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Teachers of English as a Foreign Language

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I hope that our readers will find this issue informative and insightful.

Best wishes,

Andy Noces Cubalit, EDD Candidate
GEN TEFL President

***REFLECTION AND JOURNALS WRITING:
A CASE STUDY OF THAI EFL LEARNERS***

By: Dr. Maneerat Chuaychoowong

ABSTRACT

While ‘reflection’ has been emphasized as a means to enhance students’ learning, writing journals is regarded as essential tool in fostering reflective skills (Shön, 1983; Holly, 1989). However, little is known whether writing activities could be suitable for different types of learners, particularly ones who study English as a foreign language (or EFL learners). Thus, this case study was set out to explore learners’ levels of reflection and to identify inhibitors and promoters of reflective writings. The main instruments used were semi-structured interviews, and students’ reflective journals. Findings revealed that the learners’ journals were categorized into two groups of journal writers: 1) reflectors whose writing displayed reflection contents and 2) non-reflectors whose writing contained only records of activities or events the writers encountered with. The interview accounts showed that previous trainings in reflective writing and the teacher’s and peers’ feedback for individual student promoted learners’ ability to write quality journals. However, lack of English writing skills, absence of reflective writing training, the same guided questions, and unclear guidelines were identified as obstacles of students’ writing and reflecting.

Key words: Reflection, levels of reflection, EFL learners, journal writing

INTRODUCTION

Instruction for English-language learners can vary and come with different terms such as English as a second language (ESL), English as a foreign language (EFL), or English as an additional language (EAL) depending on who is the learner and what is the official language of the learner's country. In South East Asian countries such as Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Brunei and Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language. Thus, the learner in this case is known as an EFL learner. When comparing to learners who learn English as a second language, Yoshida pointed out that EFL learners have fewer opportunities to use English in their daily lives (as cited in Lee, Murphy-Shigematsu & Han, 2006) and such situation can result in effectiveness of the development of English skills in EFL context (Yamada, 2014).

At present, due to both the advancement of technology and transnational trading, EFL learners have to strive to develop not only their English skills but also higher order thinking skills. Particularly in Thailand, when students attend the university level, aside from the English courses that are offered in English, higher order thinking skills such as reflective skills are also aimed to develop in the course. This is the result of a lifelong learning policy, considered to be a world policy that has been driven by global and regional forces. In Thailand, when the lifelong learning policy was enacted as the national policy, universities nationwide started to implement the policy in different forms. The main goal is to develop lifelong learners. Thus, at a faculty level, the policy has been translated into the design of curriculum and syllabus. At a classroom level, different activities are carried out to concertedly respond to its main curriculum and course syllabus. Self-study tasks, project-based assignments or portfolios are common activities in most syllabi found

at many universities. In addition to these activities, students in English courses are more often required to write learning journals to reflect on their experiences regularly throughout the courses.

In general, students are provided with structured questions as guidance for writing English journals. However, through occasional conversations with teachers and students who have learning journals included in their courses, the researcher found that they both perceived learning journals as a burden or a waste of time. While teachers expressed their disappointments with the quality of the journals submitted by their students, the students themselves who are all non native speakers of English also perceived journal writing as a burden with no clear reasons why they had to write them. While literature in the field has provided promising results of journal writing in enhancing student learning (Conner-Greene, 2000) and encouraging students to become more critical and more reflective (Jarvis, 2001), language barriers might be one of several limiting factors that limit the quality of reflection in student journals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

REFLECTION AND JOURNALS WRITING

More than two decades, 'reflective skills' have been emphasized as a means to enhance students' learning across various disciplines in higher education (Dewey, & Shön, 1983). In particular, writing journals are an essential tool in fostering reflective skills in adult education (Shön, 1983; Holly, 1989: and Mezirow, 1990). In disciplined-specific areas, such as nursing, (Chirema, 2007); teacher education programs, (Arikan, 2006); and engineering, (Socha, 2003), they are actively used with the same purpose. Also, in ESL, reflection and using reflective journal as learning and research tools is not a new idea (Richards & Lockhart, 1994: Orem, 2001: Peyton, 1990: Norton, 1998).

Even though the definition of the concept of ‘reflection’ is considered unclear regarding its relevant features such as its antecedent conditions, processes and outcomes (Rogers, 2001), scholars and researchers who have advocated reflective practice in the field have offered how the concept can be defined. Mezirow (1991) defined “reflection” as an involvement of “the critique of assumptions about the content or process of problem solving.... The critique of premises or presuppositions pertains to problem posing as distinct from problem solving. Problem posing involves making a taken-for-granted situation problematic, raising questions regarding its validity (p. 105)”. In brief, Gilpin (1999) considers ‘reflection’ as a kind of thinking involving the examination of ‘a situation or concept against a broader knowledge base’.

Boud (2001) elaborates the process in more details that reflection involves ‘taking the unprocessed, raw material of experience and engaging with it to make sense of what has occurred...exploring often messy and confused events and focusing on the thoughts and emotions that accompany them’. He further describes that it can be taken as an informal personal activity for its own sake, or as part of a structured course where reflection may focus on special activities primarily arranged as a stimulus for learning, on events of the past, or on concurrent placements in workplaces and the community. In the same way, Barlett (1990) views reflection as a full cycled-process, ‘where an experience is recalled, considered and evaluated in relation to a broader purpose for decision making, planning and action’.

Unlike others, Rodgers (2002) offered four criteria based on Dewey’s view of reflection:

1. Reflection is a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas. It the thread that makes continuity of learning possible, and ensures the progress of the individual and, ultimately, society. It is a means to essentially moral ends.

2. Reflection is a systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking, with its roots in scientific inquiry.
3. Reflection needs to happen in a community, in interaction with others.
4. Reflection requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and of others. (p. 845)

The present study adopted the definition offered by Boud (2001) and Barlett (1990) which focuses on the whole process of the reflection activity. This starts from recalling events and experience and engage in examining, evaluating, making decision and plan for further actions.

JOURNAL WRITING AND RESEARCH STUDIES

What is journal writing?

According to Boud (2001), 'journal writing is a multifaceted activity that can take many forms for many reasons. It can be used in many different ways to promote reflection. Different strategies and devices can be used at different stages of learning to focus on events anticipated and those that have passed' (p. 6). In a study by Conner-Green (2000), journal writing refers to 'written connections' between course content and materials outside of class such as books, television, or film made by students.

The studies of the effectiveness of using journal writing in class have been well-documented in higher education literature. For example, in the content-based courses such as psychology Conner-Greene (2000) assigned her students to write journals with the aim to balance the course contents with application. Her study which used a quasi-experimental design in comparing classes through three semesters revealed that journal writing enhanced student learning as reflected in test scores. In addition, her students viewed journal writing as a valuable assignment that fostered understanding and application of concepts. Similarly, in Chirema's study (2007) journals were found as

a beneficial means in fostering reflection and learning among nursing students, and they also provided evidence for the presence or absence of reflective thinking. However, the study indicated that the writing activities did not seem to benefit students equally. A study by Arikan (2006) though predominantly revealed the advantages of writing for reflection; it mentioned a negative response from ELT teacher trainee as they had to cope with writing loads in the process.

All in all research studies in the field emphasize several benefits of journal writing. While some mentioned its drawbacks, little is known whether writing activities could be suitable for different types of learners, particularly learners who study English as a foreign language (or EFL learners). Thus, this case study was set out to explore what could be promoters or inhibitors of reflective writing among EFL learners and what could be possible ways to assist them to reflect themselves effectively.

PURPOSES OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The two main purposes of this study were to explore learners` levels of reflection and to identify inhibitors and promoters of quality learning journals amongst EFL learners who attended a specially designed summer course. This summer course program was designed only for students who did not have strong background in English.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study tried to answer three main research questions.

1. What are inhibitors or promoters of quality reflective journals?
2. What are levels of reflection of the research participants who are EFL learners?
3. Do these participants prefer certain ways in reflecting themselves?

METHODOLOGY

THE COURSE

“Academic English 2” is an undergraduate foundation course required for English-majored students. However, during summer semester academic year 2012 it was adjusted for students with weak background in English. Like the course in the regular semester, the main objective of the course was to encourage students to develop four main English skills, through classroom activities ranging from essay writing, presentations, taking notes, and discussions. It was expected to prepare students essential skills demanded by academic environment. Students in this course are typically freshmen. The 15-week course covers note-taking skills, presentation skills, essay writing evaluation, and discussion. The course took place once a week with a three-hour-long session. There were only five students in the class when it was offered. In this course students were assigned to do various tasks or activities which had been designed to encourage them to be independent, critical, and reflective learners, the desired characteristics that the course aimed to promote.

THE REFLECTIVE JOURNALS

The main objective of using reflective journals in “Academic English 2 course” is to foster students’ reflective thinking skills. Thus, reflective writing was required as part of a student’s portfolio which is the assessment of the course. The portfolio mainly includes 4 self-study assignments which include 1) an essay writing assignment, 2) a note-taking assignment, 3) an academic presentation, and 4) a discussion. In each assignment, students would be involved in the three stages of the assignment: stage 1, the first trial; stage 2, the intervention stage; and stage 3, the final intervention stage. After stage 1, students would write a reflective journal. In the intervention stage, they then chose tasks or activities that they considered contributive to their improvement of English language skills relevant to the assignment. They would collect all the tasks they did which were related to each assignment in the portfolio. After they finished

the final stage of each assignment, they were also required to write another reflective journal. The guided questions were designed to have the same scope. The following are the examples of questions used to guide a reflective journal for the academic presentation assignment for stage 1.

Referring to your first presentation, what did you do that made you happy or disappointed?

How are you going to solve the problems you found?

What are the comments or feedback from your classmates and teacher? The plus (positive), minus (negative), or interesting points?

What are the comments for your own performance? The plus (positive), minus (negative), or interesting points?

Do you have any plans to improve yourself for the second presentation? Explain.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Research participants were students in a small-sized and comprehensive university which offered English medium of instruction in twelve fields of study, among these were Accounting, Cosmetic Science, and English. The participants include five students; 2 males and 3 females who were enrolled in the Academic English 1 course in the summer term. Academic English 1 is offered to students who failed from the courses offered during regular terms or whose study plans were delayed due to other causes. The participants in this study were considered to have low level of English. Their grades from the previous English courses ranged from fail (F grade) to just pass (D or D+ grades). Thus, they were considered students who primarily needed most help from the

teacher. Below are the backgrounds of the research participants.

Table 1 Background information of the research participants

No	Students Names*	Gender	Year of study	Grade of previous English course	GPA* *	Characteristics of individual student
1	Sam	M	2nd	D	1.72	Sam is very relaxed and is the best performer in the class despite his weak background in English.
2	Jim	M	3rd	B	2.35	Jim is the only third year student in this class. Since he had got F grade, he had to enroll in Academic English 1 twice. In his second attempt he got B grade. Though his English speaking skill considered fluent and better than his classmates, he seems to be reluctant to express his thoughts.

						Comparing to everyone in the class, he has a fair background in English. However, he could express better when he wrote.
3	Sandy	F	2nd	D	2.02	Sandy has a weak background in English and had got F grade in Academic English 2. This is her second registration for the course. She is a cheerful girl and she is always willing to participate in the class.
4	Vivian	F	2nd	D+	2.22	Vivian is a bright student who is eager to learn and communicate well in English. However, she has problems with reading and writing. She had withdrawn from Academic English 2 course last term and this is her

						second registration for the course
5	Bella	F	2nd	D	1.96	Bella is the weakest of all the five students in the class. She has problems with all four skills. Though she is willing to participate in doing tasks, she does not seem to be eager to do anything beyond the minimum requirement.

*Students' names are pseudonym to protect students' identity.

**GPA is grade point average.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

To answer the research questions, research data was gathered by two research instruments: a semi-structured interview, and students' reflective journals.

STUDENTS' REFLECTIVE JOURNALS

Students in the present study were assigned to write reflective journals after they finished each of their assignments. In writing reflective journals, they were provided with guided questions.

Twenty journal entries from the participants were analyzed for their levels of reflection using three-level of coding scheme of Paton`s (2006):

Level 1: Non-reflection level: shows ability to recall and describe events, and activities students chose and participated in; learners in this level are considered **non-reflectors**;

Level 2: Reflection level: shows ability to recall and describe events or activities, recognize and express feelings associated to the activities involved, evaluate own performance, decision, and plans; learners in this level are considered **reflectors**;

Level 3: Critical reflection level: shows awareness that their practices or decisions need further improvement and consideration of more suitable perspectives or a change of perspective; ability to discuss sound plans of further improvement; learners in this level are considered **critical reflectors**.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

While there are many types of interviews employed by the researcher, one distinction among them is their various degree of structure or standardization (Robson, 2002). For example, structured interviews have pre-set questions with a pre-set order and fixed wording, whereas unstructured interviews are based on a general area of interest, and concern of the interviewer who lets the conversation develop within the area, and in an informal atmosphere. The main weak points of a semi-structured interview is its lack of standardization of the interview which is considered a threat to reliability. However, its main strength is that interview questions can be primarily determined, and the order and question wording can be adjusted appropriately. It also allows prompts and probes to in the interview (May, 2001).

In this study semi-structured group interview was conducted at the

end of the course to explore students' experiences in the course. The interviewees were interviewed in their native language (Thai) to avoid language barrier since most of them (4 out of 5) had low level of English proficiency which can be observed from their grades in Table 1. The followings were the key areas of the interview:

- Learners' experience of self-study tasks
- Learners' experience of journal writing
- Learners' perceptions of the advantages/disadvantages of writing journals
- Learners' perceptions of a good journal and how to write it better
- Learners' preferred ways to reflect themselves

Transcribing and translating of the interview data were carried out by the researcher. The main reason as to why the researcher took the roles by herself was that the researcher was the teacher of the course, so she understood the course context as well as the present research project. In addition, to ensure the accuracy of the translation, a fellow native-Thai teacher who taught general English was invited to work with the research and check the translated version of the transcripts. This step has been considered essential, particularly in qualitative approach. According to Polkinghorne (as cited in Van Nes et al, 2010), "research is considered valid when the distance between the meanings as experienced by the participants and the meanings as interpreted in the findings is as close as possible". In the present study, the researcher and the fellow teacher worked together to minimize such a distance.

Generally, the analysis of interview data involved organizing the data into manageable units, synthesizing, recognizing themes, and distributing the information (Bogdan & Biklan, 2003). The present study followed three main flows of activity specified by Miles and Huberman (1994) which included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. STUDENTS' LEVELS OF REFLECTION

According to Table 2, journals of three research participants contained detailed and substantial writing; in other words, their writings portrayed that they were reflectors, while the other two were non-reflectors. Interestingly, though their grades of the previous English course were similar, suggesting their backgrounds in English were similar, their levels of reflection were different. In addition, none of participants' journals was considered at critical reflection level.

Table 2 Students' levels of reflection

No	Students' Profile					
1	Names	Sam	Jim	Sandy	Vivian	Bella
2	Gender	Male	Male	Female	Female	Female
3	Year of study	2nd	3 rd	2nd	2nd	2nd
4	GPA	1.72	2.35	2.02	2.22	1.96
5	Grade: Academic English 1 (previous English course)	D	B	D	D+	D
6	Levels of reflection	reflect or	reflecto r	reflecto r	non- reflecto r	non- reflecto r

To illustrate, students who were non-reflectors would simply describe what they did, while students who were considered reflectors would describe the activities they involved, express their feeling, and explain how they took the teacher and classmate's comments into account when planning to improve themselves as shown in the excerpts below:

Level 2:

“Our group had a lot of mistakes. I think we can make it better in the final presentation. Our plan is to take the teacher and our classmates' comments to improve our presentation...”

“This time is better than the first presentation. Everything was improved such as visuals, organization and objectives. I am so happy like I got a gold medal. ..I think I learnt about the ways to present our work. For example, we'd wear formal uniform because the presentation is academic... I spoke fast in the first presentation so in the final one I spoke slower just like what the teacher advised.” (Jim)

“The teacher and my friends (classmates) told me that I spoke softly (when presenting) and did not point things out (for the audience)...I was a little disappointed but I did not give up....for the final presentation, I solved my problems...I had many comments from everyone...“This time I was so happy everyone told me that it was better than the first. I think the good point about my group is we have contents, and our topic is interesting. I have learnt that I should use the microphone and make eye contact, not read in front of the room when presenting.” (Sam)

“I think I did well in the academic presentation part because I improved in my presentation. I did it better than the first presentation because I spent time practicing again and again. I made eye contact to get attention.” (Sandy)

All of the above demonstrate that students with reflection level 2 not only described what they did but also explained why. They related their decisions on comments that they received from the teacher and their peers.

On the contrary, students with reflection level 1 simply answered the guided questions briefly. Though they expressed their feeling, they did not provide details, nor did they try to relate with situations.

Level 1:

*“I introduced the topic and the organization of the presentation. I was happy. The teacher suggested us to add some information about people in our country and I should not read my notes too much. My group finished the presentation in a short time.”
(Vivian)*

“My part was about showing graphs. I felt alright when I finished. Everyone in my group presented well but we have to find more contents for the next presentation.” (Bella)

In the following section, the analysis of the interview will be summarized as well as the main inhibitors and promoters of students' reflective writing.

2. INHIBITORS AND PROMOTERS OF STUDENTS' REFLECTIVE WRITING

The analysis of the interview accounts revealed main inhibitors and promoters of students' reflective writing as follows:

2.1 ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS

One of the main inhabiting factors for these students was their English language writing skills. All of the participants were considered to have weak background in English as shown from their grades in the previous English course (Academic English 1). Since

the present course was aimed to encourage students to build up both reflective skills and English writing skills, students were assigned to write in English language rather than in their native language. Every student mentioned why they could not write as they wished:

“ If we wrote in our own language, we would be able to express better than in English. Some words in our own language are not found in English.... I used similar words if there was no equivalent one.” (Jim)

“I basically skipped that part when I could not find any word (with the same meaning) or when I was desperate. When I was unable to explain, I would not feel like writing. If I was able to explain I would.” (Sandy)

This finding is in line with the study by Roux, Mora, and Tamez (2012) which revealed that students with elementary proficiency in English and lack of writing skills struggled dramatically with reflective writing. Thus, it was proposed that students should be allowed to write in their own language at least at the initial stage.

2.2 THE ABSENCE OF SAMPLES OF REFLECTIVE WRITING

Research participants mentioned that they had no idea what the reflective journal should be like. One participant who adopted surface approach to study stated that she basically answered the guided questions:

“I wrote the way I thought it should be. There was no example of reflective journals provided. I have never done this before. This is the first course that I had to write journals.” (Bella)

This suggests that students are likely to provide similar accounts of information if they have seen an example of reflective writing. In particular, when students are new to this writing genre and have little

background to the process, it is necessary to provide initial supports. According to Harris (2005), supports as well as motivation at the early stage of the reflection process are needed. In the present case, examples of reflective writing should be provided with the consideration of students' level of English proficiency. If the examples are too difficult to understand, students are more likely to be discouraged rather than motivated to write.

2.3 UNCLEAR GUIDELINE AND OBJECTIVES

Most research participants in this study stated that they had never written reflective writing before and found it was not clear why they had to write the journal and what it was for. However, in the present study the guideline and objectives of reflective writing had been explained at the beginning of the course. Students' statements below suggest that the guideline and objectives of the writing need to be communicated more not only at the beginning of the course.

“I don't know why I had to write the journal. I can't see the point about why I had to write what I did each time.” (Bella)

“I've never done this, writing reflection, in any course. I had no idea how to do it and I just answered the questions.” (Vivian)

Also, their comments suggest that the explanation of how reflective writing will benefit students should be in place and emphasized both before and during the reflection process. As stated by Moon (2006) the right conditions in the environment that are conducive to reflection process should be provided, and these range from guidance, encouragement, helpful questions or exercises and the expectation of a worthwhile consequence both during and at the end of the process.

2.4 EXPERIENCE OF REFLECTIVE WRITING ACTIVITIES

The data from the interview revealed that reflective journals or journals with descriptions of student learning, further plans for improving, generally, were from Jim who was required to write reflective journals in previous courses.

“I used to write reflective journals in three subjects, but as I remember one was in a tourism course and the other was in a writing course.....We wrote about at the end of the course and about what we had learnt, whether we improved our skills, and experience we had got from the course. ” (Jim)

The student’s account shows that prior trainings of reflective writing are likely to encourage more quality writing. Dymont and O’Connell (2010) also stressed that it is important for students to have adequate training in how to reflect more deeply. They further quoted Dewey who primarily pointed out that it is a must for the teacher to teach their students reflective habits of the mind.

2.5 FEEDBACK FROM PEERS AND THE TEACHER

A student would write journals in response to the teacher’s feedback showing how he intended to improve himself according to the feedback. Despite no training in writing reflective journals, the student’s journal contained details of how he would improve himself. He took the comments and feedback from both peers and the instructor as accounts in planning how to improve himself.

“I had taken comments from both my teacher and my friends to find ways how to improve myself. I agreed that I did speak loud enough in my first presentation. I also looked at my note and made less eye contact. In my second presentation, I did much

better. I prepared myself and practiced talking without a note.”
(Sam)

In the present study, feedback and comments were provided after students had performed a task such as giving a presentation. Then the student wrote a reflection and referred to the feedback and comments from the teacher and classmates. Though research studies emphasized feedback and responses given on students reflective writing (Williams & Sundelin, 2000; Thorpe, 2004), the present study additionally revealed positive effect of feedback or comments of both peers and teacher given after students` performing a task and then the student wrote his reflection in response to feedback and comments. Hence, relevant and constructive responses and feedback were indicated as a promoter of quality reflection. Similarly, Roe and Stallman (1994) who studied students` dialogue journals, stressed the vital role of the teacher feedback as it “promoted collegial consultation, improved task engagement, and affirmed [students`] feelings and ideas” (p. 579). In the present study, Sam`s words showed how comments or feedback led him affirm the evaluation of his own performance and also engaged him in reflection process.

2.6 TIME OF REFLECTION

Jim who always wrote journals with detailed information comparing to other 4 students mentioned that time of reflection can be a factor whether he could cover all substantial contents. He compared the Academic English 2 course and the English for Tourism course in which he said he could not write as many details as in the Academic English 2. He mentioned that:

“This one (reflecting on Academic English 2) is fine for me because we wrote after we finished each task. In another subject, like tourism, not all that happened were written down. Sometimes, I

could not explain or comment about something. I just forgot stuff. It needed to be based on our experience, right? But when our activity was done in January and the submission of our work (reflection and report on the activity) was done in March (end of the semester)... I then forgot some parts of the activity". (Jim)

Writing journals right after the completion of an activity or an event is identified as the most common period of reflection process (Dyment & O'Connell, 2010). It allows students to revisit their experience and record both the events, emotions and their responses to the events when it is still fresh and clear to them.

3. STUDENTS' PREFERRED WAYS IN EXPRESSING AND REFLECTING

The interview account revealed that even though three students were considered reflectors as their journals were in Level 2, they preferred different ways in reflecting themselves. Only one third-year student preferred writing; while two reflectors who were first-year students, similarly to their peers, preferred group discussion in their native language. This suggested that students' ability in writing English plays a major role in leading them to prefer different ways to recall and reflect on their experience. According to the students' account in the present study, students preferred ways that they thought would allow them to express themselves better. In addition, discussions provide opportunities for participants to interact with each other and accordingly provide opportunities for students to reflect. As Dewey put it (cited in Rodgers, 2002), reflection needs to occur in interaction with others and in a community. Hence, if the main goal of reflection was to encourage students to reflect deeply, students should have choices of the tools or modes which allow them to share their experiences and be open to comments or opinions of others and become more engaged in reflecting on their experiences.

CONCLUSION

This case study investigated the inhibitors or promoters of reflection among EFL learners who registered in English course during summer term. The study revealed that despite students' weak backgrounds of English, journals of three research participants were categorized as level 2 where participants were able to reflect. On the other hand, journals of other participants were in a lower level where participants simply described events or activities that they did or participated in. Regarding inhibitors and promoters of reflection, it was indicated that the key factors that could inhibit or enhance reflection of these students included English writing skills, the samples of reflective writing, guideline and objectives of reflection, experience of reflective writing, feedback or comments from peers and the teacher, and the time or occasion of reflection. Lastly, the study indicated that students with low level of English preferred using their native language and preferred discussion better than writing as a mode or tool in reflecting on their experiences.

Generally, the present study suggested that when a reflection process is involved with EFL learners, especially to those who have a linguistic background problem, it may need to provide more than one mode of reflecting. Likewise, key promoters of reflection should also be in place. As pointed out by Hacker and Barkhuizen (2008) since reflection is a dynamic process, serious attention should be given to the designing and implementing courses that will draw learners' engagement in the reflective process. With regards to promoters of reflection indicated in this study, it is deemed critical to decide when and how each promoter will be introduced into the process. As this study was only a preliminary study and its focused was on a specific group of students, it is recommended that there should be more extensive research in this area so that it could offer better understanding of how EFL learners could be well supported in developing reflective skills.

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THE PROMOTION OF POSITIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN ELL CLASSROOMS

By: Hisae Nakagawa and Hiroshi Nakagawa

Abstract

Classroom management is a topic of enduring concern for ELL teachers, and many ELL teachers integrate a variety of motivational and group dynamic theories into their classroom planning. Creative methodology, including cooperative and hands-on activities, is a successful strategy for lowering the affective filter and engaging students in active learning. This presentation provides ELL teachers and language educators with a comprehensive, practical description of current positive classroom management research and methodology. First, the authors will present how to create a productive learning environment and enhance the conditions for personal growth in ELL students within the Japanese university context. With examples and specific details of the authors' classroom management techniques, and its relationship to students' personal and academic needs, the authors will present a hierarchical model, which represents class motivation and learner autonomy. Next, the authors will discuss interpersonal relations and classroom interactions as key factors influencing students' behavior and achievement. In addition, teachers' roles in promoting learning platforms, scaffolding through in-class activities and motivating students to enhance their English proficiency will be highlighted. The authors will conclude with a reflection and discussion on the relationship between productive group formation and autonomous learning.

Introduction

Within the Japanese university context, enhancing English language learner (ELL)s' motivation is one of the common challenges among English educators. This paper focuses on one motivational model that has been implemented in Japanese university English classrooms and describes its effectiveness from the teachers' and students' perspectives. To help English language educators better understand, the authors will introduce the motivational model for enhancing group performance through personal growth of students by earning students' trust. In this paper authors will also focus on how understanding our learners' cultural backgrounds can help us to create a safe learning community. After several years of teaching English as a second language in the United States and Japan and with the consideration of the ELL's perspectives and feedback from the classes, the authors have formed the belief that culturally diverse students, such as students from different family and socio-economic backgrounds, are unique and need extra attention. For example, these students are most likely to expand and improve their pronunciation, intonation, grammatical, lexical and cultural knowledge of the target culture through communication with their peers in a positive and supportive learning environment. Thus, the authors have been examining ways to support ELL students by enhancing their motivation in the university English classrooms and help them succeed in taking responsibility for their academic and social goals.

Background

One of the recent challenges in reading/writing classes is creating a learning environment that fosters the students' autonomy. At the beginning of the fall semester of 2014, the authors had eight different classes each with 30 sophomore students, who had taken mainly lecture-style courses before, and were therefore used to taking a passive role in their learning by quietly listening, taking notes, and

memorizing new vocabulary and grammatical forms that the teacher recommended. According to Tomlinson (1999), the ELL 's performance can be improved by working towards creating a positive learning environment through recognizing individual learner differences. Therefore, the authors attempted to create a positive learning environment. By working with these learners and arranging seating according to their individual needs and differences and encouraging them to interact with their peers by either teaching or simply helping each other, the authors started to see positive results. For example, students who usually sat at the same desk and only talked with friends started to interact with all classmates, and there was a greater focus on communication with each other rather than only communicating with the teacher. By talking with each other, students were able to work through their misunderstandings and negotiate meaning. Through this experience, the authors have realized that if both the teacher and students work together to construct a cooperative and motivating learning environment, the students are more likely to realize their learning goals and rely on their peers more while on their way to becoming more autonomous. Therefore, since the fall semester of 2014, the authors have focused on creating a positive learning environment by adapting Paydon's (2012) model for developing a motivational learning environment. Paydon (2012) hypothesizes that there are five levels to classroom motivation: the first four levels: Structure, Trust, Cohesion, and Performance, focus on building and strengthening the group. The fifth stage, Personal Growth, focuses on supporting the individual's own development. By examining each stage to enhance motivation and to create a positive learning environment, the authors have successfully employed learning tasks while helping learners to increase their autonomy to improve their language and personal goals in English classes.

Motivational models in ELL classrooms

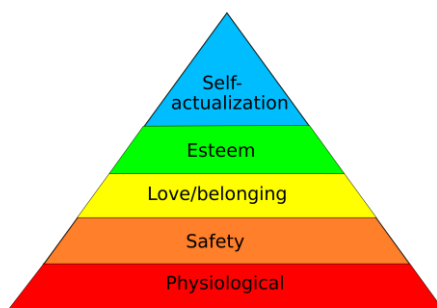
While a useful guide for generally understanding why students behave the way that they do and in determining how learning may be affected by physiological or safety deficiencies, the promotion of positive classroom management in ELL classroom can be discussed using Ehrman and Dornyei (1998)'s Sequential stage theory and the foundation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Sequential stage theories of group development introduced by Ehrman and Dornyei (1998) also paved the way for forming the classroom motivational model and suggests that there be four stages of development: formation, transition, performing, and dissolution, and groups undergo each of them in order. Learners first go through the formation stage where members meet others for the first time and start making closer relationships. It is necessary for teachers to pay careful attention to this stage since a group does not move forward until this stage has been favorably completed. Next, groups go into the transition stage where a dichotomy of opinions or deadlock occurs in order for them to be more cohesive with each other. By experiencing the process of agreeing and disagreeing, groups develop and enhance their performance. This, performing stage, is a desired stage which teachers should strive to reach with their students, and since they have performed to their maximum potential, students start developing their individual learning even after groups disassemble. Finally, once group members of a class have achieved the prior three stages, teachers can determine whether a group has grown into certain level by observing them after it dissolved. That means, members of a successfully formed group will be highly likely to commit themselves to working hard even individually.

Abraham Maslow (1943) is a well-known psychologist who created the theory of hierarchy of needs. His assumption in this theory was based on the idea that human development involves

actualization. Also, it focuses on describing the five stages of growth in humans because psychopathology results from the frustration of a human being's essential nature. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is formed and represented as a hierarchy pyramid. The bottom four stages represent physiological needs, and the top stage of the pyramid is considered as growth needs. In his theory, the lower needs must be satisfied in order to meet the higher stage needs. In other words, on the whole, an individual cannot satisfy any stage unless needs below are satisfied (Maslow, 1943). As shown in Figure 1, the bottom stage is called physiological needs, survival needs. In this stage, literal requirements for human survival are considered. For example, in the classroom, if students are hungry, they are easily distracted. Once their physical needs are met, the next stage, safety needs, takes over. This need includes safety and security of environment, health, property, and resources. To satisfy these needs, many teachers always check that the number of desks and chairs are set for students, lights are on, temperatures of the classroom are well adjusted for students. Once those needs are met, the next stage, love and belonging, can be considered. Since students feel a sense of belonging and acceptance from the teacher and classmates through the time they spend together, their social relationships become an important factor for their learning (Maslow, 1943).

Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



(Maslow, 1943)

Many students' academic performance may be affected by time spent forming friendships to feel accepted. By establishing their social relationship and recognizing their achievement, confidence, and acceptance of others, they may start to seek their own self-esteem. Once those bottom four physiological stages have been satisfied, the highest level of needs, self-actualization or self-fulfillment, is established. Maslow emphasized the need for self-actualization, and he defined self-actualized person as one who is satisfied with basic needs, has fully exploited talents, and is motivated by values. The common characteristics of the self-actualized person that Maslow describes are ones who have a superior perception of reality, increased acceptance of self and others, and improved interpersonal experience with high levels of creativity (Maslow, 1943). Because a highly motivated person tends to increase autonomy and resists conformity, behavior is not driven and motivated by deficiencies.

As mentioned above, because ELLs may follow the stages of the development in their language learning, following the theories should be considered as they have positive implications in the classroom. Therefore, in this paper, the authors will concisely outline the main principles based on the motivational theories above, and arrange to employ them in our teaching to enhance ELLs' motivation.

Structure

At the structure stage, students discover interpersonal relationships which provide the basic proximity, contact, interaction, and security that facilitates the development of trust (Paydon, 2012). Creating a favorable atmosphere by constructing a structure plays an important role when it comes to managing a language classroom. In this stage, especially at the beginning of the semester, teachers need to consider students' initial concerns towards their class, classmates,

and learning tasks. Teachers may focus on the learning content, trying to make it meaningful and fruitful, or attractive and enjoyable by applying it to students' needs, while others reckon learning strategies to be more significant. Dörnyei (2001) also emphasized that it is necessary to be thoughtful about classroom language in order to create a pleasant atmosphere so that students do not feel anxious and feel motivated to learn. Therefore, it is suggested that teachers consider how to create a favorable classroom atmosphere for students before jumping into a notion about content or a learning strategy. Also, language teachers need to spend adequate time for preparation. Lesson preparation (Echevarria, Vogt, et al., 2008) includes the following key features: language objectives, content concepts, supplementary materials, adaptation of content, and meaningful activities. One of the authors uses the content objectives for the required courses at Tokai University to meet their content standard. While he carefully considers the language objective, he must select the development of the vocabulary for the students so that they can relate them to the subject area. Also, he clearly states lesson objectives by writing them on the syllabus and the board, then telling the students the objectives orally in each lesson. In this way, for example, if the content objective may be making a hotel reservation, the teacher clearly tells them that imperative verbs, suggestive models, and several specific vocabulary words are necessary to learn in order to reach the objective. Since content concepts are very important, they should be always focused and appropriate to the students' age and educational background. Because students' English proficiency is low, it doesn't mean that they are appropriate to learn from children's literacy book. The author also uses supplementary materials, such as pictures, visual aids, and multimedia in order for students to create meaningful learning connections from their previous knowledge and consider the effectiveness of technology enhanced language learning (TELL) (Yang & Chen, 2007).

Despite the fact that content and learning strategies can be

significant factors which control students' motivation, controlling the classroom atmosphere for students who are always worried is important at the beginning of the class. Making pairs with students who have a higher level of motivation and enjoy interacting with others find it easy to get involved in the classroom atmosphere and get to know each other. On the other hand, students who are anxious about interacting with others, especially in English may isolate themselves; especially the first time they meet classmates. In order to help students feel safe interacting with each other, the authors first ask them to create a personal résumé. Each student writes his/her birthday, interests, hobbies, favorite sports, and academic goals. Once created, it provides a way for the students to form and strengthen peer to peer relationships by simply asking questions about the contents of their resume. In this way, they were able to show interest in each other. Students break the personal barrier while speaking English to others. By creating a friendly social atmosphere in the classroom, students will, over time, feel more at ease taking risks to speak out in English and to share their own ideas, thoughts, and opinions. Second, another classroom management technique for ELLs is arranging seats (Wright, 2005). By assigning students to seat at a different desk in each activity, all students can have an opportunity to get to know all the members so that helps to alleviate initial anxiety. According to Furrer et al (2014), harmonious relationships with peers relieves students' anxiety in a classroom so that they feel comfortable enough to stay and participate. This student interaction helps students extend their interpersonal relationships, which eventually leads them to the next stage, trust (Paydon, 2012).

Trust

After creating the structure stage, the authors focus on the trust stage by creating a favorable atmosphere where students feel comfortable to come to class. According to Paydon (2012), trust can be created on mutual understanding between people and to achieve

the goal; therefore, teachers need to be aware that there are two kinds of significant relationships in a class: a relationship between students, and between students and teachers (Furrer et al, 2014). One of the ways that the authors successfully build trust at the beginning of the semester among students in the classes is allowing students to speak in their first language in the classroom when necessary. Despite the fact that there are some teachers and researchers who think that only the target language should be used in a language classroom, the use of the first language by students has a positive effect (Cook, 2001). For example, students must have a mutual understanding of the language activities before it is proceeded. Especially for the basic ELLs, frustration from miscommunication and not understanding the task may demotivate and cause them to feel isolated in the classroom (Freeman & Anderson, 2013). Once students and the teacher talk more comfortably and have a reciprocal understanding in the class, students feel comfortable and trusted. That is simply because students, especially for beginners, can express and embrace opinions and feelings most clearly when they talk in their first language. As Harry Meyer (2008) conducted a research and discovered, not surprisingly, that to a large extent, anxiety is caused when students gain instruction only by the target language. Even though it is true that the maximized use of the target language can enhance language learning or even students' motivation in certain situations (Moeller, 2013), in terms of building trust, it is fairly inappropriate and extremely tough for beginner language learners and using the first language, as a socialization tool, helps students to gain a better understanding with other students (Mora Pablo. et al, 2011). However, there are two main aspects of first language use in the classroom. First, teachers should not only allow students to use the first language, but also recognize it as important and crucial for students so that they can willingly utilize it (Burden, 2001). Second, the English proficiency level of students should also be taken into consideration as those with low proficiency levels are more likely to need the first language use (Carson & Kashihara, 2012).

Since students and teachers are inevitably in different positions, there is at least a slight barrier between them. As mentioned above, trust is constructed upon reciprocal understanding. A study by Tartwijk et al., (2009) states that it is essential to have positive student-teacher relationships in order to have a successful multicultural classroom. De Jesus et al. (2007) says that content delivery effort can be ignored when the teaching style of a teacher does not match the learning style of the student. As a result, the student's motivation and achievement can be also negatively affected. However, De Jesus et al. (2007) explains in research supporting this concept that when student learning styles match teacher instructing styles, student performance is affected positively. Thus, to be successful in lessons and activities with students, teachers are recommended to be equipped with the skills necessary to accomplish the tasks as well as accepting and understanding of students' cultural background and learning styles (Swafford & Dainty, 2009).

Cohesion

The aim of cohesion is to make the students feel safe enough to take a risk and share their own ideas, thoughts, and opinions with peers in the classroom and link with them in a variety of groups; therefore, students are not just sitting with best friends or somebody who is in close proximity. For example, when the teacher uses students' personal information and background that they share in the classroom, the teacher is easily able to identify those who have common interests. Many teachers who spend quality time in the first orientation of the class may take notes on their students' personal information and utilize them for more personal and successful communication. Once common interests are identified, the teacher is able to group them together. Also, mixing the groups or changing the seating several times during a class in order to provide several different types of interaction and grouping configurations in a given

lesson often create a successful classroom atmosphere. By encouraging the students to feel empathy towards all their peers through the sharing of both their similarities and differences, the class as a whole is able to build interpersonal relationships that enable them to perform at their best. As cohesion is the glue that binds a group of people together, their strong relationship with each other as bigger groups enables them to focus on motivating not just themselves but each other, which is essential when moving on to challenging, authentic activities. The key in this stage is for students to offer to share their personal experience and background; therefore, speaking to the class in the native language is more favorable than the target language, especially when they break the interpersonal barrier at the beginning of the class. Students feel coherent with others when they work closely together and have as many opportunities as possible to work collaboratively, so involving all the members into one is another important aspect to creating cohesion. In addition, Brandt (1998) explains that second language learners tend to equate their ability with outcomes, and motivation becomes more differentiated and complex. Therefore, it is important for them to share with each other the products of their learning so that they can see the results of their development. Also, when the authors have students work with classmates who have different interests after gathering their own thoughts and opinions in and outside of the class, it seems that they develop a more global sense of their second language acquisition together. Their levels of motivation may change as they relate both to their development and learning outcomes. However, students are encouraged to work together to set the goals themselves rather than having the teacher set them. This leads to them having longer-term motivation that is developed and sustained through the positive learning environment.

Performance

Once a classroom experienced structure, trust, and cohesion stages, a group has already started to be unified as a whole in a classroom where students help and collaborate with each other to achieve certain goals. That means teachers can expect a great performance in a classroom. Whether performance is positively established can be determined, for example, by conducting a group assignment such as group presentation or discussion. An inadequate skill of one student can be compensated for by another, while they also reciprocally promote and enhance their powerful and potent aspect for each.

Tomlinson (1999) suggests that when teachers teach new academic concepts to students, it is important to consider how the students' cultural backgrounds, use of language, and other possible factors, affect their learning. Therefore, it is important to utilize the students' life experiences and ideas and help students develop new vocabulary using their background knowledge as they think critically, significantly apply, and emotionally produce these in a variety of oral communication activities. For example, in discussion activities, the students are encouraged to individually reflect on what they learned from the stories they have encountered in the class materials so that they can construct a personal definition. After sharing these definitions as a group, students are asked to apply what they have learned so that they connect these lessons critically with their own life experiences, which they then share with their peers. Littlemore (2012) also found that schema, the students' cognitive framework stimulated by their interests, helped students organize and interpret information. Individually students' learning styles may also be shaped by their past learning experiences and coded differently from their peers. During the class, students' personal résumés are highly recommended to be used because it contains meaningful vocabulary and personal information relevant to their life experience. By utilizing the vocabulary in the personal résumés to describe life experiences,

students are able to expand their semantic networks to share with classmates in the discussions, presentations, debates, peer reviewing, commenting, and a variety of other in-class activities (Dunn, 2012). Connecting existing language ability and new concepts developed during interaction and mediation with peers and the instructor helps students learn core concepts and allows them to fill the language gap (Jenkins, 2012), which results in improved language ability. Thus, by contributing their own unique examples, each student feels that they have an important role to play in co-constructing the classes' understanding and their language performance. On the contrary, adverse effects can be also anticipated to be brought about if teachers naively misuse a group activity (Long, 1990), so careful attention should be paid when it comes to administering group work.

First, instruction for a task which students engage themselves in should be transparent, clear, and easy to follow right from the beginning (Dörnyei, 2011). In addition, it is the teachers' responsibility to determine if a group works properly even though it is sometimes highly difficult to take care of all groups due to the size of class (Jones, 2007). In some situations, it is possible that group work does not function properly and only the academically clever students understand what to do. Even worse, there is unfortunately, but highly possible, a case that no students are even certain about a task, and they start group work from talking about what they are going to do. That is initially caused by insufficient teacher instruction given to students before the activities, and not only does it waste the precious time of the students, but it can also lead to decreased motivation of the group. Those unfortunate situations lead to the importance of giving proper instruction for group work. Group work instructions should be consistent and not demanding for all the students and should expend much time so that everyone fully understands what they are supposed to do. Consequently, students can spend time working together in a meaningful way and helping each other.

Second, grouping should be taken into consideration when it comes to applying group work in a class as Burke (2011) points out because a well-organized group is likely to realize their full potential. When it comes to making full use of group work, a teacher has to think about the best way of grouping (Hock, 1961). It is similar to making a great structure. First, when grouping, it is required to allocate a different seat to each student so that students can gain as many opportunities as possible to collaborate with other members. Since group work is not only for collaboration but also for gaining or embracing others' opinions from different point of view (Kozar, 2010), keeping group members the same every time creates boringness and consequently, makes them reach a deadlock in some cases. Second and more importantly, teachers should pay careful attention, when grouping, to enhancing students' English proficiency. Robert (2007) proposed two grouping methods: 'like-ability' and 'cross-ability,' and students with the same level of proficiency come together into group in like-ability grouping while it is the opposite case in cross-ability grouping. To be sure, each of them has great advantages. In like-ability grouping, similar and specific purpose or needs of students can be dealt with while helping low-proficiency students with vocabulary and teaching high-proficiency students about difficult expressions (Robert, 2007). On the other hand, cooperation occurs in cross-ability grouping in that high-proficiency students help lower level group members to achieve a group goal. Therefore, the full potential can be realized by the taking grouping process into consideration to maximize students' performance.

Personal growth

After these components described above are achieved, students tend to focus on and enhance their ability, based on personal growth as mentioned by Dörnyei and Malderez (1999). Furthermore, students who have belonged to a cohesive group are highly likely to start considering their own learning style. It is important for learners to have a clear personalized vision in order to successfully acquire

language for their own purpose. Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) mentioned that the first step which should be taken to increase students' motivation is to provide students with opportunities to clarify a personal-future vision. It seemingly sounds a bit indirect to classroom management because personal growth, as the name indicates, is literally for a personal purpose while the previous section focused on enhancement as a whole group achieving structure, trust, cohesion, and performance.

Once students come to realize their personal growth, it greatly contributes to successful language acquisition and an enhancement of the classroom environment. The first benefit gained from self-actualization and realization of personal growth is that students are more likely to start working alone or together even outside the classroom in order to satisfy their goals, which is an inevitable part of successful language acquisition (Dörnyei and Kubanyiova, 2014). Students without a personal vision are unlikely to have an opportunity to study outside the classroom even though it is an essential part of language acquisition according to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009), simply because there is no obligation or punishment to study without the teachers' instruction. Conversely, personally motivated students study outside the class because a content only class does not match their needs to achieve their personal goals and consequently, they tend to seek chances to study more extensively outside the classroom. This is also supported by the well-known concept of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000), defining that intrinsic motivation (e.g. desire to be an English speaker) is highly likely to last longer than extrinsic motivation (e.g. pressure from external factor). Some students have personal goals in mind, which means that they are intrinsically motivated, and they do not lose their motivation even after class finishes. Also, they are not obligated to study. Many researchers have pointed out and concluded that autonomy enhances language acquisition, so it is of importance to facilitate students' autonomy and students need to have their personal reason to study so as to be

autonomous (Onozawa, 2010; Wagner, 2013). Therefore, helping students to create personal growth by giving them the opportunity to go through the structure stage, trust stage, cohesiveness stage, and performance stage, leads to a greater degree of students' autonomy.

Second, when students attempt to improve their English skills, they are contributing in their own way to deeper class participation. As Vygotsky (1978) suggests, social interaction is necessary for learning to occur. Freeman & Anderson (2011) further add that students can benefit from interacting with each other in that eliciting others' experiences enriches theirs and deepens their original knowledge. For example, meaningful feedback can be only given among the learners and plays a significant role in collaborative language learning (Cornillie et al, 2012). It is also great discovery that students are also likely to regard feedback as crucial and helpful for their learning (Ali, 2014).

Student's perspective

A teacher should be a facilitator of learning by providing students with as many opportunities for them to learn English as possible or simply motivating them to study English. What students want a teacher to do is not simply to teach what they do not know, but to tell them how to know what they want to know or to provide useful resources so that they can make an effort to study even outside of the classroom.

Five students from our required listening and speaking class voluntarily joined the interview to share their perspectives. The interview questions were conducted to produce how students perceived the positive classroom management that the teacher has created through the semester. The main questions asked to participants were, "How do you feel about the class atmosphere?" and "How did this class help to keep you motivated through the semester?" A total of five out of five students answered that getting

to know each other and learning together helped their learning most. The following responses are evidence of such assertions and reflect increased levels of autonomous learning and social communicative learning.

In English class, I usually don't talk to my classmates and don't know about them. However, after changing seats and introducing myself to my classmates, I felt comfortable with sharing myself. Even though I was not able to communicate well in English I was able to imitate my classmates to answer with my personal experience. That helped me get used to speaking in front of classmates. At least, I felt like I was able to practice with my classmates together during the activities. Now, we talk in the classroom and do not hesitate to discuss and share our ideas. The teacher allows us to use Japanese only when necessary for the tasks, and also helped us to promote better communication and understanding too. Through the semester, I realized I started to interact and exchange my opinions more often. (Student A: Intermediate level)

I don't like face to face conversations. Especially, when I use English in front of people, I am scared and not comfortable at all. I don't think my English is good enough; however, through resume activities and many group activities, my classmates approached me to know more about me. I felt encouraged, trusted, and confident, and I was able to feel the mistakes were accepted in front of my classmates. I would like to appreciate the

teacher who gave us opportunity to have close friendships with classmates. (Student B: Intermediate level)

Many students feel fear about making mistakes, especially faced with tasks that they have never experienced before. However, as Paydon (2012) explains about levels of classroom motivation, at first, students found their interpersonal relationships and developed trust among peers. Since students are guided to provide basic proximity, contact, interaction, and security, they felt safe to interact each other. A mixture of individual-centeredness to challenge the activities and group learning as reviewing and sharing with classmates helps students to boost their motivation and task management (He, 2004). Therefore, to reduce their stress and pressure towards making mistakes among peers, it is effective to allow them to interact and share a variety of examples with peers. One of the interviewees responded, "I was happy when several classmates gave me comments and asked me questions in discussions. I thought my English was too poor and that nobody understood me. I felt like I connected with them more every time we changed partners, and my social network has been expanded." Another student said, "I am always worried about my English sentences, so I always imitate how classmates respond. I compared and contrasted my answers and tried to create my own responses. Also, "Maybe, I wouldn't have wanted to help others if I hadn't known them well. So, I was glad to know and to have chances to talk to them in and out of the class," said one of the female interviewees. She also mentioned that she was able to share her English goals and started to extend it towards the end of semester because she could perform better by accomplishing the tasks with peers and getting more learning opportunities from peers. He (2001) explains that when learners are highly motivated, they express a more positive attitude, feelings of competency and satisfaction. Therefore, students seem to communicate and socialize through positive classroom management.

On the contrary, the negative feedback that student had was that

it sometimes creates several frustrations. One of the interviewees said, “It is too time consuming to change partners and repeat the process. I am an individual learner and prefer to be alone. If we share answers, I most likely copy my classmates’ answers every time.” That simply indicates that teachers must teach students how to learn English by telling them learning strategies or in some cases clarifying the final purpose of a task so that they can clearly imagine what they should do to achieve it, rather than just giving them the answer. Freeman and Anderson (2013) concluded that what teachers should do in a language classroom is not only provide students with information of language but also to tell them about learning strategies. They further described that each learner has their different method to learning. This means that students cannot gain the most suitable method of learning only by just attending the lecture because the content of a class is inevitably for all the students, and that teachers should provide students with personally appropriate learning strategies.

Another student responded that it took time for me to get used to communicating with classmates at first. At that time I was very frustrated not only in English but also in connecting with my classmates and sharing activities. Learners who may experience anxiety, frustration, and complications in interpersonal relationships, clearly have a major barrier with other people, especially in sharing personal experiences in English. To serve the specific needs of such learners, guiding these high-risk students through more explicit instructions is necessary.

Thus it is important for teachers to know and understand students’ authentic needs and personal and language goals through the semester. Students tell their personal thoughts only when they feel safe and there is good rapport, so establishing close interaction with students is of paramount importance for deeper insight into students’ thoughts (Luz, 2015). Similarly, getting students involved in the goal-setting process also establishes great rapport within a classroom so that students feel like they are a more integral part of

their learning (Yang, 2008). Moreover, it is the teachers' responsibility to provide students with a variety of learning resources called 'vision-immersion' opportunities (Dörnyei, 2014). These opportunities can expand students' possibilities and potential on learning language in that they find the most appropriate strategy for themselves.

Teacher's Attitude

Ryan and Cooper (2008) explain how a teachers' positive attitude during the lessons impact students' academic improvement. It is significant for teachers to show a positive attitude and feelings while interacting with the class, and in turn students react and respond to the teacher's contact (Calderon, 2012). Lindholm-Leary (2001) states that the background of the teacher, characteristics of the school curriculum and the program, and the academic support by the staff members, colleagues, administrators, and also parents are the great factors that influence a teacher's attitude.

A background is a great factor for the teachers' own experience, and their own experience as a second language learner is also a very important factor (Ma, 2008). The teachers' ethnic and racial history and the amount of interaction with the culture of the students can become a part of other background elements. Banks & Banks, 2010; Tartwijk, Brok, Veldman & Wubbels, (2009) says that there will be great misunderstandings between teachers and students with teaching styles that adversely affect student learning. Banks & Banks (2010) explains that teachers tend to avoid teaching diverse students because diverse learning involves and relates contents with the degree of understandings in multicultural, racial, and ethnic groups. What the teachers fail to understand is that a multicultural environment is much broader than reading stories about minority groups, and it also includes teaching in such a way that students feel accepted and valued in an atmosphere that is equally receptive to minority and majority cultures (Swafford & Dainty, 2009).

Conclusion

English language learners in Japanese universities will continue to struggle if universities in Japan maintain traditional teaching and make students learn passively. Without helping them set their academic goals and motivating them to autonomously learn English by providing a positive learning environment with a new pedagogy, ELL students English proficiency will never be improved. For future careers in Japanese society, the need for academic English has been increasing. Therefore, it is very important for Japanese universities to mandate more English communicating practices rather than teaching them with traditional grammar-translation methods. With the implementation of the positive classroom management techniques described above and with the empirical feedback from teachers and students, Japanese English learners in universities may improve their oral communication skills, critical thinking skills, and academic language comprehension skills by building a foundation of learner development. Those skill sets are necessary when they apply to higher educational institutions and to have the skills necessary to enter the job market for the future careers. The intention to extend learners' social networks by helping them understand their academic needs and future goals and to articulate academic tasks demonstrated by self-directed and self-sufficient learners helps Japanese university English learners. Thus, this paper may encourage teachers to create effective language teaching and encouraging learning environments.

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LET'S ESCAPE: IN-CLASS STUDENT'S PARTICIPATION TOWARDS THE UPTAKE OF "ESCAPE" IN THE TEACHING OF SPEAKING

By: Ismael Anas and Andi Musdariah

Abstract: In a traditional teaching context, the domination of *Teacher Talking Time (TTT)* brought negative impact on *Student Talking Time (STT)* in which the students got a little time to practice speaking. Grounded in a qualitative research design, this micro-ethnographic study was carried out to investigate the student's participation in speaking activities using an ESCAPE (Engage, Study, Create, Activate, Practice, and Evaluate) model. In the context of an Indonesian vocational higher institution, this involved two EFL lecturers and forty-four (44) Polytechnic students during the even semester 2015-2016. The methods used for this study were classroom observations and standardized open-ended interviews. Findings revealed that the students were engaged actively in the lesson which promoted their participation in speaking activities. The implication for this study is for the school administrators, lecturers, and heads of the academic matters to consider this strategy. Further development of ESCAPE strategy will contribute to the merit of the teaching of speaking within the interdisciplinary courses in Indonesian vocational higher education context and beyond.

Keywords: ESCAPE, Speaking, Teacher Talking Time, Student Talking Time, lesson plan

Introduction

In traditional EFL teaching context, the strategy for teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) still applied a teacher-centered approach. This situation brought a significant impact on the student performance in the classroom as it increases the teacher talking time (TTT) and decreases the student talking time (STT). Based on the student-centered approach, L2 learners should be given opportunities to do more practices. In fact, but not all, most teachers played a dominant role in the classroom teaching while the students became active listeners. Richards (2008) put an emphasis on talk as interaction referring to speaking activities. He also stressed that interaction enables students to create a comfortable zone of socialization with other learners. The types of learning interaction have evolved over time as the technology advances in the world of education. In this globalized era, the digitalization in all sectors of education has changed the way people learn and communicate and provided an ease of access to a myriad of online resources and materials using the internet-assisted technology (e.g. Guan, 2014; Young, 2003).

In the context of Indonesian Vocational Higher Education, the proportion of practice session should meet at least 70% of total length duration as demanded in the curriculum. This standard has brought a systemic impact to ELT in which the lecturers should design and construct their lesson plan that meets the expectation of the curriculum. Designing and constructing a practice-based lesson

plan in a VHE becomes a daunting task for most ESP teachers. Teacher as course developer needs to investigate the ESP needs and so do the teaching strategies to navigate the learning process to reach the teaching goals and objectives (e.g. Mahdavi Zafarghandi, Khalili Sabet, & Sharoudi Lomar, 2014). Donaye Tous and Haghghi (2014) reported that the ESP textbooks and teaching methodology failed to meet the student's needs and expectation. Therefore, mirroring from the case of Mahdavi et.al (2014) work, the teachers should be able to negotiate the student's needs and expectation and transform it into a meaning-making process of ESP teaching.

Regarding to teaching ESP lesson, not only the relevant textbooks the teachers need to evaluate, but also they need to engage and motivate student to participate actively in the learning process which is not an easy task. Moreover, there are many factors influencing the student's participation in ELL classroom learning activities. These factors include whether or not the materials are interesting, updated, and meaningful to students, whether the teacher uses an appropriate teaching methodology and strategy, or it might be from external factors such as classroom environment, learning facilities, and sociological perspective.

Teaching English conversation for L2 learners posits different obstacles and challenges as they are mostly silent and unwilling to participate in the discussion and speaking activities. The non-native English teacher also found it difficult to attract the student's attention and to increase their participation in the learning process. The teacher needs to set an appropriate teaching approach and strategy to address

the learning goals and objectives. As many EFL teachers experienced the difficulties in teaching speaking, they will need a practical strategy to overcome the barriers and challenges in the speaking classroom. In the study of Oseno, Barasa, and Omulando (2014), where reported on the investigation of the EFL teachers challenges in teaching speaking in secondary schools context, it was found that most EFL teachers were difficult to organize their speaking class due to some constraints. These constraints are the shortage of teaching time, a large number of student, and the mother tongue interference as well.

Theories underpinning the study; measuring the students' participation

There have been many attempts to investigate the students' participation in the learning process in which it posits a pivotal role in engaging and increasing the students' involvement in the lesson (e.g. Czekanski & Wolf, 2013; Dancer & Kamvounias, 2005; e.g. Hovorka, 2014; Rocca, 2010; Wright, 2014). Measuring the student participation and effort should look into a conception in what particular area the teacher should design a teaching and learning strategy that inform a meaning-making process (Douglas & Alemanne, 2007). They also put an emphasis that no matter how good, updated, and well-structured lesson plan is, the student might find it uninteresting unless they have a convincing reason why they need to learn. Many teachers are strunggling to design and create a well-structured and systematic strategy of learning, but they failed to negotiate the learning goals and objectives with their students. Consequently, it was neither the course content nor the strategy

would successfully increase the student participation in the lesson. Given the importance of increasing the student participation, a teacher should be able to sustain the student interest before turning to the pedagogical aspect of learning to improve the student cognition (Aboudan, 2011).

In the classroom learning context, the student engagement can be seen through how actively the students participate in the lesson as Dancer and Kamvounias (2005) categorized five criteria for assessment of class participation; they are; preparation, contribution to the discussion, group skills, communication skills, and attendance. The student engagement is an important issue to be addressed as active facilitation to increase the student's retention and encourage the student learning (Lindt & Miller, 2014).

One of the most important properties in language learning is transforming practice into the classroom learning environment to provide the student with a space to explore their own learning. There have been numerous publications focusing on how to engage the student in learning such as using digital video (Hughes & Robertson, 2010), practical learning strategy (Kehoe, 2007), project-based learning, problem-based learning, service learning, place-based education, and active learning (Wurdinger & Rudolph, 2009), and using new literacies (Dredger, Woods, Beach, & Sagstetter, 2010). Therefore, a practical guide to teaching speaking with more emphasis on practice will be necessary. A flexible guideline to transform practice and inform a meaning-making process in the teaching of speaking might be needed particularly in a vocational higher education.

The initial model of ESCAPE

This first model of ESCAPE is expected to be useful for teaching speaking not only in the higher education but also other levels of education (Murdariah, Anas, & Muchtar, 2016). This model allows the ESL teachers to organize the learning activities for the teaching of speaking. It aims at increasing the STT and reducing the TTT in which the students will have more time to practice and participate in the process of learning rather than just being the active listeners. Given the importance of STT in the speaking class, the involvement of students as active learners is necessary while the teacher plays as a learning facilitator. The domination of TTT should be avoided to increase the student's participation and involvement in the speaking class.

ESCAPE stands for *Engage, Study, Create, Activate, Practice, and Evaluate* as it is called the six principles in the teaching of speaking in higher education. Each principle guides the teachers to what should be included in the lesson plan. For example, the first element "engage" should be acknowledged by the teacher as the process of engaging and motivating the student in the lesson. The duration of the engagement activities should not exceed the allotted time provided for this session (maximum 10% of the total length of time). The length of time may be varied in many different contexts of learning setting, so this model will fit speaking class with a various length of teaching time.

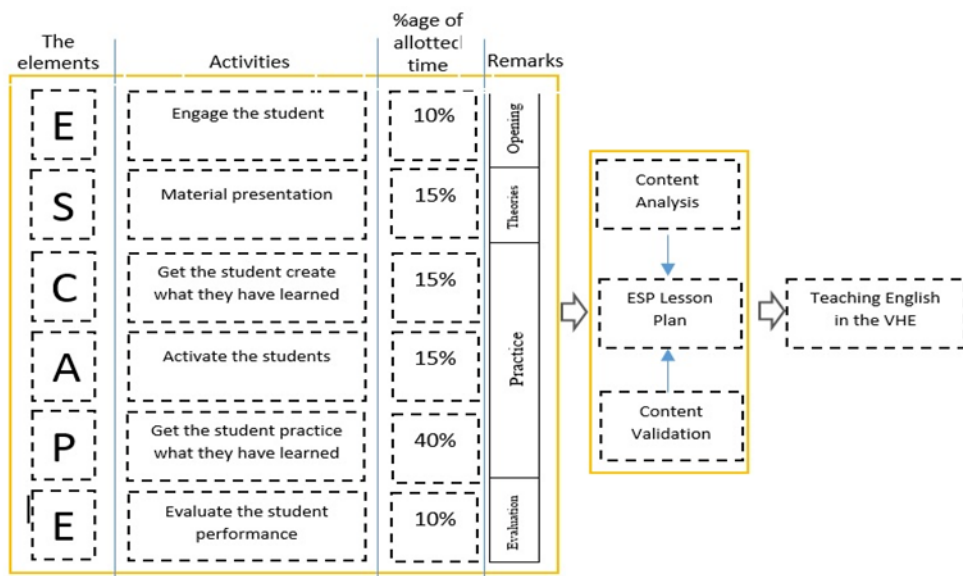


Figure 1. The initial model of ESCAPE

Method

Research design

The study is a qualitative research in nature (e.g. Creswell, 2003; Harwell, 2011; Williams, 2007). More specifically, this study employed a classroom micro-ethnographic approach to investigate the student participation towards the uptake of ESCAPE (Gracez, 1997). The selection of this type of ethnographic research was based on the context of the study where the researcher would need to investigate the student’s interactions, attitude, and responses to the application of the ESCAPE-based teaching model. The uptake of this approach offers a naturalism, understanding, and discovery of social learning phenomena in which it enables the researcher to capture the true nature of human behavior (Hammersley, 1990).

The study began with the pre-teaching program by conducting a

workshop on ESCAPE model for teaching speaking in Vocational Higher Education (VHE). This phase is a continuous series of pilot studies for ESCAPE development cycles. Firstly, the teachers worked on the lesson plan using the ESCAPE template in which the design of the template was associated with the six principles of the ESCAPE-based teaching model. The teachers then filled out and constructed the lesson plan template based on their pedagogical knowledge and understanding on how they selected appropriate activities for each session during the teaching process. For example, at the very beginning of the lesson, the teacher should set activities that promote the student's engagement such as ice-breaking, brainstorming, and game activities. They set the length of the engagement session based on the allotted time required by the model (for details, see figure 1). Secondly, the participating lecturers then used the lesson plan to teach in their classrooms. During the process of ethnography, we joined the class regularly as the ethnographers, researchers, and lecturers. We observed the process of teaching and learning by videotaping the classroom activities. We used some video recording tools such as mobile devices (tablet and smartphones) and digital camera. We set the camera not too close to the participants to avoid disturbance and any unwanted reactions that may affect the participants' performance. Following the observations, we also conducted interviews to gather information from the participants, and these interviews were recorded.

Participants and access to the research field

In this pilot study, there was a total of forty-four semester 2

students (n=44) from two classes (1A and 1B) who enrolled the speaking course as a compulsory subject during the even semester 2015/2016 academic year. The setting was not an EFL classroom in which the students are only learning one English subject per semester and two meetings per week for 15 weeks. As ethnographers, we negotiated the research aims with the participants (both lecturer and student) to gain access to their classrooms. This initial process is an important issue in an ethnographic study that allows the researchers, lecturers, and participants to make agreements on how the project will be undertaken. We ensured that the participants were willing to participate in the study including their willingness to be observed, videotaped, and interviewed (Widodo, 2015).

Data collection and analysis

Grounded in a micro-ethnographic research approach, this study strived to explore the student participation during a semester intake 2015/2016 (six months). The researchers observed the student's participations, interactions, attitudes, and responses towards the implementation of the ESCAPE-based teaching model. Through a series of observations, the classroom activities were videotaped and then analyzed to identify the patterns of participation. Besides that, the researchers also interviewed the participants as one of the main properties of ethnographic study. The interviews were necessary to gather information and make a clarification for what have been observed. The interview data was recorded and transcribed for the analysis. The data was then analyzed using a Critical Discourse Analysis.

Result

Students' participation

In-class student participation might be falling into the investigation of the students asking questions, raising one's hand, and making comments (Rocca, 2010). Based on the observation, some patterns of the students' participation such as asking and responding questions (teacher-student and student-student inquiry), stating opinion (interrupting, objecting, agreeing, disagreeing, confirming, and permission), gaming (brainstorming, miming, hot seats, and ice-breakings), role-playing (simulations, mini talk shows, and storytelling), and working on tasks (exercises, writing an essay, and worksheets) were noted.

Table 1

Descriptive labels of the students' participation (Asking and responding questions)

Participation categories	Types of questions	of	Sample observed reactions
Asking and responding questions	Teacher asks	Student asks	T-S: <i>Have you finished working on the task?</i>
	Teacher asks	Student	Ss: <i>Not yet, sir!</i>
	Student responds to student	Teacher	S-T: <i>Excuse me sir, how to say in English "said in L1:tugas saya tinggal sedikit lagi"-meaning I</i>

responds to teacher	<i>am almost done with</i>
Student	<i>my task?</i>
responds to student	S-S: <i>Hey...(in L1: selesai tugasmu?) have you finished your task?</i>
	S: <i>Not yet!</i>

**Note: T: teacher, S: Student*

It was observed that there are six types of questions activities occurred during the teaching and learning process (see Table 1). The students seemed to be not reluctant to respond the questions from the teacher even though some students remained silent. The teacher used English when asking questions, and the students tried to give responses in English although they had to ask their friends next to them. This phenomena indicated that the students were engaged in the study and willing to participate in the process of learning. Regarding the use of L1, most students didn't feel confident to use English when communicating among them.

Interview excerpt 1

Interviewer: Why did you use L1 when talking to your friend?

Student: I am not really confident, my friends do use L1 too, and they usually laugh when we make mistake.

The interviewer wanted to know why most students used L1 when communicating (asking questions, making small talk, and giving responses) with other students. In this context, they are influenced by the class environment where most students keep using L1.

Psychologically, they feel reluctant to use English because they didn't want to be laughed by other students whenever they made mistake. In the classroom context of social learning, this behavior often occurred as determinant factor hampering the teacher's efforts to make them use English. It happened almost to weak students in which they have a low proficiency level of English.

Interview excerpt 2

Interviewer : When talking and asking questions to your lecturer, do you always use English?

Student : Sometimes I used English, sometimes in Indonesian

Interviewer : Do you feel confident to use English when talking to your lecturer?

Student : Yes because my lecturer was friendly and always correct my words if I was wrong.

It can be compared from the two excerpts that students were more confident to use English when talking to their lecturer than talking to their classmates. It can also be inferred that learning is not merely about the pedagogical knowledge, but also the psychological encounters might have an significant impact on the student's participation. Therefore, the lecturer should have an affective competence as well as the pedagogical competence to address the learning goals and objectives. The students will learn better if they feel comfortable and respected (see interview excerpt 2). Additionally, the students showed a good participation in terms of

asking and responding questions although the use of L1 was still found in the discourse.

Table 2

Descriptive labels of the students' participation (stating opinion)

Participation categories	Activities	Sample of observed reactions
Stating opinion	Interrupting, objecting, disagreeing, confirming, and permission	<p>S: <i>Excuse me, sir, can you repeat?</i></p> <p>S: <i>Sir, can we use dictionary?</i></p> <p>S: <i>Excuse me sir, What is in English "e.g. tidak adil"?</i></p> <p>S: <i>Sir, we write or just speak?</i></p> <p>S: <i>I think it is not true!!</i></p> <p>S: <i>He is lying sir!</i></p> <p>S: <i>Excuse me, I want to go to the toilet</i></p>

**Note: S: Student*

The students' participation in the form of stating opinion was represented by interrupting, objecting, agreeing, disagreeing, and permission. The samples of observed reactions indicated that most students participated actively in this kind of discourse although some

students still remained silent particularly the weak students. The students seemed to be not hesitate to interrupt, object, agree, disagree, confirm, and permit in most of the series of classroom teaching activities. Regarding the less participation of the weak student, we tried to investigate the reasons what made them disengage in the classroom activities (focused stating opinion). We interviewed some of the silent students at the end of classroom session to find out what was going on.

Interview excerpt 3

Interviewer: (in L1) Bisa kita bicara sebentar (can we talk for a while)?

Student 1,2,3,4,5: Iya pak, ((yes, sir))

Interviewer: (in L1) Saya perhatikan dalam beberapa pertemuan terakhir anda sepertinya jarang sekali atau enggan berpartisipasi menggunakan bahasa Inggris? Bisa dijelaskan mengapa demikian? (in some classroom sessions, I observed that you rarely participated and are reluctant to use English? Why?)

Student 1: Saya tidak tahu bahasa Inggris pak, saya kurang kosakata (I don't know how to speak English sir, I am weak in vocabulary)

Student 2,3: Saya malu-malu pak, saya takut salah. (I feel shy, I am afraid of making mistakes)

Student 4: Sebenarnya saya punya ide pak, tapi saya tidak tahu bagaimana mengucapkannya dalam bahasa Inggris (actually I've got an idea but I don't know how to say it in English)

Student 5: Saya kurang pede pak karena teman-teman sering tertawa kalau kami salah. (I feel unconfident sir, they laugh at us when we made mistakes)

In the context of sociology of learning, some students were

culturally and socially multifaceted. Culturally, the learning behavior posits a pivotal role in getting the students motivated and engaged in the lesson in which they feel unsupported and respected. It is all about the matter of encouragement and respect where every student can feel that they have place in the culture. From the interview excerpt 3 above, the further research should come to an investigation on what made them shy, unconfident, and afraid of making mistakes as well as the practical solution to cope with the problems. Regarding their participation in the classroom learning activities, it can be inferred that it is not because they don't want to participate, but they don't know how to participate.

Table 3

Descriptive labels of the students' participation (Gaming and role-playing)

Participation categories	Types of games/activities	Sample of observed reactions
Gaming	Chain words	T starts the word then pointed a student to continue saying another word began with the last letter of the previous word mentioned by the teacher as the first letter. This activity was repeated in some meetings particularly at the beginning of the class.

Miming the T divided the class into words two and asked them to stand in line. T explained what they were going to do. T prepared a number of flash cards containing a single word (e.g. adjective: happy, gloomy, hungry, etc) then the student try to guess the words mimed by one of their team. The class was really crowded, they screamed, yelled, jumped, muttered, and even arguing amongst them.

Hot seat This was simply the same with miming, but a bit different in application. This was a kind of guessing game which also allowed students to work in a team. The student reaction was typically noisy and crowded.

Role playing	Talk show	Acted like a host, actor, actress, famous singer, public figure, politician, and sportman.
	Pair Conversation	Guided questions, interviews
	Group discussion	Problem solving, planning an event, debate
	Weather forecasting	Individual presentation

**Note: T: teacher, S: Student*

Table 3 shows the patterns of the students' participation in a game or a role-play. It was observed that the students showed their enthusiasm and motivation to take part in the activity. The crowd, loudness, and cheers indicated that the students actively participated in the learning process. Gaming aimed at engaging students in the lesson while the role-playing allowed the students to have a space to do more practices as it took a dominant portion in the ESCAPE model outline.

Interview excerpt 4

Interviewer: apakah anda senang jika dosen anda selalu melibatkan game dalam proses PBM?

Student 1: (in local accent) iya pak, tidak bosanki terus seru-seruanki sir.

Interviewer: and you?...while pointing another student.

Student 2: samaji pak, bosanki juga kalau teori terus, mengantukki. Tapi mungkin perlu kegiatannya divariasikan sir, jangan itu-itu terus.

Interviewer: Dari beberapa sesi pertemuan dan beberapa games dan role-plays, kira-kira yang mana paling anda sukai?

Student 1: saya lebih senang yang role-play dan conversation practice pak karena kita langsung praktek dan waktunya juga lumayan. Intinya lebih banyak praktek lebih baik pak

Interviewer: kita?

Student 2: samaji pak, percakapan sama diskusi. Saya suka yang begitu pak karena tidak dirasa waktu. Terus banyak kita dapat vocabulary.

The students' participation can also be seen through their involvement in classroom activities whether they are willing to participate in every part of learning sessions. The interview excerpt 4 illustrates the conversation between the researcher and the students. The interview was in bahasa Indonesia with the local accent to familiarize the interviewees with the main purpose of the interview. The use of bahasa Indonesia allowed both the interviewer and the student to elaborate more information which is not as good as the English interview. The result of the interview shows that most of the students were actively engaged in role-playing and conversational practices. In most speaking classes they have experienced, they found them boring and uninteresting in which the teacher talking time was really high and dominating the talks. Consequently, the students didn't have enough time to participate and practice their speaking. As English teacher, we might be able to realize that teaching speaking is

not only about teaching them how to speak and introducing them with the complexed grammatical formulas and vocabulary, but also providing them enough time, guidance, and practical activities that will make them be able to figure out the way of learning and speaking English.

Student-Student and Student-Teacher Interactions

The student-student and teacher-student interactions are complex things in a classroom learning environment (Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012). Some students are engaged and some other are not depending on how teacher provide support and facilitate their learning. Effective teacher-student interactions inform the positive relationships among teachers and students, well-managed classroom learning environment where students are engaged, enjoyable, and proactive in learning activities. In this study, we observed that the classroom interactions depended on how teacher plan, select materials, organize and manage the classroom learning activities.

Students' attitude

The students' participation in the class was reflected on the students attitude towards the classroom learning environment. Based on the observations, we found that the students had positive attitude towards social communication, academic/learning activities, and feedback. Special attention needs to be paid on weak students who need to be guided and prompted to participate in an activity.

Conclusion

The deployment of ESCAPE in ELT promotes the student's

participation in classroom learning activities in which the model enables the student to create a socio-academic interaction in a micro-reality context of classroom learning. Students experienced a social learning context where they formed social interaction with other students in the classroom. Although the model promotes the students' engagement and participation, there some issues regarding with components constituting ESCAPE should be developed, they are: 1) the instructional clarity of each component, 2) the adjustment of the model with various length of teaching time, and 3) the used of model in mutidisciplinary courses within the VHE should further be investigated. Otherwise, the employment of this model will contribute to a dynamic process of English language learning at the higher education level.

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WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL LANGUAGE LEARNER: A CASE STUDY

By: Napat Jitpaisarnwattana

Abstract

Since the emergence of SLA research, researchers have been interested in the factors contributing to success in second language acquisition. This study thoroughly researches a successful language learner who achieves a high English proficiency. The study utilizes in-depth interview as a principle research method. The interview is conducted both face-to-face and online. The results reveal that although there are many factors contributing to the participant's success in English acquisition, learning motivation, intrinsic motivation in particular, appears to be the key to his success. Plus, the role of attention to language code seems to play a part in the participant's success as well.

Introduction

Since the emergence of SLA research, researchers have been interested in the reasons contributing to success in second language acquisition. In fact, they are particularly interested in why some learners gain success in second language learning, whereas others fail to achieve proficiency in second language in spite of the same conditions and learning environment. As a result, a number of studies in this area has been conducted (Ellis, 2004, Long, 1996, Ushioda, 2001). However, the identification of learners' characteristics that

determine success in L2 learning is varied among SLA researchers. For example, Ellis (2004) broadly divided contributing factors to L2 success into personal and general factors. Gardner and MacIntyre (1992) also differentiated between two features of learners: cognitive factors consisting of intelligence and language aptitude and affective factors consisting of language anxiety and motivation. The cognitive factors consist of age, cognitive styles, language aptitude, personality and motivation, whereas the affective factors comprise of attitudes toward teachers and course material, group dynamics and individual teaching techniques. Therefore, it implies that there is a variety of factors contributing to the process of second language acquisition.

In order to study this, there are several methods that can be used to investigate the reasons behind learners' success (Dornyei, 2007). In this study, since there is only one participant, the interview concerning participant's learning experience appears to be a most suitable method to find out the reasons that make him successful in his second language learning. As a result, the focus of this case study is to analyse a very successful second language learner using interview method in order to find out the key to his success as well as to shed some light on the way second language can be acquired.

This study is divided into 6 main sections. In the next section, the literature review about the key concepts in this area of study is provided. Next, the research methodology used in this study is described. In the following section, the results are presented and

discussed in order to illustrate the key findings of the study. Finally, the conclusion is given with some limitations, implications and suggestions for further study in this area.

Literature Review

This part deals with the theoretical perspective of individual differences and linguistic environment in second language acquisition. Generally speaking, there are a number of factors contributing to success in achieving proficiency in second language. However, with the limitation of space, only relevant literature to this study namely, general factors, motivation, the theory of multiple intelligence and linguistic environment will be briefly presented in this section.

General Factors

Anxiety

Anxiety is defined as “a state of apprehension, a vague fear” (Scovel, 1978 p. 134 as cited in Brown, 1994, P.41). A type of anxiety that is associated with second language achievement is foreign language anxiety. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) divided foreign language anxiety into three elements: communicative apprehension happens when learners are unable to adequately express ideas, fear of negative social evaluation happens when learners want to impress others and test anxiety or apprehension over academic evaluation. On top of that, foreign language anxiety can be either facilitative or debilitating (Scovel, 1978). Facilitative anxiety helps learners to try to

achieve new learning tasks. In contrast, debilitating anxiety stimulates learners to escape from new learning tasks. However, such types of anxiety are not permanent capability of learners and depend on what learners feel at certain moment.

Extraversion and introversion

An extrovert person is someone who is sociable, likes parties, has a lot of friends and needs people to talk to, whereas an introverted person is quiet, introspective and fond of books rather than people (Eysenck, 1965 as cited in Skehan, 1989, p. 100). In the field of SLA, much of research has been done in this domain of personality. However, there is still no clear conclusion whether extroversion or introversion can facilitate or hinder the acquisition of second language. It is believed that extroversion can be a facilitative factor to the development of oral communicative competence rather than other skills such as listening, reading or writing. Furthermore, Wankowski (1973) reported that before puberty, extroversion seems to have positive relationship with achievement. Also, Strong (1983) pointed out that there is a relationship between sociable personality and communicative competence among children. However, in higher education, where individual study habits are emphasized, introversion may be more beneficial. Interestingly, Dawaele and Furnham (2000) found that in extroverted speakers display faster speech rate than introverted speakers, however, under stressful conditions, introverted speakers achieve higher lexical richness and more explicit language with more hesitation. Above all, it could be acceptable to say that

both extroversion and introversion have positive features in language acquisition, thus having both types of personality would be beneficial in second language learning if learners adapt them effectively in different contexts of learning (Skehan, 1989, pp. 104-105).

Age factor

Age has been one of the most discussed issues in second language acquisition research (Cazden, 1975, Krashen, 1973, Krashen, Long & Scarcella, 1979). There is traditional belief that children are better than adults in second language learning. However, such belief is undermined by research carried out in this domain. To begin with, studies show that, as far as age is concerned, it is the rate not the route of learning that age factor plays a role in. Cazden (1975) pointed out that child, adolescent and adult learners all process linguistic data in the similar mean. Moreover, adolescents perform better than children if they are exposed to the same language material in the same length of time but in the long term younger learners tend to become more proficient (Krashen, Long & Scarcella, 1979).

It would be deficient, when talking about age, to not mention the perspectives from critical period hypothesis. In language acquisition, this theory proposes that there is a period when language can be learned naturally. Researchers did not totally agree on the actual age for the critical period of language learning. Krashen (1973) posited the critical period at the age of 5. Penfield and Roberts (1959) placed the critical period within the first ten years of life. However,

researchers finally realized that the question could not actually be phrased (Oblor & Hannigan, 1996, p. 511).

One top of that, one area of second language acquisition that has largely been discussed in relation to age is pronunciation. Scovel (1988) posited puberty as the critical period for acquiring pronunciation. This is probably because, as Flege et al. (1999) reported, the acquisition of phonology may be more strictly tied to biological schedules than other areas of second language learning. As a result, unlike morphosyntactic knowledge, pronunciation may be the only prominent element of language that age potentially has an impact on in some crucial respects (Ortega, 2009, p. 22).

Motivation

Motivation is a crucial ingredient of learning a second language. It is defined as “ a process whereby a certain amount of investigation force arises, initiates action and persists as long as no other force comes into play to weaken it and thereby terminate action, or until the planned outcome has been reached” (Dornyei, 1998, as cited in Dornyei, (1998), p. 118) As for language learning, Ellis (1997) interpreted motivation as “ attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make to learn an L2” (p. 75). Early in the theory of motivation, Gardner and Lambert (1972) distinguish motivation between instrumental and integrative. For instrumental motivation, learners are intrigued about how second language can function as a useful tool in achieving their goals. On the

other hand, integrative motivation motivates learners to want to be able to communicate with the people in the target community as well as get closer to their culture. Gardner (2001) thought that integrative motivation is the highest and the most facilitative kind of motivation and learners who are exceptionally successful tend to be integratively motivated.

However, it should be noted here that learners do not have to possess just only one type of motivation and most learners are motivated by the mixture of integrative and instrumental.

On top of that, motivation can also be categorized as intrinsic and extrinsic orientation. Learners are intrinsically motivated when they are self-determined by choice and perform tasks in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction. This type of motivation is really crucial as it has been proved its association with the high levels of achievement (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). In contrast, learners are extrinsically motivated when their behaviour is structured by a mean-end and pragmatic-causation. In other words, their behaviour is determined and controlled by external factor as opposed to internal factors from intrinsic motivation. Good examples for this type of motivation would be getting good grades and avoiding punishment. This type of motivation is less ideal than the former one (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). From language learning perspective, the division is somewhat vague and learners are usually motivated by both types of types of motivation.

Furthermore, there are other aspects of motivation contributing to success in second language learning. Learners' level of aspiration is one of those. To clarify this, learners ought to set themselves goals or standards of achievement; as a result, goal-setting is definitely a significant aspect of motivation. It is reported that children with who set themselves realistic goal tend to be successful in learning, whereas learners who set themselves unrealistic goal either too high or too low tend to experience failure (Child 1991, p. 51). Another motivation theory that is relevant to this study is attribution theory which proposed that people perceive their failures or successes by pulling casual conclusions and attribute them to different causes. The causes can be ability, effort, luck and the difficulty of the task. Ushioda (2001) defined four different attributional patterns that mark motivated language learners: (a) positive results are viewed as the result of personal ability and personal quality; (b) negative results are perceived as the consequence of changeable temporary shortcomings; (c) demotivating instances are assigned to classroom context; and (d) personal resources and initiatives are used to motivate the self. As a result, the way learners perceive success or failure is crucial for language learning i.e. Learners who have desire of success attribute their success to external factors; on the other hand, they attribute failure to not working hard enough.

In addition, it is frequently accepted that motivation is subject to transient changes. Dornyei and Otto (1998) proposed the process model which identifies several discrete temporal segments of the

motivational process. This model indicates how desires are changed into goals and later into intentions and how the intentions are performed. After that, the attainment of the goals or the end of the action or both was illustrated. Finally, the final evaluation summarizes the process.

The last model in this part is called the motivational self-esteem theory which was proposed by Dornyei (2005). This model combines the notions from previous theories together. This model consists of three main components: the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self and the L2 learning experience. The idea L2 self is learners' wish to become a proficient L2 speaker. The ought-to L2 self is the attributes that learners should have in order to handle abstain from negative results. The L2 learning experience is the situational motivation related to the immediate learning environment and method.

The role of Intelligence

The multiple intelligence theory

Gardner (1983) proposed the multiple intelligence theory, explaining why some students are talented with one skill and others with multiple skills. He categorizes intelligence into seven categories: linguistics, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. The theory states that each human holds all types of intelligence. However, each type of intelligence can only be developed to certain levels (Gardner, 1983, p. 67). The type of intelligence that is related to language learning is linguistic intelligence. People with linguistic intelligence tend to be able to

communicate effectively in both oral and written communication. They are talented with language use and sensitive to meanings, sound and rhythms of words. It is believed that they have inclination in learning languages.

Linguistic environment

Linguistic environment is basically the environmental influences on second language learning. In other words, it is fundamentally the positive and negative evidence learners are provided about the target language by speakers and writers of that language (Long, 1996, p. 413). Generally speaking, there are five important ingredients for optimal second language learning: acculturated attitude, comprehensible input, negotiated interaction, pushed output and attention to language code. (Ortega, 2009, p. 63). However, only some ingredients relevant to this study will be discussed in details.

Acculturated attitude

Schuman (1976, cited in Ortega, 2009, p. 59) predicted that the more acculturated a learner can become, the better learning outcomes he or she will get. However, the notion that acculturated attitudes being the only mechanism for achieving proficiency in second language learning has been undermined especially with the study of Wes, a Japanese learner who obviously has positive attitude towards the target language community, but fail to master his grammatical competence in the target language.

Comprehensible Input

In learning second language, learners are usually afforded with

input from other users in the second community (Ortega, 2009, p. 59). Krashen (1985) proposed Comprehensible Input Hypothesis as the central role for second language learning. In the light of this hypothesis, comprehensible input is the most significant element for second language learning. Learners learn second language by listening to utterances produced by the interlocutors or reading surrounding texts such as newspaper and street signs. However, the notion of comprehensible input for L2 learning has been proved to be insufficient by studies conducted by many researchers in the area. As a result, it can be concluded that input is an important element for L2 learning, but it is not sufficient (Ortega, 2009, p. 60).

Attention to language code

In the study of Wes, he processed the other four ingredients of language, but still has not mastered the L2 grammar. In the case of Wes, the missing ingredient in L2 learning process is attention to language code. As a result, Schmidt (1995) proposed the Noticing Hypothesis claiming that if learners want to acquire any aspect of L2, they need to notice essential material in the linguistic data available in the environment, As there is a thin line between inability to remember and report the experience of noticing and the lack of noticing, Schmidt (2001, cited in Ortega, 2009, p. 63) later summarized that the ability to notice relevant linguistic material helps learners to learn more. In contrast, without noticing, learning a new language can be minimally achieved

Research Method

Participant

The participant in this study is currently a master student in Discourse Studies program in the department of English language and Linguistics, Lancaster University. His name is Alfonso Sanchez. He is 24 years old and comes from Spain. He holds a BA in English from Universidad Complutense Madrid and a Master of Teaching English as a Foreign Language from the same university. In his childhood, he was raised in a small village in the center of Spain where language of communication was at all-time Spanish. So, Spanish is regarded as his native language. He first officially learned English at school when he was 8 years old; however, it is paramount to mention here that he, in his nature, has been attracted to English language since he was a very small child. In the interview, he mentioned that “I have always been attracted to the sound of English, so when I was really small, a kid, I used to record a cassette in English even though I understood nothing, I really love the way it sounds, so I mean the sound of it, I love it, so I spent ages listening to cassettes and all that, a song and all things like that”

According to the interview,, the way he was taught in school was grammar translation method and the language of instruction was mainly Spanish. Occasionally, English was used but with very strong Spanish accent behind and sometimes even ungrammatical. He had been taught in that way until he finished high school. After that, he went on to study English literature for his BA. During his university time, he was granted Erasmus scholarship to come to take some

modules in England for 9 months as a part of his BA. In 2010, he received Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) from University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations which is equivalent to C2 level in Common European Framework of Reference. Then, he went on to study his master in TEFL at the same university. At the same time, he was working as a language teacher as well as a speaking examiner for University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations in Spain. Now, he is a master student in Discourse Studies at Lancaster University.

Procedure

The participant was asked in person to participate in this study as the researcher and the participant are both studying in MA programmes at Lancaster University. The reason for choosing him as the participant is because he is considered a successful language learner as justified by his standardised test score. The interview was conducted face-to-face at Lancaster University. The interview was tape-recorded and transcribed. The interview lasted for 58.06 minutes. In the interview, 56 main questions concerning participant's personal information, language learning experience, attitude towards language learning and learning techniques were asked. Also, follow-up questions were asked when clarification of some points is needed; however, these questions were not included in the main questions. After that, the answers were analyzed to demonstrate the reasons behind participant's achievement in English proficiency. Further clarification between the researcher and the participant was done via Facebook message as the participant was not in England during the analyzing process.

Results and Discussion

In the data analysis, the transcription was analyzed in order to find the reasons behind his success in

learning English. Generally, the key ingredients contributing to his success are motivation, input that he received when he was a small child, the combination of extroversion and introversion and the attention to language code, the missing ingredient in Wes' case (Ortega, 2009, p. 63).

The role of motivation

According to the interview, the most important key to his success in learning English is undoubtedly motivation. As far as language learning is concerned, he is an exceptionally motivated language learner. However, as motivation is not static, his motivation has developed over time during his learning experience. In this part, his motivation in learning English will be analyzed and discussed in details.

To begin with, it is important to say here that he is an exceptional case in the study of individual differences in SLA. This is because he is naturally motivated in learning English. As evident in his answer to question 12.1 in the transcription that he has always been so attracted to the sound of English that he would listen to English even he understood nothing and was only a small child. This is an important key to his success and later on plays a crucial role in his acquisition of English.

On top of that, he has always had positive attitude towards English language and British community as he mentioned in his answer to question 24 that he has always loved English language and literature as well as British people. Consequently, it made him want to become a part of the community as can be seen that he has made effort to come to England for three times. The first two times were for learning English and the last time was for one of his academic years. Apparently, positive attitudes towards the L2 community and its speakers can potentially increase L2 motivation (Ortega, 2009, p. 174). As a result, positive attitudes motivate him to work hard in order to fulfill his personal desire.

Regarding his types of motivation, in the light of Gardner and Lambert's (1972) perspective, he has both instrumental and integrative motivation. As for the former one, he is highly motivated partly because he has always wanted to become an English teacher and having good English is an essential instrument for him. (See question 52). For the latter one, it is prominent in his answers throughout the interview that he really wants to be able to communicate in English as well as get acculturated to English culture. Both have largely contributed to his high level of motivation in learning English.

However, it may be synthesized that his motivation is more integrative than instrumental. To support this, it is evidenced in his answer to question 31 that his ultimate goal of learning a new language (a new language other than Spanish and English) would be being able to communicate. Thus, it can be seen that his goal of

learning a new language is not to enhance his career but rather for the sake of communication. As Gardner (2001) values integrative motivation as the highest and the most facilitative kind of motivation and learners who are exceptionally successful tend to be integratively motivated, the findings in this study might be partly relevant under this notion as he is definitely integratively motivated. However, the instrumental part of his motivation cannot be overlooked. As a result, it may be best to say that both types of motivation are important to success in his acquisition English.

In respect to the intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation, it can be seen clearly from his answers to questions 12.1, 24 and 48 that he is both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. It is undeniable that his motivation of learning English is rooted from his natural fondness of the language in the first place, however, he also tried his best in order to meet his teachers' expectation. Therefore, for him, it is the combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that paves the way to his success. Even though it is quite agreeable that both types of motivation are important in L2 learning, it may be concluded based on the findings this study that the initial motivation in learning an L2 should be the intrinsic motivation and when it is later combined with the extrinsic one, the success may be expected.

In addition, in the light of the attribution theory, the way he attributes success and failure was somewhat conducive to his achievement in English especially the way he manages his failure. As can be seen from his answers to questions 20, 21 and 24 that when he first failed in his first test at the university after has been getting

good grades throughout his life, he started working hard and made his effort to come to England to improve his English even though it was just for two weeks. Importantly, his 2 weeks in England made him realize how poor his English was. He was unable to communicate in basic conversation even though he knew a lot of grammar rules. This was the turning point in his acquisition of English as it made him realize that he had to practice his real English meaning both grammatical and communicative aspects of English. It is very impressive to see the way he attributed his failures to not working hard enough and worked harder to gain accomplishment.

The last interesting point to mention in this part is the role of goal-setting in his process of learning. As can be seen in his answer to question 28 that setting a goal is really crucial for his acquisition of English as he set himself a goal of speaking English and he went for it. Eventually, he did successfully reach his goal of speaking English.

The combination of being both an introvert and extrovert

As Skehan (1989) claimed that having both types of personality would be beneficial in second language learning if learners adapt them effectively in different contexts of learning (pp. 104-105), Alfonso seems to possess both types of personality and utilizes them effectively. In his answer to questions 46 and 46.1 in the interview, it can be seen that, on the one hand, he is socially extroverted which is a valuable quality in developing fluency and communication competence. On the other hand, as a student in the class, he is introverted meaning that he does not participate much in class if he is

not sure about what to say. Being an introvert could be more beneficial in higher education where students need to work individually. Also, it could be more beneficial in terms of learning grammar, reading and even vocabulary. To analyze this, as he has mastered all skills in English, being socially extroverted may help him to develop his fluency and communication skill by talking to people in English during his time in England. On top of that, being introverted in the classrooms may help equip him with other skills of English including grammar, reading and vocabulary as he mentioned in questions 20 and 21 that his English was actually good compared to his classmates. As a result, the good combination of both partly helps him to master all the language skills and become an exceptionally successful language learner.

The role of input in relation to critical period hypothesis

This is a significantly interesting point for this study. It has been believed by researchers that there is a critical period for acquiring language naturally and effectively (Cazden, 1975, Krashen, Long & Scarcella, 1979). Even though researchers have not totally agreed on the actual age for the critical period, it has been broadly discussed that the range might fall within the first fifteen years of life. After this period, it is really difficult or even impossible to gain proficiency in a language, particularly a second language. In the case of Alfonso,

It is hypothesized by the researcher that the input that he received when he was a child (4 or 5 years old) has played an extensively important role in his acquisition of English. As he mentioned in

answer to questions 55 and 55.1 that the input that he got when he was a small child somehow was hidden in his brain until he activated when he started his university and even further when he came to England for nine months and used it in the real context with real people.

Another important idea that is well-worth mentioning in this section is his pronunciation. The tape record from the interview was presented to two untrained native speakers of English and they were asked to comment on his pronunciation. Impressively, even though they did spot the foreign accent in his pronunciation, both of them rated his pronunciation as “very native-like”. Again, in the light of the critical period hypothesis, the area that is considered to have a crucial relation with age is pronunciation and it has been proposed that it is strictly tied to biological schedules (Flege et al., 1999). Therefore, it is fascinating to study closely the reasons behind his achievement in pronunciation whether it is biological, educational or personal training. However, with the limit of time, it cannot be done in the process of this study.

The role of attention to language code

In the study of Wes (1980)), who seems to have all ingredients afforded by the environment for the optimal L2 learning. However, he still has not mastered his grammatical competence due to the lack of attention to language code. In the case of Alfonso, he was not in the ideal conditions as Wes was, meaning that he spent most of his

time learning English in foreign language setting where opportunity for producing output and interacting with native speakers is very limited. However, what seems to be important in his grammar acquisition is his attention to language code. In question 49, he mentioned that whenever he listened to teachers who speak good English, he would pay attention to the way the words sounded and the way they uttered the words as well as writing down words that he did not know. As a result, it is reasonable to say that the fact that he paid a lot of attention to the linguistic element when he listened to his teachers has made a crucial effect in his acquisition of English particularly grammar.

On the whole, there are several reasons contributing to his success in learning English. However, there are some other factors that may not be as important as the others, but still noteworthy. In the light of the multiple intelligence theory, it is hypothesized that people who are linguistically intelligent tend to do well in learning languages. As for Alfonso, he has been tested in his high school and it turned out that he was considered linguistically intelligent. (See question 54 and 54.1) As a result, the fact that he possesses linguistic intelligence may give him a good background in gaining his proficiency in English.

Also, the fact that he majored in English literature as well as was formally educated in England should be taken into account. As he mentioned in question 58 that teachers were really strict with his academic English which in turn really helped him to become more

proficient and get certified in English. Therefore, being formally educated in the target language community and surrounded by academic discourse actually helped him to achieve the higher level of English proficiency.

Limitation, Suggestions and Implications

This study is a reasonably small-scale study and as such the results may not be generalizable. . Also, there is only one participant in the research. Even though most of the reasons behind his success in English were investigated and discussed, some other factors that could be relevant were not covered including foreign language aptitude, foreign language anxiety, the instructional setting and many others. Also, a closer and more solid investigation on his English proficiency, especially pronunciation should be done.

As mentioned earlier, his native-like pronunciation is really worth pursuing in a more solid and systematic manner. Also, more study of this kind is recommended in order to paint a clearer picture in the way second language could be acquired. Suggestively, a study of successful learners who have gained their proficiency in the foreign language setting is highly recommended as most learners are actually in such setting, not naturalistic environment. Conversely, as this study looked at the bright side of language acquisition, the reasons why some learners are not successful should be also studied in order to show that which factors are beneficial and which are not.

The findings from this study may be beneficial for any language learners who want to become proficient in a second language as it shows in this study that working hard does pay off. Also, for language teachers, teaching languages through motivation may be more effective for learners in the long run. More importantly, for parents who do not speak a second language and monolingual school administrators, the role of mere input within the critical period has been hinted to play a crucial role in the acquisition of a second language.

Conclusion

The findings from this study demonstrated that there are many factors contributing to Alfonso's success in English acquisition. The most prominent key to his success is motivation. He has always been highly motivated to become proficient in English. However, it should be noted here that he is, at the first place, naturally motivated by his fondness of English language and will to become like British people. Later, he was motivated by other factors including teachers' expectation and his career goal as an English teacher,

On top of that, the input he received when he was a small child also played a paramount role in his language learning process as well i.e. the input may somehow be hidden in his brain until he activated when he went to university and when he spent time in England. Additionally, the fact that his pronunciation is considered native-like

is a really fascinating thing to be studied further whether that input had an effect on his pronunciation or not.

Furthermore, other constituents are also crucial for his achievement including the role of attention to language which may enhance his grammar acquisition as well as the combination of extrovert and introvert personality that seems to interchangeably facilitate him in mastering all skills of English. Also, the fact that he has been tested and considered being linguistically intelligent should be taken into consideration as this might provide him good foundation in learning languages.

To conclude, this is a very small-scale study and the fact that the participant has a very exceptional way of learning a second language make it not so valid to generalize the findings with other learners. However, the findings have shed some lights on the teaching and learning perspectives that motivation should be valued and instilled in learners' language learning resources. Lastly, even though it is said that people use the same route in learning languages, people are just simply different. Therefore, what really determine success in the language learning are the differences in each individual and how they manage to use and deal with them effectively.

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**PERCEIVED TEACHING CHALLENGES OF EFL
TEACHERS AT KABINWITTAYA SCHOOL,
THAILAND**

By: Vilma Badua-Liwan

ABSTRACT

This descriptive method of research aimed to find out the perceptions of EFL teachers on their teaching challenges in teaching the four-macro skills. The respondents of the study were 12 EFL teachers at Kabinwittaya Secondary School in Kabinburi, Thailand. An original teacher-made questionnaire on the challenges and strategies in teaching the four-macro skills was used while statistical tools that were used were the mean, frequency count and percentage.

The results showed that the teachers usually experience teaching challenges in all the four macro skills. Likewise, they usually employ different teaching strategies as a way of dealing with the challenges they face.

After the teaching challenges faced by EFL teachers were identified and recorded, an intervention program was developed with suggested activities for teachers' professional development to address such challenges.

Key Words: Teaching Challenges, Teaching Strategies, English as a Foreign Language

INTRODUCTION

Thailand, like many other countries where English is a foreign language, is trying to improve its people's ability to use English effectively. However, educational institutions have been facing enormous challenges and problems regarding English education which may either be a teacher-factor, a learner-factor, or other education-related factors. The results from the surveys regarding English skills of Thai teachers and students alike in the Education System and Policy Handbook (2011) reported that the general education in English is of a low academic standard compared to the development and modernization of the country as a whole. With the current situation, the Ministry of Education acknowledged that the kingdom is undeniably facing problems in English education that is why they are putting much effort on how to tackle such problems (Punthumasen, 2007).

Thus, this study aims to identify, record and address the teaching challenges faced by EFL teachers at Kabinwittaya School and to come up with an intervention program with suggested activities for teachers' professional development.

Hopefully, the results of this study will enhance the responsiveness of the involved EFL teachers as well as the academic personnel who are responsible in facilitating guidelines and decision making on what should be done to help EFL teachers at Kabinwittaya School overcome their teaching challenges,

Considerably, this study expects to provide useful information for every school in Thailand most especially for EFL teachers, academic administration, and other personnel who work with EFL teachers in the government secondary schools in Thailand. The school personnel and administration may use the results of this study to come up with other innovative teaching strategies which may help EFL teachers overcome their teaching challenges. Researchers, who will study the same topic, may use the results of this study as a reference.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

In teaching and learning a first language (L1), teachers and students cannot avoid challenges, let alone teaching and learning a second language (L2). Basing on the survey of the British Council (2008), serious challenges faced by teachers include teachers teaching with limited resources, having large classes, and developing speaking skills. The role of English language teachers become increasingly challenging because they seem to be under increasing pressure to have a wider teaching repertoire and a more diverse range of skills. Aside from the mentioned contextual inconsistencies, many similar concerns arise from EFL teachers which they experience on daily basis. These challenges that teachers and administrators are well aware of include the class size, time constraints, accommodation of local needs and conditions, and the need to cope with problems resulting from lack of both teacher training in teaching EFL and student training in learning EFL.

Likewise, Noom-ura (2013) reported in her study that Thai teachers of English view the problems involving themselves, curricula and textbooks, assessment, and other factors supporting teaching success at a moderate level. They see a high level of problems resulting from students' lack of exposure to English and insufficient background of the language.

Harklau et al. (1999) mentioned that a variety of socio-cultural factors can affect language learning. ESL teachers and learners might face additional challenges such as acclimating to a new culture and status that interfere with teaching and learning English. Given this, English teachers may use culturally relevant materials to build on the learner's linguistic and cultural resources while teaching language through content and themes. Teachers should encourage learners to use the English language strategically, and motivate them through student-centred activities. It is inevitable that in teaching and learning a foreign language, difficulties and challenges on the part of the learner and the teacher cannot be avoided. Consequently, teachers may use different innovative strategies to overcome such challenges.

In Bongolan and Moir's (2005) case study, they recorded some teaching strategies which can greatly help teachers in developing their students' English language skills such as vocabulary and language development strategy, guided interaction and Schema-Building strategy, metacognition and authentic assessment strategy, explicit instruction strategy, meaning-based context (contextualization), the use of modeling, graphic organizers, visuals,

and text representations strategy. By using these strategies, EFL teachers plan, reflect, and observe classroom instructions with the students' language skills development and content learning in mind. Such strategies are used to identify good teaching skills that help them plan lessons that are accessible to a range of students.

Likewise, Environmental strategies are needed as much as classroom management. The EFL teacher like any other teacher should create the classroom with an atmosphere conducive for learning. Also, it is a great help to utilize classroom protocols and routines.

Moreover, teaching does not only end in conveying information to students. The teacher has to assess and reinforce as part of the teaching-learning process by giving assignments and providing appropriate activities for the students. Some assessment and reinforcement strategies are assessing and utilizing the background knowledge of the students and using bilingual students or the bright ones as helpers (Moughamian et al. 2009).

There is no doubt that skills in teaching are acquired throughout the years of teaching experience in a teachers' profession. Richards (2010) highlighted the significance of some core dimensions of teachers' skills and expertise which include; language proficiency, content knowledge, teaching skills, contextual knowledge, learner-focused teaching, and professionalism. Thus, EFL teachers in any context require these skills to make their efforts worthwhile and exercise their effectiveness in EFL classrooms. As Hammond (2000) emphasized that a teacher's knowledge of the subject taught has

often been found to be an important factor in teacher effectiveness. Likewise, measures of pedagogical knowledge including knowledge of learning, teaching methods and curriculum have more often been found to influence teaching performance, and frequently these factors exert even stronger effects than subject matter knowledge. Knoblauch & Woolfolk, (2008) also agreed that teachers with positive attitude towards teaching often strive for better performances. Their beliefs and perceptions about their teaching skills have a strong impact on their teaching effectiveness.

Statement of the Problem

1. What are the teaching challenges experienced by EFL teachers at Kabinwittaya School in teaching the four-macro skills?
2. What English skill/s is/are the most challenging to teach?
3. What are the teaching strategies that EFL teachers at Kabinwittaya School employ in resolving their teaching challenges?
4. What intervention program may be proposed to overcome the challenges in teaching EFL?

METHODOLOGY

Research Method

Since this study aims to identify and record the teaching challenges of EFL teachers at Kabinwittaya School, how often they encounter these challenges, as well as how they resolve such challenges through their innovative teaching strategies in teaching the

four macro skills, the descriptive survey method was employed.

Respondents and Research Environment

The participants were twelve EFL teachers who are currently teaching during the period of this study . All of the respondents had undergone and completed the required trainings to become professional teachers. All the participants were able to complete the survey questionnaire and handed them over on time.

The study was conducted at Kabinwittaya Secondary School. It is a government school located at 199 Moo 6 Suwanasorn Road, Kabin Sub-district, Kabinburi District, Prachinburi Province, Thailand.

Data Gathering Tool and Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher made a survey questionnaire in order to determine the respondents' teaching challenges, and teaching strategies in teaching the four macro skills. The questionnaire was divided into two parts and used a 5 point rating scale to measure the degree of the respondents' frequency in facing challenges and employing the teaching strategies, with 5 as "always or almost faced or employed" and 1 as the "never faced or employed". The first part of the questionnaire examined the respondents' perceptions on teaching challenges on the four- macro skills. The second part of the questionnaire examined the respondents' perceptions on teaching strategies on the four- macro skills.

The researcher asked permission from the head of the

English Department and the School director before gathering the needed data. The survey was conducted by politely asking the participants to complete the survey questionnaire. The participants were given enough time to complete the questionnaire on their own free time and pace. Fortunately, all of the participants were able to hand in their answered questionnaires on time. The researcher recorded the raw scores in a table then finally, submitted the raw data to the statistician for treatment and analysis.

Treatment of Data

The mean and standard deviation were used to determine the respondents' perceptions on teaching challenges and teaching strategies.

The interpretation of the scale used in the teaching challenges faced by EFL teachers and the teaching strategies they employed are as follows:

Description	Range	
High	Always face challenges	4.5-5.0
	Usually face challenges	3.5-4.4
Medium	Occasionally face challenges	2.5-3.4
Low	Rarely face challenges	1.5- 2.4
	Never face challenges	1.0-1.4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Teaching Challenges of Teachers in the Four Macro Skills

Writing

Table 3 shows that the overall mean of (4.22) on the challenges of teachers in teaching writing is high, which means that the teachers always or usually face challenges. The most challenging items, having the same mean of (4.66), were with the students who can't write a formal theme or an essay within a limited time, with the students who can't easily express their thoughts in written form, and correcting grammar exercises and giving appropriate and useful feedback on multiple written outputs by large numbers of students are tiresome and time consuming. This is followed by the item on students who have a poor writing skill in their first language (Thai) which affects their writing skill in English with a mean of (4.50). The teachers also face personal challenge as they don't have a wide background and adequate training in teaching EFL writing with a mean (4.50).

This implies that the teachers face challenges in teaching the writing skill to EFL learners because, the students have a poor writing skill in their first language (Thai) which affects their writing skill in English that's why their students can't write a formal theme or an essay within a limited time and their students can't easily express their thoughts in written form.

Similarly, Noom-ura (2013) reported in her study that the teachers' top five problematic areas, although at a moderate level, involved teaching writing. In her study, the teachers agreed at a high level that students were a problematic factor in the success of their teaching. Problems of students include insufficient knowledge and skills of English, thinking in Thai before translating to English, having problems with writing, and the like.

Table 3 Means of Teachers' Perceptions on Teaching Challenges in Writing

Teaching Challenges in Writing	Mean	Description	
		n	SD
1. I can't write formal letters and essays in English.	3.5833	High	1.62135
2. I don't have a wide background and adequate training in teaching EFL writing.	4.5000	High	.52223
3. I can't teach formal EFL writing to my students following writing guidelines and disciplines.	4.4167	High	.66856
4. I can't easily express my ideas in English	3.3333	Medium	1.43548

5. I can't take down notes in English while listening to lectures or talks in English.	4.2500	High	1.05529
6. Students who have a poor writing skill in their first language (Thai) affect their writing skills.	4.5000	High	.52223
7. My students can't write a formal theme or an essay within a limited time.	4.6667	High	.49237
8. Correcting grammar exercises and giving appropriate and useful feedback on multiple written outputs by large numbers of students are tiresome and time consuming.	4.6667	High	.49237
9. My students can't easily express their thoughts in written form.	4.6667	High	.49237
10. Teaching materials and text books in teaching writing to EFL students are not available or not well provided.	3.5833	High	1.24011
Overall	4.2167	High	0.85424

Reading

Table 4 indicates that most of the statements regarding the teachers' perceptions on the teaching challenges in reading have an overall mean of (3.88) which means the teachers always or usually face the following challenges: The participants are having the most challenges with their students who can't read well in their first language (Thai) so they can hardly read in English. (4.33), students who are able to read English texts can't easily comprehend what they read (3.58), followed by giving corrective feedbacks and evaluation to all their students is tiresome and not possible due to large number of classes (4.25), and not being able to give needed attention to all the poor readers in their class due to limited time (4.0).

This reveals that the participants are having challenges in teaching the Reading skills in English due to having students who are poor readers in their first language which greatly affect their reading skills in English, having large number of classes and having limited time in teaching the reading skill. In the same way in Noom-ura's study, other factors contributing to the teachers' teaching success include limited time-allocation for English classes. On the other hand, the teachers see large classes as less problematic as inadequacy of teaching aids. Noom-ura, S. (2013)

Adunyarittigun (1998) found that weak performances in reading in English indicate difficulties in fulfilling the demands of their studies. Addressing this problem of poor reading ability among Thai students poses extra difficulties for Thailand as access to libraries is restricted compared to other countries and it does not

have a strong reading culture, as indicated by its ratio of newspapers to population (1 to 31) compared to Japan's 1 to 6. Marukatat, 2003. Reading in English may be a special problem for Thai students as the country does not possess a strong reading ethic, even in its own language, Ubon, P (year not mentioned).

Table 4 Means of Teachers' Perceptions on Teaching Challenges on Reading

Teaching Challenges on Reading	Mean	Descripti on	SD
1. My students who can't read well in their first language (Thai) can hardly read in English.	4.3333	High	.98473
2. My students can read some English texts but can't easily comprehend what they read.	3.5833	High	.66856
3. Texts and other interesting reading materials in English are not available or not well provided.	3.2500	Medium	.75378
4. It's not possible to give needed attention to all the poor readers in my class due to limited time	4.0000	High	.85280

5. Giving corrective feedbacks and evaluation to all my students is tiresome and not possible due to large number of classes.	4.2500	High	.75378
Overall	3.8833	High	0.80273

Speaking

Table 5 shows that the means of teachers' perception on teaching challenges on speaking is high with the overall mean of (4.0) which denotes that the teachers always or usually face challenges. From the results, the participants are having the most challenges in teaching the speaking skill with their students being used with translating from Thai to English before they speak (4.75), students can't interact with each other and discuss the lessons with their teacher in English (4.75), the teacher have to speak Thai to teach and explain lessons in EFL speaking for students to understand (4.50), and their students can't understand instructions and simple explanations in English (4.41).

From the results, it can be concluded that the participants are facing more challenges on the student factor. This means that the students themselves are really struggling in developing their speaking skills while learning the English language. Similarly, Noom-ura, S (2013) found in her study that the teachers' problems involving students included students not having enough practice in English on their own, students lacking opportunities for English exposure

outside class, students' insufficient knowledge and skills of English, students thinking in Thai before translating to English, students lacking patience in practicing English, and students lacking confidence in speaking.

Moreover, Kitjaroonchai, N. (2013) found in his study that the most encountered problems of teaching and learning include learners who do not apply the knowledge of English in daily life, learners who are shy to speak English, and grammar and structures that are emphasized too much in language classrooms.

Table 5 Means of Teachers' Perceptions on Teaching Challenges on Speaking

Teaching Challenges on Speaking	Mean	Descript ion	SD
1. I don't have a wide range of vocabulary in English.	3.0000	Medium	1.47710
2. I don't have sufficient training in English spoken discourse.	3.8333	High	1.02986
3. I can't speak in English very clearly and fluently.	3.7500	High	1.28806
4. I can't have a formal conversation in English confidently.	3.6667	High	1.37069
5. Students, teachers and other Native English Speakers can't understand me when I communicate with them in English.	3.4167	Medium	1.24011

6. My students are used with translating from Thai to English before they speak.	4.7500	High	.45227
7. I have to speak Thai to teach and explain my lessons in EFL	4.5000	High	.79772
8. My students can't interact with each other and discuss the lessons with me, in English.	4.7500	High	.45227
9. My students can't understand instructions and simple explanations in English.	4.4167	High	.66856
10. I don't have enough new and updated teaching materials in teaching EFL speaking	3.9167	High	.79296
Overall	4.0	High	0.95696

Listening

Table 6 which shows the teachers' perceptions on teaching challenges on listening has a high overall mean (4.03). Surprisingly, all of the statements were perceived to be high which means that the teachers always or usually face challenges in each aspect. The most challenging in teaching the listening skill with their students is taking time to translate from Thai to English before they comprehend what they hear (4.75), followed by students are confused with the differences of the sound systems between Thai and English alphabets, phonetics, phonemes, and the like. (4.16).

This implies that the participants are having teaching challenges in teaching the listening skills involving both the teacher

factor and the student factor. Cubalit, (2014) reported that listening problems of Thai students related to listening text include unfamiliar vocabulary and difficult grammar structure, unfamiliar situations, long spoken text, and slang and idiomatic expression.

Moreover, McCloud, G. (2011) presented three major reasons why EFL listeners are having difficulty understanding and comprehending through listening. One reason can be the speaker's speed of speaking and since EFL listeners can't control the pace at which the speaker speaks, what the listeners hear seems to be spoken too quickly.

Furthermore, Sriprom (2011) stated in her study that the process of studying English in the Thai education system still places less emphasis on listening and speaking skills and put more emphasis on the use of grammar, writing and reading skills. In addition, most Thai English teachers use Thai in explaining English grammar rules and whenever they speak English, their pronunciation affects the listening practice of the students even from primary grades (Cubalit 2014).

Table 6 Means of Teachers' Perceptions on Teaching Challenges in Listening

Teaching Challenges in Listening	Mean	Description	SD
1. I have difficulty understanding and relating to Native English speakers.	3.7500	<i>High</i>	1.21543

2. I have difficulty understanding and retaining information I heard from announcements, reports, news, and etc. in English.	3.6667	<i>High</i>	1.23091
3. My students are confused with the differences of the sound systems between Thai and English Alphabets, phonetics, phonemes, and the like.	4.1667	<i>High</i>	.71774
4. My students take time to translate from Thai to English before they comprehend what they heard.	4.7500	<i>High</i>	.45227
5. I don't have adequate and appropriate materials in teaching EFL listening.	3.8333	<i>High</i>	.83485
Overall	4.0333	<i>High</i>	0.89024

Other Related Teaching Challenges

Table 7 highlights the means of teachers' perceptions on other related teaching challenges with a total mean of (3.55) interpreted as high which means that the teachers always or usually face challenges on this aspect. The participants perceived the challenges with the highest mean were their lack of teaching experience and knowledge in the field of EFL teaching affects their

teaching competency (4.50).

The results of the survey imply that the participants are facing challenges in several aspects such as their own teaching competency, not suitable and not enough teaching materials, not being able to give special attention to slow learners, rapid transition of teachers, and not being updated with the details of the developments of the English curriculum.

The survey of the British Council (2008) states that serious challenges faced by teachers includes: teachers teaching with limited resources having the highest vote followed by having large classes and developing speaking skills. On the other hand, the study of Noopong (2002) reported that most of the problems concerning teachers, curricula and textbooks, and student assessment were at a moderate level, while most of those concerning students were at a high level. He reported that as the lack of English native speakers, inadequate budget for teaching materials, insufficient financial support for teachers' professional development and students' extra-curricular activities, and inaccessibility for language resources were seen as the most serious problems for language teaching.

Table 7 Means of Teachers' Perceptions on Other Related Teaching Challenges

Other Teaching Challenges	Mean	Descripti on	SD
1. Coming in and going out of new and old English teachers in a regular basis can affect the English learning process of students.	4.0833	<i>High</i>	.79296
2. I don't always have alternative and flexible plans for my lessons in case it won't work out for the students.	3.7500	<i>High</i>	.86603
3. I find it complicated to teach English language in the four macro skills to Thai students.	3.6667	<i>High</i>	.65134
4. My lack of teaching experience and knowledge in the field of EFL affect my competency.	4.5000	<i>High</i>	.52223
5. I have trouble integrating learning technologies in my lessons.	3.8333	<i>High</i>	.38925
6. I find it hard to incorporate authentic materials and new methodologies in teaching.	3.1667	<i>Medium</i>	1.11464
7. I struggle on planning well structured lessons and how to execute my lessons effectively.	3.5000	<i>High</i>	1.24316

8. I don't attend seminars regarding the English curriculum and the developments in English Language Teaching (ELT).	3.0000	<i>Medium</i>	.73855
9. I can't understand all the English text books I use in teaching and can't easily teach them to my students.	2.9167	<i>Medium</i>	.99620
10. Large numbers of students per class are not easy to manage	3.1667	<i>Medium</i>	.57735
11. I spend more time in classroom management than usual.	3.7500	<i>High</i>	.75378
12 I can't give special attention to all the slow learners in my class.	4.3333	<i>High</i>	1.15470
13. Students' previous training or educational background has something to do with their present study of EFL.	3.4167	<i>Medium</i>	.66856
14. The English department does not receive full support and teaching needs are not being well provided by the school.	4.1667	<i>High</i>	.83485
15. The designed English curriculum for my Thai students is not effective.	3.5833	<i>Medium</i>	.51493
16 I am not aware about the details of the English curriculum and its every development.	4.0000	<i>High</i>	.73855
17. English text books from abroad that I use in teaching are not suitable and good for Thai students	4.4167	<i>High</i>	.66856

18. Teaching materials or local needs are not well provided and conditions are not well accommodated.	1.9167	<i>Low</i>	.66856
19. Updates for the English curriculum developments are not being implemented in my school.	2.8333	<i>Medium</i>	.83485
20. The time allotted for my teaching is not enough to attain my teaching objectives every meeting.	3.0833	<i>Medium</i>	1.67649
Overall	3.5542	<i>High</i>	0.82028

Teaching Strategies of EFL Teachers

Table 8 shows the means of teachers' perception on their teaching strategies. According to the statistical analysis, the respondents perceived that the teaching strategies they employ with the highest mean interpreted as high were assessments and reinforcement activities strategy, followed by Environmental strategy, then Instruction strategy with the overall mean of 3.47 interpreted as occasionally used.

The instructional strategies that the teachers always or usually used were using as many mediums of instruction as possible to convey information either be in oral, written, videos, teacher demonstration, student demonstration, and integrating music when possible. When speaking and explaining, they also try to slow down their speech and use shorter sentences, present tense of words,

synonyms, examples, gestures, and demonstrations. For the environmental strategies, the strategies with the highest level of frequency that the teachers employ are: using visual displays, using fast learners as helpers, maintaining good rapport with their students, using classroom protocols and routines, and creating a good learning atmosphere. Likewise, the strategies that the teachers always or usually employ in assessments and reinforcements activities are: assessing and using the background knowledge of the learners, using cooperative learning, classifying the students from their level of learning ability, providing self-activities and homework, and taking note of the learners' proficiency, goals motivations, and learning strategies.

Lee (2007) mentioned in her study that Assessment for learning or (AfL), underlines the pivotal role assessment played in reinforcing and extending learning. The key premise is that the implementation of AfL starts with awareness of the connection between teaching and learning and specifically how assessment can be used to inform teaching and learning.

Table 8 Means of Teachers' Teaching Strategies

Teaching Strategies	Mean	Description	SD
1. Instructional Strategies-			.77850
1.1. I slow down my speech and use shorter sentences, present tense of words, synonyms, examples, gestures, demonstrations.	4.3333	High	

1.2. I use as many mediums of instruction as possible to convey information: oral, written, videos, teacher demonstration, student demonstration, etc. 4.5000 High .67420

1.3. I work collaboratively with a foreign teacher. 2.2500 Low .86603

1.4. I integrate multicultural education throughout the curriculum 2.4167 Low .51493

1.5. I prepare lesson plans regularly and evaluate their efficiency. 2.2500 Low .45227

1.6. I integrate music when possible. 4.5833 High .51493

2. Environmental Strategies .51493

2.1. I create print-rich environments using bulletin boards with articles on different topics like sports and physical activity, game play strategies of the day, words of the day, etc. 2.5833 Medium

2.2. I use visual displays, portable white boards, and posters when giving instructions. 4.0833 High .51493

2.3. I use Word Walls: Alphabetically arranged high-frequency words displayed at an easy access point for students. 2.1667 Low .71774

2.4. I use bright and fast learner students as helpers.	4.0833	High	.66856
2.5. I maintain a good rapport with my students even outside the classroom or school.	3.8333	High	.38925
2.6. I utilize classroom protocols and routines.	4.5833	High	.51493
2.7. I create a good classroom setting and a good learning atmosphere in my class.	4.2500	High	.45227
3. Assessments and reinforcement activities strategy			.28868
3.1. I take note of my students' proficiency in the four macro skills and I try to know my students personally, their goals, motivations, and learning strategies to help me develop a new teaching strategy appropriate for them.	3.9167	High	
3.2. I classify my students from their level of learning ability to help me assess and decide what suitable teaching strategy to use in each group level.	4.5833	High	.51493
3.3. I provide learning stations to reinforce concepts and skills that I previously taught.	2.9167	Medium	.66856

3.4. I assess and utilize the background knowledge of my students.	3.5000	High	.67420
3.5. I provide a variety of tasks and activities to match the learners' varied learning styles.	3.1667	Medium	.57735
3.6. I teach vocabulary words in a fun way such as a <u>Word Search, Cross Word</u> , or I let my students create new games.	4.5833	High	.51493
3.7. I use cooperative learning such as jigsaw learning and peer observations.	3.5000	High	.52223
3.8. I use newspapers, magazines, and web sites in assignments.	2.1667	Low	.83485
3.9. I involve librarians in assignments.	2.1667	Low	.71774
3.10. I provide self-activities and homework to encourage students for self-learning.	3.5000	High	.52223
Overall	3.4746	Medium	0.58301

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The teachers at Kabinwittaya School usually experience teaching challenges in all the four macro skills while the most challenging skills

that the teachers teach are the writing, speaking and listening skills. Likewise, the teaching strategies used by the teachers are: instructional strategies, environmental strategies, and assessment and reinforcement activities strategies. Lastly, an intervention program with suggested activities for teachers' professional development was designed as a way of addressing the teachers' challenges in teaching EFL.

Recommendations

1. The teachers at Kabinwittaya School should be encouraged and motivated to grow professionally by pursuing teacher trainings, master or higher degrees.

2. The administration of the school in collaboration with the teachers should consider coming up with certain activities appropriate for them to be able to meet the teaching challenges in all the four macro skills: writing, reading, speaking and listening.

3. The administration should plan trainings or professional development activities for teachers to be acquainted with the various teaching strategies such that these teachers will be able to use them in their classes. Through this, the teaching-learning situation would be enhanced and a more successful output will be realized.

4. Whatever programs or activities that will be undertaken to let these teachers overcome their challenges should be done to all teachers regardless of age, years of teaching experience, and years of formal study of the English language, nationality and educational attainment.

5. The intervention program is highly recommended to be funded and implemented.

6. Future researchers are encouraged to do a similar study but on a wider scope and include other variables.

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**SOFIA THE FIRST AS A CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTION AMONG FEMALE
KINDERGARTEN PUPILS**

By: Julie Calvez

ABSTRACT

Sofia the first is a television cartoon series shown in Disney Junior channel where a little girl is portrayed as a princess who is kind, loving, honest, and admirable. The research evaluated the listening and speaking skills of children who watched the series regularly and those who seldom did or not have any interest with the show at all. Participants were 100 little female children three to six years of age. All participants have watched Sofia the first and were observed after the tenth episode. They were asked questions to gauge both their listening and speaking abilities. The results show that participants who've seen the tenth episode responded well and were able to express themselves confidently without the help from their parents to recall and answer. Those who have viewed less were quiet, had minimal words in answering questions and sought approval from their parents if their answers were satisfactory. The results provide that the children who were exposed in the show felt they see a reflection of themselves and were encouraged to mimic the language and manner on how dialogues were spoken.

INTRODUCTION

In a world that gets more challenging with new inventions and innovations, the English language becomes a great asset for one. All over the world, English plays an important role in many industries. Even in nations where they patronize their native tongue, their people are now adhering to learning this language. Online ESL schools have been put up to cater to the needs of those who wish to learn English overseas. ESL students reported that they enjoyed participating in the online discussions and considered online discussion assessment to be a good idea (Birch and Volkov, 2007). English connects people, offers one more opportunities and makes a common ground for the global community to meet. English is a need to widen one's array of chances.

The ability to learn a language takes constant practice and an environment supporting the need to develop it continuously. To be able to communicate with it, constant listening and speaking the language enhance these skills. Listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. For learners, listening is how spoken language becomes input, (Saricoban, 1999).

In a country where English is not the primary language spoken, it can be challenging to inculcate this to be learned well by everyone. For one to be able to have a good grasp of this language, learning it at a young age will build a good foundation and will be strengthened over time of consistent usage. Individuals that are

observed are called models. In society, children are surrounded by many influential models, such as parents within the family, characters television, friends within their peer group and teachers at school. These models provide examples of behavior to observe and imitate, e.g. masculine and feminine, pro and anti-social etc. (McLeod, 2011).

Children are fast learners. They easily adapt to what is presented to them and are very susceptible to changes. This becomes a good avenue to teach them a second language. In the social learning system, new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others (Bandura, 1971). In reality, not all households use English as their means of communication. Even if the children learn English at school, if there is no reinforcement at home, the language will not be embedded in them.

Technology offers many perks and taking advantage of it to good use will perfectly be beneficial for anyone. The television can serve as a medium to enrich children's English skills in speaking and listening. There are myriad of English shows to be watched and choosing one that is appropriate for the children and their needs will help them learn to communicate well in the language. Given the right conditions, children between the ages of two and five may experience benefits from good-quality educational television. For this group of children there is evidence that attention and comprehension, receptive vocabulary, some expressive language, letter-sound knowledge, and knowledge of narrative and storytelling all benefit from high-quality and age-appropriate educational programming

(Close, 2004).

Sofia the First is a television animation series shown on Disney Junior channel. Over the years, Disney has always featured princesses that are grownups. It is the first time that they are having a little girl princess as a protagonist.

Sofia is an ordinary girl who lives in the village. Until one day, her mother Miranda, marries the king of Enchancia, Roland II. She then becomes a princess overnight and is compelled to act and be like a real princess. It showcases the characters speaking in English to each other. It also has singing as a part of it. Any syllabus designed for teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) to young learners (YLS) typically contains songs, chants, and rhymes, (Bourke, 2006). This way, the show is a good way to learn and practice communication skills and widen their knowledge.

This research aimed to determine how Sofia the First affects the language development of female children. First, it aimed to know the level of conversational skills rating of the pupils before watching Sofia the First, Secondly, to know the level of conversational skills rating of the pupils after watching Sofia the First. Likewise, to know the significant difference between the conversational skills of the pupils before and after the intervention. This is done to know what areas of communication are being developed and learned by the female pupils as embedded in the show. And lastly, if there are any changes in the behavior or values of the children after watching the show, specifically, confidence and non-verbal communication.

METHODS

This quantitative research was conducted through a quasi-experimental method, specifically one group pretest-posttest design. The one-group pretest-posttest design is a research design where one group of participants is pretested on the dependent variable and then post

tested after the treatment condition has been administered. In this design, the effect is taken to be the difference between the pretest and posttest scores. In the case of this research, the conversational skills of ten (10) female kindergarten pupils from Baguio Central School, Baguio City, Philippines were subjected to pre-test>intervention>post-test to see if the animated series Sofia the First is an effective intervention to develop the conversation skills of the pupils. Only females were considered in this study because female children would be more involved in the identity and communication, since Sophia the First is a princess and they are able to relate with the values and characteristics of a little girls. Since they like Sophia as a character, it was also observed among female children that they patronize the character.

This research was done by conducting a pre-test wherein the communication practices and skills of the children, as well as their values or characteristics in relation to communication, were assessed. In here, they were engaged in a conversation by talking about themselves and their day in the class. Their responses, actions and conversation skills were assessed using the Conversational Skills

Rating Scale by Spitzberg (2007). This tool is used to assess the conversational competence in interpersonal settings, having an internal reliability (coefficient alpha) between .85 to .90.

The CSRS consists of 25 molecular skill items (e.g., speaking rate, articulation, posture, questions, etc.), and five molar items (e.g., inappropriate interactant--appropriate). The behavioral items can be subdivided into four skill clusters: attentiveness (i.e., attention to, interest in, and concern for conversational partner), composure (i.e., confidence, assertiveness, and relaxation), expressiveness (i.e., animation and variation in verbal and nonverbal forms of expression), and coordination (i.e., the nondisruptive negotiation of speaking turns, conversational initiation, and conversational closings). An additional five molar or general impression items are included to provide a validating (or dependent) measure to which the behavioral items are expected to relate.

The children were then asked to watch ten (10) episodes of Sofia the First. Ten shows were given because these could already give much information, skills and dialogues that reflect values depicted in the cartoon. Sophia the First was chosen as the intervention because it has various communication cues and skills that could help in the development of communication skills of children. In addition, the show is also embedded with values that could help in communication as well as personal values of the characters and the children. This was done to assess how the show was able to see if there are any changes in the pupils' character.

After watching, the children are given the same test to assess

and changes in their communication or language skills. This time, they were asked to describe their day and talk about what they saw in the animated series. Again, the communication practices and skills of the children, as well as their values or characteristics in relation to communication, were assessed for the post-test.

The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically mean, by analyzing it through a 5-point scale using the following table:

Mean Scores	Conversation Skill	Interpretation
4.24 – 5.00	Excellent (E)	Use is smooth, controlled, results in positive impression of communicative skills
3.43 – 4.23	Good (G)	Use was better than adequate, but not outstanding
2.62 – 3.42	Adequate (A)	Use is sufficient but neither very noticeable nor excellent. Produces neither particularly positive nor negative impression
1.81 – 2.61	Fair (F)	Occasionally awkward or disruptive, occasionally adequate
1.00 – 1.80	Inadequate (I)	Use is awkward, disruptive, or results in a negative impression of communicative skills

The result of the pre-test and the post-test was analyzed using t-test because the data being compared were two groups of interval data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was seen in this research that the cartoon show entitled Sophia the First is helpful in the development of communication skills (verbal and non-verbal) as well as the confidence of female children studying at the Baguio Central School. To understand the changes, the result of the Conversational Skills Rating Scale should be analyzed.

As seen in Table 2, the data shows that the students were generally fair in their conversational skills based on the assessment of the researcher by having a casual conversation with them on a certain topic. This means that the children have occasional awkward or disruptive behaviour that affects the conversation. In particular, most of the indicators were rated as fair, while less than half were seen to be inadequate during the conversations. Nevertheless, some were seen to be adequate.

Table 2. Conversational Skills of the Pupils before the Intervention

	Mean	DE
1. Speaking Rate (neither too slow or too fast	2.60	Fair
2. Speaking fluency (pauses, silences, "uh", etc.)	2.60	Fair
3. Vocal Confidence (neither too tense/nervous nor overly confident sounding)	2.60	Fair

4. Articulation (clarity of pronunciation and linguistic expression)	2.50	Fair
5. Vocal Variety (neither overly monotone nor dramatic voice)	2.50	Fair
6. Volume (neither too loud nor too soft)	2.80	Adequate
7. Posture (neither too closed/formal not too open/informal)	2.20	Fair
8. Lean toward partner (neither too forward nor too far back)	2.20	Fair
9. Shaking or nervous twitches (aren't noticeable or distracting)	1.50	Inadequate
10. Unmotivated movements (tapping feet, fingers, hair-twirling, etc.)	1.20	Inadequate
11. Facial expressiveness (neither blank nor exaggerated)	2.40	Fair
12. Nodding of head in response to partner statements	2.80	Adequate
13. Use of gestures to emphasize what is being said	2.20	Fair
14. Use of humor and/or stories	1.70	Inadequate
15. Smiling and/or laughing	2.40	Fair
16. Use of eye contact	2.40	Fair
17. Asking of questions	1.70	Inadequate
18. Speaking about partner (involvement of partner as a topic of conversation)	2.00	Fair
19. Speaking about self (neither too much nor	2.10	Fair

too little)			
20. Encouragements or agreements (encouragement of partner to talk)	1.80	Inadequate	
21. Personal opinion expression (neither too passive nor aggressive)	1.80	Inadequate	
22. Initiation of new topics	1.40	Inadequate	
23. Maintenance of topics and follow-up comments	1.40	Inadequate	
24. Interruption of partner speaking turns	1.30	Inadequate	
25. Use of time speaking relative to partner	1.40	Inadequate	
Over-all Mean	2.06	Fair	

In particular, the lowest among the indicators was the presence of unmotivated movements (M=1.20) such as tapping of feet or fingers, hair-twirling and others. These movements are also what Chandler and Munday (2011) call as displacement activities, which they defined as “small, apparently unmotivated body movements which are inferred to reflect frustration or inner conflict.” In a more descriptive illustration during conversations, these movements are reflections of engagement in self-focused behaviours that bear no discernable direct relation to the topical development of conversation” (Spitzberg, . The rating of inadequate conversational skills among the pupils as seen in the data shows that the pupils are either bored in the conversation, uninterested, or are unengaged because of their low level of conversation skills or confidence during the communication process.

This was followed by the interruption of partner speaking turns ($M=1.30$). In other words, the use of turn-taking in the conversation was seen as awkward and disruptive. For example, the participants does not seem to have a smooth alternating turns when speak one at a time. In particular, a low level of contribution from the child is seen, which results to a negative communication, or in her case, a negative communication skill. This also involved non-response to previous comments and a vague transitioning to a different speaker.

Conversely, only two of the indicators were rated as adequate: Volume (2.80) and Nodding of head in response to partner statements (2.80). During the conversations, the pupils' voices were neither too loud nor too soft. The children's voices were audible, resulting to absence of strain or distraction during the conversation. This is very important in any conversation because the volume of voice could affect the conversation because your listener could not be able to hear and comprehend the message that you are conveying (Butterfield, 2011). On the other hand, the nodding of head as a response provides reinforcing feedback, which denotes comprehension of the conversation. Likewise, by nodding the head, the pupil is able to understand the message that the researcher was conveying, showing an agreement or acceptance of the message.

After the pre-test, the pupils were asked to watch Sofia the First for five (5) days. They were then assessed again by asking the same questions, as well as incorporating some topics about the show in order to elicit conversation with them. Table 3 shows the result of

the post-test, wherein a significant increase in the different areas of conversational skills of the pupils are evident.

In general, ten (10) of the 25 indicators scored a rating of Good, and only four (4) are rated as Fair. This means that a significant number of the indicators were improved from Inadequate to Fair and from Fair to Good. Another notable change in the indicators of conversational skills of the pupils was the presence of Excellent, more items with a rating of Adequate, and only two (2) items with ratings of Inadequate. This shows that overall, the conversational skills of the pupils changed, from Fair (2.06) to Adequate (3.07). This means that the conversational skills are sufficient, although most of them are neither very noticeable nor excellent.

Table 3. Conversational Skills of the Pupils after the Intervention

	Mean	DE
1. Speaking Rate (neither too slow or too fast)	3.70	Good
2. Speaking fluency (pauses, silences, "uh", etc.)	3.70	Good
3. Vocal Confidence (neither too tense/nervous nor overly confident sounding)	3.70	Good
4. Articulation (clarity of pronunciation and linguistic expression)	3.70	Good
5. Vocal Variety (neither overly monotone nor dramatic voice)	3.70	Good
6. Volume (neither too loud nor too soft)	3.90	Good
7. Posture (neither too closed/formal not too open/informal)	3.10	Adequate

8. Lean toward partner (neither too forward nor too far back)	2.90	Adequate
9. Shaking or nervous twitches (aren't noticeable or distracting)	1.90	Fair
10. Unmotivated movements (tapping feet, fingers, hair-twirling, etc.)	1.40	Inadequate
11. Facial expressiveness (neither blank nor exaggerated)	3.50	Good
12. Nodding of head in response to partner statements	3.50	Good
13. Use of gestures to emphasize what is being said	2.90	Adequate
14. Use of humor and/or stories	3.30	Adequate
15. Smiling and/or laughing	4.20	Excellent
16. Use of eye contact	3.70	Good
17. Asking of questions	3.20	Adequate
18. Speaking about partner (involvement of partner as a topic of conversation)	2.70	Adequate
19. Speaking about self (neither too much nor too little)	3.70	Good
20. Encouragements or agreements (encouragement of partner to talk)	2.80	Adequate
21. Personal opinion expression (neither too passive nor aggressive)	3.20	Adequate
22. Initiation of new topics	2.60	Fair
23. Maintenance of topics and follow-up	2.20	Fair

comments

24. Interruption of partner speaking turns	1.90	Fair
25. Use of time speaking relative to partner	1.70	Inadequate
Over-all Mean	3.07	Adequate

In particular, the highest rated indicator of conversational skill was the act of smiling and/or laughing ($M=4.20$), which was originally rated as Fair (2.40) during the pre-test. This was a good indicator of a good conversation because it means that the pupils are more confident now. The presence of smiles and/or laughter tend to show that the partners are having fun and good conversation based on the contexts and outcome of the communication, showing that a good understanding and sharing of the messages prevail.

This indicator was followed by Volume (3.90), which was rated as Good. This was a significant leap from the pre-test result of 2.80 (Fair), which indicates that they have become more confident and skilled when it comes to having conversations. Other indicators such as Speaking rate, Speaking fluency, Vocal confidence, Articulation, Facial expressiveness, Use of eye contact, and Speaking about self improved significantly from a rating of Fair to Good. This shows that such skills the some of the most affected by the intervention when it comes to conversation skills development.

On the contrary, the act showing unmotivated movements still emerged as the least among the indicators ($M=1.40$), which was rated as inadequate. Nonetheless, an improvement on the pre-test result is still evident, although it was only slight. This implies that the

pupils still need to work on their unnecessary non-verbal gestures during conversation. This means that, the intervention – watching Sofia the First – did not really address this conversation skill.

In addition, the use of time speaking relative to partner followed this with a mean of 1.70, which is equivalent to a rating of inadequate. This shows that the pupils are unable to balance relative proportion of speaking time in manner compatible with the context of the message being communicated. Moreover, the pupil virtually does not speak, or if she talks, she uses only brief utterances, or speaks constantly and does not allow partner speaking turns or turns of any duration. This implies that they could either not think of ideas to convey or are still lacking confidence in some ways. Nonetheless, this skill still showed a slight increase from the original value during the pre-test after watching Sofia the First.

Difference between Pre-test and Post-test Results

After looking into the details of how the conversational skills of female pupils from the Baguio Central School were enhanced in different levels, the significance difference in increase of the pre-test and post-test results should be compared. This would show how significant the development in the pupils' skills were changed in order to know if the show Sofia the First could really work as a good intervention tool in making developing conversation skills of students, particularly in the English language.

Table 4. Difference on Pre-test and Post-test Result

Test	Mean	DE	t-computed	p-
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Pretest	2.06	Fair	-4.40	**	0.0003
Posttest	3.07	Adequate			

Note. ns- not significant, *- significant at 0.05

level, **- significant at 0.01

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the conversation skills of female pupils before and after watching Sofia the First as an intervention for developing English conversational skills. Findings showed that there was a significant difference in the scores for pre-test ($M=2.06$) and post-test or the conversation after watching the show ($M=3.07$); $t(10)=-4.40$, $p = 0.0003$. These results suggest that the animated show Sofia the First really does have an effect on the conversational skills of pupils. Specifically, our results suggest that when pupils watch the show, their conversational skills and confidence in communicating increase.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The pre-test results imply that the children's communication skills are generally fair. After watching the show, the skills of the pupils increased and became good to excellent. In some ways, the children's confidence level also increased based on the observation and unstructured interviews. This was seen in instances wherein they showed shyness at first and became more open to conversation after watching the show.

It is then recommended that schools, particularly those at the

kindergarten and elementary level to consider using the show *Sofia the First* as an intervention to boost the confidence of pupils in dealing with people, particularly to boost their conversational skills. Nonetheless, it is also important that the pupils should be guided as to the different areas or indicators of a good conversation or good conversational skills (e.g., volume, unmotivated gestures, use of time in speaking, interruption, etc.). While these might not be directly seen in the animated show or directly learned, the show could be able to enhance the listening skills of the pupils and they could be able to apply it in a conversation.

Lastly, the pupils will not be able to learn and embed the conversational skills development if the teachers and parents are not practicing the pupils in English conversation even if they watch the show for many times. This means that parents, teachers and other students should act as support groups in the learning of English language and conversation.

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A REVIEW OF FLIPPED LEARNING IN EFL CLASSES

By: Kenje Gunda

Abstract

'Flipped Learning' as popularized by Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams (2012) is a growing pedagogical trend that is widely and globally adopted by educators to further enhance their teaching practices. Simply put, flipped learning is a strategy which deviates from the traditional classroom timing and environment where recorded video lectures are provided to students in advance while classroom exercises such as class discussions, debates, formative tests and the like are done under close supervision of the teacher. This study aims to seek and investigate related researches proving flipped learning strategy's adaptability and address evidences demonstrating satisfactory outcomes of classes --particularly EFL classes-- which have implemented this pedagogy. The review involves 6 studies on flipped classrooms taken from Academia.edu and Google Scholar from 2015 to 2016. Findings revealed that students' outcome increased and their perceptions were positive after teachers flipped their classes. The implication is for teachers to flip their EFL classes to differentiate their instruction and to improve their students' outcome.

Keywords: 'flipped learning', 'EFL'

Introduction

'Flipped Learning' (FL) is when students watch recorded lectures at home and then do their homework in class. The term flipped learning was first used in 2007 when two high school chemistry teachers, Bergmann and Sams, pre-recorded the slideshows of their lectures and asked their students to watch the videos at home. When students get back to their classroom, they are tasked to answer exercises, do experiments and engage in activities with the guidance of their teachers and the help of their peers. Bergmann and Sams (2012) noticed that students showed a better understanding of the lessons after flipping their classes. This is a result of increased interaction of students to their classmates and more meaningful assessment by the teacher inside the classroom.

The Flipped Learning Network (2014) defines FL as the movement of "direct instruction from the group learning space to the individual learning space, transforming the group space into a dynamic, interactive learning environment". Inside the classroom the teacher is guiding the students rather than being the center of attention. However, a flipped classroom does not always result to FL if the "four pillars" are not integrated in the class. The four pillars are as follows: (1) flexible environments, teachers allow students to choose where and when to learn and learning spaces are arranged to accommodate a lesson or unit; (2) learning culture, instruction changes to learner-centered approach resulting to active involvement of learners; (3) intentional content, teachers decides what to teach

and what materials learners should explore on their own; (4) professional educator, the role of the teacher is often more demanding since they constantly give feedback and assess their learners' work.

People who advocate FL uses technology to differentiate instructions. Examples of technologies used are online videos and screen casted lectures which are uploaded to the Internet. One well-known advocate of using videos to deliver lessons is Salman Khan. He made videos and uploaded them in YouTube to tutor his niece with her Math lessons online. His niece commented that she understood the lessons better with her uncle's videos for the reason that she can pause, rewind and play the videos again anytime. He then started the Khan Academy in 2008 which was supported by a number of benefactors and began to upload videos providing lessons to everyone that has access to the Internet. He considered this to be the future of education since people can access lessons anytime, anywhere for free. Furthermore, Khan mentioned that it will be more beneficial to the students when teachers are directly helping them with their exercises in class rather than doing it at home without someone knowledgeable guiding them. Since technology is ubiquitous in the 21st century, teachers have to move from traditional learning to a pedagogy that will engage their students more from outside the classroom.

However, FL doesn't just involve recording videos. Bergmann and Sams (2013) stated that "Flipped Learning is not

about how to use videos in lessons. It's about how to use in-class time with students. (...) Flipped learning helps teachers move away from direct instruction as their primary teaching tool toward a more student-centered approach." More and more teachers think they could use the time they have inside the classroom to engage the students in higher order-thinking skills and not just delivering lectures. The teacher can allot more time to students who need more guidance and challenge those who mastered the lesson by giving them more exercises. That is why extra focus has been placed in using Bloom's Taxonomy rather than producing more videos. The higher end tiers of the taxonomy: application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are given more emphasis inside the class while the lower end tiers: knowledge and comprehension are being moved outside of class. However, does the flipped classroom really work in increasing students' outcome or engagement?

In a study by Estes et. al (2014), they reinforced in their literature review that "flipping technique is useful when seeking to optimize class time, support the development of higher-order thinking skills, and enhance teacher-student and student peer-to-peer interactions." They also mentioned that the effectiveness of FL lies upon the relationship between the teacher and learners and needs to have constant engagement on the duration of the learning. Their research concludes that FL is an important addition to higher education if applied in the right way. In a study about affordances of FL, Bormann (2014) mentioned that students prefer flipped over the traditional model of teaching. Some of the findings from this study

were: all learners were reached by the flipped classroom, it empowers students, it leads students to be more prepared, it improves critical-thinking skills and it enhances computer knowledge skills. Thus, this paper seeks to find out the development of FL in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. It also investigates the effectiveness of the techniques being implemented in EFL classes using the flipped method. Furthermore, this review wants to probe if student's performance can be better in a flipped classroom than those in a traditional didactic class. (Leis, 2015a; Webb and Doman, 2016; Kang, 2015)

This review attempts to answer these questions:

1. What techniques have been used in the reviewed studies to implement flipped learning in EFL classes?
2. What are students' outcomes after teachers flipped their classes?
3. What are the perceptions of students and teachers regarding flipped classrooms?

Methodology

The reviewer used the search engines Google Scholar and Academia.edu in researching for papers and literature. The reviewer has used the following descriptors: 'flipped learning' and 'EFL'. When reviewing the sources, the reviewer looked out for pertinent information about 'flipped learning' and 'EFL' in the abstract. All of

the studies showed the techniques they used to implement flipped learning in EFL classes. In some studies, students' outcomes were about improved grades and output, in other studies the outcome was about attitude and motivation.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of measurements of student engagement were sought. The reviewer's primary intent was to include studies done in all levels of the academe. However, there are relatively few studies done regarding the outcomes of flipped learning in EFL classes in lower levels, therefore the reviewer used available studies which were mostly done in higher education. The reviewer used sources that have been published in the last 2 years (2015-2016).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the selection of the case studies are detailed in Table 1. The studies had to be conducted on undergraduate level with students attending English courses but are not considered native English speakers. The studies have to be appropriately 'flipped' classes whereby students learnt material outside of the class using pre-recorded videos accessed online, and spent in class discussions, exercises and activities which were facilitated by the teacher. The studies had to obtain feedback or outcome from the participants in the form of surveys or post-tests. Articles not published in coherent English or written in another language was excluded. As a result, 6 studies have been selected for this review, which are shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the selection of the

sources.

Inclusion Criteria	
1	Undergraduate or postgraduate students.
2	Attending English courses but are not considered native English speakers.
3	Flipped classes or topics.
4	Discussion, exercises, and activities in class.
5	Evaluate feedback or outcome at the end of class.
Exclusion Criteria	
1	Sources not published in English.
2	Sources not done in higher education level.

Table 2: Studies that were reviewed and students' outcome with Flipped Learning in EFL classes.

Author, year	Participants	Class	Data Gathering	Outcome
Leis. A (2015a)	Undergraduate students: 11 in flipped 11 in traditional Miyagi University of Education	English compos ition	pre- and post-tests; questionnaire	number of words, and proficiency; improved understanding in flipped class.

<p>Webb, M., Doman, E. (2016)</p>	<p>64 community college students in US and ELC university students in Macau; 39 in experimental 25 in control group</p>	<p>Grammar class</p>	<p>pre- and post-tests; Grammar survey</p>	<p>flipped class students scored higher in the posttest and expressed increase in confidence with their grammar than the control group</p>
<p>Leis, A. et. al (2015b)</p>	<p>17 undergraduate students Tohoku University</p>	<p>English composition</p>	<p>number of words in 12 compositions; proficiency in writing scores weeks 1 and 12</p>	<p>effort based on number of words increased and average proficiency in writing improved (introduction, body, conclusion, content, accuracy)</p>

Leis, A. (2016)	27 undergraduate students Miyagi University of Education	Foreign culture class	reading and listening TOEIC test as pre- and posttests; questionnaire and post study survey	increase in overall and listening TOEIC test scores, speaking proficiency (communication and presentation) and self-confidence improved
Yudintseva, A. (2016)	14 undergraduate students in Technical University in Kazakhstan	Grammar, vocabulary, and listening	questionnaire evaluating student's perception towards the videos and time spent for class preparation	86% were motivated to learn English, 79% found the exercises helpful, students spent 16-40 minutes instead of 1-2 hours preparing for the class

Kang, N. (2015)	undergraduate students: 24 in flipped class and 42 in regular classes Chu-Ang University	Grammar and vocabulary	pre- and post tests on 2 nd and 15 th week; questionnaire and interview in the middle and end of the course	flipped class showed increase in total English knowledge (vocabulary and grammar), 92% satisfied and 86% said it was helpful
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Analysis and Discussion

The 6 studies were done in different universities in four countries which include Japan, China (Macau), USA, Kazakhstan and Korea. Three studies were done in Japan, one study was done simultaneously in the USA and Macau, one study in Kazakhstan and one study was done in Korea. From the six studies subjected for the review, only one study did not conduct a pre- and post-test to evaluate students' output (Yudintseva 2016). Several techniques in flipping classes were explored including screen casting PowerPoint lectures, uploading videos on YouTube with captions and subtitles, and using YouTube videos and worksheets to show authentic sources. Evaluation includes pre- and post-tests, online quizzes and

checkup quizzes in the classroom, submissions of compositions using email and Google Docs, and open-ended questionnaires and surveys.

Leis (2015a) recorded his lectures and uploaded them on YouTube and used subtitles and captions for his English composition class. He asked the two classes to answer a pre-test and post-test. Not only did the students in the flipped class increase their proficiency they also got higher scores on the post-test compared to the traditional class. His students in the flipped class also mentioned that subtitles helped them better understand the videos. This study showed that the use of pre-recorded lectures which can be accessed by students anytime from the Internet can improve students' English writing proficiency. It could be attributed to students spending more time preparing for their compositions at home and also more assistance by their teacher inside the class.

Webb and Doman (2016) used weekly 10-minute videos of screencasts of their PowerPoint lectures for ten weeks on two simultaneous English courses in the US and Macau. The students were asked to watch the video lessons, complete a follow-up quiz online and post a sentence using the corresponding grammatical principle through an online discussion tool. They asked their students to answer a 32-item grammar test and grammar survey on weeks 2 and 14. The flipped group scored higher on their post-test than the control group and they showed increased confidence in their grammar on the survey. This research showed that FL can be beneficial in improving the English grammar skills of EFL learners.

Even though the students in the US also considered English as their foreign language, they showed the same improvement in their grammar as the students in Macau when their classes were flipped. Therefore, the location of the classes doesn't affect the outcome of the learners.

Leis, A. et, al. (2015b) conducted another study in an English composition class, he used videos with subtitles and asked the students to submit their composition in a word document and send it to his email from weeks 1 to 6, and then submit it via Google Docs from weeks 7 to 12. The authors looked at the number of words for each composition for each week, and compared the proficiency of the students' compositions on weeks 1 and 12. Their findings showed that effort based on number of words increased and average proficiency in writing improved (introduction, body, conclusion, content, accuracy). This study also emphasizes the use of closed captions to enhance the learning experience in using pre-recorded videos. The students can understand the lessons better with videos especially those with subtitles.

In another study by Leis (2016), he recorded his lectures for his foreign culture class and uploaded them on YouTube with subtitles and captions, and required his students to watch the weekly videos for 15 weeks. For the evaluation, he asked his students to complete a questionnaire on the start and end of the course which includes their self-perceived proficiency as defined by the CEFR-J Can-do list and tested their proficiency according to their reading and

listening TOEIC scores. The students showed an increase in their post-test listening and over-all TOEIC scores and also showed increased linguistic self-confidence. However, since the focus of the course was on listening and speaking, the students' reading scores did not show a relevant increase.

Yudintseva (2016) used a six-minute grammar video about the Present Perfect and asked students to do a set of short fill-in the gap exercises after watching the video. She also used a four-minute cultural video focused on vocabulary and listening comprehension. For the evaluation, she asked the students to answer an open-ended questionnaire about their perception towards the videos and exercises as well as their time preparation for the flipped class compared to the traditional class. 86% of the students reported that the videos motivated them to learn English and were useful for grammar, listening, vocabulary and pronunciation practice while 79% found the exercises helpful. Students also reported that they spent approximately 16-40 minutes watching the videos and answering exercises compared to 1-2 hours spent in preparing for the traditional class. This study showed that flipped learning doesn't necessarily mean that teachers need to flip all of their lessons, they can select which topics can be appropriately flipped to tailor-fit with their students' needs.

In Kang's (2015) study, he recorded his Grammar videos based on the main textbook and YouTube worksheets and asked the flipped class to watch them at home. He scanned each unit, screen

casted the PowerPoint slides and recorded them while he was narrating the lecture. Alongside the textbook topics, 10 YouTube videos were assigned on a weekly basis as authentic sources: 3 interviews, 4 media extracts, 2 oral descriptions and 1 narrative (Brown, 2001). The worksheets contained 5 comprehension questions and vocabulary definitions. A checkup quiz was implemented in every class to check if the students were watching the videos at home. For the evaluation, he asked his students to answer part 5 of MOCK TOEIC test as pre- and post-test on the 2nd and 15th week of his General English course. He also conducted a questionnaire and an interview twice in the middle and at the end of the course. 92% of students felt satisfied with the flipped classroom and 86% said it was helpful. The flipped class students showed an increase in total English knowledge (vocabulary and grammar) compared to the regular class.

The results implied that flipped learning can be effective in improving the outcome of students in EFL classes and can, therefore, be more beneficial to students than in traditional classes. The favorable result towards flipped learning could be attributed to students being provided the opportunity to access the video of the lessons anytime and anywhere convenient to them. The flipped group also showed autonomy by reviewing their lessons, allowing more time to prepare for their class and considering ways to improve their output (Han 2015). In addition, more time was provided by the teacher to give feedback on their work in class. Since language learning is best achieved by practicing, students are able to use in-

class time to apply the lessons they have learned from the online videos. Students get the chance to interact more with their peers and at the same time take feedback directly from the teacher making the classroom student centered (Pappas 2013). Therefore, based on the evidence from the studies that were reviewed we can safely say that flipped learning can be applied in EFL classes and can bring about favorable outcomes. FL is a promising concept that helps students obtain significant outcomes and increase engagement and increase higher order thinking skills while helping teachers differentiate their teaching and personalize their instructions (Correa 2015) and can use their time in class efficiently.

Based on the researches discussed in this review, the advantages of using flipped learning outweigh the disadvantages. Leis et. al (2015b) mentioned that the students in their study do not speak English as their native tongue, therefore they considered adding captions and correctly timing them exactly with the speech of the teacher explaining the videos. This proved to be a very time-consuming aspect of making videos. However, the use of subtitles was proven to be effective in increasing both the listening ability and vocabulary acquisition of students. In the same study, the hours of preparation for students in a flipped class increased, this is due to them watching the videos, looking for vocabulary, thinking and practicing to write their compositions.

Pappas (2013) mentioned that although allowing students to work on their own pace maybe beneficial to students; this may lead

to teachers having more workload because of multiple standards and more students working on multiple assignments making it more time-consuming. This is evident in the reviewed studies comparing flipped classes and traditional classes (Leis 2015a, Webb and Doman 2016, Kang 2015).

Conclusion

From the six studies subjected for the review, only one study did not conduct a survey or used a questionnaire or survey to evaluate student's perception or engagement regarding flipped learning (Leis et al 2015b). However, students' effort increased with their word count in their compositions. All the other studies showed increased outcome in terms of proficiency in writing and an increase in their post-test scores. Three studies compared a flipped class and a traditional class (Leis 2015a, Webb and Doman 2016, Kang 2015) while the other three conducted it only on flipped classes (Leis et.al 2015b, Leis 2016 Yudintseva 2016). Students in the flipped classes improved their English writing, speaking, grammar and listening skills. All of the studies showed positive outcomes and students having favorable responses to FL. They also perceived an increase in satisfaction and found the videos to be helpful in their studies. There is overwhelming evidence that flipping EFL classes can improve students' outcomes which brought about a positive perception.

Limitations

In reviewing these studies, the researcher focused on the outcomes and perceptions of students on FL. It will be beneficial if future studies will be directed on the teachers' perceptions about flipped learning and how FL contributed to their teaching practices. Aside from that, the sampling method used was through search engines which can leave out other related studies that were not published online or those that can only be accessed if there is a subscription. Furthermore, studies that weren't conducted in higher education settings are excluded in this study.

Recommendations

One of my recommendations is for future researchers to conduct a survey to measure teachers' perceptions regarding the outcome of FL in their classes and its contribution on their practices. Additionally, future research should employ more reliable sampling methods and include studies done in other levels of the academe. Furthermore, future reviews should include those studies that weren't published online and, if possible, to get access to those studies published on private journals and publications.

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