THT Journal

The Journal of Teachers Helping
Teachers
Volume 3
Fall 2015

Patrick Dougherty, Editor

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A journal dedicated to exploring and promoting best practices in language education

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The THT Journal is dedicated to the memory of William "Bill" Balsamo (1943 - 2008) the founder of Teachers Helping Teachers.

Foreword

Teachers Helping Teachers

Michael Furmanovsky
THT Coordinator

I would like to take this space to thank Pat Dougherty and the contributors to our THT journal for their hard work and dedication. THT has long been committed to working with young teachers who participate in our annual programs in Vietnam, Laos, Bangladesh and Kyrygzstan. However, it is only in recent years that we have gone to the next stage and begun to encourage young teachers to give their own presentations and consider publishing their research and practical teaching ideas in our journal. Thanks to Pat and several other dedicated members, we have been able to produce several volumes of our journal since 2013 and to fulfill our larger mission of helping Asian English teachers at every stage of their careers. The publication stage is an extremely important one if they are to develop the professional status they have been working so hard to attain in their countries,

Turning to our organization itself, THT recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of its first workshops in Hue, Vietnam and I would like to take this opportunity to thank our former coordinator and present treasurer, Joe Tomei for his huge role in developing that program. Joe has attended or organized all ten of those workshops in Hue, and this year, under his leadership (and with help from Pat's Akita International University colleague Carlos Budding), we were able to bring a record sixteen THT participants to Hue College of Foreign Languages for what was a highly successful 3-day event. Joe has also played a major role in setting up the journal. I would also like to thank a number of other veterans of our organization, namely Brent Jones and

Roger Palmer who have made our seminars in far-away Kyrgyzstan a consistently well-attended program and have also been very active in producing the journal. Thanks also go to Chris Ruddenklau who has developed our Laos program into something very special for its Japan-based participants. We are now looking to setting up programs in Nepal (next year) and possibly also Myanmar. I am delighted to report that we already have a group of members who have built up contacts in these two countries, both of which are full of English teachers who hungry to join the larger EFL world and who we would love to help in a more formal manner. Our organization is striving to fulfill the vision of our founder Bill Balsamo and the THT journal is something that I know he would extremely proud of. Thanks again to all the contributors.

Preface

**The Third Volume of the THT Journal: The Journal of
Teachers Helping Teachers**

Patrick Dougherty

Akita International University
Japan

Patrick Dougherty is a professor of International Liberal Arts
and the Director of the English for Academic Purposes program
and Foreign Language Education at Akita International
University. He is the Publications Chair for Teachers Helping
Teachers and is the editor of this volume of the *THT Journal:
The Journal of Teachers Helping Teachers.*

Preface

The Third Volume of the THT Journal: The Journal of Teachers Helping Teachers

Patrick Dougherty

Akita International University
Japan

Welcome to the third volume of the *THT Journal*. It consists of four articles that all give homage to the underlying philosophy that directs this publication. They are dedicated to exploring and promoting best practices in language education.

Before introducing the articles, it is important that we acknowledge the contributions of our team of reviews. The THT Journal is a peer, double-blind, reviewed journal. It requires much service by our international team of reviewers. Adding to the international flavor of this, our most recent THT Journal, is the fact that our authors come from academic institutions in Japan, Vietnam, and Bangladesh.

Marian Wang offers her insights into the Teachers Helping Teachers experience. She conducts a very personal evaluation of her experiences giving presentations and workshops at THT events. She is veteran of the THT experience, having presented as a delegate in Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, the Philippines, and Vietnam. She outlines her understanding of the mission of THT to create sustainable programs that meet the needs of our local partners and teachers. She contemplates, for our benefit, the obstacles she has overcome, the type of workshops and

presentations that have truly worked, and what type of presentations would, in the future, continue to meet the needs of our stakeholders.

Jeffrey Morrow offers research based evaluations of the communication ability of Cambodians participating in the local tourist industry of Siem Reap, Cambodia. His analysis encompasses economics and language ability in a manner that is unique to the THT experience, but is essential to understand if, as is being discussed, THT intends to explore the possibility of conducting future programs to serve the educators serving this population.

Cherie Brown and **Le Pham Hoai Huong** dig deeply into their experience creating and carrying out a collaborative project as part of the THT experience in Vietnam. They offer insights into the challenges of such collaborations.   We learn that collaborators need to be flexible and not perturbed by the unexpected turns such research and work can involve. Having back-up plans and good avenues for communication are essential for success in these, as the authors indicate, generally satisfying and worthwhile projects.

Our final article comes to us from **Nanda Kumar Das.** He outlines a project that he undertook to identify an approach that would help to raise the cultural awareness of his students. It is action research in the best form: immediate, important, and about a challenge an educator and his students confront and overcome.

These articles were reviewed and selected for inclusion in this volume because they offer not only theoretical constructs but practical indications of templates and tangents for effective

practice in the classroom. They are grounded in the realities of the teaching experience in their localities, and, therefore, by reflection, classrooms and communities throughout the world.

About our Authors

Ms. Marian Wang is Associate Professor at the School of Languages and Communication (SOLAC) at Kobe University. She has taught at Kwansei Gakuin in Japan and the International Trade Institute in Taiwan. She has worked at international organizations including the World Trade Organization in Geneva, UNICEF in Paris, Oxfam America, Catholic Relief Services in Macedonia, and Partners for Democratic Change in New York. She holds an M.A. in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School at Tufts University and an M.A. in TESOL from the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

Dr. Jeffrey Morrow is an Associate Professor of English in the Department of Environmental and Symbiotic Science at the Prefectural University of Kumamoto in Kumamoto, Japan. Originally from Greensburg, Pennsylvania, he has been teaching at the university level in Japan in various capacities since 1999. He recently obtained a Ph.D. at Kumamoto Gakuen University, Kumamoto, Japan, where his dissertation topic was the role of English in procuring better employment and income in the tourist industry in developing countries. Jeffrey has done extensive research on the role of English communication ability in employment and income in Siem Reap, Cambodia tourist industry, and currently researches English ability in ecotourism. Recent publications include: Creating Effective ESP Programs for Future Employment in Tourism, English Communication Ability in Employment and Income in Siem Reap, Cambodia Tourist Industry, and English Ability and the Tourism Industry in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Ms. Cherie Brown lectures in the EAP and BE programs at Akita International University, Japan. She has team-taught English-medium content classes at Miyazaki International

College, Japan, and pre-sessional ESL and Study Abroad programs at The University of Otago Language Centre, Dunedin, New Zealand and The University of Waikato Language Institute, Auckland, New Zealand, where she also worked as a program coordinator. She writes in the field of teaching resources and is co-author of "Max Vocab" and "Partners in the Classroom: Collaborative English Language Teaching and Learning Projects". She has been a writer and editor for 'English-to-Go' (providing Reuters' news-based ESL/EFL resources to teachers around the world via the Internet). Her collaborative work in PBL earned her the inaugural 'NZ International Excellence in Tertiary Teaching Award '.) She has been an active member of THT since 2008 and has previously participated in THT programs in Bangladesh and Vietnam.

Dr. Le Pham Hoai Huong is an associate professor in the English Department, College of Foreign Languages, Hue University, Vietnam. She has been training English language teachers in Vietnam for 20 years. Her research interests include sociocultural theory, teaching and learning vocabulary, and teacher education.

Mr. Nanda Kumar Das has a long experience of teaching professional and general English at different level of learners. During his teaching period, he met learners with different back grounds. He has also a wide experience of teaching higher secondary level students for more than five years. He has conducted various English language training programs for teachers at work. Mr. Das did MA in English (TESOL) from North South University and his research area was 'Cultural Awareness in Bangladesh'. He did another Master's in English (Major in Literature). His research interests include Cultural studies in ESL classroom, Use of authentic materials in ESL classroom and professional development for the teachers. He is also an executive member of Bangladesh English Language

Teachers Association (BELTA). Mr. Das has also a keen interest in writing short stories and poems. He has a wide range of poems in his collection including lyrical poems and Japanese Haikus.

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Marian Wang
School of Languages and Communication
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Reflecting on Presentations and Workshops for Teachers Helping Teachers (THT)

Marian Wang
School of Languages and Communication
Kobe University
Japan

Last year, I reflected on my experience as a THT delegate to Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, and the Philippines. To this list, I can now add THT Vietnam, a program I participated in last summer, which has fueled my desire to continue my journey with THT, thanks to the efforts of Joseph (Joe) Tomei, the student volunteers of Hue University, and the dedicated THT delegates who keep returning to Vietnam. This year, I have decided to reflect on the presentations and workshops that I have conducted ever since I began my adventure with THT six years ago. Just last weekend, I presented on THT Bangladesh at the THT Showcase of The Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) in Nara and came to realize that the aim of THT is to ensure *sustainable* programs to enhance partnerships locally and internationally among teaching professionals in Asia. Thus, it is not enough for me to go overseas and conduct presentations or workshops and pat myself on the back for trying to do something good overseas – I must endeavor to grow professionally as a THT delegate by giving presentations and workshops that are more inclusive of local partner organization and participants' goals and objectives. It goes without saying that THT seminars attract an appreciative audience. In fact, as a THT delegate to multiple countries, I have been overwhelmed by the positive feedback I have received from participants and have often wondered if I was worthy of such accolades. To be honest, I am not sure I merited such kudos and have concluded that as a lifelong member of THT, I need to be much better – far better – at giving better presentations and workshops to participants who

often come from far away and sacrifice much of their time, often on weekends, to attend THT seminars. Nonetheless, there have been a few presentations and workshops that seemed to have resonated quite well with THT participants irrespective of which country I have worked in as a THT delegate. In the end, I believe that thinking about how I can prepare presentations and workshops for participants will increase my effectiveness in fulfilling THT's mission of assisting and training language educators and students in and around Asia through current research in the field of second language acquisition. In this personal reflection on THT presentations and workshops, I have posed the following questions:

1. What have been the obstacles I experienced when giving presentations or workshops to THT participants?

2. Which presentations or workshops have attracted a captive audience in THT programs? Why?

3. What kind of presentations or workshops might I consider giving in the future for THT participants?

Obstacles

The presentations or workshops that are highly sought after by THT participants are practice-based presentations that address how to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to learners not only in higher education but also in primary or secondary education. Often times, when I have worked overseas with THT, I had assumed that I was going to train educators working at the tertiary level when in fact many were teaching English to primary or secondary school students. Presentations on debating and developing critical thinking skills, for example, were not in high demand compared to more basic language acquisitions skills such as vocabulary acquisition games or grammar-based

activities for primary and secondary school learners. With a lack of experience on my part in teaching primary and secondary school learners, I felt that I was not equipped as I failed to understand that the English level some of the participants were teaching was not comparable to my intermediate to advanced learners of English at Japanese universities. In some THT countries such as the Philippines where the English level of primary or secondary school students is high or in Kyrgyzstan where most of the participants do in fact teach university level, my presentations for teaching EFL learners in higher education were suitable. Nevertheless, I believe that overall, my presentations and workshops should have been prepared so that they could reach a larger audience including primary and secondary school EFL teachers.

Another obstacle that may have hindered my ability to give useful presentations or workshops was my dominant academic ego that led me to prepare academic presentations based on my research in a Japanese university setting. This is not to say that research should not be included in presentations and workshops. In some situations such as in Vietnam where local teachers and THT delegates are encouraged to collaborate on research-based presentations, this may be a positive development in the sustainability of THT programs. Here I am stating that such research and theoretical foundations could be introduced to set the stage for more practical solutions to teaching EFL learners in each of the countries in which THT operates. Presumably through joint research projects, the problems addressed in the research will have local relevance, and solutions could be based on action research in the classroom where various cycles of experimentation have contributed to lessons learned and solutions to problems encountered when teaching English.

The final obstacle was that I did not understand the conditions in which local teachers teach English. Many teachers taught large classes of usually more than 40 students, had many teaching

hours, used old or no textbooks, relied on the grammar-translation method and teacher-fronted classrooms, and did not have much access to technology. As for large classrooms, I also have taught classes with 45 students, so I could relate to the challenges of teaching large classrooms and could offer some suggestions on classroom management practices in large classrooms. Regarding technology, I have never considered myself a technological whiz and have not relied heavily on technology in the language classroom. However, when it came to the fundamental principles of teaching EFL, with my preferred method being communicative learning practices using debates, presentations, discussions, and peer teaching, I often felt that I had little to offer in terms of how to teach English that was less student-centered. My arsenal of teaching tips and my teaching philosophy conflicted with many of the teachers who preferred teacher-fronted classes. THT participants often asked if I would observe or teach their students after the THT programs were completed. What I witnessed in their classrooms made me realize that I could suggest another approach to teaching, possibly a novel teaching method, which may be easily forgotten or ignored because it did not match the local context of foreign language learning and teaching.

Successful Presentations or Workshops

There have been presentations or workshops that have consistently brought about a positive response – those about classroom management practices to keep an English-only classroom environment and on how to teach learners writing skills. As for classroom management, it appears that EFL teachers, regardless of where they teach in the world, struggle with how to balance the use of their students' native language (L1) and the target language (L2) in their language classrooms. Some teachers, especially those who are inclined to teach using the grammar-translation method, have claimed that using their students' L1 is indispensable to teaching effectively. Thus, what

they are struggling with is more about how to encourage learners to speak the L2 with other learners when engaging in language learning activities. My presentation on classroom management practices began first with explaining my conundrum in the EFL classroom where my Japanese university students did not adhere to my English-only policy and used predominantly Japanese in my class, a brief literature review on monolingual (target language) classrooms, classroom research on student and teacher attitudes and opinions towards the English-only policy, interventions in my EFL classroom to facilitate an English-learning environment, and changes resulting in students' L2 use after the interventions were introduced in the language classroom. The sequence of my presentation from a common problem to practical solutions such as having students fill out participation cards, practice useful classroom phrases in English, and reflect on their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to speak English contributed to the audience's understanding of how an English-only language learning environment could be fostered. I also gave participants a chance to share some techniques they used in the classroom to encourage English use in the classroom to see if any of my techniques were already being used in their language classrooms. Many teachers wrote in their feedback that they comprehended that an English-only classroom is not for every EFL teacher, but if a teacher were committed to creating such a learning environment, there must be an environment that enables learners to feel comfortable speaking with their peers in English and mechanisms in place that would allow teachers and students to monitor the amount of English being used in the classroom at the end of each class. More importantly, some teachers said that an English-only environment could not be maintained if teachers themselves were unable to respect a policy of teaching in English only. Finally, a few teachers and even a THT delegate who was attending my presentation said that they were going to try one of my methods of motivating students to speak English in the classroom using red, yellow, and

green cards. I was pleased to meet the same delegate at another conference who told me that he had adapted my card system (inspired by the rules of soccer) in his EFL classrooms to create a positive learning environment. This made me understand that most participants (and delegates) wanted quick and useful fixes that could be adapted to suit their unique classroom environment to solve common problems in the EFL classroom.

 A workshop that seemed to have practical applications to local c ontexts was on how to teach students to write more coherently by including a variety of sentence structures and word choice. Again, I began with the problems I encountered when I taught Japanese university learners how to write coherent and interesting paragraphs in English. First, my students tended to write paragraphs in the form of lists leading to parallel structure and sentences with repetitive structures, not to mention ideas that were not necessarily ordered sequentially or logically. Second, they relied on using adjectives (e.g., nice or good) and verbs (e. g., talk or walk) that were not painting a clear picture with their word choice. Third, they translated directly from Japanese to English. Instead of what I refer to as the hamburger structure in writing paragraphs – the top bun representing the topic sentence; the lettuce, cheese, and patty acting as supporting sentences; and the concluding sentence being the bun at the bottom all assembled together with tasty condiments (e.g., descriptive verbs and adjectives, rhythmical sentences, and clear examples) – the students wrote in ways that were more like Japanese *nabe* (hot pot) or *kaisendon* (seafood rice bowl) where main ideas were embedded within paragraphs and were not as easily identifiable at the beginning or end of paragraphs. When I explained the difficulties I had in teaching my students how to write in English, many THT participants said that they faced such problems in their classrooms. Before I knew what was going on, THT participants began filling out the worksheets I had prepared on sentence variety, word choice, and coherence in writing and

were telling me that they wanted to pretend that they themselves were EFL learners in my classroom to see if the techniques I have used in my writing courses would help them with their teaching or even their English writing skills. The experience I recall most clearly was when I was in Kyrgyzstan working with English teachers on how to write a paragraph using descriptive vocabulary, sentence structures, and the hamburger logic. One by one, we constructed sentences based on what the previous person had said and when we agreed that these sentences fit the criteria of interesting, rhythmical, and coherent, we moved on to the next person. I told them that when the sentences were connected well, we should hold the hand of the person before who had constructed the sentences to demonstrate that the sentences flowed well. After about 25 minutes, we had created a paragraph together, were all holding hands, and were standing up to form a circle. All of a sudden, the participants began to clap and insisted on reading aloud the paragraph that we had jointly constructed. For most participants, they said that this was the first time that they had learned how to write clear paragraphs in English and asked to do the activity again to see if they could incorporate this technique in their classroom. Unfortunately by then I was out of time, so I had to say my farewells and move on to my next presentation. Later, however, I did meet the participants in the corridor and was invited to teach their learners how to write effective paragraphs in English.

Future Presentations or Workshops

The future of THT presentations and workshops lie in joint efforts among participants and THT delegates to prepare globally and locally relevant practice and research-based presentations. In the future, if I decide to continue with a research focus because of the aforementioned academic ego, it would be better to include research conducted in the settings of the participants rather than to continue referring to research in Japanese

academic settings because the reality is that most of the participants have not had a chance to teach in Japanese higher education institutions. As I aim to add to the sustainability of THT programs, it may be better for me to engage in collaborative research projects with local participants that will bridge our understanding of language learning issues across various EFL contexts. Of course, there may be power dynamics that must be addressed. In general, many participants view THT delegates as representatives who come already equipped with new and enlightened teaching techniques. Being put on a pedestal means that equitable working relationships with local teachers must be deliberately constructed so that they are encouraged to see how their contributions are imperative to having more sustainable THT programs. In the end, I must work harder towards building more sustainable relationships with local participants so that I can be more mindful of fulfilling THT's mission of assisting and training language educators and students in and around Asia through current research in the field of second language acquisition.

Assessing English Communication Ability for Economic Analysis in the Siem Reap, Cambodia Tourist Industry

Jeffrey Stewart Morrow, Ph.D.
Prefectural University of Kumamoto

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Prefectural University of Kumamoto

Abstract

Since the 2000's, tourism in Cambodia has grown remarkably. Because of the influx of international travelers, tourist industry (TI) employees need excellent English communication skills. Presently, data in Cambodia has been lacking. To fill this gap, the author wanted to verify the role of English communication ability (ECA) in TI employees in Siem Reap city. During four surveys over five years, the author collected background as well as ECA data. In many economic studies, ECA is taken from census data, which is not accurate due to the subjective nature of self-reporting. The author designed an assessment test loosely based on the CEFR to more accurately measure ECA numerically as a means for other researchers to conduct further studies. In statistical analysis of income with English variables, high positive correlations were also found in English communication ability, years and hours of English education, and monthly expenditure for English learning. Therefore, it can be said that there is a significant relationship in ECA, better employment, and higher incomes in TI employees of Siem Reap. This scale could be profitably used via the Internet to conduct similar research in similar situations.

1. Introduction

From 2010 to 2013, the author conducted four surveys in Siem Reap to gather socioeconomic background data and measure the English communication ability (ECA) of TI employees. The

purpose was to verify the role of ECA in obtaining better income and employment. During that time it was necessary to use a scale of ECA ability for economic analysis that lent itself to expeditious and accurate measurements. At the outset it was critical to focus on the question of ECA and its importance for employment and income, as the author's goal was to verify its interaction with socioeconomic factors numerically. Therefore, the author set out to find an appropriate ECA assessment tool to be used for this study. Some studies (Bleakley and Chin, 2003; Casale & Posel, 2010) examine English proficiency, employment, and income, but use self-reported ECA from census or survey data. Respondents rate their own ability on a four-point Likert scale of *very well, well, not well*, and *not at all*. For example, Casale and Posel (2010) studied the role of English in a country where English is the language of business. They used regression analysis to examine the role of English proficiency in income among African men. The data was from the National Income Dynamics Survey (NIDS) in Africa, used to follow 28,000 individuals across the nation. An example of self-reporting English proficiency can be found in the NIDS, which obtains English language proficiency in *self-reported* answers on a four point scale: *very well, fair, not well,* and *not at all,* focusing on the ability to read and write the English language *very well* as the benchmark for proficiency (Casale and Posel 2010).

The relationship between earnings and English proficiency among African men between ages 25 and 65 was tested in the study; statistical results showed that proficient English language users earned almost 55% higher incomes than non-proficient English users. It can be seen here that English language proficiency can lead to more effective communication among co-workers and management and also lead to higher job productivity. In the end, higher benefits for over 50% of respondents with English language proficiency was found. The

study also showed that African men who had post-secondary education earned approximately 97% more if they were also proficient in the English language. Correlation results were low but positive, and showed a positive relationship between English proficiency and earnings in South Africa. The correlations were expected to be high, but the low outcome may be due to the survey situation and also to the accuracy of obtaining English proficiency levels, showing that self-reporting of respondents' own English ability is not accurate as self-reported abilities can be both overrated or underrated. For this reason, the method of measuring ECA must be questioned. In the paper, it is suggested that a better method of determining English ability is through a proxy such as test scores (such as TOEFL or TOEIC), but this is prohibitive in many developing countries due to the high cost, inconvenient logistics, and problematic mail services. Perhaps the best way is a language proficiency test during face-to-face interviews, which may be time consuming and costly but in the long run, more accurate. Of course it is important for respondents to be able to gauge their own ECA and to know and understand their own levels of language ability. However, better methods must be introduced to measure not only English proficiency, but also other languages numerically for more accuracy.

To that end, this study's goal was to investigate English proficiency and income in a developing country. Although four surveys were completed, this paper will only focus on the survey of 2013. In statistical analysis, it is difficult to prove causation but the author's assumption was that higher English communication ability led to better employment and higher incomes in 2013, especially in upper echelon businesses such as travel agencies and hotels. However, this assumption can only be proved with accurate ECA data. The author's goal therefore was to configure a method to gather accurate ECA data and then to

verify that a higher ECA level and more years and hours of English education could help TI employees obtain better jobs and higher incomes. The author and research team created a paper questionnaire and spent time conducting face-to-face conversations with many respondents in difficult conditions; however, much useful data was collected. In the future, a way accurate ECA data could be compiled is by offering an on-line language proficiency assessment test, which could be completed with low cost at the respondents' convenience.

Section two offers English language and assessment background. In section three, the method and materials are explained. Section four covers survey areas and sample. Results are examined in section five, and a discussion is presented in section six. Section seven offers integration of ECA into economic analysis, and section eight concludes.

2. Background

English language became global as a result of British international colonization during the 16th to the 19th centuries, which, in the 19th century, occurred throughout much of Asia. However, even earlier than this, English also emerged in the United States through independence efforts during the process of unification and through America's emergence as a global superpower. Since then English has taken root in modern societies as a lingua franca in politics, business, and science. In addition, the official language of air traffic control is English, and it is also the main language of academic publications.

Kachru (1985) characterized global English use in three concentric circles: 1) *inner circle* countries, where English is the national language, include the United States, England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Caribbean nations; 2) *outer circle* countries use English as the language, politics, and

science or business. Examples of outer circle countries include: India, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Bangladesh, and Tanzania. 3) The third category is *expanding circle,* and these countries also use English as a language of business or as a lingua franca. Examples of these countries are China, Japan, and some European nations. It is also used as a lingua franca within science and social science disciplines globally. As seen in the introduction, economic studies use methods that lead to misrepresentation of true skills because respondents could undervalue or overvalue their own ECA. In addition, these tests do not measure spoken or listening ability. English communication ability is important for employment and income. Therefore it should be measured on a more quantifiable and concrete basis during interviews in order to achieve the most reliable results. To this end the author decided to create a new method of measuring ECA in the field for economic analysis. Unfortunately, there is not one unified definition of English communication ability, as there are many different ideas of what language *ability* refers to. However, in the case of measuring ECA for statistical analysis, an uncomplicated concept must be found for consistency and standardization. In the author's research, the respondents' ECA is applied to speaking and listening only, so it is not *complete* language proficiency; however, much economic research focuses on *spoken* ECA for employment or income anyway. According to Bachman (1996), the target language of study is located around particular situations or domains, one of which is the *target language use* (TLU) domain. Assessment should utilize sets of specific communication tasks with which to measure ability in the TLU domain. It should also focus on a construct, or the underlying meaning of the ability and the method used to interpret outcomes.

In employment cases, speaking is most widely used for communication purposes during working situations and so a

fitting domain in this case is that of *real-life* (Bachman, Palmer, 1996), which the author adopted for this study's research work. Once the construct, the framework, and the assessment tool are created, the assessment questions can be devised, which in the author's case, were included in the questionnaire and used in the field. Assessment is difficult to accomplish during a face-to-face interview; however, rubrics are often used as a guide for the evaluator to assess the individual. Rubrics are indicators of how test-takers are supposed to be proceeding with various tasks, and need to be as clear and concise as possible for consistency.

A perfect method of assessing language ability does not exist because the question of what constitutes language proficiency is very complex. Some methods have become known as useful assessment tools. One kind of language ability assessment tests in use globally today is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (2001), which is used to assess the language ability of EU citizens. The CEFR scale uses stages of language development for assessment as outlined in Table 1. In addition, it weaves *can-do* lists into the fabric of language assessment. Can-do lists are for respondents to rate their own ability to rise to the next level of ability, reflecting on if they can or cannot accomplish some task. As for spoken ability, which will be examined here, the CEFR is broken down into 6 stages from beginner to advanced with levels and an explanation for each level:

Table 1. CEFR Reference Levels

A1 Breakthrough or beginner - can understand familiar everyday expressions, can introduce self

A2 Way stage or elementary - can understand and use expressions within immediate relevance

B1 Threshold or pre-intermediate - can understand main points

and deal with traveling

B2 Vantage or intermediate - can understand and produce ideas on concrete and abstract topics

C1 Effective operational proficiency - can get implicit meaning, can use language flexibly

C2 Mastery or advanced - can understand everything, can express spontaneously and fluently

Source: Adapted from CEFR, Council of Europe for Language Education, 2001.

The assessment reference levels of the CEFR reveal that language ability is measured on an ascending scale of familiarity with everyday expressions, producing concrete and abstract topics, and getting implicit meanings. These kinds of assessment references are perhaps common in the EU where the CEFR was originated where many people speak two or more languages; however, in some countries, it is common for some speakers to have little or no English ability. In addition, the CEFR cannot be quantified as it stands. The CEFR assessment tool works for assessing spoken English for day-to-day activities, but does not lend itself readily to quantification for statistical or economic analysis. At first glance, the CEFR is applicable to those who already have a slight command of a given language, as noticed in the first stage, breakthrough or beginner. Here, respondents are assumed to be able to have at least the ability to introduce themselves and handle everyday conversations. However, in some developing countries this is not the case. It was clear that a new type of English assessment be created for survey work and data collection in the developing country of Cambodia.

3. Method and Materials

3.1 Method

The author, leading a research team of indigenous students with advanced ECA, conducted four surveys during 2008, 2010, 2012, and 2013. However, to save space, this paper will only examine the survey of 2013. The goal was to conduct simple random surveys in face-to-face interview format. The author wanted to examine only TI businesses that have contact with English-speaking tourists. For this reason, in 2013 six obvious businesses related to TI and stand out as being so were chosen as representative businesses. Those businesses were: 1) souvenir shops, 2) restaurants, 3) guesthouses, 4) hotels, 5) travel agencies, and 6) tuk-tuks (motorized rickshaws). The author used 5 indigenous student assistants from Angkor University with advanced English proficiency during the surveys. The assistants were introduced by the Angkor University Research Center for Economic Development (AURCED). The assistants used hand-held IC recorders to record self-introductions given by TI employees in English during face-to-face interviews. The method for ECA measurement was loosely based on the CEFR. The CEFR contains levels on a concrete scale in which reference levels are quite clear. The author wanted to emulate this feature, but the scale was changed slightly to be more numeric, and included levels from (0) for respondents with no ability at all, to (5) for respondents with advanced ability. The scale is quantifiable this way and calculated statistically. This showed its importance in income and job employment. The author's assessment can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. The Author's Variation of English Ability Assessment

0 No or little ability - can't communicate at all

1 Beginner - can only understand and use familiar everyday

expressions with no confidenc

2 High Beginner - can understand and use expressions within everyday relevance, little confidence

3 Intermediate - can understand many things, can produce but with many mistakes, less confidence

4 High Intermediate - can understand and produce ideas but with lower confidence

5 Advanced - can understand everything and produce fluently and confidently

Source: Author, 2010.

The assistants judged the English ability of each respondent individually during interviews, using the level assessment and rubrics as guides. They then marked the appropriate level on the questionnaire. The self-introductions were then re-evaluated by English teachers for accuracy after the recordings by following the author's ECA assessment.

In addition to hand-held IC recorders, the assistants were also provided with a supply of questionnaires. Each business was given a number that was drawn blindly to ensure randomness. After the blind drawing of the business number, and entering the shop, the first person to be approached became the interviewee after verifying that they had not been previously interviewed. The assistants introduced themselves, explained the survey project, and proceeded to ask questions all in English, except if and when problems arose. In this case, the assistants could translate into Khmer language. The assistants circled or wrote pertinent answers themselves. The last part of the interview process was the recording of the self-introductions. Here, the assistants explained the process to the respondents. Then they

turned on the recorders and first stated the questionnaire number to ensure the self-introductions would be properly matched with the corresponding questionnaire. The respondents were then asked to introduce themselves in English while being recorded.

In most cases the respondent were able to say quite a bit about themselves and their families, although sometimes they required some prompting, which the assistants were able to provide. After the interview and recording was over, the assistants thanked the respondents and provided them with the author's contact information in case they had any questions or concerns afterward.

In order to both collect socioeconomic background data as well as measure the English abilities of the TI respondents, the survey team needed to be fully trained in the method of interviewing TI employees for collecting data and gathering ECA measurements. For this purpose, before the surveys the author conducted an orientation for the research team in appropriate English interviewing, as well as techniques for recording answers and techniques to record the self-introductions. In several cases the research team displayed their hesitancy to judge the English abilities of Cambodian nationals. However, the author explained that their English ability made necessary to this endeavor and that they should try their best to successfully and accurately assess the English ability of their fellow countrymen. Eventually they understood the importance of their input to the project and were able to judge respondents ECA levels with accuracy. Post survey, the questionnaires were double-checked and the ECA levels were re-measured by linguists to ensure reliability. The respondents were to give freely spoken self-introductions of around 5 minutes, which were recorded and analyzed after. This method seemed to work the best, as answers were genuine and not biased by questionnaire constraints.

3.2 Materials

A questionnaire to gather background socioeconomic information as well as to measure ECA was first written and used in the field for the second survey in 2010. In 2012, the questionnaire was revised, and this time it included similar questions but also a section for recording a specific self-introduction by following a set of questions given in the questionnaire. In this survey, the recordings were more thoroughly analyzed for accuracy by English teachers. In 2013 the survey was yet again revised and shortened. It consisted of similar background questions, and this time, the set of questions was not provided. This is because the respondents in 2012 answered the questions too briefly and therefore the authenticity was lower than regular conversations allow. The questionnaire contained specific sections on English education, employment and English, future job potential and English, and it also contained a section for business owners and managers regarding English ability of their employees and needs for English in the future.

4. Survey Areas and Sample

4.1 Survey Areas
The tourist zone in Siem Reap is largely located around Old Market, New Night Market, and Central Market, which can be considered downtown Siem Reap. Because the author wanted to examine businesses with broad international customer bases, it didn't make sense to blindly choose locations outside of the tourist zone. Within the tourist zone, businesses were each given a number beforehand. The number was drawn blindly. The corresponding business was approached and permission was granted to conduct the interviews.

4.2 Sample
Instead of population, the samples were calculated based on the total number of shops because reliable data were difficult to find. The sample sizes for 2013 are found in table 3. The sample size

was calculated differently for each business type, depending on the confidence interval, or margin of error. At a 95% confidence level, the author used a margin of error of 11 to calculate sample sizes in each business separately.

Table 3. Sample, 2013

Establishment	Total No. of Shops (2013)	Sample Size 2013
Souvenir shop	320	60
Restaurants	150	57
Guest houses	252	34
Hotels	125	49
Travel Agencies	150	23
Tuk-tuks	500	69
n= 292		

Source: Department of Tourism, Siem Reap. Adapted by the author, 2013.

5. Results (similar tables were used in Murrow, 2015)

Six variables related to ECA were calculated with 5 statistical measures to examine their interaction. Variable names were each shortened for brevity. The variables used in the study were: ECA level, income, total years of schooling, total years of English education, hours of English education in school, monthly English expenditure. The statistical measures used were: mean, median, standard deviation (SD), and coefficient of variation (CV). In addition to simple statistical analysis, a Spearman's rank correlation test was also performed for verification. The findings will be presented and explained by statistical measure tables with the explanation following. The businesses chosen for the study follow: Tuk-tuk drivers, souvenir shops, restaurants, guesthouses, travel agencies, and hotels.

Table 4. Mean Values

<u>Business</u>   <u>Variable</u>

	ENL*	INC	TYS	YEE	HEE	MEE
Tuk-tuks	2.4	193	9.58	2.0	9.17	6.78
Souvenir Shops	2.7	144	12.03	2.2	7.50	11.71
Restaurants	2.8	131	11.80	2.4	9.63	13.78
Guesthouses	2.9	170	12.85	3.4	10.15	11.55
Travel Agencies	3.4	205	13.74	4.0	6.75	11.3
Hotels	3.6	192	13.14	5.1	14.14	13.88

Source: Calculated using survey data, 2013.

ENL (English communication ability level); **INC** (Income); **TYS** (Total years of schooling); **YEE** – Years of English education; **HEE** – Hours of English education in school; **MEE** – Monthly English expenditure

The mean, or average, values of ENL (Table 4) show that there are no respondents with a level of 0 (no ability), nor are there respondents with a level of 5 (advanced). Tuk-tuk's had a value at 2.4, or high beginner, meaning they can understand and use words within everyday relevance with slightly more confidence. Their YEE, HEE, and MEE values reflect this; here is evidence that one's ENL is comprised of all background study and experience combined. Souvenir shop staff's ENL was slightly higher at 2.7 meaning they had slightly more confidence and slightly higher ability. ENL for travel agency staff was 3.4, or intermediate, revealing they can understand many things and can produce broken ideas but with many mistakes. Hotel staff's ENL value is 3.6, or intermediate, but highly so. ENL and INC values examined together show an ascending order with slight exceptions. As ENL values rise, so do INC values with two

exceptions: 1) Tuk-tuk's, which can be explained by the fact that tuk-tuk drivers are quite ambitious in order to purchase their own tuk-tuk's and obtain enough business to make an adequate living as they receive no set salary, and 2) Restaurants, which can be explained by the fact that restaurant employees may be quite content in their present jobs and see no higher to move to higher income businesses. Many of them may in transition jobs as well. Results show that the variables, YEE, HEE, and MEE also generally correspond to income according to business type. During the four surveys, this fact led the author and research team to realize that generally, higher ENL, more YEE, more HEE in school, and a higher MEE helped employees get higher incomes and one could assume more stable positions in TI, which can also be seen in median values (Table 5).

Table 5. Median values

Business	Variable					
	ENL*	INC	TYS	YEE	HEE	MEE
Tuk-tuks	2	200	9	2	6	1.
Souvenir Shops	3	120	12	2	5	5
Restaurants	3	100	12	3	6	8
Guesthouses	3	150	12	3	8.5	12
Travel Agencies	4	185	12	3	4	8
Hotels	4	170	12	4	7	9

Source: Calculated using survey data, 2013.

ENL (English communication ability level); **INC** (Income); **TYS** (Total years of schooling); **YEE** – Years of English education; **HEE** – Hours of English education in school; **MEE** – Monthly English expenditure

Median values strengthen the hypothesis that the author put forth earlier; that is, there is an ascending order of values from lower echelon business to higher echelon business, with the two

exceptions mentioned above. Restaurant staff's ENL clearly rises from low to high, as does YEE values. HEE and MEE values generally follow the same trend, although some differences in restaurants and guesthouses are evident. This could be due to the same reason as stated above; restaurant and guesthouse staff members are content in their jobs and feel no need to obtain higher paying jobs. Median values are not sensitive to outliers, and as such, the prediction that ENL values correspond to rises in INC, TYS, and YEE values holds true.

Table 6. SD values

Business			Variable		
	ENL*	INC	TYS	YEE	HEE	MEE
Tuk-tuks	0.76	80.52	2.55	1.21	2.55	10.10
Souvenir Shops	1.01	64.14	3.15	1.59	6.72	20.12
Restaurants	0.92	64.09	3.53	1.13	8.23	15.35
Guesthouses	0.88	80.70	2.83	2.31	8.09	11.70
Travel Agencies	0.90	99.07	2.03	2.26	9.79	14.31
Hotels	0.70	147.85	2.75	3.68	15.13	15.89

Source: Calculated using survey data, 2013.

*ENL (English communication ability level); **INC** (Income); **TYS** (Total years of schooling); **YEE** – Years of English education; **HEE** – Hours of English education in school; **MEE** – Monthly English expenditure

Standard deviation, or SD tells how far the values are from the mean. ENL values are very low and very close to the mean, which indicates that these values are less dispersed. However, it is evident that INC values are widely spread out. This is mainly due to outliers in the data implying that incomes are quite varied in our sample and many employees earned differing incomes. In addition, MEE values are also spread showing that employees had a varying expenditure when it came to English study. Values

in TYS, YEE, and HEE, are closer to the mean, indicating true values, but are slightly high.

Table 7. CV values

Business	Variable					
	ENL*	INC	TYS	YEE	HEE	MEE
Tuk-tuks	0.31	0.42	0.27	0.62	0.26	1.49
Souvenir Shops	0.51	0.45	0.26	0.70	0.89	1.72
Restaurants	0.33	0.49	0.30	0.47	0.86	1.11
Guesthouses	0.31	0.48	0.22	0.68	0.80	1.01
Travel Agencies	0.26	0.48	0.15	0.57	1.45	1.26
Hotels	0.20	0.77	0.20	0.72	1.07	1.15

Source: Calculated using survey data, 2013.

*ENL (English communication ability level); **INC** (Income); **TYS** (Total years of schooling); **YEE** – Years of English education; **HEE** – Hours of English education in school; **MEE** – Monthly English expenditure

Coefficient of variation (CV) is the relative SD, showing variation in relation to the mean. CV values can use residuals to verify the fit of the model (Table 7). Low CV values show small residuals and this indicates a good fit for the model with correct predictions. The CV values are low here and suggest accurate predictions in these data; the exceptions are values for HEE in travel agencies and hotels. In MEE, a further exception, values are slightly high suggesting inaccurate predictions. This discrepancy could be accounted for by differentials in HEE and MEE variables, and also due to the presence of outliers. The values of most interest are ENL and INC because this is what the author was assuming, and where true impact can be seen; the CV values in both <1 indicating true predicted values.

Spearman's rank correlation uses ranking to show validity of two quantitative variables (Table 8). Spearman's rank was ideal for the surveys in Cambodia because it is robust and not sensitive to outliers. Here, six variables were examined in correlation tests with income as the dependent variable. The author tested 6 variables with income as the dependent variable: ECA level, total years of schooling, years of English education, hours of English education, and monthly English expenditure. A system of interpreting the correlation coefficient using value ranges is offered for clarity: 1.00~0.90, very high positive correlation; 0.89~0.70, high positive correlation; 0.69~0.50, moderate positive correlation; 0.49~0.30, slight positive correlation; 0.29~ 0.10, weak positive correlation; 0.09~0.01, very weak positive correlation.

Table 8. Spearman's Rank Correlation Results, 2013

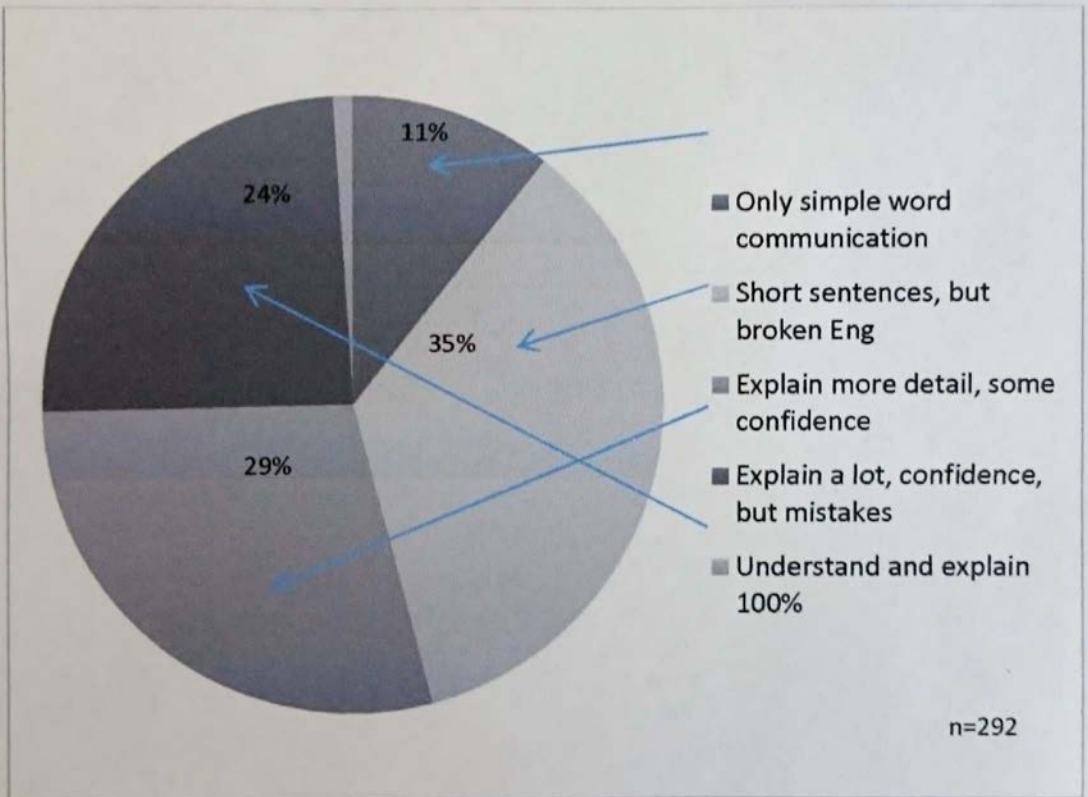| Business			Variable		
	INC/ ENL*	INC/ TYS	INC/ YEE	INC/ HEE	INC/ MEE
Tuk-tuks	0.62	0.68	0.64	0.73	0.49
Souvenir	0.80	0.78	0.67	0.78	0.62
Restaurants	0.84	0.83	0.84	0.75	0.58
Guesthouses	0.45	0.63	0.82	0.70	0.62
Travel	0.65	0.69	0.54	0.64	0.45
Hotels	0.80	0.79	0.79	0.56	0.58

Source: Calculated using survey data, 2013.

ENL (English communication ability level); **INC** (Income); **TYS** (Total years of schooling); **YEE** – Years of English education; **HEE** – Hours of English education in school; **MEE –** Monthly English expenditure

As Table 8 shows, values in INC/ENL for souvenir shops, restaurants, and hotels were all high positive correlations. Values for INC/TYS for souvenir shops, restaurants, and hotels were also high positive. Values in INC/YEE in restaurants, guesthouses, and hotels were high positive; other high positive correlations were found in tuk-tuks, souvenir shops, restaurants, and guesthouses in INC/HEE. No high positive correlations were found in INC/MEE; these values ranged from slight positive correlation in travel agencies and tuk-tuks to moderate positive correlations in souvenir shops, restaurants, guesthouses and hotels.

Fig. 2 illustrates the ECA ability of Siem Reap TI employees from the 2013 survey. Out of the total of 292, 103 respondents (35%) could communicate in short sentences only, and with broken English. Of the total, 84 (29%) could explain things in more detail with some confidence; seventy-one respondents (24%) could explain a lot and had confidence but made many mistakes. Of the total, 31 respondents (11%) could only communicate using simple words. On the upper spectrum, only 3 respondents (1%) could understand and communicate everything fully and confidently at a 100% level. The implications for this help researchers know communication problems of the TI as a whole, focusing on the whole population, not just a few people. This can help English program administrators create more effective study situations for those in TI. In turn, this will help the young labor force in SR obtain better employment and higher incomes.

Fig. 2 ECA Ability of SR TI Employees, 2013

- Only simple word communication
- Short sentences, but broken Eng
- Explain more detail, some confidence
- Explain a lot, confidence, but mistakes
- Understand and explain 100%

n=292

Source: Calculated from survey data, 2013.

6. Discussion

Generally, the author's assumption that higher ENL corresponded to higher INC was verified with several exceptions. One exception was the result of the ENL and INC differential in tuk-tuk drivers. Here, the ENL is the lowest, but the INC is 2nd from highest, meaning that the author's assumption for tuk-tuks was not completely substantiated. This could be explained by the fact that tuk-tuks are owner operated and therefore do not rely on brick and mortar businesses for their salaries. They work their own hours and learn English on the job. Therefore, their ECA is low and is limited to utterances of tourism-related phrases only and many could not carry on lengthy conversations. Because of the owner-operated nature of the business, tuk-tuk drivers have become adept at attracting customers and selling their services, hence receiving high salaries. Another exception was that restaurants have the lowest INC, but 2nd from lowest ENL. This differed from the previous surveys in which the author found an ascending order of both ENL and INC, which did not hold true in the 2013 survey. As stated earlier, this could be due to the fact that restaurant employees are satisfied with their employment and do not seek advances in incomes or higher salaries. Another discrepancy was that guesthouse staff had the most hours of English education per week and spent the most money per month studying English according to median values. The SD and CV values are not overly large, so this value must be true because median values are not sensitive to outliers. Therefore, it can only be surmised that guesthouse staff were happy in their employment, and were not interested in seeking new positions.

Although causation cannot be proved, most of the simple statistical verifications in the results section confirm the author's assumption that there is a positive impact from having a higher

ENL, more years and hours of English education, and studying English on one's own monthly. Worthy to note is that the two variables, which constituted the underpinnings of the author's research, ENL and INC, had values that were close to the author's predicted outcome. In addition, the Spearman's rank correlation test results verified that many correlations were high positive correlations or at least moderate positive correlations, giving further strength to the author's hypothesis.

7. Integration of English Education into Economic Analysis

A major goal of the author was to integrate ECA into economic analysis. These are two different fields, but there are many studies on education and economics already. Some of these studies try to link education and economic development. However, there are still very few studies on *English education* and development economics, especially those regarding English *ability*. Some studies do try to connect English ability with economic development, but do not use surveys as bases for their work. The author's study however tried to verify English education and income by years and hours of English education, money spent on English study per month, and respondents' use of English per month, all quantifiable variables. There has been no such study on ECA that has tried to successfully integrate English ability with income. Many people perhaps think the two are linked through English only as a descriptive tool in economics; however, through this study there is evidence that English is much more than that. English is a bona fide variable in statistics much like education, which can illustrate much about the nature of human capital and income.

8. Conclusion

Results show through statistical analysis there was a positive

relationship between ECA, years of English education, hours of English education, monthly English expenditure and income in Siem Reap TI. Spearman's rank correlation findings show high positive, and moderate positive correlations with income and English level, years of English education, and hours of English education. Although qualitative studies are extremely important, this study attempted to approach the question of English assessment in economic analysis quantitatively rather than qualitatively to be able to test the ECA assessment levels numerically with statistical measures, and by doing so, it was hoped their outcomes can be easily noted and understood. However, interpretation of numeric data is often difficult. This was a pioneer study, but it has begun to shine a light on a new method for numerically assessing languages. Having numerical verification of a variable can help researchers know the exact situation among a large population more thoroughly, and therefore, be able to study the population more concretely, know the situation in a larger population, and create long-term solutions. Another benefit is that this method can obtain accurate ECA assessments rather than relying on self-reporting by the respondent, by subjective assessments by the evaluator, or by numerical values that attempt to be proxies but have no connection with a person's actual ability, as in the case of test scores.

Hopefully as one can see through this paper, gathering ECA data, self-reported or otherwise is not an easy task. However, the author tried to examine an assessment tool in use today, and then attempted to use this as a model to create a new kind of numeric assessment tool for use in survey work in Siem Reap TI. Data obtained during the author's survey work was much more reliable than that found in self-reporting; however, one draw-back is that the author's assessment presented here may be too short and too simple. Another limitation is that there still could be an element of subjectivity among the evaluators. Perhaps a

better method of assessment could be to make a larger scale with more minute and precise variations of language ability, all quantifiable and numeric. There has been little evidence of the influence of ECA as a variable in economic analysis until now. The author can say that this is a first step in integrating English education and economics. Other researchers must examine more deeply and test more fully such improved tools of language assessment. At that time, both linguists and economists will be able to link development economics and English education with more accuracy.

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Negotiating a Long-distance Relationship – Insights from a Collaborative, International Research and THT Presentation Project

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Abstract

The report describes the researchers' experience of a collaborative Japanese / Vietnamese project funded by Akita International University's (AIU) "Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development" (GHRD). Faculty at AIU and Hue University College of Foreign Languages agreed to collaborate on a joint research project (to explore the effects of textbook modification and associated production tasks on high frequency vocabulary acquisition) while other project goals included a desire to strengthen international institutional ties, and to incorporate more Vietnamese participation in the annual "Teachers Helping Teachers" (THT) event in Hue, through co-presentation of the project at the Hue University-hosted THT English teachers' development workshops. The report reflects on three aspects: project goals, the project process, and finally the project outcomes. It primarily aims to provide insight, via one example of a cross-national project, into the unexpected pitfalls encountered that led to the original project being modified, measures taken to employ those findings that were useful, and recommendations for others (particularly THT participants) embarking on similar joint endeavors that might enable collaborating research partners to experience greater success in their efforts.

Introduction

In February and March 2014, an international collaborative research project was undertaken by faculty at Akita InternationalUniversity (AIU), Japan, and Hue University College of Foreign Languages (HUCFL), in central Vietnam. The project proceeded with the support of the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT) and AIU funding under the "Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development" (GHRD), building on existing "Teachers Helping Teachers" (THT) ties between faculty and staff members of the two institutions. The project aimed to strengthen international institutional ties, and, since previous THT workshops have largely been dominated by 'foreign' presenters, to culminate in a greater Vietnamese presence in the annual HUCFL/THT English language teachers' development workshops, via a collaborative presentation in August of the same year. It was also hoped that the presence of local Vietnamese presenters in 2014 would encourage such participation in future THT events in Vietnam.

Project Goal

Goal One: Research. *(To explore the effects of textbook modification on high frequency vocabulary acquisition)*

The idea for the project sprang from research conducted by Ruegg and Brown (2013, 2014) into the potential of commercial EFL textbooks to maximise high frequency vocabulary acquisition. Their research, though based on a narrow sample, indicates a strong likelihood that…

"Most (commercial) English language textbooks… ('Reading' textbooks and 'Integrated Skills' books)… do not focus on high frequency general or academic vocabulary. Instead, much of the vocabulary that is presented is inappropriate for learners at the

level the textbook is designed to cater for…" Ruegg and Brown (2013).).

If further research supports these preliminary findings, this may mean, that in most cases, where teachers rely on textbooks as the basis for vocabulary teaching andlearning, learners are not being given enough appropriate opportunities to meet and acquire those words that are most necessary for them to know.

In light of official Vietnamese national language learning goals and the heavy dependence on commercial EFL textbooks in Vietnamese EFL classrooms, the project researchers decided to investigate the effect of modification of reading texts (as found in the core textbook used by Vietnamese English language learners in their first year at HUCFL), and the use of especially designed vocabulary production tasks, on high frequency vocabulary acquisition across one semester.

The decision to modify the reading texts and vocabulary learning tasks found within prescribed textbooks (and to provide supplementary tasks based on the material in these), reflected current general agreement on the importance (to overall language acquisition) of the need to identify and build a strong knowledge of high frequency vocabulary, and, for learners aiming for tertiary success in particular, the acquisition of high frequency academic vocabulary. Rott (2007), Ruegg and Brown (2014)and Coxhead (2000).

The Vietnamese Government's "2020 National Foreign Language Project" requires English teachers and their students to reach specific language skill targets by the year 2020. Originally, these were based on the standards outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), Council of Europe (2001), which have since been adapted for use in Vietnam. (See Appendix A.)

Informal discussions with Vietnamese teachers indicat these expectations to be very high, and local educators responsible for their implementation express deep concerns about their achievability. Since reaching Ministry targets is also linked to teachers' employment and promotion prospects, and Vietnamese news reports indicate that teachers are at risk of being disciplined or financially penalized for failing to reach Ministry targets (Talk Vietnam (2014)), Vietnamese teachers, whose own levels of English language ability are described as generally low (Le Hung Tien (2013) and Viet Tuan (Tuoi Tre News, 2013)), are naturally worried about reaching these targets. Likewise, expectations of student achievement are very high, another source of professional stress, since teacher performance is also measured by this.

The research project, therefore, originally aimed to discover whether a stronger focus on the learning of high frequency vocabulary, via the modified texts and tasks, would enhance learners' vocabulary acquisition beyond current achievement levels. If this were seen to be so, a strong case could then be made for training Vietnamese teachers, many of whom work in limited-resource settings, in methods of modifying existing resources, without the need to purchase new, more 'appropriate' (and possibly expensive) resources, so as to improve their students' likelihood of achieving the target levels described above.

As elaborated in the Vietnamese Education Ministry's guidelines for the '2020 Project', the goals most relevant to this project were identified. (Key points are italicized.)

"To use English as a means of communication at a certain level of proficiency (e.g. C1) *in four macro-skills*: listening, speaking, reading and writing, and *be able to read materials at the same level of their textbook, using a dictionary;* To have mastered basic English phonetics and grammar, *to have acquired the*

minimum of around 2500 vocabulary items of English.

To attain a certain level of understanding of English and American cultures, to *become aware of cross-cultural differences* in order to be better overall communicators, to better inform the world of Vietnamese people, their history and culture, and to take pride in Vietnam, it's language and culture."
Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) (2007).

These specific goals were relevant, since the project focused on reading texts within level-appropriate, prescribed textbooks, high frequency general and academic vocabulary (as target vocabulary), allowed for the use of dictionaries, took an 'integrated skills' approach and the content of the reading texts also reflected the goal of promoting greater national and international cultural awareness.

Goal Two: International Co-operation. *Strengthening of institutional ties between AIU and HUCFL*

Prior to the visit, the AIU researcher (also an experienced THT presenter with existing ties to HUCFL), gathered information from the AIU GHRD Project Funding Committee and the AIU International Office about their expectations for the project, in terms of furthering relationships between the two institutions.

She also established contact with colleagues from the HUCFL's Department of Science, Technology and International Cooperation, and sought agreement for and assistance with setting up the project.

During the first visit to Hue, in February/March 2014, the collaborating researchers met and discussed the project, and the project began. The respective needs and expectations of each institution were discussed, and the practical considerations of the project were clarified, along with the roles and responsibilities of

the participants.

Discussions also took place between the AIU researcher and staff members of the HUCFL's Department of Science, Technology and International Cooperation, over the possibilities for future co-operation between the two institutions and informational materials and contact details exchanged.

Once the project was underway, and on her return to Japan, the AIU researcher submitted a report, along with photographs, to the GHRD Project team at her institution and shared the HUCFL informational materials and contact details with members of the relevant departments at AIU.

Goal Three: THT Events. *Incorporation of more Vietnamese participation in THT Teacher Development Workshops*

Prior to the research project, very few Vietnamese presenters had ever participated in a THT teachers' development workshop. It was hoped that the project would provide an in-depth opportunity for foreign THT participants and local Vietnamese teachers to get to know each other well, and to begin the process of collaboration over a longer term.

Through this process, the aim was to provide a model to local teachers of successful collaboration and co-presentation, which included members of their own peer network, and by doing so, to encourage more Vietnamese English teachers to consider contributing as presenters in THT events in the future. The research project was the first occasion on which THT presenters from abroad have visited Hue in advance of the annual THT event specifically to conduct a research project together in preparation for co-presenting at the August workshops.

Project Process:

Stage One: Research

It was planned that the research segment of the project would involve the following steps:…
Pre-testing all Vietnamese learner participants to ascertain existing levels of vocabulary knowledge. (Control and experimental groups.) Intervention with the experimental group (using modified reading texts and production tasks specifically designed to reinforce the learning of target vocabulary. The control group followed its normal program.) Post-testing of all participants at the end of the semester.

Data analysis

The project covered approximately seven weeks of the second half of a Vietnamese university semester (the final semester for the academic year), since this was the only time available within the period permitted by the research funding conditions.The project process and findings were then to be co-presented at the August 2014 THT workshop and finally written up for publication.

Stage Two: International Co-operation

Permission to embark on the project, and the project details, were arranged through contact with HUCFL staff towards the end of 2013. The initial plan was to establish contact with local high-school teachers and to work with them within the Vietnamese high school system. This was later modified to working with researchers and teachers at Hue University College of Foreign Languages itself, as it was difficult to find high-school teacher volunteers and to arrange for their participation in the time-frame allowed for by the GHRD project Committee's funding requirements. (Official Education Department permission is also apparently needed for this, which creates a slow process.)

On the other hand, existing ties with Hue University staff and faculty, established through many years of THT involvement at the university, made participation of university teachers and classes easier to organize, while first-year 'English Reading Skills' classes at HUCFL also provided suitable control and experimental groups needed for the study.

E-mail contact was established between the AIU and HUCFL Vietnamese researchers and an online planning dialogue began. A 'Dropbox' folder was set up for document sharing, and maintained for the duration of the project and beyond.

At the beginning of March 2014, the researchers met twice in person, in Hue, to discuss matters relating to the project's implementation, the data gathering process, the organization of data management, and the preparation for the presentation and publication. The first meeting was an opportunity for face-to-face introductions, to provide some background to the project, to outline mutual expectations and decide roles and responsibilities, and to discuss a mutually suitable project timetable and other practical considerations. The second meeting was to discuss the pre-test arrangements and management of testing materials and data.

The HUCFL researcher took responsibility for contacting participating teachers, explaining the project to them, and providing and collecting the pre-testing materials and resultant data and overseeing the use of the teaching materials for the experimental group and record keeping. She also acted as the immediate resource person for the teachers for the duration of the project, since she resides in Hue. (She did not teach either of the classes participating in the project.)

The AIU researcher also met with participating teachers and, briefly, with the students, She purchased the prescribed

university textbook used by the participating classes, began to analyze the reading texts students would use, and prepared classroom materials based on these. The materials were provided to the HUCFL researcher to give to the teacher of the experimental group.

Towards the end of the visit to Hue, the AIU and HUCFL researchers met again to confirm mutual availability to co-present the project at the August THT event later in the year, and briefly discussed publication possibilities beyond that. The AIU researcher then returned to Japan. Regular e-mail communication continued between the two researchers for the project's duration.

Near the end of the classroom intervention stage of the project, the HUCFL researcher arranged the post-test with the classroom teachers, collected the teachers' logs (recording which materials were used) and all student data. (Both quantitative (pre- and post-test results) and qualitative data, (in the form of student feedback writing) were eventually gathered, though the qualitative data was not originally sought.)

The HUCFL researcher then sent the data to the AIU researcher for analysis. The quantitative data were analyzed by the AIU researcher and the results were shared and discussed with the HUCFL researcher. Both researchers analyzed the written qualitative data independently, then shared and discussed their analyses. The qualitative data were then categorized according to mutually agreed criteria, based on key recurring themes emerging from the data themselves.

Secondly, during the visit to Hue, the AIU researcher also spent time getting to know several HUCFL students (from different departments within HUCFL and at different stages of their academic career) and other faculty members, informally, and invited them to join a closed social network site that had been set

up in order to facilitate communication and cross-cultural exchange opportunities between students and faculty of the two institutions. Approximately 10 students and the Hue faculty and staff members involved in the project initially signed up.

Thirdly, informal discussions were also held with staff members of HUCFL's Department of Science, Technology and International Cooperation, and publicity information materials about the respective institutions were exchanged, along with contact details of relevant personnel, with a view to exploring the possibility of establishing a formal MOE between the two institutions at some stage in the future.

As mentioned previously, following the visit to Hue, the AIU researcher reported back her recommendations to her employing institution (AIU).

Stage Three: THT Events and local participation
After the research phase of the project was completed, theresearchers planned their August presentation, and immediately prior to the August THT teacher development workshops, met in Hue in order to 'fine-tune' it. The presentation was conducted, as planned, within the larger, annual THT/HUCFL teacher-training event, with around 25 local teachers (out of a total conference population of almost 200 participants) attending.

The AIU and the HUCFL researchers were introduced as research colleagues of comparable status and spoke for a similar length of time. The project was outlined, with a clear account of its strengths and failings, along with a discussion of outcomes, and teachers were offered practical suggestions for classroom application.

At the end of the THT event, teachers who had attended were

explicitly invited to consider presenting the following year, and an 'interest list' was circulated.

Subsequent to the presentation, the researchers remained in contact to discuss and prepare for publication.

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Project Outcomes and Recommendations

Goal One: Research

Several issues arose from the research project:
Research Preparation and Planning --

Time-frame: The 'last-minute' nature of notification of the availability of funding, the length of time allowed for completion of the application process, and a delay in notification of success, meant that the time-frame for planning and implementation of the Hue-based sections of the project was severely limited. The order of events in this case began with the advertisement of the opportunity for the funding grant very late in the fall of 2013, followed by application and notification of acceptance, then the process of setting up the project. The terms of the grant required the travel to Hue to take place within a very short-term time-frame (before the end of March 2014).

Time Frame - Recommendations:

On reflection, it may have been better to have had plans for a specific project in place first, with a mutually agreed and manageable project schedule, *then* to have applied for funding, if it were already known that funding was to be made available. Unfortunately, this opportunity (being a new one for AIU faculty) was not made known early in the 2013 year, which meant that the project had to begin at an awkward time (part-way

through a Vietnamese university semester and directly before

HUCFL final exams). This narrow window of time imposed limitations on how the project could be implemented, on who (in

Vietnam) could participate, the length of time the project could take place and on the potential efficacy of the intervention necessary, and inherent in, the research process. Being able to plan a project that could occur across an entire natural academic cycle (of at least one complete semester) would have been preferable. This would have minimized difficulties involved in trying to both organize and implement a project at short notice, to all parties, and allowed for an improved quality of planning, and of the project itself, overall.

Motivation:

The project was, to some extent, 'imposed' on the HUCFL participants, since the motivation for it, and the idea for subject of the research, came from the AIU-based researcher. Initially, it was difficult to find and organise willing Vietnamese participants from outside Vietnam, since Vietnamese teachers have extremely heavy workloads and because of official and institutional constraints in both Japan and Vietnam. This placed a burden on the administration staff at HUCFL, who had been asked to help find Vietnamese project participants who would be both willing and able to commit to a project that would necessitate disruption to their regular classroom routine, give them extra work on top of an already demanding workload, and require them to do a public presentation later in the year.

Motivation - Recommendations:

Though the HUCFL administration staff were extremely helpful and were, eventually, able to identify participants who were also

enthusiastic to become involved, in future, (since the project incorporated THT participation) it may be better to discuss the possibility of projects face-to-face, between people who have already met each other, for example, during an earlier THT event. Such mutual co-operation would have the advantage of being seen to emerge more 'organically' from within a context of familiarity between participants who have already indicated a mutual desire to work together.

Likewise, ideas for studies would then better reflect the perceived needs for local research, emerging from the people already working within the local context itself, rather than the particular research interests of an 'outside' researcher.

Meetings:

Face-to-face meetings with Hue participants were short (less than an hour each) and somewhat hurried, because of the immense pressure of work commitments of HUCFL faculty. Because of the time constraints and interruption caused by public holidays, only e-mail contact was established before the visit to Hue took place.

Meetings - Recommendations:

If earlier, ongoing face-to-face discussions are not possible, opportunities for these would need to be created, perhaps by means of an online platform such as 'Skype', in order for participants to get to know each other, and to co-operatively plan, well before they begin to work on a set project together.

Establishing good rapport is essential to the success of any collaboration, and research partners need to be aware of each others' commitments external to the project. Flexibility is

important, and respective participants' expectations of the time involved in planning need to be clarified and agreed before meeting. A mutually suitable timetable should be established beforehand. In this case, the participating researchers were satisfied with the quality of their interactions, though time constraints and employment obligations did occasionally make meetings rushed.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The project was largely 'driven' by the AIU researcher, who initiated the project and suggested the subject for investigation. This meant that one researcher (the AIU researcher), was better informed about the background theory behind the research, since it sprang from her own research endeavors.

Roles - Recommendations:

In future it would be better (and would save time explaining) if both researchers contributed equally to ideas for a research subject, and were equallyconversant with the background literature. Wherever a research project is to take place, ideas for the subject of studies might better come from local teachers themselves, who know the issues they face more intimately, and have a greater sense of priorities for investigation. In this case, while both researchers worked hard to ensure the success of the project, the HUCFL researcher felt strongly that she would have benefitted from greater opportunity to become more familiar with the academic background to the project.

Responsibilities - Recommendations:

On the whole, the practical responsibilities were largely undertaken by the HUCFL researcher, while the more academic and theoretical input came from the AIU researcher. A more

even distribution of each of these areas of responsibility may h ave enhanced the flow of the project, particularly in the area of pre- and post-test administration, and control of the classroom content. On the other hand, having a native-speaker teach the experimental class, for example, may have added a variable that could create a significant difference between the outcomes of the two class groups that could not be directly attributable to the i ntervention itself.

Similarly, though having the AIU researcher available during the entire course of the project would have been helpful, releasing a faculty member from a foreign institution for an entire semester to oversee an entire project abroad seems unnecessary and impracticable. Practical limitations make it imperative for participating researchers to communicate regularly and effectively, and to demonstrate an equal commitment to overcoming obstacles as they arise, and seeing the project through. In this case, though the results of the research project did not meet expectations (for reasons that will be explained later), the high quality of co-operation and communication between the two researchers enabled them to complete their goal of co-presenting at the August THT event, and to develop ties between the two institutions that are likely to continue in the future.

Accountability:

The AIU researcher, on application for funding, outlined a proposal which included the plan to conduct the research, present it at the 2014 THT event, and to publish a written account of the project in the academic arena. However, there has, as yet, been no follow-up from the funding institution (other than the request for a written report and photographs of the trip to Hue in March 2014) to investigate the efficacy of the project (or otherwise) or its outcomes, or to complete its own brief (of establishing formal

MOE ties with HUCFL). The high workload of staff in the International Office at AIU is one factor contributing to the lack of follow-up to date (in the form of an MOE), since it has meant that other priorities have had to take precedence. Timetabled, face-to-face meetings with all interested parties following the visit might have helped to promote more positive outcomes in this respect.

While the absence of follow-up allows a researcher great independence and flexibility, it may also be demotivating, since it may create the impression that there is little interest in the research and its outcomes and implications for positive change.

Though a similar grant has been offered by AIU for the 2015 year, there has, as yet, been no contact between new recipients of the grant and recipients of the previous one, meaning that researchers collaborating across international boundaries (unless already experienced in international research collaboration) will (unless they have considerable previous experience of such collaborative endeavors) be required to 'reinvent the wheel'.

Accountability - Recommendations:

Timetabled, face-to-face meetings with all interested parties prior to and following the visit might have helped to promote more positive outcomes, in this respect.

It would appearis also desirable, then, especially for researchers inexperienced in collaborating across international borders, for recipients of international such collaboration grants (working within the same institution), to meet and share experiences and concerns, in order to improve the quality of future international collaborative research. If the quality of collaboration is to

improve, and in order to avoid potential 'stalling', if projects do

not go ahead according to plan, as was almost the case with this project early in its implementation, lessons learned from the e xperience should be shared within institutions, and practice

modified on the basis of the insights that are gained.

Likewise, information (such as that contained in this report) should be freely disseminated with others interested in similar international research partnerships (particularly THT members), who may be able to attract funding from their employing institutions (and beyond) for similar projects.

The Research Process:

Testing procedures:

The researchers were not always able to directly administer all the pre- and post-tests. Therefore, there was a lack of consistent control over test administration procedure and conditions. In fact, controlling the testing conditions proved to be impossible. Though student participants were asked not to help each other or to refer to outside aids, some ignored this request. During the pre-test, some participants were seen to be helping others with the answers, and others were seen using dictionaries. This meant that any data gathered (relating to vocabulary knowledge of individual test takers) had to be discounted as unreliable. In the end, the quantitative data could not be used. This put the entire project at risk and almost ended the project at the outset.

Testing Procedures - Recommendations:

In future, researchers hoping to gather reliable data from similar testing situations would do better to administer the pre- and post-tests themselves, explaining the expectations clearly and firmly to students, and ensure that the necessary test conditions are

adhered to. In cases where class sizes are relatively large and classroom space is limited, testing may be more effective if it takes place in a larger, more formal setting, such as a general assembly hall, rather than a regular classroom, with desks far enough apart to make it difficult for test-takers to communicate with each other. The participants need to know that the results cannot be used if they share or check information and that these kinds of tests should be viewed as something akin to an end-of-year formal examination.

Testing Tools: The Nature of Pre- and Post-Tests:

The 'Vocabulary Levels Test' proved not to be the most useful tool for assessing knowledge of the specific target vocabulary, since it was considered to contain too narrow a range of items and did not specifically test, or adequately reflect, the target vocabulary selected from the reading texts (though the target items were all drawn from high frequency word lists on which the 'Levels Test' is based).

Testing Tools - Recommendations:

On reflection, the researchers would have been better to have used the more extensive *Vocabulary Size Test,* or a more 'finely-tuned', specially constructed test using only the target vocabulary itself. More time to access and discuss, or create appropriate testing materials would have averted this problem.

The Teaching Materials:

There was inadequate time to examine the HUCFL prescribed teaching materials thoroughly (just one week only), and to create suitable vocabulary lists, before the pre-test had to be conducted. This also impacted on post-testing, since it meant that creating a suitable post-test (i.e. one that matched the pre-test) was also not

possible.

The Teaching Materials - Recommendations:

These problems indicate a need for researchers in similar settings to be fully conversant with the context in which they will be working, and the materials in use, prior to beginning a project, to ensure they have adequate time to investigate and, if they need to create materials well before attempting to use them.

Materials Use:

In the experimental class, not all the modified texts and supplementary vocabulary tasks that had been created for the teacher to use, were, in fact, used, since the researchers did not have direct control over the teaching process, and the classroom teachers themselves made decisions about which portions of the prescribed texts (and consequently which modified texts and supplementary vocabulary tasks) they wished to use. This limited the potential for the intervention to 'make a difference', and, consequently, for any significant change in student's vocabulary knowledge, likely to have been influenced by such texts and tasks, to occur and subsequently be noted.

Likewise, the control and experimental classes, in some cases did not follow exactly the same curriculum, nor did they use exactly the same reading texts from the textbook, so it proved difficult to compare the two groups.

Materials Use – Recommendations:

In light of this, it seems clear that researchers somehow need to ensure they keep a close control of the conditions under which a project is carried out. Perhaps the most effective way to do this

is to ensure that one of the researchers actually teaches the experimental class, and confers regularly with the teacher of the control class to ensure that materials and conditions remain as similar as possible between the two groups.

Though clear instructions may be given to participating teachers, there is a limit to the amount of 'control' that a researcher can reasonably expect to have over a class that is taught by someone else, particularly when a researcher is a guest or is not a regular member of the teaching faculty of the institution within which the research is taking place.

Fulfilling Expectations

The difficulties described above compromised the research portion of the project, and, along with the questionable reliability of the pre- and post-test data, as previously mentioned, they created a pressing problem, since the two participating researchers were committed to presenting the project at the THT August teacher development workshops at HUCFL. However, since the project had diverged from expectations, and had not, therefore, yielded any reliable data indicating significantdifferences between the two classes, they were left in the situation of potentially having nothing to present. To resolve this, a shift in focus was required.

Because of the difficulties involved in acquiring reliable *quantitative* data, the focus shifted to the *qualitative* written feedback of the participating students, in the hope that useful insights might be gleaned for teacher development or teaching/learning purposes that could then be presented at the August THT workshop.

Likewise, for the sake of presentation (and publication) it was

considered useful to reflect and comment on the *nature* of the project process, and the problems encountered, rather than the research outcomes (or lack thereof), in the hope that others embarking on future similar projects might benefit from the insights gleaned from the perceived 'failures' in this case.

The decision to shift from a quantitative study and to focus on the participants' qualitative reflections was considered appropriate for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it is in keeping with the principle of 'learner-centerdness' in classroom teaching/learning practice, in that it allows the voices of the participants themselves to be heard, and for their preferences to have an impact on future learning experiences, either in their ongoing classes with the same teacher, or those of other students enrolled in similar classes in the future.

It also reflects principles of action research, wherein a cyclic process of investigation, evaluation and application evolves from changes in the research context, where the direction of the enquiry is determined by eventualities inherent (but not always apparent) within the investigative process as it unfolds. The focus, in this case, moved to an examination of student perceptions of the advantage and disadvantages of focusing on high frequency target vocabulary, and the use of the speaking and writing production activities supplied by the researchers, as opposed to the course-book based activities they were more accustomed to.

From the qualitative data, a list of recommendations for teaching practice was drawn up. This information, formed the basis of the THT August presentation, which, rather than presenting the findings of a quantitative investigation into the efficacy of textbook modification for vocabulary acquisition, instead briefly

outlined the background to the project, its implementation, problems encountered (and reasons for these), then provided examples of categorized feedback from students about their experiences of the process and their suggestions for improvement. The presentation then went on to offer practical applications for the classroom based on the feedback, along with samples of activities and materials that could be used to provide

Vietnamese learners with experiences that would utilize existing course-book material and still enable them to work more purposefully towards the 'Project 2020' goals.

Recommendations:

Overall, a key lesson to be learned from this experience is the need for flexibility and creative problem solving, so as to ensure that the time and resources invested in a project are not wasted should a project take a different direction than that first anticipated. Researchers would do well to have a 'plan B' in place, particularly if they are committed to publishing or presenting their work as part of funding conditions. With some creative and lateral thinking, even a 'failing' project may yield insights and information worthy of consideration, and of practical use to classroom teachers.

Goal Two: International Co-operation. *Strengthening of institutional ties between AIU and HUCFL*

'Foreign' researchers engaged in international collaborative research do well to remember they are guests in the hosting institution in which they are working, and need to be aware that even faculty working within the institution who participate as partners in a research project of this nature, may have limited influence over what takes place in in their institution, especially in individual classes taught by their colleagues.

A great deal of tact is required, along with a willingness to accept the reality that procedures that are clear and important to a researcher may be interpreted differently, or not implemented at all, or may be of a lower priority to the teacher who is ultimately responsible for the class. Cultural considerations must also be taken into account, in the way in which information is disseminated and expectations presented. An outsider, in particular, needs to take care not to appear 'demanding' or 'impatient', and should be willing to adopt suggestions and make adaptations if the necessity for these is indicated by their 'local' research partner.

In regards to this project, Japanese Ministry of Education expectations of improved international institutional ties were met to some degree. As a result of this shared project, the relationship between AIU and HUCFL (via the THT connection) *has* been strengthened. In fact a significant number of AIU faculty have now indicated a desire to participate in THT events in Hue in the future, with a group of around five AIU faculty expected to participate in the 2015 event, an increase of three participants from the previous year. There is also a greater awareness of the work of THT within both institutions.

The online social network site continues to play an effective role in maintaining informal ties with participating faculty and students. There are plans to increase the number of AIU student participants on the site in 2015, via an invited 'buddy pairing' system. This will ensure the site continues to fulfillfulfil both institutions' expectations that their students will become more globally aware, and that connections between the two institutions are maintained (on varying levels).

Recommendations:

A strong recommendation needs to be made, however, for other researchers who hope to engage in similar projects in the future, especially if their goal is to strengthen formal ties between institutions, for example via Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs') and student or faculty exchanges. Before projects are undertaken there needs to be a clear commitment on the part of the funding/sending institution to actually follow through and build on the contacts that are made, by taking concrete steps to work towards establishing formal MOU relationships as soon as possible after the contact has been made. The longer the delay between initiating a project and establishing a connection, and a formal approach, in the form of requesting an MOU, for example, the less likely that approach is to be successful.

For the process to be effective, there needs to be strong dialogue between members of funding committees, university international departments in respective institutions, and the researchers or visiting faculty, who need to work together on a jointly crafted and well-co-ordinated plan and to keep each other fully informed of expectations, progress and outcomes. Strong interdepartmental planning, overseen by a specially appointed project steering committee that meets together before, during and after the project, for example, would better ensure that project expectations and possibilities are very clear to all stakeholders, and that there is accountability for achieving the agreed goals, than if the research project is left entirely to the participating researchers to manage in isolation.

A disjointed project at the institutional level, and too great a time lapse between research visits and the establishment of formal institutional ties, may mean that the funding, efforts and time of project participants is not fully utilized and potential opportunities may be lost.

Goal Three: THT Events

Encouraging greater Vietnamese participation in THT Teacher Development Workshops

Though there were not more local Vietnamese presenters at the THT event in 2014 than in the previous year, (the number remained almost the same), the collaborating researchers did manage to co-present aspects of their project successfully and the presentation was well-received.Ongoing collaboration between AIU faculty, faculty and staff at HUCFL and members of THT continues, with the goal being to assist local Vietnamese teachers with preparation for presentations (both collaborative and independent) in August 2015. Potential presenters were identified among August 2014 participants at the THT workshops, who indicated interest via a sign-up sheet circulated at the 2014 closing ceremony. Approximately 15 participants (local high school teachers) provided their contact details to this end. This number does not include HUCFL faculty members who are also expected to contribute in the coming year. THT members visited Hue in April 2015 with a view to firming plans for greater local participation in the August workshops. It is gratifying to see that the research partnership established via this research project appears to have provided a model for co-presenting that has contributed to the increased interest of local English teachers in Vietnam in sharing their professional knowledge and skills with each other.

Summary

Partners working on collaborative international research projects of this nature need to be aware that a project may take an unexpected turn. They should be prepared to be flexible and find

a way to use *all* the information gathered, even if it comes from an unexpected source (in this case the teacher of the experimental class herself suggested the collection of qualitative feedback – which proved to be the basis for much of the subsequent workshop presentation).

The lesson to be gleaned from this indicates it is desirable to have a 'back up' plan, and the importance of gathering a wide range of different forms of data, both qualitative and quantitative, so as to have something to present and publish, in the event that the unexpected events interfere with one's ability to gather the kind of information hoped for.

Researchers collaborating across borders should be prepared for the fact that their research participants (teachers and learners), may do unexpected things. It is good to be aware, for example, that 'instructions' about how to carry out aspects of a project may not be followed in quite the way anticipated. Therefore, it is important to be flexible, especially if one cannot be on site for the whole of the research period and tasks have to be delegated to others. The context in which the research is being conducted may be beyond the control of the researchers, even if one participant is based in the same institution. Likewise, participants do well to be cognisant of the fact that institutional, cultural and personal factors will inevitably influence a project.

It is vital to ensure enough time to discuss the project before it begins with all stakeholders. This will save misunderstandings later. Likewise, ongoing communication is necessary since co-researchers and project participants have their own set of priorities, which may mean time delays, shortcuts or that aspects of a project cannot or may not happen.

Having plenty of time to plan and select appropriate research tools is ideal. The limitations of time, the stage of a semester that

students are at, at the time of a project, accessibility to course materials, and the schedules of co-researchers need to be considered, and appropriate adjustment made to the timeframe and management of the project.

The successful co-presentation in the THT 2014 event indicated that, in spite of difficulties, it is still quite possible to prepare and present research projects collaboratively, over time and distance, and it is pleasing to note that more collaborative presentations are planned for THT Vietnam for the 2015 event in August next year. The goal is to increase the proportion of local presenters so that the event becomes self-sustaining in the long-term, with less reliance on presenters from abroad.

Perceptions of Vietnamese teachers that foreign presenters are 'experts' or will be 'more interesting' than local presenters still need to be addressed. (Staff at HUCFL indicated that if too many presenters are Vietnamese, it is harder to get local teachers to attend the event (especially since the number of competing teacher-development opportunities is growing each year), since they believe local teachers will not offer them anything they don't already know.)

Though Vietnamese teachers may lack confidence in their own English abilities, having local presenters demonstrates that 'perfection' is not necessary to make a contribution to the field and may encourage more people to volunteer to present in the future. By offering opportunities for confident local presenters to share their skills and knowledge, good professional role models are provided, which give local teachers realistic ideas of what they also may aspire to.

Helping local teachers to perceive personal professional development as something they are individually and collectively responsible for, to value the experience and insights of people

working within similar contexts, and to consider how best to pass those skills on to others is a challenge to be addressed by Vietnamese educators themselves. Greater Vietnamese participation in events like the THT Teacher development workshops and joint projects such as the project outlined in this report may go some way towards demonstrating that Vietnamese teachers do indeed have something to offer, as presenters outline how their problems, and their solutions, have relevance to teachers elsewhere.

Appendix A:

Upper secondary school and university teachers - Level 5 (= CEFR C1)

Primary and lower Secondary school teachers - Level 4 (= CEFR B2)

University students - The standard depends on the student's major. E.g. English majors - Level 5 (= CEFR C1)

Upper secondary school students (on completion) - Level 3 (= CEFR B1)

Lower secondary school students (on completion) - Level 2 (= CEFR A2)

Primary school students (on completion) - Level 1 (= CEFR A1)

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Raising Cultural Awareness in ESL Classroom in Bangladesh:
An Approach to Facilitate Effective Language Learning at the
Intermediate Level

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Raising Cultural Awareness in ESL Classroom in Bangladesh: An Approach to Facilitate Effective Language Learning at the Intermediate Level

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Abstract

Given the growing importance of English language teaching under the academic curriculum (intermediate level) in Bangladesh, this study investigated the importance of cultural awareness that can help facilitate learning better and faster. The main purpose of the research work was to see if cultural awareness in the target language could help learners learn English language better. From a comparative study between two groups of intermediate level learners throughout the research, it was found that the group of students who were provided with sufficient cultural knowledge in the target language improved better than the other group. In my findings it was clearly observed that a gradual process of growing cultural knowledge not only ensures better language learning but also prepares learners with sufficient knowledge in the target language culture.

Introduction

With the growing demand of English language worldwide, the approach to teaching this language has also evolved. Although we have many effective English language teaching methods in

this modern era, the effort to bring innovation into the practice of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) has been there all the time. According to Aggarwal (1983) as a global language, English is taught in many countries as a native and non-native language. More than 350 million people speak English as a native language while 300 million people speak English as a second language. It is called the international passport in terms of communication with the entire world (p. 11).

The way English has been taught to our students in Bangladesh there are many frailties. Very few students can claim that they are learning the real language. What they are learning are the enormous amount of rules and structures which are far away from the real language. So, the Target Language Culture (TLC) remains incomprehensible to the students in many respects. For instance, Native speaker-like perception, e.g.: the phrase 'Hangout' is very familiar in target language where drinking alcohol is used but this might sound alien to the Bangladeshi culture. It's very regular in their culture. So, if a student is completely unaware of the British or American culture, he/ she may get shocked (by sudden awareness of the meaning of the term "Hangout"). Again, language changes its meaning according to the situation. What is appropriate for one culture may be wrong to the other culture. For instance, we say 'Assalamualaikum' or 'Nomoskar' or 'kemonachen?" when we greet someone but the British people say 'Good Morning' or 'Hello' or 'what's up' (informal) when they meet people. So, the approaches are different and if one is unaware of that he/ she may get embarrassed.

RESEARCH ISSUES AND QUESTIONS

The following research questions were designed to be addressed in the current research. The questions were designed based on

different criteria of ELT that directly or indirectly relate to the concept of "raising cultural awareness in the target language". These questions are as follows:

1. Can learners in Bangladesh (intermediate level) learn English language better if they get opportunity to raise cultural awareness in the target language and what changes do we find in language learning while students are provided with sufficient cultural knowledge?

2. Does the awareness of the target language culture make any change in language teaching in Bangladesh and how important is the TLC (Target Language Culture) in a Bangladeshi ESL Classroom (intermediate level)?

3. Do culturally familiar/unfamiliar materials affect learner's motivation? How can literature be used to raise cultural awareness in the context of Bangladesh?

Methodology

For an authentic research work, both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied in the study. These two methods gave me an opportunity to find a more comprehensible picture for finding appropriate answers. According to Bryman (1988), research work which is done based on both qualitative and quantitative approaches can help find a researcher 'best of the both worlds'.

To keep pace with my research questions, I prepared two sets of research questions – separately prepared for the teachers and the students. I also used one set of question papers (interview session) for the students to examine the learning outcome of the students. This method helped me to find out the result quantitatively and analyze them statistically. I also kept

observational notes while conducting experimental classes which helped me to deal with qualitative approaches.

In order to gather authentic information, some participants from both the groups of students had been chosen for the survey. Two groups of thirty six students (eighteen students in each) participated in my research and helped me a lot in my study to reach my goal. The students who participated in my research w ere all studying at South Point College located in Baridhara, Dhaka. During students' selection, I did not make any distinction between the two groups rather I tried to keep the groups as they were earlier.

Moreover, seven teachers from the same institution facilitated my research activity by filling up a questionnaire designed for them and also by sharing some important information and giving advices from their experience and observation. During teacher selection, I chose teachers only from the intermediate level who have adequate experience of dealing with the same level of students.

As a part of my research activity, I conducted classes at South Point College (located in Baridhara, Dhaka) and used created and some authentic materials to make the students become aware of the target language culture. I conducted altogether thirty two classes there with a limitation of forty five minutes per class. I used different techniques to get my students acquainted with the Target Language Culture (TLC). I chose Group-A containing eighteen students after the pre-placement test to conduct my survey. Those experimental classes provided me an opportunity to observe the development of the students. I also took interviews of some students before and after the experimental c lasses. These interviews helped me a lot to come to a conclusion of my survey. However, the tests helped me to find the attitude of the students towards the target language culture (English in this case).

The questionnaire was administered to the students in classrooms and around the institutions where students were found. Before signing the consent form, the students were informed that their participation was voluntary and the survey was anonymous.

After getting the consent from the students, the questionnaires were distributed. The students were asked to read the general instructions for the survey and informed that they could skip any question that they would feel uncomfortable with for giving answer. They were given no additional information relevant to the nature of the research project. As the questionnaires administered in the classrooms, the teachers were requested to leave the classroom in order to make the students feel comfortable as they were answering the questions. Another set of questionnaire was distributed to ESL teachers from the same institution.

Assessment and Evaluation Process

The main intention of my research was to see what impact the raising of cultural awareness had on the English language learning of our learners when such materials (created materials) were applied in the context of Bangladesh. Language learning also means learning the target language culture. So, I tried to focus on raising awareness among the students about the Target Language Culture (TLC) to facilitate learning better. I collected passages from different sources including two modern writings considering the culture of native language country which had been applied to grow awareness among the students. I chose literary texts because 'literature can provide a key to motivating them to read in English' and it can be a tool for 'illustrating language use' and for 'introducing cultural assumptions' (McKay, 1982, 536). Unlike the traditional ways, I engaged learners to do some extensive reading. I also tried to engage them in different discussions regarding the target language

culture.

The collected data were analyzed in order to answer the research questions. I gave multiple choice questions mostly because I wanted to analyze the questions in different stand points. The numbers gave me the opportunity to calculate and figure out some exact outcomes.

To conduct classes with the students of class XI at South Point College, I prepared materials (collected from different sources) of my own which reflected the culture of the target language. The materials had been collected with an intention to give learners the flavor of target language culture in their classroom so that they could grasp meanings of terms associated with the TL culture faster.

Data Analysis

The descriptive and contextual methods have been followed for the data analysis. The two methods are applied in the data analysis of the present study because these methods are inexpensive, time-saving and easily understandable. The findings of the present study are shown in tables and column charts, and then narrative description is presented in the text in a quantitative manner.

Comparative Study of Group A

It has already been mentioned that classes for two groups of students (eighteen in each) were conducted as a part of research investigation during the experimental classes at South Point College. A comparative list of marks of the students in two tests is shown in Table A.

The actual names of the learners have been hid in order to avoid any kind of embarrassment. However, these students are all quite matured and have the prior knowledge of the Target Language (English). Now, if we look at the performances of the students, we can see that many of the students have improved their skills to some extent. Only a few students could not bring much development throughout the whole session. However, the other students broughtvery little development in their use of tenses, vocabularies and sentences construction.

Here we see that the average of the total marks of the students in the pre-test was 58.88% but it reached to 64.07% in the post-test. It means that the studnets have improved upto 5.19% in the post-test.

It is true that the the students have got some advantages in the second test and there is no doubt about it. After all, all the students have improved more or less and that is not a miracle in case of learning.

TABLE 1: COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GROUP A

Sl.	Students Roll No.	Obtained Marks (Pre-Test) Total Marks-15	Obtained Marks (Post-Test) Total Marks -15
01	001	8	10
02	003	10	11
03	005	9	11
04	007	10	10
05	009	8	10
06	0011	7	7
07	0013	8	6
08	0015	6	7
09	0017	11	12
10	0019	12	13
11	0021	10	11
12	0023	10	10
13	0025	9	11
14	0027	7	10
15	0029	7	7
16	0031	10	8
17	0033	10	7
18	0035	7	12
	Total marks of all students	159	173

Comparative Study of Group B

Same kind of tasks have been given to both groups in order to ensure the authenticity of my research. Both the groups have achieved quite similar level of profeciency. So, my purpose was to investagate the improvement of the two groups. The comparative study of two tests of Group-B is given in Table 2.

This group has been taught in the traditional way of story wrtiting. It is clear in this group that some students also got some improvement and only few of them remained the same as they were before.

Here we can see that the average of the marks of all students in the pre-test was 62.22% which has increased upto 64.81% in the post-test. It means that the improvement in the second test is 2.59% which is very minium. While students of Group A have improved 5.19% in the narrative story wrting class, Group B has improved comperatively less.

Now, it is very clear that the students who were taught through the gradual growing of cultural awareness had improved more than the students taught in the traditional way. Though, the improvement is very less, it can be taken as considerable improvement as it was a session for teaching writing courses. It takes a long time to get mastery on writing unless it has been nourished for a long time practice.

TABLE 2: COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GROUP B

Sl.	Students Roll No.	Obtained Marks (Pre-Test) Total Marks-15	Obtained Marks (Post-Test) Total Marks -15
01	002	11	11
02	004	10	12
03	006	12	13
04	008	11	12
05	0010	9	10
06	0012	6	6
07	0014	9	12
08	0016	10	10
09	0018	8	8
10	0020	11	10
11	0022	7	8
12	0024	8	8
13	0026	10	10
14	0028	6	6
15	0030	12	11
16	0032	10	10
17	0034	7	7
18	0036	11	11
	Total marks of all students	168	175

Interviews

First of all, I called two students from each group and asked them few questions regarding their way of learning English in their classroom. Their interviews have been given in Appendix - C. From their interviews, it came out to light that some of them knew about the term 'Culture' but they were never given any emphasis on the Target Language Culture (TLC). Maximum of them were very exam-oriented what their teachers and parents wanted from them. But it also came to the light that they are much interested to know about the other culture.

However, I called two students from each group again after the whole session. Maximum of the student from Group B had the same kind of opinion regarding learning English which was not interesting at all. The teacher asked them to memorize the stories from the guide, sometime they were asked to prepare notes from the collection of two-three books.

However, the students from the Group-A were not so de-motivated like the students of Group-B. Rather, the classes seemed quite different from the traditional classes. They leant many things about the target language culture through pictures, videos, reading texts and so on. They also enjoyed the method the teacher introduced to teach them. Their interviews are also added in the Appendix – A.

Teachers' Questionnaire

The teachers' questionnaire will be discussed first with the use of charts and tables. There were altogether 8 questions for the teachers.

1. Do you provide proper cultural knowledge while teaching

English language in the classroom?

Yes-25%/ No-60%/ Sometime-15%

2. If your answer is no, then why do you think cultural knowledge is not necessary in the English language classroom?

It's very time consuming to give importance on culture-70%/ Students will not be benefited by getting cultural knowledge-60% / National Curriculum doesn't provide any opportunity to raise cultural awareness-60%/ Students usually run for getting marks-85%/ Cultural knowledge is not included in the syllabus-40%/ Some students who come from conservative background may get embarrassed-70%/ Students need strong grammar knowledge not culture-60%

3. Do you think culture should be given as importance as other as language skills in a language classroom?

Yes-30%/ No-70%

4. Do your students get enough opportunity to involve in target language culture?

Yes-5%/ No-60%/ Sometime-15%/ Very often- 20

5. How much it will be benefited if the students are given prior knowledge about the target language culture?

Very Much-5%/Quite Less-55%/Not at all-40%

6. Do you think students' attitude and learning will be changed if they are given proper cultural knowledge?

Very Much-15%/Quite Less-60%/Not at all-20%

Finally the teachers had to write a comment on the effectiveness of growing cultural awareness in the English language classroom. Only 40% teachers replied to this question. One of them wrote there is no scope to introduce culture in the classroom since there is always a pressure of huge syllabus to cover and students also want to get good marks. Another teachers wrote that cultural knowledge can be introduced in the classroom but it should be included in the curriculam first of all. Other one has similar kind of opinion like if the students are to provide with any kind of knowledge that would be helpful, they should be prepared from the earlier stages of their learning, not from the middle of their session.

Students' Questionnaire

Now, students' questionnaire will be discussed one after another. There were altogether ten questions for the students which were designed to address the students' comments regarding cultural awareness in the classroom.

1. Do you think the awareness of the target language culture (English) can make changes in language learning?

Yes-75%/ No-25%

2. Do you get proper opportunity to learn about culture in English language classroom?

Yes-5%/ No-70%/ Sometime-20%/ Very Often-5%

3. How much will you be benefited if you are provided with sufficient cultural knowledge in the classroom?

Very Much-75%/ Quite Less-20%/ Not at all-5%

4. Do you think culture should be given as importance as language skills in a language classroom?

Yes-60%/ No-/5% Sometime-25%/ Very Less-10%

5. Do you think students' attitude and learning will be improved if they are given proper cultural knowledge?

In a great extent- 60%/ No-5%/ Sometime-25%. Very less-10%

6. Will you support providing sufficient cultural knowledge through the use of literary works in a language classroom?

Always-45%/ No-5%/ Sometime-15% /To some extent-35%/

7. Do you think raising proper cultural awareness in the classroom is more important than the other problems?

Yes-95%/ No-5%

Thus, from the questionnaire it has been clearly identified that majority of the teachers are not willing to provide sufficient cultural knowledge in the classroom due to time constraints, rigid curriculum, students' exam oriented mentality, conservative outlook and so on. On the other hand, majority of the students want to get some prior knowledge about the target language culture though they also agreed with the limitations of our education system. However, many of them believe that if they are provided with adequate cultural knowledge in the target language culture, their learning and attitude may improve. Finally, they claimed that the students will be more interested to learn the target language when they get a chance to be accustomed with it which is more important than the limitations.

LIMITATIONS

Most of the students of our country are not aware of the target language culture since they are never thoughtful of that. Again, our teachers are not inclined to have any conversion regarding other culture. Even if the students are interested to know about the target language culture, they are very often introduced with the TLC.

We have social restrictions which sometime make a big wall for learning a language. We have rigid national curriculum, lack of trained teacher, traditional notion of teaching and so which are also added with this problem.

Lack of teacher's motivation can be another major problem in the introduction of culture in the ESL classroom. When I look back to my own experience, I remember how miserable it was to learn English. Our teacher used to enter into the classroom with a cane and let us memorize the word meanings in Bengali. Moreover, the grammar classes were more horrible, since the teacher wanted us to memorize so many rules of grammar, even the structure of the sentence.

Last but not the least; financial deficiency is an age-old problem in the education sector of Bangladesh. I bore the total expenses of my experimental classes including the materials, photocopies, collection of movie clips and so on. I did it for special purpose but it is not possible for others to do on regular basis in the present practical situation of Bangladesh. Most of the teachers of our country are not properly paid, so it is unwise to expect financial supports for the cultural materials and resources beside text books. Though our government provides enough text books for the students up to class XII, they may not provide more money for making the students culturally aware.

Conclusion

The experimental classes raising awareness about culture among the students opened up a door for me to read the minds of my students and understand what they really wanted, how they preferred to learn English, what really made them go out of the box for communicative purposes and so many others.

The research outcome suggests that the learners have enjoyed the sessions where they were exposed to TL culture through texts and other forms. Those who gained better understanding in the TL culture, did better in linguistic performance throughout the sessions. However, there is still this concern in relation to what our teachers think about it. Unfortunately, majority of the teachers who took part in the survey did not whole-heartedly support this kind of initiative for CLT. Some reasons that they came up with are:

1. Students are only concerned about passing tests and achieving
grades

2. Use of additional materials focusing on TL culture is time consuming

3. National curriculum does not include this as a vital part in the texts.

Apart from these reasons, the underlying reality was that no educator could come out of the convention of "textbooks" and "tests". My research outcome suggests that the learners who were exposed to TL culture had been able to develop language better. Based on this observation, I could claim that the research outcome matches with my hypothesis. However, there is still this question- to what extent this study has been able to involve

teachers? Well, this is where I believe we have a greater scope to study further to address this question.

It has already been proved in this study that growing cultural awareness in Bangladeshi classroom will surely bring a wind of change in ESL teaching and learning in Bangladesh. So I can assert that the time is not so far away when our students will be able to read, write, listen and speak English efficiently. There is a promising scope for educators in Bangladesh to carry out this type of research to have better insight into TESOL through raising cultural awareness. I recommend that these types of research be undertaken in different segments of public and private education in Bangladesh, i.e. school (till SSC), college and university so our approach to teaching English gets better. The better we can prepare our learners as culturally assimilated, the better a future we can offer them.

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Appendix-A

An Interview with a student (before the experimental classes)

T: Are you familiar with the word 'Culture'?

S: Yes, I know. Culture means the tradition. Culture means our life style. Culture is also our identity.

T: Do you like other culture?

S: No, I like my culture. I think our culture is the best. We respect our elders but other people don't respect the seniors. We have good kind of clothing but western people wear very bad bad clothes.

T: Do you think culture has a connection with the language (In this case English)?

S: I don't know. We learn English to get good marks in the exam. That's why we have to practice a lot of grammar every day. But I don't know whether we learn culture or not.

T: Can you tell me why do we need English?

S: We need English everywhere. If we want to write anything, we need English. If we want to read any book, we need English. Again, if we want to know grammar well, we need to learn English. We need English to get a good job

T: Do you read English books and if yes, what kind of?

S: I don't like to read English books because they are very tough

and I don't understand them. Sometime, I read comic books. I love to read Bengali books.

T: Then how do you prepare your assignment for English class?

S: We have particular books and our teacher tells us to read from there. Sometime our teacher prepares topics and we also read from there.

T: How do you write stories?

S: Most of the times, we get common stories from book. So, we don't need to write of our own. Sometimes, there are unseen stories and we have to write of our own. Then we try to write of our own. But I don't like to write of my own.

An interview with a student (after the experimental classes)

T: What is Culture?

S: Culture means the values, beliefs, thoughts, behaviors, attitudes, and ways of living of a particular group. Every nation has own culture and it is different from other nation. Culture is our identity. We are Bangladeshi and we have our own Bengali culture.

T: Do you like other culture, like Western, Indian or Chinese?

S: Every culture has unique qualities. What is right for us may not be right for other cultural people. So, I like my culture the best but I don't hate other culture also.

T: Do you think cultural knowledge helps to develop our language?

S: Culture is an integral part of the language. It helps a lot to learn language if we are culturally aware. We can understand the situation well when we know the culture of that language. We can also grow our familiarity with the language and situation.

T: Do you think you are benefited after knowing the culture of the target language?

S: Before knowing about the western culture, I used to hate many things about their culture. Now, I don't have the same kind of thinking. I think what they are doing is appropriate for their culture and what we are doing is right for our culture. Now, I can see the dissimilarities clearly with my own eyes and I have also respect for their culture. After knowing the western culture, I intention of reading English has changed and I can guess many unknown words now.