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Best Practices for Professional Development

Dan Ferreira[1]
International Christian University

Abstract

The shift from the industrial-age model of learning to one driven by the global knowledge economy has placed a burden on institutions of higher education to modernize teaching methodology. Although iterations of modern technology continue to mark their presence to varying degrees in learning environments globally, linking the instructional use of modern affordances with enhanced learning outcomes remains an issue. More than ever, research in effective integration points to professional development as the linchpin for success. This essay reviews the latest research and proposes ideas for adapting some of the best practices for professional development today at the individual and institutional levels.

INTRODUCTION

The demands for accountability and quality in teaching and learning in the 21st century have progressed well beyond the traditional teacher-fronted approaches limited to the confines of brick-and-mortar settings. The demand of the global knowledge economy, the advent of instructional communication technologies (ICTs), and the widespread access to the Internet continue to have an unprecedented influence on the culture of teaching and learning on a global scale. In many institutions, however, the combination of increased tuition and reduced budgets asserts pressure on administrators and instructors to suffice with what resources are available while delivering teaching content that is dynamic and efficient (Balan, Manko, & Phillips, 2011). The challenge confronting many educational institutions is how to change the outdated industrial-age model of one-way knowledge transmission to a constructivist student-centered model that incorporates all the affordances that modern literacies allow. The following paragraphs will offer some contemporary ideas and resources that faculty, administration, and/or individual teachers may want to incorporate into their teaching methodology to meet the challenge outlined above.

BEST PRACTICES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

TPACK

As a result of the plethora of technological innovations and the constant changes to software and hardware, the need for guiding principles of technological integration has gained popularity in educational research (Balan, Manko, & Phillips, 2011; Eib & Miller, 2006;

[1] Dan Ferreira is an instructor at International Christian University, Mitaka City, Tokyo, Japan. Correspondence should be sent to thkr07@gmail.com

Požarnik, 2009). The Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework is a model that has gained much popularity in educational research due to its focus on assessing the integration of technology with pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge (Ay, Karadağ, & Acat, 2015; Fransson & Holmberg, 2012; Lehiste, 2015). Building on Shulman's (see Koh, Chai, & Tay, 2014) Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) model, Mishra and Koehler (2006) expanded the PCK framework to include the technological aspect.

The TPACK breaks down into seven domains and four intersecting processes and is defined as (1) technological knowledge (TK) - understanding the tools used in the classroom—"digital and non-digital" ("TPACK Model," 2010), (2) technological content knowledge (TCK) - understanding how technology can be used to deliver subject content, (3) technological pedagogical knowledge (TPK) - understanding how to use tools with teaching methodology, (4) content knowledge (CK) - knowledge of subject matter including "deep learning of concepts, as well as higher order thinking and high level communication" ("TPACK Model," 2010, Para. 2), (5) pedagogical knowledge (PK) - understanding different ways to present curriculum content, (6) pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) - understanding how to teach subject content, and (7) technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) - understanding how to blend the intersecting domains of TCK, TPK, and CPK to enhance the learning experience.

Since the TPACK measures the effectiveness of an instructor's use of technological integration, a common strategy for many studies is to use the model's questionnaire as a pre- and post-test assessment along with some instructional intervention program (Lehiste, 2015; Rienties, Brouwer, & Lygo-Baker, 2013). Contrary to the practice of empirical research design of guarding against the testing effect as a rival explanation (Krathwohl, 2009), the TPACK is deliberately used as a pretest to raise awareness and challenge assumptions about the technological pedagogical integration (Fransson & Holmberg, 2012). The questions contained in the TPACK questionnaire target specific domains that instructors must reflect on and provide a self-assessment based on their teaching practices. The following are two examples of questionnaire items. One (TPK) question item is: "When I design my teaching, I always consider how pedagogy will influence the use of technology"; and a non-tech survey item isolating a CPK indicator is: "When designing a teaching activity, I always consider how the content and pedagogy influence each other" (Rienties, Brouwer, & Lygo-Baker, 2013. p. 127).

While raising an instructor's TPACK awareness is an important first step for teaching effectiveness, it is the design of a professional development program that plays a significant role in increased student performance. Fransson and Holmberg (2012) illustrate an example of how TK, PK, and CK come together to enhance teaching. A teacher's knowledge of an online presentation tool such as Prezi (https://prezi.com/) is considered TK; adapting CK on a course such as home economics to the online tool is using TCK because it requires "knowledge about the manner in which technology and content are reciprocally related" (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p. 1028). Additionally, Fransson and Holmberg identify a user's manipulation of online presentation features of an e-tool as TPK because the interactivity required on the part of the user has the potential to influence learning (2012).

However, the extent to which a teacher adequately conveys CK in the presentation will reflect the effectiveness of PCK—the domain that identifies what approaches are necessary for teaching content effectively (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Nevertheless, the above example represents the dynamics of the TPACK process because "effective technology integration for teaching specific subject matter requires understanding the relationship between technology, pedagogy, and content" (Lehiste, 2015, p. 19).

Teacher Reflection

Teacher reflection is one of the common strategies to emerge from the literature regarding best practices for professional development. A case study of a teacher-training course at the University of Ljubljana identified teacher reflection as one of its top goals of the program (Požarnik, 2009). It indicated that "[t]o acquire a reflective and researching attitude" into their teaching practice, teachers used video recordings to search for proof of effective teaching (p. 348). For example, the teachers in Pehmer, Gröschner, and Seidel's study (2015), viewed their work objectively on video recording. Establishing the teacher-as-viewer and removing the instructors from the "complex classroom setting" (p. 110) can help teachers reflect on TPK and/or PK. Additionally, the teacher-as-student performance on a learning activity with the aid of video material can provide further opportunities to review the footage for evidence of TCK or CK—areas targeting higher thinking skills and content. Eib and Miller (2006) suggest that in addition to video presentations, "combining other forms of media resources with an online discussion forum can stimulate deeper reflections and meaningful dialog" (p. 5). As Balan, Manko, and Phillips (2011) assert "[t]hrough the process of reflection, educators can determine their strengths and identify their weaknesses…[and] ensure improvement in their skills" (p. 6).

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is any form of feedback that is given during a learning event such as a professional development course. Unlike summative assessment, which usually summarizes the learning objectives at the end of a course, formative assessment is ongoing and can be repeated many times. For professional development, teachers may choose from any combination of formative assessments such as "a mini-lecture with reflective analysis, written reports on reading assignments, peer observation, [and a] seminar thesis" (Požarnik, 2009. p. 349). Formative assessment can also include artifacts from the students through classroom observations, focus group interviews, and collected student assignments" (Wang, Hsu, Reeves, & Coster, 2014, p. 107). Formative assessment allows a teacher and/or course designer to evaluate teaching and learning and to refine areas of improvement. In a study to promote quality online teaching, Dittmar and McCraken (2012) explain the role of formative assessment in PD:

> Mentors collaborate with instructors as they reference a curriculum…worksheet, a formative assessment instrument that includes key instructional elements identified as critical to successful teaching. Together, the mentor and instructor review the instructor's performance, and collaborate regarding instructional goals and needs, for example, responding to questions and requests for additional information and assistance. This approach not only provides needed resources, but also assists participants to further identify areas of unmet need. Moreover, it promotes strengthened collegiality among departmental faculty members as well as reinforces affiliation with the larger institution. (p. 166)

In short, the above quote reinforces the idea of community in the professional development process. Nurturing a sense of togetherness and mutual endeavor in professional development can

benefit the individual instructor as well as the institution as a whole. Moreover, using formative (and summative) assessment along with self-reflection practices, instructors can improve their TPACK by analyzing their practices, deciding areas for more research and/or improvement, and then developing strategies to implement those changes in their teaching methodology (Balan, Manko, & Phillips, 2011).

Student Formative Assessment

One overlooked area for professional development that represents a gap in the literature is the role that student formative assessment can play in teacher professional development. In a study of students' perceptions of effective blended learning practices in a higher education setting in Saudi Arabia, students' responses to open-ended questions allowed the researchers to observe ways to improve their TPK in face-to-face classes (Zumor, Refaai, Eddin, & Al-Rahman, 2013). Moreover, student suggestions helped instructors refine their TPK to include "[s]olving students' technical problems, providing them with proper training, and increasing the number of labs" (p. 104). Since learning environments are situational and the needs of the learners are context-dependent, professional development that includes student voice can improve the complexities involved in the TPACK experience. Given the ever-increasing demands to include new literacies into the curriculum, Nummedal's (1994) suggestions hold as much relevance today as it did over two decades ago:

> [A] variety of signs point to the need for change in the ways we approach higher education. To launch such a movement for change without a well-thought-out plan for the ongoing assessment of the effects of the proposed instructional innovations on student learning simply will not do. (p. 291)

Although some might argue that students' lack of professional training precludes them from formative assessment, recent calls for exploring the value of student voice throughout the learning event (and not just through an anonymous end-of-term summative assessment) have revived what Nummedal (1994) started decades ago (see Olofson, Swallow, & Neumann, 2016; Zher, Hussein, & Saat, 2016). In a qualitative study of 100 first-year Japanese students at a liberal arts college in Japan, Hale (2015) explored the use of student self-assessments of high-stakes essay tests. Although some students expressed uneasiness with the formal assessment process, Hale (2015) suggests that "the longer students are exposed to self-assessment, the stronger the 'buy-in' becomes" (p. 10). The important point established in the above study, in terms of professional development, is the idea of expanding the role of ownership and accountability of learning outcomes to the domain of the primary stakeholder—the student. As Hale (2015) aptly concludes, "[i]f… the aim of university educators is to promote student self-awareness and inclusion in a democratic community of practice, then showing students are respected and trusted enough to be a part of their learning assessment can only enhance these aims" (p. 11).

Framework-based Faculty Development Programs

Framework-driven faculty development programs offer one the best professional development practices because they present opportunities for participant instructors to explore

and synthesize researched approaches with authentic teaching needs in a structured environment. For example, Wang, Hsu, Reeves, and Coster (2014) investigated how the professional development (PD) program using a design-based model impacted teachers' use of technology in teaching and student learning outcomes. After the two-year study, they observed that "the PD's intervention successfully affected 68% the teacher's change in classroom practices by providing ample opportunities to foster the development of students' new literacy skills" (p. 113).

The common element that can be found in other models such as The Dialogic Video Cycle (Pehmer, Gröschner, & Seidel, 2015), Design-based Research Model (Wang, Hsu, Reeves, & Coster, 2014), NETTLE (Požarnik, 2009), or the TPACK (Lehiste, 2015) is the iterative process. Changing old ways of teaching is a process and one-off professional development workshops are not enough to bring about sustainable change (Balan, Manko, & Phillips, 2011; Lehiste, 2015). If instructors are to improve their TPACK they need continuously sustained opportunities to examine their teaching in light of recent research practices measured against student learning outcomes. Research by Wang et al. (2014) suggest that as many as 240 hours of training is needed before use of new methods become usable in a teacher's repertoire. The flexibility of adding the TPACK framework with other sound models into a professional development program should afford opportunities to improve on individual domains TCK, PCK, and TPK. Successful integration of those intersecting domains into an overarching TPACK will depend on personal and institutional factors.

Synopsis of Effective Learning Environments

A common theme found in the literature regarding the environment best suited for effective professional development is one that is driven by faculty/administration (Balan, Manko, & Phillips, 2011; Eib & Miller, 2006; Hinkelman & Gruba, 2012). In a European study of tertiary educators, Pozarnik (2009) identifies the "teaching environment in 90% of cases as the main obstacle" to professional development on an individual level due to factors such as too high a workload, too rigid and overloaded programs, large groups of students, and no support from colleagues (p. 351). Financial "incentives" offered by the department (Eib & Miller, 2006, p. 11), achievement certificates "signed by the Dean" of the faculty (Požarnik, 2009, p. 349) or nurturing an overall sense of "mutual ownership" (Rienties, Brouwer, & Lygo-Baker, 2013, p. 130) can contribute to community building and a climate of invested interest. The importance of faculty taking the lead in community building and professional development is encapsulated in Eib and Miller's (2006) assessment: "Carefully designed faculty development approaches can create a culture that supports thoughtful focus on teaching, while nurturing the sense of connectedness and collegiality that is vital to continuous innovation and improvement in post-secondary institutions" (p. 1). Without the proper learning environment established by the leaders of the institution, the climate will most likely devolve into a "blaming [i]nstitution" (Rienties, Brouwer, & Lygo-Baker, 2013, p. 130) where everyone accuses the other of being the source of the problem.

CONCLUSION

For the better part of a century, institutions of learning have largely depended on a reliable transmissive model of teaching that was suitable for local industrial-age economies. Since the turn of the century, the growing accessibility to modern technologies, such as the

Internet and personal computers, has placed a pressure on educational institutions to respond to forces now driven by the global knowledge market. Of greater concern than the rapid changes to technology in education is the need for an effective integration of modern affordances that deliver on the promise of enhanced learning outcomes. In response to that challenge much research has focused on modernizing teaching methodology as the answer.

The purpose of this essay was to share some of the professional development best practices as they pertain to improved teaching methodology. The use of frameworks such as the TPACK can help an instructor raise awareness of teaching practices by zeroing in on certain teaching objectives as divided into various intersecting subdomains of knowledge—that is, technological, pedagogical, and content. Teacher reflection, formative assessment, and even student input round out some of the ideas that research suggests could help instructors become more adaptable to the ever-changing educational environment. Finally, a look at effective learning environments suggests that for real change to take root, a collaborative culture of learning and development involving all stakeholders—faculty, administration, teacher, and student—may be the best approach for the next enduring model for years to come.

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Hooper, D. (2017). Beyond a transaction: Independent vocabulary study approaches for English conversation school students in Japan. *Accents Asia, 9*(1), 8-29.

Beyond a transaction: Independent Vocabulary Study Approaches for English Conversation School Students in Japan

Daniel Hooper[1]

Kanda University of International Studies

ABSTRACT

Despite vocabulary size being widely recognized as a key predictor of L2 reading and listening proficiency, it could be argued that many students within English conversation schools in Japan (*eikaiwa*) are not given sufficient opportunities for theoretically principled vocabulary study. This paper analyzes existing research on independent study approaches as well as complementary classroom-based pedagogical practices that foster both incidental and deliberate vocabulary learning. Through the utilization of both mobile assisted language learning (MALL) and extensive reading (ER) programs, measured changes to a language course are suggested that could be feasibly implementable within the specific constraints of an *eikaiwa* setting. Furthermore, potential institutional, technical and affective obstacles that could hamper such a program's effectiveness are identified and discussed. This paper hopes to provide approaches to vocabulary instruction based on empirical data, while also remaining accessible to teachers in a context often overlooked in academic and pedagogical literature.

VOCABULARY LEARNING IN AN ENGLISH CONVERSATION SCHOOL IN JAPAN

English conversation schools (known as *eikaiwa gakkou* or simply *eikaiwa*) form a substantial segment of the private English language education industry in Japan. For many Japanese, these schools provide perhaps one of the only post-university points of contact with the English language. Especially outside of the major urban centers, for those wishing to learn

[1] Daniel Hooper is a student in the MA TESOL Program at Kanda University of International Studies. Correspondence should be sent to Daniel Hooper, Tochigi-ken, Ashikaga-shi, Asakura-cho 2-13-17, JAPAN. Email: tywardreathdan@gmail.com

English in later life or those aiming to develop existing communicative ability further, *eikaiwa* exists as one of the only available options.

Despite *eikaiwa* schools being widely accessible across the entirety of Japan, there are several obstacles that potentially limit frequent and sustained student attendance. Lessons are usually expensive and, due to most adult students being in full-time employment, attendance is usually restricted to one hour-long lesson per week. Within an EFL context like Japan, this extremely limited access to L2 input and lack of opportunities to interact in the target language are grave concerns for teachers aiming to foster communicative competence in their students. Furthermore, within *eikaiwa* lessons, students are generally taught from set textbooks, often prescribed or even published by the *eikaiwa* schools themselves, as a method of bypassing the fact that instructors in these institutions often lack even fundamental teaching qualifications or basic classroom experience. Many lessons in this context are carried out with leisure, rather than language acquisition in mind (Kubota, 2011). Student assessment within a large number of *eikaiwa* schools is often administered by instructors with limited experience with best practices in language assessment. The hiring practices in eikaiwa schools are at times criticized as it is claimed that instructors may be hired for aesthetic reasons (young, attractive, Caucasian) while often being pedagogically inexperienced and lacking adequate training (Bossaer, 2003; Kubota, 2011; Lummis, 1976; Sapinaru Tamas & Tamas, 2012). This means that, in some cases, students could conceivably float from class to class for years on end without any real signs of improvement while, at the same time, lacking a experienced educator to advise them on what they could potentially do to remedy any developmental issues they might have. Independent study is not normally prioritized in the *eikaiwa* industry, as this undermines the economic model whereby schools are paid for the time students attend classes. Providing independent strategies could result in students finding less value in the face-to-face model, thus threatening their revenue source.

It could certainly be argued, then, that if an instructor in this context is to stand a reasonable chance of encouraging long-term linguistic development in their students, they will need to provide students with training and opportunities to learn effectively in, but without the need of, *eikaiwa* schools. Students will need to be exposed to both the tools and language necessary to open themselves up to the wealth of linguistic input provided by books, movies, and the Internet. However, another issue that teachers must consider is that many adult students are full-time salaried workers in a country famous for its demanding work schedules. Therefore, teachers need to provide students with training in independent study that will be efficient in terms of returns for their effort, afford flexibility of time requirements, and include features that sustain continued motivation.

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) potentially offer a number of resources that have the potential to fill (with proper instruction on their use) most, if not all, of these criteria. If an adequate amount of initial learner training is provided and learner consultation and feedback is monitored continuously by the teacher, CALL and MALL can go some way to addressing the shortcomings that *eikaiwa* students face in terms of insufficient L2 exposure. Furthermore, these approaches to vocabulary study, with materials informed by SLA and TESOL research findings, can act as a bridge for students that will eventually allow them access to a world of manageable native or near-native level input. To date, *eikaiwa* schools have utilized CALL and Internet access as a substitute for, rather than a supplement to, standard face-to-face lessons. Most of the major *eikaiwa* chains offer some kind of CALL-based option for allowing students to take video lessons online, accessing

their in-house texts via mobile device, or providing supplementary quizzes for home study. An extensive review of these online offerings revealed only one company to offer a focus specifically on vocabulary.

Vocabulary size is one of the most reliable predictors for L2 reading ability (Cobb, 2008; Nation, 2006) and, despite this fact, an explicit focus on vocabulary is often overlooked or under-emphasized in a large number of teaching materials and instructional contexts (Folse, 2004; Folse, 2010). In particular, a concentration on the first five thousand highest frequency words in English has been claimed to offer students substantial returns on their effort in terms of understanding a wide range of spoken and written language (Nation, 2006). Helping students increase their vocabulary size to the point where they are able to achieve 95% (minimal) or 98% (optimal) coverage of written and spoken English is arguably a desirable goal as it has been found in a number of studies (Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010) to be sufficient for student comprehension without the aid of a teacher or dictionary. After considering these findings it becomes evident that spending time both inside and outside of class building students' vocabulary size based on high frequency word lists could be an effective approach towards gaining access to a wealth of comprehensible input in the future.

As for how to best approach vocabulary study, this is a continuing debate. Opinion is largely split between those who believe vocabulary can be effectively learnt through an implicit focus, through the use of extensive reading and ample opportunities for analysing words in context (Oxford and Crookall, 1990), and those who feel that the explicit study of decontextualized words via word cards or word lists has great value to learners (Nation, 2013; Webb, 2009). Both camps present convincing arguments and one could certainly say that there is clear value in both positions. One way of addressing these two opposing positions is through the integration of both within a balanced curriculum such as Nation's "Four Strands" (Nation, 2013). In this model, incidental vocabulary learning, through activities like extensive reading, is covered within a "meaning-focused input strand" whereas explicit vocabulary study forms part of a "language-focused strand." These strands each make up 25% of a language course (with the remaining 50% focused on ‘meaning-focused output” and “fluency development”) and work in a way where each strand complements the other.

Within a context where students have limited time and often limited motivation to study outside of class, a teacher needs approaches that will offer the best chance of giving learners at least a basic understanding of high frequency words quickly, whilst also exposing them to contextualised language outside of the classroom. The extremely high percentage of smart phone ownership currently among Japanese university students (White & Mills, 2015) is one untapped resource that can be potentially exploited to achieve this goal. Furthermore, explicit and implicit vocabulary study via CALL or MALL can be done at a low cost and, in many cases, has a strong theoretical foundation in terms of increased efficiency of vocabulary retention as well as techniques for sustaining student motivation (Abrams & Walsh, 2014; Imrie, 2014; Spiri, 2008; Yip & Kwan, 2006; Zhang, Song, & Burston, 2011). Most importantly though, it undermines certain arguably negative elements of the *eikaiwa* business model by exposing learners to the idea that their development is not reliant on a company or an instructor. Language learning becomes something that exists beyond the walls of an institution, something that can occur anywhere and at any time in their daily lives and something that becomes personal and rewarding as they are handed the responsibility for their own linguistic development.

The specific setting acting as a basis for this particular pedagogical investigation and intervention is a mid-sized private English conversation school, located approximately 100

kilometres north-west of Tokyo. Students range in age from pre-school children to retirees. At present, the school teaches around 1,000 students in total. The school employs 22 foreign native-speaker and Japanese teaching staff, with solely the foreign staff teaching adult classes. The primary focus of this study is the school's 150 currently enrolled adult students. Adult classes are divided between private classes and group classes. Private classes are more expensive, can be arranged at the students' discretion, can be one-on-one or small groups, and can last up to 2 hours. Group classes typically meet once a week for an hour, contain 2 to 6 students, and feature an institutional requirement of 50% of the lesson content being based on a set textbook. Especially in the case of group lessons, students have an extremely limited amount of L2 contact time and often do not incorporate home study as part of the course. Furthermore, instructors in the school, with four exceptions, have received no formal training in TESOL principles and practices and, of these four instructors, only one has received training associated with adult or university-age students. If one also takes into account the fact that most instructors teach on average 25 classes per week, not including travelling time between several school branches, it becomes clear that practical viability needs to be at the forefront of any pedagogical approach being proposed.

Considering these specific contextual considerations, it could be argued that an effective and sustainable vocabulary program would need to greatly increase opportunities for student L2 contact outside of the school. Additionally, the pedagogical intervention needs to be well organized and simple enough that teachers lacking even fundamental training would be able to easily implement it in class despite a demanding teaching schedule.

SELECTIVE REVIEW OF LITERATURE: PROMOTING AUTONOMOUS AND SUSTAINED VOCABULARY STUDY

A need for vocabulary

An essential but often overlooked issue in vocabulary teaching involves which words students should study to stand the best chance of fulfilling their language goals. Nation (2013) claims that learners need to focus on high frequency vocabulary as (a) it covers such a high proportion of spoken and written texts that it is necessary in order to make these sources of input accessible to learners, (b) fluent access to high frequency words is necessary for text comprehension, and (c) students will be unable to produce spoken or written language without a basic knowledge of it. Frequency word lists therefore act as a valuable resource to both researchers and teachers as they give insight into which words are the most useful for students to focus on (Spiri, 2008).

A key reason for teachers to devote time to ensuring students have a comfortable grasp of high frequency vocabulary is the concept of text coverage. Coverage refers to what percentage of a text will be made up of words known by the reader according to their current vocabulary size. It was found by Laufer (1989) that a vocabulary size of 5,000 words was sufficient to provide a

reader with 95% coverage of authentic academic material at an undergraduate level. Laufer also reported that this 95% coverage figure marked the point where the participants were able to function as "readers" as they succeeded in achieving a score of 55% or more in a reading comprehension test. Word coverage was also examined by Hirsch and Nation (1992), who found that in order to allow learners to read unsimplified texts for pleasure they would require 97-98% coverage which, in turn, is provided by a 5,000-word vocabulary.

In order to address the challenge of providing learners with the guidance and tools necessary to reach the goal of a 5,000-word vocabulary while also having a solid working knowledge of the words they encounter, a balanced approach is necessary. There is no one single effective way in which to study vocabulary (Folse, 2004) and providing students with direct guidance supported by empirical research as well exposing them to a range of resources allowing them to work autonomously is perhaps ambitious enough for educators. Nation proposes a "four strands" approach where 25% of a language course is spent on each of the following areas: meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development (Nation, 2013). It is the meaning-focused input strand through extensive reading and the language-focused strand via deliberate word card study that this paper will direct its attention to.

Incidental vocabulary learning through extensive reading

Extensive reading (ER) programs are based around students reading large amounts of material that is comprehensible at their current level (less than 5% of unknown running words) while being focused on meaning rather than language and reading as a pleasurable activity (Nation, 2013). Furthermore, most extensive reading programs seek to create a comfortable and supportive environment that nurtures "a lifelong reading habit." (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002, p. 296). Teachers can increase the likelihood of ER programs being successful by creating a ‘reading culture’ where students are reading in large amounts and by providing students with material such as graded readers featuring a wide range of topics and genres in order to appeal to diverse student interests. Active involvement in the reading process can also be stimulated through teacher participation in ER, continued monitoring of student progress, and the inclusion of post-reading activities like role plays and discussions into class time (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002).

In regard to vocabulary learning through extensive reading, Nation (2013) presents estimates of how much reading would be necessary in order to learn (meeting each word in a text around ten times) the words in each 1,000 high frequency band. It was calculated that over a 40 week period, a learner would have to read for 4 hours and 24 minutes a week at a rate of 100 words a minute in order to learn the 5,000 most frequent words. While this is, of course, a substantial time commitment over 40 weeks, over a two- or three-year program this becomes a much more manageable figure and highlights the potential benefit an ER program offers to learners. Particularly in an EFL context like Japan, Nation claims that ER is all the more valuable as it addresses the fundamental issue of a lack of available comprehensible input with the added benefit of learners being able to access it outside of the classroom.

The benefits of extensive, pleasurable reading were also supported in a study by Cho and

Krashen (1994) that was conducted in an ESL setting. Four adult subjects living in the U.S. participated in a free reading program for an unspecified period of time (participation varied from between one week to around two months) using texts aimed at younger native-level readers. The four participants were given very little instruction regarding how much they should read, were not expecting to be tested, and were encouraged to focus on reading for pleasure rather than for language learning. The results later showed that several of the subjects had exposed themselves to large amounts of material, including one who had read 126,000 words in around two months. This was explained in part through positive feedback from the participants regarding how reading comprehensible and interesting material drew them into sustained L2 reading. One participant stated that:

> "When I finished reading one volume of Sweet Valley Kids, I was looking forward to reading the next one. This was the first experience in which I wanted to read a book in English continuously…" [translated from Korean]. (Cho & Krashen, 1994, p. 4)

In addition to the positive interview responses, the researchers found that when tested via oral translation on unknown words in the reading texts, the four participants displayed vocabulary acquisition rates of between 7.1 and 37.4 new words learned per volume read. Additional qualitative data suggested that the pleasure of reading had beneficial effects for not only the participants' reading skills, but also their speaking and listening ability.

In a study more specifically focused on vocabulary learning, Brown, Waring, and Donkaewbua (2008) compared three input modes designed to promote incidental vocabulary acquisition: reading, reading-while-listening, and listening to stories. This investigation, which took place with Japanese university students and utilized a between-group design, found that in tests of previously unknown vocabulary items, the reading-while-listening and reading modes performed significantly better in immediate and delayed multiple choice and translation tests than the listening only mode. This difference in performance between the modes was also mirrored in student questionnaire responses where most students were found to prefer the reading-while-listening and reading approaches over the listening-only mode. Of the two testing methods (multiple choice and translation), the researchers claimed that the translation test was "the one that most closely indicates whether a subject actually knew the meaning of the word while reading and listening" (Brown, Waring, & Donkaewbua, 2008, p. 147). However, despite the superior performance of the reading-while-listening and reading modes in both testing conditions, the results of the translation test showed that only a limited number of the target words were learned in either mode. In terms of three-month retention, it was found that participants were able to learn roughly one new word from listening-while-reading or simply reading one graded reader. This study highlights the fact that sustained effort and the reading of a large amount of text is essential if an ER program is to provide substantial vocabulary acquisition.

In an article arguing the need for extensive reading, Waring (2006) asserts that much of the true benefit derived from students engaging ER lies not simply in learning new words, but in deepening learners' knowledge of all the underlying elements of vocabulary items as well as the grammar structures that dictate their use. Waring claimed thatin order for students to have a workable grasp of how words work by learning their collocations, colligations, and levels of formality, it will require students meeting the word in a text a huge number of times. This demand requires more time than teachers can hope to provide in class, and further emphasizes

the need for ER programs to be based upon autonomous, out-of-class learning. Waring (2006) maintains the importance of this reality:

> It is impossible for us to teach a sense of language. We do not have time, and it is not our job. It is the learners' job to get that sense for themselves. This depth of knowledge of language must, and can only, be acquired through consistent exposure. (p. 47)

The study also clearly locates extensive reading within a balanced curriculum as it is claimed that exposure to texts through ER acts as an opportunity for learners to consolidate language that they have encountered in language-focused activities like studying from textbooks or decontextualized words. The aim of this type of contextualized study is not so much focused on learning basic word meanings as it is focused upon how the words fit together and how the language works as a whole. While extensive reading inhabits an essential role in enriching basic form-meaning connections and giving learners a fuller sense of how words fit into the language, building learners' basic understanding of meaning for large numbers of words can arguably be more efficiently achieved through deliberate vocabulary study via word cards (Nation, 2013).

Deliberate vocabulary learning through word cards and CALL/MALL

This section aims to highlight the potential benefits of the deliberate learning of vocabulary via word cards. Firstly research focusing on word card study, scheduling systems, spaced repetition, and the retrieval hypothesis will be presented as a theoretical foundation to the approach. From here, results from several studies that have investigated the effects of spaced learning and CALL/MALL-based approaches on retention of lexis will be presented. Quantitative data related to word retention performance as well as qualitative attitudinal data from both students and teachers will be included in the review. Subsequently, research into gamification and its role in CALL/MALL vocabulary software will be examined due to its potential value in sustaining student motivation in independent study. Finally, potential pedagogical pitfalls and considerations related to the implementation of CALL-based word card study that were raised in a study from a Japanese university setting are analyzed before a proposed pedagogical intervention is put forward in the final section of this paper.

There is some debate over the role of deliberate vocabulary learning in contemporary language learning with a number of strong and weak positions on whether or not strategies such as dictionary use, word lists or word cards cause students to effectively understand and use L2 vocabulary (Folse, 2011; Hulsijn et al., 1996; Knight, 1994; Nation & Waring, 1997). However, the existing literature on vocabulary acquisition strongly supports the value of learning decontextualized words for the promotion of both productive and receptive vocabulary knowledge. In research examining the deliberate study of word pairs, Webb (2009) found that students, through productive study of bilingual word lists, exhibited improvements in their productive knowledge of orthography, meaning, syntax, and grammar. Additionally, deliberate study focusing on receptive knowledge produced gains in receptive vocabulary understanding in the areas of meaning, form, word association, syntax, and grammatical functions. Webb concludes that the findings of this study strongly suggest the value of these deliberate study methods to learners aiming to quickly and efficiently increase their receptive and productive

learning of vocabulary.

It has been argued that the study of word cards within a spaced scheduling system can offer even greater benefits for the long-term retention of lexis. Mondria and Mondria-de Vries (1994) proposed the utilization of a scheduling method for word card study called "Hand Computer." The researchers claimed that the use of simple word cards featuring the L2 word and an L1 translation on the other side in conjunction with this scheduled repetition system created opportunities for efficient long-term acquisition of new words. In this system, correctly answered words are shifted into boxes where they are reviewed again in gradually increasing intervals, whereas incorrectly answered items are shifted back to the start for short-term review. The "Hand Computer" system contributes to learning as it (a) avoids 'overlearning' by moving easy or already learned cards out of the review deck and focusing learners' time on difficult items, (b) allows vocabulary sets to be adapted depending on the individual learner's strengths and weaknesses, (c) avoids learners gaining help from focusing on words in list sequences by constantly changing the order in which words are encountered, and (d) prevents forgetting of learned words over time via repeated "reactivation" via retrieval practice. The researchers also highlight the potential of synthesizing the "Hand Computer" with CALL citing heightened convenience and motivational effects as possible benefits.

The automated spaced repetition scheduling found in many current CALL and MALL software applications is based on the same concepts as "Hand Computer". This involves initially learned words being reviewed on an expanded review schedule where learners are presented with review questions in gradually increasing intervals of time. The focus of this approach is on the construction of long-term memory, rather than the short-term retention bolstered through cramming, and means that learned words will be retained for a long time (Nation, 2013). Furthermore, the practice of regular testing and review alone has been claimed to have a positive effect on the retention of information and has a slowing effect on the rate at which remembered information decays and is forgotten (Roediger, Putnam, & Smith, 2011).

The fact that the long-term retrieval of vocabulary knowledge through spacing will be, in general, more challenging than short-term testing can also be regarded as a positive factor in promoting vocabulary learning. The retrieval hypothesis (Pyc & Rawson, 2009) states that successful retrievals of difficult questions will be more beneficial to improving memory than succeeding in answering easier questions. This hypothesis was tested in a study that compared subjects who were given shorter intervals between retrieval attempts with another group with significantly longer intervals between questions, thus increasing their retrieval effort. The results found that although the short-term retrieval group were able to respond more quickly to questions, the long-term group exhibited better performance in a final test.

Bury (2016) confirmed the value of spaced repetition for learning in a recent study of Japanese university students where three classes of students each participated in six different review schedules in order to test to what degree key vocabulary from class content was retained. Two schedules were based on expanding retrieval, two on uniform retrieval where the periods between spaced review were fixed, and two were based on a massed retrieval model where students would 'cram' directly before the final test. Results showed that expanded retrieval produced the highest retention of vocabulary, narrowly outperforming the uniform retrieval groups on average. However, despite the data failing to consistently confirm the advantages of expanding over uniform retrieval scheduling, this study was able to demonstrate the clear benefit of spaced retrieval over massed retrieval as both expanded and uniform retrieval led to higher improvement rates in test results (massed retrieval - 10.9%, uniform retrieval - 18.1%, and

expanding retrieval - 20.8%). Nakata (2015) also found that expanded repetition produced a "limited, but statistically significant" (p. 36) improvement over equal, or uniform spacing in the memorization of L2 vocabulary. Again, however, as in Bury's study, Nakata found that the most noticeable differences in immediate and delayed test performance were seen between the massed learning group and the experimental groups (short, medium, and long spacing), suggesting the benefits of spaced vocabulary learning, regardless of spacing schedule.

Imrie (2014) compared three different groups of Japanese university students studying textbook vocabulary using paper word cards, digital flash cards through the Quizlet website (www.quizlet.com) and Quizlet smart phone app, and a control group who were given a vocabulary list with no explicit instruction on how to study the words. Pre-tests were done using a vocabulary size test. The researcher found that in the pre-test all three groups performed very similarly in terms of average score: Group 1 (Quizlet) - 70.1%, Group 2 (paper cards) - 70.9%, and Group 3(control) - 71%. This pre-test determined that each group had a statistically equivalent English vocabulary size. In post-tests, conducted via an end of semester vocabulary test, it was found that the Quizlet group had achieved an average score of 97%, 28% higher than the paper flash cards group average (69%) and 41% higher than the average of the control group (56%). Qualitative interview data from the study suggested that the Quizlet group studied more frequently than the other two groups, with several students utilizing the smart phone app to study on the train as they commuted to and from university. The researcher claimed that students, from questionnaire and interview data, demonstrated positive attitudes regarding the ease of use and convenience of smart phone digital word card technology and suggested a valuable role for this approach to vocabulary learning in the future.

Another Japan-based study by Spiri (2008) investigated how the degree to which first and second year university students were able to learn words taken from the Academic Word List (AWL) using WordChamp (www.wordchamp.com - shut down in 2013), a website focusing on vocabulary learning via word lists and flash cards. This initial study found that several of the participants were able to significantly improve on pre-test quiz scores as a result of using WordChamp. Furthermore, around 93% of respondents to an attitudinal survey on how easy or enjoyable WordChamp was to use stated that the website was either "a little enjoyable" or "very enjoyable" to use (pp. 29-30). A follow up study, also based on learning items from the AWL, aimed to compare two groups using either a paper-based (word lists or paper flash cards) or an online (WordChamp) approach. The results of this study were mixed in that although the online group narrowly outperformed the paper-based group in post-test results (on average 19.8/20 compared to 17.7/20) (p. 33), the attitudinal data showed a different picture. It was found that participants believed that, although the online approach was rated as more enjoyable, the paper-based approach was a more effective study method. Of course, this data was purely based on the individual students' impressions of each method and the researcher hypothesised that these findings could have been explained by a learning curve that existed when first using WordChamp that was not present in the traditional paper-based methods.

An earlier study that examined the specific potential of MALL relating to vocabulary was carried out by Zhang, Song, and Burston (2011), where Chinese undergraduate students using SMS via mobile phones were compared with a control group using paper-based methods while studying TOEFL vocabulary. The results of the study found that despite exhibiting lower pre-test scores, the experimental (SMS) group outperformed the control (paper) group on both immediate and delayed post-tests. The researchers claimed that the SMS learning promoted the retention of vocabulary in students' long-term memory. Participant interview data also highlighted the

potential convenience and effectiveness of a MALL-based approach to vocabulary study as students frequently referred to the idea that they could study during any free period they had in their daily lives and that the frequent reviewing schedule the software utilized helped them to retain words more effectively. One participant stated:

> I think it is a good way because I bring my mobile phone almost everywhere and at any time. Sometimes I don't have things to do, such as when travelling in the subway, I can read the vocabulary many times and remember them. In a word, it can help me to make use of leisure time to learn vocabulary. (Zhang et al., 2011, pp. 208-209)

CALL can also offer assistance in sustaining continued student engagement and motivation in the often demanding and often repetitive task of deliberate vocabulary study. Various online vocabulary sites and apps, such as Quizlet (www.quizlet.com), Memrise (www.memrise.com) and Duolingo (www.duolingo.com), incorporate gamified features that aim to boost student intrinsic motivation and ensure continued use. Gamified features within vocabulary software include points earned through use, leaderboards, statuses, and trophies or rewards that can be earned (Kapp, 2012). Abrams and Walsh (2014) carried out a study of eleventh grade students and young adults studying SAT vocabulary through the use of The Challenge (www.vocabulary.com/play/), an online vocabulary study tool that featured a number of game-like elements. The researchers reported that the website offered several affective benefits to students such as providing instant feedback through point scores, records of words learned, public rewards, and statuses. It was found that many of the students felt a sense of friendly competition with each other as they compared the rewards and statuses they had attained and it was reported that some participants stated an intention to continue their progress on the site after the study had concluded. Although not all students were as enthusiastic about the gamified features of The Challenge, the researchers concluded that this approach "afforded students opportunities to become motivated, self-directed learners" (p. 57).

The potential benefits of gamified vocabulary learning were also addressed in a study by Yip and Kwan (2006) of both teachers and students in a Hong Kong university that investigated the usefulness of online vocabulary games. Both quantitative data, in the form of results of pre- and post-tests of course vocabulary, and qualitative attitudinal questionnaire and interview data were collected and analysed in the study. It was found that the experimental group (utilizing online games) achieved a significantly higher mean score on the post-test than the control group (studying via activity-based learning). Furthermore, the questionnaire responses regarding the vocabulary game software were positive with around 70% of respondents stating that the software was effective for assisting them in learning vocabulary.

As smart phone ownership continues to increase globally, the role of MALL is set to grow in the coming years. White and Mills (2015) carried out surveys of Japanese university students studying EFL regarding their attitudes towards smart phone technology and its use in language learning. This research found that in 2012, although 85% of students surveyed owned a smart phone, only 7% of students used their phone for educational purposes. Despite this low figure, however, it was also reported that 78% of students believed smart phones would be "helpful" or "very helpful" in their language study (pp. 9-10). Based on these results, the researchers hypothesised that student access to smart phone technology would soon reach 100% and that, as useful educational technology develops and students' familiarity with smart phones in general increases, the amount of educational smart phone use will increase.

Despite the apparent benefits of online flash cards supplementing regular class content,

Taylor (2009) carried out a study using the software iKnow! (www.iknow.jp) with first and second year Japanese university students which highlighted several obstacles that greatly limited the effectiveness of a CALL/MALL-based component to vocabulary study. The researcher found that due to practical issues, such as students being unfamiliar with the log-in or registration process on PC's and smart phones, compatibility problems with certain cell phones, as well as the teacher being unable to track individual students' progress, a large number of students failed to complete the study. Student motivation was also marked as a major contributing factor to the underwhelming performance data as even though students participated constantly throughout the testing period, the actual amount of time spent using the software was very low. In the final results of the study it was found that only six out of twenty six subjects successfully completed a set of two hundred words in two months. Taylor claimed that this study highlights the importance of both technical support in terms of helping students to access and become familiar with the software and also close, sustained monitoring and consultation by teachers regarding student progress throughout a course.

PEDAGOGICAL ACTION AND EVALUATION

Assigning homework or autonomous study goals is generally not a common feature of *eikaiwa* classes, due to practical reasons, such as a flexible schedule where the student takes lessons from a number of different teachers, or due to a lack of confidence on the part of instructors that homework will ever be completed by students with busy schedules or low motivation. This was partly supported in an informal survey of teaching practice involving seven instructors from the same teaching setting as the researcher (Appendix 2). Of the instructors asked the question, "Do you usually set homework for your adult students?", only one instructor stated that they gave homework regularly, usually consisting of asking students to prepare some ideas for discussion in the following lesson or to write a short journal entry. This one instructor did, however, maintain that a number of students did not display any interest in out-of-class study:

> "Yes, but it was mostly to be prepared to add something for discussion. Most students write things down, like a journal entry. Some could care less and never bothered." (Participant K)

This potential resistance to autonomous study from students, and subsequently instructors, was mirrored in comments from other respondents:

> "Depends on the class and students in them. But yes, I do give homework. Not regularly though. My expectations are too low for regular homework." (Participant W)

> "Usually not. I would ask classes their preference… usually got overwhelming no votes. Mentioned people could ask privately for their own hw, very few takers." (Participant G)

As a result of many adult students studying English primarily in their free time and having full time jobs in the notoriously demanding Japanese workforce, it can be argued that students lack the time and inclination to extend their language learning beyond the *eikaiwa* classroom. This, however, is not the sole obstacle facing an *eikaiwa* instructor aiming to foster autonomous learning and sustained motivation for study.

In an investigation into the *eikaiwa* industry and its ideological basis, Kubota (2011) claimed that English conversation schools in Japan were based largely on "leisure and consumption" more than any real concern on the part of the school owners or students for second language acquisition. Kubota states that a focus on leisure and the consumption and exploitation of (usually Caucasian) native speakers of English to attract students stands at odds with creating conditions for effective foreign language learning. Qualitative findings from Kubota's study confirm a lack of enthusiasm on the part of students towards serious attempts from the instructor in fostering linguistic development or the assignment of homework. Attendance in these classes was instead viewed as a casual leisure activity where students could come and go as they pleased and could get a sense of escapism from their everyday lives while socialising. One participant in the study stated:

> "Even if you skip one lesson, it's not a burden at all. I like the relaxed aspect… The teacher says, "You may do your homework," and no one does it. It's that casual. We go out to have lunch after class and it's fun. That's what keeps me going." (Kubota, 2011, p. 479)

Upon reflection of the similar findings in both Kubota's research and the informal survey, it suggests a serious need to consider the *eikaiwa* context in a different manner to formal educational institutions such as high schools or universities. Furthermore, it becomes clear that sustaining intrinsic student motivation and making English learning as enjoyable as possible is one of the primary concerns for an educator in this context as they lack a 'captive audience' in that the instructor is arguably in a subservient role with no power to induce student participation extrinsically. Despite the potential challenges facing instructors promoting out-of-class vocabulary learning in an *eikaiwa* context, the need for it in terms of the pedagogical benefits is compelling. Textbooks play a central role in conversation classes, with instructors often contractually obliged to use a set text for a high percentage or the entirety of class time. Textbooks often dedicate a significant amount of time to practicing grammatical structures but also display a lack of adequate attention to vocabulary instruction, often lacking fundamental concepts such as the recycling of newly learned words (Folse, 2004). Considering these institutional and pedagogical constraints, it becomes clear that affording sufficient vocabulary exposure to students needs to be done, at least in part, outside of the classroom.

Proposed interventions and methods

Prior to analysing how to best handle any concerns stemming from student motivation, there are also a number of practical issues that may need to be addressed before an ER or MALL-based approach can be implemented. Firstly, unlike a university setting, *eikaiwa* schools are unlikely to have a library of graded readers available for students to use. Indeed, it is

probable that some *eikaiwa* owners are not aware of the practice of extensive reading. Therefore, a certain amount of negotiation is likely to be necessary on the part of the instructor in order to acquire funding for an ER program. Luckily, a wide range of second-hand graded readers can be found on online shopping sites like Amazon for as little as 300 yen (approximately $3.00), allowing institutions with even a very modest budget to acquire enough texts to introduce an ER component to their courses. In terms of encouraging the use of MALL or CALL resources, the high degree of smart phone and computer ownership in Japan (White & Mills, 2015) means that access to vocabulary flash card apps or websites is not likely to be a major issue for learners. Furthermore, although sites and apps such as Memrise and Quizlet have the option for paid membership, the core features of each program can be accessed by users completely free of charge.

Studies like that of Cho and Krashen (1994) show that if reading material is both comprehensible and interesting to students, then they can become intrinsically motivated and read large amounts of material over sustained periods of time. The key point here is that students read at a level that is manageable for them whilst not having to read books that are boring or seem childish as most students in these schools are adults. In order to appeal to a wide range of different students, a successful ER program also requires reading material encompassing a variety of genres, including both fiction and non-fiction material. Varied material not only increases the odds of appealing to different individuals, it also familiarizes students with different types of discourse and promotes the use of different reading skills such as skimming or scanning (Day & Bamford, 2002).

However, simply providing students with appropriate reading material does not go nearly far enough to ensure students' long-term engagement in ER. In order to encourage students to participate actively and be available for support if necessary, silent reading of graded readers should initially be carried out during class time for the first one or two months. Due to the short duration of many *eikaiwa* classes, this may have to be for as short a period as ten to fifteen minutes per lesson, but this orientation period is essential as it "forces learners to read and have a chance of experiencing success" (Nation, 2013, p. 256). Support and opportunities for consultation with the instructor need to be available for students throughout the duration of an ER program as the unrestricted nature of independent reading can sometimes lead to issues that require teacher intervention. Students can feel unsure about what level of text they should be reading or perhaps lose sight of the original purpose of ER; reading for pleasure. This supportive role can even be taken a step further as the instructor actively participates in reading along with their students. Instructors therefore act as role models, sharing the enjoyment of reading with students rather than appearing as an authoritarian figure forcing homework upon them. This positive attitude by the instructor can create a community of readers in which everyone in class shares reflections on books they have read and recommendations for future reading material (Day & Bamford, 2002). This could arguably have a powerful motivational effect as teachers are demonstrating 'do what I do' rather than 'do what I say' and could create a warm collegial atmosphere that deepens the social bonds of the class in every facet of classroom life. Furthermore, these oral book reports offer students additional opportunities to practice speaking skills, thus maintaining congruence with the primary *raison d'être* of an *eikaiwa* program.

The management of a MALL-based approach to deliberate vocabulary study presents perhaps even more potential pitfalls than an ER program due to technical problems that can occur and also due to the fact that studying word cards, be it in paper or digital form, can often be a laborious and repetitive process (Yip & Kwan, 2006). Instructors can mitigate many of these

pitfalls through thorough pre-training of both the technological and educational aspects of MALL. In a similar fashion to a fledgling ER course, assigning ten to fifteen minutes per lesson for the first month would be extremely valuable in familiarizing students, some of whom will not be tech-savvy, with a MALL-based approach. In this time, students can set up, explore, and practice using the functions of word card apps with teacher and peer support available. Such guidance could feasibly have a significant contribution to the likelihood of sustained student use. White and Mills' (2015) study concludes that some students are still uncertain over how smart phones can be used for language learning and, if they are to become integrated into the classroom in the future, teachers need to spend more time educating students on their use. Teachers may even need to consider providing analogue options such as paper word cards for students who lack access to technology or struggle with its use. Instructors also need to be mindful of the dangers of perceiving technology as something that will guarantee student motivation. As was found in Taylor's (2009) study, even with engaging software, without adequate support and monitoring from teachers, long-term student motivation and participation is by no means a foregone conclusion.

One method of monitoring students' progress is built into a number of major flash card programs, such as Memrise, in the form of an online leader board. Online leader boards both give teachers a rough indication of how much time students are spending on a flash card set and additionally have the potential to fulfil a motivational role. Kapp (2012) states that leader boards add a social component to individual achievement, can stimulate players to interact with each other about scores, and can act as a powerful motivational factor as players strive to reach the top of the board for "bragging rights and social capital" (Kapp, 2012, p. 34). Memrise users can also achieve certain statuses and badges by studying enough to reach certain point totals. These awards can also extrinsically motivate students into continued participation in activities, like word card practice, that are perhaps inherently not particularly entertaining.

Another important component of any vocabulary course is selecting words that will offer the most benefit in terms of students' development. High-frequency words lists are naturally an essential component of a basic vocabulary course as they offer students the best returns in terms of text coverage (Nation, 2013). In terms of useful word frequency lists available to instructors setting up a MALL-based program, the New General Service List (Browne, Culligan, & Phillips, 2013) offers teachers and students a high frequency word list based on modern corpora that also gives a high degree of coverage (90.34% in the Cambridge Educational Corpus) from 2,818 words. The New General Service List can also be accessed via a number of online flash card programs such as Memrise and Quizlet. The use of high frequency word lists also has the added benefit of avoiding interference caused by the study of vocabulary in semantic sets (e.g., grouping words by topic like 'clothes' or fruit'). It has been shown that this common practice in many teaching materials actually has a negative effect on the efficient memorization of these items and should be avoided as much as possible by educators (Nation, 2013). Grouping words by frequency, while primarily highlighting the most important words to learners, also has the added benefit of sidestepping this practice of semantic grouping.

As in the case of training students in using technology, some class time should be set aside at the start of a course to have a discussion, be it in English or in the students' L1, about the necessity for vocabulary learning. An open and honest dialogue about the contextual constraints, such as time, that both instructor and student face, a simplified presentation of important findings from L2 vocabulary research, and an explanation of the benefits of studying high-frequency words allows students 'behind the curtain', making them partners, rather than subjects, in an

endeavour. This greater sense of involvement in the course, it is hoped, will translate into a heightened sense of purpose, and a higher likelihood of sustained active participation.

Assessment and evaluation

In many ways the fundamental tenets of extensive reading, such as allowing independent, minimally regulated reading for pleasure, defy the notion of formal testing. Day and Bamford (2002) state that ER differs greatly from standard classroom practice and this includes informing students that there will be no test on what they have read. Additionally, a formal testing approach runs counter to standard practice in this instructor's context, where no assessment structure is in place, as students often attend *eikaiwa* for a casual, hobby-like experience (Kubota, 2011). There are, however, approaches that teachers can adopt that serve to indirectly monitor student progress whilst simultaneously deepening understanding of texts and stimulating group members' interest in ER. Post-reading class exercises can include a short book review, a book report, or students can prepare a short talk on a broad theme they encountered in the book such as travel, fear, or dating. These differ in essence from formal testing as, rather than seeking to measure or grade student comprehension like a standardized test item, they act as an opportunity to share their feelings and opinions about what they have read freely, be it in English or, in a monolingual classroom, the students' L1. To address more practical needs, a simple digital spreadsheet (Appendix 3) can be used to monitor which books are being borrowed by whom, as well as individual students' reading totals over the course of the year. Students' book ratings (A-E) can also be recorded on this sheet and from this information quarterly book leader boards could be presented in class in order to inform readers of the most popular books among their peers.

Assessing student progress, and therefore the effectiveness of the course itself, with MALL software has thankfully developed substantially since Taylor's (2009) study, where lack of student monitoring was suggested to be a major contributory factor for lacklustre student participation. Modern flash card sites like Memrise and Quizlet feature some method by which teachers can check on each student's progress in a course via either point scores on a leader board, running counts of numbers of words learned, or by highlighting class performance history on each lexical item encountered. These records can be accessed at any time by the instructor as long as an internet connection is available. Furthermore, Memrise includes a forum function where students can ask questions and flag technical problems online for the instructor, thus opening up another avenue for support to students who are studying outside of class hours. For a more traditional approach to assessment and monitoring of student progress, Quizlet features a Test feature that allows students to test themselves on word set content online and record their score, or teachers can create a printable test sheet that can be printed out and given to students periodically in class.

Whether the approach to autonomous vocabulary study in *eikaiwa* is centred on extensive reading, decontextualized word card study, or both, two conditions must be satisfied in order to stand any real chance of sustained participation. The first essential element is adequate student preparation or training. In many senses, the idea of pleasure reading for language learning arguably deviates from some beliefs held in the Japanese public school system that students were previously a part of. Also, despite adults using smart phones on a daily basis for communication

and leisure, many are unfamiliar with the use of such technology for an educational purpose. Therefore, an instructor looking to implement these components into a language course needs to provide a guided period of learner training where students can become comfortable with what could be considered new and alien concepts.

The second condition that must be fulfilled is the provision of continuous dialogue with students over the duration of a course. Although both ER and MALL include a number of features that go some way to cultivating and maintaining positive student affect, this alone is insufficient for ensuring long-term participation. Instructors should encourage student feedback via periodic surveys, utilize activities that promote a cooperative team-like atmosphere, like sharing book reviews and online forum posts, and act as learner role models via active participation in these study methods themselves. Through a simultaneously shared and autonomous learning experience, it is hoped that an out-of-class vocabulary course component will be hardy enough to weather inevitable dips in motivation and encourage students to take control over and responsibility for their own learning in a context where institutional support or advice may be sparse.

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APPENDIX 1

Student questionnaire sheet

How important are these things for your own English study?
(5 - most important, 1 - least important)

下記の項目はあなたの英語学習にとってどのくらい重要ですか?
（５-とても重要、１-全然重要ではない）

Improving grammar　文法の強化

1	2	3	4	5

Increasing my vocabulary　語彙を増やす

1	2	3	4	5

Having more chances to practice listening　リスニングを練習する機会を増やす

1	2	3	4	5

Having more chances to practice speaking　スピーキングを練習する機会を増やす

1	2	3	4	5

Having more chances to practice reading　リーディングを練習する機会を増やす

1	2	3	4	5

Having more chances to practice writing　ライティングを練習する機会を増やす

1	2	3	4	5

Having more time for textbook exercises　教科書で勉強する時間を増やす

1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX 2

Eikaiwa instructor homework question responses

Hey H, do you usually set homework for your adult classes? *depends* *some are okay w it some not*

Hey M, do you usually set homework for your adult classes? *hey man, no i dont*

K, do you usually set homework for your adult classes? *Yes, but it was mostly to be prepared to add something for discussion. Most students write things down, like a journal entry. Some could care less and never bothered. I did often ask them to read the text reading before the next lesson so they could ask questions.*

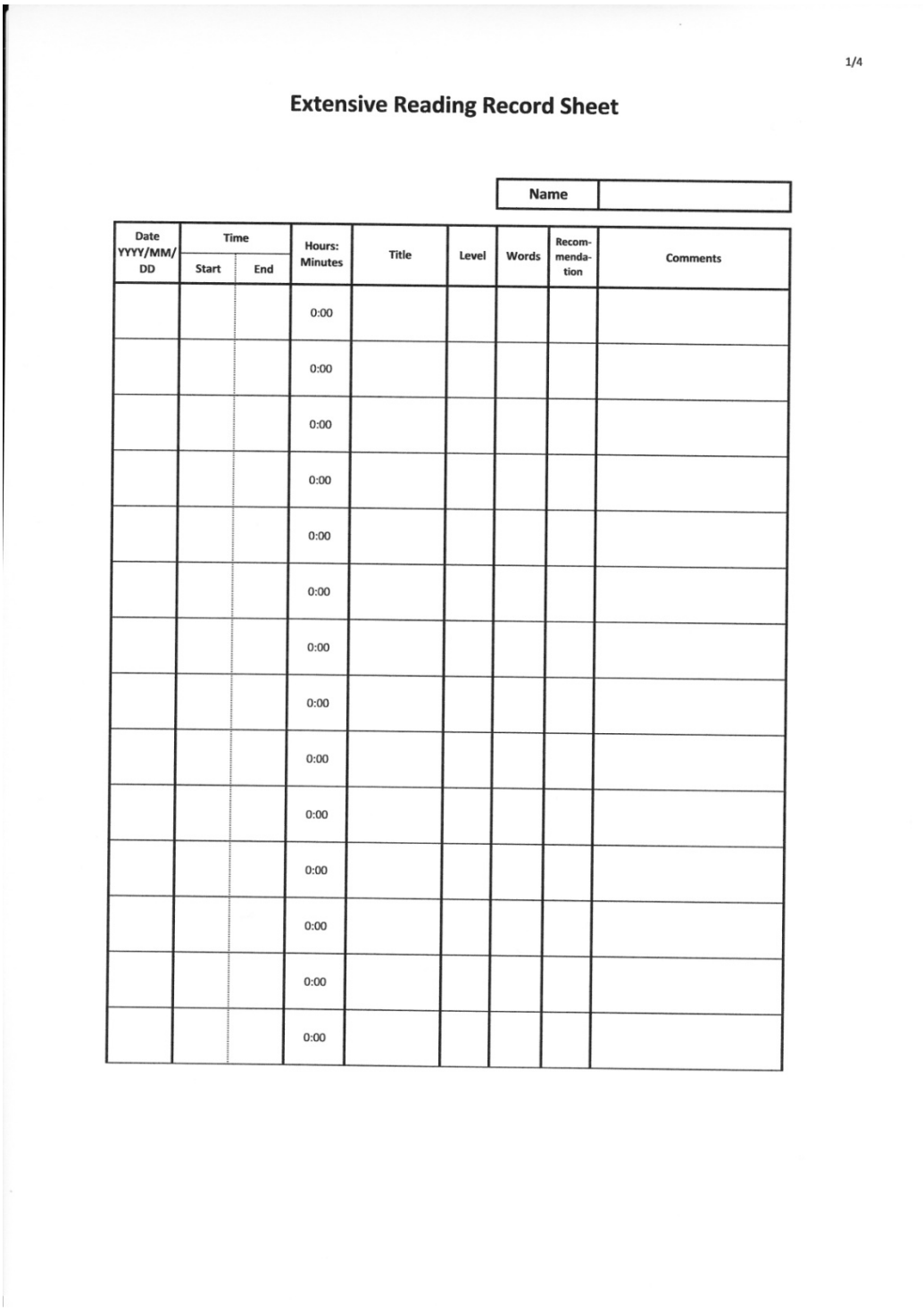
W, do you usually set homework for your adult classes? *Depends on the class and students in them. But yes, I do give homework. Not regularly though. My expectations are too low for regular homework. If it's a private or company class I will give more, however. Most of the time it's reading. But I have assigned small presentations or journal writing.*

B, do you usually set homework for your adult classes? *Not company classes* *Usually with my private classes* *What kind of thing do you set?* *I send them home with reading exercises mostly short stories*

G, when you were in (school name), did you usually set homework for your adult classes? *Usually not. I would ask classes their preference.. usually got overwhelming no votes. Mentioned people could ask privately for their own hw, very few takers.*

APPENDIX 3

Extensive reading record sheet



1/4

Extensive Reading Record Sheet

Name	

Date YYYY/MM/DD	Time		Hours: Minutes	Title	Level	Words	Recommendation	Comments
	Start	End						
			0:00					
			0:00					
			0:00					
			0:00					
			0:00					
			0:00					
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Gai Mali, Y.C. (2017). Promoting effort attributions to EFL students. *Accents Asia, 9*(1), 30-40.

Promoting Effort Attributions to EFL Students

Yustinus Calvin Gai Mali[1]
Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Attribution describes an explanation that learners provide for the progress of their second language learning and reasons they attribute to their success or failure in the process of learning a target language. This paper explicates three practical ways to promote effort attributions based in Dornyei's (2001) motivational teaching framework to the learning process of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The explications are elaborated with relevant literature and my reflective learning experiences as a language learner in Indonesia. This paper will be an interest of EFL teachers who are looking for practical ways in enhancing motivation and academic achievements of their students. In essence, this paper encourages constructive collaboration between parents and EFL teachers in taking an active role to promote the effort attributions to students.

Keywords: attributions, attribution training, effort attribution, effort, EFL teachers

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to provide some details about three practical ways on how to perform an attribution training, namely effort attribution in a learning process of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Those three ways are [1] modeling effort-outcome linkages, [2] providing effort feedback, and [3] encouraging learners to offer effort attributions (Dornyei, 2001). The ways can be seen as strategies that teachers can use to enhance the students' motivation (Dornyei, 2001), regarded as one of primary determinants to their learning achievement (Dornyei, 1994; Harmer, 2007; Reid, 2007), including a success of their language learning (McDonough, 1983; Ellis, 1994; Kimura, Nakata, & Okumura, 2000; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Alsayed, 2003; Lifrieri, 2005; Khamkhien, 2010).

The practical discussions of the paper will be an interest of EFL teachers who are looking for practical ways in enhancing motivation and academic achievements of their students,

[1] Yustinus Calvin Gai Mali is a lecturer at Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Salatiga, Indonesia. Correspondence should be sent to: calvin.yustinus@yahoo.com

particularly in EFL settings. To achieve the objective and to provide clear understanding of the attributional issues, the paper continues to discuss related definitions of attributions, findings of previous attributional studies, and some concerns of the attribution training in students' learning.

WHAT IS ATTRIBUTION?

Literature clarifies related ideas of attributions. For instance, attribution is defined as an explanation that learners provide for the progress of their second language learning (Ellis, 2008) and reasons they attribute to their success or failure in the process of learning a target language (Gonzales, 2011). In educational fields, attribution has been pervasively cited as a determinant of students' learning motivation and academic achievement. Attribution becomes an essential factor in classroom learning and performance (Weiner, 1972) and influences students' motivation (Ellis, 2008). Moreover, attribution made toward the success or failure in studying will affect motivation that individuals have for their learning academic achievement (Lei, 2009) and can significantly impact on their future performance of academic tasks (Banks & Woolfson, 2008).

Attribution can also be described from the lense of psychology. As explanations people have on why they succeeded or failed in the past (Dornyei, 2001), attribution is related to four types of causal explanations, namely (a) ability, (b) effort, (c) luck, (d) task difficulty (Weiner, 1976 as quoted in Farid & Iqbal, 2012; Weiner, 1985; 1986 as cited in Rasekh, Zabihi, & Rezazadeh, 2012). Furthermore, in the theory of motivation, attribution is described as a causal structure covering three main dimensions: (e) locus, (f) stability, and (g) control (Weiner, 1979 as cited in Mori, Gobel, Thepsiri, & Pojanapunya, 2010), "along which particular attributions can be measured" (Banks & Woolfson, 2008, p.1).

With regards to Weiner's attribution theories (Weiner, 1979 in Mori, et al., 2010; Weiner, 1986 in Banks & Woolfson, 2008; Weiner, 1980), the locus of causality concerns whether people perceive a particular cause as being internal (such as abilities) or external (not having enough preparation for a test or completing a particular task) to them. The stability dimension explains whether a particular cause is something fixed and stable, or variable and unstable over time. Meanwhile, controllability refers to how much control a person has over a particular cause. These three main dimensions (e-g) can form a basis for taxonomies to classify causes of any success or failure in students' learning (Mori, et al., 2010).

It is documented that Vispoel and Austin (1995) successfully integrated the main dimensions (e-g) with Weiner's causal attributions (a-d) in their classification scheme for causal attributions, which appears to be adapted widely by a number of attributional studies (see among others: Mori, et al, 2010, Thang, Gobel, Mohd. Nor, & Suppiah, 2011; Farid & Iqbal, 2012; Gobel, Thang, Sidhu, Oon, Chan, 2013, Phothongsunan, 2014). Table 1 depicts the classification scheme.

Table 1. Dimensional Classification Scheme for Causal Attributions
(as cited in Vispoel & Austin, 1995, p.382)

	Dimensions		
Attributions	**Locus**	**Stability**	**Controllability**
Ability	Internal	Stable	Uncontrollable
Effort	Internal	Unstable	Controllable
Strategy	Internal	Unstable	Controllable
Interest	Internal	Unstable	Controllable
Task difficulty	External	Stable	Uncontrollable
Luck	External	Unstable	Uncontrollable
Family influence	External	Stable	Uncontrollable
Teacher influence	External	Stable	Uncontrollable

PREVIOUS ATTRIBUTIONAL STUDIES IN EFL CONTEXTS

In English a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, a situation in which people learn English in a formal classroom with limited opportunities to use the language outside their classroom (Richards & Schmidt, 2010), some studies have revealed some possible attributions that students perceive to success and failure in their EFL learning. For instance, in their study on how EFL university students in Thailand and Japan judged their success and failure to their language learning tasks, Mori, et al. (2010) found that the students regarded their teacher's influence and classroom atmosphere as primary factors for their success. Meanwhile, their lack of ability was one of the causes of their failure.

Another study is by Yilmaz (2012) who involved ninety-one undergraduate EFL university students and focused his analysis on the attributions that students made for their reading comprehension. The study found that the students attributed their success to their good learning strategies, positive mood, interest in reading, good teachers' feedback, and positive environment. Meanwhile, they attributed their not doing well to the lack of interest in reading, lack of time, negative mood and environment.

In a more recent year, Mali (2015a) conducted an in-depth interview with three university students in Indonesia to explore their attributions to failure and success in their EFL learning process. His study appears to prove that negative environment, time management, and negative habits become the attributions to the failure. Meanwhile, the students regard learning strategies and family support as the primary attributions to success in their EFL learning. To sum, these three studies found that the students still attribute their failure to stable and uncontrollable factors, such as a lack of ability (Mori, et al., 2010), and negative environment (Yilmaz, 2012; Mali, 2015a). In that case, teachers need to encourage their students to explain their failures to facts that they did not make any sufficient effort and employ appropriate strategies (Dornyei, 2001). These changeable and controllable causes can enhance students' learning motivation, encourage them to build a logical conclusion that they will work harder, and facilitate their future achievement. On the other hand, attributing the failures to a stable and uncontrollable cause named students' ability is dangerous as it can conceivably reduce self-confidence in their potential, make the students not try to be successful anymore, and not believe that they can do better.

ATTRIBUTION TRAINING: EFFORT ATTRIBUTIONS

Therefore, with regard to the findings of the previous studies, I reinforce Dornyei's (2001) view that calls upon attribution training to prevent students from making any deliberating attributions and to change negative attributional styles. Attribution training is "a process that involves improving a person's beliefs in the causes of his or her own failures and successes to promote future motivation for achievement" (Robertson, 2000, p.111). The training is also designed to enhance motivation and encourage students' achievement by altering how they perceive their academic successes and failures so that their beliefs facilitate, rather than discourage, their future chances of academic success (Kallenbach & Zafft, 2016). Among types of attribution training, this paper focuses on "promoting students' effort attributions" as the attribution training based on Dornyei's (2001) motivational teaching framework. In essence, he states that "if we can make students believe that higher level of effort, in general, offer a possibility for success, they will persist in spite of the inevitable failures that accompany learning" (p.120). Nevertheless, some people appear to express their pessimism towards the attribution training. For instance, the training is time-consuming, perhaps not be the most effectual way to motivate students to learn (Pearl, 1985), and not easily translated to the classroom (Robertson, 2000). I also consider a view that

attributions of causality may be various due to individual, tasks, culture, and social group differences (Graham, 1991).

DISCUSSION

The paper continues to discuss the ways to promote the effort attributions and elaborates them with related literature and my reflective learning experiences as a language learner in Indonesia.

Modelling Effort-Outcome Linkages

In modeling an effort attribution, EFL teachers can detail their personal experiences when they tried hard to complete a particular task. Subsequently, they can ask their students to share related experiences (also proposed by Kallenbach & Zafft, 2016). The teachers can also model confidence that their students can be successful if they find better learning strategies to deal with difficulties in performing classroom activities or in completing particular tasks. Nevertheless, it is important to note that "adult models may be effective but only if they are believable" (Robertson, 2000, 131).

In Indonesia, these activities are possibly workable as teachers are "viewed differently from their Western counterparts and perhaps those in other EFL contexts" (Zacharias, 2014, p.3). Guru, the Indonesian word for a teacher, stands for "sing digugu lan ditiru," which means the ones to be listened to and to be emulated (Gandana, 2015). Importantly, Gurus are considered as an ideal model of a member of the society, so they need to instance good manners and behavior that should be imitated by members of society in their daily practice (Widiyanto, 2005). In the country, Gurus are also the ones who should educate their students about morality, ethic, integrity, and characters (Wiwoho, 2015). However, this is not to say that EFL teachers from different contexts cannot model the similar effort attributions. Rather, I regard the ideas as an encouragement for the teachers to participate actively in modeling the attribution to their students.

Another way to model the effort attribution is by using true stories and biographies of individuals who made a satisfactory achievement due to their effort. As a real example from Indonesia, Setianingsih (2015) explicitly narrates hard work done by Maria Harfanti, the 2nd runner up of Miss World 2015, as a key factor for her win. Another similar story is from Marthen Sambo (Kick Andy Enterprise, 2014). He successfully finished his undergraduate study though he was from a very humble family and had to work as a private teacher and

shop keeper to be able to finance his study. Then, the teacher can discuss with students practical reasons behind the success of the individual.

The true stories of related efforts made by the teacher can also be a good start. For example, I always remember what my teacher has said to all students in her classroom that there is nothing free in this world. We have to pay for everything we want. She, for instance, always reminds us that if we want to be successful in our study, we have to pay the success by doing our very best in completing every task we get from our teachers.

I also see possibilities to involve parents in modeling the effort attributions by constructively telling their children of any hard work, efforts, and struggle they have done in life. Carlyle (2014) clearly writes that not all chidren are going to find inspiration in their school. Therefore, it is an opportunity for parents to provide the inspiration. Further, Carlyle provides some data that 80 per cent of a child's achievement is based on inspirations coming from their parents. Similary, Krisbergh (2016) believes that "children repeat any positive behaviors they see in the parents. For instance, children whose parents have healthy self-esteem tend to be more confident and hold themselves in higher regard" (n.p).

My personal reflection on what my father likes to tell when we have a dinner can help to illustrate that idea. In brief, my father is from Ende East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia and grown up in a family with a low financial condition. He lives in Wologai, a small village that is forty kilometers away from his Senior High School in Ende city. He describes how difficult it was to study at that time, for he had to live in the school dorm with its far-from-luxurious conditions. Interestingly, he also mentions that when the holiday came, he had to walk home without taking any public transportation due to his financial condition. He could cope with the situations and keep studying hard every day to achieve his goal of getting a better life.

After telling his stories, he always reminds me to struggle and not to give up easily in this life. When I study, I have to do it seriously and be responsible for it. How difficult my condition was, I had to finish my study. He has repeated the same stories since I was a child. At first, I did not clearly understand the meaning behind his stories until I gradually can reflect the essence of his hard work and implement it in my daily life. Other similar stories can be drawn from students' parents who indirectly can take an essential role in modeling the effort attributions.

Providing Effort Feedback

Another practical way to promote effort attributions is by providing feedback to students. In teaching, feedback refers to comments that students get dealing with their success on learning tasks either from a teacher or other persons (Richards & Schmidt, 2010) and needs to be given respectfully (Harmer, 2007). Essentially, the teacher should emphasize low effort as the primary factor in their students' underachievement in learning, so s/he can encourage them to do better in the future. It is also necessary to tell the students that they need to complement their effort with learning strategies, described as behavior and techniques that students adopt in their effort when they learn a second language (Troike, 2006), and with sufficient skills, which they can master (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996, as cited in Dornyei, 2001).

The literature discusses some characteristics of good language learners that can help to illustrate the learning strategies and skills that students can reflect on and cultivate to promote their effort attributions. Some of them are [1] trying to find all opportunities to use the target language, [2] being prepared to experiment by taking risks, which perhaps makes them look foolish, [3] developing a strong task motivation (students respond positively to particular learning tasks they have to complete) (Ellis, 1986). Other characteristics include "[4] being able to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning, [5] active and speak out (Renandya, Lee, Wah, & Jacobs, 1999, p.48), [6] unafraid of making mistakes, [7] confident in his/her ability to learn, and [8] aware why s/he wants to learn" (cited in Hedge, 2000, p. 82).

To delve more learning strategies, teachers possibly can role as sources (Harmer, 2007) who share their experiences on useful strategies to complete particular tasks and to cope with learning difficulties. Another possibility is by inviting students to share their experience of learning strategies that they usually do in their language learning. It is always necessary, therefore, to encourage students to keep developing a proper learning strategy for their language learning (Mali, 2015b).

Encouraging Learners to Offer Effort Attributions

Besides two previous ways, students need to be encouraged in explaining any effort they have done to be successful in their class. Ushioda (1996) believes that "the motivational belief in the value of individual effort will have a stronger foundation if students express it using their words" (as cited in Dornyei, 2001, p.122). In that case, the teacher can ask his/her students to reflect and provide some details about challenges about their language tasks,

strategies to deal with the challenges, and things they can learn from the experience (Dornyei, 2001). These activities can be done, for instance, by writing a reflective journal (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, 2010), personal diary (Neuman, 2006), or completing a guided journal (Nunan, 2002). Importantly, when students attribute failure in learning to their low ability (thought that they are not good at languages), teachers should refuse those related reasons.

CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed three applicable ways to promote the effort attributions, which encourage EFL teachers to model particular effort-outcome related stories, provide effort feedback, and encourage their students to reflect and detail any efforts done to be successful in their learning. Nevertheless, these ways should not be translated in isolation, as they are open to necessary modifications based on specific situations that EFL teachers are dealing with. Moreover, considering that the attribution training is primarily based on Dornyei's (2001) motivational teaching framework, I encourage future studies to explore other possibilities for the training from more diverse perspectives and settings. Future empirical research is also needed to justify the effectiveness of the training particularly in EFL contexts and to provide a better understanding of a correlation between promoting the effort attributions and students' learning achievement. Eventually, this paper endorses that "teachers and parents should know to what their children attribute their learning and academic performance so they can provide necessary guidance and support" (Solar, 2015, p.37) and, therefore, encourages constructive collaboration between EFL teachers and students' parents in taking an active role to promote the effort attributions to the students.

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The Impact of Empathy on Attitudes Towards English in Japanese University Classes

Paul B. Nadasdy[1]
Tokyo Denki University

ABSTRACT

Data were collected from 192 Japanese university students relating to how they interpreted empathy and whether or not the presence of empathy was important in communicative English classes. Furthermore, to get a better understanding of students' attitudes towards learning English, individuals were asked to give feedback about their studies at junior high school and high school. This was compared to how their attitudes towards English had changed after a year studying communicative English at university. The majority of students reported that it was important for empathy to be present in the learning environment and that their attitudes had changed positively over the course of a year. In addition, questionnaires were distributed relating to how teaching approaches, choice of tasks, and ways of interacting affected levels of empathy between classroom participants. The results from the data suggested that students enjoyed practicing communicating with strangers, enjoyed a range of tasks, and preferred it when teachers recognised them as individuals.

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[1] Paul Nadasdy teaches at a private technical engineering university in Tokyo. His main research interest is educational psychology, with a particular focus on how group dynamics, empathy, rapport, and attitudes affect the learning process. Correspondence should be sent to nadasdy@cck.dendai.ac.jp

INTRODUCTION

Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, helps people bond in social situations. To what extent empathy affects the learning environment is still relatively unknown. However, as teachers and researchers generally agree, students thrive in a positive learning atmosphere. Other influences on the success of the language learning classroom include the teacher quality, pedagogic approach, and choice of teaching materials, the goals and aims of the educational institution, as well as the ability of the student. However, without the presence of trust and empathy between classroom participants an atmosphere can become "stale", with participants disengaging from the subject being studied and from each other. The teacher may also feel that students end up simply going through the motions as it becomes harder to motivate them from lesson to lesson.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become an integral part of language education at tertiary level in Japan. However, many students reach university having only been exposed to teacher-fronted lessons, where they were expected to remember vocabulary and grammar, and solely for the reason of gaining qualifications to enter the next tier of education. At university, students are suddenly faced with the prospect of having to communicate with each other in English. This new experience affects students' attitudes towards the subject as a whole, and especially if they are forced, often against habitual behaviours ingrained through previous educational experiences, to conform to the expectations of communicative classes. Foreign language teachers are constantly challenged to think of innovative ways to motivate Japanese university students to share their ideas and offer opinions, or to simply communicate. Having a good reason to practice English is not always present, however, and with integrative or instrumental motivation sorely lacking it is not always possible to engage beyond the most fundamental stage, whether on an individual level or as a group (Benson, 1991).

This paper examines how empathy affects individuals and the group as a whole in foreign language learning environments, and focusses specifically on how empathy and group dynamics affect the attitudes of Japanese university students studying communicative English at a technical college in Tokyo. There is a discussion on the teacher's role in creating a successful classroom atmosphere, and an attempt to pinpoint whether and to what extent students believe empathy has an impact on their learning. After a brief summary of ideas by

researchers in educational psychology, this paper explores the results of a classroom-based research project in order to highlight how students' attitudes towards English improved within a year of study and what was implemented to achieve this. Students also provided feedback on the effectiveness of teaching approaches, the impact of tasks, and how certain interactions created solid relationships between participants in class.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several researchers agree that empathy and group dynamics influence the quality of the learning experience when studying a foreign language (Stevick, 1980; Hadfield, 1992; Arnold, 1999; Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003; Cooper, 2004). Part of that learning experience is developing the ability to communicate efficiently. As communicative English is now an integral part of Japanese students' English education, further focus on improving the learning process seems imperative. The quality of ouput at present, however, often leaves much to be desired. With student motivation and confidence levels low (Berwick and Ross, 1989) and ingrained errors frequent by the time the average Japanese student reaches university, all a teacher can expect is the same attitudes towards learning and limited development in terms of ability thereafter, despite the extensive exposure to English language study up to that point. Yamaoka supports this view, saying: "The Japanese cannot speak English even though they have studied English for ten years from junior high school to university" (2009, p. 59). Yamaoka is not alone in her criticism of the ability of Japanese learners of communicative English. LoCastro draws attention to the “negative reputation” Japan has for not producing skilled communicators in foreign languages (1996, p. 40), observing that, despite the efforts and desires of the Ministry of Education to promote the communicative approach (MEXT 2008a), the grammar translation method still remains a popular pedagogic choice, and that it has a debilitating effect on Japanese students who are still underachieving where communicative competence is concerned.

Moreover, as Hirasawa (2009) explains, cultural factors affect the ability of Japanese students to communicate their ideas openly and without hesitation during lessons, stating: "Due to the collective culture, many students are educated to value harmony with others, so they are likely to hesitate to express their ideas and thoughts in public" (2009, p. 4). The limits created, then, by ineffectual preparation for extensive communication lessons, combined with strongly influenced communication-related characteristics mean that students

are unlikely to succeed in this particular foreign language learning environment. Therefore, the way a teacher intervenes once students reach tertiary level will have a significant influence on the possible learning outcomes (Dornyei and Murphy, 2003).

As mentioned above, empathy and group dynamics can have a considerable impact on the learner group and the individuals within it. Stevick (1980) observes that classroom successes are likely influenced by the internal mechanisms of individuals and how relationships are fostered within the group of people, and that this has more of an impact than other factors such as the type of materials used, teaching techniques and linguistic analyses. Hadfield (1992) agrees with this assertion, and specifically in relation to group dynamics points out that “a successful group dynamic is vital in the teaching/learning process." As the presence of empathy and positive group dynamics appear to have such a strong impact on how individuals communicate and bond in the language learning environment, it becomes the responsibility of the teacher to create a conducive atmosphere.

Considering Arnold's description of "teacher as facilitator" (1999), which describes three types of teaching approach (hierarchal mode, cooperative mode, and autonomous mode), it is recommended that teachers provide opportunities for students to have meaningful interactions if trusting and empathic bonds are to develop. Arnold describes a “special society established within the classroom”, and “the affective dimension of the relationships among the learner, the teacher and other learners” when talking about how positive outcomes can be achieved (1999, p. 19). Therefore, the conscientious teacher, aiming for harmony and bonds between individuals in their classroom, should adopt the role of facilitator, incorporating the three teaching modes in a deft and subtle way. Once Japanese students have reached university, however, there is often little the teacher can do encourage them to believe that English communication is not a waste of their time (Whitney, 2015), and though students spend an extended period under the instruction of the same foreign language teacher, attitudes that have become so ingrained due to negative experiences, particularly during high school, are extremely difficult to overcome.

Moreover, because many students have gotten used to a certain type of teaching and prefer to continue being taught that way (Matsuura et al., 2001), innovative approaches by the foreign teacher may have little or no impact and students may remain reticent and unengaged. To combat this, Matsuura et al. argue that teachers must better understand how students want to learn, that learner satisfaction and commitment are inextricably linked to learner beliefs and that once teachers learn how to adjust their teaching approach to complement this, a

greater chance of learning success exists. This is easier said than done, however, with it often being the case that university classes are packed with students, making access for teachers to all individuals difficult. The aim, therefore, is for a teacher to find ways to engage with students, get them focused, and encourage them to have a stake in their learning process. Ultimately, the teacher wants their students to be autonomous and to not need complete attention to make sure they are on task. This can be achieved in an environment where students believe they can benefit from the subject being taught and one in which they connect in a positive way with the teacher and with each other.

In an ideal situation, once students start to become independent of the teacher, higher levels of learning successes will be realised. Cooper (2004) describes how through functional and fundamental empathy students can reach higher levels of independence as learners, leading to "profound empathy" (p. 15). In this case, individuals are finally in control of their learning. They "take responsibility" and therefore become less reliant on the teacher. Moreover, referring to the development of self-confidence and self-esteem in the learning environment, Caine and Caine describe the importance of the understanding between all classroom participants:

> Because it is impossible to isolate the cognitive from the affective domain, the emotional climate in the school and classroom must be monitored on a consistent basis, using effective communication strategies and allowing for student and teacher reflection and metacognitive processes. In general, the entire environment needs to be supportive and marked by mutual respect and acceptance both within and beyond the classroom. (1991, p. 82)

Referring to the changing classroom dynamic, Dörnyei and Murphy (2003) point out that as a group evolves over time, there are plenty of opportunities afforded to the conscientious teacher to mold the dynamics of the group. If students are reticent to teaching methods, do not respond to immediately to attempts by the teacher to create bonds, or do not have motivation because of the subject being taught, the teacher has to be constantly aware and ready to take advantage of moments where better relationships can be formed in the group. Knowing the learning and emotional needs of the students individually and as a group cannot be underestimated in these circumstances.

In summary, students must be confident and open enough to express themselves in the learning environment if they are to become proficient communicators in English, they must have an investment in the subject being taught if they are to be focused from lesson to lesson,

and they must establish a positive connection with their teacher and other class members if trust and empathy are to be achieved. It is vital that teachers find ways to create an environment that allows these conditions to happen. What follows is a classroom-based research project at a university in Tokyo, Japan, that focuses on how to create such an environment.

BACKGROUND

Between 2009 and 2010, data was collected from Japanese university students at various institutions with the aim of identifying the most important factors for creating a positive foreign language learning environment (Nadasdy, 2010). This research suggested that having a shared sense of purpose, activities that were fun and easy to follow, and, most importantly, empathy between individuals were the three most important factors. This led to further research which attempted to answer why students considered the presence of empathy so important and, secondly, what factors are important in creating an environment conducive to fostering empathy between learners. The study described in this paper, conducted over a year at a technical engineering university in Tokyo, concentrated on gathering information from students about their English language learning history, their interpretation of empathy, how their experiences through studying at university had changed their attitudes towards English, and what factors mattered most with regard to teacher, task, and interaction when applied to language learning.

The students in this study major in a variety of technical subjects, ranging from electrical engineering and environmental chemistry to architecture and robotics. Apart from a small minority of these students who go on to do post-graduate study and will be writing their theses in English, academically it has little relevance to them or their main study interests. Students, therefore, do not show particularly high levels of motivation or enthusiasm, but instead are quiet, well behaved, and restrained. Classrooms are set up for lecture style instruction and due to cultural and interpersonal issues, most students sit quietly awaiting instructions and do little in the way of interacting with their partners in English (or Japanese), and especially with those of the opposite sex.

Due to the reticence of the majority of the students, it is often the case that the teaching style becomes a form of light entertainment which, while good in itself for creating a positive atmosphere and for creating a sense of trust and connection with the teacher, does

little in the way in allowing students the amounts of talking time necessary to improve their English communicative skills. The course is structured so that most of the classes focus on grammatical and vocabulary points in order to prepare for oral communication tests (twice each semester). The final grade, calculated combining the class score, grammar and TOEIC tests, and a weighted standardisation, is the main reason that most of the students are attending the class. Learning to communicate in English would appear secondary at best.

DATA COLLECTION

Data for this study were collected over a period of one year. Classes meet once per week for a 90 minutes over two 15 week semesters, beginning in April and ending in January the following year. For the initial study, students were asked to give a detailed description of what empathy meant to them (Appendix A). In section A, students were given multiple-choice questions related to their experience studying English at junior and senior high school and then at university level (A1, A2, & A3), with the purpose of comparing how their English study history might be affecting their perception of English now. Section B focused on change in their attitudes towards English over the course of the first year of study (B1, B2 & B3). Section C focused on empathy students felt between them and their classmates and with the teacher. Finally, section D focused on how teacher, task, and interaction affected classroom dynamics and empathy between participants.

RESULTS

Students defined empathy in several ways (Appendix B). The most popular answers were that empathy meant the ability to share open and honest opinions with each other, having similar or the same opinions as others, being able to understand each other's thoughts and feelings, having the same sense of humour, having the same values, and having the same interests. Other examples included feelings of trust, acceptance of others, a feeling of closeness, behaving positively towards others, being patient, thinking and feeling the same way, and a willingness to learn from each other.

Questions A1-A3 collected responses relating to experiences students had at junior high school and high school, as well as at the current university (Appendix C). Regarding experiences at junior high school, the most frequent positive answers were that studying

English was fun, that it was a good start to learning English, and that there was an increase in motivation. However, there were several negative responses relating to study at this stage, including that English was too difficult, was not enjoyable, was not taken seriously, and was not effective. The feedback relating to junior high school teachers was mixed, with some students responding that they liked their teacher and others did not. The negative responses, in fact, outweighed the positive, with respondents saying that the teacher was too strict, serious, and was difficult to understand.

Regarding experiences at high school, the feedback suggested that the main reason for study was to gain entrance to university. There was also an emphasis on grammar and vocabulary study, testing, and reading. Most reported that they did not like English, that there was no experience practicing communicative English, that study was boring, and that lessons were difficult to follow. Students also responded that they did not take English seriously and that motivation dropped. Therefore, the data suggests that the experience studying English at junior high school and high school for the participants in this study was, on the whole, framed negatively and demotivating.

On whether students' attitudes towards English had changed during the first year at university (Section B), 57% reported that their general attitude towards English had changed positively during the year, 41% said their attitude towards English had not changed, and, notably, only 2% reported a negative change. Regarding whether the positive change had occurred somewhere specifically throughout the communication course (B2 & B3), 44% reported a positive change, 48% reported no change, and 8% reported a negative change.

Results in Section C showed that 46% had positive empathic feelings towards fellow students by the end of the course, 44% felt at least some empathy towards others, with 9% reporting there was little empathy (C1). Results relating to connection with the teacher throughout the course (C2) showed that 9% of students reported there was a high level, 31% reported a fairly high level, 46% said there was some connection, 12% responded that there was not much of a connection at all, and 2% responded there was no connection with the teacher. Changes in empathy (C3) throughout the communication course were reported as 12% where empathy had increased a lot, 54% a slight change, and 33% that there was no change. On whether empathy between classmates and with the teacher was important (C4), 77% responded that it was important, 21% were unsure, and 2% believed it was not.

Teacher, Task, and Interaction

Students reported that the best way a teacher can connect with them is by remembering their names. This was closely followed by the amount of attention given to them in class. The next most popular answer was the amount of respect they have for the teacher and this was followed by whether the teacher is easygoing or not. Strictness was the least popular choice. None on the choices relating to task were favoured considerably more than any other. However, individuals having the opportunity to express real thoughts was the most popular choice. This was closely followed by group and pair work. Easy tasks and interactive games were also considered good for creating empathy between individuals. Challenging tasks was chosen the least, though still scored relatively high. The most chosen example for the category of interaction was the opportunity for students to get to know each other. This was followed closely by interaction with unfamiliar members in the group. Being assigned easy textbook conversations was also a popular choice. Neither focus on the teacher or interaction with other familiar members of the group scored high on the scale.

DISCUSSION

At the start of this paper, empathy was defined as the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Though the students in this study included this in their definitions, they went further, describing it as a combination of several factors. Due to the many ways of experiencing empathy, coming up with a straightforward definition is problematic. Considering the various definitions of empathy in this paper alone, it is clear that, due to the subjective experience of each individual, reaching a consensus on a “one definition fits all” is unlikely to be achieved. However, considering Cooper's 2004 model, which applies the concept of empathy to an educational model, there are sets and subsets of definitions relating to how and to what extent empathy impacts learners and the learning environment. Therefore, while a single definition of empathy may still be out of reach, once it is applied to specific situations, it may be possible to begin seeing how it impacts those situations and the people within them. The participants in this study stated clearly that they believed empathy was important for the language learning environment. Participants also reported that their attitude towards English changed in a positive way, that they felt more connected to each other through studying in a communicative environment, and that they felt a specific teaching

approach benefited them best.

The data suggests that the implementation of certain teacher-related classroom practices had positive effects on individuals and the group in this study (Appendix A: Section D), and this signals that a conscientious and attentive teaching approach is vital for creating a positive and empathic atmosphere. In classes which have many students, giving individual attention is not always practical, however, and as some students are likely to receive more attention than others, finding the balance is not always going to be straightforward. Moreover, as each member of the learner group tends to require a slightly different approach, the manner in which the skilled teacher gives attention will differ subtly from individual to individual. Referring back to Dörnyei & Murphy's (2003) assertion regarding the change in class dynamics over time, a teacher also has to take into account that their class and its participants will not remain static and that these changing conditions and mindsets will need to be closely scrutinised and monitored to make sure levels of trust and empathy are maintained. Adopting the teacher as facilitator approach suggested earlier by Arnold (1999) is one way to cope with any changes that occur, as teacher can switch between various degrees of intervention and distance when necessary to create harmony within the group (this includes commanding respect but without the need for intimidation). The teacher has to allow for individual personalities to function and evolve properly, understanding that not all students respond with the same levels of respect and behaviour. Experience in the classroom is, of course, an advantage for knowing how to deal with the many varieties of student personalities. However, even inexperienced teachers can adopt a simple set of techniques to give them an early advantage. How a teacher sets rules from the start and how they connect with members of the learner group is clearly an important strategy. There are several things a teacher can do:

TEACHER

Action: Be a facilitator

Process

- set rules and guide the students to operate within those limits
- encourage students to form the character of the group

- keep the classes fun and interesting
- acknowledge and reward instances of positive behaviour
- create goals through positive framing so that students believe good levels of English can be achieved

Potential benefits

- effects strongly how positive relationships build within the group
- achieves profound empathy if rules and codes are adhered to
- cultivates discipline with instructions being accepted from non-Japanese teacher
- gives students sense that they are being treated fairly
- allows students to become more self-determined, motivated, and self-efficacious

Action: Prepare photo sheet of the students for quick reference

Process

- take photos, or have students take their own photos, at start of semester
- use free software to create contact sheets (Irfanview; OpenOffice)
- put one whole sheet in a folder for easy cross-reference with register
- cut up sheet into individual photos and use it to divide students into groups of three for speaking tests
- distribute photos around tables at start of class so students can mix with unfamiliar members of the group

Potential benefits

Teacher…

- can instantly recognise students (especially useful when they are new)
- can spot absentees without having to take a register
- can identify, penalise, and reward students without individual contact
- can immediately address students (answering, giving information and examples)

- can get to know students more easily by remembering their names and faces

Students…

- have a sense of being treated as individuals
- receive attention which can lead to more connection with teacher
- learn other's names without direct contact
- become more engaged during the lesson (on alert in case their name is called)

TASK

Action: Encourage real communication through tasks

Process

- allow students to find their own way within tasks (help/explain only if and when necessary)
- extend communication tasks to allow students to express themselves more
- introduce the 'communication class' at the start of the semester (they must 'communicate' with one another)
- implement idea that there is no such thing as 'finished' (infinite conversation (Appendix D))
- draw attention to the dynamics of how they communicate in Japanese (fundamentally the same in a foreign language just with different words)
- intervene when conversations become unfocussed

Potential benefits

Teacher…

- focusses more time on monitoring and evaluating and less time on prompting
- does not have to constantly intervene, which allows for better conversational flow
- can indirectly collect information on students' interests
- can indirectly collect information on areas that need improving

Students…

- require less prompting to extend conversations

- become more engaged in the subject itself through utilising new skills
- empathise more through real interaction with unfamiliar members of group
- develop communicative competence
- develop interpersonal intelligence
- accept advice and guidance from near peer role-models
- frame the idea of learning communicative English positively
- engage in fewer 'joke conversations' (will actually engage with what partner says)

INTERACTION

Action: Teacher as chaperone and deflector of attention

Process

- monitor to see if students understand what they are supposed to be doing
- bring individuals together to speak in classroom activities (only when necessary)
- join in conversations when there are natural opportunities to do so
- implement 'do not speak Japanese' policy – have students remind each other it is an English practice class not a Japanese practice class
- implement the 'infinite conversation' model (Appendix D)
- promote idea of having fun with English
- connect conversations to real events

Potential benefits

Teacher…

- will be more attentive and positive with students, not intimidating and imposing
- has opportunities to observe and can pinpoint trouble areas that need attending

to

- can afford to be more relaxed and can assert natural character on the class
- can bring interesting and topical subjects into class

Students…

- show focus, motivation, and eagerness to interact
- speak English more beacuse everyone else around them is doing so
- frame English competency as something that can be achieved
- believe English study is interesting and will benefit them, thereby reducing resentment of the subject and animosity towards the teacher
- achieve learning goals, leading to satisfaction and a successful classroom environment

The categories of teacher, task, and interaction intertwine, giving us some ideas about how to approach the learning environment and the learners within it. From the ideas above, the best approach would appear to be when the teacher allows the group to define itself and grow organically within a clear set of rules, and promotes the idea that English is not just another subject to get a grade in but one that will allow for the development of communicative and interpersonal skills, both of which can be applied in general terms and not just in a foreign langauge environment. How students interact during their time in class will greatly influence attitudes towards learning and the subject being learnt now and in the future.

In the culture of the classroom many factors come into play, either allowing students the freedom to express themselves or, conversely, pushing them further inside themselves. As mentioned above, one way to subtly cultivate a positive learning environment is for the teacher to assume the role of facilitator. By standing back and letting students exercise control over their experience, while practicing simple tasks that promote real conversations, there is a higher likelihood of meaningful interactions and establishment of empathic feelings. Most importantly, though, is that the teacher acts as both a chaperone and deflector of attention. This brings individuals together so they have a chance to interact within their comfort zone. Japanese students are notoriously shy when it comes to communicating in English. If these interactions are positive, the benefits are twofold: students enjoy conversing

with one another so they want to do it more, and over time they become used to having meaningful conversations with unfamiliar others while communicating in English, leading to more potential for positive reinforcement.

CONCLUSION

Empathy in the learning environment can have an impact on the way students think about the subject they are learning. This paper revealed that most Japanese students have similar experiences during their English education and that these experiences influence their attitudes towards English when they enter university. If the current climate is remains, it is likely that most Japanese university students will continue to consider English as a subject that they cannot learn effectively and will continue to regard developing English communication skills as not necessary for their futures. However, by analysing how empathy affects individuals in a learning environment and through a careful pedagogical approach, teachers can start to implement strategies that will help students develop better connections with each other in class, and this can have a strong impact on how individuals develop their communication skills when conversing in English, as well as having an influence on whether they consider English as an important and integral part of their educational history and future development.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire: Students' experiences of studying English and the importance of empathy.

Introduction: Interpretation of Empathy

1. What does **empathy** between people mean to you? Please write in this box below.

Section A: Experiences studying English

1. How were your experiences studying English in junior high school?

Please write the reason for your answer in the box below

2. How were your experiences studying English in senior high school?

Please write the reason for your answer in the box below

3. How are your experiences studying English at this university?

Please write the reason for your answer in the box below

Section B: Attitude towards English now

1. Has your attitude towards English changed? (Circle 'better' or 'worse', or 'no change')

a. better b. worse c. no change

2. How was your attitude towards English at the start of the English course?

a. very positive b. positive c. neutral d. not positive e. negative

3. How is your attitude now towards English?

a. very positive b. positive c. neutral d. not positive e. negative

Section C: Empathy

1. How much empathy do you feel towards your classmates?

a. a lot b. quite a lot c. some d. not much e. none at all

2. How much connection do you feel between you and your communicative English teacher?

a. a lot b. quite a lot c. some d. not much e. none at all

3. How has your empathy towards you classmates changed since you started studying English at university?

a. increased a lot b. increased a little c. no change d. decreased a little e. decreased a lot

4. Do you think that empathy between you and your classmates, and between you and the teacher, is important?

a. yes b. no c. not sure

Section D: Influence of teacher, task, and interaction on class atmosphere

(Score: 1 – very important, 2 – important, 3 – somewhat important)

Teacher: What can the teacher do to create a better atmosphere in class?

Teacher gives students lots of individual attention ( )
Teacher is strict ( )
Teacher is easygoing ( )
Teacher remembers students' names ( )
Teacher gains respect from the students ( )

Tasks: Which types of tasks help to create a better relationship between students?

Interactive games ( )
Tasks that help students express real thoughts ( )
Easy tasks ( )
Challenging tasks ( )
Tasks that allow lots of group and pair work ( )

Interaction: Which of the following help improve empathy between students?

Practice of easy conversations with each other using language from the textbook ( )
Getting to know everyone in class ( )
A lot of interaction, especially with students you are less familiar with ( )
A lot of interaction, but only between friends ( )
Little interaction – main focus on teacher ( )

Appendix B

Students' definitions of empathy

1. Being able to share thoughts
2. Having the same opinion
3. Feelings are the same or similar
4. Understanding each other's thoughts and feelings
5. Agree with each other openly
6. Have the same hobbies and interests
7. Have the same values
8. Have the same sense of humour
9. Enjoy the same activities
10. Accept other people
11. Learn from each other
12. Feelings of trust
13. Feelings of closeness
14. Respect for each other
15. Thoughts are the same or similar
16. Be patient with each other

Table 1. Feedback provided by students relating to their interpretation of empathy

Appendix C

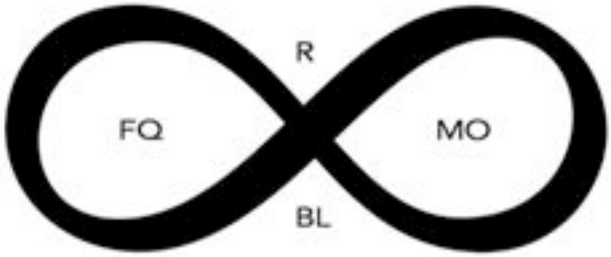
Feedback relating to students' educational experiences

Junior high school	High school	First year at university
Was fun	Studied for college entrance	Speaking class fun
Was easy	Did not like English	Fun with classmates
Motivation increased	Difficult to keep up	Teacher gave attention
Good start to learning Eng.	No practical English	Opportunities to talk
A little difficult	Too much vocabulary	Understood a little
Too difficult	Focus on getting good score	Got used to English
Pace too fast	Did not want to study	Fun extending conversations
Did not take study seriously	Often boring	Still not confident
Did not like English	Easy to understand	Happy when can understand
Did not study at all	Too grammar focussed	Fun talking with teacher
Teacher was friendly	Nothing special	Did not learn much vocab
Teacher was serious	Did not take seriously	Reading class was slow
Teacher difficult to understand	Did not pick up listening	No autonomous learning
Education not effective	Effort not rewarded	Reading class teacher awful
Did not like teacher	Lessons too fast	Poor placement test
Crammed grammar & vocab	Motivation dropped	Classes not practical
Focus on test scores	Felt encouraged	
Not able to understand NS	Focussed on reading	
Other	Teacher not good enough	
	Some speaking practice	
	English top priority	

Table 2. Feedback relating to students' educational experiences while studying English

Appendix D

Model of infinite conversation



Key:

FQ = Follow-up Questions

MO = More Information

R = Reactions

BL = Body Language

Reed, J.T. (2017). Interaction and SLA: The role and power of rising intonation. *Accents Asia, 9*(1), 62-76.

Interaction and SLA: The Role and Power of Rising Intonation

Jacob T. Reed[1]
Kanda University of International Studies.

ABSTRACT

The interaction hypothesis states that second language acquisition (SLA) takes place best in an environment where meaning is negotiated between interlocutors using various feedback types. To add to the body of work in determining whether or not interaction plays a role in SLA, this study examines and analyses the quality of interaction in an information gap activity between two participants – one L1 and one L2 English speaker. Interesting findings in the data and pedagogical implications are discussed.

INTRODUCTION, DEFINITIONS, AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Input, *interaction*, and *output*; it is argued throughout the SLA literature that these three elements of language learning are required for acquisition to take place. Generally speaking, *input* is the linguistic information that a learner has available from their learning environment (e.g. spoken language in the case of this inquiry) to learn a given second language (L2). According to Krashen (1982), no second language can be learned or acquired without *input*. Not just any *input*, but specifically *comprehensible input* is what learners need repeatedly over a long period of time in order to acquire a second language. One aspect of *output* refers to the language that learners actually produce (Swain, 2005), which, on account of their learner status, may contain non-target like errors that are either form (e.g. pronunciation), meaning, or socio-culturally based. Swain (2005) advocates output as a necessary element for L2 acquisition to take place, because it provides the raw language that can be negotiated amongst interlocutors. It is the contention of the *interaction* hypothesis that said speech errors can be repaired, and ultimately with time, practice, and exposure, acquired through interaction with other users of the L2. *Interaction,* then, is certainly the most complicated and multivariate of the three concepts and therefore requires more preliminary explanation.

The Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996; Gass, 1997) postulates that through *comprehended input* (Gass, 1997) and *interaction* with other speakers of an L2, a learner can benefit and acquire novel language for target-like output. The acquisition comes primarily from the interaction between the interlocutors in the form of feedback and negotiation provided by the more proficient speaker. The interaction hypothesis has been tested and found to be empirically valid in settings examining retention of language task competence (Gass and Varonis, 1994) and

[1] Jacob Reed has lived and worked in Japan since 2013, and currently teaches in the English Language Institute at Kanda University of International Studies. His research interests include gamification, vocabulary acquisition, and phonology. Correspondence should be sent to reed-j@kanda.kuis.ac.jp

grammatical development (Mackey, 1999), and its tenets and constructions have also been summarized in Gass and Mackey (2006). Whether an incorrect utterance is actually repaired as a result of feedback has been termed either 'successful' or 'unsuccessful' uptake (Ellis et. al., 2001a; Loewen, 2004), and this is one way in which researchers and teachers can operationalize and measure the effectiveness of feedback. Loewen's (2004) study on uptake claimed that while uptake does indeed happen, it is still too early to tell whether or not it facilitates L2 learning in the strictest sense. However, in light of research findings on output (Swain, 2005), it is equally difficult to claim that uptake plays no role in acquisition.

Because feedback and negotiation are central parts of the interactive process of language learning, some constructs need to be defined. In this study, Long's (1983) definitions of negotiation types are used: *confirmation checks*, *clarification requests,* and *comprehension checks*. Confirmation checks are used by a listener in a conversation to ascertain that what they just heard was indeed what they heard, a clarification request is an attempt to ask for meaning clarification, and a comprehension check is an attempt by a speaker to prevent miscommunication by pre-emptively making certain that the listener is following along.

Feedback, on the other hand, is expounded upon at length by Gass (1997) and Gass and Mackey (2006). Gass provided a framework for discussing feedback by defining three types: *positive feedback*, *indirect negative feedback*, and *direct negative feedback* (Gass, 1997). In short, positive feedback is explicit feedback given to a learner by either providing authentic, native-like input or modifying input by either elaborating on or simplifying it. Finally, indirect negative feedback on the other hand is an implicit form of feedback also used in response to a linguistic construction that deviates from target-like production (Gass, 1997; Mackey and Gass, 2006). The two types of feedback extant in the transcription data are *positive feedback* and *indirect negative feedback*; there was no direct negative feedback evident in the data. Feedback, as is evident from the transcript data shown below, has the potential to open the floor to modified input through elaboration, repetition, pacing, or simplification in order to make target-forms or lexical items more salient to the learner, and thus more likely to be acquired.

As theoretical constructs, input, interaction, and output are all seemingly integral parts of acquiring a second language. On the other hand, it does not follow that the 'perfect conditions' necessarily produce 'perfect results' (acquisition). There are a plethora of explanations to attempt to account for why it is that every instance of interaction does not result in learning, but one that I address here is the contention that 'communication is paramount.' In other words, if a learner produces an utterance with a problem with morphology, pronunciation, or some other formal aspect, but the meaning is nevertheless understood (e.g. "You saw this in Japan? Have you eat one?" (Mackey, 1999)), then it is unlikely that feedback or negotiation will occur (Mackey, Gass, and McDonough, 2000). Examples of these sorts of 'opportunities for learning form' that are lost during communication of meaning were evident in the transcript of this study's interaction.

Finally, perhaps the most interesting finding of this study is the role of rising intonation during interaction and its possible correlation with the elicitation of feedback and negotiation of meaning. Intonation has been examined before in limited contexts from the perspective of teachers' recasts in meaning-based classrooms (Loewen and Philp, 2006), but the role of intonation as uttered by L2 speakers has not been as heavily considered in the literature.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

There were two participants in the interaction who were given an information gap activity to complete. One of the participants (NS in the transcript) is a male from the United States, has an L1 of English, and has advanced proficiency in L2 Spanish. At the time this study's data was collected, he studied theoretical linguistics as a graduate student. The second participant is a female from Taiwan whose L1 is Mandarin, L2 is English (NNS in the transcript), and at the time of the study was a graduate student studying landscape architecture. Both participants are language learners of their stated L2, but neither of them were nor had been language educators, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that they are unfamiliar with SLA theories such as the interaction hypothesis or methodology. This makes them good participants for a task that focuses on the benefits of interaction for second language acquisition.

Materials

The task given to the two participants was a 'spot the differences picture task', which is included in Appendix A. Each of the participants were randomly given one of the sheets containing twelve different small pictures with slight differences between them. The NNS used "Student A" and the NS used "Student B."

Procedure

Without looking directly at the interlocutor's version of the pictures, the task involved the participants discovering the differences between each picture through discussion and question-answer type interactions. Whilst being audio-recorded, the participants completed the task successfully through a series of said interactions. The researcher created a full transcript of the twenty-minute interaction afterwards in order to provide data for analysis under the interactionist paradigm outlined in the literature review. The transcript is available at the end of this document in Appendix B, and the key to the transcript is in Appendix C.

Analysis of the data involved examining the transcript and looking specifically for instances in which interaction may have played a part in assisting the NNS in acquiring the L2. Additionally, areas of the interaction in which an opportunity for learning may have been lost due to inappropriate or lack of feedback by the NS were observed in detail. The results of the analysis are in the following section.

RESULTS

In this section, parts of the transcript have been copied here to illustrate specific points about the types of interaction that were observed as well as possible ways in which the NNS may have been able to acquire language as a result of it.

The only types of interaction that were evident in the transcript and are outlined below were *indirect negative feedback, negotiation of meaning*, *elaboration*, and *repetition* (positive

feedback). Other types of interaction such as *direct negative feedback* defined in the literature review did not occur in the data. Successful uptake was also evident in both cases of indirect feedback addressed, but not all cases of feedback elicited uptake and were considered 'lost opportunities,' which are discussed and illustrated below.

Finally, examples of the concept of rising intonation as a catalyst for providing feedback are taken from the transcript and elaborated upon. Following the examples of the different types of feedback and negotiation and corresponding discussion, the study ends with relevant pedagogical implications.

Indirect Negative Feedback

NNS: Um, number six. I think they are .. one, two, three? It look like pine trees on the wall? I think it's just like the paintings … on the wall. And .. there is a [4s] v- vase? [2s] And put some flower inside of like a ..
NS: Mhm.
NNS: container or something. And there are one, two, three … three flowers? And some leaf?

. . .

NS: Umm… But then yeah, in the vase there are [2s] two flo-, well, three flowers and [3s] a leaf [1s] And then another sort of … maybe two leaves, or .. two or .. three leaves, actually [laughs]
NNS: I have – I guess maybe I have three leaves, but they are different shape.

In this example, the NNS repairs her initial incorrect utterance after implicit negative feedback is received from the NS. She begins by saying "some leaf", and about twenty seconds later hears the correct plural form, "leaves," in the NS's utterance. Finally, in the next turn, she claims that she has "three leaves," resulting in successful uptake (Ellis et. al. 2001a; Loewen, 2004) of the implicit negative feedback (Gass, 1997).

NNS: And .. the just lines on his short.
NS: Uhh … in my picture, both of the boys have shorts that are white.
NNS: Ah, oh yeah shorts, it's .. I mean shirt, a shirt.
NS: [laughs]

This example shows that pronunciation can also be acquired through implicit negative feedback. The NS never explicitly states that her pronunciation is wrong; rather, his response implicitly (Gass and Mackey, 2006) informs the NNS that a miscommunication has occurred. After noticing this, she repairs her incorrect pronunciation after a miscommunication is encountered, resulting in successful uptake (Ellis et. al. 2001a; Loewen, 2004)

Negotiation of Meaning

NNS: Yeah, okay. Uh, there is … there are two boys, they are playing the football [2s] I think

it's .. soccer. Not American football, it's maybe soccer, right?
NS: Soccer? Yeah

The NNS uses a comprehension check (Long, 1983) to make sure that she is using the correct word, "soccer" to refer to the sport she might have first learned as "football" in English. The NS then follows with a confirmation check (Long, 1983). The NS shows his completed confirmation by saying, "Yeah." This interactive negotiation of meaning allowed the NNS to confirm her intuition about the usage of the word "soccer," and provided a space for her to test her language in a controlled environment.

Elaboration (Positive Evidence)

In the following excerpt, positive evidence (Gass, 1997; Gass and Mackey, 2006) is given to the NNS in response to the interrogative, "what?" The NNS did not understand the word "daffodil", and so asked for clarification. The NS's response was to elaborate by explaining that a "daffodil", while he does not "know flowers that well", is referring to the two flowers that look the same in picture number six (see Appendix). The NNS utters, "Yes," indicating that at least she is following along with the NS's elaboration.

NS: And they look like, I dunno, I think it's called like … a daffodil.
NNS: A what?
NS: The two with the same flowers? (NNS: Yes.) And then maybe a rose? One uh, one rose? (NNS: Yes) or … a tulip? I don't know … It's hard to tell. I don't know flowers that well.

In the next excerpt, the NNS's rising intonation, "Yes?" is looking for clarification of the word, "chimney", and it is returned and elaborated by using another lexical item ("tower") with which she is probably familiar given the fact that she does not use rising intonation in the last line directly after the NS uses "tower." This is an example of how modified input can be elicited with rising intonation. More examples like this and a discussion follow the 'lost opportunities' for negotiation section below.

NS: Okay, yeah, that's like mine. Um, and the house is, um, [unclear]. There's a chimney, too. On my house. [1s] Do you see it? On the left side of the roof?
NNS: Yes?
NS: There's like a .. chimney? Or some sort of [3s] I dunno, tower maybe? [laughs]
NNS: Yeah.

'Lost Opportunities' for Negotiation

The next two excerpts from the transcript show incorrect NNS utterances going uncorrected by the NS. As illustrated in the excerpts below, the NS does not correct the NNS incorrect production of "**childrens**" or "the baby **look** a little bit big." As in Mackey, Gass, and McDonough's study (2000), an opportunity for negotiation is lost, perhaps because the meaning

is clear from both the context (the picture differences task) and the vocabulary used, thus relegating the correct grammatical forms to a superfluous position. The NS's backchanneling ("Mmhm") and laughter indicate that meaning was not inhibited by the incorrect forms, and so interaction did not assist the NNS in acquiring the correct forms.

NNS: Mm, number four, they are [6s] six childrens, and they are watching something… and .. I think they are in like a classroom? Cause there is a [2s] whiteboard. On the wall.
NS: Mmhm.

NNS: And the baby is crying. But the baby .. look .. a little bit … big?
NS: [laughs]

In the following passage, the NNS does not learn the word "striped" or "stripe." Instead, she opts to use the word "line," probably because she did not notice the NS's usage of the word "stripe" and map the form to the meaning. This non-noticing is reinforced by the fact that the NS confirms the NNS's clarification check about "line"

NS: And then .. the other boy has a striped shirt.
NNS: Yes?
NS: Also .. on yours?
NNS: And .. the just lines on his short.
NS: Uhh … in my picture, both of the boys have shorts that are white.
NNS: Ah, oh yeah shorts, it's .. I mean shirt, a shirt.
NS: [laughs]
NNS: He he dress just .. his share – shirt just line?
NS: Uh-huh.
NNS: Line? On the shirt. Same?
NS: Yeah.
[both laugh]

The Power of Rising Intonation

The highlighted words in the sections below indicate areas where rising intonation occurs in various places in both the NNS and NS's sentences. In response to all of these instances, a confirmatory response is given by the other interlocutor in the form of either "Yeah" or "Mhm." In other words, there is no explicit confirmation or comprehension checks in the strictest sense (Long, 1983), but rather, the rising intonation alone seems to give the interlocutor a cue to confirm the validity of the statement containing the intonation.

NS: And number five? .. It .. looks like, eh, there's a .. lake?

NNS: Yeah.

NNS: Um, number six. I think they are .. one, two, three? It look like pine trees on the wall? I think it's just like the paintings … on the wall. And .. there is a [4s] v- vase? [2s] And put some flower inside of like a ..
NS: Mhm.

NNS: Yeah, I think she looks a little bit … happy? [both laugh]
NS: Yeah .. yeah, and it's really close [unclear]
NNS: Yeah.

Repetition

Below is an example from the interaction of how rising intonation elicited modified input in the form of repetition.

NS: And there's something in the background. I can't tell what it is. Like an arch or something?
NNS: Yes?
NS: Like a round shape? Round shape?
NNS: Yeah. I think the same on- on my picture is like .. arch on the … maybe wall or something is just like decoration on the wall.

After the NNS's rising intonation on "Yes?", the NS provides modified input by repetition. The intonation itself once again indicates (or has the potential to indicate) a possible misunderstanding or knowledge gap. In this case, the word is "arch", which the NNS may already know, but nevertheless implicitly asks for some kind of clarification through rising intonation.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Pedagogical implications one can take from this interaction firstly assume that interactive feedback and negotiation are positive and perhaps necessary conditions for language acquisition to occur. The first implication is that students need detailed and specific instructions if interaction is to be more successful. The positive effects of interaction need to be made more salient to learners and teachers so that they know how to guide students to the conditions that make for effective interaction. Otherwise, opportunities for acquisition of forms in particular may be lost as they were in this interaction and others (Mackey, Gass, and McDonough, 2000). The second and final implication is that ESL and EFL teachers should pay close attention to not

only the semantic and phonetic values of the utterances of their students, but also to suprasegmental features of language such as prosody. Specifically, the data from the interaction here has shown that rising intonation can play a powerful role in eliciting feedback from an interlocutor. It may also be worth the time to educate students about the effects of their own intonation in garnering information via interactive feedback and negotiation.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In closing, this study has several limitations that need to be addressed. First of all, the study focused solely on verbal linguistic elements and thereby operated under a very basic definition of acquisition that did not take socio-cultural facets, gesture, and other types of meaning making into account. Given the scope of the present study, it would have been impossible to attempt to account for all of these various issues, but the reader should be aware of this fact.

Another limitation is the fact that the study had only two participants, and their quality of interaction was not compared to two NNS as in Sato (2007). Therefore, any attempt to extrapolate the results of the interaction that occurred in this study to another environment may or may not yield the same or similar results.

In future studies, it would be interesting to see whether intonation plays a similarly powerful meaning making role in other interactions. Studies might also address whether or not it is an effective pedagogical practice to teach features of language such as intonation explicitly, and to what degree doing so results in noticing or accurate usage.

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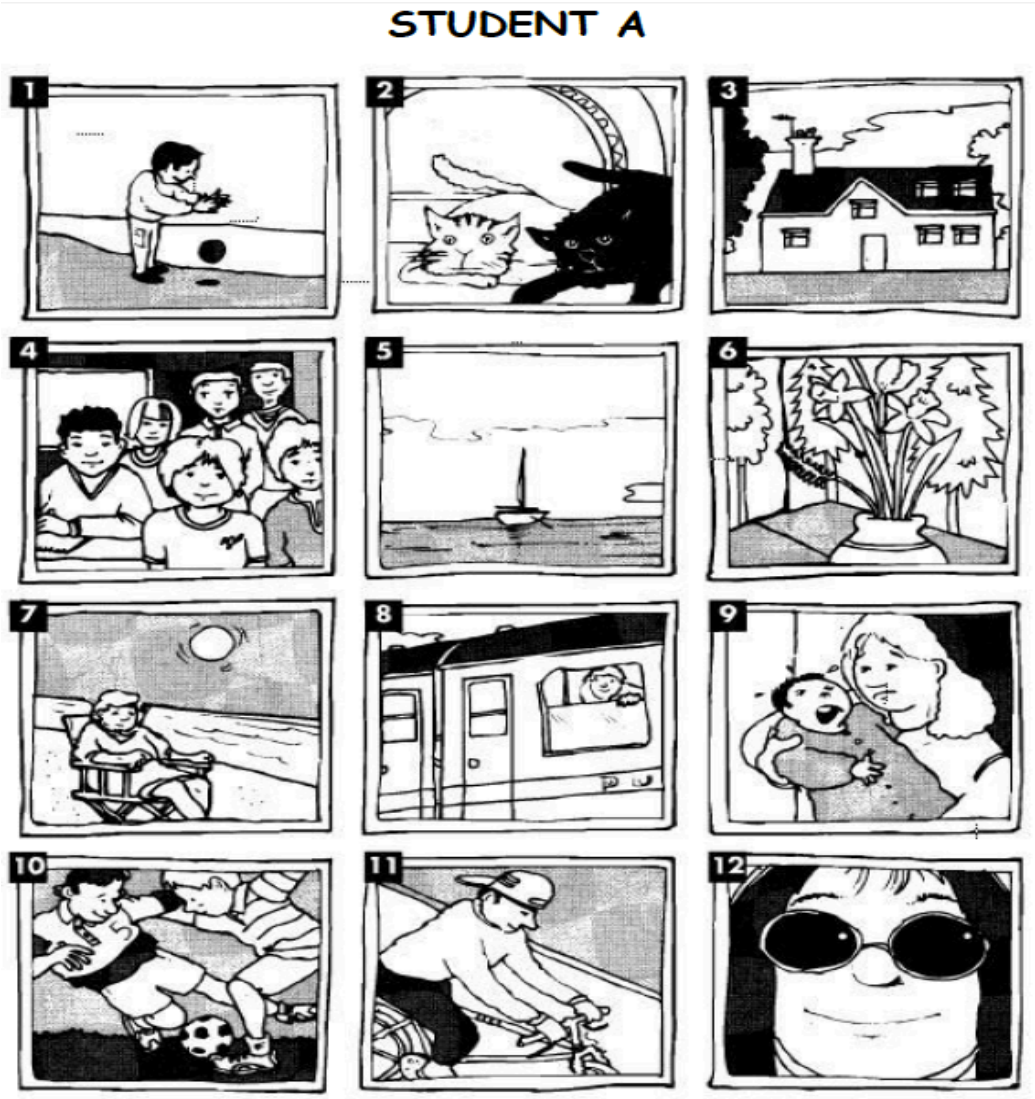
APPENDIX

A) Find the Differences Picture Task



B) Transcript

NS: Um, in my picture it looks like there's a .. little girl? And she's playing with um .. a ball.

NNS: Mm .. in my picture I think it's a little boy? And he just dropped the b- ball.
NS: Oh, okay

NNS: And I think the ground is has a little bit slope. On the ground. It's not flat.
NS: Okay. I think … mine too. It's a different colors, it looks like. I dunno. It might be … on the edge of something……A lake, or something … I don't really know.
NNS: (laughter)
NS: It's hard to tell, but yeah. It looks like there's two different … okay? Okay. So, do you wanna start for the second one?
NNS: Okay? Uh, there is two cats? One in black? And a- another one in white. They… they lie down on the .. the ground? And they focus something, because they wash the [unclear] direction, but I dunno what are they looking.
NS: Okay. Yeah, I- Mine has two cats also. Um, they're both white. And their tails are black. [3s Pause]
NS: Did you say one of yours was?
NNS: One [unclear] is black and another one is … um … white?
NS: Oh, okay. And then, yeah, both of the cats in my picture… it looks like they're looking .. towards the .. person … looking at the picture.
[3s Pause]
NS: And there's something in the background. I can't tell what it is. Like an arch or something?
NNS: Yes?
NS: Like a round shape? Round shape?
NNS: Yeah. I think the same on- on my picture is like .. arch on the … maybe wall or something is just like decoration on the wall.
NS: Yeah.
[4s Pause]
NS: And then, um .. one of the cats .. in my . the cat on the left … has …. stripes? On its head.
NNS: Umm . yes.
NS: Yeah. And then the cat on the right has .. black paws [1s] Yours too?
NNS: Yeah.
NS: Okay.
[3s Pause]
NNS: Um.. number three?
NS: Number three?
[2s Pause]
NNS: Um .. I think it's just a .. small .. house? And at the left side is um .. a tree? Maybe a tree? Because I can see the whole just … little part of the tree.
NS: Mm-hm.
[1s Pause]
NNS: And I think that [2s] mm, the … the house is behind of a … lake? Or a river?
[3s Pause]
NS: Mmk. [1s] Yeah, I also see the tree. And it looks like .. um [3s] how would I describe the house? It's a white house with a black roof.
NNS: Ah, yeah, the same.
NS: And then there are … five windows? Well … maybe no? One, two, three, four …
NNS: Mm?
NS: Seven windows?
NNS: I have four windows on the .. house, and two on the roof.
NS: Okay, yeah, that's like mine. Um, and the house is, um, [unclear]. There's a chimney, too. On my house. [1s] Do you see it? On the left side of the roof?
NNS: Yes?
NS: There's like a .. chimney? Or some sort of [3s] I dunno, tower maybe? [laughs]
NNS: Yeah.
NS: And then .. yeah, a door in the middle?
NNS: Yes.
[5s Pause]
NS: Um, okay?
[4s Pause]
NNS: Mm, number four, they are [6s] six childrens, and they are watching something… and .. I think they are in like a classroom? Cause there is a [2s] whiteboard. On the wall.
NS: Mmhm.
NNS: [Unclear] they are …
[4s Pause]
NS: My picture has four .. kids. Uhh .. but

there's also a whiteboard. Behind them. On the back wall. [2s] And [3s] they're all … I think? They're all .. boys [3s] maybe.
[2s Pause]
NNS: I guess maybe …
NS: Actually, that … yeah, it's hard to tell. [unclear]
NNS: …two or three in my picture are .. are girls, I guess .. after all [both laugh]
[2s Pause]
NS: Well [2s] they're young, they're definitely in schoo- in school. School-age children.
NNS: Yes.
[7s Pause]
NS: And number five? .. It .. looks like, eh, there's a .. lake?
NNS: Yeah.
NS: And then [1s] in the middle of the lake? Or away from the shore? There's a … a boat.
NNS: Yes.
NS: Um .. and the lake is smooth. There's no waves. [unclear]
NNS: Yep.
NS: It's just calm .. and maybe some clouds in the sky.
[2s Pause]
NS: Uh.
[4s Pause]
NNS: I think it's .. the same.
NS: The same?
Researcher: There should be one difference for each .. for each picture.
NS: What kind of [1s] In my .. picture, the boat is like a … it looks like a sailboat, but with no sails. It's just sort of … I don't know.
[7s Pause]
NS: Is it …
[3s Pause]
NNS: I dunno … what's the difference?
[both laugh]
[1s Pause]
NS: Um … is it a big boat, or a little boat?
NNS: I think it's … not really big.
NS: Yeah. Does it look like there's a … like a … maybe like a …
NNS: A one …?
NS: Like an oar?
NNS: Yes, just one on the right.
NS: Yeah, yeah. And then a … pole? Coming up? In the boat?
NNS: Yeah.
NS: Into the … sky? [1s] Uh [1s] there's like … a white boat?
NNS: Yes?
NS: Yeah? [both laugh] Um [2s] okay.
[2s Pause]
NS: Let's see. [3s] I think there's like a .. I dunno .. to the right? Side? There's a … something in the sky? Like I thought it was a cloud.
[1s Pause]
NNS: Yes, maybe ..
NS: You can see like half of it?
NNS: Yeah.
NS: And then above in the sky there's a .. like a .. like a line?
[6s Pause]
NS: Above the boat? You can see it go all the way across? From one side of the picture to the other side of the picture?
NNS: Yes?
NS: There's like a .. a thin, black line.
NNS: Yes?
NS: That too? You have that? [2s] Okay.
[3s Pause)
[both laugh]
[2s Pause]
NNS: Um, number six. I think they are .. one, two, three? It look like pine trees on the wall? I think it's just like the paintings … on the wall. And .. there is a [4s] v- vase? [2s] And put some flower inside of like a ..
NS: Mhm.
NNS: container or something. And there are one, two, three … three flowers? And some leaf?
NS: Mmk. [1s] Yeah, I have – yeah, there's a vase with … three flowers … and a

leaf, but I don't see any … did you say you had pine trees?
NNS: Yes?
NS: Oh, really? I – where? I don't have any. There are no pine trees in my picture.
NNS: Um, it's … I think it's just like a painting or (NS: Oh.) decoration on the wall. Not real pine tree.
NS: Yeah, I think the wall in mine are [1s] blank.
NNS: [unclear]
NS: Umm… But then yeah, in the vase there are [2s] two flo-, well, three flowers and [3s] a leaf [1s] And then another sort of … maybe two leaves, or .. two or .. three leaves, actually [laughs]
NNS: I have – I guess maybe I have three leaves, but they are different shape.
NS: Yeah. Two of them are the same, but one's .. different. Okay.
NNS: Alright.
NS: And they look like, I dunno, I think it's called like … a daffodil.
NNS: A what?
NS: The two with the same flowers? (NNS: Yes.) And then maybe a rose? One uh, one rose? (NNS: Yes) or … a tulip? I don't know … It's hard to tell. I don't know flowers that well.
[2s Pause]
NS: Um
[1s Pause]
NNS: Mhm.
NS: On the vase there's one line going around.
NNS: I have two lines.
NS: Two lines? On the vase?
NNS: Yeah.
[7s Pause]
NNS: Number seven?
NS: Okay.
NNS: I think there is a [2s] woman. [3s] Sit on the chair at a beach? And there is a sun? [3s] I guess? Or moon, I don't know, because I can't figure out it's … the morning? Or night? But I think she is just … sit close to the .. the beach?
[1s Pause]
NS: Hm. In my picture, there's also a woman in a chair, but behind her is a .. a fence. It looks like. Or a wall. [2s] Um, so you can't really tell, it looks like she's maybe in her backyard or something.
NNS: Ohh..
[1s Pause]
NS: Um .. she doesn't .. look that happy, either.
NNS: Yes, she looks not happy, and I think she – the chair is on .. is put on the sand? [1s] Uh, I guess it's close to the ... maybe at the beach.
NS: At the beach?
NNS: Yeah, I guess.
NS: Yeah. Yours must be in a different spot. [1s] Mm, cause it looks like she's … well, she might be at the beach, but … all I see is the fence.
NNS: Ah. [2s] Okay?
NS: Okay. Number eight?
[4s Pause]
NNS: I think it is a train? Train. And there is a … girl? In the train? And she open the window and look out? And then she put her hands on … Maybe sh- she just open the window, and she just put her hands on the top of the window.
NS: Mhm, like it's halfway open.
NNS: Yes?
NS: And, yeah, there's still grass in the bottom part.
NNS: Yeah, yeah. And sh- she look outside. And the train in .. white? And the roof in black.
[1s Pause]
NS: Yeah. And she's waving with … he or she … with the right hand?
NNS: No? She's not waving in my picture.
NS: Oh, really? Oh, okay. In my picture .. yeah, the person's waving. Looking out the … train.
[1s Pause]
NNS: She just put her … left hand? On the

top of the half window.
NS: Both of them? Or ..
NNS: No no, just one.
NS: Oh.
NNS: Just one hand.
NS: Okay, yeah. Yeah, this person is waving in my – in my picture.
NNS: Okay?
NS: On the car? The train? There's one door, to the left. To the left of the window?
[2s Pause]
NNS: Yes.
NS: Yeah.
NNS: Yeah, and I can still see another train ca- another train? And it's a also have a one door on it. It's just a .. half. And they are two lines? On the .. the train?
NS: Yeah.
[3s Pause]
NS: Okay.
NNS: Um, number nine? [1s] I think it's a .. babysitter. She is … hold- holding a baby?
NS: Mhm.
NNS: And the baby is crying. But the baby .. look .. a little bit … big?
NS: [laughs]
NNS: Not- not just a infant, right? I guess maybe one years old?
NS: Yeah. Um, the baby in my picture is .. smiling.
NNS: Umm, my .. my picture? The baby is … crying.
NS: Mhm.
NNS: Yeah.
NS: Mhm. Yeah, and then – and then the person holding the baby?
NNS: Yeah?
NS: I dunno, the mom, or the babysitter, or … (NNS: Yeah) whoever, I guess. Uh, she's also smiling.
NNS: Um, no, because my .. I guess the babysitter or the woman .. because maybe the baby is crying? So she … she look .. not real good.
NS: She's upset too?
NNS: Yeah.
NS: Okay. Um. [2s] And the baby is wearing [2s] [laughs] I dunno, like one … um … like, there's buttons going down?
(NNS: Yes?) Like, the front of the baby's (NNS: Yes?) .. clothes.
NNS: Yeah, it's a longsleeve.
NS: Yeah [2s] Okay. [1s] Uh… ten?
NNS: Yeah?
NS: Ten.
NNS: Yeah, okay. Uh, there is … there are two boys, they are playing the football [2s] I think it's .. soccer. Not American football, it's maybe soccer, right?
NS: Soccer? Yeah.
NNS: And … I think it looks real exciting? [2s] Maybe they play in the .. the football on the .. the grass? (NS: Mhm) Yeah.
NS: Yeah, I have two .. two guys, or two boys playing soccer. One has his jersey? Or his shirt? Has number five.
NNS: Yeah, I'm same.
NS: Yours also? And the top part is white, (NNS: Yeah) and the bottom is … black? Of his shirt.
NNS: Mine is … oh, yeah, shirt, yeah.
NS: Yeah.
NNS: Yeah, and he dress a white pants.
NS: Mhm.
NNS: White short.
NS: And then .. the other boy has a striped shirt.
NNS: Yes?
NS: Also .. on yours?
NNS: And .. the just lines on his short.
NS: Uhh … in my picture, both of the boys have shorts that are white.
NNS: Ah, oh yeah shorts, it's .. I mean shirt, a shirt.
NS: [laughs]
NNS: He he dress just .. his share – shirt just line?
NS: Uh-huh.
NNS: Line? On the shirt. Same?
NS: Yeah.
[both laugh]
[6s Pause]

NNS: Mm one [1s] one boy .. uh .. the boy who wear the .. shirt [1s] was number 5?
His, uh, his hair is black.
NS: Oh, no. Not in (NNS: And ano—) .. mine. Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you! Hi- His hair's uh… I suppose blonde. Lighter.
NNS: Ohhh, and another one's lighter, maybe.
NS: Okay.
NNS: Light.
NS: Yeah. Both of them have light hair .. in my picture.
NNS: Ohh, so in my picture have difference.
NS: Okay.
[3s Pause]
NS: Uh, eleven?
[4s Pause]
NNS: Uh, a boy is riding a bicycle?
[2s Pause]
NS: Yeah.
NNS: And he wear white .. white shirt and .. black pants? [1s] And he also wear a .. hat?
NS: A helmet?
NNS: No no, a hat.
NS: Oh, really? (NNS: Yeah) Mine, he's wearing a helmet. [2s] On his bike. (NNS: Ahh) So [1s] But he's dressed the same. He has the same .. well, it sounds like he has the same clothes.
NNS: Mhm.
NS: Um, okay. [2s] The last one?
NNS: Mm. I think [1s] It's um .. just a … woman's face on the picture. And she wear uh … some glasses? And … there's the shape of the sunglasses .. a circle?
NS: Um .. I also have a woman's face, but she's not wearing any glasses.
NNS: Ahh.
NS: She has uhh, long dark hair? (NNS: Yes?) It goes all the way down to .. (NNS: Uh-huh) Yeah? And she has a … a slight smile on her face. (NNS: Yes?) Not like a huge grin, but .. just (NNS: Yeah, just a little bit smile) yeah, yeah. And … a round nose? [1s] Yeah?
NNS: Yeah, I think she looks a little bit … happy? [both laugh]
NS: Yeah .. yeah, and it's really close [unclear]
NNS: Yeah.
NS: Yeah, yeah. In the picture.
NNS: Yeah.

C) Transcript Key

Symbol	Meaning
.	Quick pause (~150-249 ms[2])
..	Short pause (~250-499 ms[2])
…	Medium pause (~500 – 999 ms[2])
[Xs]	Time in seconds pause (at least 1s)
[information]	Other information, usu. [laughter]
(NNS:) / (NS:)	Either the NS or the NNS is speaking during the other's turn.
?	Rising Intonation

[2] Times are approximations only, and were not measured.

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Does Size Matter?: Learners' Self-reported Perceptions in a Small-sized EFL Class

Min Lun Yeh[1]
Ming Chi University of Technology

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on three aspects of EFL learning by identifying learners' self-reported perceptions of learning in a small-sized class, as compared with their previous experience in a larger class. The first aspect investigates the learning efficiency of a small-sized class, the second is related to participation in a small-sized class, and the third deals with the benefits of a large-sized class. A questionnaire was administered to 48 freshman college students from two English classes at a technology university in Taiwan to collect data. The results demonstrate that participants generally had a positive attitude toward learning English in a small-sized class. First, concerning learning efficiency, the aspect most favored by participants was the student-teacher interactions in a small-sized class. A high percentage of the participants considered such interactions beneficial to their learning. They also believed that their errors could be corrected in a more timely manner. Second, regarding class participation, they mostly agreed that small-sized classes better prevented cheating in class. Furthermore,

[1] Min Lun Yeh obtained her master degree in TESOL at San Jose State University in California, U.S.A. She is currently teaching at Mingchi University of Technology in Taiwan with an expertise in speaking and listening strategic instructions. Her most recent publication was *The Preference of Learning With Various Authentic Materials on an E-Platform: A Survey on Advanced-Level Students.* Her areas of research interest include authenticity and online learning. Correspondence should be sent to: minlunyeh@hotmail.com.

small-sized classes facilitated greater concentration in their learning. Third, no significant advantage was found for large-sized classes among the participants in terms of sense of security and the joy of being in a large crowd. Finally, the study addresses what areas participants perceived as most improved in terms of learning in a small-sized class. The top three areas were: oral communication ability, pronunciation, and listening, in that order.

INTRODUCTION

Language classes with a large population are the norm and also a concern for many teachers. In most educational contexts in Taiwan, the average class size is around 40 to 60 students. Teachers mostly have the impression that large class size has been the cause to many learning problems. Also, it substantially increases teachers' workload especially if the teaching activities require teachers' attention to individual student. However, the current tendency of English learning advocates interactive activities in class. The interactive teaching activities which are time-consuming especially when they are done in large classes can in fact impose tremendous time pressure on teachers. As such, this situation creates a dilemma for teachers about how much effort and time should be spent on teaching activities without sacrificing the learning progression stated on the teaching syllabus. Lots of previous research into large classes has surveyed instructors' beliefs about the size and problems of large classes. According to Todd (2012), he suggested a threshold level of class size around 25 and 45 students per class, and numbers of students beyond that will make learning drop noticeably.

As many instructors and researchers cited, a large class might bring problems such as classroom management, time allocation on lecturing and activities, interaction issues including fewer opportunities for students to speak and less individual attention. Additional problems can be associated with feedback and monitoring issues where

teachers were imposed with heavy workload to observe and comment on individual student's work, etc. (Hayes, 1997; Li, 1998; LoCastro, 1989; Coleman, 1989; Todd, 1999; McLeod, 1989; Peachey, 1989). Given the fact that quite a number of teachers believe large-sized classes might adversely affect student learning, how teachers have tried to address the problems is worth an examination. Literature has suggested teachers adopted a global solution using project-based or cooperative learning to minimize the impact of less individual attention in large classes (McDonald, Thiravithul, Butkulwong, Kednoi, 2002; Sarwar, 2001). However, on the other hand, no research evidence confirmed that this kind of global solution can promote student learning. A research by Todd (2012) indicated that there was a correlation between class size and students' scores for EFL classes. It showed that there was a tendency for the students who studied in a larger class to receive a lower grade. He stated that students in larger classes learned less effectively than those who in a smaller one. This view is consistent with the widely supported beliefs from most teachers. However, few relevant studies show hard evidence in the field of second language learning at a university level concerning the relationship between class sizes and learning effect (Slavin, 1989). So far, the arguments on language class size have manifested a great discrepancy and presented some controversial views on class size and students' learning achievements. As such, the purpose of this study is to find out whether there is a correlation between small-sized class and learning effectiveness by soliciting freshman college students' self-report opinions on English classes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Interaction Hypothesis & Output Hypothesis

Interactions are an important part of English teaching and learning. In second language classes in particular, the importance of meaningful interactions and the ability to provide feedback to students is paramount to learning (Gass, 1997). Meaningful interactions in promoting English proficiency has been more emphasized these years

since Long's *Interaction Hypothesis* and Swain's *Output Hypothesis*, which both suggest that interactional deficits particular to large, teacher-centered classes could lead to less effective learning (Long, 1996; Swain, 1985). They both attempted to conceptualize the need for learners to negotiate comprehensible input and the role of their own output in driving their language development.

Impacts of Varied Class Sizes

LoCastro (1989) also argued that there are decrease opportunities for learning in large classes where fewer quality interactions occur. By surveying teacher opinions, his study showed that the pedagogical problems associated with large class size were: (1) more difficulties in carrying out speaking, (2) difficulties in monitoring work and giving feedback, (3) problems with individualizing work, (4) difficulties in setting up communicative tasks, (5) tendency to avoid activities that were demanding to implement. Bosker (1998) asserted that teachers had more opportunities to monitor individual pupils closely in smaller classes in his research with regard to the issues of interaction and feedback; therefore more individualized instruction and assistance during the interactive practices were provided. Camak (2009) also supported the concept of a small-sized class in his study noting that class size was an important dimension in planning and realizing effective teaching. Korostoff (1998) argued that the assessment and evaluation of students was less time-consuming in smaller classes, and provided teachers with more time to focus on pedagogical considerations, rather than marking and grading. These studies showed that class size indeed influences students' learning in certain ways.

METHODS

Participants and Context

The study focused on three aspects of English learning and class size by identifying students' self-perceptions for English learning efficiency. A class with over 35 students was considered a “large class” in this survey. A self-concept scale was adopted in the study where data were collected from 48 freshman students. The participants were students in intermediate-level English classes at a vocational technology university in Taiwan. The typical class enrollment at the university is around 25 students.

Instrument

The questionnaire, mostly in the form of a Likert five-point scale, was divided into two sections. The first section probed into the basic information giving special attention to the students' top three problematic areas. Also, the students were asked to specify how many students there were in their English classes at high school. The definition of a large class was a population of over 35 students in this survey. Those who did not have the experience of attending a large class were removed since they needed the reference benchmark to respond to the items in the second section accordingly. Furthermore, they were asked how many hours they spent on studying English each week. Those responses were solicited for understanding whether there was a relationship between their learning efficiency and participation in the small-sized class. The second section comprised 14 items that examined three emphasized aspects. The three aspects in the survey were: (1) learning efficiency of a small-sized class, (2) participation in a small-sized class, (3) benefits of a large-sized class. Eleven students responded that their English class at high school had a population lower than 35 people; hence, these subjects' responses were removed since they were not able to compare the differences required in the items from the second section of the survey.

Data Analysis

The adoption of the 14 items in the questionnaire was a result of factor analysis (direct oblimin) that extracted three factors using the extraction method of principal component analysis. Factor one was associated with learning efficiency of a small-sized class accounting for 38.59% of the total variance. Five items in this category received strong loading (>.6), which were items # 4, 6, 7, 8, 9. Factor two is indicative of participation in a small-sized class including items # 1, 2, 5, 10, 11, 12, which carried appreciable loading from .48 to .75. Factor two accounted for 15.32% of the variance. Factor three was representative of the benefits of large classes containing items # 3, 13. Factor three accounted for 10.77% of the variance. Therefore the total variance accounted for was 64.67%. The Cronbach Alpha's coefficient was used and yielded an internal consistency of .827, which was considered acceptable based on the conventionally accepted reliability coefficient of .70.

The items of each factor were interspersed with those of the other in order to make the intended meaning of each factor less obvious to the participants in the survey. Also, the items were written in both negative and positive expressions. For example, *I think there is a negative impact on my willingness to participate in the activities in a large-sized English class* (negative); *I feel more comfortable raising questions in a small-sized English class* (positive). The accumulated statistics of the students' hours of studying English in a week were used to ascertain the correlations of hours spent in studying English and their perceived learning efficiency of a small-sized class. The result obtained in this research was analyzed using SPSS descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The overall responses in the survey showed that the students generally had a positive attitude toward learning English in a small-sized classes (see Table 1). However,

a large percentage of the participants responded *neither agree nor disagree* for many of the items in the survey. Finn et al. (2003) in their study proved that class size had great effects on students' social and academic involvement in the class. Namely, students in small classes, contrary to their counterparts in large ones, are always under pressure to participate in class activities in a positive sense. Resnick (2003) had a similar view on small class where students encounter continuous pressure to engage in various activities and become active class members. Therefore, attention to learning went up, while off-task as well as other disruptive behaviors went down. As a large percentage of the participants appeared to have no particular preference for small-sized class, this might coincide with earlier research showing discrepant views of the teaching/ learning effect of small-sized classes.

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics for Factor 1, 2 & 3*

Factor	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
1. Learning efficiency of a small-sized class	3.69	.807
2. Participation in a small-sized class	3.28	.870
3. Benefits of a large-sized class	2.85	.812

Learning Efficiency of a Small-sized Class

Factor 1 consisting of items 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 referred to the learning efficiency of a small class. Table 1 suggested that the participants favored most the interactions with the teacher in a small-sized class (item 8) in this category. They thought the interactions benefited their learning for 73% responding *agree* or *strongly agree*. Students at small classes were engaged in more social interactions with their teachers which gave them less space to misbehave as Finn et al. (2003) suggested in their study in relation to

antisocial attitudes versus class sizes. Also, they perceived that their mistakes could be more timely corrected compared with that at large classes (item 7). According to Miller-Whitehead (2003), small classes allowed teachers to identify problems quickly; thus, remedial solution could be timely applied to eliminate or minimize any possible learning obstacles. The descriptive statistics of Factor 1 is shown in Table 2. Following items 7 and 8, item 6 ranked the third most informative in regards to the participants' opinions of having more practice opportunities in the class. The other two items, item 4 and 9, (#4 "Compared with large-sized class, I feel more comfortable raising questions in a small-sized English class."/ # 9 "Compared with large-sized class, the interactions I have with my classmates in a small-sized class make me love going to the English class.") received low mean scores of 3.54 and 3.41 respectively. Given the fact that Taiwanese students are not prone to initiate questions in the class, item 4 showed that the norm of not raising questions could not be changed even in a small class. Item 9 intended to understand whether the increased interactions among students by facilitating more paired or grouped activities in a smaller class could enhance their motivation in attending English classes. 38.8% of them agreed that interactions among peers were an incentive for going to English classes. However, almost 50% of the students responded that they had no particular stance on this. Table 3, 4, 5 revealed the frequencies of items 6, 8, 9 reported by the participants.

Table 2 *Descriptive Statistics for Items of Factor 1*

Statement No.	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
4	2	5	3.54	.869
6	2	5	3.73	.804
7	3	5	3.86	.751
8	3	5	3.92	.682
9	2	5	3.41	.927

Table 3*Frequency for Statement 6*

#6. Compared with large-sized class, I feel there are more opportunities to practice English in a small-sized class.

		Frequency	*Valid Percent*	*Cumulative Percent*
Valid	disagree	1	2.7	2.7
	neither agree nor disagree	15	40.5	43.2
	agree	14	37.8	81.1
	strongly agree	7	18.9	100.0
	Total	37	100	

Table 4 F*requency for Statement 8*

#8. Compared with large-sized class, the interactions I have with teachers in a small-sized English class make me love going to the English class.

		Frequency	*Valid Percent*	*Cumulative Percent*
Valid	neither agree nor disagree	10	27.0	27.0
	agree	20	54.1	81.1
	strongly agree	7	18.9	100.0
	Total	37	100.0	

Table 5*Frequency for Statement 9*

#9. Compared with large-sized class, the interactions I have with my classmates in a small-sized class make me love going to the English class.

		Frequency	*Valid Percent*	*Cumulative Percent*
Valid	disagree	5	13.5	13.5
	neither agree nor disagree	18	48.6	62.2
	agree	8	21.6	83.8
	strongly agree	6	16.2	100.0
	Total	37	100.0	

Class Participation

Factor 2 probed into class participation in regards to large and small classes. The implementation of class size reduction in EFL classes presumably has a positive effect on student learning as what is predicted that students themselves prefer to be in classes with fewer students where their participation can increase. However, many participants surprisingly appear neutral on most of the items in this category. To ensure the validity of the survey, as previously mentioned, those who attended an English class under 35 students at high school were removed from the survey since they did not have a reference benchmark to make a fair judgement or comparison between large and small classes. The representative items were items 1, 2, 5, 10, 11, 12. Among all these six items, item 5 received more positive and meaningful responses from the participants. 48.6% of the participants agreed that a small-sized class can better prevent students from cheating in the class. This became the most appreciated advantage of a small-sized class for Factor 2. A large class is usually believed to deprive students' opportunities to practice the target language. Item 1 expected to verify this assumption that the students might have few

practice opportunities in their previous, larger English classes. However, those who responded they had enough opportunities to practice in their English classes at high school was only 5.4% more than those who believed they did not. More than half of them (51.4%) had no particular opinions on this issue. Furthermore, they did not believe that a large-sized class would impose a negative impact on their willingness to participate in the class activities because the percentage of those who agreed was only 5.4% more than those who did not. According to items 1 and 2, it showed that the participants did not really think a large class would impact their learning negatively. As for whether they were more concentrated in a small-sized class, the result turned out more positive as 45.9% of the students agreed compared with only 2.7% who disagreed.

Table 6 *Descriptive Statistics for items of Factor 2*

Statement No.	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
1	1	5	3.00	.913
2	1	5	3.11	.875
5	1	5	3.43	.959
10	2	5	3.27	.804
11	2	5	3.43	.801
12	2	5	3.59	.798

Table 7 *Frequency for Statement 5*

#5. Compared with large-sized class, I think it is more difficult for students to cheat in a small-sized class.

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	2	5.4	5.4
	disagree	2	5.4	10.8
	neither agree nor disagree	15	40.5	51.4
	agree	14	37.8	89.2
	strongly agree	4	10.8	100.0
	Total	37	100.0	

Table 8 *Frequency for Statement 11*

#11. Compared with large-sized class, I feel like contributing more in the activities in a small-sized class.

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	disagree	3	8.1	8.1
	neither agree nor disagree	19	51.4	59.5
	agree	11	29.7	89.2
	strongly agree	4	10.8	100.0
	Total	37	100.0	

Table 9 *Frequency for Statement 12*

#12. Compared with large-sized class, I can be more focused in a small-sized

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	disagree	1	2.7	2.7
	neither agree nor disagree	19	51.4	54.1
	agree	11	29.7	83.8
	strongly agree	6	16.2	100.0
	Total	37	100.0	

Benefits of a Large-sized Class

The two items in Factor 3 were to learn if any merit was attached to larger classes, as some research has suggested mixed opinions of the advantages of small-sized classes. The two items describe the possible sense of security (item 3) and joyfulness (item 13) of being in a large crowd. More students (35.1%) disagreed with the concept of security in a large-sized class than those who agreed (10.8%). As for item 13, 75.7% of them appeared undecided. Those who either agreed or disagreed were fairly few, so it does not present a significantly meaningful outcome.

Table 10 *Mean Scores for Statements 3 & 13*

Statement	3	13
	I feel more secured in a large-sized English class.	I like the feeling of a large-sized class where there are many classmates.
Mean	2.65	3.05
Std. Deviation	.919	.705
Minimum	1	1
Maximum	5	5

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to find out the relationship between study hours and student perceived learning efficiency of a small-sized class. Item 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 were involved in this analysis with the time students spent in a week on studying ranging from none to six hours at a two-hour increment. 62.2% of them reported the time for studying English was under two hours. It was hypothesized that if students spent more time studying English, they might be able to appreciate the benefits of implementing class size reduction more. However, the result did not prove there was a link between these two variables. It was concluded that the appreciation of implementing class size reduction did not relate to the weekly hours students spent on studying English.

The final issues investigated were: (1) the top three difficult areas in learning English, (2) the top three areas they perceived more improvement in a small-sized class compared with a large-sized class. The participants were required to choose three areas they had problems with in the order of difficulty from seven categories. The most difficult area for them was vocabulary, rated 27.1%, among grammar, reading, speaking, pronunciation, listening, and writing. The second one was grammar receiving 12 votes, accounting for 25% of the total counts. Reading/ writing both secured nine votes, and then ranked in third place. In terms of the most improved areas, the percentage of participants who chose oral communication ability was significantly higher than the other areas reaching 54.1%. As for the second rated improvement, pronunciation received 14 votes which was 37.8% of the total. The third was listening securing nine votes. The ranking for the self-perceived improved areas seem to indicate that class-size reduction seemed to benefit students noticeably in the speaking and listening areas. The impediment of oral production in a large English class was cited by Yu (2004). Her research indicated that college students in large language classes had limited practice for the target language so that the improvement for their level of oral ability was hindered. However, the results here seem to suggest that the participants had enough opportunities to practice English in their previous large class. Nonetheless, they recorded more self-perceived improvements in speaking and listening.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrated that class size was a crucial dimension in realizing effective learning. Generally, the participants responded positively toward most of the items; however, a majority of the items obtained a high percentage of responses of no particular inclination. Judging from the early research in regards to learning effect in varied class sizes, it has been suggested that the lack of links between class size and learning was that the problems reported by teachers or students in surveys may only reflect their perceptions, not necessarily reality (Todd, 2012). Boonmoh (2005) kept a diary while teaching a class of 84 students and found that his initial negative expectations of a large class did not actually manifest themselves. Classroom activities, instructional strategies, and classroom management might also greatly outweigh the effect of class size (Kumar, 1992; Cakmak, 2009. Furthermore, Zahorik, Habach, Ehrle, and Molnar (2003) remarked that class size reduction did not always result in high student performance. Teachers themselves should acquire and practice effective teaching strategies applicable to various class sizes. It is important for them to be flexible and adventurous in applying viable teaching strategies.

Different qualitative and quantitative research methodologies have been used in reference to class sizes such as interviews and observations where teachers play a dominant role in the reporting. However, not only teachers' views but also students' perceptions should be taken into consideration. It is asserted by Camak (2009) that both accounts should be thoroughly examined to understand the advantages and disadvantages of class sizes on learning effect.

Previous findings regarding class sizes present various thoughts where positive and negative correlations between large class size and pupil reactions towards class activities both exist (Galton, 1994, pp. 94-95). The participants' perceptions in this study also

showed that they generally felt positive about implementing class size reductions though a number of them still appeared to have no particular preference for it.

The limitation of the study is that it is not possible to compare the same group of participants in both large and small class sizes in the context being studied. A comprehensive empirical alternative study in the future could include comparisons of successful and less successful language learners in small classes to understand the differences of their perceptions in the particular context. In addition, not only students' perceptions, but teachers' views should also be included.

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APPENDIX

A.

1. Gender: □ male □ female

2. List three most challenging areas when learning English in the order of difficulty:

1._____ 2. _____ 3. _____

(1) Grammar (2) Reading (3) Vocabulary (4) Speaking

(5) Pronunciation (6) Listening (7) Culture (8) Others (please specify.)

3. How many hours did you spend on studying English other than the regular class time each week? _____

(1) None (2) 0~2 hours (3) 2~4 hours (4) 4~6 hours

(5) above 6 hours

4. How many people were there in your high school English class before? _____

(1) Under 20 people (2) 21 to 35 people

(3) 36 to 50 people (4) over 50 people

B.

		Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I had enough opportunities to practice English in my previous class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2.	I think there is a negative impact on my willingness to participate activities in a *large-sized English class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3.	I feel more secured in a large-sized English class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4.	Compared with large-size class, I feel more comfortable raising questions in a small-sized English class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.	Compared with large-size class, I think it is more difficult for students to cheat in a small-sized English class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6.	Compared with large-size class, I feel there are more opportunities to practice English in a small-sized class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.	Compared with large-size class, I feel that my mistakes can be more timely corrected in a small-sized English class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8.	Compared with large-size class, the interactions I have with teachers in a small-sized English class make my learning more efficient.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9.	Compared with large-size class, the interactions I have with my classmates in a small-sized class make me love going to the English class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10.	Compared with large-size class, I tend not to sit where I am less noticed in a small-sized English class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11.	Compared with large-size class, I feel like contributing more in the activities in a small-sized class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12.	Compared with large-sized class, I can be more focused in a small-size English class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. I like the feeling of a large-sized class where there are many classmates. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

14. Compared with large-sized class, what are the top three areas that you feel are improved the most? 1._____ 2. _____ 3. _____

(1) Grammar (2) Reading (3) Vocabulary (4) Speaking

(6) Pronunciation (7) Listening (8) Culture (9) Others

(please specify.)

A large-sized English class means there are over 35 people in the class.

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Suprasegmental Errors, Pronunciation Instruction and Communication

Tien DANG (Tien Ngoc Dung DANG)[1]

Griffith University

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on findings from an investigation into the reason why 50 Vietnamese adult EFL learners have made so many pronunciation errors, particularly suprasegmental errors. The data of this qualitative research study provides evidence that pronunciation instruction was focused on individual sounds (segmentals) and tended to overlook suprasegmetals. Additionally, the study shows that lack of exposure to foreigners, both inside and outside the classroom, is one of the main factors in determining the participants' pronunciation errors.

INTRODUCTION

There is agreement among current proponents of the teachability of L2 pronunciation that suprasegmentals need to be explicitly taught (Anderson-Hsieh, Riney, & Koehler, 1994;

[1]MA in Applied Linguistics, Doctor of Education awarded by The School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University in 2014. Correspondence should be sent to: tuthapbatnguyen@gmail.com, or socialeducationalresearch@gmail.com

Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson, and Koehler, 1992; Celce-Murcia, et al., 1996; Gilbert, 1995; McNerney and Mendelsohn, 1992; Morley, 1994as cited in Robertson, 2003, p.7). Wong (1993) highlighted the importance of suprasegmental features of pronunciation and suggested, that "[t]he most relevant features of pronunciation—stress, rhythm, adjustments/reductions, logical stress, and intonation—play a greater role in English communication than the individual sounds themselves" (p.7). This was also recognized by Nakashima (2006), who claimed that suprasegmental errors have a stronger impact on the intelligibility of language output of Japanese English speakers than segmental errors. Anderson-Hsieh et al. (1992) also believed "[s]uprasegmental errors have a more serious effect on intelligibility than segmental errors," and state that this is because "prosody provides the framework for utterances and directs the listener's attention to information the speaker regards as important" (p. 531). Additionally, Wong (1993) emphasized:

> Teaching speech from the perspective of suprasegmentals seems indispensable for the purpose of achieving real communication. Learning pronunciation should not be limited to comparing individual vowel and consonant sounds in a given word, as has often been the case with pronunciation learning in the past. Focusing on individual vowel and consonant sounds is only the first step in learning to speak and understand English. (p.19)

This view is also widely held among teachers and textbook writers (Burgess and Spencer, 2000).

However, recently in Vietnamese educational institutions, if pronunciation is taught, it is usually only taught at the segmental level. This can be found in the past studies as conducted by (Bui 2006, Ha 2005, and Nguyen, 2007). Ha (2005) recommended in her study's conclusion to all her colleagues that university teachers in English departments should pay attention to teaching segments, as the findings from her study show that an investigated cohort of final-year students majoring in English for teachers had a serious English problem with

pronunciation of English individual sounds. Such an emphasis on teaching segmental features is also pointed out by Bui (2006), who stated "[w]hen dealing with pronunciation, teachers simply turn on the tape to let students listen and repeat. Few teachers stop to explain to students the mechanism of producing sounds. Consequently, students easily forget the correct pronunciation of words" (p. 10).This problem is often compounded by the students' own lack of awareness of their communication and pronunciation problems, particularly related to suprasegmental features, which play a crucial role in English pronunciation instruction.

After leaving high school and moving on to university, many students have very low communicative competence because at high schools, grammar and reading are still the first priorities since the assessment practices have not been changed and the learners' English competence is measured by grammar-based tests (Dang, 2006). Even in tertiary education, developing students' oral competence is paid little attention in the second language curriculum. The neglect in training Vietnamese university students' English speaking and listening skills is partly identified by Bui's (2006) study conducted at Hanoi College of Science, Vietnam National University. She claimed:

> The textbooks cover four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, at the end of each semester, students are assessed based on a written test on reading and writing skills only. As a result, many students and even teachers are examination-oriented. (p. 3)

Bui (2006) further suggested "[t]eachers spend time developing reading and writing skills while ignoring listening and speaking skills. This is likely to happen not at a single university in Vietnam, but across the whole spectrum" (p. 3).

An assumption arising from this is whether or not the lack of understanding of suprasegmental features in English pronunciation instruction (combined with insufficient usage of English in communication) could be major causes of pronunciation errors, particularly syllable-structure errors and rhythm errors (Dang, 2013) made by Vietnamese

adult EFL learners. This assumption is verified by Dang (2013) on a cohort of 50 Vietnamese adult EFL learners from Vietnam via a qualitative study on why Vietnamese adult EFL learners made a great number of pronunciation errors.

METHODOLOGY

Research Question

The study focuses on exploring major causes for so many pronunciation errors, particularly syllable errors and rhythm errors (Dang, 2013) of Vietnamese adult EFL learners, significantly reducing their intelligibility as demonstrated in the first phase of the study. Thus, the research question which needs to be examined is: why have an investigated cohort of students made many pronunciation errors?

Interviews

This study collected data from four separate interviews with four Vietnamese lecturers of English with different volunteer students from the investigated cohort of the 50 participants in Dang's previous study. The data were analyzed on the basis of subjectivist viewpoints that reality is what each person interprets it to be, that researchers interact with the subjects of study to obtain data and that inquiry changes both the researcher and the subjects (Coll & Chapman 2000; Cousins 2002). The selection of the participants (lecturers) was guided by the criterion that three of the four interviewees taught pronunciation. At Vietnamese universities it is very often the case that those who teach first year students are the best English

Department graduates who have spent three years as teaching assistants. The fourth interviewee was a team leader, who had over nine year experience in teaching English at the university where this study was conducted. These instructors taught according to a rotational system, so that they conducted tutorials in all the five classes with 300 first-year students. All these circumstances qualified the four tutors as appropriate participants for the interviews since they had potential insights into the reasons why their students have pronunciation problems, what pronunciation aspects have been taught and how they have been taught at the English Department.

Preparation of interviews

It can be said that the preparation of the interviews for this research was a crucial step because it directly affected the success of data collection. In this study, the preparation of the interviews involved selective sampling (who would participate in these interviews), decisions about what data would be prioritized (shown via an interview protocol), what types of interviews would be conducted and where the interviews were to happen in order to limit potential bias.

Interview Protocol

Designing an interview protocol is of a great significance. Creswell (2008) suggested that "[a]n interview protocol serves the purpose of reminding the researcher of the questions and it provides a means for recording notes" (p.233). The interview protocol for this research consisted of five questions. The first question served as an icebreaker, encouraging the interviewee to talk more. The second question was posed to examine what the factors are in

determining the students' pronunciation errors. The third question came from the assumption that there could have been some difficulties among teachers in enhancing pronunciation, particularly at the suprasegmental level. The fourth question was included in the hope that the researcher might be able to gain more data on the participants' experiences and problems with teaching pronunciation. The last question explored what pronunciation elements were being taught and the method for how they were taught in the classroom. The interviews were individually conducted face-to-face in a semi-structured manner and the following questions were asked:

- Could you tell me something about yourself? (E.g. Your occupation, your institution, your role)
- Why do you think university students who major in English have difficulties in oral communication with foreigners?
- What are the difficulties you have faced in teaching pronunciation?
- How did you address these problems?
- What aspects of pronunciation have you explicitly taught in the classroom to enhance the Vietnamese adult EFL learner's speech intelligibility?

Conducting the Interview

A quiet and suitable location for conducting the interviews was selected. In agreement with the literature I believe that the respondents' responses could expose their interiors' (knowledge, motives and meanings) or make valid descriptions of exteriors, as cited in Baker and Johnson, 1998 with the idea that "[r]espondents' answers represent their 'interiors' (knowledge, beliefs, motives, meanings) or give valid descriptions of 'exteriors, or can do so under ideal conditions, treats language as a transparent medium for expressing and

exchanging ideas" (Kress, 1988; Silverman, 1993; Baker, 1997). The researcher believes together with Silverman (2004) that in an interview, an interviewer talks less and an interviewee talks more. During the interviews, probes were used to obtain additional information in case some points in the interview needed to be clarified or expanded on by the interviewees.

Tape Transcription

The interviews were taped and transcribed. Previously consent was sought from the interview subjects to record their contribution. In addition to listening to the interview with foci on the interviewees' intonation, in this study, heavy stress (loudness), overlap and turn-taking, and long pauses were included in transcription since these features imply what the subject wanted to convey. The transcripts were sent to the interviewees for verification. Suggestions for corrections if necessary were welcomed in order to make sure that the data was exact.

Interview Data Analysis

The data analysis process undertaken involved a coding-based analysis of ideas and themes in the interview transcripts using discourse analysis (DA). The use of themes is one of the common ways to analyse qualitative data, as Creswell (2008) stated "[t]hemes are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the database, they form a core element in qualitative analysis" (p. 256). The use of themes is also one of different forms of Discourse Analysis. This view is identified by Fulcher (2012), who suggested "[t]hematic analysis is about trying to identify meaningful categories or themes in a body of data. By looking at the

text, the researcher asks whether a number of recurring themes can be abstracted about what is being said" (p. 4). In this study, first by listening to the interactions and reading the transcripts, chunking the data, categorizing it, moving it around and rearranging it, then analyzing initial data, and eliminating redundancies, major themes related to the research question, "Why an investigated cohort of Vietnamese speakers make so many pronunciation errors?" were identified. Then, in order to gain an insight into the major themes, the study tried to discover the socially constructed reality of participants through how language was used in the interview texts.

Discourse Analysis is a linguistic approach to talk and text that tries to see how the speakers' choice of words construct "social reality", as discourse researchers argue,"[p]eople construct their own 'versions' of social reality in everyday conversation" (Abell & Stokoe, 1999, p. 298). According to Halliday, the major developer of Systemic Functional Grammar in the 1960s, DA explores how language is used in social contexts to achieve particular goals such as conveying information/ideas (as cited in O'Connell 2012, p.2). Potter and Wetherell (1987) stated, "[p]eople use their language to do things" (p. 32). In this study, the interview data were analysed on the basis of DA with a focus on themes and language exposed via what the interviewee says.

INTERPRETATION OF TEACHERS' INTERVIEWS

Introduction

This section presents the interpretation of teacher interviews through the identification of themes, using DA techniques. It aims to verify through additional research the following points: first, to establish that the teachers who were chosen for the interviews were the right

subjects, and were able to provide trustworthy information for this study; second, to gain additional data for triangulation such as from the questionnaire data and individual interviews from ten of the 50 subjects in order to increase the validity of the findings in relation to the main research question 'Why do the investigated cohort of 50 Vietnamese adult EFL learners have serious pronunciation problems, particularly at suprasegmental leveland third, to find further rich data and reasons for the participants' weaknesses in their English pronunciation. All these issues were investigated through four themes: social context; students' oral and pronunciation competence; problems lecturers have in their pronunciation instruction; and pronunciation pedagogy. Table 1 below is a summary of the findings according to the themes gained from the four interview transcripts.

Theme-based Analysis and DA

Theme-based Analysis

The assumption was that some reality – knowledge, beliefs, stories and perspectives – pre-existed before the interview. This approach provides for a coding-based analysis of ideas and themes in the interview transcripts (Baker and Johnson, 1998). In other words, the use of themes is one of the ways to analyse qualitative data (Creswell, 2008, p. 256). By listening to the interaction, reading the transcripts, chunking the data, categorizing them, moving them around and rearranging them (Silverman, 2004); through initial data analyses; and through the elimination of redundancies, four major themes were recognized in these interviews. The major themes were1) social context and interviewees; 2) students' oral and pronunciation competence; 3) what aspects of pronunciation were taught and how they were instructed; and 4) problems teachers had faced in pronunciation instruction. DA techniques were used to

analyse the data and classify within the identified themes. The results are summarised in Table 1.

DA and Thematic Analysis

Discourse Analysis is a way of understanding social interactions. There are various forms of discourse analysis. However, this study focuses on using themes to analyse the interview texts. Therefore, the interview talk (transcripts) were read with care using skimming and scanning skills for this purpose. Four major themes were identified and classified. In DA, language plays an important role in understanding what is socially constructed. As Volosinov (1986) states, "language is an indispensable part of the subject's self-understanding, since words are present in every act of interpretation" (as cited in Talja, 1999, p. 12). The four core themes were explored to support the investigation into why the Vietnamese adult EFL learners have made so many pronunciation errors, particularly at the suprasegmental level. This was done on the basis of analysis of each theme as a result of coding the language in the interviews which helped to identify the ways which the interviewees constructed their own version of reality about their students' English background with a focus on their pronunciation competence and pronunciation learning and teaching issues. Additionally, qualitative researchers frequently demonstrate their findings visually by using figures or pictures that enhance the discussion. Creating a comparison table is one of the different ways to display the findings as Creswell (2008) claimed that creating a comparison table that compared groups on one of the themes helped augment the findings. Therefore, the findings are also summarised using a comparison table below.

Summary of Main Points from the Four Transcripts

TABLE 1

Outline of findings from the teacher interviews

THEMES		LECTURER 1	LECTURER 2	LECTURER 3	LECTURER 4
Social context	Teaching experience	In charge of students' speaking skill 1.5 years' experience in teaching English	In charge of students' listening skills (turn 12) Nearly 3 years' experience in teaching English (turn 12)	In charge of students' speaking and reading skills (turn turn 11, 31 & 175) Several months' experience in teaching English (turn 7)	In charge of General linguistics Nine years' experience in teaching English (turn 6) In charge of speaking skills for students from another university (turn 48)
	Particulars about students	Being trained to be teachers of English Gaining very high level in entrance exams, grammar and reading multiple-choice question exam The number of students: 50 or 60 (turn 90) from different cities (turns 8 and 56)	Seven years in learning English (turn 16 &18) The number of students: 50 (turn 82) different cities (turn 80)	Being trained to be teachers of English, interpreters, translators or for business purposes (turn 7) Age: 18-19 (turn 7) The number of students: 61 from different cites (turn 11)	Seven years' experience in learning English The number of students: 50 (turn 42) from different cities (turn 34)
Students' oral and pronunciation competence	Comments on their students' pronunciation skills and oral competence	Those who come from Ho Chi Minh City are good (turn 8)	Good (turn 18, 19 & 22)	Good for Saigonese students Not good for those who come from other provinces (turn 11)	Not good (in general) (turn 8) Saigonese students are often better than other students (turn 52)
	Exposure to foreigners	Sometimes have chance (turn 18) Shy to talk to foreigners	Little chance, very rare (turns 44, 66 & 72) They can't communicate with foreigners (turn 74)	Not much chance (turn 33 and 123) Students who study here do not have much chance to talk, communicate with foreigners. (turn 33)	No chance: for over students class for two periods seven months, only one foreign teacher from Belgium observed first-year (turn 12) A few of them are active to talk to foreigners outside university. (turn 14)
	Policy of English Department	Teaching staff: all of us are Vietnamese (turn 18) Exchange program for students: foreign teachers sometimes come and attend class (turns 18 & 32) Suggestions: we should provide more chance for foreigners coming here. (turn 36)	Teaching staff: All the classes are conducted by Vietnamese teachers and on time for foreign teachers (turn 74)	Teaching staff: We don't have a foreign teacher right now. (turn 123)	Teaching staff: Foreign teachers are teaching English at foreign school or centers. (turn 60)
Problems lecturers had faced in their pronunciation instruction		Crowded class: 50 or 60 students (turn 96) Different regional background: Shy (students from other provinces) those who come from Saigon are active Limited time: one	Big class: 50 students in my class (turn 82): we cannot care for individual students. So it is difficult to correct their pronunciation mistakes. (turn 88) Different regional background: those who come from Saigon are	Class is very big: 61 students (turn 36): noisy, cannot pay attention to all (turn 44) Different regional background: half from Saigon Half from other provinces are so shy (turn 11) Limited time: two periods	Huge class (turn 42): over 50 students (turns 44 &48) Different regional background: they are shy and they come from other cities or other provinces (turn 34)

	period (turn 96) Students' pronunciation is not sharpened enough (turn 56)	active and from other provinces are shy (turn 80)	(= 90 minutes) for each class every week (turn 35, 37); we do not have much time to practise speaking English. (turn 33). we don't have time (turn 153)	Limited time: To be honest, I have no time to pay attention to other pronunciation mistakes such as intonation or rhythm. (turn 68)
Aspects of pronunciation currently taught and how they were taught	Vowels, consonants and clusters (136 & 142) They are encouraged to produce unfamiliar sounds by imitating them after the recording (turns 58, 76 and 84)	Vowels, consonants, clusters, intonation and sentence stress (turns 34,, 46 and 118-120): I combine the two, but I usually pay more attention to pronunciation of vowels and consonants. (turn 124) Group work: ask their friends for help. (turn 96)	Vowels, consonants with a focus on Final sounds (turn 95): I pay attention to vowels. They make a lot of mistakes of vowels, clusters, minimal pairs and stress, sentence stress and word stress Role play: game focusing in consonants and vowels and intonation (turns 147 149) Teachers move around and correct mistakes (particularly individual sounds) (turns 77-92	Theory about sounds: vowels and consonants, basic rules on assimilation, intonation and connected sounds (turns 24-26)

Social context

Descriptions of social settings through a representational view of language are part of DA. This is a good way of investigating exteriors of an interviewee As Alasuutari (1995) stated, "the analysis concentrates on the contents of interview answers, which reveal something about phenomena or processes occurring either in participants' inner realities or in external reality" (as cited in Talja, 1999, p. 12). The four interview transcripts were therefore read for information regarding a current social setting which the interviewees are associated with. All of the information has been outlined in Table 1 detailing who students and lecturers were and what they were doing in a specific context through the interviewees' answers with a focus on their relevant turn-taking from the interviews. In other words, these interviewees' turns can transport readers to the setting so that they can almost feel the situation.

These turns associated with this theme (social context) evidence that the English program aims at training the students to be teachers of English with a focus on improving the four macro skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and that the four lecturers are currently teaching speaking, listening and general linguistics related to pronunciation instruction in a classroom of 50-60 first-year students who come from diverse regional

backgrounds. In addition, it can be realized that all the students have experienced seven years in learning English. One more detail needs to be noted, namely that the students gained a very high level in the entrance multiple-choice grammar-reading-based exam, indicating that their English is at a high level in grammar and reading skills. These details are evidence that both the lecturers and students are the right subjects for this research. Therefore, it can be postulated that they have provided essential and trustworthy information for the study.

Students' Oral and Pronunciation Competence

The findings from the pronunciation data analysis show that the cohort of the 50 EFL students perceived themselves to be weak in pronunciation. This might be realised bythe most experienced teacher's comment that their pronunciation is not good in general, as displayed via his turn 8 in Table 1. The reason for this is partially revealed by the data from Table 1: that they had very few opportunities to communicate with foreign teachers and they were shy about talking to foreigners. This is true for two reasons. Firstly, all the four interviewees stated that their English instruction had been conducted by Vietnamese teachers only, indicating that there were no foreign teachers of English who were part of English instruction. In other words, the data suggest that the English department leaders or university leaders have no policy for appointing foreign teachers in their English teacher-training program. This is ascertained by lecturer 2, who claimed, *"There is no time for foreign teachers"* (turn 74). It is also supported by the statement made by lecturer 3, "*We don't have a foreign teacher right now"* (turn 33). Interestingly, the detail in turns 18 and 32 of the interview transcript of lecturer 1 seems to indicate that there is an exchange program for students in which foreigners came in and joined his class. However, the 'sometimes' is vague in its meaning. Therefore, the researcher applied probes to obtain additional information about it demonstrated in turns 25-28 as follows:

25 R: [What] do you mean by sometimes. I want you to clarify sometimes.

26 I: = Sometimes? as I told you before it's up to the program. For example, the Fulbright program for American style come(s) in here. Sometimes, the students from Belgium come here…

27 R: Every year?

28 I: Uh, ***I'm not sure about that. Ah it's up to …in this university. I think every year, we have a chance****.*

It is evident that the lecturer was not sure about this, indicating that the policy for foreign teachers as part of the English department's English teachers-training program was not widely known. This situation is backed up in turn 12 of the interview transcript of lecturer 4, the most experienced teacher, in which they acknowledge that there had been only one foreign teacher from Belgium who did not teach English but observed his class. Therefore, it would seem that there is very limited interaction with foreign teacher-trainers. Secondly, although there were other opportunities for students to engage in verbal communications with foreigners outside class, few of them actually talked to foreigners as stated by the most experienced lecturer in turn 14. This is reinforced by lecturer 2 who said in turn 74 that students cannot communicate with foreigners. Therefore, a lack of practice and exposure to authentic language (no foreign teachers nor foreigners outside class) appears to be one of the causes in determining the participants' low speech intelligibility at suprasegmental level. There is a perception that students' pronunciation could not be improved through communication in English with their Vietnamese teachers and their classmates alone in the classroom. As Dang (2004) suggested "[b]adly trained and badly paid teachers result in poor teaching methods, improper pronunciation and a lack in teacher motivation." (p. 68), especially as their classmates' pronunciation competence was not considered as a good model.

Communication plays an important role in the enhancement of L2 learners' pronunciation skills. As Cohen (1977) argued, pronunciation instruction goes far beyond the teaching of phonemes, and should have an emphasis on meaningful communication along with Morley's premise (1991) that, "[i]ntelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communication competence" (as cited in Robertson, 2003, p.7). Otlowski (1998) also supported this view by saying that pronunciation must be seen as a crucial part of communication and that without adequate pronunciation skills, the learners' competence to communicate is severely limited

A new finding from the data in Table 1 is that all the four lecturers agree that students who came from Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) had better pronunciation than those from other cities or provinces. Whether or not such a difference can give rise to a significant difference in the pronunciation competence between HCMC students and the others is not known because it was not explicitly investigated and it also may not be true because learner's English competence in pronunciation or communication is based on any number of other factors, such as attitude, motivation, instruction, inferiority complex about students from English-speaking countries and so forth.

What Pronunciation Aspects Are Taught and How They Are Currently Taught

It was argued that students have pronunciation problems due to their own lack of awareness of pronunciation problems, particularly relating to suprasegmental features since instruction was concentrated on the mastery of the segmental (Dang, 2013). This assumption is confirmed by the data displayed in Table 1 that the current instruction conducted by the lecturers mostly focused on segmental elements only. The data below show that the pronunciation pedagogy as generally applied in Vietnam centred on the improvement of the students' pronunciation at the segmental level, while consideration of suprasegmental features was not sufficiently shown in instruction. This can be realized in turns 136 and 142 of lecturer

1's interview transcription where he indicates that consonants, vowels and clusters were the main foci of his lectures. He further stated in turns 58, 76 and 84 that his students were encouraged to produce unfamiliar sounds by imitating them after the recordings. This emphasis on the segmental features is also identified by lecturer 2 in turn 124: *"I combine the two (segmental and suprasegmental features), but I usually pay more attention to the pronunciation of vowels and consonants."* Lecturer 3, in turn 95 indicated that she focused on final sounds and vowels although she also paid attention to stress and sentence stress in her pronunciation instruction. Lecturer 4 provided the students with theory about sounds, vowels, consonants and suprasegmental elements.

A similar situation appears to occur during English speaking practice, too. For instance, lecturer 3 used language games such as role play to encourage her students to improve their segmental aspects rather than suprasegmental aspects in spite of intonation also being part of their practice activities, as reflected in the following comments.

*145 I: because I ,**we meet only two periods**. During the periods, we have a lot of things for pronunciation we learn ….sometimes I let them play games. In some games, it lasts about 20 minutes, half an hour or even 40 minutes. **So, pronunciation games**. I'd love to, I'd love to let them listen to sounds English because they talk less….*

146 R: yeah, return to pronunciation game. What aspects of pronunciation do you focus on in the pronunciation games?

*147 I: **so far, I let them play pronunciation games focusing on consonants and [vowels]***

148 R: [vowels]

149 I: intonation for tag questions

Additionally, the focus on the segmental features and insufficient attention to suprasegmental features during the practice section is clearly displayed in the approach to correction of the students' pronunciation mistakes. Turn 77 from transcript 3 shows that the teacher moved around and corrected her students' mistakes, particularly the individual sounds. This is supported in interview transcript 2 in that the lecturer used group work from which the students' pronunciation was improved by peers in their group by asking their friends for help (shown in turn 96), indicating that he did not recognize many of his students' pronunciation mistakes. This could give rise to the restriction in the improvement of his students' pronunciation, possibly brought about by the lack of his students' knowledge and skills in pronunciation, regardless of the idea that producing output is a way to practice their pronunciation without a teacher's involvement. In other words, their pronunciation could not be improved in this way.

One more detail needs to be noted from the current data: lecturers' reporting that the suprasegmental features that were taught did not include syllable structures, one of the main factors in determining the informants' low speech intelligibility, as shown in Dang's study (2013). However, further studies such as classroom observations on this need to be undertaken to determine whether or not it would be true.

It is safe to claim, therefore, that teachers perceived their instruction to canter on the individual sounds (segmental elements), which, if true, could be a reason that students have difficulty improving their overall intelligibility. This strongly supports the findings revealed by those of the questionnaire data analysis undertaken by Dang (2013).

Problems Teachers Have Faced in Improving Their Students' Pronunciation

In addition to the lack of exposure to foreigners or foreign teachers and insufficient attention to suprasegmental features, a large class size, limited time for English instruction

and regional background are considered as the other three main reasons for limitations in the improvement of the participants' pronunciation possibly leading to the students' pronunciation errors particularly at the suprasegmental level. These are the additional findings as summarized in Table 1.

Firstly, a class which consists of 50 or 60 students is too overcrowded for teachers to pay close attention to their students, limiting the improvement in individual students' pronunciation. This is shown in turn 96 in the interview transcript of lecturer 1, *"We have a big problem because I cannot stretch my attention to all of them."* This is also reinforced by lecturer 2 and lecturer 3 in turn 82 and turn 44 respectively, as displayed in Table 1.

Secondly, the data from Table 1 show that two periods of 90 minutes for each class per week are too limited for 50 or 60 students to practice their English speaking. Such limited time per week for each subject is really a problem, which is confirmed by lecturer 3, who said, *"We do not have much time to practice speaking English. We don't have time."* (turns 33 and 153). Lecturer 1 shared this problem, which is revealed by the following turn in the interview transcript of lecturer 1, (in charge of speaking subject) *"I just pick up a maximum about 30 students at one period. I mean, at one class."*

Both large class size and time limit are considered as factors in limiting the students' pronunciation improvement in terms of recognition and correction of their mistakes. This is reflected by the following turns from the transcript 3:

42 R: *about or over?*

43 I: *actually, 61 he he*

44 R: *yes, exactly number. And do you think the crowded class is a problemfor you in your lecture in order to take care of all the members in the class?*

45 I: *Uh* ***I cannot take care of all****, I cannot control all. Sometimes, they- they move*

around and talk. I cannot control them ***because it's too big, they talk at the same time. So very noisy. Some of them speak Vietnamese instead****. I cannot pay attention to all of them. I cannot check. So, I move around and give a warning when I heard some Vietnamese. I also, when we practice role place and I want to ask some pairs to come to the front of the class and …out…****it's very difficult because I cannot ask a lot of pairs, just some pairs in the class big like this. A lot of students do not have a chance to come to the front and they have to listen to their friends most of the time****…..*

87 I ***[I] let the whole class pay attention to the mistakes and correct together with other students.***

Like lecturer 3, lecturer 1 also utilized peer correction of pronunciation mistakes during English practice, if undertaken in a mixed group between students from HCMC who had better pronunciation as stated above and those from other provinces, potentially leading to the improvement of the pronunciation of the latter (less-proficient students). However, the former's knowledge and experience in pronunciation is a question, limiting the enhancement of their pronunciation. In turn 98 the interview subject stated his resignation and doubts whether this is a good solution for a large class: 'y*eah, I think. I come up with a solution that a pairwork, teamwork,* ***they can correct with each other about, I mean, the sounds****. However, I'm not sure whether it can be effective or not. I think, it is the best way we can, I can do in solution of a big classroom like that*".

Finally, it can be said that diverse regional background of students is another problem, particularly when they come from other cities or provinces outside Ho Chi Minh City. It may be that there is a big gap between HCMC students and those who come from other cities or provinces: that HCMC students were active and their pronunciation was better according to the lecturers' comments (see Table 1) while the other students were shy and their

pronunciation was weaker. The fourth theme in Table 1 shows that all the lecturers had trouble in supporting the pronunciation of those who came from other cities or provinces because they were shy about speaking English. This can be seen in turns 52 and 53 from the interview transcript of lecturer 1: *"Some of them are shy…so, ah problem sometimes you see. They, they, some of them I mean quite not confident about that they can speak with teachers. Some of them especially, who come from the rural area(s)."*This is also confirmed in turn 88, turn 11 and turn 34 of transcript 2, transcript 3 and transcript 4 respectively displayed in Table 1. All in all, students from other cities appear to have fewer opportunities to use their English and interact in English with their teachers than those who came from Ho Chi Minh City. This suggests that their pronunciation improvement is more restricted because their pronunciation mistakes have little chance of being corrected by their teachers. On the other hand, it could also be because they are shy as indicated by lecture 1. This could account for all the lecturers' comments that HCMC students' pronunciation is better than the pronunciation of those who came from other cities. This is an assumption to emerge from this research, which needs to be further investigated.

CONCLUSION

The research paper shows the following findings: The first is that the pronunciation instruction was concentrated on the individual sounds (segmental elements) more than suprasegmental features, which may indicate why students make pronunciation errors at the suprasegmental level. The second is that lack of exposure to foreigners both inside and outside class might be one of the potential factors in determining the participants' low speech intelligibility.

In addition, a huge class size and limited class time for the teaching of English results in a restriction in the improvement of the participant's pronunciation because they have little chance to apply their English in practice and little chance for their mistakes to be corrected by their teachers.

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