ASIAN EFL JOURNAL
The EFL Professional's Written Forum

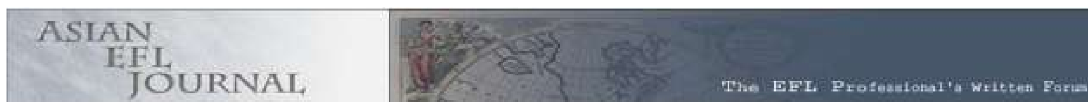
The Asian EFL Journal Quarterly

December 2016

Volume 18, Issue 4

Senior Editors:

Paul Robertson and John Adamson



Published by the English Language Education Publishing

Asian EFL Journal
A Division of TESOL Asia Group
Part of SITE Ltd Australia

http://www.asian-efl-journal.com

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editor@asian-efl-journal.com

Publisher: ELE Publishing

Chief Editor: Dr. John Adamson

Production Editor: Dr. Custódio Martins

ISSN 1738-1460

ASIAN EFL JOURNAL
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Foreword

The more information is gathered about L2 learning contexts (formal or informal), the more challenging it becomes to address issues related to learning and acquisition. Research on L2 learning and acquisition in the past two decades has brought to light the fact that L2 acquisition, even in formal contexts, is highly variable. The variables and factors that come into play in the acquisition process are varied, complex and systemic. Communicative approaches breached the way to a deeper understanding that language (learning) is not a set of fixed contents that can be learned (acquired) in a straightforward continuum. Apart from social and psychological variables and factors, we have to take into account variables pertaining to the wider learning context(s). Policies, for instance, can considerably deter, both teachers and students, in their endeavour to develop the necessary skills to better achieve language proficiency.

In general, the articles in the current volume of the Asian EFL Journal bring such issues to our attention and thought.

The first article by Nuttakritta Chotipaktanasook and Hayo Reinders evaluates the importance that Instagram for Thai students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC). Chotipaktanasook and Reinders conclude that the use of Instagram to share information related to the class, students become more engaging and more confident to communicate in English.

The article by Malcolm Sim and Peter Roger evaluates the impact that both anxiety and beliefs may have for the language learning process by Japanese learners of English. Comparing two groups of students, one learning English in Japan and the other learning English in Australia, the study found that there is no difference in anxiety levels between these two groups. The study also reports that anxiety levels are closely related to the fear students have of making mistakes.

Hawraz Hama's article compares Kurdish pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs. The study is based on the assumption that teachers' beliefs can have a great impact on how they learn how to teach, but also on their perception of educational reforms. The study generally concludes that both groups shared similar beliefs, except for the fact that pre-service teachers considered that knowing the culture of the language they are teaching is important, contrary to what in-service teachers' beliefs on this topic.

Georgiadou's study discusses the role proficiency level, error-tolerance, and speaking habits have on self-repair behavior of Emirati EFL learners. The aim is to assess how elementary and lower-intermediate level students self-repair and monitor spoken speech by applying Kormo's taxonomy of L2 self-repair. The study concludes that even if there are no significant differences in speech monitorization, there is evidence from the results that proficiency does play a role in the choice of lexical and grammatical items.

The last two articles of the current volume discuss national testing systems, both in Korea and China.

Whithehead's article discusses the opinion of in-service teachers on the National English Ability Test, in Korea. The study concludes that even if teachers, in general, perceive the importance of the NEAT, they still express their concern for the fact that the educational system does not provide the necessary conditions for the smooth implementation of the examination. The teachers consider, for instance, that class size needs to be reduced, so that teachers may have the opportunity to help students prepare for the examination.

Qing and Stapleton discuss the university entrance examination in China, the *Gaokao*. The authors stress the fact that some regions in China may be "deemphasizing English in high-stakes tests". Qing and Stapleton contend that such measures by local educational authorities may contribute to the instrumental demotivation of students. Despite such fears, not all students that took part in the study showed negative attitudes regarding the test's washback.

Custódio Martins, PhD

Production Editor

Asian EFL Journal

University of Macau

Willingness to Communicate in Social Media: An Investigation of the Long-term Effects

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Abstract

This study reports on the effects of using social media on Thai EFL students' Willingness to Communicate (WTC) in English. An intact class of 40 university students was asked to use one particular type of social media program, Instagram, to post pictures of what they did in class and to reflect on their learning experience in English. WTC questionnaires were administered and the responses were then analyzed to investigate participants' willingness to use English in their communication. The findings revealed that participants' WTC in English was greater when using social media, compared with their WTC during class time. These findings were confirmed in a follow-up study with the same participants, indicating that social media had a significantly positive impact on learners' WTC. In light of these findings, this study draws attention to the potential of social media in encouraging English communication and willingness to use the language to communicate ideas, feelings, and opinions. The study concludes with implications of the findings for future research, pedagogy, and practice.

Keywords: computer-assisted language learning, social media, Willingness to Communicate

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Introduction

In many English as a foreign language (EFL) environments, for example in Thailand, the language classroom appears to be the only place for target language exposure and use for most learners, with online opportunities more reserved for highly motivated learners. Although certain approaches such as communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) are employed, they may produce language learners who are *capable* of communicating but are not *willing* to try to use the target language to engage with others (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels, 1998). As reported in the literature (e.g., Bennui, 2008; Kamprasertwong, 2010; Pattapong, 2013) and as experienced on a daily basis by most Thai teachers of English, it is typical to see Thai EFL learners being reluctant to use English in class. Also, it is not unusual to find Thai EFL learners who do not participate in English even though they might want to, or when they do, do not do so voluntarily (Wattana, 2013). Interaction in the second and foreign language (L2) has been argued to play a role in creating language learning opportunities (Long, 1996) and facilitating the process of language acquisition (Swain, 1985). It is therefore particularly important to ask how teachers can encourage learners to use the language as much as possible both in and, indeed, beyond the classroom. Due to a profound impact of recent developments in computer-assisted language learning (CALL), technologies have been quickly embraced by language teachers to transform the way that L2 is learned, and, importantly, to enable new opportunities for learners to use the language willingly. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the effects of one type of technology, the social media program *Instagram*, on WTC.

Review of literature

Willingness to communicate

WTC has recently become an important concept in second language acquisition (SLA). The construct is defined as an individual's 'readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2' (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 547) and it is regarded as a final step before actual L2 use (MacIntyre et al., 1998). An increase in WTC has been found to

be important to L2 acquisition (Ellis, 2004), and, especially, L2 communication (Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004). Dörnyei (2003) asserts that learners need to be not only *able* but also *willing* to communicate in L2. Accordingly, language instruction to improve learners' ability to communicate should be combined with opportunities to increase their WTC, and the encouragement of WTC should thus be a fundamental goal of L2 pedagogy (Dörnyei, 2001; MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Previous WTC studies (e.g., Baker & MacIntyre, 2000; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Yashima, 2012; Yashima et al., 2004) have placed a great emphasis on the exploration of variables that influence WTC. Meanwhile, a number of studies (e.g., Aubrey, 2011; Cao, 2006; Kang, 2005; Noon-ura, 2008; Pattapong, 2013; Wang, 2011) have used these findings and translated them into actionable implications for classroom teaching, revealing particular strategies teachers can employ to help their learners to become more willing to use the L2. One of the identified variables is the integration of technologies into the teaching and learning process, because they can play a key role in encouraging learners to feel free to communicate in ways and with means they are used to in their daily lives (Reinders & Wattana, 2014).

Jarrell and Freiermuth (2005) investigated the use of Internet chat as a means to increase 69 female Japanese L2 learners' interaction, motivation, and, consequently, WTC. The findings showed that the majority of their students preferred Internet chat to perform tasks to face-to-face interaction and they were more motivated to use English when communicating online. Students in this study also reported that they felt more relaxed and were able to use the L2 more. Given these findings, the authors emphasized the educational benefits of chat for increasing learners' WTC. In a related study (Freiermuth & Jarrell, 2006), by comparing the performing of tasks in the L2 during chat and face-to-face interaction among Japanese university students, both survey findings and analysis of the discourse produced convincing evidence that the majority of the students felt more intrinsically motivated to use English, less anxious about using English, produced more English, and, importantly, were more willing to communicate in English as a result of using chat.

In a recent study by Yanguas and Flores (2014), unlike other CMC studies which mainly involved the written mode, the authors made a challenging investigation of learners' WTC in the

oral mode. University students from two intact Spanish classes participated and were engaged in two decision-making tasks; one conducted via Skype and the other performed face to face. A descriptive analysis of the language production revealed that the majority of the participants actually produced a significantly greater number of turns, but not a greater number of words, in oral CMC. Although the quantity of L2 output was not greater, the findings could reflect learners' higher levels of WTC since their contributions were more frequent. The authors concluded that the significant increase in the number of turns in oral CMC might indicate that participants felt less anxious and more motivated.

Social Media and Language Learning

In the area of CALL, social media technologies have been said to offer great promise for language learning, as evidenced in numerous journal articles, book chapters (e.g., Blattner & Fiori, 2009; Brick, 2011; Forlano, 2009; Meskill & Quah, 2012), and dedicated volumes (e.g., Lamy & Zourou, 2013; Lomika & Lord, 2009). Because of the social nature of social media, the tools can encourage language socialization and engagement with communicative practice in a meaningful way (Mills, 2011; Stevenson & Liu, 2010). A wide range of social media tools are now available to teachers, such as blogs (e.g., WordPress), social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), Microblogs (e.g., Twitter), Wikis (e.g., Wikipedia), Video Podcasts, RSS Feeds, virtual worlds (e.g., online games), and Photo sharing sites (e.g., Instagram).

When supplementing traditional reading and writing courses, social media have been found to present pedagogical potential for practising language skills (Lee, 2010), developing language competence (Dieu, 2004), improving grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and language awareness (Wu & Wu, 2011). A number of studies have shown that, when used for the development of communicative skills, social media can provide opportunities for learners to interact with others using the L2 (Thorne, 2009; Toetenel, 2014). Toetenel (2014) examined the use of the social networking site *Ning* as a means of informal language practice in a classroom setting with 15 foreign college students in the UK. *Ning* sessions were carried out for an hour a day for a two-week period and students were asked to contribute to the site (by updating their status, posting comments, and responding to their friends), keep diaries, and complete two sets of questionnaires — one administered at the end of the first session and the other one during the

final session. The study found that using *Ning* in the classroom resulted in increased group cohesion, learner-to-learner interactions, and use of informal language.

Social media have been also investigated for other affective responses or attitudinal effects and showed some positive effects in increased confidence (Thorne, 2009; Wu & Wu, 2011), increased motivation (Harrison & Thomas, 2009; Lee, 2010), reduced anxiety (Stevenson & Liu, 2010), decreased shyness (Bosch, 2009), and more positive attitudes towards language learning (Thorne, 2009; Toetenel, 2014), which could positively affect their willingness to interact with other learners. Lloyd (2012) conducted a case study examining the use of *Livemocha* with eight university students taking 10-week elective language modules at a university in the UK. *Livemocha* was introduced to them as a means of practising their oral skills outside class time. Students were asked to complete two questionnaires (one examining the connection between learners' personality types and their WTC in the L2 with *Livemocha* language partners, and the other checking how often participants used social media), record what they actually did in *Livemocha*, and attend four focus-group sessions at two-week intervals discussing their experience in the site. The findings showed that social media was useful for language learners with different personality types. Even though some of the participants were found to be introverted, they were clearly quite willing to use the L2 when using social media. The study also showed higher levels of motivation for practising the L2 and an increase in learners' WTC in *Livemocha*.

Online games, such as 'massively multiplayer online role-playing games' (MMORPGs), have been found to offer potential benefits in fostering certain aspects of the variables influencing WTC because of their characteristics, which may help to lower anxiety while increasing confidence and motivation (deHaan, 2005; Peterson, 2010, 2011, 2012; Zhao & Lai, 2009). This is evident in a pilot study (Reinders & Wattana, 2012) investigating the use of the MMORPG *Ragnarok Online* in a Thai EFL class, and the effects gameplay had on learners' interaction and WTC. Fourteen university students were engaged in three computer game sessions and completed questionnaires gauging their WTC during gameplay. In addition to their positive questionnaire responses, their remarkably increased L2 use indicated that their WTC appeared to be enhanced by playing games. These findings were congruent with subsequent investigations (Reinders & Wattana, 2014, 2015; Wattana, 2013) which were carried out with a

greater number of students (N = 30), over a longer period of time (i.e., 6 computer game sessions in a 15-week semester), and using a wider range of data sources (questionnaires, observations of participant interactions within the game and interviews).

Despite the widespread use of social media for educational purposes, there appear to be no significant and consistent efforts examining the use of social media in language learning (Harrison & Thomas, 2009; Toetenel, 2014). Although previous studies have revealed benefits of the use of social media for achieving affective states that can influence L2 learning, more empirical research is needed to determine the impact social media has on different aspects of SLA, and in particular WTC. Our study therefore focused on the use of one particular type of social media, Instagram, to determine its effects on enhancing participants' WTC.

Methodology

The study employed a straightforward pre-test-post-test design. Participants were given questionnaires to determine their level of WTC before and after the treatment, which involved the use of Instagram in class. The research question was:

How does the use of Instagram influence Thai EFL learners' willingness to communicate in English?

Participants

The study was conducted in one intact class with 40 Thai university students. They were enrolled in a 15-week course of English for Information Technology 1, offered in semester 1, and of English for Information Technology 2, offered in semester 2. These two courses were taught by one of the researchers. Each course met weekly for two 90-minute sessions. All participants were third-year IT majors. Twenty-three of them were male and 17 were female, all aged between 20 and 25 years old. Participants had different English language proficiency levels and reported their limited use of and exposure to the target language. Prior to the study, all participants had experience in learning settings combining face-to-face teaching and technology-mediated language learning. They also reported that they normally used social media as part of

their leisure time, particularly Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. It is therefore reasonable to expect no or little novelty effect.

Research design

During the first phase conducted in semester 1, the study involved discovering participants' WTC in English beforehand. In the first week of the course, participants completed the first part of the WTC questionnaire, to determine their level of WTC particularly *inside* the language classroom. The study then involved engaging participants in the use of social media throughout the course (see the following section). After 15 weeks, when the course finished, the second part of the WTC questionnaire was administered. This asked specific questions about participants' WTC in English using *social media*. We then compared participants' WTC *in class* with their WTC in using *social media*. In the second phase of the study, conducted in semester 2, the same participants took part in the same type of social media use and after another 15 weeks again completed the second part of the WTC questionnaire. The purpose was to ascertain whether there were long-term effects of the use of social media on learners' WTC.

Intervention and how it was implemented

The intervention involved the use of one type of social media, Instagram, an online mobile photo- and video-sharing application which allows users to take photos and videos and share them on social networking sites. A major pedagogical objective for using this type of social media was to give participants opportunities to reflect on their learning experiences. Throughout the course they were required to take pictures during class time and share them with a one-sentence summary of their learning experience of that day's class. The teacher encouraged them to respond in English to the teacher's and their friends' posts. There was no restriction in the number and length of turns, as well as the nature of interaction which could be sharing ideas/opinions, providing information, giving comments, questioning, expressing agreement, or joking. Since the rules for participation were not explicit, the amount of discussion generated could vary from learner to learner. The other objectives of using social media in our teaching practice were to offer participants natural exposure to the target language and foster increased

opportunities to communicate in the target language outside the language class and, in turn, develop their WTC.

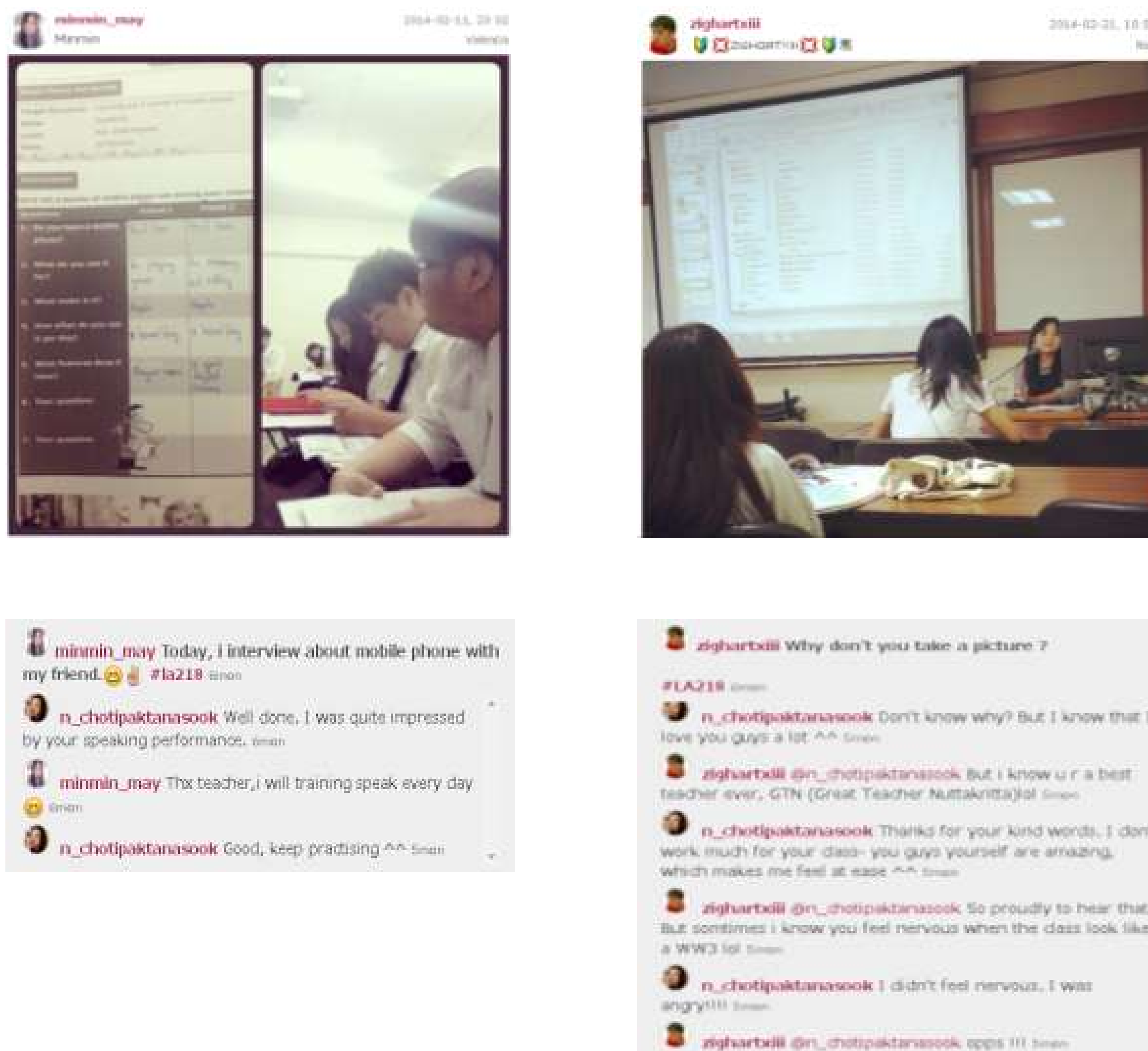

Figure 1 The use of Instagram (picture used with permission of the participants)

Measurement

WTC was operationally defined as students' *readiness to engage in communication in the target language at a particular moment and situation*. Guided by Wattana's (2013) study, such

readiness was determined through individual's a) perceptions of willingness to use English, b) communicative self-confidence (i.e., a combination of low communication anxiety and sufficient self-perceived communicative competence), and c) frequency of English use. Unlike in Wattana's study, these three aspects were included in both sets of WTC questionnaire. The first one gauged participants' WTC in *class* and was administered prior to the social media activity, to obtain baseline data. The second one measured their WTC in using *social media* and was administered twice; once after each of the two 15-week periods in the course. The overall reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha (α)) of the first WTC questionnaires was .891 and of the second questionnaire .914, suggesting that the questionnaires displayed acceptable levels of reliability.

Data collection and analysis

Questionnaire data was analyzed using SPSS for both descriptive and inferential statistics. Participants' 'positive' perceptions of WTC in English, 'high' communicative self-confidence, and 'high' frequency of target language use could suggest their 'high' willingness to engage in English communication, and vice versa. In order to determine the differences between learners' WTC in *class* and *social media*, a paired-samples t-test (with an alpha level of .05) was performed. To indicate effect size, Cohen's *d* (1988) was subsequently calculated. Effect sizes of 0.2, 0.5, and 0.8 were interpreted as 'small,' 'medium,' and 'large,' respectively.

We were primarily interested at this point in identifying the impact of the use of Instagram on WTC and for this reason used quantitative data and analysis. We did not include qualitative analysis at this point but hope to do so in a follow-up study.

Results

Perceptions of WTC in English in the classroom and in using social media

As shown in Table 1, the overall mean of 2.30 (SD = .60) indicated that participants perceived themselves to be somewhat unwilling to use English to complete communication tasks in *class*. However, their perceptions tended to be more positive after using Instagram for the first 15-week period; the results showed they felt somewhat willing to use English in using *social media* (M =

4.05, *SD* = .25). The paired-samples t-test results indicated that participants hold significantly more positive perceptions of their WTC in English in using *social media* (*M* = 20.30, *SD* = 2.71) than they did during *class* time (*M* = 11.52, *SD* = 4.47), $t(39) = 16.85$, $p < 0.001$. The effect size was large ($d = .76$).

Table 1
Participants' Perceptions of WTC in English in the Classroom and in using Social Media

Communication tasks	Classroom		Social Media I		Social Media II	
	M (SD)	**Interpretation**	**M (SD)**	**Interpretation**	**M (SD)**	**Interpretation**
Talk to my friends in English.	2.52 (1.32)	Neutral	4.22 (.69)	Somewhat willing	4.40 (.59)	Somewhat willing
Communicate ideas/ feelings/ opinions in English.	2.15 (1.07)	Somewhat unwilling	4.05 (.67)	Neutral	4.22 (.57)	Somewhat willing
Ask and answer questions in English.	1.32 (.72)	Very unwilling	3.62 (.62)	Somewhat willing	4.02 (.42)	Somewhat willing
Read comments/feedback given in English.	2.67 (1.11)	Somewhat unwilling	4.25 (.63)	Somewhat willing	4.50 (.50)	Very willing
Give explanations in English.	2.85 (1.00)	Neutral	4.15 (.69)	Somewhat willing	4.32 (.47)	Somewhat willing
Overall Mean	**2.30 (.60)**	**Somewhat unwilling**	**4.05 (.25)**	**Somewhat willing**	**4.29 (.18)**	**Somewhat willing**

The results after the second 15-week period (so 30 weeks from the start of the study), participants' perceptions towards WTC in English in using *social media* remained positive, and in fact increased somewhat (*M* = 4.29, *SD* = .18). One response in the questionnaire stood out for the dramatic change it represented; participants were now very willing to read comments in

English in using *social media* (*M* = 4.50, *SD* = .50). The paired-samples t-test results did confirm significantly more positive perceptions of their WTC in English in using *social media* after a 30-week period (*M* = 21.47, *SD* = 1.92) than they did during *class* time when their perceptions were measured in the first week of the semester 1 (*M* = 11.52, *SD* = 4.47), $t(39) = 17.86$, $p < 0.001$. Again, the effect size was large ($d = .82$).

Communicative self-confidence in the classroom and social media

Overall, participants showed low communicative self-confidence when using English in *class* (*M* = 1.65, *SD* = .18, see Table 2). Clearly, they were very anxious (*M* = 1.69, *SD* = .18) and did not perceive themselves as competent (*M* =1.60, *SD* = .19) to communicate in English during *class* time. There was, however, a change when the results revealed the combination of low anxiety (*M* =4.62, *SD* = .08) and high perceived communicative competence (*M* = 4.15, *SD* = .27), which reflected participants' high communicative self-confidence (*M* = .38, *SD* = .31) when using English in *social media* for one semester. According to the paired-samples t-test analysis, participants showed higher communicative self-confidence in using *social media* (*M* =43.90, *SD* = 3.72) than during *class* time (*M* = 16.52, *SD* = 5.10). There was a statistically significant difference $t(39) = 31.86$, $p < 0.001$), with a large effect size (*d*) of .96.

Table 2

Participants' Communicative Self-Confidence in the Classroom and in using Social Media

	Classroom		Social Media I		Social Media II	
Statements	**M (SD)**	**Interpretation**	**M (SD)**	**Interpretation**	**M (SD)**	**Interpretation**
Anxiety items						
I am not afraid of making mistakes.	1.62 (1.05)	Disagree	4.52 (.55)	Strongly Agree	4.67 (.47)	Strongly Agree
I am worried that I will not understand what my friends say in English.*	1.75 (.86)	Agree	4.55 (.55)	Strongly disagree	4.65 (.48)	Strongly disagree
I feel nervous about using English while participating in class (social media)*	1.42 (.63)	Strongly agree	4.70 (.46)	Strongly disagree	4.77 (.42)	Strongly disagree
I feel comfortable sharing my ideas/ feelings/ opinions with my friends.	1.82 (.98)	Disagree	4.70 (.46)	Strongly agree	4.77 (.42)	Strongly agree
In general, I find communicating in English in classroom (social media) relaxing.	1.87 (.72)	Disagree	4.65 (.48)	Strongly agree	4.75 (.43)	Strongly agree
All anxiety items	*1.69 (.18)*	*Disagree*	*4.62 (.08)*	*Strongly agree*	*4.72 (.05)*	*Strongly agree*

Perceived communicative competence items						
I find it difficult to communicate in English.*	1.40 (.84)	Strongly agree	4.55 (.50)	Strongly disagree	4.60 (.49)	Strongly disagree
I can say what I want to say in English.	1.50 (.81)	Disagree	4.00 (.67)	Agree	4.22 (.47)	Agree
I think my friends cannot understand me because of my poor English.*	1.87 (.85)	Agree	3.90 (.87)	Disagree	4.17 (.59)	Disagree
I know the words required for communicating in English.	1.50 (.87)	Disagree	4.00 (.59)	Agree	4.15 (.53)	Agree
I think participating in class (social media) help me develop my fluency.	1.75 (.63)	Disagree	4.32 (.57)	Agree	4.45 (.50)	Agree
All perceived communicative competence items	*1.60 (.19)*	*Disagree*	*4.15 (.27)*	*Agree*	*4.31 (.19)*	*Agree*
Overall Mean	**1.65 (.18)**	**Disagree**	**4.38 (.31)**	**Agree**	**4.52 (.25)**	**Strongly Agree**

Note. *Responses for these items were reversed.

The results after the second 15-week period were similar; participants reported low anxiety (M = 4.72, SD = .05) and high perceived communicative competence (M = 4.31, SD = .19). This clearly reflects their high communicative self-confidence (M = 4.52, SD = .25). When statistical analysis was performed, participants, again, showed higher communicative self-confidence while using English in *social media* (M = 45.22, SD = 2.99) than they did in *class* (M = 16.52, SD = 5.10). This difference was statistically significant $t(39) = 34.81$, $p < 0.001$), with a very large effect size (d = .96).

Frequency of English use in the classroom and social media

The findings suggested that participants rarely used English during *class* time (*M* = 1.67, *SD* = .27) whereas they often used it in *social media* (*M* = 4.00, *SD* = 025), as shown in Table 3. The paired-samples t-test results confirmed that participants used English in *social media* (*M* = 20.05, *SD* = 2.77) more frequently than they did in *class* time (*M* = 8.37, *SD* = 2.65), $t(39) = 29.11$, $p < 0.001$. The effect size was very large ($d = .90$).

Table 3
Participants' Self-Reported Use of English in the Classroom and in using Social Media

Communication tasks	**Classroom**		**Social Media I**		**Social Media II**	
	M (SD)	**Interpretation**	**M (SD)**	**Interpretation**	**M (SD)**	**Interpretation**
I use English to communicate with my friends.	1.87 (.75)	Rarely	4.20 (.72)	Often	4.52 (.50)	Always
I use English to check meaning.	1.55 (.63)	Rarely	4.00 (.71)	Often	4.30 (.46)	Often
I use English to ask questions.	1.32 (.57)	Never	3.57 (.63)	Often	3.92 (.47)	Often
I use English for simple interactions.	1.60 (.54)	Rarely	4.20 (.64)	Often	4.45 (.50)	Often
I use English only when I participate in social media.	2.02 (.80)	Rarely	4.07 (.69)	Often	4.42 (.50)	Often
Overall Mean	**1.67** (.27)	**Rarely**	**4.00** (.25)	**Often**	**4.32** (.23)	**Often**

After the second 15-week period, participants' responses suggested their high frequency (*M* = 4.32, *SD* = .23) of the use of English. The most observable was when participants reported

that they always used English only while engaged in *social media* (M = 4.52, SD = .50). The paired-samples t-test results exhibited participants' greater frequency of English use in *social media* (M = 21.62, SD = 1.79) than in *class* time (M = 8.37, SD = 2.65), $t(39) = 35.00$, $p < 0.001$. The effect size was very large (d = .90).

Discussion

Our study addressed the question how the use of CALL, and in particular the use of one type of social media application (Instagram), affects Thai EFL learners' willingness to use the target language. The results show that learners exhibited high WTC when engaging in the use of Instagram, felt positive about their willingness to use English, became confident to communicate in English, and self-reported that they frequently produced target language output. It is also verifiable from the findings that participants demonstrated a statistically greater WTC in *social media* than in *class*. This is consistent with previous CALL studies which also reported that learners interacting online were more willing to communicate than those engaging in face-to-face interaction (e.g., Freiermuth & Jarrell, 2006; Reinders & Wattana, 2014, 2015; Wattana, 2013; Yanguas & Flores, 2014). Thus, the findings of this current study can reaffirm and extend the usefulness of online interaction as activities for engendering learners' WTC. However, the exciting point of this study is that the increased level of WTC was also noticeable after our participants continually took part in social media use over an extended period of time. This suggests that the results we found were not due to novelty effects and that the use of Instagram can have long-term benefits. From a WTC perspective, social media can be a powerful tool for offering language learners opportunities to feel more confident and more willing to practise and use the target language. This is mainly due to the key affordances of social media environments – free communication of ideas, social interaction, and the presence of an authentic audience. By using social media in the language classroom, we can help our students to improve their WTC, which is a requisite for the success of any language program (Dörnyei, 2001; MacIntyre et al., 1998). Clearly, increased WTC is essential to L2 development since it can result in increased L2 production.

Several pedagogical implications pertaining to English language teaching and learning can be drawn from this study. Our findings first suggest that the use of Instagram can enhance

learners' WTC. Because the characteristics of Instagram that make it a type of social media are found in many such applications, their implementation in the foreign language classroom holds promise for increasing student engagement and WTC. Our findings may motivate teachers to adopt the use of social media to provide their learners with more opportunities for language use, while at the same time encouraging their willingness to use the target language beyond the classroom. This may require curriculum designers and materials developers to consider the integration of social media in language teaching resources more widely than has been the case so far.

The effectiveness of social media might depend on learners' needs and learning activities, and the understanding and abilities of the teacher to plan, design, and make use of technologies. Reinders (2009) points out that teachers should have the ability to apply the technology, create activities using the technology, and teach with the technology. This is to suggest that pedagogy should be a fundamental consideration in the design of CALL activities, and that technologies should be selected for class because their use and outcome can meet the learning goals and pedagogical approaches, not just because they are new or popular. At a practical level, this implies the need for specific training, time, resources and pedagogical support so that teachers can integrate technologies in an appropriate way.

Like all studies, ours has a few limitations. Most importantly, the study was conducted with only one teacher and one class. It is possible that this teacher and her enthusiasm for technology, or certain characteristics of this group of learners, affected the results. This means we have to be careful in generalising from our findings. Secondly, we only obtained results for students' perceptions of their WTC in class at the start of the course; it is possible that over time not only their WTC in using social media but also their WTC in class went up, but we do not know. Future studies will need to find ways to control for such variables. Future studies could also look at measuring language production, in addition to self-report data. This is because what learners think about communicating might be different from how they actually communicate (Clément et al., 2003; Yashima et al., 2004).

While some might argue that social media like Instagram are not directly intended for educational purposes and have not much to do with language learning, the benefits of their use for improving WTC are promising indeed. Especially in EFL settings this seems a particularly

valuable contribution to encouraging learners to become more active participants in the learning process, and to develop positive attitudes towards communicating in English; assets that will be valuable to them both inside and outside the classroom.

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Culture, beliefs and anxiety: A study of university-level Japanese learners of English

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine learner beliefs and anxiety among young adult Japanese EFL learners at a university in Tokyo. It discusses the findings from a set of self-report questionnaires and compares the results with those obtained in an earlier study of Japanese, Chinese and Swiss English language learners studying abroad. The findings from the Japanese respondents (ESL and EFL) in the two studies were remarkably similar overall, and relatively high levels of classroom anxiety and fear of negative evaluation were evident among the participants, as well as some indications of social anxiety. The findings provide a picture of foreign language anxiety in a broader socio-cultural context and have the potential to influence the design of approaches to its management. It is concluded that addressing negative learner beliefs and empowering individual learners to understand and take control of their own anxiety may lead to more successful language learning outcomes.

Keywords: foreign language anxiety, learner beliefs, university students, Japan

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Introduction and Literature Review

The importance of anxiety as a factor that can have a significant and measurable impact on the learning of a foreign language is well documented (Brown, 2004b; Dörnyei, 2005; Doyon, 2000; Imamura, 1978; Markee, 1986; Nonaka, 1990; Scovel, 1991). Language anxiety is often regarded as a distinctive form of anxiety (Gardner, 1985; Horwitz et al., 1986; Horwitz, 1986; Kondo & Yang, 2004; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Matsuda, 2001; Young, 1990). One of the reasons for this is that learning and using a foreign language can impact upon an individual's sense of identity in relation to themselves and others. Language anxiety has been defined as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, p. 284). Some researchers have examined anxiety as an independent variable in its own right in the language learning process, while others have seen it as one component of larger constructs (Dörnyei, 2005).

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) first proposed the specific 'language anxiety' construct and outlined why they believed it to be a prevalent factor in the success (or lack of success) of many students struggling to learn another language. This led them to develop the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) consisting of 33 items which they felt were "reflective of communication apprehension, test-anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation in the foreign language classroom" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 129). Although it was developed more than 25 years ago, the FLCAS remains a frequently used tool in language anxiety research today (e.g. Na, 2007; Wu, 2011).

Fear of Negative Evaluation

A component of the anxiety picture that is particularly relevant to L2 learning and use is fear of negative evaluation (FNE). FNE is defined as "apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (Watson & Friend, 1969, p. 449). Horwitz et al (1986, p. 128) point out that although FNE is related to test anxiety, "…it is not limited to test-taking situations; rather, it may occur in any social, evaluative situation such as interviewing for a job or speaking in foreign language

class." Even social situations where there is no obvious evaluative element can still trigger a fear in learners that their less-than-perfect L2 performance may elicit negative evaluations (expressed or not) from their interlocutors. Whatever the psychological makeup of individual learners, the potential to trigger FNE is inherent in the language learning process. According to Kitano (2001) many students fear making mistakes when speaking in class, regardless of whether or not a more general fear of negative evaluation is part of their personalities.

Social Anxiety

A closely related form of anxiety is social phobia. According to Noyes and Hoehn-Saric (1998, p. 158), "social phobia is an unreasonable fear of embarrassing oneself in social performance situations." Such situations can include eating in public, meeting new people and, of course, speaking and communicating with others in any number of everyday encounters. Most people experience this form of anxiety to some degree, and it is only when it reaches higher levels, and starts to affect an individual's behaviour, that it becomes a concern. Social anxiety is closely linked with other forms of anxiety and "results from an interplay between fear of negative evaluation (FNE) and excessive self-directed attention" and "in short, socially anxious persons are preoccupied with being negatively evaluated by others, and this causes them to become anxious" (Fay, Page, Serfaty, Tai, & Winkler, 2008, p. 1160). The possible negative effects of such an anxiety on students learning another language are obvious. As Brown (2004a, p. 9) suggests, "for some students, a particular component (fear of negative evaluation) of a particular type of anxiety (social anxiety) can have a deleterious effect on particular learning outcomes, if it interferes with their participation in essential learning activities."

The Japanese context

It has been noted that Japanese learners appear to be one group that experiences levels of anxiety that often disrupt their development in the English language (Kitano, 2001; Mastsuda & Gobel, 2004; Pite, 1996; Sim, 2004; Takanashi, 2004). It has been suggested that many Japanese learners of English (JLE) have a fear of making mistakes (Murphey, 1996; Nonaka, 1990), and

there are those who argue that Japanese students are affected by a high degree of learner and classroom anxiety (Anzai & Paik, 2000; Masataka, 2002; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; McDowell & Yotsuyanagi, 1996; Pite, 1996; Takada, 2003) and that some suffer from inhibiting levels of language anxiety (Isselbaecher, 2004; Kitano, 2001; Kondo & Yang, 2004; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004).

Research has examined some of the underlying sociocultural elements that may have an impact on foreign language learning in Japan and by Japanese learners living or studying in other parts of the world. One such factor is a belief system on cultural and communicative norms that seeks to protect the Japanese identity (LoCastro, 2001). LoCastro illustrates the latter further by explaining that "many favour retaining their own identities as Japanese, suggesting it as inappropriate for them to accommodate to the L2 pragmatic norms" (p. 83). A related factor known as ‘ethnospecificity’ is examined by Hinenoya and Gatbonton (2000) in their study of Japanese adults living in Canada. This involves a sense that one’s own national and cultural identity is distinct and unique, without necessarily being superior or inferior to that of other groups. They found significant negative effects for ‘language ethnospecificity’ and ‘Japanese ethnospecificity’ on English learning outcomes among some participant groups.

Some of the commentary involving Japanese learners has centred on purported cultural tendencies towards traits that may predispose individuals to anxiety, such as introversion and shyness. According to Zimbardo (1981, p. 9, as cited in Doyon, 2000), shyness is "mental attitude that predisposes people to be extremely concerned about the social evaluation of them by others" and "involves keeping a low profile by holding back from initiating actions that might call attention to one's self". While shyness in itself is not a ‘negative’ personality trait, it can hinder free engagement in events and situations that would normally assist in the development of proficiency in a second or foreign language. For instance, Hinenoya and Gatbonton (2000) found that shyness scores were significantly negatively correlated with English language performance scores among groups of Japanese adults living abroad.

Japanese learners of English (JLE) tend to have expectations of their language classroom performance which prioritise accuracy and correctness of form. In Japan, Brown (2004b, p. 16) comments that students tend to be much more accepting of negative evaluation in the form of low grades for attendance or class participation, than risk the negative evaluation of their peers

for making mistakes in front of others. Nonaka (1990) claims that some learners are also reluctant to speak because they are afraid of sounding “silly” in English. They may also fear being seen as show-offs if they display significant levels of aptitude or skill. Brown (2004b) elaborates on the ‘double-bind’ facing English learners in Japan, who risk ridicule if they make a mistake, and risk social rejection if they answer correctly. Further to this is evidence of negative attitudes among Japanese towards other Japanese who can speak English well. The Japanese word *eigo-zukai* (English user) is used to describe Japanese who are fluent English users. According to Nakai (2005), the word is "loaded with negative connotations and implies a loss of identity" and also suggests "an ability to make a display in the language that is of no substance or value beyond its effect of drawing attention to the speaker" (p. 18). This means that those students who have the ability and desire to succeed in foreign language study can be held back from achieving their potential.

Previous Comparative Research

The initial stimulus for the current research came from the findings of a comparative investigation by Sim (2004) exploring the cultural traits and beliefs of young adult Japanese ESL learners studying in Australia, and comparing these traits and beliefs to those of their Chinese and Swiss peers also studying in Australia. The majority of the participants were recruited from private language schools across Australia, and a smaller number came from more intensive university and higher education programs. The 2004 study employed a self-report questionnaire (translated for each of the three nationalities) made up of four different measures, two psychological in nature and two related directly to language teaching. The measures, in order, were (a) The Fear of Appearing Incompetent Scale (FAIS) by Good & Good (1971) (b) The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) (c) Targeted Beliefs Set (TBS) by Murphey (1996) (d) The Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (FNE) by Leary (1983). The returned questionnaires collected for analysis consisted of 101 Chinese, 52 Swiss, and 101 Japanese. Following statistical analysis of the data from the scored sections of the questionnaire (Sections A, B, & D), the numerical findings are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparative overall scores on three anxiety scales (from Sim, 2004)

Questionnaire Section:	**Nationality**		
	Chinese	**Swiss**	***Japanese***
(A) FAIS (Fear of Appearing Incompetent Scale).	11.66	10.46	*17.09*
(B) FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale).	54.91	47.61	*66.71*
(D) FNE (Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale).	30.22	29.53	*37.77*

As a group, the Japanese respondents, when compared to the other groups (Swiss respondents and Chinese respondents), reported significantly higher levels of fear of appearing incompetent, a much higher level of anxiety in the foreign language classroom, and a higher level of fear of negative evaluation. Overall, the influence of these three anxiety measures was significantly more prevalent among the Japanese population in the study, suggesting the importance and influence of anxiety factors within this particular learner group.

Section C, the Targeted Beliefs Set (TBS) by Murphey (1996) could not be scored numerically as it was only an instrument for the exploration of a small set of learner beliefs. However, the results for one item, in particular, stood out. Item 7, "I don't feel confident when I speak English" received a very strong response in the affirmative from the Japanese participants but a much more negative response from the Chinese and Swiss (Figure 1).

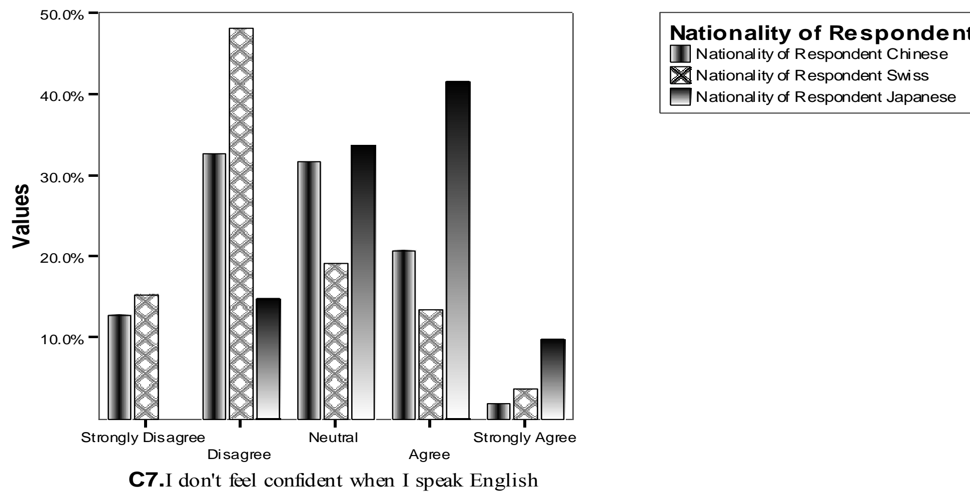

Figure 1: *Responses to 'I don't feel confident when I speak English*

The Japanese respondents, when compared to the other English language learner groups involved in the study, scored higher across most items in each of the four sections (FAIS, FLCAS, TBS & FNE). While they shared language learning traits with the other groups, such as feeling the need to use correct grammar, they were quite distinctive. This was especially evident when focusing on their anxiety levels and their levels of fear with regard to what others thought of them.

The conclusions of the research by Sim (2004) and the work of others covered in this review highlighted the need for complementary investigation of Japanese learners studying English in their native country of Japan. This current study thus sought to determine whether or not the findings of Sim (2004) would be confirmed by a similar study of university-age language learners in Japan. As Johnson and deHaan (2011) illustrate, strategies that enable learners of English in Japan to move towards greater self-regulation of their language learning and are likely to be associated with proficiency gains. Understanding the specific elements of anxiety among JLE is an important step to the design of programs that aim to empower these learners by helping them to understand and take control of their foreign language anxiety.

Research Questions

The present study used a similar instrument (translated four-section questionnaire) to the earlier investigation by Sim (2004), in the EFL setting of Japan. The study aimed to address the following four research questions:

1. How do Japanese EFL students assess their confidence and anxiety with respect to learning and using English?
2. What major language learning beliefs characterise these Japanese EFL students?
3. To what extent are the beliefs and anxiety levels expressed by these Japanese EFL learners different from those reported by their Japanese ESL counterparts?
4. Is there evidence to suggest that the learning context (ESL VS. EFL) influences learner beliefs and the prevalence of anxiety among Japanese learners of English?

METHODS

Data Collection

Three classes of Japanese university students were sourced as the candidates for the self-report questionnaires used in this study. This was possible due to an academic contact of the first author agreeing to provide access to his classes at this university. As a result, three instances of data collection took place at the university on the same day from three different classes. Formal approval of the ethical aspects of the study was obtained from the relevant university committee. It was made clear to potential participants that their participation was completely voluntary by the academic in charge. In addition, the questionnaire also included a participant information statement (translated into Japanese) on the front page that was brought to their express notice. Fortunately, the students were very accustomed to completing surveys and all students present on the day in the classes completed the questionnaire. The anonymity of participating students was preserved in an effort to elicit frank responses to the items in the questionnaire.

Participants

A suitable cohort of participants was identified through a professional academic connection of the first author at a major Japanese university in Tokyo. The three classes targeted were standard Japanese university English classes, both elective and compulsory. The participants consisted of fifty-eight males and forty-three females with an average age of approximately 20 years. A total of 101 fully completed questionnaires (Appendix I) were collected.

Instruments

Despite the many disadvantages and limitations, which include simplicity of and superficiality of answers, unreliable and unmotivated respondents, prestige and acquiescence bias, self-deception, and the fatigue effect (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010), the chosen instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. This anonymous self-report questionnaire (Appendix I), was originally chosen by Sim (2004) for a variety of reasons, despite the aforementioned disadvantages. Firstly, questionnaires enable large quantities of data to be gathered in a relatively short amount of time and contain the potential for researchers to draw conclusions about the pattern of responses for particular groups (as opposed to individuals). It was also felt that a questionnaire was the most appropriate instrument for the current study given that "the essential characteristic of quantitative research is that it employs categories, viewpoints, and models that have been precisely defined by the researcher in advance, the numerical or directly quantifiable data are collected to determine the relationship between these categories and to test the research hypotheses" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 9). Also, questionnaires can offer anonymity, which was an important factor considering the desire for frank responses to the somewhat personal area of individual feelings and anxieties. Next, in order to be able to make a valid comparison between an ESL (Sim, 2004) and EFL cohort of Japanese learners, the questionnaire was again chosen for this follow-up Japan-based study. Finally, the researcher simply could not physically visit the seventeen data collection points that ultimately spanned the continent of Australia for the ESL study (Sim, 2004) nor were the researchers able to travel to Japan to gather data for the

current study. This further highlights the choice of questionnaires due to their "unprecedented efficiency in terms of (a) researcher time, (b) researcher effort, and (c) financial resources" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 6).

The final 74 item questionnaire was made up of four components:

Section A: The Fear of Appearing Incompetent Scale (FAIS) by Good and Good (1971).

Section B: The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986).

Section C: Targeted Beliefs Set (TBS) by Murphey (1996).

Section D: The brief Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) scale by Leary (1983).

The selection of the four scales aimed for a mix of psychological measures (Sections A & D) and measures related to language learning beliefs and experiences (Sections B & C). The selection of this combination of scales was motivated by a desire to understand language anxiety in a broader social context, hence the inclusion of learner beliefs and more general measures of anxiety in social settings. The original 36 item FAIS, according to Good and Good (1971), possessed a reliability coefficient of .89 (KR-20) and Sim (2004) achieved a similar reliability score of .87 (Alpha) for a reduced number of 27 dichotomous data items (true or false = 1 or 0). This comparison was deemed acceptable since according to Siegle (2013, para. 9) "although alpha is usually used for scores which fall along a continuum, it will produce the same results as KR-20 with dichotomous data (0 or 1)." Similar to the FAIS, the original 33 item FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986) possessed a published reliability coefficient of .93 (Alpha) and in its reduced 22 item form (Sim, 2004) produced a reliability score of .92 (Alpha). Both original scales in section A and B had their items totals reduced largely in an effort to reduce repetition and the collective number of items across the four sections in the final questionnaire. The 13 item TBS scored a reliability coefficient of .65 (Alpha) for Sim (2004), however this section was not a 'scale' intended to measure an overall construct (such as those in section A, B, and D) but rather a collection of learner beliefs targeted for investigation. The brief FNE contained 12 items

and recorded a reliability coefficient of .87 by Sim (2004) and this compared favourably with the established reliability score of .90 (Alpha) by Leary (1983). All items were translated into Japanese in order to reduce misunderstandings and eliminate the variable of English reading comprehension levels from the exercise. Since the questionnaire was anonymous, participants were informed that by returning the questionnaire they were consenting to the use of the information for the research project.

Analysis

Only questionnaires that were fully completed (no missing answers or sections left incomplete) were included for the purposes of analysis. In addition, questionnaires submitted after achieving the target total of 101 complete questionnaires were excluded. A final complete sample of 101 respondents was eventually obtained out of 109 questionnaires that were originally taken by students; five being submitted incomplete and three excluded. The responses were analysed using SPSS Version 15.0 (2007), and items for which statistically significant differences between the EFL and ESL cohorts were identified. The first part of the analysis took the form of an average derived from the answers to all of the questions contained in each of the three main scales used in the study. For example, the highest possible score from section A (FAIS) was 27 (a true or false response to each of the 27 items providing a respective item score of 1 or 0). For section B (FLCAS) the highest possible sentiment total was 110 (22 items on a scale from 1 to 5). Section D (FNE) was scored the same as the FLCAS for each of its 12 items giving it a highest possible FNE sentiment score of 60 (12 items scored from 1 to 5). Averages were then compared between groups using independent samples T-tests in order to identify any instances of significant difference between the ESL and EFL cohorts.

Results

In terms of the aggregate scores on each of the questionnaire components, the results from the current in Japan-based study were very similar to the earlier results of the Australia-based ESL study of Sim (2004). However, some notable differences emerged on individual

items. As noted above, in order to allow for comparisons between the two studies, every attempt was made to match the current study's Japan-based Japanese EFL (JEFL) population to the earlier Australia-based Japanese ESL (JESL) respondents. The final comparison of respondents (Table 2) shows that the two groups were very similar except that the JEFL group were slightly younger and contained a higher ratio of males to females.

Table 2

Age and gender distribution in the two studies

	Average Age	***Male***	***Female***	***Total***
JESL Australia	23 years	40	61	101
JEFL Japan	20 years	58	43	101

The p-values for individual items on the questionnaire were calculated in order to assess the statistical significance of the findings. Results with p-values *less* than .05 were considered strong enough to reject the idea that the observed result could have occurred by chance and was therefore statistically significant. However, this did not mean that those items with p-values greater than .05 were discounted altogether; although their individual statistical power was diminished, many of these results still provided valuable insights.

Table 3

Questionnaire r*eliability score (Alpha) comparison between EFL and ESL cohorts*

α	*Section A:* ***FAIS***	*Section B:* ***FLCAS***	*Section C:* ***TBS***	*Section D:* ***FNE***
JESL Australia	.87	.92	.65	.87
JEFL Japan	.82	.87	.64	.75

There was a universal fall in the reliability scores for all four sections of the questionnaire. Section D (FNE), the final section of the questionnaire, suffered the greatest

reduction in reliability. Items chosen for display in the following tables (4, 5, 6 and 7) were selected based on a value judgment and with a mind to space and word-limit constraints. This value judgment was largely made considering (1) an interesting comparison between JEFL and JESL, and (2) either a close similarity or a stark difference between the JEFL and JEFL scores.

Table 4 shows the overall results obtained on the 'Fear of Appearing Incompetent' scale, as well as the comparative score of the JEFL and JESL groups on selected items. The JEFL group returned a slightly higher aggregate score (17.98) when compared with the JESL group (17.09). This compared with aggregate scores of 11.66 for the Chinese group, and 10.46 for the Swiss group.

Table 4

Scores on the Fear of Appearing Incompetent Scale

JESL Australia (2004) Overall score = **17.09** (Chinese = 11.66 & Swiss = 10.46)

JEFL Japan (2005) _ Overall score = **17.98**

Section A: Fear of Appearing Incompetent Scale (FAIS) (α = .82)	***n*True/*n*False**		**Mean (SD)**		*p-value*
Item #	JEFL	*JESL*	JEFL	*JESL*	
3. After having a conversation with someone, I have a tendency to worry about having said something that was inappropriate.	81/20	*66/35*	.80(.400)	*.65(.478)*	.018*
6. I am frequently prone to take actions to counteract previous bad impressions which I believe I have made.	56/45	*41/60*	.55(.500)	*.41(.494)*	.035*
7. After completing an assignment or task, I am prone to have doubts about whether I did it correctly.	81/20	*70/31*	.80(.400)	*.69(.464)*	.075
9. I have a tendency to worry that others will consider my behaviour in some activities to be inappropriate or tactless.	66/35	*46/55*	.65(.478)	*.46(.500)*	.005*
16. I am prone to worry that others may regard my beliefs and opinions as incorrect or funny.	65/36	*56/45*	.64(.481)	*.55(.500)*	.196
17. I am prone to worry about my adequacy in classroom work or activities.	55/46	*75/26*	.54(.500)	*.74(.439)*	.003*
18. I would never worry about the possibility of saying something inappropriate in a new social situation.	3/98	*5/96*	.03(.171)	*.05(.218)*	.471
20. I have a tendency to worry that others will laugh at my ideas.	52/49	*58/43*	.51(.502)	*.57(.497)*	.397

26. I tend to fear what others, even if they are complete strangers, may think of my actions or behaviour.	61/40	*50/51*	.60(.492)	*.50(.502)*	.119

*Statistically significant at the 5% level. Shaded = opposing/contrasting JEFL/JESL results.

JEFL respondents

Overall, JEFL participants did report significant levels of fear when it came to appearing incompetent. The responses of the JEFL respondents suggested that they were very conscious of their interactions with others, especially with regard to their performance. For example, item 3 illustrates how lacking in communicative self-confidence many of the respondents appear to be, and this post-activity self-doubt is evident again in item 7. The JEFL participants also appear to place a very high value on what others think of them according to many of the questionnaire items (# 6, 9, 16, 20 and 26). This appears to manifest itself as a distinct worry or concern, with the potential to impact upon their communicative interactions with others.

JEFL VS. JESL respondents

Some points of difference were noted when comparing the JEFL results with the Australian JESL study. On items 3, 6 and 9, the JEFL participants (as a group) reported a significantly higher 'fear of appearing incompetent' than did the JESL participants. By contrast, item 17 "*I am prone to worry about my adequacy in classroom work or activities*" stood out as an item in which the JESL group (75) scored higher in agreement than the JEFL respondents (55). Item 18 clearly showed that both groups expressed a strong potential for "*worry about the possibility of saying something inappropriate in a new social situation*" with scores of 98 and 96 respectively; however, the inclusion of the word *never* in the full statement was perhaps largely responsible for this result. After all, it would be a rare person who *never* worried about this possibility. Finally, the overall comparison between JEFL and JESL (Sim, 2004) demonstrated that, despite four individual JEFL items yielding results that contrasted with those obtained in the

earlier study (items 6, 9, 24 & 26), the majority of responses (23 out of the 27 items) produced very similar results.

Table 5 shows the overall results obtained on the ‘Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale’ (FLCAS), as well as the comparative score of the JEFL and JESL groups on selected items. Once again, the overall scores of the JESL (66.71) and JEFL (66.00) group on the FLCAS were very similar. These scores contrasted with those obtained from the Chinese group (54.91) and Swiss group (47.67) in the earlier Australia-based study.

Table 5

Scores on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale:

JESL Australia (2004) Overall score = **66.71** (Chinese = 54.91 & Swiss = 47.67)

JEFL Japan (2005) Overall score = **66.00**

Section B: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (α = .87)	***n*Agree/*n*Disagree** (neutral responses excluded))		**Mean (SD)**		*p-value*
Item #	JEFL	*JESL*	JEFL	*JESL*	
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	48/25	*30/41*	3.31(1.21)	*2.82(1.06)*	.006*
5. I keep thinking the other students are better at languages than I am.	55/17	*61/11*	3.55(1.11)	*3.71(.993)*	.718
6. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my language class.	68/20	*54/25*	3.79(1.15)	*3.46(1.12)*	.162
7. I worry about the consequences of failing my language class.	78/13	*53/38*	4.04(1.19)	*3.24(1.37)*	.000*
9. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	64/18	*28/36*	3.64(1.15)	*2.88(1.08)*	.000*
15. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	48/23	*53/15*	3.38(1.06)	*3.57(.973)*	.365
16. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	57/23	*41/30*	3.45(1.05)	*3.15(1.02)*	.243
19. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	53/22	*35/33*	3.39(1.01)	*3.03(1.06)*	.123
20. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	28/46	*54/26*	2.74(1.07)	*3.27(.979)*	.004*
22. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared for in advance.	74/12	*43/29*	3.82(.994)	*3.11(.989)*	.000*

*Statistically significant at the 5% level. Shaded = opposing/contrasting JEFL/JESL results.

JEFL respondents

The results from the FLCAS section of the questionnaire indicate that many of the JEFL respondents experience anxiety in a range of language classroom situations. Nearly half of the respondents (48, #3) reported trembling when they were about to be called upon to perform in their language classes, while even higher numbers of participants tended to panic when they had to speak without preparation (68, #6), found it embarrassing to volunteer answers (64, #9), and became nervous when they felt unprepared for questions from their teacher (74, #22). A large proportion of JEFL participants (78, #7) worried about failing their language classes. Conversely, only 28 (#20) reported feeling nervous about not understanding every word spoken by their teacher.

JEFL vs JESL respondents

Out of the 22 items in this section, JESL and JEFL response patterns were only opposing on six occasions (items 2, 3, 9, 14, 18, 20) The response patterns in the case of the other items were not opposing, although for some items (e.g. item 7) there were significant differences between the JESL and JEFL cohorts. The remainder of responses in a similar range. However, while it at first appeared that overall the JESL participants scored higher for many FLCAS items than their JEFL counterparts, there were a number of items with significant opposing results which influenced the final score. It appears that many participants in both groups lack self-confidence in their language abilities and feel that other students are better at languages than themselves (55 & 61, #5).

Contrasting findings were obtained in response to item 9, with JEFL respondents reporting embarrassment when volunteering answers in class (64) while their JESL counterparts were not as concerned (28). It is quite possible that this item reflects a difference in the makeup of the language classrooms between the two groups. The JEFL group were sourced from a Japanese university with classes of 30 or more students, while the Australian JESL respondent classes had a usual maximum size of 20. Also, it is likely that the classroom cultures and behavioural norms were different; volunteering answers may well have been an established norm in the mixed-nationality classes in Australia, to which the Japanese students had become accustomed. A similarly contrasting response pattern was seen in participants' reported levels of

nervousness when they felt unprepared to answer a question from their teacher (74 for the JEFL group vs 43 for the JESL group, #22), which once again seems likely to reflect a different classroom culture. While concerns about the consequences of language class failure were prevalent among both populations, the JEFL group led the way with 78 in agreement compared with 53 for the JESL group (#7).

Table 6 contains the results obtained on the Targeted Beliefs Set (Murphey, 1996) questionnaire items. The responses to Section C could not be 'scored' like the other measures employed in the questionnaire as it was not an overall measure of a defined construct but rather an investigative tool with the purpose of exploring a variety of potential beliefs of language learners.

Table 6

Responses to the Targeted Belief Set Questions:

Section C: Targeted Beliefs Set (TBS) (α = .64)	***n*Agree/*n*Disagree (neutral responses excluded)**		**Mean (SD)**		*p-value*
Item #	JEFL	*JESL*	JEFL	*JESL*	
1. I must speak in grammatically complete sentences to be understood.	15/70	*28/50*	2.35(.889)	*2.72(1.05)*	.057
4. I am afraid of making mistakes in English.	30/54	*29/51*	2.76(1.09)	*2.74(1.10)*	.838
5. To improve my English I must speak with native speakers of English.	87/2	*78/9*	4.21(.725)	*4.07(1.00)*	.132
7. I don't feel confident when I speak English.	58/14	*52/15*	3.58(.908)	*3.47(.867)*	.695
8. Speaking English with other Japanese does not improve my English.	11/67	*22/51*	2.27(.915)	*2.65(1.12)*	.067
10. I speak in complete sentences in Japanese.	6/70	*17/70*	1.93(.962)	*2.13(1.23)*	.028*
11. Making mistakes in English can help you learn faster.	80/3	*85/4*	3.92(.674)	*4.09(.750)*	.131
12. I feel foolish when I speak incorrectly in English	26/48	*25/52*	2.69(.987)	*2.62(1.09)*	.503
13. If I make mistakes in English my fellow students will lose respect for me.	8/77	*1/77*	2.01(.889)	*1.93(.765)*	.081

*Statistically significant at the 5% level.

JEFL respondents

The findings reported in Table 6 reflect a general awareness that 'mistakes' are an inevitable part of learning a foreign language, and that only a minority (30) report being afraid of making mistakes (#4) or feeling foolish when doing so (26, #12). This was consistent with a general belief (80) that making errors facilitates language learning (#11). However, a majority of respondents expressed the belief that to improve their English they required native speakers to communicate/practise with (87, #5).

JEFL vs JESL respondents

Looking at the selected example results in the above table, it can be stated that the learner belief responses obtained from the two groups were similar. A slightly smaller number of JESL respondents (78 vs 87) believed that speaking with native speakers of English was necessary in order to improve their own proficiency. This (once again) may reflect the experiences of the JESL participants who were studying in mixed-nationality classes and communicating in English with learners from other first language backgrounds. However, in this instance it is not the difference that is striking, but rather the pervasiveness of this belief across both groups.

Table 7 displays the group scores on the on the 'Fear of Negative Evaluation' (FNE) scale (Leary, 1983). As can be seen in the table, the mean overall score for the JEFL group (41.73) was higher than for the JESL group (37.77), which in turn was higher than the mean overall score for the Chinese and Swiss groups (30.22 and 29.53 respectively).

Table 7

Scores on the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale:

JESL Australia (2004) Overall score = **37.77** (Chinese = 30.22 & Swiss = 29.53)

JEFL Japan (2005) Overall score = **41.73**

Section D: Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) (α = .75)	***n*Characteristic/ *n*Not so Characteristic** (moderate responses excluded)		**Mean (SD)**		*p-value*
Item #	JEFL	*JESL*	JEFL	*JESL*	
1. I worry about what other people will think of me even when I know it doesn't make any difference.	77/11	*57/24*	3.84(.891)	*3.30(1.05)*	.002*
3. I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings.	61/14	*41/38*	3.58(.941)	*3.02(1.16)*	.003*
4. I rarely worry about what kind of impression I am making on someone.	7/84	*12/74*	1.89(.847)	*2.14(.959)*	.376
5. I am afraid others will not approve of me.	67/9	*47/24*	3.67(.884)	*3.23(1.06)*	.028*
6. I am afraid that people will find fault with me.	57/19	*39/36*	3.49(.986)	*2.98(1.09)*	.017*
8. When I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking about me.	74/11	*57/17*	3.80(.928)	*3.48(.965)*	.118
9. I am usually worried about what kind of impression I make.	84/7	*71/12*	3.99(.781)	*3.68(.948)*	.070
11. Sometimes I think I am too concerned with what other people think of me.	65/21	*55/31*	3.69(1.23)	*3.33(1.42)*	.187
12. I often worry that I will say or do the wrong things.	61/17	*50/24*	3.27(1.05)	*3.27(1.05)*	.389

*Statistically significant at the 5% level.

JEFL respondents

77 of the JEFL respondents worried about what others thought of them even when they knew it didn't make any difference (#1). A majority feared disapproval from those around them (67, #5), were fearful of others finding fault with them (57, #6), and wanted to make good impressions (84, #9). These fears even occurred during actual communication with others (74, #8) and in the time before interactions (61, #12).

JEFL vs JESL respondents

Again, for this section no opposing/contrasting patterns of results were recorded between the JEFL and JESL respondents, with no stark points of difference between the two. The only noticeable variation was the degree of FNE recorded for each item (the JEFL participants generally recorded higher levels across the entire section). Looking at the nine examples given in Table 7 above it is clear that the local JEFL grouping appear to report higher levels of FNE than the international JESL students involved in this study and the final scores were evidence of this.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

Given the results collected from the JEFL participants on the four sections of the questionnaire (A, B, C & D), a number of conclusions can be proposed regarding their overall profile. Generally, the JEFL respondents:

- reported high levels of self-doubt and insecurity (A3, A7, A20, B5, B16, C7, D3, D6);
- reported being worried about what others think about them and having high levels of FNE (A9, A16, A27, D1, D3, D5, D8);
- expressed low levels of confidence in themselves and their abilities (A6, A7, A17, B5, B9, B15, C7, D9, D12);

- reported experiencing high levels of not only language anxiety but what could be social anxiety, especially in relation to performance situations involving others (A9, A26, B6, B19, B22, C4, C12, D12).

Foreign language anxiety among JEFL participants

The FAIS (Good & Good, 1971) produced results that highlighted that many of the respondents did indeed experience a fear of appearing incompetent in a range of situations. One of the most interesting FAIS results was item 3, "after having a conversation with someone, I have a tendency to worry about having said something that was inappropriate", which returned an acceptance score of 81 ($p = .018$). This result and many others verifiably showed that the 'fear of appearing incompetent' very likely does have an effect the communication processes of the respondents in the study. These fears about how others perceive one’s words, behaviours and general identity are not an uncommon trait among many Japanese learners of English (Burden, 2002; Isselbaecher, 2004; Kondo & Yang; 2003; Masataka, 2002; Nakai, 2005; Nonaka, 1990). It follows that if an individual experiences anxieties like these then their levels of self-confidence must also be negatively affected. This complex mix of fear, doubt and self-questioning which occurs before, during and even after specific activities and events appears to be a solid component of the average JEFL profile. Matsuda & Gobel (2004), in a study involving 252 Japanese university students, highlighted the importance of fostering student self-confidence in the classroom, with the implication that "teachers need to reduce anxiety and enhance self-confidence by encouraging students' involvement in classroom activities and creating a comfortable atmosphere" (p. 32).

Anxiety in the English language classroom also appears to be a major component of the JEFL picture. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al (1986) produced results that showed the respondents often felt nervous and self-conscious in the classroom, particularly when faced with performance activities. This was highlighted by the result that 74 of the JEFL candidates became nervous when asked questions without advance warning and 68 reported that they felt like panicking when they had to speak without preparation. This not only illustrates the passive nature of a good many of classes in Japan but also hints at deeper issues within (and among) students themselves. Burden (2002, p. 1) cites a

belief in the wider Japanese culture which is termed the "I'm poor at English syndrome" in which university students describe the English language as "beyond them". Given results and findings such as these, there needs to be further investigation as to why students are reporting these feelings.

The results of the JEFL from the Targeted Beliefs Set (Murphey, 1996) provided further information about the study participants. Firstly, nearly all of them (87) felt that practising with a native speaker/expert speaker was required to improve their English ability. This is an established and widely held belief among Japanese learners of English which may account for why many students in Japan see their English language learning situation as something of a lost cause (Burden, 2002) partly due to their limited exposure to native speakers/expert speakers of English within Japan. However, this could also be a symptom of subtle undertones of social anxiety present in the population that results in a fatalistic attitude that resolves itself into an excuse. Attributing the fault to the environment is perhaps a convenient coping measure that could be masking anxieties that lead to resistance to engage in acts of communication in a foreign language. As Noyes & Hoehn-Saric (1998, p. 158) state, social phobia "is perhaps the most prevalent and disabling of the anxiety disorders yet is responsive to treatment" but "few persons seek this treatment, viewing their problem as a form of shyness or inherent weakness to be endured". Could it be that some individuals, believing that they are simply shy, are actually experiencing a form of social anxiety brought about by a range of (often conflicting) factors including contemporary social and cultural norms? Combined with this is the fact that many Japanese aspire to 'mastering' English as opposed to learning it, and as a result often setting self-defeating (unattainable) performance targets (Nishino & Watanabe, 2008; Takanashi, 2004).

Self-confidence was also lacking among the JEFL participants, with over half (58) reporting that they did not feel confident when speaking English. However, a majority of respondents (80) realised that making mistakes was an important part of faster learning. Despite knowing that mistakes were crucial to their progress, a quarter (26) felt foolish when speaking incorrectly and almost a third (30) expressed a fear of making mistakes in English. Although these figures do represent a significant minority of participants, it is interesting that a majority of participants did not associate feelings of fear and foolishness with ‘mistakes’. This suggests that expectations of accuracy and error-free production reported in the literature can at best explain

only part of the anxiety picture. Nonaka (1990), in an examination of Japanese learners of English, found that many fear that they may sound silly when speaking in English. It seems likely that, for some learners, fears of 'sounding silly' in a foreign language may have roots that are deeper than a simple fear of grammatical, lexical or pronunciation errors.

A fear of negative evaluation (FNE) was prevalent among the survey respondents, many of whom indicated that they worried about what others thought of them. FNE among Japanese learners of English appears to be quite evident (Kitano, 2001; Brown, 2004b) and it is apparent that this presents as a major factor affecting the English language development of many students. For example, almost three quarters (74) of JEFL reported that they worried about what others were thinking of them even when they were engaged in a conversation with that person. This, together with concerns about what impressions they make on others (84), and fears of others finding fault with them (57) or noticing their shortcomings (61), clearly has the potential to influence the performance aspects of learning a foreign language.

Finally, despite the fall in reliability observed in all sections of the questionnaire (Table 3, p. 11) the results were still considered to be in the universally acceptable range with values of .7 to .8 (Field, 2009, p. 675). In fact, Kline (1999) points out that psychological measures (such as those employed in this paper) attempt to gauge such diverse constructs that scores *less* than .7 should not be unexpected. Potential explanations for the variance in reliability could potentially lie with the different in how the JESL and JEFL cohorts were sourced. The JESL cohort of Sim (2004) were sourced from a wide range of institutions (17 schools across Australia) whereas the JEFL cohort in the later study were homogenous, all coming from a single university. However, section D (FNE) suffered a more marked decrease in reliability when compared to the earlier Sim (2004) ESL study (.87 → .75). Possible reasons for this could be the homogenous group characteristics of the EFL cohort coupled with what Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) describe as 'fatigue effect' that "is obviously more likely to influence responses toward the end of the questionnaire" (p. 9). Perhaps the EFL cohort were simply less interested in the issues canvassed in the questionnaire compared to the diverse range of students in the earlier ESL cohort.

JEFL and JESL comparisons

It is evident from the collected data and the subsequent results that the EFL (Japan) students' responses to most of the items closely followed those of their ESL (Australia) counterparts in the earlier study. This was further highlighted by the close collective scores for each of the scored sections of the questionnaire (A, B & D). This effectively meant that both the EFL and ESL respondent populations delivered results which appeared largely unaffected by the location of the students involved. However, there were some interesting variations and contrasts observed among particular questionnaire items. Graphs of these items are available in Appendix II.

- *Item A9 "I have a tendency to worry that others will consider my behaviour in some activities to be inappropriate or tactless".*

This item, with a statistically significant p-value of .005, demonstrated the finding that JEFL respondents, with a majority acceptance (true) response of 66, were considerably more worried about the considerations of others than the JESL, with a minority acceptance score of 46. In this instance it appears that perhaps there exists an increased level of worry of this type in Japan when compared to the levels experienced overseas. One possible explanation for this difference is that the JESL participants were studying in mixed-nationality language classes, meaning that the awkwardness that can arise when using English with other Japanese speakers was less evident in this learning context.

- *Item A17 "I am prone to worry about my adequacy in classroom work or activities".*

On this item there was a large difference between the two populations. The JEFL students recorded an acceptance (true) score of 55 but their JESL counterparts recorded 75 (p = .003). In other words, the JEFL participants appeared (as a group) to be less worried about meeting their classroom expectations than their JESL counterparts. This finding suggests that ESL students perhaps have a higher investment in their success/failure; after all, they are living and studying away from home, which involves substantial financial costs and (for some) the pressures of meeting language proficiency requirements for Australian university entrance. Another explanation could be that, for EFL students based in Japan, the language classroom is not the

focus of the anxiety, which stems instead from *the act of communicating* in English. The JESL presented somewhat differently, with the classroom stressing them more but actual communication in English worrying them slightly less. This is not surprising, given that many of them would have become accustomed to communicating with their international classmates in English.

- *Item A18 "I would never worry about the possibility of saying something inappropriate in a new social situation."*

This item, in contrast to item A17, highlights a key similarity between the two respondent populations. The agreement levels of JEFL (3 → 2.97%) and JESL (5 → 4.95%) suggest that a clear majority of both populations believe that they could worry about the possibility of saying something inappropriate in a new social situation. These figures compare starkly with the earlier Australia-based study (Sim, 2004) which revealed agreement levels of 19% from the 52 Swiss participants and 37% from the 101 Chinese participants. This is significant since it clearly highlights the involvement of social and communicative factors that are all combined with an obvious link to language anxiety for both Japanese groups when interacting with others. The inclusion of the word *never* in the item is probably a factor in the response patterns across all groups.

- *Item A26 "I tend to fear what others, even if they are complete strangers, may think of my actions or behaviour."*

The results reveal a higher level of agreement from the JEFL (61) compared to the JESL (50). This may be due to the fact JESL students (studying in mixed nationality classes) have experienced higher levels of exposure to people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and have had to develop better survival mechanisms to cope with their new environments. A simpler explanation may be that JESL students (who have chosen to study overseas) are by their 'international' nature more resistant to fear of what others think of them; however, the responses on other items in the section do not appear to support this.

- *Item B9 "It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class."*

It is evident from this item that the JEFL respondents have a much higher level of agreement (64) in comparison to the JESL group (28). It seems likely that differences in class environments and norms in Japan and Australia are a contributor to this result. As noted above, university language classes in Japan tend not to be places where students are eager to volunteer responses, even when teachers attempt to promote such a classroom culture. The mixed nationality learner groups in Australia may make it easier to establish volunteering answers as a 'normal' and thus an unremarkable feature of classroom interaction. When volunteering answers becomes an everyday occurrence, it loses its anxiety-producing power.

- *Item B22 "I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance."*

It is clear from the results that the JEFL respondents had a significantly lower disagreement when compared with their JESL counterparts (12 VS. 29) and much higher agreement (74 VS. 43) with this item. Here again, perhaps the cultural expectations and social norms in the Japanese environment serve to increase the threat value of such a situation for Japanese learners. This could also be evidence of the different teaching styles, with ESL students more experienced with communicative styles of learning and teaching.

Another possible explanation for the differing results seen in both items B9 and B22 is the phenomenon of 'grade entitlement' attitudes seen in English programs at some Japanese universities. Apparently, some students believe that simply attending and making an effort in their classes is enough to guarantee them passing grades (and beyond) and that actual results (the measures used to assess their increased skills and knowledge) are less important (Quinn & Matsuura, 2010). According to Quinn and Matsuura (2010), performance/ability targets need to be codified into basic standards and "without these standards, it is most likely that students will continue to view attendance and effort as more important than proficiency" (p. 17). Some of the differences observed between the JEFL and JESL may be attributable to this phenomenon, as progression in Australian language institutions is predominantly performance and proficiency

based. This is particularly true for the pre-university language courses, where only a small part (if any) of the final grade is generally given for attendance, and effort is not explicitly rewarded.

- *Item C5 "To improve my English I must speak with native speakers of English."*

This item is of particular interest because the responses from both groups were very clear and uniform. Both ESL and EFL groups displayed strong agreement (78 and 87 respectively). However, a small number of the JESL respondents (9) did express disagreement with this statement, compared with only 2 of the JEFL cohort. It seems likely that some of the ESL students had realised through experience that their English can be practised effectively with other L2 speakers, and a small but significant number of them had come to the view that practice with native speakers was not, in fact, essential. Japanese students studying English in Australia are often in the minority in their classes in terms of the nationality mix, and would (as noted above) need to use their English regularly with other non-native English speakers. In addition, a proportion of those students who choose to study overseas in the first place may have a more 'international outlook' and may see English in its role as a lingua franca as a means of communicating with people from a range of countries.

- *Item D5 "I am afraid others will not approve of me."*

Responses to this item revealed some interesting differences between the two groups. While 67 of the JEFL group expressed agreement, a little less than half (47) of the JESL group did so. Only 9 of the JEFL group disagreed with the statement, compared to 24 of the JESL participants. Again, perhaps the JEFL students feel a stronger burden operating in a culturally homogeneous environment when compared with the JESL students living and studying overseas. It stands to reason that increased mixing with people who tend to be less concerned about seeking approval of others may 'rub off' on the students, causing them to relax more in this regard.

- *Item D8 "When I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking of me."*

Almost three-quarters (74) of JEFL respondents felt this item was characteristic of them. These high levels of affinity suggest that, for many of these participants, it would be difficult to engage in a care-free in-depth conversation with others if they are experiencing stressful thoughts at the same time. The JESL were also a majority in leaning towards this characteristic but with a lower number (57) in agreement. The disparity observed between the two groups may reflect higher self-confidence levels among JESL and their increased level of interaction experiences in English, hence the lower 'care factor'.

Finally, as noted earlier, the individual item results for all four sections in the questionnaire displayed a close correlation in findings between the two studies. This was also reflected in the final scores for the three scoring sections (FAIS, FLCAS, and FNE) with only very small variations in evidence. The JEFL group scored slightly higher in FAIS (17.98) to the JESL (17.09). This suggests that JEFL students (as a group) were slightly more concerned about what others thought of them and hence were slightly more concerned about appearing incompetent. However, on the FLCAS the JESL group scored slightly higher (66.71) compared to the JEFL respondents (66.00), although these overall mean scores were remarkably close. Responses to individual items suggested that the language classroom was still quite an intense and challenging environment for the JESL despite their comparatively higher self-confidence results in other sections. Lastly, the JEFL participants scored significantly higher on the FNE scale (41.73) against the JESL (37.77), highlighting the very real fears that many of them have about what others think of them. Putting these results further into perspective were the FNE results for both the Chinese (30.22) and the Swiss (29.53) participants (Sim, 2004).

Conclusions

This study, and its comparisons with the earlier work of Sim (2004), suggests that the Japanese university student respondents appeared to share many characteristics with their Japanese counterparts studying abroad. The results showed that while there are small differences in responses attributable to the differences in the language learning context (university in Japan and language institutes in Australia) the prevalence of foreign language anxiety among both groups of Japanese learners of English was remarkably similar. When both of the Japanese

cohorts (JEFL & JESL) were compared with the Chinese and Swiss cohorts, differences were apparent in the overall scores on the various scales contained within the questionnaire. The learning context (EFL versus ESL setting) also did not appear to greatly affect their language learning beliefs. The findings reported here enable some tentative conclusions to be drawn on the research questions.

1. How do Japanese EFL students assess their confidence and anxiety with respect to learning and using English?

The findings indicate that JEFL respondents (as a group) tended to lack confidence in their English abilities. A high prevalence of language anxiety was also evident and, in the case of some individuals, this may include an element of social anxiety.

2. What major language learning beliefs characterise these Japanese EFL students?

The major language learning beliefs arising out of this study that characterise Japanese EFL students are that, despite reporting that they know making mistakes in English helps them learn faster, almost a third of them confess to being afraid of making mistakes in English. Given the patterns of responses on other sections of the questionnaire, it appears that a fear of 'mistakes' is only one component of the foreign language-associated anxiety that was reported by the group. In addition, even though 67 of the respondents agree that speaking English with other Japanese will improve their English, 87 believe that to improve their English they *must* speak with native speakers of English. There appear to be competing and perhaps contradicting forces at work here in terms of beliefs. Finally, many participants express anxiety about how they are viewed by others, which influences not only how they think but also how they act, both in the language classroom and in situations where they need to use English outside the classroom.

3. *To what extent are the beliefs and language anxiety levels expressed by these Japanese different from those reported by their Japanese ESL counterparts?*

For the explicit beliefs measured in the study in the Targeted Belief Set (Section C of the questionnaire) the two respondent groups did not present a single opposing or contrary result out of the total of 13 items. However, when we look at the issue of language anxiety, some

interesting differences emerge. Language anxiety levels for the JEFL group appear, at first, to be very slightly lower overall than the JESL cohort. This can be evidenced by the scoring in the FLCAS, with a mean aggregate score 66.00 for the JEFL group and with and 66.71 for the JESL group. However, the JEFL scores for the FAIS and FNE measures were higher than their JESL counterparts (17.98 vs 17.09 and 41.73 vs 37.77 respectively). Despite the variation, these scores are also very close. Strictly speaking, the FAIS and FNE are not explicit measures of language anxiety *per se*, but (as noted earlier) were used in this research in order to obtain a picture of language anxiety in a broader social context. Some items in these instruments do potentially relate to language anxiety while others are more closely related to the construct of social anxiety. Examples of those that could include an element of language anxiety include:

- *A3. After having a conversation with someone, I have a tendency to worry about having said something that was inappropriate.*
- *A18. I would never worry about the possibility of saying something inappropriate in a new social situation.*
- *A20. I have a tendency to worry that others will laugh at my ideas.*
- *D8. "When I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking of me."*

These items clearly indicate the involvement of anxieties related to language and verbal communication. However, looking at all the results, it might be worthwhile to ask *how do individuals actually go about registering/recording their stress levels* in the sorts of situations included on the FAIS and FNE scales? In many cases, the 'endpoint' is a form of communicative interaction with others, and it is what the individual says (or does not say) that actually triggers any fear that is experienced. Therefore, language anxiety is undeniably a significant factor in many of the items.

4. Is there evidence to suggest that the learning context (ESL VS. EFL) influences learner beliefs and the prevalence of anxiety among Japanese learners of English?

Overall, there appears to be little evidence to suggest that the learning context is a major contributing factor to the patterns of results seen in this study. As discussed earlier, both groups scored very similarly in the three scoring sections of the questionnaire with only a few individual

items displaying any significant disparity. The beliefs section of the questionnaire (Section C, TBS) also displayed close levels of similarity with no item returning an opposing/contrary result. Looking at the study as a whole, the only result that did not follow this analysis was the strong inference that, despite the JESL group's responses suggesting higher levels of anxiety in the language classroom than those of the JEFL students (perhaps due to higher class performance expectations), the JEFL cohort still tended to be slightly more anxious than the JESL students.

Limitations

A number of limitations must be acknowledged, relating to (a) the participants who took part in the study, and (b) the questionnaire itself. The potential limitations involving the participants include inexperience of the respondents with introspection and self-reporting, a possible lack of interest on the part of some participants in the questionnaires, as well as possible resistance among potential respondents sensitive to the nature of the study. It was also difficult to source ‘equivalent’ JESL and JEFL student populations. There was a thus a small difference in average age (3 years) between the two cohorts, and the JESL group (from the previous comparative study) was made up of students from many different language schools across Australia, whereas the JEFL participants were all from the same Japanese university.

The potential limitations involving the questionnaire included the large number of items which could have resulted in participant fatigue in some cases, as well as a likelihood of biased sampling due to non-respondents differing from the respondents. As mentioned earlier, the reduced reliability (alpha) scores of the JEFL study compared to the earlier Sim (2004) JESL research could have resulted (at least partly) from this. Although translations of the items were provided to improve comprehension among participants, some translated questionnaire items may still have been misunderstood.

Finally, one difficulty when using self-report measures to investigate the prevalence and effects of various types of fear and anxiety is whether or not participants feel able and willing to provide an accurate account of their true feelings and experiences.

Implications and Future Research Directions

The research project demonstrably empahsizes the prevalence of anxiety (in many of its forms) among this group of young adult Japanese English language learners. On many of the measures of anxiety used in this study, the JEFL and JESL groups aligned in the patterns of responses that they provided. While anxiety associated with foreign language learning is a universal phenomenon, comparisons with the Swiss and Chinese cohorts in the earlier Australia-based study suggest that it may be a more salient factor overall for the Japanese learner groups.

From the findings reported here, it seems clear that further research focusing on the management of anxiety and the development of learner beliefs that facilitate language acquisition may well assist young Japanese learners of English to reach their full potential. While the current study has obvious implications for language teachers making decisions about how to plan and manage their classes, it also highlights the fact that individual learners are diverse in terms of the situations that tend to induce this anxiety. The current study thus points to the value of future research that focuses on the individual learner as opposed to "the classroom" as a whole. Such research will inform new approaches to help learners understand and take control of their own language anxiety and to reach their true potential.

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3. Appendix I

…Cultural Questionnaire…

 # The original version of this questionnaire contained Japanese translations that were omitted in this publication due to space and word constraints.

(A) Please write down your nationality:

I am ___________________________.

(B) Please write down your age:

I am ___________________ years old.

(C) Please circle:

I am male/female.

Please follow instructions.

Please complete all sections and respond to all items.

Be advised that this questionnaire is anonymous and all information obtained will be confidential.

The return of this questionnaire will be regarded as consent to use the information for research purposes.

Please remember that all questions relate to what you believe you would really do in any given situation….not what you wish you would do!

Items in this questionnaire have been acquired from the following authors: Good & Good (1971), Horwitz (1986), Murphey (1996), and Leary (1995).

Thank you for taking part in this research.

Section A:

Read each item carefully. There are no correct answers.

T F 1. I would never worry about the possibility of being judged a fool in some activities.

T F 2. I would very much like to be less apprehensive about my capabilities.

T F 3. After having a conversation with someone, I have a tendency to worry about having said something that was inappropriate.

T F 4. I am not prone to be apprehensive or worried about my ability to do a task well.

T F 5. I am prone to worry sometimes that others may think I am not intelligent enough for my current job or occupation.

T F 6. I am frequently prone to take actions to counteract previous bad impressions which I believe I have made.

T F 7. After completing an assignment or task, I am prone to have doubts about whether I did it correctly.

T F 8. I am never concerned about the possibility that others may regard me as being somewhat odd or strange.

T F 9. I have a tendency to worry that others will consider my behaviour in some activities to be inappropriate or tactless.

T F 10. I am almost never concerned about the possibility of being regarded as silly or clumsy around others.

T F 11. I have a tendency to worry that others may regard me as not knowing what is really going on in the

immediate social situation.

T F 12. I tend to worry about the possibility of displaying in appropriate etiquette at a formal social event.

T F 13. I might be inclined to avoid criticizing someone else's judgement for fear of appearing to be in the wrong.

T F 14. I tend to worry that others will think I am not keeping up with work.

T F 15. If I were functioning in a professional field, I would not worry about my relationships with fellow professionals.

T F 16. I am prone to worry that others may regard my beliefs and opinions as incorrect or funny.

T F 17. I am prone to worry about my adequacy in classroom work or activities.

T F 18. I would never worry about the possibility of saying something inappropriate in a new social situation.

T F 19. I tend to worry that others may think I don't know what I'm doing.

T F 20. I have a tendency to worry that others will laugh at my ideas.

T F 21. I am rarely concerned about whether others will take me seriously enough.

T F 22. I am prone to worry that my parents or friends may regard me as irresponsible or undependable.

T F 23. I tend to fear that others may see me as not sufficiently self-disciplined.

T F 24. I tend to worry that others may think I am not devoting enough energy or enthusiasm to my work.

T F 25. I would never worry about the possibility that others might feel I have poor judgement in some situations.

T F 26. I tend to fear what others, even if they are complete strangers, may think of my actions or behaviour.

T F 27. I am prone to worry what others will think of me and as a result I regularly modify my behaviour to avoid possible embarrassment in front of others.

Section B:

For each item, indicate your response from the following options:				
SA	A	N	D	SD

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.(_____)
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.(_____)
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.(_____)
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language. (_____)
5. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am. (_____)
6. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my language class. (_____)
7. I worry about the consequences of failing my language class. (_____)
8. In language class, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know. (_____)
9. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class. (_____)
10. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers. (_____)

11. Even if I am well-prepared for class, I feel anxious about it. (_____)

12. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class. (_____)

13. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make. (_____)

14. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class. (_____)

15. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do. (_____)

16. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students. (_____)

17. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind. (_____)

18. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes. (_____)

19. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class. (_____)

20. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says. (_____)

21. I am afraid the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language. (_____)

22. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance. (_____)

Section C:

For each item, indicate your response from the following options:

1. I must speak in grammatically complete sentences to be understood. (_____)

2. Native speakers of English speak English correctly. (_____)

3. I must not make mistakes when I speak English. (_____)

4. I am afraid of making mistakes in English. (_____)

5. To improve my English I must speak with native speakers of English. (_____)

6. The main job of a teacher is to correct your English. (_____)

7. I don't feel confident when I speak English. (_____)

8. Speaking English with other Japanese does not improve my English. (_____)

9. I make no errors when I speak Japanese. (_____)

10. I speak in complete sentences in Japanese. (_____)

11. Making mistakes in English can help you to learn faster. (_____)

12. I feel foolish when I speak incorrectly in English. (_____)

13. If I make mistakes in English my fellow students will lose respect for me. (_____)

Section D: Read each of the following statements carefully and indicate how characteristic it is of you according to the following scale:

1 = Not at all characteristic of me

2 = Slightly characteristic of me

3 = Moderately characteristic of me

4 = Very characteristic of me

5 = Extremely characteristic of me

1. I worry about what other people will think of me even when I know it doesn't make any difference. (_____)
2. I am unconcerned even if I know people are forming an unfavorable impression of me. (_____)
3. I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings. (_____)
4. I rarely worry about what kind of impression I am making on someone. (_____)
5. I am afraid others will not approve of me. (_____)
6. I am afraid that people will find fault with me. (_____)
7. Other people's opinions of me do not bother me. (_____)

8. When I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking about me. (_____)
9. I am usually worried about what kind of impression I make. (_____)
10. If I know someone is judging me, it has little effect on me. (_____)
11. Sometimes I think I am too concerned with what other people think of me. (_____)
12. often worry that I will say or do the wrong things. (_____)

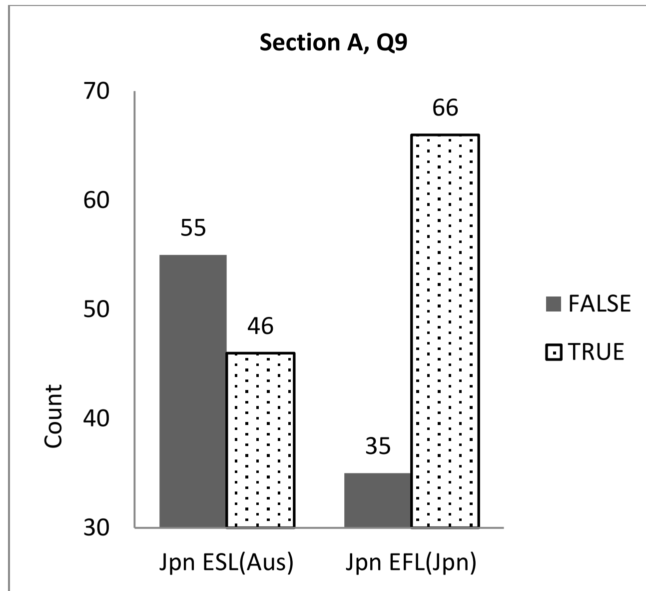
===

End of Questionnaire.

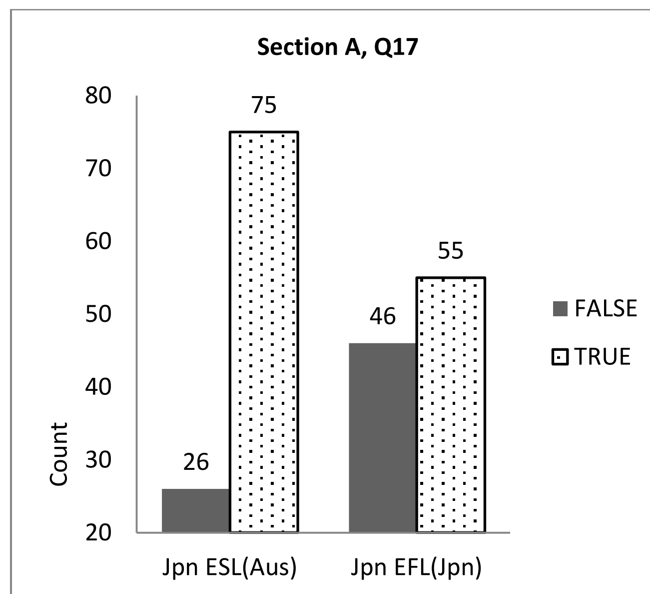
Thank you for taking part!

Appendix II

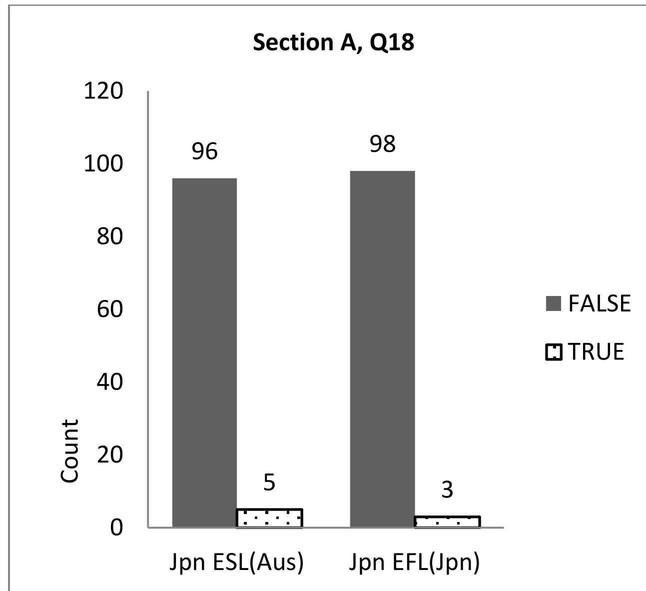
Section A Examples:



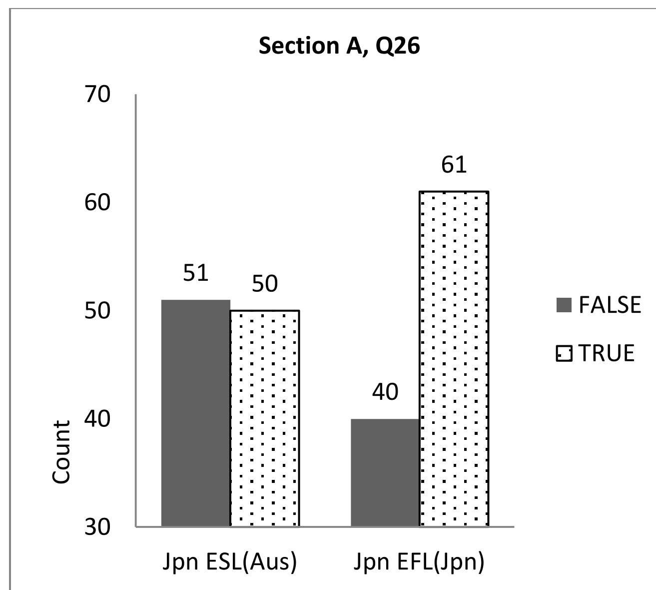
A9. I have a tendency to worry that others will consider my behaviour in some activities to be inappropriate or tactless.



A17. I am prone to worry about my adequacy in classroom work or activities.

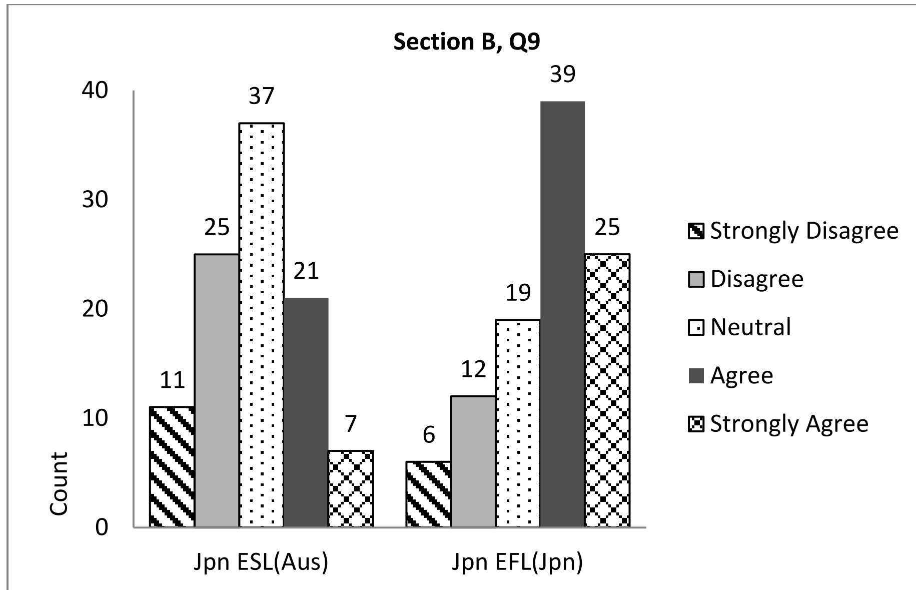


A18. I would never worry about the possibility of saying something inappropriate in a new social situation.

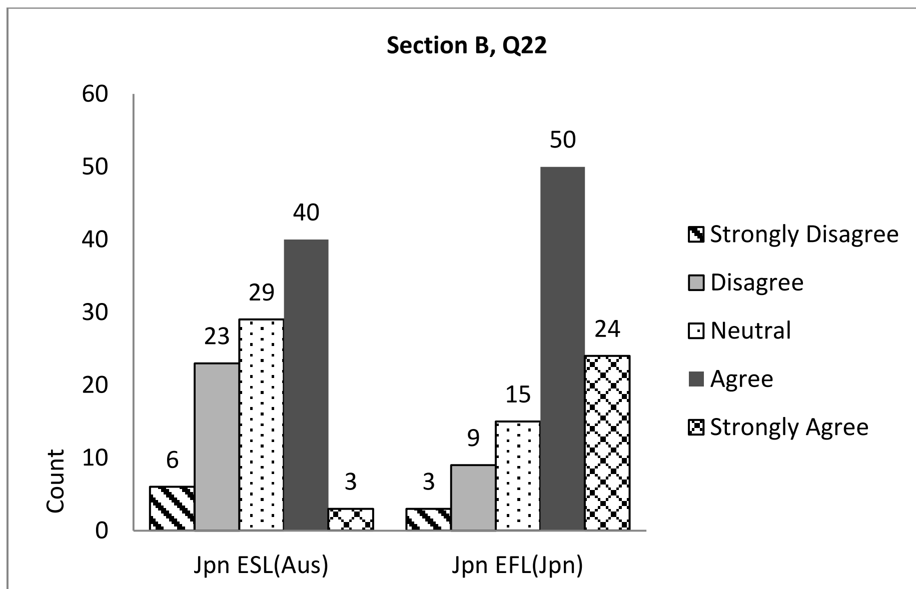


A26. I tend to fear what others, even if they are complete strangers, may think of my actions or behaviour.

Section B Examples (SD→SA, left to right):

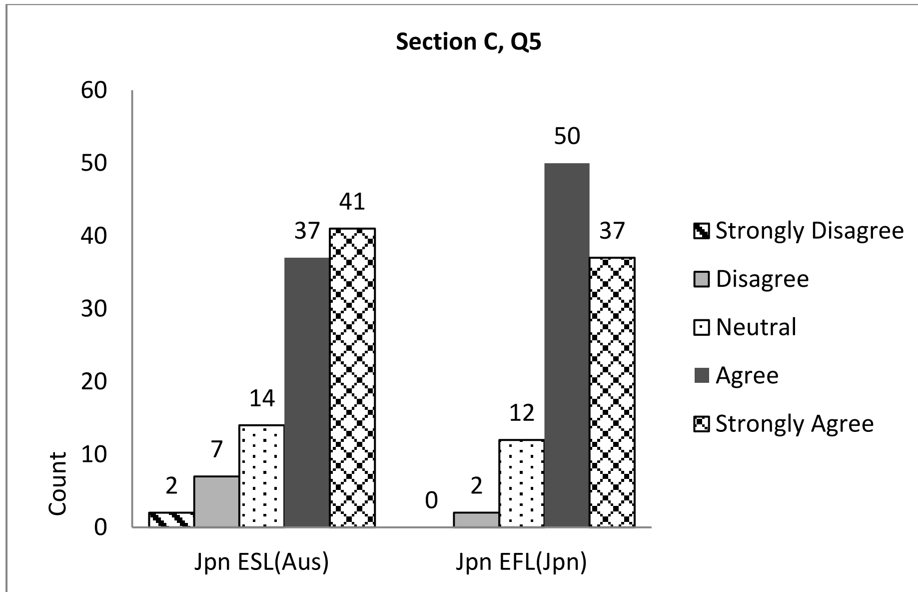


B9. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.

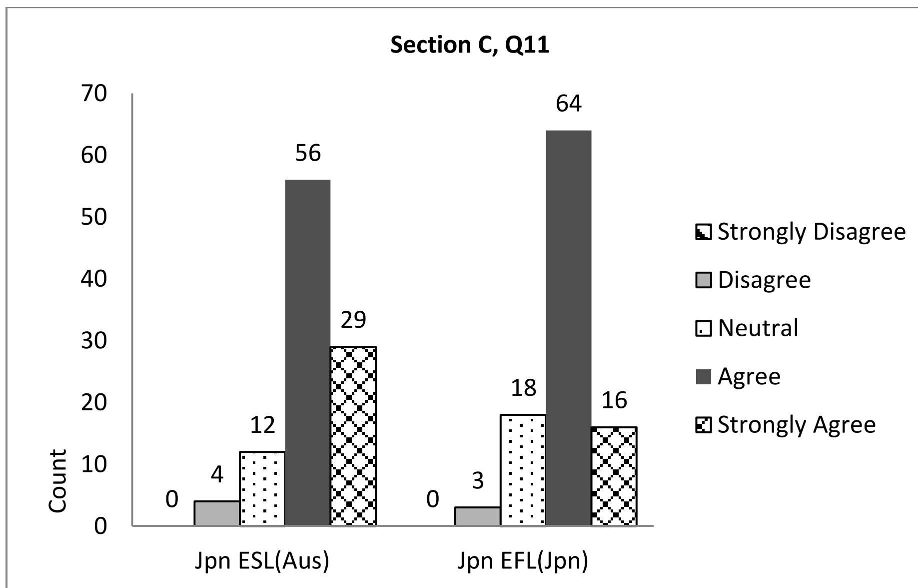


B22. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.

Section C Examples (SD→SA, left to right):



C5. To improve my English I must speak with native speakers of English.



C11. Making mistakes in English can help you to learn faster.

Section D Examples (1 → 5, left to right):

Response Key:

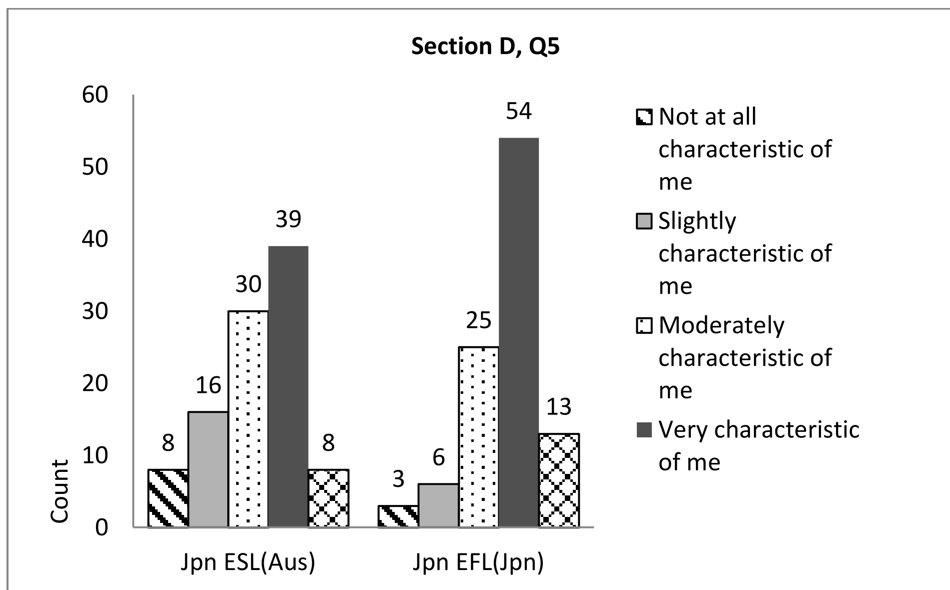
1 = Not at all characteristic of me.

2 = Slightly characteristic of me.

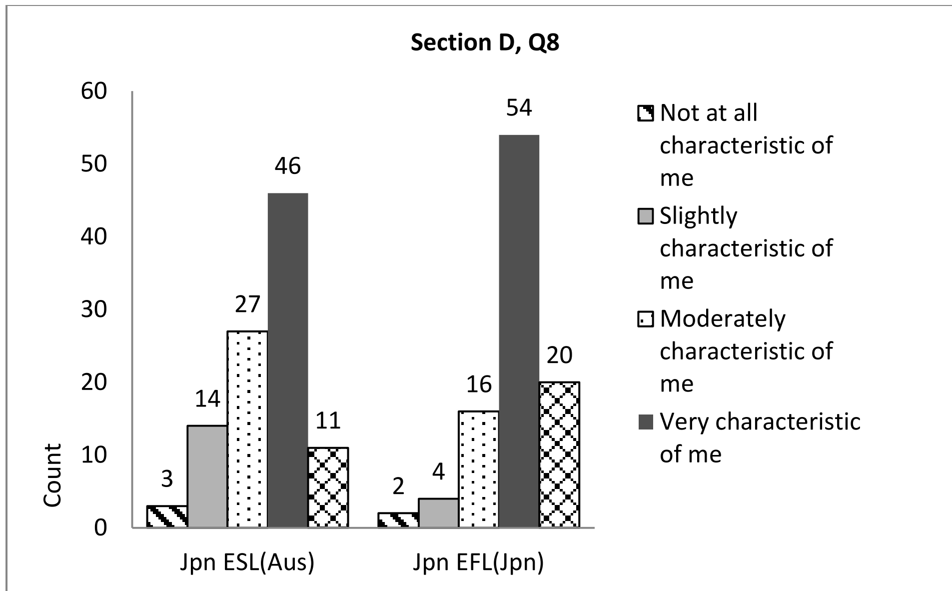
3 = Moderately characteristic of me.

4 = Very characteristic of me.

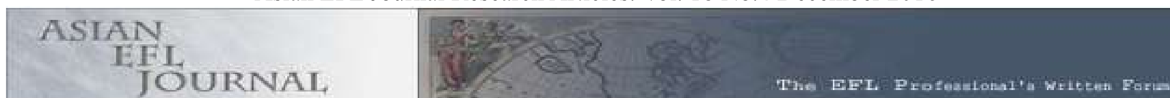
5 = Extremely characteristic of me.



D5. I am afraid others will not approve of me.



D8. When I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking about m



A Comparative Analysis of Kurdish Pre-service and In-service EFL Teachers' Beliefs about English Language Learning

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Abstract

Teacher beliefs, as part of their cognition, about English language learning and teaching vary. The consensus, however, in the literature is that EFL teacher beliefs have a profound impact on the way teachers teach in the classroom, learn how to teach, and perceive educational reforms (Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002). This shows that exploring beliefs of EFL teachers is noteworthy for a better understanding of the state of English language education in specific EFL contexts. This quantitative study aims to explore the beliefs of Kurdish pre-service and in-service EFL teachers about English language learning and compare these beliefs to see whether any differences occur. Data were collected through administering Horwitz's (1988) Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) questionnaire to 23 Kurdish pre-service teachers of English from one of the public universities in Kurdistan region of Iraq, and 25 Kurdish in-service teachers of English from some basic schools in Qaladiza, a small town located in the same region. After the statistical analyses of the collected data, the results showed that both groups held both different and similar beliefs about English language learning. Furthermore, the reasons for holding these beliefs are explained in the discussion section of this study.

Keywords: Kurdistan Region of Iraq, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Teacher and Learner Beliefs, English Language Learning (ELL), BALLI

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Introduction

In the past few decades, research in Second Language Learning (SLL) and Teaching (SLT) has prioritized teacher and learner beliefs from various perspectives and in different contexts. The reason for this special interest in this area is believed to be that understanding and improving teaching and learning are difficult without uncovering the beliefs teachers and learners hold about language learning (Borg, 2009). Since beliefs are unobservable, related to the mental lives of particular individuals (Borg, 2009), and complex, researchers have faced serious challenges in giving the precise definition of beliefs (Johnson, 1994). Therefore, various terms have been coined to describe the concept of “beliefs”; among these terms are attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, dispositions, personal theories, perspectives, and rules of practice (Stergiopoulou, 2012). In the present study, the definition of Borg (2001) on beliefs as “a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior” (p. 186) is adopted to find teacher beliefs about English language learning. It can be inferred from the definition that beliefs have some characteristics, as they might be conscious or unconscious. Moreover, it indicates that people hold particular beliefs as each of them might have particular justifications for such beliefs, which are considered as conscious. Unconscious beliefs, on the other hand, are those that teachers have no reasons to justify their perceptions. Beliefs, in addition, might also be evaluative because they can be evaluated and judged for their convenience, usefulness, or success for a specific purpose or in particular context. Beliefs are also personal, as each individual has particular beliefs about concepts and they are completely private and might be different from the beliefs of others. Finally, beliefs guide actions. Linking these features to those of learners and teachers will be extremely helpful in understanding and improving the process of language learning.

In the related literature, beliefs about English language learning have been investigated mainly through three distinctive frameworks, namely, normative, metacognitive, and contextual. In the normative framework, beliefs are examined by using Likert-scale questionnaires, such as those of Horwitz’s (1988), Bernat & Gvozdenko’s (2005), Cotterall’s (1999), Kuntz’s (1996), Sakui & Gaies’s (1999). Furthermore, the metacognitive framework has also been adopted by

many researchers (for example, Goh, 1997; White, 1999; Wenden (2001) through the use of semi-structured interviews and self-reports to collect the necessary research data about beliefs. Finally, studies in which the contextual framework has been adopted, are qualitative and have used ethnography, narrative, and metaphors (Kramsch, 2003) through the means of case studies, ethnographic classroom observations, informal discussions and stimulated recalls (Allen, 1996; Barcelos, 2000), diaries (Hosenfeld, 2003), and discourse analysis (Kalaja, 2003).`

Literature Review

Teacher beliefs, as part of teacher cognition, about English language learning have become a major topic of much research since the mid-1990s (Borg, 2003) for two major reasons. First, due to the developments in cognitive psychology, which highlights the influence of thinking on behavior (Borg, 2006), understanding teaching and what teachers do necessitated uncovering what is going on in the teachers mind, which is what Walberg (1977) called teachers "mental lives". Second, because of the changes in teacher roles, teachers are seen less as knowledge transmitters in the classroom; rather, they have become active agents in the process of teaching.

It is widely believed that teacher beliefs are deeply rooted and formed long before they start in the aching profession (Johnson, 1994). The major sources of these deep-rooted beliefs are varied. For instance, Lortie's (1975) famous phrase, "apprenticeship of observation", might be a source of teacher beliefs. It indicates that teachers learning experiences and histories, when they were students, have a significant effect in shaping their beliefs (Farrell, 1999; Bailey, 1996). Furthermore, Borg (2003) believes that professional coursework, contextual factors, and classroom practice can also influence and shape teacher beliefs. Therefore, the results of previous studies on teacher beliefs cannot be generalized to all contexts, because each context seems to be unique in providing learning experience and teaching programme.

Since teacher beliefs have gained much importance in the field of language education, research on both pre- and in- service teachers beliefs about English language learning has developed.

Assasfeh (2015), for instance, examined pre-service EFL teachers beliefs about EFL learning. In the study, a questionnaire was given to 200 (75 males and 125 females) participants

ranging from freshman to seniors in the program. The results showed that the participants had the strongest beliefs about motivation to language learning; whereas, their beliefs about language learning were weakest. Moreover, Altan (2012) conducted a study to uncover the beliefs of 217 prospective EFL teachers about foreign language learning through a questionnaire. The results revealed that the participants had various beliefs about language learning and such beliefs may affect and shape their future instruction. Additionally, Peacock (2001), in his longitudinal study, investigated 146 pre-service ESL teachers in Hong Kong to explore whether changes in their beliefs about second language learning occur. He collected data through the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) questionnaire of Horwitz (1988). The results showed no change in the participants beliefs. In contrast, Grijalva and Barajas (2013) in their longitudinal study concluded that almost half of the pre-service teachers' beliefs were changed after receiving treatment on teacher preparation and teacher practice. This conclusion was drawn after investigating 14 Mexican pre-service teachers majoring in English through giving them a questionnaire and interviewing them. In Iraq, Abid (2012) conducted another study about the beliefs of EFL university learners. BALLI questionnaire was given to 101 EFL learners to explore their beliefs about the four skills of English language. The results showed that reading and writing skills were less difficult than listening and speaking; and between speaking and listening, participants chose speaking as easier than listening.

Apart from studies on pre-service teachers' beliefs, research has also been conducted to uncover in-service teachers beliefs on language learning. For example, Erkemen (2014) examined nine non-native novice EFL teachers teaching in Northern Cyprus to find out their beliefs about teaching, learning, and classroom practices. She collected data through the use of instruments like semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, post-lesson reflection forms, and stimulated recall interviews. The results revealed that the participants' prior experience had effects on shaping their beliefs, and contextual factors had main roles in making the novice teachers provide instruction incongruent with their beliefs. Furthermore, Stergiopoulou (2012), in two small case studies, compared experienced (n = 6) and inexperienced (n = 9) foreign language teachers beliefs about learning and teaching language. The necessary data were collected through pre- and post- questionnaires, observations, and interviews. Little difference was found between the beliefs of experienced and inexperienced

teachers, and context-related factors played an essential role in shaping and changing teacher beliefs.

Having considered the facts stemming from the previous literature on teacher beliefs about language learning, and since these beliefs are characterized as personal, cognitive, and context-dependent variables in EFL learning (Borg, 2001; Dörnyei, 2005; Ellis, 2008), the current study is worth conducting due to the following reasons: First, the participants will be Kurdish pre-service and in-service teachers of English, who are personally and contextually different from those who participated in the previous studies. Second, the context of the present study is the Kurdistan region of Iraq where there is a new context in which to investigate, and to the best of my knowledge, no research has been conducted on this topic. Finally, there still seems to be a shortage of studies in the related literature about comparing pre-service and in-service EFL teachers' beliefs about English language learning. Therefore, exploring prospective and in-service EFL teachers' beliefs, particularly, those of Kurdish ones, about English language learning will significantly contribute to the related literature.

The Current Study

The main aim of this study is to explore and compare Kurdish pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs about English language learning with those of Kurdish in-service EFL teachers.

The instructional setting and Participants

The study is conducted in two different settings. The first setting is the English department at the University of Raparin located in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The participants were 23 Kurdish pre-service EFL teachers studying English and related teacher education subjects for about three (i.e. junior participants) and four (i.e. senior participants) years, who are expected to become teachers of English language in basic schools. The reason for choosing these participants is to understand their beliefs about English language learning, as it is likely to be determinant in shaping future English education.

The second instructional setting is some basic schools in Qaladiza, a town located in the eastern part of Kurdistan region of Iraq. The participants were 25 Kurdish in-service EFL teachers who had at least three years of experience, and graduated from different universities in

the region. The reasons for choosing these people are to understand the current situation of English language learning in basic schools and compare their beliefs about English learning to those of pre-service teachers of English.

Research Instruments and Data Collection

Quantitative data were gathered through a questionnaire to explore the pre-service and in-service teachers beliefs about language learning. This questionnaire was (BALLI) designed by Horwitz (1988). It is a quantitative self-report questionnaire, which investigates beliefs about language learning in five different scales, namely, foreign language aptitude, the difficulty of language learning, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation and expectations. Furthermore, it has a five-point-Likert-scale format which ranges from (1 = strongly disagree) to (5 = strongly agree). The aim of employing the BALLI scale is not to identify which beliefs can be correct or not, but to survey them and then discuss their potential impact on the process of language learning and teaching. In addition, the questionnaire has a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.79, which, according to Hair, *et al*. (1998), has the acceptable reliability since the value is more than 0.70. It is also worth mentioning that some items were slightly modified for use in both settings and with the selected participants.

The process of quantitative data collection was completed through the following steps. First, the participants were asked for their consent about participating in the potential research voluntarily. This was done by sending a message of volunteer participation to their Facebook account. Second, after receiving their positive replies, the questionnaire was sent to them online, and the participants were given three days to complete the questionnaire. In case the participants had questions about the questionnaire, they were told to ask any time without any hesitation. Third, within three days the questionnaires were collected and checked for their completeness before the data analysis. Finally, the collected data were put into the SPSS program for the analyses.

Data Analysis and Findings

This study aims to explore and compare Kurdish pre-service EFL teachers beliefs about English language learning with those of Kurdish in-service EFL teachers. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed statistically to compare the beliefs of both pre-service and in-service teachers about English language learning. To do so, 35 variables representing whether the participant was pre-service or in-service, and the items in the questionnaire were created, and analyzed through using T-test. There are many reasons for employing the T-test. First, it is used for analyzing the means of two different populations. Second, it is commonly employed when the variances of two normal distributions are unknown, as seen in the data of the present study. Finally, it is widely used when a small sample size is investigated.

To understand the beliefs of the participants about difficulty of English language learning, which is represented by items 3, 4, 6, 14, 24, and 28, the results of data analysis (see Table 1) showed that both pre-service and in-service teachers had common beliefs about the difficulty of English language learning. Furthermore, although there were small differences between the mean values of pre-service and in-service teachers about the items, these small differences were not statistically significant. It is worth noting from the results that the mean values of *item 4*, which is about the difficulty of learning English language, showed that pre-service (Mn = 3.17) and in-service (Mn = 3.00) teachers agreed that English language is of a medium difficulty to learn. Another considerable point from *item 14* is that both group participants believed, by spending 1-2 hours a day on learning English, learners can become fluent in it since the mean value for both groups is 2.48.

Table 1

Pre-service and In-service Teachers' Beliefs about Difficulty of English Language Learning

Items	Participants	No.	Mean	SD	Sig. 2-tailed
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	Pre-service	23	4.26	.68	.63
	In-service	25	4.36	.75	.63
4. English language is 1) very difficult 2) difficult 3) medium 4) easy 5) very easy to learn.	Pre-service	23	3.17	.77	.38
	In-service	25	3.00	.88	.37
6. I believe that my students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.	Pre-service	23	3.39	.65	.81
	In-service	25	3.44	.76	.81
14. If someone spends one hour a day learning English, how long will it take him/her to become fluent? 1) less than a year 2) 1-2 years 3) 3-5 years 4) 5-10 years 5) never	Pre-service	23	2.48	.99	.99
	In-service	25	2.48	.65	.99
24. It is easier to speak than to understand English.	Pre-service	23	2.43	1.12	.38
	In-service	25	2.16	1.02	.38
28. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	Pre-service	23	3.47	1.16	.72
	In-service	25	3.60	1.19	.72

Mean Range: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree sig. ≤ .05

Concerning the participants beliefs about language learning aptitude, which is another component of the questionnaire, and represented through items 1, 2, 6, 10, 15, 22, 29, 32, 33, and 34, the following results (see Table 2) were obtained.

Table 2
Pre-service and In-service Teachers' Beliefs about Foreign Language Aptitude

Items	Participants	No.	Mean	SD	Sig. 2-tailed
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn English language.	Pre-service	23	4.08	1.04	.71
	In-service	25	4.20	1.11	.71
2. Some people are born with a special ability, which helps them learn English language.	Pre-service	23	3.47	1.16	.18
	In-service	25	3.88	.78	.18
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks another foreign language to learn English.	Pre-service	23	3.47	.89	.86
	In-service	25	3.52	.82	.86
15. I have English language aptitude (= natural ability or skill).	Pre-service	23	3.43	.94	.68
	In-service	25	3.32	.98	.68
22. Women are better than men at learning English language.	Pre-service	23	2.91	1.08	.87
	In-service	25	2.96	.88	.87
29. People who are good at Math and Science are not good at learning English.	Pre-service	23	2.17	.88	.35
	In-service	25	2.44	1.08	.35
32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.	Pre-service	23	3.91	.84	.22
	In-service	25	4.20	.76	.22
33. Kurds are good at learning English.	Pre-service	23	4.17	.49	.02

	In-service	25	3.80	.57	.02
34. Everyone can learn to speak English.	Pre-service	23	3.65	1.15	.72
	In-service	25	3.76	.92	.72

Mean Range: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree sig. ≤ .05

It can be inferred from the mean values of (Table 2) that the participants hold positive beliefs about most of the items of foreign language aptitude, as they had natural ability to learn English as a foreign language. Moreover, although the mean values of all items for both pre-service and in-service teachers are slightly different, the difference is statistically significant only for *item 33* ($p = 0.02 < 0.05$) in favor of the pre-service teachers.

To explore pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs about the nature of language learning, the items 8, 11, 16, 20, 25, and 26 were analyzed. The results (see Table 3) showed that only the mean value of *item 8* was statistically significant ($p = 0.01 < 0.05$), which indicates the pre-service teachers(Mn = 3.82) stronger beliefs about the importance of knowing English culture in speaking English language than that of in-service teachers (Mn = 3.04). However, no statistically significant results were found for the mean values of the other items.

Table 3

Pre-service and In-service Teachers' Beliefs about the Nature of English Language Learning

Items	**Participants**	**No.**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Sig. 2-tailed**
8. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English.	Pre-service	23	3.82	.71	.01
	In-service	25	3.04	1.30	.01
11. It is better to learn English language in an English country.	Pre-service	23	4.82	.38	.58
	In-service	25	4.76	.43	.58
16. Learning English language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new English vocabulary.	Pre-service	23	3.95	.87	.63
	In-service	25	3.84	.80	.63
20. Learning English language is mostly a	Pre-service	23	2.34	1.11	.08

matter of learning a lot of grammatical rules.	In-service	25	2.88	.97	.08
25. Learning English is different from learning other school subjects.	Pre-service	23	3.69	1.06	.25
	In-service	25	4.00	.70	.25
26. Learning English language is mostly a matter of translating from Kurdish.	Pre-service	23	2.91	.90	.07
	In-service	25	2.44	.91	.07

Mean Range: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree sig. ≤ .05

To understand the participants' beliefs about language learning and communication strategies, items 17, 21, 7, 9, 12, 13, 18, and 19 were analyzed. The results (see Table 4) revealed no significant differences between pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs about language learning and communication strategies ($p > .05$). It is worth noting, however, that both groups almost strongly accept the belief about repetition and practicing as important in language learning. Furthermore, speaking English with an excellent accent and in a correct form was believed to be necessary in language learning.

Table 4

Pre-service and In-service Teachers' Beliefs about Language Learning and Communication Strategies

Items	Participants	No.	Mean	SD	Sig. 2-tailed
17. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	Pre-service	23	4.82	.49	.40
	In-service	25	4.68	.69	.40
21. It is important to practice in language laboratory.	Pre-service	23	3.47	1.16	.35
	In-service	25	3.76	.87	.35
7. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.	Pre-service	23	3.86	1.09	.58
	In-service	25	4.04	1.05	.58
9. You should not say anything in English until you say it correctly.	Pre-service	23	1.86	1.01	.13
	In-service	25	1.48	.71	.13
12. If I see someone speaking English, I will go	Pre-service	23	3.65	.77	.19

to him/her so as to practice my English.	In-service	25	3.96	.84	.19
13. It is OK to guess, if you do not know a word in English.	Pre-service	23	3.86	.96	.34
	In-service	25	4.08	.49	.35
18. I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.	Pre-service	23	3.60	.83	.72
	In-service	25	3.52	.91	.72
19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of the mistakes later.	Pre-service	23	3.00	1.31	1.00
	In-service	25	3.00	1.11	1.00

Mean Range: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree sig. ≤ .05

The last category of the BALLI questionnaire is beliefs about language learning motivations and expectations, and is represented by items 23, 27, 30, and 31. The results (see Table 5) of data analysis revealed that both pre-service and in-service teachers had strong motivation to and high expectations from learning English language.

Table 5
Pre-service and In-service Teachers' Beliefs about English Language Learning Motivations and Expectations

Items	**Participants**	**No.**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Sig. 2-tailed**
23. If I get to speak this language very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	Pre-service	23	4.26	1.13	.20
	In-service	25	3.92	.64	.21
27. English language helps me to get/maintain my job.	Pre-service	23	4.13	.75	.56
	In-service	25	4.24	.52	.56
30. Kurds think that it is important to speak English language.	Pre-service	23	4.21	.79	.90
	In-service	25	4.24	.43	.90
31. English language helps me to get to know its speakers better.	Pre-service	23	3.82	.57	.94
	In-service	25	3.84	.85	.94

Mean Range: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree sig. ≤ .05

To conclude, the results of data analyses showed that both pre-service and in-service teachers hold similar and different beliefs about the components of English language learning.

The following section will discuss these beliefs and make connections with those found in the related literature.

Discussion of the Findings

The major goal of this study was to explore and compare Kurdish pre-service EFL teachers' beliefs about English language learning with those of Kurdish in-service EFL teachers.

The first section is about the difficulty of language learning. One of the noticeable similar beliefs between pre-service and in-service teachers is that English language is of medium of difficulty. Similarly, Diab's (2009) found that Arab pre-service teachers of English held similar beliefs about the difficulty of English language learning. However, in the study of Altan (2012), most of the participants, who were Turkish pre-service teachers of English, claimed that English was not at the medium level of difficulty. It is not surprising, indeed, that both groups in the current study had similar beliefs about the difficulty of language learning because they were educated in the same context and from the same system of education. Thus, their previous learning experience might have affected the teachers holding these beliefs (see Lortie, 1975; Johnson, 1994), and such beliefs have been static and remained unchanged. This also supports what Peacock (2001) concluded, claiming that beliefs are very difficult to change.

Another stressing finding in this section is both groups had similar beliefs about the duration of learning English. The results showed that both groups thought that becoming fluent in English language takes almost 1-2 years after spending one hour a day on learning the language. This is a positive view, and might be a reflection of their beliefs about the difficulty of English language as it was found earlier that the language is at the medium level of difficulty. On the contrary, previous research (such as Diab, 2009; Peacock, 1999) dealing with the same item found that learners needed at least 3-5 years to become fluent in English. This finding in the present study seems to be new, though, since to the best of my knowledge, previous research has not shown that 1-2 years will be enough for becoming fluent. Consequently, this positive belief is likely to have reflection on the participants' current and future occupation, and the English language education system in the region. However, it is also important to be cautious about whether this belief is realistic, because the teachers may face frustrations when their students'

language development does not meet their expectation, which is becoming fluent in English in two years.

The second section of the questionnaire is about the beliefs about English language aptitude. The results showed that both groups were significantly different in holding beliefs about "*Kurds are good at learning English language*" in favor of pre-service teachers. Similarly, Peacock (1999), in his investigation found that smaller number of Chinese teachers comparing to their students believed that Hong Kong Chinese learners were good at learning English. This might be due to their experience with the students, as most students do not study hard, have enough participation, and show insufficient improvements throughout the course.

As for the other items in this section, on the other hand, both pre-service and in-service teachers held mostly similar beliefs, since the small differences between their mean values of the items were not statistically significant. For instance, they were neutral about whether women are better than men in learning English. In Diab's (2009) study, however, the participants believed that men are better than women in learning English. Additionally, both groups in the present study disagreed about "*people who are good as Math and Science are not good at English*". Similarly, Altan (2012) concluded in his study that most of the participants rejected the belief that people who are good at some scientific subjects are not good at English language. This could be interpreted in a way that the majority of respondents do not make a distinction between an aptitude for the sciences versus an aptitude for humanities subjects. This distinction is also put forward by Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligence theory in which he distinguishes linguistic intelligence from logical/mathematical intelligence (Bernat 2006).

The third section of the questionnaire is about the nature of English language learning. According to the results obtained from data analysis, significant difference was found between the pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs about the importance of knowing culture in learning English language. Pre-service teachers, for instance, had stronger beliefs than in-service teachers about the necessity of knowing culture in learning English language. One of the reasons for having this difference is likely to be that pre-service teachers are studying many courses about English and American literature, and to understand this more effectively, culture plays an essential role. However, in-service teachers use a particular course book for teaching English, in which literature is rarely presented. Therefore, this has made them to be unaware of the importance of culture in English. The study conducted by Grijalva and Barajas (2013) supports

this claim showing that the beliefs of their pre-service EFL learners about the importance of English culture in learning English language were significantly changed after receiving courses on English literature in the course.

Concerning the other items presented in this section, both groups held mostly similar beliefs. For instance, one of the findings is that both groups strongly agree with the idea that English language should be taught in a foreign country. This belief seems to be highly realistic, because it has been supported conventionally, for example by Nuttal (1982), that the best way to learn a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. In addition, two other important findings should be highlighted here. First, both groups believed that vocabulary plays an essential role in learning English. In the study of Peacock (2009), moreover, students believed that vocabulary is necessary in learning English; whereas, the teachers did not think so. However, Diab (2009) found in his study that pre-service teachers did not think that vocabulary is necessary. Generally, it seems to be realistic to say that vocabulary is essential in learning language, because words carry meaning and they are the building blocks of language; without knowing English words, one cannot speak it. Second, both groups disagreed with "*learning English is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammatical structures*". This indicates that grammar-translation is no longer a focus of Kurdish pre-service and in-service EFL teachers, and they are aware of the fact that grammar alone is not enough for learning English language. This is a positive belief because nowadays grammar is not the only component to be highly considered in the English classes. This finding seems to be related to the participants' background of studying English and the theoretical courses taken in university, in a way that communicative competence might have been given the primary focus. This finding matches what Altan (2012), and contradicts with what Peacock (1999) found. In the former, most of the participants believed that grammar does not play the most important role in learning English; whereas in the latter, the participants thought it plays a significant role. One of the major reasons for having variety in holding beliefs about this item is that such studies are conducted in different contexts, as each context has its own principles for language learning and significance for shaping the learners beliefs about language learning (see Borg, 2006, 2009).

The fourth section of the questionnaire is about language learning and communication strategies. The results showed that the mean values were not statistically significant. It is worth mentioning, for example, that both groups almost strongly disagree with the belief "*You should*

not say anything in English until you say it correctly". This seems to be a strong indication of both pre-service and in-service teachers' intention of encouraging their students about speaking English without thinking of making mistakes. This is also found by Peacock (1999) and Diab (2009) as their participants rejected the belief of producing only correct English. Furthermore, another finding is that both groups believe that speaking with excellent accent is important. This seems to indicate that those participants who believe in the importance of having an 'excellent pronunciation' will probably hold some 'native-like accent' model in mind while instructing their students. However, nowadays, the new developments in English language pedagogy have seen a shift from a focus on 'excellent pronunciation' to internationally accepted pronunciation with communicative competence (Altan, 2012).

The last section of the questionnaire is beliefs about motivations and expectations of learning English language. The results of data analysis showed small differences between the mean values of both pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs but none was statistically significant. For instance, one of the worth mentioning findings is that pre-service and in-service teachers believed that learning English helps them to get or maintain the job in the future. This is perhaps a strong instrumental motivation because learning English would guarantee them getting or maintaining job opportunities.

Thus, from the mean values of this section it can be inferred that the responses of the participants reflect their strong desire to learn English as well as their optimism to be good speakers of this language one day. This supports the finding arrived earlier when analyzing the results of the items relating to foreign language aptitude in which the subjects are confident of their own abilities in learning English.

To conclude, the quantitative results obtained from BALLI questionnaire about Kurdish pre-service and in-service EFL teachers beliefs about English language learning showed that in most of the items both pre-service and in-service teachers held similar beliefs about the English language learning. However, they differed in two major areas, namely, the importance of culture in English learning and Kurds sufficiency in English language learning, in favor of pre-service teachers.

Limitations of the Study

Two major limitations are detected by the researcher. First, the major instrument of this study is a questionnaire. Such instrument shows only the participants' perceptions about their actions; it does not provide direct evidence about what they really do (Borg, 2009). Therefore, if interviews were used along with the questionnaire, we would have deeper understanding about the participants' beliefs about English language learning and reasons for holding such beliefs. Second, the findings obtained from the current study may not be generalized to all Kurdish pre-service and in-service EFL teachers because the pre-service and in-service teachers were chosen from one specific university and one particular town in the region, respectively. To make broader generalizations, other Kurdish pre-service and in-service EFL teachers from other universities and other schools in the region should have been asked to participate.

Recommendation for Future Studies

The current study showed that there are significant differences between pre-service and in-service teachers' beliefs about some items of BALLI questionnaire. However, it did not show why these differences occurred. Therefore, further research can investigate the reasons behind having these differences, which can be done through using interviews. Additionally, future research may include various Kurdish pre-service and in-service EFL teachers from different parts of the region, which will provide us with a clearer picture about these groups beliefs about English language learning.

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APPENDIX 1

BALLI Questionnaire

For each item, please choose **one** of the options given on the right side of the item.

Item					
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn English language.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
2. Some people are born with a special ability, which helps them learn English language.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
4. English language is …………….. to learn.	**very difficult**	**difficult**	**medium**	**easy**	**very easy**
5. English is structured in the same way as Kurdish.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
6. I believe that my students will ultimately learn to speak English very well.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
7. It is important to speak English with an excellent accent.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
8. It is necessary to know English culture in order to speak English.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
9. You should not say anything in English until you say it correctly.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree

10. It is easier for someone who already speaks another foreign language to learn English.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
11. It is better to learn English language in an English country.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
12. If I see someone speaking English, I will go to him/her so as to practice my English.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
13. It is OK to guess, if you do not know a word in English.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
14. If someone spends one hour a day learning English, how long will it take him/her to become fluent?	**less than a year**	**1-2 years**	**3-5 years**	**5-10 years**	**Never**
15. I have English language aptitude (= natural ability or skill).	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
16. Learning English language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new English vocabulary.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
17. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
18. I feel self-conscious speaking English in front of other people.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
19. If you are allowed to make mistakes in the beginning, it will be hard to get rid of the mistakes later.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
20. Learning English language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammatical rules.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
21. It is important to practice in language laboratory.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
22. Women are better than men at learning English language.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
23. If I get to speak this language very well, I will have many opportunities to use it.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
24. It is easier to speak than to understand English.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
25. Learning English is different from learning other school subjects.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
26. Learning English language is mostly a matter of translating from Kurdish.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
27. English language helps me to get a job/maintain my job.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree

28. It is easier to read and write English than to speak and understand it.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
29. People who are good at Math and Science are **not** good at learning English.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
30. Kurds think that it is important to speak English language	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
31. English language helps me to get to know its speakers better.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
32. People who speak more than one language well are very intelligent.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
33. Kurds are good at learning English.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree
34. Everyone can learn to speak English.	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree nor disagree	agree	strongly agree

Asian EFL Journal Research Articles. Vol. 18 No.4 December 2016

The role of proficiency, speaking habits and error-tolerance in the self-repair behaviour of Emirati EFL learners

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Abstract

The main objective of the present paper is to shed light on the role of proficiency, error-tolerance and speaking habits in EFL speakers' self-repair behaviour. Thus far, research studies on self-repairs have not consistently identified the factors that contribute to EFL learners' self-repair behaviour during unrehearsed oral speech. In this study, self-repair behaviour was defined as the frequency and types of overt self-repairs as well as the rate of successful grammatical and lexical error-repairs. Speaking habits were considered on the basis of the aspects that speakers tend to focus more on while speaking (i.e. fluency, accuracy or precision of expression), while error-tolerance was operationalised as a) level of embarrassment when making errors in oral speech, b) level of irritation when others make mistakes while speaking EFL and c) perceptions of an ideal

L2 speakers. The results showed that lower-intermediate participants performed more rephrasing repairs than their elementary counterparts. In addition, participants' perceptions of the ideal L2 speaker were found to contribute to a greater amount of self-repairs. The main findings show that increased proficiency contributes to qualitative differences in L2 self-repair behaviour while the frequency of self-repairs seems to depend on L2 speakers' perceptions of an ideal L2 speaker. Thus, self-repairing is not an exclusive linguistic or psycholinguistic phenomenon but a decision associated with personal beliefs about self-repairing and speaking in L2.

Keywords: self-repairs, monitoring, L2 proficiency, speaking habits, error-tolerance, individual differences

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Introduction

Self-repair behaviour is considered the overt manifestation of the monitoring process which is believed to contribute to the development of second language (L2). Based on Swain's (1985, 1993) Output Hypothesis, learners notice the gaps in their knowledge through external or internal feedback (i.e. monitoring) and thus aim to fill these gaps. In both L1 and L2 research, this monitoring process has primarily been explored through the study of self-corrections speakers perform after articulation. Understanding this monitoring process by investigating the factors contingent for overt self-repairs can provide researchers and language practitioners with further insight into the psycholinguistic mechanisms behind L2 speech production and, ultimately, language learning.

Previous studies have focused on the nature, frequency and distribution of self-repairs in oral speech as well as the various factors (i.e. task characteristics) and speaker individual differences that contribute to it (Dietrich, 1982; Fathman, 1980; Georgiadou, 2014; Kormos, 1999a, 2000; Lennon, 1984, 1990, 1994; Mojavezi & Ahmadian, 2014; Poulisse, 1993; Van Hest, 1996). The type and number of self-repairs speakers perform have been linked to overall L2 competence, which is in turn related to the level of automaticity of the linguistic processes (i.e. formulating and articulating a message), on one hand, and on extended metalinguistic knowledge, on the other. It has been suggested that with the development of L2 proficiency and increases in the metalinguistic knowledge and automaticity in the processes of message

formulation and articulation, L2 speakers are more successful in self-correcting but also make fewer mistakes to begin with.

Apart from L2 competence, a number of individual differences has also been investigated. These include L1 background, motivation, language aptitude and working memory (WM). While these previous studies have provided valuable insight into L2 self-repair behaviour, some of the findings have not been founded on statistical analysis (Diethriech, 1982; Fathman, 1980; Lennon, 1990) and therefore their findings cannot be generalized. In addition, with the exception of more recent studies (Kormos, 1999; 2000; Mojavezi and Ahmadian, 2014) which use Kormos's (1998) L2 taxonomy of self-repairs, the identification of overt self-repairs has been previously based on various taxonomies rendering the comparison and interpretation of results somewhat problematic. In addition, all of these studies have investigated the number of self-repairs speakers perform without taking into consideration whether such repairs are successful. Finally, it has been suggested that in L2, unlike L1, the speaker makes a conscious decision about what and when to self-repair. Among others, this decision may depend on how serious the error is, how seriously it impedes communication or on how important linguistic accuracy is for a specific task (Kormos, 2000). However, self-repair behaviour may also be linked to other factors that can render it a conscious or semi-conscious decision, such as speakers' own speaking habits and their tolerance for making errors. Unlike the factors mentioned above, these factors are not contingent upon the speaking situation but on the speaker.

The present study investigates the role of L2 proficiency in the amount and type of self-repairs as well as the rate of successful error-repairs using statistical analysis. It further explores whether a variety of speaker variables, such as speaking habits and error-tolerance, contributes to the overt self-repairs performed by less advanced L2 speakers.

Although the impact of L2 proficiency on self-repair has been previously investigated, the aim of the present study is to address some of the gaps in the literature by using statistical analysis and applying Kormos's taxonomy of L2 self-repairs. It focuses on the self-repair behaviour of participants at lower levels of proficiency when the automaticity of language production is more limited. Furthermore, the impact of proficiency is examined in relation to the successful detection and correction of grammatical and lexical errors. Finally, the study expands on Kormos's (2000) work on error-tolerance as an individual difference that may contribute to EFL speakers' self-repair behaviour. More specifically, the study addresses the following

research questions:

1. Is there a difference in the amount and types of self-repairs performed by elementary and lower-intermediate L2 speakers?
2. Is there a difference in the successful repair rate of grammatical and lexical errors in the speech of elementary and lower-intermediate L2 speakers?
3. Is there a relationship between L2 speakers' speaking habits, error-tolerance and the amount and types of self-repairs they perform?

Literature review

Previous studies in self-repair behaviour have either focused on identifying the overt self-repairs in EFL speakers' speech or on examining the frequency and type of self-repairs in relation to different speaker variables. The following section provides a brief overview of their main findings.

Distribution of L2 self-repairs

In a study with 75 children speaking English as L2, Fathman (1980) distinguished between five types of self-repairs: phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and lexical self-repairs. She found that the majority of L2 self-repairs (50%) were lexical while phonological repairs were the most rare. Similarly, Lennon (1984) found that lexical repairs (73%) were more frequent than any other type of repairs (phonological, syntactic and semantic) in her 12 German university students' L2 speech. However, Lennon's advanced L2 speakers self-corrected only a total of 23 times, which makes this a very small sample of self-repairs. The assumption that L2 speakers focus more on the correction of their lexical choices has since been further supported by Poulisse's (1993) analysis of a corpus of slips of the tongue made by Dutch speakers of English,

which showed that repairs of lexical slips outnumbered morphological, syntactic and phonological ones.

Van Hest (1996) used Levelt's (1983) taxonomy of L1 self-repairs to classify 4700 self-repairs made by Dutch speakers of English both in their L1 and L2. Van Hest's analysis revealed several interesting findings. First, error-repairs were found to be more common in L2 than in L1, which can be explained on the basis of automaticity of the formulating processes in language production. Second, phonological error-repairs were detected and corrected faster than lexical errors. This was in line with Levelt's (1989) monitoring model whereby, in contrast to lexical self-repairs, the repaired version of a phonological error does not need to be checked in the conceptualiser against the original message. In addition, van Hest's analysis of self-repairs in three different oral tasks (picture description, story-telling and informal interview) indicated that appropriacy repairs were the most common types of self-repair (L1 and L2) in tasks that required precise expression, such as the story-telling and picture description tasks suggesting that task characteristics play a role in the overt-self repair behaviour of both L1 and L2 speakers. Finally, her findings suggested that L2 cutoff-to-repair intervals are longer than L1 intervals, which is in alignment with the notion of limited automaticity in the processes of message formulation and articulation.

In another study on self-repair behaviour, Kormos (2000) analysis showed that L2 repairs involving slight modifications, such as error and rephrasing repairs at the linguistic level and appropriacy repairs at the conceptual level, take less time to re-plan. Therefore, Kormos concludes that compared to different-information repairs which involve the reconstruction of the message from scratch, these types of repairs require less effort and attentional resources. These findings by Kormos and van Hest offer considerable support to Levelt's (1983, 1989) 'modular theory of speech production' and 'the perceptual loop theory' of monitoring as they suggest that L2 speakers, similarly to L1 speakers, do not have access to the intermediary results of formulation but only to parts of the phonetic string already processed and stored in the articulatory buffer.

Individual differences and self-repairs

In addition to the frequency and distribution of overt-self repairs, several studies have attempted to shed light on speaker individual differences that may play a role in how often L2 speakers self-repair and the kind of self-repairs they tend to perform. A few of the individual differences (IDs) thus far investigated are L1 background, motivation and working memory. The need for these studies stems from the assumption that in L2 speech the detection of errors is not automatic as it is in L1, and thus does not necessarily entail their correction. Mackay (1992), for example, has argued that L2 speakers make a conscious decision about correcting or not correcting the errors they detect in their speech. The reasons for this may be related to speakers not wanting to slow down their speech, sounding native-like (Lennon, 1990), feeling embarrassed to self-correct and, thus, direct the listener's attention to the mistake (Krashen, 1981), and being bothered by frequent mistakes in speech (Seliger, 1980).

In her 1980 study, Fathman investigated the role that a speaker's L1 background plays in the frequency of overt self-repairs. Her analysis indicated that children with L1 Korean self-repaired more than children with L1 Spanish. In a small-scale study, Dietrich (1982) investigated the relationship between motivation, L1 background and language aptitude, and the overt self-repair behaviour of four American and four Japanese learners of German. Her analysis focused on the self-correction of morphological and phonological errors and revealed that language aptitude and L1 background play a role in overt L2 self-repair behaviour. Both Fathman's (1980) and Dietrich's (1982) studies, however, lack the support of statistical analysis. Therefore, the extent of the relationship between L1 background and overt self-repair behaviour remains relatively unclear. Kormos (1999b) investigated another aspect of overt self-repair behaviour connected to Krashen's approach to speech monitoring, namely speakers' tolerance for error. Krashen (1981) distinguishes between three types of speakers, the optimal users, the monitor over-users and the monitor under-users. Optimal users use the monitor appropriately while monitor over-users have a low tolerance for error and tend to use the 'monitor' constantly. Monitor under-users, on the other hand, are more tolerant in that respect and may almost never monitor their output. Monitor under-users are believed to speak faster and not self-correct as often while monitor over-users are more sensitive to the mistakes they make. These speakers tend to be more self-conscious, speak more slowly and are more likely to correct themselves when they think they have made a mistake (Seliger, 1980). To investigate this aspect, Kormos (1999b) asked her 30 participants to complete a self-report questionnaire on their speaking

habits. The questionnaire sought answers to questions related to whether participants consider it more important to express their thoughts precisely, to speak more quickly, to make fewer mistakes and so on. Based on their responses, participants were categorised as monitor-over-users, monitor-under-users and average monitor users. The statistical analysis of the self-repair data revealed that monitor-over-users, who were found to pay more attention to the correctness of their message, made significantly more rephrasing repairs than the monitor-under-users while monitor-under-users, who tended to speak faster and focused more on the precision of their message, had a higher correction rate of lexical errors. No relationship was found between grammatical error-repairs and speaking habits as measured by the self-report questionnaire. Likewise, no significant results emerged between the frequency of self-repairs and speaking habits. Nevertheless, a tendency was observed whereby monitor-over-users generally corrected their errors more frequently that monitor-under-users.

In another study, Kormos (2000a) found that the frequency of appropriacy repairs correlated with proficiency test scores suggesting that with the increase of proficiency L2 speakers pay more attention to the informational content of their message. According to Kormos (2006), "with increasing L2 proficiency there is a shift from simple error repairs to more complex discourse-level repairs, but the global frequency of self-repairs does not seem to be affected by the level of L2 competence" (p.133). In a later study (2000b), Kormos's findings revealed that the less advanced L2 speakers made more grammatical and lexical error-repairs than more advanced L2 and L1 speakers. Similarly to L1 speakers, the increased automaticity in the oral production processes in the advanced L2 speakers also allowed them to cater more to discourse-level aspects of their message. In support of previous studies (Poulisse, 1993; van Hest, 1996), Kormos found that her L2 participants, like her L1 participants, were more concerned with correcting their lexical errors than their grammatical errors.

Kormos's findings are based on the assumption that with the increase of L2 competence and automaticity, more attentional resources become available for monitoring. According to Levelt (1983; 1989), self-monitoring requires the allocation and division of attentional resources as it occurs in parallel with the conceptualisation, formulation or even the articulation of the message, as demonstrated in overt error-repairs. Although formulation and articulation are largely automatic in L1, Levelt (1989) postulates that conceptualisation and monitoring of one's own speech require awareness and controlled processing made possible by the attentional

capacity of WM. In L2, the limited automaticity of the formulator, especially in novice learners, would further tax WM and possibly affect both the speakers' monitoring process and their self-repair behaviour.

To explore this, Mojavezi and Ahmadian (2014) investigated the relationship between WM, as measured by an L1 listening span, and the frequency and types of overt self-repairs their L2 speakers (English and English Translation majors) performed in a narrative task. Kormos's (1998) self-repair taxonomy was used to identify participants' self-repairs. Mojavezi and Ahmadian's findings revealed a significant negative relationship between listening span test scores and different-information repairs as well as a significant positive relationship between listening span test scores and error-repairs. These relationships suggest that speakers with greater WM capacity, i.e. with extra attentional resources, performed fewer reformulations of their initial message and more corrections of accidental grammatical, lexical and phonological lapses. The authors argue that the positive relationship between WM and L2 error-repairs indicates that L2 speakers with extra attentional resources will utilise them to attend to form (in addition to meaning) and, consequently, perform more error -repairs. The authors postulate that this is in keeping with previous studies on task complexity and self-repair behaviour (Ahmadian, 2012; Guara-Tavares, 2009) which showed that when L2 speakers have more attentional resources to their disposal, as is the case with structured tasks, produce more accurate language because they can monitor more effectively. Although the proposed explanation is plausible and in accordance with Levelt's (1999) theories of speaking and monitoring, it is based on the assumption that monitoring equals self-correction. This may be true for L1, but most likely it is not the case for L2 (Mackay, 1992). In addition, the relationships observed were based on the amount of error-repairs performed, not on the number or rate of errors corrected – an approach which would have arguably provided stronger support for the authors' claims regarding the interconnection between monitoring, self-repair behaviour and linguistic accuracy.

The relationship between working memory and L2 self-repair behaviour was investigated in a study by Georgiadou (2014) who found that neither executive working memory nor phonological short-term memory were associated with the amount of self-repairs L2 speakers performed. However, speakers with greater executive working memory and phonological short-term memory performed significantly fewer phonological error-repairs. This was explained on the basis of Levelt's model of speech production whereby phonological encoding is the last stage

of speech production. The outcome of this process is internal speech, which can be monitored prior to articulation. The author supports that as a result of the limited automaticity in novice L2 speakers' linguistic production processes, internal speech is not adequately monitored because by that time the speaker has shifted his/her attention back to the earlier stages of production (conceptualisation, lemma activation, syntactic encoding, etc.) in order to continue to produce 'fluent' speech. Speakers with greater WM and PSTM have the attentional resources to allocate to monitoring internal speech more effectively so as to avoid phonological lapses and thus perform fewer phonological error-repairs.

Methodology

Participants

The participants in the present study were 77 learners of L2 English aged 17-20 (mean age = 18). All participants were female and spoke Arabic as their L1. At the time of data collection, they were studying English at an intensive EFL course at a state university in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE). The learners had been previously taught EFL at elementary and secondary school for a mean length of nine years. Although none of the participants reported having lived or studied in an English-speaking country for a period of more than six months (mean = 1 month), language students in the UAE, especially the two largest emirates, Dubai and Abu Dhabi, are daily exposed to English outside the classroom. As the population of these two Emirates is quite diverse, English is the main language used to communicate with both native and non-native speakers of English outside the classroom and the home.

At the beginning of the study, participants took the Oxford Quick Placement Test (2004; see below for details) and based on their scores, 42 participants were at the elementary level (mean score = 20/40) and 35 at the lower-intermediate level (mean score = 25/40) of L2 proficiency.

Instrumentation

L2 English proficiency

Participants took the paper-and-pen version (Part 1) of the Oxford Quick Placement Test (2004). The 30-minute test assesses vocabulary, grammar and reading ability and was administered at the initial stage of the data collection in order to gauge participants' level of L2 proficiency.

Background questionnaire

A questionnaire consisting of 11 items was used to gather basic biographical information about participants' language learning history and exposure to English. It was administered in both English and Arabic and was piloted with two different samples from the same population before being administered to the participants in the present study. Except for the first question, the rest regarded participants' use of or exposure to English as this could affect their L2 proficiency, and possibly their self-repair behaviour. More specifically, four factors were considered likely to affect participants' proficiency and thus their performance in the oral task: 1) how long they have been formally taught English, 2) whether they had studied or lived in an English-speaking environment for an extended period of time, 3) whether they attended a public or private school prior to university[3], and 4) whether there is a native English speaker in their immediate living environment with whom they daily interact in English. The analysis of the data showed that the sample was quite homogeneous with only very few participants having lived or studied abroad for a limited time or having attended a private high school. Statistical analysis did not reveal any significant differences between groups in relation to their L2 proficiency or their self-repair behaviour. Therefore, the groups were collapsed in the analysis of their self-repair behaviour.

[3] This is specific to the region as students who attend private schools tend to have better command of the English language.

Oral task

Oral data were collected through an interview structured to resemble a standardized speaking test (IELTS, n.d.). The interview lasted approximately 5 minutes, but only a portion of the interview was used for analysis (Part 2). In Part 2, participants were given a task card with five questions about their best friend (how they met, a description of their friend, etc). They had to address all the questions and speak for two consecutive minutes. Prior to speaking, all participants were given one minute to plan and take notes if they wished. It is worth mentioning that none of the 77 participants utilised this option.

Self-report questionnaire on speaking habits and error-tolerance

Following the completion of the interviews, participants answered a 6-item questionnaire on their speaking habits and error-tolerance (Appendix 1). The questionnaire was designed for this specific study and was piloted twice prior to being administered to the present sample. In terms of speaking habits, it was based on the brief questionnaire used by Kormos (2000). The rationale for the remainder of the questionnaire items, which addressed error-tolerance, was founded on Krashen's (1981) and Selinger's (1982) characteristics of monitor over- and under-users. More specifically, in the present study, error-tolerance was operationalised as a) level of embarrassment when making mistakes in oral speech as monitor over-users tend to be more self-conscious in this regard, b) perceptions of an ideal L2 speaker, and c) bothersome behaviour in other speakers' speech. The last two operationalisations were used to provide more information on speaking habits that participants valued in other speakers and possibly wished to adopt in their own speech. The questionnaire was provided in English and Arabic. It consisted of four Likert-scale items and three multiple-choice questions. Each of the six questions was treated as a categorical variable.

Data collection and analysis

The measures were administered in the following order. First, participants completed the background questionnaire and the L2 proficiency test in groups supervised by the author.

Subsequently, the oral interview took place in which participants were interviewed individually by the author. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in CHAT format for subsequent analysis via the CLAN program of the CHILDES database (MacWhinney, 2000). In the final stage of the data collection, participants answered the self-report questionnaire in groups supervised by the author.

The interviews were analysed for self-repair behaviour, which, for the purpose of the present study, was defined as the number and types of overt self-corrections participants made during their two-minute turn as well as error-repair rate (grammatical and lexical errors[4]/grammatical and lexical error repairs per 100 words). Overt self-corrections were coded in accordance with Kormos's (1998) taxonomy for L2 self-repairs (see Appendix 2). Inter-coder reliability based on a sub-sample of 10% of the transcripts was 90%, with cases of disagreement between the two coders resolved through discussion.

Results

Firstly, the study addressed the issue of whether self-repair behaviour differed between the two proficiency groups in the sample, namely the elementary and lower-intermediate participants. Table 1 displays the total number of self-repairs performed by the two groups as well as the number of overt self-repairs by type. Elementary and lower-intermediate participants performed nearly the same number of self-repairs (223 and 225, respectively; see Table 1). A Mann-Whitney U test showed that the difference between groups was not statistically significant ($p=.126$).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics: Overall number of self-repairs

[4] An error was defined as "…a linguistic form or combination of words, which in the same context and under similar conditions of production, would in all likelihood, not be produced by the speakers' native speaker counterparts…" (Lennon, 1991, p.182)

	N	Min	Max	M	Median	SD	Total SRs
Whole sample	77	1	15	5.6	5.0	3.1	448
Elementary	42	1	14	5.3	5.0	2.9	223
Lower Int.	35	1	15	6.4	6.0	3.2	225

In terms of specific types of self-repairs (see Table 2), lower-intermediate participants performed a slightly greater number of different-information and appropriacy repairs, but the difference between the two groups was not found to be statistically significant (p=.343 and p=.060, respectively). On the other hand, elementary participants focused more on repairing language. Overall, elementary participants made more error-repairs, but again with no recorded statistical difference (p=.904). The single statistically significant result emerged for the type of rephrasing repairs (p=.034), whereby lower-intermediate participants were shown to make more rephrasing repairs (n=20) than their elementary counterparts (n=10).

Table 2
Number of self-repairs by type

	Whole sample	Elementary	Lower Intermediate
Different-information (D) repair	198	98	100
Appropriacy (A) repair	75	34	41
Error-repair (E) overall	145	81	64
Error repair: grammatical	54	27	27
Error repair: lexical	70	41	29
Error repair: phonological	21	13	8
Rephrasing (R) repair	30	10	20
Total	448	223	225

The analysis of error-repair rate for the elementary and lower intermediate participants showed that there was no difference between speakers' success in correcting these errors

(p=.361). As grammatical and lexical errors per 100 words were also calculated in order to assess error-repair rate, it is worth mentioning that the lower-intermediate participants were overall more accurate in their grammatical and lexical use. The difference in the number of errors per 100 words between the two groups was statistically significant ($p<.001$) with elementary participants making on average 13 (+/- 5) errors and lower intermediate averaging 9 (+/- 4) errors per 100 words.

In terms of speaker variables and whether they contribute to the frequency and types of self-repairs, the analysis of speaking habits, namely whether a speaker attributes greater importance to fluency, precision or accuracy expression, did not reveal any significant findings. Similarly, the level of embarrassment speakers feel when making mistakes in oral speech did not produce any significant results either. However, the speakers who reported feeling *quite* embarrassed performed more rephrasing repairs than their counterparts (*not embarrassed at all; a little embarrassed; extremely embarrassed*); the difference approached significance ($\chi^2(3)=7.074$, $p=.070$).

A statistically significant difference between participants was observed for the speaker variable of perception of an ideal L2 speaker. More specifically, a Kruskal-Wallis test revealed that participants who consider an ideal L2 speaker to be one who speaks at medium pace but only makes few mistakes were shown to perform overall a greater amount of self-repairs ($\chi^2(3)=9.124$, $p=.028$).

A Tamhane post-hoc test revealed that these participants performed more self-repairs than participants who regarded an ideal L2 speaker as one who realises and corrects her mistakes but still speaks fast. The former produced a mean of 8.2 (±.7) self-repairs while the latter performed an average of 5 (±2.8) self-corrections. No other statistical significance was borne out in relation to different types of self-repairs and participants' answers to the questions in the speaking habits and error-tolerance questionnaire.

Discussion

As per the difference in self-repair behaviour between speakers at the elementary and lower-intermediate level of L2 proficiency, the present study did not produce any significant results. Nevertheless, the tendencies observed in the data seem to corroborate previous findings that

suggest a shift of speakers' focus from low-level linguistic errors to higher-level discourse-related ones (Kormos, 1999; 2000) with the increase in L2 proficiency.

The significant finding regarding the larger number of rephrasing repairs performed by lower-intermediate participants suggests that as L2 proficiency progresses, speakers' repertoire of lexical and grammatical structures expands. Therefore, they have a greater variety of structures available to them to select from for the formulation of their message. Although rephrasing repairs were not included in the measure of error-repair rate, and, therefore, the accuracy of the rephrasing repairs could not be determined, what the finding can confirm is that the added lexical and grammatical options available to the participants are not yet fully stabilised in their linguistic system and thus compete with each other causing speakers to feel more unsure of their initial language selections resulting in their attempt to rephrase. The lack of significant difference in the error-repair rate between elementary and lower-intermediate participants corroborates the findings in Kormos (1999b). This suggests that the detection and correction of lexical and grammatical errors does not change with increased proficiency but is most likely dependent on other speaker characteristics.

In further evidence of this point, the self-report questionnaire produced one significant finding that can be tentatively used to explain the difference in the amount of overt self-repairs among participants in the present sample. There was a statistical difference in the amount of self-repairs made by participants who perceive an ideal speaker of English to be someone with a balanced performance between linguistic accuracy and speed, namely someone who makes few mistakes but can maintain a medium speed of production. These participants performed significantly more self-repairs than the participants who believed the ideal L2 speaker to be someone who speaks fast but also detects and corrects their mistakes. There are two differences between these two aforementioned options. The first difference clearly addresses the speed of speech, and the second addresses linguistic accuracy. In one of the options, the speaker 'makes few mistakes', but at the same time maintains a medium pace of speech. On the other hand, in the latter, the speed of speech is fast, something that is often equated with native-likeness. In addition, the speaker is able to detect and correct his/her mistakes, which means that he/she may make errors - an anticipated and acceptable practice for L2 speakers - but has the capacity and linguistic knowledge to correct them, as an L1 speaker would detect and correct the inevitable errors/lapses in their speech. Although this difference between the two options is subtle, it may

be indicative of the sample's perceptions of ideal L2 speakers and their behaviour, as well as the participants' personal desire and aspiration to sound as such. Thus, it is not surprising that the vast majority of the participants (65%) selected the latter. Counter-intuitively, these participants self-corrected the least among all other participants.

A possible interpretation of this finding lies in how often oral competence in a foreign language is closely associated with oral fluency, which in its everyday sense it has come to mean speed of production or lack of pausing. More specifically, "in the narrow sense, L2 fluency has been conceptualised as a temporal performance phenomenon, manifested primarily as speed and effortlessness" (Chambers, 1997, in Rossiter, 2009, p. 397). Being fluent, in this case fast, can give the listener the impression of the speaker's ease in L2 processing and production. As Lennon (1990) supports, oral fluency can also help divert the listener's attention from grammatical, lexical, syntactic, phonological or other inconsistencies in speech, and, in addition, a fluent speaker can be seen more favourably in terms of his/her communicative competence. This perception places certain significance on being fluent (fast) rather than accurate or precise. As a result, speakers' perceptions of what they think means to be a an ideal L2 speaker or, consequently, their own aspiration to be perceived as good speakers or native-like by their interlocutors, may be a factor affecting L2 speakers' overt self-repair behaviour in terms of how often they choose to self-correct.

Speaking habits and the affective factor of embarrassment, which has been linked to monitoring and correction (Krashen, 1982) were not found to play a role in participants' self-repair behaviour. Similarly, whether speakers are bothered by errors in others' speech was not found to be a contributing factor to the amount or type of self-repairs they themselves produce either. Their perceptions of an ideal L2 speaker though, and by association, how they are perceived themselves as L2 speakers seems to be a possible explanation, especially if one considers that on standardised speaking test rubrics self-repairs are consistently coupled with dysfluent and disruptive speech. This creates a negative perception regarding self-repairs and, therefore, speakers will avoid self-correcting if it means being labelled as non-fluent or less competent in their oral performance. In addition, the focus EFL curricula place on communicative competence, especially in parts of the world like the United Arab Emirates where there is wide variation in the Englishes used by speakers of ranging proficiency for everyday communication, promotes the perception that accuracy and precision of expression are not as

important or even necessary. Consequently, for these speakers monitoring and repairing one's speech become rare processes, and this can further affect their ability to notice gaps in their language and work towards acquiring this knowledge.

In an English-language learning setting as culturally diverse as Abu Dhabi where English is used in everyday interactions between native and, mostly, non-native speakers of English, successful communication is not evaluated based on linguistic accuracy but on efficiency. According to the Statistical Centre of Abu Dhabi (2012), the total population of the Emirate at the end of 2011 was 2.4 million, of which 18% were UAE nationals. The rest of the population, the non-nationals, consist mainly of other Arab and South Asian nationalities as well as 'Westerners', a term used to denote residents of the Emirate who are either native speakers of English and citizens of English speaking countries, such as USA, Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa or of the western world at large. Among such a diverse population, English is the common language used extensively in daily life, outside the classroom. Naturally, in such settings where getting the message across is more important than being accurate, focus on linguistic form and formal rules deteriorates, and as a consequence, the monitor may become underused and self-correction limited. According to Krashen (1981), this is a common characteristic in speakers who live in the country where the target language is spoken or are frequently exposed to the target language in their own country, as is the case some participants in the present study.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the difference in the amount and type of overt self-repairs as well as error-repair rate between elementary and lower-intermediate speakers in addition to the role other speaker variables play in the amount and type of self-repairs performed by Emirati EFL university students.

Every effort was made to ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments used in collecting the data for the present study. It has to be acknowledged, however, that the self-report questionnaire consisted of subtle nuances that might have been lost on the participants. Individual interviews and qualitative data would have added to the validity of the results. In addition, although the study looked at the self-repair behaviour of speakers at different levels of

proficiency, the two groups were not widely distinctive. More studies allowing for the comparison of more clearly distinct proficiency groups, for instance elementary versus advanced, would provide further useful insight in how the individual differences in the present study manifest themselves in L2 speakers' self-repair behaviour. Finally, the relationship of overt self-repair behaviour and individual speaker variables in participants from various L1 backgrounds and L2 learning settings would be an interesting path of inquiry.

The findings indicate a trend towards a shift in the types of self-repairs performed with an increase in L2 proficiency as lower-intermediate participants performed a greater number of higher-level, discourse-related repairs. The lower-intermediate speakers also produced significantly more rephrasing repairs than the elementary participants, which seems to suggest that with the expansion of the language system, a wider variety of structures becomes available for experimentation. When speakers are unsure of the accuracy of their message, they have more options at their disposal.

Furthermore, the study tentatively supports the view that self-repair behaviour, if not a conscious decision, is at least associated in the present sample with the speakers' perceptions of what self-repairing means in terms of fluency. The findings from the self-report questionnaire suggested that speakers who valued fast speech as a characteristic of an ideal L2 speaker chose to self-correct less frequently. Although this was the single significant finding borne out of the questionnaire, and thus any interpretation should be approached with caution, it might be indicative of how individual L2 speaker perceptions can play a role in their decision to self-correct during oral speech. Future studies on speakers' perceptions of fluency, temporal phenomena and the ideal L2 self can help shed more light on this topic.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Speaking habits & error-tolerance self-report questionnaire

1. When I make a mistake in English, I feel ___________.

1	2	3	4
Not embarrassed at all	A little embarrassed	Quite embarrassed	Extremely embarrassed

2. In general, I consider it important to express my thought/ideas ***precisely***.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

3. In general, I consider it important to speak accurately with no grammatical mistakes.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

4. In general, I tend to express my thoughts quickly even if what I say may not be absolutely grammatically accurate.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

5. An ideal speaker of English is __________. (choose only ONE)

   a. Someone who speaks fast even if they make a few mistakes.
   b. Someone who speaks at medium pace but only makes few mistakes.
   c. Someone who speaks slowly but makes no mistakes.
   d. Someone who realizes his/her mistakes and can correct them but can still speak fast.

6. When I hear someone else speak in English, it bothers me when _________. (choose only ONE)

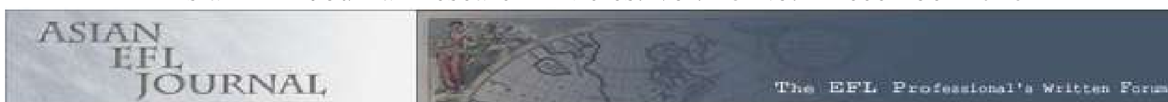
   a. They make too many mistakes.

b. They speak too slowly.
c. They speak too fast.
d. They frequently correct themselves.
e. They keep repeating the same mistakes.

Appendix 2 Kormos's (1998) taxonomy of L2 self-repairs

Type of self-repair	Operationalisation	Examples from the present study
Different-information repair (D-repair)	Message replacement; different information is encoded.	"um my friend [//] I know my friend since grade one…" "um she like [//] we have a strong relationship.."
Appropriacy repair (A-repair)	Intended message is encoded in a modified way to provide more detailed, more specific or less ambiguous information.	"I give her a hug [//] big hug..." "and not I am in the university [//] in Z university…"
Error repair (E-repair)	Corrections of accidental grammatical, lexical or phonological lapses.	"and sometimes I went [//] I go with…" (grammatical) "my friend he [//] she is…" (lexical) "if I am ubsent [//] upset…" (phonological)
Rephrasing repair (R-repair)	Revision of form but not content of message due to uncertainty about correctness.	"we go together shopping [//] for shopping…" "I'll talk about my friend she's name [//] her name is Amani…"

Asian EFL Journal Research Articles. Vol. 18 No.4 December 2016



The Rise and Fall of the National English Ability Test: Exploring the Perspectives of Korean High School English Teachers

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Abstract

This study set out to investigate Korean in-service secondary English teachers' perspectives on the National English Ability Test (NEAT) with the hopes of addressing some of the issues and concerns that may have resulted in its downfall. Data was initially collected from 86 Korean in-service high school English teachers using an online survey, and followed up with semi-structured discussions in focus groups. The results revealed that the majority of teachers in this study felt that the NEAT could positively affect English education in South Korea; however, at present, key aspects of the education system have not been adequately prepared to deal with the requirements of the new test. This lack of preparation has led to skepticism and resistance, with fears of negative washback outweighing and undermining the potential positive washback of the new test. This has caused a split in support for its current implementation with 47% of teachers supportive, 44% unsupportive and 9% uncertain. Although respondents had major concerns over the current state of affairs, through further analysis of the data, future directions emerged that could assist in mitigating or eliminating worries in the implementation of the NEAT, and/or similar future tests in both the South Korean and other language learning contexts.

Key words: NEAT, National English Ability Test, washback, South Korea

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Introduction

High-stakes testing of English was first introduced in South Korea in 1945 as a component of university entrance examinations, and to-date, four distinct testing periods have been observed. Each testing period has generated long lasting influences which have shaped present day English education in the country. Unfortunately, these influences have not always been positive. Since the beginning of high-stakes testing of English in South Korea there has been ongoing criticism due to the overall lack of reliable and valid productive-skill (speaking and writing) testing items (Choi, 2008, p. 41). This has resulted in detrimental effects to the overall communicative competence of Korean English language learners as the lack of need for teachers and learners to focus on productive proficiency has allowed them to avoid a focus on those skills altogether (Choi, 2008; Hong, 2000; Kim & O, 2002). Although educators have contended for a long time that it is imperative for high-stakes tests in Korea to include genuine productive skill assessment in order to promote and foster real-life communication skills (Choi, 2008; Lee, 2001), the same problems continue to persist 70 years later.

In response to the ongoing and growing concerns, in 2006, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology announced plans to design a new high-stakes English ability test, known as the National English Ability Test (NEAT). This costly multi-year initiative has aimed at addressing and resolving criticisms of previous testing systems and initiating new proficiency-based directions in English education in South Korea. Jin (2013, p. 6) outlines the specific aims and objectives of the NEAT as follows:

- To improve students' English ability in speaking and writing for an enhancement of practical English education.
- To improve students' English communicative competence.
- To align the contents of the NEAT with the national curriculum to reform school education.
- To use the test to screen college entrance applicants.
- To lower dependency on foreign tests (i.e. Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL))

With these new objectives, the NEAT has set out to be substantially different from previous high-stakes tests in five main ways; it would be the first high-stakes test in history to directly measure all four English skills, test takers are to receive two test opportunities, two levels are available for differing purposes, it is a computer based test rather than paper based, and it is criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced (KICE, 2011, p. 8). Further details of these differences can be found in Appendix A.

Since high-stakes tests in South Korea have historically had significant impacts on English language education in the country, the NEAT's focus on fostering communicative competence in learners brings with it hopes of influencing positive changes that respond to the lingering issues linked to productive proficiency. As stated by KICE, "It is expected to change the way schools measure student proficiency; English lessons in Korea are currently focused on listening and reading only. The NEAT will enhance the quality of public English education by bringing a fundamental change to the English curriculum" (2011, p. 6).

According to the original plans, the long term schedule for the implementation of the test was to occur in the following three stages, as outlined by Kwon (2010, p. 5).

> Stage 1: The current College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) will be maintained during NEAT development.
>
> Stage 2: The newly developed NEAT will be used as supplementary criteria for college/university admission.
>
> Stage 3: Based on the reliability, validity and public opinion, a decision regarding the NEAT replacing the English portion of the CSAT will be made

The NEAT was slated to completely supersede the current English portion of the CSAT by 2016. However, signs that the future of NEAT was in jeopardy began to show in the final stage of implementation in late 2013. It was found that public concerns over a general lack of readiness (Kwon, 2011; Oh, 2013) and a fear of increased reliance on private English education (Jung, 2014) fueled strong opposition to the testing transition. After much deliberation from government officials and policy makers, the implementation of the NEAT has now been indefinitely postponed resulting in the continuation of the current high-stakes testing system which, as previously mentioned, has been widely criticized for not actually measuring test-

takers' overall communicative competence and contributing to low productive proficiency in Korean English learners (Kim & O, 2002).

Why would the NEAT, with its promising directions and huge investments in time and money, meet its demise? What are some of the issues and concerns that may have played a part in its the sudden halt? By examining in-service high-school teachers' perceptions of the NEAT from the conceptual framework of washback, this study attempts to elicit some of possible reasons that may have contributed to its downfall in order to better understand some of the issues that may be avoided in the implementation of any future high-stakes testing changes in South Korea and the wider English language education field.

Literature Review

High-stakes Testing and Washback

High-stakes tests of English have become increasingly widespread around the world, and the way in which they affect their educational contexts has become a topic of increasing focus in the field of applied linguistics (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng, 2005; Pan, 2009; Spratt, 2005). Tests are referred to as 'high-stakes' when their results are employed in the process of making important decisions that affect students, teachers, administrators, communities, schools and districts (Madaus, 1998). Receiving a poor score on these tests can initiate a domino of consequences for test takers, starting with the failure to qualify for university entrance. A failure to be admitted to selected universities can in turn affect future job opportunities and this is why the stakes are so high. The score on a single test has the potential to affect the overall trajectory and quality of one's future life.

Due to the crucial importance of these high-stakes tests, impacts reach far beyond the test itself and can be easily observed in the teaching and learning process. Some researchers have gone so far as to state that these tests actually control how teachers teach and how students learn (Shohamy, 1993; Spolsky, 1997). What happens in the classroom follows what is on the test, because what is assessed becomes what is valued, and what is valued is what is taught (McEwen, 1995). The overall influence of testing on teaching and learning has become known as 'washback' or 'backwash' (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Bailey, 1996; Cheng & Curtis, 2004; Messick, 1996; Wall, 1997), and as noted by Apichatrojanakul, "In recent decades, the

significance of washback effects in the world of teaching English seems to have increased, as evidenced by the availability of many English proficiency preparation courses and books…" (2011, p. 63). While the term 'washback' itself is a neutral term (Ahmad & Rao, 2012, Hawkey, 2006; Shohamy, 2001), researchers have generally classified effects as either positive or negative depending on how educational practices are affected (Hughes, 1989; Prodromou, 1995).

Positive washback - Washback is considered to be positive if there are overall beneficial effects on educational practices (Anderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng, 2005). For example, a test that stimulates the implementation of a new national curriculum to promote higher overall communicative competency in learners would be categorized as positive washback, where increased communicative competency is seen as a positive goal (Morris, 1972). Additionally, positive washback effects may include motivating teachers to utilize new teaching-learning activities to promote a more positive teaching-learning process (Pearson, 1988). Pan (2009) summarizes positive washback as effects that induce teachers to cover their subjects more thoroughly and motivate students to work harder to have a sense of accomplishment leading to enhanced learning and an overall positive teaching-learning processes.

Negative washback - Washback is considered to be negative if there is a harmful impact on educational practices (Cheng, 2005; Shohamy, 1993; Donitsa Schmidt & Ferman, 1996). Examples of this could be a test causing an increased reliance upon privatized education and paid coaching (Wiseman, 1961) or teachers ignoring subjects and activities which are not directly related to passing the exam (Vernon, 1956). Pan (2009, p. 260) provides additional descriptions of negative washback effects as: tests that push teachers to narrow the curriculum and classroom aims towards testing objectives, tests that bring anxiety both to teachers and students and distort their performance, and tests that result in students failing to learn real-life knowledge by focusing on the discrete points of knowledge that are tested.

Hangover effects - In relation to washback, researchers have noted the continuation of trends in methods and mindsets long after new curriculum and/or high-stakes tests have been implemented (Cho, 2010; Woo, 2001). Sometimes these lasting trends limit the ability to move forward under new curriculum and/or testing objectives and counteract possible positive washback. An example

of this is found in the Korean context with the ongoing dominance of rote memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules despite the national curriculum objectives promoting fluency based teaching (Cho, 2010). Although this type of phenomenon has been recognized, there has been a failure to define it with respect to washback. This study will use the term *hangover effect* to refer to the continuation of trends and mindsets of the past that have obstructed, currently obstruct, or in the future will obstruct the ability for positive change to occur. Due to this obstructive nature, hangover effects are categorized as negative.

Research on Washback in South Korea

Only a small number of studies have investigated the washback of high-stakes tests in South Korea, and have primarily focused on the negative washback effects of the English portion of the CSAT.

Kim and O (2002) examined the relationship between the CSAT and characteristics of the 12th grade English teaching in Korea. The study found some inconsistencies between test designers' intentions and what was happening in classrooms. However, further details into why teachers may have reacted in such a way were not provided.

Cho (2010) and Woo (2001) both conducted studies focusing on the washback of English CSAT in high school classrooms within Korea and found that teachers and learners had developed a faith in focusing on test-taking strategies, rather than focusing on overall English language development. Throughout the history of high-stakes testing, test taking strategies and repetitive mock testing have supported good test scores. For this reason, test-taking strategies have become the main focus of secondary classrooms following the belief that this will cultivate higher scores than focusing on learners' English language development. This has resulted in learners with low speaking and writing skills in comparison to their reading, listening and grammar abilities.

Choi (2008) provided one of the first comprehensive overviews of the impact of standardized tests in English education in South Korea where he describes how washback affects English education as early as elementary school and carries on throughout higher education. Testing washback throughout the country has caused a narrowing focus on reading, listening and test-taking strategies in the classroom and the avoidance of productive skill practice. Choi (2008)

goes on further to state that this narrow classroom focus has resulted in very few English learners acquiring genuine communicative competence.

Research in regards to teachers' perspectives of the NEAT

As of yet there have been very few studies conducted that focused on examining teachers' perspectives of the implementation of the NEAT. Kim (2009) conducted a preliminary survey about the NEAT with 57 English teachers and 1990 students. She found that 31.6% of teachers and 35.9% of students had negative feelings towards the introduction to the NEAT, however, all of those surveyed expected the NEAT to have a direct influence on positive changes to English language learning and teaching methods.

In a similar study, Kwon (2011) investigated secondary school English teachers' concerns and psychological burdens regarding the new speaking and writing tests in the NEAT. He surveyed 169 Korean in-service secondary school teachers and found that 57.4% were in favor of the introduction of NEAT while 22% were not. One of the main reasons that surfaced for being in favor of the NEAT was that the test was to finally assess actual English abilities by including the assessment of productive skills. Respondents felt that this would help overcome the limitation of a reading-centered approach to English education in the country and promote the development of practical English (Kwon, 2011, p. 15). Individuals not in favor provided the rationale that the test frame was vague and schools and teachers are not prepared to take on the new communicative directions of the test. Furthermore, respondents were worried that the test would drive people to seek private education, creating a greater financial burden on parents and learners (Kwon, 2011, p. 16).

Although the above studies have provided a starting point in understanding in-service teachers' perspectives of the NEAT, none of these studies have examined teachers' perspectives from the conceptual framework of washback. The basis for this study was grounded on the assumption that, based on the strong impact that testing has had, and continues to have on Korean English language teaching (Choi, 2008; Kwon, 2010; Li, 1998), it is reasonable to speculate that the implementation of a new testing system that is so different from past will also yield significant washback. Since it is the teachers who have to deal with these effects first hand,

their perspectives of the implementation and washback of the NEAT are invaluable in understanding why the project may have failed.

The Study

This study was exploratory and data-driven by nature as it aims to generate hypotheses rather than test them (see McDonough & McDonough, 1997, p. 79). The main aim of the study was to investigate Korean in-service secondary English teachers' perspectives on the NEAT in relation to washback, with the hopes of eliciting some of the concerns and issues that may have negatively affected stakeholder support for the implementation of the test and led to its downfall. Through a greater awareness of the issues at hand in regards to the NEAT, this study additionally aims at suggesting future paths that may facilitate the implementation of current and future high-stakes testing changes both in South Korea and beyond.

The following questions served as the basis for this study.

1. To what extent are Korean in-service high-school English teachers supportive of the introduction of the NEAT? Why?
2. What are some common concerns teachers have about its introduction in relation to washback?
3. What actions can be taken to facilitate the introduction of the new testing system?

Methodology Overview

This qualitative study collected data in the forms of an open-ended survey that was later followed up with semi-structured discussions with focus groups. The analysis of the data was conducted in line with the constant comparative analysis procedures outlined by Tracy (2013) and Charmaz (2006). The overall nature of the study lent itself best to a qualitative rather than quantitative paradigm as the data was primarily open-ended and non-numerical and was analyzed using non-statistical methods (see Dörnyei, 2007, p. 24). Quantitative data was only collected in

a single initial question to elicit teachers' overall support for the NEAT and provided a basis for qualitative data analysis. The specific procedures of the data collection and analysis are outlined in the following sections.

Participants

This study chose to examine Korean in-service high school English teachers as they have historically been the most significantly affected by test washback (Kwon & Lee, 2003) and hold a multi-dimensional view of the situation, by constantly being in contact with other students and parents. This provides them with a wide-angled vantage point from which the issues and concerns in regards to the new NEAT testing system can be discussed.

Survey participants consisted of 86 Korean in-service secondary English teachers attending a two-month professional development course at a specialized government run provincial training institute for in-service language teachers. Participants consisted of 12 males and 74 females between the ages of 25 and 50. All teachers had been teaching English for a minimum of three years, with 55% having greater than 10 years of experience. All participants did so on a voluntary basis and provided informed consent prior to partaking in the study.

Participants from the survey were randomly requested to participate in follow-up semi-structured discussions in focus groups of four. A total of 5 focus groups were conducted and in order to maintain a relative distribution of gender, each focus group included one male and four female participants. Each discussion lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Data Collection

Initial data was gathered through an online survey (Appendix B) asking respondents their overall feelings towards the NEAT. The survey design followed the model of McDonough & McDonough (1997) who affirm that "The designer has to choose a mix of question types that will maximize the range and detail of the information elicited" (p. 177). Thus, the survey contained a mixture of fixed alternative and open-ended questions, which allowed participants to provide details and rationale behind their close-ended responses.

To verify validity, the survey was first piloted with a small sample of 10 teacher trainee volunteers who had attended a teacher training session in the previous month. Volunteers were contacted via email, informed of the study, and asked to complete the final version of the survey online. Their responses were then analyzed to ensure that the survey questions were being interpreted accurately and useful data relevant to this study's research questions was being elicited. Once validity was verified, the survey was administered to the study's sample group the following week at the training institute.

To ensure survey takers fully understood the study they were participating in, prior to taking the survey, they were briefed on the details. Participants were also required to read over an informed consent page and could only begin the survey once their consent was given. Participants were also notified that if at any time they wished to withdraw from the study, they were free to do so.

Since the survey responses were open-ended, it was important to expand on the information collected and clarify responses. Thus, semi-structured discussions were conducted with five focus groups consisting of four participants. In line with Berg (2001, p. 70), a semi-structured discussion set-up was specifically chosen to allow the researcher to go beyond the answers to prepared questions when necessary in order to elicit data that could be cross-referenced with the survey results and expand on trends found in the initial data. A focus group format was specifically chosen to allow participants to interact with one another resulting in more in-depth and insightful responses (see Dörnyei, 2007, p. 146). The overlap in questioning and responses from the survey and focus group discussions naturally allowed for cross analysis of the data and provided an additional self-auditing function in answering the research questions. Discussions with focus groups were arranged with volunteers and data was collected until answers from the discussions and survey data became repetitive to the point of reaching saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and research questions could be satisfied.

The following questions were used to initiate the discussions:

1. What are some of the concerns you have in regards to the future implementation of the NEAT?
2. Is there anything that could be done to ease or remove these concerns? If so, what?

As suggested by Dörnyei (2007, p. 145), prior to initiating discussions, the researcher explained to participants the purposes of the follow up focus group discussion and ensured participants that the discussion was to gather their opinions and perspectives and therefore there were no right or wrong answers. At this time, participants had the opportunity to ask questions and/or request clarification before giving their written consent to partake. In order to ensure that the questions were interpreted correctly, the researcher acted as a moderator and after each question was asked there was opportunity for clarification. In order to elicit in-depth responses and avoid lack of detail in responses due to language constraints, all focus discussion participants had the option of discussing in Korean or English. Although they had the option, all participants ended up using English only. Additionally, to ensure that discussions were not dominated by individual participants, the researcher moderated discussions and requested input from all group members. With informed consent from the participants, all discussions were audio recorded and then transcribed for further analysis, each discussion session lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Data analysis

Data analysis followed constant comparative analysis procedures (Charmaz, 2006; Tracy, 2013). Data analysis began with data immersion (Tracy, 2013), where the entire breadth of the data was explored through a detailed reading, analysis, re-reading, re-analysis process. The raw data gleaned from the online survey was automatically consolidated and summarized by the Lime Survey software used to administer it.

In order to analyze the focus group discussions, each session was transcribed and reviewed twice in order to check for accuracy and make corrections when necessary. At times, the transcription may appear grammatically and lexically inaccurate; however, this reflects the context and participants actual English usage in the discussions. Participants' responses have been transcribed verbatim in order to avoid the risk of imposing any personal interpretations.

Following data immersion, data from the surveys and focus group discussions were separately analyzed and coded using NVivo 10 software. The coding procedure involved primary coding of the survey data as well as primary coding of the focus group data. Primary-cycle coding, outlined by Tracy (2013), followed standard procedures where qualitative responses were first closely examined and compared for similarities and differences. Secondary cycle

coding followed the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006). In order to triangulate these two data sets, secondary-cycle coding involved the critical examination of the preliminary codes while organizing, categorizing and synthesizing them into interpretive concepts. During this process, codes that were originally separated by question were reorganized into second level codes that helped to explain, theorize and synthesize emergent trends (Tracy, 2013).

Codes and data were under constant review allowing me to make slight modifications and create new nodes during the coding process.

Findings

The results from the online survey showed a split between respondents' supportiveness and unsupportiveness of the NEAT. Of the 86 teachers surveyed, 47% were supportive, 44% were unsupportive and 9% were uncertain, indicating a strong division in opinions with regards to the NEAT and its implementation. The following sections present the findings of this study under thematic subheadings that provide a descriptive frame for the collected data. The themes presented are the outcomes of the formal data analysis previously described which resulted in data being reshuffled and reorganized multiple times. Excerpts from survey and focus group participants are provided to support each theme, however, to maintain anonymity, each respondent has been labeled with an alias.

Teachers' rationale for supporting the implementation of NEAT

In open ended survey questions as well as in focus group discussions, data showed that those in support of the NEAT, as well as many of those who stated they were unsupportive, felt that it would produce positive washback by promoting productive skill development. Many respondents noted that they felt there is general agreement amongst educators that the current testing system has to change in order for proficiency to be endorsed in classrooms.

> "One good thing is there is already a consensus that it is necessary to change… and all of the Korean teachers understand that so they basically they think that it is necessary to change it." (Min Ji)

More specifically, respondents felt that the new directions and objectives of the NEAT would allow them to focus more on communicative ability in class, and help Korean students develop a more balanced language skill set.

> "…students who are learning language have to communicate with others who speak that language. If the recent test system is changed into NEAT, which focused on speaking and writing as much as reading and writing, the class will also be changed and students can have more chances to speak and write in English during the class." (Ji Min)

Furthermore, those in support felt that the NEAT would put pressure on learners and teachers to develop writing and speaking skills, promote a more balanced approach in English language learning, increase teachers' English usage, promote more communicative activities in class and demand an increased focus on fluency and the ability to communicate.

The supporting reasons elicited from participants aligned with both the findings of Kwon (2011), the overall objectives of the NEAT, and the administrative rationale for its creation and implementation. However, it was found that within the responses of those in support of the NEAT, the rationale for being unsupportive tended to override many teachers' positive feelings as exemplified in the following data excerpt.

> "Sure I agree with that the NEAT can have very positive washback effect for that but basically it may be too difficult to change it …." (Jin Hee)

Teachers' rationale for being unsupportive of the NEAT

It was discovered that even though a majority of the participants in this study expressed support toward the NEAT, negative feelings towards its implementation existed in nearly all of them. Thus, 100% of this study's participants expressed concerns with the new system. A wide variety of issues emerged in both the online surveys and focus group discussions that outlined major factors affecting positive support for the new testing system. The following sections

present each major concern that surfaced as well as teachers' suggestions of ways that may help alleviate those concerns.

Concerns of Readiness - The implementation of the NEAT would result in considerable washback on all areas of English language education in South Korea. With its considerable differences from the current CSAT, many carefully planned changes in various areas are required if there is to be a smooth and successful transition. It is concern over the lack of progress in the implementation of these vital changes that surfaced most frequently in the data, contributing to majority of the respondents feeling that the Korean system is simply not ready for the major transition and the washback it will bring.

Lack of readiness in school facilities - Sixteen teachers (18.6% of total respondents) reported that their school's equipment and facilities do not sufficiently support what is needed to prepare students for the NEAT and that their schools need to be fitted with computers and technology to allow their students to practice for the new style of testing.

> "…for the test actually we need computer a lot in the classrooms so students can practice by themselves … but actually students' schools don't have." (Sang Min)

In order to address this concern, many of the respondents stated that it is imperative for the government to adequately equip schools with the proper technology.

Lack of readiness in materials - 18.6% of the participating teachers also expressed the feeling that the necessary changes have not been made to current language learning textbooks and classroom materials and that it would be impossible to meet the demands of the NEAT in the current state.

> "I have no idea what kind of materials I should use in class." (Jung Mi)

> "Materials development that is somewhat of a problem to keep up with the changes to the NEAT. The materials need to be changed in order to support communicative competency." (Mi Young)

In addition to feeling that materials needed communicative revisions, eight focus group participants (40% of focus group participants) took this further stating that they have tried to make the current textbooks communicative by adding their own supplementary materials, however, many difficulties were experienced.

> "In the actual situation in school … people say like 70% of their work is not about teaching but about administrative jobs or for the homeroom teacher… I saw or experience that kind of situation in high school the teacher prepares some teaching material for their class while some other teacher or other head of the department (says) 'Hey, what are you doing it looks like you don't have anything else to do... then take this... it is my document... finish this!" (Ji Sook)

Due to issues outlined in the data excerpt above, many teachers felt concerned about the time and energy required to create supplementary materials needed to compensate for the lack of communicative aspects of current textbooks.

To address the perceived lack of readiness in materials, respondents felt it was crucial for teachers to be provided with textbooks and materials that are in-line with the objectives of the new test. Teachers reported that they want their textbooks to be right from the start so they are not burdened with the job of trying to supplement it.

Lack of readiness in teachers - Another major trend was that many of the respondents did not feel ready to cope with the new productive aims of the test in the classroom, with 35 participants (40.6%) expressing that they felt that their own productive skills were insufficient.

> "Even I, an English teacher, sometimes feel less confident when I have to teach speaking and writing to the students. Unfortunately, when I was a student, those productive skills were less focused than now and there were not enough opportunity for me to be exposed

by English. But If I realize the reality, I have to focus more speaking and writing in teaching." (Mi Seon)

Many participants also reported feeling pedagogically unprepared to teach productive skills. A total of 40 teachers (46.5%) voiced concern over this issue.

"still many Korean teachers don't have the real tools practical tools to teach writing and speaking the productive tools because they haven't done that before." (Jae Min)

"It needs the changes of the way of teaching and tests, but I don't know how to change and even what to change." (Hye Seon)

45 teachers (52.3%) also reported difficulty and uncertainty in evaluating learners' speaking and writing skills.

"It's too DIFFICULT to evaluate students' speaking and writing skills… I'm not sure to make the right rubric." (Mina)

It was also found that teachers were concerned about testing overlap. Sixteen teachers (18.6%) reported that if the NEAT were implemented today there would be great confusion over which test to teach towards, the CSAT or the NEAT. The differences between the two tests pose problems in regards to classroom pedagogy.

"If NEAT takes over for CSAT now, we have to teach for two tests… Some students will take the CSAT and some take NEAT… I don't know how to do both at same time… it is too confusing. We need some plan to change slowly so it can be smooth." (Dong Kyu)

In order to resolve the issue of teachers not feeling ready in their own proficiency and/or pedagogy, respondents felt that more training was required. Teachers felt that their needs to be more opportunity to partake in high quality training courses catering to their needs of improving their English language and teaching skills as well as their confidence. As it would be the first

time for them to focus on productive skills and overall learner proficiency, respondents felt that there must be more explicit training on how to focus on communicative competence and how to teach and evaluate speaking and writing. Teachers felt that the training should be included in all pre-service university teaching programs and well as in-service professional development programs. Since offering training courses in person may be a difficult feat to accomplish, teachers suggested that courses could be offered through various methods such as, on-campus training at government training institutes or universities, or off-campus via online courses or training CDs.

Furthermore, respondents felt that it is crucial for teachers to be provided with a detailed breakdown of how the current testing system will be phased out and the new testing system phased in, to avoid confusion on which teaching objectives to follow. With the sizeable differences between the current system and the NEAT, having to teach to both tests would be an extremely difficult task.

Lack of readiness in students - In addition to teachers feeling unprepared, 19 participants (22%) also voiced concern over students' lack of readiness for productive assessment because of the historical lack of need for productive skill development.

> "In real class students never have a chance to speak and write in English, but NEAT has questions about all four skills." (Sae Ra)

> "It will give more pressure students because they are likely to think NEAT is to add speaking and writing test to the CSAT, so they need much more time to prepare for them." (Tae Su)

If the NEAT were implemented today, respondents were worried that students have not had adequate time to transition to the new testing focus due to the constraints of the current CSAT combined with the issue of textbooks and materials, as previously outlined.

Teachers felt that the solutions to concerns previously discussed would directly contribute to the resolution to the lack of readiness in students. The creation of new communicative textbooks combined with trained, communicatively-equipped teachers would naturally contribute

to the development of learners speaking and writing skills and overall proficiency development, readying them for the requirements of NEAT.

Lack of readiness in policy support - Participants also expressed a lack of support from administrators and policies in relation to the communicative objectives of the NEAT. 15 participants (17.4%) felt that administrators were against or ignorant to what is needed in fostering communicative development in the classrooms.

> "Some of them I know some school principals who have very innovative ideas act very positively and as some of the really want to listen to others teachers' opinion but basically in Korean society it will be very difficult for the school principal to listen to some idea from his subordinates Basically the school principals are not ready to listen." (Hyun Mi)

Teachers felt that is imperative for the Ministry of Education to empower English teachers by implementing strong policies that will support them from the bottom up. This would allow teachers to somewhat avoid the prejudice and obstruction of less competent authorities and conduct classes in line with the new testing objectives.

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> "We need some policy that helps us … like in some cases school principals or vice principals they just want to stop us because some of them think it is dangerous that is why we need kind of help from policy. If the government helps us have some power to change it if we can really recompose our own materials and curriculum we can do whatever we want but still even though we agreed all the teachers agreed with it, as long as the school principal don't want that it cannot change." (Jae Seok)

Additionally, teachers felt that it was important to better educate all stakeholders in the educational changes required to support the new testing system. Because the concept of a communicative classroom is a relatively new idea in South Korea and is somewhat contrastive to traditional teaching beliefs, it is important for stakeholders to develop an educated understanding of what is needed to meet the new testing paradigm.

Negative washback concerns - In addition to the lack of readiness, another substantial reason that was reported for being unsupportive of the implementation of NEAT was a fear of an increased dependency on private English education. This concern surfaced in 32 survey responses (37.2%) as well as in all 5 focus group discussions and stems from large class sizes and an inability to provide students with the same amount of practice and feedback as private institutes. Respondents felt that parents would do anything to try to gain an advantage for their children and the large class sizes and limited contact do not work in favor of the public classrooms. The only way to gain the advantage is to turn to private education.

> "…if NEAT is replaced for the CSAT, students who grow up surrounding by all the private study will have much benefits than those who don't have that kind of support." (Jin young)

The fear of an increased dependency on private education is an issue that teachers felt is not easily fixable and something that the elicited very few practical suggestions for.

Teachers felt that it is crucial for class size to be reduced to allow teachers to give students the same quality attention that they are able to receive at private institutes; however, the majority of teachers believed this solution was not easy to attain. Furthermore, teachers felt that class time or English study opportunity in the public setting must be increased in order for teachers to provide more communicative opportunities as well as in depth feedback. Until the public system is able to offer the same advantages as private education, teachers felt that the reliance on private education will continue and/or increase.

> "We have too many students in one class, so hard to teach speaking or writing and give them feedbacks. Students and parents are worried about how they can make it on the NEAT, which can drive them rush into the English private institutes. Because they don't think that English classes in school can satisfy their desire of getting high scores on the NEAT." (Bo Mi)

Discussion & Implications

Although many participants were generally aware of the objectives and positive benefits of the NEAT, the findings of this study have uncovered some prominent teacher concerns in line with the findings of both Kim (2009) and Kwon (2011). What the evidence suggests is that, at present, teachers' positive perspective towards the NEAT may be hindered by a perceived lack of readiness in the education system to deal with the washback of the new test, making the required changes difficult and unfeasible from their vantage point. Furthermore, the fear of an increased dependency on private education adds to the negativity surrounding the NEAT, resulting in negative concerns far outweighing the positive benefits. The suggestions provided by the participants seem practical and relatively straightforward in resolving some of their issues and concerns; however, further analysis suggests that the issues and concerns are rooted much deeper than initially suggested.

Further consideration of the findings indicated that some of teachers' concerns arise from hangover effects which have an ongoing effect on their general outlook and mindset in regards to English teaching and learning. The influence of hangover effects has resulted in a skewed outlook on the new testing system as teachers are viewing it through a set of beliefs and practices rooted in the long history of teaching to test objectives and mock test practice (Kwon, 2009; Li, 1998). A prominent feature in the data that exemplifies the influence of hangover effects includes expressing the need for schools to be equipped with computers in order administer mock NEAT tests. The concern that equipment is needed for mock test practice illustrates the calibration of teachers' views to previous periods and practices as they want to continue their past practices of focusing on test drilling rather than on development of learners' overall language proficiency. If this sort of practice were to continue under the new system it would undermine the core proficiency based objectives of the test; however, teachers indicated that they felt it was necessary. This may be a result of a lack of information on how to approach the new testing objectives and a lack of communication between the agents of change and the stakeholders.

In order to counteract the influence of hangover effects, it is of great importance for all stakeholders to be provided with detailed information on how language education mindsets and practices should change, and need to change in order to align with the new testing system. This information could be disseminated by experts in the field through variety of methods for

example, teacher training courses, public announcements in the news, media, flyers, newsletters and online platforms. It is crucial for teacher training programs to take aim at addressing hangover effects, and fostering understanding and confidence in suitable classroom practices that align with the core objectives of the new testing system. As noted by Kumaravadivelu (2012), it is crucial for teacher education to take into account the broader historical, political, social, cultural, and educational factors that have influenced teaching. By accounting for how the past continues to influence the present, training programs can help to reset or reconstruct teachers' paradigms in relation to the mindset, as well as classroom approaches and techniques, in relation to the proposed future directions. With a directed paradigm shift and understanding and confidence in techniques that can develop a balanced set of learners' English skills, teachers may realize that just because the test is computer based does not necessarily mean that schools need to be equipped with more computers. Teachers should be persuaded and convinced that class time would better be spent on proficiency development and engaging students in skill building tasks, activities and projects rather than mock test practice. Increased access and exposure to detailed information would perhaps contribute to greater understanding from not only teachers, but also parents, students, administrators and additional stakeholders resulting in increased support to implement the pedagogical changes needed to work within the new testing paradigm. In addition, it is also crucial for policies to be implemented that push the new directions in testing and support teachers from the bottom up, allowing them the power necessary to make changes to their teaching and materials, and resist the suggestions and/or demands of other stakeholders who may continue to suffer from hangover effects of their own and push for ways of the past.

Concerns over teacher and student readiness align with the findings of Kwon (2011) and seem to be embedded in a complex situation where this substantial change in the direction of testing has caught teachers and students off-guard. Although talk of the NEAT has been around for many years, the high-stakes testing has remained the same. The quick changeover from the CSAT, with no productive focus, to the NEAT, with major productive focus, has left no time for teachers and students to transition both mentally and pedagogically. Without a gradual changeover, sudden transition to the new testing system may have left little opportunity to develop the skills and confidence needed to be effective under the new testing objectives. It has been well documented that teachers and students have been strongly influenced and even somewhat controlled by the objectives of the high-stakes tests (Choi, 2008; Shohamy, 1993;

Spolsky, 1997). As long as the CSAT continues to neglect productive proficiency, there is little incentive for teachers, students or policies to focus on the new directions of the NEAT (Jeon, Lee, & Kim, 2011; Park, Chang, Park, & Paek, 2012).

To avoid this issue in the future in Korea and other similar contexts, a perceived lack of readiness is something that may be resolved again through proper communication and education. If new testing objectives, preparatory procedures and future implementation plans are made transparent and explicit, and training courses are offered and/or mandated, teachers, as well as additional stakeholders can be much more convinced that when the time comes for it to be implemented the education system will be ready. Additionally, as the data has indicated, it may be important for more proactive and gradual measures to be taken prior to full implementation that allow the old system to slowly transition to the new with possibly a phase out, phase in approach to the new testing system which would allow various parts of the system to catch up. For example, productive questions could slowly be introduced into the current CSAT and the amount of questions could be increased each year until the NEAT has completely superseded it.

The concerns that surfaced over material readiness and the alignment of materials with the new proficiency based objectives may be a sign for the Korean Ministry of Education to initiate the reconstruction of public English textbooks taking into account the opinions and desires of in-service teachers. In any context it is important for tests, textbooks and curriculum to be supporting the same objectives in order to have harmony in the system. If these components are in opposition to one another, as they have been, it is difficult for teachers to decide which objective to follow and therefore they default to their past habits. If these components are aligned, teachers may find it much easier to make the transition to new requirements.

In line with Kwon's (2011) findings, the results of this study also found major concerns over increased reliance and expenditure on private education indicating that teachers' concerns reach beyond the context of the classroom. This finding was of interest as participants seemed to consider this from a broader social perspective rather than simply their perspective as a teacher. From the data, it was unclear why teachers were concerned about this, whether they were concerned as parents who may be worried of an increased financial burden, as citizens generally concerned about fellow members of society, or as public teachers who feel at competition with private education. Concerns over private education have been reported in the South Korean media many times over the past 20 years stemming from the feeling that the advantage of private

education unfairly burdens those who are in financial difficulty. This has led to successive government policies trying to curb the spending by imposing curfews, imposing cost regulations, and even banning private teaching (Lartigue, 2000). It seems like it is the case that the NEAT has not necessarily created this concern, but teachers are worried that it may exacerbate the ongoing issue.

The fear of an increased dependency on private education, is something that history has shown is not easy to control. Even with strong government policies put in place, private education has found its way around them. Unless the public system is able to offer the same benefits of private education, it is an issue that may indefinitely persist in a competitive high-stakes testing environment as everyone is trying to gain the advantage. It comes down to the personal choice of stakeholders to partake in additional English education and as long as they are convinced that private education can provide additional benefits, they will probably continue enroll. In order to help resolve some of this concern in Korea and similar contexts, it may be worthwhile for governments to consider ways in which public and private sectors could work together and support one another. This may include investing in the creation of public funded after school academies to provide more equal opportunities for lesser privileged students.

Conclusion

This study has aimed at providing insights into the concerns of in-service teachers in regards to the washback of the NEAT in order to better understand issues that may have influenced its demise, and outline possible directions that may facilitate high-stakes testing changes in the future.

There is a common agreement amongst educators that it is imperative for high-stakes tests in South Korea to include genuine productive skill assessment in order to foster overall communicative competence in learners. If high-stakes tests continue to exclude genuine productive skill assessment, teachers and learners have little need to develop speaking and writing skills, resulting in an ongoing productive deficiency amongst learners. Although the objectives of the NEAT are well–intentioned, theoretically sound, and a push in the right direction, teachers in this study tended to hold negative perspectives.

The negative perspectives expressed in this study seem to arise from many years of washback from previous testing periods that has resulted in the obstruction of a clear and unbiased view of the directions of the new testing system. This obstructed view is unlikely to be unique to teachers and may be found in additional stakeholders as well (i.e. parents and students), however further research must be conducted to provide insight into this. Additionally, these phenomena are unlikely to be unique to the Korean context as all individuals are influenced by hangover effects of one kind or another; it is human nature for our current outlook and beliefs to be influenced by our pasts. However, what is important is for stakeholders in any context as well as agents of change to be aware of those effects and understand how they may be influencing their outlook.

In order to address this issue, it is imperative to work on fostering mindsets that can work in the present but are open to, and directed towards, the future. It may take respected experts in the field (i.e. professors, researchers, teachers) to take steps to advocate changes more publicly, or for the agents of change to use experts to disseminate information that will shift paradigms positively towards future directions. If hangover effects are ignored, stakeholders will continue to look at things through the lens of the past and new directions will continue to be met with scrutiny.

Although this study has focused on the Korean context, its implications may be far-reaching. The NEAT was, and may still be an exciting option for the future of English education in Korea. However, the findings of this study highlight that the implementation of future testing systems, must be handled with care. The initiation of blind policy changes has resulted in the possible waste of 42.5 billion won (about US $41 million) on the development of the NEAT (Jung & Jung, 2014). In order to avoid similar circumstances in language learning contexts worldwide, when changes are to be implemented, whether it is in testing, curriculum, policies or other areas, it is important to consider how these changes will affect stakeholders prior to implementation in order to alleviate their concerns, gain their support, and preemptively resolve possible pitfalls. If stakeholders are not convinced that the benefits of change will outweigh the costs, negative perspectives will persist. This is likely to result in the demise of possible positive directions forward, as has occurred in South Korea with the downfall of the NEAT.

Limitations & Suggestions for Future Study

This study included some limitations. The sample size for this study was relatively small and therefore the opinions of teachers in this study cannot be generalized nationwide. Further research would need to be done to investigate the transferability of the findings. Additionally, this study was not able to capture all of the problems that the NEAT faces as it only investigated the perspectives of teachers. Ideally, a collective study from multiple stakeholders' perspectives would have provided a more accurate representation of the issues at hand. As this study chose to focus on teachers' perspectives only, additional reasons that have not been discussed may have also contributed to its postponement. Additionally, even if the problems addressed in this paper are resolved, the success of NEAT is not guaranteed as other unknown variables may also be at play.

The issue of the implementation of the NEAT or any new high-stakes testing system is complex, and its success is dependent on many factors. Additional research needs to be conducted with additional stakeholders in order to get multi-faceted and in-depth view of perspectives and concerns with the NEAT and/or other future testing changes. It may be beneficial for this research to be conducted prior to changes being implemented rather than in the midst of or post change as the issues may be late to address at that point.

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Appendix A

The NEAT directly measures all four English skills. Possibly the most significant change that the NEAT purports to bring is the introduction of speaking and writing assessment through performance tasks. In addition to paper-based items focusing on listening and reading, the NEAT would be the first test in the history of Korean college entrance examinations set to assess productive skills through performance tasks. This new direction of assessing productive skills through tasks aims to be more valid and reliable than the indirect paper-based multiple-choice questions of the past.

Test takers receive two test opportunities. When the CSAT was first introduced in 1993 two different exams were offered, however, in 1995, the CSAT was reduced to a single annual opportunity. The NEAT would once again offer students two opportunities per year to take the test.

Two levels are available: Levels 2 and 3. The NEAT would also offer three versions of the test as opposed to the single version of the CSAT. NEAT options aimed to allow test takers to choose which test to take based on their situation, aptitude and future goals. Kwon (2010) outlines the objectives of the different levels as follows:

> **Level 1** is a proficiency test for university students and is to be used in civilian and government sectors for selection, placement and promotion.
> **Level 2** is to be used for admission to university departments that require advanced English.
> **Level 3** is to be used for admission into university departments that require basic, practical English.

Since the objectives of the two versions differ, the distribution and types of questions were also planned to differ slightly. Below is the proposed framework of item distribution for levels 2 and 3 as released by MEST in September, 2010.

Table 1.

NEAT item distribution

Skills	Level 2	Level 3	Time (mins.)
Listening	35	35	35
Reading	35	35	60
Speaking	4	4	15
Writing	2	4	5
Totals	76	78	145

Note. NEAT item distribution. Adapted from "The National English Ability Test of Korea: Levels 2 & 3" by, O. Kwon, 2010, paper presented at Japan Language Testing Association Conference at Toyohashi University of Technology, Japan, page 9. Adapted with permission.

The NEAT is administered using the Internet. The NEAT was to be the first high-stakes test to be internet-based. The test was slated to be administered at a number of test centers around the country with a total of 50,000 test takers at the same time. It would also be the first test to use a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) where recorded answers could be immediately consolidated and sent to the scoring center for further processing.

The NEAT is criterion-referenced. Previous tests have followed a norm-referenced scoring system where test takers have been compared with their peers in order to identify whether the test taker performed better or worse than others. The NEAT was to be the first test to introduce a criterion-referenced system in which scores would indicate how well test takers performed on a given task without further comparison.

Appendix B

Teachers' Perspectives of the NEAT Implementation

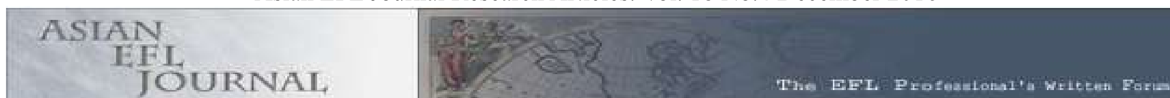
1. I am…
    a. Male
    b. Female
2. I currently teach at…
    a. Elementary school
    b. Middle School
    c. High-school
    d. Other:

3. How long have you been teaching English for?

4. Are you in support of the NEAT replacing the English portion of the CSAT?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Uncertain

5. Please explain the reasons why you **are**, *or* **are not** in support of the NEAT replacing the CSAT.

6. What are your biggest concerns with the implementation of the NEAT?



Marginalizing English in high-stakes tests: an attitudinal study in China

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Abstract

This paper highlights a series of measures deemphasizing English in high-stakes tests that recently have been, or shortly will be implemented in various parts of mainland China. It is contended here that these measures may be leading towards the marginalization of English via negative washback into secondary-school classrooms and students' self-learning behavior. This paper thus investigates the attitudes of secondary-school students from three locales: Beijing, Shenzhen and Zaozhuang. Findings revealed that negative washback arising from an increasing de-emphasis of English in high-stakes tests could lead to a reduction of students' short-term instrumental motivation. Additionally, although students from Beijing collectively gave priority to long-term instrumental motivation, the first concern of their counterparts in other regions tended to be their performance on approaching high-stakes tests, and their attitudes towards learning English was notably weaker than Beijing students.

Keywords: China; foreign language education policies; marginalization of English; L2 motivation; washback

Introduction

Since the modernization of China in the late 1970s, English teaching and learning has been increasingly prioritized at all levels of education there (Cheng & Curtis, 2010). To ensure the quality of English language education and to promote pedagogical reform, proficiency aspects of the language have been incorporated into a series of high-stakes examinations by the Ministry of Education (MOE), including the senior-secondary school enrollment test (*Zhongkao*), the university matriculation test (*Gaokao*[1]), the postgraduate entrance examination, and the College English Test (CET).

Holding the role of a default gatekeeper for individual development, English is believed to be critical for one's upward and outward mobility. After the establishment of the state policy of reform and opening up, the significance of nationwide proficiency in English has never been questioned (Hu, 2007). However, a trend to de-emphasize it in formal education has been growing since 2005 -- efforts to play down the role of English have been implemented by at least six provinces, namely Zhejiang, Hebei, Gansu, Shaanxi, Guizhou and Jilin, when they announced pilot plans to abandon the English listening section in *Gaokao*. Although listening was restored in most of the pilot provinces due to strong opposition from parents and teachers (Tao, 2007), other assessment adjustments marginalizing English have been, or soon will be implemented in China. Table 1 shows in chronological order some of the efforts to minimize English. In the meantime, no significant instances of English being augmented in secondary-level education during the same period (2008-2014) were found.

Table 1

Efforts to minimize English

From	Region	Test	Adjustment
2008	Jiangsu	*Gaokao*	Reduction of marks from 150 to 120
2008	Sichuan	*Gaokao*	Cancellation of listening section
2014	Harbin	*Zhongkao*	Reduction of marks from 120 to 100; Cancellation of listening section
2014	Shandong	*Gaokao*	Cancellation of listening section
2014	Linyi	*Zhongkao*	Reduction of marks from 120 to 100
2014	Suqian	*Zhongkao*	Reduction of marks from 150 to 100
2014	Zhangye	*Zhongkao*	Increasing marks of all other subjects except English
2014	Shanxi	*Gaokao*	De-emphasis of listening section (accounting for no marks, for universities' non-compulsory reference only)
2014	Beijing	*Gaokao*	Reduction of vocabulary demand (from 3480 to approximately 3080)
2014	Beijing	*Zhongkao*	Reduction of the lower limit of words in the composition task (from at least 60 words to at least 50 words)
2015	Heilongjiang	*Gaokao*	De-emphasis of listening section (accounting for no marks, for universities' non-compulsory reference only)
2015	Beijing	*Gaokao*	Further reduction of vocabulary demand (from 3080 to approximately more than 2000)
2016	Beijing	*Zhongkao*	Reduction of marks from 120 to 100
2016	Beijing	*Gaokao*	Reduction of marks from 150 to 100

Note. While the university matriculation test (*Gaokao*) is undertaken on a provincial basis, the senior-secondary enrollment test (*Zhongkao*) adopts city-based administration. Harbin, Linyi, Suqian and Zhangye are cities of Heilongjiang, Shandong, Jiangsu and Gansu Provinces, respectively.

The move to reduce the role of English in tests also has the support of high profile individuals. In September 2013, Wang Xuming, the former spokesperson of the MOE, appealed to the public and the government on his microblog to eliminate English teaching in all primary schools and add Chinese Culture Studies as a new subject. In his words, children should be "emancipated" from English, and Chinese [the language] should be "saved" (Modern Express, 2013, p. F12). One month later, the Municipal Education Commission of Beijing announced that the share of English in *Gaokao* would be reduced from 150 marks to 100 (out of a total of 750) from 2016 onwards, while the proportion allotted to Chinese would increase from 150 to 180 marks, almost double that of English (CNN, 2014).

Furthermore, in a document titled "Several major decisions to comprehensively deepen the reform made by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China" (CCCPC, 2013), the supreme authorities announced that China would explore ways to implement "society-level" tests to replace the English section in *Gaokao*.

According to Cheng and Curtis (2010, p. 10), language tests in China can be categorized into three types: 1) society-level tests (e.g. TOEFL and IELTS); 2) university-level tests (e.g. CET); and 3) school-level tests (e.g., the English section in *Gaokao*). Society-level tests are open to public test-takers and are not compulsory. The aforementioned document, released in November 2013 after the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CCCPC, revealed a plan from the highest power to further diminish the English section in *Gaokao*. With this change as a backdrop, the present study investigates the attitudes of students in three locales soon to be affected.

Literature review

Washback effects and impacts of high-stakes tests

Having a natural influence on teaching and learning within the classroom, the education system and the wider society (Xiao, Sharpling, & Liu, 2011), high-stakes tests are often manipulated to achieve the desired washback effects in teaching and learning (Gu, 2014). In a study examining the washback effects of the English section in *Gaokao*, Qi (2005; 2007) concluded that the intended washback, which was meant to serve as a lever of pedagogical reform "to produce a shift from formal linguistic knowledge to practice and use of the language in secondary schools" (2007, p.145), was dwarfed by an unintended washback coming in the

form of the test-orientedness in classroom teaching due to the selective nature of *Gaokao*. A similar observation was made by Matoush and Fu (2012, p. 114) who noted that Chinese families are fully aware of the fact that they live "in a country with a large population and comparatively few opportunities", in which tests are used to filter out the majority. Accordingly, both teaching and learning practices specifically aimed at the attainment of top scores in high-stakes tests has become a common practice. As a major subject in formal education, English has become a subject for which the strongest motivation to learn is simply to score high on various tests. Thus, the apparent recent moves to de-emphasize English in high-stakes tests could be perceived as an effort to marginalize English in formal education at the secondary level in China.

Testing researchers have made a distinction between test impact and washback (Hamp-Lyons, 1997; McNamara, 2000). Impact refers to the influence of language tests on the overall educational arrangement and society, while washback refers more to the influence on classroom practice of teachers and students (Cheng & Curtis, 2012). Thus, the "impact" may have an inter-disciplinary effect, while the washback tends to occur within one subject. This distinction itself suggests that tests have both macro and micro influences, and both could apply to the present perceived efforts to marginalize English in high-stakes tests in China. Since other subjects also occupy sections in *Zhongkao* and *Gaokao*, there may be strategic decisions about how much effort students should allot to each subject to ensure they get a high overall grade. Now that the significance of the English section has decreased in some regions, or will soon do so, the negative washback could lead schools to reduce the classroom teaching time of English or fine-tune instruction, in order to leave more time for other subjects, such as Chinese, that have had their importance in high-stakes tests increase. It is also possible that students will invest their time in subjects whose grade allotments are higher, and concurrently their motivation for English learning may decrease.

The motivation to learn English in China

The most cited theoretical concept on second language learning motivation is Gardner's (1985; 2004; 2010) distinction between integrative and instrumental orientation. Integrative orientation refers to "a positive affective disposition towards the L2 community and a desire to achieve language proficiency in order to be a member of, and to develop a sense of belonging to,

the L2 community" (Yu, 2013, p. 730), while instrumental orientation "reflects the belief that language learning will bring concrete benefits" (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2013, p. 23).

This conventional distinction has been questioned. Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009) claim that due to the global spread of English, the motivation to learn English may not necessarily be linked to a specific language community that is usually perceived as the owners of English. Since English is now the de facto world lingua franca, it has come to be considered a generic skill. Today, the motivation for learning English in China, thus, may have little to do with the attitude towards a particular group of speakers, but rather may be connected to the life-long development of individuals, that is, a long-term instrumental orientation, or may be driven by the high-stakes tests, i.e., a short-term instrumental orientation.

Research on Chinese students' L2 motivation has featured prominently in the literature. For example, Pan and Block (2011) noted that instrumental motivation for English was common among students and teachers when they investigated Chinese people's attitudes towards English during the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 at a time when China's integration into the world reached a new peak. While most of their respondents agreed that national proficiency of English would benefit China, many believed that the focus of teaching and learning English was still test-oriented. Thus, there appear to be countervailing forces at work: the strong role of test washback on English learning in China (Qi, 2005; Cheng & Qi, 2006), which is now being influenced by a possible marginalization of English, and the instrumental L2 motivation propelled by the established prestige of English.

While concerns about test policy and washback from assessment appear in high-level exchanges between government officials and educationalists, it is the students who are impacted most by such forces. Few studies, however, have investigated the attitudes of students who are positioned in the middle between their L2 motivation based on sociolinguistic realities and the potential negative washback caused by the newly implemented assessment policies. Hence, our research question emerged from the present situation:

> How do secondary-school students under different assessment policies in three disparate locales view English, English learning and testing? Will their motivation to learn English be affected by potential negative washback and why?

Method

Schools and Informants

Three typical (i.e., neither elite nor low-performing) junior-secondary schools in Beijing, Shenzhen and Zaozhuang were selected as research sites. The first two are major cities, while Zaozhuang is a less developed city in Shandong Province. The participants, who were in the second year of secondary schools from three distinct cities, would face different assessment policies in their most crucial high-stakes examination, *Gaokao*, four years later. Beijing, Shandong and Guangdong have been given the autonomy to design their own exam papers for *Gaokao* and they are adopting different policies with regard to the English section. As Table 1 shows, the test policies announced when this study was conducted were different among the three regions. For students in Beijing, they thought the section on English would be significantly reduced by the time they sit the test in 2018, while for students in Zaozhuang, listening will be cancelled from the English section. As for the students in Shenzhen, the English section may not change.

The participants from the three schools, randomly invited by their teachers to participate, were all about 14 years old. We assume that all participants were at a similar level of mental maturity.

Instrument 1: the questionnaire

Following the completion of standard ethical procedures, a questionnaire was used as the principal instrument. Adopting a five-point Likert-scale, the first part of the questionnaire was designed to collect respondents' reactions towards 20 evaluative statements.

Similar to previous attitudinal studies (e.g., Lai, 2005), a distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation was built into the questionnaire items. However, emphasis was placed on instrumental motivation in that items related to instrumental motivation were further divided into short-term (high-stakes test-related) and life-long (individual development-related) orientations. Gardner's (2004) attitude/motivation test battery (AMTB) was referred to when developing questionnaire items, but major adaptations were made to address the research

questions. As a result, items 1, 6, 7, 8, 16, 17 and 19 focused on integrative motivation; items 4, 5, 9, 12, 14, 18 and 20 elicited long-term instrumental motivation; and items 2, 3, 10, 11, 13, 15 concerned short-term instrumental motivation.

Nine of the 20 items were worded negatively and presented together with the eleven positive statements in random order to "avoid a response set in which the respondents mark only one side of a rating scale" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 43) and to reduce the acquiescence bias, i.e., "the tendency for people to agree with sentences when they are unsure or ambivalent" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 9). When calculating the reliability and reporting the findings of the questionnaire survey, responses to all negatively worded items were reversed.

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice items concerning personal particulars, together with an open-ended question inquiring about the assessment policy of the English section in high-stakes tests, and why the respondents held such opinions.

Questionnaires, originally written in simplified Chinese, were administered by collaborative teachers to the classes they were teaching. Participants were asked to read the relevant news about the testing policy, take home the questionnaires and hand them in the following day. Confidentiality and anonymity were emphasized and promised. Consent was obtained from all participants and their parents. Additionally, the students had the option to leave their names and contact information on the questionnaires.

Four hundred and twenty-two questionnaires were collected from the three schools including 200 from Shenzhen, 110 from Beijing and 112 from Zaozhuang.

Instrument 2: the interview

Thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted by the first author in Mandarin (*Putonghua*) via online video chat as a follow-up to provide deeper views of students and to triangulate the findings obtained from the questionnaire data. From each school, ten interviewees who left contact information on the questionnaire were randomly selected. All interviews (ranging from 30 to 55 minutes) were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and their parents, and later transcribed. They were told that pseudonyms would be used if the interview data were to be used.

Before the interview, the returned questionnaires of each individual respondent were analyzed. Apart from the general questions, the interview was highly individualized based on

each participant's previous response in the questionnaire survey. Some interviews began by asking why the student responded to specific items in a particular way, especially when strong emotions were expressed, or when seemingly contradictory responses were given. Other questions addressing personal attitudes towards English learning and the present or upcoming assessment policies were also asked.

Data analysis

The first author cleaned the initial questionnaire data. Returned questionnaires with obviously dubious responses (e.g., strongly agreeing with all items) were excluded, leaving 179 valid questionnaires from Shenzhen, 100 from Beijing and 95 from Zaozhuang. Cronbach's alphas for the sub-scales of the three region-specific questionnaires (see Table 2) showed sufficient reliability (>0.70).

Table 2

Cronbach's alphas for sub-scales

Cities	Integrative	Long-term instrumental	Short-term instrumental
Beijing (*n*=100)	0.765	0.760	0.850
Shenzhen (*n*=179)	0.711	0.801	0.835
Zaozhuang (*n*=95)	0.824	0.844	0.872

The five-point scale was symmetrically digitalized as shown in Table 3. The nine negatively worded statements were reversely coded when processing. For each item, students were thought to be in favor of English if the mean was a positive number and vice versa. Based on this coding method, means and standard deviations were calculated on each item.

Table 3

Coding spectrum for the Likert-scale items

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
2	1	0	-1	-2
Strongly in favor of English	In favor of English	Neutral	Against English	Strongly against English

To code the data of the open-ended question, the first author was joined by a graduate student. Three detailed practice sessions were held as pre-coding training. Questionnaires were divided into three groups according to the different regions. The principles and processes of inductive analysis were followed including initial coding and second-level coding (Dörnyei, 2007). First, the first author and grad student independently read all responses line by line to create several initial categories, i.e., preliminary codes or themes, the names of which were key words selected from authentic data. When differences emerged between the coders, they created broader categories over three rounds of discussions. Finally, they read all the responses again and classified them into mutually agreed categories. The inter-rater correlation coefficients of the three regional groups coded independently were calculated and each was greater than 0.8. For the few responses where disagreements remained, the first author's codes were used.

Since the interviewees were minors and some of them could not articulate the answers to the interview questions in a logical, organized manner, the first author went through the interview transcripts three times and identified themes by key words in order to capture ideas that were "important about the data in relation to the research question" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). According to the taxonomy of findings in the questionnaire, the key words used by participants themselves in the interview were selected, examined and categorized.

Useful excerpts were then translated into English by the first author. The original transcripts plus the translations were sent to a professional translator to proofread. Excerpts of interviews

according to the emergent themes are selectively presented to provide additional depth to the underlying attitudes behind the questionnaire responses.

Findings

Findings that address how participants view English, English learning and testing and their attitudinal reactions to the potential negative washback are reported in this section. To understand the respondents better, an overview of the profiles of students from the three schools is introduced first. Table 4 shows the respondents' demographic details.

Table 4

Profiles and learning behavior of the respondents

Particulars	Beijing (*n*=100)	Shenzhen (*n*=179)	Zaozhuang (*n*=95)
Sex	M:47 F:53	M:85 F:94	M:48 F:47
Future plans to study or live abroad	Yes: 22 No: 9 Not sure: 69	Yes: 39 No: 18 Not sure: 122	Yes: 19 No: 5 Not sure: 71
Attending fee-paying English language classes outside of school	Yes: 66 No: 34	Yes: 64 No: 115	Yes: 46 No: 49
Type of fee-paying classes	Advanced: 47 Remedial: 19	Advanced: 23 Remedial: 41	Advanced: 7 Remedial: 39
Future plans to sit international English tests, such as IELTS or TOEFL	Yes: 38 No: 62	Yes: 70 No: 109	Yes: 24 No: 71
Self-evaluation of English level in class	Below: 11 Average: 36 Above: 53	Below: 72 Average: 50 Above: 57	Below:30 Average: 30 Above:35

Generally positive attitudes towards English and English learning

According to the coding spectrum (Table 3), students' attitudes were calculated in terms of the mean on every item. Table 5 shows the generally supportive attitudes of the students (overall mean values >0).

Table 5

Responses to the twenty evaluative statements

Item No.	Beijing (*n*=100)		Shenzhen (*n*=179)		Zaozhuang (*n*=95)	
	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*	Mean	*SD*
1	1.07	1.027	0.7	1.016	0.67	1.076
2R	0.83	1.190	0.21	1.188	0.38	1.322
3R	1.15	1.095	0.69	0.913	0.79	1.287
4R	1.04	1.127	0.7	0.934	0.66	1.182
5	1.11	1.014	0.8	0.912	0.94	1.090
6	0.79	1.166	0.96	1.027	0.71	1.184
7R	1.08	1.143	0.69	1.071	0.29	1.352
8	0.76	1.065	0.77	0.995	0.78	0.947
9	1.05	1.009	1.12	0.856	1.20	0.894
10R	0.91	1.102	0.54	1.098	0.26	1.475
11R	0.89	1.188	0.36	1.13	0.45	1.335
12	1.09	0.975	1.01	0.89	0.95	1.025
13R	0.8	1.064	-0.2	1.083	-0.15	1.101

14	0.78	1.001	0.53	0.895	0.6	1.215
15R	1.06	0.941	0.51	1.062	0.27	1.364
16	1.06	0.973	1.07	0.884	0.74	1.132
17	0.48	1.259	0.48	1.191	-0.11	1.387
18	1.57	0.820	1.58	0.626	1.67	0.691
19R	0.73	1.190	0.34	1.131	0.35	1.507
20	0.55	1.048	0.79	0.946	0.47	1.351
Overall	0.96	n/a	0.71	n/a	0.63	n/a
Integrative	0.85		0.72		0.49	
Long-term Instr.	1.03		0.93		0.92	
Short-term Instr.	0.94		0.35		0.33	

Note. Item numbers with an 'R' stand for negatively worded items that were reversely coded before calculating.

Each individual item generated a positive mean in Beijing. Only one slightly negative mean (Item 13) was found in Shenzhen (-0.2). Similarly, in Zaozhuang only two items (Item 13 and 17) were slightly negative (-0.15 and -0.11).

The responses to half of the statements were calculated as more than 1 in Beijing, suggesting that the motivation for English learning was strong.

Long-term instrumental motivation

Long-term instrumental motivation proved to be the strongest kind. Almost all mean values generated on the following long-term instrumental items were more than 1.

Item 18 in Table 6 recorded the highest means and the lowest standard deviations in all the three cities, clearly indicating that most students hoped their English could reach an advanced level in the future. Most students from all three cities gave positive responses to this statement. Since it begins with "I hope someday," implying long-term instrumental goals after schooling, students were able to express their attitudes free from the consideration of high-stakes tests. This suggested that without policy interference, advanced English tended to be collectively desired among respondents.

Table 6

I hope someday my English could be so proficient as to be capable of reading books, viewing websites and watching TV shows in English with ease.

Item 18	Mean	*SD*	2	1	0	-1	-2
Beijing (*n*=100)	1.57	0.820	72.0%	19.0%	3.0%	6.0%	0%
Shenzhen (*n*=179)	1.58	0.626	63.1%	32.4%	3.9%	0%	0.6%
Zaozhuang (*n*=95)	1.67	0.691	74.7%	22.1%	0%	2.1%	1.1%

Note. 2: strongly agree; -2: strongly disagree. Response distributions were presented as percentages. Similarly hereinafter.

Table 7

Good English would make me more competitive if I worked in an international company.

Item 9	Mean	*SD*	2	1	0	-1	-2
Beijing (*n*=100)	1.05	1.065	38.0%	41.0%	12.0%	6.0%	3.0%
Shenzhen (*n*=179)	1.12	0.856	35.2%	48.0%	11.2%	4.5%	1.1%
Zaozhuang (*n*=95)	1.20	0.894	41.0%	45.3%	9.5%	1.1%	3.1%

Table 8

I think a bilingual résumé looks more attractive than a résumé in Chinese only.

Item 12	Mean	*SD*	2	1	0	-1	-2
Beijing (*n*=100)	1.09	0.975	38.0%	43.0%	13.0%	2.0%	4.0%
Shenzhen (*n*=179)	1.01	0.890	28.5%	51.9%	14.0%	2.8%	2.8%
Zaozhuang (*n*=95)	0.95	1.025	31.9%	44.1%	16.7%	2.1%	5.2%

Respondents also collectively realized the importance of English. Tables 7 and 8 show that about 80% of the students believed English is important to one's career. In the interviews, some students held similar beliefs; Jane was typical among Beijing respondents in expressing her strong long-term instrumental motivation:

> "My Mom's company uses English to interview potential employees. She [her mother] said that fluent English is a prerequisite to get a decent job in big companies... I practice my oral English with Mom at home all the time."

Comparatively, integrative orientation (towards the English-speaking community) was also generally positive, but weaker in terms of mean values. For example, on Item 1, 6, 8 and 16 (see Table 5 and Appendix 1), students associated fluent spoken English with a well-educated background. They admired those whose English is good; they wanted English-speaking friends; and thought bilingual signs would make their cities more modernized and internationalized.

Short-term instrumental motivation

Item 13 in Table 9, which elicited participants' future actions as a response to the assessment policies, was worded differently for each of the three schools because of the different approaching policies facing students in the three cities. Revealing students' anticipated reactions to the changing assessment policies, it produced negative means in both Shenzhen and

Zaozhuang, where a very similar distribution of responses in terms of percentages was found. In both Shenzhen and Zaozhuang, almost half of the students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Conversely, only 16% of the Beijing students would reduce their time for learning English and a 70% would still spend their time as usual.

Table 9

Beijing: I will reduce my time devoted to English accordingly since its significance in Gaokao and Zhongkao will be heavily marginalized in and after 2016.

Shenzhen: I would reduce my time devoted to English accordingly if its significance in Gaokao and Zhongkao were de-emphasized.

Zaozhuang: I will reduce my time devoted to English accordingly since it has been de-emphasized in Gaokao from 2014 onwards.

Item 13R	Mean	*SD*	2	1	0	-1	-2
Beijing (*n*=100)	0.80	1.064	2.0%	14.0%	14.0%	42%	28.0%
Shenzhen (*n*=179)	-0.20	1.083	8.9%	39.7%	17.9%	29.6%	3.9%
Zaozhuang (*n*=95)	-0.15	1.101	8.4%	39.0%	15.8%	32.6%	4.2%

Note. 2: strongly agree; -2: strongly disagree. Response distributions were presented as percentages. This is a negatively worded item (with an 'R'attached to the item number), but for a better presentation the raw data here are NOT reversely coded. Thus, -2 simply means the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. Similarly hereinafter.

In the hypothetical situation raised in Item 11 (Table 10), Zaozhuang and Shenzhen respondents produced low means as well, indicating that they could be affected more by washback and test impact. A notable phenomenon is that 41% of the Beijing respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, indicating a firm commitment to English beyond the tests. This same commitment could not be found among Shenzhen and Zaozhuang students. Additionally, for Item 10 in Table 11, most Beijing students (72%) believed they were learning English for their own good, while students in Shenzhen and Zaozhuang seemed relatively unconvinced. The mean value generated in Beijing (0.91) was almost double that of Shenzhen (0.54) and tripled that of Zaozhuang (0.26).

Table 10

I would not study English if it were removed from all high-stakes tests including Zhongkao, Gaokao, CET and so forth.

Item 11R	Mean	*SD*	2	1	0	-1	-2
Beijing (*n*=100)	0.89	1.188	5.0%	9.0%	19%	26%	41%
Shenzhen (*n*=179)	0.36	1.130	8.4%	12.3%	28.5 %	36.3%	14.5%
Zaozhuang (*n*=95)	0.45	1.335	13.7%	11.4%	13.7 %	37.9%	23.3%

Table 11

I am not studying English for myself. I am learning it to satisfy the requirements from teachers, parents and the high-stakes tests.

Item 10R	Mean	*SD*	2	1	0	-1	-2
Beijing (*n*=100)	0.91	1.102	3.0%	11.0%	14.0%	36.0%	36.0%
Shenzhen (*n*=179)	0.54	1.098	3.4%	18.4%	18.4%	40.8%	19.0%
Zaozhuang (*n*=95)	0.26	1.475	19.0%	14.7%	13.7%	26.3%	26.3%

Regional differences in terms of short-term instrumental motivation were also identified in the interviews. Although most Shenzhen and Zaozhuang students claimed to prioritize subjects according to their significance in high-stakes tests, some Beijing students stated that tests should not be the only concern. Some also mentioned their parents' disagreement regarding the reduction of 50 marks from the English section in *Gaokao* – in some Beijing parents' eyes, English was still a key to success in the future.

Sociolinguistic issues

With regard to the former MOE spokesperson's appeal presented above, three items meant to invoke a sense of nationalist sentiment and construed to be supporting arguments for further marginalizing English in formal education were included. Item 7 in Table 12 was meant to inquire how nationalist sentiment would affect integrative motivation. More than 30% of respondents in Zaozhuang supported the argument, while almost half of those in Beijing strongly disagreed revealing a significant regional disparity.

Table 12

Foreigners should learn Chinese to communicate with Chinese people rather than requiring us to learn English.

Item 7R	**Mean**	***SD***	**2**	**1**	**0**	**-1**	**-2**
Beijing (*n*=100)	1.08	1.143	6.0%	5.0%	10.0%	33.0%	46.0%
Shenzhen (*n*=179)	0.69	1.071	6.7%	6.7%	16.8%	50.2%	19.6%
Zaozhuang (*n*=95)	0.29	1.352	15.9%	14.7%	11.5%	40.0%	17.9%

Item 19 in Table 13 implied the possibility that the fast rising status of the Chinese language could jeopardize the prestige of English. Here, Zaozhuang and Shenzhen generated low means compared to Beijing. More than 30% of the respondents in Zaozhuang identified with the sentiments stated in the item, indicating their confidence in the escalating prestige of Chinese.

Table 13

China will be increasingly strong and prosperous and Mandarin may become the new global language. Hence, we do not need to learn English so hard like before.

Item 19R	**Mean**	***SD***	**2**	**1**	**0**	**-1**	**-2**
Beijing (*n*=100)	0.73	1.190	7.0%	10.0%	14.0%	41.0%	28.0%
Shenzhen (*n*=179)	0.34	1.131	10.1%	10.1%	28.5%	39.0%	12.3%
Zaozhuang (*n*=95)	0.35	1.507	20.0%	12.6%	8.40%	30.5%	28.4%

Lastly, Item 2 (Table 14) raised the issue of fairness of the compulsory national curriculum of English. Seventy-four per cent of Beijing students either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, while close to one-third of Shenzhen and Zaozhuang students deemed the compulsory English course as unfair. The findings of these three items clearly show the regional disparity among the three locales, suggesting that Beijing students rejected statements with nationalist sentiments more strongly than their counterparts.

Table 14

It is unfair to set English as a compulsory course in formal education since most of the Chinese students will stay in China and seldom use English.

Item 2R	**Mean**	***SD***	**2**	**1**	**0**	**-1**	**-2**
Beijing (*n*=100)	0.83	1.190	6.0%	12.0%	8.0%	41.0%	33.0%
Shenzhen (*n*=179)	0.21	1.188	9.5%	21.2%	20.6%	36.5%	12.2%
Zaozhuang (*n*=95)	0.38	1.322	14.7%	12.6%	10.6%	44.2%	17.9%

The interview data further support this disparity. Clement from Zaozhuang expressed his dissatisfaction with the compulsory English learning, voicing a typical view from this city's respondents:

> "English is a foreigners' language. We are Chinese here in our own country. I don't understand why I have to learn English to go to high school and university."

Similar opinions were also expressed among Shenzhen students. However, most Beijing students held the opposite viewpoint. Ellen, for example, stressed the importance of English as a global language:

> "It sounds ridiculous to abandon English simply because we are Chinese. As a global language, English is used everywhere including China... I don't believe learning English will harm my mother tongue…"

Sebastian from Beijing defended the teaching of English in China:

> "Some people say it's unfair to test English in *Gaokao* since most Chinese people won't use English in the future. That's just nonsense. I think most Chinese people won't engage in politics in their lives. Then why test politics? …"

Ideal assessment policies

Table 15 shows a multiple-choice item together with an open-ended item eliciting opinions about the proportion of English in *Zhongkao* and *Gaokao* with regard to the latest policies.

Table 15

Opinions about the proportion of English in Zhongkao and Gaokao.

Ideal proportion of English in *Zhongkao* and *Gaokao* compared with current policies:	Beijing (*n*=100)	Shenzhen (*n*=179)	Zaozhuang (*n*=95)
Cancel English completely	7	27	11
Decrease	20	88	79
Increase	73	58	4
Maintain status quo	0	6	1

English now accounts for 150 marks in *Gaokao* both in Zaozhuang and Shenzhen, but will account for only 100 marks from 2016 onwards in Beijing. The listening section has been cancelled in the English section of *Gaokao* in Shandong Province from 2014 onwards which affects Zaozhuang. Table 15 shows that a substantial number of students in Beijing (73%) wanted the proportion of English to return to 150 marks. Conversely, 90 students (95%) in Zaozhuang and 115 students (64%) in Shenzhen wanted a decrease or total cancellation of English.

Ninety-six students in Beijing, 166 in Shenzhen and 86 in Zaozhuang completed the open-ended question to further explain their opinions. Table 16 summarizes the reasons collected.

Table 16

Explanations with frequencies of opinions about the ideal assessment policy.

Opinions	Reasons	**Beijing (*n*=96) (*r*=0.85)**	**Shenzhen (*n*=166) (*r*=0.83)**	**Zaozhuang (*n*=86) (*r*=0.88)**
Cancellation or decrease	1. Useless for daily life in China	4	24	5
	2. To lessen the burden of students	2	4	4
	3. Should not be compulsory	6	45	4
	4. Personal dislike of English	/	/	1
	5. Not our mother tongue	13	34	49
	6. Chinese will be the new global language	/	/	18
Increase	1. Personal interests in high-stakes tests (very good at English)	4	7	/
	2. New policy has gone too far	3	/	/
	3. English as a Global language	38	19	4
	4. Cross-cultural communication and appreciation	3	/	/
	5. To guarantee English learning in China	8	/	/
	6. Practical use and concrete benefits	15	28	/
Remaining	1. Changes cause inconvenience	/	1	1
	2. Satisfied with the status quo	/	4	/

Note. *r* = inter-rater reliability

Discussion

The research questions driving our study inquired about the views of secondary school students towards the English and the associated learning and testing of the language in three locales. Key to this inquiry was whether a recent de-emphasis of the English section in high-stakes tests would impact the students' motivation to learn English and whether there were regional differences in this regard.

Three types of L2 motivation of the respondents

The overall positive attitude towards English reveals the language is still generally valued among young students, which may be connected to the respondents' long-term instrumental motivation. The responses from many students in the three cities revealed that they had a willingness to learn English, and most of them hoped they could advance their English skills in the future, indicating that the established high prestige of English remains intact. Similar to Pan and Block (2011), the belief that English is critical to an individual's life-long development was also found in the present study with a majority of participants still perceiving English as necessary for pursuing further study or getting a good job.

According to the data from the MOE, the number of Chinese students who went abroad to pursue their further study in 2013 reached 413.9 thousand, which is 3.5 times of the figure of 2003. Most of these students went to English-speaking countries and a younger age trend was detected (China Education Online[2], 2014). Responses in the present study tended to support this trend with 39%, 38% and 25% of students from Shenzhen, Beijing and Zaozhuang respectively reporting their intentions to sit for IELTS or TOEFL. Meanwhile, only a very limited number of students rejected the future possibility of studying abroad. Thus, English tended to have important linguistic capital for the long-term individual aspirations of the respondents.

Secondly, integrative orientation, that is, towards specific speaking groups, was generally positive, but weaker. This concurs with Ushioda and Dörnyei's (2009) claim that English has come to be considered a basic skill in today's globalized world. Rather than the motivation for learning English coming from attitudes towards a particular group of speakers, e.g., native

speakers of English, the underlying L2 motivation of learners may be related to concrete benefits, such as possibilities to work abroad.

Nevertheless, short-term instrumental motivation (test-related) could become negative in Shenzhen and Zaozhuang under the impact of the assessment policies that have already been, or could soon be implemented. This further aligns with the results of the previous washback studies and suggests that test-orientedness is still a significant phenomenon in teaching and learning English in China. The positive attitude towards learning English in the above two cities appeared to be swayed by test impact in spite of the established prestige of English in China. Thus, it is possible that short-term instrumental motivation is still prevailing in primary and secondary education where the basics of English are acquired, especially when English is still a compulsory subject, and this is further reinforced by high-stakes tests. Under this scenario, if assessment policies do not safeguard English teaching and learning by way of high-stakes test content, students may lose their short-term instrumental motivation, resulting in a loss of interest in learning English. Those who value long-term instrumental motivation most, however, may look for alternative ways to learn English such as resorting to training centers, as many Beijing students appeared to do.

Beijing may resist negative washback most

According to the profiles of respondents (See Table 3), 66% of the students from Beijing went to training centers, and among those, 71% attended advanced English classes beyond the level of the national curriculum prescribed by the MOE and the requirements of high-stakes tests. This may indicate that the main purpose for attending fee-paying courses for most of the respondents in Beijing was to reach a higher level of English proficiency, rather than to correctly answer discrete items in high-stakes tests.

The present study shows that despite the move to de-emphasize English, Beijing students valued English much more than their counterparts from the other two cities. Facing the pressure of imminent high-stakes tests, their responses indicate they still focused on the benefits English can bring them in terms of long-term individual development. Most of them did not plan to reduce their time studying English, and it appeared they would seek compensatory education of English from training organizations if regular school English instruction were further reduced.

Important regional differences were found in the present study, possibly shedding light on how globally engaged a city is. In light of the latest Global Cities Index presented by A.T. Kearney (2014), Beijing ranks the 8th out of 84 cities in terms of business activity, human capital, information exchange, cultural experience and political engagement, while Shenzhen ranks 73rd. Zaozhuang is less developed and is not on the list. A survey such as this one may be an indicator that people in Beijing simply need and use English more.

Region-specific curriculum and assessment?

Regarding the second part of the research question, which inquired into students' opinions towards the assessment policies of the English sections in high-stakes tests, significant regional differences appeared. For example, in Beijing, where 73% of the students supported returning the English section of *Gaokao* to 150 marks, their reasons focused on their beliefs in the importance of English as a global language. On the other hand, more than half of the students from Zaozhuang wanted to see a decrease of English in terms of marks in high-stakes tests because it is not their mother tongue. One possible reason for this large difference is the relatively heavy emphasis on Chinese Studies in Shandong Province, which was the birthplace of Confucius. Although Beijing and Shenzhen students also bear the same characteristics of typical Confucian cultural background, Shandong students may hold a stronger awareness of Chinese culture that affects their L2 motivation. This coincides with Gan's (2009) observation that learners with the same Confucian cultural background but different social contexts may behave differently in their learning activities.

A noteworthy phenomenon in Zaozhuang is the large number of commercial training centers there teaching subjects such as classic Chinese, Chinese traditional medicine and tea ceremony to young students. Some parents are willing to pay up to 20,000 *yuan* per year for their children to attend these classes (Qilu Evening, 2014). This is a striking contrast with Beijing parents who are most eager to pay for their children's English classes.

The different emphases on education depending on the region raises the issue of fairness in education, i.e., specifically whether China should promote a region-specific curriculum and assessment of English, rather than the present nationwide requirement of English because people

in regions, such as Zaozhuang, may need English far less than those in Beijing. However, as Pan (2011) argued, region-specific curriculum and assessment policies create unequal access to English provision, which can lead to further inequality in education and economic development.

This, again, triggers the debate on inequity.

Given the disparity of views among regions, as illustrated by this study, education authorities can better reflect the needs of the populous by conducting attitudinal surveys on a large scale covering as many parents and students as possible before the implementation of new assessment policies. Traditionally, however, policies in China tend to be put into place without performing such surveys. If, in fact, surveys have been performed, their results have remained confidential, leaving grassroots opinions unheard while a top-down approach dominates the formulation of foreign language education policies (Hu, 2007).

Conclusions and limitations

The present study employed a questionnaire and interviews to investigate the attitudes of secondary-school students from three cities in mainland China towards English and English learning, as well as their opinions about the present or forthcoming assessment policies concerning the proportion of the English section in high-stakes tests, especially *Gaokao*. Similar to the conclusion about the spread of English as a global language made by Crystal (1997), the established value of English is still widely held among participants in terms of their long-term instrumental motivation and to a lesser extent, their integrative L2 motivation. However, high-stakes assessment policies were seen to potentially jeopardize the short-term instrumental L2 motivation of students, especially of those from Shenzhen and Zaozhuang whose learning behavior and plans tightly centered on their academic achievement.

Regional differences were clearly evident. Students in Beijing weighed long-term instrumental benefits much more. They appeared to be unaffected by negative washback and seemed to ignore nationalist sentiments. Most of them wanted pro-English assessment policies in the matriculation test, and alternative avenues for acquiring English would be adopted if English were further marginalized. In Shenzhen and Zaozhuang, however, despite the common

acknowledgement of the prestige of English, students weighed short-term goals much more and expressed negative attitudes towards L2 learning.

It should be noted that the conclusions reached in the present study have been based on small samples from only one school in each of only three cities. Thus, although all three schools may be typical, the findings can be taken as indicative only. Secondly, since the present study is attitudinal in nature, the factors behind the high-stakes test policies to marginalize English have not been discussed. By presenting these policy moves and bottom-up attitudinal reactions in China, however, the authors hope to trigger more inquiries about the rationale for the latest language policy and language planning in different settings to reveal the fast-changing sociolinguistic realities in the context of a globalizing Asia.

Note:

1. The university matriculation test (*Gaokao*) is a comprehensive test consisting of several subjects of which English serves as a key component rather than an independent exam. Considering regional disparities, nowadays most provinces and municipalities are given autonomy to design their own exam papers for local use. Based on this, the conventional term “National Matriculation English Test (NMET)” is not adopted to refer to the English section in *Gaokao* in the present study.
2. China Education Online is a website under the administration of the MOE.
3. In March 2016, the Beijing Education Examination Authority finally decided that for the year 2016, the weighting of Chinese and English in Gaokao would remain 150 respectively (Shao & Gao, 2016). However, this study is still valid because when it was conducted, participants in Beijing thought the weighting of English would be reduced in 2016.

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Appendix 1

Likert-scale items not included in tables

1. Fluent spoken English suggests a well-educated background.

Beijing - Mean:1.07; SD:1.027; Shenzhen – Mean:0.70; SD:1.016; Zaozhuang – Mean:0.67; SD:1.076

3R. My English would matter little if I could score very high in all other subjects in *Zhongkao* and *Gaokao*.

Beijing - Mean:1.15; SD:1.095; Shenzhen – Mean:0.69; SD:0.913; Zaozhuang – Mean:0.79; SD:1.287

4R. With the state-of-the-art technology, many good online translation tools are widely used nowadays. Therefore we do not need to learn English as hard as before.

Beijing - Mean:1.04; SD:1.127; Shenzhen – Mean:0.70; SD:0.934; Zaozhuang – Mean:0.66; SD:1.182

5. English serves as a gatekeeper everywhere in China. It is necessary for us to learn English well.

Beijing - Mean:1.11; SD:1.014; Shenzhen – Mean:0.80; SD:0.912; Zaozhuang – Mean:0.94; SD:1.090

6. I admire those whose English is good.

Beijing - Mean:0.79; SD:1.166; Shenzhen – Mean:0.96; SD:1.027; Zaozhuang – Mean:0.71; SD:1.184

8. I hope I have some online friends whose mother tongue is English.

Beijing - Mean:0.76; SD:1.065; Shenzhen – Mean:0.77; SD:0.995; Zaozhuang – Mean:0.78; SD:0.947

14. English should be a prerequisite for tertiary education since many great academic works are written in English.

Beijing - Mean:0.78; SD:1.001; Shenzhen - Mean:0.53; SD:0.895; Zaozhuang - Mean:0.60; SD:1.215

15R. I do not want to learn more English than required by passing the high-stakes tests.

Beijing - Mean:1.06; SD:0.941; Shenzhen - Mean:0.51; SD:1.062; Zaozhuang - Mean:0.27; SD:1.364

16. Bilingual signs make the city more modernized and internationalized.

Beijing - Mean:1.06; SD:0.973; Shenzhen – Mean:1.07; SD:0.884; Zaozhuang – Mean:0.74; SD:1.132

17. A bilingual brochure looks more formal and trustworthy than a Chinese one.

Beijing - Mean:0.48; SD:1.259; Shenzhen – Mean:0.48; SD:1.191; Zaozhuang – Mean:-0.11; SD:1.387

20. Other conditions being equal, those whose English is better may get better jobs.

Beijing - Mean:0.55; SD:1.048; Shenzhen – Mean:0.79; SD:0.946; Zaozhuang – Mean:0.47; SD:1.351

Appendix 2

General interview questions

What would you do if English were further de-emphasized?

What motivates you most to learn English?

What is your opinion on the recent trend to marginalize English in formal education?

What do you think would be the rationale behind the de-emphasis of English?

Do you think it is necessary to set English as a compulsory course?

Asian EFL Journal Research Articles. Vol. 18 No.4 December 2016

Book reviews

Exploring Listening Strategy Instruction Through Action Research by Joseph Siegel, Palgrave MacMillan UK. 2015 (pp. xvi+259)

Reviewed by Elizabeth Wohlers, Mahidol University

Nearly in tears, the student approached me at the end of a listening test and said, "Teacher, I try so hard, but I can't understand. *How can I get better at listening?" "*Practice a lot," hardly seemed a satisfying response, but it was the best I could offer. This memory from my early days at a Thai university in mind, I eagerly read Joseph Siegel's *Exploring Listening Strategy Instruction Through Action Research.* In this book, Siegel details how he sought to change the status quo of the 'listen, answer, check' (p. 13) approach to listening instruction by creating, implementing, and evaluating a listening strategy instruction program at his home university in Japan. The book transformed the way I think about listening instruction and inspired me to implement Siegel's approach in my own classroom.

Siegel begins by providing compelling support for the assertion that, although listening is the most used skill in communication (p. 5), it is one for which pedagogy remains highly underdeveloped. Siegel states, "Consistent, focused, and widely accepted methods for the teaching of L2 listening has yet to reach the L2 education mainstream" (p. 39). He explains that common methods of listening instruction are based on one of two approaches: reliance on listening exposure, or use of practices that mimic testing ('listen, answer, check') (p. 39). In neither of these does the teacher actually perform much *teaching*; he/she is merely setting up practice for the students. Siegel explains that a reason for the underdevelopment of teaching

methodology is the complex nature of listening, a process occurring totally within the mind of the listener, and the resulting lack of thorough research into listening.

However, Siegel highlights some promising emerging ideas in the literature - the *process approach*, and the *listening strategy instruction approach* (LSI) - which are the basis of Siegel's process-based LSI approach to his listening instruction program. In short, his concept uses teacher modeling to train students on how to use specific strategies for listening in order to build skills which can be transferred outside of the classroom to everyday listening events.

Siegel put these theories into practice using an Action Research (AR) approach within the context of his university's compulsory Upper Intermediate English (UIE) course. The participants were 121 students in six different classes, which were divided between two instructors and three semesters. Each semester was viewed as a different phase and reflection and modifications were completed between phases. A new listening strategy was explicitly taught each week, for a total of thirteen strategies. (Examples of strategies include prediction, genre recognition, and identification of main ideas.) Classes met four days per week and instruction each week followed the same pedagogic cycle: strategy introduction, guided practice with teacher modeling, and strategy transfer and review (p. 59). The intervention was measured using questionnaires, student interviews, a researcher journal, class observation, teacher interviews, and pre/post-semester listening tests (including the TOEFL and an in-house test). Siegel focused his findings on student and teacher perceptions.

The results were consistently positive across all three phases. The vast majority of students felt that the LSI contributed to their listening skill development throughout the semester and said that they benefited from teacher explanations of the strategies. The majority of students also predicted that they would make use of the strategies learned in a variety of everyday life situations. The increase in the averages between the pre and post-semester test scores seemed to confirm the student perceptions. The teachers shared the generally positive feelings about the success of the program in teaching students transferable skills for real-world listening.

In general, I was impressed by the rigor of Siegel's research and I felt that his use of a variety of research methods and triangulation compensated for the potential downfalls of his insider status as researcher, teacher, and program designer. However, one question continually

nagged me as I reviewed the research findings: How would the students' perceptions of the course and their listening skill improvements compare to those of students who took the course in semesters prior to the intervention? Evidence of student perceptions of the course and its impact on their listening skills in semesters under the old modes of instruction would have stood as an insightful point of contrast with the findings of perceptions post-intervention.

Nevertheless, as a teacher, I was very impressed by the research findings, and I closed the book with a desire to put the concepts into action. I have used numerous textbooks which include strategy use to a certain extent, but I was compelled by two of Siegel's concepts that were quite new to me. The first was the idea of modeling- a teacher is an expert listener who can actually demonstrate his/her thinking to the students. The second was the explicit teaching of a strategy over the course of an entire week with focused and repetitive practice of it. As far as the practicality of replicating a program like Siegel's, I believe it is possible, but not without challenges. Siegel's co-teacher for the study reflected on the difficulty of explaining the concepts of the strategies, and Siegel himself states that how to effectively model remains an area with many questions in need of future research (p. 203). The book itself does not provide a detailed explanation of how to teacher model, nor does it explain in detail the design of the segments of each strategy lesson or the creation and modification of materials for the lessons. A reader of this book can expect to be inspired but not instructed on how to use these methods.

In conclusion, I highly recommend *Exploring Listening Strategy Instruction Through Action Research* for those who desire to take a critical look at how listening is taught. As he endeavored, Siegel inspired me, the reader, to think that it's possible to actually *teach* listening , so I can have a more satisfying answer next time a student approaches me with, 'Teacher, how can I get better at listening?'

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Competency-based Language Teaching in Higher Education. Edited by María Luisa Pérez Cañado, New York & London: Springer. 2013. (pp. xiv+194)
ISBN 978-94-007-5385-3 ISBN 978-94-007-5386-0 (eBook)
Reviewed by R. Ganjali[5] and kh. Motallebzadeh[6]

Competency-based Language Teaching (CBL) presents a forum for work that crosses traditional boundaries between theory and practice, and between native, second and foreign language education. Cañado provides invaluable practical guidance for the post-secondary sector on how to approach, teach, and assess competencies in Bologna-adapted systems of study. The ultimate aim of this volume is to present a practical delineation of the concept of competency in tertiary language education. It pools the insights of scholars, practitioners, and policy makers from diverse parts of Europe and the US.

The introductory chapter clarifies the definition and taxonomy of competencies in higher education. The definition of CBLT involves not only knowledge, but also skills, attitudes, values, and entails the capacity to perform successfully in an academic, professional, or social environment. The author sets forth the categorization of competencies propounded by Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and TUNING project (TUNING Educational Structures in Europe 2007) regarding learning, teaching and assessment. This chapter also provides an overview of the volume.

The book is subdivided into three main parts. The guidelines derived from the CEFR serve as the overarching theme which guides and connects all three sections. To achieve its objective, section I examines the necessary changes which have to take place in language teaching in order to adapt to a competency-based language model. The first chapter in part1 by Ian Tudor focuses on the use of the CEFR's common reference levels for transparency and comparability in terms of what learners are able to do in a language at a given time. The author has highlighted the very positive role which the CEFR can play in the creation of a pedagogical approach geared to the

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development of transferable learning skills needed for lifelong language learning. It offers guidelines for the identification of pragmatically relevant learning goals, and also creates a framework for engaging learners in an active and self-directed manner in their language learning.

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Chapter three by María Luisa Pérez Cañado gives a detailed analysis of the adaptation to a competency-based model of language degrees across Europe and scrutinizes the main strengths and weaknesses of this process. She offers the results of the recent European study ADELEEES, carried out with nearly 500 students and teachers of more than 15 different language degrees across Europe. The purposes of the study were to assess the current state of competency development and evaluation, different types of learning modalities and groupings, student-centered methodologies, and evaluation procedures and strategies, with a view to addressing and overcoming the major gap detected therein.

Part II focuses on the actual teaching of competencies in tertiary education. It provides a valuable bank of materials, procedures and ideas, based on accounts of successful practice and experiences, for the practical implementation of competencies in language education.

Chapter 4 by Daniel Madrid Fernández and Stephen Hughes clarifies competences and foreign language teacher education in Spain. For the pervasiveness and disparity in the notion of competence, they illustrate beneficial references for teacher educators on key competencies help teachers become adept in the use of competences in their future fields of work. Accordingly, the OECD's (2005) definition and selection of key competencies, the European Commission's identification of eight key competences for lifelong learning and the importance attributed to competences in the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System have set the agenda in European educational policy.

Chapter 5 by Melinda Dooly focuses on the learner-centered approach of PBLL, which is based on contextualized cooperative learning and can be implemented as a competency-based learning platform. The implementation of PBLL aims to foster the development of language learners' cognitive, social and communicative skills through their engagement in authentic activities and sub-activities that lead up to the project output.

Chapter 6 by Greg Kessler and Paige D. Ware focuses specifically on how competencies within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) can be implemented using technology-based instruction with particular emphasis upon the examples of telecollaboration and local

collaboration. They illustrate how telecollaborative projects can be used as a forum for developing discipline-specific EHEA competencies, through the examples of three telecollaborative research projects.

Chapter 7 by Barry Pennock-Speck describes the design, implementation and assessment of activities in which competences are acquired either in part or entirely through the use of ICTs in several English language and linguistics modules in English Studies at the Universitat de València.

Chapter 8 by Manuel Jiménez Raya elaborates on various definitions of autonomy and its pedagogy in language education at universities. In the context of formal education, Jiménez Raya et al. (2007) defines autonomy as "the competence to develop as a self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware participant in (and beyond) educational environments, within a vision of education as (inter)personal empowerment and social transformation" (n.p.). He also presents a methodological framework in which pedagogy for autonomy is operationalized through nine pedagogical principles.

The final part deals with evaluation competencies in tertiary language education. Diverse proposals with specific guidelines, indicators, and descriptors are provided to evaluate the hitherto abstract concept of competency in this section.

Chapter 9 by Kent Löfgren discusses the relationships between CEFR for languages and corrective feedback in higher education second language teaching regarding perspectives from empirical research. The author stipulates CEFR purpose as a reference manual in matters related to the standardization of competencies in terms of language teaching and learning, regardless of what language is being taught or in what country this teaching takes place.

Chapter 10 by María José Terrón-López and María José García-García demonstrates a guide to the implementation of generic skills, particularly giving assessment criteria to readers, as well as grade descriptors and marking schemes of transferable skills, besides providing orientation to integrate guidance and feedback to the students. This chapter also examines several possible educational activities and the assessment of the learning progress of professional skills through self-explanatory templates, using self-assessment and peer-assessment tests , among other useful tools.

Chapter 11 by Marta González-Lloret illustrates how indispensable skills in a competence-based model of education, such as electronic literacies and second language ability, can be

combined into the assessment of a language learning curriculum. The author approaches performance-based, student-centered assessment by expounding what innovative
technologies have to offer in this area.

Chapter 12 by Karen M. Lauridsen explains the reasons why individuals learn foreign languages such as interest in foreign languages as their professional goals, living and/or working in a multilingual context whether in their home country or abroad.

In sum, this publication serves as a comprehensive reference book for second/foreign language teachers and decision makers since it offers practical guidelines such as CEFR for goal-setting, course development and evaluation in the new language teaching panorama confronting Europe. Moreover, it provides a valuable bank of materials, procedures and ideas, based on accounts of successful practice and experiences, for the practical implementation of competencies in language education. A particular strength of the book is its concise and accessible presentation of qualitative and quantitative empirical case studies from around the globe.

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I didn’t submit my book review for publication to other journals and I have just revised it for your journal.