

EXPLORING MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES OF SUCCESSFUL TEACHERS

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Abstract: This multiple case study investigated how teachers implemented motivational teaching strategies and the impact of these strategies on students' motivation in an Indonesian high school context. The participants were four teachers and four groups of their students. The data were collected from teachers by conducting semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and stimulated recall, and from the students through focus group interviews. The findings of the research indicated that each teacher had unique strategies to motivate their students, and these strategies had a profound impact on students' motivation. The students reported that the strategies influencing their motivation could be categorized into five main groups: teachers' classroom behaviors, supportive classroom atmosphere, selection of learning resources and activities, the usefulness of English, and the way feedback was given. These findings suggest that teachers of English in an Indonesian high school context can influence their students' motivation by understanding the effect of motivational teaching strategies on students' learning and behaviors.

Keywords: motivational teaching strategies, students' motivation, EFL

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Studies on motivation in second/foreign language learning reveal that students' motivation is influenced by several factors such as teachers, classroom climate and assessment (Ghenghesh, 2010; Kikuchi, 2009; Matsumoto, 2009; Yeung, Lau, & Nie, 2011). In other words, the role and the influence of the teacher in motivating high school students to learn a second/foreign language are significant.

Ushioda and Dornyei (2012) have identified several research phases in relation to the research conducted on second/foreign language motivation. These phases have been described as: the socio-educational period; the cognitive-situated period; the process-oriented period; and the socio-dynamic period. The result of the analysis also reveals that second language motivation is related to other disciplines outside language learning.

The socio-educational period can be traced back to an early leading theory in language learning motivation. It arises from the seminal work of Wallace Lambert and Robert Gardner (Gardner & Lambert, 1959) who studied motivation in second language learning in a Canadian context. They classified motivation into two basic types: integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation relates to the learner's positive attitude toward the target language community and the desire to integrate into that community. Instrumental motivation refers to students' goal of learning a target language because of the usefulness of the learning, such as, getting good mark in a test, winning a prize, or getting a good job. The limitation of the socio-educational perspective of motivation encouraged researchers to search for other factors that may influence second language learning motivation. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, research began to focus on "cognitive-situated" influences (Ushioda & Dornyei, 2012). The starting point for this research is the work of Crookes and Schmidt (1991).

Crookes and Schmidt (1991) suggested that motivation in learning a second language dealt with the students' choice, engagement, and persistence. They argued that research on motivation in learning a second language should be not only general, but also consider strategies that can be applied in a certain context. Oxford and Shearin (1994) supported Crookes and Schmidt's (1991) findings that students' motivation to learn a second/foreign language is broader than the distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation.

As research in motivation developed, the source of students' motivation to learn a second or foreign language was expanded. Researchers interested in how students are motivated to learn a second language have utilised different theories, such as, reinforcement theory, self-determination theory, self-efficacy theory, expectancy value theory, and goal theory (Dornyei, 2010). Self-determination theory divided motivation into two categories based on reasons or goals that lead to action. These are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to the excitement or enjoyment of doing an activity while extrinsic motivation refers to the outcome or reward of doing the action such as good grades (Dornyei, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The third phase of research on motivation is based on Dornyei and Otto's (1998) research on second language learning motivation, which is referred to as the process-oriented period. This research groups motivation into three temporal segments (Dornyei & Otto, 1998); they are: (1) Pre-actional stage, in which motivation needs to be generated (also called "choice" motivation); (2) Actional stage, the stage where motivation needs to be maintained and protected by providing pleasant and interesting activities or tasks so learners experience a supportive learning atmosphere (sometimes called "executive" motivation); (3) Post-actional stage, where learners need to undertake retrospective evaluation of how the learning has been conducted; they should be able to select learning activities that motivate them to learn in order to pursue their future goals. The third segment is also known as the "motivational retrospection" stage.

In support of the process oriented model, Dornyei and Csizer (1998) conducted a survey involving 200 Hungarian teachers of English from various language teaching institutions. The teachers were asked to complete questionnaires in which they were supposed to indicate how frequently they used 51 motivational strategies listed in the questionnaires. From the result of the questionnaires, Dornyei and Csizer (1998) concluded that ten major strategies or "Ten Commandments" underpinned motivation for second language learners.

Based on his research on second/foreign language motivation, Dornyei (2001) developed a total of 102 motivational strategies, called motivational teaching practice (MTP). Motivational teaching practice systematises the application of motivation into a circular system comprising four phases (see Figure 1): creating motivational conditions; generating student motivation; maintaining motivation and protecting motivation; and encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation. This cycle implies that student motivation should be built, generated, maintained and encouraged (Dornyei, 2001, p. 29).

In his later research, Dornyei (2005, 2009) broadened and elaborated the framework (MTP) by introducing the L2 motivational self-system. This current phase of motivation research is called the "socio-dynamic" phase because it emphasizes that the context of teaching and learning consisted of a multiplicity of internal, social and contextual factors (Ushioda & Dornyei, 2012). In this model Dornyei proposed three main dimensions of students' language learning motivation: the ideal L2 self; the ought to L2 self; and the L2 learning experience. Since this research focuses on how teachers motivate their students, the

MTP framework is a more appropriate model for gathering research data in the present study.

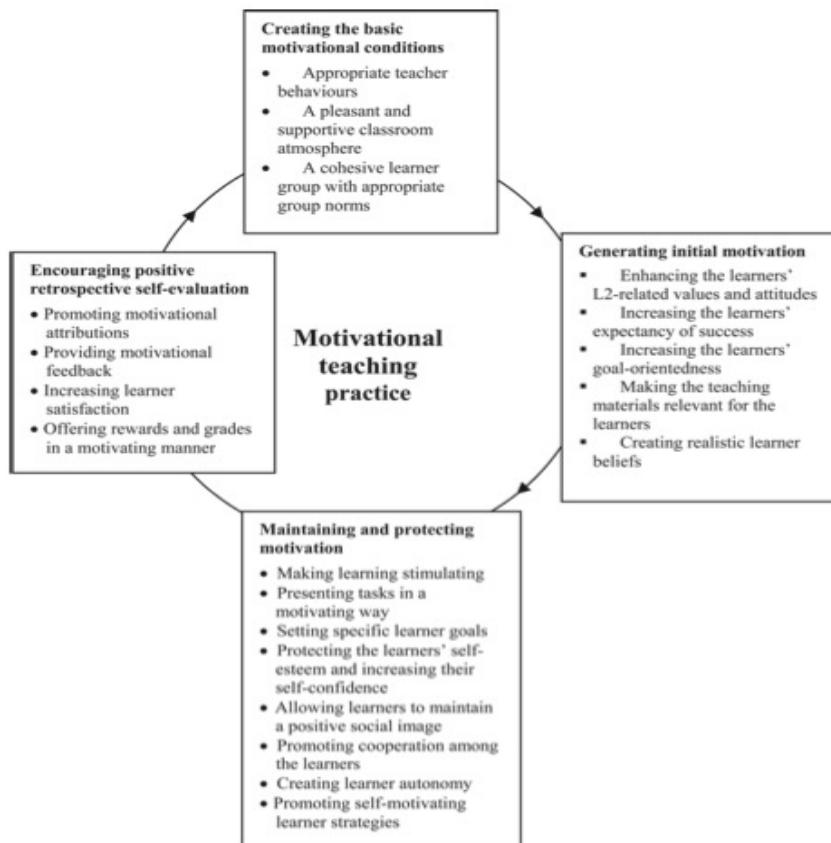


Figure 1: Motivational Teaching Practice (MTP) (Dornyei, 2001, p. 29)

A limited amount of research has been conducted to find out the effect of implementing motivational teaching strategies on students' motivation. Plenty of studies have used Dornyei's motivational teaching practice framework

(Alrabai, 2011; Asante, Al-Mahrooqi & Abrar-ul-Hassan, 2012; Papi, 2010). Most of the studies were surveys, followed up by interviews or classroom observations; one study employed a quasi-experimental design, and one case study used interviews only. The studies of motivational teaching strategies generally found that there is a correlation between teacher motivational teaching strategies and students' motivation (Guilloteaux & Dornyei, 2008; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2011). However, the teachers were not necessarily aware that their motivational teaching strategies impacted on learners' motivation (Kassing, 2011). Furthermore, Sugita and Takeuci's (2010) study indicates that only a few motivational teaching strategies have a correlation with students' motivation and the effectiveness of these strategies varied based on students' language level. Cheng and Dornyei's study in a Taiwan context (2007) reveals that some motivational teaching strategies are transferable across cultural and ethnolinguistic contexts but some strategies are culture-sensitive or even culture-dependent. This finding is supported by Nugroho's study (2007) in an Indonesian university context and Xavier's (2005) study in a Brazilian high school context.

It appears that there have been few published studies of motivational teaching strategies conducted in an Indonesian high school context. It is important therefore to research motivational teaching strategies in Indonesian high schools, particularly to understand the impacts of these strategies on students' motivation. The findings are expected to help English teachers understand the source of students' motivation, so that they can implement suitable motivational teaching strategies.

METHOD

To reach its objectives, this research is designed as a qualitative study. The collection of rich data allows the context in which teachers implement motivational teaching strategies, and the effect of these strategies on their students' motivation. Qualitative research produces both exploratory and descriptive explanation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

The method used in this qualitative research is case study in order to contextualize the research within the real life environment of an Indonesian secondary classroom (Yin, 2003). Additionally, this approach allows different data collection techniques (Yin, 2009). These include semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, stimulated recalls, and focus group interviews. The

participants in this study involved 4 (four) teachers along with their groups of students. Those teachers are Moza, Harry, Yuke and Arfan. The researcher contacted the principals of four senior high schools in the research site asking them to suggest a teacher who, based on their personal knowledge of the teachers and their recorded assessments over recent years, they knew to be successful in motivating their students to learn English.

The data were collected from both the teachers and their students; the data from the teachers were gathered using semi-structured interviews with teachers, classroom observations, and stimulated recall, while focus group interviews were used to collect the data from the students. Then, the data were transcribed in which its result was coded and its themes were identified. The themes were analysed in relation to Dornyei's framework.

In order to anticipate ethical issues that may arise during and after the study, the following actions were conducted. First, I gained ethical permission and approval from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee at Victoria University of Wellington. Second, I obtained permission from the local department of education within Indonesia by providing appropriate information. Third, I also obtained permission from the principals whose schools were involved in this study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that most of the students involved in the study held a similar perception that learning should involve enjoyable learning activities such as jokes, games, or funny stories. They also like learning materials from the internet. They enjoyed doing activities involving body movement such as drama or role play. Additionally, they said that they enjoyed learning in a relaxed classroom atmosphere. In the following section, factors influencing students' motivation are presented and the findings are discussed in relation to Dornyei's (2001) framework and other relevant motivation studies and theories in ESL/EFL context.

Creating the Basic Motivational Conditions

In creating students' motivation, at least three components are usually present: appropriate teacher behaviors and a good relationship with students; a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere; and a cohesive learner group

with appropriate group norms. These three components are interrelated (Dornyei, 2001). Two strategies from this phase emerged from the data, that is, teacher behaviors and a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere.

Teachers' Classroom Behaviors

Most of the students in the focus group interviews said that a key factor in motivating their classroom learning is the teacher. The students reported that a teacher is the one that determines whether or not the learning is interesting. The way a teacher explains lessons and how the teacher creates the learning atmosphere is very important as signaled by one of the participants during focus group interviews.

I think the most important thing is the teacher. If the teacher is interesting, the learning will be interesting, too. But if the teacher is boring, the learning will be boring, too. (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

Moza's students indicated a similar view by stating that she loved Moza's warm facial expression and smile.

She smiles a lot. It makes me feel comfortable, not afraid of making mistakes. Previously my English teachers are very strict so I experience that English is a very difficult subject for me and I am afraid to talk in the classroom (Focus group B, 18/2/2012).

Harry's students also mentioned a similar opinion that for them the most important aspect in learning English was the teacher. They remarked that Harry managed to build an understanding and respectful relationship with students.

I like studying English because I like the teacher especially the way the teacher interacts with us. He makes jokes but we still respect him as our teacher. I do not like teacher with serious face or no jokes at all (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Yuke's students also stated a positive response towards her classroom behaviors. One of them said that:

She is open and warm so it makes us feel comfortable, not afraid of delivering our ideas. She is not angry if we make mistakes. She listens to our opinion and expressions. It is so interesting (Focus group B, 18-2-2012).

Arfan's students reported a similar point of view about their teacher's classroom manners. They saw him as a friendly and approachable teacher. The students can talk to him inside and outside the learning period.

I like the teacher. He is friendly. When I have a problem and I ask him, he will answer it promptly. He explains the lesson enthusiastically. It makes us motivated (Focus group 14/3/2012).

Overall, the four teachers showed their warm, enthusiastic and friendly manners. These behaviors influenced students' motivation. The students even stated that the first important factor influencing their motivation was teacher classroom behaviors. This is in line with most of the findings from motivation studies worldwide such as Ruesch, Bown, and Dewey (2012), Guilloteaux (2013), and Cheng and Dornyei (2007).

Classroom Atmosphere

Moza's students indicated that they appreciated the teachers' attempt to build a warm and friendly relationship with them. They reported that they enjoyed learning because the teacher was not irritable and listened to their opinions carefully.

The data from Moza's students point out that the key idea in creating a successful environment in the classroom is the development of a warm and a supportive relationship between teacher and students. Moza mentioned that the establishment of trust between teacher and students makes students feel free and safe to express their ideas and opinions in the classroom. She also encouraged her students to be autonomous learners by giving them the opportunity to choose discussion topics in the classroom. The students said that they enjoyed learning with Moza because they learnt in a relaxed and encouraging atmosphere.

In the focus group, Harry's students reported that they liked the teacher's informal style in teaching. It created relaxed learning atmosphere in which the students felt free to express their ideas and opinions. It made the learning condition become more lively and encouraging. The students enjoyed learning

with Harry because they did not feel any pressure within the classroom environment. The students reported that Harry is a great teacher who is easy to get along with.

I like the way the teacher interact with us. He has a great sense of humour. We laugh a lot in the classroom. It is very relaxed. I do not like a serious teacher. I will be afraid to talk when the teacher is so strict (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Another student supported this opinion.

I like the teacher. He advises us and gives religious advice. I like his personality because he makes the classroom atmosphere lively. We have time to share ideas (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Many ESL teachers found that games, songs, jokes, and other fun activities would motivate students to learn in the classroom as long as they are used strategically (Dornyei, 2009). However, in the focus group interview one student said that she did not like too much fun in the classroom. She complained that if there was too much joke and laughter, there would be little in the lesson that she could learn. This implies that teachers should be able to determine the appropriate time and amount of humour they should apply in the classroom.

The students also talked about the possibility of learning outside the classroom. One of the students mentioned the enjoyment of learning in a language laboratory. He stated that he never experienced learning in a language laboratory. Another student stated that it would be motivating if they could learn with English native speaker.

Yuke's students reported that they felt relaxed when they studied with Yuke. They said that this helped them to understand and use their English. One of them, for example, stated that:

I like it when my teacher speaks English with me. She does not force me. She invites me to speak and if I have a problem with vocabulary, she allows me to use Indonesian and she helps me with the English words that I do not know (Focus group A, 10/2/2012).

Similar to Harry's students, some students in Yuke's class commented in the focus group that they wanted to learn in a different setting.

I have a dream to learn outside the classroom, in the school park, maybe. I think learning outside the classroom will be nice and we will have a different learning atmosphere (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Another student wished she could learn English in a language laboratory.

I think learning in language laboratory will be interesting. It is a new experience. I suppose we can practice our listening skill (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Some of the students wanted to experience learning with English native speakers.

It will be cool if we can learn with an English native speaker or, at least, practice talking with them (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Similarly, Arfan's students in the focus group said that they liked Arfan's way of creating a relaxed classroom atmosphere. They said that Arfan was easy going and approachable. The students could talk and discuss with him inside or outside the classroom. He even offered many opportunities to his students to ask questions. He allowed his students to discuss their problems in learning English (Classroom observation, 7/3/2012).

In summary, regarding the classroom atmosphere, the students wanted a variety of learning environments. They expected to experience learning in open areas such as the school playground. They were also eager to know how to learn listening in a language laboratory, and they would like to practice their English with English native speakers. The four teachers were warm and friendly to their students. The classroom atmosphere is relaxed, the students feel free to ask their teachers some questions, and they enjoyed learning with them. The teachers seemed to have a good sense of humor. The students could approach and talk to them inside and outside the classroom. This point emphasizes that social and contextual factors influence students' motivation (Ushioda & Dornyei, 2012).

Generating Initial Motivation

Dornyei divides phase two (generating initial motivation) into five categories: enhancing learners' language value and attitude; increasing the learners' expectancy of success; increasing the learners' goal orientation; making the

teaching material relevant to learners, and creating realistic learners' beliefs (Dornyei, 2001). In enhancing learner language values, Dornyei mentioned that learners' intrinsic motivation can be aroused by presenting interesting materials (Dornyei, 2001). This is also related to self-determination theory which divided motivation into two categories, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Students' intrinsic motivation can be built through their extrinsic motivation, such as, presenting encouraging and interesting learning material and activities (Dornyei, 1994; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

A Variety of Learning Resources and Activities

The students reported that they preferred particular learning materials and activities, such as, some language examples that were related to a teenager's life. Such materials were easy to understand and would remain longer in their memory. They also enjoyed a range of learning activities during lessons.

I work harder when the topic is interesting. I am so happy if I can do the exercise well or answering teacher question (Focus group a, 18/2/2012).

One student reported that he is more motivated when a teacher gives the class a challenging activity. This kind of activity makes him think and this motivates him to find out an answer.

I like games especially games with challenging activity. I like crossword puzzle or quiz games (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

Moza's students enjoyed listening to her stories. This was one of the ways used by Moza to attract her students' attention. The students said:

The teacher tells us interesting stories and sometimes the ending surprises us. She usually starts the lesson by telling a story. I think some of the stories are her real life experience (Focus group, 18/2/2012).

Another student also mentioned that he enjoyed learning with Moza because of her way of explaining the lesson. He said that Moza used simple sentences that were easy to understand.

I like the teacher because I understand her language. She does not use difficult words. I can understand what she is saying or explaining in the classroom (Focus group B, 18/2/2012).

Moza also gave examples of sentences from real life situations (observation, 17/2/2012). This motivated her students because they could see a purpose for learning English as stated by one of her students.

The teacher makes sentences that are easy to follow and close to our world. She gives examples from real life activity and gives us time to make our sentences (Focus group B, 18/2/2012).

In addition, the data from Harry's students indicated that learning by using games, songs, poems, and jokes is motivating. However, in the focus group, the students suggested that the class have varied learning activities. One student, for example, reported:

I like songs and games, but in my opinion, the classroom activities should be varied. Any activity that we do too much in the classroom makes us bored. So far, I enjoy learning English in the classroom (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

One student mentioned that she liked learning English grammar followed by practice. He thought that grammar was also needed in learning a foreign language.

I really enjoy activity that makes me practice to speak English. I feel English grammar is also important but compared to practice maybe it should be balanced. I can say 40% language knowledge and 60 % practice (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

In the focus group a student stated that:

I want to get more vocabulary from the learning activities so it will make my English fluent. English is international language. I need it badly (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Yuke's students found "cycle stand" activity interesting. It was a fun activity for them. Besides practicing the language, the students also moved their body by standing up each time they expressed their ideas. Besides cycle-stand,

Yuke's students mentioned that they liked other activities involving body movement such as games, role play, and drama. A student commented:

I like cycle stand or other activities that make me use English. It is an interesting activity because everyone shares ideas. For me, it is a new way to practice English (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

Arfan's students reported that they enjoyed learning by watching a video as the learning media. They said it was a new learning experience for them, especially if there was an activity that allowed them to answer questions by pressing the right button to answer.

I like learning by using games or activity from video. It is a new experience for me. It is fun because I can directly know whether I give right or wrong answers (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

It reveals that Arfan tried hard to find ways to motivate his students in learning the language and he found out that using audio learning resources are interesting for his students. Another student said that Arfan uses a range of strategies in explaining lessons. He gives many examples. This helps his students understand what their teacher taught them.

I like the teacher's way of explaining the lesson. He has many different ways of explaining the topic and gives many examples. He is so patient answering my questions (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

The students enjoyed having various learning resources and activities especially activities involving body movement, materials from the internet, playing challenging games, listening to English songs, watching movies, or listening to the teacher's stories.

The Usefulness of English

Another way to generate students' motivation is by introducing the instrumental value of the language. The instrumental value of learning a second language can be getting a good job, earning extra money, pursuing further study, improving social position, pursuing hobby like working on computers which generally use English (Dornyei, 2001). Yuke's students mentioned the benefit of learning English for their future. They understood that they need to

study hard to improve their English for their future. They also realized that they needed English for their university study.

Students seemed to be motivated when teachers explain the usefulness of English for their study and future careers. The students understood that they also needed English to communicate in international forum. They appear to study hard to improve their English. One of the students in the focus group commented:

I realize that I need English for my future career and university study. It motivates me to learn English. My brother told me that, at university level, textbooks are mostly written in English (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

However, some students still thought that English is difficult to learn. Most students learn English in the classroom only; it does not support their English communicative skills both in spoken and written language (Field note, 23/1/2012).

I like English but I still find that it is hard for me to learn English. I know it is important but I do not understand why it is very difficult for me. Some of my friends just enjoy learning it (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

Among strategies from phase two of the framework, there are two strategies influencing students' motivation: interesting learning materials and increasing student's goal orientedness by understanding the usefulness of English. Understanding the usefulness of English for their study and future careers increased their motivation. Stressing the usefulness of English is also found in the study of Ruesch et al. (2012) which is similar in terms of increasing students' goal orientedness and in promoting students' confidence (Cheng & Dornyei, 2007).

Maintaining and Protecting Motivation

The third phase of motivational teaching practice is maintaining and protecting motivation, which is elaborated into eight categories: making learning stimulating and enjoyable; presenting tasks in a motivating way; setting specific learner goals; protecting learner self-esteem and increasing their confidence; allowing learners to maintain a positive social image; creating learner autonomy; promoting self-motivating strategies; and promoting cooperation among the learners (Dornyei, 2001). Among these strategies, two have been discussed

in phase two, making learning enjoyable and presenting task in a motivating way. The Indonesian teachers in this study stress the importance of enjoyable and fun activities, which is in contrast with the views of teachers in other Asian setting (Cheng & Dornyei, 2007; Wong, 2014). Promoting cooperation among learners and increasing learners' self-confidence by giving a lot of time to practice will be discussed in the following section.

Group-work Activities

The students enjoy working in groups. They said that it helped them to protect their self-esteem and increase their confidence. The smart student could act as the moderator and lead the discussion in the group. The weak students could learn from their peers. The students' self-confidence was enhanced when they worked in mixed ability groups so they could practice in their groups before presenting in the class discussion. This also helped them to be autonomous learners.

In general, they felt more confident. They could ask questions to their friends in the group. They said that it was easier to understand their friend's explanation. Harry believed that mixed-ability group composition would benefit his students more.

I enjoy working in group because if I have problems, I can ask my friend how to do it. It is easier to understand my friends' explanation (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

It seems that group work helped them to practice and be confident to talk in a class discussion.

Opportunity to Practice English

The students indicated that they enjoyed having much time to practice their English. They liked practicing their English rather than just listening to their teacher explaining a lesson. A student commented:

I like using English especially if there is someone that I can talk to. Sometimes my friends tease me if I use English. Many of them will say that I show off if I use English. I just enjoy practicing my English. It is fun (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

Her comment indicated that she enjoyed the opportunity to practice her English. She tried hard to use English as often as possible, especially outside the classroom, which required her to interact with her friends using English. Thus, the opportunity was created to make the students become familiar with English and use it for their daily communication. A student reported that:

I like speaking English. My teacher supports me to use English with her and with my classmates in the classroom or outside the classroom (Focus group, 10/2/2012).

Motivated students are keen to use and practice their English. They try hard to communicate in English with their teacher during English class. Meanwhile, outside school hours, some students enroll in and join extra English courses. They realize that they need to be able to speak English, not only for their university study but also for their future careers. They reported that their classroom learning did not give them enough knowledge and skills in English (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

Some strategies of this phase did not emerge from the data; conversely, one strategy which is not included in the framework emerged from the data. The strategies from the framework which also emerged from the data promoted cooperation among the learners and increased learner self-confidence by giving them a lot of time to practice. The strategy reported as motivating but was not in the framework was the use of L1.

The Use of L1

The use of L1 appeared to influence students' motivation to a certain extent. One of Moza's students reported that Moza mostly used English in her teaching. She only used Indonesian for some sentences when she explained important points of the lesson (Focus group, 18/2/2012). One of the students, for instance, reported in the focus group:

I like it when the teacher explained the lesson in English, but not all the time, because it is hard for me to understand long sentences. I want the teacher to use Indonesian too (Focus group B, 18/2/2012).

However, in the focus group, one of the students from a regular school said that she was motivated when she listened to the teacher or someone who could speak English fluently. She needed someone to practice her English.

If I hear the teacher or anyone who can speak English fluently, it motivates me to learn harder (Focus group, 14/3/2012).

It indicates that the amount of L1 used in the classroom in this study depended on the students' needs and level of English. This is supported by Nation (2003) who stated that the first language has an important role in learning a foreign language. The strategic use of using L1 and L2 is unique to this study finding. The appropriate use of L1 not only motivates students but also helps them build positive and encouraging relationship. Using L1 to explain difficult language points was appreciated by the students. This study suggested that too much L1 or L2 could be demotivating.

Encouraging Positive Retrospective Self-evaluation

The last phase of Dornyei's framework is teaching the learner to appraise and react positively to their past learning. This is seen as necessary so that students see their past learning as something to promote, rather than hinder their future learning (Dornyei, 2001). This phase is categorized into: promoting motivational attributions; providing motivational feedback; increasing learner satisfaction; and offering rewards and grades in a motivating manner (Dornyei, 2001). The strategies that emerged from the students' data were offering rewards and grade in motivating manners.

Learning Assessment

The four teachers said a similar thing that they did not do direct correction on their students' speaking practice. This way of correcting mistakes and the teachers' view toward mistakes made students feel free to talk. Even with their half English and half Indonesian, they talked actively in the classroom. The teachers appreciated and encouraged their students' attempt to communicate in English. The students enjoyed this opportunity too.

I like the opportunity to speak English. To be fluent in English is my learning goal. The teacher really supports me. He does not laugh at any mistake. He even

reminds my classmates not to laugh at others' mistakes. The learning atmosphere is really fun and relaxed (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

A student from Harry's class did not like it when the teacher passed the question to other students to answer. She wanted the teacher to answer her question too.

I like the teacher, but I don't like the teacher when he does not answer questions. When I ask a question, the teacher asks other classmates to answer it, but he does not give his answer. It is a kind of uncertainty to me, which one is the correct answer (Focus group, 11/2/2012).

Moza's students gave responses in a similar way in that they appreciated their teacher's way of evaluating their learning.

I like the way my teacher evaluates us. She does not only consider the test but also our classroom participation (Focus group B, 18-2-2012).

Yuke and Arfan did a similar thing, in a way that they did not do direct correction on their students' mistake, and they also assessed their students' learning through their classroom participation during the learning.

In regards to the implementation of strategies from the last stage of MTP, it appears that the four teachers did not use strategies to encourage students to evaluate their learning. This indicates that the teachers did not teach students to be able to identify factors that promote or hinder their learning. This is important for students to keep them motivated and being self-motivated. This point supports other study findings in Asia that developing learner's autonomy are not considered important (Cheng & Dornyei, 2007; Guilloteaux, 2013). None of the teachers in this study informed about promoting their students to be autonomous learners which should be considered to help students to be independent learners outside the classroom. For this sense, they share similar views with the Taiwanese and Korean teachers.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings indicate that the key factor to motivate students' learning in the classroom is the teacher. The students reported that the teacher was the main factor that made the classroom learning process become interesting. The

teachers' ways of explaining the lessons and how the teacher created a learning atmosphere were very important factors.

Several factors that enhance students' motivation are teacher classroom behaviors, a relaxed and supportive classroom atmosphere, awareness of the importance of English, having various learning resources and activities, and encouraging feedback. There were no significant differences in factors influencing students' motivation among the students.

This study shows that most of the strategies from Dornyei's MTP (2001) emerged but some strategies did not emerge from the data. Conversely, a strategy that is not included in MTP emerged from the data, that is, the use of L1. Strategic uses of L1 increase students' motivation, and this is unique to this study. The findings also support that some strategies are transferrable but some are culturally bound.

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RE-CONCEPTUALIZING EFL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: ENHANCING COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY FOR THAI TEACHERS

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Abstract: The spread of globalization means an accompanying growth in the importance of English as a lingua franca. Efforts to increase English proficiency are especially pronounced in Southeast Asia with the opening of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015. A common strategy to enhance English learning in Asian countries is to begin instruction at the primary level, but policymakers face the challenge of preparing teachers of young learners with the necessary content and pedagogical knowledge to provide high quality English education. This article reports on a professional development effort aimed to help Thai primary teachers of English integrate communicative language teaching approaches. After describing the Thai English education context and key project components, the author uses participant and trainer response data to identify factors that contribute to perceived quality of the project. From these findings, the author makes recommendations to re-conceptualize best practices in teacher professional development for Thai English teachers. Findings and recommendations are applicable both to Thailand and to other nations with EFL contexts.

Keywords: English as a foreign language (EFL), communicative language teaching, professional development, Asia, young learners

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Globalization has meant an increased reliance on English as a lingua franca across the world. Nations without a history of English as a native or second language, those within Kachru's (1992) expanding circle, are experiencing an

urgency to ensure citizens are equipped with English skills needed to be competitive in the international economy. Southeast Asia's political landscape makes learning English especially important. For instance, most recently, the opening of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Community (AEC) in 2015, which adopted English as its working language, is strengthening the resolve to learn English in the region (Kirkpatrick, 2011).

Of the 10 ASEAN countries, Thailand is one of the most pivotal for English education: while it has experienced rapid economic growth and development over the past two decades, communicating in English is still rare for many of its citizens. Education First's (EF) English Proficiency Index (EPI), which ranks countries by adults' communicative English skills, listed Thailand as 48 of 60 countries, one of the lowest-ranking countries in Asia (Education First, 2014). This low level of English proficiency in Thailand may be a function of its historical context; unlike most of its neighbors, Thailand has never been colonized by Western powers and therefore has never been obliged to learn English. Some have suggested that Thailand has yet to embrace English as a global language, or to "own" English (Foley, 2005), further hindering its progress in adopting English. Nevertheless, the nation is committed to upgrading language proficiency through government schools. As an example, since the early 2000's, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has required schools to provide at least one hour of English instruction beginning in Grade 1, a reflection of the growing trend among Asian countries to start English learning at young ages (Nunan, 2003).

A challenge that Thailand faces in implementing compulsory primary English education is recruiting English proficient teachers who are qualified in communicative language pedagogy for young learners. English language teaching in Thailand consists largely of outdated grammar translation instructional methods that give little attention to authentic communication or oral language skills, a phenomenon that has been documented in other Asian EFL classrooms as well (e.g., Butler, 2005). The need for qualified teaching personnel is especially acute at the primary level because, unlike secondary teachers, Thai primary teachers are not required to take many English language university courses before earning their teaching credential. Therefore, preparing primary teachers to provide English instruction is left to in-service teacher professional development (TPD) initiatives. This article evaluates the implementation of a training program for primary English teachers (henceforth called the *Primary-PD Program*) on communicative language teaching. I collaborated with Thai

and American colleagues to design, deliver, and evaluate the professional development program.

The study sought to inform the research question: *What themes contributed to perceived quality of CLT PD for Thai primary teachers?* Data were gathered through survey, interviews, observation notes, and autobiographical reflections. Lessons learned from the project are applicable to nations within and beyond ASEAN that teach English as a foreign language (EFL) in primary schools. Following, I first review literature on teacher development theories and CLT in Thailand and then summarize how the Primary-PD Program's design took into account existing theory and Thailand's unique English educational context. I next describe the evaluation methodology and distill key themes that inform the research question. From these themes, I suggest considerations for adapting PD common in Anglophone countries to Thai English teachers. Finally, I provide recommendations for systemic changes at a policy level necessary to support any TPD initiative.

Literature on adult learning theory was the foundation of the project design, as it underlies promising TPD (Speck, 1996; Zepeda, 2011) across a range of contexts. Built on constructivist epistemology, the notion that individuals actively make knowledge rather than passively consume information (Bruner, 1960), adult learning theorists posit that best practices for teaching adults do not necessarily mirror those for teaching children because of different prior experiences and motivations. Knowles' seminal concepts of andragogy serve as a common basis for the variety of adult learning theories in education and informed the design of the PD-Program. Specifically, Knowles (1984) asserts that adult learning should: (a) involve learners from the planning stages; (b) incorporate life experiences learners bring; (c) focus on subjects that are relevant for learners' professional or personal life; and (d) adopt a problem-oriented focus so that adult learners can apply new concepts immediately. Although empirical evidence documenting TPD's effects on student outcomes is sparse (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007), research is clear that promising PD reflects foundational concepts in adult learning theory, such as sustained, ongoing, and relevant support tailored to teachers' needs (Desimone, 2009).

While Thai scholars have recognized the importance of constructivist learning and tenets of adult learning theory in TPD (e.g., Teng & Sinwongsuwat, 2015) much existing English TPD is based on the knowledge transmission model that is prevalent in classrooms (Kustati, 2013). It is not

clear if the learner-centered, job-embedded collaborative coaching that is at the heart of the high-quality TPD in Western contexts is as effective in Thailand. Indeed, as evidenced by Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos' (2009) review, few seminal, robust PD studies examine ASEAN contexts. Effective TPD in Thailand may differ from best practices in Western countries, especially given manifestation of Buddhism in social institutions (Saengboon, 2004). For instance, *karma*, which emphasizes acceptance of the status quo, means that Thai teachers may avoid confrontation or uncomfortable conversations that could occur in coaching (Adamson, 2005). And, the uniquely Thai concept of *Kreng Jai*, showing deference to older and higher-status individuals, is evident among students' unquestioning acceptance of their teacher as an expert (Adamson, 2005; Foley, 2005); a similar phenomenon may be at play among teachers and TPD trainers. The scarcity of literature in Thai contexts makes defining effective PD for Thailand difficult. The present analysis contributes to the emerging knowledge base on TPD in Thai contexts and can help inform a PD model for Thai English teachers.

To address the ongoing challenge of teachers employing grammar translation instructional approaches, the Primary-PD Program addressed communicative language teaching (CLT) with an emphasis on teaching oral language skills. The goal of the Primary-PD Program was not just to impart knowledge about CLT, but also to provide teachers with the practical tools and confidence to implement CLT in the classroom. The concept of CLT has been interpreted variously among scholars in the field of language education (Harmer, 2007), and specific components of the approach differ by perspective (e.g., see Brown, 2007; Littlewood, 1981, Nunan, 1991). In general, Widdowson's (1978) foundational notion of "achieving communicative purposes" as an instructional goal rather than "comprehending isolated linguistic units" underpins present-day understandings of CLT and guided our operationalization of the concept for the Primary PD-Program.

Although CLT is not implemented consistently in Thai schools, the MOE has advocated for the approach for over two decades (Darasawang, 2007; Kustati, 2013). In fact, Thailand's Basic Education Core Curriculum, first developed in 2001 and most-recently revised in 2008, defines foreign languages as the "knowledge, skills, attitude and culture...for communication, seeking further knowledge and livelihood" (p. 11). Prior Primary TPD has included topics that fall under CLT, such as task-based learning and content-based language learning (Kustati, 2013; Teng & Sinwongsawat, 2015). Explanations are

varied for Thai English teachers' reluctance to apply CLT in their classroom: the nation's high-stakes English test measures grammatical accuracy rather than communication (Wongsothorn, Hiranburana, & Chinnawong, 2003), which understandably leads to a lack of teacher belief in the efficacy of CLT (Foley, 2005); teachers do not feel confident enough in their own English skills to teach communicatively (Foley, 2005; Wanchai, 2012; Wongsothorn et al., 2003); and the hierarchal structure within schools do not allow teachers adequate job-embedded support to apply CLT theories to instruction (Iemjinda, 2005).

Although overhauling these deep-rooted educational systems and transforming firmly-held beliefs is beyond the scope of the TPD, the Primary-PD Program can make inroads to changing teachers' attitudes. In line with Knowles' emphasis on the need to provide adults with relevant knowledge that they can apply to solve daily problems at work, we theorized that demonstrating step-by-step CLT activities designed for use by teachers with only a beginning level of English would facilitate this attitude change. The Primary-PD Program was built on the theory that the most effective training for Thai teachers would account for Knowles' principles of adult learning with special attention to the unique challenges Thailand faces in implementing CLT methods. The following components were thus at the heart of the PD program.

Based on an analysis of literature and conversations with teachers and MOE officials, we determined four principles of CLT consistent with Widdowson's (1978) seminal definition: (1) meaningful communication; (2) collaborative student group work; (3) language connected to context; and (4) language to engage in critical thinking. I intentionally narrowed the broad and potentially messy theories of CLT to principles that could be exemplified with videos and images to ensure concepts were accessible for teachers with beginning English proficiency. From these principles, I worked with Thai teachers and MOE officials to identify and adapt 8 classroom activities. These activities were selected from comprehensive search of research and best practice in primary EFL teaching from refereed journals, pedagogy texts, Internet Blogs, and colleagues' recommendations. The following criteria were used in determining the techniques to include in the training: (a) applicable across topics; (b) could be differentiated for various language levels; (c) appropriate for young learners; (d) involved student-to-student oral communication; (e) required few or no supplemental materials; and (f) aligned to one or more of the 4 CLT principles.

We also created a handbook in which each of the activities with step-by-step directions and ideas for adaption written in basic English. A Web link of the activity in practice was listed so that teachers could see the activity in action, something we theorized would be especially valuable for teachers with low English proficiency in reading. To address teachers' need to prepare students for the national test, we also included target language skills that each activity addressed. Although the validity of the national test has been called into question (Goodman, 2013), these language skills we included are supposedly represented on the test.

The activities were introduced to participants through active learning methods, such as simulating instruction so that the teacher participants first engaged in the activities from a student's perspective. Participants then tried out the activities through microteaching for their peers. These 15-minute presentations required participants to work in pairs or groups of three to adapt a particular activity to their context (e.g., students' age and language level, learning objectives, and textbook topics) and then to demonstrate how they would teach the activity to their students, including giving directions and applying a topic they usually teach to the activity. For example, one group used an information gap activity with animal photographs because vocabulary for animal features was part of their regular curriculum. Microteaching was made more meaningful by requiring participants to use a checklist when observing their colleagues, noticing for observable examples of the CLT principles. This reflection tool reinforced the connection between CLT theory and classroom activities and facilitated collaborative sharing rather than the top-down teacher evaluations prevalent in Thai schools.

We conducted an intensive multi-day train-the-trainer (TOT) session for the 25 teacher leaders (henceforth called *local trainers*) who helped lead the subsequent 10 regional workshops. These local trainers were primary teachers with strong English language proficiency, and most had received pedagogy training abroad sponsored by the MOE within the past five years. Keeping in mind Knowles' tenet that adults thrive when directing their learning experiences, we theorized that involving teachers in the initial stages of the PD would increase their sense of ownership of CLT, crucial to fostering subsequent sharing with colleagues. In the past, these local trainers have been responsible for "cascading" training they received from outside consultants without an explicit TOT support mechanism. Further, while these trainers are recognized as leaders for primary teachers, they rarely have input into the design or content of the

training, instead being asked to “pass down” knowledge from workshops they attended.

Between four and six local trainers co-led each of the 10 regional workshops together with the visiting trainers. Collaboration enabled us, as the visiting trainers, to provide intensive support to the local trainers by modeling training techniques and debriefing in daily reflective meetings. The local trainers were able to support participants with low English proficiency through translation at strategic moments. The workshops also built on the teacher trainers’ prior experiences of working with Thai teachers as a resource for learning, another one of Knowles’ principles of adult learning theory. Thai local trainers’ leadership lent credibility to the PD content for participants, demonstrating that CLT is no longer the sole domain of consultants from native English-speaking countries, but is also part of Thai education. We also theorized that transferring leadership to Thai teachers would begin to break down stringent hierarchal relationships that assume teachers learn passively from outside experts or superiors.

METHOD

The goal of this evaluation was to analyze implementation factors that appeared to facilitate or hinder the perceived quality of the Primary-PD Program. Data does not allow us to make conclusions about the PD’s ultimate effectiveness on teacher learning or student achievement. Our research question was informed by evidence from participants, local trainers, and visiting trainers. We gathered data through surveys, field notes from observations, informal interviews, and my own autobiographical reflection.

We distributed a paper-and-pencil survey to assess participant satisfaction after the initial TOT session, and then a slightly different survey after each of the 10 training sessions. The survey was adapted from those used previously with English teachers in countries where English is taught as a foreign language. Both surveys consisted of Likert-type and open-response items. The Likert-type items were designed with a 4-point scale to measure perceived usefulness of each aspect in the workshops. The same six open-ended items were used for the TOT and regional workshops. These items measured participants’ opinions on the quality of the training (e.g., *What was the most interesting part of the workshop? What changes would you suggest to improve this workshop?*). The open-response items also attempted to measure the likelihood that partici-

pants would apply strategies in the classroom (e.g., *Will you do anything differently in your classroom as a result of this training? If so, what will you do?*). We asked Thai colleagues at the MOE to review the surveys for content and face validity. The surveys responses were transferred to an electronic database for analysis.

For the train-the-trainer session, all 25 attending teachers completed the survey. Due to miscommunication, the survey for the local trainings was only distributed to 8 of the 10 locations. Of the 883 participants who attended these 8 trainings, 349 completed some or all of the survey, for a response rate of about 40%. The relatively low rate may be a function of the limited English proficiency of many participants, though we permitted participants to write in Thai because local trainers could translate. Another explanation is participants' absence; due to school-related responsibilities, some participants left the workshop before the final ceremony at which the surveys were distributed.

Additional data sources were visiting trainers' field notes of observations from the workshops and informal interviews, recorded in email exchanges and summary reports after each workshop. My own reflections served as data as well, recorded through notes and email exchanges with other trainers. These notes represented events that occurred during the workshops as well as the daily debriefing conversations that were held with local trainers. I initiated these debriefing sessions with questions such as, *How do you think it went today?* and *What worked well? What might we change next time?* For eight of the ten workshops, the teacher trainers collected "exit tickets," a type of formative assessment that required participants to write what they liked best about the day and problems or questions they still had about the content. Reviewing and discussing responses on the exit tickets comprised many of the debrief meetings, helping us make data-informed conclusions about the workshop.

Data analysis was an iterative process. Information from surveys and field notes were reviewed regularly throughout the training, and preliminary findings were used to adapt and improve subsequent trainings. Responses to the open-ended items on the survey were coded thematically. In line with analysis protocols of mixed method studies (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), data from different sources informed holistic understandings about the training. At the completion of the training series, I distilled overall successes and challenges based on data from surveys, visiting trainers' field notes of observations and conversations with teacher trainers, and my own subjective experience as a visiting trainer.

Temporal and structural constraints posed multiple limitations to data collection. Improved student outcomes is the ultimate indicator of effective teacher PD (Guskey, 2000), but determining achievement means carefully following cohorts of students over years, a task that was beyond the scope of the project. Another measure of effective PD is the quality of instruction that occurs subsequent to training, but without permission or resources to visit participants' classrooms, ascertaining applicability in the classroom was not possible. We instead examined perceived effectiveness through self-report data on surveys, informal interviews, and field notes. The study thus contains common limitations of self-report data: social desirability, ordinal rather than interval data on rating scales, participants' varying level of introspective ability (Merriam, 2009). My participation as a trainer both introduced researcher bias and enhanced findings by presenting an insider's perspective (Merriam, 2009). Given these limitations, the study cannot make conclusions about effectiveness of the PD program. However, self-report PD evaluation data still holds value, as they may predict the likelihood participants will apply learned content in their classroom (Guskey, 2000). In the absence of long-term application data, subjective data can be used when planning subsequent training.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Data was analyzed holistically to identify themes that appeared to contribute to the perceived quality of the Primary-PD Program. The survey results indicated that in general participants were satisfied with the training. Between 97%-99% of respondents from the eight trainings in which the survey was distributed rated each component of the workshops as either "somewhat useful" or "very useful" on a four-point scale. On the open-response item about changes participants would suggest to improve the training, nearly a quarter of respondents indicated that the session was good as is and needed no changes. At the debriefing meetings, local trainers reported that they thought participants were "having fun," especially during interactive simulations. The microteaching was particularly well-received, with 12% of participant respondents listing it as the most interesting activity of the workshop. These overall positive perceptions suggest that teacher participants left the workshops willing to try out new strat-

egies in the classroom. The overwhelmingly positive responses on the survey may also reflect the Thai cultural value of *kreng jai* (Foley, 2005) that discourages negative opinions that jeopardize others' contentment. Thus, while the participants may have been genuinely satisfied with the workshops, some of them may have withheld specific concerns. The following are specific themes that appeared to contribute to perceived quality of the PD.

“Fun” Active Learning

The positive responses to microteaching and simulations suggest that the activity simulations and microteaching facilitated learning. This finding is not surprising, as active learning has been shown to be effective in previous PD studies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Microteaching was included as a workshop component because it made the materials relevant, requiring participants use a topic that they teach for the activity. Surprisingly, though, respondents did not mention this relevance when praising the microteaching. Instead, open-response items emphasized how the microteaching and simulations were enjoyable, with 6% of respondents using the word “fun” in describing why they chose their “most interesting part.” Further, at least five participants suggested more games and “fun” activities when responding to an open-response item about suggestions for changes. In fact, when suggesting changes, one survey participant pointed out that, “Thai teachers have different learning behaviors than foreigners, so foreign trainers should add more fun activities into the session.” This emphasis on fun is consistent with the high value that Thais tend to place on *sanuk*, roughly translated as “fun” (Foley, 2005).

A component which was seemingly not popular with participants was the CLT checklist that they used to rate the trainers and each other as they demonstrated the activities. Only one survey respondent mentioned this when responding to the “most interesting part.” Further, at least three of the local trainers “forgot” to instruct participants to use the checklist during the microteaching or the simulations. At first blush, this finding is at odds with the positive reviews of active learning: we designed the checklist to facilitate active learning so that all participants would be cognitively engaged, even when watching their peers present or playing the part of a primary student during modeling simulations. However, while the checklist required critical thinking, it did not involve ostentatiously “fun” activities, such as moving around or talking with peers, as did the activity simulations. Another possible explanation is teachers'

hesitancy to critique their peers, a reflection of a work culture that discourages potential conflict. The participants may also have been affected by the traditional passive learning during PD and were not comfortable vocalizing criticism.

Participants' English Language Proficiency

A recurring challenge in all the training locations was the level of participants' English proficiency. The 25 local teacher trainers appeared to have relatively strong English skills, evidenced by their confidence to lead sessions in English and ease in conversing with visiting trainers. Most of these local trainers benefitted from attending coursework in countries where English was widely spoken. Many of the primary teacher participants, on the other hand, did not have experiences abroad, and only a minority majored in English at the university level.

About 10% of respondents indicated that the language level was a barrier to their comprehension of the PD content. These participants wrote comments such as 'I cannot do because I am not English major,' and some suggested translating the materials into Thai. Varying levels of language proficiency may have been a reason why the cooperative structure of the microteaching was popular among participants; planning time for microteaching presentations enabled those participants with higher levels of English to explain the process to those with lower levels.

Some participants' perception of their English abilities and lack of self-confidence in English – rather than actual proficiency level – appeared to be the main barrier to applying CLT. For instance, after presenting a near flawless CLT microteaching activity, one participant confided that she felt the native English-speaking teachers at her school could implement CLT better than she could because of her English. In another regional workshop, local trainers asked participants to brainstorm ways Thailand could improve English teaching in the schools as part of a simulation of the gallery walk activity. Common responses included hiring foreign English teachers and sending primary Thai teachers to study abroad in English-speaking countries, reflecting a priority to use English teachers with native or native-like proficiencies. While not underestimating the real need to improve English proficiency of Thai primary teachers, an associated issue is the self-confidence level of teachers in speaking Eng-

lish, as native-like proficiency is not necessarily pre-requisite for an effective English teacher.

Likely related to the English proficiency levels of teachers, another theme throughout the PD was the persistence among participants to regard native speakers as experts in all matters related to English, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as the “native speaker paradigm” (Holliday, 2005). Despite our self-identification as “visiting trainers,” MOE staff, local trainers, and participants often called us “native-speaker trainers” or sometimes “native experts,” implying that our status as native speakers granted us the authority to provide CLT pedagogy training. In fact, an MOE staff-person admitted that I was recruited to coordinate the Primary-PD because of a “demand for teachers to interact with native speakers.” Even the 25 local teacher trainers, many of whom scored at near-native levels on standardized proficiency tests, consulted me to edit their PowerPoints or handouts for grammatical accuracy. In an open-response item on the survey from the TOT session, one local trainer stated that she wanted me to give her more feedback on her pronunciation rather than teaching style.

Support for Teacher Leadership

Co-leading the regional workshops together with visiting and local trainers was not an effortless process. By the end of the program, I viewed many of the local trainers as true leaders. However, my initial frustration at their lack of leadership and willingness to take initiative was evident in my personal notes and email exchanges to colleagues soon after the TOT session. For instance, I complained in an email to a visiting trainer who would help during one of the subsequent local trainings: “the teachers at the TOT seem to want me to do everything... I’m not sure they understand that they are supposed to be trainers and not just in charge of arranging hotel rooms.” Immediately after the face-to-face TOT session, I set up a social network site for local trainers and I to exchange information about trying out the CLT content in their classrooms and then planning the regional PD sessions in the next few months. Despite email reminders, structured tasks, and even incentives, though, the teacher trainers did not use the site beyond posting that they like CLT activities and enjoyed the training. From conversations with MOE colleagues, I later discovered that these teacher leaders were accustomed to serving in assistant or translator capacities when working with outside trainers.

Co-planning the first regional workshop fell largely on me, but I learned that the local trainers were able to plan their own presentations when given specific tasks and directions. They also all agreed that planning and presenting with a partner was more “better” and “more fun.” Thus, assigning small groups specific time blocks and activities to present worked well. With this written scaffolding, the local trainers took on ownership and creatively adapted activities using topics they taught in their classrooms and knew were common for the teachers.

The visiting trainers and myself witnessed gradual improvement in the quality of the workshops over the 10-session series. The daily pre- and post-session meetings among trainers served as opportunities for reflection and enabled trainers to review critically the session and collaborate to make adaptations for future sessions. An example of growth among the trainers was the alteration in giving directions. After a debrief meeting following the first day of a workshop, the trainers discussed how participants did not seem to be engaged with a small group board game activity, concluding that the root of the problem was that the participants did not understand the directions. The first solution some of the trainers offered was to switch languages and include more translation in the workshop, even translating entire slides and directions. However, as the workshops were opportunities for teachers to improve their own English skills along with learning about CLT, we discouraged extended translation unless absolutely necessary. Instead of translating directions, I suggested that the local trainers break down directions for activities into explicit steps and model playing the game. The multiple regional workshops gave trainers the opportunities to watch me show them what I meant by explicit directions and then try it out multiple times.

Another area of growth for the trainers was in their use of warm-up activities. When co-planning the workshops, the teacher trainers confidently volunteered to coordinate and lead warm-up activities each day. Throughout the workshops, it became clear that the trainers had a plethora of warm-up games and songs at their disposal, and the teacher participants seemed to enjoy the activities, as evidenced by their eager engagement and laughter during the warm-up. Although the warm-up activities achieved the purpose of injecting light-hearted fun into workshops, they were not always directly tied to the content of the workshop. Moreover, some of the warm-up activities required little or no English communication, thus wasting an opportunity for English language practice for the teachers. During the post-workshop meetings, we dis-

cussed how the purpose of warm-up activities was not only to ‘get people moving,’ but also to ‘get people talking,’ and brainstormed ways to adapt the warm-up activities to include content related to the workshop and require English language communication among teachers.

A third example of growth was using participant feedback to inform the workshop. During the initial TOT session, we introduced the concept of daily ‘exit tickets’ to the local trainers. Several trainers stated that while they were accustomed to distributing a cumulative evaluation form, these formative measures were new. The responses on the exit tickets served as a conversation starter for the debrief meetings, as they empowered the teacher trainers to make data-based assessments about the successes and challenges of each day and then adapt future sessions based on participants’ needs.

Discussion

The findings of the PD Program provide implications for re-envisioning high-quality PD for Thailand. Transplanting the PD best practices of job-embedded coaching and ongoing reflective observations into the MOE’s PD strategy will not affect long-term change in the classroom. Instead, a fusion of best practices in TPD drawn from seminal adult learning theories, such as Knowles’ concepts, with the country’s unique culture might be the best hope for improving teacher quality in Thailand. As an outgrowth from the findings, I recommend the following concepts be considered explicitly when planning TPD on CLT for Thai English teachers. While these recommendations are specific to Thailand, many of them may be transferrable to other Asian nations that teach EFL.

Kreng Jai

Roughly translated as consideration for others (Foley, 2005), *Kreng Jai* is a concept unique to Thailand, but similar to notions of deference to authority in other Southeast Asian countries. Observations and interactions with participants and local trainers demonstrated that we were right to forefront this concept when designing the Primary-PD, and in fact, future PD initiatives may take even further measures to accommodate this cultural value. The local trainers were reluctant to take on leadership roles that weren’t prescribed in a step-

by-step fashion, but after substantial coaching and encouragement during and after the TOT session, most local trainers gradually assumed more control during the regional workshops. The reasons for this reluctance were varied, but other visiting trainers and a few local trainers themselves stated that they were hesitant to give direction to their peers because it was not “very Thai.”

Future PD might systematically and intentionally scaffold local leadership so that teachers first lead with scripted directions and then move to designing their own sessions using templates and graphic organizers. Similar steps should be considered for microteaching: a step-by-step prescriptive process should precede an open-ended request to “lead a small group.” Such written guidance may not directly address the *kreng jai*, but would provide teachers with a resource to follow as they may be unaccustomed to giving peers directions. Written guidance may also be understood as a higher authority so that younger teachers who feel uncomfortable leading older peers can explain that they are only following the authority of the written guidance rather than usurping a superior’s position. An additional measure to mitigate the stifling potential of *kreng jai* would be to recruit and train more leaders so that teachers become accustomed to seeing peers in leadership positions.

Native-Speaker Paradigm

The fact that teachers valued my accent more than my credentials and experience revealed that they did not perceive English as a world language rather than one belonging to Anglophone countries. Despite scholarly voices that have long debunked the superiority of native speaking teachers (e.g., Seidlhofer, 1999), many nations in which English is a foreign language continue to defer to native speaking experts in English educational practice. Remaining is the quandary why the native speaker paradigm persists when English is becoming increasingly understood as a global language. It might seem logical that Thailand would in fact embrace this new understanding of English, as it opens doors for its own practitioners and scholars to speak with authority on English and English education. Rather, the continued deference to native speakers may reflect Thailand’s reluctance to accept ownership of English. Reasons for this hesitance may lie in an apprehension that English may encroach in the well-preserved Thai language and culture, especially when considering historical campaigns to promote Thai identity through schools (Foley, 2005). PD initiatives can help Thailand move away from a native-speaker paradigm by ceding

decision-making roles to local experts. Anglophone trainers who lead PD for Thailand should insist that Thai teachers take part in the training as equal partners from the beginning. PD providers might also resist using sole examples from native-English-speaking teachers. In the Primary-PD, we showed video examples of local teachers throughout ASEAN, including Thailand, and tried to minimize videos and images from U.S. classrooms. In a particularly powerful example for teachers, a TL at one of the regional trainings showed a video of her classroom completing one of the CLT activities. Future PD should provide opportunities for local teachers to showcase their instruction so that teachers understand a native-English accent is not the gold standard.

Sanuk

PD providers should take seriously Thailand's value of fun – or *sanuk* in Thai – seriously. The first step to classroom implementation of PD training is ensuring teachers believe or “buy-into” the content (Guskey, 2000). For Thai teachers, earning this belief means demonstrating that fun is involved because for Thais, learning should be fun. The Thais may have something to offer education cultures focused on test performance in this regard: students will be less likely to become life-long learners if they do not have positive educational experiences. However, a risk in overemphasizing this *fun* factor is watering down the rigor so that students are not frustrated with unanswered questions, the kind that often accompany critical thinking exercises that are essential for 21st century learning. The challenge for PD providers is to strike a balance between fun and challenge for teachers, and then to help teachers strike this same balance with their students.

Policy Implications

Teacher training is only one lever for improving student learning. Professional development cannot occur in isolation of other efforts, nor can it be expected to single-handedly transform teaching and learning. I thus put forth a few policy recommendations for Thailand that stem from the experiences in the Primary-PD Program. These systemic changes might enhance the probability that the CLT addressed in Thai PD will make its way into the classrooms and impact student learning.

Differentiated TPD

A challenge in the workshops was meeting the needs of all teachers, especially those with limited English language skills. As evidenced in participants' feedback and trainers' reflections, English language was a barrier for some of the participants in their learning about instructional strategies. Rather than providing one workshop topic for all teachers, EFL countries like Thailand might consider first identifying the language learning needs of its teachers and then offering a selection of professional development opportunities designed for teachers at different levels. Professional development can include a common pedagogical focus at all levels (e.g., communicative language teaching), but those teachers with limited English skills might benefit from workshops that focus more on language learning than on pedagogical knowledge.

Long-term Planning

We were unable to determine the quality or extent of the cascade training beyond the 10 workshops across the country. However, it is probable that any local workshops subsequent to the 10 regional ones we coordinated and led suffered from dilution of content, a common disadvantage of cascade PD models (Gilpan, 1997). Although we provided the training materials to teachers, and the local teacher trainers and visiting trainers even assisted with some of these localized workshops, there was no dedicated TOT session for the participants who shared the workshop content. Furthermore, the participants at the 10 regional workshops were asked to conduct a cascade training for their colleagues within a few months – and sometimes weeks – of the regional workshop they attended, which meant that teachers had little time to prepare for their cascaded versions, much less time to focus on applying the instructional strategies in their classroom.

However, these challenges should not discredit the cascade model; as articulated by Hayes (2000), problems with the cascade PD are usually a function of the implementation of the model rather than theory underlying the model itself. The Primary-PD Project may have experienced more success in the cascaded trainings if the project was extended beyond a one-year timeframe. Instead of approaching PD as annual training initiatives, the MOE might conceive of the training as an ongoing project in which cohorts of teachers move through different training stages that include a coaching component. After a

period of dedicated classroom application teachers will be more prepared and confident to share the training with their colleagues. Structures such as professional learning communities might be instituted so that teachers can support each other and manage their own growth in ongoing structures. Learning communities may also help break down strict hierarchal relationships that prevent collegial sharing in informal contexts.

Integration of PD with Student Assessment

While a lack of job-embedded coaching contributes to the ongoing struggle to ensure teachers apply what they learn at PD workshops in the classroom, a mismatch between curriculum, assessment, and teacher training also limits the likelihood that Thai teachers use the communicative instructional strategies with their students. Thailand's national English assessment only addresses reading and writing and focused on grammatical details rather than communicative competence (Goodman, 2013), even though the National English Curriculum included standards for all four language skills. At the time of the Primary-PD Project, conversations were underway within the MOE about developing or identifying English assessments that measure speaking and listening and include a stronger communicative focus. However, until an assessment that measures English communication is adopted, teachers have little motivation to implement such a curriculum or to use communicative methodologies. Before investing in large-scale PD efforts on particular pedagogical techniques, Thailand might first align curriculum, assessment, and professional development so that they send a consistent message to educators.

Rethink Primary English Language Education Policy

Perhaps the most radical recommendation is for EFL countries to rethink policies on English instruction at the primary level. Ample resources in the areas of curriculum, assessment, personnel, and home support need to be in place to ensure effective English learning at the primary level (Enever & Moon, 2009; Garton, Copland, & Burns, 2011; Kirkpatrick, 2011). In particular, teachers need to be knowledgeable in both the language and the pedagogy. Currently, Thailand's education policy does not require primary teachers to demonstrate a minimum level of English proficiency or to major in English at the university level, resulting in English classrooms led by teachers who are

unable to communicate in English. Instead of investing resources in pedagogy and language training for these teachers, Thailand might consider prioritizing secondary level English education, in which English teachers are required to major in English at the university and then specialize in the subject for teaching. Meanwhile, primary teachers can focus on ensuring students have a strong literary background in Thai and (if applicable) their mother tongue. Seminal bilingual researchers have long theorized the benefits that first language literacy brings to learning a second language (Cummins, 1989), so by improving Thai language education, primary teachers will be contributing to students' eventual English language learning.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Thailand's commitment to enhancing English language instruction in schools is commendable, and its dedication to integrate best practices in language education is evident by the ongoing professional development structures in place. The Primary-PD Project holds promise for improving the pedagogical skills of primary teachers across the country, and the model may be adapted and applied to other EFL countries. Utilizing local teacher trainers alongside visiting trainers from English-speaking countries helps Thailand integrate educational innovations in the western world with local, contextualized knowledge. Moving forward, Thailand can build on these connections to determine a vision for communicative English language teaching that is accessible for Thai teachers and appropriate to the Thai educational culture. Such a vision might take into account the varying language needs and pedagogical backgrounds of local teachers as well as the differing educational contexts within the nation.

Based on the Primary-PD Project experiences, I suggest that the field of professional development might revisit taken-for-granted 'best practices,' such as intensive job-embedded support. Researchers that extol the benefits of these models are often from western contexts (e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2009), and it remains to be seen if such practices are the most effective means to boost English instructional quality for students in Thailand. With an education system that is tied to the strict hierarchical culture common to many Asian countries, Thai teachers may struggle to implement PD structures that require a collaborative culture in which teachers and administrators can provide non-evaluative critique, such as peer observation. For example, as evidenced in the

Primary-PD Project, teachers were reluctant to embrace the CLT checklist to evaluate each other. Instead, PD providers might redefine best practices for Thailand so that they are integrated within existing societal norms, including the Thai values of *kreng jai* and *sanuk*. PD should also be redefined to account for unique challenges EFL teachers from non-English-speaking countries face, most notably achieving adequate proficiency and confidence in communicative English use. Such a task requires close rapport and collaboration between researchers and local practitioners to take risks in trying new initiatives and documenting short and long-term outcomes in teacher learning and instructional change as well as eventual student achievement. Future research in PD for EFL teachers in Thailand might explore systematically PD models that draw on adult learning theory while also explicitly accounting for cultural values and language challenges of teachers.

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TAIWANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TO NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS ENGLISH TEACHERS

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Abstract: Numerous studies have been conducted to explore issues surrounding non-native speakers (NNS) English teachers and native speaker (NS) teachers which concern, among others, the comparison between the two, the self-perceptions of NNS English teachers and the effectiveness of their teaching, and the students' opinions on and attitudes towards them. Most of these studies have been conducted in ESL contexts in which the teachers are NNS English teachers, while most NNS English teachers actually work in EFL contexts. It is important that we understand issues on NNS English teachers in EFL contexts. Hence, this article aims to investigate university students' attitudes towards their NNS English teachers in Taiwan. The data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The findings indicated that Taiwanese students' attitudes towards their NNS English teachers are positive and favorable and NNS English teachers are generally perceived as capable of delivering efficient instruction though some shortcomings of NNS English teachers were pointed out by participants. Discussion on these shortcomings and implications on Taiwan educational system and the qualifications of NNS English teachers is provided.

Keywords: EFL, non-native speakers (NNS) English teachers, native speakers (NS) English teachers, learners' perception, attitudes

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In Taiwan, English competence is viewed as a developmental aid, not only for the nation to build relations with political powers and maintain national economic competitiveness, but also for an individual to succeed in higher education and job market. This phenomenon is also pervasive in other Asian countries, such as China, Korea, Japan and so on. Due to the increasing popularity

of English, many Asian countries develop English language teaching programmes which involve NS English teachers. Japanese government, for example, sponsored a programme which focuses on hiring Western native English speakers to work with Japanese ELT curricula. The program is called the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET, <http://www.jetprogramme.org/>). Korea had a similar program named English Programme (EPIK, <http://www.epik.go.kr/>). Taiwan government also developed the "Implementation Plan for Cooperation Teams Promoting English Language Teaching at Elementary and Junior High Schools" to recruit NS English teachers to address the urgent need of qualified teachers in line with the new English language policy "Grade One to Nine Curriculum", which requires that English be taught in the elementary school from Grade five starting in 2001 and Grade three in 2005 (Chang, 2008), creating 2000 new positions for English instructors. However, the quantity and the quality of NS English teachers remains a critical issue to this day and the NS English teachers' recruitment plan did not meet Taiwanese government's expectation. The plan called for an initial group of 369 NS English teachers to arrive to Taiwan, but only five of them came, and two of them left before finishing their contracts (Sun & Li, 2004). The discrepancy between MOE's planned number of NS English teachers and the actual number has continued for several years (Tsai, 2009).

Although the policy of MOE did not work as expected, more and more private English cram schools, language centers, and private schools recruit English native speakers as English teachers to create the "whole English" contexts in which English is used as the medium for instruction. Classes instructed by NS English teachers are always popular with not only students but also their parents. Most of the people in Taiwan tend to believe that NS English teachers are better language learning models for learners than NNS English teachers merely because English is their first language. They also agree that students can learn English much better in NS English teachers' classes rather than in NNS English teachers' classes. Also, NS English teachers always get higher pay and receive more respect from students and their parents than NNS English teachers (Wu & Ke, 2009). Some NNS English teachers even play a role as NS English teachers' assistants or tutors, responsible for translating what NS English teachers say in class into Chinese to help students' learning. It seems to imply that NS English teachers are superior to NNS English teachers.

However, some previous studies pointed out that NS and NNS English teachers are just two different groups of teachers and that NS English teachers

are not superior to NNS English teachers (Medgyes, 1994; Braine, 2005; Ling & Braine 2007; Wu & Ke, 2009; Yeh & Wang, 2009). Ling and Braine's research in Hong Kong (2007) showed students' positive attitudes towards NNS English teachers. They feel that the NNS English teachers perform as well as NS English teachers and they can learn from the NNS English teachers as well as from NS English teachers. NNS English teachers, based on that study in Hong Kong, are considered better in both 'ability to use students' mother tongue in teaching', particularly in explaining the problems the students have, and 'effective pedagogical skills' as they are knowledgeable of students' cultural background and the way Hong Kong students learn. Moreover, in Yeh and Wang's (2009) research in Taiwan, NNS English teachers are also regarded as good language learning models for students since they can share their own learning experiences with their students, anticipate learners' learning problems and use learners' first language to make effective communication.

With regard to Taiwanese context, Wu and Ke's (2009) research on Native Speakers English teachers show that there is a gap between Taiwanese students and NS English teachers. For example, students expect that there should be more interaction between them and NS English teachers, but NS English teachers express that students are very passive and reluctant to express their opinions, keep quiet all the time, and wait for teachers' answers instead. Such misunderstanding might have arisen because NS English teachers have little understanding about Taiwanese students' cultural background. In Taiwan, the traditional English teaching can be described as both teacher-centered and test-driven. Therefore, teachers control almost everything in the classroom and students are always taught to keep quiet in class even though they may have some questions. Under the pressure of examinations, students tend to ignore other things irrelevant to examinations. Hence, it is predictable that students are less independent and lack the ability to do critical thinking. Without this awareness, NS English teachers will find more difficulties in making their teaching effective and successful. In contrast, NNS English teachers can avoid such problem since they are quite familiar with how students learn and what students need. Therefore, the result of Wu and Ke's study supports Medgyes's perspective that NNS English teachers can serve as good, or even better, learning models since they generally have better understanding of what students need and how they learn.

With the influence of globalization and the increasing importance of English, more and more research have been conducted to explore issues on the

comparison between NS English teachers and NNS English teachers in the field of English language learning and teaching. The primary focus of these studies is on exploring and discussing teachers' self-perceptions on English instruction (e.g. Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llurda, 2004, 2005; Medgyes, 1999; Moussu, 2000, 2006; Tsui & Bunton, 2000), the differences of their professional abilities, the prestigious status of NS English teachers, the threats faced by NNS English teachers and so on (Ling & Braine, 2007; Todd & Pojanapunya, 2009; Wu & Ke, 2009). However, less research has emphasized on investigating issues on these two groups of teachers from learners' perspectives. Furthermore, the majority of students around the world learn English and most English teachers work in EFL contexts. Therefore, some research on issues about these two groups of teachers conducted in the EFL contexts are needed. In Taiwan, English is the only foreign language tested in the entrance examinations and it is the most popular language that Taiwanese people desire to master (Tsou, 2013). Because of the privileged status of English in Taiwan, people pay more and more attention to the ways of improving English language learning. Additionally, most of the English classes are still instructed by NNS English teachers. Obviously, in order to improve English language learning in Taiwan, it is significant and necessary to explore issues on NNS English teachers.

Hence, this article addresses the need of a comprehensive and in-depth investigation of university students' attitudes towards their NNS English teachers in Taiwan by virtue of the growing importance of English. To specify, the study addresses these two questions: (1) What are the attitudes of university students in Taiwan towards NNS English teachers?; and (2) What are the students' expectations of NNS English teachers?

METHOD

The participants of the study were 200 undergraduates who had had experiences of being taught by Taiwanese NNS English teachers and NS English teachers. They were all freshmen from a university in the south part of Taiwan and the research was conducted in 2013.

In order to investigate the students' attitudes to and expectations of NNS English teachers, the present research was conducted in two phases, a questionnaire survey followed by an interview. Questions in a questionnaire are generally limited and it is difficult to obtain more in-depth responses (Munn &

Drever, 1990). However, participants can further express or explain their opinions in the interview; in this way, the interview data can complement and elaborate that from the questionnaire. For this reason, both questionnaire and interview were adopted in this research to collect more useful and objective data.

The questionnaire used in Ling and Braine's study in 2007 was adopted for this research because of its suitability to the context of the study. The questionnaire in Ling and Braine's research was modified from the International Teaching Assistants (QUITA) questionnaire which was designed and used by Plakans (1997) to collect background information about undergraduate students' opinions towards international teaching assistants, including their experience with international teaching assistants, their attitudes towards courses conducted by international teaching assistants, their cross-cultural awareness, and their willingness to take the responsibility for the interaction in classes taught by international teaching assistants (Ling & Braine, 2007). A lot of studies have adopted the International Teaching Assistants (QUITA) questionnaire to investigate students' attitudes towards non-native English teachers in many different countries.

The questionnaire consists of four sections. The first section focused on the target subjects' background information, such as gender, experience, number of years of previous study of English, and their major. The second part of the questionnaire intends to ask about the subjects' experience with non-native English teachers. The following section emphasizes on exploring students' attitudes towards non-native English teachers from two perspectives: communication with NNS English teachers and learning from NNS English teachers. The last part of the questionnaire was designed to elicit subjects' expectations of NNS English teachers from linguistic and cultural aspects.

Before the questionnaire was administered to a larger group of subjects in the main study, a pilot study was done with fifty randomly selected university students. In the pilot study, students were asked to underline some terms or words that they could not understand when filling in the questionnaire. Most of them responded that they did not understand the terms like ESL, NNS English teachers and non-native English teachers. Therefore, before copies of the questionnaire were given to the students, I explained the meanings of the terms that caused difficulties in the pilot study to ensure every participant understands the terms used in the questionnaire. There were two hundred copies of the questionnaire returned in total.

The follow-up interview was held two weeks later. It was conducted in Mandarin with ten of the participants in the questionnaire survey who volunteered to have the interview. It lasted half an hour, and the questions revolved around issues on the shortcomings and merits of NNS English teachers based on the students' learning experience. The interview was recorded under the students' permission and was translated into English for analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 and 2 present the results of the questionnaire concerning the students' attitude to NNS English teachers in terms of their communication with the teachers, and their learning from them. Even though there were four choices for each question, I categorized them into only two categories, "agree" and "disagree", in order to make the results more apparent and much easier to investigate students' attitudes towards NNS English teachers in Taiwan. This study was designed to be primarily descriptive, so the numerical data from the questionnaire were not intended to be strictly quantitative and they were presented by percentage to indicate some common traits in students' attitudes to NNS English teachers.

Table 1. Communication with NNS English teachers

Question	Agree/ Disagree	Number of students (Percentage)
1. If I had trouble understanding a non-native English instructor, I would talk with her or him about it during office hours.	Agree	160 (80%)
2. Many non-native English instructors usually communicate effectively in the classroom.	Agree	194 (97%)
3. I make friends with my native English instructors more than my non-native English instructors.	Agree	140 (70%)
4. When there are communication problems between students and non-native English instructors, students cannot do anything to improve the situation.	Disagree	180 (90%)
5. I feel comfortable talking about personal	Agree	130 (65%)

Question	Agree/ Disagree	Number of students (Percentage)
concerns with non-native English instructors.		
6. On the whole, non-native English instructors show about the same level of concern for students as do native English instructors.	Agree	180 (90%)

* Percentage in each cell (N=200)

Table 2. Learning from NNS English teachers

Question	Agree/ Disagree	Number of students (Percentage)
7. If I got a non-native English instructor with a weak foreign accent, I would try to transfer to another course.	Agree	176 (88%)
8. I can learn just as well from a non-native English instructor as I can from a native English instructor.	Agree	176 (88%)
9. Students' attitudes affect their ability to understand non-native English instructors in class.	Agree	190 (95%)
10. If I could choose the course myself, I would choose a course taught by a non-native English instructor.	Agree	116 (58%)
11. Many non-native English instructors have difficulty understanding and answering students' questions.	Disagree	170 (85%)
12. It would be better if non-native English instructors were not allowed to teach in ESL programmes.	Disagree	114 (57%)
13. There are many non-native English instructors who teach just as effectively as native English instructors.	Agree	188 (94%)

* Percentage in each cell (N=200)

The results of the survey indicated that most of the students showed favourable and positive attitudes toward NNS English teachers as based on the NNS English teachers' teaching performance in class and their shared back-

ground with the students. For example, in answering questions 8 (88%) and 13 (94%), students showed their agreement that they can learn from NNS English teachers as well as from NS English teachers, and NNS English teachers teach as effectively as NS English teachers.

Moreover, based on the students' answers to questions 1, 3, 5 and 6, students' attitudes towards NNS English teachers were favourable due to the same cultural background and language shared with their teachers. For example, the results of the questions 1 (80%), 3 (70%) and 5 (65%) in the questionnaire indicated that students did not have trouble communicating with NNS English teachers inside and outside the classroom, or even make friends with NNS English teachers.

To sum up, from the analysis of the questionnaire which focused on students' communication with NNS English teachers and learning from NNS English teachers, most of the students indicated that they did not encounter problems in both communicating and learning with NNS English teachers. In particular, the participants strongly agreed that NNS English teachers' understanding of and answering their questions were great. Generally, the university students tended to agree that NNS English teachers can both communicate with their students well and teach as effectively as NS English teachers. Therefore, it is apparent that most of the Taiwanese students in this survey had positive attitudes towards NNS English teachers. Furthermore, more than half of the students agreed that they preferred to learn English under the instruction of NNS English teachers rather than NS English teachers, which is against the native speakers model that NS English teachers is superior to NNS English teachers (Tang, 1997). The results also confirmed Medgyes' findings that NNS English teachers can be a good language learning model for learners because of their good understanding of the students' language, and culture and their experience of being second language learners (Medgyes, 1994).

Table 3 presents the results of the questionnaires concerning the students' learning experiences with Taiwanese NNS English teachers.

Table 3. Students' Learning Experiences with NNS English Teachers

Question	Agree/ Disagree	Number of students (Percentage)
14. I think that the NNS English teachers will pay more attention to grammar.	Agree	176 (88%)

Question	Agree/ Disagree	Number of students (Percentage)
15. The NNS English teachers' teaching style is easy for me to follow.	Agree	169 (80%)
16. The NNS English teachers' pronunciation is much easier for me to understand.	Agree	134 (67%)
17. The accent of the NNS English teachers is easy to understand.	Agree	130 (65%)
18. The NNS English teachers will pay less attention to correcting my pronunciation.	Agree	122 (61%)
19. The NNS English teachers tend to correct the grammatical mistakes I made.	Agree	168 (84%)
20. The teaching materials prepared by NNS English teachers are much understandable for me to follow.	Agree	172 (86%)
21. The NNS English teachers' speaking speed is not too fast to follow.	Agree	168 (84%)
22. The NNS English teachers can not help me to learn more about the culture of the target language.	Disagree	118 (59%)
23. There will be less interaction between the NNS English teachers and the students in class.	Disagree	152 (76%)
24. The NNS English teachers will use some Chinese in class to help students to learn when most of the students reflect that they do not understand what the teachers are teaching.	Agree	190 (95%)
25. The teaching performance of NNS English teachers is as good as native speaker English teachers.	Agree	172 (86%)
26. The NNS English teachers can know my needs and learning problems.	Agree	186 (93%)

* Percentage in each cell (N=200)

Based on the results in Table 3, generally, most of the students' attitudes towards NNS English teachers were high. The data were analyzed in terms of three aspects: NNS English teachers' teaching style, linguistic performance and understanding of culture. Firstly, concerning NNS English teachers' teaching

style, such as the ways they lead the class, a high percentage of the students indicated that NNS English teachers' teaching style is easier for the students to follow and understand. In particular, the students' answers to question 24 (95%) showed that almost all of the participants agreed that it is effective and helpful for them to understand teachers' instruction when NNS English teachers use Chinese to explain the difficulties they encounter. It further implied that proficiency in the learners' mother tongue is very important in the contexts of teaching EFL as stated by Medgyes (1994). However, most of the NS English teachers do not have such proficiency of learners' first language. Furthermore, the result of question 20 (86%) showed that the materials prepared by NNS English teachers were more comprehensible for the students. It might possibly be due to the shared cultural background between teachers and students, which allowed the teachers to select and/ or develop materials that suit the students' levels and interests (Ling & Braine, 2007).

From the linguistic point of view, the linguistic traits of NNS English teachers are easier for learners to follow, such as, in terms of speaking speed and pronunciation. Furthermore, it is apparent that NNS English teachers paid more attention to syntactic mistakes made by learners based on the responses to questions 14 (88%) and 19 (84%). I think that NNS English teachers tend to emphasize more on the syntactic, but not phonetic part, because the educational system in Taiwan is test-driven orientation. For this reason, NNS English teachers tend to focus more on teaching grammar and correcting learners' grammatical mistakes to help them pass the exams. This test-driven teaching results in students' ignorance of the importance of listening and speaking ability, which further leads to students' unsatisfactory English proficiency.

With regard to the understanding of English culture, students also showed positive attitudes towards NNS English teachers. The result indicated that NNS English teachers can also help students understand the culture of English even though they are not English native speakers.

The results of the interview with ten voluntary students complement and further elaborate the results of the questionnaire. The interview questions concern NNS English teachers' strengths and shortcomings based on the students' experience with NNS English teachers as well as their perception of them. Athematic analysis (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997) was adopted in this study to analyze the interview data. The data were discussed and presented in terms of NNS English teachers' strengths and shortcomings, accompanied by excerpts from the students' responses in the interview.

With regard to NNS English teachers' strengths, the students pointed out that NNS English teachers' ability to use their mother tongue in the classroom is really helpful for the students to overcome learning difficulties they faced and make their learning more effective. For example, one of the interviewees mentioned:

My NNS English teacher always uses Chinese to explain more difficult parts in her teaching. She tends to use Chinese, not English, when most of the students in the class show that they do not understand what she is teaching. I think that it is an effective way for me to learn English. (Student H)

In addition, with the help of the shared language between NNS English teachers and their students, students pointed out that they could feel more relaxed and less anxious in the classroom as what Student E stated:

I think it is really helpful for me to learn well that the NNS English teacher can use Chinese in teaching, which can help me to feel more relaxed and less nervous in the class. (Student E)

Moreover, from the students' perception, NNS English teachers are able to share their own EFL learning experiences and understand their students' learning problems since they themselves were EFL learners and experienced the same learning difficulties, which makes them possibly more empathetic than NS English teachers and be able to provide their students with suggestions on useful language learning strategies. For example, Student B and D remarked:

My NNS English teacher can provide me with a lot of learning strategies because she had been an English learner in an EFL environment before. She taught me how to memorize vocabulary well and use these words I learned to make sentences. (Student B)

I can learn a lot from my NNS English teacher because she is always willing to discuss learning strategies with me. She also likes to share her English learning experience with me. I think her experience really helps me a lot in the language learning process. (Student D)

In addition to sharing useful language strategies with their students, NNS English teachers are thought to be aware of their students' needs during the language learning process.

I think that my NNS English teacher always knows what my needs and my learning problems are. For example, he knows that most of the students in Taiwan are under the pressure of the examinations, so he tends to put more focuses on the grammar to meet our needs. (Student J & H)

In order to meet the trend of passing the GEPT or TOEIC policy in Taiwan, my NNS English teacher tends to emphasizes more on how to help me to pass the English test or explain more about it. (Student A)

Taiwanese NNS English teachers' test-driven teaching, on one hand, is good for students because they understand clearly the students' needs and problems. But, on the other hand, the over-emphasis on passing the examinations always leads to the unbalanced development of English language four skills.

Based on the above discussion, generally students have favorable attitude toward NNS English teacher. However, students in the interview also pointed out some shortcomings of NNS English teachers based on their teaching performance and their linguistic competence. First of all, in terms of NNS English teachers' teaching performance, students mentioned that the teachers tend to adopt test-oriented teaching approach and they correct almost every grammatical mistake their students make as what Student E and H mentioned below:

Because we face the pressure to pass the examinations, such as, GEPT, TOEIC, College Entrance Examination etc., the teacher tends to use the spoon-feed teaching approach to instruct the class. (Student E)

My English teacher likes to correct almost every grammatical mistake I made in class, which makes me feel very nervous and anxious when I want to express my opinions in class. (Student H)

Secondly, based on the results of the questionnaire, most of the NNS English teachers were criticized for their pronunciation and accents which are always viewed as their drawbacks, and the participants in the interview also pointed this out as shown below:

The teacher's pronunciation is easier to understand and more familiar to me. Though I can understand my teacher well in class, it is still very difficult for me to understand the accents or pronunciation of native speakers. I think it would be better if my NNS English teacher can have an accent like native speakers. (Student E)

NNS English teachers' test-driven teaching style further manifested two disadvantages of the educational system in Taiwan. First of all, under the Taiwanese assessment system that emphasizes mainly on reading and writing, apparently, the development of English listening and speaking abilities have been ignored for a long time. Since 1994, the "communicative approach" has been adopted as the main principle in the curriculum, attempting to balance the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Unfortunately, listening and speaking have not reached the popular status as reading and writing do due to the assessment system which still emphasizes mainly on reading and writing. The lack of practice in listening and speaking leads to students' poor listening and speaking abilities. A lot of scholars, university professors and English teachers have been complaining about students' poor listening and speaking abilities (Chen & Tsai, 2012). In response to this problem, since 2014, Ministry of Education in Taiwan has included English listening as a formal and compulsory part of Comprehensive Assessment Program for Junior High School Students. Moreover, English was an optional part in the College Entrance Examination since 2013 and it has become compulsory since 2015. However, though English listening has been adopted as a formal part of the entrance examinations, it is still not given adequate attention in the classroom due to its small proportion in the exams compared to reading and writing. Besides listening, speaking instruction has long been marginalized in Taiwan and did not receive much attention due to the fact that English speaking is not tested for school entry. The assessment system of Taiwan education system, in my opinion, leads to NNS English teachers' over-emphasis on the importance of grammatical correction and reading skills because they face the great pressure of the two main entrance examinations. The test-driven teaching style of NNS English teachers points out the unbalanced development of English competence in Taiwan English education. The balanced development of English four skills should be taken into careful consideration in designing the English curricula and the assessment systems of English ability.

Furthermore, because of NNS English teachers' test-driven instruction, they are always classified as being good at teaching grammar only. Under the extreme pressure of two entrance examinations, Comprehensive Assessment Program for Junior High School Students and College Entrance Examination, not only teachers but also students devote themselves to cultivating reading and writing skills in order to get good grades to enter their ideal universities. However, this does not mean that NNS English teachers are capable of teaching grammar only or that they like to teach grammar. It also reminds us that NNS English teachers should not be confined to being responsible for grammar only as a lot of them do so in some private cram schools or language centres.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings, the participating students showed very positive attitudes towards their NNS English teachers, which corresponds to the findings of the previous studies like Mahboob (2004), Moussu and Braine (2006), Ling and Braine (2007), and so on. They also felt that NNS English teachers can serve as good English language learning models for them because of their own foreign language learning experiences. Moreover, NNS English teachers' teaching performance was also considered to be as good as or even better than NS English teachers' performance because they can use their students' first language in teaching, anticipate their learning difficulties and share useful language learning strategies with them, which corresponds to what Medgyes (1994) states, that NNS English teachers are able to share effective learning strategies, anticipate language difficulties, and understand the learners' needs and problems.

Apart from the positive and favorable attitudes towards NNS English teachers, students also pointed out some of their drawbacks, such as test-driven teaching style, non-authentic pronunciation, and over-correcting students' grammatical mistakes. Those shortcomings of NNS English teachers are, on the other hand, the strengths of NS English teachers. However, the merits of NNS English teachers discussed above are the drawbacks of NS English teachers. The results of this study thereby support Medgyes (1994, p. 25) that NS and NNS teachers are just "two different species". It further implies that NS English teachers are not superior to NNS English teachers, and they are just two different groups of teachers who differ in terms of language proficiency and teaching practice. Both NS and NNS English teachers could be equally

good teachers on their own terms (Ling & Braine, 2007). Moreover, students' positive attitudes towards NNS English teachers in this study indicate that NNS English teachers are generally perceived capable of delivering efficient instruction, and their students benefit from not only their instruction but also their learning strategies.

Such research findings should make changes in the beliefs of the proponents of "nativism", which may further lead to changes in actions (Tong & Cheng, 2006), in which NNS English teachers are treated as equally and respectfully as NS English teachers, and raise the awareness of the public that NNS English teachers are not inferior to NS English teachers in knowledge, professional skills, and so on.

Concerning the test-driven instruction indicated in this study as the NNS English teachers' major drawback, not only teachers but also students should be aware of the importance of the balanced development of English language four skills simultaneously instead of ignoring speaking and listening skills, which needs to be supported by the schools and government.

Finally, it is suggested that further researchers interested in doing similar studies expand the number and range of the subjects. It would also be worthy to explore both teachers' and students' opinions to make the research more complete and fruitful.

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LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVES OF FACTORS INFLUENCING GAINS IN STANDARDIZED ENGLISH TEST SCORES

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Abstract: There has been an increased level of attention devoted to the consequences of test use in recent years; however, the majority of washback studies focused on teaching. In fact, little research has addressed learners' perspectives to analyze possible determinants of test results. To address this issue, this study first compared the pre-and-post standardized English tests of two groups of Taiwanese university students, and six students from each of the groups were interviewed at a later date to investigate the possible factors that may influence their score gains. A control group of 140 Taiwanese university students at a school without any English proficiency certificate exit requirement was compared to a contrast group of 136 similar students at a school that required the students to pass an English certification test in order to graduate. The major finding indicates that the amount of time spent on language learning plays an essential role in determining the degree to which student scores improve. This study subsequently offers pedagogical implications for the instruction of English at institutes of tertiary education.

Keywords: standardized tests, test results, score gains, graduation requirement

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There has been an increased level of attention devoted to the consequences of test use in recent years; however, the majority of washback studies focused on

teaching (Cheng, 2008, 2014). For example, a number of studies on test consequences have taken an educational perspective and focused on teachers in various contexts, such as the US (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Stecher, Chun, & Barron, 2004); Australia (Burrows, 1998, 2001, 2004); Europe (Oerke, Merki, Holmeier, & Jager, 2011; Smyth & Banks, 2012; Wall & Horak, 2006); China (Cheng, 2004, 2005); Japan (Watanabe, 1996, 2004), and Taiwan (Pan, 2011). In fact, a far more limited number of studies have addressed learners' perspectives to analyze possible factors that may contribute to their test results. Wall (2000, p. 502) contends, "What is missing... are analyses of test results which indicate whether students have learnt more or learned better because they have studied for a particular test." Wall and Horak (2006) also claim that much of the research regarding washback or impact focuses less on investigating the test effects on products than teaching practices, that is, the outcome or quality of student learning. Since learners are the major test stakeholders, this study aims to investigate whether English certification exit requirements in Taiwan have significantly enhanced their listening and reading scores of the most common test of EFL proficiency in Taiwan, the Elementary Level General English Proficiency Test. In particular, it intends to explore from learner perspectives regarding the possible factors influencing the gains in their test scores.

Mixed findings have been found from the limited number of studies that investigated test effects on learning outcomes. These findings are discussed below.

Hughes (1988) reported that at a Turkish university, students' performance on the Michigan Test (a measure of English proficiency) increased after the introduction of a new test, along with additional summer courses in English. Based on a need analysis of what language skills students in their first year of undergraduate study required, the new performance test was designed to assess students' English proficiency to decide whether after a year of study at the university, they could continue to study. If they failed the test, they had to leave the university because it was presumed that their unsatisfactory English proficiency would make it difficult for them to understand the lectures, which were primarily conducted in English. The research revealed that before the introduction of the test, usually less than 50% of students in the Foreign Languages School had scores on the Michigan Test that qualified them to enroll in certain subjects. However, after the introduction of the test, 72% of the students

reached the requirement, and after the summer school, the figure went up to 83%.

The factors attributed to the score gain, according to Hughes, are the changes made for the new test such as the new syllabus, textbooks and pedagogy, which were designed to match the test content. These changes suggest that test scores can be improved if what is taught is what is tested, but it would be naïve and simplistic to attribute score gain mainly to teaching factors.

Andrews, Fullilove, and Wong (2002) compared the scores of three groups of students on the use of English oral exam in Hong Kong from 1993 to 1995. The first and third groups had test-driven instruction in their first and second years respectively. The second group received no test-preparation instruction. The scores of the students in the first and third groups tended to increase, but not to statistically significant levels. These researchers claimed that students' improved proficiency might be attributed to their "familiarization with the exam format, the rote-learning of exam-specific strategies and formulaic phrases" (p. 220).

Elder and O'Loughlin (2003) examined the relationship between intensive English language study and band score gains on the IELTS after 10-12 weeks of instruction. They found significant gains in listening, but no significant progress in reading skills. In their study, a range of factors were linked to improving scores on tests, such as personality, motivation, confidence, and exposure, but initial score level was the strongest predictor. Students with low scores at the onset exhibited more score gains than students with high scores at the onset. The fact that there was a test preparation course was not influential.

Green (2007a, 2007b) investigated whether test preparation classes helped students improve their IELTS writing scores. He found "no clear advantage for focused test preparation" (2007b, p. 75) in terms of grammar/vocabulary test performance among different groups in a 4-14 week intensive IELTS preparation course. However, score gains were found primarily among two groups of learners: those who planned to take the test again and those who had low initial writing test scores. These findings have two implications: first, as indicated by Green (2007a), test-driven instruction does not necessarily raise students' scores; second, students' motivation plays an important role in increasing their test scores.

Both Elder and O'Loughlin's (2003) study, as well as Green's (2007a, 2007b), suggest that students' original proficiency plays a more important role in affecting score gain than the time they spend in test-preparatory courses. It

appears that the lower the proficiency of the students, the more likely it is that they will receive a score gain.

Test effects on learning outcomes are an intricate issue, as is evident from the foregoing discussion. Due to a lack of research in this area, one may be tempted to question whether 1) test-related instruction and practice or 2) other factors such as their original proficiency, personality, motivation, and the length of exposure to the target language are greater determinants of learning outcomes.

In order to motivate their students to enhance their English proficiency, 90% of four-year technical universities/colleges in Taiwan have established an English certification exit requirement policy for non-English majors (Pan & Newfields, 2012). According to this policy, students must choose from an array of external English proficiency tests such as the international tests -TOEIC[®], TOEFL[®], IETLS[™], or the local tests - the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), and the College Student English Proficiency Test (CSEPT) and reach a certain level or score in order to graduate. Since 2002, the GEPT has existed at five different levels: Elementary, Intermediate, High Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior. It is designed to test all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The Elementary Level, which is required by the two recruited four-year technical universities, is thought to correspond to the Council of Europe's A2 Waystage level (Taiwan Ministry of Education, 2004). Given the 4.3 million GEPT test takers (Wu, 2012), the most common test in Taiwan for university EFL learners was used. For simplicity's sake, English certification exit requirements are abbreviated as ECER in this study. This study compares two groups of schools: the ECER school that has established English certification exit requirements, and the non-ECER school that has not.

Since students' levels of English proficiency in these two schools were not similar (as seen in Table 1), an investigation of which group of students received better scores would not be able to determine whether test requirements promoted learning outcomes. Instead, a comparison of students' score gains by group can generate an understanding of whether such a test-driven policy has resulted in improved student English proficiency. Furthermore, few studies have been made in regard to the factors that may influence learning outcomes from learners' point of view in the field of language testing. Three research questions, therefore, were made in order to understand test effects on learning outcomes, and the possible determinants of learning outcomes, that is: (1) Have English certification exit requirements promoted statistically significant differ-

ences in the score gains?; (2) What are the possible factors contributing to students' scores at the ECER school?; and (3) What are the possible factors contributing to students' scores at the non-ECER school?

METHOD

A comparative approach is usually conducted to investigate test effects (Hayes & Read, 2003, 2004). For examples, studies by Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) and Green (2007a, 2007b) compared test-preparation and regular classes to determine whether there are differences in regard to teaching practices and student learning. If differences exist, they can be taken as evidence of the existence of washback effects. Utilizing a mixed method which involved the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, this study, therefore, made a comparison of the differences between the ECER school and non-ECER school in regard to their pre-and-post GEPT test scores.

Subjects

One hundred and thirty six first-year students at an ECER school and 140 first-year students at a non-ECER school took the 1st stage (listening and reading sections) of two authorized GEPT tests.

Six participants at an ECER school and six at a non-ECER school were interviewed. As seen in Table 1, the majority of the participants (83%) are females; two are males. Three have already successfully met their school's exit requirements; none of their counterparts passed the English certification tests. 67% of the interviewees made progress on the listening section, while 58% improved on the reading section. The bio-data of these 12 interviewees is categorized in Table 1, in regard to type of school (with exit or without exit requirements), gender, possession of certificates, and whether they progressed or regressed on their post-test scores.

Table 1. Profiles of the 12 Interviewees for Pre- and Post-Tests

ID	ECER/non-ECER	Gender	English certificates	Progress(+) Regress (-) in listening	Progress (+) Regress (-) in reading
S206-2	ECER	M	No	+	+
S206-1	ECER	F	No	+	+
S206-3	ECER	F	No	+	-

ID	ECER/non-ECER	Gender	English certificates	Progress(+) Regress (-) in listening	Progress (+) Regress (-) in reading
S207-2	ECER	F	Yes	+	-
S206-4	ECER	F	Yes	+	no change
S207-1	ECER	F	Yes	+	-
S208-1	Non-ECER	M	No	-	+
S212	Non-ECER	F	No	-	-
S210	Non-ECER	F	No	-	+
S209-1	Non-ECER	F	No	+	+
S209-2	Non-ECER	F	No	+	+
S208-2	Non-ECER	F	No	-	+

Instruments

To investigate test effects on learning outcomes, two authorized GEPT elementary level, first-stage tests (listening and reading parts), were given to the students as pre- and post-tests at ECER and non-ECER schools to determine whether students with the exit requirement progressed more than those without, and if they did, in which area of language skills (i.e. listening, reading) student scores increased the most. Only the first stage of the test was administered because of limited access to trained raters to assess the writing and speaking sections. Nevertheless, this would still demonstrate whether student learning outcomes improved more at the ECER school than those of the non-ECER school. This research incorporated authorized authentic GEPT elementary level tests because participants would be more likely to take the tests seriously if they were told the tests were real tests and had been used in the past. Therefore, the validity of the findings would be stronger.

The primary goal of the structured interviews with 12 students was to obtain the possible factors contributing to their score gains. The interview questions for these 12 students addressed 1) their time spent on English study, 2) the length of their English classes, and 3) the language skills focused in their English classes.

Data Collection and Analysis

The pre- and post- authorized elementary GEPT tests were held four months apart; one at the beginning and the other at the end of the semester.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to 6 students from the ECER school and another 6 students from the non-ECER school. Students were recruited based on their willingness to take the pre-and-post tests, and be interviewed. Interviews were conducted in Mandarin for better communication and to avoid confusion. Each interview lasted about 10-30 minutes. Several follow-up phone interviews took place if incomplete or confusing responses occurred.

For the pre- and post-tests, descriptive statistics were calculated as well as independent t-tests to see if a larger score gain was found among the ECER students, and whether this was statistically significant at $p < .05$.

All the electronically recorded interview data was first translated from Chinese to English. Following the five analytical-strategy steps for structured interviews proposed by Schmidt (2004), the transcripts were analyzed. First, "intensive and repeated reading" (p. 254) of the transcribed interviews were done. Second, analytical main and sub-categories were constructed as a fundamental guide. Third, with the assistance of the qualitative software packet NVivo 8, all the transcribed data were sorted according to the analytical categories, with the goal of providing examples for the research questions. Fourth, quantifying the results where possible was applied for a preliminary overview of the data. Finally, detailed explanations were presented to draw inferences for the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and discussion for the three research questions.

Question 1: Have English certification exit requirements promoted English learning outcomes?

A total of 276 first-year students from an ECER school and a non-ECER school took the listening and reading sections of two authorized Elementary GEPT tests. Since students' levels of English proficiency in these two schools were not similar, an investigation of which group of students received better scores would not be able to determine whether test requirements promoted learning outcomes. Instead, a comparison of students' score gains by group can generate an understanding of whether such a test-driven policy has resulted in improved student English proficiency.

Table 2 shows the pre- and post- listening and reading scores of 136 students at an ECER school and 140 students at a non-ECER school. Students' original proficiency levels at the ECER school were a little lower than those of students at the non-ECER school.

Table 3 shows the score gain the two groups of students achieved for each section. Both groups made greater progress on the listening section than on the reading section. Students at the ECER school showed a slightly higher score gain on the listening section (1.6 out of 120 points), while their counterparts showed a slightly higher score gain on the reading section (3.3 out of 120 points). Although students at the ECER school showed greater improvement than their counterparts in listening skills, they did not exhibit comparable increased progress in reading.

These findings are not fully consistent with Elder and O'Loughlin's (2003) and Green's (2007a, 2007b) studies, where learners at lower levels of proficiency made more rapid progress. Students' original proficiency does not seem to be a sole predictor of their score gains in this study.

The consistency among these studies is that students' score gains for listening were higher than those for reading. As Elder and O'Loughlin (2003) suggest, progress on listening may be easier to detect within a specific timeframe due to the fact that reading abilities involve knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, phrases, and reading comprehension. However, according to Table 4, an independent sample t-test reveals no statistically significant score gain difference on either the reading or listening sections between the two groups.

Table 2. Pre- and Post- GEPT Test Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of 276 Students in Two Groups of Schools

ECER (Listening test)		Non-ECER (Listening test)		ECER (Reading test)		Non-ECER (Reading test)	
Pre-test N=136	Post-test N=136	Pre-test N=140	Post-test N=140	Pre-test N=136	Post-test N=136	Pre-test N=140	Post-test N=140
m=73.41 SD=19.34	m=80.72 SD=21.59	m=74.94 SD=19.41	m=80.69 SD=22.53	m=67.82 SD=26.11	m=69.69 SD=26.09	m=75.50 SD=14.60	m=80.66 SD=18.20

Table 3. A Comparison of GEPT Test Score Gain for 276 Students in Two Groups of Schools

Score gain (Listening) (post-test – pre-test)		Score gain (Reading) (post-test – pre-test)	
ECER N=136	Non-ECER N=140	ECER N=136	Non-ECER N=140
7.31	5.75	1.87	5.16
SD= 13.25	SD= 15.07	SD=15.36	SD= 15.52

Table 4. An Independent Sample T-Test for Score Gain of 276 Students in Two Groups of Students

	t	df	Significance (two-tailed)
Score gain for listening	0.912	274	0.36
Score gain for reading	1.77	274	0.08

The minimal difference in score gains between the two groups suggests that such a test requirement policy plays a minimal role in improving student proficiency. In addition, the insignificant score gains suggest that the exit requirement policy does not affect students' learning behaviors to a large extent.

Question 2: What are the possible factors contributing to students' scores at the ECER school?

All 6 interviewees at the ECER school stated that they did not make any special efforts to study for the GEPT tests, apart from attending regular English classes. As seen in Table 3, all these 6 interviewees made progress on their listening scores. As for their reading scores, two made progress, three did worse, and one remained the same. Three out of six indicated that they also attended extra test-preparation classes offered by the school after class. The required English classes offered at this school are 2 hours of aural/oral classes and 2 hours of reading classes each week for first-year students, and 2 hours of aural/oral class for one semester for second-year students. In other words, 10 hours of English classes in total (6 hours of aural/oral classes and 4 hours of reading classes) are offered to students in their first two years.

Possible factors that led to a greater score gain on listening than on reading are: 1) more hours of aural/oral classes offered at the school with exit requirements, 2) test preparation classes offered for test-taking strategies and test-oriented practice, and 3) additional time required/encouraged to spend at a self-access center for listening practice. These are discussed below.

1. Aural/oral classes are offered in addition to 2 hours of reading classes.

Four out of the 6 interviewees stated that their improved listening scores may be linked to the aural/oral classes, where they were given opportunities to do listening exercises offered in the text, and to do oral practice such as chorus repetition or dialog practice with the teacher or a partner. For example, S206-4 claimed that she did not make more effort to prepare for the test, but only attended classes; however, in aural/oral classes, they were given opportunities to practice speaking.

In regular English reading classes, half of these 6 interviewees stated that their teacher included some test-preparation materials, while the remaining students indicated that little test-preparation instruction occurred. S207-2 stated that although vocabulary and grammar quizzes were given on a regular basis, there were fewer than they were given in high school, and that in high school, they were pushed more to study, but at university, it all depended on whether students wanted to study. Interestingly, when asked about the factors that resulted in their reading score gain, students were uncertain, even though test-preparation material and instruction were included in regular English classes. S206-4 said that the inclusion of test-preparation material and instruction began only a month prior to the post-test, and she wished that this type of instruction could have happened earlier. Another student, (S207-1) whose post-test reading score regressed, mentioned that the test-related instruction did not help her to gain a better understanding of the GEPT because she did not have the opportunity to take the entire set of mock tests; however, she found this type of instruction very beneficial because the teacher started with basic grammar, which helped her to build a solid foundation.

2. Test-preparation classes, where teachers told students about test-taking strategies, are offered.

Of the six interviewees, three students stated that in the TOEIC test-preparation classes, they were given some listening practice. S206-2 said,

I did not really study harder after class, but I paid attention in class... As for listening, we were required to listen to the test questions, and the teacher told us some listening strategies. She said something like the first sentence usually was the most important one.

S206-3 claimed that test-preparation classes pushed her to study more and improve her scores because in regular English classes, students were not given quizzes on a regular basis, so she did not really study for them. However, she liked regular English classes more because there was less pressure there.

I feel I'm studying at a university in regular English classes, while in test-preparation class, I felt like I was taking classes at a cram school... In test-preparation classes, we were usually forced to study, which I don't like very much because I don't like to study for tests... We were required to be there at a certain time and finish a certain number of mock tests before we were allowed to go home.

3. English teachers recommended or required their students to spend time on test-related practice at the self-access center, so students engaged in more listening practice there.

Four out of these 6 interviewees stated that their English teachers recommended that they spend a certain amount of time doing test-related practice at the self-access center, and those who finished the task were given extra credits as a reward. S206-2 said, "I would have felt like I had lost face if everyone else except me hadn't gone there." S206-3 said, "I went there for 10 hours and did listening practice." Likewise, S207-1 stated that her teacher encouraged them to do test-related practice at the self-access center, and "I go there when I have time to do listening practice."

Question 3: What are the possible factors contributing to students' scores at the non-ECER school?

The non-ECER school requires that first-year students take three hours of English classes. S208-2 stated that she attended lessons for 3 hours a week after class, which were offered by the school to help students to earn English tour certificates. S212 was preparing for an exam herself to transfer to another university. The remaining students did not attend classes, other than the 3-hour regular required English classes.

Factors that may possibly have contributed to students' lower listening score gain but higher reading score gain than their counterparts are: 1) English classes focused on reading rather than aural/oral skills, 2) self-study or after-class English lessons, where practice on reading skills is the focal point, and 3) additional listening practice after class is not required. These are discussed below.

1. English classes focused on reading skills more than on aural/oral skills.

All 6 interviewees claimed that the focus of their English classes was reading skills, not listening skills. They mainly read the text, reviewed the vocabulary, or did grammar-related assignments.

S208-1 said that since he entered university, he had never been given much practice on listening. The teacher focused on reading in class, and he therefore spent a lot of time memorizing vocabulary, reading the text and practicing making sentences, but he spent little time on listening. Later, he continued, saying that the English classes had helped to increase his vocabulary knowledge base, and his reading comprehension has improved because of his greater knowledge of vocabulary and expressions. "However, there seems to be little improvement on my listening." He offered this explanation:

In high school, listening was assessed on the mid-term and final exams, so I listened to the audio version of the textbook to practice my listening skills. At university, since listening is not assessed, I spent more time memorizing vocabulary, sentences and reading the text to prepare for the exams; therefore, I spent little time on listening.

S209-2 stated that her reading scores improved because the English teacher assigned her class a grammar report, where she needed to compile grammar rules and make sentences for each rule. In order to finish this assignment, she reviewed the grammatical knowledge she had learned at high school, and by reviewing it, she contended that she seemed to have improved her English.

S210 said that her teacher did not instruct on listening, but she assumed her reading had improved because she had read more English articles in class, and her vocabulary bank had enlarged accordingly.

When asked if they made any efforts to practice their listening skills, they replied "nothing in particular." Three students said that they listened to English occasionally when their teacher played the video version of the textbook, or

when he read the text, but that did not happen often. S209-2, whose listening and reading scores both improved a lot, said that she did not have time to do any listening practice because there were too many reports to do for other subjects, but she said her listening was satisfactory because she used to work in a restaurant that many foreigners visited, so she had opportunities to practice her English. Moreover, she did not find the second test more difficult than the first one.

When asked if oral skills were practiced in class, their answer was “very little.” S208-1 said this was because it was a reading class. S209-2 said that the teacher occasionally read the text, played its audio version, and had them read the text; that was all. S210 said, in regular English classes, reading seemed to be the only skill focused on, but there was no other choice because there were only three hours of class time each week, and it was impossible to cover all skills in such a short time. Usually the class time was over by the time the teacher had finished instructing about the article, and there was not much time left to practice other skills.

2. Self-study or after-class English lessons, where practice on reading skills is the focal point

Two out of the 6 interviewees said that they studied vocabulary, grammar, and English articles after class by themselves either to prepare for the transferring entrance exam or to enhance their own English proficiency. Neither of them stated they did any listening practice themselves after class. S208-1 said that the entrance exam was a written test, so she focused on the vocabulary and grammar. S212 claimed that although her scores on the GEPT test did not reflect her improvement, she found she improved a little by reviewing vocabulary and grammar herself. She said,

I understood some grammatical points that had confused me better. I found that my reading comprehension became better when I did some reading.

S208-2 attributed her score gain on reading to the fact that she attended the after school Travel English classes offered by the school. She said her progress on reading might have something to do with the Travel English class, where “we are required to do a lot of mock tests, which are similar to what is tested on the GEPT to some extent. All the questions are multiple-choice ques-

tions, consisting of vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension. The teacher reviewed and explained the questions after we finished them... After class, we are assigned to finish the mock tests we did not complete in class.”

3. Students are neither required to nor rewarded for engaging in listening practice on the school website.

When asked if they practiced their listening skills on the school website by doing test-related practice, or whether they attended test-preparation classes offered by school, the students either said they rarely did, or that they did not know where to go for this practice or class. S208-1 said,

I did not know about these (the test-preparation classes) until you told me just now... To be honest, I do not know what resources (for test-preparation) have been provided by the school, unlike in high school, where the teacher had us do mock test practice in addition to regular English instruction.

S209-1 said, “I do not know where we can do such practice.” However, S210 said that she plans to do the online test-related practice offered by the school when her English proficiency reaches a certain level. She said that she knew the school had offered this website for them to do test-related practice, because the teacher had told them about it, and she had visited it once before.

Jez and Wassmer (2015) contend that “the more time spent to produce something (holding the other inputs into the production constant) the greater should be the quantity and/or quality of the output produced” (p. 287). The findings derived from this study are consistent with their proposal and imply that the amount of time, both the extension of class time, and after-class learning time, spent on language learning plays an essential role in determining a student’s degree of improvement. Previous studies also consistently indicate that the more time learners spend in learning, the better academic outcomes they receive (Borg, 1980; Brown & Saks, 1986; Cotton & Savard, 1981). Similarly, the most recent study conducted by Jez and Wassmer (2015) found that “fifteen more minutes of school a day at a school site (or about an additional week of classes over an academic year) relates to an increase in average overall academic achievement of about 1%, and about a 1.5% increase in average achievement for disadvantaged students” (p. 284). Furthermore, as found in this study, autonomous learning by encouraging students to make use of the materials on the website or in the self-access center is considered beneficial in

boosting learners' test scores. Similar results were also discovered in the studies of McMurry, Tanne and Anderson (2009) and Thanasoulas (2002). English teachers should encourage more autonomous use of center materials by providing students with an appropriate website and database to help them find materials that are beneficial for their English learning.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Utilizing two authorized GEPT tests as pre- and post-tests, and conducting interviews with 6 each from the ECER and non-ECER schools, this study intended to explore 1) whether English certification exit requirements have promoted learning outcomes, and 2) the possible contributing factors to the score gains for each group of students.

With regard to learning outcomes, 136 ECER students had a 1.6-point higher listening score gain than 140 non-ECER students, who in turn had a slightly higher level of reading score improvement (3.3 out of 120 points). Neither score gains were statistically significant.

Findings from the interviews with the 12 students confirmed that the slightly higher score gain on listening for the students at the ECER school is likely due to the larger amount of time engaged in practice of listening skills, which occurred in regular aural/oral English classes, test-preparation classes, or their school's self-access center or website. Additional hours of English classes (both regular English aural/oral classes or test-preparation classes) and the frequent use of the school's resources (self-access center or online test-related school website) have been established to help students to enhance their English proficiency and earn the English certificates, and they seem to have effects on improving students' listening scores, to some extent.

A focus on reading skills at the non-ECER school seemed to explain the slightly higher score gain on reading for its students. One more hour of reading class is offered at the non-ECER school than at the ECER school, suggesting that additional hours of English classes are beneficial to boosting students' scores. This is also proven in the case of the students at the ECER school, where the score gain on listening is a little higher than for their counterparts, partly because of the increased amount of time they spend practicing listening skills. In addition, since reading was mainly covered in both the mid-terms and finals in this school without exit requirements, students studied the text, vocab-

ulary, and phrases to prepare for the exam, and did little practice on listening after class.

These findings imply that the amount of time spent on language learning plays an essential role in determining a student's degree of improvement. It is therefore suggested that (1) additional hours of English classes, and (2) an additional number of test-preparation classes, (3) the extension of English classes from the first to the final year be offered to students to provide them with more opportunities and exposure to English practice. Furthermore, since students are the major stakeholders of this policy, of course, they need to work hard on their own after class. Autonomous learning must be encouraged. Even if teachers have done their jobs well, if students do not devote their own time and effort to studying English and preparing for tests, their learning outcomes will still be insignificant. To encourage autonomous learning, students should be provided with sufficient resources (e.g. self-access center and online test-preparation website) to increase the time they study both in and after class.

Although this study offers practical insights into the test effects of the English exit requirement policy on learning outcomes and highlights the possible factors contributing to test score gains, it has some limitations that indicate directions for further research. First, this was a case study of first-year students and 12 interviewed students only from two universities. In order to ascertain the relevance of the findings in other contexts, replication studies would need to be conducted. Second, while interviews were used in the study partly to triangulate what the test results indicated, other types of data could usefully have been employed in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the study, including student questionnaires, teacher interviews, and classroom observations.

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USING A FACEBOOK CLOSED GROUP TO IMPROVE EFL STUDENTS' WRITING

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Abstract: This study investigates how social media, in this case Facebook, can be incorporated in ELT through e-dialogue journal writing shared in a Facebook closed group. Fifteen EFL students participated in this case study. They were second, third, and fourth year students of English Education Department of a university in Bandung, who voluntarily joined a Facebook closed group for about four months and contributed their journal entries. The content of the students' journals and responses in this closed group were analyzed to identify the nature of the students' journals, the patterns of interaction, and their responses to e-journaling through Facebook. The findings indicate that the students responded positively to this activity and perceived improvement in their writing especially in vocabulary and grammar. The power of learning and sharing from others is also emphasized.

Keywords: social media, Facebook closed group, E-dialogue journal writing

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Social media includes social networks, wikis, blogs, podcasts, forums, content communities, and microblogging. Among this media, social networks seem to be the most widely accessed and used and they have been the new trend of today's communication. Facebook, as the most widely used social media due to its continually increasing active members (Noyes, 2015), can be a promising educational tool to be used in today's information era. Similar to other social

media, Facebook shares these following characteristics: participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness (Mayfield, 2008). This social networking site has gained popularity among teenagers; almost all teenagers have a Facebook account and spend hours in there (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008).

With its large number of users worldwide, Facebook has a great potential as an educational tool that teachers cannot ignore. The ubiquity of smartphones makes access to Facebook and other internet-based application easier than ever. Teachers can take advantage of this convenience to facilitate a mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) by setting up a Facebook closed group which allows beneficial engagement and interaction among members yet keeps the privacy maintained.

Previous studies on the use of Facebook as an education tool show that students see some benefits in using Facebook for certain aspects of peer communication, which often focused around group work (Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009) and assessment (Selwyn, 2009). VanDoorn and Eklund (2013) report that the students in their study felt comfortable contacting lecturers through Facebook and found that the teachers' unapproachability was reduced. This implies that a better atmosphere for learning has been established. VanDoorn and Eklund (2013) investigate how students perceived the use of Facebook chat with their teachers, and the study suggests that this social media chat was perceived positively by students because of the immediacy of response and irrelevance of distance. In addition, using social media fosters long-term retention of information and develops a deeper understanding of content that has been discussed in a class (Chen & Bryer, 2012).

Besides the benefits, Facebook as social media also pose challenges for teachers as Bugeja (2006) warned that it can be both a tool and a distraction in the classroom. Similarly, Hurt et al. (2012) mentioned that social media may provide too much stimulation and therefore can distract students from completing their coursework. As Arnold and Paulus (2010) stated, even when social media is used for an educational purpose, students incorporate the technology into their lives in a way that may differ from the intentions of the course instructor. Instructor cannot take a full charge of what their students do with social media beyond their supervision. Besides, off-topic or non-academic discussions occur on social media due to its primary design as a social networking tool (Lin, Hou, Wang, & Chang, 2013).

In order to address the issues, Bugeja (2006) maintains that the solution is not to block content, but to foster students' ability to discern when and where technology may be appropriate or inappropriate. Encouraging students to use social media wisely can maximize the benefits of technology for learning. For this purpose, teachers' technology literacy is necessary in order to effectively incorporate it in their teaching and learning processes and facilitate students' learning.

The present study explores the possibility of using social media to improve EFL students' writing by employing electronic dialogue journal writing (EDJW) through Facebook. It is a type of dialogue journals, defined as "a written conversation between a teacher and an individual student, which is quite confidential and is an on-going writing throughout a whole semester or school year" (Peyton, 2000, p. 3). In this study, however, the dialogue journal is conducted through a Facebook closed group rather than through traditional paper and pen media. Another difference is that the 'dialogue' is not limited to teacher-students but it involves all students in the group.

Dialogue journal is believed to be beneficial for students (Peyton, 2000; Langan, 2000; Harmer, 2001). They have distinctive features, namely, interactivity, periodicity and privacy (Jones, 1991, pp. 28-29). These features allow meaningful communication between the teacher and the students. The most common type of electronic dialogue journal writing used was journal writing using e-mail. Wang's (1996) study on the use of email dialogue journaling indicates that students had positive attitude to using email for journaling and produced more language functions than those who used paper and pen dialogue journaling. EDJW is also reported to affect the quantity of students' writing. For example, the conversational and informal style of email communication has made students write more (Wang, 1996, p. 776). Meanwhile, Staton, Shuy, Peyton, and Reed (2005) show the potential value of teachers' e-mail correspondence with their students since it allows teachers and students to get to know each other in new ways, to develop greater rapport and mutual understanding and to expand and deepen their communication.

Other studies (Shang, 2007; Naba'h, 2013; Abdelrahman, 2013; Foroutan, Noordin, & Gani, 2013a) indicate that the use of electronic dialogue journal writing has significantly improved students' writing performance. Students were able to improve syntactic complexity (Shang, 2007) and grammatical accuracy (Shang, 2007; Abdelrahman, 2013). Meanwhile, Thevasigamoney and

Yunus (2014) investigate the use of EDJW as a tool to alleviate writing anxiety and promote writing skills among gifted learners.

While the previous studies investigated the use of dialogue journals through email, this article explores how dialogue journals can also be conducted using the widely used social media, Facebook. Facebook is used because of its popularity among students. They are already familiar with Facebook's features, which is expected to minimize the possibility of technical difficulties.

The previous studies reveal that dialogue journal writing has positive impacts on students' learning in general and students' development of writing skill in particular. This study investigates the use of electronic dialogue journal writing through a Facebook closed group, in which all members can share, comment, and interact freely. Thus, the nature of 'dialogue' in this type of journal is different, because it is more interactive and promotes interaction among all members, not only between teacher and students.

Using Facebook to support learning is in accordance with the social constructivism paradigm, which emphasizes social interaction and learning from others in the group. It enables synchronous and asynchronous interactions and information sharing (statuses), such as links, videos, surveys, files, texts, and photos. Any Facebook member can create a group and invite other Facebook users to join. The privacy setting can also be managed to determine whether the group is open to all Facebook users or closed (accessible only to members approved by the group creator).

Facebook closed group is chosen because it gives more privacy to the members. Only group members can read and comment on the posts. Anything posted in the closed group does not appear in the members' logs as do their other Facebook activities. It is visible only to other group members (Meishar-Tal, Kurtz, & Pieterse, 2012). Another convenience is that a Facebook user can join and be approved as a member without having to be friends with the creator, so teachers and students do not have to share their profile and statuses with each other.

As mentioned earlier, this study explores the possibility of incorporating e-dialogue journal through Facebook closed group to improve students' writing. There are three main questions formulated as the problems of the study: (1) What is the nature of students' journal entries?; (2) What is the pattern of interaction and language functions that appear in students' journals?; and (3) What are their responses to journaling through a Facebook closed group?

METHOD

This is a preliminary case study on the use of dialogue journals through a Facebook closed group. I created a Facebook closed group named ‘Journal Community’ and invited students who were interested to participate in this group. The membership was voluntary.

There were 16 members of this group including me as the facilitator. The participating students were second, third, and fourth year students of English Education Department of a university in Bandung. At first I only invited a few students interested in journal writing, (especially those who were active Facebook users); then, they added some more students from different classes. I invited the members to post their journal entries in this group’s wall. I did not specify what topic to write, how often, and how long; they were given full autonomy. I did not score their writing nor their involvement because I considered this an informal learning channel where students could express their ideas more freely than in the classroom.

The data in the form of students’ journal entries were collected for about four months, from February to May 2015. However, there were not many entries posted by the students because only five members were active and the rest chose to be silent readers or only commented on other journals occasionally. There were a total of 40 entries or about 10 entries per month. The length of each entry varied, from 20 to 500 words. The content of the journals were analyzed by identifying and categorizing the emerging themes in their journals. Samples of the students’ entries included here were presented verbatim.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The Nature of Students’ Journals

It is found that students write different types of texts in their Facebook journals and they can be categorized in the following list, from the most to the least frequent.

- a. Personal account of one’s own feeling and experience

This seems to be the most common types of posts identified. Students tend to write about what they feel/experience during the day/week. One student, for

example, told about her dad being sick and hospitalized. Another reported about his recent conflict with a classmate. Still another wrote about his intention to move from his current boarding house. There was also one who shared his feeling discouraged to continue pursuing a career as a teacher, etc.

This is a sample of students' journal of this type:

My dad is being taken to hospital now. He just recovered from light stroke a few months ago. My mom said he kept showing some signs that the same illness might come again. We're both so afraid. Doctors say the second one will be fatal..

b. Personal reaction to a phenomenon

Sometimes students did not write about their feelings or experience but were critically commenting on a recent phenomenon. For example, one student commented on the government' policy to raise the fuel's price, which was then commented by other students about how their life was affected by the rise. Here, the student's entry was in the form of a comment on the policy. He did not write introductory sentences (e.g. the government has just increased the fuel price...) but directly expressed his opinion, which was probably because he thought that everybody had known about the newly announced policy.

This is crazy! How can the government increases the fuel's price when the world's oil price drops? This increase will lead to the increase of other prices, which means more people will suffer.

c. Discussion on certain issues

One student wrote about a serious issue regarding ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and how they as students should respond to it. The threat, challenges, as well as promises were discussed. This is the introductory of his quite long entry:

Facing ASEAN Economic Community 2015 is an inevitable phase. As a last grade students (and this also may represent other fresh graduate), this phase is somehow either threatening or promising. We are threatened by the competitive labours that come from Asean country, and optimist because the task and demand of the presence of English teacher will soon increase as the needs is increasing. Indonesian people are urgently required to acquire English skill otherwise they can't compete with other workers.

Another member admitted that she just heard about that issue and that she was grateful to have been informed through his post. She also found the information useful when she had a conversation about it with her teachers. This is what she wrote in her comment:

I'm so lucky that I read your post before visiting my school today. My teachers there talked about this MEA thing (which I had never heard before), and since I had read this, I could share (or "copy"?) your opinions and blended in well with them. They think I've improved a lot, lol. Thanks for sharing this n_n"

d. Reflection on an event/thing

One student wrote a reflection after reading others' posts, revealing how grateful she was to be a part of the community because it helped open up her horizon and she appreciated the value of sharing with others, which allows her to learn many things from others' writing.

I'm so fortunate to be in this group because reading my freinds' (*sic*) posts has opened up my horizon. Sharing in this group makes me learn a lot from others' writing.

The Degree of Formality in Students' Journals

Unlike other in-class writing assignments, which require students to use formal style, journaling through Facebook is not restricted to certain genre, topic, length, and style. The lecturer's presence in the group does not really affect the students' choice of language used. They mostly used informal style in their writing. This is indicated by the use of abbreviations (*lol, asap, OOT*), informal language (*'coz, wanna*), slang (*dude, buddy*), idioms (*kinda punching me in the head*), also the heavy use of emoticons (e.g. smiley or frowny faces). In addition, their writing is more like a written speech, with some exclamation (This is crazy!) and conversation-like chats.

I'm sorry...☹ (*A student wrote this after a 'debate' on an issue*)
I don't see why you need to say sorry though, ha ha (*The reply*)

This informality is something quite common in computer-mediated communication (CMC) and it in fact promotes genuine communication.

The Patterns of Interaction and Language Functions

The interaction/exchange in this dialogue journal can be from teacher-students, student- teacher or students-students. In this study, I give students the autonomy to write about topics of their own choice. By doing so, I expect that they will be autonomous writers who take charge of their own writing, similar to an autonomous learner who is responsible for their own learning (Little, 1991). The interaction with other members can also lead to autonomy, as suggested by Foroutan, Noordin, and Gani (2013b, p. 996) that “Online interaction in CMC along with the constructivist principles, which emphasize the role of communication and social contacts, are important factors in developing autonomy among language learners”.

Sometimes I prompted questions for them to respond when they were not active for a long time. Once there was no post for about two weeks, I wrote a topic for them to reply, and they responded in two days. I assumed that sometimes they just did not know what to write or were busy with some assignments. However, they mostly wrote as they like and others commented when they thought they had something to say about the issue. Otherwise, they would show their presence or attention to their friends' post by pressing the 'like' button.

The language functions the students perform in their writing can be categorized into:

a. Showing agreement and disagreement

When one student wrote about the bad effect of the increase of the fuel's price, for example, others showed agreement by writing about similar problems resulting from the increased price, complaining how it had also affected their life, and criticizing the government for the policy. However, they can also show disagreement on things written by their friends.

Indeed, the increase of fuel price has killed me softly... ☹️ (*Response to a journal entry*)

b. Asking questions

Student asked questions to their friends or sometimes to their teacher, and in other occasions, the teacher asked a question to the students related to the topics they raised. An example of student-initiated question is the one raised by G: “Mom, could you tell me what personal account is?”

Another example is when one student wrote about a certain issue and others responded by giving their own opinion regarding the issue. In the following journal entry, a student responded to his friend who wrote about being successful, which was indicated by a perfect GPA.

Anyway, besides all definition of "being the best" that people have, I personally define success as not only as "high GPA" or "doing assignment without mistakes" but also as "to be effective person". (*Response to a journal entry*)

c. Offering suggestions

When one student wrote about her problem, others give opinion about how she could solve the problem.

All you need to do is just prove it, because saying out loud is not enough! (*Response to a journal entry*)

d. Showing empathy

Students showed empathy when one student wrote about a bad thing that happened to his/her family.

I'm sorry to hear that, we're on the same boat. (*Response to a journal entry*)

Students' Responses on EDJW through Facebook Closed Group

In general, the participating students consider journaling through Facebook beneficial for improving their writing and increasing their knowledge. Some of the benefits expressed by the students are:

a. Enlarging their vocabulary

One student said that writing journals regularly helped them enlarge their vocabulary because when they wanted to express something and they did not know the word, they would be forced to search the word in a dictionary. Writing in Facebook can help students remember the vocabulary better because they can refer to the word anytime they reread their writing. Therefore, it is good to retain the long-term memory. As written by one student:

Writing journals will help to develop our vocabulary. While we write a word that we do not know the meaning, we just keep the word and we look for in a dictionary what the meaning of that word.

b. Improving their grammar and spelling

The student also reported that she improved her grammar knowledge because she sometimes used the spelling and grammar check before posting her entries. She also learned from others how to write good sentences. This is because some students were considered 'better writers' than others. They wrote longer, more frequently and more grammatically accurate. Their writing can therefore serve as models for others to learn from.

The tools in microsoft word helps me check the grammatical accuracy and spelling when writing. The more I write the more often I check it. Besides, I also learn from other smarter students about how they write good sentences.

c. Providing a fun and interesting practice

One student wrote that he found journal writing through Facebook a fun and interesting practice because he could share with others. He experienced the excitement of using social media (sharing with others, giving and receiving comments and feedback from others) as well as a fun practice to use English.

I find writing journals on FB like this fun and interesting, in a way that I don't usually get a chance to share anything or interact with people with so much use of English. So I just like it. It feels 'cool'.

d. Widening their knowledge

The freedom to write on any topic has given students extra knowledge in addition to what they acquire in the classroom. For example, one student seemed to know much about manga, while others talked about more serious topics such as economy (e.g. increasing fuel price), culture (e.g. a wedding ceremony), or politics (e.g. government's policy). The variation of topics in journal entries can enrich their knowledge and open up their horizon.

After reading other posts, I somehow feel like my mind gets bigger.
I learn a lot of new things from this group.

e. Learning from others' writing

One student reported that although he was not very active in posting his journals on Facebook, he felt excited to read others' posts and he learned a lot from their ways of expressing their ideas in writing. In his opinion, his friends'

English was amazing that sometimes made him ashamed to write. He learned some expressions that he did not get from his textbook, and he felt very good about it.

To be honest, the presence of this community is quite helpful generally for us to share everything, and for me as an English learner in particular. I seldom put my words here; however, it doesn't mean that I am not following this group and discussion. I always feel excited when someone posts something and others put their comments on it. From that, I can learn many expressions and (*sic*) utterances that I rarely find in books.

f. Building rapport

Undoubtedly, sharing with others helps them know each other better, and this can build a good rapport among group members. This group consists of students from different classes so they did not really know each other well before. Being involved in this group by sharing and commenting on each other's writing helps create a bond between them.

This is an interesting way of knowing each other better.

g. Expressing feelings

Some students wrote about their personal problems in their entries; for example, a female student wrote about her having an argument with her mom, a male student wrote about his conflict with his peer during a teaching practice at school, etc. Having a place to express one's feelings can help release the stress, and this is admitted by one of the students.

I feel so relieved (*sic*) after writing here. I can't talk nor argue with my parents so expressing my feelings here helps me release my stress. Reading your comments and encouragement makes me feel even better. Thanks, guys. Lucky to have you.

Discussion

Regarding the first research questions, it is revealed that students write on various topics for different purposes in their journals. This is in line with Wang's (1996) study on email journaling that students produce more language functions than those who use paper and pen in dialogue journaling. Just like updating status on Facebook, students have the autonomy to write whatever they want, from a personal complaint to a serious topic for other members to respond to. This practice gives students exposure to different types of writing

such as description, recount, narration, argumentation, with different styles and tones, from informal to formal style, and personal to impersonal. This also supports the view that journaling is a method that can help students develop their voice (Rohman, 1965).

The students' writing style, which is mostly informal, is the common characteristics of language used in computer-mediated communication (CMC) context, in which the use of special abbreviations and acronyms and informal language as well as features of speaking are common (Warschauer, 2007). This should be seen as an indicator that the students really communicate using authentic language as they usually use in social media.

Unlike the traditional dialogue journals, in which the pattern of interaction is mainly between teacher and students, in this study, the interaction is not only between teacher-students but also among students. All members can contribute and comment on each other. The value of sharing is dominant here, in which the role of the teacher is more like a 'friend' rather than an instructor or a teacher. Teachers and peers have equal chance to comment and share with other members of the group. This suits the theory of constructivism, which places social interactions as an essential part of human cognitive development (Kurtz, 2014). It is believed that this social interaction can better foster students' learning.

The findings also indicate that students have positive attitude toward having interactive journals in a Facebook closed group. A Facebook group is considered a good media to promote learning. As also found in Kurtz (2014), a Facebook group is perceived as a protected environment that fosters social learning processes while emphasizing learner involvement and active contribution as well as frequent interaction with peers and instructor.

Incorporating electronic dialogue journal writing is believed to give several benefits to students. In the following sections, some values of journal writing will be discussed and compared to previous research findings.

a. Improving students' writing skill

One of the students said that this activity helped enrich her vocabulary. Similarly, Rezaei and Manzari (2011) who conducted a study on the effect of EDJW on the quality and quantity of students' writing found that participants' vocabulary gradually developed as they wrote more complicated and advanced topics.

In addition, the same student wrote that writing journals regularly helped her improve her grammar. This is in line with previous studies which reported that journal writing improves students' grammatical accuracy (Shang, 2007; Abdelrahman, 2013). This is because the availability of grammar checker in the computer allows students to check for their writing's grammatical accuracy before posting it on Facebook, especially when they access Facebook using their laptop/PC. Being exposed to the writing of other students who have better grammar skill also helps them to get familiar with the correct grammar use.

Besides grammar, the students' spelling also improves because they can also check the spelling in their writing using the spelling check feature. Those features (grammar and spelling checkers) can facilitate students to be autonomous learners. As Abdelrahman (2013) maintains, EDJW provides a chance for self-learning, which helps students to be more independent.

It is found that students' writing fluency has improved from the first to the last entries recorded. Even though some of them might not realize it, based on my observation, the students were likely to write longer and more fluent than before. This is in line with Holmes and Moulton (1997) who maintains that dialogue journal writing can develop writing fluency.

Most importantly, EDJW allows students to learn from others. They learn how others express their ideas, arrange sentences, and choose appropriate words. This conforms to Yancey's (2009) opinion stating that the 21st century will be known as a new era in writing where people who compose are not necessarily taught through formal instruction, but rather they will use a process called co-apprenticeship in which the students write authentic texts and are evaluated by peers rather than instructors.

b. Promoting students' motivation

Another advantage of journaling through a Facebook closed group is that it can promote students' motivation to write. This is because journaling through Facebook is a fun and non-threatening writing activity for them. As one student said, this practice could raise her motivation to write more, and that she was especially excited to know that her peers positively commented on her writing. Similarly, Liao and Wong (2010) found in their study that EDJW can increase students' motivation. EDJW through Facebook is even more motivating because it suits the current trend in communication media.

This is also supported by Remiasova's (2009) study which shows that dialogue journal writing is motivating as it contributes toward establishing a closer

relationship and a mutual trust environment. Indeed, students feel secure and motivated to post their entries because there is trust among them, so they can freely express their ideas and feelings.

c. Boosting students' confidence

Another response from a student to journaling through Facebook is how it can boost his confidence to write. He used to be shy and unconfident to write because of fear of making grammatical mistakes. I emphasized that the main goal of writing a journal is to foster a writing habit and that grammatical accuracy is not the main priority. Later on, he discovered that writing a journal can increase his confidence to write. This is in accordance with the results of other research on EDJW which indicate its potential to increase students' writing confidence and control over written language (Jones & East, 2010).

d. Building rapport

Interactive journal writing through Facebook allows sharing and genuine communication between teacher-students and among students. Research done by Staton, et al. (2005) on dialogue journals shows the positive impact it has on teacher-students' communication and rapport. When journal writing is conducted interactively through a Facebook closed group, this can increase students' engagement and interaction and establish rapport among them as well, as it has been proven that using social media as an educational tool can lead to an increased student engagement (Chen, Lambert, & Guidry, 2010).

Compared to the results of previous studies on the benefits of using social media for learning, this study reveals that despite the participants' perceived benefits of writing journals on Facebook, they did not share the same level of confidence when it comes to writing. Therefore, some had low or even non-existent participation due to the EDJW's voluntary nature. Some participants preferred reading entries from other students whom they considered better-skilled at writing rather than writing their own entries. Freedom to write was not always good for them either. Some were confused about what to write. This suggests that if EDJW is to be integrated in writing class, teachers need to occasionally provide topics for them to write about and consider their participation in the evaluation in order to encourage their active participation.

This study has some limitations due to its short time and limited members participating in the Facebook closed group. As mentioned earlier, there were only five members who actively posted their journal entries. From an interview

with the students, some reasons were revealed. Those who chose to be silent readers mentioned that they did not have enough confidence to write because, in their opinion, their friends' writing was mostly very good and they thought their writing was not that good, so they felt ashamed of it. Others said that they did not feel comfortable sharing many things publicly.

Meanwhile, those active contributors shared the same reasons: perceived values and benefits of sharing. They posted their entries because they like to share and believe in the benefits of writing and reading others' comment. Another reason is because of hobby, as stated by one most active member, a second year student, whose hobby was writing diaries. Writing journal entries is therefore not a problem for her. She loved writing down many things both in her diary and on Facebook. Those factors led to uneven participation, and this should be better handled in future research.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The study implies that teachers should adapt to the changes in technology and consider how the changes affect the teaching learning process. Social media as the new trend in today's society can be potentially used for teaching and learning purposes. Teacher's role as a facilitator is essential to ensure that the use of social media is in accordance with the previously set purpose. Dialogue journals through a Facebook closed group can be adopted not only to improve students' writing skill but also to help students express themselves better, interact with their peers and teachers in a more meaningful way, build a good rapport among them, and learn from each other.

In this study, e-dialogue journal writing was not integrated with any writing course; rather, it was an informal learning channel provided for students interested in sharing their journal entries. This had some limitations, in that students' participation was sometimes low, especially when they were busy with school assignments. During this period, nobody posted in the group, or if one did, there was no response from other members. Another problem was that some students chose to be 'silent readers', who only read and 'liked' others' writing without commenting on it, let alone posting any journal entries. This happened because of low confidence in writing, or because there was no such obligation to do so. Therefore, it is suggested that this e-journaling activity be integrated into a writing course, so as to increase students' motivation and to

have ample data to measure students' writing progress. Teachers can then set a kind of rules at the beginning, whether students are expected to post entries every week or any other specified time. Teachers can also set a rubric for a good journal entry, and can then use it for assessment.

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SECOND LANGUAGE LITERACY PRACTICES: A CASE STUDY OF A CHINESE STUDENT IN AUSTRALIA

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Abstract: This article discusses the second-language literacy practice of an ESL student in Australia. It firstly explores the literacy practices (reading and writing) exercised both in China (the subject's home country) and in Sydney, Australia, where the subject was taking an academic preparation course prior to her master study. Secondly, this article delves into literacy practices conducted inside and outside the classroom in the same contexts. This research aims to contribute to the existing literature on literacy practices by expanding the focus of investigation beyond writing and by bringing up a specific case study, which is hardly addressed in the literature: a Chinese student in non-American education setting. Through analyzing the results of semi-structured interview, it is revealed that the participant adopted several different literacy practices in reading and writing due to different learning objectives and contexts.

Keywords: literacy practice, reading and writing inside and outside the classroom, threshold level

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Literacy practices among ESL learners especially Chinese in English-speaking countries is worth investigating as Chinese students make up a large number of international students in these countries, such as, in the United States (Tan, 2013), and in Australia (Institute of International Education, 2014). The Chi-

nese international student mobility to English speaking countries means that on one hand, they need to adjust to a new literacy environment and on the other, the universities in the English speaking countries need to consider their academic and socio-cultural backgrounds when treating them.

The concept of literacy is often defined “as a set of social practices” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8) inferable through written texts which capture social events. While this definition is very broad, this paper will focus on reading and writing practices of one Chinese student doing an English preparation course prior to her enrolment in a master’s program at the University of Sydney, Australia. Narrowing literacy on reading and writing is triggered by the notion that one of the best ways to understand and to expand our knowledge on literacy is through teachers’ and students’ reflection on their own daily practices (Barton, 2000). Focusing only on a student’s reflection of reading and writing practices, this paper explores the following two questions: how reading and writing practices were exercised both at home and in the school in China and secondly, how reading and writing were conducted inside and outside the classroom at a university in an Australian setting. Linking the reading and writing practices both outside and inside the classroom, according to Burns (2003), is beneficial “to gain student oriented insights about classroom teaching for literacy development” (p. 18) and to see whether or not there is a transfer of strategies from L1 (first or native language of the learners) literacy practices to L2 (second language) literacy practices as researched by Mu and Carrington (2007).

As mentioned earlier, a research on this topic in an Australian setting is worth conducting as in 2014 there were 91,089 students from China studying in Australia, which equals to 33.8% of all international students (Institute of International Education, 2014). Thus, it is important for Chinese students’ academic adjustment and Australian universities to get academic and learning support as academic system in these countries are different so that the academic expectations are dissimilar (Mu & Carrington, 2007).

A number of studies on Chinese students have been conducted on different foci, such as, different learning strategies used in UK (Gao, 2006), Chinese students’ adjustment in UK (Wang & Byram, 2011), Chinese students’ perceptions of Australian universities (Briguglio & Smith, 2012), Chinese learners in New Zealand university environment (Tait, 2011-2012), pedagogy to empower Chinese students in Western learning context (Savaranamuthu & Yap, 2014), etc. However, there are only limited studies found comparing the reading and

writing practices of Chinese students in their home country and in English speaking countries where they study. Among the scarce resources are Kong (2006) on reading in Chinese and English in the American setting, and Mu and Carrington (2007) on Chinese and English writing in Australian context.

Kong (2006) examined the reading strategies employed by four Chinese adult readers (all Chinese native readers and ESL learners). He reported that in general, the participants exerted a variety of strategies such as comprehending unfamiliar vocabulary through memory recall, decoding the component of words and inferring from context. Furthermore, the participants also benefited from the organization of the text and text structures, activating background knowledge, predicting, evaluating, monitoring and translating (Kong, 2006).

Mu and Carrington (2007) investigated the writing strategies of three Chinese postgraduate students in Australia and the differences between English and Chinese writing process. The findings reveal that by employing rhetorical, metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective strategies, all the students had the same ideas that an English text should have the common structure such as “good introduction” and “well defined organization”. However there was disagreement on how to write a conclusion (Mu and Carrington, 2007).

The reading and writing practices reported in Kong (2006) and Mu and Carrington (2007) demonstrate that writing in English and Chinese is distinct in their own ways. The writing in both languages is governed by complex aspects including academic conventions, genres, and sociocultural backgrounds. These differences required students to apply different strategies.

The scarcity of references which discuss the comparison of reading and writing practices is also found with studies concerning practices outside and inside the classroom carried out by Chinese learners. Only two studies were found: Burns (2003) and Williams (2007).

Burns (2003) conducted a research project investigating Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) in Australia. One of the three research participants was a Chinese woman who had lived in Australia for six years and had joined several AMEP classes at the time of the research. Williams (2007) explored the literacy practices of two undergraduate female students in UK, with regard to their leisure and study time. The study shows that the students retained their own learning tradition e.g. collaborative learning but they also accepted the learning culture in UK: being independent.

In my study, the Chinese student from mainland China was selected purposefully because it aims to expand the former study conducted by Mu and

Carrington (2007) on the literacy practices of Chinese students in Australia which only focused on writing in L1 and L2. The relationship between reading and writing practice of Chinese students attempting to pursue master's study in English speaking countries has also been underexplored. Furthermore, no study has been conducted on female Chinese students' reading and writing practices in Sydney context. Thus, the study is expected to provide some new insights into second language literacy studies.

METHOD

The subject of this study is Sara¹, a 27 year-old Chinese woman studying general English at Centre for English Teaching (CET) of Sydney University. The General English class at CET was usually held for four and a half hours from Monday to Friday involving a number of teachers. Sara had been learning English since secondary school, and, at the time of study, had been living in Sydney for five months. She held a bachelor degree in education, and her purpose of attending the course was to prepare herself to continue her study in a Master's program on Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and for her future employment. Sara speaks Chinese and English.

The data for the study were collected primarily from a semi-structured interview and on site follow-up questions. The interview questions had been collaboratively prepared by a senior academic with TESOL expertise and her students (I was one of them) undertaking *Literacy and Language Teaching* course, which was one of the subjects in the Master of Education program in TESOL at the University of Sydney, Australia. The first ten questions concerned, in particular, the learner's background information, such as, gender, age, level of English proficiency, length of study, length of time spent in English speaking country, level of education, current place for learning English, reasons for learning English, native language and possibility of learning other languages. Other seven questions were made to explore the literacy practices outside the classroom and eight questions were constructed to investigate the literacy practices done outside the classroom. Overall, the interview questions explored the kinds of reading and writing strategies employed by Sara in her home country (China) and in Sydney, Australia. Threshold hypothesis in L2 reading was also

¹ A pseudonym

investigated. Samples of the interview transcripts are included in this article and are not presented verbatim. Nevertheless, the content accuracy of the transcripts is well maintained.

This research employs case study design to allow me to explore this particular case more thoroughly.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings on the literacy practices of the learner are categorized into reading and writing both outside and inside the classroom.

Reading Outside the Classroom

Based on the interview, Sara slightly shifted her 'outside-classroom reading' literacy practice by no longer reading English novels for study as she did in China. Instead, she was more engaged in reading newspapers, novels and magazines for pleasure. This was mainly because her immediate goal in learning English is to pass the course in order to qualify for her Master program. It shows that her reading is confined to a specific learning objective and context. Following is more detailed discussion of this finding.

When asked about the length of time spent outside the classroom in a week, she answered:

If not for the purpose of learning English, I spent two to three hours a week (for reading texts in English). (Q1a)

The above answer shows that the time spent for reading was associated with English learning. Since she did not give examples what she meant by "English learning", it is possible to assume that English learning refers to the English materials given by the teachers in the classroom. The above answer also signals that Sara was typical of a task-oriented student as she would do extra learning if she was given some tasks. When asked about the type of English material she read outside the classroom, she mentioned:

Newspapers and magazines, like Time... (Q2a)

Living in Sydney did not change her reading habit in her L1 because she still read Chinese novels through online media.

No, I still read Chinese novels, but online. In China, I read English novels but just for study. No English diaries, no activities for pleasure... I just read novels and magazines here. (Q4)

Her answer that she continued reading Chinese novels led to further question on whether she enjoyed reading in L1, to which she provided the following response:

Yes, sure. I am familiar with my first language. I get all information from there, but in English, I don't think so. Sometimes I need to check dictionary and try to understand. It is a little difficult. (Q5a)

Reading novels in Chinese language obviously did not pose any linguistic and socio-cultural constraints, so it was easy for her to understand the content. On the other hand, reading in English for Sara was not enjoyable.

I just want to learn. I don't enjoy it, but if I can use English more fluently, I will be attracted to the culture and I will read more. But now, it is still a period of learning. (Q6a)

This excerpt indicates that the linguistic or socio-cultural backgrounds of the English language inhibits Sara's reading process, which is often the case for EFL learners, as stated by Grabe and Stoller (2011). Sara might still be struggling to employ her metacognitive knowledge, so that she did not enjoy reading in English.

Reading Inside the Classroom

Moving to Sydney and enrolling in CET course allowed Sara to experience reading of different purposes. She also employed a variety of different strategies for different reading purposes. In addition to the general reading strategies such as guessing the meaning from context and understanding main ideas, Sara made use of her L1 as a way to help her understand a difficult text. The following discusses her reading practices in the new context.

The next quote describes Sara's reading experience in her family and school environments in China.

When I was in primary school, my parents asked me to recite some poems, or passages, as they thought it would be useful for my later studies. I just recited something in the classroom. It is the same thing. The teachers asked us to recite everything, like textbooks and beautiful sentences. This happened in all subjects. Teachers asked us to recite and try to do filling the blank exercises. (Q7a)

Sara's reading history in the family and school, where recitation was stressed, portrays audio-lingual method implemented in China during the 1980s. Adamson and Morris (1997) reported that between 1977-1993, audio-lingualism and grammar translation method in English learning were implemented in China. Richards and Rodgers (2001, p. 57) explain that drilling and providing the correct responses were the core activities done in Audiolingualism. Drilling is believed to "enable learner to form correct analogies".

In literacy perspective, what Sara's parents asked her to do and what her teacher(s) instructed in the classroom was parallel: recitation. Therefore, Sara gained benefits from her home literacy practice. In other words, Sarah's parents indirectly "prepared" Sara for the literacy practice at school. This fact underlines that home and school literacy practices mutually support each other. The conformity of home and school literacy practices in Sara's case underlines Vacca's (2009, p. 147) argument that parent's interest in "helping and supporting their children" would result in students' growing interest in learning "because they did not see the gap between their reading and writing experience in the course and at home".

When asked about the differences between the way Sara learnt reading in her L1 and L2, Sara answered the following way:

I don't find any differences... CET teachers teach us reading in the same way that our teachers did in China. CET teachers analyze texts and find some key words and try to paraphrase them and sometimes, they asked us to make (sic) main ideas in paragraphs. (Q7d)

Sara's reading experiences above characterize three different purposes of reading. Finding some key words is the feature of "reading to search"; looking for main ideas is the attribute of "reading to learn" while paraphrasing is the component of "reading to integrate information, write and critique texts"

(Grabe & Stoller, 2011, pp. 7-8). While “reading to learn” is typically done in the “academic and professional context” (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 7), reading to write and critique texts are the “common academic tasks” (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 8), the forms of assignments in the university context. So what Sara experienced in reading in CET class is logical in the context where the program she was enrolled in was to prepare her to embark on the master program where the skills to find main ideas, to paraphrase as well as to critique texts are essential.

During the class, Sara usually read a range of articles provided by the teachers. The articles varied in topics, such as agricultures and international issues. She spent around four hours a week in doing so (Q2c, 2d).

They took some articles from magazines or books. (Q2c)

No, just articles in every area, such as, in agricultures, international issues... (Q2d)

The teachers in the CET, when giving various articles from magazines and books, seemed to be aware that reading widely would broaden Sara’s knowledge in general, and in literacy perspective it would be beneficial for Sara to compose a text as reading could facilitate writing. After all, one of the objectives of such readings is to “integrate information, write and critique texts”, the typical tasks in academic context (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, pp. 7-8).

Sara also described that when reading, she rarely tried to understand every word in the text as she argued that it took time. Moreover, she also usually tried to comprehend the main ideas of text and read texts quickly (Q5a, b).

It’s rare because it costs a lot of time. (Q5a)

When being asked whether or not she tried to understand the main ideas from the text, Sara said the following:

I usually do that. (Q5b)

The above quotes indicate that she is a “text user” or “text participant” (Freebody & Luke, 1990, pp. 9-10) who “understands what to do” after reading and is able to use text for social purposes as well as for participating in the social context in which text was created (Burns, 2003, p. 19). Furthermore, as a text participant, she is able to infer meaning from the text and to relate it with

his/her own experiences and knowledge including being able to identify the figurative meaning emerging (such is as defined by Burns, 2003).

Sara, at times, used guessing strategy to understand the meaning of words in addition to asking teachers or friends.

Sometimes, guessing... Sometimes, asking the teachers and other students... (Q5b)

When reading, Sara employed guessing, one of the reading strategies (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 10), but she might ask about “technical words” of a specific field outside her background knowledge to her teachers and friends. She also once mentioned that to understand one of the readings titled *Stem Cell*, she had to check the version written in her native language to help her understand the English version better.

The act of guessing the meaning here signaled that Sara’s English proficiency was above the *threshold hypothesis*; a certain level of proficiency required to be able to use L1 knowledge, skills and strategies in L2 reading (Cummins, 1976). She also preferred using a web tool to find the meaning of words rather than electronic dictionary as she argued that electronic dictionary did not help her significantly in searching for certain meanings. Her preference for the web tool might also be caused by the fact that web tool is more regularly updated with new vocabulary entries, and is available in different varieties.

Furthermore, Sara should be aware that word meaning might change depending on the contexts or subjects, and that the Internet provides a wide range of meanings from diverse fields. Sara’s use of the Internet was one of the examples on how ICT had impact on literacy practices (Vacca, 2009). Vacca suggested that technology such as ICT should be used appropriately to enrich reading and writing practices (Vacca, 2009).

However, Sara reported that she, especially in reading difficult paragraphs, translated part of the text into Chinese. Later on, her translation strategy was abandoned as the teacher at CET said that this strategy would “harm” her English learning.

O’Malley and Chamot (1990, cited in Upton, 2001) described that the roles of L1 in L2 reading, among others, are translation, prediction, and confirmation of comprehension of a large text. Her willingness to abandon the strategy upon teacher’s reminder indicated that she highly respected teacher’s authority, which is typical in Chinese culture, where teachers tend to dominate

the classroom while students listen and respond passively (Tan, 2007). The word “harm” in Sarah’s sentence to express her teacher’s reminder that translation “harms” learning might be linked to her teacher’s beliefs that English should be the only language used in the ESL classroom. There was a movement in the U.S. to promote English only in the ESL classroom where other languages should not be used (Auerbach, 1993). However, this English-only belief among ESL educator, as Auerbach (1993, p. 9) argued, is “neither conclusive nor pedagogically sound”. Therefore, the CET teacher’s claim that Sara’s use of L1 would harm her learning is debatable and needs to be proven.

In reading a text, Sara often used the ‘title’ to guess the content of the text (Q5h). She also underlined important words and sentences that contain important ideas (Q5j).

Yes, I often do that. (Q5h)

Yes, I often do this. (Q5j)

The (Q5h) quote highlights Sara’s cognitive strategies to activate mental process. It also indicates her higher-level text processing because in the process of guessing the meaning from text and underlining words and sentences which have important ideas, her ability to infer and evaluate the text was used. Grabe and Stoller (2011) explain that higher-level text processing is the ability to infer, form attitude and evaluate the text.

Sara seemed to have also utilized *executive control processing* by mentioning that she usually asked herself questions about the texts she was reading (Q5i).

Yes I do that, but at home, not in class... (Q5i)

Yau (2009) notes that the high performing readers typically “orchestrate a variety of strategies to solve the problems that occur in reading” (p. 231) through the integration of higher and lower cognitive strategies such as “paraphrasing, mentally translating, drawing inferences, linking with prior knowledge etc...” (p. 231). What Sara did seemed to be “mentally translating” – the activity to cognitively draw her resources of L1 and L2 and allowed L1 as a strategy for comprehension especially to understand difficult texts (Grabe & Stoller, 2011), and drawing on previously read references as she consciously engaged in a reading process. Sara also mentioned in the interview that when

she encountered a difficult text in English, she tried to translate it into Chinese (See Q5c).

Sara reported that understanding uncommon vocabulary items and extremely long and complex sentence structures were the most difficult learning process for her. To solve her issues with this, she recited the vocabularies, separated the sentences and transferred them into Chinese.

Maybe vocabulary... sometimes, also sentence structure... To understand complex sentences, I usually recite the vocabulary, separate the sentences, and then transfer it to my first language. (Q8a)

I mean, I can't (understand) some really difficult sentences and complex and long sentences. And at this time, I try to cut them to pieces then try to translate them into my own language and then try to organize this in Chinese. (Q8b)

In this context, Sara used *bottom up model*, where reading “follows a mechanical pattern” as she focused on recognition of words and sentence comprehension via their syntactic structures, etc. (Grabe & Stoller, 2011, p. 25). Her activities of reciting vocabularies can be associated with word recognition, and separating sentences (syntactic parsing) might ease her in the reading comprehension process as she understood the syntactic meaning unit. Translating English into her Chinese language confirmed that L1 facilitates L2 learning process, as also found in Kong's (2006).

Maybe lack of background knowledge... such as last week, we learned about stem cell, (laugh) I had no idea about that... it was difficult for me. I tried to find some background knowledge in Chinese and then tried to understand it in English... because it is easier for me to understand the articles in Chinese than in English. (Q8b)

In the above answer, Sara's L1 helped her understand English material. It has been argued that the facilitation from L1 to L2 learning occurred through ‘semantic processing’ (Ochi, 2009, p.133). Sara processed the meaning of “Stem Cell” from material in Chinese to help her understand the English version. In similar vein, three participants in Kong's (2006) also utilized their prior knowledge to understand English texts through circus visualization and suicide analogy. Sara's difficulties to understand English text which, in her opinion, had “long” and “complex” sentences might be because she and other stu-

dents were not involved in the selection of the texts so that the texts might be above their proficiency levels. This could be demotivating for her. Completing careful research, Guthrie and Humenick (2004) found four factors that motivate students to read. Those factors are: knowledge goals, student choices, interesting texts and collaborations. In CET classroom, the teachers solely decided the text selection based on their own interests.

Due to different literacy settings and educational backgrounds, Sara's reading practices showed dissimilarities with the Chinese participant in Burns' (2003) study. Sara employed guessing, translation, syntactic parsing, paraphrasing and others, while the participant in Burn's (2003) study learned from the scratch, spelling alphabets. If compared with the participants in Kong's (2006) study, Sara's use of prediction, translation, and use of cognitive strategy shared affinity with the reading strategies in English employed by participants in Kong's (2006) study. However, Sara's use of syntactic parsing was not done by the participants in Kong's (2006) study.

Writing Outside the Classroom

Sara's writing practices in China was situated in two different domains: hobby and examination demand. Under the new academic context in Sydney, her writing practices altered. Sara wrote diaries in English and Chinese. These diaries served dual purposes: a method of learning and self-expression. The followings are the details.

When asked whether she enjoyed her writing in L1, Sara recalled her primary school memories.

Yes, I like that. It is just a habit...a hobby. When I was in my primary school, my teacher encouraged us to write in Chinese about what we felt every day or every week. I think he wanted us to improve our writing because I need to pass the exam, but when it becomes a hobby, it is not only for study but to express myself. (Q5b)

The fact that her teacher suggested that she write in Chinese as routines (everyday) suggests that it involved repetitions and drilling, the basic notion of audio-lingual method (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) applied in China in 1980s (Adamson & Morris, 1997).

Living in Sydney, Sara developed a new habit, writing two versions of diaries.

Many times, I have just two versions of diaries: English and Chinese versions. They tell the same thing. I just want to improve my English, so I write English... So the first aim is learning, and the second aim is to express my feeling. If you say 'enjoy', I am not sure... (Q6b)

The above excerpt proves that literacy is "intimately bound up with lives outside classroom" in a complex "cultural, social and personal ways that affect one's L1 and L2 identities" (Burns, 2003, p. 22). Sara's use of L1 in diaries was likely to reflect her personal feeling and L1 identities through expressive languages. However, when writing diaries in English, although the goal was to improve her English, she might not be as expressive as in her L1 because when starting to use English, she did not only use the other language, but she also entered 'the new world', the other way of representing her identities.

Sara's writing of diaries in two languages indicates that the 'shuttle' from one language to another language (target) language has proven effective despite her uncertain feeling about enjoyment on the diary writing. So, in this regard, Sara had been successful in the first aim, but not yet fully successful for the second aim. Sara's coming to Australia also, to some extent, lessened the use of her writing in Chinese, except for writing diaries and chatting (Q4b).

For writing, I seldom do that, but maybe sometimes, in online chat with my friends, I use Chinese. (Q4b)

This excerpt supports Gao's (2006) similar study that Chinese students who did postgraduate studies in UK adopted different learning strategies of English due to different demands and contexts. Accordingly, in China the demand of learning English was for a national exam while in UK, the demand was for coursework assessment. Moreover, Gao (2006) also revealed that learning from language teachers, experts and friends in China had caused students to adopt memorizing strategies, while in UK students used "social and interactive strategies" with supportive native friends (p. 63). In Sara's case, her new learning context required her to socially interact with native speakers. This seemed to be the determinants of her seldom use of Chinese in her writing.

Writing Inside the Classroom

Unlike the slight changes that Sara made on reading practices, she learnt a lot of things when she was learning writing at CET class. She was struggling to adjust with the new context which proclaimed plagiarism was strictly prohibited. She also found it difficult to write her own voice as she had not been taught to do so.

Contrary to Sara's answer that writing in her primary school became her hobby, this time she expressed that writing was boring.

So maybe diary is another thing. Yeah... Because our teacher encouraged us to do so... Maybe he will check it as a homework. So we wrote down. I think it was boring at that time but we always kept.... He encouraged us to imitate passages in our writing. For example, if teacher thought the passages were good, he encouraged us to follow the patterns. (Q7b)

There are some important issues in the above statement. Firstly, Sara's feeling bored, despite its contradiction from her former statement, might indicate that the lessons given in her classroom was monotonous, which could partly be attributed to the audio-lingual method practice employed in her previous education levels. Secondly, the fact that imitation in writing was allowed, showed that in China (at least in her school), plagiarism was not introduced as an issue. Hu and Lei's (2012, p. 842) study reveals that "some Chinese students" regard that "textual borrowing practices are acceptable in examination". Referring to Hu and Lei (2012), it was possible that Sara's experience of being encouraged to imitate was the indication of the tolerance of the "textual borrowing practices" (p. 842). The fact that "beautiful words", literary style of writing, were appreciated in examination (as Sara mentioned) showed that Chinese schooling system (at least in Sara's school) appreciated literary writing style as also explained by Mu's and Carrington's (2007) research participants.

When asked about whether Sara enjoyed writing in her L1, she expressed the following statements:

Yes, sure. I think I am familiar with my first language. I get all information from there. But in English, I don't think my English is good. Sometimes I need to check dictionary to understand. It is a little difficult (Q5a).

Her enjoyment while writing in her L1 was partly because of the absence of linguistic or cultural constraints. Enjoyment in this case was that Sara was fully engaged in the topic she was writing. However, writing in English, Sara felt uncertain and uneasy because she was linguistically and culturally constrained. Sara's case in writing was an example supporting Hyland's (2003) argument that L2 writers were confronted with two burdens concurrently: thinking about ideas and also about the language. When asked about how Sara experienced writing in Chinese and English, she confidently stated:

But in writing, it is different. In Chinese we were just encouraged to imitate but here, it is called plagiarism, so it is totally different. The teachers in CET encouraged us to express our opinion in Chinese. It is not strict... you can follow other people's opinion... In English, you must show your own voice and if not, they will think that you don't have critical thinking. And you can follow the pattern, but you can't use the same sentences or same expression; otherwise, they will say you are plagiarizing. (Q1d)

Sara, in the above excerpt, made two important conclusions. The first point was imitation in China versus plagiarism in Australia. Secondly, she recognized voice in writing as an indicator of critical thinking in Australian academic setting. She was able to spot that the two above issues were very crucial academically. Sara showed awareness that academic conventions were governed by socio-cultural differences. Further, Sara was also mindful that there was schematic structure (genre awareness) that she needs to follow in Australian writing as a way of participating in the community. Sara's genre awareness shows similarity with the participants' awareness in Mu's and Carrington's (2007) study. All the participants in the study showed genre awareness even though the foci of the genres that they paid attention to were dissimilar. What Sara did is also similar to two female students in William's (2007) study as Sara and the two students adjust to literacy practices in English speaking countries by recognizing the academic practices applied in the setting where they study.

With regard to plagiarism in ESL learners, Swoden (2005, p. 226) stated that students should be given chance to understand plagiarism concepts due to different cultural concepts, in which having one's own voice is necessary in English writing, while it may not be as important in their original academic setting.

When I asked Sara about the type of text that she learned in the classroom, she said the followings:

It's about essay which links to our main courses... we have learnt about argument and discussion essay, two essays we focus on... (Q2f)

Sara's answer above indicated that argumentative and discussion essays were her main courses. These two essay types were given to prepare the CET students to embark on the university academic lives in which making one's own voice in writing, according to Sara (Q1d), was considered by the teacher as an indicator of student's critical thinking. Argumentation and discussion are essential parts of the learning process in the tertiary level; particularly, the teaching of argument is associated with critical thinking (Hillock, 2010). In the university, one way to assess critical thinking is through assessment of written works (Wade, 1995). Critical thinking is also considered an important skill for university graduates (Biggs & Tang, 2007, cited in Lun, 2010)

In the classroom, Sara sometimes received peer feedback from other students. In relation to feedback, Mendoca and Johnson (1994, cited in Hyland & Hyland, 2006) described that peer feedback could encourage more self-control and self-autonomy for students. However, since there was no example of the peer feedback given in Sara's classroom, further judgment could not be made on the impact of feedback for Sara.

Sara also reported that she usually wrote texts together with another student.

Usually do that, more than often. (Q 3e)

In a relatively current study, Storch (2011) notes that collaborative writing, if carefully done, will foster "reflective thinking, and a greater awareness and understanding of audience" (p. 276) because when composing writing together, the writers can read each other's part and provide peer feedback. The reflective process during the collaborative writing process as argued by Storch (2011) also indicates the process of knowing (Park, 2013) as students could mutually engage the shared topics and actively construct the writing essay and maintain the readership level (Hyland, 2009).

Another activity that Sara often did in the class was to learn the structure of a text (Q3f). Learning the structure of a text is argued to facilitate compre-

hension because readers can “anticipate and predict the direction of a plot or argument, thereby facilitating attention to the larger meaning of the text” (Peregoy & Boyle, 2000, p. 240).

Even though her teacher suggested that Sara should plan the text before writing, she said that it did not help her much. So she just planned the writing upon teachers’ requests.

Sometimes my teacher said, here, it will help you, but I don’t find it helps me... If they don’t ask, I don’t do it...

Yeah... according to their requirement...but I seldom do it (Q6a)

The fact that Sara seldom did planning in writing shows that she might not fully understand the reason why planning would help the writing process. Sara’s attitude toward planning in writing was similarly shared by participants in Silva’s (1993) study. Silva (1993) described that “L2 writers did less planning and had more difficulty in setting goals, generating and organizing material” (p.13). This unplanned writing resulted in unfocused writing. The following is Sara’s acknowledgement on the issue:

I have no plan, yes...that is a problem. I always write into another direction. That is really a problem. (Q6b)

Sara’s action of not planning her writing might also mean that she was not fully aware of the benefits of making an outline to help her focus her writing. It may reflect her former writing experience in China where planning in writing was not mandated, so it might take a while for her to get used to the new academic writing which promotes planning.

The remarkable change in Sara’s literacy practice was that she rarely wrote sentences in L1 and then translated into L2 as she had done previously.

Rarely now, but before I came here, I often did this... thinking of the sentences in the first language and trying to translate them into English. (Q6c).

Sara’s vocabularies and rhetorical skills might have improved considerably, so that she did not have to translate from L1 to L2 again.

In another related statement, Sara further reported that her coming to Australia had changed her belief in a way that she directly wrote in English, while in the past, she used to write in her L1 and then translated it into English. This

means that she had found ways to express her ideas better and more easily, a different way which speeds up her writing. Her exposure to English in her course and daily social interaction with native speakers should give her authentic language inputs which benefit her in expressing her ideas better inside and outside the classroom. Carsons and Loghini (2002, cited in Gao 2006) revealed that due to the rich target language environment and continuous communicative demand, language learners use more meta-cognitive strategies. In the above case, Sara might have evaluated that her habit of thinking in Chinese then translated it in English was not helpful in the authentic context where she was exposed to English language rich environment. This indicates the application of a metacognitive strategy feature.

Furthermore, Sara reported that she just followed the patterns given by the teachers in writing the essay, so her writing did not always change.

I just try to follow the pattern my teacher gives us. I just follow argument and discussion essays, so not always change... My consideration is to pass... (Q6d)

The excerpt demonstrates that the writing taught at CET was very much guided. Sara's "instrumental motivation", loosely related context dependent motives (Dornyei, 1994, p. 279), seemed to dictate her, in this case, to pass the exam, as she had experienced in China. Her not reading the previous sentence before moving to the next sentence showed that she did not engage in meaning making process in L2 as she experienced in L1.

However, Sara followed the generic structure of texts (e.g. argumentative essay, discussion essay) to organize her ideas and to formulate her essay.

Yes, I often do that. I have to say my teacher taught us about that, and they said that you don't have your own ideas... you have to paraphrase... (Q6f)

This strategy corresponds to the rhetorical strategy of writing, in which a writer attempts to organize ideas and put it into acceptable genre convention of the target language (Mu & Carrington, 2007).

Sara also reported that she only re-read the text before handing in assignments and when the teacher returned them, and she was not sure whether the text made sense.

No, I'm not sure if it makes sense. I'm just writing it, rereading, maybe, when handing it in and when getting my homework back. I always make no sense inclusion (*sic*), the end of the essay... you should repeat the ideas (Q6g).

I clarified to Sara about what she meant with the word "inclusion". When I asked her whether what she meant was "conclusion", she confirmed it. In the above answer, Sara stated that she was not used to re-reading the assignment, which indicates that she did not maximize her metacognitive strategy, that is, evaluating her work prior to submission. Based on Sara's statement "I always make no sense inclusion" (made unclear conclusions), we can say that Sara might feel it difficult to synthesize the main ideas she wrote in the body paragraphs and restate them in a concise manner.

In CET, Sara was confused with different suggestions given by different teachers and whose suggestion she would take.

...but in writing, I am confused... Sometimes different teachers said different things... You have to write like this, and other teachers say that it is not academic words... I don't know which one to follow. (Q7a)

In Sarah's case above, CET teachers, when giving feedback, did not seem to have the same focus.

Sara seemed not to have firm ideas on how to improve her writing skills, but she mentioned that her parent's (her mother's) suggestion may work especially concerning reading more frequently.

I have no ideas... My parent suggested me to read more. She said that there are common points when learning English and Chinese. (Q7b)

Sara's reference to parent indicated that her parent was still an important role model for her despite her moving to Australia.

Furthermore, Sara acknowledged that knowing the typical structure of how native speakers organize their essays would help her to compose her own.

I mean to get familiar with the people in English speaking countries... how they organize their essay.... then I can naturally do it in my essay... (Q7c)

Sara's statement about the typical structure of native speakers' essays resembles the awareness of genres of texts among the participants in Mu and

Carrington's (2007) study. The three participants in Mu and Carrington's (2007) study, however, showed more understanding about writing convention in Australia, such as, the structure of report of an experiment, the structure of the journal published papers, and others. This was because they were post-graduate students, while Sara was still doing her preparation course for Master's program. This indicates that studying in new literacy contexts, especially in different cultural backgrounds, would encourage someone to identify the required academic conventions in order to survive.

The most difficult thing to do for Sara in writing was to voice out her own ideas and be direct.

The most difficult thing is to voice out, to have own voice...

How to express your opinion directly is another important thing, to have your own voice...now I learn to paraphrase others' voices into my own. To write directly, I need more practice. When I was in China, we were told that we can't let the reader guess what we want to say in the beginning, but in English we must let readers know in the introduction (Q8d).

Sara's above confession shows the results of her previous studies in China, in which student's voice in writing was usually not prioritized. Moreover, she claimed that the non-direct way of writing in L1, to some extent, inhibited her from writing in a succinct way. This explained that the structure of writing in L1 can influence the structure of writing in L2. Kaplan (1966) illustrates that Asian people including Chinese tend to be indirect (not straightforward) in their writing.

Sara's reading and writing practices both outside and inside the classrooms in two different settings demonstrate complex relationships. Her reading and writing practices were constructed by the different academic and sociocultural settings. Not only was she aware of the different academic demands, but she was also alert on how to struggle in her transitional academic setting. While in reading Sara seemed to have no serious problem, in Australian academic writing, she was still working to progress.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Sara's enrolment in the academic preparatory course necessitated her to adjust and change her reading and writing practices. In CET, she learned three

different forms of reading: reading to search, to learn and to integrate information and write texts. During the reading process, the 'long and complex' sentences and unfamiliarity with English texts posed difficulties for Sara. To understand long and complex sentences, Sara broke the sentences into several parts so that she could learn the meaning of the sentence bit by bit. To learn unfamiliar English texts, Sara resorted to texts in Chinese with similar topics.

Sara's ability to address her problems in reading English texts was not parallel with her endeavor to solve English writing problems. Writing her own voice and writing succinctly was the most difficult thing for her. The difficulty in having a voice and making concise writing was the result of culturally different writing practices in China where the concept of voice and straightforward writing was not recognized. To address this, Sara kept on practicing to have her opinion in the first sentence.

One interesting thing about Sara was the fact that she still considered her parents as a reference or role model for her learning to overcome her writing problems in English, as she said that she needed to read more and more to improve her writing as suggested by her mother.

Sara's use of syntactic parsing as her reading strategy and her reference to her parents' advice were not found in the previous studies discussed in this article. This suggests that syntactic parsing and the role of parents should further be taken into account when researching Chinese students who are doing academic preparation for Master's study in English speaking countries.

Furthermore, universities in English speaking countries should wisely consider Chinese students' cultural understanding on voice and plagiarism when teaching writing. The universities need to ensure that Chinese students experience smooth learning transition, especially when requiring the students to comply with the concepts of voice and plagiarism in academic writing as applied in the universities. This should lead to providing better learning support for Chinese students as well as other international students of different countries with similar characteristics.

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