SREC: A New Tapestry of Collaboration in ELL Education

Dr. Joan Johnston Nelson
Independent Trainer and Consultant

Dr. Gina Mikel Petrie
Eastern Washington University

This paper introduces a grassroots effort to harness the energies of community organizations, higher education, and k–12 to improve the education of English language learners in the Spokane region. The many catalysts leading to this collaboration are described. The Spokane Regional ESOL Consortium (SREC) takes a holistic approach to the education of the region's refugee and immigrant populations by organizational collaboration to advocate for English language learners (ELLs), bringing much-needed access and energy to all parties involved. This effort weaves the expertise of English language development (ELD) teachers in k–12 and adult classrooms, university teacher educators, and community organizations to create a new and empowered opportunity for education, advocacy, and research. Foundational work to date, methods for communication, and future steps are described. The paper provides an understanding of the importance of such collaboration and what it takes to bring together an educational community.

Joan Johnston Nelson (johnston9@wsu.edu) has worked with ELLs since 1986, teaching adults and children alike in k–12, adult literacy, university, and overseas programs. She is an active advocate, teacher trainer, and consultant. Her passion is for working with those considered on the margins, especially those in the refugee and immigrant communities and her own Native American community.

Gina Mikel Petrie (gpetrie@ewu.edu) is an associate professor in the English as a Second Language Program at Eastern Washington University. She coordinates the undergraduate ELL endorsement program. Her research focus is on the role that English is given and is taking in Nicaragua.

SREC Mission Statement:

> *SREC is dedicated to collaborate through education, advocacy, and research to harness the energies of higher education, adult literacy, k–12 programs, and community organizations to improve the education of refugees and immigrants in the Spokane region.*

Introducing SREC

The Spokane Regional ESOL Consortium (SREC) was established in May of 2015. This paper describes this new consortium in the Spokane community, which has formed in order to harness the energies of higher education, adult literacy, and k–12 programs, along with community organizations to improve the education of English language learners in the Spokane region. Located in Eastern Washington, about 20 miles from the Idaho border, the city of Spokane is the second largest city in the state, with a population of more than 210,000 people. While Spanish is the dominant language of English language learners (ELLs) in much of the state, the Spokane region's ELL population is highly diverse.

There has been a long tradition of refugee resettlement in the Spokane area going back to the 1970s with various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) taking the lead, including Washington Association of Churches, Catholic Charities, and, since 1992, World Relief, which resettles approximately 600 refugees each year in the Spokane area (M. Kadel, personal communication, September 24, 2015). From 2013 to April 2015, the Refugee Resettlement program at World Relief resettled 1,042 individuals in the Spokane area. Not drawing from just one area, the countries of origin for those resettled in Spokane closely parallels the countries of origin of refugees resettled throughout the United States.

Tables 1 and 2. *Comparison of Countries of Origin*

Country	Resettled in the United States in FY 2014
Iraq	19,488
Burma	16,299
Bhutan	9,134
Somalia	7,608
Cuba	4,205
DRC	2,563
Sudan	2,160
Eritrea	1,824
Afghanistan	661
Total	**63,942**

Country	Resettled by World Relief in Spokane 2013 – April 2015
Burma	196
Iraq	144
DRC	116
Sudan	97
Afghanistan	96
Bhutan	55
Cuba	48
Somalia	45
Ukraine	33
Other	212
Total	**1,042**

Note: Adapted from M. Kadel, 2015.

Drawing heavily on first and second-generation refugees, the population of English language learners in the Spokane region's k–12 and adult literacy programs includes a wide range of home languages. In Spokane School District, more than 1,620 students representing more than 70 different home languages are qualified for English Language Development (ELD) support services, a 26% increase since 2010 (see Figure 1). Although not considered a refugee group, the top language group in Spokane Schools, Marshallese, has experienced rapid increases over the past several years, recently replacing Russian as the top home language spoken by ELLs in the district.

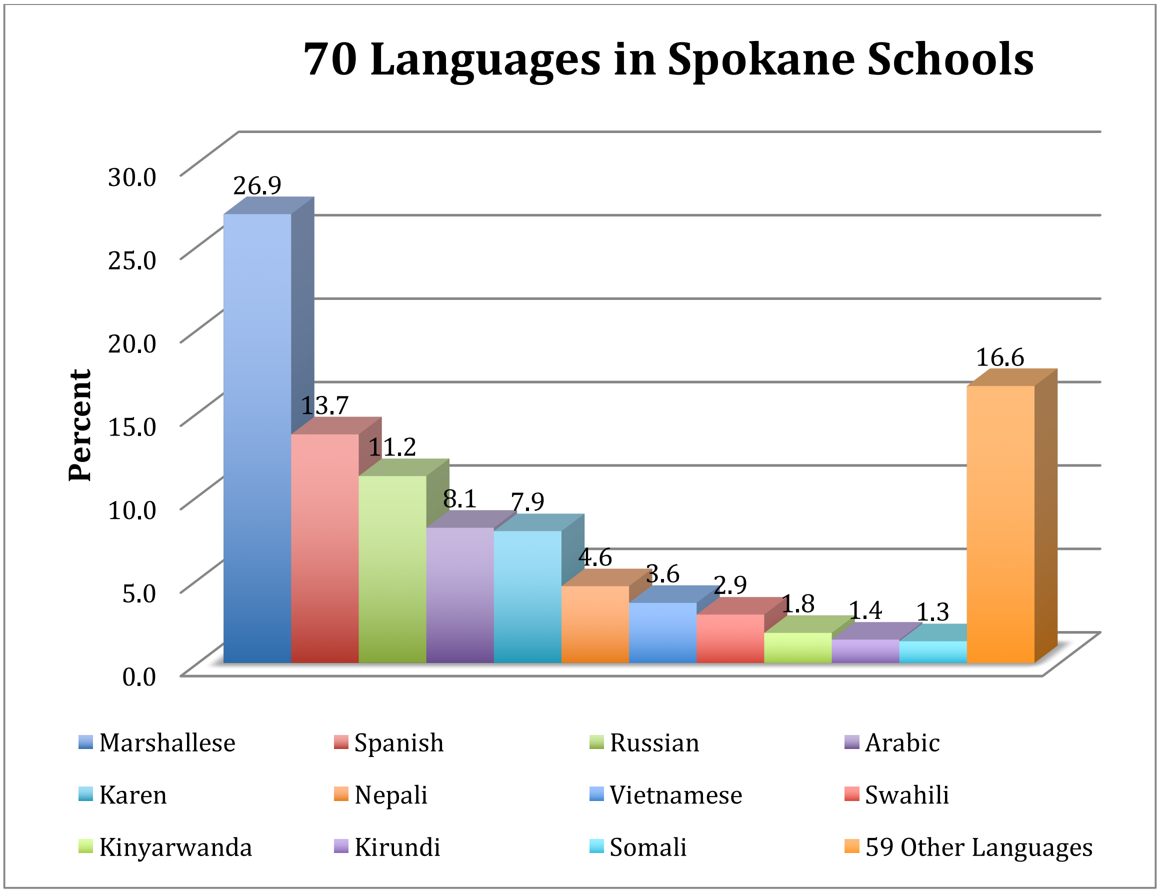

Figure 1. Languages of ELD students in Spokane schools as of January 2016. Adapted from Spokane Public Schools, 2016.

A neighboring school district in the Spokane Valley, Central Valley School District, has a similarly diverse population, counting 34 different languages among their 664 qualified ELLs in January of 2016 (see Figure 2). This is an 84% increase in the number of qualified ELLs since spring of 2014. As families become more established in the area, we often see languages shift away from the city of Spokane into the neighboring school districts. This is what is currently taking place with the Russian speaking population and is beginning to be observed with the growing number of Marshallese speakers in surrounding communities of the Spokane Valley. We see other examples of this shift in the small rural districts in the area, such as Reardan-Edwall, Freeman, and Deer Park, where there are growing communities of Russian and Ukrainian speakers.

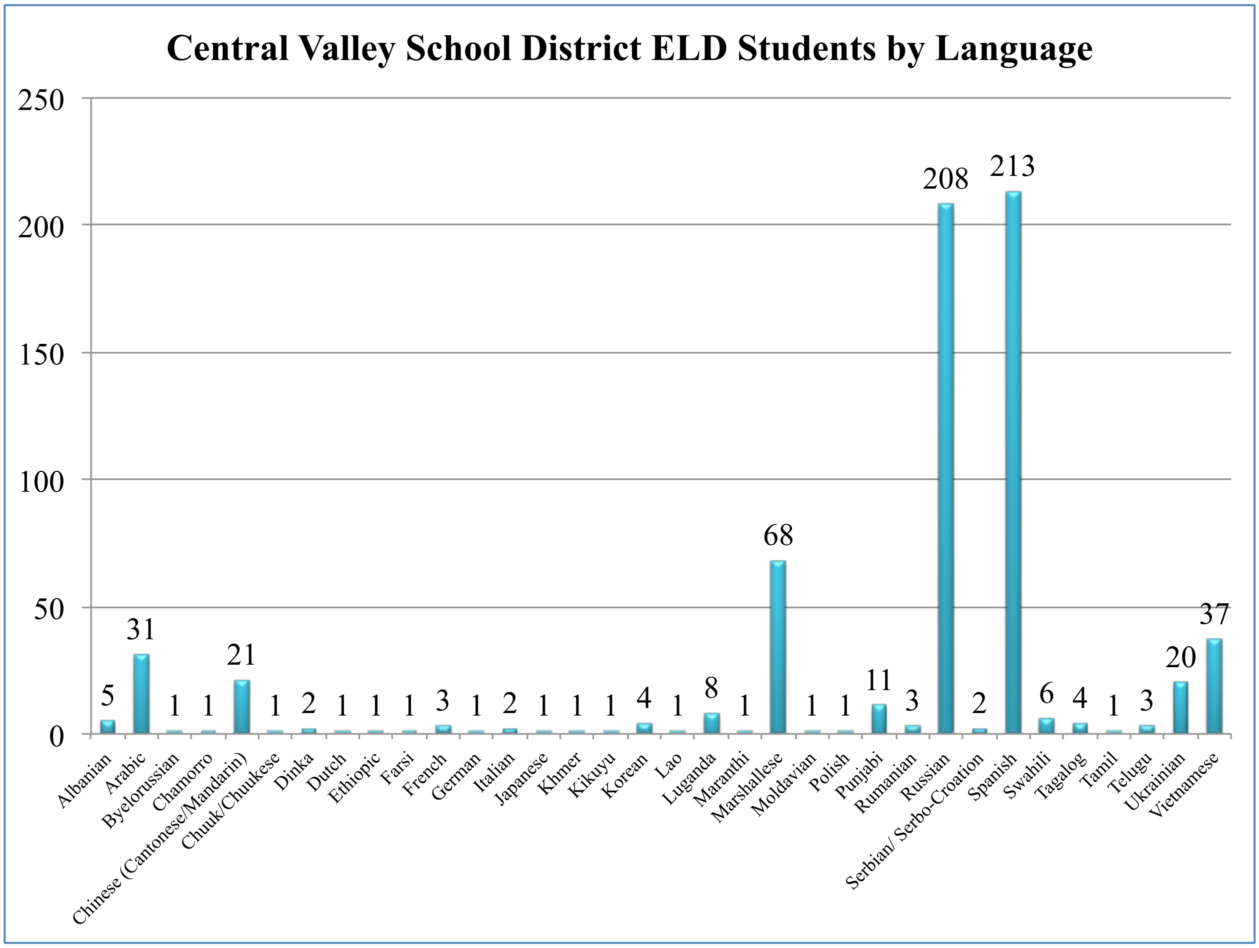

Figure 2. Languages of ELD students in Central Valley schools in January 2016. Adapted from Central Valley School District, 2016.

The adult basic education program at Spokane Community College provides English language instruction for the majority of adult refugee and immigrant community members in the region. In many cases, these are the parents and family members of the students in the k–12 programs. The countries of origin and range of languages of the ELLs in the Community Colleges of Spokane ESL program mirror those identified in the preceding discussion of Spokane and Central Valley school districts, with the additional languages of Dinka-Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Dari, Amharic, Tigrinya, Karenni, Burmese, and Somali also identified in their top 25 languages. With referrals from the World Relief Spokane Refugee Resettlement program, many of the adult English language learners in the community college programs are refugees.

Over the past decade, there has been a strong increase in the number of students who do not possess literacy skills in their native language, often referred to as pre-literate or LFS (limited formal schooling) learners. Such a shift affects not only instruction of the adult and k–12 students themselves, but how communication is handled between the various instructional institutions and the families, as well as how support services are provided through state agencies and community organizations.

The Genesis of Our Collaboration

Perhaps other communities experience this phenomenon as well: each year at the regional conference in Spokane, ELL professionals, teachers, and administrators from across many institutions meet, see the potential for more collaborative work, state intentions to do so, and then return to their solo enterprises, only to repeat the ritual the following year. However, a culminating moment came for us in early 2015. Outside of the regional conference setting, stakeholders in higher education and k–12 began to wonder out loud if we could find a way to pool our energies and work in a unified way to improve the educational experiences of the ELLs in our community. We began to hear reports that others were expressing similar sentiments. At our first meeting, in May of 2015, Frank Newman, ELD instructor at Lewis and Clark High School, observed the synchronicity that became the catalyst for action (Spokane Regional ESOL Consortium, 2015).

With this catalyst, a couple of visionaries from k–12 and higher education sent out an invitation for a meeting to those like-minded leaders who they believed would both contribute to and benefit from such a collaboration. At the initial meeting, the following institutions were represented by either administrators, teachers, or community members: Spokane Public Schools, Central Valley School District, Eastern Washington University, Gonzaga University, Whitworth University, Community Colleges of Spokane, and World Relief. Throughout the meeting, energy built as people expressed needs that they could see in the community—and in their own institutions—that could be met through the efforts of a consortium.

Those consortium members involved in higher education pointed to a need for greater connection with current k–12 teachers and administrators in order to strengthen the instruction that they provide to pre-service teachers, noting that they wished to bring pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and learners together in ways that would truly benefit the ELL students. Anny Case, an education professor from Gonzaga University, suggested that the teacher preparation programs in the area work together, rather than in competition, when placing students in practicums and service learning assignments (Spokane Regional ESOL Consortium, 2015). By using the staggered semester and quarter schedules already inherent in the local institutions (along with adjustments to placement timelines), a smoother transition could take place for the teacher candidates. K–12 programming for ELLs would, likewise, benefit by eliminating inconsistent breaks in support provided by the pre-service programs.

As those in teacher preparation programs expressed their wishes for a closer connection to k–12, so did those teaching in the k–12 system. Julie Engeland, ELD teacher at Sacajawea Middle School, described the energizing and restorative effects that had resulted from the meaningful partnerships she had recently experienced between in-service and pre-service teachers and wished for more of these opportunities for herself and her colleagues (Spokane Regional ESOL Consortium, 2015). As we got a glimpse of the ways that the puzzle pieces fit together, it became clear that by forming a consortium we would be building a means by which various entities and individuals could come together to address the issues and concerns to improve the education of ELLs in the region.

Just as significantly, many in attendance at the May meeting expressed that the Spokane region seemed to lack a unified and consistent voice in the many policy decisions that impact the education of ELLs. Policy and planning at the state level often appear to be based on misperceptions of what our needs are thought to be. As described earlier, Spokane's ELL population is somewhat unique to most of Washington State due to the region's large, highly diverse population of refugees and its increasingly large Marshallese population. Our particular challenges call for more focused advocacy to inform and communicate on behalf of those of us serving ELLs, as well as the learners themselves.

Our isolated discussions, which finally came together in that first meeting in 2015, led us to identify two key areas in which to focus our efforts: 1) to form enhanced, coherent, and sustainable connections between and within our educational communities, and 2) to voice Spokane regional needs in ELL-related public policy. Within these overarching categories, specific needs have emerged:

- Enhanced coherent and sustainable connections:
  - for resources and information for refugee/immigrant families.
  - between teacher preparation programs and the local k–12 systems.
  - between community organizations, k–12, adult literacy, and higher education.
- Voice Spokane regional needs in public policy:
  - to advocate for the unique student demographics of the region.
  - to support culturally and geographically diverse instructional needs.
  - to inform legislation and policy regarding ELL education.

Through discussion and deliberation, a clear consensus indicated our shared focus on education, advocacy, and research, resulting in the following mission statement:

> *SREC collaborates through education, advocacy, and research to harness the energies of higher education, adult literacy, k–12 programs, and community organizations to improve the education of refugees and immigrants in the Spokane region.*

Meeting Our Unique Needs

As our mission statement makes clear, the primary goal for all of us involved in this newly formed consortium is to improve the education of English language learners in our community, particularly those who are choosing to make our community their home. Since many of the individuals at the table also teach in intensive English or international programs, it was important to the group that we specify the populations that we were seeking to serve through this effort; the consensus was clear that each of us was involved to focus on the education and support of the refugee and immigrant communities. We have identified the following five action teams to take advantage of the depth of expertise and the range of interests across the members of the consortium: 1) Pre-service Teacher Education, 2) In-service Professional Learning, 3) Community Engagement, 4) Policy and Advocacy, and 5) Transitions. The following sections feature an overview of each action team.

Pre-service Teacher Education and In-service Professional Learning. SREC members who work in pre-service teacher education identified some crucial needs in our community regarding how we are preparing future teachers of English language learners. Of utmost importance is the need for our teacher preparation programs to develop a tighter and more responsive connection between what teacher candidates are learning and experiencing in their coursework and the actual current and shifting needs of ELL students and teachers in our area. In addition, a clear desire was voiced that our pre-service programs should take a far more active role in directly supporting ELLs in our community through service learning and experience beyond the requirements of their ELL practicum and student teaching. An example of such direct involvement includes the three teacher preparation programs involved in the consortium (Eastern Washington University, Gonzaga University, and Whitworth University) coming together to take advantage of their existing staggered schedules to place English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) teacher candidates. Merely by coordinating their efforts, an afterschool program for ELLs has been able to continue running an entire academic year rather than having to end when the pre-service teachers from one university finished their course requirements. Now, as one university course ends, another university is able to pick up the service. By coming together through SREC, the institutions have been able to provide authentic service learning to pre-service teachers and place the needs of ELLs firmly in the middle of the page, rather than on the margins.

Furthermore, there has been a call for closer relationships between in-service teachers and teacher educators that has led to academic service learning projects that truly impact and improve the teaching and learning of English language learners in the community. In this way, our abundant population of aspiring teachers in the community can fully take part in the rich process of planning for and carrying out instruction. A recent example came about when improved communication between an in-service ELD teacher and a pre-service teacher educator led to fulfillment of a need for original leveled texts in the classroom; for its final project, a university literacy course wrote and adapted leveled texts for high school ELLs. By expanding the focus beyond pre-service programs to include professional learning of in-service teachers, members of the consortium have noted that there is great—and untapped—potential for collaboration along these lines across the universities in the region. Expertise, resources, connections, information, guest speakers: all of these, as well as other ideas, suggest ways that teacher education in the region can be a site for innovative partnerships and synergy, rather than exhaustion.

Current consortium goals related to pre- and in-service professional learning include creating an electronic meeting place for enhanced communication between the different groups, and including an electronic bulletin board where we can become aware of each others' needs and meet them with resources within our community. In addition, grant funding is currently being sought through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) and other sources for a project that would bring teacher education programs across three institutions together with in-service teachers in local school districts to improve ELL education in the Spokane region.

Community Engagement. Our work in the area of education cannot be accomplished apart from the community. For that reason, several of our consortium members are working to expand community engagement that crosses institutional boundaries with the primary goal of raising understanding between the refugee/immigrant communities and the established communities of the region. As community organizations such as Refugee Connections and World Relief Spokane join the consortium, opportunities to engage the community are being identified. The SREC provides an ideal opportunity for education and community organizations to connect on a regular basis and expand and extend support beyond what individual agencies can provide.

Spokane once enjoyed rich cultural exchanges on a regular basis through regular cultural nights at school locations. However, this practice has fallen by the wayside in recent years—as have the regular benefits those event had brought. One goal of the Community Engagement work group is to re-establish cultural nights in conjunction with the schools and community centers to kindle ties, connection, and understanding.

Policy and Advocacy. Since our primary purpose is to improve the education of ELLs in our community, a top priority of the consortium is to advocate for the educators and students of the Spokane region both within and beyond our own community. While there have been occasional opportunities to provide input to policy makers and programs at the state level, those opportunities are few and far between. As the consortium began to take stock of where and how members currently engage in affecting policy, it was clear that, while there are a few individuals voicing their concerns, the isolated voice on the occasional committee was not going to be enough to affect change and dispel the misconceptions that exist about Eastern Washington.

Joan Johnston Nelson, having recently worked as a Bilingual Program Supervisor at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), shared with the consortium that many of the departments at the state's educational agency were not aware of the highly diverse ELL demographic of the Spokane region (Spokane Regional ESOL Consortium, 2015). At the state level, the term "Eastern Washington" is frequently used to refer to the areas of Wenatchee, Yakima, or the Tri-Cities when considering the ELL population. More accurately labeled "Central Washington," these areas predominantly serve Spanish speakers; whereas the Spokane region, in the northeastern part of the state, serves more than 70 different languages in the k–12 and adult education programs. Since our region has large numbers of first and second generation refugees from many different cultural backgrounds, the impact of state and federal policies, especially those related to education, are significantly different from the impact those policies may have on areas of the state that serve predominantly Spanish speaking migrant populations. With few advocating for our area's unique needs, planning is all too often based on what our region's needs are presumed to be, rather than what they actually are. Consortium members strongly agree that a powerful cohesive voice to represent the needs of the area and help inform policy makers is a high priority. By taking steps to inform legislators and policy makers on the unique demographics and needs of the Spokane region through letters, presentations at conferences, and meeting with local, state, and federal leaders, we hope to open up lines of communication that will facilitate ongoing influence for the ELLs and educators in the region. In light of the 2015 passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which will provide more authority to states for making decisions about English language learners, a goal of the consortium is to ensure that the needs of our region are known as state-wide policies are planned and implemented. By presenting a united voice on behalf of an organized consortium, we seek to have a greater and more sustained impact.

Transitions. The consortium has recently added a fifth action team labeled "Transitions." As students move from one educational institution to another (often aging out of the k–12 system), or move from education to work, individuals often fall through the gaps. Consortium members shared stories such as that of discovering that a student new to one program had previous assessment and coursework in another program, either in the k–12 system, adult education, or in another agency. These anecdotal discoveries led to the realization that it would better serve the individuals to have a process in place for cross-institutional support for ELLs. Through the consortium, k–12, adult basic education, and community college programs are working together to transition students from one program to another.

Another realization was that newly-arrived refugees are often unsure about their many educational options across Spokane area institutions. One related goal of the consortium is to create a way of effectively communicating educational options to individuals entering the educational system at 17 to 20 years old. By having the adult education programs and k–12 programs working together, students and their families can identify which option will best work for them. Steps such as these should lead to better planning for English language learners across institutions so that students do not fall through the gaps and are better equipped for their future success.

A Work in Progress

Although clearly a work in progress, our achievements thus far have been notable. Early leaders established a base list of potential participants—including those who had most recently voiced eagerness for such a consortium. We have established a monthly meeting schedule and place (an ELD room in centrally-located high school) and continue to reach out and invite potential members. We have created a name, The Spokane Regional ESOL Consortium, developed a mission statement, established five working committees, and identified future projects for each committee.

In May of 2015, we applied for and received a small grant from Eastern Washington University to support connections between university students and the community. This grant has enabled us to establish an online workspace for our group, which has proven a useful tool for our shared and developing discussions and documents. The funding has allowed us to purchase a domain name and establish a website to connect with the larger community, *eslspokane.org* (Spokane Regional ESOL Consortium, n.d.).

In the area of policy and advocacy, we have had members attend a meeting of the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee convened by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). We have carried our concerns to the congressional offices in Washington, DC to help legislators understand the issues and concerns related to ELL education for our region, and introduced SREC to districts in the region via emails to program directors. Finally, we have taken the first steps to introduce our initiative to the ELL community by presenting at the Tri-TESOL 2015 conference, as well as other regional and state conferences. Figure 3 illustrates the process of the formation of the SREC from inception to action.

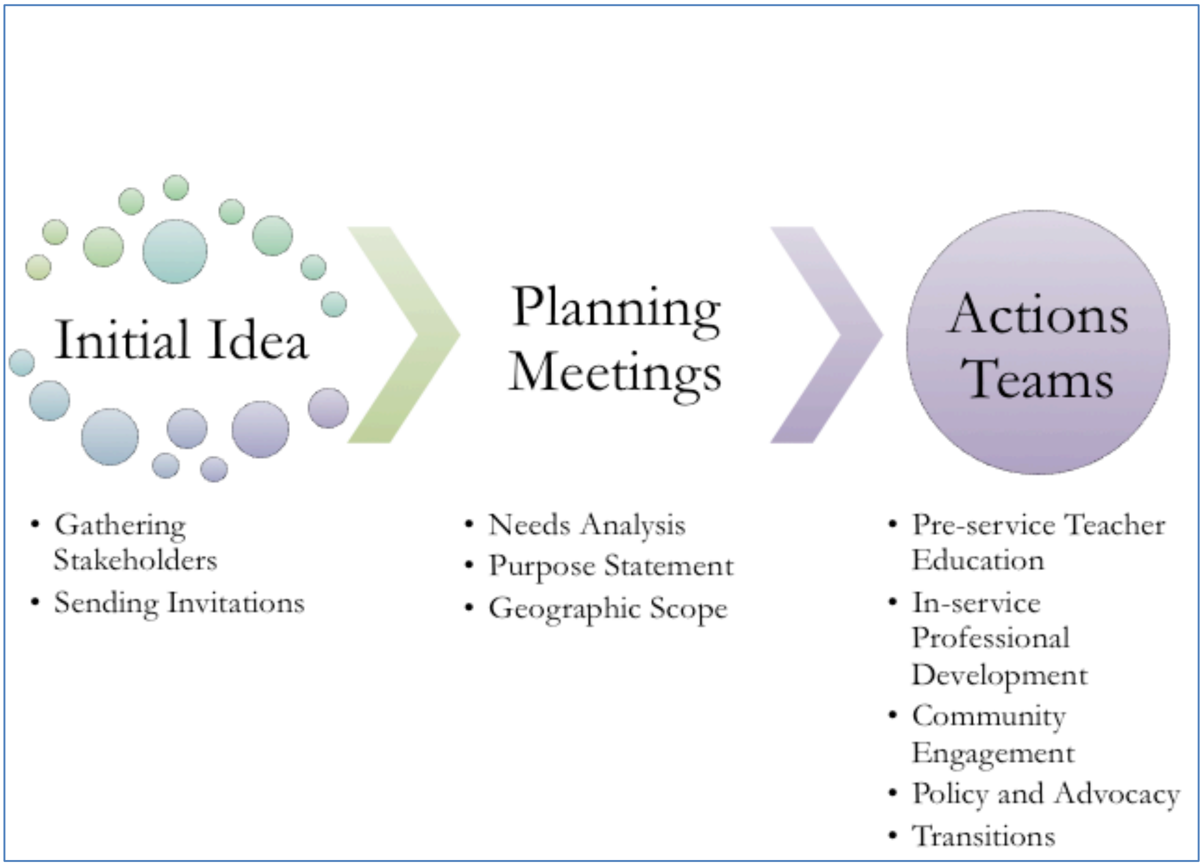

Figure 3. Progression of establishing the consortium.

Yet to Come

In the near future, our next steps are to further connect with the community and establish our role with the many stakeholders in the area. We will further our discussion of forming a board of directors and applying for non-profit status, which will open up opportunities for further grant funding of our projects and enable access to research opportunities. Letters of introduction to policy makers at the state and local level and to area stakeholders are currently being drafted. A launch party is being planned in collaboration with local non-profit members of our consortium, which will also serve as a fundraiser for the most recent group of refugees in Spokane.

To broaden our reach and strengthen our network, we continue to seek out and add new members. We now include Spokane Public Schools, Central Valley School District, Mead School District, World Relief Spokane, Refugee Connections, Communities in Schools Spokane, Quiroga Law Office, Community Colleges of Spokane, Eastern Washington University, Gonzaga University, and Whitworth University. It is clear from our discussions thus far that there is much the consortium can accomplish in the Spokane region beyond what individual institutions can accomplish on their own. By forming this consortium, we have become empowered to share our resources and form bridges between our services. In this way, an entire network of institutions and dedicated individuals reflect the great value we see in the English language learners among us through strengthened and responsive education and service.

References

Central Valley School District. (2016, February). January 2016 ELL Count. Spokane Valley, WA.

Spokane Public Schools. (2016, February). January 2016 ELL Count. Spokane, WA.

Spokane Regional ESOL Consortium. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.eslspokane.org

Spokane Regional ESOL Consortium. (2015, May 5). *Meeting* [Meeting minutes]. Spokane, WA.

Student-Teacher Conferencing: ESL Learners' Perspectives Explored

Nouf Alqahtani
University of Idaho

Caroline Payant
University of Idaho

Within the field of second language (L2) writing research, a growing amount of work has focused on the practices of providing learners with written corrective feedback (CF). While the debate regarding the optimal practices for providing CF persists, there is a general consensus that students do indeed desire written CF from their teachers (Chandler, 2003; Diab, 2005). Nevertheless, few studies have examined students' beliefs and needs in relation to L2 written CF during student-teacher conferences. This paper investigates the beliefs of five upper-intermediate and advanced level students of English about writing conferences in one intensive English program. Student-teacher conferencing sessions were video-recorded and each learner participated in two stimulated recall interviews. Findings suggest that student-teacher conferences provided each learner with individual opportunities to negotiate their writing and question their language use. Furthermore, findings indicate the learners saw immediate benefits for engaging in dialogues with their teachers. Pedagogical implications for L2 writing teachers are provided.

Nouf Alqahtani (noufalqahtani_ui@hotmail.com) is an MA student in the University of Idaho's TESL program. Her research interests include L2 writing and L2 teacher development.

Dr. Caroline Payant (cpayant@uidaho.edu) is an assistant professor in the MA TESL program at the University of Idaho. Her interests include cognitive and sociocultural aspects of second language acquisition and teacher education. Her work can be found in the Canadian Modern Language Review, TESL Canada Journal, and Journal of L2 Writing.

Within the field of second language (L2) writing, a growing amount of research has focused on the practices of providing learners with written corrective feedback (CF). While the debate regarding the optimal practices for providing CF persists, there is a general consensus that students desire CF from their teachers (Chandler, 2003; Diab, 2005). The CF is often provided in writing, directly on the students' work; however, in many L2 settings, students and teachers meet to discuss the paper, the feedback, and any additional concerns about the writing (Ferris, 1995). These student-teacher conferences have become popular in L2 writing classrooms over the last two decades, which has led to a number of studies reporting on the teachers' roles and practices during student-teacher conferences (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Eckstein, 2013; Ewert, 2009). However, what actually unfolds during these one-on-one meetings from the students' side and how students perceive this practice remains largely under-researched. The present case study research aimed to fill this gap and examined five English as a second language (ESL) students' perceptions towards student-teacher conferences. To situate the current study, we first provide a brief overview of previous work in the field of L2 writing.

Student-Teacher Writing Conferences

Student-teacher writing conferences have been found to be instrumental in developing student's L2 writing. Bitchener et al. (2005) examined the effect of providing varying types of CF during student-teacher conferences with 53 ESL adult learners. The CF under investigation targeted three forms: prepositions, simple past tense, and the definite article. In their experimental design, three groups were formed: Group 1 received written and oral CF, Group 2 received written CF only, and Group 3 received limited written CF on other non-target forms. They found that the combination of both written feedback and oral CF during conferencing benefited the students the most. Goldstein and Conrad (1990) studied the process of student-teacher negotiations on early drafts with ESL students and their impact on subsequent drafts. They found that students involved in the negotiation process revised their drafts and ultimately produced better revised drafts. However, they did not find significant student contributions during these interactions. In other words, asymmetrical interactional patterns were identified between the teachers and their students.

The interactional patterns between participants have been the object of some recent studies. Ewert (2009) examined the talk of two writing teachers during student-teacher conferences. The results revealed that both teachers negotiated with their students their drafts and used different features of scaffolding. The amount of negotiation and scaffolding, however, differed as teachers were sensitive to the students' proficiency levels. In addition, differences among the two teachers were identified: for example, one of the teachers focused more on content and rhetorical features of students' drafts and the other teacher focused on sentence-level mistakes. Qureshi (2011) examined teacher and student talk during writing conferences with one ESL composition teacher and two ESL students. The findings again reflected asymmetrical patterns in that the teachers dominated the interactions in the amount of talking and turn-taking. These findings appear to be symptomatic of power differences often present in educational settings (Fairclough, 2001).

To date, a small number of studies have included the learners' perspectives on these conferences. Eckstein (2013) examined the relationship between learners' proficiency levels and their preferences in feedback. In total, 546 ESL students completed a brief, semester-end written evaluation reporting on their writing program. The author found that unlike low-level students, upper-level students liked to learn in more collaborative contexts with teachers and the latter group preferred to focus on global mistakes. In contrast, low-level students were less interactive than upper-level students and these less proficient learners focused on lower-order feedback. Recently, Best, Jones-Katz, Smolarek, Stolzenburg, and Williamson (2015) examined how ESL students' perceived several approaches to feedback including student-teacher conferencing. Drawing on data from focus group interviews, they found that learners held strikingly positive attitudes towards one-on-one student-teacher conferences as it enabled them to clarify teachers' comments and provided a space for them to explain their ideas.

While there is support for including conferencing in L2 writing programs, we continue to have a narrow understanding of how ESL learners perceive conferencing and how they understand their roles. Therefore, it seems that ESL learners' perception of student-teacher conferences is a research gap in the field of L2 writing. This gap led us to the following three research questions:

1. What are students' beliefs toward student-teacher conferences?
2. How do student-teacher conferences raise students' awareness of L2 academic writing conventions?
3. How do student-teacher conferences impact students' future practices? The goal of the present study is to explore what upper-intermediate level and advanced ESL students gain from engaging in one-on-one conversations with their teachers.

Methodology

Participants

The participants for this multiple-case study were five ESL students from one intensive English program located in the Pacific Northwest. The two learners from the upper-intermediate level were Myra (from China) and Mather (from Saudi Arabia). At the time of the study, Myra had studied English for three years in China and had been studying English in the United States (US) for eight months. Mather reported not having English language education in his home country and had been studying English in the US for one year. The three learners from the advanced group included Abdullah (from Libya), Hussam (from Saudi Arabia), and Shin (from China). Abdullah had studied English in middle and high school in Libya and had been studying English in the US for one year. Hussam had a bachelor's degree in English from his home country and was the most experienced English language learner. Shin had studied English for nine years in her home country, China, and she had been studying English in the US for four months. Despite having a range of experiences, based on in-house placement examinations, these three learners were considered advanced learners. Both the upper-intermediate level group and the advanced level group experienced student-teacher conferences for the first time in their current intensive English program.

Setting

The study took place in an intensive English program over a six-week period during a summer session. The study was conducted with learners of ESL writing courses from two proficiency levels: upper-intermediate and advanced. The writing assignments for the upper-intermediate level learners were cause and effect essays and summary and evaluation essays. The assignments for the advanced learners were synthesis and problem-solving essays. In both levels, there were three drafts of each assignment. The teachers held a writing conference with each student after providing them with written CF on their first or second drafts as well as assigning a grade on the draft giving learners the opportunity to improve their writing and their grades.

Procedure

The participants were involved in two student-teacher conferences over the course of the semester. Each conference with upper-intermediate (Level 5) learners was approximately 15 minutes long and each conference with the advanced learners (Level 6) was 30 minutes long. These conferences were video-recorded. Following each session, the focal participants engaged in a stimulated recall interview. Stimulated recall is a verbal reporting by the participants after the task has been completed in response to a stimulus; the stimulus in this study being the recorded videos of the student-teacher conferences. At the onset of the stimulated recall interview, learners were instructed to stop the recording at any moment to comment on their thoughts. In addition, they were informed that the primary researcher would select segments of the conference and would be asked to comment on it. Their stimulated recall interviews were transcribed verbatim which allowed us, the researchers, to have a deeper exploration of the collected data (Gass & Mackey, 2000).

Data Coding

This study adopted qualitative data coding methods. We coded the transcripts of the students' stimulated recall interviews following three steps. First, both authors read the students' interviews separately and underlined any ideas that were repeated or insightful. Second, the authors together discussed each student transcript in turn. Third, the authors identified overlapping themes, to be discussed below, and ideas for the five focal participants.

Findings

The first research question concerned ESL learners' beliefs towards student-teacher conferences in L2 writing classrooms. In this study, learners used the conferences as an opportunity to clarify misunderstandings. Throughout the data, student-oriented clarifications and teacher-oriented clarifications were prevalent. Student-oriented clarifications were operationalized as instances where learners discussed doubts about the written CF and task expectations. For example, during the second stimulated recall interview, Hussam, a Level 6 student, explained that, "I think before I come to the conference, I was a little bit confused about the issue here. And, when I met with her, she explained very well to me how to fix this problem and be organized." In this example, we see how Hussam used this opportunity to ask his teacher to explain her comments more clearly thus helping him better edit his paper.

Conferencing also provided opportunities for students to clarify task demands, the second type of student-oriented clarifications. Shin explained that, "When I finished writing my article, I wasn't quite sure if is this what the teacher wants. Does it meet the requirement? Is this understandable? After the conference, this can be improve." In other words, when introduced to new assignments and academic genres, students are not always confident that they truly understand what is expected of them and conferencing opens an avenue for these discussions. Moreover, it affords learners the opportunity to pursue unfinished conversations. For example, Abdullah had approached his teacher about the use of charts and had not reached a clear understanding in class:

> Actually, I have asked her before if I can use charts and graphs or some tables to explain more my three solutions . . . so, actually, she didn't answer me. She told me that "I will tell you later" . . . because she told us from three to four pages. . . . If I put charts and graphs, the paper will be maybe six or seven pages. Now, after the conference, she told me it is OK.

After these one-on-one conversations, students appeared to be in a better position to succeed in completing the task.

The stimulated recall interviews further led to the identification of teacher-oriented clarifications. These are defined as instances where students, feeling they had been misunderstood, clarified their ideas to the teacher. For example, the feedback that Hussam had received suggested that perhaps the teacher did not understand his point; however, he explained, "When my instructor explained that to me, I think she didn't understand what I mean by my writing. But, after I explain it in person, she understands me very well." This opportunity for clarifying their ideas is most important for developing writers as it gives them their own scholarly voice and helps them create their identity as L2 writers. Through discussions about writing, these students express their views and position themselves in new discourse communities (Hyland, 2008). L2 writing research shows that L2 writers seek their teachers' feedback and may value their teachers' feedback more highly than their peers' feedback (Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Liu & Hansen, 2002). In this context, learners did not have an opportunity to engage in peer editing. However, interestingly, we found that students in this setting tended to weigh their current teachers' feedback as more valuable than their previous teachers' input. For example, Abdullah recalls having studied how to cite differently in the past, but after discussing the topic with his current teacher, he believes that he was mistaken, based on a previous teachers' feedback, and takes his current teachers' input as the correct approach:

> I asked my teacher about this one because the way that I had studied before is that in the first time, I should put the first name and the last name of the author. And then if I mention the author again in my writing, I should put just the last name. . . . She reminded me the example should put the last name. So, I remember my mistake.

Myra was surprised to learn, from her current teacher, that the use of the first person pronoun is not a desirable voice in academic papers. She explains that her previous teachers never brought this to her attention and thus she found this advice quite helpful:

> Um, before I wrote my conclusions, always I think like this. My teacher told me you cannot use the pronoun (I), but other teachers will not. Maybe I'm wrong or maybe my previous teachers didn't pay attention to this word. So, I need to change it and I know how to write my suggestions in my conclusion without the pronoun (I). It is very helpful.

What is fascinating about these examples is that both students walk away believing that their current teacher had the correct knowledge in contrast with prior instruction. In the first instance, rather than deciding that both techniques may be acceptable, the student determined that the last name-only approach was the acceptable technique, and in the second instance, the student believed that the use of the first person pronoun was not acceptable in concluding paragraphs. These appear to be missed opportunities for teachers and learners to discuss the variety of philosophies that exist regarding what good writing practices are.

The second research question focused on the benefits of student-teacher conferences for raising learners' L2 writing awareness. In the data, there was recurring evidence that learners saw this as an opportunity for them to notice gaps in their use of academic genres and grammar. Through conferencing, students are able to visualize that both breadth and specificity in lexical use can benefit their writing:

> I think before I just write the word "human" a lot. And maybe I think this is correct, so I did not think it is a problem. But when teacher said you need to change the word and your essay will look academic if you just use more words. (Myra)
>
> Actually, I didn't notice this kind of thing before. I just think this idea is important, so I use "important" there. I didn't notice this word can be biased. The teacher mentioned that and I started thinking that maybe this word is biased. Maybe the words "useful" or "effective" are more academic in that way. (Shin)
>
> I didn't notice this before. This is my paper and I know what I'm talking about. As a reader, maybe he or she will find this sentence maybe unclear. (Shin)

These surface-level errors became very salient for the learners. However, throughout the stimulated recall interviews, the discussion of explicit rhetorical moves and genres was limited. Only one student discussed thesis statements and another discussed the manipulation of tense for the particular genre they were working on:

> I thought the thesis statement with this phrase will be a strong and make my thesis statement more powerful. So, when my teacher told me, I should remove this phrase and put it at the end. . . . So, when I read my thesis statement again with this phrase at the end, I convinced that this phrase is better to be at the end. It's strong more than before. (Abdullah)
>
> We have academic research now. In academic research, the teacher tells me it is not a report, it is a research. You have to tell something we should do. But, this paper (problem-solution) is a report and actually the verb tense maybe the same from the beginning to the end. (Shin)

In other words, even though the sessions included discussions pertaining to language and rhetoric, the learners appeared to notice the surface-level errors almost exclusively.

The final research question focused on how student-teacher conferences impacted learners' future writing practices. Two time frames were identified in terms of reported activities: the immediate future and long-term future practices. Every learner discussed using the obtained information in the immediate future. In some cases, learners claimed that they would revisit their actual sources to improve their writing whereas others mentioned they would consult their textbook to help them improve their writing:

> But my teacher told me that I can go back to *A Pocket Style Manual* book by Hacker and find the information that I need. So, when I read the book, I found that I have to organize my sources alphabetically. (Mather)

The goal of the student-teacher conference can be envisioned as having an impact on the students' immediate writing practices (i.e., revisions of the paper); however, teachers would hope that information shared during the conferences would also impact their long-term practices. Yet, only Myra made an explicit connection between the conferences and her future practices:

> I was thinking that this is very helpful because before I don't know I need to explain my topic. So, I don't explain it, maybe if I go to the university, my professor maybe will take a lot of my points because of this.

In sum, the reported impact on students' practices was more likely to be immediate; however, the long-term learning that ideally occurs may not be something learners are conscious of forthwith.

Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

The present study focused on how learners perceived student-teacher conferences in one academic English program in the US. Given the overarching goals of intensive English programs across contexts, the findings of this study may be of interest to teachers working in similar settings. Thus, our discussion focuses on pedagogical implications that have emerged as a result of this study and previous studies on the topic.

Overall, there was some evidence that learners benefited from engaging in these one-on-one conversations with their teachers. Students were able to dispel their doubts as well as clarify any ideas that their teachers may have misunderstood. Language-related discussions were also seen as central to these conferences; however, many of the topics addressed tended to focus on lexical issues, while few examined genre-based or rhetorical matters. Nevertheless, students found the information to be valuable and discussed how they would use this information to improve their practices in the immediate future. The identification of positive attitudes towards student-teacher conferences, from the students' perspectives, is in line with previous research (Best, et al., 2015; Eckstein, 2013).

Since time was spent primarily on addressing linguistic aspects and, in some cases, on clarifying task requirements, we began to reflect on strategies that would ensure that the meetings address additional dimensions of student writing (i.e., rhetorical aspects). One useful strategy that could maximize learning opportunities is to provide learners with ample time and opportunities to reflect on the written CF. Some specific steps include:

1. increasing the time lag between returning an essay and the student-teacher conferences;
2. returning student papers and allocating class time for initial review of the feedback; and
3. creating small groups for students to discuss some feedback.

These three suggestions, while not empirically tested in this context, may encourage learners to address some of the comments before the conference and ultimately create a space for dialoguing about the content and rhetoric of the paper. Specifically, by allocating time in class for an initial review, surface-level errors, often common to many papers, can be negotiated as a whole group and resolved prior to the individual meetings. An alternative is the creation of small groups to discuss the teachers' feedback. Rather than relying on peer feedback, which learners appear to view negatively (Best, et al., 2015; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Rollinson, 2005), they can work collaboratively on the teachers' comments. We believe that these discussions about the teachers' feedback may increase the students' awareness of shared issues in addition to those that are unique to their writing. Once the in-class review in small groups of the feedback is complete, students could have specific tasks to prepare them for the actual one-on-one meeting. These tasks can include:

1. responding to the comments directly on the paper; and
2. preparing specific questions that are directly related to the comments, and bringing these written questions to the meeting.

The more students prepare prior to the meeting, the more they can engage with their teachers to tackle more complex issues.

The focus of this research was based on the students' perspectives, and we saw that many of our participants felt their teachers helped them; however, there were some cases where learners continued to feel confused. To minimize these communication breakdowns and to again maximize learning opportunities, we would like to propose that a post-conferencing reflection be written by the learners. Immediately after the conference, students can respond, in writing, to reflective questions: (1) what they noticed about their writing; (2) what they think you wanted them to focus on; (3) what questions they still have about their writing (specific points); (4) what they need their teacher to focus on in their future conferences and why. We hope that by having the student engage with the feedback before the one-on-one conference, during the meeting, and immediately following the interaction, students will have a greater ability to recall the information and increase their own potential to notice gaps in their writing (beyond surface-level errors) and focus on these in the future. Finally, the time spent on working with the feedback may lead to greater uptake on the revised draft and give teachers a greater sense of purpose when providing the feedback.

There are some limitations and gaps for future research. With only two writing instructors and five ESL students participating in this study, generalizability is not possible. Similarly, focusing on advanced learners precludes us from understanding how student-teacher conferences benefit learners across proficiency groupings. Additionally, conducting longitudinal studies with the same purpose of this study will help to generalize its results. Finally, the study only examined what unfolded during the conference, and the analysis has yet to consider the impact on the students' writing. Despite these limitations, this study uncovered information about the students' perspective.

Conclusion

While there is support for the value of writing conferences in the ESL context (Bitchener et al., 2005), there are ways in which they can be improved. Combining the principles of negotiation and scaffolding in writing conferences encourages learners to participate in conferences (Ewert, 2009). These principles guarantee that a writing conference will be dialogic. Researchers are highlighting the importance of engaging learners in conversations about their writing such that both the ESL learner and the teacher contribute to the revisions during writing conferences (Ewert, 2009; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Young & Miller, 2004). Young and Miller (2004) reflected that teachers encourage ESL students to have the authority in correcting their errors by holding conversations with their students during writing conferences. We hope that further studies focusing on both the students and the teachers will emerge to help expand our current knowledge base regarding this practice.

References

Best, K., Jones-Katz, L., Smolarek, B., Stolzenburg, M., & Williamson, D. (2015). Listening to our students: An exploratory practice study of ESL writing students' views of feedback. *TESOL Journal, 6*(2), 332–357.

Bitchener, J., Young, S., & Cameron, D. (2005). The effect of different types of corrective feedback on ESL student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *14*(3), 191–205.

Chandler, J. (2003). The efficacy of various kinds of error feedback for improvement in the accuracy and fluency of L2 student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 12*, 267–296.

Diab, R.L. (2005). EFL university students' preferences for error correction and teacher feedback to writing. *TESL Reporter*, *38*, 27–51.

Eckstein, G. (2013). Implementing and evaluating a writing conference program for international L2 writers across language proficiency levels. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 22*(3)*, 231–239.*

Ewert, D. E. (2009). L2 writing conferences: Investigating teacher talk. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 18*(4), 251–269.

Ferris, D. R. (1995). Student reaction to teacher response in multiple-draft composition classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 29*(1), 33–53.

Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power* (2nd ed.). London: Longman.

Gass, S. M., & Mackey, A. (2000). *Stimulated recall methodology in second language research*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Goldstein, L. M., & Conrad, S. M. (1990). Student input and negotiation of meaning in ESL writing conferences. *TESOL Quarterly*, *24*(3), 443–460.

Hedgcock, J., & Lefkowitz, N. (1994). Feedback on feedback: Assessing learner receptivity to teacher response in L2 composing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 3*, 141–163.

Hedgcock, J., & Lefkowitz, N. (1996). Some input on input: Two analyses of student response to expert feedback on L2 writing. *The Modern Language Journal, 80*, 287–308.

Hyland, K. (2008). Disciplinary voices: Interactions in research writing. *English Text Construction*, *1*(1), 5–22.

Hyland, K., & Hyland, F. (2006). Contexts and issues in feedback on L2 writing: An introduction. In K. Hyland and F. Hyland *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, (pp. 1–19).

Liu, J., & Hansen, J. (2002). *Peer response in second language writing classrooms*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Mangelsdorf, K. (1992). Peer reviews in the ESL composition classroom: What do the students think? *ELT Journal, 46*(3), 274–284.

Qureshi, Z. (2011). Teacher-student talk in the one to one writing conference: Who talks more and why? *UCLan Journal of Pedagogic Research*, *3*, 27–33.

Rollinson, P. (2005). Using peer feedback in the ESL writing class. *ELT Journal, 59*(1), 23–30.

Young, R. F., & Miller, E. R. (2004). Learning as changing participation: Discourse roles in ESL writing conferences. *The Modern Language Journal*, *88*(4), 519–535.

Teaching Cultural Identity: Stuart McLean's *Vinyl Cafe*

Susanna Fawkes
Thompson Rivers University

This paper provides practical tips on using Stuart McLean's *Vinyl Cafe* stories in advanced English for academic purposes (EAP) reading courses. By choosing a story with immigrant characters and strong cultural references, the author shares activities for developing students' understanding of literary concepts of point of view, irony, symbolism and others. Additionally, a number of activities are discussed, including ones where students manipulate the story, filtering it through their own cultures and values (Oster, 1989, p. 85).

Susanna Fawkes (sfawkes@tru.ca) is a sessional English for Academic Purposes instructor at Thompson Rivers University in British Columbia, Canada. She has taught language for over 20 years overseas and in Canada. She earned her MA in Applied Linguistics at UMASS, Boston, US.

Teaching the concept of culture and cultural identity to students is essential, considering the contemporary globalization of the world. Educating students on issues of culture and cultural identity requires instructors to equip students with an intercultural lens on a multicultural society, which helps them to gain cultural sensitivity as they explore cultural identities not only of others but also their own. I agree with Galante (2014) that an English as an additional language (EAL) classroom is a perfect environment for promoting intercultural discussions and "negotiating identities," (p. 3) which "can be particularly beneficial in multicultural classrooms where students can voice and expand on beliefs, values, and issues from a cultural standpoint" (p. 5).

Advanced reading classes, where we teach multicultural fiction from different parts of the world, provide a necessary context for such cultural exploration. As Khatib, Rezaei, and Derakhshan (2011) argued, literature brings a "motivating drive… not readily found in any other text" (p. 207); learners gain "access to a rich sample of input of various discourse styles, and to historical, geographical, cultural, and linguistic information," which contributes to learners' language proficiency and their cultural awareness (Barrette, Paesani, & Vinall, 2010, p. 217).

Moreover, as Scott (1964) pointed out, culturally rich literature—when appropriately selected and productively used—provokes "thoughtful and deeply felt" reflection (p. 267). Stuart McLean's work is a great example of such literature; his stories are full of culturally diverse characters, most of whom are Canadians whose parents or grandparents immigrated to Canada from different parts of the world. In addition, his stories are spiced with fine humour, irony and cultural symbolism and engage learners on multiple levels, providing necessary material for developing both learners' language proficiency and cultural awareness. McLean's work is a rich source for studying literature and literary concepts as well as developing analytical and critical thinking skills along with cultural understanding. This paper provides practical tips on using Stuart McLean's *Vinyl Cafe* stories, and this approach may be adapted for a variety of short stories in advanced English for academic purposes (EAP) reading courses.

About Stuart McLean

A best-selling author, host of CBC Radio program the *Vinyl Cafe*, and award-winning journalist Stuart McLean is well-known in Canada, the United States and other English speaking countries. More than 1 million copies of his ten *Vinyl Cafe* books have sold since the first publication of the *Stories from the Vinyl Cafe* in 1995. McLean is a three-time winner of the Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour for *Home from the Vinyl Cafe*, *Vinyl Cafe Unplugged* and *Secrets from the Vinyl Cafe*. In 2004, for his *Vinyl Cafe Diaries*, he was awarded the Canadian Authors' Association Jubilee Award. The *Vinyl Cafe* books have also been published in the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand (CBC/Radio-Canada, n.d.).

The Story

The most suitable *Vinyl Cafe* stories for ESAL (English as a second or additional language) students, I believe, are "Rendi" and "Kenny Wong's Practical Jokes" (McLean, 2006). Both stories are about father–son relationships in the context of cultural heritage, and both illustrate the value of cultural identity and the meaning of belonging—to a specific culture or to a culturally diverse society such as Canada.

Although in this paper I will focus only on "Rendi," the activities designed for it can be easily adapted for "Kenny Wong's Practical Jokes" and indeed, the approach can be adapted for short stories by other authors. Even though “Rendi” like many other McLean’s stories is humorous—according to the author, many times while reading people will find themselves laughing—the story is "brushed by longings, loneliness and a certain melancholy” (McLean, 2006, p. 73). After the first reading, teachers can expect that their students, rather than seeing or understanding the humour, will find the tone in the story sad. A brief summary of the story is below:

> “Rendi” is about an elderly Canadian couple of Italian background, Eugene and Maria Conte. Eugene is a gardener; he grows grapes and makes wine. Their son Tony moved to London, England, and began calling himself Thomas, which both parents cannot understand or accept. Eugene is originally from a village in Calabria called Rendi in Fiori. Sam, the neighbor’s 12-year-old son, comes to Eugene’s house every Sunday with his laptop to read Tony’s emails to Eugene and Maria and to send Eugene’s emails to Tony.
>
> When Eugene tells Tony to go to Italy to his home village, Tony does not want to as he has been to Italy five times already. “Tell Tony that it is my dying wish,” (p. 76) says Eugene to Sam. But it wasn’t Eugene’s first dying wish. He calls his parental requests, such as find a wife, have a baby, have another baby, and so on “my dying wish” (p. 76). Tony reluctantly agrees, trying to fulfill one of his father’s numerous dying wishes.
>
> So Tony goes first to Rome, then to Napoli, from Napoli to Cosenza, and eventually, with his limited Italian and certain difficulty, he finds the mountain village. Ironically, he goes to a wrong Rendi: it turns out there are a few of them. People, however, treat him as if they know his father. Tony takes pictures as evidence and rushes back to England the next morning. He sends the pictures to Eugene and calls Italy “so backward” (p. 81), just like Canada. He has no doubt that it is the right village as he doesn’t understand or believe that people would treat a stranger like a family member. Eugene’s explanation is simple: that is the Italian way, and he sends his son back to the right village. He is persistent in imposing his “dying wishes” and especially his most important “dying wish” upon his son.
>
> Tony goes back, to the right village this time, where he meets his uncle’s wife, Michelina, and stays at her house for a while. According to McLean, “the events of the [second] visit were almost identical to those of the first trip. But that is not how it felt to Thomas” (p. 84). His second trip is similar to the first one in many ways, especially in the beginning, but is, however, completely different in its importance and significance to Tony’s cultural self. Here comes the culmination of the story: Tony meets a man on a narrow street who reminds him of himself, and he gets that “unsettling feeling, a feeling of the world shifting—becoming both larger and smaller at the same time” (p. 85). He tries to express and explain the feeling to his father and his wife but he does not succeed. This is the beginning of Tony’s journey to his cultural roots. McLean does not overwhelm his reader with cultural references, but the ones he uses create the rich imagery of the culture, which finally becomes meaningful for Tony. The stone floor and wooden shuttered window of his auntie’s house, the valley of olive trees and old stone arches, can all be considered as stereotypical descriptions of any Italian village. Not by Tony, though, not at this time when he finds himself in connection with the place and people who—

although being so different from him and almost complete strangers just a short while ago—ironically become so close and meaningful that the world is shifting for him, opening a door for his new–old cultural identity.

The time Tony spends in his ancestors' village has a significant influence on his cultural identity. He eventually moves back to Canada where he was born and grew up.

The Course

I have adopted this story for a 12-week advanced academic reading skills course which is based on literature and designed to prepare students for reading college level material. The course introduces specific approaches to reading for both factual and fictional writing where emphasis is on the short story. The educational outcomes of the course include the ability of students to interpret, analyze, and respond to fictional prose independently through discussion and in writing. Students also increase their background knowledge of culture, human nature and motivation (Fawkes, 2013).

The tasks presented below are designed based on such educational objectives as recognition and evaluation of the major literary components of fiction, including plot, character, symbolism, and point of view (see Figure 1). Students learn to read critically and formulate independent comparisons and judgments of the reading.

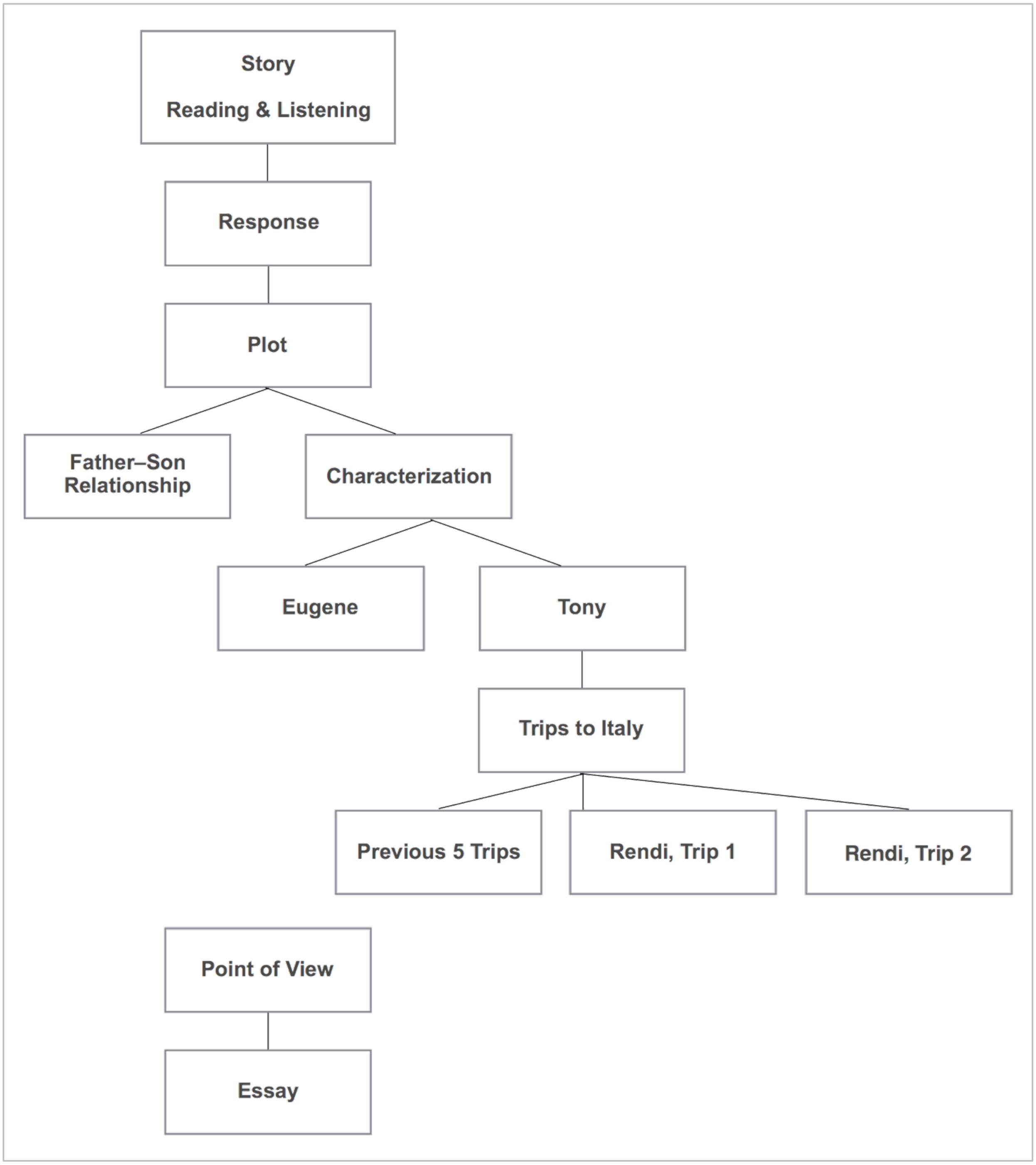

Figure 1. The tasks.

Task 1: Response

To introduce the story to students in class, the teacher plays the audio recording on the CD *Out & About* (McLean, 2010). Then students read the story at home and write a journal entry as a response to the story. Journal writing can be substituted by forum discussion on Moodle or any other similar teaching and learning platform. Simultaneous listening and reading

ISBN: 978-0-692-74488-8

can be done in class, too. This way, the students practice reading and listening skills. Also, McLean's artistic performance may contribute to the students' better comprehension of the story. The following questions can be given to students to guide them with their response writing:

1. Did you like or dislike the story? What did you like or dislike about it? Explain.
2. What is the story about? What is the main idea of the story?
3. Why do you think Tony changes his name?
4. Why do you think Eugene calls his wishes "dying wishes"?
5. What do you think Eugene's most important "dying wish" is? Explain.
6. Why do you think Tony moves back to Canada?

Task 2: Plot Diagram

The analysis of the story begins with creating a plot map or diagram. By using a template provided by the teacher, students in small groups draw a plot map or a diagram to examine the following parts of the plot: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution (see Figure 2).

After sharing and discussing their diagrams with the class, students begin working on characterization.

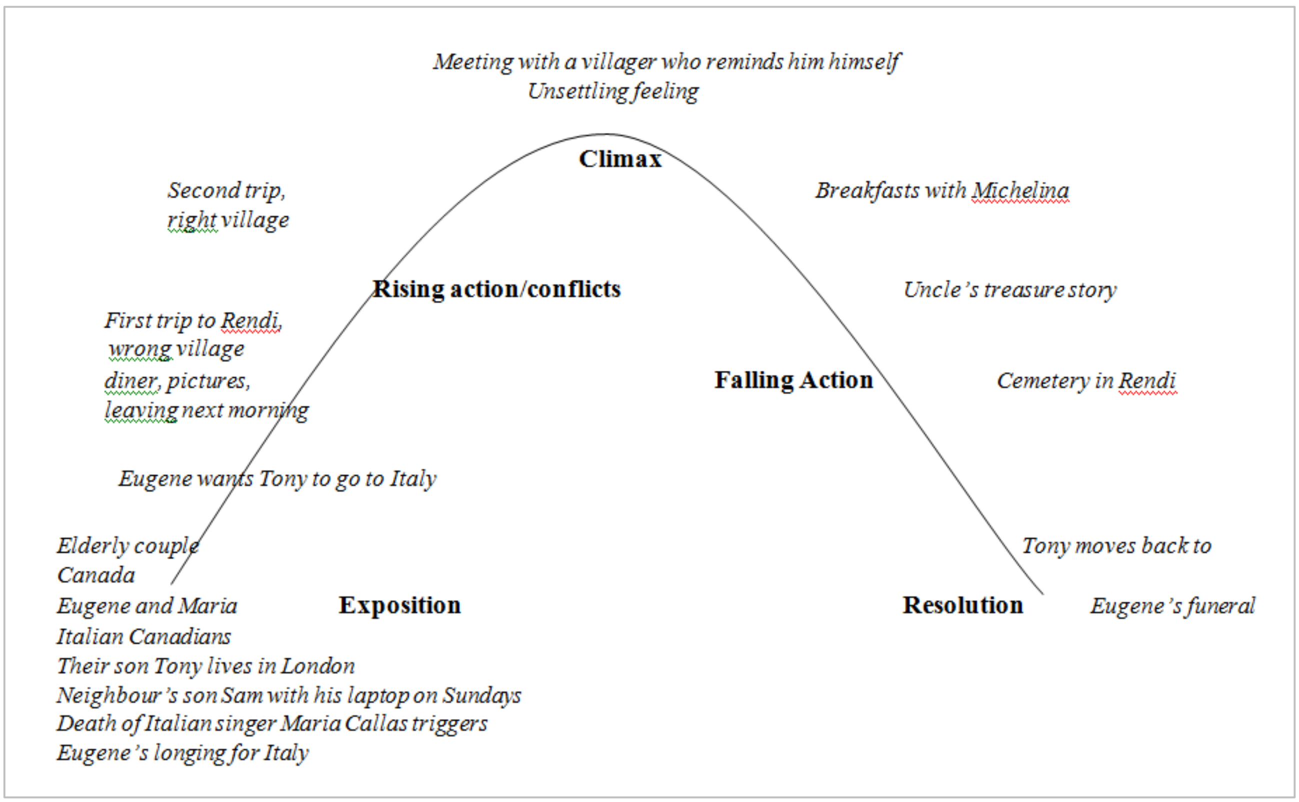

Figure 2. Example of a plot diagram.

Task 3: Characterization – Cultural Portraits

McLean uses many cultural references which symbolize the cultural identities of the two main characters: the father, Eugene, and the son, Tony. Eugene, an Italian Canadian who moved to Canada after WW2 and never left, has a very strong connection with his home country, Italy. Tony's cultural identity is much more complex: he was born in Canada, he speaks some Italian, and he moved to England for school and stayed there after graduation. He also changed his name from Tony to Thomas. Canada and Italy are "so backwards" (p. 81) for him.

Working in small groups, students make a list of cultural references for Eugene and Tony. This activity teaches students to recognize and interpret such a challenging literary concept as symbolism in relation to cultural identity.

To debrief, the students compare their lists with the one provided by the teacher (see Table 1).

Table 1. List of Cultural References for Eugene and Tony

Eugene	**Tony/Thomas**
Garden	Move from Canada to England
Sweet peppers and string beans	Name change
Beloved fig tree	Italian language "far from perfect"
Grapes and homemade wine	Some French language
Little Italian cigars	Trips to Italy
Italian Opera singers: Renata Tebaldi and Maria Callas	Meeting with a man on a narrow street; unsettled feeling
His home village in Rendi, Italy	Breakfasts with aunty Michelina
	Laughing at his uncle's treasure story
	Cemetery visit in Rendi
	Move back to Canada

Task 3: Extension

This optional homework assignment can be done through a discussion forum such as on a learning management system (e.g., Moodle, Blackboard) or a journal entry. Students create their own and their parents' cultural portraits by making a list of characteristics of their cultural identity. Such a task provides more room for developing students' critical thinking skills as well as their ability to draw comparisons and characterize personalities from a cultural point of view.

Task 4: Tony's Trips to Italy

In small groups, students first discuss the similarities and differences in all of Tony's trips—especially the ones to Rendi—and then, in point form, they note the important events within each trip and finally, answer the follow-up questions. A list of possible points that the students might create and the questions that would follow are below:

Previous five trips to Italy:

- Grand Prix in Milano twice
- friend's villa in Tuscany twice
- skiing trip in the Alps once

First trip to Rendi:

- dinner with villagers
- taking pictures as evidence for his father
- leaving the next morning

Second trip to Rendi:

- a man on a narrow street
- unsettled feeling
- staying at his aunty Michelina's
- listening to his uncle's dream about buried treasure while laughing and laughing
- not leaving the next morning
- breakfasts with Michelina remind him of breakfasts with his mother when he was a child
- visiting graveyard with Michelina and the priest

Follow-up questions:

1. What is the purpose of the trip to Rendi for Eugene?
2. What is the purpose of the trip to Rendi for Tony?
3. How do the trips influence Tony's cultural identity?

By analyzing Tony's trips to Italy, students learn to recognize and understand such literary concepts as irony, foreshadowing, symbolism, and imagery in relation to culture. They discuss these concepts in groups, make a list, and compare it with the one provided by the teacher. A sample of the teacher's list below is:

- irony: dying wishes, wrong Rendi, family-like friendliness of strangers, feeling of belonging in the right Rendi, where strangers are treated like family
- foreshadowing: the second trip being "almost identical" (almost, but not quite the same), meeting with a man on the street and the unsettled feeling of the "world shifting," not leaving the next morning
- symbolism: the unsettled feeling, breakfasts with Michelina, the cemetery, and everything else happening in the right Rendi symbolize awakening of Tony's cultural identity
- imagery: stone floor, wooden shuttered window, valley of olive trees and old stone arches.

Task 5: Father and Son Relationship

The next activity guides students in an exploration of cultural differences in child–parent relationships. Eugene, being an immigrant himself, does not tell Tony directly to move back home to Canada or to keep his name. At the same time, he gently guides his son's journey through life and search for cultural identity, and does it indirectly, “in his own way” (p. 87). Ultimately, the son honours his father’s “dying wishes.” Tony moves back home to Canada where he was born and grew up.

How would Chinese, Arab or Latin American parents, for instance, implore their children to listen and follow their parental wishes? In a multicultural classroom, the students’ task for this activity is to imagine themselves and their parents in a similar situation, when after spending a few years in Canada they have become distant from their own culture. What would their parents do to save their children’s cultural identity? How similar or different from Eugene’s would their actions be? In this activity, not only do students compare their own and their parents’ relationship with that of Eugene and Tony’s, but they also hear their classmates’ versions of the situation and become aware of intriguing cultural differences in different parts of the world. The group discussion question and extension assignment are shown below:

Group discussion question:

- Imagine yourself and your parents in a similar situation. How would it be similar or different?

Extension or homework assignment:

- Change the cultural background of the characters and write a new plot.

Task 6. Point of View

The story is narrated in the third-person. By changing the point of view to the first person and taking the position of one of the characters, students make the narration more personal to themselves and learn to understand the difference between the third-person and first-person narration. This task contributes to the comprehension of a challenging literary concept, point of view, while it also invites better overall understanding of the story. The progression of this task is shown below:

1. In small groups or with a partner, students choose one of the characters (Sam, Maria, Tony, or Eugene) and tell the beginning of the story from that character’s point of view.
2. Next, students analyze the changes in the characters’ behavior and the dynamics of the events seen or told from a different point of view.
3. In class or as a homework assignment, students individually rewrite the beginning of the story from a point of view of their chosen character. As an additional challenge, students can be required to place the characters in a different cultural environment.

Task 7. The Essay

After reviewing all of the literary elements in the story, the students are ready to produce an essay. It can be a compare and contrast, cause and effect, or an argumentative essay, depending on the course objectives. The story provides more than enough material for a number of types of essays; however, if the students are familiar with other literary work on cultural identity, a compare and contrast essay may be a good choice. Comparing and contrasting the work on the same topic of different authors contributes to a better understanding of the topic itself, as well as development of students’ ability to understand literature in general. Moreover, since the cultural and historical settings are different in every story, it creates extra challenges for students, including extra opportunities for them to develop their critical thinking skills as well as their cultural understanding. An example of an essay question for this task is shown below:

Essay question:

> Choose any literary element or elements and write a compare and contrast essay, comparing "Rendi" with another story about cultural identity such as "Kenny Wong's Practical Jokes" by Stuart McLean or "The Americanization of Shadrach Cohen" by Bruno Lessing.

Learning Outcomes

Through the approach detailed in this paper, students gain a number of relevant and important skills. In addition to developing such language skills as academic reading and writing, students also expand their critical thinking skills and cultural awareness. They learn to understand complex literary concepts, to analyze literature in relation to culture, and they also learn a great deal about cultural identity and its importance.

Furthermore, students learn that for some people, such as Tony, cultural identity can be lost, especially if one is young and lives in a multicultural environment. They learn that cultural identity can give a person a feeling of belonging; creates a deeper connection with ancestors, family and parents; and that one's own culture and cultural identity is not something to be ashamed of; on the contrary, it is something to be proud of. This may be the most important concept they can learn when they are young. When they travel overseas, often students try to blend into the new culture. During this time they can often feel confused and lost as they struggle with homesickness and cultural differences. As educators, I believe we all have a responsibility to teach our students how to keep and cherish their cultural identity and not to get lost in the modern globalized context.

References

Barrette, C., Paesani, K., & Vinall, K. (2010). Toward an integrated curriculum: Maximizing the use of target language literature. *Foreign Language Annals*, *43*(2), 216–230.

CBC/Radio-Canada (n.d.) Vinyl cafe with Stuart McLean. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/vinylcafe/about.php

Fawkes, S. (2013). ESAL 0570: Academic reading skills [Course outline]. Kamloops, BC: Department of English as a Second Language, Thompson Rivers University

Galante, A. (2014). Developing EAL learners' intercultural sensitivity through a digital literacy project. *TESL Canada Journal/Revue TESL du Canada, 32*(1), 53–66.

Khatib, M., Rezaei, S., & Derakhshan, A. (2011). Literature in EFL/ESL classroom. *English Language Teaching, 4*(1), 201–208

McLean. S. (2010). Rendi. On *Out & About* [CD], Canada: Vinyl Cafe Productions.

McLean. S. (2006). *Secrets from the vinyl cafe.* Toronto, ON: Penguin Group (Canada).

Oster, J. (1989). Seeing with different eyes: Another view of literature in the ESL class. *TESOL Quarterly, 23*(1), 85–103.

Scott, C. (1964). Literature and the ESL program. *The Modern Language Journal, 48*(8), 489–493.

Fostering Pragmatic Competence: Strategies and Materials for Email Writing

Anna Krulatz
Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Koeun Park
University of Utah

Whereas graduate English as a second language (ESL) students have been found to use a wide range of appropriate politeness strategies in email, studies have found that emails sent by undergraduate ESL students can be perceived as impolite (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). On the contrary, effective use of politeness strategies leads to positive perceptions of students' competence (Bolkan & Holmgren, 2012). Explicit instruction on netiquette guidelines can foster the ability to construct polite email messages. This paper offers a set of strategies and materials devoted to email writing for undergraduate students in ESL settings. The goal of the paper is to promote the development of sociopragmatic competence with a specific focus on electronic requests in academic contexts. In our overview of pedagogical materials and approaches, we draw on current literature regarding teaching pragmatics and on our own extensive experience working with English language learners both in the United States and abroad.

Anna Krulatz (anna.m.krulatz@ntnu.no) is Associate Professor of English at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Norway, where she works with pre- and in-service English teachers. Her main interests include second language teaching methodology with focus on interlanguage pragmatics, content-based instruction, multilingualism, and teacher education.

Koeun Park (koeun.park@utah.edu) is a graduate student at the Department of Education, Culture and Society and an associate instructor for the Department of Languages and Literature at the University of Utah. Her areas of interest include bilingual/biliteracy education, heritage language maintenance, ESL, and teacher education.

The fact that international undergraduate students at American universities often experience difficulty when communicating via email with their professors has been noticed by many faculty and documented in the literature. Students typically use email to communicate with faculty when they ask questions about course content, make requests regarding deadline extensions, or need help with course assignments. Studies suggest that overly informal emails can affect student credibility (Stephens, Houser, & Cowan, 2009) and that electronic messages written by students from abroad are often perceived as rude (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2007). The potential reasons are divergence from native-speaker norms such as lack of elaborate modifications (Hendricks, 2010) or overuse of directness (Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002; Chen, 2006). As a consequence, international students are at risk of being negatively perceived.

Following a belief that more native-like linguistic performance can lead to positive perceptions of international students by faculty (Bolkan & Holmgren, 2012), numerous suggestions for language teachers have been offered in the literature. They range from general principles for pragmatics-focused instruction (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2002; Butler, 2012, Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Rose, 2010) to specific teaching approaches and activities that focus on improving students' ability to write appropriate emails (e.g., Ford, 2003b; Lancaster, 2011).

In this paper, we draw on the existing literature and our own classroom experience to propose activities and materials that help international students become more effective participants in email exchanges during their studies at American colleges and universities. We use examples from students of Korean linguistic and cultural background but also offer suggestions that can be applied in diverse, multicultural and multilingual English as a second language (ESL) classrooms.

Literature Review

Pragmatic Knowledge and Email

Pragmatic knowledge can be defined as the speaker's ability to formulate and comprehend messages that are appropriate in a given context. Language users utilize pragmatic knowledge to relate their utterances to the language-use settings, such as to use and comprehend various registers and to comprehend cultural allusions (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). Pragmatic knowledge helps language users construct linguistic messages that are context-appropriate and polite, and it can be considered "one of the most complex and challenging aspects of communicative competence" (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010, p. 76).

To successfully participate in computer-mediated communication (CMC) with their professors, in particular when making a request of instructor's time or resources, students need to keep in mind the hierarchical relationship between themselves and the addressee, and carefully construct their messages to ensure they are polite. This means that they need to be familiar with the pragmatic norms of the target community, and they need to be able to employ appropriate salutations, as well as spelling, punctuation and grammar conventions. However, as Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) points out, "appropriate models for emails from students to faculty are lacking" (p. 60). This is why it is so important for ESL teachers to specifically focus on netiquette.

Teaching Pragmatics

Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2002) stress the importance of integrating pragmatics in second language instruction and argue that it is language teachers' responsibility to raise language learners' pragmatic and cultural awareness and to sensitize them to politeness strategies available in the target language. Various approaches to teaching pragmatics and politeness have been proposed. Some argue that pragmatics instruction should be combined with grammar teaching (Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012), whereas others propose that it should be integrated into the general language teaching curriculum (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010) or, more specifically, into courses centered on content-based language teaching approaches (Krulatz, 2014).

Research suggests that implicit teaching of pragmatics is not sufficient (Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002; Chen, 2006; Hacking, 2008; Hendricks, 2010). Students, for example, are often unable to simply pick up the target language pragmatic norms from the input they receive. Consequently, various explicit tasks and activities have been proposed.

Hacking (2008) provides a range of activities that target sociopragmatic competence, which she defines as “the ability to select linguistic forms appropriate for a given situation” (p. 110). These include inductive data description activities in which students become researchers, analyzing linguistic language samples collected from native and nonnative speakers and deciding which responses are more appropriate in a given context. Another similar activity focuses on the analysis of speech acts with the goal to discover their structure. For instance, a request can consist of an attention-getter, a request proper, a supportive move, an explanation, a mitigator and an upgrader (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). Students can be asked to compare the structure of a given speech act in their first and second language and reflect on their own performance. Hacking also describes an activity, which she refers to as “exploring pragmatic transfer” (2008, p. 121). The activity aims at familiarizing the students with the concept of transfer and helping them reflect on some potential areas of pragmatic transfer between their first language and the target language. This can be followed by guided practice during which students are encouraged to perform scenarios originally used to collect native speaker data.

Research suggests that teaching netiquette to nonnative speakers can have a positive, lasting impact on the employment of politeness strategies (Ford, 2003b), and web resources with netiquette guidelines abound (see Appendix B). Some specific activities that focus on netiquette for international students have been suggested as well. For instance, Ford (2003a) describes an activity appropriate for intermediate to advanced ESL students. First, emails are collected from students in response to a prompt that requires them to write a high-stakes request to a fictitious professor. The instructor then selects a few emails that contain typical areas of difficulty and uses these to guide a class discussion on netiquette. Lancaster (2011) proposes a complete lesson plan that includes brainstorming the characteristics of a formal email with the students, guided email writing practice with a partner, and a whole-class discussion about potential areas for improvement in the emails written by the class. Nevertheless, there are few ready-to-use materials that engage students in active learning, and most of the resources we have been able to identify simply consist of an explicit presentation of prescriptive netiquette rules.

Email Samples and Areas of Difficulty for Korean Learners of English

As instructors working with ESL students, we have identified several areas of difficulty that they can encounter when writing emails. The challenges that this paper addresses include (a) culture norms and pragmatic choices; (b) formal and informal writing conventions including capitalization and punctuation; (c) forms of address and composition of subject lines; and (d) directness. We use email samples from Korean ESL students selected from a personal email collection. The names of the students have been replaced with pseudonyms, and any information that could lead to identification of the authors has been removed or modified.

Cultural Norms and Pragmatic Choices

When communicating with others, language users make linguistic choices based upon their cultural norms (i.e., traditions, customs, beliefs, values, and thought patterns), which are shared by a group of people and which influence their behaviors (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). In other words, “the norms of the community tend to make certain pragmatic behavior more or less preferred or appropriate in a given context by speakers in that community” (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010, p. 13). This notion suggests that learning a different language entails learning the cultural norms of the language speakers. This is often challenging for ESL students, especially since the cultural norms are seldom explicitly taught. Often, when ESL students translate what they would have said in their languages into English literally, it may result in negative transfer and affect the listener in an unintended way. Email 1 is a case in point.

> *Email 1.* Example of differences in cultural norms.
>
> Subject: About TA
>
> Dear. Professor Eldrdge K.P.
>
> Hello, I'm Hye-jin Song who is an international student to U. I'm writing with regard to TA in your Korean class. I wanna know if I can be TA. By teaching Korean to my friends who are interested in Korea and Korean, I have taken courage of teaching Korean. In addition, I have wanted to help some students who want to learn about Korean, and to contribute to introduce Korean culture! also, I want to be a teacher after graduate. If you think I lack Korean teaching skill, I'll also study in a way to teach Korean before helping them.
>
> I would be grateful if you permit to be TA. I'm looking forward to hearing you.
>
> Your sincerely,
>
> Hye-jin Song

The student in this email shows her interest in becoming a teaching assistant (TA) in a Korean class. She displays her confidence in the ability to teach Korean indirectly by stating that she has some experience teaching her friends. However, she also contradicts this by mentioning her lack of Korean teaching skills. In the Korean culture, confidence may be perceived as arrogance. Being influenced by Confucianism, which considers modesty an essential virtue of group-oriented human communication (Kim, 2003), Koreans consider *gyomson* (겸손, “modesty”) an important cultural norm. Whereas Koreans would more likely perceive the author of this message as humble, American recipients may get an impression that she lacks in confidence. As a result of this failure to make appropriate pragmatic choices in accordance with U.S. cultural norms, the student is likely not to receive a post as a TA.

Writing Conventions

Writing conventions vary across languages. As the term suggests, the ways in which written varieties of languages employ the rules of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization depend on what is commonly agreed upon or believed to be correct. There is thus no empirically based support for why in English the Oxford comma should be used, or why in Korean there are no capital letters. Nevertheless, Korean learners of English are expected to place a comma immediately before a coordinating conjunction in a series of three or more items and to learn the rules of capitalization. Learning to use the conventions of written language which differ from one's native language has been shown to pose significant challenges for learners (Doughty & Long, 2003). Email 2 illustrates some areas of difficulty for Korean learners of English.

Email 2. Example of differences in writing conventions.

Subject: about TA

hi. professor eldredge.

my name is minjung lee.

i am studying at the U.

my major is international studies.

i just found your intermediate class this fall semester.

i am interesting in the TA for your class.

so, if i can, what should i do?

thank you.

best.

It can be inferred that the student may not be aware of how capitalization correlates with forming formality in English, as such punctuation features do not exist in the Korean writing system. In addition, this student begins each sentence with a new line, which is a common pattern that can be observed in Korean CMC. Lack of capitalization and incorrect punctuation are often associated with text messaging and carelessness, and this student is risking being negatively stereotyped as someone who does not take the time to revise and edit a message to a person of higher status.

Forms of Address and Subject Lines

A problem often encountered by ESL students is how to address the recipient of an email. Forms of address are complex and vary widely across languages and cultures since sociolinguistic and contextual parameters must be considered and appropriately applied (Formentelli, 2009). For example, it is most common for Korean students to address their teachers using titles (e.g., teacher). Other combinations such as teacher's last name and title (e.g., Park teacher), or a full name (last name and first name) and title (e.g., Park Koeun teacher) are also acceptable, while addressing teachers by first names is perceived as extremely rude.

In the United States, the ways in which teachers prefer to be addressed vary. While some teachers want to be addressed by their academic title and last name, others prefer informal styles of address, which can be confusing for foreign students. As Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) asserts, "if this issue is a difficult one among native speakers of a language, it becomes even more complex when correspondents from different cultures are involved" (p. 3197). Consequently, explicit attention should be given to forms of address in ESL classrooms.

Research confirms that student choices of address forms vary considerably (Bjørge, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Formentelli, 2009). Sample emails we have received from Korean ESL students confirm this finding. They include salutations as varied as "Dear.

Professor Eldrdge K.P.," "Dear. Kona Eldredge," "Dear, Professor Eldredge," "hi. professor eldredge.," or simply "Hi." Thus, it appears that how to write an email subject line can be a challenge for international students. Email 3 illustrates this issue.

Email 3. Example of differences in forms of address and subject lines.

Subject: Hi, my name is Jun

Hi,

This is Jun and I was wondering that is any opportunity that I can be a TA in your Korean class next semester? . . . I would love to discuss face to face about this. I hope I hear from you near future. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jun

The author of Email 3 used the subject line to identify himself to the faculty. He likely did not realize that an effective subject line should include the purpose of the email. Chen (2014) asserts that inappropriate subject lines could lead to a negative impression of senders by their recipients.

Directness

The use of directness and indirectness varies among languages and cultures. Research suggests, however, that beginning and intermediate language learners tend to overuse direct request strategies such as want statements and imperatives, which can be perceived as less polite if used with an interlocutor of a higher social status (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1996). This is illustrated in Email 4.

Email 4. Example of differences in directness.

Subject: Korean TA

Dear, Professor Eldredge,

My name is Minsun Kim. I'm Korean international student in University of Utah.

I want to be Teaching Assistant in Korean class. My major is Linguistic and Communication (Double major)

I want to be a Korean TA in your class. Please let me know what should I prepare and what should I do.

I will wait your reply.

Sincerely,

The author of this message employs a direct requestive strategy three times. There are two want statements in the email and one imperative. Even though the imperative is modified by a lexical hedge *please*, the message may still be perceived as somewhat rude because in English, direct strategies are more commonly used by interlocutors of equal status.

Classroom Approaches and Materials

The examples above illustrate potential areas of difficulty for Korean learners of English who engage in CMC with their professors. This section presents a sequence of activities that can be used as a complete lesson plan, or selectively, to foster international students' sensitivity to American politeness norms and to improve their ability to successfully participate in formal email exchanges.

Ishihara and Cohen (2010) point out that the following cognitive and social frameworks are relevant to second language pragmatic development: the language socialization theory, the input hypothesis, the noticing hypothesis, and the output hypothesis (p. 101). We refer to these frameworks below as we justify the use of specific activities.

Activity 1

According to language socialization theory, acquiring a new language goes along with learning about the social practices of the target community. The process of socialization is a gradual one, and it does not necessarily culminate in convergence to, or following of, all social pragmatic norms. In fact, some learners deliberately diverge from the cultural and linguistic routines of the target community. Thus, it is important to understand that language socialization should be a bidirectional learning process that involves both the language learners and the native speakers (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

In this vein, the first activity focuses on recognizing the differences in linguistic and cultural norms between the learners' first language and English. Using an infographic from the web article "Email Etiquette in Different Countries" (Cowan, 2015), the teacher leads a discussion about email writing conventions across cultures. Students are then asked to identify similarities and differences between emails in their first language and English. The activity is an enriching cultural experience for all students in class as well as the teacher, who can better understand students' areas of difficulty.

Activity 2

The important role of input in second language acquisition is undisputable: students need to be exposed to examples of target language because they are expected to successfully produce it. Ishihara and Cohen (2010) suggest including research-based information into pragmatics instruction to provide students with authentic language models. In this activity, the teacher begins by examining various politeness strategies using examples from empirical research (e.g., Biesenbah-Lucas, 2007; Ogiermann, 2009). It may be useful to prepare a short, simplified, research-based text that summarizes some politeness feature in English, for example typical requestive strategies used in emails by native speakers. After reading and discussing the text, the students are asked to revise sentences that may be considered impolite.

Activity 3

This activity is rooted in the notion of noticing as an important factor in second language acquisition (Schmidt, 2001). According to the noticing hypothesis, language learners need to consciously attend to pragmatic information in the input if the learning of pragmatics is to take place. In this particular activity (see Appendix A), the teacher uses an inductive approach that raises students' pragmatic awareness by guiding them in the process of discovering rules and making generalizations. Students are presented with samples of formal and informal emails and asked to identify linguistic features that are formal and informal. It is important that the students provide justifications and explanations of their decisions and that the activity culminates in a teacher-led discussion so that consensus is reached.

Activity 4

According to the output hypothesis, language learners are more likely to notice gaps in their language system if they produce language forms in interaction (Swain, 1998). Output tasks focused on various pragmatic features create opportunities for language learners to produce utterances that are appropriate in the context. In Activity 4, students are instructed to compose and revise emails with a focus on politeness using the knowledge they have gained from the previous activities. During this stage, students can improve their own emails, participate in a peer-review session, or be assigned emails selected in advance by the teacher. They can also receive explicit individual feedback.

Conclusion

Participating in CMC can be a real challenge for undergraduate ESL students on American campuses. Models of polite emails are not readily available, and email writing conventions and English politeness norms are rarely addressed in ESL classrooms. Research findings suggest that explicit instruction in email pragmatics has a positive effect on the ability to write polite email messages, including the use of certain structural and pragmatic features. However, netiquette instruction has to be carefully designed, as research also indicates that explicit teaching may result in the overuse of politeness features in email messages (Ford, 2003b).

In this paper, we specifically discussed potential areas of difficulty for Korean ESL learners. We have provided examples of linguistic choices that may prevent successful CMC, and suggested activities that support the development of pragmatic knowledge, which enables English language learners to successfully communicate with their professors via email. The activities are rooted in four strands identified as crucial in pragmatics instruction, namely the socialization theory, the input hypothesis, the noticing hypothesis, and the output hypothesis (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). As effective employment of politeness strategies can lead to positive perceptions of students' competence (Bolkan & Holmgren, 2012), it is crucial that ESL students across American campuses are provided adequate instruction and guidance to help them develop sociopragmatic competence in English.

References

Bachman, L., & Palmer, A. (2010). *Language assessment in practice.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1996). Pragmatics and language teaching: Bringing pragmatics and pedagogy together. In L. Bouton (Ed.), *Pragmatics and language learning.* Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, Division of English as an International Language.

Bardovi-Harlig, K. & Mahan-Taylor, R. (2002, July). Introduction to teaching pragmatics. *English Teaching Forum, 41*(3), 37–39.

Biesenbach-Lucas, S. (2007). Students writing emails to faculty: An examination of e-politeness among native and non-native speakers of English. *Language Learning and Technology, 11*(2), 59–81.

Biesenbach-Lucas, S., & Weasenforth, D. (2002). Virtual office hours: Negotiation strategies in electronic conferencing. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 15*(2), 147–165.

Bjørge, A. (2007). Power distance in English lingua franca e-mail communication. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 17*(1), 60–80.

Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Bolkan, S., & Holmgren, J. L. (2012). “You are such a great teacher and I hate to bother you but...”: Instructors' perceptions of students and their use of email messages with varying politeness strategies. *Communication Education, 61*(3), 253–270.

Butler, R. E. (2012). Politeness is more than ‘please.’ Teaching email requests. *ORTESOL Journal, 29*, 12–20.

Chen, C-F. E. (2006). The development of e-mail literacy: From writing to peers to writing to authority figures. *Language Learning and Technology, 10*(2), 35–55.

Chen, Y. (2014). Understanding the development of Chinese EFL learners’ email literacy through exploratory practice. *Language Teaching Research*, 1–16. doi: 10.1177/1362168814562014

Cowan, A. (2015, April 4). Email Etiquette in Different Countries. Retrieved from http://www.business2community.com/infographics /email-etiquette-different-countries-infographic-01197474

Doughty, C. J., & Long, M. H. (2003). *The handbook of second language acquisition.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Economidou-Kogetsidis, M. (2011). “Please answer me as soon as possible”: Pragmatic failure in non-native speakers' e-mail requests to faculty. *Journal of Pragmatics, 43*(13), 3193–3215.

Félix-Brasdefer, J. C., & Cohen, A. D. (2012). Teaching pragmatics in the foreign language classroom: Grammar as a communicative resource. *Hispania, 95*(4), 650–669.

Ford, S. (2003a). “Dear Mr. Shawn”: A lesson in e-mail pragmatics (netiquette). *TESOL Journal, 12*(1), 39–40.

Ford, S. (2003b). The use of pragmatics in e-mail requests made by second language learners of English. Paper presented at the 5th Annual Conference of the Japanese Society for Language Sciences. Tokyo, Japan (pp. 143–162). Retrieved from http://www2.hawaii.edu/~sford/research/jsls5.pdf

Formentelli, M. (2009). Address strategies in a British Academic setting. *Pragmatics, 19*(2), 179–196.

Hacking, J. (2008). Socio-pragmatic competence in Russian: How input is not enough. In Katz, S. & Watzinger-Tharp, J. (Eds.) *AAUSC 2008: Conceptions of L2 grammar: Theoretical approaches and their application in the L2 classroom.* Florence, KY: Heinle.

Hendricks, B. (2010). An experimental study of native speaker perceptions of nonnative request modification in e-mails in English. *Intercultural Pragmatics, 7*(2), 221–255.

Ishihara, N., & Cohen, A. (2010). *Teaching and learning pragmatics. Where language and culture meet.* Harlow, UK: Longman Applied Linguistics.

Kim, S. (2003). Korean cultural codes and communication. *International Area Review, 6*(1), 93–114.

Krulatz, A. (2014). Integrating pragmatics instruction into a content based classroom. *ORTESOL Journal, 31*, 19–25.

Lancaster, N. (2011). Teaching Email Writing to Non-Native Speakers of English. *ITJ, 8*(1), 75–83.

Ogiermann, E. (2009). Politeness and in-directness across cultures: A comparison of English, German, Polish and Russian requests. *Journal of Politeness Research, 5*(2), 189–216.

Rose, M. (2010). Grammar in the real world: Enhancing grammar lessons with pragmatics. *Hispania, 95*(4), 670–680.

Schmidt, R. W. (2001). Attention. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Cognition and second language instruction.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2000). *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures.* London, UK: Continuum.

Stephens, K. K., Houser, M. L., & Cowan, R. L. (2009). R U Able to Meat Me: The impact of students' overly casual email messages to instructors. *Communication Education, 58*(3), 303–326.

Swain, M. (1998). Focus on form through conscious reflection. In C. Doughty & J. Williams (Eds.), *Focus on from in classroom second language acquisition.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Appendix A

Activity 3: Noticing hypothesi

Activity:	Formal and informal emails
Objectives:	Students will be able to successfully identify the elements of formal emails and differentiate between formal and informal emails.
Materials:	Handout 1 (Formal and informal emails) Handout 2 (Guidelines for writing formal emails)
Time:	Approximately 60 minutes
Procedure:	1. The teacher distributes Handout 1. 2. In pairs or small groups, students analyze each email and identify features that make them formal or informal. They provide reasons for their decisions. 3. Using Handout 2, the teacher guides a discussion: compare and contrast findings. 4. The teacher provides individual feedback as appropriate.

Handout 1: Formal and informal emails

In pairs or small groups, analyze the two emails. Identify features that make them “formal” or “informal” and provide the reasons why.

Steve’s Email

Subject: Hi. my name is Steve.

dear. professor

I’m sorry but I can’t finish my paper by tomorrow.

We have too much homework, so I can’t keep up with everything.

Can I turn it in next week?

Please permit me to do so.

I’m sorry to bother you.

I will wait for your reply.

thanx!

Jessica's Email

Subject: Paper Extension

Dear Professor Lopez,

This is Jessica from your Intermediate ESL course (ESL 2000).

I am currently taking four courses and feel quite overwhelmed with the amount of work that I am dealing with. I am aware that our paper for this course is due tomorrow; however, I am not confident I will be able to finish it on time. Due to this, I was wondering if you would consider extending the deadline for me. This would allow me to put more time and effort into the paper instead of rushing through it. I would greatly appreciate it if you could grant this request. Please let me know what your thoughts are when your schedule would allow for a response.

Thank you,

Jessica Lee

Handout 2: Guidelines for writing formal emails (adapted from Ford, 2003)

- Use a proper greeting and address the recipient appropriately.

  (e.g., Dear Professor Last name)
- Write brief and specific subject lines.
- Introduce yourself in the opening line of the message unless you are sure the recipient will recognize you from your email address alone.
- Use proper punctuation, spelling, and grammar.
- Remain polite, even if the topic is controversial.
- Do not get too emotional or personal.
- Keep your message brief and to the point, but not so brief that it sounds terse and rude.
- Provide the context for the message without going into unnecessary detail, ask specific questions, and do not wander off the topic.
- Ask for a reply at the recipient's convenience, keeping in mind some people may not check their email accounts frequently.
- End your message with a proper closing that includes your name and affiliation. (e.g, Thank you, Best Regards, Sincerely)

Appendix B

Resources

Karlovich, N. (2012). Take-away tips for acadmic email [PDF file]. Retrieved from http://twp.duke.edu/uploads/media_items/academic-email-tips.original.pdf

Purdue OWL: Email etiquette for students. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://owl.english .purdue.edu/owl/resource/694/1/

Stolley, K., & Brizee, A. (2010, April 17). Purdue OWL: Email etiquette. Retrieved from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/636/01/

Promoting Pragmatic Competence: Focus on Refusals

Anna Krulatz
Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Tülay Dixon
University of Utah Asia Campus

Being able to communicate successfully in a second language (L2) depends on not only having the knowledge of grammar but also on the ability to select context-appropriate language. Thus, pragmatics can prove to be one of the most difficult aspects of language to acquire, even for advanced L2 speakers, and it plays a crucial role in L2 teaching. Considerable amount of attention has been devoted to teaching pragmatic skills in second and foreign language classrooms in recent years (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). This paper represents a step towards strengthening the link between research on interlanguage pragmatics and L2 classroom practices. Focusing specifically on the speech act of refusal, we illustrate the potential areas of difficulty for second language learners. After a review of current literature on teaching refusals, a qualitative analysis of selected examples of refusals produced by Korean and Norwegian English as a second language (ESL) learners is presented. Specific pedagogical approaches and strategies for teaching L2 refusals are offered, including implications for curriculum development.

Anna Krulatz (anna.m.krulatz@ntnu.no) is Associate Professor of English at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Norway, where she works with pre- and in-service English teachers. Her main interests include second language teaching methodology with focus on interlanguage pragmatics, content-based instruction, multilingualism, and teacher education.

Tülay Dixon (tulay.orucu@utah.edu) is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Department of Writing and Rhetoric Studies at the University of Utah Asia Campus in South Korea. She teaches academic writing courses to freshman year students. Her research interests lie in course and curriculum development, technology integrated language teaching, and pragmatics.

Most second language learners (L2), once they find themselves in the target language environment, experience the anxiety associated with the need to communicate with other native and nonnative speakers. They may feel that they possess insufficient grammar and lexical means to fully participate in interactions, and that they do not have native-like intuitions about what is appropriate, polite, and acceptable in the target culture. This is where pragmatics, the knowledge of “when to speak, when not, . . . what to talk about with whom, when, where, [and] in what manner” (Hymes, 1972, p. 60), plays a role in the ability to communicate successfully in a second language.

Speech acts have been extensively studied to understand how people of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds use language in context. Studies have demonstrated that how speech acts are performed may vary across languages and cultures (Beckers, 1999; Chen, 1996; Kinjo, 1987; Stevens, 1993). Nonnative speakers of a language might respond to utterances in the target language the same way they would in their first language (L1), which might result in more serious communication breakdowns than those resulting from grammatical errors (Linde, 2009).

Teaching pragmatics, therefore, has received attention in L2 research; however, teaching practices are not always grounded in current research findings (Cohen, 2012). This paper focuses on the speech act of refusing, a face-threatening act that involves a complex sequence of semantic formulas, and it aims to strengthen the link between research and L2 teaching practices.

Literature Review

Pragmatic Knowledge

The ability to perform speech acts requires various types of language knowledge. In Canale and Swain’s (1980) model of communicative competence, performance of speech acts belongs to sociolinguistic competence. According to Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell (1995), pragmatic knowledge belongs to sociocultural competence, which allows language users to consider the social and cultural context of utterances, and to actional competence, which is responsible for comprehending and expressing communicative intent. Bachman and Palmer (1996; 2010) propose that the knowledge of speech acts is situated within language use, the component of language competence which allows us to create and interpret meanings in context.

Refusal Strategies

Performance of refusals can vary greatly depending on sociolinguistic factors such as the context and the status of those involved in the interaction, and it requires appropriate strategies to minimize the negative effect on the interlocutor. Refusals can involve a long sequence of interactional exchanges. At the same time, the linguistic means used to perform them can vary depending on whether one is refusing an invitation, an offer, or a request (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Salazar, Safont & Codina, 2009). Refusal strategies can be classified into direct strategies, indirect strategies and adjuncts to refusals. Direct strategies include a blunt *no* and negation (e.g., “I can’t” or “I don’t think so”). Indirect strategies include suggesting other options, explanations, and avoidance. Adjuncts to refusals are external modifications of the speech act. They include expressions of gratitude, consent, empathy, or a positive opinion about the proposal before turning it down.

Cross-cultural studies suggest that the basic types of refusal strategies are universal, yet the specific content and frequency of the strategies vary across cultures. In some cultures, such as Chinese and German, speakers tend to use indirect refusals (Beckers, 1999; Chen, 1996), whereas direct strategies are preferred in cultures such as Polish (Rakowicz, 2009). Speakers of English tend to employ softeners such as “I’m afraid . . .” frequently, while Egyptian speakers of Arabic do not (Stevens, 1993).

Unlike other speech acts such as requests, complaints, and apologies, refusals have received little attention in research on interlanguage pragmatics. Studies to date have found that nonnative speakers use different semantic content in the head act than native speakers (Chang, 2009), employ direct and indirect strategies in nonnative-like ways (Jung & Kim, 2008), and may experience difficulties selecting appropriate linguistic means for high-stakes refusals in situations in which the social distance between the interlocutors is high (Taguchi, 2007). Several studies (Beebe et al., 1990; Kwon, 2004) have also documented occurrences of pragmatic transfer in L2 speakers’ refusals in English.

Refusals in English, Korean and Norwegian

In English, direct refusal formulas are preferred, but these are often assisted by reasons and expressions of gratitude or a positive opinion (Kwon, 2004). Native speakers of English also tend to use softeners such as “I’m afraid . . .” or “I don’t know if . . .” (Stevens, 1993). When uttering refusals in response to invitations, they often express gratitude (Nelson, Al-Batal & Echols, 1998), and overall they tend to provide specific reasons for refusals (Beebe et al., 1990).

Very few studies to date have examined refusals in Korean. Kwon (2004) found that Koreans prefer direct refusal strategies, as well as providing reasons and using alternative statements. They also use extensive mitigation (i.e., linguistic devices that allow one to soften the impact of a face-threatening speech act) such as providing reasons and apologies before uttering a refusal. As Kwon (2004) notes, these pragmatic features of Korean refusals “may cause pragmatic failure when Korean learners of English rely on their native culture-specific refusal strategies” (p. 339).

To our knowledge, no studies of refusals in Norwegian, or another closely related Scandinavian language such as Swedish or Danish, have been conducted to date. As a result, our discussion here focuses on the more general characteristics and politeness norms in Norwegian. Very generally speaking, in the Norwegian culture, which is characterized by egalitarian individualism, there is a strong focus on equality between the interlocutors (Awedyk, 2003; Dittrich, Johansen & Kulinskaya, 2011). In addition, a strong emphasis on objectivity and correctness is a prominent feature of the Norwegian culture (Horbowicz, 2010), as are peace and quiet (Gullestad, 1989) and focus on harmony and avoidance of conflict (Elster, 2006). As a result, Norwegians tend to employ conversational strategies that allow them to minimize the possible imposition on the interlocutor (Rygg, 2012).

Data Collection and Participants

To illustrate the potential challenge areas in production of refusals for Korean and Norwegian learners of English, we have selected samples from data collected in a large intercultural pragmatics project. The project, currently under way, aims to compare refusals produced by Korean, Norwegian, and Turkish learners of English.

The data in this project have been collected using a written, anonymous, online discourse completion task (DCT), a commonly used data collection method to elicit a particular speech act developed by Blum-Kulka (1982). In DCTs, participants are first given a written scenario that includes information regarding the setting and social statuses and then asked to produce a certain speech act—*refusals* in this study—by completing a dialogue, writing an email or a text. The task in this study consisted of two scenarios regarding refusals: one that elicited refusals to an invitation from a friend, and another in which the respondents were asked to refuse a request by a professor (see Appendix). Participants were given a brief description of the situations and asked to respond following their intuitions.

To date, 41 Korean and 30 Norwegian respondents have participated in the study. The Korean participants were freshman year students at a U.S. university in South Korea and scored at least 80 on TOEFL IBT as part of the requirements for admission into the university. The Norwegian participants were freshmen students enrolled in an English-medium teacher training course at a Norwegian University. Participation in the survey was voluntary, but the students were offered an extra credit in their writing or grammar course for completing the survey.

Data were analyzed using the framework proposed by Salazar et al. (2009). In each response, the head refusal was identified and classified as either direct or indirect. In addition, adjunct strategies were labeled using the categories such as options, explanations, advice and criticism. Below, we illustrate three potential areas of difficulty for the two groups of study participants, namely inappropriate choice of main refusal strategies, overuse of adjunct strategies, and underuse of adjunct strategies.

Results

Choice of Main Refusal Strategies

One of the main areas of difficulty we identified in our data pertains to the use of main refusal strategies. In English, direct refusal strategies are preferred. In contrast, our data contain several examples of indirect refusals, including plain indirect strategies, reasons and explanations, and statements of regret and apology. Direct strategies have been identified as well, but were in some cases blunt and not accompanied by any external modifications. Table 1 below illustrates these issues.

Table 1: Head Acts

Example	***Strategy type***	***Participant's background***
I would love to attend to your party, but I am really sorry that I will not be able to make it.	Plain indirect	Korean
I'm so sorry, but I'm going to Paris on Wednesday.	Plain indirect	Norwegian
I'm sorry that I cannot participate in your party due to my appointment in that day.	Indirect + reason	Korean
But I really don't feel confident talking up in front of so many students. Sorry!	Indirect + apology	Korean
No.	Direct (blunt)	Norwegian

Overuse and Misuse of Adjunct Strategies

Some of the responses in our data displayed an elaborate use of adjunct strategies. While it has to be noted that it is not unusual for native speakers to provide many reasons, especially when refusing a friend, some of the reasons found in our data could be interpreted as inappropriate, or exceedingly informal or elaborate (see Table 2). While in English, expressions of gratitude and reasons are commonly used as adjunct strategies, the nonnative speakers in our study employed strategies such as advice, criticism and elaborate reasons with potentially excessive amount of detail, in particular if there is a status difference between the interlocutors. The majority of such elaborate responses were found in the data obtained from the Korean participants.

Table 2: Overuse and Misuse of Adjunct Strategies

Example	**Strategy type**	**Participant's background**
I think the best way I can help them is to meet them in person and give them advice face-to-face.	Advice	Korean
I have a part time job from 6 to 10. My boss might be angry if I don't show up. I already missed two times of work, and I might lose my job if I miss this time again.	Excessive detail	Korean
I am afraid I don't consider the suggestion is the best way to help those students.	Criticism	Korean
[T]hank you for giving me the oppurtunity to come to your class. I hope you proseed your good work as a teacher, and i'm sure your students will be less anxious as time goes by!	Gratitude + advice	Norwegian

Underuse of Adjunct Strategies

Unlike the examples above, which contained extensive external modifications of refusals, some responses were very brief, consisting only of the head act, or the head act with minimal external modifications. The head acts were performed using direct strategies, which are preferred in English, or indirect strategies, e.g., regret, and the adjunct strategies consisted of no more than one sentence (see Table 3). Such refusals may be perceived as insufficiently justified. We want to note that these extremely brief refusals were only found in the responses provided by Norwegian participants.

Table 3: Underuse of Adjunct Strategies

Example	Strategy type	Participant's background
I'm sorry but I will not be able to make it!	Direct	Norwegian
Thanks for the invite to your party, but I can't come. Enjoy!	Direct	Norwegian
Thank you, but next week I'm already overloaded with things to do. My final exam is just around the corner so I have to study. Sorry I couldn't help, good luck to your students.	Indirect + reason + apology	Norwegian
I´m sorry, but I have to say no.	Apology + direct	Norwegian

Discussion

Teaching pragmatics

The excerpts above illustrate various challenges L2 learners may face when participating in interactions in English that call for employment of refusals. As pragmatic norms in any language display a great degree of variation, and pragmatic competence in an L2 takes a substantial amount of time to develop, "[w]ithout instruction, differences in pragmatics show up in the English of learners regardless of their first language background or language proficiency" (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003, p. 38). Thus, the importance of explicit teaching of pragmatics to second and foreign language learners has been underscored in literature (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). In fact, it has been argued that pragmatics need to be taught from beginning levels of language instruction (Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012).

Various inductive and deductive strategies for teaching pragmatics have been proposed. According to Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003), the use of authentic materials and providing learners with input before they are asked to analyze target language pragmatic norms and produce output are two important criteria for successful instruction of pragmatics. Rose (2012) suggests that pragmatics instruction should be integrated with grammar teaching, while Cohen and Sykes (2013) outline an approach that aims at helping learners develop strategies for learning pragmatics so that they can "deal with both common patterns and variety [in target language pragmatic behavior] simultaneously through observation, explicit inquiry, and experimentation" (p. 94).

It is important that focus on pragmatics should guide not only individual lessons, but whole language syllabi. Ishihara (2010) stresses the importance of integrating pragmatics into general curricula and suggests that it could potentially be taught along a range of topics. Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen (2012) point out that pragmatics-focused instruction can easily be integrated into structural syllabi, arguing that such an approach provides language learners with useful communicative resources. In the similar venue, Krulatz (2014) postulates that pragmatics should be a central component of content-based language teaching (CBLT) because students may be more motivated to raise their pragmatic awareness when the main focus of class is communication about meaningful content (p. 24).

Teaching Refusals

Some specific suggestions on teaching refusals can be found in the existing literature. Fernández-Guerra (2013) suggests using snippets from TV series as they provide students with input that exemplifies how native speakers perform this speech act in relation to sociopragmatic factors (e.g., social status, politeness, setting). He acknowledges that the conversations in TV series are previously written scripts resulting in input that might be criticized as non-authentic. Nevertheless, he argues that TV series are “made by native speakers, for native speakers to hear, and so consists of authentic language” (Baddock, 1996, p. 20, as cited in Fernández-Guerra, 2013).

Martínez-Flor and Beltrán-Palanques (2013), and Usó-Juan (2013) also recognize the potential of audiovisuals in pragmatics teaching, and in their instructional approaches to teaching refusals, they aim to address three factors that are crucial for pragmatics learning: exposure to input, opportunities for producing output, and feedback. The first phase of Martínez-Flor and Beltrán-Palanques’s (2013) four-phase inductive–deductive approach to teaching refusals focuses on raising students’ pragmalinguistics awareness. During this phase, refusal strategies employed in selected scenes from movies are compared to the ones used by the students and explained using Salazar et al.’s (2009) taxonomy. The second phase aims to increase awareness on sociopragmatic factors such as social distance, power, degree of imposition, gender, and age, and to explain how these factors might affect the realization of refusals. The third phase provides students with opportunities in which they can perform refusals using the knowledge they gained in the first two phases, and during the final phase teachers give feedback to students on their performance of the speech act of refusing.

Drawing conclusions from our findings, we would like to suggest that students of various linguistic backgrounds may benefit from individualized instruction geared to their specific language needs. Our data indicate that Korean and Norwegian students face different areas of difficulty, a fact that language teachers should take into consideration when planning instruction. Thus, it may be useful to conduct awareness-raising activities in which students reflect on their own pragmatic performance and compare it to native-speaker models.

Conclusion

Performing refusals in a second or foreign language is challenging because pragmatic norms vary among languages and cultures. As the excerpts obtained from the Korean and Norwegian participants in our study illustrate, difficulties may arise concerning not only the selection of appropriate head act and adjunct strategies, but also the linguistic means to perform them. While Korean students may employ an excessive amount of strategies and thus come across as overly polite and subservient, Norwegian users of English, who either employ very few request modifications or select informal language forms, can be perceived as too direct and therefore overly familiar or even rude.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that the findings presented in this paper are preliminary as the data collection process has not yet been finalized. In addition, despite several examples of problems with L2 refusals, our data also contain a wide range of refusals which could be deemed perfectly appropriate.

Notwithstanding its limitations, this paper has important implications for L2 pedagogy. Performing speech acts in a foreign language can pose a challenge for language learners, and language teachers can support the development of language learners' pragmatic competence. Research suggests that employment of explicit teaching methods, and, in particular, using inductive approaches in which students discover the pragmatic rules, can be very efficient. We would also like to underscore that it may be beneficial for learners to consider their linguistic and cultural backgrounds and to be guided through the discovery process of the differences in the L1 and L2 pragmatic norms. In doing so, teachers could strengthen the link between the findings from research and the pedagogical practices in the foreign and second language classroom.

References

Awedyk, W. (2003). Request strategies in Norwegian and English. *Folia Scandinavica, 7*, 287–300.

Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (2010). *Language assessment in practice: Developing language assessment and justifying their use in the real world.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Mahan-Taylor, R. (2003, July). Introduction to teaching pragmatics. *English Teaching Forum, 41*(3), 37–39.

Beckers, A. M. (1999). *How to say "no" without saying "no": A study of the refusal strategies of Americans and Germans* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 9942342). Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/304509274?accountid=14677

Beebe, L. M., Takahashi, T., & Uliss-Weltz, R. (1990). Pragmatic transfer in refusals. In R. C. Scarcella, E. Andersen, & S. D. Krashen (Eds.), *Developing communicative competence in a second language* (pp. 55–73). New York, NY: Newbury House.

Blum-Kulka (1982). Learning how to say what you mean in a second language: A study of the speech act performance of learners of Hebrew as a second language. *Applied Linguistics, 3*(1), 29–59.

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, *1*(1), 1–47.

Celce-Murcia, M., Dörnyei, Z., & Thurrell, S. (1995). Communicative competence: A pedagogically motivated model with content specifications. *Issues in Applied Linguistics, 6*(2), 5–35.

Chang, Y. F. (2009). How to say no: An analysis of cross-cultural difference and pragmatic transfer. *Language Sciences, 31*(4), 477–493.

Chen, H. J. (1996). *Cross-cultural comparison of English and Chinese metapragmatics in refusal* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (Order No. 9640110). Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/304300888?accountid=14677

Cohen, A. D. (2012). Teaching pragmatics in the second language classroom. *The European Journal of Applied Linguistics and TEFL, 1*(1), 35–49.

Cohen, A. D., & Sykes, J. M. (2013). Strategy-based learning of pragmatics for intercultural education. In F. Dervin & A. J. Liddicoat (Eds.), *Linguistics for intercultural education* (pp. 87–111). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Dittrich, W. H., Johansen, T., & Kulinskaya, E. (2011). Norms and situational rules of address in English and Norwegian speakers. *Journal of Pragmatics, 43*, 3807–3821.

Elster, J. (2006, November). Mye høflighet, lite kvalitet. *Aftenposten.* Retrieved from http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikker/Mye-hoflighet_-lite-kvalitet-6433659.html

Félix-Brasdefer, J. C., & Cohen, A. D. (2012). Teaching pragmatics in the foreign language classroom: Grammar as a communicative resource. *Hispania, 95*(4), 650–669.

Fernández-Guerra, A. (2013). Using TV series as input source of refusals in the classroom. In P. Salazar-Campillo & O. Martí Arnàndiz, (Eds.), *Refusals in Instructional Contexts and Beyond* (1st ed., pp. 5–23). Amsterdam: Brill Academic Publishers.

Gullestad, M. (1989). *Kultur og hverdagsliv. På sporet av det moderne Norge.* Oslo, NO: Universitetsforlaget.

Horbowicz, P. (2010). How to be Norwegian in talk? Polish-Norwegian interethnic conversation analysis. *Studia Nordica, 6.* Oslo, NO: Novus Press.

Hymes (1972). On communicative competence. In Pride, J. & Holmes, J. (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269–293). Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

Ishihara, N. (2010). Lesson planning and teacher-led reflection. In N. Ishihara & A. Cohen (Eds.) *Teaching and learning pragmatics. Where language and culture meet* (pp. 185–200). Harlow, UK: Longman Applied Linguistics.

Ishihara, N., & Cohen, A. (2010). *Teaching and learning pragmatics. Where language and culture meet.* Harlow, UK: Longman Applied Linguistics.

Jung, E. H., & Kim, Y. J. (2008). First language transfer in pragmatic use by second language speakers. *Korean Journal of Linguistics, 33*, 517–543.

Kasper, G., & Rose, K. (2002). *Pragmatic development in a second language.* Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

Kinjo, H. (1987). On refusals of invitations and requests in English and Japanese. *Journal of Asian Culture, 1,* 83–106.

Krulatz, A. (2014). Integrating pragmatics instruction in a content-based classroom. *ORTESOL Journal, 31,* 19–25.

Kwon, J. (2004). Expressing refusals in Korean and American English. *Multilingua, 23*(4), 339–364.

Linde, A. (2009) How polite can you get?: A comparative analysis of interlanguage pragmatic knowledge in Spanish and Moroccan EFL university students, *Porta Linguarum, 12,* 133–147.

Martínez-Flor, A., & Beltrán-Palanques, V. (2013). Teaching refusal strategies in the Foreign language classroom: A focus on inductive-deductive treatments. *Journal of English Studies*, *11,* 41–67.

Nelson, G. L., Al-Batal, M., & Echols, E. (1996). Arabic and English compliment responses: Potential for pragmatic failure. *Applied Linguistics, 17*(4), 411–432.

Rakowicz, A. (2009). *Ambiguous invitations: The interlanguage pragmatics of Polish English language learners* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations &

Theses Global. (Order No. 3346268). Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/304953123?accountid=14677

Rose, M. (2012). Grammar in the real world: Enhancing grammar lessons with pragmatics. *Hispania, 95*(4), 670–680.

Rygg, K. (2012). (In)directness – distance or proximity. *SYNAPS – A Journal of Professional Communication, 27*, 54–55.

Salazar, P., Safont, M., & Codina, V. (2009). Refusal strategies: A proposal from a sociopragmatic approach. *Revista Electrónica de Lingüística Aplicada, 8,* 139–150.

Stevens, P. B. (1993). The pragmatics of 'no!': Some strategies in English and Arabic. *IDEAL 6,* 87–112.

Taguchi, N. (2007). Task difficulty in oral speech act production. *Applied Linguistics, 28*(1), 113–135.

Usó-Juan, E. (2013). Effects of metapragmatic instruction on EFL learners' production of refusals. In P. Salazar-Campillo & O. Martí Arnàndiz, (Eds.), *Refusals in Instructional Contexts and Beyond* (1st ed., pp. 65–99). Amsterdam: Brill Academic Publishers.

Appendix

DCT scenarios

Subject: Birthday party invitation

Hi,

It's my birthday next week, and I am having a party to celebrate it. It's going to be next Friday at 7 pm at my house at my house. RSVP by Tuesday to let me know if you can make it. I would love to see you there!

Thomas

Subject: Invitation to give a short presentation

Hi,

This is Professor Johnson—you took my English class last semester. I am emailing you because you wrote an outstanding term paper, and I was wondering if you would be willing to come to my class next week to talk about it. My new students are quite anxious about the paper, and I think it would be nice for them to talk to someone who has already gone through the process. It would not have to be long, perhaps 10–15 minutes. Please let me know if that is something you could do.

Thank you in advance,

Prof. Johnson

Using the Academic Word List to Promote Academic Writing

Mary Martha Savage
Gonzaga University

Teachers today face the complex task of teaching content-based lessons that also support and develop language for English learners in classrooms. The integration of content and language relies on a student's ability to navigate academic language. Research suggests a strong correlation between vocabulary use and academic writing competence utilizing academic language effectively (Douglas, 2013; Kinsella, 2012; Roessingh, 2006). Using the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000), this paper outlines current research on effective strategies for practical teaching of academic vocabulary in classroom settings. This paper then offers a step-by-step approach to enhance students' acquisition of academic vocabulary within the writing process.

Mary Martha Savage (savage@gonzaga.edu) is an associate professor at Gonzaga University in the MA/TESL program. She has over thirty years of teaching experience spanning k–12, immigrant/refugee, and intensive English language programs. Throughout her professional experience, she has shared practical ways to apply research and theory in the classroom.

The English Learner Context

Teachers today face the complex task of teaching content-based lessons that also support and develop language for English learners in classrooms. US and state standards and assessments require understanding the role that language plays with discipline-specific vocabulary, academic engagement in written and oral assignments, and the ability to present arguments based on documented evidence (Fu, 2009). The English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21), a consortium of educational authorities in ten American states, describes the movement to deepen connections between language and content. Washington State and Oregon State are members of this consortium and are expected to comply (ELPA21, n.d.). The integration of content and language relies on a student's ability to navigate academic language. This navigation often goes beyond learning the content to include learning how to discuss and write effectively about that content. Clarifying the role that language plays in content teaching, van Lier and Walqui (2012) suggest, "it is clear that language permeates all the standards, in many ways, even in those cases where the word 'language' is not explicitly mentioned" (p.1).

The challenge is daunting and requires the collaboration of classroom teaching strategies with English language pedagogy. Cummins (2009) describes the traditional approach of classroom teachers as waiting until the students learned English before writing or discussing the content. Cummins calls the impact of this approach on writing "the poverty of the writing experience" (p. ix). Hill and Miller (2013) assert that "language has always been the medium of instruction," so a better understanding of the role that academic language plays in the classroom is necessary (p. xi).

Academic Language

Academic language is the high-utility language of school that is used to discuss and write about content (Kinsella, 2012). Academic language allows a student to show his or her understanding of content. It includes discourse and grammatical rules for effective classroom participation in written and oral discussions. It represents a language-across-the-curriculum approach (van Lier & Walqui, 2012) and includes the vocabulary to discuss and write about functions such as comparing/contrasting, synthesizing, and persuading. These authors further describe academic language as "the development of language through perception, interaction, planning, research, discussion, and co-construction of academic products" (p. 4).

Kinsella (2012) describes academic language as words that deserve intense and robust instruction. Kinsella purports use of the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000) as a viable source for vocabulary worthy of vigorous instruction. Coxhead (2014) describes vocabulary as the "central building block for all learners" (p. x). She cites this list as a means of learning and teaching the most frequently used words and phrases to navigate content. These include high-utility academic words and high-utility discipline words within a content area. This approach is supported by Douglas' (2013) study with novice writers. Douglas reports that 2,000 high frequency word families covered almost 88% of the running words in papers assessed as being satisfactory or higher in a first year university setting and that the AWL contributed another 7%. He asserts that utility with these words would be beneficial to English language learners by providing almost 94% of the vocabulary to achieve academic success in writing as they begin to engage in post-secondary studies.

The Academic Word List

The Academic Word List (AWL) was developed by Coxhead (2000) from a corpus of 3.5 million running words of written academic texts. From this corpus, the 2000 most frequently occurring words were eliminated. From the remaining words, 570 word families were created, which make up approximately 10% of academic texts outside of content vocabulary within disciplines. This list is arranged in the order of frequency and divided into sublists. Although no context is given because they represent words that occur across academic disciplines, the AWL represents the language used to discuss those disciplines. Examples from Sublist One include: *analyze, approach, area, assess, assume, authority, available, benefit, concept, consist, constitute, context, contract, create, data, define, derive, distribute, economy, environment.*

Words from the AWL allow students to discuss content in effective and precise ways (Kinsella, 2012). The words are, as Scott, Jamieson-Noel, and Asselin (2003) assert, the way in which students can "gain access to power" in classrooms (p. 269). Coxhead (2014) reiterates the need for instruction to include raising awareness of words and intentionally making connections between words. This is supported in research done by Graves and Watts-Taffe (2002) who argue against trying to teach words one-by-one. They advocate going beyond the explicit teaching of individual words to include word learning strategies and fostering word connections and consciousness. Providing and creating context for vocabulary is essential.

Kinsella (2012) describes the AWL as a tool because comprehension questions from reading texts often embed content vocabulary and academic language. She describes those questions as asking students to discuss a topic with language relevant to themes or concepts not directly used in the text. Examples of comprehension questions from an intermediate level English proficiency reading text with AWL words bolded include: "***Identify** and understand the **elements** of fiction: characters, setting, plot, **themes**; **Scan** a **text** for '**compare** and **contrast**' words"* (Miller & Cohen, 2014, p. 114).

The AWL provides language to participate in class discussions and writing. Comprehension questions also provide multiple encounters in various contexts and encourage students to think deeply about the words (McKeon & Beck, 2004). The irony of teaching vocabulary in traditional ways is that students learn the content vocabulary, but are not taught the language with which to discuss or write about that vocabulary (Kinsella, 2012). The AWL, according to Kinsella, provides instruction in both.

Effective Strategies for Teaching Vocabulary

"For years, second language learners have complained about their lack of vocabulary in their new language" (Folse, 2004, p. v). Scott, Jamieson-Noel and Asselin (2003) examine how vocabulary is taught in twenty-three upper elementary classrooms and find that it primarily consists of mentioning vocabulary and assigning tasks around those words. The researchers assert that this does not meet the standards of teaching vocabulary. Defining mastery is central to the discussion. When is a word or phrase learned? Twaddell (1973) describes the blurry process of learning vocabulary as, "the twilight zone between the darkness of the entire unfamiliarity and the brightness of complete familiarity" (p. 73).

Rod Ellis (1999) highlights the role that interaction plays in the process of learning vocabulary. He expands the concept of interaction to include face-to-face as well as intrapersonal interactions. When meaning is constructed internally in response to socially constructed events, language and vocabulary develop within a multi-layered learning lens of experience. There has to be both instruction from the teacher and practice by the student. In this way, Ellis disagrees with the concepts of modified input. He labels that approach as a deficit lens on the language learner. By bringing language learning into a social and interactive experience, the process highlights the learner's ability to mediate meaning by increasing self-awareness of the process. Graves and Watts-Taffe (2002) support the notion of an interpersonal approach emphasizing the power of discussion. Within this discussion, students meet the language within the discipline-specific context. Lewis (1960) writes, "One understands a word much better if one has met it alive, in its native habitat" (p. 1).

Kinsella (2012) reiterates the use of partnering during discussions to deepen the use of vocabulary. She says that by bringing physical movement into the instruction during the partnering experience, meaning is enhanced through association and conversation. Kinsella reports that vocabulary is best learned through examples rather than exclusively with definitions. Learning happens as students experience vocabulary multiple times and within varied contexts. Salmon (2014) suggests anchor charts to describe word banks be left on walls to recycle instructional objectives, language concepts, and key terminology. Marzano and Pickering (2005) advocate an imagery-based technique combined with meaningful encounters of words, rather than a connection to a limited knowledge of one definition. Kinsella (2012) adds that students must be held accountable to the instruction in explicit ways by requiring practice using vocabulary that has been taught in direct ways. She advocates teacher-mediated instruction that outlined expectations in writing and thinking.

Teacher-mediated instruction includes providing examples of academic language and precision in expressing critical thinking (Kinsella, 2012). McKeon and Beck (2004) advocate direct instruction to deepen and broaden the breadth of information about words and engage in an active process by getting students to "think about the word" (p. 13). These authors describe a successful process of teaching vocabulary including multiple exposures to the contexts in which words are found, a breadth of information about the words, and deep processing by students about those words. The goal of this approach aims at establishing networks of connections through multiple experiences and contexts. These concepts are similar to notions expressed by other researchers (Coxhead, 2014; Ellis, 1999; Fu, 2009; Folse, 2004; Kinsella, 2012).

Teaching vocabulary explicitly while deepening the academic context are concepts central to the approach described below. Providing multiple opportunities to apply vocabulary in a variety of contexts is also important. Relying on the effectiveness of interaction both interpersonally and intra-personally, learning is supported and deepened, particularly when augmenting vocabulary instruction through the use of the AWL.

Workshop: Using the Academic Word List to Promote Academic Writing

The goal of the following activity is to establish networks of connections through written and oral interaction through multiple exposures to contexts. In addition, instruction aims at deep exposure to the breadth of information about words as an ongoing process by students.

The following activity is suggested for all proficiency levels. The content can be adjusted to meet grade-level expectations.

Step One: Explicit Teaching

- Every week, each student is assigned one word from Sublist One of the AWL (explicit teaching)
    - Assignment for students
        - Make a mind map and include the following information:
            - A definition (in your own words)
            - A definition given to you by a native speaker (interaction)
            - Word family members (expanding the context)
            - An illustration of the word (imagery)
            - Use the word in a sentence (applying context)
                - Each week, the topic of the sentence is assigned
                - The topic is taken from current reading assignments
    - Interaction
        - Students bring their mind maps to class
        - Students share their mind maps with peers in an active around-the-room conversation (interaction)
        - Mind maps are scanned and put online for everyone to access
        - Words are written on an anchor chart (word bank) and hung in the room (as a recycling; resource)
    - Assessment
        - Weekly quiz
            - Students use five of the words from the current week and write an in-class paragraph (to ensure explicit accountability)
                - The topic is the same as on the mind map
                - Students can prepare outside the class
                - Spelling and grammar are assessed
    - After repeating this process for a few weeks, quizzes can be broadened in scope to recycle more of the AWL vocabulary to which students have been exposed

Rationale: The explicit focus on AWL allows students a scaffolded approach to increasing academic language (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002; Kinsella, 2012). The interactive component promotes deep learning by bringing peers into the conversation (Ellis, 1999). Assigning the mind map promotes the experience of seeing the vocabulary in a variety of ways which utilize learning styles (Marzano and Pickering, 2004). By limiting the number of vocabulary words, students are given opportunities to apply the words into multiple contexts (McKeon and Beck, 2004).

Step Two: Intentional Contextualization

- Each week, content is presented (in the form of readings or lectures)
    - Students are read a text or listen to a lecture
    - Students answer comprehension questions
        - Students analyze questions in groups and do the following in a scaffolded manner, thinking about words

        - Identify content vocabulary used in the questions
        - Identify academic language used in the questions
        - Identify questions that require simple facts from the text
        - Identify questions that require deeper thinking and analysis
        - Identify ways of answering the text:
            - using AWL
            - incorporating content vocabulary
        - Students write their answers
    - Grading
        - Content (accuracy)
        - Use of content vocabulary
        - Use of academic language
        - Acceptable grammar
    - Students highlight all content/academic language they use before turning in their papers

Rationale: Based on research by Salmon (2005), students are provided with explicit practice in identifying content vocabulary and the academic language to navigate that vocabulary. This approach confronts the challenge for English learners to deconstruct comprehension questions (Kinsella, 2012). By making this intentional, the lesson promotes students' awareness of the reciprocal process of reading and writing by identifying "good vocabulary and the option of borrowing key vocabulary" (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002, p. 150). By raising students' awareness of the language they need, word consciousness is promoted (McKeon and Beck, 2004). Having students actively think about the words they are using promotes active acquisition of language while also helping them to learn content. Analyzing comprehension questions, while promoting critical thinking, also promotes the students' awareness of what is being asked and what the best approaches would be in answering. These are taught explicitly, as Kinsella (2012) suggests.

Step Three: Word Consciousness

- Anchor charts are displayed as ongoing resources in the classroom. In addition, all anchor charts are scanned and placed online for subsequent use by students.

  Note: In some teaching settings, posters are not permitted on walls between classes. In these situations, teacher removes and reposts for each class session.

    - During discussions, when explicit use of AWL words surface, attention is drawn to them (raising word consciousness)
    - Additional words are added when they surface during discussion (natural context)
    - Before quizzes, students are asked explicitly which words they might want to use
        - This encourages students to look beyond contextual use and discover how words change with contexts (thinking about words)
    - All writing is graded on AWL use

Reflection: Anchor charts present accessible word banks of academic language to help students recycle vocabulary. Highlighting vocabulary in pre-writing discussions and encouraging recycling of vocabulary provides multiple exposures and uses of academic language, which facilitates word consciousness (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002; Kinsella, 2012). By fostering word consciousness in explicit ways, students encounter and use vocabulary in a variety of contexts, thus deepening their understanding of how words are used (Scott, Jamieson-Noel, & Asselin, 2003). Furthermore, this provides students multiple sources of words and increases their ability to adjust their use of academic language. In addition, by scaffolding the task of thinking which words to use before writing, students' metacognition and motivation for effective academic writing is fostered (Graves & Watts-Taffe, 2002).

Extensions of the Lesson

1. This activity can be done with lectures as well. Have students take notes on content. Form discussion groups. Follow the same procedures.
2. When a guest speaker comes to class, students identify academic language the speaker uses. Other students identify content vocabulary used by the speaker. Discussion follows the lecture.
3. Peer evaluation. Students conduct peer feedback sessions where they read a classmate's paper to identify academic language and give suggestions where more could be incorporated.
4. Use proverbs and quotations to generate critical thinking questions. Students explain a proverb's literal and figurative meanings. Having students identify the language they want to incorporate fosters word consciousness as well as intentional application.

Conclusion

By explicitly focusing on the language that promotes academic language proficiency, teachers can foster an awareness within students of the language necessary to join academic conversations and build their academic capital. Having repeated exposures and interactive practice with alternate contexts for language, students' skill of using language effectively deepens. Creating multiple experiences fosters the ability to see alternative contexts in which to apply the language. Moving away from traditional methods of vocabulary selection and instruction, teachers can apply what Lewis (1960) describes as finding the vocabulary alive and in its "natural habitat" (p. 1). It is the hope of this writer that the above process moves teaching closer to these outcomes.

References

Coxhead, A. (2000, Summer). New academic word list. *TESOL Quarterly, 34*(2), 213–238.

Coxhead, A. (2014). Introduction. In A. Coxhead (Ed.), *New ways in teaching vocabulary* (pp. ix–xi). Alexandria, VI: TESOL Press.

Cummins, J. (2009). Foreword. In D. Fu, *Writing between languages: How English language learners make the transition to fluency, grades 4–12.* (pp. ix–xii). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Douglas, S. (2013). The lexical breadth of undergraduate novice level writing competency. *The Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 16*(1), pp. 152–170. Retrieved from https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/CJAL/article/view/21176/24432

Ellis, R. (1999). Factors in the incidental acquisition of second language vocabulary from oral input. In R. Ellis, & R. Ellis (Ed.), *Learning a second language through interaction* (pp. 35–62). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

ELPA21. (n.d.). Retrieved from State of Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction: http://www.k12.wa.us/ELPA21/default.aspx

Folse, K. (2004). *Vocabulary myths: Applying second language research to classroom teaching.* Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Fu, D. (2009). *Writing between languages: How English language learners make the transition to fluency, grades 4–12.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Graves, M., & Watts-Taffe, S. (2002). The place of word consciousness in a research-based vocabulary program. In A. Farstrup, & Samuels, J. (Eds.), *What research has to say about reading instruction* (pp. 140–158). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Hill, J. & Miller, K. (2013). *Classroom instruction that works with English language learners* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Kinsella, K. (2012, October). Evidenced-based principles to guide English language development in the Common Core standards era. San Francisco, CA. Retrieved from http://teacher.scholastic.com/products/teach-english-language-learners/pdf/Kinsella_ELD_CCSS_4-19-12Handout.pdf

Lewis, C. (1960). *Studies in words* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Marzano, R. J., & Pickering, D. J. (2005). *Building academic vocabulary: Teacher's manual.* Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

McKeon, M. G., & Beck, I. L. (2004). Direct and rich vocabulary instruction. In J. Baumann, & E. Kame'enui (Eds.), *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice* (pp. 13–27). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Miller, J., & Cohen, R. (2014). *3 Longman Academic reading series: Reading skills for college.* White Plains, NY: Pearson.

Roessingh, H. (2006). BICS-CALP: An introduction for some, a review for others. *TESL Canada Journal, 23*(2), pp. 91–96. Retrieved from http://www.teslcanadajournal.ca/index.php/tesl/article/viewFile/57/57

Salmon, K. (2014). *More than good teaching: Explicit language instruction for ELLs in mainstream classrooms*. (E. O. Opportunities, Producer) Retrieved from http://erlc.wikispaces.com/Explicit+Language+Instruction+for+ELLs.

Scott, J., Jamieson-Noel, D., & Asselin, M. (2003). Vocabulary instruction throughout the day in twenty-three Canadian upper elementary classrooms. *The Elementary School Journal, 103*(3), 269–286.

Twaddel, F. (1973, March). Vocabulary expansion in the ESOL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 7*(1), 60–77.

van Lier, L., & Walqui, A. (2012). Language and the Common Core State Standards. *Paper presented at the Understanding Language Conference.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University. Retrieved from http://ell.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/academic-papers/04-Van%20Lier%20Walqui%20Language%20and%20CCSS%20FINAL.pdf

Let's Get SIRIous! Voice Recognition in Language Learning

James Hunter
Gonzaga University

Voice recognition, or automatic speech recognition (ASR), technology is now widely available at little or no cost, and it shows promise in language education, primarily in the area of pronunciation training, where research suggests the technology can outperform human teachers (Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, & Freynik, 2014, p. 88). This paper discusses how ASR works, how accurate it is, and how it can be applied to language learning both in and out of the classroom. This discussion is followed by a brief examination of recent research into the pedagogical applications of the technology, and concludes that there are many valid reasons to incorporate ASR technologies into language instruction.

James Hunter (hunter@gonzaga.edu) has taught ESL/EFL for over 20 years and is the director of TESOL Programs at Gonzaga University. He has a PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Birmingham, UK, and his research interests include second language acquisition, corpus linguistics, instructional technologies, and teacher development.

Voice recognition, or automatic speech recognition (ASR), software has been commercially available for 25 years, but its use in language teaching has been limited. However, the advent of smartphones with bundled voice recognition technology, such as Apple's Siri or Samsung's Voice, has brought the technology within reach of millions of individuals. As language teachers, we often look for low-cost ways to enhance our instruction and engage learners, and ASR technology is a promising development. This paper will look at ASR from a language teaching and learning perspective and will suggest useful ways in which it can be incorporated in and outside the classroom to augment instruction.

A few preliminary points are worth noting, however. First, all ASR technologies that are currently available for free (i.e. not commercial software such as Dragon NaturallySpeaking or Rosetta Stone) require an Internet connection. The reasons for this will be explained below, but it is important to note that the examples given in this paper all require a fast Internet connection. Second, while many of the examples below feature Apple's Siri and Google Dictation, these products are not specifically endorsed here; ASR technology is developing very rapidly, and new and better options are becoming available every year.

What is ASR?

The evolution of ASR parallels new developments in linguistics in many ways: ASR relies heavily on probabilistic (statistical) and usage-based assumptions about language production and comprehension, which are also theoretical cornerstones of corpus linguistics (see, for example, Leech, 1991). In this regard, linguistics (in the US, at least) has moved from a strict Chomskyan approach, which has always remained firmly in opposition to usage-based approaches to linguistic theory. As Chomsky (1969) put it, "It must be recognized that the notion of 'probability of a sentence' is an entirely useless one, under any known interpretation of this term" (p. 57). Applied linguistics, on the other hand, and computational linguistics in particular, have largely followed a different trajectory and have made considerable contributions not only to linguistic theory but more importantly, to daily life. Two examples of how probabilistic models have achieved evident success are search engines and machine translation. Granted, the latter still leaves much to be desired—polysemy, especially in (idiomatic) lexical bundles, renders many automatic translations quite inadequate for practical purposes, offering little more than gist —but it is hard to argue with the fact that people are getting what they need from search engines. Google alone had over 1.2 trillion hits in 2012 ("Google Search Statistics," n.d.), and according to Mitchell (2012), 16%–20% of Google searches on any given day have never been asked before. The key to handling novel search strings lies in employing the likelihood of a given word or string of words (a probabilistic approach) together with algorithms to determine the relevance of the results.

ASR employs a number of processes, some algorithmic but most probabilistic, to recognize continuous speech. In brief (see Jurafsky & Martin, 2009, pp. 232–82 for a comprehensive explanation), the stages in the recognition process are:

1. The sound of one's speech is recorded by the device's microphone, cleaned up to eliminate extraneous background noise, and digitized (converted to a digital file), which is then compressed and sent to cloud servers for processing.
2. The sound wave is scanned for phonemes; when a phoneme, such as the /d/ of *do* is recognized, the statistical likelihood of subsequent phonemes or silence is used to

calculate the accuracy of that /d/ actually being a /d/. The point here is that the process is recursive, not linear; the system has to backtrack continually to ensure comprehension —just as people do when they have to decipher speech under noisy conditions, when encountering unfamiliar accents, or when dealing with homophones; for example, disambiguating "super salad" from "soup or salad," or "Gladly, the cross I'd bear" from "Gladly, the cross-eyed bear."

3. As the string of probable phonemes is recognized, segmentation into legitimate—and probable—words becomes increasingly possible. It is important to bear in mind that any given utterance is not composed of individual words with silences between them; in fact, much of the silence in an utterance comes from stops *within* words, rather than between them. To demonstrate this, Figure 1 shows part of the previous sentence displayed as a waveform using the Praat software (Boersma and Weenink, 2011). As can be seen, silence (the absence of vertical waveform in the top third of Figure 1) does not correspond to word boundaries.

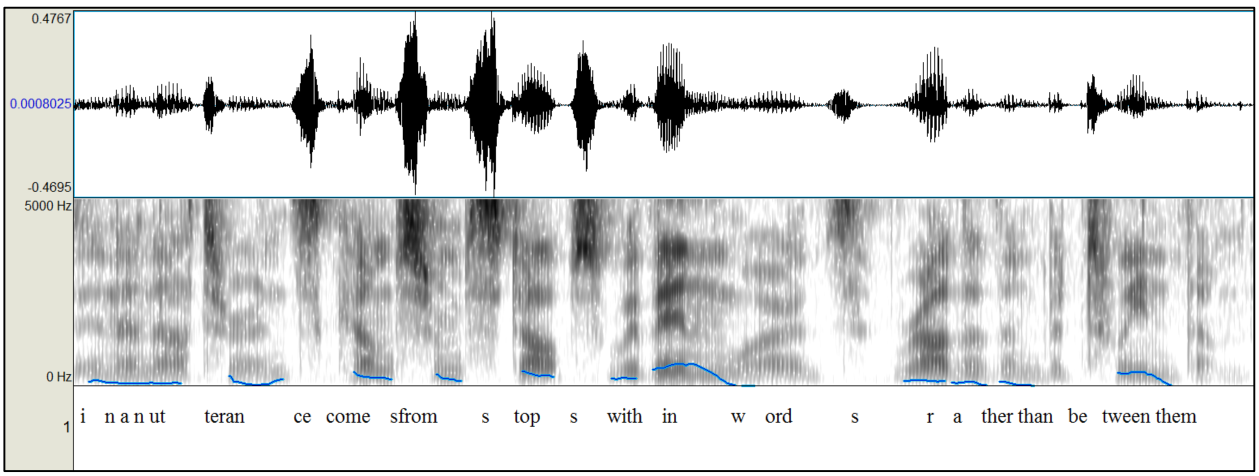

Figure 1: Praat analysis of a phrase showing silence (stops) between words.

4. As words and strings of words are assembled and transcribed, they are verified again for likelihood of co-occurrence, this time using statistical information from vast collections of text (corpora). This is one reason Siri requires an Internet connection: probabilistic inferences require either training (in the sense of teaching the software to recognize a single user's voice) or access to very large acoustical databases in order to match input to likely phonemes, words, and phrases—and that is simply too much data to store on a smartphone.

5. The transcription is sent back to the device of origin and appears in real time (i.e., it shows up as soon as it is recognized, or, in the case of question answering apps like Siri, the answer is provided).

What is truly remarkable about the above process is the speed at which it occurs: ASR applications can now comfortably deal with dictation speeds of 100+ words per minute (wpm), in contrast to typical typing speeds, which average between 50 and 80 wpm (Harwath, Gruenstein, & McGraw, 2014) The speed and accuracy with which today's ASR technologies can operate are what make them interesting pedagogically.

How Accurate is ASR?

To test the accuracy of iPhone ASR and Google's dictation.io website, I first made an mp3 recording of a short text (see Appendix) read at slightly slower than normal speed, about 100 wpm. Using the Notes application, or app, I then played it through inexpensive PC speakers into the iPhone (once "Enable Dictation" is turned on in the phone's settings, a microphone icon will appear next to the spacebar on the on-screen keyboard). I had to pause the recording three times to allow the ASR app to catch up, but even under these conditions, the dictation software achieved 97% accuracy, measured in terms of the number of words either substituted or omitted, divided by the total number of words. A colleague read the same text directly into the iPhone, and the ASR achieved 98% accuracy. With accuracy rates this high—Google currently claims an accuracy rate of 92%, while Apple boasts a 95% accuracy rate (Novet, 2015)—it would seem reasonable to assume that a learner could use the technology to identify problematic areas in her pronunciation and be reasonably confident that any substitutions or omissions could be attributed to her output, not the ASR software. To test this assumption, I asked the 24 students in my intermediate Oral Communication course to read the same text into their phones and send me the results, which were then manually compared to the original (see Figure 2), with omissions, additions, and substitutions highlighted in red. In this example, the student (Arabic L1) achieved 70% accuracy.

Titanic – student version

The Titanic was a very large shipment and putting in fact it was 8082 feet long the Titanic was such a big strong ship that's most people thought that's nothing could ever happen to it unfortunately this idea was not correct on the night of the ____ 14th 1912 at Santa and the ice ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ocean on its first trip it was going from pretended to New York City about 1600 miles northeast of New York City that should hit alarms icepack this made a hole in the side of that shit that's what the hundred tweets like what time and for the ship through the whole and that should begin to sink

116 words
35 errors *
= 70% accuracy

____

* "shipment" (= *ship made*) = 2 errors; "what time" (= *water*) = 1 error

Figure 2: ASR transcription of a student recording of *Titanic* text, showing errors in red.

It should be noted that this accuracy calculation was post hoc: the students only saw the words appearing on their screens. One might think that this low recognition accuracy rate would be disheartening, but what I found when introducing the idea of practicing pronunciation using ASR technologies to my students was that they spent far more time huddled over their phones, both in and out of class, trying to get it right than they would ever have committed to traditional pronunciation drills and exercises.

Interestingly enough, one of the misrecognitions that occurred in all three versions was the following:

original: *Water entered the ship through the hole, and the ship began to sink.*

ASR version: *Water entered the ship through the **whole**, and the ship began to sink.*

The software has to pick a transcription for the homonyms *hole/whole*, and despite the fact that the word *hole* appears in the text shortly before this point, it chose *whole*. This exemplifies one crucial feature of current ASR: it does not pay attention to context beyond the sentence level. It selects the most statistically relevant interpretation of a word or phrase based on frequency in everyday discourse, not the interpretation that is most coherent in that particular text. A search in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies, 2009) for the phrases *through the hole* and *through the whole* confirms that the latter is about twice as frequent, while a Google search shows it to be almost 13 times more common.

To borrow a term from one theory of communicative competence, it could be said that ASR lacks discourse competence (Hymes, 1972). An interesting question is whether humans have anything akin to statistical knowledge about frequency of occurrence of phonemes, words, collocations, and multiword sequences (see Granger & Paquot, 2008, p. 42). Many contemporary linguists would argue that we indeed do. Taylor's (2012) *The Mental Corpus* makes a compelling argument for this case, as does Patricia Kuhl's (2010) TED Talk, *The Linguistic Genius of Babies*, which argues that from the very earliest age, babies are "taking statistics" on the occurrence of language-specific phonemes in the speech around them. This usage-based theory of linguistic competence is without doubt more productive than one which separates syntax and semantics, and in fact points out the weakness in Chomsky's argument against probabilistic accounts and corpus linguistics in general: he insists on the *sentence* as the relevant unit of analysis, whereas ordinary speech and writing becomes far more predictable once the *idiom principle*, proposed by Sinclair (1991), is taken into account:

> A language user has available to him or her a large number of semi-preconstructed phrases that constitute single choices, even though they might appear to be analyzable into segments. To some extent this may reflect the recurrence of similar situations in human affairs; it may illustrate a natural tendency to economy of effort; or it may be motivated in part by the exigencies of real-time conversation. (p. 110)

The pedagogical implications of this perspective are far-reaching, but at a minimum argue for teaching practices and materials which emphasize single choices (formulaic speech, collocations, phrasemes) rather than the traditional words-and-rules approach found in the majority of classrooms and textbooks.

ASR in and out of the Classroom

Speaking

Pronunciation training and accent reduction are probably the most obvious applications of ASR technology in language learning, and now that the technology can transcribe natural speech with levels of accuracy which are quite acceptable, there are good reasons to incorporate it into regular language learning activities. There is a major motivational advantage to the use of ASR as a pronunciation feedback system: the feedback is immediate, since the (mis)understood words and phrases are transcribed in real time (Ahn & Lee, 2015). In contrast, a human listener will generally deal with misunderstandings by continuing to listen, in the hope that further context will provide clues as to intended meaning. This is desirable in terms of developing fluency and confidence, but in terms of focusing learner attention at the level of word stress, linking, and segmental, it is not of much help. Teachers often tell their students that phonemic distinction is important because meaning can be affected, but the reality is that a student who says “dare” instead of “there” or “tree” instead of “three” is unlikely to encounter listeners who simply refuse to interpret the words with latitude. ASR, as we have seen, will do just that. A Korean student of mine was recently trying to say the phrase “though there are . . .” and could only get the technology (dictation.io) to transcribe “do terra.” This was a source of frustration, for sure, but the student sought me out during my office hours for a targeted pronunciation lesson, just to try to beat the machine. Similarly, my Arabic L1 students who say “paper” in a way that sounds to me like “baber” will actually see “Baber” transcribed (presumably because the software concludes it must be a name) and “botatoes” transcribed not as “potatoes” but as “but it does.”

If, as I am suggesting, ASR technology can motivate students to notice, focus on, and practice phonological challenges, it also does so tirelessly and with infinite patience, which is more than I can claim for myself. This means that learners can “communicate,” in the sense of getting a message across, and get feedback on the success of the communication without any of the affective epiphenomena that accompany human interaction, and above all, without judgment or embarrassment, and at their own pace. In fact, the technology seems to replicate a willingness to understand in spite of pronunciation issues, in other words, a forgiving ear. It can do this precisely because it refers to probability of occurrence of certain language strings in the real world. So, for instance, if you were to say the sequence “boot eat does,” the resulting transcription is more likely to be “but it does” because this is a far more likely sequence in the real world, by a factor of 300 million (a quick search on Google gives 0 hits for the former and 317 million for the latter).

Virtual assistant applications like Siri, Cortana, and Google Now can be used in many other ways to practice speaking. I give teams of students a worksheet of facts to find out about the world (see Figure 3) by asking Siri questions. In this instance, Siri reads the answer aloud, assuming it understands the question, and the students have to be able to give the answer verbatim (they can get the answer as many times as they like by saying “repeat”).

ISBN: 978-0-692-74488-8

Figure 3: Worksheet of information to research using Siri or Google Voice Search.

Writing

Beginner-level students, and especially those who are challenged by English spelling, can benefit from a simple exercise in which they read a word on a flash card and see if the ASR transcribes the same word. The point here is that they will not see the non-words they might produce on a spelling test. More advanced students, in contrast, can dictate rather than write or type first drafts of essays or other writing assignments, just to get their thoughts down in writing. The advantage of this approach is that it allows for more fluency—as the writer does not have to stop to worry about the spelling of a challenging word, as long as she can say it reasonably comprehensibly—and also provides an inherent reason for editing work (to verify that the ASR transcribed what was intended). With the addition of text-to-speech technology, which is built into most smartphones and computers, writers can hear their words read back to them in a reasonable facsimile of a human voice, which offers another opportunity to compare the intended meaning with the transcribed text, as well as further reinforcing the pairing of written word with sound.

Both of these suggestions may appear to promote less, not greater, attention to spelling conventions among English learners. But it also seems to be the case that American college students, at least, are over-reliant on spelling technologies and tend to assume that they eliminate the need for careful proofreading (Galletta, Durcikova, Everard, & Jones, 2005), so English language learners are in good—or bad—company. On the other hand, *anything* which motivates language learners to talk more, write more, and read more is worth investigating, and I look forward to seeing studies that investigate the relationship between ASR use and literacy skills.

Other Applications of ASR in Language Learning

Possibly the most exciting developments in instructional technology at present involve the combination of ASR and artificial intelligence technologies to create virtual learning environments and characters with which learners can interact. Macedonia, Groher, and Roithmayr (2014), for example, claim that “intelligent virtual agents” such as their “Billie,” a virtual character which teaches learners vocabulary with the help of “iconic gestures,” outperform human trainers (p. 1). Similarly positive results are claimed for virtual scenarios, in which learners interact with virtual characters to complete communicative goals such as purchasing rail tickets (Chiu, Liou, & Yeh, 2007; Morton, Gunson, & Jack, 2012). Coniam (1998) suggested that ASR scoring of texts read by learners could represent a useful automated assessment tool, although he concluded at the time that a "robust generic speech model is not yet available" (p. 20), meaning that the ASR needed to be trained to recognized individual speech, which is no longer the case. At my university, we are developing a web-based application of our "Small Talk" database (Hunter, 2011) which is part of a system of delayed corrective feedback of learners' oral production. The web application will incorporate ASR so that learners will be able to check the accuracy of their reformulations, in particular their pronunciation, against those provided by their teacher. These are just a few of the ways in which researchers and practitioners are harnessing the technology to facilitate or improve upon language pedagogy.

Conclusion

In their review of 350 studies of technology in language teaching, Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, and Freynik (2014) conclude that the most impressive contributions of ASR to language instruction are in the area of pronunciation training:

> Among those technologies that were included in our review, the only strong support we found for an impact of technology on FL [foreign language] learning and teaching were for the ASR programs and chat. Research shows that the ASR technology can facilitate improvement in pronunciation to a larger extent than human teachers can and, because of constant improvements of this technology, ASR programs have great potential in FL learning. (p. 88)

For teachers who struggle to find the time and means to give their students the individualized pronunciation training they need, this is good news, and I hope that I have made the case that there are good reasons to incorporate ASR-based activities into our regular teaching, with a view to encouraging learners to build these tools into their language learning strategies and practices. It is time for teachers to get serious about ASR.

References

Anh, T. Y. & Lee, S. M. (2015). User experience of a mobile speaking application with automatic speech recognition for EFL learning. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *47*(4), 778–786. doi:10.1111/bjet.12354

Boersma, P. & Weenink, D. (2011). Praat [Computer software]. Retrieved from: http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/

Chiu, T., Liou, H., & Yeh, Y. (2007). A study of web-based oral activities enhanced by automatic speech recognition for EFL college learning. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 20*(3), 209–233.

Chomsky, N. (1969). Some empirical assumptions in modern philosophy of language. In S. Morgenbesser, P. Suppes, & M. White (Eds.), *Philosophy, science and method: Essays in honor of Ernest Nagel*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Coniam, D. (1998). The use of speech recognition software as an English language oral assessment instrument: An exploratory study. *CALICO Journal*, *15*(4), 7–23.

Davies, M. (2009). The 385+ million word corpus of contemporary American English (1990–2008+): Design, architecture, and linguistic insights. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, *14*(2), 159–190.

Galletta, D. F., Durcikova, A., Everard, A., & Jones, B. M. (2005). Does spell-checking software need a warning label? *Communications of the ACM*, *48*(7), 82–86.

Granger, S., & Paquot, M. (2008). Disentangling the phraseological web. In S. Granger & F. Meunier (Eds.), *Phraseology: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 27–50). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

Golonka, E. M., Bowles, A. R., Frank, V. M., Richardson, D. L., & Freynik, S. (2014). Technologies for foreign language learning: A review of technology types and their effectiveness. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *27*(1), 70–105.

Google search statistics. (n.d.). Retrieved March 10, 2016 from Internet Live Stats: http://www.internetlivestats.com/google-search-statistics/

Harwath, D., Gruenstein, A., & McGraw, I. (2014). Choosing useful word alternates for automatic speech recognition correction interfaces. *INTERSPEECH* – 2014 (949–953).

Hunter, J. (2011). 'Small Talk': Developing fluency, accuracy, and complexity in speaking. *ELT Journal*, *66*(1), 30–41.

Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: Selected readings* (pp. 269–293). Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

Jurafsky, D., & Martin, J. H. (2009). *Speech and language processing: An introduction to natural language processing, computational linguistics, and speech recognition.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Kuhl, P. (2010, October). *Patricia Kuhl: The linguistic genius of babies* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/patricia_kuhl_the_linguistic_genius_of_babies ?language=en

Leech, G. (1991). The state of the art in corpus linguistics. In K. Aijmer & B. Altenberg (Eds.) *English corpus linguistics: Studies in honour of Jan Svartvik* (pp. 8–29). London, UK: Longman.

Macedonia, M., Groher, I., & Roithmayr, F. (2014). Intelligent virtual agents as language trainers facilitate multilingualism. *Frontiers in psychology*, *5*, (1–4).

Mitchell, J. (2012, February 29). How Google search really works. *Readwrite*. Retrieved from http://readwrite.com/2012/02/29/interview_changing_engines_mid-flight_qa_with_goog/

Morton, H., Gunson, N., & Jack, M. (2012). Interactive language learning through speech-enabled virtual scenarios. *Advances in Human-Computer Interaction*, *2012*, 1–14.

Novet, J. (2015, June 8). Apple claims Siri’s speech recognition tech is more accurate than Google’s. Retrieved from http://venturebeat.com/2015/06/08/apple-claims-siris-speech-recognition-tech-is-more-accurate-than-googles/

Sinclair, J. (1991). *Corpus, concordance, collocation*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Taylor, J. R. (2012). *The mental corpus: How language is represented in the mind*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Appendix

Titanic text (original)

The Titanic was a very large ship made in Britain. In fact, it was 882 feet long. The Titanic was such a big, strong ship that most people thought that nothing could ever happen to it. Unfortunately, this idea was not correct. On the night of April 14th, 1912, it sank in the icy water of the North Atlantic Ocean on its first trip. It was going from Britain to New York City. About 1,600 miles northeast of New York City, the ship hit a large iceberg. This made a hole in the side of the ship that was 300 feet long. Water entered the ship through the hole, and the ship began to sink.

Incorporating Host Families in Foreign Exchange Learning

Susan E. Caisse
Portland State University

In short-term study abroad programs, teachers can assign activities that extend learning outside the classroom. One framework by Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart (2010) involves providing host families with interaction tasks, including specific vocabulary, before students arrive. Later, study abroad students are taught relevant vocabulary, which they use in interactions with their host families. Based on this framework, this paper describes how host families in a localized two-week study abroad program act as cultural informants, test audiences and in-class teaching assistants. Insights from this program are described and classroom and programmatic suggestions are given.

Susan Caisse (susancaisse@gmail.com) obtained her MA TESOL degree from Portland State University. She has taught survival English, English for study abroad, and English as a foreign language. Her culminating experience project involved recommendations for English medium instruction during her internship in Spain. She enjoys teaching pronunciation and using technology in the classroom.

ISBN: 978-0-692-74488-8

Students studying abroad usually look forward to staying with their host families. They hope to integrate into the family and imagine themselves eating meals together, talking frequently and engaging with one another daily (Rodriguez & Chornet-Roses, 2014; Ingram, 2005). They imagine using the host family as a conduit through which to understand this new culture and help them learn the language (Rodriguez & Chornet-Roses, 2014). However, according to Rodriguez & Chornet-Roses, half of students participating in a short-term study abroad program reported that their expectations about their host family were not met. For a variety of reasons, exchange students did not engage with their host families as much as they originally anticipated. The reasons included difficult or conflicting schedules, reticence or discomfort on the part of the host student or family, and student choices (e.g., prioritizing travel over family engagements). When mismatches such as these occur, both language and culture learning can suffer (Freed, 1995; Rivers, 1998; Rodriguez & Chornet-Roses, 2014).

Study abroad program coordinators have a responsibility to carefully match host families and students to ensure that expectations are met on both sides. Teachers can assist students in developing closer relationships with their families through carefully crafted coursework that creates opportunities for interaction and sharing between student and host family (Rodrigues & Chornet-Roses, 2014). At the same time, students may improve their cultural learning and increase their language proficiency through host family interactions. The question then becomes how teachers can best utilize the host families of study abroad students, even those in short-term programs, to improve outcomes and give students a richer and more fulfilling experience.

This paper describes the efforts to enhance the language learning environment of urban middle-class Japanese teenagers studying in a rural setting an hour outside of Portland, Oregon on a short-term two-week study abroad program. It describes excursions students took as part of the program and addresses challenges students faced day-to-day. Five three-hour lessons were spread over two weeks of homestay. Limited by the two-week time frame, activities were created to foster interaction with host families in direct and explicit ways.

Additionally, challenges that led to the current investigations are presented. Secondly, this paper discusses the roles that host families can play: cultural informants who guide students and can help them interpret and make sense of the study abroad experience; test audiences who help study abroad students hone performances and projects by providing needed feedback on language; and teaching assistants who participate during class activities. For each role, suggestions and experiences from the classroom are presented.

Roles of host families

One approach that connects study abroad students and their host families, by Knight & Schmidt-Rinehart (2010), includes a set of procedures that attempt to encourage exchange student and host-family interaction by creating mandatory conversation and interaction tasks that must be performed weekly. Host families are notified in advance of interaction activities. Instructors teach relevant and important vocabulary to students. Students then engage the host family in the task. The next day, the class conducts a discussion in which they compare and contrast the information gathered from the host families. Both the host family and the student are aware that these tasks are mandatory, and the in-class discussions increase the likelihood that students will make time for the interactions. Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart found that participation in post-interaction discussions was 100%. Because of the need to discuss the interaction tasks with classmates, students were held accountable for their homework (p. 75).

Cultural Informants

Cultural informants can be anyone from the host culture; however, host parents and host siblings are closest to the exchange students and are best placed to act as sources of information for exchange students. The interaction in a daily routine affords many opportunities for exchange students to ask questions or clear up any uncertainties they may have.

The role of the cultural informant (Leroy, 2012) is probably the most traditional of all roles that a host family can play. Leroy defines cultural informants as “partners from the culture that is being observed who are able to shed light on ethnographic questions” (p. 4). Increased intercultural sensitivity as a direct result of the host family and study abroad experience has been heavily documented by Brecht and Ingold (2000), Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart (2010), and Nagahashi (2013). Host families clearly have a role to play by being comfortable and familiar representatives of local culture. They can discuss a range of topics and may offer a number of perspectives. Students can be tasked with discussing a variety of topics ranging from typical table manners to gun control. The selection of topics should be guided by student age and proficiency level. In their investigation of university study abroad students, Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart (2010) found that students preferred topics they had the language for and avoided controversial topic that they deemed “difficult” (p. 73).

Practical applications. This is a personal preference, but I suggest that short-term study abroad programs avoid controversial discussion topics such as religion, politics, and women’s rights. Students may not have enough experience to adequately evaluate and discuss such topics from a perspective other than their own. With the students in my class, I asked 14- to 16-year-old students to find three differences and three similarities between table manners in Japan and the United States. Students could also be asked to discuss holidays, such as Christmas, that are celebrated in Japan and US in very different ways. Finding differences and similarities in cultural practices can help students begin thinking about culture. In these discussions, students can begin to see their own culture and may continue to notice it more even after they return home.

Test Audiences

In addition to interaction tasks, teachers often ask students to do performance tasks (e.g., speeches, dialogs, and question sets). Host family members can act as test audiences because there could be a need for technology that the exchange student may not have, or the student may need feedback on an upcoming performance task, such as a speech. Host families can be invaluable in helping create topics, helping students understand differences in register, and helping students polish performances by providing an audience and providing feedback. Zhang & Rahimi (2014) found that both high- and low-anxiety learners requested and valued feedback on oral performance. Therefore, the use of the host family as a test audience may be an effective way to discover and correct errors affecting comprehensibility.

Practical applications. The first day of class, my co-teacher and I showed introductory videos that we made about ourselves, including our names and our hobbies. The videos were subtitled to help students compensate for gaps in listening skills. The exchange students were then asked to go home and create one-minute videos about themselves. They could talk about their natal families, their hobbies, their favorite classes, or their future plans. The only requirement was that a host family member had to be the videographer. Host students are more likely to view the host family as a lower anxiety-inducing audience than the classroom audience and, therefore, are able to accept feedback more readily from the host family.

After completion of the videos, the students then emailed, texted or brought in their final projects on flash drives. For the students, there was a tremendous amount of language planning involved in these short videos. They were written, practiced, and finally videotaped. The project and the videos were a huge hit with the students and especially with the families. One host mother reported that she learned more about this student in one minute than she had learned about all the previous students from past years combined (host mother, personal communication, August 15, 2015).

Teaching Assistants:

Teaching assistants assist with some element of classroom interaction or classroom management. Utilizing the children of host families as teaching assistants is another way to incorporate the host families.

In many short-term study abroad programs involving children, host children (and more rarely a host parent) will accompany their new host sibling to class and on class excursions. Since most host children are fluent English speakers, in class they are typically positioned around the classroom in order to break up homogeneous language groups and ensure that the target language is used in group work. This is a helpful role because it reduces the use of the L1 among the study abroad students and encourages the use of English in class.

Practical applications. There are additional ways to incorporate the host sibling. These students can be tasked with creating interview questions for the exchange students to ask their host parents. Suggestions from the children in this program included: How did you two meet? What is your favorite thing about your job? What is your hobby? What was different when you were a kid? Because questions are created in advance for students to ask, it frees the study abroad children from their own cultural or behavioral constraints that may prevent them from otherwise asking questions (Knight & Schmidt-Reinhart, 2010).

According to Knight and Schmidt-Reinhart (2010), adult students studying Spanish in Spain and Mexico exhibited the ability to step outside of culturally conditioned behavior in order to complete classroom requirements when they were assigned interaction topics that they would have typically deemed too personal. One student reported, “It made it OK to talk about certain things. I wouldn’t just go up and ask them about politics and religion. It was like a safety net because I *had* to ask them. We engaged in conversations that we would not have had otherwise” (p. 75).

Host family children can also be team captains or team advisors. In a game conducted during the Portland program, study abroad students ran to the board in a relay-style race and wrote words from particular categories such as animals, emotions, or colors. The team advisors helped the Japanese exchange students come up with ideas, spell words correctly, and avoid duplication between teams. After a lesson on money and shopping, host children also acted as shopkeepers selling items to the exchange students to practice routine conversations around shopping and using money. In preparation for a visit to a farm, students received a lesson on local fruits and the vocabulary to describe them (e.g., sweet, sour, etc.). Host children were blindfolded and the exchange students tasted the fruit and described it using the newly learned vocabulary. The host children then had to guess the fruit based solely on the descriptive words used by the exchange students. In preparation for an end-of-program farewell party, host children assisted by conducting video-recorded interviews of exchange students, advising on the comprehensibility of the interviews, and staging and taking photographs during the event. The result was a collaborative video that was impressive, humorous, and a tremendous learning experience for all of the participants. They were all immensely proud of the final product.

Other Considerations

Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart (2010) found that many university-aged study abroad students did not tell their host families about interaction type homework that they had been assigned because completing it would be difficult. In my context, I found a similar pattern. At a recent farewell party for a short-term study abroad program for Japanese teenagers, I overheard several mothers talking about the various homework assignments that my co-teacher and I had assigned. One host mother reported that she repeatedly asked her Japanese study abroad children if they had homework and was repeatedly told *no* (host mother, personal communication, August 13, 2015).

The host families had been told to expect their students to have homework, but had not been told precisely when it would be assigned or what the assignments would be. One way to prevent this problem in the future would be to have a schedule of activities and homework available at host family orientation night, before the exchange students have arrived. This way, activities can be planned. For example, the evening that the exchange students were asked to talk about table manners, the host mother reported that she was serving spaghetti and it was a mess. She told the students they could talk about table manners the next evening. Had she known in advance of the assignment, she would have prepared a different meal (host mother, personal communication, August 13, 2015). Advanced notification of tasks helps host families plan in advance for activities and meals and whatever else may be necessary to perform the activity.

Conclusion

A study abroad experience is “inherently so powerful, often life-changing, that often there is too little effort invested to make it as rich in outcomes as it could be” (Brecht & Ingold, 2000, p. 37). What this looks like in our students is that cognitively and physically tired teenagers don’t make the extra effort to engage with their host families or other native speakers. Likely it is just hard, but they miss out on benefits provided by interaction and negotiation of meaning (Gass and Mackey, 2007) and the additional motivation (Nagahashi, 2013) that interaction can provide.

As teachers, we can use specific activities designed to help study abroad students and their host families engage in meaningful ways that may pave the way for a richer and more worthwhile study abroad experience. The students benefit from extending learning beyond the confines of the classroom and being able to experience new learning opportunities with increased negotiation and interaction as they more fully utilize the short window of opportunity that they have to learn and use English in authentic contexts with fluent speakers.

References

Brecht, R. D., & Ingold, C. W. (2000). Literacy, numeracy, and linguacy: Language and culture and general education. *Liberal Education, 86*(4), 30–39.

Freed, B. (1995). Language learning and study abroad. In B. Freed (Ed.), *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context* (Studies in Bilingualism, vol. 9, pp. 3–33). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Gass, S., & Mackey, A. (2007). Input, interaction, and output in second language acquisition. In B. VanPatten & J. Williams (Eds.), *Theories in second language acquisition: An introduction* (pp. 175–199). New York, NY: Routledge.

Ingram, M. (2005). Recasting the foreign language requirement through study abroad: A cultural immersion program in Avignon. *Foreign Language Annals, 38*(2), 211–222.

Knight, S., & Schmidt-Rinehart, B. (2010). Exploring conditions to enhance student/host family interaction abroad. *Foreign Language Annals, 43*(1), 64–71.

Leroy, W. S. (2012) Consulting cultural informants: A look at the extent to which students use informants and other strategies to learn from their international experience (Master's thesis). Retrieved from http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/capstones

Nagahashi, T. L. (2013). "Explore Oregon, USA": Results of a successful short-term study abroad program. 秋田県立大学総合科学研究彙報 [Akita Prefecture University Science Research Bulletin] / 秋田県立大学総合科学教育研究センタ [*Akita Prefectural University of Science Education and Research Center* (14th ed., pp. 77–99)].

Rivers, W. P. (1998). Is being there enough? The effects of homestay placements on language gain during study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals, 31*(4), 492–500.

Rodriguez, S. R., & Chornet-Roses, D. (2014). How 'family' is your host family? An examination of student–host relationships during study abroad. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 39*, 164–174.

Zhang, L. & Rahimi, M. (2014). EFL learners' anxiety level and their belief about corrective feedback in oral communication classes. *System*, *42*, 429–439.

ESOL Strategies in STEM Content Classroom Teaching

Catherine Kim
Pacific University

This paper aims to introduce and discuss ways to incorporate various language scaffolding and instructional strategies in secondary science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) content classrooms. The paper is based on a research study conducted on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)-trained STEM teachers' teaching effectiveness. The focus of the study was on describing how ESOL-trained STEM teachers utilized various language scaffolding and sheltered instruction (SI) strategies in their classroom instruction, and compared them with those who have not received any substantial training in ESOL. The participating teachers' teaching effectiveness was measured based on a set of established sheltered instruction evaluation criteria. It was revealed that the ESOL-trained STEM teachers, when compared to those with no such training, incorporated more explicit instruction of academic language, more explicit language and literacy integration in content instruction, activation of background knowledge, partner and small-group work to increase student talk time. Their instruction was also more balanced in terms of classroom interaction types and was not heavily dependent on teacher talk. This paper concludes with a summary of the ESOL strategies commonly adopted by ESOL-trained STEM teachers and implications of ESOL professional development for effective STEM content instruction for secondary English language learners (ELLs).

Catherine Kim (catherinekim@pacificu.edu) is Associate Professor and Coordinator of ESOL education and the TESOL minor program at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon. She is the director of a federally funded NPD (National Professional Development) grant program, ELSTEM (ESOL for STEM educators), and currently serves as President of ORTESOL.

The contents of this paper were in part developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Sheltered instruction (SI) is an instructional model used in K–12 content subject teaching to facilitate English language learners' (ELLs) understanding and learning of concepts introduced in content subject lessons (Peregoy & Boyle, 2012). ELLs are students from non-English-speaking families and do not yet possess grade-level English language proficiency. ELLs in K–12 content subject lessons face dual challenges: they need to learn and understand the concepts introduced in the content lessons while trying to learn the language of instruction itself. As they move up in grade levels, the content gets increasingly more challenging and the language required to learn and understand the concepts becomes more complicated. Therefore, lack of grade-level English language proficiency likely results in achievement gaps, particularly at the secondary level, unless the content lessons are taught and scaffolded in a way that ELLs can comprehend and follow the instructions.

ELLs are in need of language accommodations in order to understand content in subject-area classes, and most often receive specialized English language instruction in their schools for the purpose of improving proficiency in English. SI, originally modeled after content-based instruction (CBI), uses the target language (English) while applying various language modifications and scaffolding strategies. When implemented effectively and utilized by content teachers, SI has been shown to significantly enhance ELLs' understanding of content subject concepts and vocabulary (Echevarria & Short, 2010).

Therefore, it is important for content-subject teachers of ELLs, especially at the secondary level, to be prepared to address ELLs' needs. Indeed, academic language proficiency is one of the most determining factors for ELLs to succeed in secondary schools, as discussed by Short and Boyson (2012). Despite the recognition that we need trained professionals, the reality is that many secondary-level teachers, particularly teachers of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) subjects are still not adequately equipped to address ELLs' needs (Hart & Lee, 2003). Thus, the goal of the present study was to compare secondary STEM teachers who have and have not received training in (English for Speakers of Other Languages) ESOL in an attempt to demonstrate how all levels of teachers, regardless of their subject area specialization, must be well prepared to teach ELLs in their classroom.

In order to achieve this goal, the following research questions were put forward:

1. In what ways are ESOL-trained STEM teachers similar or different in classroom instruction when compared to non-ESOL-trained STEM teachers in ESOL?
2. What language scaffolding and ESOL strategies are commonly observed among ESOL-trained STEM teachers' classroom teaching?
3. What types of ESOL strategies appear to be most prevalent in STEM content instruction?

Review of Sheltered Instruction Strategies

In the US K–12 education system, the major SI models adopted for content-based English language instruction include Sheltered Instruction and Observation Protocols (SIOP), Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD), Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), and Systematic English Language Development (ELD) (Be GLAD, n.d.; Echevarria, & Graves, 2011; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2009; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2016; Peregoy, & Boyle, 2012; Short, Vogt, & Echevarria, 2011; SIOP, n.d.; Systematic ELD, n.d.).

Although each SI model has unique features, there are a number of overlapping strategies. These models are intended to enhance students' understanding of academic content concepts and language proficiency by employing many of the effective language teaching strategies known to enhance content subject teaching (Peregoy & Boyle, 2012). The review of these major SI models revealed ten commonly observed strategies:

1. Identification and Review of Content Lesson Objectives

Most SI models emphasize the importance of the teacher's role in identifying and reviewing the lessons' objectives. This is typically done via visible display, accompanied by the teacher's and the students' oral review of the learning objectives. Learning effectiveness will be enhanced when the students are clearly informed of what will be taught to them in the lesson.

2. Identification and Review of Language Objectives

In SI, each lesson comes with a clear set of language objectives that correspond to and correlate with the content learning objectives. Teachers clearly identify key content vocabulary that will be introduced and explicitly taught in their lesson, along with linguistic structures and functions that are covered in their content instruction. These language objectives are also clearly visible in the classroom and reviewed with students.

3. Activation of Background Knowledge

ELLs' learning will be much more effective if they can make a clear connection between what they previously learned and what they will learn. It is important to use various teaching strategies and teacher guidance to help to help students relate to and understand new concepts by making a clear connection with what they already know.

4. Modeling

In many SI models, the role of the teacher in providing modeling is greatly emphasized. Through modeling, the teacher's expectation can be clearly communicated, particularly when ELLs have difficulty understanding all the verbal directions given to them in class. As a result, ELLs will better understand and engage in the learning activities.

5. Scaffolding of Key Academic Concepts

Scaffolding is important in any learning process, but it is particularly critical for ELLs. It is very important that key academic concepts crucial for understanding and following the instruction are explicitly covered and scaffolded to ELLs. To provide a scaffold, teachers are encouraged to use visual illustrations of the concepts using concept webs, maps, or flow charts. Explicit instruction, illustration, and explanation of key concepts also contribute to and facilitate ELLs' learning.

6. Multi-faceted Vocabulary Instruction

ELLs, particularly those in secondary-level content instruction, need academic vocabulary in their content subject classes. For this, teachers must provide ample opportunities to learn key content vocabulary words through rich and varied language experiences. This is facilitated through the development of word-learning strategies and through pre-teaching of academic vocabulary words in every content lesson.

7. Explicit Instruction of Academic Language

In addition to vocabulary, ELLs need to understand sentence and discourse patterns pertaining to a particular academic discipline. Sentence frames and sentence starters are frequently used to prompt ELLs to use proper sentence patterns and to help them engage in academic discourse using appropriate language structures. Teachers should also be prepared to rephrase complex sentences using simpler structures in order to scaffold the concepts and help ELLs.

8. Visual Aids (Diagrams, Charts, Graphic Organizers), Realia, Manipulatives

ELLs learn content concepts better when they are able to make a clear connection between what they learn and what they see or experience in real-life situations. It is also helpful if they are provided with visual images, real objects, or manipulatives that they can see and use to learn academic concepts.

9. Partner and Small-group Work, Cooperative Learning

ELLs should be given ample opportunities to practice language during classroom instruction by engaging in collaborative activities (e.g., partner or small-group work). This reduces the pressure associated with talking in front of the whole class. It also provides good opportunities to interact with peers and to receive peer support in accomplishing learning tasks.

10. Positive Learning Environment, Motivation

For all types of learning, creating a positive learning environment contributes to enhanced learning outcomes. It is particularly important for ELLs to learn in an environment where they can feel encouraged and motivated. ELLs will be motivated and learn better if they are not afraid of taking risks or making mistakes in using English. The teacher's positive feedback plays an important role in promoting a good learning environment.

To date, research studies have discussed the effectiveness of these SI instructional strategies in enhancing ELLs' academic learning. Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2016) showed how ELLs taught by teachers who had been trained in SI strategies outperformed ELLs whose teachers had not received such training. More recently, Short, Fidelman, and Louguit (2012) found that ELLs with teachers trained in SIOP achieved greater academic gains than those taught by teachers with no such training. Although there are researchers who question the effectiveness of SI in closing the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs, it is generally agreed among educators and researchers that ELLs need additional instructional support to make the instruction meaningful and productive (Goldenberg, 2013). Therefore, it is important to investigate how well teachers are prepared to implement the SI instructional strategies in their classroom teaching for ELLs and to examine whether teachers' professional development in ESOL increases their use of various SI instructional strategies.

The Study

The Context of the ELSTEM Project

The ESOL for STEM Educators (ELSTEM*)* project is currently in progress at Pacific University Oregon and is a federally funded professional development program. This program aims to design and implement a new ESOL teacher preparation curriculum that integrates teacher training in the STEM fields and an endorsement in ESOL. The goal is to increase

ISBN: 978-0-692-74488-8

middle and high school STEM teachers' ability to meet ELLs' instructional needs, thereby maximizing ELLs' achievement in STEM subjects.

The ELSTEM project is a yearlong graduate-level program that leads to an Oregon ESOL endorsement. The curriculum of the ELSTEM program follows the Oregon Teacher Standards and Practice Commission's competency guidelines for ESOL endorsement. The curriculum consists of courses that are specifically tailored to prepare secondary STEM teachers to teach ELLs effectively in their content subject teaching. These courses include training on STEM literacy and teaching methodology, linguistics for STEM teachers, cultural and linguistic diversity existing among secondary ELLs, and language policy relevant to ELL education. A special focus is given to prepare secondary STEM teachers to utilize various language scaffolding and ESOL teaching strategies introduced in many SI models.

Participants

There were a total of nine participants in this study. Five of the participants were ESOL-trained STEM teachers and had completed the first year of the federally funded ELSTEM project. The other four participants had not had any substantial training in ESOL (as declared in a self-reported survey), and were in-service STEM teachers recruited from the same school districts where the project cohort participants were teaching. These four teachers applied to for the study by responding to a call for participation. The participants were teaching in the school districts where over 10% of the students were identified as ELLs.

The ESOL-trained STEM teachers had an average teaching experience of 6 years, ranging from 2 to 11 years. The non-ESOL-trained STEM teachers had an average teaching experience of 12 years, ranging from 8 years to 20 years. In terms of classroom teaching experience, the non-ESOL-trained STEM teachers had approximately twice as much teaching experience as the ESOL-trained STEM teachers.

Instruments and Procedures

The ESOL-trained STEM participants were observed twice by three ESOL specialists (university supervisors) using an established set of criteria intended to measure ELL teaching effectiveness before and after the ELSTEM project participation. The non-ESOL-trained STEM teachers were observed once using the same criteria. The observation criteria included dimensions pertaining to ESOL and SI teaching strategies. Table 1 presents these strategies along with specific observation criteria used by the university supervisors.

Table 1. *Observation and Evaluation Criteria*

Commonly Observed ESOL Strategies in SI Models	**Observation Criteria Used in this Study**
Identification and review of content lesson objectives	The learning objectives clearly evident
Identification and review of language objectives	The language objectives clearly evident
Activation of background knowledge	Teacher's activation of students' background knowledge
Modeling	Teacher's modeling before having students engage in group or partner work
Scaffolding of key academic concepts	Scaffolding Thematic or cross-disciplinary units Explicit instruction in how to read and use math/science syntax and symbols
Multi-faceted vocabulary instruction	Vocabulary instruction varied and multi-faceted
Explicit instruction of academic language	Incorporation of explicit instruction of academic language STEM literacy integrated into the instruction
Visual aids, realia, manipulatives	Graphic organizers Realia (real-life objects or photos of real-life objects) Manipulatives (blocks, tiles, beans, models) Images and sketches
Partner and small-group work, cooperative learning	Partner work Small-group work Cooperative learning Ask students to explain how they solved a math/science word problem
Positive learning environment, motivation	Have students work in teams to solve math/science problems Inquiry-based methods to teach math and science concepts

ISBN: 978-0-692-74488-8

The observation data were gathered through videotaping of the teachers' classroom instruction. Each observation lasted approximately 55 minutes (middle school lesson) and 75 minutes (high school lesson). The data were collected following the Institutional Review Board procedure for human subject research. The videotaped classroom instruction segments were then separately evaluated and rated by three ESOL specialists using the established observation templates. The observation template is designed to evaluate ESOL teaching effectiveness and rate the STEM teachers' overall teaching effectiveness for ELLs on a 5-point Likert scale (0–4 where 0 is for not effective at all and 4 is for exemplary). All three ESOL specialists had extensive experience in teaching and supervising pre-service and in-service teachers who were working towards their certification in ESOL. They had a minimum of eight years of experience in supervising teacher candidates in ESOL, and were very familiar with the observation criteria before evaluating and rating the teachers' ESOL teaching effectiveness. In an attempt to increase inter-rater reliability, they went through a series of training sessions during which they reviewed sample STEM-ESOL classroom instruction videotapes and discussed how to conduct evaluations using the observation template. The completed observation reports were reviewed and analyzed by the researcher as well as a program evaluation team to determine the effectiveness of the ELSTEM program (Autio & Lasley, 2014).

Findings

In the following section, the findings pertaining to the three research questions are presented.

Similarities and Differences Between ESOL-trained and Non-ESOL-trained STEM Teachers

The data analysis showed that, overall, the ESOL-trained STEM teachers shifted towards using more supportive language interventions near the end of their yearlong participation in the ELSTEM program. Specifically, the observers' overall rating of lessons for the ELSTEM program participants' teaching effectiveness improved: on a four-point scale, it increased from 2.8 before participation to 3.5 toward the end of their participation. On the other hand, the overall rating of lessons for the non-ESOL-trained STEM teachers was 2.75, which was about the same as the ELSTEM project participants' rating before their participation in the program.

Some similarities between the two groups were identified. For instance, both groups included content and language objectives in their instruction. However, only 50% of the non-ESOL- trained STEM teachers covered specific language forms (linguistic features) and functions during their classroom instruction, and none of them explicitly integrated STEM literacy and content instruction. Conversely, all of the ESOL-trained STEM teachers explicitly covered the intended language forms and functions in their instruction, and 60% of them also integrated STEM literacy in their classroom instruction.

Further, compared to the ESOL-trained STEM teachers, few non-ESOL-trained STEM teachers successfully demonstrated the activation of ELLs' background knowledge. Also, few made use of various scaffolding strategies to improve ELLs' language proficiency to learn STEM content. Although these teachers used at least one language scaffolding strategy during their instruction, it was scarcely used, unlike the ESOL-trained teachers. They did not, however, differ much from the ESOL-trained STEM teachers in terms of using classroom materials. Only one teacher relied heavily on textbooks; others used various instructional materials such as tools and props, models, and teacher-made materials, including a word wall that contained key concept vocabulary.

Language Scaffolding and ESOL Strategies Commonly Observed Among the ESOL-trained STEM Teachers

The findings revealed that the ESOL-trained STEM teachers incorporated more explicit language instruction into their STEM content lessons. At the end of their ELSTEM program participation (post-ELSTEM), all of their lessons included clear lesson and language objectives and incorporated explicit, planned language instruction. Also, 60% of their lessons demonstrated clear integration of STEM literacy and content instruction. Figure 1 shows these findings.

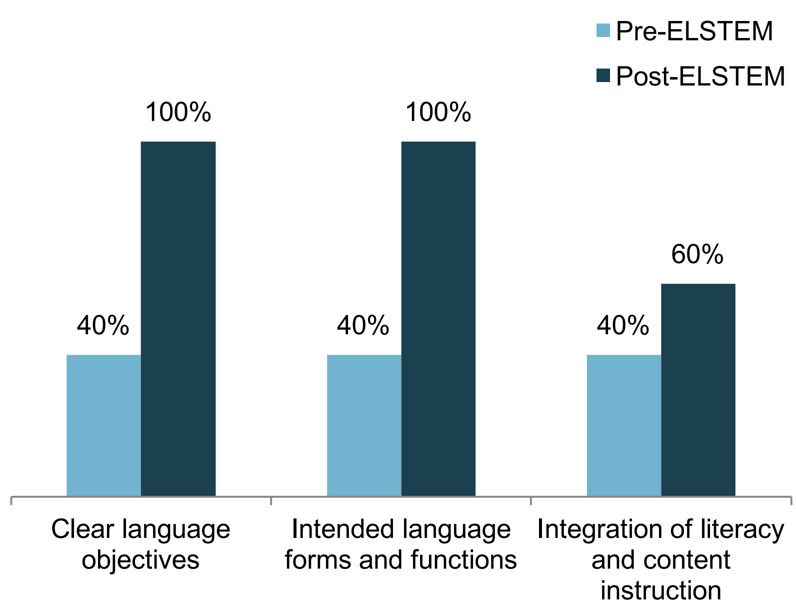

Figure 1. Language incorporation into STEM content lessons among ESOL-trained teachers.

There was also substantial growth in the activation of ELLs' background knowledge that applied to a given lesson topic. Before participation in the program, activation of background knowledge was never observed; however, toward the end of the program, it was seen in 100% of the lessons. By the end of the ELSTEM program, 40% of the participants' lessons explicitly incorporated ELLs' background knowledge into STEM instruction, in contrast to 20% prior to the program.

ISBN: 978-0-692-74488-8

As Figure 2 shows, the participants also shifted in their use of instructional materials. For instance, they relied less heavily on textbooks, which were seen in just 20% of classrooms (compared to 80% before participation). Further, they began to use manipulatives—physical objects (i.e., blocks, tiles, beans, or models) that aid in learning—which were found in 40% of the lessons.

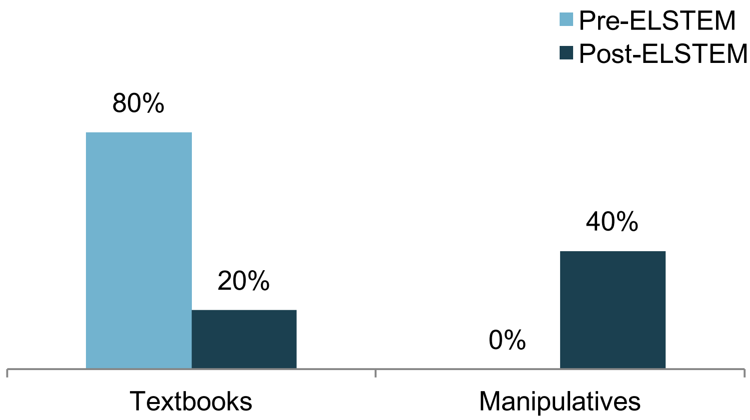

Figure 2. Use of materials among ESOL-trained teachers.

In addition, there were many changes in how teachers and students interacted with each other after the ELSTEM project participation (see Figure 3). The length of teacher-talk time calculated for an entire lesson period was reduced (53% to 37% of lesson time) while the duration of student talk time as measured by the length of student-to-student interaction increased (30% to 39% of lesson time). Also, the teachers used cooperative learning approaches in 40% of lessons (compared to none before participation). Their students worked with partners in 100% of lessons (compared to 40% before participation). In addition, their students worked in teams to solve math problems (in 60% of lessons) and were asked to explain how they solved word problems (in 60% of lessons), which was minimally seen before participation. Finally, a few observed lessons (20%) used inquiry-based methods: asking questions, planning and conducting investigations, using appropriate tools and techniques to gather data, thinking critically about relationships between evidence and explanation, and constructing and analyzing alternative explanations.

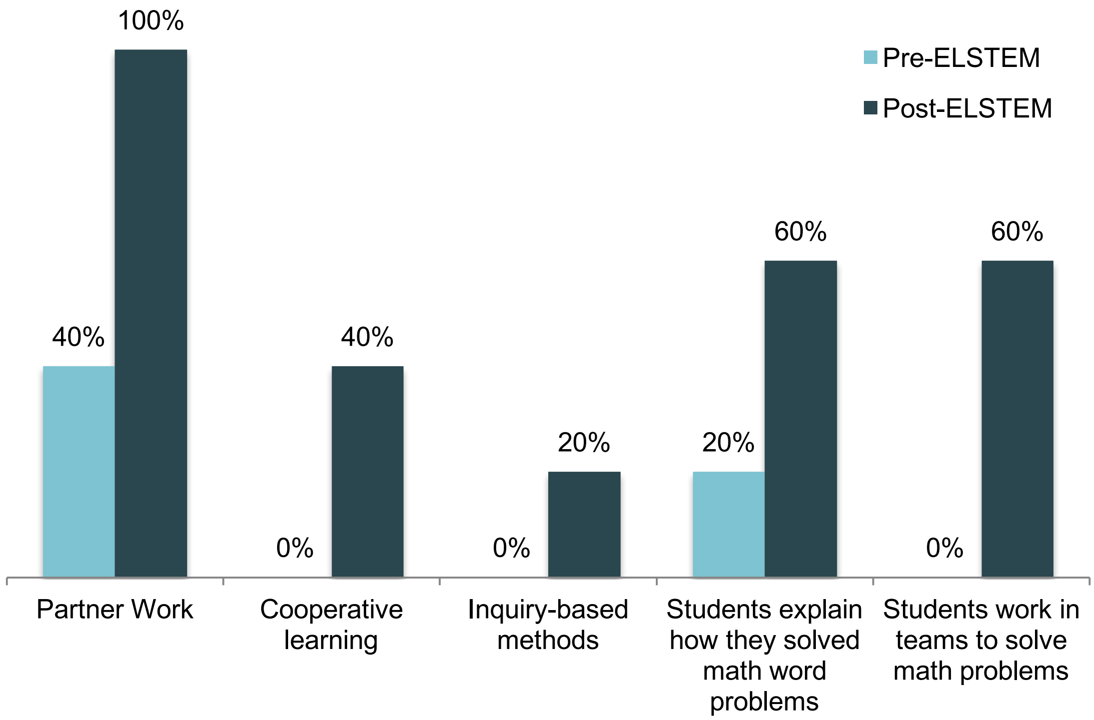

Figure 3. Changes in teacher/student interaction.

Most Prevalent ESOL Strategies in STEM Content Instruction

In this study, there were three ESOL strategies most commonly observed in the ESOL-trained participants' STEM content instruction. First, all of the participants (both the ESOL-trained and the non-ESOL-trained STEM teachers) included clear lesson and language objectives in their instruction. Moreover, all ESOL-trained STEM teachers went beyond including these objectives and further demonstrated clear incorporation of explicit, planned language instruction into their content instruction. Further, all of the ESOL-trained STEM teachers were shown to activate students' background knowledge that applied to a lesson topic. Finally, increase in student talk time and balance in classroom interaction types were also identified as the most commonly observed strategies used by the ESOL-trained STEM teachers. In particular, 100% of the ESOL-trained STEM teachers incorporated partner work toward the end of the ELSTEM participation. In summary, the findings showed that the ESOL-trained STEM teachers incorporated more explicit instructional interventions and strategies in their classroom instruction. Further, the ESOL-trained STEM teachers, when compared to the non-ESOL-trained STEM teachers, incorporated more explicit integration of the STEM content and language instruction. Finally, all of the ESOL-trained STEM teachers demonstrated clear and explicit incorporation of language learning objectives and instruction in the STEM instruction, activation of students' background knowledge, and greater allocation for collaborative work to increase student talk time.

Discussion

In this study, two groups of STEM teachers (ESOL-trained STEM teachers and non-ESOL-trained STEM teachers) were observed to address three research questions. With respect to the first research question, results show that the ESOL-trained STEM teachers demonstrated a number of language scaffolding and SI strategies to support ELLs' academic content learning. After the yearlong participation in the ELSTEM project, they incorporated more explicit instruction of academic language and literacy into their content instruction.

Compared to the ESOL-trained STEM teachers, the non-ESOL-trained STEM teachers did not demonstrate a wide array of explicit instructional intervention for ELL's language proficiency or ESOL strategies to support ELLs' content learning. Although these non-ESOL-trained teachers included lesson and language objectives in their STEM lessons, none of them clearly and successfully integrated language aspects in their actual classroom teaching. This finding demonstrates a need for teachers' professional development in ESOL, and also clearly shows that only the teachers with substantial training in ESOL actually implement language-related instructional intervention for ELLs. Thus, explicit instructional intervention strategies do not appear to be adopted without a substantial amount of ESOL training.

The findings pertaining to the second research question show that the ESOL-trained STEM teachers, after the yearlong training in ESOL, demonstrated substantial growth in activating ELLs' background knowledge, in using more explicit STEM language and literacy integration in content subject instruction, and in employing partner and small-group work to increase student talk time. They also relied less heavily on textbooks and began to use more manipulatives to enhance students' learning. On the other hand, the non-ESOL-trained STEM teachers did not integrate literacy and content instruction at all. In general, they scarcely incorporated explicit language instruction in their content subject teaching. This further supports the claim that ESOL training for content subject teachers is necessary and beneficial since language scaffolding and ESOL strategies are not gained without specific teacher training in these areas.

The third research question, regarding the types of ESOL strategies that appear to be most prevalent in STEM content instruction, was answered as well. All of the ESOL-trained STEM teachers were effective in activating and building on students' background knowledge, using explicit language and content integration, and providing ample opportunities for student talk and engagement in content instruction. All of them clearly addressed the language forms and functions intended to be covered during their STEM content instruction. These findings suggest that an ESOL professional development (PD) program intended to enhance classroom teachers' effectiveness, such as the ELSTEM program, leads to substantial growth in using many of the ESOL strategies. Also, it was notable that the length of teachers' teaching experience did not necessarily correlate with their teaching effectiveness. This implies that ELL teaching effectiveness and incorporation of explicit language instruction are not achieved just because content teachers gain more experience. It appears that classroom teachers need substantial PD experience in ESOL in order to improve their effectiveness for ELL teaching (US Department of Education, 2015). These findings are also in line with Hart and Lee (2003) who examined the impacts of an ESOL PD intervention on teachers' beliefs and practices in teaching science to ELLs. The study showed that teachers require continuous and sustained PD activities to promote the science and literacy achievement of ELLs. It appears that improved teaching practice for ELLs is only gained through substantial and sustained PD in ESOL.

In conclusion, this study showed and discussed the findings from a federally funded ESOL PD program offered to a group of secondary STEM content teachers and compared their teaching effectiveness with that of the teachers with no such PD experience in ESOL. Although this study is limited in terms of number of participants and scope of research questions, the findings clearly suggest that PD has a positive impact on teachers' ELL teaching practice. It is very important that teachers, particularly secondary content teachers, are well prepared to address ELLs' needs in their classroom instruction. It is hoped that future research studies will investigate further how the ESOL strategies demonstrated by the ESOL-trained STEM teachers are sustained and maintained in their content instruction, and that any long-term effects of improved ELL teaching effectiveness on ELL learning outcomes will be identified.

References

Autio, E., & Lasley, N. (2014). *Preparing STEM teachers to work with English learners: Pacific University's ELSTEM, Year 2 evaluation* (Rep.). Portland, OR: Education Northwest.

Be GLAD Training (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.begladtraining.com

Echevarria, J. & Graves, A. (2011). *Sheltered content instruction: Teaching English language learners with diverse abilities* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Echevarria, J. & Short, D. (2010). Programs and practices for effective sheltered content instruction. In F. Ong & V. Aguila (Eds.), *Improving education for English learners: Research-based approaches* (pp. 251–321). Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.

Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. J. (2009). *The SIOP model for teaching mathematics to English learners* (1st ed). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. J. (2016). *Making content comprehensible for English learners: The SIOP model* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Goldenberg, C. (2013). Unlocking the research on English Learners: What we know—and don't yet know—about effective instruction. *American Educator*, *37*(2), 4–11.

Hart, J. E., & Lee, O. (2003). Teacher professional development to improve the science and literacy achievement of English language learners. *Bilingual Research Journal*, *27*(3), 475–501.

Peregoy, S. F., & Boyle, O. F. (2012). *Reading, writing and learning in ESL: A resource book for teaching K–12 English learners* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol - SIOP. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://siop.pearson.com/about-siop/index.html

Short, D. J., & Boyson, B. A. (2012). *Helping newcomer students succeed in secondary schools and beyond*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Short, D.J., Fidelman, C., & Louguit, M. (2012). Developing academic language in English language learners through the SIOP Model. *TESOL Quarterly*, *46*(2), 334–361.

Short, D., Vogt, M., & Echevarría, J. (2011). *The SIOP model for teaching science to English learners*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Systematic ELD Home. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.syseld.elachieve.org

US Department of Education. (2015, September). *English learner toolkit for state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs).* Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html

ISBN: 978-0-692-74488-8