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Contents

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ARTICLES

New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics, 2009, 15 (1) 1-12

THEORY, RESEARCH, & PRACTICE IN WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK: BRIDGING THE GAP, OR CROSSING THE CHASM?

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This is the text of the keynote address given at the ALANZ Symposium at AUT University in December 2009

"Written corrective feedback," otherwise known as "error correction" or "grammar correction" (Truscott, 1996; 2007) in second language teaching has been a controversial topic for some years now. Especially for those of us who work with second language (L2) learners in writing classes, it is definitely a topic about which there are theoretical disagreements, conflicting research trends—and a wide gap, perhaps more rightly called a chasm, between research, theory, and real-world practice. That gap really is the essence of this talk today: From a theoretical or research perspective, there are arguments about methodology and terminology. Meanwhile, real-world teachers struggle to help their students write more effectively—and in some instances, their students fail to succeed because of their lack of progress in producing more linguistically accurate texts. Those teachers and students need a better answer than, "We're still doing research, and we'll get back to you about whether you ought to step up your error correction efforts, fine-tune them, or forget them altogether."

In this paper I will briefly trace the history of the theory and research behind this controversial issue, bringing us to "where we are today"—and where we need to go from here to close the chasm or bridge the gap. In particular, we will look at two distinct lines of research on WCF: the work done by second language acquisition (SLA) researchers focused on the effects of corrective feedback on long-term language acquisition and the research of second language writing (SLW) scholars, who are most interested in how WCF can promote long-term writing proficiency.

Error in SLA: Theoretical Perspectives

In second language acquisition (SLA) research and theory, there has been disagreement over the decades about the role of error in language acquisition and in classroom language pedagogy. In the 1950s and 1960s, second language theory and pedagogy was strongly influenced by behavioural psychology and structural linguistics, leading to the development of the widely used audio-lingual method of foreign/second language instruction. As behavioral psychology was applied to language teaching, it called for correct responses to be "reinforced" and incorrect production to receive negative feedback lest harmful "habit formation" occurred. Writing was not stressed in this era of L2 instruction except as a means to practise the vocabulary and grammar that had been learned, and errors were not tolerated.

Beginning in the 1960s, some linguists and psychologists argued that error in SLA oral or written production was just a necessary stage of the developmental process, similar to what children go through as they acquire a first language (L1) (Corder, 1967; Krashen, 1982)—implying that not only do we not need to worry about correcting or treating error in the second language (L2) classroom, but in fact it was rather in bad taste to mention it. After all, no one criticises a three-year-old for saying "*I goed to the park today," and no one would dream of teaching that child a lesson on irregular past tense verb forms with a test to follow. We assume that given time and exposure to the language, that L1 child acquirer will work things out—so why shouldn't we assume the same for adolescent or adult L2 acquirers? Krashen (and others) went even further, arguing that error correction was not only unnecessary but harmful in that it raised learners' "affective filters," meaning emotional responses such as anxiety or low self-esteem, that then "blocked" language input from becoming acquired intake.

Another question raised around this issue was what is an "error," anyway? Is it a missing verb or plural ending? An awkward or confusing sentence? A spelling mistake? A lexical choice that is imprecise or too casual for the writing context? In trying to define "error," I'm reminded of a famous quotation from the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart, as he struggled to characterise "hard-core pornography" for a First Amendment (free speech) case: "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced . . . *[b]ut I know it when I see it"* (Stewart, 1964, emphasis added).

Let me add one final - and important - comment about theoretical perspectives that have brought us to this point in our discussion of written corrective feedback for L2 writers. In addition to the linguistic/SLA viewpoints that have informed this issue, there is the contribution of composition/rhetoric/writing theorists. For example, around the same time that Krashen and others were arguing for a more developmentally based and enlightened view of error, composition theorists were expounding the so-called "process approach" to writing instruction, meaning that the emphasis in writing classes should be on the individual writer rather than developing a perfect end-product (Elbow, 1973; Shaughnessy, 1977; Sommers, 1980; Zamel, 1982). As this theoretical perspective was applied to issues of error in general and L2 writing in particular, it was argued that L2 writing teachers should de-emphasise grammar instruction and error correction, allowing students instead to "discover" their ideas through a recursive process of drafting, receiving feedback, and redrafting. Error, it was presumed, would largely take care of itself (Zamel, 1982; 1985) as the natural consequence of a more enlightened approach. However, it is also worth noting that there was almost instant pushback from other L2 writing specialists (Eskey, 1983; Horowitz, 1986; Silva, 1988), who argued that such a benign view of written accuracy issues dangerously underestimated the linguistic gaps that most L2 writers bring into advanced writing situations (see also later comments by Johns, 1995, Leki, 1990 and Reid, 1994).

Research on Written Corrective Feedback in L2 Writing

Moving now from history back to the title of this talk and the theme of this conference, research on error correction in L2 writing has largely been driven over the years by practitioners' dissatisfaction with the conclusions of theorists. Take two opposite historical examples. Some teacher-researchers, frustrated by the tedium and apparent ineffectiveness of error correction, felt empowered by Krashen's SLA theory and compositionists' process theory and endeavoured to prove that error correction did not "work" and could therefore be safely abandoned. In fact, they argued even more strongly that teachers had a moral obligation to stop demoralising and impeding their students with this punitive and counterproductive practice (Truscott, 1996; 1999; 2007).

In contrast, other teacher-researchers were alarmed by the "benign neglect" of accuracy issues in L2 composition instruction and its impact on student progress and success (e.g., on in-class exit examinations, writing proficiency examinations, and in advanced academic coursework)—and they endeavoured to prove that enlightened "error treatment" not only could "work" but that L2 students wanted and expected it and in fact were made anxious and resentful by its absence (Ferris, 2002; 2003, for reviews of studies and discussion).

Early Research on WCF in L2 Writing

Prior to the mid-1990s, empirical research on the effects of WCF was relatively rare. A reason for that may have been the historical/theoretical trends I have just outlined. First, writing was not emphasised in L2 instruction, and then later when it was, it was heavily influenced by writing process pedagogy and Krashen's theories, both of which relegated WCF to a minor role. Though a few studies were conducted between 1976-1996, they mostly focused on foreign language (FL) students (either English as a Foreign Language or other foreign languages in the U.S.) and not on composition/writing students in second language settings, meaning contexts in which those students must complete their studies, live, and work by utilising the L2. Why does this matter? Because, as noted by scholars such as Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994; 1996), FL students rarely need to learn to write extensively in the L2. As a result, they may not be highly motivated to attend to comments and corrections on their writing, so studies on this audience may not show much progress in written accuracy as a result of error correction. There were other methodological oddities with these early studies, but time does not permit a full discussion here (but see Ferris, 2003, ch. 3, for a full discussion, and Ferris, 2004, for a state-of-the-art "where are we now" perspective).

By the mid-1990s, however, many ESL composition instructors were growing restless and anxious. Most of us had been weaned on Krashen's SLA theory and trained in process pedagogy. I personally was delighted to hear that all I had to do as a teacher was to provide interesting topics to write about in a low-stress environment and that I didn't need to think about teaching grammar in class or killing myself with error correction outside of class. But as time went on, I began to wonder and to worry. My student writers made language errors, these writing problems did not go away by themselves over time, and these mistakes had real-life consequences for real people. Maybe even more dismaying, my students expressed surprise, disappointment, frustration, and anxiety over programme policies such as "don't correct journal entries or free writes" or "don't provide any error feedback until the final draft" or "don't teach grammar." Though we teachers were explicitly told by program administrators that we needed to do "public relations" as to why our approach was better, or, to put it another way, to help our students "accustom themselves to [the] absence" of WCF (Truscott, 1996), I and others found it to be an extremely tough sell. Though students don't always know exactly what they need most and their desires should not be slavishly followed, they should not be entirely ignored, either.

In response to this growing unease (which I have described elsewhere [Ferris, 2002, Preface] as being characterised by whispered conversations in teachers' restrooms about "covert" grammar teaching in our writing classes), a number of materials—ESL editing handbooks (Lane & Lange, 1992/1999), books (Bates, Lane, & Lange, 1993), chapters (Frodesen, 1991), and journal articles on enlightened error correction techniques (Ferris, 1995; Reid, 1994)—began to appear in the early 1990s. Despite—or maybe because of - this evidence that the wild theoretical pendulum swings of previous eras were beginning to find a judicious and practical middle ground, Truscott (1996) published a review essay in *Language Learning* arguing that "grammar correction," as he called it, was ineffective and even harmful and should be abolished in L2 writing instruction. Truscott's hard-line approach to this persistently difficult question created an immediate stir, leading to several published journal responses (Chandler, 2003, 2004; Ellis, 1998; Ferris, 1999) and even more heated discussions at conferences.[i]

Recent Research on WCF

In the dozen years since the publication of Truscott's original essay, there has been quite a proliferation of work on the topic of corrective feedback. I think it is now safe to say that the "benign neglect" approach to accuracy issues in L2 writing is over. It is intriguing that an essay calling for the abandonment of the practice of WCF actually inspired increased interest in the topic!

Interestingly, the research that has been conducted over the past decade has crossed disciplinary—or at least sub-disciplinary—boundaries. Some of us, mainly second language writing (SLW) researchers or teachers, focused our own primary research efforts and our literature reviews on what was going on in composition classes and what was published in composition/writing journals. Others, who primarily identify themselves as SLA researchers, were instead looking at research conducted in language classrooms and extending paradigms related to focus-on-form instruction and oral corrective feedback (OCF) to new research on the effects of WCF on SLA. In short, the same topic was being examined in parallel work by two distinct groups of researchers.

This brings me to where we are today. There are a number of excellent recent SLA studies on WCF. These studies have taken us a long way in a short period of time. First of all, as a body of work they provide clear and convincing evidence[ii] that WCF, under the right conditions, can facilitate L2 development and help students improve their writing. A second and related point is that these studies have been methodologically rigorous enough that they have addressed most of the criticisms aimed at the previous research.

However, the question of "where do we go from here?" arises. In the interests of "empirical rigour," some of these research efforts have been so confined to "laboratory conditions" that it is hard to imagine how their approach and findings could be transferred to a real writing classroom. Can this gap be bridged? That is what I want to consider next.

Intersections of SLA & SLW Research on WCF: Different Starting Points?

Design & Emphasis

As I have thought about this paper and looked closely at the most recent research on WCF, I have realised that though SLW and SLA researchers are looking at similar things and often (but not always) in similar ways, we are not necessarily asking the same questions. As I understand it, the studies of WCF that start from an SLA standpoint are asking something like: Does WCF facilitate long-term acquisition of particular linguistic features—and if so, how? Related sub-questions include how many features (and which ones) should be examined in one treatment or study, whether the feedback should be implicit or explicit, and if explicit, how much metalinguistic explanation is necessary (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Sheen, 2007). Other related questions have looked at the influence of reformulation and think-aloud techniques in helping students to notice and incorporate corrections (Qi & Lapkin, 2001; Sachs & Polio, 2007).

In contrast, SLW researchers start with the question: Does WCF help student writers to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of their texts? We see expert WCF as a tool that can help students improve their writing, but it is not the only one. Frankly, I doubt it would occur to most SLW researchers or practitioners to pursue acquisition of a particular linguistic feature, such as direct and indirect articles, as a primary pedagogical goal. While we certainly want our students to use articles accurately, a heavy emphasis on them in instruction and feedback would strike us as too narrow a focus for a writing class.

Importance of Different Starting Points: Two Illustrations

Why are these differences in starting points important? I think they help us understand the conflicting methodologies and conclusions of various reviews on this topic (Ferris, 2003, 2004; Truscott, 1996, 2007). For example, in his recent paper, Truscott (2007) dismissed the "revision studies"—in other words, investigations of how student writers use WCF in revisions of the same paper (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001) - as being "of no interest" to him and didn't bother to include them in his meta-analysis of error correction studies. Truscott is certainly entitled to decide what interests him and what does not, but other SLW researchers find the question of the impact of expert feedback on student revision extremely interesting and very important—because, as I said, we see the development of effective strategies and writing processes that impact students' subsequent writing not only in our courses but in their future production as the primary goal of writing instruction. Thus, starting from the SLW question of "Does WCF help student writers?" the so-called revision studies are not only interesting but provide important evidence that helps us justify and refine our practices—but from the SLA standpoint of "Does WCF facilitate acquisition of targeted structures?" the evidence from revision studies is less compelling because it does not by itself demonstrate that control of the structure is maintained over subsequent pieces of writing.[iii]

Another example of how different starting points affect research designs and interpretation of findings revolves around the relative explicitness of feedback. SLA researchers examining OCF have discussed differences between *recasts* (restating the learner's utterance correctly) and *prompts* (signaling to the learner through verbal or nonverbal means that there is a problem), with some researchers reporting that prompting had better effects than recasting and others reporting no significant differences between the two methods. An analogy can be drawn, I think, between this distinction and the one made in the WCF literature between *direct* and *indirect feedback*, with recasting being similar (but not identical) to direct feedback in the sense that the correct form is provided for the student and prompting more similar to indirect feedback, in which students themselves must supply the correction. I have argued (Ferris, 2002; 2003; 2006) that indirect feedback may have greater benefits for student writers over the long haul, while other researchers have found evidence favouring direct (or more explicit) feedback (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Ellis, N., 1993; Ellis, R., Loewen, & Erlam, 2006; Sheen, 2007).

As with the previous example, understanding the differences in focus may also explain the differing outcomes and conclusions. If we are attempting to trace evidence of long-term acquisition of a specific linguistic feature (the SLA starting point), perhaps direct correction (providing the most input for acquisition) gives the best, most explicit information to the learner. If, however, the primary goal of WCF is to build effective metacognitive skills and revision/editing processes in student writers (the SLW starting point), then feedback methods which require more effort or engagement on the part of the learner may better address this longer-term objective.

Implications: Practical Applications & Future Research Intersections

With these different starting points in mind, let me turn now to the practical implications of the most recent research findings on WCF. One of the things I have appreciated about the latest SLA-focused WCF research is the relatively "squeaky clean" designs of the studies. Specifically, these studies have control groups (receiving no feedback) and pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest designs; they focus on only a few carefully defined linguistic features or errors for feedback; and the feedback itself is systematically delivered in very precise ways, usually by the researchers themselves. Bitchener's recent research also has the added benefit of being truly longitudinal, covering periods of up to ten months. These design features, as I mentioned, address most of the criticisms aimed by reviewers at previous WCF research.

In contrast, the SLW studies tend to be less controlled and messier. While some include control groups, others do not. While some focus on specific, predetermined error categories, others are more broadly based. While some look with precision at the methods used to provide feedback, others are vague about exactly how the feedback was delivered and by whom. Besides these methodological issues, there are tremendous differences across these studies in subject characteristics, institutional contexts, and pedagogical approaches to writing and feedback, as I have noted elsewhere (Ferris, 1999; 2002; 2003; 2004).

As I have read other studies, done my own, considered the criticisms that have been aimed at WCF in general and at the previous research in particular, and noted with pleasure the work of the most recent researchers, it has been tempting to conclude: "The new SLA-focused research is just better all around. The old SLW stuff - including my own - is worthless." However, as I contemplate the complexity of both language acquisition and the development of academic literacy or writing proficiency, I realise that such comparisons are oversimplified. The two lines of research are not in competition; rather, they are complementary. There may be a methodological gap, but it is not a philosophical chasm. SLW researchers and SLA researchers investigating written corrective feedback—though they are posing somewhat different questions - can and should learn from each other and build on each other's work.

Practical Implications

While admiring the clean, clear designs of recent SLA studies of WCF, I have also noted their findings and conclusions with some caution. As I mentioned earlier, I read these studies partially through the lens of what the writing teachers I work with would say about their practical applications. Here are examples of objections they might raise:

- Focusing written feedback for all students only on the same 1-2 specific errors will not address students' accuracy issues quickly or comprehensively enough, nor does it address the need to individualise feedback according to students' different strengths and weaknesses. Even if, for the sake of argument, 100% of the students achieved 100% accuracy in producing these few targeted features in writing, what about the rest of their errors, be they syntactic, morphological, or lexical?

- Focusing feedback only on narrowly drawn features (ones that are relatively easy, from a linguistic/research perspective, to describe and teach) will not address the more complex, more problematic errors student writers make—the "global" ones that obscure their meanings and interfere with communication. In many cases, the most "treatable" errors are the ones that interfere the least with comprehensibility of the message.

- Advising teachers to provide not only corrective feedback but also written or oral rule explanations is not realistic. Most teachers have neither the time nor patience to give that much feedback in that much detail, especially if they are attempting to address a broader, more complex range of error types. Also, I might add, many teachers do not have even the linguistic expertise to do so. Further (and most importantly), they have many other aspects of writing—ideas, organisation, processes—on which to focus, so an intensive instructional emphasis on specific written errors would seem out of balance to many.

So as a teacher and teacher-educator, I am caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, these SLA studies provide much-needed support for a controversial pedagogical practice—written error correction - that most L2 writing teachers and nearly all L2 writing students feel is essential.[iv] On the other hand, their practical applicability is an unresolved question that demands further exploration. What we do not know is whether the findings of these types of studies will hold up if more features are considered, if more complex structures are addressed, and if teachers opt, in the interests of time, energy, and limited expertise, for less explicit feedback methods. As a SLW researcher, I would like to take the lessons learned from these well-designed recent SLA-focused studies and try to address the practical questions I just mentioned.

Intersections: Future Research Directions

With the issues I have outlined in mind—design and focus differences, questions about practical application—there are some profitable lessons we—SLA researchers and SLW researchers—could learn from each other, whether in collaborative efforts or in complementary lines of research.

(1) ***L2 studies on written corrective feedback should be longitudinal AND contextualised.*** SLA research tends to follow a pretest/posttest/delayed posttest design somewhat detached from the types of day-to-day activities of a writing class. SLW research tends to follow a response/revision design that fits within the multiple-draft process-oriented approach of many (but not all) writing courses. What is needed in these latter contextualised designs are longitudinal studies which look at whether feedback and revision on one paper can help student writers to exhibit greater control of those same features in subsequent writing. While there have been a couple of attempts at such designs over the years, these have been on a small scale and fairly unsystematic. In the real world of the writing classroom, a response/revision/later text analysis is roughly parallel to an experimental pretest/posttest/delayed posttest design and thus is both contextualised and longitudinal.

(2) ***L2 studies of WCF should not ignore revision as a variable or factor***. If "immediate responses" to (or "uptake" of) oral feedback have been demonstrated to facilitate L2 acquisition (as OCF researchers have indeed suggested), it would seem even more likely that written revision or editing would do so, given that students have more time to think about and process the corrections and attempt repairs and modifications (see also Sachs & Polio, 2007, for a discussion of this point). One possible modification to the recent pretest/posttest/delayed posttest designs of SLA researchers would be to ask students to make revisions or corrections after receiving feedback on their writing and then to assess whether doing so improved their posttest and delayed posttest scores (or their subsequent texts, following point 1).

(3) ***L2 studies of WCF should focus on discrete specific errors or features.*** It seems clear from both SLW research and SLA research that identifying specific features for feedback is more effective than a vague "correct all the errors" approach (either for research or for teaching). The question is how many features can optimally be treated, and which ones. From an SLW perspective, it seems fair to say that 1-2 are too few; probably 15-20 are too many. But what is the "right" amount of written corrective feedback information—five error categories? Seven? Ten? Can these categories change over time? And must we limit ourselves in our research designs to narrowly drawn "treatable" categories, or can we look at "messier" ones (such as lexical issues or sentence structure)?

(4) ***L2 studies of WCF should consider subject and contextual characteristics.*** This is one of the most surprising oversights, in my opinion, in the WCF research and especially in reviews of it. Foreign language students in the U.S., EFL students in other countries, and ESL students in the U.S. (who further subdivide into international, recent immigrant, and early arriving Generation 1.5 students) are lumped together in research reviews as if the differences across L1, L2, motivation, and L2 proficiency level or writing experience are irrelevant in

understanding why or if WCF "works" or helps them. Most significantly, I think, we fail to adequately consider subjects' divergent paths to SLA (i.e., classroom instruction versus naturalistic exposure in an L2 context) and how those paths affect the knowledge base students bring to SLW and WCF and their ability to utilise varying types of feedback. Though one of Bitchener's recent studies (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008) examined differences between international and migrant students with regard to WCF, much more work remains to be done. At this moment in time, it seems safe to say that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to error treatment is unlikely to be effective or appropriate.

Concluding Thoughts

As I have chronicled briefly here, in recent years I have come to know and appreciate the work on corrective feedback (oral or written) that has been undertaken in the SLA realm. It is important to acknowledge and respond to criticisms that have been made in the past regarding not only research techniques but also pedagogical practices. Those of us primarily interested in WCF from the SLW perspective must continue to ask ourselves whether compelling evidence (not just anecdotal experience) exists to support the continuation of our practices and whether such evidence helps us refine and improve what we do. Similarly, SLA researchers should ask themselves how their designs and findings reflect realities surrounding writing—a complex endeavour —contexts, and individual students. The two perspectives, far from being in competition or mutually exclusive, have great potential to move our knowledge and our practices forward.

In closing, to revisit the title of my talk, I believe that differences between SLA and SLW researchers with regard to WCF are a gap, not a chasm, and a gap that can be bridged by a more enlightened understanding of what we are looking at and what the implications of our findings might be. More importantly, through crossing these sub-disciplinary "bridges," the "gaps" between theory, research, and practice in this important area of L2 writing instruction can also be bridged—and perhaps closed altogether.

Notes

[i] One of my favourite discussions was a rumour started a few years ago at AAAL that Truscott, who seldom travels to conferences and whom none of us had ever seen or met, was really a *nom de plume* of Stephen Krashen. Since then, though, I have heard reliable reports that Professor Truscott is, in fact, a real person, and alive and well in Taiwan!

[ii] It's fair to say that *most* people find the recent evidence "clear and convincing." As of last year, Truscott (2007) had not yet given up the fight against the practice of WCF.

[iii] As I have argued elsewhere, though, revision/editing of a specific text after receiving WCF may be a necessary intermediate step between input about a target feature and long-term acquisition of that feature (see Ferris, 2004; 2006). It is arguably analogous to the SLA/OCF research model of "pretest→immediate posttest→delayed posttest, with revision after WCF being the "immediate posttest" and subsequent new texts being the "delayed posttest."

[iv] I have never met a L2 writing student who did *not* believe that WCF is essential. However, the qualifier "nearly" here acknowledges that my firsthand knowledge of L2 writers worldwide is not exhaustive!

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TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON WHAT MAKES A GOOD GRADED READER

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Abstract

The importance of extensive reading to the development of ESOL learners' proficiency has been widely recognised among ESOL teachers since Elley and Mangubhai's (1983) study on the Fijiian book flood, and Day and Bamford (1998), notably, have been responsible for advocating the use of graded readers in extensive reading programmes. But what are the qualities considered essential to a good graded reader? The study reported in this paper is focused on the views of one group of stakeholders in graded readers, the teachers, and comes to the conclusion that although these particular teachers generally support the notion of extensive reading, their perceptions of a good graded reader are often centred around the elements of the books that are useful for teaching purposes, rather than those that encourage reading for pleasure. Thus it would seem that their views tend to endorse the use of graded readers for intensive, rather than extensive purposes.

Introduction

That extensive reading has a positive effect on language proficiency is not in doubt. Elley and Manghubai's (1983) study of a "Book Flood" in Fiji turned the pedagogical tide in favour of reading, and since then there has been a considerable amount of work supporting this view. Examples of such studies are Hafiz and Tudor (1989) (1990), Lao and Krashen (2000), Mason and Krashen (1997) and Robb and Susser (1989). But what should learners with a relatively small English vocabulary read? Graded readers would seem to provide one solution to the problem of the imbalance between the relatively sophisticated content requirement of tertiary ESOL students and their limited vocabulary. These texts are familiar to ESOL teachers either as versions of the classics, or original stories re-told using reduced lexis so that learners with a limited vocabulary and proficiency in English can read them. Day and Bamford (1998) have redefined the term "graded readers" as "language learner literature", thereby raising their status to a form of writing that is not just a watered-down version of an original, but a work of literature in its own right. But the question posed in this paper is: "What makes a 'good' graded reader?" One perspective upon this question is provided here.

There may be several perceptions, or beliefs, as to what makes a "good" graded reader, in line with the perspectives of the various stakeholders. Stakeholders in graded readers may include learners, publishers and writers, judges and critics, and teachers. This paper deals specifically with the views of the teachers. Given the endorsements for extensive reading cited above, ESOL teachers' support for reading might also seem to be a "given". Simply by virtue of being language teachers they are likely to be advocates for reading. In many institutions teachers also bear the major responsibility for the reading choices available, so clearly teacher cognition, defined by Borg (2006, p. 1) as "what language teachers think, know and believe", must play a pivotal part in what and how learners of English are reading. Through this investigation of teachers' perceptions, or beliefs, I hope to shed some light on the reasons behind decisions they make related to graded readers.

Rationale and Methodology

In line with the belief that teachers play a pivotal part in influencing learners' reading habits, the researcher decided to investigate the attitudes of teachers at one tertiary college which has a high percentage of ESOL students, towards graded readers. There were 25 ESOL teachers at the college at the time of this study, and 14 of these volunteered to participate. They agreed because they were interested in the topic and because they were friends or colleagues of the researcher. Because of these limited numbers it is not possible to generalise from its conclusions, but the study could be regarded as a pilot to generate hypotheses, which might form the basis of a future study. The focus group methodology was used for several reasons. Focus group results are often used to form hypotheses. Miles and Huberman (1994) say, "Focus groups are useful for ... generating hypotheses that derive from the insights and data from the group." One alternative, a survey, was rejected because its necessarily structured nature would have precluded any ideas that were not implicit in the questions. Teachers by the nature of their profession are often highly articulate, and the potential of the focus group to stimulate fruitful discussion among them was considered to be high. Fontana and Frey (2000) concur with this opinion. They do cite some disadvantages of the focus group: the impossibility of generalisation, and the possibility that an emerging group culture may inhibit the expression of individual opinions, especially if some group members are more outspoken or influential than others. The impossibility of generalisation can perhaps be traded for the richness of the data gathered in a focus group. The issue of dominant individuals can, I suggest, be dealt with provided the researcher or proxy manages the discussion sensitively.

Once the focus group was decided as the means of data gathering, the composition of the groups had to be settled. For focus groups, Kreuger and Casey (1994, p. 4) recommend groups of 6 to 8 people selected on the basis that they have something in common. However, in the end teacher availability dictated the numbers and composition of the groups. Teachers could only participate when their timetables permitted. In fact the groups of teachers available at any one time turned out to consist of less than 6 participants, but within this limitation three focus groups were set up. Apart from the common factor of being ESOL teachers, the participants were quite a heterogeneous set of people in terms of ethnicity, age, foreign language proficiency and teaching experience, and it is possible that the diversity of the groups might have compensated in some measure for the small size of the sample.

The total pool consisted of 5 New Zealanders, 3 originally from England, three Americans, one Russian, one Vietnamese and one Canadian. There was one under 30, one between 30 and 40, 6 between 40 and 50, 5 between 50 and 60 and one who was over 60. Of the 14, 12 were teachers and two were college librarians with teaching experience. Only one participant was male.

The researcher explained that she was investigating their perceptions of what makes a good graded reader, because as teachers they were both the advocates for reading in the college, and to a certain extent the arbiters of choice of what was read. Thus their choices would probably have a high impact on what the learners read. All participants understood that their identities and that of the college would not be disclosed, and on this basis all signed forms consenting that the information obtained be included in the final report.

Discussions were held in groups of 5, 5 and 4 plus the researcher as facilitator, in February 2007 and each session lasted approximately one hour. The participants were simply asked to discuss what, in their opinion, makes a good graded reader. The researcher spoke as little as possible. Each discussion was recorded and transcribed, and, according to Merriam's *Case study research in education* (Merriam, 1990) "patterns and regularities [in the transcriptions] were then transformed into categories into which subsequent items were sorted." In order to give the inquiry a more general perspective, the new categories were assigned places within Nuttall's (1996, p. 170) precepts for choosing texts, which, in her order of ranking, are "suitability", "exploitability" and "readability".

Nuttall's criteria were originally designed for selecting texts for classroom study. Nonetheless, her rationale for the criteria is for "evaluating texts for reading development," so the researcher had no qualms in borrowing them to use as yardsticks against which other perceptions of graded readers may be examined. Under the heading of "suitability", she says, "Far and away the most important criterion is that the text should interest the readers—preferably enthral and delight them." Second on her list comes "exploitability", which she justifies by saying, "A text you cannot exploit is no use for teaching." Here she may be thinking of intensive reading, but the criterion is no less true for extensive reading. Her last criterion is "readability", which she defines as a combination of structural and lexical difficulty.

Nuttall is not alone in her conviction that "interest" should be the primary factor in the choice of reading material. The third principle in Day and Bamford's (2002) "Top Ten Principles of Extensive Reading" states that learners choose what they want to read, and the sixth one says that the purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, both of which are related to interest. Bassett (2005), Hill (2008), Hedge (1985) and Williams (1986) all concur that at the very least interest and enjoyment are the first reasons for choosing a text and reading on. There are detractors from Nuttall's position, certainly, who think that a text in a learning situation has a job to do and therefore the priority in choosing it may be exploitability, or level. Robb (2002), for one, seems to tend to this opinion when he talks of “cracking the pedagogical whip” in Asia to make reading more of a task and less of a pleasure. Pino-Silva (1992) used length of text as his criterion for choice. This study explores how the teachers at the tertiary institute under scrutiny ranked reading criteria of their own, and how these compared with Nuttall’s criteria and rankings.

The ESOL teachers’ concerns, when “transformed into categories” (see above Merriam, 1990) were as follows, with the ranking according to the number of mentions received in the discussions: *Mechanics of the reading class, Modalities, Content, Design, Choice, Purpose, Culture and Context*, and *Reading habits.* Because this method of measuring importance may be perceived as rather a blunt instrument, and may indicate the ease with which teachers were able to talk about the particular concerns, as well as the importance attached to them, an informal peer review was sought regarding the categories and their ranking. This follows Gillham’s (2000) recommendation, for cases such as this where subjectivity might bias analysis, to ask for “peer review of our analysis so that we can be challenged on points where our ‘category construction’ is perhaps not doing justice to the content.” In accordance with his advice, an earlier version of this paper was given to the teachers who took part in the focus groups, and comments were invited. There were no major areas of dissent among these. However, when the teachers’ ranking was compared with that of Nuttall, it was seen to be different, as described below.

Suitability

Nuttall (1996) insists “interesting content makes the learners’ task far more rewarding,” and also says “that is why publishers of EFL readers are increasingly offering well-written, **gripping** stories.” These comments underpin her judgement that “suitability” in texts, the factor that interests and preferably enthrals and delights the reader, is the most important criterion to use in choosing a text for second language learners. But which qualities in a text will achieve this enthralment and delight? Jennifer Bassett (2005), the editor of the Oxford Bookworms Graded Reader series, says, “The underlying pedagogical aim is to tell a story so fascinating, so beguiling, so unputdownable, that it draws reluctant readers into its fictional universe and holds them there, willy-nilly, until the end,” and I suggest that this “unputdownability” is largely what Nuttall means by “suitability”. According to this notion, content, and its subsets in fiction of story, genre, characters and setting, and in non-fiction, interest and perhaps usefulness, will determine the suitability of the text to the learner and will govern the motivation to “read on”. Naturally, in order to find suitable content, the learner needs a choice of texts from which to select, and the suitability of texts will also depend on the individual learner’s culture and context, but for Nuttall the most important element of suitability is the potential of the text to seize and hold the reader’s attention. So how did the teachers in the focus groups rate suitability?

Teachers on Suitability

One of the librarians commented that, from the list of the most borrowed books from the college library (see appendix A), the most notable feature was the variety. The most popular author was a certain Jennifer Chipper, who writes fictional accounts of "how to do" topics, like how to get takeaways. These texts are at the elementary level, and the teachers suggested that their popularity indicated that low-level learners are engaged by content which is useful in helping them to function in the L2 environment. One of the teachers, L, commented on the value of reading several books in the same genre, "There is a whole series of 'How to', and if they [the learners] keep reading they will know the structure and what to expect." The importance of understanding genre in actually choosing a book was commented on by J, who said, "When I go to a library, I think, what interests me? Which genre do I like? Which authors do I like? But the students don't have this resource." She was referring to learners' lack of experience in English literary genres, and the fact that their choice can be limited by lack of familiarity with the culture, and context, not only in the realm of topics, but also of the library itself.

Another comment related to usefulness was that reading about some target language culture would be good for the learners, "it's crucial for them to know things from Western culture like Mother Teresa so that they can blend in and know what people are talking about." This introduced the fiction/ non-fiction divide. H commented that far more people worldwide read non-fiction than fiction, and therefore this split might be expected among second language learners in English. Most teachers dealing with the lower proficiency levels thought that learners preferred non-fiction. K said, "My guys often choose junior non-fiction instead of graded readers." As the junior non-fiction is not specifically written for non-native speakers of English, the texts are likely to contain a higher percentage of unknown words than the recommended graded readers for that level, but they are also likely to have more illustrations and diagrams than graded readers. The question was raised whether non-fiction reading was extensive or intensive reading. L said she thought it could be both, implying that she herself could become as engaged with a non-fiction, as with a fiction text.

The younger teachers particularly tended to be disparaging about European classics in graded reader form. With regard to *Oliver Twist*, S and T were adamant that "18 year old Japanese students do not relate to little boys from 19th century London", and they found the idea of Jane Austen for 18 year old boys laughable. They were somewhat surprised when E pointed out that *Anne of Green Gables* in translation is very popular in Japan, where it is regarded as an iconic "growing up" book, and this has had the effect of making the graded reader version popular among Japanese students abroad. Another classic which has achieved popularity in graded reader form is *Gone with the Wind*, although E admitted that the movie may have had something to do with this. A more modern book which has gained the status of a classic is *The Diary of Anne Frank*, another popular graded reader. The popularity of this book surprised N, who considered *Anne Frank* too simple and "primitive", and had thought her more advanced students would prefer *Airport.*

Discussion of films of the book led to a number of teachers saying that they often chose class readers with a movie tie-in. The concept of suitability also covered the suitability of reading itself, for learners who mostly come from the television generation. Many of these learners, commented S, have not had the experience of being read to when young, and therefore have never acquired the ability to construct a world in the imagination. As a result of this phenomenon it is possible that texts which make demands on the imagination and lack visual back-up are becoming less accessible. Another aspect of the suitability of the notion of reading was suggested by L, who is Vietnamese. She related that when she was a child, “We didn’t have [English] reading books at that time, only text books. A lot of books were censured. Books were very expensive. So reading wasn’t part of English learning at all.” K responded that if the only reading done in school was “text book” reading, the students would never acquire the habit of reading for pleasure.

To sum up, the teachers’ principal thoughts on suitability revolved around the idea that, for low-level learners at least, books which provided factual information were the most popular. The familiar was seen to be an important factor, whether that referred to comforting familiarity with learners’ own culture, or the attempt to become familiar with another. Thus there was a marked bias against the classics, even when it was acknowledged that some classics were popular with learners. The suitability of reading itself in particular cultures was questioned.

Exploitability

To Nuttall this means the uses to which the teacher can put the text. Her main purpose in exploiting a text is developing the students’ competence as readers (Nuttal, 1996) and it is clear from the examples she gives that she is referring to intensive in-class reading. There is no reason why her view of the exploitation of a text should not also extend to developing competence by using extensive reading in order to develop fluency.

Teachers on Exploitability

A good deal of discussion went on about the difficulties of assessing learners’ reading. Teachers found it hard to agree on a system which showed reliably how much learners were reading, and how much they understood. This led to comments about the use of concept checks in graded readers. S thought that questions at the end of chapters in graded readers, by providing an interactive element to the reading, were motivational, while M considered them a major turn-off. K said she never used them and the learners did not even look at them, even though some teachers and publishers probably thought they were useful. But H said, “Concept checks are good. Sometimes with idiom … it could make a major difference to the impact of the story.” Teachers who were in favour of questions maintained that answering them might mean learners developed skills that are generally useful in reading, like skimming and scanning. They also advocated accountability by asking learners to fill in worksheets about the texts and their reading of them.

N, J and R all admitted to using class sets of graded readers regularly. N, a native Russian speaker, described how her own school English teachers "exploited" the texts she read. "We had to read 25 pages a week for what was called pleasure reading." In answer to the question of follow-up, N said, "There were class discussions. The language was important; we were usually given some things to pay attention to ... expressions, collocations, phrases in context … and then it [the phrase] sticks."

There was some disagreement over using texts to study the language intensively, as A feared it was concentrating on the "literary" side of English, which, she maintained, the learners did not need. "Our students come here and need to be able to read a text book, not literary language … it's a mechanical thing, transforming shapes on the page into meaning, and it has to be practised." But N maintained that deconstructing language was not for the sole purpose of studying literature, but in order to acquire "an intuitive grasp of the language."

Teachers were generally very interested in accountability and how the students' reading could be evaluated. They also focused on how texts could be used to improve language skills, and there was a tendency to regard graded readers as materials for intensive, rather than extensive reading.

Readability

Nuttall's (1996) definition of readability is a combination of lexical and structural difficulty, translated into the ESOL teachers' concern categories as level and comprehension. The teachers also added to the discussion the possible effects of book design and mode of presentation upon the ease with which learners are able to read.

Teachers on readability
M, S, E and A agreed that "some kids don't read in any language," but when they said this, they were talking about reading conventional books. S went on to observe that learners read the translated "manga" [Japanese cartoons] available in the library, and of course they read untranslated "manga" as well. He thought that most low proficiency learners responded to pictures, and a natural concomitant of that was the popularity of "the book of the film." Some teachers felt that the popularity of pictures may also relate to the preferred mode of learning. Although some students are visual learners, some learn better aurally or kinaesthetically, and it was speculated that readers who tended towards the latter two orientations may demand more pictures than a visual learner might, for the very reason that they are unable to "see" pictures in their imagination.

The question of comprehension led to a major concern, the actual level of the texts. C, a librarian, explained that the publishers all have slightly different levels and therefore the library has had to impose its own colour coding system. When asked if this worked she replied, "More students are finding the right books for their levels."

R considered this highly motivational, "Finding a level they can cope with, that's motivational in itself."

There was a suggestion from J that the habit of reading fluently could actually be the result of certain national characteristics. "So many of our students don't complete the full sentence. It may be that when the Japanese reach a word they're not certain of, they automatically stop; whereas the Thais or Polynesians are more inclined to guess from context."

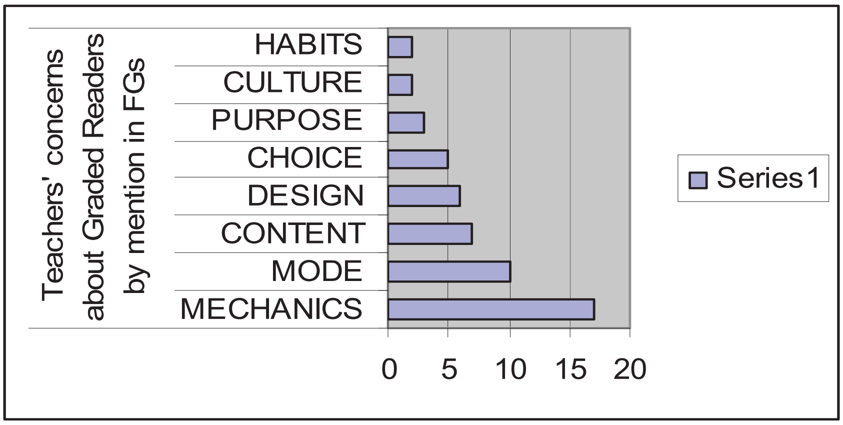
Certain teachers were interested in the form and delivery of the texts. The possibility of graded readers in traditional form being replaced by graded readers online was mooted. H said, "You could have multi-media graded readers. At home I've got a semi-literate adult and an 11-year old, and I was surprised at the level and amount of language that's attached to the computer games they play. You have just sighted a Nicorat and it might evolve into a Berflump … what will you do? People are riveted for hours." The implication was that graded readers could be re-worked into computer game format. Another suggestion was that they could be recorded onto I-pods or MP3s, and learners could listen to them while travelling or doing sport. Clearly this is removing them from the realm of reading per se.

Readability for the teachers has the potential to be enhanced by means of modern technology, whether by a straight link to a movie, or an electronic re-working in some way. There was a consensus that visual support was important.

Criteria comparison

Although the reporting of the focus group discussions appear to divide fairly evenly between Nuttall's three criteria, if the teachers' concerns are classified according to the number of times particular topics are mentioned, a rather different picture emerges, as seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Teachers' Concerns by mention in Focus Groups



This can be compared with the teachers' concerns categorised according to Nuttall's three criteria, represented in Table 2, below.

Table 2: Categories of teachers' perceptions on Graded Readers according to Nuttall's criteria for selecting texts.

1. Suitability	2. Exploitability	3. Readability
CONTENT: Fiction • story • genre • characters • setting Non-fiction • usefulness	MECHANICS of the READING CLASS: • concept checking • follow up • discussions • accountability	MECHANICS of the READING CLASS: • Levels • comprehension
CHOICE: • interest • culture	PURPOSE: • function	MODE: • format • design • (delivery)
CULTURE: • school system • youth culture • cost and censure		
HABITS: • role models • families		

Discussion

It is appropriate to reiterate the original research question: "What makes a good graded reader?" The primary purpose of graded readers is to support the increase of fluency in reading by means of extensive reading, and according to Day and Bamford, some of the chief criteria underpinning extensive reading involve reading a lot of easy books which are enjoyable. The criterion of enjoyment seems to be what Nuttall (1996) is describing when she writes of texts that "delight" and "enthral". But in the teachers' focus group discussions enjoyment was not a concept that appeared high on the list of concerns. The most important category by *mentions* was that of *the mechanics of the reading class,* as can be seen from Table 1. That the teachers were deeply concerned about the reading of their learners was not in doubt, but analysis of the focus group transcripts showed that by and large they were not thinking of reading primarily in terms of "suitability" as in "pleasure"; they were more interested in "exploitability" and "readability".

Suitability

Despite the fact that "suitability" came after "exploitability" and "readability" in terms of discussion time, there is no denying that *content, choice* and *culture*, which fall into the "suitability" category, were important to the teachers. However discussions of these three factors rarely included mentions of the merits of a good story, or, in a non-fictional category, anything that might "enthral and delight".

"Interest" came closest to "enthral and delight" and it was generally expressed in terms of a topic that was either useful or familiar. Overall the emphasis seemed to be on the how and why, or the mechanics of reading, and the types of book, rather more than the quality and detailed content of what was being read.

This may be missing the point. Nell (1988) in his book *Lost in a Book,* suggests that there is reason to suppose that the quality of a particular text, rather than its generic properties, might influence a reluctant reader. He contends, "for ludic reading … the effort required should be almost nil." This concept of little effort on the reader's part when reading for pleasure suggests a ratio between the power of the text to enthral, or at least please, and the effort needed to read it. Naturally for the second language reader, there is probably a more marked relationship between the effort needed and the level of difficulty, but as was remarked by H, reading difficulty can to a certain extent be overcome by interest. By using the word "enthral", Nuttall seems to endorse the goal of selecting a text which, because of its innate fascination, can be read almost without effort. However, facilitating effortless silent reading may seem, to a teacher whose normal role is imparting knowledge, like the avoidance of pedagogical responsibilities.

Teachers were inclined to suggest that certain genres might be superior to others in the selection of texts. Yet it is difficult to imagine a single broad textual category that is guaranteed to enthral every reader, and within each category there will be a vast spectrum of interest. As Bassett (2005) says, "There are no new texts ... they are all recycled. If you reduce a lot of stories to the fabula, there are a lot of similarities. It's **how** they are told." And this quality of story telling at any level can, to a degree, trump the difficulty factor of the language.

Exploitability

Nuttall (1996) says that a text that cannot be exploited is of no use for teaching purposes. While this seems an obvious truth, there are clearly different ways of exploiting a text. To the focus group teachers the graded reader often seemed to be a specimen for forensic grammatical examination. With some exceptions they applauded the notes and questions often found in graded readers. Their opinions on accountability reflected the variety of opinions on methods of conducting extensive reading programmes, from very high accountability (Helgesen, 1997; Takase, 2007) to almost no accountability (Macalister, 2008). In fact, most teachers appeared to exploit the graded reader texts on a micro level, using them as material for intensive reading. There was little discussion about the amount of reading outside the class, or the extent to which the learners' fluency improved as a result of reading.

Readability

This was Nuttall's (1996) third priority, but for our ESOL teachers it was the most discussed, perhaps because it is the factor in students' reading over which they have most control. They spent most time discussing the level at which students should read, and the kinds of text that were likely to be most comprehensible. They included in their discussion design of texts and the modes in which they can be delivered.

Conclusion

The primary concerns for the focus group teachers in discussing graded readers appeared to be the level at which learners were reading, and the mechanics of teaching reading strategies in the classroom. While these are essential, in terms of priorities they may be putting the cart before the horse. Nuttall (1996) rates “suitability”, the ability to “enthral and delight”, as far more important than “exploitability” or “readability”. This position is endorsed by Day and Bamford (1998; 2002), Bassett (2005), Hedge (1985), Williams (1986) and others. However, it is not universally agreed upon in the literature, and the ESOL teachers in this study tended to disagree with it. They placed “readability” as the primary concern, followed by “exploitability”. It seemed that in looking at graded readers they were placing the level of language over the importance of content, and this might indicate that they perceived the graded readers more as a fund of classroom texts for intensive work rather than as an extensive, extra-classroom tool for developing fluency and providing enjoyment. Their appreciation of a good graded reader seemed to revolve around the “graded” part of the epithet as opposed to the qualities that must be inherent in any work of literature, the actual content and quality of the writing.

It seems that this brief snap-shot of teachers’ perceptions of graded readers shows them slightly at variance with some reading specialists in the field of ESOL pedagogy, including Nuttall (1996) and Day and Bamford (1998, 2002). This could well be because teachers are caught in the accountability trap, their teaching having to appear measurable and useful, constrained by the syllabus and the expectations of parents and the institution. More research needs to be done on whether the attitude of the teachers at this particular institution is a general one.

But however much teachers value graded readers as useful tools for practising language proficiency skills, if the content and quality of these graded readers does not “enthral and delight”, the learners are unlikely to read them. Perhaps teachers should be employing them for the enjoyment, rather than the educative, factor. As Williams (1986), the precursor of Day and Bamford with his “top ten” principles for teaching reading, says, “In the absence of interesting texts, very little is possible.” Sadly, very little indeed.

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Appendix A:

International Pacific College Library

Most popular graded readers 1 Jan 2006 – 31 Dec 2006

	Title	Author	No of times issued
1	Sorting things out	Chipper, Helen	20
2	Toshishun	Akutagawa, Ryunosuke	20
3	Jurassic Park	Crichton, Michael	18
4	Gone with the wind	Mitchell, Margaret	18
5	Gandhi: his life was the message	Byrne, Don	18
6	Flatmate wanted	Chipper, Helen	18
7	Jurassic Park III	Ciencin, Scott	15
8	Matilda	Dahl, Roald	15
9	Finding the key	Chipper, Helen	14
10	Free Willy	Strasser, Todd	14
11	The lost world	Doyle, Arthur Conan	14
12	The road ahead	Gates, Bill	14
13	Stargate	Devlin, Dean	14
14	Braveheart	Wallace, Randall	14
15	In the woods	Akutagawa, Ryunosuke	14
16	Tales of the supernatural	Brennan, Frank	14
17	All I want	Johnson, Margaret	14
18	A picture to remember	Scott-Malden, Sarah	14
19	A little princess	Bassett, Jennifer	14
20	Trouble with takeaways	Chipper, Helen	13

New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics, 2009, 15 (1) 26-37

RECURSIVENESS IN WRITTEN FEEDBACK

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Abstract

Studies on written feedback have reported on writers' perceptions of feedback. However, these studies have relied on observations, questionnaires, checklists, classroom observations, retrospective interviews, and textual analysis of written feedback. What seems to be lacking in the literature is an in-depth understanding of the thought processes of students when they attend to written feedback. In this paper, we report on a case study that investigates cognitive processes and reactions when a postgraduate student of Confucian Cultural Heritage attends to written feedback. Concurrent verbal protocols used in conjunction with written drafts and questionnaires form the data source for this study. Our analysis shows that attending to feedback is an ongoing recursive process. Secondly, this case study suggests that recursiveness prompts discovery in writing. Finally, this study indicates that although cultural attributes are often mentioned in relation to Confucian Heritage Culture learners, in this case these attributes did not appear to play a strong role.

Introduction and related literature

Providing written feedback on student writing is common practice in writing classrooms, including those using the process model of writing. Process models, such as those of Hayes and Flower (1980) and Hayes (1996), consider feedback and revision an important part of the recursiveness of the writing process. Its value has also been recognised by researchers, giving rise to several strands of research. Much of the research since the mid-90s has been instigated by Truscott's 1996 review that essentially challenged the research community into providing evidence for claims about one type of written feedback, grammatical error correction. It thus focuses on topics such as the ability of teachers to provide suitable corrective feedback (Zamel, 1985, & Ferris, Chaney, Komura, Roberts & McKee, 2000); the use of corrective feedback by students (Ferris, 1997; Ferris et. al., 2000; Ferris & Roberts, 2001); and the long-term efficacy of corrective feedback (see the above studies; more recently, see Bitchener, 2008). Some of these studies have also distinguished between the efficacies of different types of feedback (Berg, 1999; Chandler,2003; Enginarlar, 1993; Ferris & Helt, 2000; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996; Paulus, 1999; Tuzi, 2004), largely by focusing on the degree of explicitness of feedback and linguistic categories (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Leki, 1991; Rennie, 2000).

Some of these studies have considered student writing behaviour; few have considered student thought processes, although some have considered the preferences of students (for example, see Dheram, 1995; Enginarlar, 1993; Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996). Although some studies have been carried out on how feedback is perceived by looking at cognitive processes (Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; F. Hyland, 1998, 2000, 2003), little research has been done on the actual thought processes of students as they attend to feedback and how that feedback is used in their revisions. In examining the role of feedback in students' composition, Cohen & Cavalcanti (1990) used teacher think-aloud protocols while providing feedback to students' compositions, teacher questionnaires, students' concurrent verbal protocols on their reactions to teacher feedback, student check-list and student questionnaire. However, the study failed to identify the actual thought processes of attending to feedback. Furthermore, the results conflicted with the different data sources, so that it is not clear which were thought processes and which were questionnaire items. This study, however, explores the thought processes of students as they attend to feedback through the use of concurrent verbal protocols.

Chinese culture

Another area which this study addresses that has received little attention is the role culture might play in a student's responses to feedback. Chinese culture is deeply steeped in Confucian teaching (Hui, 2005). Confucian philosophy subscribes to the idea that teachers have high moral virtues and harmony and, as such, are held in high regard. Thus, this attribution towards teachers makes them highly respected, so that students "are not supposed to interact freely with teachers on the basis of equal status" (Hui, 2005, p.22). A barrier then exists between teachers and students where teacher-student roles and expectations are strongly delineated (Craig, 1995; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Students steeped in the Chinese culture thus accept the role of the teacher as the ultimate authority in imparting knowledge and the role of the student as the passive receiver of this knowledge (Craig, 1995; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Scollon & Scollon, 1995).

However, when such a student is transported to an entirely "alien" culture and learning environment, where the teaching discourse substantially differs from what the student has been exposed to, opportunities for conflicts may arise. Going against Chinese culture by trying to conform to new cultural values in order to fit in with a new learning environment may be counterproductive (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Garrot, 1995; Hird, 1996). Such factors might play a role in how students respond to a teacher's feedback. They suggest that Confucian Heritage Culture (CHC) students might passively accept teacher feedback, or may experience difficulties in knowing how to go about responding to teacher feedback in any other way. So far as we can determine, no other study has looked at this issue with respect to feedback on written work.

Verbal protocols

The literature is sparse on studies dealing with the thought processes of students as they attend to feedback. In examining the role of feedback in student responses towards teacher feedback on essays, Belanger and Allingham (2004) made use of verbal protocols to get a glimpse of the thought processes of students as they attended to written feedback on their written drafts. However, the drawback of this study is that the verbal protocols were collected retrospectively. During this process, participants could have reconstructed thought processes. This is based on the premise that participants may rely on long term memory to search for selective relevant information before transferring it to the short term memory (STM) for verbalisation. Thus, participants may try to present coherent processes rather than provide a glimpse of the actual deliberations in their thought processes. In other words, what the researcher gets may not be an accurate account of the thought processes.

Concurrent think-alouds, on the other hand, have been argued to provide “direct insights” (Wigglesworth, 2005) into learners’ cognitive processes. This is based on the premise that when participants are doing a task and thinking out loud, they rely on their STM. Since data is collected while a task is being performed, participants spontaneously verbalise aloud their thoughts without altering their cognitive processes. It has been argued that not all writers may be comfortable composing aloud and not all their thoughts may be verbalised, and even that verbalising may lead to increased attention and deeper processing (Jourdenais, 2001). Even so, the use of verbal protocols has been used by researchers to tease out the differences between skilled and unskilled writers as they attend to their writing tasks (Ericsson & Simon, 1993). As such, verbal protocols can be a rich source of information to identify the strategies adopted by writers as they solve the problems they encounter while completing their writing tasks. At least one study has demonstrated that participants using the concurrent method reflect information processes from the STM (Kussela & Paul, 2000). This study, which is exploratory in nature, makes use of concurrent think-alouds to gain insights as to what happens when a writer attends to written feedback.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:
What are the features of one CHC student’s responses to written feedback on a draft?

a. What cognitive processes does the student go through?
b. Does CHC play a role in the student’s responses?

Methodology

Setting

This study is based on a larger study involving eight participants from two different classes in the Master of Arts postgraduate programmes at two universities in Malaysia. The study involved data in the form of two written texts, two questionnaires, and concurrent verbal protocols.

A lecturer from each of the universities assisted the researcher in the collection of data. They gave the writing tasks to the participants, gave feedback on the participants’ essays, administered the survey questionnaires, and collected the verbal protocols from the participants.

Participant

The participant on whom this study focuses, Yu (a pseudonym), is a language teacher from China who is currently pursuing his PhD in Applied Linguistics. He has more than 10 years of experience teaching courses in English grammar and academic writing at the tertiary level. He was selected for this study because he provided rich verbalisations when he attended to teacher feedback, but was one of several participants in the larger study who could not be included in it because their data sets were incomplete. (Yu failed to provide a revised essay.)

Data collection

In this study, the participant, after giving informed consent to the research, was introduced to think-alouds (see below). He was then asked to write an argumentative essay at his own convenience on the prompt *Success in education is influenced more by the student's life and training as a child than by the quality and effectiveness of the educational programme*. The draft was submitted to the lecturer three days later. The lecturer read through the draft and provided written feedback through in-text comments, marginal comments, and end of text comments (See Appendix A). The feedback was then sealed in an envelope and given to the participant. The participant was instructed to be prepared to record himself thinking aloud as soon as he opened the envelope and began attending to the feedback and revising his essay. The revised draft and taped verbal protocol were then handed in to the lecturer. The participant was then given questionnaires on his background information and preferences for types of feedback, which he completed and reurned to the lecturer. The researcher then collected all the data from the lecturer.

Training sessions

Prior to carrying out the research, two think-aloud training sessions were conducted by the researcher to familiarise the participant with the think-aloud method while simultaneously attempting a task. This was to enable the participant to become comfortable with the idea of thinking aloud and to provide an opportunity for the participant to practice on sample tasks. In both sessions, the researcher first modelled thinking aloud while performing a task for the participant. This was to alleviate any fears or anxieties the participant may have about the idea of thinking aloud and at the same time become accustomed to the task of thinking aloud and writing simultaneously.

Cognitive processes while attending to feedback

In this section, we discuss Yu's feedback processes. While attending to feedback, Yu constantly moved back and forth from feedback comments to his written text. During this process, Yu either accepted or rejected feedback by evaluating written feedback and providing justifications for his decisions.

Accepting feedback

Yu evaluated and weighed teacher written feedback thoroughly before accepting it. The following is an example of the process that Yu went through when he accepted teacher feedback and made changes based on it.

In this instance, Yu first refered to the feedback when he read aloud the following – *'*Check this sentence (Reads feedback)*'*. As Yu read the feedback, he evaluated it by questioning himself about the feedback given in this way – 'Anything wrong with this sentence? (Think-aloud protocol-TAP)'. Yu then read his essay to analyse the comment that was given and responded positively by attempting to make changes, as indicated when he said: 'Um… maybe here I should add the preposition into behind cultivated (TAP)'. He then read aloud the changes that he made: 'they will be cultivated into a wonderful learning habit, then this learning habit can improve their following study models (Reads essay)'.

After making the changes, Yu accepted the feedback by saying: 'Ya, I will do it (TAP)' and showed his appreciation to his lecturer by thanking him, which is clear in the following: 'Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you (TAP)'.

In another instance, Yu accepted feedback by making links to previous learning experiences. Yu read the feedback that was given: 'what does the research evidence say about all these?' Yu seemed to understand the intent of teacher feedback; he appeared to acknowledge and accept that the feedback was justified when he said: 'Yes, I did not produce any research evidence. This is my fault (TAP)' and again showed his appreciation to the lecturer for the feedback: 'Thank you for your suggestion (TAP)'.

Yu also linked the feedback to past learning by saying 'I learned a lot from the class in the academic writing, I should put some evidence (TAP)' and showed positive acceptance of teacher feedback with: 'I will do that (TAP)'.

However, while responding in a positive manner, Yu still went through his own process of evaluation by trying to justify the lack of evidence he had provided by highlighting the source of his arguments in this manner: 'But actually speaking you know, I just wrote this article mainly based on my own idea, based on my own experience (TAP)'.

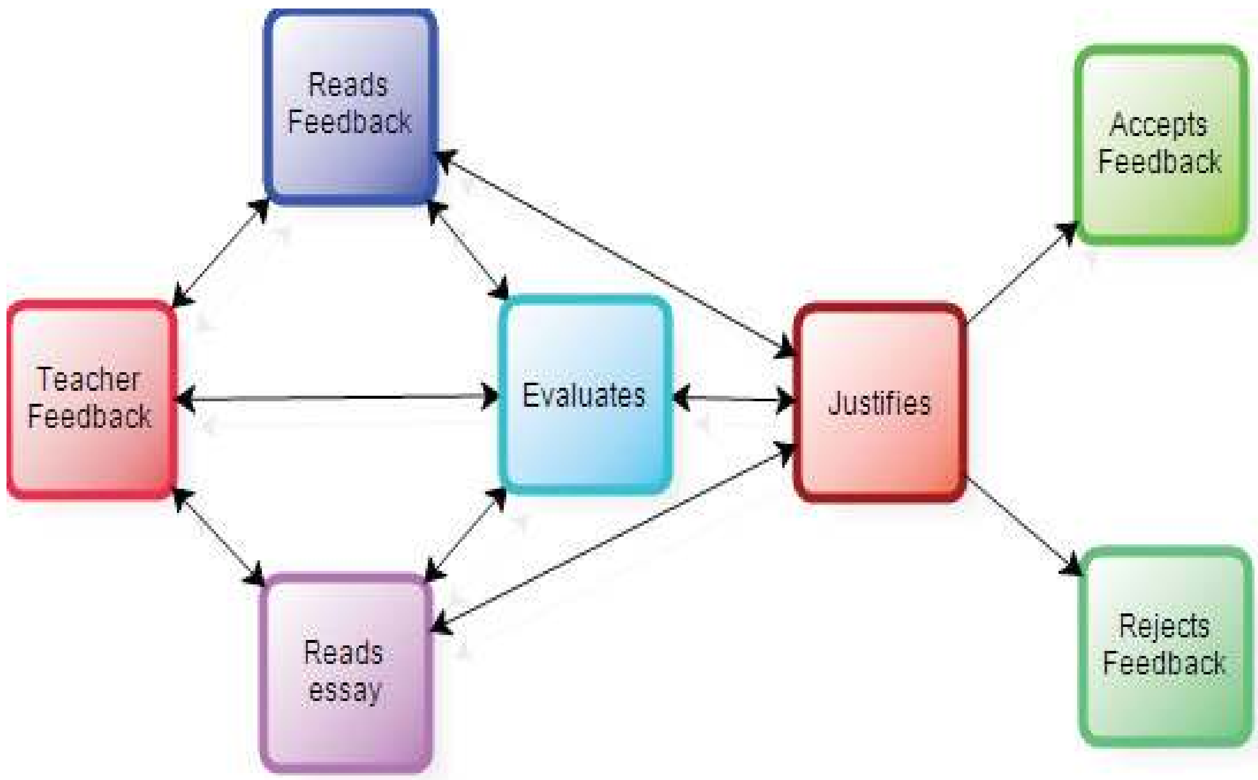
Though Yu appeared to appreciate the feedback that was given to him, he did not fully accept the feedback at its face value. He accepted the feedback with reservations and with the intention of proving himself to be right by doing more research, which is evident in the following: 'But I don't think I am wrong. But may be yah, I should find some evidence. I think I can find a lot evidence to prove that I am right (TAP)'.

Rejecting feedback

In our analysis we found that when Yu rejected his lecturer's coments, he always read and evaluated the feedback first. This was usually followed by some justification or explanation for his rejection of particular feedback. In the following example, for instance, Yu responded to the comments by first referring to the feedback: 'But I think there are some points marked by you such as 'that' (Refers to feedback)'. He then evaluated the comments by linking his previous learning experience to the comments in a kind of a dialogue with the absent lecturer by arguing the finer points of grammar in this way: 'Here, 'that' means a relative pronoun and maybe you wrote, you write another 'as to'. You write 'as to' above 'that'. Do you think 'as to' is better? Do you think 'that' should be replaced by 'as to'? (TAP)'. It should be recalled here that Yu had been a grammar teacher prior to pursuing his postgraduate studies, suggesting that perhaps Yu was trying to come to terms with the feedback that was given by the lecturer. He then clearly rejects the feedback in the following verbalisation: 'Oh, I don't think so 'as to' is better (TAP)'. However, he justifies his choice by explaining his reasons for rejecting the feedback by explaining the grammar point in this way: 'as to' is a preposition, but 'that' is a relative pronoun. Now, relative pronoun, you know, 'that' here is to modify the question. I don't think 'as to' is better (TAP)'. Although Yu ultimately rejects the feedback, he does so only after careful evaluation.

In summary, Yu's feedback processes seem to give a clear indication that attending to feedback is a recursive process. Figure 1 provides a diagram of this feedback process. Yu either read the written feedback or read the relevant sections of his essay. He then evaluated the feedback and related the feedback to what he had written. He explained his own original choices, and in some instances he accepted the feedback. Whether he accepted or rejected feedback, he justified his decisions with explanations.

Figure 1: Yu's feedback processes



Discussion

This study provides three insights into the nature of one writer's response to feedback: it was recursive; it prompted discovery; and it did not appear to reflect cultural factors attributed to CHC.

Recursiveness in feedback

Models of writing, such as those proposed by Hayes and Flower (1980) and Hayes (1996), emphasise and give insights into the cognitive processes of revision in the process of writing. These models of writing suggest that writers go through a recursive process (Hayes, 1996) with various stages such as prewriting, planning, drafting, editing, and publishing. This, in turn, propels writers through the various cognitive processes to achieve their goals. However, these models of writing have failed to establish how recursiveness in the process of writing occurs with feedback acting as input for the outcome of the final written product. One insight from this study is that attending to feedback is a recursive process, with the writer constantly moving back and forth from the feedback to the text. This process involves evaluating the feedback and finding justifications for either accepting or rejecting the feedback.

Yu often appeared to carefully deliberate on his decisions as he attended to his lecturer's feedback; he would then, in the next instant, refer to his text to work out a solution to the issue raised by the feedback. In this way, Yu moved recursively between the lecturer's feedback and his original text until he either was satisfied with the feedback and acknowledged his acceptance of it, or was satisfied with his justifications for the orginal text and rejected the feedback.

Recursiveness prompts discovery

Recursive writing entails revision which leads to a process of discovery fuelled by teacher feedback. Feedback has long been regarded as essential for the development of second language writing skills (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Teacher feedback on student writing helps student writers to understand how well they are writing and how they might further develop their writing (Ryan, 1997). Thus, feedback encourages writers to respond and revise their writing by moving recursively from the text to the feedback and back to the text, possibly prompting new ideas in the writer through comparison of the feedback and the text.

In this study, for example, when Yu attended to the following feedback, check this sentence, he seemed to have moved back and forth from feedback to his text as he questioned himself by asking Anything wrong with this sentence? Touching base with feedback and his text seemed to have helped him discover a solution to the problem highlighted in the feedback, as is evident in the following protocol: … maybe here I should add the preposition into behind cultivated. Thus, recursiveness between feedback and text appears to have prompted new discovery in revision.

Cultural factors in feedback

A third insight from this study is that, contrary to claims in recent English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language literature that “Asian learners of English are generally reticent and passive learners” (Cheng, 2000, p. 436) as a result of Asian societies’ cultural attributes, Yu seemed to exhibit the trait of being independent by presenting a willingness to confront argumentation in his writing. Yu may be a counter-example to the general myth that Asian students are mostly passive, quiet, and accepting of whatever is taught to them. Yu was not willing to accept teacher feedback blindly and was assertive enough to think critically by challenging feedback, rejecting it, and justifying his stand. For example, in the following extract of his think-aloud protocols, Yu indirectly challenged the teacher by challenging the feedback the teacher had given: ‘Do you think ‘as to’ is better? Do you think ‘that’ should be replaced by ‘as to’? Oh I don’t think so’. He then justified his point of view as to what he perceived as correct when he explained his belief in this way : “As to” is a preposition, but “that” is a relative pronoun. Relative pronoun “that” modifies the question. I don’t think “as to” is better’.

There are several possible explanations for Yu’s attitude. Perhaps factors such as the student-centred learning environment in which Yu was immersed at the time, such as the type of teaching methodologies employed in Yu’s learning, his relationship with the teacher, and his own language proficiency, contributed positively towards Yu’s active participation in his learning. Perhaps it was the fact that Yu was an academic staff member from China prior to undertaking his post-graduate studies. It is possible that his position as an academic staff member, by making him a peer with the lecturer as well as making him knowledgeable about the language, meant Yu did not consider himself to be in the student role characterised by the purported characteristics of CHC learners as passive and reticent (Cheng, 2000). However, Yu’s active participation in his learning does not mean that he was set against Confucian teachings or was being disrespectful to the teacher. He may have merely been reacting positively in an interactive teaching-learning situation with which he had become accustomed.

Conclusion

Written feedback is a widespread teacher practice that, although it has received considerable positive and negative attention, has not often been explored from the perspective of the thought processes of the student writer attending to it. This study is an initial exploration into those thought processes. It is, however, limited in two respects, although both lead to implications for further research. First, this study is based on a single writer who is somewhat atypical of student writers because of his experience as an English grammar and academic writing teacher. Yu’s active engagement with feedback and his particular style of justifying his original writing and his lecturer’s feedback, especially regarding grammar points, may be attributable to that background. He may also be atypical of learners of CHC background; although this study offers some evidence against the myth of the passive Asian learner, again this might be attributable to his experience as a teacher.

Nonetheless, this study offers a glimpse of what occurs when student writers do engage with feedback. Since recursiveness can be identified, analysed, and explained, as this study attempts to do, it can probably be taught to students as a technique to foster engagement with feedback, perhaps by having teachers model the process or even go through a think-aloud transcript with students. While this may not lead all students to make discoveries like Yu did, it may at least help students learn what teachers hope students will do with written feedback. At a broader level, it may even be a way of nurturing a more independent and critical stance in students, regardless of the personal and cultural attributes they bring to the classroom, by removing it from the arena of a directly spoken response that may be perceived by some students (and some teachers) as a challenge to the teacher's authority.

Second, another limitation is that speaking while attending to feedback may have led to incomplete, inaccurate, or "enhanced" reports, as some researchers have suggested (Jourdenais, 2001; Sachs & Polio, 2007). In fact, Swain (2006) suggests that speaking while thinking may be a source of development. This possibility raises intriguing pedagogical and theoretical issues about the role played by the think-aloud itself. The larger study from which this case study has been drawn aims to more fully explore this and related issues. Further studies ranging over contributing factors that differ from those of the participant considered here, such as different writer proficiency levels and backgrounds, and different teaching/learning and writing contexts, would contribute to this line of research.

Note

A version of this paper was presented at the 12th English in South-East Asia Conference (2007) in Bangkok, Thailand.

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Appendix A: Written feedback on Yu's draft

BBI 5215

Principles and Practice in Language Learning

Abstract:

on the

This article probes into the question that which factor, involving students' childhood settings and educational quality, more intensely influences educational success. Both of the factors are developed in detail, arriving at the conclusion that both play an essential role in educational achievements, and neither should be neglected. Good.

Key Words:

Success in Education   Students' Life and Training   Quality   Effectiveness Educational Program

the argument

Nowadays, ~~some people~~ argue that success in education is influenced more by the student's life and training as a child than by the quality and effectiveness of the educational Program. ~~Personally,~~ this argument does not hold water.

your main point here is that the environment plays an important role

As for children, their surroundings such as living and training are significant for their future career and success. On the one hand, given that children are brought up in a graceful condition, they will be cultivated a wonderful learning habit improving their following study models. Good living condition may provide children with a fair learning environment in which they can learn under a proper guide and be influenced by partners equipped with appropriate learning strategies. Children are more subject to the surrounding people, thus they will subconsciously be transplanted into similar learning habits and ideas, which will definitely pave a solid ground for their future success under the influence of satisfactory partners.

check your sentence

is that always the case?

elaborate

who are these?

check your sentence.

Many claims - but can justify all these with empirical evidence

On the other hand, training children cannot be set aside either. From the perspective of language cognition, it could be easily claimed that no successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self-esteem, self-confidence, knowledge of yourself, and belief in your own capabilities for that activity. (H. Douglas Brown 2000). Malinowski (1923) noted that all human beings have a need for phatic communication—defining oneself and finding acceptance in expressing that self in relation to valued others. Personality development universally involves the growth of a person's concept of self, and reflection of self as seen in the interaction between self and

check referencing style.

elaborate / substantiate

6623190   1/6

SHORT REPORTS AND SUMMARIES

New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics, 2009, 15 (1) 38-46

DESIGNING RESEARCH TO TRACK SOCIO-PRAGMATIC SKILLS AMONG PROFESSIONALLY QUALIFIED WORKERS [1]

Janet Holmes, Meredith Marra, Jonathan Newton, Angela Joe, Nicky Riddiford & Bernadette Vine

Victoria University of Wellington

Introduction

This paper outlines the rationale and design for a research project devised by the authors, all members of the Language in the Workplace (LWP) Project based at Victoria University of Wellington, to track the linguistic progress of a group of skilled migrants from their enrolment in a communication skills course to the end of their internships in a New Zealand workplace.

Conceptualised within a broadly intercultural framework (Kotthoff & Spencer-Oatey, 2007), the research is concerned with the development of the migrants' socio-pragmatic skills during this period, and pays particular attention to the ways in which the skilled migrants handle the tension between their desire to "fit in" and obtain secure employment, and their need to assert their expertise and construct a professional identity in a new environment. Often these two desires are at odds: fitting in requires adapting to the new culture and its sociolinguistic and communicative norms, and this is often best achieved, at least initially, by taking a background role, quietly observing and responding to rather than initiating interaction. Constructing oneself as an expert, on the other hand often requires relatively assertive and forceful behaviour, at least in some contexts. Balancing these conflicting needs is often a challenge for new migrants, but it has rarely been explicitly identified.[2] This research thus extends the focus of ESP needs analysis to encompass the challenge of negotiating professional identity in a workplace where one is a minority ethnic group member.

Our approach incorporates a critical component, reflecting our awareness of "connections between workplace uses of language and relations of power at the institutional and broader social levels" (Pennycook, 2001, p.19). The communication skills course aims to empower professional migrant learners to undertake their own analyses of what is going on in workplace interactions (Benesch, 1996; Byram, 1997, 2006a, 2006b; Roberts, Byram, Jordan & Street, 2001; Newton, 2006; Holmes, Joe, Marra, Newton, Riddiford & Vine, forthcoming). The research is designed to identify evidence that these skills have been acquired and are being used during the migrants' internships.

People seeking work in a country which uses an international language which is not their mother tongue are undoubtedly at some disadvantage. In such a context, even well-educated, skilled migrants may experience the effects of the social inequalities and power disadvantages resulting from their cultural and linguistic difference from the dominant majority (Meeuwis & Sarangi, 1994; Pennycook, 2001; Rampton, 2001; Blommaert, 2004). The research plan thus incorporates techniques designed to elicit potential employers' attitudes to immigrant workers (cf Derwing & Krahn, 2008), and their expressed perceptions of their employees' communicative needs. Our longer term goal entails using this research as the basis for materials designed for the New Zealand workplace, and aimed at developing in New Zealanders an appreciation of the richness of the communicative and cultural resources which skilled migrants bring to the New Zealand workplace.

The VUW Workplace Communication Skills course for Professional Migrants

In 2005, Victoria University of Wellington was contracted to provide language-focused training courses for skilled migrants who had been unable to find work in their chosen professions in New Zealand for at least two years. The twelve-week course begins with a five-week in-class component followed by a six-week workplace placement or internship (with each Monday afternoon spent back in class), and concludes with a final week in class. The course aims to assist skilled migrants to develop communication skills which will facilitate their attempts to gain employment within their chosen profession in New Zealand. These professions include accountancy, law, teaching, information technology, and medicine. One goal of the initial five week block is therefore to develop awareness of characteristic features of communication in New Zealand workplaces.[3]

In order to enrol in the course, professional migrants are required to be reasonably proficient in English (e.g., IELTS 6.5), and, of course, they are all qualified and experienced experts in their professional areas. Their control of the transactional (task-oriented) aspects of workplace talk is generally adequate: they know how to do the job and they know much of the technical language associated with doing it. And, while pronunciation is sometimes a barrier to comprehension, it is the relational (people-oriented) aspects of workplace interaction which are often particularly challenging, i.e., establishing and maintaining rapport with colleagues. Employers frequently identify relational talk, in particular, as a problem area (e.g., Podsiadlowski, 2006; Clyne, 1994; Spoonley, 2006/2007). Some comment that many workers have all the skills necessary to do the job, and generally cope well with the transactional (information-oriented) aspects of workplace talk, but that they seem unfriendly or uncomfortable at work; they don't seem to fit in smoothly. The reasons for these impressions can generally be traced to problems with handling the sociocultural or relational aspects of communication, and with the acquisition of intercultural competence, rather than more narrowly defined proficiency in English (Brown, 2000; Liddicoat, 2009).

The analyses undertaken by the LWP Project team have provided a good deal of information about the communicative skills underlying effective relational talk, as well as an extensive corpus of authentic interactions which have been used in developing appropriate classroom materials.[4] Drawing on this research, the Workplace Communication Skills course aims to provide the well-educated migrants with the ability to analyse workplace interactions along socio-pragmatic dimensions (cf Byram, 1997). The incorporation of an empowering critical dimension helps prepare learners for encounters beyond those presented in class, and encourages them to see their role not as imitators of native speakers, but as social actors engaging with other social actors in a particular kind of communication and interaction which is different from that between native speakers, and which expresses their professional identity in a way they find satisfactory and satisfying.

The materials used in the course are also, importantly, developed from authentic interactions in New Zealand workplaces. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) observes that one cause of non-target like pragmatics is misleading input in teaching materials. She maintains that providing authentic language input is crucial in classroom instruction, a form of “fair play, giving the learners a fighting chance” (2001, p. 30). They provide a means of assisting migrants to become more informed, sensitive, flexible, and strategically equipped communicators in their second language (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004, p. 7).

Working with employers

Our LWP research has a well-established record of working on “real world” issues identified in collaboration with “real world” partners (Bygate, 2004, p. 18). We have consistently worked with practitioners to identify issues of mutual interest, drawing on our knowledge of the way language works, and especially our awareness of the immensely important influence of contextual factors on communication in researching those issues. Basing our design as far as possible on the action research principle of research “for and with” our participants (Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton, & Richardson, 1992, p. 22), we have aimed for a research process which is as open and empowering as possible, and which avoids exploitation of those we work with.

Working with professional migrants seeking employment in a diverse range of specialities has involved canvassing the views of a wide range of potential employers. While we have some general information from employers about what they see as the disadvantages and the reasons for not employing migrant workers (Henderson, 2007; Podsiadlowski, 2007), there is little specific information from particular professional areas. The hundred employers that Astrid Podsiadlowski interviewed identified language proficiency, communication difficulties, and cultural differences (including different attitudes to work) as the chief disadvantages of employing migrants. But the experience and observations of our workplace mentors and support people suggests that a more fundamental issue is often the attitudes and expectation of the employers towards their employees. Some employers are very positive in their approach, seeing migrants as providing valuable cultural resources, a source of fresh opinions, different ways of thinking, and alternative approaches to evaluation. Other potential employers, however, regard migrant workers through yellow-tinted (i.e., jaundiced) spectacles, categorise them as a "perceived risk", and do not appreciate what they offer.

Consequently, the project outlined below involves a fundamentally collaborative methodology in order (a) to systematically document changes, if any, in professional migrant learners' ability to manage workplace interaction, including their ability to undertake their own analyses of what is going on, and to actively construct a satisfying professional identity, and (b) to investigate the contribution of employers' expectations and attitudes to the extent of learners' workplace communicative success, and to identify changes, if any, over the placement period. This approach provides opportunities for self-reflexive techniques combined with direct engagement with issues of relevance to the wider community (Roberts, 2003; Candlin & Sarangi, 2004; Sarangi, 2006, p. 215), as well as facilitating a productive, collaborative partnership between researchers and researched (Sarangi, 2006, p. 215).

The research plan
The steps in the proposed research project:

A. Stage 1: Interview data

(i) Discussion with course participants to establish
- a. how they perceive their communicative needs
- b. what they expect from the course
- c. how we can work collaboratively to attain their goals

This step addresses the challenge of communicating to participants the importance of developing not only their analytical skills but also of acquiring ways of expressing different communicative strategies which are comfortable for them and which index the kind of professional identity they wish to enact.

(ii) Discussion with employers to establish
- a. how they perceive employees' communicative needs
- b. what they expect from the course
- c. how we can work collaboratively to attain their goals

Potential employers will first be identified according to the professional backgrounds of the course participants. Each course participant's work profile, together with a description of the placement process, and of the content of the communication skills course, will then be circulated to the list of potential employers. Willing employers will be interviewed to establish their expectations of employees, their attitudes towards EAL users, and their expectations of what the course will provide for the employees.

(iii) Discussion with workplace support people
   a. how they perceive employees' communicative needs
   b. what they expect from the course
   c. how we can work collaboratively to attain their goals

Each employee will be provided with an internal support person or mentor from within the organisation in which they have been placed. In addition, one of our research team will act as a workplace consultant providing further support throughout the internship period, and liaising regularly with the workplace mentor as well as the intern. Workplace mentors will be interviewed at the start of the internship to establish their expectations of their intern, their attitudes towards EAL users, and their expectations of what the course will provide for the intern.

B. Stage 2: Recorded data

(i) Collect recorded data to establish workplace interactional norms

Our data collection method has been thoroughly described elsewhere (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). Its most distinctive feature is the fact that the participants themselves record their everyday workplace talk with as little interference from the research team as possible. As far as possible, our policy is to minimise our intrusion as researchers into the work environment, while also carefully managing ethical matters and confidentiality. After the recordings are obtained, the material is processed, selected sections are transcribed, and useful and useable material for instruction is selected for analysis (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Marra, 2008).

(ii) Collect recorded data on participants' proficiency in selected areas (small talk, requests) at start and end of course

As part of the normal processes involved in participating in the course, information will be gathered at the beginning and end of the course on participants' spoken proficiency and ability to accurately interpret socio-pragmatic aspects of workplace talk, with a focus on requests and small talk (Riddiford, 2007).

(iii) Collect data from participants in workplace at start and end of placement. The standard LWP methodology will be used for this, as described in (i) above

C. Stage 3: Interview data

Discussion with (i) course participants and (ii) employers to establish whether, and if so to what extent, they feel that the course has met their needs, and to gather their reflections on what they have learned.

(iii) Discussion with workplace mentors to collect their views on the participants' progress in communicating effectively at work, and to gather their reflections on what they have learned. Their views will also be sought regarding any perceived changes in attitudes towards the course participant by other employees and the employer.

Discussion

This paper has outlined the rationale and structure of a project aimed at tracking the progress of professional migrants from the point at which they enrol in a communications skills course through to their total engagement in workplace interaction. Rather than simply shoe-horning migrants into employment, the project aims to empower learners to make choices about the kind of identity they want to construct in workplaces where their expertise is valued (Spreckels & Kotthoff, 2007). The Workplace Communication Skills course provides analytical skills which enable migrants to select linguistic forms which enact an authoritative identity when required, and to be supportive, collaborative and collegial when they judge it appropriate.

Socio-cultural, sociolinguistic and socio-pragmatic differences are undoubtedly sources of potential miscommunication in New Zealand workplaces. New Zealand has a very high level of monolingualism (Starks, 1998), and many Pākehā people are rather suspicious of those from different cultural backgrounds. There is clearly an opportunity for applied linguists to provide information which might assist in changing attitudes so that migrants' linguistic and cultural resources are more widely viewed positively, as assets rather than drawbacks.

Many Pākehā are simply unaware of the stresses that people from different cultures face on a daily basis because of different expectations about "normal" ways of behaving at work, or about what is considered an acceptable way of communicating. The situation of new migrants is particularly challenging since they are generally working in isolation from other members of their linguistic and cultural group. They have no obvious source of tension relief or camaraderie with others in the same minority situation. However, developing an understanding of the migrants' situation among co-workers could provide a starting point for humour and social talk which would contribute both to the development of camaraderie and to the empowerment of the migrant professional. The planned research is designed to provide information which could inform such an approach.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined a research project, conceptualised within a broadly intercultural framework, aimed at evaluating the success of a communication skills course in empowering skilled migrants as they enter the New Zealand workforce. The project will gather data on the effects of a communication skills course on migrants' socio-pragmatic proficiency and analytical abilities; it will also collect information on employer attitudes towards their migrant employees, with the long-term goal of providing information to assist employers and co-workers in understanding and appreciating the distinctive socio-cultural backgrounds and different socio-pragmatic norms of migrant employees. This comprises another less direct means of empowering learners; more positive and supportive attitudes will potentially liberate migrants to exercise their expertise more fully.

This project will be the first of which we are aware to record authentic workplace talk in order to examine the effects for professional migrants of participation in a course which explicitly focuses on the development of socio-pragmatic and analytical skills in workplace interaction. It will also be the first to work with employers with the aim of raising their awareness of the positive attributes of migrant professional workplaces and of the ways in which the diverse cultural and linguistic resources they bring to a community of practice can enhance the quality of workplace interaction.

Notes

[1] This paper was presented in March 2008 at a Symposium ("New Directions for Applied Linguistics: Discourse Analysis in Applied Linguistics: what does the future hold?"), organised by Chris Candlin and Ron Carter at AAAL in Washington DC. We express our appreciation to our co-presenters and the audience who contributed to a valuable discussion of the issues raised in the paper.
[2] But see Campbell and Roberts (2007), Roberts et al. (2008).
[3] See Riddiford and Joe (2005), Newton (2007) and Prebble (2007) for more information about the course.
[4] See, for example, Holmes (2005a, 2005b) on small talk, Holmes and Marra (2002, 2006) on humour, Vine (2004) on diverse ways of giving directives and making requests, and Daly et al (2004) on refusals and complaints in different communities of practice.

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TIMOR LESTE COLLABORATIVE PROJECT: A SHORT REPORT

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Introduction

This report discusses findings from a small-scale scoping study, which is part of a larger curriculum project—a collaborative venture between staff from the Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL) and a New Zealand university.

The aim of the wider project is to develop a context-sensitive English language curriculum for students at UNTL who are undergoing pre-service training to be teachers of English as a foreign language in local secondary schools. (Details of the institutional and linguistic context are provided in the appendix.) According to Norton (2000), investment by learners is a key factor in the successful implementation of a new curriculum: "if learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will increase their value in the social world" (Norton, 2000, pp. 165-166). Thus, when designing the curriculum, it is important to ensure that the students will not only understand how to use the specific learning tasks but that it also expands their repertoire of skills and knowledge for application in their subsequent professional and social lives.

The report begins by outlining the history and objectives of the project before explaining the specific research questions posed for the scoping study. The means of collecting data will be outlined and examples of the participants' attitudes will be presented based on open-ended questionnaire responses. These findings will be discussed in terms of how they might lead to the design of a curriculum which is internationally-framed and context-sensitive in terms both of its content and implementation. The report will conclude with the further steps that are being taken to move the project to its next phase.

History and objectives of the project

The curriculum project was initiated in late 2005 when the second author, who had been working at UNTL on a VSA (Volunteer Service Abroad) assignment, sought research funding. Consequently, a Higher Education Exchange Programme (HEEP) scholarship was awarded by the Asia New Zealand Foundation to facilitate staff exchanges between Timor Leste and New Zealand. The Head of UNTL's English

Department visited New Zealand between March and October 2006, during which time he worked with New Zealand Applied Linguistics staff to link the existing UNTL curriculum across skill areas and also to align it with benchmarks in the European framework (Council of Europe, 2001; Little, 2006). The reformulated curriculum framework was taken back to Timor Leste, where it was discussed by UNTL staff and eventually received formal approval from the Rector for its adoption. Although funding was extended for the following year, in 2007 there were no further exchanges between the universities due to security issues in Timor Leste. However, discussions continued on developing the curriculum objectives, with a particular focus on reading and writing skills and the potential use of the Greenstone digital library (greenstone.org), the software programme FLAX (Flexible Language Acquisition) software (flax.nzdl.org), and Moodle as an open-source online learning platform. Subsequently, senior staff from UNTL visited New Zealand at various times in 2008 and were given opportunities to familiarise themselves with the above facilities. During one of these visits, formal agreement was reached to facilitate further academic collaboration between the two universities, the next step of which was to design the scoping study which is the basis of this brief report.

The study

The scoping study was intended to identify the attitudes of those UNTL staff currently responsible for teaching the writing strand of the English language curriculum, and the following two research questions guided the enquiry:

- How can the UNTL English writing curriculum meet student needs at all levels?
- What resources and support are needed to achieve the desired changes?

The data were collected by two means; firstly, a questionnaire comprising five open-ended items was issued to, and discussed with, two UNTL staff visiting New Zealand in 2008; secondly, and subsequently, a parallel questionnaire was administered to the four writing instructors at UNTL. The following outline presents a few samples, rather than the complete set, of the responses to those questionnaire items (*italicised below*) which most directly addressed the research questions.

Findings

These are verbatim responses provided by the six UNTL English Department staff in response to the survey questions. It should be noted that the respondents' first language is not English: the authors of this report have decided to give priority to accurate citation of the participants' expressed responses to the interview and survey questions. The initials in parentheses refer to the pseudonyms of the respective respondents.

What aspect of writing is the most important?

- The most important aspect of writing is word organisation or the way of how thoughts are transformed into a written language (English). (AL)
- The most important aspect of writing is outline. When the writer finishes the outline means that 50% of the writing has finished. (TC)
- Writing is a complex process that allows writer to explore thoughts and ideas and make them visible and concrete. (GC)
- Introduces topic sentence in a single paragraph and list the important point to develop the ideas. (SJ)

How is writing organised in the English Department of UNTL?

- Writing is one of the four language skills. It is a written language that exercised or used by the people in their communication. It is the hardest language skill to be learned in the schools. (TC)
- Writing at UNTL is organized in five parts. They are writing 1, 2, 3, 4 and academic writing. Academic writing should be harder than writing IV and IV harder than III and so on. From writing 1 to IV talk about general topics and some theories, for example the way how to write and some types of writing. Academic writing discusses about graphics, tables and percentages, for example, the comparison between two or three things for the first year and five years coming. (TC)

How do you teach writing?

- In writing, I use kiss style (keep it short and simple); means that one complete sentence should have one subject, one predicate and one object and then full stop. If the writing has more than one idea should be put into two or three sentences. Then, to link the deferent (sic) ideas, the writer uses the links of conjunction or connective words, like and, but, in addition, moreover, furthermore and finally; and so forth. In the paper, the writer determines the topic, then, introduces some important points in introduction and then later will be discussed in the body (like: body 1, 2, 3, and 4) and finally come up with conclusion. (TC)

What could be done to improve the English writing curriculum?

- The teachers need to create small workshops to discuss the way how to develop writing skills, sharing materials read from different sources about writing, asking and using feedback from students about what they what to learning in developing their writing skills. (AL)
- To give some home works and some papers for students to do at home and then come check individually or in groups in the classroom. (TC)
- We do not have clue or way how to develop the curriculum therefore we need the experts of writing to see and set up the levels of the writing to each semester in our department. (SA)
- To improve English curriculum at UNTL, we need to decide material's baseline or resources for each year. (SJ)

What resources or materials do you need to make these improvements?

- There is a need of books and resources in relation to theories and practices of writing and how to develop students writing skills. (AL)
- The need of self-access materials for teachers and students to have access and there should be other electronic resources available. (AL)
- The materials used to improve writing subjects are some books, such as let write, step of writing, successful writing and some note taken from the internet. (TC)
- The resources should be based on baseline need and we are highly to hear your advice what are resources applicable for improvement. (SJ)

Discussion: Addressing the research questions

Throughout these responses by the instructors there is a consistent theme, which reflects their belief that provision of appropriate resources, in the form of writing textbooks and course materials, will assist them greatly in their desire to improve the quality of their students' written English output. At present there is a shortage of such resources, and this strongly-held perception assists us in addressing the first research question, "How can the UNTL English writing curriculum meet student needs at all levels?"

Investment, as defined by Norton (2000) and by Norton and Toohey (2001), seems to be a key issue here. UNTL students' engagement with English, especially in terms of reading, writing and academic literacy practices, is constrained by practicalities such as large class sizes and economic considerations which mean that most students cannot afford coursebooks and other learning materials such as pedagogical grammar texts.

There are very few English texts available in the environment outside the university. There is one English newspaper written for an expatriate audience, and some pages written in English in other multilingual newspapers (Taylor-Leech, 2009, pp. 8-11). Hence it is felt that access to more relevant and interesting texts would benefit and stimulate the students, especially if a sense of shared ownership of these texts between instructors and students could be encouraged. One recommendation to be pursued by the UNTL staff is developing a collection or corpus of written texts by students which can serve as local models at the different levels in the curriculum.

In addition to accessing English-language materials, another way to approach the issue of learner investment is to consider an appropriate pedagogical approach to reading and writing. The responses to the questionnaire seem to indicate a fairly conventional teacher-directed approach, and this is confirmed by the second author's experience while working at UNTL. It may be thought that a more learner-centred task-based strategy could be adopted, on the basis that appropriate tasks can provide both the input and output processing necessary for language learning. If the tasks relate to the students' needs and interests, learners' motivation (and hence investment) is enhanced both by carrying out the task and by achieving the outcomes (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 229). This may be schematised in Figure 1, below:

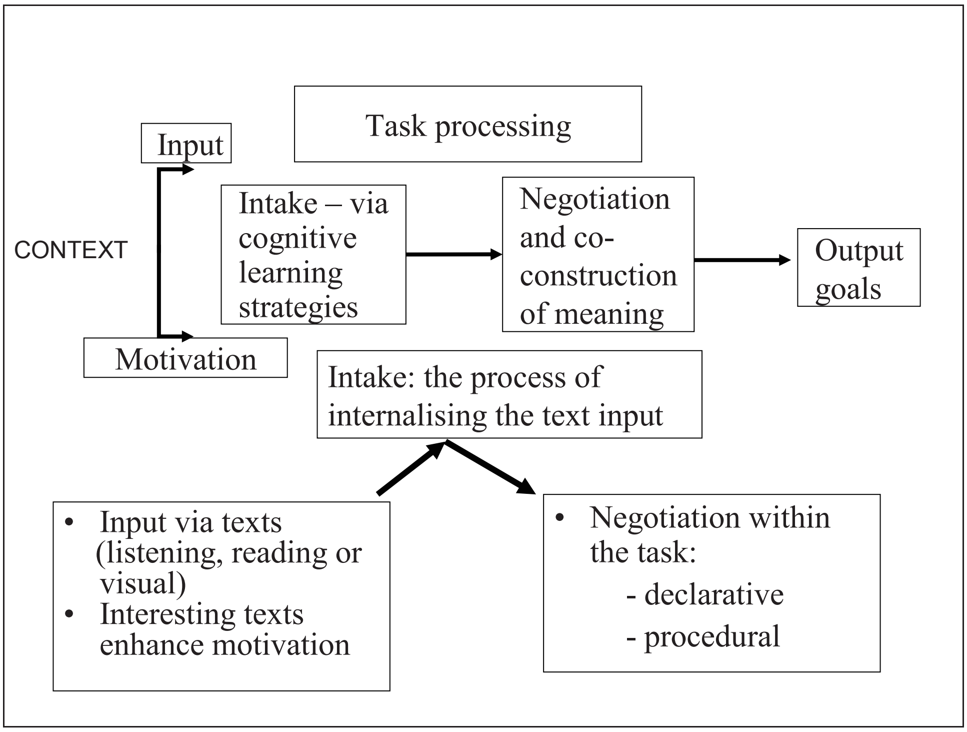

Figure 1: ***Tasks in second language learning***

The research team intends to explore in more detail how such a task-based approach to the teaching of (specifically) writing might fit into the ecology of UNTL, and the extent to which the use of Greenstone and FLAX could ameliorate some of the problems of teaching large classes of trainee teachers. Electronic storage of texts in digital library collections could overcome the lack of printed resource materials for English-language reading and writing instruction. And the FLAX software has the potential to empower the UNTL English staff - and their students - to develop their own reading and writing tasks, using an expanding collection of digital library texts selected in terms of appropriate content and language level.

Conclusion: The next phase

It is hoped that the UNTL students will invest in both the material resources of the project (the digital software) and in the symbolic tools (the interactive negotiation and co-construction of meaning involved in task processing). Not only will such investment develop their repertoire of immediate learning skills, but it will also enhance their value in the social and professional world (Norton, 2000).

However, we also wish to take the notion of investment in two further directions. Firstly, the staff directly concerned in teaching writing at UNTL need to make professional and personal investments in the curriculum project. This means that the project team must ensure that not only are the instructors fully informed about the aims, objectives and processes involved, but that they are full participants in the innovation. Thus, at various times during 2009, members of the New Zealand team will each spend several weeks in Timor Leste, working alongside the local staff to co-

construct mutual understanding of both the content and process of the curriculum, and the opportunities and constraints to its implementation afforded by the local context. Assuming that conditions are favourable, and that the local staff are willing to invest personal time and effort, further opportunities for graduate and postgraduate study in New Zealand will be considered.

This involves the second, more conventional notion of investment: that of financial resources. Fortunately, sufficient research funds have been provided to allow the New Zealand team to make the 2009 visits to Timor Leste and also to obtain requisite equipment and material. Thereafter, further funds will be sought, not only from New Zealand, but also from other agencies, both international and local—i.e. in Timor Leste. While the balance of financial investment, and opportunity cost, will differ among the various stakeholders, it is considered necessary that each should feel equal partners in the collaborative venture.

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Appendix

A. Institutional context

Universidade National Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL) is the National University of Timor Leste. It has a student body of about 8,000. There are seven faculties in the University: Agriculture, Political Science, Economics, Science & Education, Engineering and Medicine and Law. There are about 280 permanent academic staff and a number of part time staff as well.

The university opened during the Indonesian era (1976 – 1999) and reopened in November 2000, after closing during the civil unrest and accompanying destruction in late 1999. The University reopened with mainly Timorese staff, very few resources and with buildings still being rebuilt and restored. The university continues to rebuild both in terms of its professional and its physical capacity until today.

The collaborative project is situated in the Faculty of Science and Education, in the English Department. The faculty is also the government's teacher training institution, preparing science and foreign language teachers for secondary teaching. Students undertake a four year degree course which culminates in delivery of a thesis paper. Students mostly enter the University from senior High School, although since the end of the independence struggle there has been a cohort of more mature students, whose study was disrupted or who themselves participated in that struggle. There is a demand for places at UNTL as the government has set a low fee structure for the university. In 2000, the English Department received about 1000 applications for 169 places.

Class sizes at the university are now lower than in previous years, with about 30 - 40 students in each class. The classrooms are generally light and airy with a whiteboard at the front and desks and chairs available for the students. There is a central library available for all students. It contains a wide selection of books, many of which have been donated from Australia.

The degree course in the English Department has 160 credits. The papers are taken over 8 semesters with the first four semesters focusing on building English language competency. The curriculum is quite diverse, including Teacher Education subjects, Linguistics subjects, both general and applied, as well as English Literature. One semester is given to a paper called Community Service where students visit sites throughout Timor Leste and participate in development of that community. In Semester 6 students start preparing their thesis which is presented and defended in front of three examiners in Semester 8.

Graduates can then apply to the Ministry of Education for a position in a school or look for other work in NGOs or other positions where English language is required such as in embassies or international organizations operating in Timor Leste.

The following is taken from a report by the second author submitted during her assignment at UNTL in 2005:

> The multilingual environment is very exciting but also brings challenges for the English Department. There seems to be quite strong motivation on the students' part to develop their English language skills and an equal desire on the part of the staff to see the students become fluent and accurate users of English, particularly in their role as prospective teachers of English.
>
> *Writing*. The students' ability in writing does not match their oral skills. There are some students who are able to write a coherent and cohesive written text, but my observation is that there are some major difficulties experienced by the majority of students when attempting academic writing. It seems that they may be able to grasp the structure of, for instance the present perfect when it is an item in a list, but when required to use it in a text there seem to be difficulties.
>
> After reading about 40 exam scripts, where students were asked to do some writing which was fairly straightforward, e.g. write an 8-sentence narrative and an informal letter to their auntie, I think that some serious consideration needs to be given to assist the students to write well. Once again their motivation is high but there seem to be major hurdles. There is a lot of work to do at sentence level.

B. Linguistic context

The official languages of Timor Leste are Portuguese and Tetum. Bahasa Indonesia and English are defined as working languages under the Constitution.

Tetum is an Austronesian language, one variety of which is spoken around the capital city, Dili. Other dialects of Tetum are also widely used in the country, including Tetun-Terik, and there are at least 15 other indigenous languages in the country. Along with other local languages, Tetum is the most common means of communication between Timorese (Hajek, 2000, p. 401). A large proportion of the lexis of Tetum is derived from Portuguese (Van Engelenhoven & Williams-van Klinken, 2006, p.735), and it has therefore been described as a creole.

Under Indonesian rule, the use of Portuguese was banned, but it was used by the clandestine resistance, especially in communicating through spoken and written channels with the outside world (Cabral & Martin-Jones, 2008). Portuguese and Tetum thus gained importance as symbols of resistance and were later adopted as the two official languages.

The main mediums of instruction at the university at the moment are Portuguese and Bahasa Indonesia. Portuguese has been designated as the language of instruction for schools and teachers are being supported to learn the language using instructors from

Brazil and Portugal. UNTL staff report that there is frequent mixing of languages and negotiation over language choices between lecturers and students, both within and outside the classroom.

Timor Leste has a strong oral culture. Many of its customary songs and poems are part of a rich tradition passed down through generations. “The Timorese people have a rich oral tradition in which mythology and legend play an important role in passing on knowledge about the pre-colonial period and the later evolution of the kingdoms.” (Government of Timor Leste, http://www.timorleste.gov.tl/AboutTimorleste_rename/culture.htm)

Over 90% of Timor Leste’s population are Roman Catholics. The Catholic Church under the Portuguese regime was largely responsible for increasing literacy in the population, and many Timorese high school graduates went on to complete further studies in Portugal. During the Indonesian era Bahasa Indonesia was taught in schools and the school system at all levels was developed using Indonesian textbooks.

Evidence of a well developed use of literacy is found in Cabral & Martin Jones’s (2008) article “Writing the Resistance: Literacy in East Timor 1975-1999”. This article explains how literacy in different languages was embedded in the struggle for independence. Literacy practices were used to mediate the struggle using multilingual texts as dictated by the situation at that time. They were used on three fronts, the armed front, the clandestine front and the diplomatic front. Tetum and Portuguese were the main languages used.

Students at Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa’e show competence in at least three languages; their mother tongue, Tetum and Bahasa Indonesia. Some have a degree of fluency in Portuguese and only very few enter the university with a high level of fluency in English.

REVIEWS

Cohen, A. D. and Macaro, E. (Eds). (2007). *Language learner strategies: Thirty years of research and practice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-01944-2254-3. 336 pp.

This recent book falls into two sections. The seven chapters of Part One are general, grouped under the heading “Issues, theories and frameworks”, while the five chapters of Part Two are reviews of research into language learner strategies (LLS) over more than three decades. Almost all the chapters are co-written, with up to four writers each. The sub-title is a reminder that there’s nothing new about a focus on how language learners can help themselves.

Language learner strategies developed from a gathering of researchers and teachers in Oxford in 2004, and deals with an area of interest that has moved through a number of name changes over the decades. In 1975 Joan Rubin wrote of “What the ‘Good Language Learner’ can teach us”; by 2001 she was talking about “language learner self-management”. In 1986 Rebecca Oxford referred to the “strategy inventory for language learning”; in the present volume one of her chapters refers to “L2 learner strategies”. In 1990 Anna Uhl Chamot’s co-authored book included “learning strategies” in its title; later she helped develop CALLA (the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach). These three researchers and many more are represented in this book, for which the term *Language learner strategies* has been chosen. The editors claim that this term was “probably never used” before their 2004 gathering (p.2). The terminology is not the only fluid aspect of the topic, as a close reading of the twelve chapters shows.

Readers of edited books don’t always feel the need to work through the chapters chronologically. In this case, though, reading at least the first two chapters in order seems a good idea. Grenfell and Macaro (from the Universities of Southhampton and Oxford) start with an examination of research debates over the years. Here it would be easy to join the complaints of those who want the details of LLS to be more universally agreed on. To counter this criticism, we can turn to the foreword, where Peter Yongqi Gu of Victoria University uses an original analogy. Referring to the recent removal of the planet Pluto, he points out “no one is dismissing astronomy because astronomers can’t agree on what a planet is” (p. vii).

Chapter 2, “Coming to terms with language learner strategies: surveying the experts” is by Andrew Cohen, one of the editors and organizers of the Oxford meetings. Answers to a questionnaire he designed at that time led to a refined version that was posted on a website (still in place). The results are summarised in the rest of the chapter. The categories that emerge could be a useful guide for anyone wanting to narrow down an area for original research, or to prepare learning materials for students on more aspects of LLS. Reading the chapters and their references, it would be easy to get the impression that the ratio of books for researchers to books for learners is rather heavily balanced towards the former.

In the rest of Part 1, the co-authoring system means that in many cases names of long standing (Oxford, Chamot, Rubin and of course Cohen) are brought together with newer names. Oxford has had a hand in two of the chapters, one bringing together psychological and sociocultural perspectives, and one with a grammar focus. The sub-title of Chapter 6 intrigued me: "L2 grammar strategies: The second Cinderella and beyond", the term "second" referring to an earlier description of listening strategies. Following a summary of classroom approaches to the teaching of grammar, the three authors build on the premise that "no matter what the teacher does, learning is not guaranteed, and that a given L2 instructional mode does not necessarily predict a given student's way of learning" (p.124).

Part 1 includes chapters co-authored by New Zealanders: Carol Griffiths is one of three authors in Chapter 4 interested in applying strategies to particular contexts, which in her case was an Auckland private language school. Cynthia White co-authored Chapter 5 with Schramm and Chamot, entitled "Research methods in strategy research: re-examining the toolbox". Their interest is in refining some of the research tools currently in use and in particular developing "instruments appropriate for particular groups of learners" (pp. 114-5).

Part 2 works systematically through the five areas in which strategies have been most often examined: listening, reading, speaking, writing and vocabulary. The omission of grammar underlines the point made in Chapter 6. The section opens with a page and a half's introduction to the process of systematic reviewing by the book's two editors. Like Cohen's earlier chapter, this one could point future researchers in the right direction. A good reminder that some aspects of research are not for people in a hurry comes with a reference to Chapter 12 in which Nyikos and Fan "consulted 2000 entries from I.S.P. Nation's website" (p. 163).

The writers of the other four chapters are no less meticulous, yet in the traditional academic style, are careful to point out limitations. Reinforcing Gu's earlier point about blurred definitions, Erler and Finkbeiner (Chapter 9) start by referring to the challenge facing the researcher in defining the term 'second language reading strategies'. They do, however, extract for readers the three main areas of research: relationships between reading proficiency and strategy types, linguistic and non-linguistic strategies, and thirdly instruction in reading strategies.

Chapter 10 is one of several examples of the growing trend towards inter-country cooperation for which email communication must surely be responsible. Nakatani from Tokyo University of Science and Goh from Nanyang Technological University, Singapore review oral communication strategies. They show that no topic in our field is too small to be sub-divided. Starting with the distinction between interactionist and psycholinguistic perspectives, they plunge deeper into the many further distinctions that have been made over the years, such as Canale's (1983) compensatory and enhancing strategies.

By whom and how will this book be used? As well as being of use to researchers, this comprehensive coverage of the field will make excellent background reading for university staff called on to deliver lectures on an area of applied linguistics which they may not have explored for themselves. They could work systematically through all the entries or they could start with the chapter closest to their current interest, They could, so as not to miss a relevant point, follow threads which lead to specific research (such as learnability) or to target groups (such as young learners).

In some ways, "the top ten strategies of the good language learner" (p. 11) listed in 1975 by the late David Stern, have stood the test of time. Although the book shows all that has been examined since and the many new ways in which teachers and learners have applied the strategies, none of these ten look out of place in the light of what has followed.

MARILYN LEWIS, THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

Farrell, T. (2007). *Reflective language teaching: From research to practice.* London: Continuum. ISBN: 978-08264-9657-4. 202 pp.

The title of Thomas Farrell's book encapsulates its real essence. The conclusion to the book resounds with the notion that language teachers should take "responsibility for… [their]… own knowledge construction", and this is the underlying message throughout the book. While taking a clear look at the background of reflective practice, the personal anecdotes and case studies supplied by the author outline a pathway through which to engage meaningfully in the process. In his Preface, Farrell suggests that the book is unique not only because of the up-to-date nature of the research covered, but also because of the case studies that support each chapter. It could also be suggested that such distinctiveness lies in the clarity of the process of reflective practice that he outlines, which makes this a book that transcends the language teaching audience it is aimed at to also provide useful content for teachers in other sectors.

The book consists of fourteen chapters, and throughout uses a chapter template, embedding for each chapter scenarios, current research, and examples of reflection both in and on practice. The use of this template makes the book easy to read as a whole and to "dip into" for more precise answers. Each chapter is well-signposted and systematic in its approach with chapter outlines, sections by which to reflect on the chapter, and conclusions. Importantly, each chapter contains a section titled "from research to practice" which moves the reader from theory to practical strategies, and is a real strength of this book. Throughout, Farrell draws on his own experiences to give examples and suggestions for other teachers to explore.

Chapters 1 to 6 form the first section of the book, with discussion on the idea of reflection in practice and the teacher's personal areas for consideration in this regard. Farrell takes us easily through the broad picture with a comprehensive overview of the relevant discussions in the literature. He includes outlines of the three main types of reflection which he bullet-points, making it easy to complete any reflective exercise (p.5-6).

Chapters 3 to 6 systematically move the reader through a consideration of self-reflection and personal beliefs and practices. Initially, Farrell outlines a fascinating tool for reflection called "the tree of life". As with the rest of the book, Farrell's description of this tool is systematic and easy to follow, and his examples from personal experience are lively and entertaining. The concepts of self reflection are continued into a discussion of the importance of teacher's beliefs and practices, the narratives they use to consider classroom practice and the metaphors they use to make sense of events and responses. His discussion stems from the idea that "teachers are active, thinking decision makers who make instructional choices by drawing on…networks of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs" (Borg, 2003, p.81) and uses examples of how these previous experiences may affect their classroom practices. Teachers' narratives, Farrell suggests, are what teachers use to analyse "critical incidents" or the unplanned events that differ so greatly from the norm that they demand reflection and thought (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p.4). How these are constructed from underlying values and belief systems is an important consideration in the reflective practice progression.

Chapters 7 to 14 take the reader directly into developing a toolkit of strategies to successfully and efficiently reflect on practice. The discussion in these chapters moves to look at not only the process of reflection, but the practical "how to" of bringing together the relevant information to do so efficiently and in depth. The topics covered include the communication patterns of the teacher, action research, teaching journals, teacher development groups, classroom observations, critical friendships and concept mapping. The continued use of the template in these chapters is even more important, as the reader can take small sections to work on and then return to the chapter for further ideas in developing their reflective projects.

The final chapter looks at the importance of continued professional development for teachers. Understanding their own practice allows teachers to be more fully informed about which areas may need further development. Tellingly, Farrell states that the "bottom-up" approach that the book espouses "starts from the assumption that teachers, not methods or expert opinions, make a difference as they explore the nature of their own decision making and classroom practices (p. 175-76)".

This practical guide on how to reflect on practice, and develop or combine new approaches to best deliver programmes to students achieves its stated purpose of empowering language teachers in their continued professional development with efficiency and consummate ease. It is a highly recommended read.

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JO PERRY, AUT UNIVERSITY

Fotos, S. and Nassaji, H. (2007). *Form-focused instruction and teacher education: Studies in honour of Rod Ellis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-442250-5.

As the title suggests, this edited volume is in honour of Rod Ellis for his remarkable contributions to the field of SLA and different areas of teacher education, and for his unfailing commitment to teacher education through application of research in classroom practice and pedagogy. It provides an original and welcome addition to SLA by bringing together theoretical discussions and research reports on empirical studies of form-focused instruction (FFI), as well as the relevance of FFI to teacher education. It is a valuable resource for SLA researchers, teacher educators, classroom practitioners and graduate students alike who have an interest in, or have already engaged in focus on form (FoF) research.

The first section of the volume encompasses four chapters devoted to theoretical issues of focus on form. In Chapter 1 Nassai and Fotos introduce the volume, the purpose of which is to address teacher education as the gap between SLA research and pedagogy. Bearing that in mind, authors discuss contributions of FFI theory and research to teacher education. Subsequently, Nick Ellis scrutinizes the interface between explicit and implicit knowledge. He argues that even though implicit learning is entailed in much of L1 acquisition, it is not able to account for SLA due to learnt attention and transfer from L1. Thus, he implies that contemporary cognitive theories on the role of consciousness are in line with the Rod Ellis' weak interface theory in SLA, in which explicit knowledge facilitates "the processes of 'noticing', of 'noticing the gap', and of consciously guided output practice form" (p. 18). In Chapter 3, James Lantolf discusses the implications of sociocultural theory to L2 instruction. He argues that both the weak and strong positions in SLA have not given enough consideration to the *quality* of explicit knowledge made available for learners. He suggests that instruction grounded in scientific concepts is more fruitful to development than traditional grammar approaches. Peter Skehan discusses (in Chapter 4) how research and pedagogy can reciprocally enlighten one another in the context of task-based instruction. Although the author acknowledges the uneasy relationship between researchers and pedagogues due to different purposes that they pursue, he claims that task-based research findings may provide avenues for applications, whereas form-focused language pedagogy may provide a range of research questions and hypotheses.

Section 2 features five chapters on FoF in classroom practices. In the first chapter, Merrill Swain and Sharon Lapkin present a study that exemplifies learning as a situated localized process. Informed by sociocultural theory (SCT), the study focuses on detailed analysis of a French immersion student's "languaging" in performing multi-task activities including FoF tasks. The authors argue that learning takes place in "languaging", a term coined by Swain (2006) to refer to "the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (p. 98). Next, Rob Batstone questions the largely quantitative and decontextualized nature of the majority of FoF studies. By re-examining data from a FoF study from a discourse perspective, he demonstrates the vital role that discourse frame plays in shaping FoF in class, and suggests that FoF is an essentially sociocognitive phenomenon. In Chapter 3, Shawn Loewen explores the effectiveness of incidental FoF occurring in L2 classroom interaction. Both prior and subsequent use of targeted linguistic forms occurred in form-focused episodes are examined. The study provides some evidence for immediate effects of incidental FoF. The author also suggests other measurements of learners' L2 knowledge. Unlike the previous chapters that concern FoF in oral communicative tasks, the final two chapters are related to FoF in writing classes, though with different focuses. In Chapter 4, Hossein Nassaji reports on a study that investigates the role of negotiation in corrective feedback for written errors in an ESL classroom. The results point to the importance of negotiation in the feedback process. Sandra Fotos and Eli Hinkel, in the final chapter, review current research to address the importance of FFI and output in the development of L2 writing proficiency in terms of accuracy, fluency and complexity. They propose inclusion of FFI, output opportunities, corrective feedback and revisions in effective writing curricula.

Among the range of areas covered within the field of FFI, a whole section of the edited publication is devoted to teacher education and practice. What makes the assembled contributions specifically suited for teachers and renders the subject matter of the book ever more functional to their educational needs, is that they are all written from the viewpoint of researchers who have also experienced being language teachers. The articles thus give a central role to teachers, covering specific areas of interest and offering different insights into classroom use of FFI in communicative contexts. In the first paper of the section Jack Richards, moving from the consideration of the interaction between research and instructional materials design, which he claims to be weak, argues that good materials should be primarily based on teacher's needs, learner's needs and contextual variables, rather than research *stricto sensu*. Also Teresa Pica's contribution advocates the crucial role of teachers, especially those driven by the urgency of teaching content and language together. The decisional process of timing of FoF is highlighted in three decisive moments: during classroom discourse, throughout the L2 development and in intervention over time.

Brian Tomlinson draws on his own teaching experience, some of which was shared with Rod Ellis, to advocate the meaningfulness of form-focused discovery approaches (FFDAs) in promoting language awareness. On the basis of questionnaire responses on teachers' attitudes towards FFDAs, clarifications and recommendations are offered to teachers who limit their use of these approaches, despite being aware of their potential value. Extracts from teacher interviews are also presented in Pauline Rea-Dickins's study, which aims at elaborating the aspects considered in the decision making process involved in the assessment of EAL (English as an Additional Language) learners. In Tricia Hedge's study, 16 teachers in a Master's course are asked to react to recordings of the explicit reactive FFI on their writing given by the tutors of the course. The aim is to enhance awareness of the types of enquiry needed in classroom experience of learners' writing. Good inquiry is not achievable, as Catherine Elder, Rosemary Erlam and Jenefer Philp highlight through original data-driven research on samples of tests given to teacher trainees, unless teachers possess sufficient metalinguistic knowledge and command of the metalanguage in addition to an adequate level of language proficiency.

One of the collection's key strengths lies in its combination of theoretical concerns, classroom practices and applications in teacher education of FFI. The editors must be commended for bringing together high-quality state-of-the-art research in this emerging subfield in SLA. Since Firth and Wagner's (1997) seminal article in which they called for a reconceptualization of SLA with a more socially and contextually situated view, the past decade has seen increasing attention shift to consider social dimensions of SLA, a shift that is reflected in this collection.

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Hudson, T. (2007). *Teaching second language reading*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-442283-3. 350 pp.

This is the latest book in the series *Handbooks for Language Teachers*, and is intended to be read by both experienced practitioners and beginning teachers. It comprises eleven chapters (each concluding with discussion and study questions), a short glossary and an extensive bibliography.

The author combines social and psychological perspectives to provide a comprehensive overview of key issues in reading in a second or foreign language by consistently relating these issues to theory and research into first language reading. After a short introduction, the first chapter previews key concerns in reading which are to be covered in the rest of the book, illustrating the points with a wide range of short texts. The point is emphasised that reading is a complex meaning-based activity in which the reader processes a great deal of linguistic and contextual information to approximate to the writer's intention.

Chapter 2 explains at some length a number of important models of first language reading—bottom-up, top-down and interactive approaches—and concludes with the need to bear in mind fundamental differences between reading in the first and second languages. The next chapter begins with the key question as to whether reading in a second language is a reading problem or a language problem. After reviewing various theoretical views and experimental studies, Hudson concludes that research indicates that second language proficiency plays a greater role than first language reading ability.

Chapter 4 considers four broad reading skills—word attack (decoding), comprehension, fluency and critical reading—into which a wider range of minor skills may be subsumed. He then questions the extent to which such skills are separate competencies and, if so, whether there is indeed a valid hierarchy. He summarises the discussion by arguing that, although lists of skills may be helpful for curriculum development and textbook writing, actually putting them into practice is problematic because of the sheer complexity of reading and literacy events.

Chapter 5 broadens the issues just raised by considering reading strategies and metacognitive skills. Again, Hudson reviews research into first language reading before considering cognitive and metacognitive strategies in second language reading. His interpretation of the findings is that the same strategies are used by both good and poor readers, although with different degrees of success, and that successful readers tend to use more strategies. Apparently, the use of metacognitive strategies correlates with successful readers, but which is cause and which effect is not clear.

The next two chapters consider schema—what the reader brings to the text—in terms of content and cultural knowledge (Chapter 6) and then in terms of formal linguistic knowledge (Chapter 7). With regard to the former, Hudson reviews studies which have examined the effects that background knowledge has on text comprehension and recall in first language reading before considering those which have investigated content schema across languages and cultures. He concludes that while variables such as age, first language, social background, proficiency level and learning context have all been subject to research, and cannot be ignored, the interactions between them are still not clear. The formal schemata discussed in Chapter 7 include orthographic and phonemic knowledge, syntax, cohesion, and expository and narrative text structure.

The discussion of analytical research into these areas is followed by a review of several empirical studies of instruction in text structure; most of these studies are somewhat dated, indicating that there is a research gap that needs to be filled. While it seems clear from such research that students can be taught formal schemata of second language texts, the author points out that “what has been less well studied is the intensity and duration of training that is necessary” (p. 199).

Chapter 8 begins with a very lucid and up-to-date discussion of the notion of genre. Drawing on seminal work by authors such as Swales (1990; 1998) and Halliday (1985; 2004) and very recent studies in this area, the author presents various interpretations of this controversial topic and gives examples of how genres may be viewed narrowly as text types or more broadly as the characterisation of almost any (communicative) event. He concludes this section by discussing examples of the role of genre in reading comprehension, referring to the notion of a discourse community. This leads into the second part of the chapter, which is an overview of the notion of contrastive rhetoric—the study of the extent to which genres and text structures are language and culture specific. This is a matter of considerable interest to teachers of second language reading, and one which is a fruitful and growing area of research. The chapter concludes with a lengthy discussion on the pedagogical implications.

Somewhat belatedly, perhaps, Chapter 9 is about vocabulary in second language reading (although, as usual, the first part is a review of lexical issues in the first language.) In the second part, there are interesting reviews of research on dictionary use, the extent that marginal glosses can assist comprehension, and strategies for deducing the meaning of vocabulary in context—all leading to the conclusion that there are strong relationships between the richness of a reader’s vocabulary and successful reading. Chapter 10 traces the relationship between reading and writing, and the author argues that it is inefficient to separate them in second language programmes: “focussing on the unity of purpose in the two skills situates both and helps to develop critical thinking” (p. 186).

The final, short chapter draws together the threads of the issues discussed in the body of the book by summarising the main points, chapter by chapter.
Throughout the book, the author clearly and coherently discusses in depth a very wide range of issues about reading, and thus provides very useful background information for language teachers. Hudson’s summaries of the research studies he has reviewed are judiciously tentative, but not particularly helpful in terms of practical teaching. Appropriately enough, he often reminds the reader that individual learners

vary in all respects of the reading process, and that personal and contextual factors play a decisive role. The numerous discussion and study questions at the end of each chapter are well-considered and most likely to stimulate thinking around and beyond the topics—in graduate classes rather than in school staffrooms. Without discounting the need for beginning teachers to be aware of important theoretical perspectives and empirical findings, those who are looking for practical advice about how to teach their second language learners to read more efficiently would be better advised to consult recent works such as those by Christine Nuttall (1996).

My overall impression of this book is that it is a valuable compendium of information about theoretical insights and research into many aspects of first and second language reading. Those readers wishing to undertake research into any of the issues raised would find this a most useful starting point for their literature review—especially if they planned to carry out investigations within the quantitative paradigm—to identify what research has been carried out and, more importantly, where gaps remain to be filled.

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Larsen-Freeman, D. & Cameron, L. (2008). *Complex systems and applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780-1944-2244-4. 287 pp.

Thought is metaphor. While not everyone may agree with this statement, they will probably agree that few authors have addressed the metaphorical aspect of their enterprise as thoroughly as have Diane Larsen-Freeman and Lynne Cameron in their book *Complex systems and applied linguistics*. By forestalling this obvious criticism, Larsen-Freeman and Cameron have also raised the bar for others drawing on metaphors in their theoretical frameworks. By carefully distinguishing between complexity and chaos as metaphors and as theoretical constructs, the authors lay the foundation for establishing a theoretical framework that fruitfully encompasses a range of key issues.

The first three chapters develop the background for the next five chapters. Chapter 1 is essential reading; it introduces the notions of complexity and constant change, places complexity theory within its 'genealogical' context, and mentions applications of it in applied linguistics. It then raises a number of 'problem areas' in applied linguistics in a series of 'what if' questions (p.9), suggesting the potential range and value of complexity theory. Complexity and chaos as metaphor is then discussed as mentioned above, and finally complexity theory and other approaches are briefly compared. A succinct and helpful overview of each chapter is then provided. The next two chapters deal with complex systems and change; although challenging, they present concepts such as adaptation, attractors, state space landscape, and trajectory, helping to establish the claim that these terms are being systematically and theoretically developed in order to explain language issues. Other conceptual frameworks such as sociocultural theory are discussed to show how complexity theory differs. I found myself returning to these chapters periodically throughout my reading of the book. The authors acknowledge the technical difficulty of the topic, and have done an admirable job of trying to maintain readability without sacrificing detail. Nonetheless, at times one feels the strain for both authors and readers.

Various aspects of language theorised as complex systems are the topics of Chapters 4 through 8. These aspects are the evolution of language (Chapter 4), first and second language development (Chapter 5), discourse (Chapter 6), the language classroom (Chapter 7), and research (Chapter 8). These chapters need not be read in order, although they do touch on each other, as their helpful introductions make clear. Considerable evidence is provided of how a complex systems approach may unite diverse yet compatible lines of research in these areas. These chapters are thought-provoking; I found myself wondering how sociocultural studies not cited by the authors might fit into the complex systems framework (see below); readers familiar with other areas will no doubt find the same true for them. This suggests the strength but also the weakness of such a broadly aimed book—not even two authors can be expected to cover everything in a single work.

As the authors acknowledge, their work is largely theoretical. While this is necessary to developing and positioning a new framework, it is very welcome when some empirical research conducted within the complex systems framework finally appears. There is not much, however; even though Larsen-Freeman (1997) presented complexity theory as a possible approach over ten years ago, it is a little disheartening to realise how little research has actually been done. *Second language acquisition: An advanced resource book* (de Bot, Lowie & Verspoor, 2005), which makes use of the related approach of dynamic systems theory, shares the same limitations; one can only hope that further research will be inspired by these books. However, as de Bot (2008) points out in the introduction to the recent issue of *Modern Language Journal* devoted to dynamic systems theory, it is not yet clear that the our understanding of the theory is well-enough developed yet for research rivaling other models. It is particularly interesting, therefore, to read of the authors' own efforts in Chapters 5 and 7.

To some extent the limited amount of research is accounted for in the final chapter where it becomes clear that one promising tool—computer modeling of language—is still being developed. Equally clear, however, is the fact that tools used in ethnography, conversation analysis, and sociocultural theory are available. It is here in particular that readers may find themselves mentally 'adding' to the book, as I did for sociocultural theory. Coming in at under 300 pages, surely the book had space, for example, for more than a passing reference to dynamic assessment, as well as the various approaches taken to researching microgenetic language development. Perhaps a more through discussion of research tools used in these and other areas would have been possible if this chapter did not also serve as a conclusion. Given the range of topics covered in the book, a separate concluding chapter would have been warranted; at the end, I found myself re-reading the first chapter to get a clearer sense of where I had been and what I had seen.

The book has all the usual front and back matter. Like virtually all books published today, it could have done with more careful editing: more than one sentence led me down the garden path. I found the diagrams presenting empirical data useful; perhaps others will find the diagrams representing theoretical models useful.

This is a challenging but ultimately rewarding book for those with knowledge of the field. It is worth the reading time and shelf space of anyone seriously interested in one future direction for research in applied linguistics.

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Tomlinson, B. (Ed.). (2008). *English language learning materials: A critical review.* London: Continuum. ISBN: 978-08264-9350-7.

Tomlinson is definitely a good choice as an editor for a book based on language learning material. He has published widely in all three of the main areas related to language teaching addressed in this publication, namely language acquisition, textbooks for language teaching and books on material development for teaching language. The main aim of the book is 'to inform, to stimulate and to provide suggestions for future development", and I think that it clearly fulfils the aims suggested by Tomlinson.

There are four parts in the book, and each one address different aspects related to language learning material. Part 1 is a general introductory chapter by Tomlinson on the relationship between language acquisition and available language learning materials. Part 2 has seven chapters focussing on different types of materials produced for specific target learners. Some of the chapters cover materials geared for General English (GE), EAP materials or EST materials. Part 3 provides an informative global perspective, with the nine chapters each focusing on materials used in different geographical regions around the world. Some of the regions where research was conducted include the Middle East, the former Soviet Union and Africa. The variety of authors from different countries is impressive and reinforces the global approach adopted throughout the book. The authors include a range of developers and users of ELT materials. In the final part, Tomlinson summarises some of the key findings evident from the results of a number of the research projects described in the book.

In the introductory chapter by Tomlinson, a frank and some might say critical approach towards published language learning materials is adopted. On the first page of the first chapter this critical stance is evident when he states the following: 'one of my arguments is that many ELT materials (especially global course books) currently make a significant contribution to the failure of many learners of English as a second, foreign or other language to even acquire basic competence in English and to the failure of most of them to develop the ability to use it successfully" (p. 3). This opinion is, I suspect, shared by a number of people in the area of language teaching.

The second section, as a general overview displaying the multi-faceted nature of language teaching, will be informative for many language teachers. It can be particularly useful for inexperienced language teachers who have recently entered the profession, or students who are currently training to become language teachers. Each of the seven chapters provides a broad overview of materials for specific aspects of language teaching such as materials for General English, EAP materials and teaching English for young learners. In addition to these, one of the chapters has a focus on self-access materials, and another one focuses on multimedia materials. Overall, this section provides information on some good current practices in the specific areas.

One type of material that I felt probably deserved an evaluation chapter in Section 2 was material produced for preparation for proficiency testing, such as the books preparing students for IELTS. There are so many books available commercially for a testing system like IELTS that it would have been good to see a chapter addressing issues around material specifically designed for the purpose of test preparation. IELTS is mentioned briefly in the chapter on "EAP materials in Australia and New Zealand", but only in relation to the role that band scores play in students being accepted into pre-sessional courses in tertiary institutions.

I suspect that readers will find the third section on language teaching in different regions around the world particularly interesting. Some of the nine chapters in this section follow a similar pattern in terms of the issues covered. Many of the chapters start with a general introduction to the focussed region or the study that was conducted in a particular region. In a number of the chapters, this section is frequently followed by a collation of the responses to a mini questionnaire conducted amongst teachers in the target region. Typically, teachers were asked about their views of ESOL material, GE material and EAP material which is commercially available. The views of the teachers are followed by an evaluation of the materials by the author of the article, with a range of key questions such as "To what extent are the activities in the book likely to provide achievable challenges to the learners?" and "To what extent do the materials provide exposure to English in authentic use?", forming the focus of the evaluation. The article then looks at strengths and weaknesses, either related to the approaches in the regions or of the sample used for the research. This is followed by some suggestions for improvements in the region and some concluding points mark the end of the chapter.

In the chapters on Western Europe and on Central and Eastern Europe, an interesting variation on the layout of the chapters occurred, with some pertinent historical background information on ELT in the region being covered. This was really informative and highlighted the impact of politics, localization policies, financial constraints, as well as the impact of some Ministries of Education on the language learning environment. Throughout this section, it was glaringly obvious that in many regions teachers were bound to textbooks based on decisions made by these governments or Ministries of Education: essentially a very strong, top-down approach to the choice of particular language learning material. For certain regions, localization policies dictating that only books produced and published locally were to be used strongly influenced the chosen course texts. This general background information was followed by a recount of the main transitions which have happened or are happening in the region. Generally, the regions targeted in this section include a good balance between developed and developing regions, as well as EAL and EFL regions.

As a result of time constraints and workload issues, many language teachers have difficulty keeping up to date with what is happening in their field around the world. This book could be a very useful resource which summarises and critically reviews some really good research conducted around the world. In addition, language teachers will probably find that this book will provide some insight into the backgrounds of a range of students currently in many language schools and tertiary institutions around New Zealand.

A book adopting this global perspective is well overdue in terms of gaining insight into what is happening in language teaching in different geographical regions. It is a good reference resource for language schools.

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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 double-spaced in A4 format with generous margins at head, foot and both sides. Pages should be numbered consecutively. Submission of a manuscript implies that it has not been published previously and that it is not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

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

1.2 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.

1.4 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

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

1.6 Copies should be submitted as an attachment to John Bitchener, co-editor:

john.bitchener@aut.ac.nz

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

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. All Figures and Tables should have a number and 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 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

For other sources use APA (American Psychological Association) conventions.

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.

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