang (2007), who viewed cultural changes in individual perception as important in gaining broader perspectives of the world, in critically analyzing information and in making sound personal judgments.

Creatively designed activities can stimulate the learning environment and positively affect students'

motivation. Students will unconsciously move away from the rigidity of grammar rules and vocabulary and will try to get the gist of the meaning / message spontaneously. Krashen (1995) further stresses that for materials to aid students' language acquisition, the input provided should be comprehensible, interesting, relevant and not grammatically sequenced. Recently, it can be argued that as traditional methods fail to actively involve students in the learning process, authentic texts hold the key to greater student participation.

Creatively designed activities could be a catalyst for pure pleasure reading be it mystery novels, science fiction, comics etc in the target language. According to Krashen (1995), pleasure reading positively meets the needs for optimal input in language acquisition. Pleasure reading materials aid in comprehensibility, are of interest and have plenty of opportunity to be utilized in the outside world. This has been summarized by Spelleri (2002), when she aptly describes authentic materials as containing three important layers of learning: language learning, cultural insights and practical application.

Benefits of using authentic materials

Activities designed for group activities, i.e. cooperative learning using authentic materials, encourage students to be creative, analytical and confident. It also promotes higher levels of self-esteem and self-confidence in students. Individuals are able to interact and see things from different points of view. They begin to have realistic impressions of each other's strengths and weaknesses and work together for a common goal (Johnson, 2000).

In order to promote higher-order-thinking, activities set for students, i.e. the aims, content and activities, should be imaginative, meaningful, hands-on and purposeful. This will motivate them to practice thinking skills that progress upward in the hierarchy of Bloom's Taxonomy. Students will be very involved in the skills in the higher spectrum such as application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Prediction skills can be honed and learners will improve their strategies when dealing with uncertainty.

With reference to Kolb's (2006) experiential learning cycle, the active learning strategies embedded in the activities will motivate students to enquire further, think harder, analyze and reflect deeper. Students are given the opportunity to reflect, discuss, analyze and evaluate their experiences either individually, in pairs, groups or with the teacher. These will help students discover and develop knowledge themselves and build bridges with the real world.

Because teaching strategies promote experiential and active learning, students will develop a deep approach to learning. Unlike the surface approach of studying superficially, a deep approach to learning encourages learner autonomy, thinking skills, reflection and analysis. This is embedded in the Social Constructivists Approach to Learning, which propounds that through communication with peers and through authentic and realistic assignments, students are able to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. This is corroborated by Entwistle and Entwistle (1991, cited in Employment Department, 1993), who view learning as a social activity and suggest that such an approach can be fostered when students are given the opportunity to discuss their work with other students in their small 'intellectual community.' This is attested by (Hwang, 2007) in her experience with her Taiwanese students. According to her research, after approximately a year of exposure and utilization of authentic texts, students went beyond phrase-book type of English and were more fluent when using the language to communicate on broader topics. They were able to decode, anticipate and guess meanings for proper language production in *real* settings.

More importantly, based on Rogers's (1984) theory of facilitative learning, the teacher comes down from her role of the all knower to that of a facilitator. The role of the facilitator is to provide pedagogical support and negotiate with learners on their needs and interests. The facilitator's duty is to carefully select and design activities and establish an atmosphere conducive for students to explore, analyze and evaluate new ideas using their judgment. As such, there is opportunity for more student talking time and less teacher talking time.

Materials design using authentic materials

The sample activities in Appendix 1 will try to imbibe the six principles of materials design as proposed by Nunan (1989). These include linking activities to the curriculum, checking on authenticity in texts and tasks, stimulating interaction, focusing on formal aspects of the language, developing learning and teaching skills and applying skills to the real world. The tasks will also Candy and Taylor (2006) have put forward an interesting set of questions which can be used as a guideline for instructors to ponder when designing sample activities using authentic materials:

1. What level of learner is this suitable for?
2. How suitable is this material/ activity in terms of age and student maturity?
3. How relevant is this to the students?
4. What are the learning outcomes of this activity?
5. What are the stages and task designs of this activity?
6. Does the teacher need to pre-teach any vocabulary or other language items before students can do this activity successfully?

Conclusion

The sources for authentic materials are unlimited from high technology Internet and cable television to items that are typically discarded. Authentic materials bridge the vacuum between the rigidity of English language teaching and the naturalness of authentic conversation. As aptly put by Gebhard (1996), authentic materials allow students to feel the naturalness of language in a specified context, savor the importance of small amounts of data and be sensitive to the non-linguistic clues or paralinguistic features which help them discover the meaning more clearly. Most of the sample activities (Appendix 1) allow for students to employ teamwork strategies and be effective team members. Also, authentic materials give flexibility for teachers to move beyond the classroom text, which can be rather mundane and monotonous at times. A word of caution is that the activities designed must contain the elements of challenge, enjoyment and excitement.

The challenge for teachers will be to continually explore possibilities in developing activities from authentic materials. Although Nunan (1999) recognizes that it is not feasible to use only authentic materials in the classroom, he firmly believes that students should be exposed to a large amount of authentic data, and that they listen to and read as many authentic materials as possible. This will enable students to view the classroom as a microcosm of the real world.

We have to start small, take risks, reflect on our experiences and make changes accordingly. I have personally derived much satisfaction in sharing materials with colleagues and presenting these materials in seminars and conferences. All it takes is some ingenuity from teachers for the language classroom to be filled with the buzzing of students engrossed in the tasks set before them. This, I believe, is the essence of active learning.

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Appendix 1
Learning Activities using Authentic Materials

The following activities have been tried and tested. With some adaptation, they can be embedded in language lessons and used for all levels. The timing for each activity may differ according to the needs and levels of the students.

1. Authentic listening/viewing materials

Television commercials

Variation 1

Aims:
- To compare television commercials
- To critically comment and come up with criteria to evaluate commercials
- To make modifications to commercials based on group feedback

Materials:
- Some television commercials for students to view
- Large white paper for students to write and present

Step 1
Class discussion: Students view the commercials as a class. They then compare the commercials and provide feedback on the positive and negative virtues of each commercial.

Step 2
Small group discussion: In groups, students draw up criteria on the essential elements a good commercial should have.

Step 3
Class discussion: Groups give their feedback and based on this class come up with common criteria to evaluate television commercials.

Step 4
Group discussion: Each group takes on any television commercial, critically evaluates it based on the criteria drawn earlier, and based on their

creativity make modifications to it based on their creativity.

Step 5
Class work: Groups present their evaluation of commercial and their modified versions.

Variation 2

Innovation
The first activity could serve as a prelude to this that could be good project work that will tap students' creative and critical thinking skills. Ten students per group will be ideal.

Aims:
- To modify an existing household product
- To create a prototype of the product using recycled materials
- To present/sell their idea to the audience
- To create a jingle to accompany their presentation

Scenario:
Groups will be given the same amount of raw materials to work on. They must only use the materials provided. Marks will be deducted if they use outside materials. Their task is to make improvements to an existing household product. Budget given is RM10,000. This sum will cover the raw materials used, marketing, advertisement, labor and miscellaneous charges.

There are four areas students will have to work on. They will be graded on all the following aspects:
1. A power point presentation to highlight the key information of the team.
2. A poster presentation to accompany the modified product
3. A product presentation
4. Create a jingle to accompany the presentation

Details of the four areas:
1. For the power point presentation, groups are to create and highlight the following**:**
   - Company name
   - Product
   - Tag line

- Target market
- Distributing channels
- Marketing mix – Product, Place, Pricing and Promotion
- Budget plan – based on the RM10 000 given

2. A poster presentation or publicity poster – to be done on the large white paper provided. Take note of the following**:**
   - Creativity
   - Use of color and text in creating awareness of product
   - Meaning related to product
   - Able to get message across

3. A product presentation based on the prototype they come up with. Take note of:
   - The different parts of the product
   - The benefits of the product
   - Language of persuasion

4. Create a jingle for at least 1minute to accompany the presentation. Take note of:
   - Rhythm
   - Relevance of jingle to product
   - Is the tag line reflected in the jingle
   - Should stretch for 1 minute.

Step 1
Class work: Students view some television commercials on household products. This is followed by a class discussion on the products' merits and demerits.. Teacher then goes thorough the main task with students.

Step 2
Group brainstorming: Students brainstorm on ideas and select one product to work on. They then divide the 4 tasks above among all group members.

Step 3
Group presentations: Groups present /sell their ideas and members in the audience are encouraged to raise questions.

Step 4
Class discussion: Teacher gives feedback and all students are asked to select the winning product that they think will be marketable in the near future.

Note: If the activity is done out of class, students can use own recycled materials. If done as part of class work, then teacher needs to provide materials such as, blades, crepe paper, cardboard boxes, strings, scotch tape and other recycled materials. This activity works well for all levels and big groups. With good supervision and monitoring, participation from all members is ensured.

2.   Authentic visual materials
 a) Pictures

Variation 1

Language game: Photographers and Model

Aims:
- To practice giving directions
- To practice describing pictures clearly and effectively

Materials:
- Teacher to cut pictures of solo characters in action i.e. athletes, actors etc and turn these into flashcards.

Step 1
Class work: Class selects a model to be stationed in front of class. Similar copies of the flashcards are distributed around the class. Students, taking the role of photographers, take turn to describe what they see and direct the model in front of the class to position himself similar to the action in the photo. Gesturing is not allowed by either party and the model must remain mute throughout the activity.

Step 2
Group work: Once students have gathered confidence in the above, they can be broken into groups to continue with the activity. They take turns to be models. This will allow them to see the importance of giving clear and direct instructions.

Variation 2

The Mime Game
Materials:
- Flash cards of animate and inanimate objects

Similar to the above but this time around a representative stands in front of the class, collects a flash card from teacher and gestures to his friends the contents of the picture. He should remain mute throughout the game and continue gesturing until his friends guess correctly. This can be followed by group work. It will be good if some of the pictures are of famous personalities that students can identify with. Headlines from newspapers and common proverbs can also be added.

b) Songs
Materials:
- Lyrics from songs

Variations- based on student levels
- Teacher blanks out words from lyrics based on teaching objective.
- Teacher places symbols on the blanks to aid students' understanding, i.e., seasons in the <u>sun</u>–symbol of sun is shown
- Words from lyrics are written on cards and mixed up with other words. Students (in pairs) to gather cards as they listen to song.

Step 1
Pre listening
Class discussion and warm up on topic for the day.

While listening
Any of the variations above depending on level of students. This is followed by a discussion.

Post listening
- Answer some wh- questions(close and open ended) based on the song
- Create a scenario for journal/reflective writing,
- Group work- to change entire lyrics based on theme given, but to retain melody

3.   Authentic print materials
a) Travel brochures

Aims:
- To negotiate ideas with friends
- To plan a travel itinerary

Materials:
- Travel brochures of different destinations
- Large sheets of white paper

Variation 1

Preparing a travel itinerary for tourists

Step 1
Teacher to create scenario of some friends going on a holiday, their travel choices, duration of stay, cost etc. A set of travel brochures is then given to each group.

Step 2
Taking the role of travel agents, students have to discuss and come up with an exciting travel itinerary for the tourists. Pictures are cut from brochures and pasted on the white sheet provided. Students are encouraged to add relevant information to detail their plan.

Step 3
Groups take turn to present and convince the audience that their plan is the most feasible, of good value for money and economical. They must also be prepared to answer any questions raised. This is followed by a class discussion.

Variation 2

Role playing

Aims:
- To practice requesting for information-wh questions
- To effectively respond to queries

Students take turns to be hotel receptionist, travel agent and tourists. Teacher creates scenario for students to practice requesting for information.

Brochures are given only to those playing the role of hotel receptionists/travel agents.

Variation 3

Stating preferences

Aims:
- To reinforce the use of adjective, comparative and superlative
- To engage in a conversation and be able to make choices

Materials:
- Travel and hotel brochures
- Worksheets for students to practice using the comparative and superlative forms.

Step 1
Class discussion on the use of the adjective, comparative and superlative.
Worksheet at discrete, sentence and paragraph level given as a warm up for students to practice using the adjective, comparative and superlative forms.

Step 2
Sets of brochures are then given to pairs/small groups. Based on the scenario, groups compare locations, travel choices, hotels, and cost. They then report to the class their preferences and defend their choices.

Variation 4

Designing a phony brochure of an imaginary must believe place.
Groups are provided with travel brochures as well as other colorful interesting pictures. Their task is to design a 'phony' brochure of an imaginary must visit place. They cut and paste the relevant pictures and provide information on a large piece of white paper. Groups then present their travel brochure to the class.

b) Supermarket fliers

Variation 1

Planning a creative party

Aims:
- To describe processes and procedures
- To practice using transitional markers effectively

Materials:
- Supermarket fliers from different stores
- Large white sheets of paper

Class to plan a creative birthday party. Their choice of menu/recipes should only be based on items in the flier. Groups brainstorm on their choice of dishes. Class then decides what dishes each group should work on. Each group is to prepare 2 dishes. They either draw or write the process on the white sheets provided. They then present their creative menus to the class.

Variation 2

Newlyweds starting home
Groups to imagine a couple starting home with a specific budget in mind. They discuss on the essentials the new house should be equipped with. They then list the products and compare prices between stores. They then defend their choices in front of the class.

c) Newspapers and magazines

Variation 1

Treasure Hunt

Aim:
- To skim and scan for specific word, phrase or information

Materials:
- A similar newspaper or magazine for each group

Teacher to read out a specific word, phrase or information and groups have to employ teamwork strategies to locate information. Marks will be

awarded to groups and this competitive spirit livens up the activity.

Variation 2

All About US – A Collage
Groups cut pictures, words and phrases from newspapers/ magazines to describe their group motto, their personalities and likes and dislikes. No writing is allowed. They then present this to the class.

Variation 3

Making Up Stories
Groups are given newspapers and magazines to work on. They are asked to select an interesting photograph of *an animal*, *a place*, *a thing*, *a person* or *group* and *a photo* of their choice. They are then asked to paste the pictures in any order so that these pictures unravel an exciting story. Groups then present their story to the class.

4.   Realia

Variation 1

Story Telling - activity borrowed from Tomalin and Stemplesky (1998)
Aim: To discuss ideas in groups and come up with a coherent story
Materials : bus tickets, receipts, coupons, photographs, currency etc.

Step 1
Teacher hands out various pieces of realia collected from travels abroad from English speaking countries such as bus tickets, receipts, coupons, money, souvenirs and photographs. The items are mixed up in random order. Each group is presented with a collection and this may differ between groups.

Step 2
Students are put into groups of two or three. They identify each item, and then make up a story about their set of items. They are encouraged to be as creative as possible.

Step 3

They then present their stories to the class. As an item occurs in the story, it is shown to the class and placed on the table. When all groups have finished, the students write their own individual version of their story based on the ideas they picked from the various groups.

Variation 2

Playing detective

Aims:
- To practice group brainstorming
- To make possible predictions based on clues given

Material:
- Bus tickets, receipts, coupons, photographs, currency, a rope, blood stained cloth, a blade etc.

Step 1

Students are put into groups. They are told to play detective. Drawing examples from the television and books, teacher highlights aspects of activity to students.

Step 2

Clues as in objects such as bus tickets, currency, knife etc is produced on at a time. About 3-4 minutes is given after each clue for groups to brainstorm and predict on what actually had taken place. Interestingly their predictions may change every time a new clue is presented to them.

Step 3

Groups are given 15 minutes to unravel the mystery. Members confer with one another for the final version.

Step 4

Groups present their version to the class. They are also given the flexibility to act out the scene. Teacher may want students to individually write their version of the story.

Note: This activity allows for creative thinking and is a good bridge to pleasure reading.

Warming up with pictures

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Abstract
There is no doubt that images can be of great importance and relevance to second language teaching, particularly for lower level students. Nevertheless, very few instructors seem to make the best use of pictures in their classes. In a reading session where texts can sometimes be complicated and uninspiring to students, pictures are one of very few aids that teachers can use to grab their students' attention as well as to motivate them before starting the actual reading. Through this paper, the advantages of using visual aids in the warm-up phase of a reading class will be presented. Participants will be able to absorb a great many ideas on the significance of pictures and become aware of the fact that they can be a tremendously useful and convenient tools.

Introduction
It has been said that reading is one of the most difficult skills for students. For instance, the average reading scores of elementary and pre-intermediate students from Levels 1 to 5 at the Australian Centre for Education, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in Term 4, 2007 indicate that reading is among the students' most challenging and weakest skills. An average student at any one of these levels could only score 12.5 marks out of a total 20. Students' poor performance in reading tests is a result of many factors, some of which are due to the fact that these students do not like reading, texts are difficult and time-consuming, or that we, teachers, do not carry out interesting activities and tasks which inspire them in their reading.

An exciting reading lesson requires more than just asking the students to read the article in the course book by themselves, letting them do the vocabulary matching exercise, and then answering comprehension questions. All instructors are aware of the fact that one of the most important stages in any lesson is the Warming-up Phase; and yet some pay little attention to this stage of the lesson. Activating the students' schemata (prior knowledge) is extremely important. A good pre-reading activity sets the purposes of the reading, gives the students a reason to read, motivates the students, and builds their background knowledge (Sasson, 2007).

Learners' styles
Before moving on to the advantages and the different ways in which pictures can be used, it may be important that we discuss different learners' styles. According to the Technical Advisory Service for Images (2004b), the two sides of the brain "have different attributes and respond to different stimuli." The left side of the brain is "analytical, verbal, sequential, and linear; while the right is visual, spatial, holistic and relational". Accordingly, the left is more logical and responds better to textual material, whereas the right is imaginative, responding better to visual content. This shows that different learners have different learning styles.

According to Haynes (2008), there are six types of learners, all of which are explained briefly as follows:

> **(i)** *Auditory learners*: This type of learner learns best through listening and speaking. They are more interested in learning through interviewing, debating, talking, and listening to other people's opinions.

(ii) *Tactile learners***:** This refers to the type of student with the strength of learning through touching. They learn best through drawing, playing board games, or making something by following certain instructions.

(iii) *Kinesthetic learners***:** Learners with this style wish to involve their whole body in the learning process. Similar to tactile learners, they prefer playing games that engage their body, learning through movement activities, or acting out.

(iv) *Global learners***:** This refers to those who learn best through group activities, holistic reading methods and cooperative learning strategies. They would like the teacher to present information in an interesting manner where they can interact with others.

(v) *Analytical learners***:** Students with this learning style prefer to work individually and tend to focus a lot more on details and analyzing.

(vi) *Visual learners***:** This type of learner is the main focus of this research paper. Visual learners are students who learn by observing graphs, charts, maps, posters, and text with a lot of pictures. They are 'sight' readers and are highly motivated by pictures and videos.

For the reasons mentioned above, it is especially important for teachers to find a variety of activities to suit their students' various learning styles. Most of us tend to ignore the importance of pictures, which means we have already lost a very important advantage in our potential teaching. Some learners can benefit greatly from pictures.

Why pictures?
There is no question that pictures are a good source of teaching materials; but what are those benefits? This section shall examine those advantages closely, one by one.

Motivation
A reading class, as many would agree, requires the students to be more highly motivated than any other class. This is probably because the questions can be boring, or understanding the article itself demands a lot of patience from the readers. For this reason, delivering an inspiring lesson is a hard task and requires a great deal of effort from teachers. Using pictures, however, these difficulties can be overcome.

Assume that you are going to give the students a reading article about 'Sports.' With enough pictures of famous sportsmen and sportswomen from your country and around the world, you can easily engage the participants actively. One simple activity is that you can get the students to work in groups of three or four and ask them to use their background knowledge to identify the names of sports celebrities and then find out what sports they play. Not only do the pictures motivate the students, but they also provoke lively discussions and thus demand the students to give their ideas (in English). Requiring only 10-15 minutes preparation, this type of activity is certainly worthwhile.

Pre-teaching vocabulary
To continue with our 'Sports' example, let's imagine we are going to teach our students a new word, a particular sport called 'Rugby'. Instead of using pictures, some of us may anticipate exhibiting the different movements that rugby requires. However, we may only have to include a picture of a rugby player, for instance, Johnny Wilkinson (England Rugby World Cup winner) with his Rugby jersey on, or draw a picture of a rugby ball, and then we can the learners to identify the concept.

Once I had to explain to the students what 'Egyptian hieroglyphics' were. It was never an easy task because I myself did not know what they looked like. The dictionary only defines them as a 'system of writing which uses pictures instead of words, especially as used in ancient Egypt' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2003), which is clearly not enough. As a result, I spent a few minutes searching for a few pictures of hieroglyphics and consequently, I was

able to get the meaning across to the students very easily.

A teacher can pre-teach vocabulary on, for example, adjectives describing feelings and actions with ease. Handing out a number of pictures of faces of people that express different moods (happy, sad, angry, upset, etc.) will aid the students in learning new vocabulary effectively while having fun.

Pictures allow you to pre-teach, practice, or review any vocabulary items if you take some time to think about how to manipulate them, and what and who you should include in the pictures. Sports, celebrities, flags of countries, electronic gadgets, buildings and clothes are just some of the many examples of the different types of topics that allow you to use pictures as a tool for teaching.

Students' confidence

Asking our students to use their general knowledge in the learning process is an excellent way to raise their confidence level. Students who are not active in the class do not necessarily point out that they do not know the answers to our questions or their speaking may be poor. Sometimes this may result from the fact that they are not confident enough to talk. Seeing pictures of celebrities, electronic gadgets, or things that they already know allows them to talk proudly and confidently to their peers and teacher, and even more so if the other class members cannot identify the pictures. The following example shares the experience that I have had with one of my classes.

In 2007, I was presenting a reading lesson about 'Celebrities' to a pre-intermediate class. There was one teenage, male student, who, just as there is in any other class, never spoke more than two sentences and looked as if he was interested in the class. I started distributing pictures of some famous celebrities to the class. He was the only one in the class who could identify Michael Schumacher, Victoria Beckham, Tom Cruise, and Roger Federer, and more. He was certainly very proud of himself and from then on, he started to become more and more involved in the class. This particular example shows that pictures can play a vital role in increasing the confidence level of some students.

Convenience

Finding pictures is very simple and does not take much time. Pictures come from many sources: magazines, newspapers, posters, search engines, to name a few. Since many pictures are available from so many sources, it takes very little time for teachers to choose and prepare the lesson. From my own experience, it only takes about five minutes to find some pictures related to a reading article and another ten to fifteen minutes to organize them into teaching materials.

Comprehension

It is an old saying that 'a picture speaks a thousand words'. Images are more evocative than words and can initiate a variety of associations. Oftentimes students are asked comprehension questions based on the text they have read. Comprehension questions are important but it is equally important for teachers to get students to discuss and reflect on pictures as well. While texts can communicate facts, information, or an argument, images allow imagination, creative thinking, and objectivity to come into play. If teachers can establish a balance between the use of pictures and words, they can as well increase the learning potential of their students (Technical Advisory Service for Images, 2004b).

Expanding students' general knowledge

Not only do pictures inspire students in their learning, they also play a vital role in activating and building their background knowledge. Students can get together, discuss, and share their ideas and experiences with their classmates. Adding to the comprehension of the texts, students may also learn about people they have never heard of, places they have never been to, or names of objects they could not identify.

Assume that we are going to teach our students about heroes in the past. We can include biographies and pictures of great individuals such as Martin Luther King, Mother Teresa, King Jaya Varman VII, and so on. As pictures provoke great enthusiasm, students would definitely find it more interesting doing research on those people if they know what those people looked like rather than without their pictures. This shows that pictures play

a major part in developing our students' background knowledge.

Integrating other skills

Apart from vocabulary building and reviewing, pictures also allow teachers to integrate other skills including listening, speaking, and writing into a reading lesson. Depending on the goals of the lesson, a teacher can always incorporate different techniques to strengthen the skills of his or her students.   The previous examples on celebrities and sports clearly illustrate the importance of pictures in developing students' speaking skills. Pictures encourage students to get together in groups and work on their task and most importantly, to talk with their group members.

Where to get pictures

There are many sources from which digital images and pictures can be accessed. Search engines, magazines, newspapers, and classroom posters are just a few of the many sources from which to select pictures. Here is a brief look at each one of these sources:

Using Search Engines

The Internet has become the most exploited tool in many aspects of our daily life, above all in language teaching and learning. Searching the Internet is much less time-consuming than searching for a picture in books or going through magazines. Search engines contain millions (Technical Advisory Service for Images, 2004a).   There are now 'image search engines', offered by companies such as Google or Yahoo, from which only images can be downloaded. This makes it much more convenient for Internet users.

An easy search for images on the Internet would be to go to www.google.com, select the 'Image' tab and type in key words in the search bar; for example, type 'mobile phone' and hundreds or even thousands of pictures will be available on you computer screen. Some Internet sites such as www.dkimages.com and www.elshq.com also offer a great number of ESL Flash Cards and pictures.

After the teacher has selected pictures which are clear and interesting for their students, they can use them in many different ways, one of which would be to print the pictures out and hand them to the students or print them on an OHP slide and show the pictures to the class.

Pictures from newspapers or magazines

Despite the fact that pictures from the Internet can be free of charge and easy to get, printing them in colour for students can be very costly. For this reason, magazines and newspapers can be useful. As most teachers do, one can just pick up different magazines, spend a few minutes going through them, and cut some pictures out. Most pictures from magazines (or some newspapers) are nice and colorful, and thus generate great interest in students. The South Eastern Globe, The Popular Magazine, The Phnom Penh Post, and The Bangkok Post are some of the most popular magazines and newspapers available in Cambodia that contain bright, colorful pictures which can be used in our teaching. A bank of pictures held centrally in a school for all teachers to use may also be a great alternative.

Posters and maps

Classrooms in general display posters and maps; and they too can be useful resources. Maps and posters are colorful, large, and meaningful. Therefore, a teacher should never ignore the powerful teaching resources that they already have in the classroom. Depending on what topic they are trying to explain to the students, posters can be of great help.

Asking someone for help

Browsing through the Internet, going through magazines and newspapers, and finding the right posters are typical strategies for finding images and photos. However, these sources do not always reveal the images you are looking for. Another very simple way is to take advantage of your 'communication' potential by asking for help from other people, particularly your colleagues. Some specific images can be very difficult to find either because finding the location is complicated, or it is stored in someone's 'physical collection' (Technical

Advisory Service for Images, 2004a). It is not difficult to ask someone where a certain picture is.

Choosing the right pictures

Now that you have found a large number of pictures to choose from, which ones are most appropriate? Here are some of the main issues that you may want to take into consideration.

Size and quality

Some digital images are small in size while some are high in resolution and pleasing to the eyes. Choosing the right images will depend on how big and clear you want them to be. A tip would be to find an image with high resolution. This type of image allows you to enlarge or decrease their size without affecting the quality of the image.

Colour should also be considered while choosing an image. If you are to print a picture out in colour, then you might want to find one that has bright colours. However, if your decision is to make black and white photocopies for students, choosing a picture with a dark background would not be very effective.

Students' preferences

Understandably, every teacher wants to choose pictures that are fascinating to their students. It is also true that "no art is the same, [and] that not all objects are equally interesting to all viewers and equally accessible in terms of meaning" (Visual Understanding in Education, 1998). In order to choose the right pictures to suit our students' interests, we have to understand them first. We should take into consideration their age, jobs, gender, and if possible, their attitude as well. In Cambodia, male students are likely to identify pictures that are related to sports correctly while females would more likely identify pictures of young female pop stars. For this reason, if female students make up two-thirds of the class, a teacher may not want to bring in pictures of 'Ronaldinho'.

In addition to gender, age is also an important factor. Older students with more professional experience and interest in politics would love to have pictures that are related to their professions or

politics; but younger ones may find them very boring and would rather have cartoons or pictures of superstars instead. A teacher should take this into consideration before choosing pictures to be of great interest to his or her students.

Copyright and usage restrictions

The fact that digital images and pictures are available from almost any place does not necessarily mean that we are given the right to copy them. It would be morally and legally correct to cite the sources for these pictures, or even better, ask the owner for permission to use them (Technical Advisory Service for Images, 2004a). It is always best to check if the picture is copyright and if so, contact the owner to ask for permission or negotiate a sale. Citing the sources may also allow the students who are fascinated by the pictures to retrieve them for themselves.

Techniques for using pictures

As mentioned earlier, pictures can be used in many ways. Here is a closer look at some of the different techniques that can benefit from using pictures.

Reading: Pictures as motivators

Before handing the students the text itself, a good warm-up activity is to give them a handout containing several pictures related to the main idea of the article. Students can work in groups and try to identify who the people or what the objects in the pictures are. By so doing, students will be more attracted to the topic of the reading and get involved in some speaking as well.

An alternative would be to present pictures of people or objects that you think are very important in the article. For example, if the students are to read the story *Cinderella*, you may want to select pictures of Cinderella, the prince, the glass slippers, the magic wand and so on. Then ask the students to make connections among all the pictures: Students try to guess the relationship between the pictures. It does not matter if they cannot work out the connections between the pictures. After they have read the story or article, you can ask them to do the task again. Then they use the pictures to retell the story.

Vocabulary building or review

For lower level classes (i.e. elementary or below), teaching new vocabulary is not the easiest thing to do unless a teacher translates the word in to the students' first language. Translating can be difficult if the students come from several linguistic backgrounds. To minimize first language speaking, a teacher can provide the students with pictures that show the meaning of the words. For example, if you are teaching students about different jobs and think that your explanation in English may not work well, you may just give the students pictures of people doing things or wearing clothes related to their professions. This can make the class more interesting and the students can remember the words better than merely translating those words into their first language.

Speaking and writing: 'Find 10 differences'

Apart from reading, pictures can be used in teaching speaking and writing as well. For speaking, you can arrange the students into pairs and give each pair two different pictures and ask them to find 10 differences in the pictures. If you want to focus more on accuracy, you can ask them to write the differences on a piece of paper (Werff, 2003).

Grammar: 'If I were there…'

The language focus of this technique is the second conditional. Give the students pictures of different locations such as a bar, landscape, or hospital. Then ask the students what they would do if they were in that location (Werff, 2003).

For example, a student gets a picture of a 'bar'.

T: What would you be doing if you were there?
S1: If I were there, I would be dancing and talking to my friends.
S2: If I were there, I would be drinking some beer.

All four skills: 'Picture dictation'

This activity is very popular because it involves the students in all the macro-skills: Listening, speaking, reading and writing. Following are the steps that make up the activity:

Pre-Activity
Before coming to class, the teacher needs to select a short text suitable for the level of the learners. This text quoted from John Haycraft (1978, as cited by Ioeng, 2003) is a good example:

> There's an island in the middle of a lake. In the middle of the island there's a house with a big door and four windows on the ground floor, and six windows on the first floor. There're a lot of big trees to the left of the house. On the lake, to the right of the island, there's a boat with two men in it. One of them is fishing.
>
> To the left of the lake there's a hill with a church on the top. It's midday and the sun is in the sky.

Listening
The teacher then asks the students to draw a picture according to what they hear. An alternative would be to ask two students to draw on the board.

Speaking
The teacher asks a few students to look at their own pictures and retell the story.

Listening and Writing
After retelling the story, the teacher then uses the traditional dictation method. The students listen with care and write down on a sheet of paper the text they hear. This is also good for 'Bottom up' Listening Skills.

Reading
After the students have written down the text, the teacher asks them to do peer editing. Students read their partner's writing and try to locate and correct the mistakes.

Conclusion

In summary, digital images have proven that they are an incredible resource of materials. Not only can they be free resources, but they can be taken from virtually anywhere. However, teachers should take into account how to select their pictures, which pictures they should select, and cite their sources properly. In a reading session where some texts may

be of little interest to the students, pictures can inspire the students and give them a clear purpose for their reading. In addition, pictures can also be used to improve other skills. Depending on the goals of the lesson, a teacher can manipulate the use of pictures in many different ways. For these reasons, pictures do play a vital role in teaching and should never be forgotten.

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