

The Proceedings of
Teachers Helping Teachers
Learning Applications for a Developing Nation in the 21st Century

Lao-American College
Vientiane, Laos
March 20 - 25, 2007

Edited by
Brent A. Jones

With the cooperation of
Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)

Introduction

We are delighted to offer this collection of papers based on presentations delivered at Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) events during 2007, mainly at Lao-American College in Vientiane. The 2007 schedule included conferences in Vientiane, Laos (March 20-25), Hue, Vietnam (May 17-21) and Dhaka, Bangladesh (August 25-26).

These proceedings were prepared as a resource for participants, host institutions and other interested parties who may not have been able to attend. The number of THT presenters and participants continue to grow and the relationships formed at these events continue to blossom. We hope that the success of this year's events will continue to stimulate interest in future events and act as a springboard for further professional development and cross-cultural cooperation throughout the language teaching community in each of the countries.

Brent A. Jones

Editor

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Preface - THT 2007 Proceedings

By William M. Balsamo

In August THT has completed its third year of presenting quality seminars in developing countries. Our program this year was very ambitious and began in Laos at the Lao-American College in March. Seventeen teachers volunteered to participate in the seminar and represented eight countries. This was our first time in Laos and its success laid the foundation for an ongoing relationship and expanded program with LAC.

In May we returned to Hue, Vietnam at the University of Foreign Studies. Considering the time of year with teachers fully engaged in teaching at their home universities it was truly amazing that we were able to get twelve volunteers to present at the seminar. Our association with Hue University of Foreign Languages is especially valued as the prestige of the college is highly esteemed both within Vietnam and abroad.

Finally in August we returned for the third year to Bangladesh where our programs all began. The program in Bangladesh was varied and involved three separate seminars presented in immediate succession. Our first venue was at St Joseph's Secondary School where the participants consisted of the entire family. St. Joseph's is a prestigious high school in Dhaka.

This was followed by a seminar at Presidency University organized by BELTA (Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association) and concluded at NAEM (National Academy for Educational Management.) In spite of flooding, student demonstrations and military curfews the three programs in Bangladesh were well attended and greatly appreciated reflecting the resilience of both THT volunteers and local native teachers.

We anticipate further growth in the years to come and ambitious expansion. Our goal is to establish ongoing relationships with all of the institutions with which we work and to continue with our purpose in presenting quality seminars to further international understanding and professional growth.

As we look to our program for 2008 we hope to return to Laos, Vietnam and Bangladesh with additional programs which may include intensive Japanese language classes and mini-courses given by individual teachers over a period of one week on topics ranging from literature to speech writing to PowerPoint presentations.

The papers contained in these proceedings reflect only a portion of the more than one hundred presentations given at all three seminars. These proceedings would not have been possible without the dedication efforts of Professor Brent Jones and the generosity of Kobe Gakuin University who helped us to publish these works. These papers document our work and hopefully will become an ongoing addition to our programs.

Welcome back THT Year II

Ginny Van Ostrand, Co-director

Lao-American College and Chansavanh

The Lao-American College (LAC) extends to all presenters and support staff our deepest appreciation for your contributions and participation with us all.

Last year was our first year to participate in the THT program. Our acceptance into THT meant a very great deal to both students and staff. From the volunteers, many of whom had never been in Laos before, developed some on-going friendships and special collaboration. We hope for more the same again this year.

Additionally, this year we have extended invitations to other institutions and the Lao Ministry of Education to join with us all time permitting. However, only LAC teaches subject matter in English as well as English language skills at this time.

Our feeling is that THT not only provides valuable new ideas and techniques, it also is a stimulus for better understanding between and among teachers and students around the world. One of our own staff subsequently participated in the THT program in Vietnam. We encourage more such interaction.

In the future, we hope for more suggestions for implementing subject matter, using English as the language of instruction, and technology in the classroom. In our rapidly changing world, we in the least developed countries are heavily impacted by demographic explosions, climate changes, and ever-increasing need for more relevant education to keep in step with increasing global complexities and developing technologies. Sadly, available resources and funding do not keep pace with rising demand and cost, and education for teachers.

THT offers inspiration and supportive services for most teachers, most especially for those of us who are in the poorer countries. We thank you, the selfless volunteers who share your experience with us.

A slogan of the United Negro College Fund in the USA states that, “a mind is a terrible thing to waste!” Adherence to that universally accepted belief is why we all teach, must continually improve our techniques, and rise to the challenges of providing more and better education!

March 20, 2007 (Tuesday)

Time	Presenter	Topic
08:30 – 09:30	Ms. Ginny Van Ostrand	Welcome Message & Campus Tour
09:30 – 10:30	Mr. William Kay	Basic lesson preparation for EFL Classrooms
	Prof. Brent Jones	Instructional design & curriculum development
10:30 – 11:30	Ms. Kathy Riley	More than fun! Games for building community
	Dr. Patrick Dougherty	Creative writing in the EFL classroom: A grand student motivation
13:30 – 14:30	Mr. William Kay	Communicative storytelling
	Prof. Brent Jones	Automatic language growth: student attitudes and beliefs
14:30 – 15:30	Ms. Cindy Szamborski	Step by step confidence building in listening
	Prof. Ann Irish	40 or more suggestions, ideas, concepts and reminders for teaching English to Lao students
15:30 – 16:30	Ms. Kathy Riley	Ways with songs
	Dr. Patrick Dougherty	Pictures: tools for communication
18:00 – 19:00	Mr. William Balsamo	Creative group activities for ESL workshops
	Prof. Brent Jones	Business English activities for lower level students
19:00 – 20:00	Ms. Cecilia Silva	The “storied lesson” short stories in the classroom
	Prof. Ann Irish	Towards a vast, vital and vigorous vocabulary

March 21, 2007 (Wednesday)

Time	Presenter	Topic
08:30 – 09:30	Ms. Yuki Takahashi	Native and non-native speakers
	Ms. Cindy Szamborski	Guided writing: lightening the burden of the learner
09:30 – 10:30	Ms. Kathy Riley	Ways with film
	Dr. Patrick Dougherty	Native culture as a powerful tool for L2 acquisition
10:30 – 11:30	Mr. William Kay	Informative gaps activities: culture-travel theme
	Prof. Ann Irish	Grasping the main idea
13:30 – 14:30	Ms. Yuki Takahashi	Learning styles in and out of the classroom
14:30 – 15:30	Mr. Charles Kowalski	Storytelling in the language classroom
15:30 – 16:30	Ms. Cecilia Silva	Literature in the language class: group activities
18:00 – 19:00	Mr. Charles Kowalski	Being a teacher of peace
	Dr. Patrick Dougherty	Formal speeches: tools for improving communication
19:00 – 20:00	Ms. Yuki Takahashi	Motivational activities
	Mr. William Balsamo	Back to basics: using PC in the ESL classroom – pencil and chalk

March 22, 2007 (Thursday)

Time	Presenter	Topic
08:30 – 09:30	Mr. Charles Kowalski	Monster classes
	Dr. Patrick Dougherty	Graphic organizers: keys to effective communication
09:30 – 10:30	Ms. Cindy Szamborski	Learning vocabulary from speaking
	Mr. William Balsamo	Online college interviews with foreign students
10:30 – 11:30	Ms. Toshiko Onishi	Communicative activities
	Ms. Cecilia Silva	Working with the generative words in foreign language teaching
13:30 – 14:30	Mr. Colin Graham	Speak, talk, say, tell; “what’s the difference?”
	Mr. William Balsamo	Online reading lab for ESL students
14:30 – 15:30	Mr. Colin Graham	An introduction to British sign language
	Prof. Dennis Woolbright	Raising English ability through making speeches
15:30 – 16:30	Ms. Toshiko Onishi	Simple activities for slow learners
	Prof. Ronald Klein	Creativity exercise for creative writing
18:00 – 19:00	Mr. Chris Ruddenklau	L + R Teaching pronunciation
	Prof. Dennis Woolbright	Using drama in the classroom
19:00 – 20:00	Mr. Chris Ruddenklau	Sequencing thoughts in English
	Prof. Ronald Klein	More creativity exercises for creative writing

March 23, 2007 (Friday)

Time	Presenter	Topic
08:30 – 10:00	Prof. Ronald Klein	Teaching Asian English literature
	Mr. Roger Palmer	Building listening proficiency
10:00 – 11:30	Prof. Ronald Klein	The tennis way of conversation
	Mr. Roger Palmer	Creating a classroom culture of English: classroom instructor
13:30 – 14:30	Mr. Colin Graham	The corpus in the classroom
	Mr. Chris Ruddenklau	Reading the news
14:30 – 15:30	Mr. Colin Graham	Blooming materials
	Ms. Toshiko Onishi	Peace studies through English
15:30 – 16:30	Prof. Dennis Woolbright	Lateral thinking
	Mr. Colin Graham	Getting flash with flashcards
18:00 – 20:00	LAC Students	Cultural Performance

March 24, 2007 (Saturday)

Time	Presenter	Topic
08:30 – 10:00	Ms. Maggie Lieb	Teaching debate skills to intermediate and lower level students/Global citizenship education for East Asian students
	Mr. Colin Graham	Activities with news stories
10:00 – 11:30	Ms. Maggie Lieb	Listening through music: reducing anxiety and increasing enjoyment
	Mr. Roger Palmer	Participation and interaction in pairs and groups
Farewell Party		

Tell Me About Your Country: Native Culture and EFL/ESL

Patrick T. Dougherty

The University of Hyogo

Abstract

The author has begun a series of student projects that allow students to use their own Japanese heritage and history as a tool for language learning. Through presentations, role-playing, and projects, students focus on studying, relaying, and utilizing the Japanese culture to provide a basis for language comprehension. An added benefit to this format for language instruction is that it allows students to learn about themselves, their culture, and ethnic heritage. The author provides a pamphlet of activities geared at encouraging students to explore their own culture. The thrust of the presentation was that the cultural heritage of the language learner provides a rich source of inspiration and material to assist student-centered instruction. Though using examples from Japanese students, the concepts presented are universal in application.

Introduction

The researcher, in the course of his career in Japan has had the opportunity to conduct pre-student exchange programs with Japanese high school and university students. The programs usually focused on the lifestyles and situations that students might encounter in the countries that they would visit, i.e., Australia and the United States.

After students returned from abroad, the researcher set about determining the efficacy of his curriculum by informally asking for student feedback. The basic questions were, "Did the pre-exchange program prepare you for your exchange?" and, "Do you have any suggestions for improvement for the pre-exchange program?"

Students responded that they were ready to ask questions about Australia and the United States, and understood much of what was going on around them culturally, but they were not prepared to answer some basic questions about Japan and traditional Japanese culture and customs. They either (1) did not know much about their own heritage, or (2) if they had some ambient knowledge of Japanese culture they did not have the adequate English vocabulary to answer specific questions.

To address these deficiencies, the researcher devised a program of sixteen activities to give students an opportunity to learn about their own culture and heritage and practice explaining this culture and heritage in English. These activities were gathered into a pamphlet given the

title, *Tell Me About Your Country*.

Rational

The idea of using students' native culture in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a second language (ESL) classroom is not new. The topic has been researched and the benefits identified. One of the primary reasons the use of native culture is beneficial in the EFL/ESL classroom comes from schema theory research. Studies have shown that students' comprehension and retention of target language material is improved when familiar cultural contexts are used in the classroom (Post and Rathet, 1996).

If a goal of learning a language is improved cultural understanding, than the question may be asked, why should this not extend to a cultural understanding of one's native culture and heritage? As Rebecca Chism (2005) stated, the "goal in a language classroom is intercultural understanding, not only the understanding of another culture but of one's own culture as well (p. 2)." Chism's study of the inclusion of Chinese culture in English language classrooms in Taiwan pointed out that the vast majority of textbooks being utilized in the local classrooms were focused on American or world culture and cultural constructs. This resulted in a situation where Taiwanese students were comfortable and able to discuss American and world culture but had not learned the vocabulary or enough background to dialogue on their own culture (Chism, 2005, p. 2). The same situation applies to Japan, and, realistically, can apply to students from a variety of cultural and heritage backgrounds (Dougherty and Dougherty, 2006).

Pamphlet Materials

The pamphlet, *Tell Me About Your Country*, contains fifteen exercises and one conversation board game (see Fig. 1 for the table of contents). All of these exercises have been used successfully at the junior high, high school, university, and adult continuing education levels. Each exercise may be completed individually, in pairs, or in small groups. Further, each exercise lends itself to a variety of methods of use. Each may be completed as a paper and pencil activity, an opening activity for a presentation, a research program leading to a dialogue, a role-playing opportunity, etc. In each case, the author placed a premium on flexibility of usage, realizing that the materials must meet the needs of teachers and students from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of resources available. This is especially true since the author has presented this pamphlet for use in Laos and Bangladesh as well as Japan. In those countries, access to computers, copy machines, and other technology is often limited, especially on educational levels below university (Rahman, 2006 and US Library of Congress,

2007). For this reason, most of the exercises can easily be duplicated on a chalkboard or done verbally.

Additionally, many of the assignments have multiple tasks. These tasks might include researching, discussion, writing, drawing, presentation, and role-playing. This is to recognize the differing strengths of students as well as to provide the instructor with a wide variety of approaches for each exercise.

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Figure 1. Table of Contents – Tell Me About Your Country

Limitations of space preclude an in-depth presentation of each exercise. Instead, a short summary of each exercise will be provided.

Exercises

1. Cultural Inventory

Summary: This is a simple 10 question, single sheet exercise that asks students to identify in the space one or a few words, their culture's traditional clothing, most important holiday, a

famous historical personage, valued personality traits, exported cultural influences, art, cultural confusions, food, sport, and music. Two examples of questions taken from the assignment are, "What is the most traditional clothing in your culture?" and "What is a cultural food dish that visitors may not like very much?"

2. Culture Box

Summary: In this one sheet assignment, students are asked to identify eight items or things that will explain their culture, either in its ancient or modern aspects. In one form of the assignment, a student is required to create a simple box approximately 45 centimeters by 45 centimeters in size. On this box are displayed photographs, drawings, and other memorabilia that denote the native culture in some way. For example, students in Japan might have cutouts from Japanese *manga* or cartoon magazines, or origami cranes, or pictures of pop stars or traditional geisha.

Each student carefully selects eight items that he or she believes exhibit the culture. The student proceeds to give a show and tell format presentation of the eight items. Since the space is limited, ingenuity is often required in the presentation of cultural items. For example, one cannot fit a kimono into the box, and so one might put a kimono sandal or cord to represent the larger item.

This specific activity was the focus of a presentation the researcher conducted at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in May 2004. What follows is an unsolicited response by one of the presentation attendees who tried the activity at his institution with adult students:

We did the Boxes--using hats and hard paper as boxes. Students particularly liked this activity because, in addition to natural approach to language, they told me that they felt they were discovering themselves all over again in a different language as they wrote I loved the comments and the realization. I was particularly touched to discover how many values and principles they brought into the activity and therefore it was not artificial in any way (Kay, 2004).

3. Travel Brochure

Summary: This is a three-page assignment in which students create a travel brochure for their home country, prefecture, state, hometown, or cultural/geographically important area. They are asked to draw the national or area flag, a brochure-type picture, and a map of the country, city, or area.

Additionally they must identify what the visitor can see, can do, and can eat if he or she decides to visit the brochure's featured site or country. This done, the students must list some important information for the visitor, stating the population, the language(s), climate, holidays, and best season to visit. Finally, the students create a "visitor's testimonial" where they state that the person loved visiting the area and list his or her reasons why.

4. Historical/Cultural Tour

Summary: In this three page assignment students are asked to create a travel itinerary for a seven-day historical/cultural tour of their city, area, or country. They must state what will be seen each day, give a description of what will be seen, and state why it is important enough to include in the limited itinerary. On the second page they must create a map showing the itinerary. Finally, they must list what to pack, with a reason for each item, and three famous souvenirs that they can purchase on the trip.

5. Menu Assignment

Summary: In this four-page exercise, students are required to create a menu for a traditional restaurant that represents their culture's unique cuisine. They must give the restaurant a suitable cultural name, draw a picture for the cover of the menu, and then list appetizers (starters), main courses (entrees), desserts, and drinks. In each category they must give a description of each dish or beverage as well as list the price.

6. A Traditional Recipe

Summary: In this two page activity students are required to give a recipe for a traditional cultural food dish. This recipe also requires a picture, a statement for which meal this dish would be best served, ingredients, and a step by step procedural outline for the making and cooking of this dish. Additionally, students must list other food items that might be served with this dish (condiments, drinks, etc.) and a description of how this dish should be eaten.

7. A Famous Festival or Cultural Event

Summary: In this two-page assignment students are asked to identify a famous yearly or regularly celebrated event in their country or culture. They must draw a picture displaying the event, state when it is held, where it is held, who usually attends, and why it is held. Additionally, they must write an explanation of this event pretending that they are explaining this happening to a first-time visitor.

8. Traditional Music

Summary: In this one-page exercise, the student is asked to create a poster advertisement for a music concert. The music or musician must be culturally significant. They must draw an appropriate picture for the poster as well as state the time, place, and ticket price for the event. They must identify what songs will be performed and what instruments will be used. Additionally, since the poster states that half-price tickets will be given to those who dress in traditional costume, students must state what the concertgoers must wear in order to obtain the half-price tickets.

9. Traditional Costume

Summary: In this first of two assignments dealing with traditional costume, students are asked to use colored paper or cloth to decorate cut-outs of a woman, man, boy, and girl with examples of appropriate traditional dress. Along with this, the student must write brief descriptions of the costumes displayed.

10. Traditional Costume II

Summary: The same basic idea as the first costume assignment, but, instead of using cloth or colored paper, the student merely draws the costume on representations of a woman, man, boy, and girl. Along with this, the student must state the name of the costume; give a written description of it, and state when it should be worn and, for the boy and girl costumes, at what age. At the end of the assignment the student is asked to state when he or she last wore a traditional outfit and for what reason.

11. Hometown Motto or Slogan

Summary: In this three-page assignment, examples of hometown mottos are given, such as the motto for Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, "The City of Brotherly Love," and Las Vegas, Nevada, USA, "The Entertainment Capital of the World." Each student is then asked to write a motto for his or her hometown. After writing the motto, her or she must then write why this motto is a good one for the town or city. Afterward, the student is asked to give some background information about his or her hometown. This information includes the town location, the population, when it was first settled, the main industry, and a description of the climate.

The next stage of the assignment involves drawing a map of the country and locating the city or town and then drawing a detailed map of the city or town. The student is then asked to identify three things that a visitor can see or do in the hometown.

The final stage of the assignment has the student reflecting on his or her favorite memory of growing up in his or her hometown. This last stage includes a segment where the student recommends the town to a visitor as a place to live and gives reasons for this recommendation.

12. A Snapshot of My culture

Summary: In this one page activity, a student is required to bring in a photograph that they have taken, or a picture from a magazine or newspaper, that he or she feels showcases the culture. The student then must write a one-paragraph description of why this is so.

13. The Souvenir Shop

Summary: In this four-page exercise students must "create" a souvenir shop that will highlight traditional goods from their country or culture. They must design the layout of the shop, including the front with an appropriate name and display format. Then they must design culturally appropriate costumes for the shop clerks to wear (both men and women). They must then list ten items that are must-haves in their shop; these are named, described, and priced.

Finally, students are asked to create a dialogue between a shop clerk and a customer where the shop clerk describes a few of the items and helps the customer, a first time visitor to the country or area, make some purchase decision. In one version of this activity, the clerk speaks only English and the customer has a bilingual co-traveler translate for him or her, thus making it a three-way conversation.

14. The Grandparent Interview

Summary: In this exercise each student is required to interview one of his or her grandparents, or a relative, or someone that he or she knows well who is 65 years old or older. The task requires that the student translate (if necessary) and ask these questions to the interviewee: (1) *Where did you grow up?* (2) *What were your favorite past-times as a child?* (3) *What chores or household tasks did you do?* (4) *What was your early schooling like?* (5) *What is your favorite memory of your childhood?* (6) *What is your most difficult, or saddest, memory from childhood?* and (7) *What was your favorite holiday as a child? Why was it your favorite?*

The student must write three more questions for his or her interviewee. The responses are to

be recorded and translated into English.

15. The From Memory Map

Summary: The one page task for the student is to draw a map of his or her home country from memory. The student must include these items in the map: ten cities, six natural landmarks or geographical features (rivers, mountains, lakes, seas, etc.), and four historically important places (sites of battles, monuments, heritage sites, etc.)

16. A Conversation Game

Summary: This is the one activity that is specific to Japan and Japanese culture. The technical name for this game is *Speaking of Japan . . . A Conversation Game*. It has four pieces: a game board with fifty boxes, twenty question cards, twenty picture cards, a set of place markers, and a die (not included in the pamphlet).

The idea of the game is to move your marker from box one to box fifty and complete the questions or activities required. Participants roll the die and move their markers. They may land on a square that requests them to choose a picture card or a question card. With a picture card, he or she must identify what is shown in the picture. Each picture shows something from Japanese culture. Examples are a sumo wrestler, a *katana* (sword), a *kimono*, a bullet train, etc. Question cards ask the student to respond to questions about the culture. For example, "*What is a traditional wedding like?*" "*What do students wear to school?;*" or "*When is a person considered an adult?*" As participants move through the game, they might also land on squares that ask them to do certain tasks, like make a paper crane or show how a man should sit, or a woman sit, or sing a bit of a traditional song.

In most cases the game has taken four participants approximately forty minutes to complete. Suggestions for use that come with the game mention that students might also create their own questions and picture cards as a homework assignment. A response from one teacher who used this with her class was that this activity focused students on describing familiar things and made them aware "*of the difficulty of describing familiar things in English and [the students] learnt some vocabulary/phrases for doing so.*" (Dougherty, 2005)

Conclusion

One use of learning English is to allow the student to project and explain his or her own culture to the world. The problem, on a practical level, is that most course books involve the student in learning about, discussing, and articulating the culture and history of "native"

English speaking nations. This article offered the prototype of an English course book that allows students to explore and then explain, their native cultures in English.

The benefits of using this course book, and the overarching concept of using heritage and cultural information as content for the EFL or ESL classroom is that it provides basic linguistic, academic, and emotional benefits for the student. In summation, learning English does not mean that a student needs to leave his or her native culture at the classroom door, and that a student's heritage can, and should be, a source of inspiration, stimulation, and confirmation in the EFL or ESL classroom.

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Creative Writing and the English as a Foreign Language Classroom

Patrick T. Dougherty

The University of Hyogo

Abstract

This is a report on a case study of an experimental creative writing seminar that was offered to EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students at a university in Bangladesh by a visiting researcher. Questions being addressed are (1) do students perceive creative writing as motivational? (2) does creative writing encourage students to write in English outside of the classroom? and (3) does creative writing in English motivate EFL students to be better users of English? Additionally, a sample writing lesson and instructional materials are offered as a simple and concrete example of how creative writing may be utilized in an EFL classroom.

Introduction

Creative writing in English is normally not considered the domain of the EFL student, but rather, as the prerogative of the native speaker. This is unfortunate for it keeps from the language student a powerful motivational force, one that can benefit him or her academically, emotionally, and linguistically. Through this case study, based on data collected at a university in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and through the use of an example lesson that was used with students at a junior high school in Dhaka (viewable in the Appendix), the researcher gives a clear example of how useful creative writing can be in fostering student interest in, confidence in, and enjoyment of, learning English.

The Case Study

The questions addressed in this case study are (1) do students perceive creative writing as motivational, (2) does creative writing encourage students to write in English outside of the classroom, and (3) does creative writing in English motivate EFL students to be better users of English? As this case study deals with an experimental creative writing course taught in Bangladesh, a country off the tourist map and perhaps unfamiliar to many readers, the researcher judged it necessary to include a brief introduction to the country with pertinent geographical, social, and educational information.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a nation of 123.1 million residing in a land area of 144,000 square kilometers bounded by India from the north, east, and west, and by Myanmar in the south, and resting on the Bay of Bengal. Its official language is Bangladeshi, or Bangla, but, as English is a

required subject for elementary through high school students, and due to the existence of many English medium schools, both K - 12 and university, English is widely understood. The urban population is 23%, the literacy rate is 45.3%, and the per capita public expenditure on education is approximately six U.S. dollars per year (Rahman, 2006).

Data collection

Data for the study was generated by one Internet-based survey, two focus groups, and a student memoir. The survey was constructed by the visiting researcher using a survey program on the QUIA website (<http://www.quia.com/>). This software can be used to create a variety of activities and surveys for educational use. One benefit of this software is that once material is generated for a survey or activity and saved it can be transformed into html format and saved on the Internet. The class was taken to a computer lab to complete the survey. There was 100% participation.

The focus groups met within twenty-four hours of the last class and final test and before the formal convocation ending the program for the academic year. Focus Group 1 had five members and Focus Group 2 had six members. Hence, the focus groups comprised approximately 75% of the total class population. As with the Internet based survey, the focus groups were given questions to inform multiple research objectives and also to identify areas of improvement for future courses.

One of the students, a Master of Teaching English as a Second Language student at Presidency University, completed a memoir where she wrote about her experience in taking the creative writing class. Though originally not to be included in the process of this research, the instructor felt that this student's work, and her academic background in TESL (teaching English as a Second Language), made her remarks useful for this research task.

The class

The class was unique in that it was also utilized as a training opportunity for Bangladeshi English teachers under the auspices of the Bangladesh English Language Teaching Association. The class was the site of frequent visitations by local English teachers and graduate students studying English language teaching. These visits were complimented by a series of presentations by the researcher at an English pedagogical conference held in March 2006, in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The class met from March 2, 2006 to April 3, 2006. The class met four times per week over

the four-week period, with each class lasting two hours. There were eighteen classes and a final examination. As preliminary inquiries indicated that most of the students had not had previous creative writing course experiences, the instructor decided to make the course a survey course that would include introduction to, and production in, four main genres: biography, autobiography, and memoir; poetry; short story, and a drama section focused on creating one-act plays.

The students

There were sixteen students. They ranged in age from 16 years old to approximately forty years old. Fifteen of them were attending the class for a grade and one was attending as an audit. There were four men and twelve women. Most were university students from one of three universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh, one of the students was a high school student, and several of the students were university graduates either working full or part-time jobs.

Findings

Question 1: Do students perceive creative writing as motivational?

The most direct question concerning the motivational quality of creative writing came from the Internet survey. Question 17 asked students to respond either yes or no to the following: "Did you find Creative Writing to be a motivational experience for you?" The response was 100% affirmative. Question 42, which was a free response, asked "Was this class motivational for you? If so, in what areas of your life, academic or private, and in what ways?" The question elicited fifteen responses, all of which stated unequivocally, yes, the experience was motivational. Some selected responses are given here.

It was a motivational experience at its best. It prompted me to be creative, let my pen have all the power. Academic-wise, I know I'll be a lot more confident with the way I write.

Of course it is motivational and I hope it will bring out hidden writer out of me one day.

This class is motivational for me in my academic life because it will help me to do well in my result and as well as in my private life because now I am confident enough I can write something creative.

Yes it was motivational for me. It motivated me to get more serious about my

writing. Because before I just had the urge to write but now I have the tools for the job. So hopefully I can produce some thing that is worth at least one read.

Yes, as it helped me to take writing up again, which I had stopped after leaving school.

When addressed in the focus groups, the student response was to affirm that the class was motivational. The simplest statement was, "Definitely," and this was met with a choral response of "yes."

Question 2: Does creative writing encourage students to write in English beyond the classroom?

Question 4 of the Internet survey asked, "Are you going to continue writing creatively?" To this all sixteen respondents stated, "yes." Question 6 inquired as to how often this creative writing would take place. Eight students (50%) said monthly, five students (31.25%) said weekly, and three students (18.75%) said daily.

When, in Question 7, students were asked if they would share their creative writing with the public, all sixteen of the students responded, implying that all of them would share their work somehow, somewhere. In the same question students were given a choice of outlets to share their creative writing, and they were told that they could select more than one outlet. This is the break down of the responses: two respondents selected public readings (12.50%), six identified newspaper submissions (37.50%), twelve said they would submit to writer's magazines or journals (75%), six said that they would publish their own work (37.50%), and three (18.75%) stated, "other."

A free response question from the survey gave students an opportunity to expand on these choices. Question 32 asked, "If you decide to share your creative work with others, how would you do so?" Fourteen of the students responded. The responses ranged from showing the work to friends and family to publishing a book. Five of the respondents mentioned showing the work first to family and friends with the implication that positive responses would encourage them to take the work to a wider audience through publication, "In magazines or newspapers." One student stated that he or she would join a club for young creative writers and would try to get work published in magazines or journals. Another student had this interesting comment: *"I would like to share my creative works with children that are studying in school. I would encourage them and let them know how important it is."*

Question 3: Does creative writing in English motivate EFL students to be better users of English?

Question 43 in the Internet survey asked students to respond affirmatively or negatively to this inquiry: "Does creative writing motivate someone to become a better "user" of English?" Fifteen out of the sixteen students responded in the affirmative (approximately 94%). The responses were significant to this study. One respondent stated, *"It does motivate someone to become a better user of English, because creative writing shows you the infinite ways in which the language can be manipulated and used to express what you feel like, and that certainly should motivate a person to become a better user of the language."* Another student responded, *"Yes, definitely . . . a better user [of English] as now I have the guidelines inserted into me I can use English in a much more organized way to express myself or my work."* And one last comment from the Internet survey, *"Yes, as they (the students) gain more confidence in their ability to manipulate words to express emotions, confidence inevitably leads to greater skill."*

This topic was also raised in the focus groups. One student replied, *"You have to know how to organize and use the language. Creative writing gives us guidelines. So definitely, I am using English words better. I have learned how to organize my thoughts and put them together to express myself."*

Question 16 of the survey asked students whether they would recommend the Creative Writing course to other students. All sixteen of the students responded, yes, they would (100%). When asked in Question 18 whether Creative Writing should be part of a normal university education, the results were the same. All sixteen students affirmed that, yes, they felt it should be included in a regular university course of studies (100%). From Question 37, which asked whether creative writing benefits those outside the English major, we learn that, thirteen of the fourteen students who chose to respond felt that creative writing would benefit those outside of the English major (approximately 93%). One response was quite detailed in reasoning:

Most definitely. I think it benefits those outside the English major very much because English majors are already familiar with writing and expressing ideas but non-English majors are not and they need writing skills as much as anyone else, too. Non-English majors also need to be made to think about the more passionate side of life that deals with areas other than numbers and money. It's

important for every student to take creative writing courses and explore their creative potential. It's a feel good course, too. I feel creative writing courses make one feel good about oneself.

When it came specifically to the issue of writing improvement, Question 8 of the Internet survey asked the students to respond to the following: "Has Creative Writing helped to improve your English language writing? Yes or No." There were sixteen respondents, all of them answered in the affirmative to the question (100.00%).

A great deal more detail came in the free response section of the Internet survey. Question 29 asked: "Which activities in the class were the most important in respect to improving your writing skills?" A wide range of answers came back that reinforced the initial responses. Here is a cogent example, *"The constant writing of different genres of writing - short stories, biographies and autobiographies. There were some small activities, like learning to deconstruct a story, peer editing, that in a great way helped me to express clearly and so to write effectively."*

When the issue of writing was broached in the focus groups, one student made the comment that he had never been asked to write anything in English before, that this was a new experience for him. Another student pointed out the benefit of some of the instructor's intellectual and organizational tools for writing. As that student explained,

This was really helpful for me. I was always lost, I couldn't organize my time, and I really needed the help of your organizational aspects. Mind mapping, spider graphs, and pre-writing activities. These all helped me. They help me with my English and with everything.

Another student responded simply, *"It helps one's writing."* Still another student added, *"When you write you are putting yourself out there. You improve your English because you have to understand the conventions of a short story, poetry."* To finish, it would be helpful to hear from the student who wrote a memoir about her experience in the class. It offers her insight on how the class encouraged her to write (Jahan, 2006, p. 1).

The most alarming moment arrive in our class when Dr. Pat said that we had to write down at least forty lines of poetry. Almost all of us except one or two had never taken this task before. So we were shocked and my reaction was, "Okay, I

am done with the course and this will definitely be my last class!" But quite surprisingly I attended the next class because the way our teacher encouraged us and explained in the class about writing poetry, the task became easier for us. And my excitement reached a peak when I sat down and my pen started moving on the paper and thus my first poem came to life.

Conclusion

One goal of the researchers was to show that creative writing is a valuable instructional tool in the ESL or EFL classroom. As explained in the introduction, creative writing is usually considered the domain of the native speaker and not of the EFL or ESL student. In her account of her experience in the class, the memoir writer made this clear (Jahan, page 1): *"In our country there is not enough opportunity to do such a course that we had done with Dr. Dougherty. So it was quite unusual event for the students who had successfully completed the course."* The researcher believes that creative writing has many positive benefits for the EFL or ESL student. This case study focused on creative writing as a motivational resource in the language classroom. The research data gave clear answers.

There were three research questions asked (1) do students perceive creative writing as motivational, (2) does creative writing encourage students to write in English outside of the classroom, and (3) does creative writing in English motivate EFL students to be better users of English? Each question may be answered in the affirmative, supported by the data from the Internet survey, focus groups, and our student memoir writer. Additionally, one of the goals of the researcher as an instructor of the creative writing course was to have students submit work to a class chapbook. Thirteen of the sixteen students did so, some submitting several pieces for inclusion.

The memoir writer felt that the class made a positive impact on the general confidence of the students. It would be appropriate to end this monograph with her words, *"During this adventure what I got from the classes will remain as an asset for the rest of my life. Not only me but also many of my classmates could hardly imagine that we could write down any literary pieces."*

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Appendix - Example Lesson

Getting to Know You

1. Names - First Letters and Private Meanings

Example:

- P -- Purposeful as forced by childhood
- A -- Argumentative as needed
- T -- Track and Field was my focus and salvation
- R -- Resourceful in all my lessons
- I -- International with many stamps in my passport to prove it
- C -- Confused or at least my wife often things so
- K -- Kindergarten was one of my favorite years.

Now your turn:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. *A few psychological questions to answer:*

a. What animal would you like to be? _____

Give me three descriptive words to explain how this animal moves:

b. If you could be a color, what color would you be? _____

Now give me three words to describe this color:

c. If you could be a toy, what toy would you want to be? _____

Give me one word to describe why: _____

3. *Now, give this paper to a partner. Have the partner answer these four characterization questions ABOUT YOU:*

(1) How would a child of 3 years old describe him or her?

(2) How would a deaf person describe him or her?

(3) How would a blind person describe him or her?

(4) How would an animal (a dog or a cat) describe him or her?

4. *Now the greatest of all challenges. Hand this to another person. It is that person's lucky task to write a paragraph description of the owner of this paper. He or she should try to include as much of the information on the previous page as possible.*

5. Last, retrieve your own sheet and write a poem about yourself

Use the description above and any other information you want to use, and write. Make it a minimum of 10 lines long.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Toward a Vast, Vital, and Vigorous Vocabulary

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Abstract

It is impossible to learn a language without learning vocabulary. What ways to master words can we add to the usual memorization of lists presented with reading selections? Various practical strategies to learn vocabulary will be presented in this workshop. For example, teachers can use pictures, sketches and vocabulary cards in teaching words. Other strategies include how to make use of word families, tense and number changes, synonyms and antonyms, etc. as well as how to use context in developing vocabulary. Different ideas to use with beginners and more advanced students will be offered. We will discuss keys to successful memorization. Activities will be presented and we will practice some of these.

Introduction

Vocabulary acquisition is an absolutely crucial part of mastering a foreign language, but too many students find it frustrating; they feel that it is both difficult and boring. This workshop aims to present specific practical ways through which both the teacher and the student can approach vocabulary learning. Teachers probably use some or most of these ideas; perhaps this presentation will bring to mind some ideas that have been overlooked. Teachers must remember, of course, that student learning-styles are different, so that what works for one student will not work for all of them.

Introducing Words

Many textbook lessons contain lists of new words. The teacher should spend some time introducing these words, if possible. After demonstrating pronunciation, the teacher should have the students say each word several times. The teacher should also say things about each word that might make it easier to remember; examples are its relationship to a word or words that have already been learned (introducing the concept of word families), anything in the students' native language that could help them learn the word, rhymes, alliterative phrases, mnemonic devices, amusing anecdotes, etc.

What information about a word should the teacher require the students to learn? All students should learn the word's spelling and pronunciation, of course. Beginners should probably only study these aspects, but when words are first introduced, intermediate students should also learn the plural form of any irregular noun and the past and past perfect forms of any irregular

verb. The teacher might want to introduce advanced students to a word's synonyms and antonyms.

What about teaching verb phrases, prefixes and suffixes? A specific phrase should be taught when students come across it; the teacher can handle it like any other vocabulary item. For example, the verb phrase "to run out of" does not seem to be related to the verb "run" and should be taught separately. Students need to be aware that many such phrases exist in English. Teaching a list including many of the verb phrases based on the word "run" would be much less effective than teaching each phrase when it appears in a reading. Verb phrases can be treated like idioms, for in a way they are idioms.

Requiring students to learn a list of prefixes and suffixes is probably not a good idea. It is difficult to learn such items out of context. When a word is first introduced, the teacher can point out its different parts. When students have had exposure to a number of affixes, the teacher can include a lesson that presents the ones the students have already seen in the words they have studied. At this point, students should be aware of prefix and suffix meanings and this will help them understand words they learn in the future. Students must, of course, be warned about false affixes. For example, the *sub* in the word "*subtle*" is not the common prefix *sub*.

Teaching Techniques

While teaching beginning students, use pictures illustrating the words when possible. If a student can relate an English language word to a picture rather than the native language word, thinking in English rather than the native language will develop faster. Pictures can also be used in vocabulary drills, including specialized drills. For example, the teacher can hold up pictures illustrating verbs and ask the students to give the past tense of each one. For a noun: the plural form. Teachers can ask the students to write or spell aloud the words indicated by the pictures. (Note: the first time the teacher uses a picture, he or she should use the students' native language to say what the picture represents. The students will remember this after being told only once -- or perhaps twice.) To obtain pictures to use, one can cut them out of magazines, make Xerox copies of pictures in books, draw stick figures, etc. When teaching the colors, a teacher can use a colored sheet of paper to represent the word for that color. Teachers can hold up an adjective picture with a noun picture in order to ask students to modify nouns. Example: "black shoe." Teachers can make pictures of opposites, too: one sheet might show both a tall person and a short person.

The teacher can use flash cards for drills. The teacher can make ones showing numbers, dates, times of day and amounts of money. These are excellent for teaching beginning students. In the middle of a class period, when student attention is flagging, the teacher can use pictures or flash cards for a very quick drill; this will awaken the students.

New words should be reinforced. In addition to brief vocabulary drills, an excellent way to use new words is as examples when teaching grammatical structures.

What can a student do when coming upon a word that he or she doesn't know? Study the context to guess what it means. Does it contain any clues -- does it have a prefix, root or suffix that he or she knows something about? Are there related words that have been learned? The teacher should teach, and reinforce, these pointers to the students.

The teacher should tell students that when they try to recall a word that has been studied, their first thought is probably the correct one.

Teachers should *require* students to make -- and use -- vocabulary cards to learn new words. Here are suggestions for what the teacher can tell the students.

When studying vocabulary, one of the most useful things to do is to make vocabulary cards. You should definitely make cards instead of simply studying from a list or your textbook. With a list, you will always see the words in the same order, and their relationship may give clues that you won't have when you come upon the word in a different context. You can make vocabulary cards out of any kind of small pieces of paper that you have available. They do not have to last very long; once you know a word, you no longer need its card (except perhaps for review). The act of writing down a word will help get it in your mind. You might want to include pronunciation clues on your card. Also, for irregular nouns and verbs, you might want to include plurals and tenses. Also, of course, make cards for idiomatic phrases.

If you keep a small collection of cards in your pocket, you can take them out and study them when you have a free minute or two. Try to do this for different short periods in the day instead of studying them for half an hour at a time. When using vocabulary cards, you should put a card at the very back of the pack if you know its word, near the front if you cannot remember it at all, and somewhere near the

middle if you can sometimes, but not every time, recall it.

Teaching Dictionary Use

Learning to use a dictionary effectively is a crucial part of vocabulary study. First, the students must learn alphabetical order. Chanting this, individually or as a class, is a useful way to involve students in a warm-up activity or when changing topics in the middle of a class period.

Teachers should make sure students understand that it is not always easy to find the correct word, or the correct definition, when using a dictionary. They can show students how to use the context of the sentence in which the word appears in order to get some idea of what the word might mean. If students are using a Lao-English dictionary to find out what word to use in English to express their meaning, make sure they know how to check to see that they chose the right word when several are listed. The best way to do this is to look up the chosen word in a Lao dictionary (or an English-Lao dictionary) as a check. Example: suppose the student comes upon the word "pool." It could refer to a swimming pool or perhaps a labor pool, and in many languages different words would express the two meanings.

The teacher should insist that a student write down a word after finding it, and practice pronouncing it, in hopes that the student won't have to look up the same word again.

Vocabulary Learning Activities for Use in Class.

1. Write ten letters on the board. Have the students -- individually or in groups -- try to make as many English words as possible from those letters. (Instead of writing assorted letters, you could use a long word that is on the students' vocabulary list, such as dictionary, beautiful or agriculture.)
2. Say an English word. Have the first student in a row say an English word beginning with the word's last letter. The next student should say a word beginning with the second word's last letter. Continue in the same way. (Tell students not to use words that end in x or z.)
3. Choose a letter. Have students, in groups or individually, write down as many English words as they can think of that begin with that letter.
4. When studying numbers, dictate them and have the students write them in digits. Go faster and faster, using longer and longer numbers.

5. Say to the class, "When I went to New York, in my suitcase I took an apple." The first student must then say, "When I went to New York, in my suitcase I took an apple and a book." The next student has to add a word beginning with the letter C. Continue in this way, going through the alphabet a second time if the class includes more than 23 students. (You might skip difficult letters, such as x and z.) Tell the students they must keep their dictionaries closed.

Additional Activities

1. Use items from English-speaking countries, if possible, to reinforce understanding of words. Bus schedules, advertisements, brochures and menus are some examples.

2. In a beginners' classroom, assign students to take turns writing the day of the week and the date on the chalkboard or whiteboard before each class starts. Example: Wednesday, May 30, 2007. Then class members should chant this phrase together. This helps them learn ordinal numbers, how to express the year and, of course, the days of the week.

Dr. Ann Irish, a retired American high school teacher and published author, taught English, political science and Japanese in the United States. She has also taught English in Japan. She has offered presentations on teaching English in Bangladesh, Laos and Japan, and in the United States has given presentations on Asian culture.

Finding the Main Idea

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Abstract

Reading for meaning can only succeed when the reader can grasp main ideas. In this workshop we will look at practical rather than theoretical ways to increase understanding of the central concept of a paragraph or longer selection. We will first consider why it is important to find the main idea. Next comes a focus on the topic sentence. Does a paragraph have a topic sentence? What does this tell us about the paragraph's main idea? What do the other sentences in the paragraph do? We will consider aids in a book that help the reader perceive what the book is about. These include charts, pictures, maps, etc. as well as appendices. Also useful are sub- headings in a chapter, bold print and spaces free of text. We will discuss and, if time allows, practice exercises designed to help the student understand the main ideas in a reading selection.

Introduction

Students reading material in the foreign language they are studying may be able to read the words they see without understanding the meaning of the selection. One of the most useful strategies in reading for meaning is to be able to identify the main idea in a paragraph or a selection. This workshop examines ways to do this, stressing practical activities rather than theory.

The Main Idea

Why is it important to find main ideas?

The main idea makes the purpose of the paragraph or the selection meaningful. A person who cannot grasp the main idea of a paragraph will have a hard time understanding the selection.

By the way, note taking or highlighting text is helpful in retaining the meaning of what one reads. Even native speakers of the language being read sometimes do this, especially with complicated material. Taking notes helps one's understanding. The mere act of writing something helps implement it in one's mind. The most important thing -- and often the only thing -- the reader should note down or highlight is, of course, the main idea. The second language reader should work at identifying a paragraph's main idea in this way.

The Topic Sentence

A topic sentence often expresses a paragraph's main idea. This sentence may be the paragraph's opening sentence, but not always. Some paragraphs have no topic sentence and some lead up to one, not expressing the topic until the very end. Poorly written material, too, often lacks topic sentences. A writer who presents material clearly, because he or she wants the reader to understand it, will write clear topic sentences.

1. How can you find a topic sentence? There are a number of clues; here are some.
 - a. Examine the paragraph's opening sentence very carefully.
 - b. Look for one of these words: *who*, *where*, *when*, *why*, *how*. (Note that the common question word *what* is not included here; *what* is often too general to be useful.)
 - c. Look for words that are repeated in the paragraph.
 - d. Words including *always*, *all*, *never*, *none* can help identify a topic sentence or main idea.
 - e. Read the entire paragraph and then go back to look for a topic sentence and to find the meaning of the paragraph.
 - f. Reading a few paragraphs beyond the one being studied on may help.
2. How can a reader identify the main idea if there is no topic sentence?
 - a. Think about what the sentences in the paragraph have in common. Does this help?
 - b. Try to figure out what the author is trying to say.
 - c. Try to form one sentence that sums up the entire paragraph. That will be its main idea.

Other Sentences

Support sentences - These sentences include details and examples that strengthen or prove the main idea of the paragraph. They can therefore be clues to finding the main idea.

Summary sentences - These can be topic sentences; they will appear at the end of the paragraph, of course.

Transition sentences - These sentences help prepare the reader for the idea to be found in the next paragraph. To find a transition sentence, look for words like *next*, *also*, *then*, *finally*, *but*, *however*.

Organizational Aids

Aids in a chapter or book help the reader understand it and help him or her pick out the main ideas being expressed. ALWAYS CHECK THROUGH THE BOOK OR CHAPTER FOR THESE -- BEFORE READING

Aids for a chapter

- a. Chapter titles and sub-headings (Some authors write chapter titles that are not helpful)
- b. End-of-chapter summaries
- c. Pictures, graphs, charts (Some authors do not explain charts well)
- d. Highlighted items, vocabulary word lists and definitions
- e. Questions in a textbook
- f. Bold type or italics or underlined items
- g. Large spaces free of text

Aids for an entire book

- a. Table of Contents
- b. Index
- c. Glossary (ALWAYS check for this; it can be very useful)
- d. Time-line or chronology

Activities

When presenting a class considering these ideas, the teacher can assign groups or individuals to work at locating main ideas in specified paragraphs. The students can be asked to identify topic sentences, supporting sentences, summary sentences and transition sentences in these paragraphs and the teacher can ask them how they made their decisions. If groups disagree, a useful discussion should follow.

If several different paragraphs are used for this activity, the teacher can include one that does not appear to contain a main idea. When a student or group realizes this, the teacher can ask the groups to revise it so that the point they think is the main idea becomes clear.

A second activity consists of groups writing a clear paragraph. The instructor can suggest a topic. If groups write paragraphs on topics of their own choice, others in the audience can be asked to identify the topic sentence or main idea. The class can then discuss the sentence and perhaps propose alternatives.

Concluding Thoughts

Remember that not all books are well written. Some may not have clear topic sentences. Some magazine articles do not give you the topic for three or four paragraphs.

Remember your reasons for doing the reading. (You may read differently depending on your reading purpose.)

- a. Quick reference -- to find a fact
- b. Critical reading -- preparing for a test
- c. Absorbing information -- to learn about a topic
- d. Pleasure

Note that when you understand how to read for the main idea, you can be the judge of whether the author has made his ideas clear!

Use these ideas when writing your own material. When writing in a language that is not your native language, it is a good idea to express the main idea of a paragraph in a topic sentence that opens the paragraph, and then follow it with supporting sentences. This will help make your writing clear.

Dr. Ann Irish, a retired American high school teacher and published author, taught English, political science and Japanese in the United States. She has also taught English in Japan. She has offered presentations on teaching English in Bangladesh, Laos and Japan, and in the United States has given presentations on Asian culture.

Business English Activities for Lower Level Students: An Instructional Design Approach

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Abstract

This paper is an amalgamation of two presentations delivered at Lao-American College as part of Teachers Helping Teachers 2007. We begin with a brief introduction to the field of instructional design (ID) and the most-commonly-used process model in this field, ADDIE (an acronym for analyze, design, develop, implement and evaluate). We also introduce how this model is being used to develop a Business English program for non-English majors at a private university in Japan, with both macro-level (curriculum) decisions as well as micro-level (task) examples, i.e. language-learning activities with a business focus for students having low target-language proficiency levels. The paper concludes with some advice and suggestions for teachers or curriculum developers planning to use an ID approach.

Introduction

Instructional design and the related field of instructional technology (IT) or educational technology (ET) are concerned with how people learn and how best to organize and deliver instruction to meet specific instructional or training needs in a variety of settings, academic as well as industrial. The following definition for IT from Seels and Richey (1994) hints at the scope of these endeavors,

"Instructional technology is the theory and practice of design, development, utilization, management and evaluation of processes and resources for learning."

We see here the equal footing of theoretical and practical considerations. At the same time, we can gain some insight into the breadth of the activities involved. We are thus concerned with both the "what" and the "how" of instruction/training, i.e. *what* materials and media (resources) to use, as well as *how* to organize instruction (processes). ID is not just about lesson planning or materials development. Expand this to include up-front analysis and other groundwork or foundation building, follow up such as evaluation of the training or instruction, and overall project management, and we have a better picture of what is involved.

My own personal understanding of ID (Jones, 2007) is that we are taking a systematic approach to instruction/training based on a firm understanding of (1) how humans learn, and

(2) instructional delivery, i.e. technology in the broadest sense of the term. Developments in ID and its siblings IT/ET should be of interest to administrators, instructional planners, classroom instructors, corporate trainers, materials writers and other related professionals.

ADDIE

Several ID models have emerged for the planning and development of instruction (see, for example, Dick and Carey, 1996 and Morrison, Ross and Kemp, 2004). One of the most influential and enduring generic models to date, however, is ADDIE (short for Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluate). Most other ID models are built up around these core phases or components. ADDIE is most often represented as a linear process moving from one phase to the next. More dynamic representations however include the components arranged in a circle, highlighting the cyclical nature of the process (i.e. the whole process begins anew after evaluation), or having evaluation linked to all other components (fig. 1).

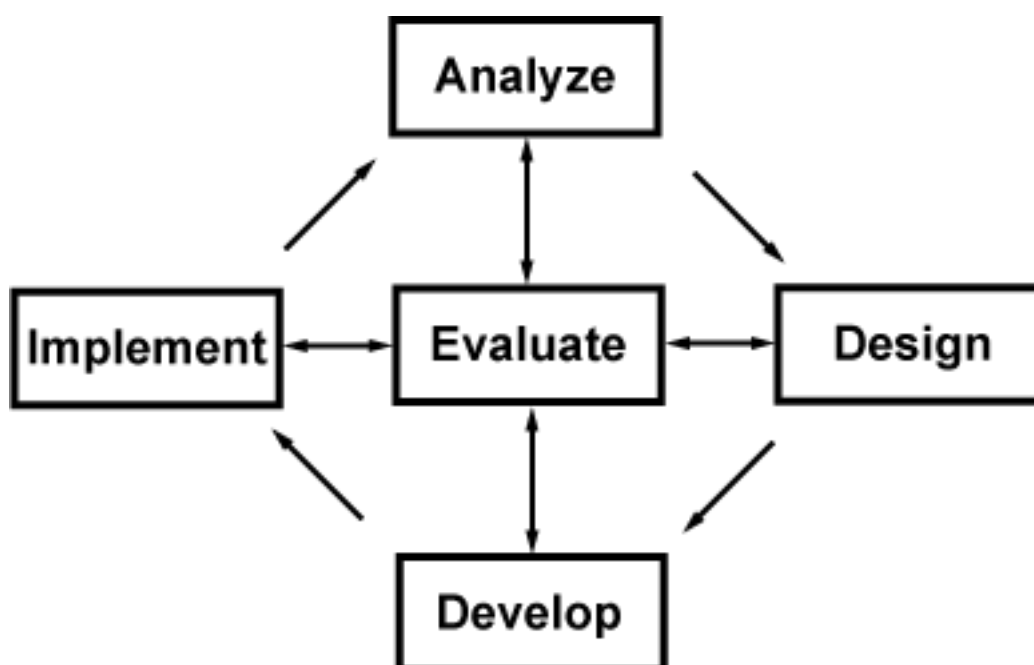


Figure 1. More dynamic depiction of the ADDIE process.

This conceptual model highlights the importance of formative evaluation during each phase of any instructional design endeavor. Each of the other ID models adds something legitimate to the mix, but the ADDIE model provides a clear, easy-to-use road map for how to approach the ID process. To give a better picture of how the ADDIE model can be used, the following section gives a brief overview of considerations during each phase of the ID process as we continue to develop our Business English program in the Faculty of Economics at a private

university in west Japan. The Business English program (two semesters each of BE I & II) is offered as a series of elective courses to students in our faculty having sophomore standing or above. Elementary Business English (BE I) requires a passing grade in the general English course (*sogo eigo*) and students electing to proceed to Intermediate Business English (BE II) need a passing grade for two semesters of Elementary Business English (BE I). Classes for each of the four levels (two each for BE I & II) meet for 90 minutes once a week for fifteen weeks. Students in the program are generally second or third-year, non-English majors with lower levels of English-language proficiency as measured by the TOEIC test (students are required to take the TOEIC twice a year).

Analysis

One of our first endeavors was to get a clearer picture of existing competencies as well as expectations and needs (individual, institutional and societal). This information is being gathered via test results, classroom observations, surveys and interviews with students, related faculty and subject-matter experts (SMEs) such as job placement consultants. We have confirmed that English-language proficiency is quite low and that business-related knowledge is rather limited. The main expectation we have uncovered is improved TOEIC (www.ets.org/toEIC/) scores. This has been expressed as a major concern by a majority of students (63%) responding to the survey (not included in this paper) and was also mentioned in interviews with both faculty and SMEs. TOEIC scores are the most common English language proficiency scale used by companies in Japan for both hiring as well as promotion and selection for overseas posts, etc. Other expectations/needs expressed were improved conversational ability, presentation skills and overall language proficiency.

Another aspect of our analysis was to begin compiling a list of exit-level competencies that students should be able to demonstrate upon completion of each level of Business English. The guiding reference for this task was Mager, 1997. Specifically, we are trying to translate all objectives into performance objectives (actions that students need to demonstrate together with both conditions and criteria) so that we have a clear way to measure achievement. This is an important goal from two perspectives, first for providing useful feedback for students and second for evaluating the success of the program and/or activity. Another part of our analysis has been reviewing relevant literature in ESL/EFL sub-fields such as English for specific purposes (ESP), vocabulary acquisition, learner autonomy and learning strategies.

As we proceed with the above analysis, we are gaining a better understanding of the performance gap that exists and areas where we should focus our attention. One major point

that has surfaced in our analysis is the lack of work experience on the part of many of our learners. This poses a major challenge in terms of establishing relevancy. Other important considerations include the learning environment at our school in general and these classes in particular, how to accommodate different learning styles and strengthen a sense of classroom community, and raising awareness and acceptance of non-native varieties of English (see, for example, Kachru, 1992).

Design

Based on findings thus far, we have begun compiling lists of design decisions and guiding principles. These are both works in progress and will be periodically reviewed and revised. The goal is to create a framework for developing instructional materials that streamlines the ID process and yet offers flexibility in terms of handling a wide range of content, language difficulty and teacher variability. Our working list of design decisions includes:

1. Clear performance objectives will be established at both the macro (curriculum) and micro (task/activity) levels (see, for example, Mager, 1997).
2. Criterion-referenced test items will be developed to clearly measure progress and performance (see, for example, Shrock & Coscarelli, 1989).
3. The curriculum will target development of all four language-skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) but will concentrate more effort on improving the receptive skills of reading and listening at earlier stages and productive skills later in the program.
4. All components will have the underlying goal of increasing familiarity and confidence with high-frequency words in the English language (Nation, 2002).
5. Attention will be focused on improving language competencies (including communication strategies), social skills and business competence.
6. Non-native varieties of English will be respected.
7. Efforts will be directed at raising cross-cultural awareness.
8. Efforts will also be focused on nurturing positive language learning attitudes and beliefs.
9. Individualized instruction will be implemented whenever possible.
10. A repository of self-access materials will be developed to supplement face-to-face meetings

The following list of guiding principals will be the foundation of our development stage endeavors:

- Effective and efficient use of existing resources,

- Balance between face-to-face meetings and self-access materials,
- Balance between concept learning and procedural learning,
- Activities and materials that appeal to various learning styles,
- Activities and materials that are both relevant and intrinsically motivating,
- Teaching methodology based on accepted and emerging theories of learning,
- Activities and materials that promote success and boost confidence,
- Get students active within the first five minutes of any encounter,
- Include non-native varieties of English

Development

Our curriculum development endeavors have so far been directed at organizing the course outlines (i.e. syllabi), including course descriptions, goals and objectives, weekly content and evaluation matrixes. We have been using Business Venture 1 with Practice for the TOEIC Test (Barnard & Cady, 2003) with the aim of judging both the difficulty level and degree of interest. We have also used the text as a reference for compiling a data base of vocabulary test questions targeting the most frequent 1,000, 1,500 and 2,000 words as well as words from the academic words list (Coxhead, 2000). Another macro level project is organizing a Moodle site (www.moodle.org) for class management and as a repository for activities and self-access materials.

At the micro level, we are developing activities that provide practice with specific language skills. Examples include (1) a PowerPoint activity (Appendix 1) aimed at introducing and practicing important reading sub-skills scanning, skimming and chunking while boosting reading rates, and (2) a listening activity (Appendix 2) that focuses attention on common communication strategies and non-native varieties of English. The emphasis on receptive skills is aligned with overall course goals as described above in the design decisions. We discuss other activities in the next section of the paper.

Implementation

We began test piloting the various supplementary activities and project work in Spring and Fall of 2006. Follow up questionnaires revealed a need to simplify material and allow for more time for individual components. We have continued to modify and adjust as we introduced full implementation in Spring 2007. We also have the Moodle site up and running, with areas for each class (between 25 and 40 students each), but have thus far only used the following modules: forums, activities and wiki. We have had to link to external sites for quizzes and podcast segments but hope to have these migrated over to the Moodle site by the

Fall semester of 2007.

Evaluation

In addition to the evaluation mentioned above, we have attempted other formative evaluation of activities via follow-up questionnaires and interviews. Feedback has been mostly favorable but we will continue to fine tune. At the same time, we continue to collect follow up data for our summative evaluation of the 2006 course. Findings from each term will provide input for further refinements as we repeatedly cycle through the process. In this way, we feel that our Business English program will continue to be improved each year and we can better focus our efforts toward helping each learner reach their potential. The main references regarding evaluation have been Phillips (1997) and Kirkpatrick (1998).

Business Activities

In this section, we outline two activities we have developed for our Business English program. We also have students work on a six to eight week class project (not discussed in this paper) each term. For the elementary class this is usually an individual project in the first term and a group project in the second term. We do this to stress the importance of both individual responsibility and group cooperation. The projects we have assigned so far are investigating and reporting on a small or medium-sized company in the community (individual project) and developing a business plan for a small company (group). These projects target the four major language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and keep to the principles outlined above in our discussion of the ADDIE model (design stage).

Activity one - Goal setting group grope

This activity is based on one of the Framgames introduced in Thiagarajan, 1997 called Group Grope. Framgames are activity shells that can accommodate a wide range of content and are generally effective in getting learners involved as well as building a sense of classroom community. Each step of our activity is introduced below together with approximate timing.

1. Getting Started (15 minutes)

Start out by greeting participants and telling them that you will begin right away with an activity aimed at forming a list of course goals and objectives. Pass out 3 blank index cards to each member and ask them to write one goal or objective for Business English on each card. You can add that the opinions do not necessarily need to be their own. You might also write up the following examples for everyone to see.

- We should learn some business related vocabulary.
- We need to practice presentation skills.
- I want to make friends.

It is also helpful to prepare about 15 extra cards to mix in when/where needed. You can begin collecting the cards from students when more than half of the members have finished, and then shuffle these cards together with the cards you have prepared.

2. Arranging Cards (2 minutes)

From the shuffled pile, pass out three cards to each student and tell them to arrange them according to how well they match their own thinking/feelings. Spread out all of the leftover cards on a display table.

3. Exchanging Cards (5 minutes)

After a minute or so, announce that individuals can exchange any or all of their cards with leftover cards on the display table that better reflect their opinion.

4. Swapping Cards (10 minutes)

During this time, students should be encouraged to swap cards with any of the other members. Also mention that they should try to talk to as many people as possible during this time and find out what kinds of goals and objectives are being expressed.

5. Forming Teams (10 minutes)

Tell participants to form groups of any size, with the only condition being that they cannot join a team with anyone they knew before this meeting. Encourage them to look for people who have cards that reflect their own personal feelings/opinions. When teams begin to form ask them to find a place to sit where they can discuss and negotiate toward a collective set of three cards with goals/objectives that reflect the opinions of the group.

6. Poster Presentation (25 minutes)

When most groups have completed their selection, pass out poster paper and markers. Collect the cards that were not selected. Instruct groups to work together on planning and drawing one poster to represent each of the ideas on their cards, but with no words or text. Circulate among tables and offer encouragement but no specific guidance. As the groups begin to finish, display the posters on the walls at different points around the room. When all of the groups

have finished, tell them to move around the room freely and try to guess/decipher the opinions represented on the other teams' posters (if time permits).

7. Show and Tell (20 minutes)

Ask the groups to sit together again and then display each poster in turn (using an overhead camera if available). Announce that this part of the task chain will be a team competition and that their team will get one point for each opinion they can guess correctly before other teams. The wording is not as important as long as the meaning matches. You can also write the opinions up for public display as they are announced and agreed upon.

8. Follow Up

To wrap things up you can present a small prize to the winning group(s) and then compile an extended list of goals/objectives from those written up during show and tell. You should combine or reword the goals/opinions that overlap with others. Tell participants that this list of "their" opinions will help you as you prepare material and activities for subsequent meetings and that each member will evaluate the course based on this list.

Caveats - Participants may struggle with various stages of the activity, but this struggle will likely be due to the complexity of the topic under discussion as much as limited language ability. Instructors should not jump in to help too soon and instead let the participants work things out for themselves. The show and tell phase can be helped along with hints from the groups themselves or the instructor, but there may be illustrations that are not decipherable. In these cases, the instructor can set a time limit or ask for elaboration to move things along. Some items may need to be abandoned but the underlying goal/objective should be elicited and written up for public display. Finally, shy students may limit their interactions to a few individuals. You will need to gauge the merits and costs of pushing for more interaction. Keep in mind that two of the goals of this activity are to create an upbeat atmosphere and build confidence.

Activity two - Scanning and skimming practice

I was introduced to this activity by a colleague several years back and have found it to be effective for practicing important reading sub-skills and building overall reading confidence. The following description includes (1) how to prepare the materials, and (2) a step-by-step explanation of how to use these materials.

1. Selecting an article - The first step is to find, write or modify an appropriate passage or

article. You should consider the content, length and difficulty level. As for content, we look for business related topics that will be of interest to our students, e.g. business trends, new products or hot industries. The passage should be around 300 or 400 words in length (something that fits on one page of letter size or A-4 paper) and not-too-challenging in terms of vocabulary, sentence structure, etc. For advanced students you could use articles from Newsweek or Times, but for these lower level students you need to find materials aimed at language learners.

2. Selecting vocabulary items - After you have found a suitable article or passage, you need to look for approximately ten vocabulary items for the scanning stage. Ideally, you should choose about one vocabulary item per paragraph or every three to five lines of text. List these up in your teaching notes in the order they appear.
3. Preparing worksheet (Appendix 3) - You should prepare a task chain worksheet that can be printed on the reverse side of the article/passage. This worksheet will include the following sections: (a) Title, (b) Scanning Words (the 10 items you selected above), (c) Skimming Activity, (d) Comprehension Questions, and (e) Discussion Questions. This worksheet will be folded in half with sections (a) - (c) above the fold. The Skimming Activity should include the following instructions: a. Based only on the title, the "scanning words" above, and what you just saw as you were scanning the passage, what do you think this passage is about? Do NOT turn this paper over to look for more information. b. When the teacher says "Go!" turn the paper over and skim the reading for main ideas. Now, what do you think the reading is about? Write your new answer here. c. Now, skim the comprehension questions below for 15 seconds. If your answer changes, write your new answer below. The Comprehension Questions should include four or five questions related to the article/passage, and the Discussion Questions should include two or three questions to promote discussion of the contents of the article/passage and how this relates to the lives of your students.
4. Prepare copies for students - Prepare the appropriate number of copies with the article/passage printed on one side and the worksheet printed on the back.

When you are ready to use the activity, tell students that you will be practicing some reading sub-skills and that they need to follow your instructions. Here is how I conduct this activity:

- a. Pass out the article with the worksheet side up. Ask students to fold the paper in half so that sections (a) - (c) are facing up. Warn them to not look at the article yet.
- b. Write up the word "scanning" for public display and explain that this sub-skill involves looking for specific information, with an example such as finding in the newspaper what time tonight's baseball game will be broadcast as well as the channel.

- c. Instruct students to turn the paper over to the article/passage when you say "Go!" and to begin looking for the words as you read them off. Tell them to touch the word with their finger or pencil when they find and to not worry about words they cannot find. Keep scanning for the new words as they are announced.
- d. Say "Go!" and begin reading off the words one by one, with five to seven second interval between words (depending on the ability of your students). When you finish reading off the ten words, say "stop" and ask students to turn the paper back over. Read the first instructions in the Skimming Activity and have students write what they think the article/passage is about.
- e. When most of the students have finished, have them read their sentences to a partner and compare. Offer encouragement by telling students that there is NO wrong answer at this stage. We are relying a great deal on our imagination at this stage.
- f. When students are ready, explain that the next step is "skimming" and write this up for display. Explain that this is a sub-skill where we look through something quickly for key words or ideas. Provide some kind of example such as forgetting a reading assignment until just before class and trying to get the main points in a limited amount of time.
- g. When students are ready, say "Go!" and make sure all students turn the paper over to the article and begin skimming. Keep time and say "stop" after 30 seconds (you can extend this for lower level students or when you are doing this activity for the first time). Tell students to turn the paper back over and write a new sentence explaining what this article/passage is about.
- h. Have students share their new sentence with a partner.
- i. Use the same procedure for the next step, skimming comprehension questions.
- j. When you have completed the pre-reading stage, tell students that they can now READ the article at their own pace and try to find answers to the comprehension questions.
- k. When the majority of students have written answers for the comprehension questions, have them share with a partner. You can also follow this up by confirming the answers as a class.
- l. The last step is to go to the Discussion Questions. Discussion can be done in pairs, groups or as a class. You can also proceed through this step with or without time for preparation. Some students may need a few minutes to think about the questions and their answers and write them down before going to the discussion.

Advice and Suggestions

This section is offered as a reminder or checklist of considerations. The short list of advice

and suggestions can be outlined as:

- Concrete Goals/Objectives
- Manage class like a business
- Make each meeting an EXPERIENCE
- Design in relevancy

We use the term goals to talk about the big targets for our courses. Ideas such as "improve overall language ability" or "boost confidence." With objectives, we are much more concerned with specific demonstrable competencies. The importance of concrete performance objectives was discussed earlier in this paper, but we want to again stress that clear objectives will make it easier for students and teachers to recognize progress and evaluate the effectiveness of individual activities as well as the overall program.

Managing the class like a business has several benefits. First, we are providing students with some insight into how things operate in the workplace. The success of the classroom, like the success of a business, depends on the efforts of each member but also on group dynamics, cooperation and effective and efficient communication. The teacher can delegate responsibility and involve everyone in the decision making process. At the same time, we are teaching valuable lessons in accountability, productivity, time management and other real life skills.

With this type of course, we are quite limited in terms of contact hours and face-to-face meeting opportunities. For this reason, we want to make each meeting an experience that helps transform learners in some positive way. We want students to go away from each meeting with higher levels of confidence and motivation to put their newly acquired skills to work. A fuller description of what we are talking about here can be found in Pine and Gilmore (1999).

Finally, activities and the curriculum must be relevant to our learners. Without this relevance, learners will not buy into our ideals or program decisions. They will also not make the necessary investment that is required for a measurable return (i.e. language learning success). One way to increase the chances of relevancy is get learners more involved in the decision making process, both for what kinds of activities to engage in and the content of those activities. The goal setting activity above is an example of how we might accomplish this.

Conclusion

This paper has argued for a systematic approach to course development (i.e. an ID perspective) and provided some examples of how this is being done in an ESP context. Granted, an ID approach to course development like that mentioned above does require quite a bit of effort and time. Still, the potential benefits make this a worthwhile effort and the return on investment should increase as your program matures (i.e. greater returns will come from less investment of time and energy). Greater accountability is being demanded of classroom teachers, materials developers, curriculum specialists and other related professionals. One way we can meet these demands and the changing environment is to expand the view of our role as language teachers. In addition to becoming more involved in instructional design, we can assume new relationships with our learners such as that of client and consultant, or even co-creators of value. With this kind of relationship in mind, I now demand of students a 50-50 level of commitment and responsibility for success in class. Focusing more attention on customer (student) satisfaction should put us in a better position to deal with the changing environment in our field and raise the level of individual and collective professionalism. And isn't that the direction we want to be heading?

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Appendix 1 - Reading Skills PowerPoint Activity

Introduction

This activity is designed to introduce or reinforce the concept of "chunking" and stress to learners the importance of faster reading rates. The activity includes a mini lecture, a PowerPoint presentation with a short story broken into chunks, a summarizing task, a printed copy of the story and follow up language exercises. The PowerPoint file is available for download from www.brentjones.com/ramen_shop.ppt.

Rationale

One of the main goals of the Business English program is to expose participants to as much target language as possible and build confidence with high frequency words of the English language. To gain increased input, students need to read faster. This activity will show students that they can read faster with increased comprehension.

Materials

- Blackboard and chalk or whiteboard and markers
- Computer, connecting cables, projector and screen
- PowerPoint software and PowerPoint file (www.brentjones.com/ramen_shop.ppt)
- Handout of the story (not included)

Procedure

- (1) Write up for public display the word "chunking."
- (2) Ask how this word is related to reading. Encourage guessing.
- (3) Write up "*The young man sat on the bench, took out his lunch and began to eat*" and ask how many words are in this sentence. Elicit the number 15.
- (4) Ask if we read and think about every word in the sentence when encountering this sentence in a piece of text. Explain that NO, we probably don't read and think about every word but instead break the sentence into meaningful "chunks" according to meaning.
- (5) Divide the sentence into "chunks" with slashes as follows: "The young man / sat on the bench, / took out his lunch / and began to eat."
- (6) Explain that instead of 15 words, with "chunking" we only need to process 4 ideas.
- (7) Tell students they will be reading a story about a noodle shop owner via chunks presented with a PowerPoint presentation. Ask the students to concentrate carefully, don't worry about unknown words and read for overall meaning.
- (8) With the automatic screen change set for 2 seconds, start the PowerPoint.
- (9) Following the presentation (approx. 4.5 minutes), ask students to write a short summary (3 or 4 sentences) of what they read.
- (10) Ask students to read their summary in pairs or small groups.
- (11) Write up "WPM" and the numbers "180 - 200" on the board.
- (12) Explain that 180 to 200 "words per minute" is commonly accepted as a threshold where we can begin concentrating on overall meaning instead of being occupied by each word.
- (13) Ask students to guess how fast they were just reading. Elicit guesses.
- (14) Explain that with the timing set for 2 seconds a screen, they were reading at about 80 WPM but will now try to boost that up.
- (15) With the automatic screen change set for 1 second, start the PowerPoint again.
- (16) Congratulate students on reading 160 WPM and moving much closer to the 180 - 200 WPM threshold.
- (17) Follow up by passing out copies of the story and comprehension questions.
- (18) Extend the activity by discussing what qualities are important for succeeding in business, etc.

Caveat

This activity oversimplifies the complexities of reading. Also, our brains are highly effective in finding the most efficient way to go about the business of processing written text. Students should be reminded of this and the fact that this activity is only offered as one form of reading practice.

Appendix 2 - Communication Strategies Podcast Activity

Introduction

The needs analysis highlighted the importance of having a workable set of communication strategies. Thus, this activity is being designed to raise awareness of two major communication strategies: adding extra information and asking follow-up questions. At the same time, we recognize a need for exposure to non-native varieties of English. The lesson plan involves listening to a podcast segment in which an instructor in the Business English program interviews a visiting graduate student from Malaysia about her studies and life here in Japan. Participants are asked to listen for specific communication strategies as well as details about the visiting student. We prepared a rough script for the interview (not included), but did not want to over prepare and make the interview sound unnatural. The interview was recorded digitally and the sound file has been uploaded to a podcast page at web.mac.com/bjones_jp/iWeb/kgu_be/podcast/podcast.html. A printed copy of the full transcript (available at www.waei.com/mandy_transcript.pdf) is also used in the activity.

Rationale

This activity provides students with real-life listening practice and students in our business English program will likely identify with the interviewee, thus boosting motivation. At the same time, the focus on communication strategies will hopefully highlight the importance of these two useful strategies.

Materials

- Blackboard and chalk or whiteboard and markers
- Audio file ([mandy_interview web.mac.com/bjones_jp/iWeb/kgu_be/podcast/podcast.html](http://web.mac.com/bjones_jp/iWeb/kgu_be/podcast/podcast.html))
- Audio equipment to play the file (can be burned to CD if necessary)
- Printed copies of the transcript (www.waei.com/mandy_transcript.pdf)

Procedure

- (1) Write up or dictate the following questions:

What is the interviewee's name?

Where is her hometown and where was she born?

How many times has she been to Japan?

What is she researching in Japan?

What is her impression of Japan?

When will she return to her home country?

- (2) Students listen to the podcast and write down any answers they can find.
- (3) Check answers with partner and then as a class.
- (4) Read through the transcript and have students:
 - a. circle any follow-up questions, and
 - b. underline any examples of extra information (details, examples, related information, etc.)
- (5) Listen again and displaying the transcript with answers to #3 highlighted.
- (6) Ask students to write at least three other questions they would like to ask the interviewee.
- (7) Share these questions with a partner and then the class.
- (8) If possible, invite the interviewee to class (maybe at some future time) and let students lead a follow up interview.

Appendix 3 - Reading Sub-skill Activity

The following article was found on the Voice of America - Special English website.

<http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/> The article and task sheet are printed on separate pages so teachers can copy them for use in class.

Recalls Add to Pressure on Toy Industry

This is the VOA Special English Economics Report.

Parents know about supply and demand. What they supply is not always what children demand. Toymakers have the same problem. These days, they not only face greater competition -- kids have more entertainment choices than ever. But parents could also become more choosy.

Last week, the world's largest toy company announced the largest recall in its history. Mattel is recalling more than eighteen million toys that contain small, powerful magnets. These can cause serious injury if swallowed. One death has already been reported. The toys were made over the past five years based on Mattel designs that the company says have now been improved.

Mattel combined its announcement with a separate recall of more than four hundred thousand toy cars. Mattel said the manufacturer, Lee Der Industrial in China, used lead-based paint without permission. Chinese media said the company owner hanged himself. The vehicles are based on the "Sarge" character in the movie "Cars." Mattel is based in California but makes about sixty-five percent of its products in China. The company promises greater testing. On August first, Mattel recalled almost one million toys from its Fisher-Price division because of lead paint. That recall cost the company thirty million dollars.

Other companies have also recalled children's products. Last week Toys "R" Us recalled baby bibs made in China. Independent tests showed that the vinyl bibs contained high levels of lead.

The seller of a simple test for lead in products has seen its sales jump. The kit from Homax can be found in stores including home improvement centers. Homax's Donald Hamm says the company is receiving five or six calls each day from businesses wanting to sell the LeadCheck kit. The company has now set up a Web site to sell directly to the public, at leadtesttoys.com.

China has formed a cabinet-level committee to improve the quality and safety of its exports. This follows a number of recalls around the world. But China has also criticized the quality of some American imports. And it has accused the United States and the European Union of trade protectionism. The American toy industry is worth an estimated twenty-two billion dollars. Eighty percent of the toys are made in China. But now several companies that still make toys in the United States are reporting increased sales.

And that's the VOA Special English Economics Report, written by Mario Ritter. I'm Bob Doughty.

Recalls Add to Pressure on Toy Industry

Scanning Words

competition	history	injury	permission	division
independent	improvement	committee	accused	reporting

Skimming Activity

Based only on the title, the "scanning words" above, and what you just saw as you were scanning the reading passage, what do you think the reading is about? DO NOT turn this paper over to look for more information.

When the teacher says, "Go!" turn the paper over for only 30 seconds to skim the reading for main ideas. Now, what do you think the reading is about? Write your new answer here.

Now, skim the comprehension questions below for 15 seconds. If your answer changes, write your new answer below.

(Fold the page here and do NOT look at the comprehension questions below you have answered questions (a) and (b) above.)

Comprehension Questions

- What kind of company is Mattel?
- Where are the company's headquarters?
- How many product "recalls" are mentioned in this article?
- What company is benefiting from this recent surge in recalls?
- What is the Chinese government doing in response to the recent recalls around the world?

Discussion Questions

- Do you know of any other recent recall cases? Explain what you know about them.
- What are some ethical issues related to product recalls?

Interactive English Writing and Storytelling in an EFL Context For Japanese University Students

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Abstract

Writing and storytelling are too often neglected in lower-level Japanese English foreign language (EFL) teaching/learning situations in favor of activities that focus purely on students' listening and speaking abilities. While listening and speaking are obviously essential skills in developing communicative competence in second language acquisition, there is great value in engaging lower-level EFL students to pursue writing tasks in a communicative context. Interactive writing and oral storytelling tasks have proven to effectively encourage lower-level Japanese university students to draw on their previous English language learning experience in order to develop more confidence in approaching post-secondary English language content and material. This paper attempts to focus on methods and approaches in implementing motivational writing and storytelling activities in Japanese university-level general English curriculums.

Introduction

One of the great challenges for many university-level English foreign language (EFL) teachers in Japan is generating a comfortable level of student interest and enthusiasm toward meaningful English language learning in the classroom. Teachers who instruct lower-level general English classes often remark in frustration about the futility of attempting to have their students focus on even the most basic grammatical principals necessary to successfully complete lesson target objectives. This is often despite the fact that most Japanese university students have already endured several years of English language instruction throughout their junior high school and high school academic years. Most Japanese university level English language learners are actually capable of more than their teachers sometimes realize. In fact, the majority of first-year Japanese university students tend to be reasonably familiar with a broad range of English vocabulary and grammar. The real challenge for university level EFL teachers is how to effectively elicit their students' accumulative English language knowledge and have their students produce it in a more functional capacity. Interactive writing and storytelling has proven to be one effective way of raising students' levels of awareness and attentiveness in their own language learning pursuits. By utilizing particular story genres that tap into students' interests, EFL teachers may find that they can indeed rejuvenate student enthusiasm into their classrooms. These activities can also play an influential role in

encouraging lower level students to approach English writing and composition in a more confident manner. This paper will outline some key strategies that were found to be most useful in implementing an interactive writing and storytelling unit within a Japanese university-level general English curriculum.

Background: Approach and Theory

The fact that many native EFL teachers in Japan who teach non-English majors avoid implementing writing activities into their communication classes is largely understandable. Writing has long been regarded as a solitary academic discipline that seems difficult to introduce to the large communication classes many university level EFL instructors manage. The Japanese educational system itself has continued to place more emphasis on English listening and speaking skills at the expense of developing students' basic writing skills. More troubling is the type of writing exercises that are usually common amongst most high school and college level students revolve around "one-sentence translation tasks" that emphasize the importance of grammatical accuracy over any creative or critical writing (Nakanishi, 2006: 2-3). The implication here is that there seems to be little regard for the notion that writing exercises may actually have a positive influence on a student's overall communicative ability.

There has been an interest within some EFL circles to consider writing and storytelling in a more communicative context. In such situations, writing and storytelling can be seen to provide the student with authentic language tasks that must be solved and evaluated interactively (Hamp-Lyons and Heasley, 1992). By adopting a more interactive approach to writing and storytelling with lower-motivated Japanese non-English majors, a variety of highly communicative classroom activities can lead up to the creation and presentation of short and yet authentic student-produced storytelling texts. Some of the more salient communicative features an interactive approach can offer are as follows:

- Warm-up activities: interviewing, brainstorming, listing, and/or ranking tasks to introduce story themes and genres.
- Vocabulary building: generating suitable vocabulary for story composition in a group setting.
- Group negotiation and support: writing and orally practicing syntactic structures in a group setting which were previously learned throughout junior high school and high school English classes.
- Collaborative writing: students work together to create short genre-based story texts.

- Presentation: student groups present their texts to the class (orally in more conventionally designed classrooms or using PowerPoint in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) rooms).
- Peer evaluations: student groups listen and evaluate their peers' texts.

Wachs (1993) has promoted interactive writing activities pointing to the fact that they "*work well because they orient students toward content, not language*" (75). The approaches and techniques outlined in this paper will attempt to illustrate how Japanese EFL students can be initially enticed by content and in turn become more familiar and confident with English language use and function in group settings. These approaches and techniques have been proven suitable to implement into a 3 to 4 lesson unit within a university general English curriculum. The purpose here is not to offer any definitive lesson plans, but rather to suggest some communicative strategies that have proven to be both effective and popular amongst lower level Japanese university non-English majors.

Selecting and Introducing Story Themes

The selection and introduction of suitable story themes and genres for Japanese university level EFL classes involves careful consideration. Interests will likely vary and factors such as age, gender and overall English language ability will influence the popularity of chosen themes. One storytelling genre that has proven to work well with most lower-level first-year Japanese university students, and is used as a model in this paper, is ghost stories. Having a rich tradition of ghost folklore, Japan offers a wealth of material for students to draw upon. Approaching such a story genre, students could initially be encouraged to discuss and become more familiar with the topic being introduced by answering a few simple warm-up questions on the blackboard:

- (1) Do you believe in ghosts?
- (2) Have you or any of your friends ever seen a ghost?
- (3) What is the scariest movie you have ever seen?

Students can then make an interview sheet (*Table 1*) using the warm-up questions chosen and interview a few students from different groups:

Inter-group interviews at this stage are encouraged largely to foster good relations and camaraderie throughout the entire class beyond the friendship group bubbles, which may already exist within initial group settings.

Names	Do you believe in ghosts?	Have you or any of your friends ever seen a ghost?	What is the scariest movie you have ever seen?
Naoki	Yes, he does	No	Ring
Aya	No, she doesn't	No	The Shining
Takeshi	Yes, he does.	Once, when he was camping.	The Blair Witch Project

Table 1: Warm-up Interview

Mixing around the class and sharing different views and opinions is also an effective way of introducing the type of communicative task-based activities that students will be engaged in throughout the project-based unit. Writing on the importance of tasks in the second language (L2) classroom environment, Richards and Rogers (2001) comment that "*tasks are believed to foster processes of negotiation, modification, rephrasing, and experimentation that are at the heart of second language learning.*" (228). While engaged in their task, students are expected to negotiate meaning communicatively with the covert aim of improving their fluency. As students return to their original groups, teachers can then initiate feedback where interview questions are modeled and students are chosen or encouraged to voluntarily answer. In Japanese university classrooms, where the students are often unwilling to speak up voluntarily, teachers can encourage responses through hand raising gestures: (e.g. How many people believe in ghosts? Hand raise = I do).

Student groups can subsequently be assigned a quick listing activity to generate some ideas that may later be used for short story writing. The students can be asked to make a list of some haunted places they know around their local environment. Realistically, students will often negotiate this largely in their native (L1) language. For this reason, it is sometimes useful to have students try to offer simple reasons or explanations in English for the conditions surrounding list choices: (e.g. "The Minami-Ku cemetery-because my friend saw a ghost there"). Teachers can assign each group a listing task of five haunted places and have each group write one place on the blackboard with a corresponding explanation to ensure that all groups have a range of ideas to choose from.

Negotiating Vocabulary and Grammatical Structures

Reviewing and reinforcing the basic English grammar and sentence structure relevant to the storytelling target exercise is also necessary. Although English proficiency levels will vary within even the lowest streams of non-English major university level communication classes,

students should collectively be able to recall basic grammatical concepts that they have previously studied throughout their junior high school and high school years. The standardized Japanese *mombusho* (Ministry of Education) guidelines for English material to be covered on university entrance tests assume a reasonable level of shared general English knowledge amongst most first-year university students. The main problem is the manner in which these students have likely been trained to approach English grammar. Most of these students would have studied through some type of conventional English textbook focusing on core grammatical structures that are "*very often presented out of context*" (Nunan, 1998: 192). In Japan, students become accustomed to endlessly disconnected grammar exercises revolving around "fill in the blank" style exercises to mundane sentence translations. These exercises are often devoid of any practical and functional relevance and as a result make English language acquisition a doubly mystifying and frustrating experience. Students need to actively experience how grammar is applied in accomplishing specific tasks with tangible objectives in order to understand its importance in terms of function.

Motivating lower-level Japanese university non-English majors to reconsider basic English grammar is not an easy task for an EFL teacher. Most teachers in this situation will be faced with a largely disinterested mass of students who have already been jaded through their past attempts at English language learning and who will not be receptive to grammatical explanations of any kind. By having students work interactively on exercises designed to generate vocabulary for meaningful task objectives, students can have an opportunity to actually work with English as oppose to studying it as an isolated concept. One interesting finding in Cohen and Aphek's (1981) study on second language learning was that a connection seemed to exist between language learner's level of proficiency and the type of task that was most suitable for vocabulary acquisition. It was found that listing exercises involving vocabulary worked best for lower level language learners. In terms of storytelling amongst lower level Japanese English language learners, listing has proven to be very effective when students are asked to relate vocabulary items to specific functions within a story.

In the example below (*Table 2*), student groups were shown a variety of pictures from old horror movies and asked to identify and write down relevant vocabulary from each picture. They were also instructed to write both the present and past forms of any verbs they could identify.

Verbs (action words)	Adjectives (words that tell us information about nouns)	Nouns (people, place or thing words)
present-past		
see-saw	white	ghost
walk-walked	old	house
scream-screamed	black	crow/raven

Table 2: Vocabulary Chart

Once enough vocabulary had been generated from the students, the class could orally practice using narrative structures (simple past and past progressive tense mixing) as modeled by the teacher:

"We saw a white ghost as we were walking up to the old house."

After a few "listen and repeat" style exchanges, the students were able to practice on their own within their groups. In this case, the teacher went from group to group, monitoring student attempts and offering constructive feedback.

Collaborative Writing: Working With Storyboard Templates

Sentence constructing exercises should enable students to become more confident manipulating verb forms and applying what they have practiced to creating slightly longer texts. Teachers can support lower-level students here by creating short storyboard templates where students have to collaboratively find suitable vocabulary to complete the story. *Figure 1* shows an example of a storyboard template that was used by one group of Japanese first-year university non-English majors:

GHOST STORY

It was a (1) _____ (2) _____ night in Sapporo.
 (3) _____ and I were (4) _____ through Nakajima
 park when we heard a (5) _____ scream! We were
 very scared. I looked around and saw a (6) _____ light
 coming towards us. We started to (7) _____ as fast as we
 could. The ghost was getting closer. I fell! (3) _____
 grabbed my (8) _____ and pulled me up. The ghost was
 now standing next to us. (3) _____ screamed! Suddenly, I
 noticed that it was only (9) _____. (3) _____ and
 I were relieved. We decided to go to (10) _____ to relax
 and have some (11) _____.

1. Adjective (e.g. cold, black, dark) _____
2. Adjective (e.g. cold, black, dark) _____
3. Friend's name _____
4. "ing" verb (e.g. running, dancing) _____
5. Adjective (e.g. cold, black, dark) _____
6. Adjective (e.g. cold, black, dark) _____
7. Verb (e.g. run dance) _____
8. Body part noun (e.g. hand, leg) _____
9. Teacher, friend or local talent name _____
10. Restaurant name _____
11. Food or drink name _____

Figure 1. Storyboard Template

Student groups, in this situation, were left to brainstorm and select appropriate vocabulary to fill in their stories. Once the groups were finished, individual group members were encouraged to mingle amongst other group members from different groups and exchange story ideas and vocabulary. At this point, there was a high level of communicative interaction as students orally read their stories to one another. After a sufficient amount of oral practice was achieved, the proverbial scaffold could be dismantled further and student groups were given the assignment of creating their own original short storyboard texts.

Presentation

In terms of presentation, teachers may wish to save a class for students to both practice and then share their stories with the whole class. In classrooms offering traditional resources, students can prepare poster presentations or can even act their stories out to the class. Teachers who have access to CALL rooms can also have their students prepare short PowerPoint presentations with embedded sound recordings. This approach has proven very effective in larger classes where students work in smaller groups or pairs. Students can then present their projects to the class through a central projector/monitor. Both modes of presentation add a useful listening comprehension aspect to the unit where students can peer evaluate each of their classmates' presentations.

Peer Evaluations

Providing positive feedback at the end of an interactive writing and storytelling unit is essential in building student confidence. Peer evaluations can prove to be highly interactive activities as group members are expected to negotiate amongst themselves and agree to assign other groups a score for their efforts. Peer reviewing in this context also often inspires students to invest more time and quality on their work since they know their text will likely have a live audience. Drafting evaluative criteria for story presentations can be left for individual teachers to decide depending on their needs and expectations within their own teaching/learning context. The example below (*Figure 2*) was used in a situation where a teacher decided to spend time going over basic story elements with students in order to make the listening task during the presentation stage more challenging.

PEER EVALUATION SHEET																													
GROUP NAME:	_____																												
GHOST STORY TITLE:	_____																												
CHARACTER NAMES:	_____																												
STORY OUTLINE:																													
SETTING	_____																												
BEGINNING	_____																												
RISING ACTION	_____																												
CLIMAX	_____																												
RESOLUTION	_____																												
<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;">ENGLISH</td> <td style="width: 5%;">1</td> <td style="width: 5%;">2</td> <td style="width: 5%;">3</td> <td style="width: 5%;">4</td> <td style="width: 5%;">5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>VOLUME</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>PPT</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5 (OPTIONAL: ADD POSTER)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>INTERESTING/ ORIGINAL STORY</td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table>						ENGLISH	1	2	3	4	5	VOLUME	1	2	3	4	5	PPT	1	2	3	4	5 (OPTIONAL: ADD POSTER)	INTERESTING/ ORIGINAL STORY	1	2	3	4	5
ENGLISH	1	2	3	4	5																								
VOLUME	1	2	3	4	5																								
PPT	1	2	3	4	5 (OPTIONAL: ADD POSTER)																								
INTERESTING/ ORIGINAL STORY	1	2	3	4	5																								
TOTAL:		/20																											

Figure 2. Peer Evaluation Sheet (for students)

The clearer the evaluative criteria, the more seriously the students are likely to take their evaluative task at the end of the unit. It is important to consider that many Japanese college and university students may not be overly familiar or comfortable with this style of evaluation at first. Time is needed to go over the criteria and perhaps even provide students with a practice model. The value of being able to share ideas and constructive criticism will inevitably benefit students who do decide to take a more active role in their own learning.

Conclusion

Many university-level English instructors may not have the luxury to maneuver far from their set department curriculum guidelines and may indeed find it difficult to implement a complete project-based writing and storytelling unit into their syllabus. The hope of this paper was to bring attention to the potential merits and benefits of adopting a more interactive approach to a skill that is often considered to be solitary and non-communicative. The activities outlined above have recently proven to be popular amongst lower-level Japanese university English language learners who traditionally lack motivation in approaching a required subject outside

of their major. Through developing and refining techniques in approaching a skill that is often reserved for intermediate to high level English language learners, writing and storytelling have the potential to reach a wider student audience.

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Teaching Asian English Literature

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Abstract

Asian English literature has particular reference and appeal to students of English in Asia, including Laos. Because of the limited background of students' reading skills, short stories are easier to read and allows for more variety of selections. These stories capture the issues in the lives of ordinary people in neighboring Asian countries. Settings range from the sophistication of Singapore to the poverty of India. The culture is recklessly contemporary and agelessly traditional, influenced by Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Catholicism. Yet the themes are applicable to the Lao university reader in a way that Euro-centric literature cannot capture--coming of age, the effects of poverty and pride, what to do with aging grandparents, arranged marriage, superstitious belief in the gods, etc.

Themes: Questions, searching, pain; local/universal

In his Introduction to *Skoob Pacifica Anthology No. 1: S.E. Asia Writes Back!* (Loh & Ong, 2000), Professor John McRae identifies the themes that consistently run through these works:

*There would be no literature without questions, without searching, without pain....
Humanity goes well beyond national boundaries, and identity is individual as well
as universal. Local and universal, national and international must go hand in
hand (pg. 8).*

After reading these short stories by Asian writers, it is always useful to have students identify the questions, searching and pain described. Many of the Singapore stories used demonstrate the pressure of multi-generational life. Stories from Thailand show a more biting social pain. And the stories from India describe the various trials involved in the role of women.

The second theme of local/national/universal is also a good stimulus for discussion. After each story I ask the question, "*If we change the names and places, could this be a local story? Are the struggles the same, the experiences close enough for students to see a clear cultural translation?*"

The following is a chart of a year's worth of Asian short stories:

Sample Syllabus

Title	Author	Country	No. of Pages	Summary
Home for Grandma	Goh Sin Tub	Singapore	13	Family must face the painful decision of sending Grandma to a Home.
Singapore Story	Shirley Lim	Singapore	12	The patriarch of the family moves in with his eldest son but can't get used to the modern bathroom.
Or Else, the Lightning God	Catharine Lim	Singapore	21	Professional woman is cursed by her traditional mother-in-law and begins to believe in the power of the gods.
Seven Days	Pira Sudham	Thailand	7	Poor family is given seven days to pay their electricity bill or else it will be cut off.
Title Deed and the Glory	Pira Sudham	Thailand	13	Old man fights off land developers and teaches young boy the value of honesty.
Ronggeng-Ronggeng	Lee Kok Liang	Malaysia	8	Dreams and survival among an amusement park dance troupe.
Night Train at Deoli	Ruskin Bond	India	6	University boy meets basket selling girl during train stop.
The Library Girl	Vishwapriya Iyengar	India	7	Muslim girl gets her first burqa and loses her identity.
The Meeting	Shama Futehally	India	7	Indian arranged marriage: unattractive 29-year old has an arranged meeting.
The Tamarind Tree	Mulk Raj Anand	India	8	New wife feels the desires and frustrations of pregnancy.
Point of Contact	Chandani Lokuge	Sri Lanka	9	New wife feels the desires and frustrations of not being pregnant.
Carapace	Romesh Guneskera	Sri Lanka	6	Girl must choose between a local boy or suitor in Australia

In describing three successfully used short stories, I have tried to show how these themes unite the various stories, and how they might relate to a Lao college student. They are probably relevant to most Asian countries.

Home For Grandma by Goh Sin Tub (1992) (Singapore)

In the opening scene, from their apartment balcony, the teenage narrator and his family watch a neighbor take their grandmother away to a Home. A younger sibling declares this act, "Unfilial! No sense of Asian values!" (123). This sets up the confrontation in their own family, when their grandmother must come live with them.

Grandma is not a particularly sweet old lady. The text uses words and phrases like "quite strong-willed" (123), "unreasonable" (127), "grumpy" (128), "old-fashioned" (128), "imperious" (131), "irascible" (132), and "demanding" (132).

When Uncle Charles is transferred to Tokyo and Grandma must live with the narrator's family, we watch the transformation of each family member. Mum becomes worn down, Dad develops ulcers and a short temper, and all the children are enlisted to perform the endless tasks that Grandma demands. After three years of stress and exasperation, Mum must accept the fact that they can no longer care for Grandma and that she must go into a Home. The decision is painful and heart wrenching.

Of course, Grandma does not agree and begins a long, savage protest with scolds and curses, climaxing with: "*Grandma sorry for the day Grandma born you! Better Grandma die now. Give Grandma sleeping pills. Grandma swallow whole bottle and die now!*" (134). This ultimatum sets up the confrontation scene, which is both riveting and moving:

Mum's face turned white. She reached out, picked up the bottle of sleeping pills at Grandma's bedside table and without a word handed it over to her mother. The scene froze. No one moved. Grandma could not believe what she was seeing . . .

Then Grandma dropped the bottle on to the floor. It broke to bits and the shock broke the spell. Grandma broke down. She wept from her heart (134).

The denouement shows Mum, Grandma, and even Dad hugging and crying, while the young narrator remarks, "*This was my unforgettable lesson in love. And the stress of love*" (135).

Can you see the questioning, pain, searching? Certainly! Besides these themes that students can identify with, this story has good characterizations, especially of Grandma, Mum and Meng. Students can usually identify the setting as taking place in Singapore. And, because the narrator is a teenager, he uses short, simple colloquial sentences, often incomplete.

Seven Days by Pira Sudham (1991) (Thailand)

This is a short short story by one of Thailand's most famous writers. The story is told by the oldest son of a slum-dwelling family, whose electricity will be turned off in seven days unless they can pay the bill. The family lives in a shack constructed of cardboard and corrugated iron. The father is away in Saudi Arabia working but has not sent any money back yet. By day the mother sells food by the roadside, and by day and night the eldest son sells newspapers on the streets. Here we see the underside of city life:

At the closing hours for bars, nightclubs, massage parlors and brothels, I'd see

another kind of crowd: pimps with their cash earners on the motor-cycles, drunks, gays, male prostitutes, ageing whores, and bartenders going home. Then there would be those adulterers off to motels . . . (53)

Although the boy struggles to sell papers well into the night, as the deadline gets closer they still don't have enough money. In desperation, the mother goes to a gambling den to play cards but loses. As she returns home and fingers her wedding ring, contemplating pawning it, the boy goes out once more braving the police, to sell papers. Finally, with uncharacteristic punctuality by the authorities, the electricity is cut off. Acknowledging defeat Mother prepares for the evening's darkness:

"Buy me a few candles," Mother asked me. "Don't go to the shop in front of the lane where they know you. Go farther." Even though we had lived in poverty all our lives, she still cared very much about losing face. For having to resort to candles would tell tales. (56)

Although most students have never experienced this kind of poverty, perhaps it is not so removed from their family's history. And the boy's positive attitude about life outside the slum keeps the situation from becoming too depressing. But what is relevant to university students is the question of saving face, something that everyone can relate to.

The desperation to get money leads to an interesting moral question. The follow-up question I ask is, "*If you needed money for some absolute deadline, what would you be willing to do to get it?*" Would you be willing to sell your most valuable possession, like your wedding ring? Would you be willing to brave the police to sell something on the street? Would you be willing to go gambling (pachinko, mahjong, cards, lottery, racing) to make quick money? Or, more relevant still, would you be willing to take part in dating or sex to get quick money?

Night Train at Deoli by Ruskin Bond (1990) (India)

The university student narrator tells of his train ride every summer to visit his grandmother. In the early pre-dawn hours, the train stops at Deoli where "*nothing ever happens.*" This sets up the encounter between the boy and the young girl selling baskets. She is poor, barefoot, thinly clothed, but "*then those eyes, searching and eloquent, met mine.*" (2) He jumps off the train to get closer and buys a basket. The train whistle brings him back. On his return trip to Delhi, he sees her at the station again, and this time, he meets her and talks to her briefly.

The third time he vows to be bolder in expressing his feelings, but she is not there and no one at the station can tell him where she is. His true feelings come out:

What could I do about finding a girl I had seen only twice, who had hardly spoken to me, and about whom I knew nothing-absolutely nothing-but for whom I felt a tenderness and responsibility that I had never felt before? (5)

The student fantasizes stopping at Deoli, getting off the train and looking for her, but he never does. The final paragraph is written years later, in retrospect, "*I never break my journey to Deoli, but I pass through as often as I can*" (6).

This story of first love is something every student has experienced. Especially college students can identify with the class difference between the narrator and the basket girl. Even girl students can imagine falling in love with a street vendor. And everyone can savor the bitter sweetness of that feeling that has no expression.

Conclusion

Teaching Asian English literature has several impelling advantages. First, it is fresh and modern. Most of the new national literatures were written within the past 20-30 years and most writers are still active. Second, the stories have an exotic flavor different from the Euro-centric literature students are used to. There are local sights, sounds, smells, scenes and situations, specific to that Asian country. Third, there is a similarity of cultures with its familiar value system. As we have seen, the issues of filial responsibility to grandparents, poverty and pride and first love are all issues readily accessible to the Lao college student. Fourth, stories set in a developing neighboring country forms a counterpart to the students' own experiences. Whereas British and American literature have a familiarity of First World development, Asian literature is often set among poverty and the poor. Fifth, the issues dealt with tend to be large. How the characters react, adapt, reconcile to their challenges makes for good literary tension.

Teaching Asian literature has been a successful departure for my students. It opens the door to a new literature, new cultures and new vocabularies, while at the same time, making literature more accessible to their understanding and appreciation

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Teaching Debate Skills to Intermediate and Lower Level EFL Students

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Abstract

Teaching debate skills to East Asian EFL students presents a unique set of challenges. Aside from the fact that debate is a sophisticated form of interactive discourse (which can even challenge many native speakers) debating could be construed as "mission impossible" from a cultural perspective. Because debate is built upon disagreement, it could be seen as imposing an adversarial, individualistic communication style on learners who value more harmonious, non-adversarial types of interaction. Yet, if presented carefully and systematically, debate skills can be effectively taught, leading to enlightening and enriching learning experience. This paper examines the teaching of debate skills to a large, multi-level university EFL class. Activities are described that encourage students to discover, support, and organize their own opinions, as well as refuting and challenging the opinions of others. Suggestions are also offered for providing linguistic and conceptual support.

Introduction

It is becoming more common to introduce debate skills into East Asian university EFL programs, as the value of such courses is increasingly acknowledged. Credited with enhancing both linguistic and critical thinking skills, debate classes are in greater demand than ever before. Yet, many challenges exist in the implementation of such courses, not the least of which is the lack of materials available which are designed to suit the needs of EFL learners. Coupled with this is the issue of teaching situations involving large, multi-level classes. But perhaps the greatest challenges lie in cultural constraints, and in the nature of debate itself, which is an advanced form of discourse, mastery of which is often elusive even for native speakers. This paper will offer a rationale for the teaching of debate, even under challenging circumstances, and will suggest practical approaches for overcoming challenges in order to enable students to formulate opinions, develop reasons and evidence, offer refutations, and ultimately participate in the debate process.

Mission Impossible?

Debate has been described as a highly "*sophisticated form of immediate, interactive communication . . . (which) assumes a high level of discourse skill*" (Lubetsky, LeBeau, Harrington, 2000). It involves a complexity that extends far beyond the level of ordinary conversation, demanding active and critical listening, as well as advanced linguistic

competency and critical thinking. Critical thinking, defined by Day (2003) as "*the evaluation of the worth, accuracy, or authenticity*" of information, is essential to the debate process, yet does not fit easily into the East Asian cultural context. It could be argued that because debate is built upon disagreement and critical thinking, it imposes an adversarial, individualistic style of communication on learners who are more accustomed to a harmonious, group-oriented communication style. However, studies have also shown that, given the tools and the opportunity, East Asian students are open to new and different ways of thinking and communicating (Day, 2003). Other challenges involve EFL practitioners finding themselves with large multi-level debate classes, in which they are forced to search for ways to include all students, ensure success experiences for all students, and tailor the material to student needs and not vice versa. Therefore, the advanced nature of debate skills, the cultural constraints involved in critical thinking, the challenges of large, multi-level classes, and the lack of availability of materials lead some to ask if the teaching of debate in East Asian EFL contexts is indeed *mission impossible*?

Rationale

Despite the above challenges, many still espouse the value of teaching debate. Krieger (2005) acknowledges the usefulness of debate in language learning because it "*engages students in a variety of cognitive and linguistic ways*" (p.1). Aside from the fact that debate greatly enhances speaking ability, it also promotes effective listening, reading, and writing. Prior to engaging in debates, students must research a particular topic, and employ skimming, scanning, and critical reading skills to select evidence that supports their arguments. Engaging in actual debates requires active and critical listening, as each team listens to the opposing team's arguments, and formulates refutations. This also enhances L2 writing, as students take notes, and write persuasive, argumentative speeches. Kreiger (2005) refers to the capacity of debate to foster "*argumentation skills for persuasive speech and writing.*" It follows that debate also has the potential to enhance critical thinking skills including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, as these are essential components in the formulation of refutations. Nesbett (2003) recognizes the value of debate in enabling "*analytic thinking skills . . . and self-conscious reflection on the validity of one's ideas*" (p. 210) while Davidson (1996) found that "*many students show obvious progress in their ability to express and defend ideas . . . and recognizing the flaws in each others' arguments.*" Debate can even address cultural concerns. In a debate study conducted with Japanese students, Fukuda (2003) discovered a marked increase in the number of students who were comfortable expressing viewpoints that differed from those of others. He attributes this to the fact that "*the knowledge or skills which came from the practice in the debates led the students to become more accustomed to*

expressing opinions."

Teaching Debate

The Debate Metaphor

Because debate, by its very nature, is an abstract concept, it is useful to consider metaphor to aid students' comprehension. To this end, Lubetsky et al. (2000) suggest utilizing a "*debate house metaphor*." They compare debate to a house, with the topic or resolution forming the roof. This is, in turn, supported by pillars or reasons, "*and the entire house rests on a foundation of evidence*." The metaphor is extended to reflect the dynamics of the debate process. A strong debate case, like a well-constructed house, with a firm foundation of reasons and evidence, will withstand attacks. A poorly-constructed debate case, like a poorly constructed house, will collapse if subjected to attack or adverse conditions. Building refutations is likened to attacking the affirmative house and rebuilding a negative house. Thus, the debate pattern follows the pattern: construct, attack, rebuild.

Formulating Opinions

When teaching debate to intermediate and lower level classes, it is essential to employ a step-by-step, or scaffolding approach. Rather than overwhelming students with the complex rhetorical structure of debate speeches, it is best to start with the simple process of formulating and becoming aware of their own opinions. The following is an activity adapted from Lubetsky et al. (2000) which seeks to facilitate the formulation of opinions.

Agree/Disagree Activity

- (1) Before class, the teacher prepares a list of opinions (preferably related to the students' cultural context) as well as "I agree" and "I disagree" signs. The signs are placed on opposite walls of the classroom.
- (2) Students are instructed to stand in the center of the classroom, midway between the two signs.
- (3) As the teacher reads each opinion, students go to the side of the room that reflects their agreement or disagreement with the opinion.
- (4) As the activity progresses, students may be paired off with students from the opposite side of the room, to discuss reasons for agreement and/or disagreement.

In the above activity, topics can range from the trivial "Chocolate tastes better than ice cream" to the controversial "Japan should allow a woman to become emperor." This pairwork activity

is a useful and non-threatening first step in debate participation.

At this stage in the process, it is useful to introduce students to the three different types of opinions as defined by Lubetsky et al. (2000).

- Opinions of value: X is better than Y (Ex. Soccer is more exciting than baseball)
- Opinions of policy: X should do Y (Ex. The university should ban smoking on campus.)
- Opinions of fact: X is/was/will be true (Ex. There is life on other planets).

To check students' comprehension, especially in large classes, it is worthwhile to have each student make a "Value" sign, a "Policy" sign, and a "Fact" sign. Then, as the teacher reads a list of opinions, students hold up the appropriate sign. This "Show me the Sign" activity may be used at many stages of the debate course (especially in large classes) to facilitate whole-class involvement; and to provide immediate feedback to the teacher of general comprehension.

Students should also be provided with linguistic support at each stage of the process. In this case, opinions may be introduced by "opinion indicators" (Krieger, 2005). Examples of opinion indicators include "I think that . . .," "I feel that . . .," "I believe that . . .," etc. The corresponding responses, such as "I agree that . . .," "I disagree that . . .," "Me too.," "Not me.," etc. should also be introduced at this point.

Reasons for Opinions

The next step in building a debate case is the construction of the "pillars" or reasons for opinions. Lubetsky et al. (2000) define a good reason as one which logically supports the opinion; is specific and clear; and is convincing to a majority of people. The teacher may then generate a multiple choice activity that requires students to select the best reasons from a list of choices. For example:

Opinion: It is better to eat fish than to eat beef.

- (a) because fish are prettier than cows
- (b) because fish is my favourite food
- (c) because fish is healthier and more nutritious than beef

Utilizing the above criteria, students may be guided to reject choice (a) as it does not logically

support the opinion, and choice (b) as it is not convincing to a majority of people. On the other hand, choice (c) meets all three criteria. Students may then be introduced to different types of reasons, such as comparison, contrast, and cause/effect relationships, after which, they should be prepared to practice brainstorming and giving reasons for opinions in pairs and small groups.

Collecting Evidence

The final step in building a debate case is the laying of the foundation for the entire case. This evidence or support (adapted from Lubetsky et al., 2000) may fall into four categories:

- Example: A subjective or specific illustration from a personal perspective
- Explanation: Elaborating on the reason
- Expert opinion: The opinion of a knowledgeable person, organization. or publication
- Statistic: The use of numbers or data to back up the reason

Presenting the accompanying language enables students to identify each type of evidence as well as to express it in the context of a debate speech later. In the following example, the identifying language is italicized.

Opinion: It is better to have a large car than a small car.

Reason: Large cars are more useful than small cars.

Supports:

1. Because you can fit more things in large cars than in small cars (*explanation*)
2. For example, when my friend goes on vacation, he can fit all his luggage and his family into his large car (*example*).
3. According to the American Automobile Association, large cars can save you money over public transportation costs (*expert opinion*).
4. 7 out of 10 people say they prefer large cars over small cars because they can put many things in them (*statistic*).

To check comprehension of the types of evidence, the "Show me the Sign" activity mentioned above may be used, with "example", "explanation", "statistic", and "expert opinion" signs. Students should then be more prepared to research debate topics using books, newspapers, and/or the internet, searching for evidence that fits the above categories.

Affirmative Speeches

At this stage in the process, students should be ready to practice assembling affirmative speeches and building their debate case. Use of a visual such as the "debate house" planning sheet found in Lubetsky et al. (2000) offers a concrete organizational support for students when planning their speeches. Once the key concepts are in place, a suitable linguistic framework should be offered, enabling students to construct their arguments. An example of a first affirmative constructive speech is provided in Appendix 1.

Refutations

Refutations, because of the critical thinking involved therein, are arguably the most valuable part of the debate experience. Drawing heavily on logical and analytical reasoning skills, refutation requires a reorientation of thought processes, and perspectives. In this way, refutation is an invaluable tool in stimulating creative and evaluative thought, opening the mind in unique ways in the process. It is worth ensuring that students obtain the maximum benefit from this aspect of the debate, and in a way that is culturally appropriate. An activity developed by Kreiger (2005) is especially useful for this purpose. Entitled, "*The Devils' Advocate*", the process is as follows:

- (1) Students are given a resolution on any topic.
- (2) Students have two minutes to argue one side of the resolution.
- (3) When they hear "Switch", students then have two minutes to argue the opposite side of the resolution.
- (4) Repeat steps 1-3 with a variety of topics.

This activity is also useful for preparing students to anticipate and preparing for opposing points of view during an actual debate.

Conceptual and linguistic support should also be offered. The following framework (adapted from Lubetsky et al., 2000) is helpful for students to learn the refutation process. Opposing team's arguments may be categorized as:

(1) Not True

- not true
- not always true
- not necessarily true

(2) Not important

- not relevant
- not significant
- easy to solve.

This is another situation where students may engage in the "Show me the Sign" activity, to maximize involvement, and to check comprehension. For example:

Opinion: Moisturizer X is better than moisturizer Y.

Reason: Moisturizer X costs less than moisturizer Y.

Refutation: That is true, but not important, because cost has nothing to do with the effectiveness of the moisturizer.

Students should also be exposed to the idea of challenging evidence by questioning sources, dates, statistics, and expert opinions, as well as detecting bias.

Debates

Once students have been introduced to the basics of formulating opinions, reasons, and evidence, as well as simple refutations, it is time for them to practice debate. Throughout the process, pairwork and groupwork should be employed to familiarize them with the art of face to face discussion and debate. This in itself, demystifies the process and facilitates greater ease with a more formal debate structure. Informal two-on-two debates should be practiced regularly in class on an ongoing basis.

Negative constructive speeches are longer and more complex than affirmative speeches. However, because they build upon the basic structure of affirmative speeches, they should not pose any major problems. Once students are familiar with the "introduction, affirmative points, conclusion" format of the affirmative speech, the negative speech may be structured in the same way. Lubetsky et al. (2000) suggest the following format for affirmative and negative speeches:

Affirmative

- Introduction
- Affirmative points
- Conclusion

Negative

- Introduction
- Refutations
- Transition
- Negative Points
- Conclusion

A sample negative constructive speech is included in Appendix 2.

Intermediate and lower-level students need considerable support in preparing for their debates. This teacher divided the class of 50 into ten teams of five. Students with more advanced English competency were assigned as team leaders. Each team then drew a resolution from a box and used it to prepare their affirmative constructive speech. At least one 90-minute class period is necessary for this process. When the affirmative speeches were completed, each team then chose its negative topic (i.e. the resolution they were to argue against). Copies of affirmative speeches were then distributed to the corresponding negative team, who in turn, prepared their negative speeches. This also requires at least one 90-minute class period. Advance preparation such as this allows students to become comfortable with their topics, and prepare their arguments in advance, a feature that is key to the success of intermediate and lower-level students when participating in debate.

While a variety of formats may be employed in formal debates, it is this teacher's view that intermediate and lower-level students benefit most from a less formal, more flexible structure. Therefore, teams of 3 to 5 may flexibly utilize the following format:

- (1) First affirmative constructive speech.
- (2) First negative constructive speech
- (3) The affirmative rebuttal
- (4) The negative rebuttal
- (5) Affirmative closing comments
- (6) Negative closing comments

It is important to point out that steps 3 and 4 may be repeated if necessary, and if the debate gains momentum. Judging by the teacher may be counterproductive for intermediate and lower-level students. However, it is beneficial to have the other students complete evaluation forms, stating which team they believe won the debate and why. In this teachers' class, students were evaluated on their performance in the formal debate, but were also given credit for each step of the preparation process, and for their evaluation of other students' debates. A sample student evaluation form is included in Appendix 3.

As regards choice of topics for intermediate and lower level students, Lubetsky et al. (2000) suggest selecting simple topics so as not to overwhelm learners by focusing on both content (issues) and form (debate skills). However, it could also be argued that complex issues that students care about should be introduced, as there is a greater likelihood that students will make an extra effort to communicate strongly-held viewpoints. Regardless, it is paramount to

engage students with stimulating, interesting topics that intrinsically motivate them to express their point of view.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to encourage the teaching of debate skills, even under adverse circumstances and to suggest practical approaches for overcoming challenges such as teaching large multi-level classes, and dealing with cultural constraints. Suggestions were offered to assist students in formulating opinions, developing reasons and evidence, offering refutations, and participating in debates. However, the value of teaching debate to EFL students extends beyond the acquisition of debate competency. Stewart & Pleisch (1998) see debate as "a means for developing language fluency and academic study skills, rather than as an end in itself" (p.1). They also highlight its value in promoting teamwork, cooperation, and critical thinking. This is culturally appropriate especially in collectivist East Asian cultures, and offers an antidote to the confrontational nature of debate. Finally, since debate teaches students to examine and argue both sides of issues, there is enormous potential for instilling tolerance, understanding, and open-mindedness, qualities that contribute to the benefit of society at large. Lubetsky et al. (2000) summarize the value of debate effectively by misquoting Confucius: "*Give your students an issue and you feed them for a day. Teach them debate skills, and you feed them for life.*"

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Appendix 1 - Sample First Affirmative Constructive Speech (Adapted from Lubetsky et al., 2000)

Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen. Today, we are debating the resolution Smoking should be banned in public places. We, on the affirmative team, strongly support this resolution. We have 3 reasons: public health, consideration, and example.

Our first point is public health. It is common knowledge that smoking is dangerous for non-smokers as well as smokers. For example, Christopher Reeve's wife, Dana, died from lung cancer even though she never smoked cigarettes. This is because of second hand smoking. People in restaurants, shops, and many public places run the risk of meeting the same fate if smoking is permitted.

Our second point is consideration. Many people really dislike the smell of smoke. It is common courtesy to not force people to smell smoke and to deal with the smell on their clothes.

Our third point is example. Children everywhere are very impressionable. It is irresponsible to set a bad example for them by smoking when they are not mature enough to make judgments for themselves.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have talked about public health, consideration, and example, and have shown that smoking should be banned in public places. For these reasons, we beg to propose.

Appendix 2 - Sample Negative Constructive Speech (Adapted from Lubetsky et al., 2000)

Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen. Today, we are debating the resolution Smoking should be banned in public places. We, on the negative team, strongly oppose this resolution. First, we will refute the affirmative points. Then we will give the negative points.

Their first point was public health. They said that smoking is dangerous for non-smokers as well as smokers. This is not necessarily true. Many people are exposed to second-hand smoke all their lives, and suffer no ill-effects.

Their second point was consideration. They said that smoking should be banned because many people dislike the smell of smoke. This is easy to solve, as many restaurants and public places offer smoking and non-smoking sections. People who don't like the smell of smoke should sit in the non-smoking areas.

Their third point was example. They said that smoking sets a bad example for children. This is easy to solve if parents take responsibility for teaching their children healthy habits when they are growing up.

We have refuted the affirmative points. We will now give the negative points.

Our first point is free choice. People everywhere should have the right to choose their own behavior, and not be restricted by others.

Our second point is economic impact. Many restaurants, bars, and public places will lose customers if smoking is banned. This will result in many businesses losing money and profits, which will hurt the economy.

Our third point is stress. Many people smoke due to stress and it helps them to reduce their stress so that they don't take it out on their families.

We have talked about free choice, economic impact, and stress, and have shown that smoking should not be banned in public places. For these reasons, we beg to oppose.

Appendix 3 - Student Evaluation Form

Name: _____ Date: _____

Team: _____

Affirmative resolution: _____

Negative resolution: _____

_____ In-class preparation (5 points possible)

- writing speeches
- working with your group

_____ Affirmative Team Performance (6 points possible)

- matter (logical, making sense)
- manner (clear, loud enough, easy to understand)
- method (well organized)

_____ Negative Team Performance (6 points possible)

- matter (logical, making sense)
- manner (clear, loud enough, easy to understand)
- method (well organized)

_____ Audience Judging forms (8 points possible)

_____ Debate 1

_____ Debate 2

_____ Debate 3

_____ Debate 4

_____ Debate 5

_____ Debate 6

_____ Debate 7

_____ Debate 8

_____ Debate 9

_____ Debate 10

Building Listening Proficiency

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Abstract

There is broader agreement on the importance of listening than on how to teach it. Textbooks often focus on testing listening (e.g. comprehension): they assume listening skills have been acquired and provide opportunities for practising them. The teaching of listening, however, frequently emphasises listening strategies (e.g. pre-listening to prepare learners for what they are going to hear): students learn ways to apply their knowledge to new situations they encounter in L2 communication. Classroom materials that balance building listening proficiency with the need to test listening ability will be discussed, using *Listen to the World* (Palmer & Todd, 2007).

Introduction

The abstract draws the reader's attention to an area of acute concern in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory: whether learners through exposure to the L2 automatically use pre-existing L1 listening skills and apply the listening strategies that they know regardless of the method of instruction; or else whether they require a nudge in a certain direction in order to facilitate or speed up the learning process. One side asserts that an instructor is simply providing practice opportunities and follows a testing orientation, while the other emphasises awareness-raising and noticing of commonality between the L1 and L2 and therefore follows a teaching orientation together with a testing one. What is being attempted here is a synthesis (and possible reconciliation) of these two polarities as they are represented in the literature. The problem will be addressed by asking first just what is meant by a listening class. Is it something discrete and separate from an oral skills class, for example? Next, what are a set of good practices that can be used as a benchmark for the teaching of listening? Concrete examples are examined to show what is likely to succeed in the classroom. Finally, a checklist of areas to include in building students' listening proficiency is included in the appendix for reference. By covering the items listed in the appendices, the instructor should feel more confident that their learners are well-equipped to deal with listening challenges they face in the classroom as well as those encountered with English speakers in authentic communicative situations.

Rationale

Not every institution prioritises or separates listening in such a way as to provide focused

classes in that one skill. Putting aside designated listening classes, a 'speaking' class or an 'oral' class or a 'communication' class is rarely just concerned with speaking, despite the limitations of the class description. Needless to say, opaque or inadequate terminology may do a disservice to students if instruction in key skill areas is neglected, and this is particularly so in regard to the complex processes (receptive, active, top-down, bottom-up, etc.) at work in what we call listening. Research seems to indicate that reasonably fluent L2 speakers are not necessarily good listeners, and may have only partially mastered a range of listening skills and strategies normally considered to be at the disposal of a proficient communicator in the target language. As an instructor, when we measure (test) speaking ability it is likely that we are testing listening ability that has not been taught in our classes. Language comprehension involves a number of skills at the same time, and it is evident that listening relates to speaking, and vice versa. Under these conditions, it is highly desirable for an instructor to teach listening, as a communicative activity and/or as a language learning activity.

Activities

1. Is one way to practice listening better than any other?

Group 1 - Beginners

Group 2 - Intermediate

Group 3 - Advanced

Participants are placed into groups and asked to order the following six sample activities from 'most useful' to 'least useful' from the point of view of students.

Source: Oxford Language Teaching series

- a. Play a radio broadcast
- b. Pair work in which students tell each other about events in their lives
- c. Students follow teacher instructions, e.g. rearranging desks for a discussion
- d. Play the CD from the course book
- e. Teacher clarifies a language point for corrective feedback
- f. Teacher reads a story aloud

Feedback: In fact, there are several 'best' ways in the right context.

Stress the use of naturalistic language. Any of the activities can work if the task is graded to the level of the students. But how about 'teacher talk' or grading language to the level of the students? While grading language itself is less welcome than the grading of tasks, speakers are inclined to adjust their speech to the perceived level of the listener in all walks of life.

2. What are common reasons for selecting particular listening materials?

Examples: Not enough preparation time...

The exercises are in the book...

Sample reasons for selection of listening materials:

Survey of EFL teachers' satisfaction with listening materials

Source: Oxford Language Teaching series

Good for starting discussions

Can be used for self-access learning

Contains a variety of tasks

Entertaining

Easy to use

Practises guessing from context

Amusing

Uses authentic material

Consolidates language

Feedback: Interestingly, how many are specifically about listening? Zero, actually!

Does listening to one piece of language help learners to cope with others? This is the acid test.

Teacher talk? Language exposure? Tends to be less effective than a teaching approach.

Listening comprehension? Not bad, but beware "continuous testing."

Post-listening? Another testing (or measuring/checking) technique, far less effective than pre-listening strategies like prediction.

3. Sample listening comprehension exercise

Listen to the World (Palmer & Todd, 2007)

A teaching orientation entails a number of elements at the setting-up stage involving schema-building and activating scripts.

General:

The unit name is "Thailand";

A picture of a river and boats forming a floating market is provided for discussion and visual input. Ten key words and phrases in the book and on the self-study CD pre-teach the exercise.

Students practise saying the underlined phrases, and answer questions in the book using the

words in context to confirm comprehension and ownership of any unfamiliar terms.

Specific:

Learners are helped to do the task - which in this kind of multiple choice comprehension format involves skills such as sorting through information contained in the listening dialogue, disregarding the distractors, extracting the correct information, synthesising and processing the information where there are similar answers, and making sure it is the most accurate description contained.

Typical question:

There are 3 possible answers to Question 1 in Episode 10 (p.20), On the River, Listening Exercise A: 'Where do Sam and Lukas meet?' The choices 'on a bus' or 'on a river taxi' refer to transportation, whereas the other choice, 'swimming in the river' does not. The words swimming and river link with the heading of 'On the River', but are not an accurate description of their meeting. Other key information provided on the page is a half-page size picture of the two men sitting and talking on what looks like the inside of a boat carrying passengers. Words taught on the preceding page include 'meeting people' in the section under the word Thailand and a picture of boats on a river forming a floating market. In reference to the "specific" skills mentioned above, the listening task is made sufficiently challenging yet still achievable.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Planning suggestions:

Materials for teaching listening proficiency need to move on from the above comprehension exercise to others that provide comprehensible, focused input and purposeful listening to develop competence in particular listening abilities. Such materials assume a set of skills is not known and try to help the learner acquire them.

Typically, the kinds of abilities to consider might include:

sequencing;

filling in missing information;

identifying what is true and false (especially when more than just a memory check, i.e.

helping to develop the ability to grasp main ideas or extract relevant details);

following directions;

completing cloze exercises;

summarising.

Conclusion

1. A listening activity may assume a set of skills is (a) already acquired and provide opportunities for practising them (testing) or (b) not known and attempt to help the learner acquire them (teaching) e.g. through discussion, questions, or a short paragraph to read which creates the script, providing information about the situation, the characters and the events. Hence the amount of preparation the learner is given prior to a listening task gives a teaching rather than a testing focus to an activity.

2. Authenticity: to what extent does the input resemble natural language?

3. Content validity: Does the activity practice listening or general intelligence, etc.?

4. Listening comprehension or memory: Is the focus on information retrieval or on processing activities?

5. Purposefulness and comprehension: Does the activity reflect a purpose that approximates authentic real life listening?

The thrust of the argument in this paper has been that listening skills (such as sequencing and following directions) can and need to be taught like any others. These skills work in tandem with listening strategies (such as requesting repetition and clarification) which exist in the L1, but without conscious noticing are unlikely to be applied in the L2. It is particularly important that speaking tests are recognised as listening tests too, to avert the danger of testing what has not been taught. Global listening can be reciprocal (pair work in class or social chat outside) or non-reciprocal (listening to the radio); but note that global exposure to language, while useful, is not in itself enough. In the situation prevailing in many Asian countries where English is not used in daily life, there is no real substitute for structured teaching to help learners attain higher levels of listening proficiency.

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Appendix 1

Grading the text

Listener function - the purpose for listening

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. identification | 4. detail comprehension |
| 2. orientation | 5. full comprehension |
| 3. main idea comprehension | 6. replication |

Listening responses

. . . the tasks for the listener to carry out

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. doing | 6. extending |
| 2. choosing | 7. duplicating |
| 3. transferring | 8. modeling |
| 4. answering | 9. conversing |
| 5. condensing | |

Adapted from:

Hadley, A.O. (2001). *Teaching language in context* (3rd ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle

Appendix 2

Grading the task

Novice/Intermediate (extralinguistic support common)

Prelistening activities

Listening for the gist

Listening with visuals

Graphic fill-ins

Matching descriptions to pictures

Dictation and variations (familiar content, simple structures)

Clue searching (listening for cues to meaning, such as key words, syntactic features, actor/action/object, etc.)

Distinguishing registers (formal/informal style)

Kinesics/physical response

Recursive listening (listen to the same text several times; different purpose each time)

Inferential listening (drawing inferences not presented overtly in the text)

Paraphrase in native language

Completion of native language summary

Comprehension checks (various formats)

Remembering responses of others

Advanced/Superior (require fuller comprehension, detail, & understanding of nuances)

Dictation and variations (may include unfamiliar content, more complex structures)

Completing target language summary

Paraphrasing (target language)

Note taking/outlining

Summarising (native language/target language)

Recursive listening (multiple tasks)

Inferential listening (conclusions not presented overtly in the text)

Identifying sociolinguistic factors

Style shifting

Reaction/analysis activities

Creative elaboration activities

Adapted from:

Hadley, A.O. (2001). Teaching language in context (3rd ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle

Watch Out! The Corpus, Verb Usage, and the Non-Native Teacher of English

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Abstract

For non-native teachers of English (especially in Japanese high schools), questions of appropriate English usage and possibility are constant. Although corpora usage has widely been discussed as a useful tool for EFL students, this paper discusses the possibility of corpus-usage for non-native EFL instructors in answering questions of usage and helping prepare material for classrooms. Using the online British National Corpus, a simple step-by-step methodology for teachers searching words with shared meaning and usage was presented. Analysis of the search results shows that although corpus results are often complex and require time to sufficiently analyze, corpus studies can help clarify usage and meaning questions. The paper discusses the problems of motivation with using the corpus and discusses possibilities for improving teacher motivation for using corpus studies.

Introduction

For non-native EFL teachers (especially in Japanese high schools), one of the most difficult aspects of language learning and teaching is words that share parts of meaning, but differ greatly in usage. Theoretically, a corpus should be able to help non-native EFL teachers find examples that can be used to fashion working 'rules' of usage apart from traditional textbooks and dictionary definitions. This paper will explore the possibility of using a corpus (The British National Corpus) to help non-native EFL high school teachers delineate proper usage by presenting naturally occurring examples. It will also discuss whether corpora can serve as a helpful pedagogic resource for non-native English teachers when trying to better understand the nuance of a given lexical item. Finally, the paper will briefly discuss ways to motivate Japanese EFL instructors to use corpora, both for enriching their own learning experience and that of students.

Review of Literature

Usage of corpora for EFL purposes has centered namely on the how it can be used in the classroom and how to create teaching methodologies that are more 'organic' than typical grammar-based models. Aarts writes, 'Ideally, the intuition-based grammar, through its confrontation with corpus data, becomes an *observation based* grammar' (Aijmer, 1991). A descriptive, observation-based grammar is valued because it describes grammar as it is, rather than how grammar should be. Data-Driven Learning (DDL) is one of the embodiments of

descriptive grammar centered teaching approaches. DDL methodology uses corpus studies and authentic texts to answer questions posed by a student or researcher. One of the many rewards this type of learning offers is answering questions that researchers and students have not asked and discovering new questions when the data one is presented with does not match what was expected. This process creates a kind of 'serendipity learning' that can be extremely rewarding (Flowerdew, 1996).

In DDL methodologies, the corpus becomes a kind of 'informant' for a learner rather than an instructor (Johns, 1991). For EFL students, the corpus can be used to answer common questions such as "What's the difference between . . .?" and "Can I say this?" Hadley (2002) notes, "A DDL Approach suggests a move away from unnatural, 'simplified' textbook English, and allow for greater use of authentic materials." In Japan, a popular English teaching television program employs a character named *Corpusie* (*kopasu-cun*) who presents corpus lines of lexis to viewers and was also the main character of a corpus reference book *Corpus Practice Register* (*koopasu renshucho*). Corpora has been shown to be effective at all levels, including 'low-achievement' EFL learners (Tian, 2006).

This DDL approach may be effective in the classroom at many levels, but in the Japanese high school context, where non-native speakers of English are teaching English, corpora can be an effective tool for not only non-native EFL students, but also non-native EFL teachers in answering some of the most common questions regarding questions of usage. Using a corpus to help answer the ever-present "Can I say this?" question might prove extremely useful for helping non-native EFL teachers achieve independence when addressing problems that come up in English study.

Presentation of Search Methodology

This paper will present a simple, easy-to-follow methodology for EFL teachers seeking to use corpora to investigate words with overlapping meanings or usages. The method follows these steps:

1. Clearly state question to be investigated through corpus study
2. Collect corpus data
3. Manage data and seek out unknown lexis and structures
4. Categorize usage of words
5. Note collocations
6. Contrast results of words within a given study

7. Analyze and theorize
8. Test theory through practice and further research

For this research, the British National Corpus was employed, using only the free, online version (<http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>). The question addressed is a common one among many EFL learners and non-native teachers of English: what are the appropriate usage for the words *look*, *see*, and *watch*? How do they differ in usage and how do usages overlap? The key to this corpus studies for non-native English teachers is to first clearly state the question they have about a given lexical item or set of lexical items. As corpus material can be overwhelming, it is key to start out with a clear goal rather than simply fishing for answers.

The next step is to gather corpus lines by searching the given word and limiting examples to verb forms. In this study, searches for each word were done twice, resulting in 100 random lines of corpus. Corpus lines (see Appendices) were not re-arranged and appear as the BNC presented them, the first search constituting lines 1-50 and the second constituting lines 51-100. Ambiguous lines were not replaced. Whether or not 100 lines are needed for a given question is up to the teacher and time constraints. As the goal is to move towards an understanding of the authentic use of the word rather than having a complete scientific picture of all uses of the verb, the number of corpus lines should be kept manageable.

While this study will involve 100 examples that have not been manipulated in any way, for teachers doing searches, it is inevitable that difficult examples with unknown lexical items are bound to occur. Rather than be bogged down with examples that are confusing, it may be more advantageous for teachers to throw out lines they find confusing or involve lexical items they don't understand, unless the items occur frequently. In this way, the information is kept manageable and not unnecessarily complex.

Finally, before starting, one should consider the goals of corpus studies. When looking at corpus data (as with looking at any authentic language information), clean, simple answers to questions are unattainable. The goal of corpus studies for the non-native teacher of English should be to aid theorizations about language that can be tested again and again as new data appears. The corpus helps give a picture of language as it is and, therefore, helps teachers understand how words are used. But this hardly a complete picture and should only be viewed as a step in research, not the end point. Users of the corpus are not writing dictionaries, they are trying to understand in small ways how words are used. The goals of study should reflect this modest outlook. In the corpus study presented in the paper, the goal is to set forth

working theories about usage that can then be applied to new information and contrasted with other available resources.

Corpus Study Data

LOOK

After physically collecting the data, a researcher must categorize usages. This is clearly the most time-consuming step of corpus studies. Teachers might want to limit their studies to 30 to 50 lines to help ease the time commitment. Teachers should also take care to note any frequent collocations, especially pronouns following verbs as these set phrases often have very different meanings.

The temptation of corpus research is to look immediately at the lines that seem to be the most clearly related to the question being asked; that is to say, to look immediately at the entries related to the meaning *to perceive visually*. These entries are obviously important, but the results of the categorizing usages of 'look' from the search yields the first substantial finding in the study. As the primary question of this study was how 'look' differs from 'see' and 'watch,' it is important to not only look at uses of the 'look' to mean '*perceive visually*', but other uses of the word and how the two uses might be related or not. As for 'look,' one can observe uses meaning '*to perceive visually*' and '*to consider*'. There are also a number of lines that might prove to be difficult in that they should fit on one of these categories, but they seem to denote both 'consideration' and '*visual perception*.'

Corpus lines of 'look'
29. I look at these girls. 41. Well to be quite , to be quite honestly sweetly, I mean, I look at him and I think I'm not unfond of him 48. and he said crikey look at this, what am I gonna do here and he sort of had to fill quite a big gap in, but he sort of pushed it and filled it and then the wallpaper goes up so you can just see it, a little bit, what's a name now, just in the hall there's a bit 54. Look at Paul,'; he said. 63. Must be pretty tough for them when they look at other lasses.'; 93. Look at these hairstyles! 94. Just look at the headline! 100. And look at my nails Marg!

In all of these instances, although an argument might be made that one line or another clearly means either only '*perceive visually*' or only '*consider*,' there seems to be some overlap between these two usages. In classic dictionary definitions, this relationship might be difficult

to see as examples and definitions are labeled separately. The corpus study allows teachers to see that, in authentic texts, these definitions might not be as clearly differentiated. By seeing the blurring between the usages, one is able to see that '*looking*' and '*considering*' are related and their meanings can be embedded in each other.

Collocations play an important role in any corpus study. In this case, it is clear that collocations with pronouns (e.g. '*look out*,' '*look at*,' '*look for*,' etc.) were extremely important in determining the usage and meaning of '*look*.' In the categorization stage of corpus research, these verbs should be grouped together by meaning, and further analyzed based on the importance of collocating words to the study. In this case, as the study pertains specifically to the usage of the verbs as '*perceive visually*', collocations play a less central role.

Although not necessarily an issue of collocation, it might be worth noting (especially in this search) what sort of things are the objects of the verb '*look*' (i.e. '*sketches*', '*galaxies*,' etc.) If the researcher is able to note commonalities among the object (for example, they are all inanimate), this information might be helpful for determining difference between the three verbs.

SEE

Having noticed that overlapping meanings in the study of '*look*' helped point towards the meaning of '*look*,' the same tendency of overlapping might be investigated in the search of '*see*'. Again, starting with categorization, all words were labeled by usage before any analysis is done, and all frequent collocations are noted.

Unfortunately, in the search of the BNC, '*see*' is used to mean '*to refer to*' in well over half of the corpus lines that we were presented with, often appearing in parenthesis and instructing the reader to refer to another part of the same article, another text, a graph, and so on. Perusing the corpus lines, it becomes clear that the search of '*see*' seems to have been negatively affected by the high concentration of academic and technical texts in the BNC. Kilgarrieff (2003) notes that this problem occurs with rare words or rare meanings of common words, but it can be observed that even common meanings might be excluded in a small search. For example, this search yielded no meanings of the verb '*see*' as '*to have a romantic relationship*,' which one might expect to observe.

The problem of '*representativeness*' is abundantly clear. If this search were done using a corpus with a higher concentration of spoken texts or fiction text, one would likely see few or

no occurrences of this usage. As the BNC is 90% written texts and only 25% of those are '*imaginative*' texts (Kennedy, 1997), it is clear why '*refer to*' is so prominent. Given a higher percentage of spoken texts, it is likely that an increase in usages like '*to meet*' might occur. In this sense, native intuition is still an incredibly valuable tool when viewing corpus lines. All of this should lead us to a very careful conclusion that in a corpus that has a high concentration of a specific type of writing (i.e. academic and technical writing), we are likely to find much different answers to our question of usage than if we search a different kind of corpus.

Although this information is not completely useless ('*refer to*' is certainly a legitimate use of the word '*see*'), it might be advisable to move onto the next categorized set of sentences. At just over 20% of the lines, '*understand*' is the second most common usage of '*see*.' This meaning seemed to occur most frequently in the phrase '*I see*' or '*You see*.'

As with '*look*,' it seems that the definitions of see as '*perceive visually*' and '*understand*' are not always separated perfectly into one meaning or another. Line 37 (labeled as '*to observe*') is a good example of this problem. '*Sometime and see what the facilities we've got there*.' In this case, certainly a kind of visual perception will be included, but the speaker seems to be emphasizing observation over perception. On the other end of the spectrum, there are lines like 3 (labeled as '*perceive visually*'): '*Climbing the steps through the central arch to the altar-like plinth, I see that someone has left a pot of red begonias*.' Here the speaker is perceiving '*a pot of red begonias*' with their eyes, but also deducing that '*someone has left*' them: a kind of observation.

Unlike '*look*,' collocations seemed less important to the meaning of '*see*.' There were very few examples when the pronoun dictated the meaning. The usage of '*perceive visually*' occurred relatively infrequently (3, 6, 48, 57, and 69) as did the meaning of see as '*to meet*' (only three occurrences) which might be cause for another search, especially if the researcher notes a significant difference in the kind of things that are the objects of these verbs. In the case of see, the objects observed seem to have be more varied than with look (feet, data, sunrise). Whether or not this difference holds up when confronted with more data will require additional searches. Moreover, if additional searches uncover only more unclear data, this too might cause the researcher to be more careful in theorizing about any findings.

WATCH

Of all three of these verbs, 'watch' is the only one to produce a majority of lines meaning 'perceive visually' at 30 lines. Given its frequent occurrence, one is able to get better understanding of this usage than in the other searches. Also, as seen in the previous two searches, two meanings of 'watch' were closely related: 'perceive visually' and 'observe.' The close relationship to the 'observation' usage seems to show that attentiveness is often implied in 'watching.' Line 63, for example: 'Watch any good swing closely and you will notice that the left forearm rotates clockwise on the backswing.' Although this is clearly referring to a visual perception, a kind of attentive observation is also implied. The phrase 'watch this space' which occurs rather often and refers to watching an advertising space for changes and information. It shows the close relationship between visual perception and observation.

As with 'see' and 'look,' the collocations of pronouns with the verb seemed to play an important role in the meaning of the verb. Some collocations and meanings also overlapped (e.g. 'look out' and 'watch out').

Although the objects that were observed in the 'see' and 'look' searches were relatively similar, the objects of 'watch' were, in many cases, very different. In many cases of this meaning, the thing that is being perceived visually is moving or changing. For example, line 3: 'I turn and watch them go' and line 9 'Sometimes they'd stand it up and watch it fall over.' and line 44, 'Watch my juggling.' A common collocation with 'watch' was 'television' or its derivative. In every instance of the collocation with 'watch television,' one can observe that the speaker is watching a program on the television, which is obviously moving and changing.

Theorizing

Taking the information gathered from the corpus study, the researcher can now begin to theorize about the differences in usage between the three verbs. First, here is the information that was gathered about the usages of these verbs to mean 'perceive visually.'

LOOK	Close relationship to meaning ' <i>to consider</i> '
	Pronoun collocation often dictated meaning
	Objects of ' <i>look</i> ' were inanimate objects
SEE	Search was dominated by ' <i>refer to</i> ' meaning
	Close relationship to meaning ' <i>to understand</i> '
	Pronoun collocations largely absent
	Pronoun collocation often dictated meaning
	Objects of ' <i>see</i> ' were varied
WATCH	Close relationship to meaning ' <i>to observe</i> '
	Pronoun collocation often dictated meaning
	Objects of ' <i>watch</i> ' were animate

From this information, the following theories can be put forth:

- Pronoun collocation is frequent with '*look*' and '*watch*' and often helps explicate the meaning. Conversely, pronoun collocation does not seem to influence '*see*' in the same way.
- Relationship to a second usage was important in all three cases and may be helpful in deciding which verb to use in a given situation.
- While it seems that '*look*' is used when the object is inanimate, the object of '*watch*' is often animate. The objects of '*see*' were mixed, although the majority were inanimate.

These theories are not meant to be concrete definitions, but rather road maps for analyzing further research or examples that one might discover in usage. The corpus is by no means the definitive authority on language. Moreover, unless one looks at every instance of the word, there is still the chance that data might not be representative of even the corpus one is studying. What one does gain, however, in any corpus search, is an appreciation for the word as it is, rather than the word as it should be or as it is conjectured by a textbook or reference book author. Using all of these resources in concert with one another is bound to give the teacher the most well rounded picture English usage.

Implications

This corpus study has made two points very clear. First, corpus study is not very clean; that is to say, the question posed at the beginning of the study was not answered definitively through corpus study. Although the information gleaned may be useful for exposing researchers to language information, it is not nearly as easy and convenient as simply looking the words up in the dictionary. With a multitude of simpler reference books and textbooks available that can clearly explain these differences, use of the corpus seemed to be relegated to an interesting possibility, but not pragmatically applicable. Why would a teacher take several hours to research a subject when the answer is seemingly available in a reference book?

Looking at this corpus data, the value of corpus study is abundantly clear. Although reference books, dictionaries, and textbooks might give simple answers to questions, language is not a simple matter. The corpus data presented in this study shows that usage of words is diverse and complicated. Moreover, looking at corpus data, one can see usages of words that are ambiguous, but that, in their ambiguity, give hints to usage of the word. For example, being able to observe these overlapping areas can be crucial in understanding usage. By looking past the obvious examples and considering corpus lines, very useful information can be found resting beneath the surface.

If the goal is observation-based grammar, it seems that first teachers need to be convinced that observation-based grammar is more authentic (and better) than inauthentic textbook models. The question is whether or not teachers should take the time for corpus studies. Particularly in high school contexts, where textbooks often work backwards from grammar rules that often present awkward, uncomfortable English sentences, teachers must be convinced that perfectly behaving grammar structures are inferior to authentic usage and communication models. For teachers, however, although the problem is often understood, with pressures from school boards, parents, principals, and vice-principals to produce college entrance exam passing students, the corpus may seem like an unaffordable luxury.

A shift in thinking about English is desperately needed (and occurring slowly) in the Japanese jr. high and high school EFL pedagogy. The change, it seems, needs to come from individual non-native EFL teachers who understand the value and necessity of corpus studies, use it effectively to answer their own questions and pass the information on to their students. The teachers that take initiative to incorporate corpus studies, not only into their own study, but also into their classes and subtly change the way their classes are run.

Given the pleasure derived from finding out information for oneself rather than simply being spoon-fed grammatical formulas, teachers who have an appetite for English knowledge can be encouraged to see the power of the corpus as new tool. This does not replace the native speaker or teacher whose answers to questions of '*Can I say X?*' may still prove to be the most accurate. Working with this tool, teachers (both native and non-native) will be able energize and empower students toward the goal of becoming descriptive linguists.

Final Thoughts

The corpus is not able to answer questions quickly and easily, especially when compared to traditional grammar texts and guides. In the end, however, the results are far more likely to

shed light on real usage of words and meanings. Study of the corpus alone will not improve proficiency in language and it is not a magic solution to any problem. It is, however, one of the most useful and practical tools non-native EFL instructors have in seeing how the English language actually works. This is the most powerful asset of the corpus: simply showing language as it is. The challenge is to convince high school teachers that the time and effort is worth it. For the Japanese high school system, engaging and using this information will be crucial for teachers, and subsequently students, becoming communicators of English.

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The Storied Lesson: Short Stories in the Classroom

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Abstract

Stories happen all the time and everywhere and can serve as a powerful resource because of their appeal as a highly naturalistic means of teaching. The basic condition for this is that the text of the story provides the potential for "comprehensible input," that is, language is within the range of access of the learner. This workshop proposes activities with very short stories, and the suggestion is to lead students to go beyond the stories. This work has three main parts: (1) Stories for beginners, (2) Stories for intermediate level students, and (3) Stories for advanced students. All the levels share one common aspect: students are the authors of the short stories. However, in case of beginners the focus is on language for language learning and on the learner and his/her beloved ones. In case of intermediate and advanced students the focus is on the text as narrative.

Stories as a Means for Teaching Language

Stories allow us to organize our perceptions of the world into meaningful patterns. Through the stories we speak about the world not just "the way it is" but rather the way we see it, the way we would like to see it, or the way we would like other people to see it. Language is a powerful channel between the world and the stories (Wajnryb, 2003, pp.1-19).

Willis (1996, p.11, cited in Wajnryb, 2003, p.6) mentions three notions -exposure, use and motivation- to explain the reasons for using stories in the language class.

- a. *Exposure* - The text of the story provides an amount of "comprehensible input" within the reach of the learner. This input can be conveyed to the learner in several ways: a teacher or a student reading aloud, a group of students sharing stories, groups of students working on a core text and expanding it in different directions according to their own ideas.
- b. *Use* - In the class, activities that accompany, precede or follow the story give learners further opportunities to use the language. Working with stories involves framing (warming-up, getting learners ready for the story or for work with it), focusing (engage students in activities related to the story), and diverging (following their own imagination and ideas learners expand the stories).
- c. *Motivation* - The story itself is a source of motivation and stories also invite to make

associations with personal or cultural matters.

A Framework for Working with Stories

This framework includes the following three components: experience, story and narrative text. Human experience is the moment, the event, or the portion of life we want to talk about. The experience is the raw material for the story. The story is the person's or groups' reflections and it is still part of the inner world because it has not been represented in a text yet. The narrative text is the representation of the story in the real world: it is the result and the product of several textual decisions related to communicative purposes. Figure 1 shows how this framework was used to design the activities for the workshops in the Lao American College.

Level	Experience	Story	Narrative text
Beginners	Landmarks in my life Somebody is far away	"I remember the most meaningful events in my life" "I remember somebody who is far away"	Visual and textual resources for representing events, characters, and feelings, and sharing those experiences with an audience: colleagues, teachers, and schoolmates.
Intermediate	My favorite character	"I think of my culture and choose a character"	
Advanced	My favorite legend	"I think of my culture and choose a folk-tale"	

Fig. 1. Connecting experience, story and narrative text.

This workshop has three main parts, divided in accordance with the level of students the activities are intended for. In case of beginners the author proposes several warm-up activities to refresh and enlarge learners' vocabulary before they produce their own stories. The activities are detailed below.

1. Personal experiences for beginners

The focus here is a particular kind of anecdote that can enable learners to appreciate the narrative receptively and, as it may easily be connected to students' lives, produce stories by themselves. Therefore, before students produce their own stories there is a series of activities for practicing simple grammatical structures, conversation, and vocabulary.

Far away - by Sonia Trejo

Sonia: *"I always write stories about my family because I don't have them here, only my husband and two brothers-in-law. I think of them every day because they are very far away in El Salvador"*

(To the students: this story is about someone far away. Do you know someone far away?)

1.1 Rewrite the story in the correct word order

"remembering I my because daughter am Today

.....

She it is. is years today. her old eight birthday

.....

I don't have feel my here sad children I."

.....

1.2 First impressions

- Where do you think Sonia's daughter is?
- Why do you think Sonia is away from her family?
- Do you like this story? Why or why not?

1.3 Talk it over

- What do you think will happen to Sonia in the years to come?
- What do you think will happen to Sonia's daughter?

	YES	NO
I live far away from my family		
I live near my family		
I live far away from my friends		
I live near my friends		
I write letters to my family		
I write letters to my friends		
I call my family on the phone		
I call my friends on the phone		
I visit my family		
I visit my friends		

1.4 Play with words

- Write words related to being "far away"

- Complete these sentences:

I feel happy when

I feel angry when

I feel homesick when

I feel sad when

I feel surprised when

1.5 Sharing stories: tell about your friends and family.

Who lives far away? Where do they live? How do you keep in touch?

Student's name	Who?	Where?	How?		
			Letter/e-mail	phone	visit

The following activities (1.6, 1.7, 2 and 3) were accomplished by participants in the workshops at the Lao American College.

1.6 Landmarks of your life.

This exercise is meant to use students' experiences as a "getting-to-know-you" activity to practice simple past tense. The teacher introduces the idea of a landmark as a memorable building or place and from there extend the concept to refer to memorable past experiences. As an example the teacher shows a chart with *her landmarks*: I was born in . . . , I graduated from university, holiday in Africa, first son was born, etc. Students are allowed time to draw their charts individually. Then participants work in pairs to tell each other about their charts. Afterwards, participants sit in a circle and are encouraged to show their charts and make questions. The teacher takes a back-seat role and only intervenes if necessary to clarify the meaning of words.


1.7 More ideas to tell and write: bring in a picture of someone you care for and who lives far away. Tell about that person.

If possible, in the previous class ask learners to bring one picture of somebody that is very important in their lives. The teacher shows a chart with a picture of her beloved person and a text about that person. Participants write a text about the person they chose. The teacher proposes a structure for the text: description of the beloved person, what he/she does, where he/she is, why he/she is so important. Students seat in a circle and are encouraged to share their charts with everybody.

2. Short stories for intermediate students

This part of the workshop exploits a combination of cultural and personal dimensions of narrative. In this case, the teacher presents a text about a famous character.

My favorite character in my country

	<p>This is Mafalda. Mafalda is 7 years old and lives in Buenos Aires. Mafalda is short, pretty and has brown hair. She is very nice and very intelligent. Mafalda goes to school every day. Her favorite classes are English and Spanish. She wants to be a translator and work at the UN. She loves The Beatles and hates eating soup.</p>
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The text written in the chart the teacher shows may be very simple. The author suggests the following activities:

- Writing. Cloze activity. Participants receive another text, longer, more detailed, and without verbs.
- Writing. In groups students choose a famous character of their country so as to write about him/her. The author suggests bringing to the class pictures of famous people pasted on cardboard.
- Speaking. Ask about the character! Groups share the texts they wrote: other students ask questions and the group members reply with facts or just invent the answers.

3. Advanced level: think and write.

In this part of the workshop participants construct stories based on their cultural treasure. The author suggests the following activities:

My favorite folk-tale in my country

<p>Lao Folk Tales</p> 	<p>The legend of yerba mate</p> 
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- a. Listening and reading. Strip story. The teacher prepares a legend in several strips, students work in groups and put the strips in order while the teacher reads the complete story.
- b. Writing. The teacher prepares big cardboards with illustrations of legends of the students' country. Each group of students chooses a legend and explains it.
- c. Speaking. Each group shares with the others the folk-tales members wrote about.

Conclusion

The basic idea the author had in mind at the time of deciding the activities for the workshop was to guide students beyond the stories. Actually, the stories are just excuses to wake up the imagination and use the language by building our own stories. One suggestion for teachers: allow yourself to get involved together with the learners, teachers' stories also need to be told, and students are very interested!

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Lateral Thinking

Laurence Dennis Woolbright

Abstract

Most schools of thought associate thinking with logic; if it is clear and accurate argument, it is 'good' thinking. But in normal circumstances, it is more useful to see every possible side of a problem than to argue in a complicated way from one of them. Language provides the tool that lets us understand the world. The relationship between language and thinking is so close that there are many who still look upon thinking as word manipulation and all errors in thinking as language problems. Language is cultural; thinking is physical.

This paper is about the deliberate teaching of thinking as a skill and its practical use as part of the language-teaching curriculum. Lateral Thinking can be defined as a way of thinking that seeks a solution to a difficult problem through unusual methods or elements that would normally be ignored by commonsense thinking. Dr. Edward de Bono divides thinking into two methods. He calls one "vertical thinking," which uses the resources of logic-the traditional historical method. He calls the other "lateral thinking," which involves changing the obvious thinking order and arriving at the solution from another point of view.

Dr. de Bono's Lateral Thinking methods provide a planned, orderly process that results in new thinking. These skills can be taught and learned by students who become better students by adding strength to their natural abilities and improve their creativity and originality, which leads to more successful learning.

Introduction

"Japan must think outside the box if it hopes to get ahead: creativity guru" read the headline of an article in the Friday July 18, 2003 Japan Times newspaper. Having lived and taught here in Japan for over twenty years, Edward de Bono's words rang true to me; but can the Japanese really change their way of thinking. De Bono went on to say that Japan needs to set up a "Ministry of Creativity" to think its way out of the economic slump it has endured for a decade. Perhaps members of the Ministry of Education should attend some of De Bono's creative thinking courses to help it out of its *educational* slump which would hopefully lead to much needed reforms in education.

Edward de Bono, author of 67 books in 38 languages on creativity including "Lateral Thinking" and "Six Thinking Hats," is regarded as the leading international authority in

conceptual and creative thinking and in the teaching of thinking as a skill. He designed and runs the CoRT Thinking Program, which is internationally the most widely used method for the teaching of thinking in schools and is in use by many countries around the world. He works with governments and some of the foremost corporations in the world such as IBM, NTT, Dupont, Shell and Ford. Some of the principles of his methods are presented here.

Discussion

Lateral Thinking is a way of solving problems by using your imagination to find new ways of looking at a problem. Lateral thinking is close to what we usually call insight, creativity and humor. They have the same basis but while we think of creativity, insight and humor as talents or something that just happens; lateral thinking is a more deliberate process. It is a way of using the mind for logical thinking but in a very different way. Lateral thinking is an insight tool. It is also a process that can be taught.

In logical or vertical thinking the mind functions to create patterns out of its surroundings. Once the patterns have been formed, it becomes possible to recognize them, react to them and use them. As the patterns become more established, they become very efficient for handling information and forming what we call codes, so that anytime a particular situation comes up that we have dealt with a certain way in the past, the brain automatically goes to that pattern, much like a computer would. Except that the mind is a self-organizing, self-maximizing, memory system, which is very good at creating patterns or codes and of course that is the effectiveness of the mind.

Language is one obvious code system with the words themselves as triggers. The advantage is that it is easy to transfer a lot of information very quickly and without much effort. It helps us to react appropriately to a situation by identifying the situation from the initial aspects of it, just from the words we hear and we react as we have reacted in the past to the same words and the same situation. This is true of many areas of thinking where habit is important. When we first learn to drive we have to learn all the rules or codes for driving, but after a year or so these things become automatic. But even though this system of logical thinking is very useful it has limitations. When we are faced with new situations or when old methods don't work anymore, it is difficult to restructure the patterns or codes that we have set up in our logical or vertical thinking mind. Insight, humor, and creativity all involve escaping the restricting patterns of our usual thinking process. Lateral thinking involves restructuring, escape and the provocation of new patterns. It is concerned with the generation of new ideas.

Liberation from old ideas and the stimulation of new ones are two parts of lateral thinking. Lateral thinking leads to changes in attitude and approach; to looking in a different way at things, which have always been looked at in the same way. You cannot dig a hole in a different place by digging the same hole deeper. This means that trying harder in the same direction may not be as useful as changing direction. Effort in the same direction (approach) will not necessarily succeed.

Lateral Thinking is for changing concepts and perceptions. In logic you start out with certain ingredients just as in playing chess you start out with given pieces. In most real life situations the pieces are not given, we just assume they are there. We assume certain perceptions, certain concepts and certain boundaries. Lateral thinking is concerned not with playing with the existing pieces but with seeking to change the pieces. We change our perception.

One of the most interesting parts of De Bono's new way of thinking is his invention of the new word; PO: Beyond YES and NO and is the basic foundation of the revolutionary way of thinking maintained by de Bono in 1972. Our regular YES/No thinking system is very successful in the area of making the best use of fixed ideas, but is not very good at the perception stage, which requires creating new ideas and new ways of looking at things. Just as NO is the basic tool of logical thinking so a new word PO is given as the basic tool for perception. Logical YES/NO thinking is based on judgment but PO thinking is based on change. Both are good and necessary but we need to understand that ordinary thinking is unlikely to solve those problems, which need a new idea for their solution. PO lets us step outside the black versus white of the YES/NO mindset and change from the present thought pattern to creating new ideas. PO lets us imagine anything can be true. When using PO you simply write out statements that would normally seem absolutely impossible. Then you write the word PO immediately following your statement and accept it as possible. Then you work on ways to make it possible. The function of PO is to bring about a provocative arrangement of information without saying anything at all about it. The purpose of the arrangement is to lead forward to new ideas.

The PO that, "*the factory should be downstream of itself*," led to the idea of making the input downstream of the output in order to increase consciousness of pollution. The random word is another one of de Bono's simple creative techniques. For example we need a new idea relating to some problem. You simply introduce a random word. In this case the problem is cigarette smoking. The random word was traffic light. From that quickly came the suggestion of putting a red band around cigarettes so that the smoker had a decision zone. If he or she

stopped at the red band, then the smoker was gaining control over his or her smoking habit. There are many ways that PO can be used to solve problems.

PO can be used as a laxative for those who have constipated minds that they wish to free. Po is like the reverse gear in a car. Without a reverse gear you get blocked in the first blind alley you come to. The reverse gear does not replace the forward gears but is necessary in addition. So, PO is necessary in addition to our logical or traditional thinking skills. Only a fool would try to drive on the reverse gears all the time, but only a fool would design a car without one. It is not how much you use the reverse gear that matters, but the ability to use it when necessary. A car without a reverse gear is useless except for going in circles. Culturally this is exactly what has happened in many areas here in Japan. There are four Japanese words or phrases that are my least favorite. They are impossible "*muri*," It can't be helped. "*shikataganai*," too much trouble "*mendokusai*" and difficult "*musukashi*." But if we replace all these words with De Bono's PO it opens up the way for further consideration of the problem. With PO we can reject fixed ideas and replace them with new and different ones.

Like logical thinking, lateral thinking is a general attitude of mind, which makes use of certain techniques. This attitude of mind can be taught in a formal setting using specific materials and exercises. De Bono has developed various, games, materials and exercises to encourage the development of the lateral thinking habit. Some of the props and items discussed may seem unimportant and strange, but it is the process that is important and the liberating effect it can have.

The CoRT program was designed by Edward de Bono and was first published in 1973. The name CoRT comes from the Cognitive Research Trust, which de Bono established at Cambridge, England. CoRT and consists of sixty lessons divided into six sections of ten lessons each, CoRT 1 to CoRT VI. The program offers instructions in a selection of specific thinking skills. It is recommended that CoRT lessons be taught with a mixture of direct instruction by the teacher, student group work, class discussion, individual work and homework projects.

The CoRT Thinking Lessons are the most widely used materials for the direct teaching of thinking as a basic skill. It is in heavy use throughout the U.S.A., in the U.K., Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, and Malta. In Venezuela it has been added to the curriculum of every school in the country. There has been an increased interest in the teaching of thinking as a basic skill and I think this program offers a simple and practical way to teach it. Here we

will consider "*Six Thinking Hats*" one of the basic tools of the system.

Edward de Bono's "Six Thinking Hats" is a technique that helps students adopt different views on a particular subject, which might be quite different from the view they would naturally take. In wearing a particular thinking hat, people play the role of that hat, as if that were the actual way they were thinking. For example one person might be against a particular idea, just to get the discussion going. The idea behind this system is that to make a wise decision we need to look at many different points of view. Each hat is named for its color and when one wears that hat they assume the point of view of that particular hat. Following is a list of the hats and the perspectives that they stand for.

<i>Hat (view)</i>	<i>Description</i>
White (Observer)	Neutral white paper, objective, FACTS, what is needed database. Calls for information known or needed
Red (Self, Other)	Emotions, Feelings, hunches, intuition Shows emotions, feelings and intuition
Black (Self, Other)	Strict Judge, critical, negative logical, why something is wrong. Is the Judge, says why something may not work.
Yellow (Self, Other)	Sunny, positive logical, looks for the good points. Symbolizes the positive and bright.
Green (Self, Other)	Creative thinking, New ideas, time for brainstorming. Talks about creativity, possibilities, new ideas
Blue (Observer)	Cool, steps, control of process, organizer, chairperson. Manages the thinking process

One hat is not better or worse than the other but allows us to look at something from all sides. Role-playing is used to discuss the subject and each of six students would wear a different hat or if a student had an idea he could come up and put on the hat that best represented that view. Later he might try on another hat for a different point of view. For example if you were discussing the question of the idea of being vegetarian the dialogue might look something like this:

WHITE HAT: (facts) *You will clog up your arteries on a diet loaded on saturated animal fat year after year and you're putting yourself at risk for the great killers of the Western world: heart attack and stroke.*

RED HAT: *Vegetarianism respects life! Every life is important! We shouldn't kill; even an ant, poor cows! Chickens! and pigs. It is so cruel how they are kept. I love all animals!*

BLACK HAT: *Vegetarianism will really mess up industry and could hurt the stock market, lots of jobs lost. This is a very bad idea!*

YELLOW HAT: *Vegetarianism could lead to worldwide peace, saving the ozone layer, bringing a more rewarding spiritual life!*

GREEN HAT: *If everyone adopted a vegetarian diet and no food were wasted, current [food] production would theoretically feed 10 billion people, more than the projected population for the year 2050.*

BLUE HAT: *Well we probably need to get more facts from the white hat and try to look at facts from both sides of the issue. Let's try to look at both sides of the story.*

This kind of thinking helps us to look at different views without arguing about them. Trying on different points of view is as easy as trying on a different hat.

Conclusion

The idea that to be effective thinkers all our students' need is "all the information" is not correct. In these days of the Internet technology there is the danger of becoming overly dependent on technology for our ideas. No matter how much information our students have or how well they can use technology, if they don't learn to think for themselves and think creatively they will not be successful. Teaching thinking skills needs to be part of our educational system and special courses in the curriculum should be designed to teach thinking. In the recent Japan Times article de Bono summed it up this way, "What happens here (Japan) is that people don't want to change, they don't want to let go of the traditional, feudalistic, hierarchical, know-your-position approach." But they don't have to: The method of change is to learn an additional game (the creativity game).

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