NEW ZEALAND STUDIES IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Volume 13 (2) 2007

Contents

ARTICLES

SHORT REPORTS AND SUMMARIES

Journal of the Applied Linguistics Association of New Zealand Inc.
ISSN 1173-5562
© ALANZ

ARTICLES

"I HAVE A LOT MORE TO SAY THAN ACTUALLY I AM ABLE TO." A STUDY OF ORAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE EAL LEARNERS

Zina Romova & Pip Neville-Barton

Unitec New Zealand

Abstract

This paper reports on a study that examines the changes which occurred to speech production of four graduates of a BA in English as an Additional Language (EAL) degree during their three years of tertiary study. It is an assumption of this study that oral skills can be evaluated in an objective way. The changes in overall discourse skills and the structural language used in the students' oral production are reported here. The study also examines changes in the areas of pronunciation and fluency, which will be reported in a later article. Changes in the learners' speech production are identified by analysing parallel pre- and post- programme speaking tests. The analysis of the changes is compared with the students' perceptions of the changes they have noticed in their own oral production. Findings indicate that one major area of change is greater confidence in the process of oral communication that resulted in longer speeches, a wider range of vocabulary and a willingness to take linguistic risks. Other findings indicate students' correct assessment of their progress, but only limited improvement in grammatical accuracy. The paper highlights the need for further research, with a bigger sample of subjects, into the spoken language development of EAL tertiary students of programmes that include both language development and content-based courses.

Introduction

The BA (EAL) programme which provides the context for this research started in 2003 with the first cohort of students graduating in 2006. Programmes such as this are limited in number and therefore research is needed to inform further curriculum development and teaching methodologies. This case study looks into the development of the oral production skills of four adult learners who have reached the end of their formal studies and have entered the stage where good oral skills are essential for employment, business opportunities and social integration. Much of the research about employment and integration of immigrants emphasises that good speaking skills are essential for success (Couper, 2003; Fraser, 2001; White, Watts & Trlin, 2001; Yates, 2002), as well as accurate self-awareness, which aids learner autonomy after formal studies end.

Therefore, the research questions of the study are:

1. What changes occur in the pronunciation, fluency, overall discourse skills and the structural language used in the speech of four advanced, adult EAL students over three years of tertiary study?
2. Do students' perceptions of their progress correlate with the findings?

This paper reports on the first stage of the study and examines the changes occurring in students' discourse skills and lexico-grammatical resource, and compares learners' perceptions of their progress in these two aspects of oral production with the researchers' findings.

Context of the Study

The study took place within the BA (EAL) programme in a School of Language Studies in a New Zealand tertiary institution. English language entry requirements for the programme are either IELTS 6.0 (academic) or equivalent, or completion of courses within a pathway of studies approved by the institution. One of the pathways is the Diploma in English, from which three of our four subjects graduated. The papers offered by the BA (EAL) programme fall into three strands: language development, cultural knowledge, and employment skills. The language development papers integrate written and oral language skills with linguistic theory and focus on grammatical and phonological accuracy, corpus analysis, discourse and conversational analysis. The papers covering contents other than language skills and linguistic knowledge are referred to as content-based courses.

Participants (identified by assumed names)

Martin, aged 20 to 23 years during the course of study, is a Chinese Mandarin speaker displaying an outgoing, open personality. He was a graduate of the Diploma in English programme and entered the BA (EAL) programme after dropping out of a Diploma in Business Studies. In the BA (EAL) he proved to be an active learner and a critical thinker showing interest in linguistics and cultural studies. In his final year, he spent approximately 30 hours per week outside class speaking English socially and in the workplace.

Glenda, aged 28 to 31, is a Chinese Mandarin speaker displaying a reflective learning style and a confident, articulate manner. She entered the BA (EAL) by achieving a 6.0 IELTS score and proved to be a quick learner capable of thinking critically and understanding difficult concepts. In her final year, she spent 11 to 20 hours per week speaking English outside class.

Mary, aged 19 to 22, is a Chinese Mandarin speaker with an easy-going, friendly nature. She was a graduate of the Diploma in English and familiar with the academic culture of the school. However, she struggled to cope with the academic demands of the degree, particularly in the first two years and was more interested in social activities. In her final year, she took her studies more seriously, spending approximately 30 hours per week speaking English outside class.

Nancy, aged 46 to 49, is a Korean speaker who displayed reserve and a lack of confidence throughout her studies. Although she was a graduate of the Diploma in English, familiar with the academic culture of the school, she struggled in the oral communication area throughout the entire degree. In her final year, she used English for 11 to 20 hours per week outside class, including time spent as a volunteer with community police.

Of the four students, two (Martin and Glenda) demonstrated higher levels of speaking proficiency at entry stage.

Relevant Literature

This study draws upon literature which falls into two main groups.

Literature on concepts and approaches
The first group of literature considers the concept of speaking, and approaches to and issues in teaching and researching speaking.

Kormos (2006) outlines some of these approaches: psycho-linguistic, neurological, corpus, functional, computational, semantic, morphological and syntactic, discourse, and conversation analysis. Burns, Joyce and Gollin (1996) trialled several teaching approaches with groups of adult ESL learners at different stages in their learning and provide sample analyses of authentic spoken texts within the framework of different approaches. Their insights inform our methodology.

Some of the same group of literature addresses the issue of how far ‘real’ speech is dealt with in the classroom and reviews trends in current mode-based research (Cameron, 2001; Hughes, 2002; Kormos, 2006). Some researchers comment that very little is known about what constitutes speaking ability (Fulcher, 1994), however, the majority agree that speaking is not a discrete but a complex skill that overlaps with other areas and activities and it is necessary to consider the multitude of tasks which have to be fulfilled simultaneously for talk to occur (Cameron, 2001; Hughes, 2002; Kormos, 2006).

In order to describe the complex nature of speaking for research and teaching purposes, Hughes (2002) breaks the skill into three distinct levels: the global, or discourse, level (related to psycho- and socio-linguistics, pragmatics, discourse and conversational analysis); the structural level (having to do with grammar, vocabulary and phonology); and the level of speech production (phonetics, phonemics, prosody and fluency studies). These distinctions were useful in the analysis of the data obtained for the study.

Hughes (2002) also argues that spoken forms of language have been under-researched both at the level of grammar and in broader genre-based studies partly due to attitudes to language data in linguistic theory. While teachers and material writers feel confident in dealing with stable written forms, the conventions of structuring spoken genres and the forms most typical of them are difficult to establish. She therefore suggests that the speaking going on in the classroom often constitutes "teaching a language through speaking" rather than teaching the actual spoken form of the language (Hughes, 2002, p.7).

Kormos (2006) considers cognitive factors contributing to variations in the accuracy, complexity and fluency of speech production in the L2 classroom. Following Dornyei and Scott (1997), she distinguishes three main problem sources in L2 speech: resource deficits, processing time pressure and perceived deficiencies in one's own language output, and summarises management mechanisms L2 speakers often employ to cope with these problems.

Kormos (2006) also describes four important components of language production: conceptualisation (planning what to say), formulation (grammatical, lexical and phonological encoding of the message), articulation and self-monitoring (p. xviii). She relates theories of learning to acquisition of L2 speech production procedures and argues that grammatical encoding is less frequently researched than lexical encoding.

Literature on speaking skills in specific contexts

The second group of literature reports on studies in contexts similar in some ways but not exactly replicating the conditions of our study. These studies fall into two relevant categories. Firstly, there has been considerable research into language gains and learner beliefs in Study Abroad (SA) programmes (Collentine & Freed, 2004; Coleman, 1997; Freed, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1998; Lafford, 1995; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). These studies compare language gains in SA programmes with language gains in at-home ones. Secondly, there has also been research into the progress of L2 speakers taking content-based courses (Burger & Chretien, 2001).

Tanaka and Ellis (2003) report on the relationship between learner beliefs and L2 proficiency in a 15-week SA programme for 166 Japanese learners of English. They found that significant gains in proficiency as measured by TOEFL had occurred during the time of study. However, they did not give specific attention to oral production skills, although, like many other researchers, they used speaking tests to assess proficiency. With regard to learner beliefs, these researchers report statistically significant changes in self-efficacy and confidence, although these changes in beliefs were not reflected in gains or losses of proficiency. This finding relates to Ross' (1998) statement that learners are not adept at estimating their own speaking skills, as they "assess their abilities in the light of their communicative intentions rather than the actual effect of their efforts to convey messages to an interlocutor" (1998, p. 9).

It is relevant that Freed (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1998) and Coleman (1997) cited in Tanaka and Ellis (2003) conclude from their surveys of previous research into SA programmes that accuracy and complexity of spoken language did not change noticeably, however, fluency and vocabulary gains were stronger for these students than at-home students. Of particular interest is the reported result that “the higher the students’ initial level of proficiency, the lower the gains in proficiency as a result of studying abroad” (p. 67). In summary, Tanaka and Ellis (2003) state that, despite individual variation, the SA experience seems to lead to an increase in fluency and naturalness of speech more than to accuracy and complexity of speech.

The second category of studies refers to content-based language courses. As part of a series of ESL studies at the University of Ottawa, Burger and Chretien (2001) report on the development of oral production of ESL and French as a Second Language psychology students over a two-year period in an L2 programme, which contained both a language development and a content strand, and thus appears closely aligned in context to the BA (EAL).

Instruments used were an elicited imitation exercise and a discussion task administered at the beginning and end of the course. Analysis of the imitation task included: accuracy, prosodic, syntactic and discourse features. Analysis of the discussion task included: content, speed of delivery, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy and vocabulary. Unlike the results in the SA context, this study claims significant improvement for all ESL students in syntactic features, although, as with Tanaka and Ellis (2003), the researchers comment that gains at higher proficiency levels are more difficult to demonstrate (p. 87). A detailed qualitative analysis was further conducted on the discussions produced by a subgroup of students who had shown gains in grammatical accuracy. In their post-test, this subgroup of more advanced learners reduced the number of compound sentences and produced more complex sentences than at the beginning of the course. Errors in third-person had gradually disappeared. However, most students were still producing errors in the use of definite articles and noun plurals. The researchers concluded that students in adjunct courses, where a language course is linked to a content-based course in an academic discipline, can make measurable oral production gains in both fluency and accuracy.

Measuring Speech Production

In identifying measurable areas of spoken discourse and in looking for organising principles of the nature of spoken discourse, we turned to Hughes’ (2002) distinctions between three levels of speaking skills and Burns, Joyce and Gollin’s (1996) theoretical framework of spoken discourse based on the systemic-functional approach. Therefore, in analysing students’ spoken output, attention was given to discourse features characteristic of a particular genre. Our framework for measuring spoken output also included analysis of pronunciation, fluency, sentence-level grammar and vocabulary (range, complexity, accuracy and appropriacy). The report given in this article covers the findings in discourse skills and in the lexico-grammatical features of the students' oral production.

Data Gathering

Data used in this report was obtained from a pre- and post-study parallel test and post-study individual interviews. Post-study IELTS test results were also available.

In the parallel test, participants were required to produce a monologue description of one photograph in the pre-test and a different one in the post-test, both under the same conditions. This data was used to analyse changes in discourse skills, sentence-level grammar and vocabulary use.

The post-study recorded interviews provided data on students' self-assessment of their progress in speaking, which was used to draw comparisons between the researchers' findings and the students' perceptions. The participants had been given the interview structure and a list of 13 questions to help prepare for the interview (see Appendix).

How Data was Analysed

Discourse skills, grammar and vocabulary
The analysis of discourse skills comprised comparisons of the photograph descriptions produced in the pre- and post-study tests with attention to the changes that occurred in the ideational meaning of the post-study oral texts. We were interested in the changes in the speakers' abilities to put forward and develop ideas, to express opinions, to pass on judgments, to describe, to narrate, to capture listeners' attention, to set the scene, to name the characters, to identify their relationships, to reflect their mood and to wind up the speech. We were looking for changes in the use of features characteristic of the genre under analysis and the use of patterns of cohesion typical of spoken texts, such as: the use of appropriate discourse markers, accurate referencing pronouns, substitution, ellipsis, as well as lexical cohesion requiring the use of synonyms, antonyms and words of the same semantic field.

At the structural level, the range, complexity, accuracy and appropriacy of grammatical and lexical items were examined. That meant that attention was paid to the changes in the ability to produce appropriate and varied types and combinations of simple and complex utterances, to use incomplete and fragmented utterances appropriate to the spoken genre, to select lexis appropriately and use their forms and collocations of them accurately, to employ phrasal verbs, verb forms, prepositions, articles, other determiners and ways of expressing modality.

Students' perceptions
The interview questions were designed to elicit data on students' perceptions of the changes in their spoken language (see Appendix). We compared the data obtained

from interviews with the findings in the categories listed above bearing in mind Ross' (1998) view (quoted in the literature review above) that learners are not accurate assessors of their own speaking performance.

Findings

Discourse skills and lexico-grammatical resource

Martin

In 2003, Martin produced 85 meaningful words organised into a number of sentences, with subordinate clauses, structured appropriately to the text genre. They made up a logically developed description of the photograph with a closing sentence shaping the text and serving as an explanation for the description. Cohesion was achieved via correct use of the definite article, referencing pronouns, spoken discourse markers and lexical means. Vocabulary selection was mostly correct and appropriate. Inaccuracies in prepositions, verb forms (Present Simple, Past Perfect) and participles (Present and Past) occurred.

In 2005, the length of speech did not change and he continued to produce complex, varied utterances. However, this time, the speaker exhibited creativity skilfully presenting a more interesting text as it had a humorous and personal slant. He improved the accuracy of prepositions and widened his range of vocabulary. Continuing issues were: overuse of 'and', some inaccurate verb forms, particularly past tenses, and inaccurate plural nouns.

Glenda

In her description of the photograph in 2003, Glenda produced 88 words organised into several structurally varied meaningful sentences. The description started with a nominal sentence: "Now this, now this one picture of my nephew", which gave minimal introductory information to the listener, although it sounded appropriate to the descriptive genre. Cohesion was achieved through the use of referencing pronouns (this, he, our, that day) and the definite article ('the ferry', 'the side of the boat'). Linking devices were repetitive. 'Because' was used instead of 'as' to introduce a time clause, the result of overgeneralising the temporal meaning of 'as'. Verb forms and word forms were mostly accurate and varied.

The 2005 text comprised 106 words and the descriptive genre gave way to a more sophisticated spoken narrative that included the author's comments and opinion. Here the introductory sentence set the scene, the time and the mood, named the characters and identified the relationships: "Well, last Sunday my father visit me and (uh) he was so happy to see his grandson Nathan." The text was authenticised as the content centred around the speaker's own family with the introduction of names and relationships. All the sentences were either compound or complex. Inaccuracies in verb forms occurred at a greater rate than in the 2003 text and the omission of 'be' persisted. However, Glenda successfully self-corrected in one instance: "…he keep saying, he kept saying". The use of articles was inconsistent and collocations were not always accurate. Glenda's 2005 data showed the use of a much wider range of language and oral narrative skills but little improvement in accuracy.

Mary

The 2003 text comprised 83 words organised into four meaningful utterances, three of which were complex sentences. In her introductory utterance, Mary set the location and the time of the event. However, the description broke down and the meaning became unclear because of some faulty referencing: "…when he saw the another boat …". Mary's struggle for accuracy is apparent in her attempt and eventual success to self-correct: "…he want to go... ah he want … he wanted to go across the river…". Her selection of language was limited, although she successfully employed phrasal verbs ('lean over', 'go across'), a past participle (was disappointed) and a challenging infinitive construction after a verb of sense perception ('he saw the ferry go to Devonport').

The 2005 text was longer (109 words) but riddled with numerous hesitations, fillers and conjunctions. Mary attempted to create a narrative, developing a story around the photo and employing a wider range of vocabulary. The story, however, was mostly built as a series of actions. In both the texts, she used a similar closing structure introduced by 'so'. However, unlike the 2003 text, the 2005 one had no boundaries between sentences and few appropriate linking devices, hence her speech sounded more like a stream of consciousness. The story contained phrases sometimes made incoherent by subject omission: "I visit his home, and to, you know, uh ate with each other, ah with … dinner". The speaker displayed inconsistent use of present and past verb forms to express a sequence of past actions even when the actions were located sequentially within one sentence: "I uh we went outside and play some …". It is salutary to note that she self-corrected the same verb and verb form 'want' to 'wanted' as in 2003. It appears that in the 2005 text, Mary was focussing on content while attempting to develop a sophisticated story but she did not have the linguistic skills to manage both content and accuracy, although there were indications of awareness of the linguistic challenges.

Nancy

In the pre-test, Nancy produced only 24 words arranged into three meaningful sentences with clear boundaries: two simple ones and one complex with a clause of time in the opening position. The meagre text accurately used the Past Continuous form to lay the scene of the story. The third sentence included a time clause with two Past Simple verb forms to describe a sequence of two actions and a Passive Participle to describe the emotional state of the main character. Referencing was accurate and cohesion was achieved via the use of articles, the demonstrative pronoun 'this' and an adverbial of time. However, having begun well, Nancy failed to produce any more speech.

In the post-test, Nancy showed a remarkable difference in ability to produce content and develop a story. Her text was much longer (175 words), but most of her speech was in fragmented utterances and, as a result, sounded largely like a stream of consciousness, similarly to Mary's. Nancy's hesitations and repetitions were numerous and distracting. Verb forms were inaccurate: "he visit and play …and chatting with him" and the verb 'to be' was omitted on two occasions. Some prepositions were also inaccurate and the 'there is' structure out of place. The overuse of 'and' made the speech monotonous, and faulty or unclear referencing often affected cohesion: "when he saw him, he's very happy to talk with me"; "the my neighbour".

Although the 2005 text was more substantial, the vocabulary, although enlarged, remained limited and comprised simple action verbs and mainly simple words related to the topic of family.

Students' Perceptions of their Oral Production Development Compared with the Research Findings

The data presented here comes from interviews focussing on students' self-assessment of the progress they feel they have made over the three years of study and the factors impacting their progress. It might be useful to bear in mind the studies of Skehan (1996, 1998) and Lynch and MacLean (2003) that report that some EAL learners prioritise accuracy and others prioritise fluency according to their perception of their own abilities.

Martin

Martin believes that confidence is important and that his confidence has strengthened as he is more comfortable conversing with native speakers. This comes from practice in the classroom and oral presentations. He still experiences difficulty understanding some colloquial phrases, specific culture-related content and has problems with appropriate use of formal and informal phrases and "talking with people in a friendly way". This limits his communication with peer Kiwis.

In Martin's view, his accuracy and fluency have improved considerably. Although at the start of the degree, he was aware that his speaking was at a good level, he was also aware that he was often inaccurate and so, during his studies, he focussed particularly on accuracy. He made an effort to "apply grammar and vocabulary in an academic and critical way" and felt confident in both areas by the end of his studies. Martin ranks grammar, vocabulary and content in order of importance saying, "if I lack any of these, I won't feel confident in my speaking. Therefore, I can't say only my speaking courses helped me - it is a combination of everything." He says that his self-awareness has developed and this has helped all his learning.

Researchers' comments
Martin demonstrated further development of his critical thinking skills and interest in linguistics during the three years of study. This is evidenced in his increased appreciation of the combination of theory and practice in the programme. His perceptions of his improvement are mainly in accord with our findings in each of the three aspects we have examined. In an IELTS test taken at the end of the programme, Martin achieved a Band 9 in speaking.

Glenda
Glenda feels she has moved from an 'intermediate level' at the beginning of her degree to an 'advanced level' developing her confidence that now allows her to participate in discussions and to mix confidently with native-speakers. Major areas of improvement are pronunciation, fluency, grammar and vocabulary. Her comments on discourse skills include her increased ability to use fillers to allow time to find the appropriate word and "particular attention to them".

Glenda thinks that the speaking courses provided opportunities to use language in a range of situational contexts, for example film reviews, informal dialogues and academic or professional discourses. She also comments on the importance of teacher speech sample as she has been paying attention not only to the accent but also to the way in which the teacher "brings up and develops a topic". In her presentation tasks she focussed on organising content and on delivery style, finding particular satisfaction in the spoken text produced. Of her vocabulary she says: "I have a lot more to say than actually I am able to… the limitation of my language is the limitation of my words." She finds this frustrating as it prevents her from demonstrating her personality and understanding the topic.

Although she perceives interaction between students in an increasingly helpful light, she much prefers feedback from the teacher than her peers. She expresses a need for more activities out of class "and for an incentive to participate in them" in order to stimulate interest in social speaking.

Researchers' comments
We agree that Glenda has moved to become an advanced speaker of English with increased confidence. We also concur with her assessment of her achievements and continuing challenges, particularly with regard to accuracy. In 2005 she achieved a Band 7 in IELTS Speaking.

Mary
Mary also feels that her confidence has increased with practice thus enhancing her ability to communicate. Although she still has difficulty participating in some particular topics, she sees an improvement in her use of vocabulary and vocabulary strategies. Of grammar she says, "It is still not good for me".

Her part-time waitressing job, everyday transactions, such as car repairs, and her work placement in a cultural paper have helped her spoken English and she would welcome more social activities within the degree.

Researchers' comments
Although Mary makes the point that she finds it "hard to identify factors" herself, this study confirms that her comments on the development of her vocabulary as well as insufficient development in grammar are valid. She achieved a Band 6 in the IELTS Speaking section in 2005.

Nancy
Nancy sees confidence as being important as she identifies herself as being introverted. Her confidence increased during her study and she is now "comfortable to speak English" with native speakers and is "not afraid" of her mistakes. She also feels she is more "comfortable" with vocabulary. Grammar "is a little bit improved but it doesn't show" in her spoken English.

Amongst factors that helped the development of her spoken English during the course Nancy identifies: going to church every Sunday and discussing problems there, which made her "feel proud" of herself; the School environment with good lecturers who welcomed questions; the pronunciation class in year one; watching videos in the Language Learning Centre; recording and critiquing her speech; giving presentations; conducting interviews; imitating intonation. Factors that hindered her speaking development were related to assessment. Low marks meant a loss of confidence.

Researchers' comments
In accord with Nancy's perceptions, the findings from the paired tests indicate little grammar improvement in Nancy's spoken English. The much longer text she produced in 2005 could be related to her reported increase in confidence. Although she feels that her receptive vocabulary has increased, she did not display much gain in her productive vocabulary in the post-treatment test. It is clear that her lack of structural resource significantly impacts her ability to communicate orally. Nancy did not take the 2005 IELTS test that was offered. Although Nancy achieved well in other subjects, she was able to graduate only with a restricted pass in Speaking.

Main Conclusions and Discussion

These conclusions must be read in the clear understanding that in a study with so few participants, generalisations cannot be made. However, they are useful in highlighting the need for further research in specific areas.

Discourse skills, range, complexity and accuracy of language
With regard to ideational meaning, there was a clear improvement in 2005 in all students as they had more to say to the photographic prompt. All the texts were

longer, more interesting, better contextualised, with openings, closings, character and relationship descriptions, time settings and even humour.

The two more proficient students fine-tuned cohesion avoiding faulty referencing and using a wider range of oral discourse markers more appropriately than in 2003. In contrast, the others, despite some improvement, continued to use faulty referencing and a limited range of linking devices that confused the meaning at times. All four students continued to over-use 'and', at times as a conjunction and at other times as a hedge at the start of an idea. This overuse of 'and' appears to be an example of a language deficit management mechanism described by Kormos (2006) or, in other words, a strategy employed by L2 speakers to quickly make up for shortage of lexico-grammatical resource needed to elicit content. It is this shortage that, as L2 speakers themselves feel, impedes the quality of discourse and therefore causes them so much frustration: "I have a lot more to say than actually I am able to… the limitation of my language is the limitation of my words".

Only one student improved in each of the areas: range, complexity and accuracy of language used. All four students improved in the use of prepositions. The two more advanced students used a wider range and variety of verb forms in 2005. Overall accuracy remained a problem, particularly for the two students who were very inaccurate initially (inconsistent verb forms, inaccurate articles, omission of subjects and misplaced modifiers). These conclusions concur with the findings of Freed (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1998) and Coleman (1997) cited by Tanaka and Ellis (2003) about overall low gains in language accuracy referred to in the literature review. They do not concur with the findings of the Burger and Chretien (2001) study, where accuracy did improve over a two-year period on content-based courses. It is, however, difficult to make direct comparisons because of our inability to make judgments about the starting levels of the subjects' language proficiency.

It is interesting to note that this study does not confirm Freed's (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1998) and Coleman's (1997) conclusion that linguistic gains at higher proficiency levels are lower than those at lower proficiency levels. Neither does it confirm Burger and Chretien's (2001) comment that gains at higher proficiency levels are more difficult to demonstrate as in this study the two students who were more proficient at the starting stage demonstrated more gains than those initially less proficient. Having said that, ours are findings about individual learners, which should not be generalised. It is also worth remembering that, although the two more proficient students showed gains in overall discourse features, only one of them showed considerable improvements in lexico-grammatical accuracy.

With regard to the range and complexity of language used in oral production, how is the use or the lack of complex sentences in a spoken genre to be evaluated? Firstly, it would be wrong to expect the same spectrum and frequency of complex language in each of the spoken genres, given the differing nature of them. As an example, compare how appropriate it would be to use complex sentences in an academic or business presentation, on the one hand, and in a casual conversation with a friend, on the other. Secondly, does the presence or lack of complex sentences indicate the student's awareness of the features of the genre or does it indicate an inability to produce complex language? In other words, do complex sentences exist in the student's implicit knowledge, available for appropriate use and how can this be identified?

The final discussion point relates to lexico-grammatical accuracy, which did not improve as much as expected, verb forms remaining particularly inconsistent. Several checks during the course of study indicated that the students had explicit knowledge of verb forms. This appears to be another indication of the gulf between explicit and implicit knowledge. What explanation can be found for this gulf given that the students had ample opportunity to practise? Can an explanation lead to more effective learning?

Students' perceptions of progress and contributing factors

All four students were unequivocal about the most obvious area of improvement for each of them in 2005, which was increased confidence to speak English – this belief is in accord with Collentine and Freed's 2004 findings. With increased confidence, it seems that the perceived deficiencies in one's own language described by Kormos (2006) as one of three problem sources in speech production are reduced. This belief in their increased confidence was confirmed by the findings of the study as manifested in learners' readiness to speak out, their attempt to vary their language and the longer oral texts they produced. (Three of the students increased the length of their speeches and, in the case of the two less proficient students, by a significant margin, although these students lacked adequate language to create coherent texts.) It is relevant to mention that since graduation, Glenda has undertaken an MA and Martin has become a successful director of studies at a language academy.

Each of the four students believed that they had made some progress to varying degrees in the areas considered here: discourse skills, range, complexity and accuracy of language. At the same time, they all particularly identified accuracy as their weakest point and continuing challenge. Overall, the students' perceptions of their oral language progress are confirmed by the data thus being in contrast to Ross' 1998 findings.

It is interesting that each of the students identified different factors that contributed to their progress, ranging from classroom practice including presentations to social and work events, from recording their own speech and noticing the gap to copying the teacher's example.

To conclude, although the two questions asked by this study have been answered as regards the four participants, the limitations of this study preclude generalisations and it is clear that further research needs to be done in the areas questioned on programmes that combine content with language study.
The changes that occurred in the aspects of pronunciation and fluency will be reported in a later paper.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to acknowledge the role of Joanna Smith, our co-researcher with respect to phonological data, who will be named as a co-author of the second report.

References

Burger, S. & Chretien, M. (2001). The development of oral production in content-based second language courses at the University of Ottawa. *The Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue Canadienne des Langues Vivantes, 58*(1), 84-102.

Burns, A., Joyce, H. & Gollin, S. (1996). *'I see what you mean: Using spoken discourse in the classroom: A handbook for teachers.* Sydney: NCELTR, Macquarie University.

Coleman, J. (1997). Residence abroad within language study. *Language Teaching, 30*(1)*,* 1-20.

Cameron, D. (2001). *Working with spoken discourse.* London: Sage Publications.

Collentine, J. & Freed, B. (2004). Learning context and its effects on second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *26*, 153-171.

Couper, G. (2003). The value of an explicit pronunciation syllabus in ESOL teaching. *Prospect*, *18*(3), 53-70.

Dornyei, Z. & Scott, M. L. (1997). Communication strategies in a second language: Definitions and taxonomies. *Language Learning, 47*(1), 173-210.

Fraser, H. (2001). *Teaching pronunciation: A handbook for teachers and trainers*. Sydney: TAFE NSW, Access Division.

Freed, B. (1993). Assessing the linguistic impact of study-abroad: What we currently know – what we need to learn. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication, 4,* 151-161.

Freed, B. (1995a). Language learning and study-abroad. In B. Freed (Ed.), *Second language acquisition in a study-abroad context* (pp. 3-33). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Freed, B. (1995b). What makes us think that students who study abroad become fluent? In B. F. Freed (Ed.), *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context* (pp. 123-148). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Freed, B. (1998). An overview of issues and research in language learning in a study-abroad setting. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study-abroad, 4*(2), 21-60.

Fulcher, G. (1994). Research in testing. *Language Testing Update, 15*, 39-47.

Hughes, R. (2002).*Teaching and researching speaking.* London: Longman.

Kormos, J. (2006). *Speech production and second language acquisition.* New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Lafford, B. (1995). Getting into, through, and out of a survival situation: A comparison of communicative strategies used by students studying Spanish abroad and "at home". In B. F. Freed (Ed.), *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context* (pp. 97-121). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Lynch, T. & J. Maclean (2003). *Effects of feedback on performance: A study of advanced learners on an ESP speaking course*. USA: US Department of Education Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) EFF-089 (1/2003).

Ross, S. (1998). Self-assessment in second language testing. *Language Testing 15*(1), 11-20.

Skehan, P. (1996). Second language acquisition research and task-based instruction. In J. Willis, & D. Willis, (Eds.), *Challenge and change in language teaching* (pp. 17-31). Oxford: Heinemann.

Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning.* Oxford: Oxford Uinversity Press.

Tanaka, K. & Ellis, R. (2003). Study-abroad, language proficiency, and learner beliefs about language learning. *JALT Journal*, *25*(1), 63-85.

White, C., Watts, N. & Trlin, A. (2001). *Immigrant and refugee experiences of ESOL provision in NZ: Realities and responsibilities.* Palmerston North: Massey University.

Yates, L. (2002). *What is pronunciation?* AMEP Research Centre Fact Sheets. Sydney: NCELTR.

Appendix

Interview Questions

You will be asked the following questions. Remember that this is about the development of your speaking skills.

1. How do you think your spoken English has changed over the past three years of study?
2. Can you give us information about any changes in your spoken English related to the following aspects of speaking : grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, fluency, confidence and your ability to mix with native English speakers and communicate in English?
3. In the first semester of the BA (EAL), how much time, in an average week, did you spend speaking outside of class? Give a rough estimate:
   0 – 10 hours 11 – 20 hours 21 – 30 hours more than 30 hours
4. In your final semester of the BA EAL, how much time, in an average week, did you spend speaking outside of class. Give a rough estimate:
   0 – 10 hours 11 – 20 hours 21 – 30 hours more than 30 hours
5. Have you ever had a job during the course of your study? If so:
   - What was your job?
   - Did it entail speaking with native English speakers?
   - How long did you have this job for?
   - What were your working hours?
6. Identify the main factor over the past 3 years that has helped the development of your spoken English.
7. What other factors within your course of study or outside class have helped your speaking skills?
8. Look at the list of BA (EAL) courses you have taken. Some of them are specifically designed to help language development and some are more content based. Which courses particularly helped the development of your spoken English?
9. Which minor programme did you take? Look at the list of courses in that minor. Look at the list of minor courses you have taken. Were there any particular courses that helped the development of your spoken English?
10. Can you identify any part of a course or type of activity or work within the course that particularly helped your spoken English?
11. What factors hindered the development of your speaking skills?
12. Do you have any ideas about ways in which the BA (EAL) programme could have done more to help the development of your speaking skills?
13. Do you have any other comments?

TEACHER PERCEPTION ON THE ASSESSMENT OF EAL STUDENTS IN NEW ZEALAND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Dawn Booth

Keimyung University, South Korea

Abstract

The following article reports on the first stage of a four-part research project investigating the assessment of young learners with English as an additional language (EAL) in three New Zealand primary schools (Booth, 2005). Maintaining an emic approach through focus group methodology, EAL and class teachers were interviewed regarding their perceptions of assessing EAL students. Results provide valuable insight into the perceived purposes for which teachers assess; the perceived vulnerability and special needs of young learners often operating at levels much lower than their cohort; and the many difficulties class teachers, in particular, face when assessing for normative and criterion purposes. Results also show a perceived division of roles between EAL and class teachers, and unfamiliarity with assessment guidelines. Most importantly, this study raises important implications from which to direct much needed research into the area of assessing young language learners.

Introduction and Review of Literature

While much research into the assessment of young EAL (English as an Additional Language) learners has focused on quantitative aspects of language testing, very little research has explored the personal and affective nature of teachers as agents of assessment. Yet Johnston, Guice, Baker, Malone and Michelson (1995) clearly highlight the conflict teachers express between belief systems, institutional structures, agendas and values. Investigating US teacher perceptions as well as practices of assessment in general education, the authors found assessment to be a key point of friction among teachers, associated with very powerful feelings of being overwhelmed, insecurity, guilt, frustration and anger. They note that 'assessment, as it occurs in schools is far from merely a technical problem. Rather, it is deeply social and personal' (p.359). Exploring teacher perception with regard to assessment therefore becomes crucial to guiding research into the assessment practices of teachers, as is the aim of the present study.

The teachers above, for example, expressed difficulty in keeping track of, and having the language to talk about, children's development. Investigating this further, Johnston et al. (1995) did indeed find that teachers differed in the language they used to describe student development. Yet, Hill (2000) suggests that teachers need to be confident about assessment and its terminology so that they can make informed decisions about their classroom practice. For teachers of EAL students the difficulty of describing the development of learners becomes a more serious problem in terms of the complexity of terminology associated with second language acquisition and that of sharing information between different parties.

With regard to studies conducted more specifically in an EAL young learner context, one study to investigate teacher perception on the quality of formative assessment procedures is that conducted by Rea-Dickins and Gardner (2000). One aim of the study, focusing on nine British inner-city schools, was to investigate the types of issues professionals responsible for EAL learners perceived as most important. Of crucial importance to teachers was that of collaboration among staff -- a theme which permeated discussion about planning, implementation, and assessment. The authors suggest from teacher interviews and an analysis of data that 'it is perhaps because collaboration and the associated documentation from formative assessment are valued, that the variety of formative assessment procedures [was] so rich' (p.227).

Another study related to the importance of recognising teacher perception, with regard to assessment, is that conducted by Bezemer (2007) who investigated the way teachers attributed certain linguistic resources to multilingual students in a primary school in the Netherlands. Bezemer found that attributions of linguistic resources often turned into generalizations, i.e., individual students' mistakes were attributed to a lack of certain resources which were then attributed to similar cultural groups of learners. The EAL students in the study were taken to form a homogeneous group in terms of the linguistic resources they had at their disposal, and these resources were thought to be limited when compared to other groups of students. This attribution corresponded with the teachers' ratings of the students' 'oral language proficiency' on their report cards. However, scores in standardised national tests in Dutch vocabulary and spelling showed the EAL students as repeatedly outperforming the Dutch students.

Jasparet (1996) notes that if pedagogies are contingent on accurate attributions of students' linguistic resources, which they often are, such misattributions can, not surprisingly, impede effective teaching. However, the resources that teachers attribute to EAL learners are often unarticulated, tacitly informing the selection, planning and organisation of classroom activities. This highlights the need for more 'emic' research into teachers as agents of assessment. Indeed, Seedhouse (2005, p.535) argues that the lack of an 'emic' perspective in language classroom studies has often resulted in an 'incomplete, unreliable and inaccurate examination of a phenomenon'.

One method of data collection particularly relevant in gathering qualitative data with regard to the perceptions and opinions of participants is the focus group interview. Kruegar and Casey (2000, p. 5) describe a focus group as a 'carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment'. Interaction is based on a carefully planned series of discussion topics set by the researcher who acts as a moderator during the group interaction (Green & Hart 1999; Litosseliti 2003). A key advantage of using focus groups is that 'group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments of others' (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p5). This research methodology is yet to be thoroughly explored and has been under criticism. Such criticisms, as summarized by Ho (2006) include: the doubt that all participants become highly involved with the topic; findings come from subjective opinions, particularly from the researcher who may not be neutral in reporting the data; and group discussions may not give an in-depth understanding of an individual's opinions, or may be unnatural because they are controlled by a large extent by the researcher. Yet Ho (2006), based on research carried out among ESL students in a secondary school in Brunei, investigated each of these criticisms concluding that with consideration of the above caveats focus groups remain a viable and verifiable tool in qualitative research.

The New Zealand Context

In the New Zealand context at the time of data collection for this research, there was no second language learning framework operating in New Zealand schools. The New Zealand *ESOL Assessment Guidelines* (1999), however, had been in circulation providing teachers with guidance for developing effective assessment procedures for EAL learners. New Zealand's first language learning framework was published for wider circulation in 2006. Companion to the language learning framework are the new *ESOL Progress Assessment Guidelines* (2005) which provide information on a range of assessment tools and processes used in New Zealand schools. It further provides explanation of how these tools and processes can be used to best assess language learning needs, and describes the progress of learners who are learning English as an additional language.

With regard to research into the assessment of young EAL students in New Zealand very little research has been conducted. However, in 2003, the Ministry of Education (MOE) released a report investigating the way primary and secondary schools provide for and meet the needs of NESB (Non-English-Speaking Background) students (Franken & McCornish, 2003). Through verification reports and interviews across 23 schools, the authors investigated nine key research questions initiated by the Ministry. They concluded that functions of assessment were not always understood and distinguished by teachers and that teachers were not always clear on what they needed to assess. Moreover, it was not clear if teachers understood what particular language items they were targeting, or if they regarded these tests as global tests of language proficiency. While this report provides an extensive list of the various reported materials and procedures that teachers used across all schools and describes the different summative, formative and evaluative purposes of assessment, little attention was paid to teacher's perceptions of their assessment practice. The aim of the following article, therefore, based on focus group methodology, is to provide valuable insight into the perception of teachers responsible for EAL learners highlighting a number of implications from which to base further research. It reports on the first phase of a four-part research study into the assessment of EAL learners in New Zealand primary schools (Booth, 2005).

The Study

Three outer Auckland city primary schools (SN, SH and SK), representing a diversity of different dominant demographic arrangements of EAL students, participated in the study. Such 'diversity of arrangement'(see table below), was captured for the purpose of comparing results from the Franken and McCornish (2003) study with phases two and three of the wider study (Booth, 2005) from which this article is situated. A school's decile indicates the extent to which it draws its students from low socio-economic communities. In other words, low decile schools are those with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities, and high decile schools are the schools with the lowest proportion of these students.

Demographic Arrangement of Participating Schools

Population	Low Decile	Medium Decile	High Decile
Funded Pacifica			
Refugee			
Funded Pacifica and Refugee	**SN**	**SH**	
Immigrant			**SK**

The designated EAL teacher (EALT) and two Year 4, 5 or 6 class teachers (CT) were recruited from each school. In all, three EAL teachers and six class teachers participated in the study. The EAL teachers in the study were all highly experienced in terms of years teaching, each experiencing over 20 years of teaching. Experience in terms of teaching EAL students, however, varied from one year to eight years. With regard to the class teachers, four teachers had over 15 years' experience and the remaining two teachers had been teaching for five years or less. Neither the EAL or class teachers had had any formal training with regard to second language teaching.

Data collection involved 30-minute focus group interviews with the EAL and two class teachers at each school. Questioning, as suggested by Krueger and Casey (2000), began with general open-ended questions leading to more specific open-ended questioning. 'Included in the questioning route (see appendix) were 'think back to when' forms of questioning with the aim of helping participants focus on the recent past, and to also increase the reliability of responses where participants are asked to think about 'specific experiences as opposed to current intentions or future possibilities' (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p.58). The role of the researcher was to ask questions, and to encourage the involvement of all participants so that all the participants' view points were heard.

Recordings were then transcribed and coded for common themes. A theme was identified where at least two teachers from two different schools presented a similar perception, and the most dominant of these themes were then organized into major categories. To account for criticisms previously noted regarding the subjectivity of researchers when analysing focus group data, raw data indicating each category; the associated themes; and evidence of teacher comments were presented to each teacher, who was given the opportunity to identify any comments that may have been misinterpreted. No discrepancies were noted. The summary was also provided to a second researcher in the field of applied linguistics. One teacher comment was identified as not clearly corresponding to a theme and removed.

Results and Discussion

In total, 13 themes were identified which were then organized into six major categories as described and discussed below, i.e., time and frequency, purposes of assessment; learner focused considerations; difficulties; the relationship between the EAL and class programs; and the use of MOE Guidelines.

Time and Frequency

a) Assessment takes place all the time; is frequent and ongoing

Eight comments were coded across all schools reflecting the perceptions of both class and EAL teachers. General reference to the ongoing nature of assessment is exemplified in the following comment: 'It's ongoing. You're pretty much doing assessment all the time' (SN/CT). One teacher further identified a major purpose of this type of assessment as making judgements: 'formative assessment [goes] on all the time, at every second of the day. When you are talking to them you are making judgements about them and changing something in your head. (SH/CT). EAL teachers, in particular, noted a further purpose -- providing frequent immediate feedback and reinforcement: 'I mark everything with them ... you know all this reinforcement all the time' (SK/EALT).

The idea that assessment is ongoing, and may occur at any time in the day-to-day operation of teaching, links closely with definitions of informal, formative assessment such as that provided by Mavrommatis (1997), who describes formative assessment as 'all the processes used by teachers for collecting information on a daily basis in the classroom in order to improve teaching and learning' (p.381). It is quite possible that informal assessment may dominate the measurement of early EAL learners as one teacher notes, 'I don't think the assessment for these children is as formal because often they can't do the work (SK/EALT). The types of interpretations, decisions and consequences that result from informal assessment and the validity of such judgements are key concerns, not identified in focus groups, requiring further investigation.

Purposes of Assessment

a) Assessment is used to compare against standards

One class teacher and two EAL teachers at SH and SN Schools noted that assessment is used to compare against standards. One class teacher made a number of comments comparing EAL students against the class cohort. With regard to summative assessment she remarked, 'If it's an English assessment, of course, it's going to be difficult because I have to assess them at the level they should be working at'. She also referred to a 'cumulative card' where she could 'see at a glance' whether EAL students were below or how far they were behind their age group.

Contrary to this, one EAL teacher noted, 'I've been out of the class for a long time now … I've lost the comparison a little bit so that's why it's good their teachers do it' (SH/EALT). The EAL teacher from SN School similarly noted, 'when I assess them, it's not whether or not they achieved compared to someone else in the classroom, because I don't have a whole classroom. I am assessing them on what they wanted to achieve as a goal' (SN/EALT).

One purpose of assessing EAL students for class teachers may be that of providing some form of normative comparison to class cohort. This does not appear to be an emphasis for EAL teachers. It is, therefore, possible that EAL and class teachers may vary with regard to the normative and criterion focus of their assessment of EAL students. Black and Wiliam (1998a) found a tendency for teachers in general education to use normative rather than criterion approaches, emphasising subjective competition between pupils rather than personal improvement. Such practice, the authors note, can teach weaker pupils that they lack ability and may lead them to feelings of loss of motivation and confidence in their own capacity to learn (p.18). The extent that EAL learners are assessed in relation to their cohort and the effect this may have on EAL students are further areas of focus.

b) Assessment is used to monitor needs as a basis of future teaching

EAL and class teachers across all schools contributed 10 comments to the theme of monitoring needs as a basis of future teaching. For example, 'I've got assessments to help me teach the children' (SN/EALT). Other teachers suggested assessment was generally used 'to help build on what children know' (SK/CT) and 'find where the gaps are' (SH/EALT).

That assessment is used to inform teaching reflects a major perception of teachers and links to a crucial aspect of formative assessment. For assessment to function formatively, results have to be used to adjust teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998a). Not evident, however, is how assessment is used to do this. As a significant aspect of any program is the way teachers adjust teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998b) a major focus of further investigation is the way teachers do this, and how teaching may be revised as a result of sharing assessment information where learners have two or more teachers.

c) Assessment is used for reporting to others

Teachers across all schools identified one purpose of assessment as reporting to others. One EAL teacher notes, 'I have assessments for funding and for home class teachers to let them know how their children are going' (SN/EALT). Another described how she wrote progress reports at the end of each term to report to other teachers. Teachers at SK School further noted an incongruence between what they felt to be important information to report to parents, such as social development, and what parents felt was important – grammar.

> They use that word, English grammar. They [aren't] interested in their personal development or their social development, it's just, can he read, can he write English? (SK/CT)

The importance of assessing the social development of EAL students was a common topic of conversation at SK School, and in this case the issue of reporting this to parents was a significant point of consideration for these teachers.

Clearly, one role of teachers is that of reporting the progress of EAL learners to different stakeholders including: the government, other teachers and parents. Not evident from interviews however, is the type of information reported, where this information comes from and what the reported information is used for.

Learner Considerations

Learner Considerations was by far the most dominant topic of discussion. Four key learner considerations were identified as follows:

a) Maintaining student confidence and sense of success

Maintaining confidence and a sense of success was a consideration noted by three teachers from two schools. Concerns were expressed over 'exposing' students; that students may 'feel inferior'; and the importance of 'working on confidence'. One EAL teacher noted that 'when children have a bit of success (they) go ahead in leaps and bounds' (SK/EALT), so she tended to 'err on the side of caution' so that students didn't lose their confidence.

Encouraging a sense of success and confidence was clearly perceived as an important consideration for some teachers. Indeed, structuring assessment procedures which 'bias for best' (Swain, 1985) serves to encourage children by showing them what they have learned, providing positive feedback and motivation for success. The extent that this is taken into account by all teachers and how this is accounted for at different stages of the assessment process is not clear. Moreover, the effect that erring on the side of caution might have on the progress of EAL learners is another area to be regarded. Learners may be denied 'teaching that challenges rather than supports learners' (Rea-Dickins and Gardner, 2000, p.238).

b) Considering interests and/or experiences

Considering students' interests and experiences was a further consideration noted by EAL and class teachers across two schools. One teacher noted the effect that student interest had on production: 'obviously, when they are interested in something they give it their best' (SN/CT). Numerous comments were also made from the EAL teacher of SK School regarding the consideration of children's experiences, particularly when choosing reading material for both teaching and assessment. With regard to testing she noted, 'I could tell while they were reading the story to me that it just didn't make any sense to them. It was out of their experience and I don't think that's a fair test' (SK/EALT). For this teacher therefore, considering students' experiences was perceived to be an important consideration in the implementation of reliable assessment.

Children's interests and experiences are certainly important considerations when choosing appropriate text. The English Language Learning Framework (Ministry of Education, 2005) notes that a text isn't "hard" or "easy" in itself: it depends on what the reader brings to it and what they have to do with the text. Indeed, as McKay (2006) notes, children bring to their language learning their own 'personalities, likes dislikes and interests, their own cognitive styles and capabilities and their own strengths and weaknesses' (p.5). The extent to which teachers across all schools take this into consideration is a further point of focus.

c) EAL learners are often self-conscious and eager to 'fit in'

With regard to the ongoing formative assessment of learners, teachers across all schools shared the perception of learners as often self-conscious and/or eager to 'fit in'. Ten comments were made in all. A number of remarks were made concerning the self-consciousness students may feel when receiving help or being at a lower level to their cohort. For example, 'they are very conscious … that they are getting help' (SH/EALT); 'they are scared of someone teasing them and so they just say what they need to say' (SN/CT). Teachers also noted the way EAL students wanted to 'be the same as everyone else' (SH/CT), and 'get the same marks' (SN/EAL).

Closely linked to 'fitting in' is the awareness that EAL students often portray a persona of coping, exemplified in the following comment: 'they don't like you to see that they are failing and they [try] to keep this persona of coping -- I'm good, and I'm as good as everyone else. They don't like you to see any failure at all' (SK/CT). Other class teachers note: 'I've discovered from now on with sentences, or anything, he is trying to make me believe that he can do all these things' (SN/CT); and 'you think about how much pretending must go on to make it seem as if they know' (SH/CT).

Teachers in the study, especially class teachers, appeared to be very conscious of the vulnerability and pressure EAL students were experiencing to perform in a classroom of peers often operating at much higher levels. McKay (2006) notes that whilst many older learners are vulnerable to criticism or failure, young learners have a particular vulnerability that requires attention. This pressure may manifest itself through different survival mechanisms as identified by the teachers in the study, such as: self-consciousness; trying to fit in; or presenting a persona of coping. Indeed, Willet (1995) found, in an ethnographic case study of EAL first graders, that learners who constructed a positive image positioned themselves as successful learners over those who did not. Implications are raised in terms of how teachers are able to see past these survival strategies to provide a true measure of student ability.

d) EAL learners' English ability can at times be surprising and easily misinterpreted

A final consideration is that EAL learners' English ability can at times be surprising and/or easily misinterpreted. One EAL teacher recalled an incident where she relayed a message to a child participant who later showed that she had not understood the instructions. She makes note of her surprise, 'I'd thought she had got the message' (SK/EALT). The same EAL teacher commented on her surprise when a child decoded 'beautifully' yet did not have 'a clue what she [was] reading about' (SK/EALT). Examples such as these perhaps link with EAL learners portraying a persona of coping where teachers may easily overestimate language ability.

More comments, however, relating to misinterpreting the ability of EAL learners were those relating to underestimating as opposed to overestimating ability. Note the following comments: '[He] is of a far higher level than I would have expected him to' (SN/EALT) and, 'I've just tested … his knowledge of basic words, spelling. I was surprised; he knew more than I thought, and I thought, I'm going to have to change his level' (SH/EALT). The only CT teacher to contribute to this theme notes, 'we can't assume just because [the student] can't speak that he's stupid, which is an easy assumption to make' (SH/CT).

The potential to easily under or over estimate EAL students' abilities appeared to be an important consideration noted by teachers. The extent of this awareness; how teachers may account for this in cases of formal assessment; and impact on learning, are all areas that direct further investigation. Moreover, the types of linguistic resources teachers attribute to certain groups of students, such as that investigated by Bezemer (2007), and the effect this has on assessment also requires further consideration.

The Difficulty of Assessing EAL Students

Twenty-two comments across all schools were coded with regard to the difficulties of assessing EAL learners. Only two of these comments belonged to EAL teachers. This category therefore is clearly an important concern for class teachers.

a) Teaching and assessing grammar is difficult

Three class teachers from SN and SH Schools commented on the difficulty of teaching and assessing grammatical items. This view is illustrated in the following comments: 'you look at the syntax and all of that … It's hard' (SH/CT); and 'It's a difficult language and so trying to pick up all the little things, all the rules, it can be pretty tough.' A third class teacher commented on the difficulty of making grammatical sense out of a student's writing, 'Honestly, half of the things I can't make out' (SN/CT). The difficulty of explaining grammatical errors to students was also expressed: 'I don't know how, really, to teach those things that have no meaning. They are nothing words!' (SH/CT).

Rating the proficiency of second language learners is often a complicated task where teachers require complex skills for both assessing the language abilities of EAL children (Rea-Dickins, 2004), and for providing appropriate help in response to that assessment (Edelenbos and Kubanek-German, 2004). It is not surprising that teachers would voice difficulty over assessing and teaching grammatical components. How teachers respond to these difficulties, and whether this view is shared by EAL teachers is not clear.

b) Assessment of EAL learners is difficult to conduct in the home-class

Individually catering to the needs of EAL students in large home classes is a further difficulty noted. It is the most common theme across schools and a dominant concern for class teachers. One teacher explains, 'In a class of 30 you can't personalise every task because you've got your own streams in the classroom' (SK/EALT). A large number of comments related to the difficulty of juggling the needs of EAL students with the needs of others.

One possible result of juggling the needs of EAL learners with the needs of some 25 others is that EAL students are 'tied in' with their cohort. When asked how the assessment of his EAL students 'was going' one teacher replied, 'probably not as well as I would like it to be because often I tie them in with normal assessment' (SN/CT). It is also possible that EAL students are simply excluded from assessment in the home-class until they are able to participate alongside their cohort. One teacher notes, 'assessment either means for any of my ESOL particularly that they're going to be sitting there doing nothing, if it's a particularly difficult assessment' (SH/CT). Another teacher explained, 'see mine can't do what we are doing in class, because they are just not at that level yet so mine don't do any spelling with me … it all depends on level as to how much they can be included in class' (SK/CT).

The fact that EAL students, still receiving language support, are assessed in home-classes at the level of, or near to the level of, cohort may have major implications. With regard to standardised testing, Franken and McCornish (2003) note 'great care has to be used in forming any conclusions about EAL students on the basis of these tests, and if their language proficiency is very different from their L1 peers it may not even be appropriate for them to take such tests' (p.61). The same dangers may well exist where judgements of EAL students are made on an informal basis where they are tied into classes operating at a level much higher than they are capable of. The types of tools and procedures teachers use when assessing students therefore, becomes a major area of focus.

The Relationship between the EAL and Class Program

a) EAL and class teachers play different roles in assessing EAL students

Four comments across two schools were made regarding the division of roles between EAL and class teachers when assessing EAL students. One class teacher explained that initial assessments were carried out by the EAL teacher, 'to be honest, I don't deal with any of that' (SH/CT). However, she also acknowledged it was her responsibility as the class teacher to complete funding reports. At SK School, one class teacher noted, 'we don't tend to assess the knowledge' (SK/CT) yet the EAL teacher observed that her assessment tended to be 'more knowledge based.' Generally, however, much of the responsibility of assessing EAL students appeared to be that of the EAL teachers, especially where students were at much lower levels to their cohort, i.e., 'It's mainly left up to me because it's a level far less than the others' (SK/EALT). EAL and class teachers may differ in their focus of assessment and it is also very likely that much assessment falls under the responsibility of EAL teachers.

b) Teaching and assessment in the EAL program should link with the general class program

Comments from teachers at SK School gave rise to the following theme; the EAL program should link with what is happening in the home class. Although only one school made comment to this effect, and it does not fit the criteria of identifying a theme, it is included nonetheless because it was shared by all three teachers and often dominated discussion.

The EAL teacher described her class as a 'satellite' class but also emphasised a strong connection to the home-class, 'I'm part of the semi syndicate so I know what's going on' (SK/EAL). One class teacher further noted that ongoing informal communication between the EAL and class teachers tied the two classes together so that students felt 'involved' with what was happening in the home class. She further noted, 'ESOL isn't seen as being quite 100 percent separate, a little bit separate because they are withdrawn, but the focus is the same as the other children so they don't feel totally alienated' (SK/CT). The same teacher noted that with formal assessments she usually 'set them off' in her class and then sent them to finish the assessment with the EAL teacher.

At this school, communication appeared to play a crucial role in linking the EAL program with what happened in the home-class. Indeed, as mentioned in the literature review, Rea-Dickins and Gardner (2000) found collaboration among classroom teachers and language support coordinators to be crucial to the integration of assessment. What is not clear however is how assessment in particular might link between classes at this school; what effect this might have on learning; and whether other teachers at other schools felt this to be an important consideration.

The Use of MOE Guidelines

a) Class teachers do not use the Ministry of Education Guidelines

All class teachers noted that they did not use the assessment guidelines as issued by the Ministry of Education (1999). Only one class teacher acknowledged having seen it: 'I've seen it before so I presume I have one in my cupboard' (SH/CT). The reasons for this were not identified. Although EAL teachers did not comment on the guidelines, at times they acknowledged uncertainty over their assessment program. One teacher explained that she assessed purely on goals she set in consultation with students, noting, 'whether it's right or wrong, it's what I do' (SN/EALT). Another EAL teacher noted, 'I'm sure there are ways you could do it better because as far as I'm concerned, with the assessment I've got in place, there are things that I have found myself because there has been no official testing' (SH/EALT). There may be a sense of inaccessibility where the guidelines are concerned or a lack of training.

The fact that class teachers do not access the guidelines could well contradict Franken and McCornish's (2003) finding that in general most teachers in New Zealand schools found the guidelines manageable and accessible. A major question raised is what teachers base their assessment criteria on if they are not accessing the guidelines and the extent that guidelines are utilised by EAL teachers.

Conclusion and Summary of Implications

In sum, a major difficulty voiced by home-class teachers, in particular, is that of catering to the individual needs of EAL learners operating at vastly different levels of English to peers. Contributing to this sense of difficulty appears to be a lack of understanding of how best to teach and assess grammatical items. Teachers also note that the ability of EAL students can easily be misinterpreted, particularly where students are eager to please and portray a persona of coping. Not surprisingly, class teachers appear to rely heavily on the specialised skills of language support teachers who have the resources and experience to implement personalised, criteria-based formal assessment. Both EAL and class teachers note the importance of catering to the special needs of young EAL learners. How teachers specifically account for important considerations such as children's interests, experiences, abilities and confidence at different stages of the assessment process, and the effect this might have on the reliability and validity of assessment procedures are key areas requiring further research.

In terms of the purposes of assessment, much assessment appears to be informal, used for formative purposes. How teachers revise their teaching and provide feedback as a result of assessment, however, is not clear. Moreover, it is possible that the information gained from one case of informal assessment may be used for multiple purposes. If this is the case, it is important to explore the validity and tension that may exist between using tests for both summative and formative purposes. Teachers noted making normative comparisons for funding purposes. The frequency with which class teachers use standardised tests and the effect this may have on learning and motivation in the home-class also requires further investigation. Moreover, as all class teachers in the study noted that they were not familiar with the Ministry of Education assessment guidelines, questions are raised as to the validity and reliability of teacher-developed assessment tasks. Finally, how teachers link assessment across the EAL and class programs; the effect this might have on learning; and how communication between teachers is maintained are more areas requiring further research.

Finally, with regard to the limitations of this study, results represent a small population of teachers and are, therefore, limited in this respect. A similar study across a greater number of schools would provide a broader view of teacher perception. Moreover, one limitation found in using focus group methodology is that due to EAL teachers taking the role of the 'expert' it is possible that this may have influenced the responses of class teachers who may have felt compelled to agree with the 'expert' or may have had reservations in sharing their opinion. In saying this, results revealed a number of themes which were class teacher (CT) specific and/or ran counter to the views of the EAL teachers. To avoid the influence of the perceived 'expert', however, it may be advantageous to hold both combined and individual focus group interviews with both groups of teachers. Nonetheless, this study highlights the potential of using focus group methodology as a viable research tool in that it provided a very rich source of data and raised a number of important implications for future research in the area of assessing young language learners.

Editors' note
Dawn Booth was winner of the ALANZ Best Masters Thesis award, 2006.

References

Bezemer, J. (2007). 'They don't have that feeling': The attribution of linguistic resources to multilingual students in a primary school. *Linguistics and Education, 18*, 65-78.

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998a). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education, 5* (1), 7-74.

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998b). Inside the blackbox: Raising standards through classroom Assessment. Phi Delta Kappa International *online article.* Retrieved 20 March, 2005, from http//www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kbla9810.htm.

Booth, D. (2005). *Assessment of primary students with English as an additional lanuguage: An investigation of formal assessment practice in three schools.* Unpublished dissertation, University of Auckland, New Zealand.

Edelenbos, P., & Kubanek-German, A. (2004). Teacher assessment: The concept of 'diagnostic competence'. *Language Testing*, *21*(3), 259-283.

Franken, M., & McCornish, J. (2003). Improving English language outcomes for students receiving ESOL services in New Zealand schools, with a particular focus on New immigrants. *Contract Research*, Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Green, J., & Hart, L. (1999). The impact of context on data. In Barbour, R., & Kitzinger, J. (Eds.), *Developing focus group research* (pp 21-35). London: Sage.

Hill, M. (2000). Dot, slash, cross. How assessment can drive teachers to ticking instead of teaching. *Set, 1*, 21-25.

Ho, D. (2006). The focus group interview: Rising to the challenge in a qualitative research methodology. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, *29*(1), 5.1-5.19.

Jasparet, K. (1996). NT1 en NT2 in Vlaanderen en Nederland. In S. Kroon & T. Vallen (Eds.), *Het verschil voorbij. Onderwijs Nederlands als eerste en tweede taal in Nederland en Vlaanderen*, Den Haag: SDU.

Johnston, P., Guice, S., Baker, K., Malone, J., & Michelson, N. (1995). Assessment for teaching and learning in literature-based classrooms. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *11*, 359-371.

Kitzinger, J. (1994). The methodology of focus groups: The importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health and Illness* 76, 103-121.

Krueger, R., & Casey, M. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. London: Sage Publications.

Litosseliti, L. (2003). *Using focus groups in research*. London, New York: Continuum.

Mavrommatis, Y. (1997). Understanding assessment in the classroom: Phases of the assessment process – the assessment episode. *Assessment in Education*, *4*(3), 381-399.

McKay, P. (2006). *Assessing young language learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Ministry of Education. (1999). *ESOL Assessment Guidelines*. Wellington: Crown.

Ministry of Education. (2005). *ESOL Progress Assessment Guidelines.* Wellington: Learning Media Limited.

Rea-Dickins, P. (2004). Understanding teachers as agents of assessment. *Language Testing, 21*(3), 249-258.

Rea-Dickins, P., & Gardner (2000). Snares and silver bullets: Disentangling the construct of formative assessment. *Language Testing, 17*(2), 215-243.

Seedhouse, P. (2005). "Task" as research construct. *Language Learning, 55*(3), 533-570.

Swain, M. (1985). Large-scale communicative language testing: A case study. In Lee, Y. P., Fok, A. C. Y., Lord, G., & Low, G, (Eds.), *New directions in language testing* (pp. 35-46). Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Willett. J. (1995). Becoming first graders in an L2: An ethnographic study of L2 socialization. *TESOL Quarterly, 29(*3), 473-503.

Appendix

Focus Group Questioning Route

1. When I say the word assessment, what images or feelings does the word conjure?

2. When I talk about the assessment of second language learners in your class, what images and feelings does that conjure?

3. How do you feel the assessment of your second language speakers is going?

4. Think back to the last assessment you did on a second language speaker. Tell the group about it.

5. Think back to a time that you felt good about an assessment carried out on a second language learner. Tell us about it.

6. Think back to a time that you didn't feel good about an assessment. Tell us about it.

7. What areas of English do you feel most comfortable assessing?

8. Tell the group about your experience of the ESOL assessment guidelines if you have used them.

PRACTICING IN AND LEARNING FROM COMMUNITY PLACEMENTS

Martin Andrew & Celine Kearney

Unitec New Zealand

Abstract

In 2004, the authors began a qualitative study into the value of community placements as sites of sociocultural and sociolinguistic learning among English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners studying a Bachelor of Arts degree. Students undertook community placements of ten hours, and wrote reflective journals detailing their observations of and participation in social, cultural and linguistic interactions. This paper reports on the key findings of the project over the past three years. It also applies the notion of "community of practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to community placement within a framework that accommodates constructivist, sociocultural, poststructuralist and new literacy understandings of situated learning. This report discusses participant commentaries in terms of the ten most recurrent themes emerging from open-coded analyses of the data. The findings suggest that community placement has the capacity to provide significant experiences for students, and to impact on participants' evolving identities as bi- or multiculturals. Community placements also provide opportunities for acquiring procedural, pragmatic and linguistic knowledge. The paper concludes that community placements can serve as communities of practice for the majority of language and cultural learners.

Introduction

Work placements are recognised as a way of bridging the classroom and the world of employment for English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners. New Zealand studies around Victoria University's Language in the Workplace project and Workplace Communication for Skilled Migrants curriculum (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Brown, 2005, and many others) highlight the usefulness of placement for preparing EAL learners for workplaces. The present study, however, seeks to investigate the value of *communities,* particularly but not exclusively those within the volunteer sector, as sites of sociocultural and sociolinguistic learning. The idea of immersive and experiential learning in the community follows the principles of work placements. It also implements Peterson and Coltrane's (2003) recommendation that cultural instruction should "allow students to observe and explore cultural interactions from their own perspectives to enable them to find their own voices in the second language speech community" (p. 2). Further, this study uses reflective journals as learner records of community placements, realising Norton's method of finding "spaces for the enhancement of human possibility" (2000, p. 153). Reflection on the experiences of community placement brings students to a deeper understanding of the culture of their chosen community, of New Zealand culture in general and of their own participation within such cultures.

Previous articles from this community placement study detail the impacts of community placement on learner identity; the usefulness of this method of learning in preparing migrants, refugees and international students for their various futures, and the acquisition of cultural autonomy (Andrew & Kearney, 2006, 2007a, 2007b). The project, which began in 2004, investigates the value and potential of community placements as sites for students to acquire knowledge of New Zealand culture and society. It also evaluates community placement as a method for encouraging cultural learning through observation, participation and reflection.

The students, enrolled in a second-year EAL degree course, *Culture and New Zealand Society* (CNZS), participate in community placements of ten or more hours in venues of their choice. These "communities of practice" into which learners gain entry are approved by lecturers to ensure they are sufficiently grounded in Kiwi culture and language. The participants diarise their observations and experiences. These journals provide lecturers and fellow learners with evidence of their community interaction and learning. The process of journal writing follows Norton's work with migrant women's diaries, where journals accessed "the learners' opportunities to practice the target language in the wider community, their investments in the target language and their changing identities" (2000, p. 152). The journals also provide researchers with their major data. This paper reports on the analyses of students' observations and reflections and offers insights into the kinds of learning that emerge from immersive experience in a community placement.

This paper proposes that community placement is an underutilised resource in EAL environments. In the context of provision of international education, the Ministry of Education (2007) writes: "the major host community is a major source of informal behaviour patterns and colloquial language" (p. 27). This paper discusses, in general terms, the ten most significant kinds of learning that participants reported from learning within the major host community. The researchers hope to encourage lecturers to introduce EAL learners to using volunteer communities as places where culture can be understood and language practised.

What is a community placement?

A community placement is a course-related, pre-arranged learning opportunity where participants spend a specified period in an approved community context to achieve defined sociocultural and/ or sociolinguistic outcomes. It represents a chance for learners to observe and participate in activities that happen normally as part of the regular operation of a group interacting, communicating and socialising at a particular site, in pursuit of a common goal, using discourse typical of their community. Learners become small-scale ethnographers, recording what they see, hear, think and experience, and reflecting on the community, wider society and its people and themselves. In short, a community placement is any situated, experiential, participative activity that has the potential to provide a bridge from the classroom to the real world. In this context, the purpose of the placement is to experience New Zealand culture and society and report back on individual learning.

Learners were encouraged to locate a 10-hour community placement for themselves based on their own interests. They could use volunteer agencies, community groups, clubs, lobby groups and workplaces. To help them, course documents included lists of groups and links to websites where students could seek contact information. Lecturers provided letters of introduction to placement providers, and intervened when students' placement choices collapsed, placing students in organisations that had expressed willingness to support students' community learning.

Course participants undertook community placements during mid-semester breaks, although they were permitted to use two or three shorter-term placements (for example, in the evenings) if their schedules could accommodate this arrangement more smoothly. Amongst the selections of community placements were community initiatives organised by the police or refugee support groups; volunteer help groups (Citizen's Advice Bureaux, New Zealand Federation for the Blind); rest-homes, such as Selwyn Village in Auckland; pre-schools, kura kaupapa, primary and high schools and language schools; charity and aid organisations (Red Cross shops, Central Mission); volunteer programmes run by museums or cultural sites (museums, aquaria, environmental groups); church groups and Christian communities; sports clubs (trotting and soccer clubs) and voluntary workplaces (hostels, cafés, translation agencies, warehouses).

Students were asked to keep diaries recording any aspects of culture, communication and language that seemed 'Kiwi' and to comment on the reasons for their perception. Students' perception of 'Kiwi' is informed by classroom sessions as well as by their varying degrees of interactive experience with Kiwi culture. Classroom input included discussions on a range of topics about New Zealand's cultural identity: the importance of the Treaty of Waitangi; the history of migration and immigration; bi- and multiculturalism; language policy and maintenance; national and local government, and their systems (justice, government, education and so on), and Kiwi culture as mirrored by its famous people and their achievements. Lectures focus on culture though the media, sports, arts, architecture and the iconography of Kiwiana. It encourages students to engage with a wide range of discourse written by a wide range of individuals, and to unpack the writers' ideologies and biases and to see beyond stereotypical constructions of people, events and icons. The students, the majority of whom are potential biculturals (or multiculturals), also see as 'Kiwi' anything that contrasts with their own cultures. Their observations frequently point out aspects of difference, strangeness and otherness.

Much of this data belongs to a discourse of emergent bi- and multiculturalism, where learners invest in linguistic and cultural pluralism. They aim, in constructivist cultural studies terms, for cultural competence (Byram, 1997) and even cultural autonomy

(Dlaska, 2000; Sercu, 2002). They record, in new literacy studies terms, their building cultural literacy, literacy learning being “a process by which individuals participate in specific literate communities for gaining group membership and, in turn, co-construct the social practices of these communities” (Cho, 2006, p. 1). In poststructuralist terms, their diaries are an ethnographic, phenomenological record of their investments in their target culture, and of their negotiation of evolving identities (Norton, 2000, p. 152). The learning they record occurs during community placements, and these entail entry into communities of practice.

Communities of practice

The term “communities of practice” (COPs) came into common use with Lave and Wenger’s social constructivist descriptions of imagined and real communities (1991) and has since evolved to define collaborative knowledge management within organisations (for instance, Holland & Lave, 2001). In their 1991 incarnations, “COPs” had three essential constituents: relations among persons, activity and the world, existence over time and relation to other communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). In such communities, new members move from being spectators or “apprentices” with “legitimate peripheral participation” (hereafter LPP) to being potentially in possession of a deeper, engaged, invested interest involving “the whole person acting in the world” (pp. 98, 49). Like the new members of COPs, learners in community placements are participants in the practices of social communities.

Within this conceptualization of “COPs”, LPP involves situated learning. This learning is a social process as well as a psychological and cognitive one. Community placements utilise this conception, with students starting as apprentices/ observers and theoretically developing into interns/ participants as they apply their classroom learning and develop confidence. Community placements provide students not only with opportunities to observe aspects of Kiwi culture and be involved in interactions in the English language; they also potentially offer windows into cultural and self understanding (Andrew & Kearney, 2006, 2007b). Further, placements offer learners a chance to reflect on and renegotiate their changing identities. This brings us back to Wenger. Learning communities should become “places of identity to the extent they make trajectories possible—that is, to the extent they offer a past and a future that can be experienced as a personal trajectory” (1998, p. 215).

Wenger (1998) identified three characteristics of any COP, all of which are components of community placements. These are *mutual engagement* (the regular interactions of community members), *joint enterprise* (the members’ common endeavour, goal, vision or pursuit) and *shared repertoire* (ways of thinking, speaking, expressing, remembering common to the community). The regularity of a COP’s mutual engagement allows community placement learners chances to access (as apprentices) and continue in (as participants) these communities. The joint enterprise ensures that members communicate with inclusive zeal, and welcome apprentices, guiding them to membership. The community’s shared repertoire contains specific sociolinguistic information that placement participants can overhear and reflect on.

Wenger's 1998 concept of COPs applies to community placements in two more important ways. First, that engagement in situations motivates learners to reflect on "the actual complexity of human thought" (1998, p. 281). Socially situated learners both negotiate linguistic and cultural meanings and reconceptualise their understandings. Hence, the process of learning is sociocognitive and sociocultural. Second, to cite Wenger again, "practice is about meaning as an experience of everyday life" (1998, p. 52). Learners overhear, take part in and reflect on the shared repertoires of the practitioners within the communities.

One way in which this study aims to bring about cultural literacy learning is by positioning itself relative to the notion of literacy as social practice. In particular, it draws on Gee's work on situated learning in dynamic social discourse communities (2000). Placement in real COPs activates the "social mind" and its awareness of "situated meanings" (Gee, 2000, 2004). Gee (1999, online) stresses the importance of participation and identity in "knowing": "Knowing is a matter of being able to participate centrally in practice and learning is a matter of changing patterns of participation (with concomitant changes in identity)." Community placements involve observing and participating in social languages, making meaning cognitively, socially and reflectively, and moving towards "knowing".

Engagement and investment

Community placement offers learners opportunities to gain insights into peculiar, local and national cultures of practice. While there is no guarantee all participants will engage more than superficially, close engagement with these insights may provide observers/ participants with the impetus to develop a sense of belonging to that COP, thereby offering further identity options for the observer/ participant/ member.

Learners' engagement with their COP depends on their investments in cultural and linguistic learning (Norton, 2000; Pittaway, 2004). Those with greater investment will engage more, and, as Kanno and Norton (2002) write, "as learners become more adept at community practices, they increase their responsibility in the community and become more active participants" (p. 242). Community placements entail "language socialisation" which provides crucial interaction for L2 learning (Pavlenko, 2002, p. 286). They can scaffold students into becoming more confident participants in linguistic and cultural interaction.

The negotiation of linguistic and cultural meanings within COPs impacts on the formation of identities since "the role of language is constitutive of and constituted by a learner's social identity" (Norton 1995, p. 17). A learner's desire for affiliation to a chosen community enhances their investment in performing, learning, becoming a member, and developing confidence to engage in future imagined communities. This study is underpinned by this notion, viewed through studies of EAL learners' negotiation of identities by, amongst others, Ivanic (1998), Norton (1995, 2000, 2002), Pavlenko (2001, 2002), Kanno and Norton (2003), Morita (2004), Kubota (2004) and Tusting (2005).

Methodology

Research design

This project qualitatively analyses emergent themes in learners' reflective logs written during and shortly after a ten or more hour community placement required for the Year 2 course, *Culture and New Zealand Society,* in a BA (EAL).

During their 10 hours of community placement, participants were instructed to write four diary entries of 200 words each and to comment on their observations of any striking aspects of Kiwi culture. (These cues are discussed above in the introduction). Participants were told to write freely and openly, rather than to create an error-free discourse. Most learners made pen-and-paper notes (a few, with permission, made recordings) that they wrote up as e-texts for submission as soon after the placement as possible. Because diaries record learners' investments and chart changing identities, they provide useful qualitative data for discourse analysts and ethnographers (Norton, 2000, p. 152). In diaries, participants freely provide individual descriptions of events and behaviours. Unrestrained by discursive, generic or grammatical expectations, participants produce content-rich descriptions.

Participants

Current data consists of the reflective logs of 70 students from six intakes over three years. All students are second year BA (EAL) learners with academic IELTS bands of 6.0 or above (or equivalent). The subjects included refugees (3) migrants (39), international students (19) and study abroad students (9). The average length of time in New Zealand was three years, although one student had been in New Zealand for 31 years. All of the international students had studied in English language programmes in New Zealand prior to their enrolment in the BA, so they had all been in New Zealand for at least 18 months. The study abroad students were in their first and only semester in New Zealand.

In terms of ethnic origin the participants comprise: Chinese (37), "Taiwanese" (4), "Hong Kongese" (3), Swedish (6), Korean (5), German (4), Japanese (2), and one each of Romanian, Iranian, Ethiopian, Somalian, Thai, Malaysian, Indian, French Polynesian and Samoan. There were 42 females and 28 males. The age range was from 19 to 55, with a mean of 25.

Instruments

Learner diaries were the main research instruments. Additional data was obtained from electronic text summaries learners wrote of their community-based learning (Andrew & Kearney, 2007a) and from transcriptions of group seminars in which learners discussed learning from their community placements. The data was collected in hard copy from students at the conclusion of the programme and stored in a locked cabinet. To date, researchers have used these data only to confirm and triangulate themes emergent from the learner diaries.

Data coding and analysis

A grounded methodological approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Glaser, 1998) was used during this research. The two researchers used open coding to locate themes that emerged from the data. Then they listed participant quotations under key categories. The researchers used methods from discourse analysis to locate lexical and thematic similarities in the data. The two researchers independently coded items for additional reliability, later coming together to negotiate the semantics of categories. The themes were listed in order of frequency from those mentioned by the majority of participants down to those described by only several. The data reported here emerges from six semesters of research. Data from each semester confirms that collected from previous semesters. Hence, this data comprises a sufficient and reliable sample.

Limitations

The researchers acknowledge two limitations. Firstly, the use of data based purely on reportage and not triangulated by on-site observations leads to over-reliance on self-reportage. An ethnographic approach would contain observational data to strengthen the data. Secondly, the fact that the students wrote solicited narratives within the context of an assessment event needs to be acknowledged, although no writing was treated as data until the course had concluded. This might affect the students' discourse, although it does not mitigate their sincerity.

Findings and commentary

The following section identifies, exemplifies and briefly comments on the ten most recurrent themes from the data set of reflections on value of community placement for sociocultural and sociolinguistic learning. The data demonstrates that even learners who invest minimally in community placement can comment and reflect in a way that shows gain in cultural competence and literacy. This report, then, acknowledges those who participated very peripherally (that is, those with minimum investment) and those who invested deeply in their placement and on their cultural learning. Much of the data testifies to learners' active social minds, negotiating situated meanings both of language and behaviours and practising meaning-making in everyday life.

The findings are presented in descending order of frequency. Student voices that are either typical or insightful are used to illustrate the key themes. The purpose in the present paper is to give a broad illustrative overview of main findings, while other aspects have been analysed in more depth elsewhere (Andrew & Kearney, 2006, 2007a, 2007b).

Theme 1: Opportunities for speaking

The most significant value of community placement lies in its potential to provide opportunities for overhearing and participating in spoken interactions involving New

Zealanders. All 70 participants report having increased chances for spoken interaction, with 40 commenting specifically on their chances to engage with 'Kiwis', 22 describing types of spoken interaction and 12 fascinated by the everyday subjects of the real world as opposed to education-building classroom topics. Laura, for instance, wrote: "speaking with different people about new topics is helpful to my learning, in contrast to learning in the classroom." She articulates a tension between the "real" world and the classroom that resonates throughout the data (29 references to "real world"). Learners also report on their application of classroom spoken communication strategies. Rosa, in a migrant centre, learned "to be humble and open-minded. That is the best way to keep a conversation very interesting and last for a long time."

Learners consistently remark that they heard real Kiwis speaking real *Newzild,* New Zealand English. Tomas, one of 30 students to comment on features of Kiwi speaking, remarks that "Kiwi English is sometimes hard to understand or it is just funny to listen [to]. The words they use are often very informal (like *bugger, crap, dude,* etc.) and the pronunciation rises at the end of a sentence." The learners learn about Kiwis' laidback style and high rising terminal in the classroom, but noticing such features adds value to cultural learning as learners practice meaning-making in everyday life.

Theme 2: Acquisition of procedural knowledge

An incidental by-product of learning in placements is the acquisition of procedural knowledge and problem-solving skills specific to any COP. Collected data contains 52 descriptions of skills acquisition, usually marked by the key words "how to". Dora, placed in a resthome, learned how to respond to healthcare crises. Beth learned, through real experience, "how to call 111" and Li learned how to articulate words carefully for elderly listeners. Eight of the participants trained as carers for the elderly, also acquiring life-knowledge for themselves:

> The educator taught us how we care for home residents in Selwyn Village … to those with stroke or dementia, besides emergency procedures … additionally the importance of hand-washing … some useful physiotherapy to look after my back.

Participants gain procedural knowledge through observation and skills application. Michaela, in a Trade Aid shop, was impressed by her co-volunteer's customer service skills: "how she made the goods look nice; how she made people stay in the shop longer; how she takes care with the goods, customers and volunteers; and how she dealt with refunds and goods exchanging."

Procedural knowledge includes strategies of local communicative competence. Sandra, a CAB volunteer, writes that her placement "teaches me techniques of how to communicate with native citizens and to work with them cooperatively." Danny, a language school ambassador observing students' orientation "learned how the counsellor slows down the speech and explains about life in both the school and city to the students." Rosa, in a migrant support centre, realised she had the ability to communicate over cultural barriers: "[Placement] helped me to find appropriate communication styles when approaching different people, even though there were some barriers to our communication when I first encountered them."

Theme 3: Increased confidence

When the learners detail their increased sense of self-identity, they describe it in terms of a confidence boost: "My community placement gave me lots of confidence." Anna's comment can represent 35 others, all of whom use imagery of cultural capital and adverbs of quantity, intensity or comparison. Diana, a Red Cross volunteer, phrases it like this: "Being a shop assistant is such a challenging yet rewarding thing for me." This enhanced confidence has impacts on other areas of achievement and on self-esteem, as in Sam's self-report:

> community placements have boosted my confidence and taught me to be more attentive with instructions, flexible, organised, cooperative and being more responsible with myself and the tasks provided.

Having a context for self-expression and for making a meaningful contribution impacts on learners' self-worth and on their perceptions of themselves as people who can make a difference. This is clear in rest-home worker Li's reflection: "Every time when they were wearing a smile, I felt that it was just only a tiny work to me, but can make them happy."

Theme 4: Applying classroom learning

Community placements provide a realistic context for learners to apply declarative and procedural knowledge covered in class. Specifically, they give students a mirror in which they can see concepts and objects introduced in the classroom space. Les, a volunteer at a community centre, remembers a core tenet of Kiwi adaptability: "The Kiwi's *can-do attitude* which we discussed in class has been well represented in this community centre." Other students refer to problem-solvers reflecting the "number 8 fencing wire thingie" described in class and "the *she'll be right* attitude." Karina, assisting in a charity shop, hears Kiwi idioms in practice:

> I am really happy that I learned some kiwi slang in class because otherwise I would never understand. One man came in and I asked him how everything was, etc, and he started talking with a very hard kiwi accent, about that he just came back from *the wopwops* and that he was now looking for some *gummies* because it was about to rain.

For her, valuable learning occurred on re-cognising localisms observed in class: their value consists in people using them communicatively.

Theme 5: Surprises and re-cognitions

The majority of learners (42) detail specific episodes through which they advance in terms of sociocultural knowledge about New Zealand, its people and their language. These might be moments of "surprise" (Norton 2000, p. 152), moments of re-cognition of classroom input like Karina's or broader realisations that cultural learning is occurring. The most expressively metaphorical image of moving through a transitional space towards self-knowledge occurs in Moira's analysis of before and after:

> I have tried to take part in their social activities. However, I couldn't understand them at all. I felt that I am standing out of the door, I can see through windows, I can hear their sounds, I can copy their actions but I don't know why they do that … now I do not worry about this. I have learnt their culture, although not completely. I talk with them much more confidently and state my opinion.

Even after her placement, however, Kiwis still remain "them" to Moira, and she remains an actor mimicking their actions, participating peripherally in a COP. Other codings include Ivor's realisation that his knowledge of the Treaty of Waitangi enables him to converse with a Maori co-volunteer; Dora's reflection on the tear in an old lady's eye when she sees Anzac biscuits; Karmen's realisation that Kiwis are trusting people when she is allowed to handle money, and Jill's recognition, during a Christian trip to Rangitoto that she, now, is a part of this land.

Theme 6: Cultural contrasts

Learners develop understandings of local and national practices by noticing and reflecting on contrasts with their own cultures (Norton, 2000, 152). When experiencing the 'other', learners reach an understanding of it based on identifying how it differs from, or is similar to, something comparable in their own culture. Understandings of the treatment of the elderly or the education of pre-schoolchildren, for instance, evolve from a process of re-cognising the cultural model (Byram, 1997). The data includes reflections on differences in the treatment of the elderly in resthomes, the instructive actions of pre-school teachers and the relative value attributed to leisure. Jean observes: "Instead of having formal teaching and learning, the kindergarten provides a variety of activities … promoting kids' interests in exploring." John, in a student hostel, articulates the process, writing that it is:

> inevitable that you will compare your own culture with foreign cultures. When I meet a Kiwi I will always try to find similarities and dissimilarities in his behaviour compared to my own … my experiences of New Zealand culture are not only a result of this country's culture, but also of my previous culture … we are all influenced and nothing will be objective.

Students frequently identify differences in values. New Zealand's lack of corruption, bribery and tax fraud are mentioned. So, too, is New Zealanders' ease in spending, their use of hire purchase and the charity they exhibit in food banks and missions. In their placements, participants express surprise that people are open about their poverty and are not too proud to ask for charity. "New Zealanders", writes CAB volunteer, Sandra, "can get a community card that they use while seeing doctors. However, people who phoned in called it 'poor people card' in their native language". A similar lack of stigma attacked to poverty appears in Peggy's description of Kiwis' willingness to buy second-hand goods, and Les's contrastive observation: "In China, if someone saw you go to ask for a food parcel, you will be looked down upon by others."

Theme 7: Descriptions of sociopragmatic literacy

Students frequently instance sociopragmatic appropriacy, politeness strategies, and awareness of register as they define what is "the normal way" (Hwang's words) in New Zealand society. According to café worker, Andy, "things change when customers are around … Politeness is used when addressing customers and slang is used regularly among staff." Sonja, working in a South Auckland warehouse remarks, typically: "people also can learn to speak to other people who you never meet before, learn what is appropriate to talk to each other: formal or informal." "In my workplace", writes Andreas "young people like to say some rude words when they are not happy such as *bugger, shit* and so on." Sam writes that Kiwis' communications are "happy-go-lucky" compared to those in Malaysia. Noticing these phenomena allows learners to go one step further and enact their knowledge. Michaela wrote that at first she "was a bit nervous about what I should say and what appropriate language to say to [a customer with a complaint]." With her supervisor's modelling, she managed to use appropriate language in future transactions.

Theme 8: Opportunities to interact in global Englishes

Seeing New Zealand's multiculturalism reflected in the diverse demographic and linguistic make-up of COPs is another dominant theme. Many learners (28) comment on having the opportunity to communicate with speakers of a variety of Englishes, most specifically Indian, Pacific Island and Maori. Maori appear, paradoxically, both the fearsome other and the ultimate Kiwi in the data. The samples include six effusive descriptions of interactions with local Maori. Encountering a real New Zealander is "golden" and "treasure" and the people "unforgettable" and "generous." Dana, in a city mission, writes the following:

> My second conversation was with a Maori elder and her family had gone. She told this to a complete stranger who served her a cup of coffee-me. I felt Maori people's kindness through her trusted eyes: they love to talk to people, they love to share their stories, and they love to smile. They trust people, they stick together and care about each other even though they are in extreme life situation.

The data includes references to learners' need to be exposed to a range of Englishes for New Zealand life; their happiness at being with other "foreigners" in their COP, and, most of all, to potential communication problems: "As people who call CAB are not very good English speakers, there are many problems during the translation process." The need for bilingual speakers, such as themselves, strengthens their resolve to contribute to society through their language skills in their future imagined COPs.

Theme 9: Noticing the icons

Although they often risk overgeneralisations, learners often define and quantify their observations and experiences of New Zealanders' cultures and lifestyles in terms of icons used by texts and media to symbolise the country, its people and values. Not yet critically attuned to seek the realities behind number-eight wire, buzzy bees and kiwifruit, many diaries (28) report superficially on the interactions of those in their COPs with *smokos,* chocolate fish, *marmite,* Anzac biscuits, All Black tests and quaint Kiwi idioms as evidence of having observed real local culture. Les, a volunteer in a food bank, recalled classroom discussion of Kiwi identity as reflected in local brands: "I noticed … many Kiwi products such as *Watties* canned food, *Weetbix, L&P, Kornies* and *Jaffas*."

Theme 10: Desire to fit in

The tenth key theme to introduce here is the desire to succeed as a participant within their chosen community and/or to become a member (25 citations). This involves both doing well, through their own actions, and being accepted by local people. Prior to her work with a Christian community, Margaret hoped she could "do well and fit in"; by her third entry, she was describing incidents where she was a participant and a member (negotiating a recipe, supervising a barbeque). Ivor, after conversing with a Maori volunteer at an aquarium and demonstrating interest in Maori culture, "realized that understanding a culture could help me to integrate into a society easily."

The process of fitting in is facilitated by the attitudes of workers in the volunteer sector. On day 2, Karmen wrote: "It feels like I am part of the staff now because the people who work there are counting on me and trust me." Such positive experiences impact on learners' perceptions of themselves as operating in future imagined communities. This is shown by Spring's remark about a Waitangi workshop: "I've learned everyone is different; everyone is entitled to their own opinion and beliefs… I believe this point will benefit my future work and study."

Finally, community placements offer learners potential to move from peripheral, observational 'outsideness' to a participative 'insideness'. After volunteering in her son's soccer club, Miwa writes:

> I have just been living in my own culture, not try to integrate the culture that I am living … the positive outcome for me is that I am trying to recognise real New Zealand culture and society. It is not from an outsider's view, but it's a view from a New Zealander, me.

For her, the impacts of community placement extend beyond sociolinguistic and sociocultural knowledge into something the researchers did not expect to find: knowledge of the changing self.

Conclusion: the value of community placement

Community placements offer a valuable if underutilised context for learning cultural literacy among refugees, migrants and international students. Accessing COPs as peripheral participants, and in many cases becoming interns and members, provides learners with both quantifiable and unquantifiable benefits. The ten findings illustrate the most significant ones. The downsides of community placement are that it can be extremely time-consuming for lecturers as it involves letter-writing, networking and organising supervisory support for students. Of all of the participants in the placements to date, only 3 have had insufficient investment, maturity or confidence to participate even peripherally. In contrast, 16 participants have stayed in their voluntary placements (Citizen's Advice Bureaux [CABs], the police, resthomes, migrant centres) or workplaces. They have become part of their investment in their identities as members of New Zealand society.

Diana worked in a Red Cross shop, and her reflection offers a representative summary of the value students gain from community placement:

> The original motivation for me was to plan ahead with my future career. As New Zealand work experience is demanded, I thought taking a volunteering job not only gives me an opportunity to participate in society and help other community members, but also affords me a window to observe New Zealand society, gain some experience in working in customer service area, and most importantly practice my English language.

Her comment demonstrates an awareness of community placement's potential to offer COPs where learning is socially-situated, practice-based and "an experience of everyday life" (Wenger, 1998, p. 52). Further, her remark projects her imagined gains forward to her future in imagined communities in accordance with Kanno and Norton's descriptions of imagined communities (2004). The fact that "New Zealand" (that is, both *local* and *in English)* work experience is required by employers also testifies to the importance of cultural knowledge to future participation in imagined communities. Diana believes she will gain this through her "window" to cultural understanding. She envisages herself as a participant gaining "experience" through "practice". She will gain additional reward from the knowledge that her work represents a contribution to others, and to New Zealand, the country which has accepted her as a migrant.

Community placements provide learners with a safe, supportive and 'Kiwi' COP for negotiating situated sociolinguistic and sociocultural meanings via observing, re-cognising, practising and participating in New Zealand culture, its social practices, values, mores, customs, conventions, laws and principles. For some, it might open a window for analysing its superficial and real semiotic discourses, viewing the pain behind an Anzac biscuit or understanding the feeling accompanying picking up a food parcel; for others, with less investment and confidence, understanding will remain superficial. Placement's value lies not only in its opportunities for practice and negotiation in English with real people and in real contexts, but also in its potential for building confidence, enhancing self-identity and providing evidence that everyone can make a difference. Most of all it helps students to map out the space between where they have come from (their past experiences and cultures), where they currently are (their permanent or temporary New Zealand home), and where they are going (their future imagined community).

Eraut (2002) asked if the concepts of "learning community" and "community of practice" provided added value to contexts of learning. The associated concepts of LPP, shared repertoire and situated learning provide an apt background to studying EAL students' cultural learning in community placements. Further, it can be concluded that community placement, informed by theoretical and pedagogical insights by social constructivists, poststructuralists, critical social linguists and advocates of new literacy studies can provide at least ten kinds of added value for target learners and by extension for the wider ESL industry. Community placements do have personal and assimilative value for language and culture learners and learning. But are they sufficiently valued and used by institutions, or recognised nationally? Valuing community placements institutionally and nationally as part of potential learning pathways for EAL migrants and refugees is, in fact, one of the recommendations of a forthcoming Ministry of Education report (Strauss et al., 2008).

References

Andrew, M., & Kearney, C. (2006). Windows into cultural understanding and the formation of authentic being. In M. Barrow & R. Trewartha (Eds.), *Teaching and learning for an uncertain world. Refereed Proceedings from the 2nd Annual Teaching and Learning Symposium,* 11-24. Auckland: Unitec New Zealand.

Andrew, M. & Kearney, C. (2007a). E-text and paper-text reflections on cultural learning. In E. Gray & L. Emerson (Eds.), *Old Text/Nu Txt: Writing for a Change. Refereed Proceedings from the 7th Tertiary Writing Colloquium* (pp. 3-16). Palmerston North: Massey University.

Andrew, M., & Kearney, C. (2007b). Community Placement: Windows into cultural understanding and unfamiliar freedom. In A. Scott (Ed.), *CLESOL 2006: Refereed conference proceedings of the 10th Community Languages and English for Speakers of Other Languages Conference*. Napier: CLESOL 2006.

Barton, D. & Tusting, K. (2005). *Beyond communities of practice: Language, power and social context.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, T. P. (2005). *Authentic spoken workplace texts in the classroom.* Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research: Macquarie University.

Byram, M. (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence.* Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Cho, H. (2006). Literacy as social practice. Retrieved March 21, 2007, from www.hawaii.edu/cslr/literacyasocialpractice.pdf

Dlaska, A. (2000). Integrating culture and language learning in institution-wide language programmes. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 13(3),* 247-263.
Eraut, M. (2002). Conceptual analysis and research questions: Do the concepts of 'learning community' and 'community of practice' provide added value? Paper presented at AERA, New Orleans, LA, April, 2002. Obtainable from author.
Gee, J. P. (1999). The new literacy studies and the "social turn". Retrieved March 21, 2007, from http://www.schools.ash.org.au/litweb/page300.html
Gee, J. P. (2000). The new literacy studies: From 'socially situated' to the work of the social. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton, & R. Ivanic (Eds.), *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context* (pp. 180-196). New York: Routledge.
Gee J. P. (2004). Learning language as a matter of learning social languages within discourses. In M. R. Hawkins (Ed.), *Language learning and teacher education: A sociocultural approach* (pp. 13-31). Clevedon, U.K.: Multilingual Matters.
Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions.* Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
Holland D. & Lave, J. (Eds.) (2001). *History in person: Enduring struggles, conscientious practice, intimate identities.* Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
Holmes J. & Stubbe, M. (2003). *Power and politeness in the workplace: A sociolinguistic analysis of talk at work.* London: Pearson.
Ivanic, R. (1998). *Writing and identity.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
Kubota, R. (2004). The politics of cultural difference in second language education. *Critical Enquiry in Language Studies 1*(1), 21-39.
Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Ministry of Education (2007). *English for speakers of other languages (ESOL): Effective Provision for international students.* Wellington: Ministry of Education.
Morita, N. (2004). Negotiating participation and identity in second language academic communities. *TESOL Quarterly, 38*(4), 573-603.
Norton Peirce, B. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly, 29*(1), 9-31.
Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity, and educational change*. London: Longman.
Pavlenko, A. (2001). 'In the world of the tradition, I was unimagined': Negotiation of identities in cross-cultural autobiographies. *The International Journal of Bilingualism, 5*(3), 317-344.
Pavlenko, A. (2002). Poststructuralist approaches to the study of social factors in L2. In V. Cook (Ed.), *Portraits of the L2 user* (pp. 277-302). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
Peterson, E. & Coltrane, B. (2003). Culture in second language teaching. *Eric Digest* EDO-FL-03-09. Retrieved May 4, 2007, from www.cal.org/resources/digest/subject.html.
Pittaway, D. A. (2004). Investment and second language acquisition. *Critical Enquiry 1*(4), 203-18.
Sercu, L. (2002). Autonomous learning and the acquisition of intercultural competence: Some implications for course development. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 15*(1), 61-74.
Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
Strauss, P., Roach, K., Roskvist, A., Smedley, F. & Yee, V. (2008). *An investigation of EAL (English as an Additional Language) student pathways in the School of Languages, Auckland University of Technology.* Wellington: Ministry of Education (forthcoming).
Tusting, K. (2005). Language and power in communities of practice. In D. Barton & K. Tusting (Eds.). *Beyond communities of practice: Language, power and social context* (pp. 36-54). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

THE EFFECTS OF REFERENTIAL ORIENTED ACTIVITY IN THE STRUCTURED INPUT TASK ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNERS' PRAGMATIC PROFICIENCY

Masahiro Takimoto

Tezukayama University

Abstract

The present study evaluates the relative effectiveness of two types of structured input task design, monocomponential design (referential oriented activities alone) and polycomponential design (referential oriented and affective oriented activities) for teaching English polite requestive forms, involving 41 Japanese learners of English. Treatment group performance was compared to that of a control group on the pre-tests, post-tests, and follow-up tests: a non-timed discourse completion test and a non-timed acceptability judgment test. The results of data analysis indicate that the two treatment groups performed significantly better than the control group, and that there was no significant difference between the two treatment groups. Given this lack of significant difference between the two treatment groups, it seems that the referential oriented activities alone may be sufficient in the structured input task.

Introduction

One of the issues in teaching a second language (L2) pragmatics is how it should be taught. Jeon and Kaya's (2006) quantitative meta-analysis (on the role of instruction in the development of L2 pragmatics) showed that explicit instruction is more effective (e.g., Fukuya & Clark, 1999; Lyster, 1994; Tateyama, 2001; Witten, 2000) than implicit instruction (e.g., Fukuya & Zhang, 2002; Rose & Ng, 2001). Jeon and Kaya (2006) noted that due to the limited available data, the seemingly superior effects of explicit pragmatic instruction should not be taken as definitive but only as indicative of hypotheses to be examined in future studies. Furthermore, some of the interventional studies in pragmatics teaching indicated that pragmatic features can be taught together with some sort of input enhancement activities. These studies were largely motivated by the theories and frameworks built for grammar teaching, taking place through film in Fukuya and Clark (1999), Tateyama (2001), and Tateyama, Kasper, Mui, Tay, & Thananart (1997), analysis of native speakers' output in a spoken or written form in Rose and Ng (2001), structured input task in Takimoto (2006a), consciousness-raising task in Takimoto (2006b) and comparison of participants' output and native speakers' output, comparison of non-native speakers' output and native speakers' output, and comprehension questions about native speakers' role-plays in Takahashi (2001, 2005).

VanPatten and Cadierno (1993) argued that instruction that changes the way input is perceived and processed by learners is more likely to become intake. Ellis (1997) proposed that it is the manipulation of input rather than output that is more likely to result in the integration of intake into learners' implicit/declarative knowledge. Ellis (2003) explained that one type of input-based approach, structured input task, can be best used in teaching grammar and Takimoto (2006a) demonstrated that the structured input task is effective in teaching L2 pragmatics.

Structured Input Task

A structured input task occupies an important part in processing instruction. VanPatten (1996) explained that structured input activities are where "learners are given the opportunity to process form in the input in a controlled situation so that better form-meaning connections might happen compared with what might happen in less controlled situations" (p.60).

Ellis (1997) argued that structured input texts need to be contrived in such a way that the target forms are frequent, the meaning of the target form is clear, and comprehending the target forms is essential for comprehending the whole text. Both VanPatten (1996) and Ellis (1997) suggested that the structured input task includes a mixture of referential oriented activities (i.e., relating the input to some other person(s)) and affective oriented activities (i.e., relating the input to their own lives) because the referential oriented activities promote noticing the target features and then the affective oriented activities enhance the intake, helping learners to compare what they noticed in the situation relating to some other persons with what they currently notice in the situation relating to their own lives. Wong (2004) explained that the purpose of affective oriented activities is to reinforce the proper form-meaning connection by providing learners with more opportunities to see or hear the form in a meaningful context. However, in order to teach pragmatics, the instruction should aim at learners' conscious noticing of not only pragmalinguistic factors (relationship between forms and meanings of target structures), but also sociopragmatic factors (relationship between strategies for realizing speech intentions, linguistic forms used to express these intentions and social conditions governing language use). Therefore, in the present study, the referential oriented activities in the structured input task can be helpfully sequenced to firstly require attention to sociopragmatic factors, followed by attention to the pragmalinguistic factors relating to target structures and finally to make the connection between pragmalinguistic-sociopragmatic resources. Then, the affective oriented activities are to reinforce the connection of pragmalinguistic-sociopragmatic resources by comparing what they noticed in the situation relating to some other persons with what they presently notice in the situation relating to their own lives in a meaningful context. A key issue here is whether the referential oriented activities alone without relating the input to participants' own lives are sufficient to enhance the intake and improve learners' pragmatic proficiency.

The Present Study

So far there have been no studies involving the effectiveness of referential oriented activities alone in the structured input task in teaching L2 pragmatics and the following research question is investigated in this study.

> What is the relative effectiveness of referential oriented activities only and referential and affective oriented activities to improve Japanese learners' English pragmatic proficiency?

Participants

Participants were solicited through an employment advertisement provided on the Internet in Japan. They were not informed that English lexical and syntactic downgraders were the focus of the study. Each respondent was required to submit a Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) score and after checking their TOEIC scores, only 41 individuals with intermediate English proficiency level (TOEIC scores of 500-700) were included in the study because extreme ends of learners' proficiency (e.g., low or high) might obscure the effects of different types of instruction. They were randomly assigned to one of three groups (two treatment groups and one control group). The three groups were the one instructed with referential oriented and affective oriented activities (IB) ($N = 15$), the one instructed with referential oriented activities alone (IR) ($N = 11$), and the control group ($N = 15$). The participants' first language was Japanese and their ages ranged from 18 to 40 years old. The participants had studied English from five to 25 years.

Target Structures

The studies of learners' requestive strategies indicated that non-native speakers of English typically lack the L2 knowledge to enable them to mitigate English by means of lexical/phrasal downgraders (subjectivizer and downtoner) and syntactic downgraders (aspect and tense) (House & Kasper, 1987; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Hill, 1997; Takahashi, 1998, 2001). Thus, this study focused on teaching lexical/phrasal downgraders and syntactic downgraders in English requestive forms.

Lexical/phrasal downgraders soften the imposition of a request by means of modifying the main clause internally through lexical/phrasal choices, while syntactic downgraders modify the main clause internally by means of mitigating the imposition force of a request through syntactic choices (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). A list of internal modifiers (adapted from Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989, pp. 273-186) is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. A List of Some Internal Modifiers

Some Internal modifiers	Example
Internal syntactic downgraders:	
Aspect (durative aspect marker)	I *am wondering* if you could lend me a book.
Tense	I *wanted* to ask you to come here.
Internal lexical and phrasal downgraders:	
Subjectivizer	*I wonder* if you could come here. *I'm afraid* you are going to have to move your desk.
Downtoner	Could you *possibly* lend me your textbook?

Instructional Treatments

Three groups of participants, the group instructed with referential oriented and affective oriented activities (IB), the group instructed with referential oriented activities alone (IR), and the control group, participated in three types of English language classes. Each teaching session for the two treatment groups and the control group lasted for 40 minutes and the instructor gave all directions in Japanese during the instruction. The sessions were conducted twice a week for two weeks at an English conversation school in Japan by the same instructor who was also a researcher.[1] The instructor was well experienced in teaching and participants did not know the instructor well.

The two instructional treatments were matched for target pragmatic structures and all three groups were matched for time on task. The first class for all treatment groups was spent on lexical/phrasal downgraders in English requests, the second class on syntactic downgraders, the third class on a repeat of the first class, and the fourth class on a repeat of the second class.

Instruction with referential oriented and affective oriented activities consisted of two components: (1) referential oriented activities (see Appendix) and (2) affective oriented activities (see Appendix). Each referential oriented activity lasted for eight minutes while the affective oriented activities lasted for five to six minutes. The participants were given handouts with three referential oriented activities and three affective oriented activities. In the referential oriented activities, the participants read each situation and dialogue and chose the more appropriate request form out of the two offered for each underlined part. Then, they listened to an oral recording of the dialogue and underlined the actual request. In the affective oriented activities, participants read each dialogue in the handouts and then listened to an oral recording. Participants were then asked to relate the situations to their own lives and rate the level of appropriateness of each underlined request on a five-point Likert scale.

Instruction with referential oriented activities alone consisted of just one component, engaging in the same referential oriented activities as the IB group. Each referential oriented activity lasted for about 13 minutes.

Lessons for the control group were designed to help participants perform well on the TOEIC and participants in this group engaged in TOEIC reading comprehension exercises. Participants in the control group were not exposed to the target structures at all during the lessons.

Testing Instruments and Procedures

This study used a pre-test, a post-test, and a follow-up test. The pre-test was administered two to three days prior to the instructional treatment, the post-test eight to nine days after the treatments and the follow-up test in the fourth week following instruction. Each test consisted of the acceptability judgment test (AJT), and the discourse completion test (DCT).

All situations in the two testing instruments had one speech act (request) with three sociolinguistic variables, Power (the status of the speaker with respect to the hearer), Speaker Difficulty (the difficulty that the speaker experiences when asking the hearer to perform the request), and Distance (the relationship between the speaker and the hearer), examined. The present study paid attention to situations with a high level of Speaker Difficulty (HS) combined with Power and Distance. Situations with a low level of Speaker Difficulty (LS) were added as distractors in order to increase the reliability of each instrument. The DCT and AJT consisted of 20 situations (10 HS items and 10 LS items).

The situations with a high level of Speaker Difficulty validated by Hill (1997), Hudson, Detmer, and Brown (1992, 1995) and Takahashi (1998, 2001) were modified.
Three versions (A, B, and C) of the two tests (the DCT and AJT) were developed and

counterbalanced for order of presentation of the same situations across the pre-tests, post-tests, and follow-up tests. Three versions were used so that any test learning effect would be minimized.

The pre-tests, the post-tests, and the follow-up tests were administered within an hour respectively in the following order; the DCT and AJT. The AJT was administered last because of concern that it might provide the participants with models that could be used in the DCT.

Open-ended discourse completion test (DCT). The DCT required participants to read short descriptions of 20 situations in English and write what they would say in the respective situations in English. Participants were given a Japanese translation that they could look at if they wished. The appropriateness of the request forms was rated on a five-point Likert scale by two native speakers of English. An answer that reflected mastery of downgraders in participants' requests was given five points. For example, in the HS, 1 point was given to *Please ~*, 2 points to *Can you ~?,* 3 points to *Could you ~ ?*, 4 points to *Is it possible for you ~ ?*, 5 points to *I was just wondering if it would be possible for you to ~*. As there were 10 HS items on the test, the maximum score was 100 points (50 points×two native speakers). One sample item is shown below.

> You are writing a difficult paper for Professor Hill. You need some help with the paper but Professor Hill is away for a month. A friend of yours has suggested you go and see Professor Watson. Although you do not know Professor Watson and Professor Watson is extremely busy, you have decided to ask Professor Watson to look through your long paper before you hand it in the next day. What would you ask Professor Watson? *(based on Takahashi, 1998, 2001)*
> *Note*: speaker difficulty =＋; power =－; distance =＋; ＋= more; －= less; ±= equal
>
> You: ____
> ____

Acceptability judgment test (AJT). The AJT required the participants to read English written descriptions of 20 situations with a Japanese translation. The participants received three isolated requests one at a time and they scored each one of them on an 11-point scale.[2] When a participant rated three requests appropriately in line with the degree of perceived acceptability of English native speakers, they were awarded five points and when a participant did not rate three requests appropriately, they were awarded nothing. As there were 10 HS items on the test, the maximum score was 50 points. One sample example is shown below.

Professor King at your university is a famous psychologist. You are now reading one of Professor King's books and finding it very complicated. You would like to ask Professor King some questions about the book. Professor King does not know you and Professor King is extremely busy. However, you decide to go and ask Professor King to spare you some time for some questions. What would you ask Professor King? *(based on Takahashi, 1998, 2001)*

Note: speaker difficulty =＋; power =－; distance =＋; ＋= more; －= less; ±= equal
a: I want to ask you some questions.
not appropriate at all 0—1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10 completely appropriate
b: I was wondering if it would be possible for me to ask you some questions.
not appropriate at all 0—1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10 completely appropriate
c: Could I possibly ask you some questions ?
not appropriate at all 0—1—2—3—4—5—6—7—8—9—10 completely appropriate

Reliability

Interrater reliability was estimated by examining the extent to which two raters' scores correlated with each other. The correlation coefficient for the DCT was .998, which was statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Cronbach alpha reliability estimates on average for the three test forms of the DCT and AJT were 0.952 and 0.902, showing that the internal consistency estimates for two tests were fairly high.

Validity

Content validity was examined and Table 2 indicates the variable distribution across tests. The present study was very careful about planning and matching test items to a theoretical framework involving the degree of speaker difficulty, power and distance variables.

Table 2. Distribution of Variables (Version A for the DCT and AJT)

	S4	S6	S10	S18	S2	S8	S12	S14	S16	S20	S1	S3	S5	S11	S13	S7	S9	S15	S17	S19
SD	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
P	±	±	±	±	–	–	–	–	–	–	±	±	±	±	±	+	+	+	+	+
D	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

Note: S = Situation; SD = Speaker Difficulty; P = Power; D = Distance; + = More; – = Less; ± = Equal

Results

The following section looks into the results for each testing instrument closely. The overall alpha level was set at .05, but with two group comparisons (the DCT and AJT) for one item type (HS item).

Results from discourse completion test. Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 3 and the results of a two-way ANOVA with repeated-measures show a significant main effect for Instruction (the IB and IR), F (2, 38) = 16.28, p = .000, a significant main effect for Time (the pre-test, post-test, and follow-up test), F (2, 38) = 53.76, p = .000, and a significant interaction effect between Instruction and Time, F (4, 38) = 7.74, p = .000. Figure 1 indicates that although there are no statistically significant differences among the three groups by a one-way ANOVA on the pre-test scores, F (2, 38) = 1.28, p = .290, the two treatment groups made gains from the pre-tests to the post-tests and the follow-up tests and positive effects for the three treatments were maintained, which was proved by a one-way ANOVA, F (1, 24) = .58, p = .455. In addition, the interaction reveals the relative superiority of the two treatment groups over the control group with no crossovers between the two treatment groups and the control group after the treatments. Post-hoc Scheffé tests for the main effect for treatment show the following contrasts: the IB and IR groups perform significantly better than the control group; there are no significant differences among the two treatment groups.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the DCT

	IB (N = 15)		IR (N = 11)		Control (N = 15)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pre-test	53.67	11.19	56.36	5.12	49.87	12.29
Post-test	85.00	13.33	80.09	21.20	54.33	9.55
Follow-up test	84.53	13.82	77.91	20.17	59.47	5.00

Note: Maximum score = 100.

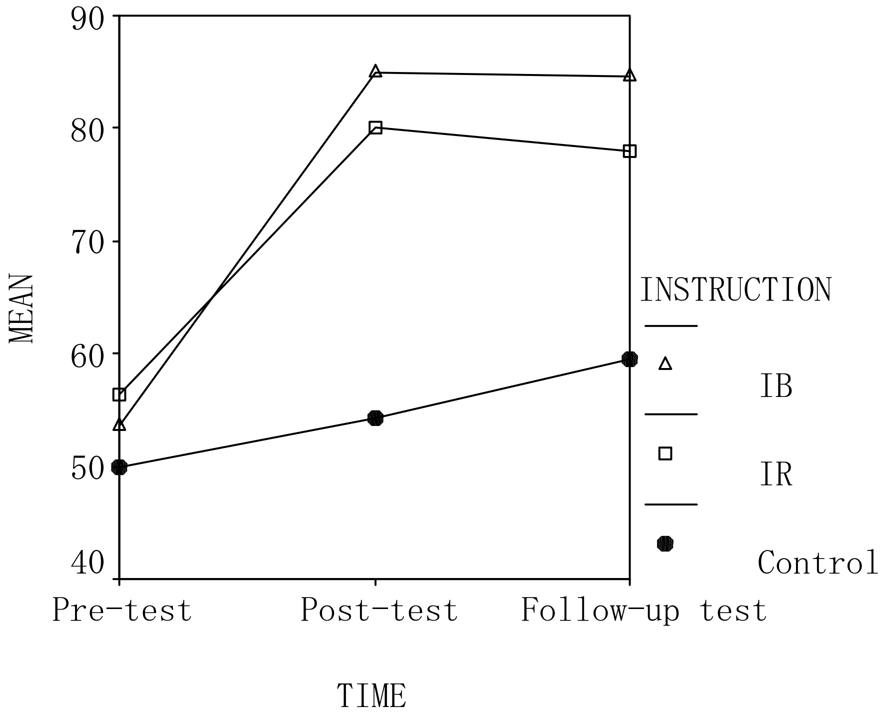

Figure 1. Interaction plot for DCT

Note: IB = Instruction with referential oriented activities and affective oriented activities; IR = Instruction with referential oriented activities alone

Results from Acceptability Judgment Test. Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 4 and the results of a two-way repeated-measures ANOVA reveal a significant main effect for Instruction, F (2, 38) = 5.24, p = .010, a significant main effect for Time, F (2, 38) = 15.40, p = .000, and a significant interaction effect between Instruction and Time, F (4, 38) = 3.21, p = .005.

The results displayed in Figure 2 indicate that although there are no statistically significant differences among the three groups by a one-way ANOVA on the pre-test scores, F (2, 38) = .35, p = .703, the two treatment groups made gains from the pre-tests to the post-tests and the follow-up tests and positive effects for the two treatments were kept, which was proved by a one-way ANOVA, F (1, 24) = .41, p = .528. Furthermore, the interaction reveals the superiority of the two treatment groups over the control group with no crossovers between the two treatment groups and the control group after the treatment. Post-hoc Scheffé tests for the main effect from treatment show the following contrasts: the IB and IR groups perform significantly better than the control group; there are no statistically significant differences among the two treatment groups.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for the AJT

	IB (n = 15)		IR (n = 11)		Control (n = 15)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Pre-test	27.33	17.10	28.64	16.29	23.67	14.33
Post-test	41.67	13.58	42.73	12.12	23.60	14.37
Follow-up test	40.00	14.01	42.73	14.72	23.53	14.42

Note: Maximum score = 50

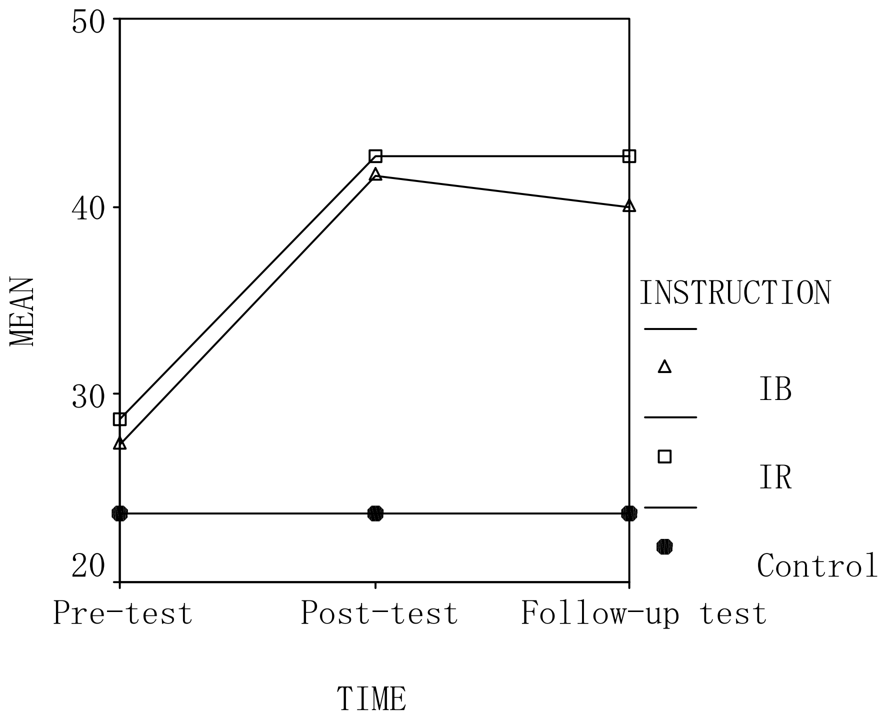

Figure 2. Interaction plot for AJT

Note: IB = Instruction with referential oriented activities and affective oriented activities; IR = Instruction with referential oriented activities alone

Discussion

The research question focused on the relative effectiveness of referential oriented activities only and referential and affective oriented activities to improve Japanese learners' English pragmatic proficiency. The participants in the IB group were provided with referential oriented and affective oriented activities during the treatment, while the participants in the IR were provided with only referential oriented activities. The results indicate that the two treatment groups performed similarly better than the control group as measured by the DCT, an output-based test and the AJT, an input-based test. Given that there is no significant difference between the two treatment groups, it seems that the referential oriented activities alone may be enough in the structured input task.

Any explanations to this result must be speculative, as no information regarding the psycholinguistic processing involved in either the treatments or the test is available. During the referential oriented activities, the IB and IR participants had to discover the rules for themselves attending to not only the relationship between forms and meanings of target features, but also the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic factors of the target structures. Wong and VanPatten (2003) suggested, when learners encounter input in structured input tasks, their internal learning mechanisms begin to make connections between the target features and the meaning that they convey. Wong and VanPatten further suggested that learners' internal mechanisms deliver data to other internal mechanisms that form the linguistic system. In short, when participants focus more on the meaning of the target feature, it stimulates their perceptual and mental processing, and they are likely to process the target form at a deeper level. Thus, it is likely that the referential oriented treatments involved greater depth of processing, resulting in improved pragmatic proficiency. In addition, the treatments in the IB and IR were repeated in view of Sharwood Smith's (1993) suggestion that an initial input enhancement will be more effective by repeated exposure. Bygate (2001) suggested that task repetition has beneficial effects on learners' performance because it leads learners to focus on message content and then to switch their attention to the selection and monitoring of appropriate language use. Therefore, it is most likely that the knowledge established through the referential oriented activities in the IB and IR had already caused learners to notice specific target features and facilitate the process of comparison between their norms and target norms appropriately, and that there were not many opportunities for the affective oriented activities in the IB treatment to adjust the way of processing specific target features. Perhaps the affective oriented activities would have had more of an impact in the IB treatment if the referential oriented activities had not been so optimal and the referential oriented activities had not been repeated.

Conclusion

The present study examines the effects of referential oriented activities alone in a structured input task. The results indicate that the referential oriented activities alone can work effectively.

The pedagogical implication then for teachers is that they should be aware that effective learning occurs even with referential oriented activities alone in the structure input task as long as the activity is optimal. It is possible, then, that the referential oriented activities in the structured input task can be repeated and their repetition can reinforce the connection of pragmalinguistic-sociopragmatic factors of target structures. Such a task may prove of great value in improving learners' pragmatic proficiency.

The present study suggests that there are several limitations that future research needs to consider. First, the number of participants in each group was small and a larger sample size might have led to increased precision in the results. Second, although the effects of referential oriented activities alone were examined, the effects of the affective oriented activities alone were not investigated. Without examining the effects of the affective oriented activities alone, we can not deny the necessity of the affective oriented activities in the structured input task. Therefore, it is necessary to look into the effects of the affective oriented activities alone by comparing the referential oriented activities alone with the affective oriented activities alone.

Even with these shortcomings, the present study has made a contribution to our understanding that an effective way of teaching English pragmatics directly leads to a positive outcome especially in a Japanese EFL context, and that the task could be conducted effectively in a monocomponential manner rather than in a polycomponential manner in teaching L2 pragmatics.

Notes

[1] In behavioral research, researcher expectancy can be a problem when the researcher teaches and select experimental groups. The researcher followed the instructional guidelines rigidly controlled for the effect with the double-blind technique after the data were collected in order to minimize any researcher expectancy effect during the treatments.

[2] The AJT used an 11-point Likert scale. According to Hatch and Lazarton (1991), a broader range in scale encourages more precision in respondents' judgments.

References

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

Bygate, M. (2001). Effects of task repetition on the structure and control of oral language. In M. Bygate, P. Skehan, & M. Swain (Eds.), *Researching pedagogic tasks in second language learning, teaching and testing* (pp. 23- 48). London: Longman.

Ellis, R. (1997). *SLA research and language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Faerch, C., & Kasper, G. (1989). Internal and external modification in interlanguage request realization. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies*, (pp. 221-247). Norwood, NJ: Albex.

Fukuya, Y., & Clark, M. (1999). Input enhancement of mitigators. In L. Bouton (Ed.), *Pragmatics and language learning*, monograph series Vol. 10 (pp. 111-130). Urbana-Champaign: Division of English as an International Language, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Fukuya, Y., & Zhang, Y. (2002). Effects of recasts on EFL learners' acquisition of pragmalinguistic conventions of request. *Second Language Studies, 21*, 1-47.

Hatch, E., & Lazaraton, A. (1991). *The research manual: Design and statistics for applied linguistics.* Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Hill, T. (1997). *The development of pragmatic competence in an EFL context.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Temple University, Japan.

House, J., & Kasper, G. (1987). Interlanguage pragmatics: Requesting in a foreign language. In W. Loerscher & R. Schulze (Eds.), *Perspectives on language in performance,* (pp. 1250-1288). Tübingen: Narr.

Hudson, T., Detmer, E., & Brown, J. (1992). *A framework for testing cross-cultural pragmatics* (Technical Report #2). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Hudson, T., Detmer, E., & Brown, J. (1995). Developing prototypic measures of cross-cultural pragmatics (Technical Report #7). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Jeon, E., & Kaya, T. (2006). Effects of L2 instruction on interlanguage pragmatic development: A meta-analysis. In J. Norris & L. Ortega (Eds.), *Synthesizing research on language learning and teaching* (pp. 165-211). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Lyster, R. (1994). The effect of functional-analytic teaching on aspects of French immersion students' sociolinguistic competence. *Applied Linguistics, 15*, 263-287.

Rose, K., & Ng, C. (2001). Inductive and deductive teaching of compliments and compliment responses. In K. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 145-170), New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sharwood Smith, M. (1993). Input enhancement in instructed SLA: Theoretical bases. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 15*,165-179.

Takahashi, S. (1998). Quantifying requestive imposition: Validation and selection of situation for L2 pragmatic research. *Studies in Languages and Cultures, 9*, 135-159. Institute of Language and Cultures, Kyushu University.

Takahashi, S. (2001). The role of input enhancement in developing interlanguage pragmatic competence. In K. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 171-199). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Takahashi, S. (2005). Noticing in task performance and learning outcomes: A qualitative analysis of instructional effects in interlanguage pragmatics. *System, 33*, 437-461.

Takimoto, M. (2006a). The effects of explicit feedback on the development of pragmatic proficiency. *Language Teaching Research, 10*, 393-417.

Takimoto, M. (2006b). The effects of explicit feedback and form-meaning processing on the development of pragmatic proficiency in consciousness-raising tasks, *System*, *34*, 601-614.
Tateyama, Y. (2001). Explicit and implicit teaching of pragmatic routines: Japanese *sumimasen*. In K. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 200-222). New York: Cambridge University Press.
Tateyama, Y., Kasper, G., Mui, L., Tay, H., & Thananart, O. (1997). Explicit and implicit teaching of pragmatic routines. In L. Bouton (Ed.), *Pragmatics and language learning,* monograph series Vol. 8 (pp. 163-178). Urbana-Champaign, IL: Division of English as an International Language, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
VanPatten, B. (1996). *Input processing and grammar instruction in second language acquisition*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
VanPatten, B., & Cadierno, T. (1993). Explicit instruction and input processing. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 15*, 225-243.
Witten, C. (2000). Using video to teach for sociolinguistic competence in the foreign language classroom. *Texas Papers in Foreign Language Education* 5, 143-175. (Eric Document Reproduction Service No. ED468314).
Wong, W. (2004). The nature of processing instruction. In B. VanPatten (Ed.), *Processing instruction* (pp. 33-63). Mahwah,NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
Wong, W., & VanPatten, B. (2003*).* The evidence is IN: Drills are OUT. *Foreign Language Annals 36*, 403-423.

APPENDIX: EXAMPLES OF REFERENTIAL AND AFFECTIVE ORIENTED ACTIVITY

Referential activity: Read the following situation and the dialogue and choose the more appropriate request form out of two offered for each underlined part and indicate your choice by circling '(a)' or '(b)'. Then, listen to an oral recording of the dialogue and indicate whether the actual request used in the dialogue is '(a)' or '(b)'.
Situation: Yuka is about to start her car when she notices that her car battery has gone flat. She needs to go to school now and she does not have any other means but to ask her landlord<u>, Mr. Brown, whom she has never spoken to before,</u> to give her a ride to school. <u>Her landlord is extremely busy</u>, but she decides to ask her landlord to drive her to school.

Brown: Hello.
Yuka: Hi, you are Mr. Brown, aren't you?
Brown: That's right.
Yuka: I'm a tenant next door. My car battery has just gone flat and I can't start my car. I really need to get to school. <u>**1. (a) I was just wondering if I could by any chance get a lift; (b) I am just wondering if I could by any chance get a lift.**</u>

Brown:	Well, actually, I am really busy helping other tenants moving into this apartment. So, I can't really help you.
Yuka:	I understand, but it's important that I get to school today because I have exams.
Brown:	Tell you what. I've got my mobile phone. Why don't you call a taxi company?

Affective activity: Read the following situation and the dialogue and answer the following questions.

Situation: John is living in an apartment. He is extremely busy working on his assignment, but he needs to send a big parcel to England today**.** <u>His landlady, Mrs. Taylor, whom he has never spoken to before, is extremely busy,</u> but he decides to ask his landlady to send the big parcel. John sees the landlady.

John:	Hi, you are Mrs. Taylor, aren't you?
Taylor:	That's right.
John:	Hello. My name is John.
Taylor:	Oh, you are the tenant.
John:	Yes. I live next door.
Taylor:	How is it going?
John:	Pretty good, thank you. I'm very busy working on my assignment. **<u>1. I wondered if I could possibly ask you a favor.</u>**
Taylor:	What's the favor?
John:	I need to send this big parcel to England today and **<u>2. I was wondering if it would be possible for you to take it into town.</u>**
Taylor:	It's quite big, isn't it?
John:	Yes, It's quite large. Usually I would do it myself, but since I need to turn in the assignment today, I won't be able to do so.
Taylor:	I understand.

Indicate the appropriateness level of the four underlined requests from your point of view on the scale below.

1. very unsatisfactory 1—2—3—4—5 completely appropriate
2. very unsatisfactory 1—2—3—4—5 completely appropriate

SHORT REPORTS AND SUMMARIES

POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THESIS SUB-GENRES: THE CASE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW.

John Bitchener & Madeline Banda

AUT University

Introduction

For the last ten to fifteen years, a growing literature has reported on issues that native speaking and non-native speaking postgraduate students experience when writing their first thesis or dissertation in English. In many respects the issues are not new; anecdotal evidence from thesis supervisors has been reported for decades and students have been equally forthcoming with concerns about not knowing exactly what is required of them at various stages of the writing process. However, only in recent times have these concerns been documented in the published literature (see, for example, Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Casanave & Hubbard, 1992; Cooley & Lewkowicz, 1995, 1997; Dong, 1998). A wide range of issues have been identified: uncertainty about what content to include in the various sections or chapters of the thesis (content parameters); uncertainty about how to organize the content (rhetorical structure); uncertainty about what stance, voice, style or register are appropriate (linguistic/discourse strategies).

To some, it is surprising that students experience difficulty in these areas, given that most have completed a research methods course, had access to practitioner advice in the form of supervisor guidance, handbooks and guides on how to write a successful thesis or had access to research articles in their field where a micro version of thesis components can be observed. Because the genre requirements of different chapters and sections vary, it is important to discover what level of understanding graduate students have of the various sub-genre functions. If their level of understanding of the functions is limited, their level of understanding of the rhetorical patterning of discourse moves that will enable them to achieve the specific functions of each sub-genre is also likely to be limited. Consequently, they will experience difficulty when it comes to writing up each sub-genre.

In spite of extensive research into the discourse features of journal articles and some attention to those characteristic of thesis sub-genres (e.g. Dudley-Evans, 1986; Swales, 2004), the extent to which students in the early stages of the research and supervision process possess a clear understanding of the requirements of each sub-genre of the thesis is an under-researched area in the literature. However, one recent study (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006) investigated the level of understanding that a group of postgraduate thesis students had of the functions of a discussion of results section. The students revealed both a limited understanding and a limited shared understanding with their supervisors of the range of functions that were referred to by their supervisors. Apart from this study, we are not aware of similar or other investigations in the literature or of any attempt to measure the level and depth of knowledge that students bring to the writing of the various sub-genres of the thesis. To address this gap, this paper reports on the preliminary findings from one tertiary context as part of an on-going international study of the extent to which graduate students understand the functions of one section of a thesis -- the literature review. The participants were asked to respond in as many ways as they could to a written questionnaire about the functions of a thesis literature review before taking part in a seminar on how to write a successful review. The question that they were asked to respond to was designed to investigate the ***level*** and ***depth*** of knowledge that students who were either about to start writing a thesis literature review or who were part way through the writing process had of the functions of a literature review. ***Level*** of understanding refers to knowledge of four main functions (review of published literature, critique of literature, identification of research gap, informing of proposed research) and ***depth*** of understanding refers to understanding of the discourse moves/subsidiary functions of each main function. Not reported in this paper, the wider study will also examine whether or not there is an effect for individual and group variables (demographic factors and past experience) on such knowledge.

In order to evaluate the level and depth of knowledge reported by students, it is necessary to compare such knowledge against the expectations of supervisors. The most frequently mentioned purpose by supervisors has been a justification of a proposed research project, including how it will be different to that which has been published (Cresswell, 2003; Peters, 1997; Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Hart (1998, 2001) adds that a literature review presents an argument for the intended study and forms part of the process in which the researcher learns about the topic and the field. He continues by identifying five specific functions. First, it identifies work already done and, in particular, that which is relevant to the proposed study. Second, it prevents one from duplicating work that has already been published. Shortcomings in previous research can also be identified as one reviews previous studies. Against this background, the researcher can use design and methodological detail from other work in the field to inform the proposed study. Finally, Hart suggests that a literature review enables one to locate a gap in the existing literature and thereby provides a justification for carrying out the intended investigation. In the following study, we categorized the various functions identified by the student participants according to four main functions: (1) to review the available literature; (2) to critique this literature base; (3) to identify a gap in the research literature; (4) to inform the design and direction of the proposed study.

The Study

Participants

Thirty seven postgraduate students from a university in Auckland, New Zealand, participated in the study. Nineteen described themselves as native speakers of English and 18 as non-native speakers of English. Three students from the Health and Environmental Sciences Faculty took part in the seminar compared with nine students from the Business Faculty, 12 from the Design and Creative Technologies Faculty and 13 from the Applied Humanities Faculty. The 22 female and 15 male participants came from a wide age grouping: 14 were in the 20-30 age bracket, nine in the 30-40 and 40-50 age groupings and five were 50 years or over. Registration details for participation in the seminar asked students to indicate their level of prior experience in writing a literature review. Thirteen reported no experience and 24 some experience. Of those who claimed to have written a review in the past, eight indicated that they had written fewer than 2000 words while six said they had written 2000 - 4000 words and a further four indicated they had written 4000 - 6000 words. The remaining four who reported that their literature reviews had exceeded 6000 words were students who had already completed a master's thesis and who were now starting a doctoral thesis.

Data collection

Before participants in the study took part in a seminar on the writing of a thesis literature review, they were asked to write down as many ideas that they could think of concerning the function(s) of a thesis literature review. They were given 20 minutes to do this and then their answers were collected.

Data analysis

The functions identified by each participant were categorized by the primary researcher according to each of the four main functions referred to above. The responses for each of these main functions were further categorized according to a range of subsidiary functions mentioned by the participants. The second researcher completed an inter-rater reliability check on the categorizations. The initial rate of agreement was 91%. The other 9% was then re-analysed and categorized by both researchers together until 100% agreement was reached.

The frequency with which participants identified each of the four main functions was calculated and a Chi Square test was chosen as the appropriate statistic for revealing any statistically significant differences between the four functional groups. The depth of understanding that the participants demonstrated within each of the four main functional categories was further investigated. Based on content analysis of responses given to the research question, a list of subsidiary functions for each of the four main functions was compiled and the frequency of reference to each was calculated.

The third stage of the analysis, to be undertaken when all the data from the wider study has been collected, will examine whether or not there is any effect for group variables (first language, faculty, gender, age and prior experience) on the main and subsidiary categories.

Results and discussion

Considering the four main functional categories of a literature review, 34 of the of the 37 participants (92%) mentioned the importance of reviewing the published literature, 11 (30%) explained that a critical assessment of the literature is important, 19 (51%) identified the need to identify a research gap in the literature, and eight (22%) referred to the role of the literature review for informing the design and direction of a new project.

The Chi Square test revealed statistically significant differences between the four categories ($X^2 = 22.5556$; df = 3; p = .00004). In particular, Table 1 below reveals that these differences exist between category one (review of literature) and category two (critique of literature) and between category one (review of literature) and category four (inform proposed project).

Table 1 95% confidence intervals for differences in function categories

	Critique lit	**Identify gap**	**Inform project**
Review lit	0.095, 0.544 *	-0.05, 0.467	0.152, 0.57 *
Critique lit		-0.309, 0.087	-0.118, 0.201
Identify gap			-0.032, 0.337

We were not surprised to find that a high proportion of the participants understood that a literature review should review the published literature. After all, the very title 'literature review' reveals this primary function. On the other hand, it was a little surprising that only half of the participants identified the need to identify a gap in the published research. There is a possibility that some of the participants may have not been consciously thinking of the literature review as a thesis literature review but rather focusing their attention on defining what it means to review a body of literature for other more general purposes. We suspect that in an interview situation, where prompting is possible, a greater number of participants would be forthcoming with this function. Thus, this result does not necessarily mean that half of the participants were unaware of the ultimate need to use the reviewed literature to identify a gap in the published research.

The second part of the investigation looked at the depth of understanding that the participants had of what was involved in the four main functional categories. For category one (review of published literature), the depth of understanding across the group of participants (highlighted in bold text) and the extent to which each of the subsidiary functions was identified by individual participants are shown in Table 2 below.

From these responses, we can see that most of the students realized the need to summarize the published literature but that only just over half mentioned the need to synthesize the material. That more students mentioned the importance of identifying the research that has been published than those who referred to the need to identify the theoretical perspectives underpinning the body of identified research was not particularly surprising as the theoretical basis for small-scale research projects that some of the students may have been involved in is often underplayed in comparison with a reporting on the findings of available research studies. This observation emphasises the need for courses and supervisors to articulate the central role of theoretical perspectives when contextualizing a proposed study.

Table 2 Review published literature subsidiary functions

	N = 37	**%**
1. to identify **relevant theories**	**9**	**24**
2. to identify the **research** in the field	**22**	**59**
3. to **summarize** the literature (theory & research)	**31**	**84**
4. to **synthesize** the literature (theory & research)	**21**	**57**

Four subsidiary functions for category two (critique of published literature) were identified. The depth of understanding and extent to which each subsidiary function was identified by individual participants is revealed in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Critique published literature subsidiary functions

	N = 37	**%**
1. to identify the **arguments for** theories/ideas	**12**	**32**
2. to identify the **arguments against** theories/ideas	**10**	**27**
3. to **assess/weigh up** the value of research **claims**	**16**	**43**
4. to **assess/weigh up** the value of research **design & method**	**4**	**11**

It can be seen that the students were less aware of the role of the literature review in critiquing the published literature. Fewer than half mentioned the need to assess or weigh up the value or importance of claims that have been made in the theoretical and empirical components of the literature review. Just over a quarter mentioned the role of the review in identifying arguments for and against the theories, ideas and claims that have been published. An even smaller proportion saw the literature review as having a role in assessing or weighing up the value of the research designs and methods employed in the published research. Overall, these responses reveal a rather impoverished understanding of one of the literature review's four primary functions. It is important, therefore, to acquaint students not only with this important primary function but also with its subsidiary functions.

Three subsidiary functions for category three (identify literature gap) were referred to. The depth of understanding and extent to which each subsidiary function was mentioned by individual participants is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4 Identify literature gap subsidiary functions

	N = 37	%
1. to identify **where the gap** in **knowledge** lies	**7**	**19**
2. to determine **where the gap** in **research** lies	**14**	**38**
3. to identify what areas have only been **partially researched**	**11**	**30**

It was surprising that less than half of the students specifically wrote about the need to identify the gap(s) in the published literature. Reflecting on this, we concluded that earlier understanding or experience in writing literature reviews may not have included the writing of a rationale and research questions for a proposed study.

Five subsidiary functions for category four (inform proposed research) were suggested by the participants. The depth of understanding and extent to which each subsidiary function was offered is revealed in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Inform proposed research subsidiary functions

	N = 37	%
1. to provide a **rationale** (importance & significance) for proposed research	**17**	**46**
2. to provide a **direction/plan** for proposed research	**3**	**8**
3. to provide a clear **focus for research question(s)**	**9**	**24**
4. to provide **guidance** for an appropriate **design & methodology**	**2**	**5**
5. to provide **background/context** for proposed research	**5**	**14**

A range of subsidiary functions were identified by the students but the depth of group understanding was not revealed at the individual level. Just over a third mentioned the role of the literature review for informing a proposed study -- a finding which is consistent with the proportion of students who saw the literature review having a role in identifying a research gap.

Considering the subsidiary functions of the literature review as a whole, the depth of understanding across the group was considerable but, at the individual level, it was less impressive and highlights the specific subsidiary functions that need to be focused on before students commence their literature search and when they start reviewing it for their thesis.

Conclusion

It is clear from even these preliminary findings, that there is a need for explicit teaching about the various functions of a literature review before students embark upon the task. If students are not able to consciously articulate what the main functions are, they are going to experience considerable difficulty in knowing what discourse moves are necessary and what their rhetorical structure should be when they start writing their review. Thesis supervisors would be unwise to assume that their students have a particular level and depth of knowledge. Discussions between both would seem to be essential not only as students are carrying out a literature search but also as they start writing their review of the literature. Because there is often a difference between what students can articulate and then achieve in practice, it is important that on-going research in this area examine completed literature review texts to see whether the application of knowledge reveals a similar, lesser or greater level and depth of understanding to that revealed in self-report data.

References

Bitchener, J. & Basturkmen, H. (2006). Perceptions of the difficulties of postgraduate L2 thesis students writing the discussion section. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 5*, 4-18.

Casanave, C., & Hubbard, P. (1992). The writing assignments and writing problems of doctoral students: Faculty perceptions, pedagogical issues, and needed research. *English for Specific Purposes*, *11*, 33-49.

Cooley, L. & Lewkowicz, J. (1995). The writing needs of graduate students at the University of Hong Kong: A project report. *Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching, 18*, 121-123.

Cooley, L. & Lewkowicz, J. (1997). Developing awareness of the rhetorical and linguistic conventions of writing a thesis in English: Addressing the needs of ESL/EFL postgraduate students. In A. Duszak (Ed.), *Culture and styles of academic discourse* (pp. 113-140). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Dudley-Evans, T. (1986). Genre analysis: An investigation of the Introduction and Discussion sections of MSc dissertations. In M. Coulthard (Ed.), *Talking about text*. (English Language Research, University of Birmingham), Discourse Analysis Monographs No 13.

Cresswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Dong, Y. (1998). Non-native graduate students' thesis/dissertation writing in science: Self-reports by students and their advisors from two US institutions. *English for Specific Purposes*, *17*, 369-390.

Hart, C. (1998). *Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination.* London: Sage Publications.

Hart, C. (2001). *Doing a literature search: A comprehensive guide for the social sciences.* London: Sage Publications.

Peters, R. (1997). *Getting what you came for.* New York: Noonday.

Rudestam, K. & Newton, R. (2001). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Swales, J. (2004). *Research genres: Exploration and applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

REVIEWS

Snow, D. (2006). *More than a native speaker.* Alexandria, VA: TESOL Inc. ISBN: 9781931185325.

In parts of Asia, trained local teachers have told me that an untrained native speaker of English, who can do no more than speak English, can be hired at a rate higher than theirs. Not surprisingly, this can lead to resentment. The original edition's readership of volunteer teachers is now broadened to include any who are teaching without professional training. The premise of the 363-page *More than a native speaker* is that this need not mean being unprofessional.

The first of the four sections, "Preparing to Teach", includes more than the predictable topics of lesson and course planning. Its six chapters also offer principles of language learning and issues relating to evaluation. The second section, "Aspects of English Teaching", has the traditional skills chapters as well as one on teaching culture and another described as "A troubleshooter's guide to the classroom". This addresses problems of large classes, discipline and too much or too little class participation. The two chapters of Part 3 are about adapting to the host culture and becoming a professional. These three sections make up about two thirds of the book. From here on, Snow adds a series of appendices, all highly practical, titles for further reading, Internet resources for learners and teachers, and a list of references.

Snow takes nothing for granted. He comments on this attention to detail early in the book. "This questionnaire may seem a bit excessive, but I have chosen to be thorough at the risk of seeming a touch fanatic" (p. 24). With his particular readership in mind the Further Reading section is more user friendly than the traditional alphabetical order of authors' surnames. Lists are divided up under headings people might think of looking for, such as 'collections of activities' or 'culture and intercultural communication'. A few of these are asterisked and have a short explanatory note. My own preference would have been to find an index as well, but new teachers might find that the very explicit chapter titles make this unnecessary. There are none of the catchy word play section headings that writers of books for teachers often enjoy inventing.

Another feature that will make the book popular for beginners is the amount of material that is ready-to-go. Some, including the whole of Chapter 6 – a set of sample course plans – will save hours of work. Lesson planning is another consumer of new teachers' out-of-class life. Turn to Chapter 5 for ideas. I can think of groups of teachers, not all of them volunteers, who would appreciate the several pages of goals (objectives, outcomes) in Appendix A and the almost 100 pages of "culture-topic activity ideas for oral skills classes" in Appendix B. I particularly liked those which put the student in the role of informant, such as offering the teacher advice on safe cycling on crowded streets and on culturally acceptable ways of turning down invitations to a banquet.

The first page of each chapter has a few underlying beliefs in point form. In Chapter 13 on teaching culture, these include a brief, non-technical definition, a rationale for including culture in language classes, a caveat about making generalisations and a warning that students might have “mixed feelings about Western culture” (p. 203). Chapters conclude with a section “for thought, discussion and action”. Unlike books for professionals, these do not depend on the reader being part of a pre- or in-service group. Many of the prompts are designed for solo thoughts, although a few do mention talking with friends.

Snow’s advice goes beyond the lesson content. Culture shock, or as he prefers to call it, culture fatigue needs to be taken into account when people are cut off from their normal support systems. Reading this section made me think that having experienced this ‘fatigue’ could be a useful apprenticeship for teaching refugees and immigrants later in one’s own country. Not all the angst is inevitable, though. His experience has provided him with many examples of how ‘foreigners’ manage as teachers in Asia. People can detract from their teaching by flouting local norms or they can add to it by learning students’ names early on. This latter would be particularly commendable with a class size of up to 50.

The advice may be basic and practical, but there is a solid theoretical base that experienced teachers will recognise and which is evident in the list of references. These cover a range of resources from the past twenty years.

Snow is quite clear that his starting point is as an American teacher and that his main area of expertise is China. As this review has aimed to show, this should not stop other nationalities from finding the material more widely applicable. Each year many New Zealand graduates, and a few at the other end of life, head to Asia to combine travelling and teaching. My suggestion would be for booksellers to include it in whatever section these travellers visit on their way to the airport.

MARILYN LEWIS, THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

Trask, L. (2007). *Trask's Historical Linguistics,* revised by Robert McColl Millar. London: Hodder Arnold. ISBN: 97-803409276-56.

Larry Trask, internationally recognised authority on the Basque language and very well respected historical linguist, passed away tragically in late March, 2004. Less than ten months later, the discipline lost Terry Crowley, Professor at the University of Waikato, who died suddenly after a brief but virulent attack of malaria. What unites these two figures is that they left two of the perhaps three or four best modern introductions to Historical Linguistics, the study of language change and language families (Trask, 1996; Crowley, 1997).

The present book is a revision of Trask (1996) by Robert McColl Millar, University of Aberdeen, a widely published historical linguist in his own right. The revision consists primarily in updating some chapters including examples. Within a mere eleven years, developments that Trask (1996) reported as new and salient had become distinctly dated. Millar has been able to include examples and discussion from his own areas, especially the history of his own dialect of Scots. He has also removed some contentious material out of place in a broad introductory text.

The discipline of Historical Linguistics is concerned with the intersection of language and time: the types of change which occur in all components of a language, sound system, grammar, vocabulary; what happens when languages are in various types of contact; the rise of 'new languages'; the spread of language families, the reconstruction of earlier stages of languages. This book provides an extremely readable treatment of all these. It is directed primarily at tertiary students of Linguistics, and presupposes some basic ideas of language analysis. However, the style and detail of explanation is such that any interested general reader would follow it. At the same time, nothing is simplified for the sake of readability, and the book is a treasure trove of fascinating examples of language change and linguistic methods. These are always clearly elucidated.

As well as containing numerous international examples, each chapter ends with a case study. This might be a thorough dissection of the subject of that chapter. Following this section are several exercises, usually sets of data from a wide range of languages. These invite the reader to try out what has been presented in the chapter.

The twelve chapters of the book are arranged in the conventional order, dealing with aspects of language change (six chapters), then passing to the notion of language families and the relatedness of languages, along with the methods used by historical linguists to explore earlier stages of a language's history (three chapters). The insights into the process of change provided by recent developments in Sociolinguistics, the study of language variation, are particularly well presented (chapter 10). So too are the social and historical factors to which languages are subjected and which can lead to language loss, mutual influence of neighbouring languages, and even the rise of new languages. The book concludes with a discussion of what Historical Linguistics can contribute to the general study of Prehistory, by providing clues as to the homeland, culture and movements of the speakers of the ancestral languages of related groups. In this context, Trask and Millar concentrate particularly on Indo-European, the family to which nearly all languages of Europe along with many in South Asia belong.

Unfortunately the otherwise excellent quality of the book is marred by minor errors, occasionally of fact, but mostly or proofreading. Some of these are in Trask (1996), but one or two more have been introduced in the revision. For instance, the Hittite empire is dated to the first millennium BC, instead of the second (p. 233). Tok Pisin, the English-based creole used widely in Papua-New Guinea, is described as arising through the needs of this extremely multilingual state, whereas its history in fact should be tied in with the general rise of Pacific creoles, including Bislama (Vanuatu) and neo-Solomonic (Solomon Islands) which began life in the plantations of Queensland in the 19th century.

Proofreading mistakes include the spelling of 'Niuean' as 'Nieuan' (p. 201), and misconfigurations of Maori (p. 328). On p. 110, in the chart plotting the shifts in the Greek vowel system, the symbol halfway up the right hand side should be 'o:', not 'a:'.

These few points notwithstanding, I can heartily recommend this book to anyone interested in language and languages, and the way they change and spread.

References

Crowley, T. (1997). *An introduction to Historical Linguistics* (3rd ed.). Auckland: Oxford University Press.

Trask, L. (1996). *Historical Linguistics*. London: Hodder Arnold.

RAY HARLOW, UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO

Pahl, K., & Rowsell, J., Eds. (2006). *Travel notes from the new literacy studies*: *Instances of practice*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters. ISBN: 1-85359-861-6 (pbk)

It is not a surprise that the theme of Literacies and Learners was chosen for the 2007 ALANZ Symposium. Academic research and theorising in literacy have burgeoned since the 1980s, with more recent influences on applied linguistics growing in the past decade. For those with a new interest in the field, *Travel notes from the new literacy studies* brings together several major current themes in engaging and accessible ways. For those more familiar with literacy issues, the book offers an integrated perspective on two previously discrete research conversations: multimodal literacies and social practice theories of literacy (namely New Literacy Studies (NLS)). But it also deals with literacy pedagogy, ethnographic approaches to research (all the chapters are ethnographies), and local and global issues in literacies.

Gunther Kress and Brian Street's forward sets the stage. It first reminds us about the different scope and focus of the two approaches. While the NLS is concerned with how literacy is meaningfully practiced across various dynamic social environments, multimodality is concerned with forms of literacy, the possibilities they present for users, and the ways they interact. It then sets the focus of the book on the complementarity of NLS and multimodality. Kress and Street identify several questions addressed in *Travel notes*: the cultural technologies at play in current times, the ways they interact, the possibilities they open up or close down for readers and writers, and the roles of academics in these developments. Each subsequent chapter reports on research that picks up these questions.

Identities and literacy practices with current electronic technologies are the subject of the four opening chapters. These focus on the ways that families with young children, young people and bloggers make use of the Internet to establish and maintain their identities, social positioning, and social relationships. Marsh's chapter, "Children's Engagement in Digital Literacy", tells how the lives of even preschool children are embedded in popular media culture and new technologies, and Marsh illustrates the increasingly indistinct boundaries between local and global and public and private domains in these children's family life. Alvermann and Davies focus on adolescent identities and the Internet. Alvermann uses data from a tutor-student email discussion that shows how a fourteen year old with "low literacy" used his extensive Internet knowledge to interact with the tutor on an equal footing. From this Alvermann challenges the popular notion of subordinate, "not-yet-adults". In her research on Wiccan girls, Davies maintains that the "Internet allows youngsters to remain physically within the home yet reside with friends experimenting with a sense of independence" (p.69). And finally, in this section, Knobel and Lankshear explore notions of power and effectiveness of influential blogging, which compare less than favourably with school attempts to adopt blogging practices.

The research in several chapters explores multimodal literacy practices in home and school settings, many of which resonate with earlier studies of literacy such as Dyson (1997), Heath (1983), Wells (1985) and many others. Moreover some of the central issues remain at the fore, such as the mismatch between home and school literacy practices, the relevance of school curricula to children's lives and interests, and access to dominant literacy practices by marginalised minorities. One example is Stein and Slonimsky's case study of literacy practices in three South African families with young daughters. It shows how different family circumstances, values and traditions relate to different, multimodal ways (e.g. oral, graphic, and print) of teaching their daughters literacy and language, which "develop particular orientations towards the future" (p. 143). Together with each family's material resources, these different literacy practices offer unequal pathways to each girl's achievement of her potential in the broader society. In other words, it is not just proficiency in particular modes of literacy that affect people's life chances, but the values, orientations, interactions – i.e. the practices and meanings of literacy – and access to other resources, together, that shape those chances.

Local and global literacies and the concept of literacies "crossing" to other sites are incorporated throughout the chapters (e.g., Marsh, Knobel and Lankshear, Nichols, Rowsell, and the afterward by Brandt and Clinton, as well as those in the section titled "Multimodal Literacy Practices in Local and Global Spaces"). This theme is treated in several ways. One is the increasingly blurred distinction between local and global and the ways that people exploit technologies and global cultures in their own literacy practices and social positioning. Another is the effects of global discourses and values that are integrated, analysed and taken up, or not, in local, situated classroom or home literacy practices and pedagogies. Marsh's and Janks and Comber's chapters illustrate the point. Both Nichols' and Rowsell's chapters provide examples of how globalised corporate pedagogies are inserted into classrooms. Kell's chapter, however, offers a comprehensively theorised perspective. Kell questions the idea that literacy can travel to other contexts, and in fact questions the local/global duality. Rather, in a carefully constructed argument, she claims that it is the meanings of literacy that cross to other contexts, and the local practices and discourses of those sites influence the "legibility" of the "recontextualised" texts.

Travel notes from the new literacy studies surpasses the aim stated in the editors' introduction "to mediate social practice with communicational networks to have an informed perspective on contemporary literacy education" (p. 1). It presents a rich variety of perspectives on multimodality; situated practice; literacies in communities, homes and schools; the local and global; literacy and identity; approaches to ethnography; power and inequality in education; and teaching and learning. It is both accessible and thought-provoking for readers in literacy and language education.

References

Dyson, A. (1997). *Writing superheroes: Contemporary childhood, pop culture and classroom literacy*. New York: Teachers College press.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words. Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wells, G. (1985). *Language, learning and education: Language at home and at school* (2nd ed.). Windsor, UK: NFER-Nelson.

JUDY HUNTER, MASSEY UNIVERSITY, AUCKLAND

Ellis, R. (Ed.) (2005). *Planning and task performance in a second language.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. ISBN: 9027219621.

Planning and task performance in a second language, edited by Rod Ellis and published in 2005, is the eleventh volume in the John Benjamins Language Learning and Language Teaching Series. In this book, Ellis brings together a series of empirical studies investigating different aspects of planning as a task implementation variable. Despite the fact that other books on task-based language learning (e.g. Bygate, Skehan & Swain, 2001; Ellis, 2003) have included or reviewed studies on task-based planning, this is the first book that focuses specifically on this task implementation variable.

According to Ellis's preface, planning as a task implementation variable is relevant for SLA researchers, teachers and testers. As for SLA researchers, Ellis points out that planning provides a window to look at SLA from the perspective of information processing theories. As for language teachers and testers, Ellis highlights the fact that planning is a task implementation variable that can be manipulated in language teaching and testing.

The book is divided in six sections. The first section is the introduction in which Ellis considers three theoretical frameworks grounding the study of planning:

1. Tarone's 1983 account of stylistic variation,
2. Models of speech production and writing,
3. Cognitive models of L2 performance and learning.

Ellis focuses on three constructs which these theoretical frameworks draw upon, namely, attention and noticing, a limited working memory capacity, and focus on form. In addition, Ellis also reviews previous studies on planning and draws some general conclusions from these studies.

Section 2 consists of one chapter presenting a study by Martin Bygate and Virginia Samuda. These authors report on a study of integrative planning through the use of task repetition. In most studies of planning production is measured in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity. However, Bygate and Samuda emphasise the importance of focusing on discourse properties as well through the use of qualitative analysis.

Section 3 comprises three chapters. In the first chapter, Lourdes Ortega reports on a study which focuses on what learners do when they plan. In the second chapter, Jiraporn Sangarum reposts on a study investigating the impact of focusing on meaning and form during strategic planning. In the third chapter of the section, Chieko Kawauchi reports on a study that focuses on individual differences in proficiency level within the effects of planning on L2 performance.

Section 4's two chapters focus on the construct of on-line planning. In the first chapter, Rod Ellis and Yuan Fangyuan report on a study examining the effects of on-line planning on written and oral L2 performance. In this study, on-line planning is operationalised in terms of time pressure. In the second chapter, Peter Skehan and Pauline Foster's report focuses on pre-task and on-line planning by scrutinising the effects of surprise information and time on task. These authors also suggest other repair fluency measures of performance in order to clearly distinguish between rapid and careful on-line planning.

Section 5 focuses entirely on planning in language testing in its two chapters. First, Catherine Elder and Noriko Iwashita report on a study focusing on the effects of planning on testing performance of narrative tasks and on learners' perceptions of task complexity. Second, Parvaneh Tavakoli and Peter Skehan report on a study that set out to investigate the effects of task structure, strategic planning and proficiency level on test performance. Based on the results, these authors raise an interesting issue as regards the roles of strategic planning and proficiency level on performance, suggesting that strategic planning will enhance fluency regardless of proficiency levels, whereas for accuracy and complexity there might be limits of strategic planning benefits beyond which it is proficiency level that will play a greater role.

Finally, in section 6's one chapter, Rob Batstone provides a tentative critique on the predominant planning research paradigm (cognitive) and views learners in terms of information processing theory. According to Batstone, learners' educational histories exert strong influences on the way they approach learning and on their learning potentials, thus, may influence the way learners benefit from planning as well. In this sense, Batstone makes claims for a view of attention within a social context in order to extend the scope of the research on planning.

By and large, *Planning and task performance in a second language* represents a great contribution to the field of task-based language learning by focusing on one task implementation variable, planning, which has generated extensive research worldwide. The book also provides useful references for further readings on task-based research.

The book is well-organised in sections according to different foci of the studies followed by a critique on the predominant approach to planning. It is very readable and certainly provides insights into second language research and teaching. However, language teachers hoping for ready-made quick instructions on how to use tasks in the classroom may be disappointed. The aim of the book is not to instruct, but rather to gather a series of studies on the nature of planning and hopefully shed some light on SLA research and pedagogy.

This book is a valuable resource for researchers currently working in the field of task-based language learning, postgraduate students who have an interest in the field and language teachers who are familiar with the field and in search for tools of reflections on tasks.

References

Bygate, M., Skehan, P. & Swain, M. (2001). (Eds.) *Researching pedagogic tasks: Second language learning, teaching and testing.* Harlow, England, New York: Longman.

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

GLÓRIA GUARÁ TAVARES, THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

O’Keeffe, A., McCarthy M., & Carter R. (2007). ***From corpus to classroom: Language use and language teaching.*** **Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 13 978- 0-51-61686-7.**

The global advent of new technologies has brought increasingly sophisticated ways of storing and analyzing texts, using specially-designed software. The ever-increasing electronic selection of representative collections of written and spoken texts features widely in the language teaching materials in our classrooms. *From corpus to classroom: Language use and language teaching* is therefore a timely publication that will provide an international audience of teachers with an accessible, informative book on the merits and limitations of corpus and its application in the language classroom.

The book, which results from the collaboration of three universities in Great Britain and Ireland, comprises eleven chapters of about twenty pages in length, and a summary. The reader will find a brief synopsis of each chapter in the preface. This provides an overview and sets the parameters for other chapters (word frequency lists and cluster analysis, for example).

Chapter 1, entitled “Introduction”*,* is a good starting point for familiarising oneself with the jargon of corpus linguistics and corpus software. Teachers learn how to build a corpus and find out, for instance, why a spoken corpus will take longer to build than a written one. Concordancing – “a core tool in corpus linguistics” (p. 8) and word frequency counts are outlined here but given more prominence in Chapters 2 and 3. How corpora are used for translation, forensic linguistics, stylistics, lexicography and grammar is also included. Readers can also ponder over what are the most suitable models of English for pedagogy.

There are individual chapters on corpus-based investigation into teaching vocabulary, teaching and using common chunks, idioms, lexis and grammar patterns as well as listenership and response, and these have drawn quantitatively from corpora. In these, language teachers will find answers to how to teach idioms and how to design a basic as well as an advanced level vocabulary programme. Chapter 6 critically examines the wh-cleft patterns using spoken corpora. Chapter 7 looks at the frequency of lexical items in spoken and written corpora and focuses on the forms and functions of what the authors call “listener response tokens” (p. 141). These are also compared across language varieties, and interactional competence is addressed. Chapter 9 examines ways of looking at creativity in language. A task sheet is given with tips on how to apply this in language settings. Chapter 10 offers a useful chapter for the teacher of academic English and business English with a useful list of pedagogical implications. Chapter 11 outlines frameworks for analyzing discourse in the classroom.

Particular strengths of the book are its clarity of style, well-researched chapters and pedagogically-relevant chapters. It is also gratifying that small (see p. 198) as well as large corpora have been afforded inclusion in the book. The authors provide a balanced view of the applications for corpora in language teaching by including the drawbacks of the use of spoken corpora and following these up with useful guidelines for language teachers as shown in Chapter 6. An interesting thread running through the chapters is the notion of the native speaker and the expert users, termed SUEs (Successful Users of English), in the discussions on vocabulary, idioms and creativity.

Although some readers may feel that the role of native and non-native Englishes in corpora has not been adequately dealt with, the authors have clearly shown that corpus linguistics has contributed and is contributing to the description of the language we teach and that corpora provide "an empirical basis for checking our intuitions about language" (p. 21). Along with the textbook, dictionary, video and handouts, corpus is a supplementary tool to complement our collection of teaching resources. And with all our pedagogical tools we need to be critically informed. *From corpus to classroom: Language use and language teaching* unquestionably contributes to our understanding of the use of corpus as a pedagogical tool.

MARGARET BADE, UNITEC NEW ZEALAND

Fulcher, G. and Davidson, F. (2007). *Language testing and assessment: An advanced resource book.* London: Routledge. ISBN: 978-0-415-33946-9

Language testing and assessment: An advanced resource book is the latest edition to the Routledge Applied Linguistics series edited by Christopher Candlin and Ronald Carter. As the title suggests, this book provides an overview of the field of language assessment, but is written for individuals with some basic understanding of language testing.

The book is divided into three main sections: Introduction (Section A), Extension (Section B) and Exploration (Section C). The introduction section is designed to introduce key terms, concepts and techniques of analysis through activities and reflective tasks. The extension section presents core readings which defined and shaped the field of language assessment. These readings are usually adapted from their original form and include commentary, annotations and tasks. The final section, the exploration, provides further samples, materials and many open-ended, student-centred activities as well as ideas for possible research projects. All three sections are based around the same ten units. This review will discuss the contents of the corresponding units in Sections A and B together.

Unit A1 focusses on a discussion of validity and how the view of validity has changed over years. Here the reader is introduced to Messick's (1989) unified view of validity as well as Bachman and Palmer's (1996) facets of test usefulness. The chosen reading for Unit A 1, which can be found in Unit B 1 is a seminal paper on construct validity by Cronbach and Meehl (1955).

In Unit A 2, the authors question whether what we know about large-scale assessment is applicable to classroom assessment. In this chapter, Moss examines how concepts like context, tasks and items, the role of the assessor, the role of evaluation, generalisability, test consequences and validity need to be reconceptualised for classroom assessment. Unit A 3 discusses theoretical models of language ability and assessment frameworks and their influence on test specifications. The most influential models of language ability are reviewed, and the differences and evolution of the models are discussed. The relevant seminal paper in Unit B 3 is Canale and Swain's much cited paper on communicative approaches to language teaching and testing (Canale & Swain, 1980).

The next five units in Section A have a very practical focus. Unit A 4 focusses on the design of test specifications. Fulcher and Davidson, with their own vast experience in practical language testing, are able to outline the most important issues in test specification design. Readers are made aware of the importance of test specifications in ensuring test equivalence. The relevant key reading associated with this chapter is by Davidson and Lynch (2002).

Unit A 5, next, focuses on the next logical step in test design, writing items and tasks. Evidence-centred design is discussed and the authors show that designing and writing test items and tasks cannot be separated from other processes of test design. It is further stressed that item writing is a collaborative and iterative process which takes a lot of time. The key reading selected for this unit is on washback (Alderson and Wall, 1993). The relevance of this paper is justified by a discussion of tasks in Unit A 5, which focuses on the importance of tasks on teaching.

Unit A 6 centres on prototyping and field testing, another practical step necessary in successful test design. Here the authors differentiate between alpha testing (in-house trialling of test materials), beta testing (external trialling of pre-production items) and field testing. Again, the iterative nature of this process is emphasised. The selected key reading is a practical account of prototyping of the speaking and writing tasks for the New TOEFL (Cumming, Grant, Mucahi-Ernt & Powers, 2005).

Unit 7 focusses on scoring language tests. The authors cover the different scoring systems available (e.g. rating scales), describe the scoring in classical test analysis as well as item response theory and discuss the area of setting cut-scores. The reading provided in Unit B 7 by Hamp-Lyons (1991) focuses on the scoring of writing.

The final practical chapter in Section A, Unit A 8, discusses the infrastructure that needs to be in place for test administration. Probably an area often under reported in other textbooks, this chapter focuses on test assembly, preparation and dispatch of test materials, distribution and delivery systems, scoring systems, interlocutor and rater training and test security. The key reading selected for this chapter focuses on the role of the interviewer in oral proficiency interviews (Brown, 2003).

Unit A 9, then turns to larger considerations in language testing, namely the discussion of fairness, ethics and standards. Here, the responsibilities of language testers and their limitations are discussed, followed by the key reading by Alan Davies (1997) in Unit B 9.

Unit A 10, like the first unit, focuses on validity. In this chapter, the idea is presented that validity should be established through a collection of evidence that supports an argument. This chapter is supplemented by Kane's (1992) seminal paper on an argument-based approach to validity.

Overall, the book makes for excellent reading and is a valuable resource for graduate students and researchers alike. All sections of the book are clearly labelled and each chapter concludes with a clear and succinct summary. The readability of the book is further enhanced by frequent examples throughout all chapters. At the end of the book, the reader can also find a glossary which provides key terms relevant to language assessment. As pointed out by the authors at the beginning of the book, language testing is a very practical undertaking, and this is reflected in numerous chapters throughout the book. We are guided through the test development process in a series of logical steps. The excerpts of key readings found in the second section of the book provide an excellent collection of key articles that have influenced language testing and assessment. These readings are divided into sections, broken up by commentary by the authors as well as consciousness-raising tasks and discussion questions. This section, as well as the entire book is therefore also useful as the basis for language testing lectures. The final section of the book, Section C, Extension, provides further exercises and ideas that might prove to be particularly useful to lecturers who consider using the book as a core reading in a graduate level language assessment course.

References

Alderson, J.C. & Wall, D. (1993). Does washback exist? *Applied Linguistics*, *14*(2), 115-129.

Bachman, L. & Palmer, A.S. (1996). *Language testing in practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brown, A. (2003). Interviewer variation and the co-construction of speaking proficiency. *Language Testing* 20(1), 1-25.

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

Cronbach, L.J. & Meehl, P.E. (1955). Construct validity in psychological tests. *Psychological Bulletin, 52*, 281-302.

Cumming, A., Grant, L., Mucahy-Ernt, P. & Powers, D. (2005). *A teacher-verification study of speaking and writing prototype tasks for a New TOEFL. TOEFL* Monograph Series 26. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Davidson, F. & Lynch, B.K. (2002). *Testcraft: A teacher's guide to writing and using language test specifications*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Chapter 3: Problems and issues in specification writing, pp. 34-59.

Davies, A. (1997). Demands of being professional in language testing. *Language Testing 14*(3), 328-339.

Hamp-Lyons, L. (1991). Scoring procedures for ESL contexts. In L. Hamp-Lyons (Ed.), *Assessing second language writing in academic contexts*, pp. 241-276. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Kane, M.T. (1992). An argument-based approach to validity. *Psychological Bulletin, 112*(3), 527-535.

Messick, S. (1989). Validity. In Linn, R. L. (Ed.), *Educational measurement* pp.13-103. New York: Macmillan/American Council on Education.

UTE KNOCH, THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

NZSAL is a refereed journal that is published twice a year. It welcomes manuscripts from those actively involved in Applied Linguistics/Applied Language Studies including second and foreign language educators, researchers, teacher educators, language planners, policy makers and other language practitioners. The journal is a forum for reporting and critical discussion of language research and practice across a wide range of languages and international contexts. A broad range of research types is represented (qualitative and quantitative, established and innovative), including cross-disciplinary approaches.

1. Submission of Manuscripts

1.1 Articles should be typed double-spaced on A4 paper with generous margins at head, foot and both sides. Pages should be numbered consecutively. Please retain a copy of the manuscript as this cannot be returned to authors. Submission of a manuscript implies that it has not been published previously and that it is not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

1.2 All relevant articles submitted for publication will be reviewed by members of the Editorial Board or other referees.

1.3 Articles should normally be between 3000 and 5000 words in length.

1.4 Three copies (if posted) should be submitted to Co-Editor:

Associate Professor John Bitchener
Co-Editor: *New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics*
School of Languages, Auckland University of Technology
Private Bag 92006
AucklandNew Zealand

1.5 A separate title page should include the following:

- the title of the article
- author's name, and in the case of more than one author, an indication of which author will receive the correspondence
- the affiliation of all authors
- full postal address and telephone, e-mail and fax numbers of all authors

1.6 Each article should include, on a separate page, an abstract of between 150 and 200 words, which is capable of standing alone as a descriptor of the article. Include the title on the abstract page.

1.7 Authors should include a brief autobiographical sketch (50-80 words) on a separate page.

2. Presentation of Manuscripts

2.1 Sections of the article should be headed but not numbered.

2.2 All Figures and Tables should be provided in camera-ready form, suitable for reproduction (which may include reduction) and should require no change. Figures (e.g. charts and diagrams) and Tables should be numbered consecutively in the order to which they are referred. They should not be included within the text, but submitted each on a separate page. They should be clearly marked on the back with the Figure or Table number. All Figures and Tables should have a caption.

2.3 Do not use Footnotes. Endnotes should be avoided, but if essential, they should be numbered in the text by means of a superscript and grouped together at the end of the article before the References under the heading Notes.

2.4 References should follow APA referencing style. References within the text should contain the name of the author, the year of publication, and, if necessary, the relevant page number(s), as in these examples:

It is stated by McCloud and Henry (1993, p.238) that "students never …"This, however, has not been the case (Baker & Thomas, 2001; Frank, 1996; Smithers, 1985).

2.5 The list of References at the end of the article should be arranged alphabetically by authors' names. References should be given in the following form:

References

Books

Lillis, T. M. (2001). *Student writing: Access, regulation, desire.* London: Routledge.
Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Article in book

Clark, R. (1992). Principles and practice of CLA in the classroom. In N. Fairclough (Ed.), *Critical language awareness* (pp. 117-140). Harlow: Longman.

Journal articles

Lea, M. R., & Street, B. V. (1998). Student writing in higher education: An academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education, 23*(2), 157-172.

Turner, J. (2004). Language as academic purpose. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 3*(2), 95-109.

Unpublished manuscript

Park-Oh, Y.Y. (1994). *Self-regulated strategy training in second language reading*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alabama, USA.

Stein, F. & G.R. Johnson. (2001). *Language policy at work.* Unpublished manuscript.

Conference presentation

King, J. & M. Maclagan. (2001, August). *Maori pronunciation over time*. Paper presented at the 14th Annual New Zealand Linguistics Society Conference, Christchurch, New Zealand.

3. Short reports and summaries

NZSAL invites short reports on any aspect of theory and practice in Applied Linguistics. Manuscripts could also present preliminary research findings or focus on some aspect of a larger study. Submissions to this section should be no longer than 2000 words, and should follow the submission guidelines for full-length articles (no abstract is required, however).

4. Reviews

NZSAL welcomes reviews of professional books, classroom texts, and other instructional materials. Reviews should provide a descriptive and evaluative summary and a brief discussion of the work in the context of current theory and practice. Submissions should generally be no longer than 1000 words.