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Editor’s Note

With regret I announce the resignation of Donna M. Johnson as editor of Research Issues. I join our readers in thanking Donna for her excellent work as editor of this column. I am pleased that Patricia A. Duff of the University of British Columbia has agreed to take on this responsibility. This issue marks her first as editor of Research Issues.

In This Issue

The lead article examines the origin and current meaning of the widely used labels, ESL and EFL. Three of the articles in the issue address aspects of L2 literacy—one dealing with the writing experience of ESL students in university courses, another with analyzing the concept of critical thinking in TESOL, and the final with assessing an approach to vocabulary instruction. The fifth article examines U.S. undergraduates’ attitudes toward international teaching assistants (ITAs).

- P. Bhaskaran Nayar places the acronyms ESL and EFL in historical context and evaluates their current credibility and validity. Noting the problematic nature of these labels to represent the present diversity in the use of English, he distinguishes three contexts commonly referred to as ESL environments—one in which English is used widely by a significant proportion of the population but few speak it as their mother tongue; another in which English is learned in the native environment; and a third in which English has a high enough profile in education that almost every educated person is highly fluent in English. Nayar then examines the sociolinguistic, pedagogical, and research implications of these distinct meanings of ESL. He closes by proposing a new nomenclature that he believes better captures the complexity of the role of English in the world today.

- Ilona Leki and Joan Carson analyze interview data gathered from ESL students in the U.S. regarding their writing experience in English for...
academic purposes (EAP) and other university courses. Drawing on their interview data, the authors characterize students’ reactions to three very different types of writing contexts—one that draws on general knowledge or personal experience, another that uses source texts as a basis for ideas, and a third that requires students to demonstrate knowledge of a source text. The information gathered in the interviews suggests that EAP courses require students to demonstrate knowledge of a source text much less frequently than do academic courses. Leki and Carson end by arguing that EAP courses that mainly require students to write from general knowledge or personal experience limit students’ academic and personal growth.

• Dwight Atkinson argues that TESOL educators should be cautious in using critical thinking pedagogies in their classrooms. As support for his position, he presents the following reasons: (a) Critical thinking is more of a social practice than a pedagogical strategy; (b) critical thinking has been criticized for being exclusive and reductive in nature; (c) critical thinking is a culturally based concept; and (d) critical thinking skills do not appear to transfer beyond a narrow instructional context. In closing he suggests that what he terms cognitive apprenticeship may be an alternative to traditional critical thinking pedagogies.

• Barbara S. Plakans examines the experiences and attitudes of undergraduates toward ITAs. Drawing on information gathered in a survey and interviews given at a midwestern U.S. university, the author contends that the picture that emerges from the data is one in which undergraduates are trying to cope with a difficult situation. Required courses are often taught by ITAs who may have different cultural and pedagogical expectations. When the students have problems, they are often reluctant to seek help, preferring instead to learn on their own or seek help from classmates. To remedy this situation, Plakans suggests several programs that might be implemented to improve undergraduate-ITA relations.

• Cheryl Boyd Zimmerman reports on a pilot study that examined the effects of reading and interactive vocabulary instruction on the vocabulary development of L2 students attending a U.S. university-preparatory intensive English program. Students were divided into two groups—one receiving 3 hours of interactive vocabulary instruction plus an assignment to read self-selected materials and the other receiving the self-selected reading assignment only. The interactive vocabulary instruction required active participation by the students and involved multiple exposures to words in meaningful contexts linked to students’ experience and prior knowledge. The study suggests that such instruction coupled with self-selected and course-related reading can lead to gains in vocabulary knowledge.
Also in this issue:

- The Forum: Marianne Celce-Murcia, Zoltán Dörnyei, and Sarah Thurrell distinguish two approaches to teaching speaking skills: a *direct approach* in which new linguistic information is practiced explicitly and an *indirect approach* that involves setting up situations to lead learners to acquire communicative skills. They argue that a significant shift is now taking place in the latter approach, and they raise a number of questions regarding communicative language teaching. Stephanie Vandrick maintains that within ESL classrooms many identities are hidden. She discusses how these identities may affect the classroom and its participants and suggests what ESL administrators and faculty members might do in response to these identities and their ramifications for the classroom. Finally, Jo Hilder’s commentary on Jill Sinclair Bell’s article, “The Relationship Between L1 and L2 Literacy: Some Complicating Factors,” is followed by a response from the author.

- Research Issues: Celia Roberts and Judith Green, Maria Franquiz, and Carol Dixon explore the ethical issues involved in transcribing.

- Reviews: Richard Yorkey provides a comparative review of dictionaries for language learners, and Virginia LoCastro compares several introductory pragmatics texts.

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In this article, I situate the two most widely used acronyms, ESL and EFL, in their historical-structural contexts, examine their denotative consistency, evaluate the credibility and validity of their individual and contrastive statuses, and suggest a taxonomic reorientation. I argue that these labels, which are more the products of history and demography than of linguistic reality and which the professional and commercial interests of the English language teaching enterprise have nurtured and promoted, are becoming reified in professional discourse, unconcerned with the realities of the changing role of English in today’s world. I demonstrate the referential vagueness and denotative variations of the label ESL by tracing its genealogy and by detailing the great ecological and implicative differences between two of its major current interpretations. I also present contexts of situational overlaps that obscure the current basis for an ESL/EFL distinction. Finally, I recommend a taxonomic nomenclature with a more realistic sociolinguistic base and a more appropriate applied linguistic motivation.

It has been over a decade since Moag’s (1982a) illuminating article of a new taxonomy for English-using societies appeared and about a decade since Judd (1987) tried a redefinition of terms related to English teaching “based on the examination of the sociopolitical context in which English functions” (p. 4). Perhaps it is time for a reappraisal of the situation. Moag uses as many as 26 defining/descriptive/distinctive features to evolve and justify a four-way typology of English users—native (ENL), second (ESL), foreign (EFL), and base (EBL). Judd also recommends four labels and categories—ESL, English as an additional language (EAL), English as a language of wider communication (ELWC), and EFL. Because the changing glossography¹ (Nayar, 1994) of English in the world is calling into question the validity, identity, and usefulness of the concept of the

¹ By glossography, I mean a composite of the global distribution, status, role, and entrenchment of the language together with the ethnonational identities of the communities that claim to speak it.
native speaker (NS) of English (see Paik eday, 1985) except as a token or instrument of a linguistically centred power dynamic, it is time to reevaluate these labels and their denotations and resituate them appropriately so that their implications for the teaching of English in the world can be reexamined. In what follows, I investigate the history and bona fides of the nomenclature of the labels ESL and EFL. I show that although there is some sort of vague universal acceptance of the existence of two different entities called ESL and EFL, a great deal of referential fuzziness within the two and denotative overlap between the two are making the terminological distinctions unclear, impractical, and ineffective or, worse still, in some cases inauspicious and irrelevant. The applied linguistic and pedagogic motivations for these labels and acronyms may well be out of touch with the current complexity of English in the world and of World Englishes.

In short, some of the questions English teachers should be asking themselves are: What do the labels ESL and EFL precisely denote today? Do the disciplines or areas of study they signify have the same type and amount of applied linguistic validity and pedagogic significance as when the labels were introduced? Is retaining the labels and the terminological dichotomy relevant or even feasible in light of the fast-changing glossography of English? If yes, then their denotations need to be clarified, redefined, and universalized. If no, then new labels, terminology, or acronyms need to be developed and related to the teaching and learning requirements that arise from the current ecology.

INCEPTION AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE ACRONYMS

The teaching of English to non-English speakers was earlier referred to simply as (the) teaching (of) English (Chapman, 1958; Frisby, 1957; Palmer, 1940; Quirk & Smith, 1959), as the teaching of English as foreign language (Fries, 1946; Gauntlett, 1957; Gurrey, 1955), or often as just language teaching (Billows, 1961; Cornelius, 1953). The expression English as a foreign language, which became popular only later with the advent of ESL and the subsequent institutionalized opposition of the disciplines, must have made good sense to English speakers at the time as a way to refer to English language use and learning that was felt to be different from the native situation and that was physically outside the native-speaking countries (see West, 1927). (For a more detailed history of language teaching and of the teaching of English, see Howatt, 1984; Kelly, 1969, 1971.) The earliest work on the teaching or learning of (English as) a second language (SL) that I can remember is Morris (1945). Morris realized that the teaching of English in the countries of
Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia was in many ways different from the teaching of a foreign language (FL) like French or German in the schools of Britain. To reflect the fact that learners in the former situations already had numerous vernaculars and that English for them was “a vital medium of education giving access to a broader culture, and providing and auxiliary language for ordinary use” (p. iii), he used the term *second language*. Within the next 20 years, the breakup of the British Empire would create several new populous countries, whose long years of intellectual, administrative, and bureaucratic association with and dependence on the English language would make English learning indispensable to their survival. These countries, nearly all multiethnic, multilingual, and even arguably multinational, vitally needed English in addition to their own reasserting native languages. Although initially the label *foreign language* was applied to English (see Catford, 1959; Gurrey, 1955; West, 1933), it was soon felt that English was not “foreign” for these peoples, initially because its historical entrenchment had made it part of their identity and later also because they had uniquely indigenized and adopted the language in their own way for their requirements. Learning English became an essential part of the educational system of these countries and, in deference to the ethnonationalist rights of the indigenous languages, English was given the status of “second” language, although in order of acquisition it may well have been the third or fourth. This utilitarian function of English was perhaps an important feature that eventually created an identity of ESL separate from EFL. Thus was born one interpretation of ESL.

By the 1950s, the interplay of two other factors, one linguistic and the other demographic, had brought the concept of *second language* in the context of English teaching into further prominence, the latter factor eventually giving rise to the second interpretation of ESL. The linguistic factor was the impact of linguistics, particularly structural linguistics, on language teaching, which was ushering in new and revolutionary changes in pedagogy. Applied linguists were discovering the influence of the native language on subsequently acquired languages and were evolving the concepts of L1 and L2 for native/first and target/second languages (see, for instance, Catford, 1959; Lado, 1957; Weinreich, 1953). (For a more detailed account of the development of the reciprocal influences of L1 and L2 see James, 1980; Kellerman & Sharwood Smith, 1986; Stern, 1992.) The demographic factor arose from a liberalized postwar immigration policy in North America, which was changing the ethnolinguistic profile of the New World. The U.S. made English literacy a requirement for naturalization in 1950 (Conklin & Lourie, 1983). The new waves of polyglot immigrants had to learn English, the language of their adopted country and one that they could no longer consider or call “foreign.” Although many of the immigrants may have already been speaking two
or three languages, second language was a convenient label for the language of the adopted country. It was in this context that Finocchiaro’s (1958) seminal book familiarized and established the term ESL in the sense in which it is now popularly used in North America and is becoming popular in other native-speaking countries.

By the 1950s ESL and EFL appear to have become identified as distinct from each other, and by the early 1970s the two had institutionalized and dichotomised sufficiently well for Wilkins (1972) to state that “it is common already to differentiate foreign languages and second languages” (p. 150). Of the two, EFL was semantically more transparent and less complex in that it basically referred to a language that was foreign, whereas ESL did not necessarily refer to a language that was second. Rather, the second in ESL even now has very little ordinal denotation at all except in an abstract way as a theoretical construct of applied linguists and English educators. One applied linguist who has frequently written about the distinction in its historical, sociolinguistic, and pedagogic aspects and has thus perhaps helped crystallize the distinction is Strevens (1977, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, to cite just a few works). Historically, Strevens (1977) traces the ESL/EFL dichotomy to a branching off of British English language teaching (ELT) in the 1940s, mostly as a result of Britain’s colonial and postcolonial international participation. He also mentions interesting differences in the use of the term ESL on the two sides of the Atlantic, a point that I examine below, where I refer to the essentially domestic motivation for the genesis of second language in North America. Howatt (1984) states that “it was not until the fifties that the modern distinction between English as a ‘foreign’ and a ‘second’ language (EFL and ESL) became widespread” (p. 212). He sees ESL as emerging out of EFL in the early 1950s in many stages: in the British Empire and in the Commonwealth from the applied linguistic tradition of Daniel Jones, Harold Palmer, Michael West, and others, and in North America under the influence of pioneers like Leonard Bloomfield and Charles Fries. In any case, by the 1970s, promoted by the two main native-speaking countries of the UK and the U.S. and supported by a thriving publications industry, both ESL and EFL had become established not just as academic fields of study and research but also as internationally recognized careers. By the same time,

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2 The label second language typifies the Anglocentricity of the discourse of applied linguistics and language teaching in today’s world. The dominance of Anglocentric discourse makes monolingualism the norm (and English speakers are Euro-America’s, if not the world’s, most entrenched literate monolinguals), and because an additional language cannot be anything more than an SL to an English speaker, so it is seen for the others. The pattern of discourse is consistently maintained in other reified labels like second language acquisition (SLA) theory, second language teaching methodology, and so on, all of which are generally based on the use of the English language but are used and accepted as generic, universally valid concepts.
many universities in native-English-speaking countries had also estab-
lished academic programs offering specialized training leading to gradu-
ate qualifications in teaching ESL/EFL as well as formed links with
overseas academic and business organizations for English language
training. (For a detailed, critical linguistic account of the history of the
development of Anglo-American ESL/EFL promotional activity, see
Phillipson, 1991, 1992.)

EFL VERSUS ESL

For a native English speaker (and perhaps for speakers of many west
European languages), an FL, in general, is fairly easy to define and
circumscribe in terms of territoriality and ethnonational identity. But for
speakers of many other languages, it is not so easy to reciprocally refer to
English as an FL using similar criteria because of the peculiar glossography
of English. However, many people will agree with Richards, Platt, and
Weber (1985) that EFL refers to the role of English in countries where it
is taught as a subject in schools but where it has no recognized status or
function. Unfortunately there is not the same amount of denotative
congruence in the world with regard to what ESL is. Richards et al., for
instance, give three different definitions of ESL, namely, the roles of
English (a) for minorities and immigrants in English-speaking countries,
(b) in countries where there is everyday purposive use of English but
where it is not the L1 (like India, Singapore, and the Philippines), and
(c) in countries (like Germany and Japan) where it is not an L1.
(Curiously, Richards et al. say that the last situation will be called ESL in
the U.S. but EFL in British usage.) For Moag (1982a), some of the
characteristics that set apart EFL from ESL are a low degree of official
recognition, a very low rate of use-related features, and indifferent
prestige in learner society. Judd (1987) thinks that in an EFL situation
English “serves little communicative function” and “has no special status
or use over any other foreign language” (p. 6). According to Broughton,
Brumfit, Flavell, Hill, and Pincas (1978), in EFL, English “is taught in

3 English teaching in an FL situation is often compared in the literature to the teaching of
FLs in English-speaking countries. In the Anglocentric tradition, this is an example of how
others’ experience is described and explained to others from and in terms of the English
speaker’s point of view in the hope of making things clearer or more comprehensible to others.
Surely, it is very naive to compare the study of FLs in functionally monolingual countries with a
very powerful dominant language with the study of that powerful language by other countries,
only because of a very superficial similarity. This is part of what Fishman (1976) calls the major
“negative impact of monolingualism” (p. 50) and what Phillipson (1992) means when he says
that “the monolingualism of the Anglo-American establishment blinds them to the realities of
multilingualism in the contemporary world and gives them a limiting and false perspective”
(p. 23).
schools, often widely, but it does not play an essential role in national or social life” (p. 6), so, unlike in ESL, in EFL more choices of target language variety are available. (For a clear continental European perspective on what is ESL and what is EFL, see Faerch, Haasturp, & Phillipson, 1984.)

In the last two decades there have been attempts to modify and bring new perspectives into the taxonomy of English-using societies. In a speech delivered to the Royal Society in 1982, Strevens articulated a rehash of the English as a native language (ENL)/ESL/EFL trichotomy as English-speaking, English-using, and non-English-using countries. Kachru (1988, 1991) has developed a sociolinguistically based polymodel of three concentric circles of World Englishes: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle, which roughly correspond to ENL, ESL, and EFL in functional terms but not in their sociolinguistic raison d’être. Kachru (1986a) argues, I think rightly, that applied linguistic models are not based on empirical research but on attitudes toward the language and the NSs’ perceptions of the problem. For him ESL and EFL denote sociolinguistic contexts more than applied linguistic situations (see also Kachru, 1985, 1991). He contends that communities in the Outer Circle speak identifiable, new institutionalized varieties of English as against the traditional varieties of the Inner Circle and the performance varieties of the Expanding Circle, and that the appropriateness and acceptability of any institutionalized variety should not be assessed against its deviance from or conformity to the Inner Circle varieties but only against the sociolinguistic profile of the community that uses the variety and the sociocultural and communicative contexts in which it is used. Kachru’s institutionalized varieties (in Strevens’s English-using countries) are also in many cases used for intranational communication, an additional dimension of ESL that differentiates it from EFL.

None of these labels, of course, demarcates categories with firm bounds or represents homogenous communities. Most people are likely to agree that English in the world is a continuum with ENL at one end and EFL at the other. According to Platt and Weber (1979), varieties can move along the continuum; the transition from FL to SL takes place when the language is used in everyday communication, and from SL to native language, when the language is or can be used for all communicative needs and when the wider speech community accepts it. Moag (1982b) admits the fuzziness of the boundaries and suggests a quasi-organic, “back-to-the-future” life cycle for the nonnative varieties: from to SL to FL. Judd (1987) echoes Moag in citing Malaysia as a country in which English is in transition from SL to FL, although the recent renewed interest in English teaching in Malaysia may yet belie the prophecy. I have myself experienced the beginnings of a move from EFL to ESL in the Ethiopia of the 1960s and 1970s and from ESL to ENL in
modern-day Singapore. All things told, there has been less consensual agreement internationally on what ESL is than on what EFL is because, apart from the greater range and variety of ESL situations in the world, a great denotative and connotative divide appears to exist between the Old and the New Worlds with regard to the core meaning of ESL.

**ESL: DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

**ESL1: East of the Atlantic**

Wilkins (1972) reflects the views of many when he says that in SL situations “the language being learned (L2) is not the mother tongue of any group within the country, but that it does have some internal social function. Almost by definition the countries where the L2 will be a second language are multilingual states” (p. 150). One very interesting feature here to me is that L2 is not being used as an abbreviation for second language but rather that an SL is being defined in terms of L2, suggesting the beginnings of a reification of the concept of ESL. The above perception of ESL, no doubt, comes historically out of Britain’s engagement and participation in the spread of English in the Raj. ESL is therefore a kind of EFL, with the E enjoying some historical status and sociopolitical function as well as having some internal communicative use (Howatt, 1984; Strevens, 1977). I refer to this interpretation as ESL1. The crucial defining characteristics of ESL1 are

1. English is not regarded or generally accepted as native to the environment, so few speak it as the mother tongue.
2. English is used widely by an influential if not significant section of the people as a medium of communication in a variety of domains like education, administration, and commerce. The learners/users may be multilingual and may use English as a link language between them.
3. Though English is not native, there is a certain amount of environmental support for English in the form of, for example, popular English language media and some indigenous literature in English.
4. English has some officially approved national status and social prestige.
5. Communication with an NS is not a primary or even likely objective of learning.

This point of view has at least one official ratification in Southeast Asia. The South East Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), which runs the prestigious Regional (English) Language
Centre located in Singapore, has named the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore as ESL countries and Thailand and Indonesia as EFL countries (Debyasuvarn, 1981) on the basis of the status and function of English in these countries. The British perception of ESL routinely reflects this situation of English, that is, its special status in Britain’s former non-White colonies. From the fact that even in the late 1970s Broughton et al. (1978) wrote that “the immigrant in Britain and the second language speaker of English” are different in that they are “gaining mastery of different varieties of English” (p. 5), one can surmise that ESL then still largely meant in Britain what it had meant to Morris in 1945. It is only very recently, perhaps under the influence of North America, that in Britain situations in which English is specifically taught to non-English-speaking immigrants or ethnic minorities have started being referred to as ESL situations (see, e.g., Brumfit, Ellis, & Levine, 1985; Hawkins, 1984; Rampton, 1988). However, most of the English teaching in Britain in the private sector (where the bulk of the English teaching to non-English speakers in Britain still is happening) is viewed as EFL (unlike in North America), and British institutions still routinely advertise vacancies in EFL (more than ESL) teaching.

ESL2: North America and Australia

Going across the Atlantic, in North America and to some extent in Australia ESL has derived its popular core meaning from the ethnodemographic perspective of an immigrant-oriented, monoglossic society. EFL taught within North America or Australia somehow seems an oxymoron.\(^4\) The fact that the Teaching English Abroad Interest Section in TESOL, still a largely North America–based organization, was renamed first Teaching English Internationally and then Teaching English as a Foreign Language, all in less than a decade, shows that EFL is fundamentally perceived as something happening abroad. All ELT to nonnative speakers (NNSs) outside native-speaking countries is seen as EFL and is assumed to be under the aegis of this Interest Section. It has been my experience that in the U.S., like many other things in life, English teaching is perceived binarily. There is English for those who are seen as NSs, usually the mainstream Anglo community, and there is ESL for all others, usually foreign students, who are known as internationals, or Third World immigrants, often known as ethnics. I refer to this situation as ESL2. Its main defining dimensions appear to be

\(^4\) A notable exception is Alptekin (1988), who makes a specific distinction between ESL and EFL in North America, where “the former involves non-English-speaking immigrants and minorities who, on the whole, are permanent residents often with integrative motives and the latter embodies foreign students and other visitors, whose motives are chiefly instrumental and whose residence is temporary” (p. 341). The former corresponds to my ESL2 and the latter to the popular meaning of EFL taught within Britain.
1. ESL is usually acquired or, rather, taught in the native environment, ideally by native-speaking teachers. (The crucialness of environmental support is a repeated theme in the discourse.)

2. The goal of ESL instruction and learning is to interact competently with NSs and eventually integrate into the native English-speaking community. (Judd, 1987, says that one of the defining features of an ESL situation is that “the non-native speaker (NNS) will be communicating primarily with native speakers of English [p. 5].” See also the chapter Defining ESL in Nicholls & Naish, 1981.)

3. ESL is acquired and taught not just for communicative ability and integration into the target community but also as an emancipatory step toward the privilege of admittance into and full participation in the target society, for socioeconomic respectability and upward mobility.

The native acquisition environment and the goal of eventual Americanization (Baron, 1990) are the most essential features of the U.S. conception of ESL, and all the other features appear to arise from them. Handscombe and Handscombe (1983), for instance, in an article on the professional development of ESL teachers, speak of ESL students and their “probationary status in their new country” (p. 224).

The enormous amount and the nature of literature and material produced in the U.S. on teaching culture in the context of ESL underscore the fact that it is acculturation and not enculturation that is envisaged in ESL2. (These tacit presuppositions about ESL2 have some

5 This overdependence on NSs, of course, exposes one to the danger of the linguistic imprecision and sociolinguistic arbitrariness of the very concept of the NS, particularly when one realizes that NS status, like the Hindu caste membership, is claimed by birth or ethnopolitical affiliation rather than by competence or effort.

6 It has been pointed out to me that English is used as a means of attaining socioeconomic status and upward mobility in ESL1 situations (e.g., in India, Nigeria), too. However, in these situations, the English literate has a status that reflects elitism and exclusiveness rather than acceptability. In ESL1 situations, progression towards native competence makes the speaker more and more socially marked, whereas in ESL2 the more nativelike the learners are, the more socially unmarked they become.

7 The concept of a native environment or the issue of what exactly can be considered an English-speaking environment, however, has not gone unchallenged even in the U.S. (see Judd, 1987).
unobserved sociopolitical and humanistic implications, which I briefly touch on below.)

It is this concept of ESL that, even as early as 30 years ago (see Anthony & Crymes, 1977), created an essential association between ESL and bilingual education in the minds of many teachers and academics in the U.S. In the U.S., bilingual education has traditionally been a subtractive process by which students are initially allowed to use two languages so that they can eventually become monolingual English literates (see Schecter, 1988). More recently, though, bilingualism is becoming more nonsubtractive (see, e.g., Crandall, 1996).

The nature, direction, and etiology of the field of second language acquisition (SLA), mainly developed in the U.S., endorses the inalienable association between ESL and native environment (Sridhar & Sridhar, 1986; VanPatten, 1988). The buzzword acronyms are SLA and foreign language learning (FLL), almost never second language learning (SLL) and foreign language acquisition (FLA) (see, for instance, Dickerson, Cowan, & Kachru, 1988), which underscores the view of an SL as acquired (i.e., with environment support) and an FL as learned (in classrooms). FLL generally refers to the classroom learning of non-English (mostly European) languages by Americans in schools or universities, and within this framework the FL basket has been known to contain even Native American languages and Spanish. Many of the findings on SLA have in any case been based on research on English SLA on the North American continent (see below).

**ESL3: Scandinavia**

A case has been made for a third type of ESL situation, typically exemplified by the Scandinavian countries. In these countries, although English has no official status or intranational use similar to that in ESL1 countries, it has a high enough profile in education to enable virtually every educated person to communicate competently with NSs and to use English in European and international contexts (Faerch et al., 1984). Explaining this situation, Phillipson (1991) claims that “there are therefore absolutely basic differences between English as a ‘second’ language in Denmark, the USA and Kenya, inside and outside the classroom. SLA studies in each context should reflect this or find more appropriate labels” (p. 44).

The ESL label thus appears to denote at least three language situations differing along a number of crucial dimensions. The main features shared by the three seem to be that the learners (a) all have access to and control over one or more other languages and (b) are all ethnopolitically from nonnative-speaking communities.
SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE ESL SCHISM

The implicit differences between ESL1 (corresponding roughly to the Outer Circle of Kachru) and ESL2 (the predominantly North American version referring to the role of English for the minorities and immigrants) are large enough even to warrant very different labels. (The political sociology of the third type of ESL does not appear to me to be as interesting as the first two, and as the numbers involved therein are relatively very small, I shall not pursue it as a separate type.)

Sociolinguistic Implications

The sociolinguistic implications that I want to raise are neither all necessarily present nor, when present, equally operative in all ESL2 situations, so their relevance and applicability will therefore vary considerably by context.

ESL2

First, in ESL2, as Tollefson (1991) observes, the ideology of the language policy of the native-speaking nation gets involved in the concept of ESL and politicizes it differently than in an ESL1 context, where it is the ideology of the language policy of the nonnative-speaking nation that gets involved. On this one factor can depend the shaping of a lot of the realities of the multitiered variables of language education (see the hierarchy of teaching operation in Corred, 1973). Second, a complex, precarious power dynamic exists in this context, which, if indelicately negotiated, can turn pernicious. Unfortunately, it is easy for ESL2 learners in native-speaking countries to be viewed as a kind of substratum community, as they mainly comprise people who not only are politically and economically less privileged but also originate from countries that have relatively little international prestige or economical-political clout. They see English, or more correctly, English is seen for them, as a means of full participation and better chances of acceptability,

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8 Judd (1987) classifies this as English as an additional language (EAL). Below I use the same abbreviation but prefer the word associate. First, additional is semantically uninformative as any language other than the L1 is additional, and these learners are generally at least bilingual even without English. Second, it fails to capture the sociolinguistic profile of the institutionalized varieties, their status, their potential for moving from a variant to a variety, and their role in the sense of identity of the people (see Foley, 1988; Kachru, 1982b; Mazrui, 1975) in ESL1 countries. Third, it reflects the NS perspective and not that of the others.

9 The major exceptions to this, of course, are the Japanese, and therefore in parts of North America, like the West Coast, where there are relatively more Japanese ESL learners, attitudes may be different. But the presumption of sociocultural superiority exists nevertheless (see Hall, 1977; Hsu, 1969).
prestige, status, and advancement in the mainstream life of their adopted country. An Ellis Island Syndrome, created in the native-speaking U.S. mind by two centuries of immigrant mythology and several decades of non-English-speaking immigrants from Second and Third World countries, can get attitudinally extended to ESL learners, just as the civilizing mission of the English language (see Kachru, 1986a) and the smug reminiscences that the “days of the Raj are not over in terms of inner psychology” (Wilson & Wilson, 1971, p. 114) may stalk British attitudes toward both ESL1 and ESL2. As a result, a sociointellectual gap inhibits the learners from equal status and communicative contact in and with the target community, particularly when they perceive themselves and others perceive them as deficient in the English language.

In addition, English is undoubtedly the preeminent language of world communication today, and as such it symbolizes general geopolitical power. Official recognition of control over English means control of power through control of interaction. In the inherently unequal power dynamic of the native-nonnative interaction, in the classroom and outside, the power is thus further tilted away from the learner, who feels obligated, so to say, for being initiated into the shibboleth of entry into the “land of the free and home of the brave” or given the right to sing God Save the Queen, the modern equivalent of what used to be the citizenship of Rome.

Third, the potential exists for another kind of social discomfort for the learners, particularly if they are the intellectual peers of the teachers, as is quite often the case in adult ESL. ESL2 presupposes that the learners are physically situated in the target community and that the terminal objectives of learning are target community oriented. This puts a heavier tutelary responsibility on the teachers as norm givers as well as typical target models, and “nonnative” learners in native-speaking countries are frequently looked after, taken care of, and generally treated as if they need to be led by the hand. (In Britain, for instance, advertisements for academic positions involving the training of overseas students, including mature students, have been known to include pastoral care as part of the job specification.) Being looked after, though not in itself an unpleasant experience, comes through as paternalistic when insensitively handled by overzealous but naive teachers, at best as pastoral, and at worst as condescending, which can be very off-putting for the learner.

Fourth, the English language inadequacy in ESL2 learners may often be interpreted, at least by implication, as cognitive deficiency (ESL

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10 I shall give just one example each from ESL and EFL of self-important intellectual condescension and confusion of cognitive abilities with English language abilities. Wright (1991) writes, “It is our experience that non-native speakers are capable of interesting and valid insights into the nature and system of language once opportunities have been provided” (p. 65). Obviously, the first presupposition on the part of the NS writer is that he finds it unusual
students are often taught thinking skills), and ignorance of English pragmatics, as lack of knowledge of the world. When communication breakdown features have to do with differences in sociopragmatics (e.g., Wolfson, 1983, 1988), the learner can be made out to feel deficient in social graces and not just ignorant in target sociocultural conventions (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Nayar, 1989b, 1991). The target dialect model as well as the sociopragmatics of interaction are inevitably presumed to be those of the particular native-speaking community, represented by the teacher, a fact that can make even competent speakers of other varieties of English sometimes insecure. (It is not uncommon for the ESL teaching community in native-speaking countries to extend and attribute learner inadequacies to SL speakers in general by failing to draw a distinction between nonnative learners, who have inadequate language, and nonnative speakers, who have adequate language but inadequate situational communicative ability owing to different speech patterns—evidently part of the concern with international teaching assistants in U.S. universities.)

Finally, the formal and informal academic discourse of the domain has created and reified an entity called ESL students, and the constant addiction to this reified entity in the literature has fostered and sustains an unhealthy binarism not unlike the proverbial “us” and “them” attitude. Conklin and Lourie (1983) state that the manner and method of institutionalized ESL instruction in the U.S. often result in the stigmatization and alienation of non-English speakers, particularly if they are also economically and socially disadvantaged. The discourse of ESL often contrasts ESL students with U.S. students as though ESL students are some extraterrestrial community with different cultural, cognitive, social, and behavioural traits. One hidden assumption of such discourse is that if one is in the ESL stream, one is not American, and, conversely, if one is not perceived to be American, one needs to be instructed in the English language in the ESL mode. (For instances of similar ethnoeducational stereotyping in Britain, see Rampton, 1992.)

ESL1

English learning in an ESL1 situation is controlled by the language politics of the NNS’s learning country. Communicating with the NSs of
English and, therefore, comprehensibility in speaking to an NS are not high learning priorities at all. NS models are distant, abstract, and even sociolinguistically impracticable or unacceptable in many cases despite powerful NS efforts to retain dominance (see Prator, 1968; Quirk, 1988) and despite the invasion of and the proliferation on the airwaves of Anglo-American TV programs. As Broughton et al. (1978) write, “And in the very rare event of a SL learner achieving a perfect command of British English, he runs the risk of ridicule and even rejection by his fellows” (p. 6). Those that foresee potential contact with NSs of English can and do accommodate their English to native intelligibility levels without necessarily losing their regional flavour if the nature and sociopolitical context of communication call for it. However, they do not have to do so if the onus of communicative responsibility rests more on the NS, as, say, in instances when it is the NS who stands to benefit from the interaction and the NNS is aware of this. Furthermore, quite a few of these communities have indigenized varieties of English with their own characteristic formal and pragmatic features (Cheshire, 1991; Kachru, 1982b; Platt et al., 1984), and conformity to these features is as much a part of their identity as sounding American is to an American or sounding Scottish is to a Scotsman.

**Pedagogic Implications**

Much of the theoretical foundation, ethos, and pedagogic practice of ESL in general in the world has rested on the automatic assumption that ESL invariably and inherently involves native environmental and teacher support as well as integrative motivation and that learners’ achievement should be evaluated against the target of NS compatibility and acceptance (i.e., ESL = ESL2). Furthermore, most of the so-called authentic knowledge in the areas of SLA (see above) and ELT is manufactured in the native English-speaking countries and is disseminated as “received wisdom” to others through published scholarly material and through the educational involvement of others in those countries (see Pennycook, 1989). There is no evidence that this is *en rapport* with the target objectives and pedagogic priorities of ESL1, where NS perspectives (based on ESL2) can be inappropriate and NS involvement more disruptive than supportive (Nayar, 1985a, 1989a). However, the discourse and rhetoric of SL and FL learning seems to have created a world view that being an NS of English will somehow bestow on people not only unquestionable competence in the use and teaching of the language but also expertise in telling others how English ought to be taught (e.g., Quirk, 1988). Universities and other private and public educational institutions in native-speaking countries are as much in the business of training NNS teachers of English as they are in the teaching of ESL.
academics are forever being invited and appointed as so-called experts, again not in English but in SL and FL teaching, which is particularly interesting considering that native English speakers usually have themselves been very poor learners of an SL or FL.

Again, in ESL1 situations, learning English is neither as stressful nor as anxiety ridden as is implied by the still widely followed (and perhaps overrated) affective filter hypothesis or as presupposed by some of the so-called humanistic approaches and methods, which ride high in the methodology market in ESL2. Neither are teaching and learning conditions conducive to the implementation of many “exotic” methods like suggestology (Nayar, 1989b). Finally, in ESL1, there is little pressure by a superstratum community to integrate or assimilate, and unlike in ESL2, the learners can with impunity use English with their native sociopragmatics (see Apte, 1974; Nelson, 1985; Sridhar, 1988).

**Research Implications**

The perspective of research on aspects of ELT can also get skewed because of an absence of context-sensitive caveats and constraints on the applicability of findings. Although this can happen in both ESL contexts, ESL2 is the context that has been much more productive and influential.

In research on particular aspects of learner behaviour in ESL2, the learner is normally (and rightly) evaluated from the point of view of the target psychosocial and cultural motivations for such behaviour. The findings, nonetheless, are often canonically universalized because of the power of the discourse and the prestige of the publishing medium. For example, the sociopragmatic issues involved in the nonnative-speaking learner’s communicative failure in complementing behaviour (Wolfson, 1988), now widely cited in the literature of ESL sociopragmatics, will be very minor issues if not nonissues in the context of ESL1 (see above) even though they are very valid in ESL2 situations.

Also, the knowledge and expertise generated in the context of ESL2 are very likely to be overgeneralized as valid for ESL1 and ELT in all contexts. For instance, four of the seven theories of SLA in Ellis (1986) base SLA pronouncements virtually on acquisition of ESL2. Ever since Gardner and Lambert (1959), the discourse of SLA has endorsed and promoted the view that motivation for learning an SL can be divided into integrative and instrumental as though it were a scientific truth. Despite some later refinement and modifications (e.g., Gardner & Lambert, 1972), the authors’ original conception of what amounts to integrative and instrumental motivations still remains largely unchanged. This

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11 English literacy does, however, provide prestige and status and in that sense creates a superstratum community of elitist class in these situations (Kandiah, 1991).
binary view of motivation makes more sense in a theoretical frame that
gives primacy to a learning situation, such as in ESL2, where integration
is seen as the ultimate goal even if not the outcome, and that hence
lumps together all other learning motivations as instrumental. In reality,
learning English in a lot of ESL1 situations is no more instrumental than
learning English as an instrument to integrate in any ESL2 situation.
Nevertheless, learning English as an instrument to integrate has now
been canonically cast into a type in itself in contrast to all other
instrumental motivations put together because that classification appears
logical from the position of the NSs of English. VanPatten (1988) has
pointed out how SLA theory, based on English SLA within the narrow
context of ESL in the U.S., has limited its cross-linguistic validity and
how, because of their relative roles and statuses in the U.S. academic
framework, a producer-consumer relationship has emerged between
SLA and FLL.

In general, very few of the variables of ESL1 correlate or covary with
the variables in ESL2. The sociocultural and affective domains of
language learning as well as the political and economic factors that
control language policy, language use, language availability, and teach-
ing conditions make ESL1 so different from ESL2 as to make many of the
sociolinguistic principles, theoretical assumptions, and pedagogical prac-
tices of one anything from ineffective to inoperable in the other. If
anything, ESL1 may be more different from ESL2 than they both are
from EFL.

AMBIVALENT REPRESENTATIONS OF ESL AND EFL
IN THE LITERATURE AND DISCOURSE

How different from EFL is ESL of either type currently represented to
be? Generally in the discourse of language teaching, SL education is
recognized and treated as different from FL education. However, it is
rather strange that in the case of English, perhaps the only language with
an internationally recognized SL and FL profile, the distinction seems to
blur in much of the literature (despite what the academics and theorists
say). For instance, Nutall (1982), in her book *Teaching Reading Skills in a
Foreign Language*, says in the introductory chapter that “the book is about
reading a foreign language and particularly about reading English as a
foreign or second language (EFL/ESL)” (p. 1). Somehow the distinction
seems not to matter when English is involved although it was in the
context of English that the distinction was originally introduced. Even
where ESL is the preferred label, EFL is very often used as a denotative
equivalent. When a difference is intended, the distinction does not relate
so much to the status or functional use of the language or to the learning
objective of the learner as it does to whether one is talking about learning within a native-speaking country or not. This primacy of territoriality as a defining feature is further evidenced by the only popular English-related acronym in the U.S. that contains an irreplaceable FL element, the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), which, of course, is a test meant to be taken before entering the U.S., and although it is administered inside the U.S., it presumes a status quo ante situation.

Literature in and about ELT often evidences an ESL/EFL ambivalence or perhaps, to be more accurate, an unwillingness to affiliate committedly to either. I cite a few tokens of many. The proceedings of the 1983 Georgetown University Round Table on Language and Linguistics are subtitled *Applied Linguistics and the Preparation of Second Language Teachers* (Alatis, Stern, & Strevens, 1983). Most articles in it deal with ESL in North America, but some concern English teaching in Yugoslavia, Austria, and Japan, all three of which are traditionally considered EFL countries. Blatchford and Schachter (1978) explicitly state that the book is “held together by the theme of the teaching of English as a foreign language, a topic that the 12th annual TESOL convention focused on” (p. iii). Of a total of 29 contributions in the volume, only 5 even discuss EFL (in its classic definition as in Richards et al., 1985, or Judd, 1987), and of these only 3 address EFL issues directly. On the contrary, most of the articles deal with ESL (in its classic North American sense), and ESL explicitly appears in the titles of several articles. Maclean (1985) has compiled a bibliography of work, “Reading in a Second/Foreign Language.” Apart from the ambivalence of the title, at least three other things are noteworthy about the bibliography. First, she has made no attempt at all to separate literature on FL reading from literature on SL reading. Second, she claims that “there has been an increase in the number of publications that have examined the extent to which the various social, psychological and linguistic factors influence second/foreign language reading behaviour” (p. 249), which, read together with the former point, strongly suggests that there is no need to consider the factors that influence reading in SL as different from those in FL. Third, she admits that most of the references focus on EFL/ESL despite attempts to include languages other than English.

Sociolinguists should and do find the SL situation different from the FL situation in more ways than one. One usually has a greater registral, stylistic, and lectal range in one’s SL than in one’s FL, and an SL, when acquired, is more likely to be the other language of a bilingual’s repertoire than an FL is (see Sridhar, 1989; Sridhar, 1992). Kachru

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12 Platt and Weber (1980), however, have argued that there is, at least initially, a fusion between the stylistic and lectal axes in an SL situation.
(1982a) says that the distinction between EFL and ESL is important “with reference to the role and functions of English in the educational, administrative and sociocultural context of a country in which English is used as a non-native language” (p. 37). But even sociolinguists do not seem to care about the indiscriminate use of FL and SL when they talk about English. For instance, Baker (1993) uses FL and SL as though they were virtually the same. Again, although Richards (1983) is writing about FL and although it is the term foreign language that appears in the title and throughout the article, the editor of the section has chosen to interpret and rename it as second language twice in the editorial introduction. Besides, foreign language learning is not even indexed at the end of the anthology, while second language learning is.

European-American educational institutions, consultancy services, and textbook and other teaching material publishers of the multibillion-dollar ESL enterprise have jumped in to capitalize on the ambiguity of ESL/EFL terminology. No doubt it is to the advantage of authors and publishers of textbooks and of the vendors of teaching materials to publicize the dual-mode versatility of their wares, as it enlarges the market. On the electronic superhighways, where a lot of formal and informal discussions go on, it is usual to find ESL and EFL used as virtual synonyms. I cite one example from a 1992 discussion on the TESL-L network:

Low-level ESL writers can do pretty well when assigned a PROJECT (not a short paper) on personal topics such as family history etc. When I say low-level, I mean EFL (generally) students who have been learning English for three or four months. . . . I stick to my original contention that EFL/ESL writers feel more comfortable. (A. Tillyer, posting on TESL-L [listserv@cunyvm.cuny.edu], June 20, 1992)

It seems that what Strevens said in 1980 holds true even now, only more universally: “I sense a great deal of free variation, uncertainty, even change of meaning, in the use of terms TESL and TEFL. For a given activity, sometimes the one is used and sometimes the other” (p. 31).

So an interesting ambivalence exists, at best a willing suspension of a confusion and at worst a paradox. On the one hand (mainly) native English-speaking applied linguists and SLA and ELT experts are trying to maintain a distinction between ESL and EFL and to convince themselves and the others that the distinction has validity in applied linguistics and relevant for pedagogy. On the other hand, similar if not the same experts are not only tolerating and ignoring the difference but also acceding with the publishers and promoters of the ELT industry in creating the

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13 As revealed in Hanson (1995), written by the director of the British Council, the ELT industry is worth £5 billion a year to Great Britain alone.
illusion that ESL and EFL are the same or that the difference is insignificant enough to be ignored.

PROBLEMS WITH THE EXISTING LABELS AND REPRESENTATION

What, then, are the problems with the labels *ESL* and *EFL*? First of all, *ESL* has two (if not three) very different denotations, and the two (ESL1 and ESL2) are opposed to each other in at least two crucial defining dimensions and have generally very different lives and living conditions. In short, the label *ESL* is denotatively vague in that it has at least two major, very different interpretations and varying sociocultural profiles. If the purpose of labelling and categorization is to “offer the ESOL professional some useful perspectives in developing instructional materials and teaching strategies” (Judd, 1987, p. 7), a blanket label *ESL* for the two is thoroughly inadequate and will undoubtedly defeat the purpose. It will then be sociopolitically and pedagogically essential to create another dichotomy within ESL to distinguish between the two types in order to faithfully represent their different sociolinguistic profiles and applied linguistic priorities.

Second, although the two labels *ESL* and *EFL* are held to be different, ostensibly so as to offer appropriate perspectives in teaching strategies and materials, in practice the two are often used interchangeably. The widespread tendency among practitioners to thus bracket *ESL* and *EFL* and to use the two labels indiscriminately as virtual synonyms in the literature and in the marketing of teaching material contradicts and debunks the (vacuous) claim that the differentiation is pedagogically advantageous. Besides, these labels may also have initiated and regularized a pattern of discourse, which may be more sociopolitically pernicious and commercially exploitative (see Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992; Tollefson, 1991) than academically illuminating or pedagogically advantageous.

Finally, at least two English-using countries, South Africa and Zimbabwe, expose the painful inadequacy of the ENL/ESL/EFL taxonomy with reference to the profile of a country. Isobel Stevenson from the University of Southern Africa, for instance, says that South Africa and Zimbabwe could be ENL, ESL, or EFL countries depending on which section of the population or which community one is profiling (personal e-mail communication, May 1992). To say that a country is at once all

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14 Some colleagues have pointed out to me that similar situations obtain in some traditional ESL1 countries like India, where an ESL/EFL difference exists between rural and urban areas or between northern and southern India. There are also a few still in India who claim English as their native language.
three is another way of saying that it is none of the three. It is also a stern reminder that the labels and classifications refer to psychosocial profiles of situations of language learning and use rather than to countries or communities as a whole, regardless of the politics of the language learning. (South Africa is generally politically counted as a native-speaking country.) It is not surprising, then, that the obfuscation of reality in the dichotomy has come under attack from several quarters (e.g., Debyasuvarn, 1981; Gorlach & Schroder, 1985; Quirk, 1988). Quirk (1991) rejects the ESL/EFL dichotomy: “I ignore it partly because I doubt its validity and frequently fail to understand its meaning. There is certainly no clear-cut distinction between ESL and EFL” (p. 159). It has even been suggested that the vagueness of these terms may be part of a conspiracy for the permanent disempowerment of a credulous clientele of NNSs. “A clear example of the operation of academic imperialism is the fuzzy concepts of second and foreign language learning. It is clearly in the interests of scholars from the dominant group to operate with such imprecise terms, as they legitimate the apparent relevance of methods and theories globally” (Phillipson, 1991, p. 50).

WHAT NEXT?

The spread, stature, role, and functions of English have changed very much in the last two or three decades, as have the attitudes of peoples of the world towards speaking, learning, and using it. The electronic revolution resulting in distance learning, communication superhighways, and other instant-access interaction among the peoples of the world will undoubtedly keep the glossography changing even more in the coming years. Strong arguments have been forthcoming also for the recognition of World Englishes incorporating several nonnative, institutionalized, stable varieties of the English-using Outer Circle (to name a few, Foley, 1988; Greenbaum, 1985, Kachru, 1982b; Pride, 1982; Smith, 1987). There have also been proposals for new acronyms reflecting the intra- and international status of English (Debyasuvarn, 1981; Smith, 1983, 1985; Via, 1981). All the same, in spite of my scepticism about the validity of concept of the NS for English in today’s world (Nayar, 1993, 1994), I do not believe that the existing NS-NNS distinction can be ignored or obliterated because the basic sociopolitical and ethnocultural issues that gave birth to the binarism will undoubtedly remanifest themselves in just another, perhaps more politically correct but equally insidious, dichotomy.

I believe the following nomenclature has good applied linguistic and sociolinguistic motivations and rationale to represent English in non-native situations:
1. The label *English as a second language (ESL)* should be retained and used only for all situations of the type I have earlier referred to as ESL2.

2. All other situations of English learning where English has some communicative goal and some well-defined domains of use should be conflated and be labelled *English as an associate language (EAL)*.\(^\text{15}\)

3. The label *English as a foreign language (EFL)* should be used for situations or countries where there is no history of prolonged British or U.S. political presence, where English has no special status or internal function, and where its communicative use is of low priority.

Although this relabelling does not achieve much in economy, it gains considerably in applied linguistic pragmatism, sociolinguistic perspective, and taxonomic accuracy as the three-way classification is well motivated politically, sociohistorically, and pedagogically. From ESL through EAL to EFL there is a cline of (a) communicative need as learning goal, (b) desired or expected target competence, (c) the importance of native target model and hence NS teacher dependence, (d) reliance on environmental support and on institutional forces in the process of learning, (e) need for involvement of English in the concept formation and socialization of the learner, (f) the nature and extent of acculturation/native pragmatics, and (g) affective factors like language loyalty and sense of identity.

**ESL: Native English-Speaking Country and Goal of Acculturation**

There are at least three sound practical reasons why the new denotation of *ESL* is far more sensible. First, the two crucial defining criteria of ESL (but not of EAL and EFL) will be the environmental support of a (politically) native English-speaking country and the goal of eventual acculturation and assimilation into the (native-) English-speaking society. These criteria have vital implications for a range of factors from planning, to funding, to administration, to target competence, to teaching material, to methodology, to teacher training. Second, this is the ESL that is represented in the bulk of existing research publications and other forms of literature concerning ESL and SLA. Third, this is by and large the situation that seems to have become the ESL at the annual conventions of the world’s largest international organization of English teachers—TESOL—and by extension popularised accordingly through consensual agreement among practitioners. Besides, of late, ESL has

\(^{15}\) See note 8 for my preference for the term *associate*. 
come to mean just this in many parts of the world as well as to the publication industry that represent, inform, and influence the ELT enterprise.

**EAL: Some Domains, No Goal of Assimilation**

On the other hand, neither of the two main defining features of ESL applies to EAL. In an EAL situation, environmental support is variable, indifferent, and unreliable, and although assimilation into the native-speaking community is never the goal, identification with a native target culture is optional and generally learner motivated. The target objectives of learning English are much less focused and homogenous than in ESL. All the same, enough sociohistorical and functional features are common for all EAL learners. For all of them English has some social function or some domains for its purposive communicative use (unlike in an EFL situation), but English will not, at the same time, normally be the sole language encompassing all public domains (unlike in ESL). Even so, for most EAL speakers, English will also be, in some manner, part of their sense of identity, as most EAL communities have evolved reasonably stable historical-traditional patterns of relating English systematically to their other functional language(s) and ethnolinguistic identities. One feature of the verbal behaviour of EAL speakers, for example, is the pervasive and persistent code mixing of English with any one or more of their other languages (Kamwangamalu, 1989; Narrey, 1982; Nayar, 1985b), often apparently with little linguistic motivation but perhaps purely as a covert way of encoding the Englishness in their complex multiple identities (Myers-Scotton, 1993). EAL communities (unlike in EFL) also generally conduct at least some of their schooling and much of their higher education in the medium of English, which makes the unusual role of English in education a special concern of EAL. At the same time, most if not all teachers of English are not NSs but SL speakers of their own local variety of English,16 who have little intention, ability, or mandate to teach anything other than what they themselves speak. The whole ecology of English learning is thus essentially different from that in ESL and EFL, so basic issues like type of language input, intelligibility, communicative competence, sociopragmatics, and so on will need to undergo serious reconsideration and reevaluation against the background of the particular EAL situation (Kachru & Nelson, 1996). Textbooks and teaching materials will also deviate accordingly from those in traditional ESL situations, which typically represent assimilationist and integrative or even the so-called instrumental motiva-

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16 It is one of the paradoxes of ELT in the world that the majority of the teachers of English to NNSs today are themselves NNSs, whereas most of current ESL literature and material seems to presume that they are NSs.
tions in their orientation and carry a great deal of Anglo-American cultural and sociopragmatic bias in their content and ideology.

**EFL: No Internal Communicative Function**

The retention of the situation of EFL is still sociolinguistically sound and pedagogically motivated. In EFL, unlike in ESL and EAL, English has little internal communicative function or sociopolitical status. If and when there is a communicative focus, the aim is to facilitate contact with other (not necessarily just native English) speech communities in the wider international context, that is, to participate in the reasonably predictable contexts of English-dominated global interaction. Unlike EAL and like ESL, EFL depends on NS norms for the target model and the cultural content, but unlike in ESL, nativelike cultural and pragmatic competence need not have a high priority. Very high competence is neither expected from nor usually achieved by an EFL speaker. Again, unlike EAL speakers, EFL speakers do not hold English to be a part of their linguistic and cultural identity. The range of levels of competence can be greater than in ESL and EAL, and, consequently, a greater versatility in methods and materials will be necessary. Moreover, EFL situations have the highest commercial value for native-speaking countries as consumers of NS expertise.

**CONCLUSION**

The acceptance of EAL as a situation and discipline, separate and different from ESL and EFL, will be sociopolitically and pedagogically significant for English in the world. EAL will represent situations of English learning in more than 30 countries with a combined population of over a billion (see Crystal, 1987). Politically and sociologically EAL will focus attention on the special status of English in many associate language situations that have variously been called, among other names, *New Varieties of English* (Pride, 1982), *New Englishes* (Foley, 1988; Platt et al., 1984), and *non-native varieties* (Quirk, 1988). An exclusive EAL label might lead to international recognition of the status of such varieties not as erroneous, fossilized, interlanguage versions of “proper” English but as real, organic, communicatively active entities with ethnolinguistic vitality and codification potential and might give them the legitimacy and credibility to be treated as realistic target acquisitional models in their habitats.17 Trends for endonormative standards are already gaining

17 A combination of socioeconomic and geopolitical forces will continue to create dialect elitism and hence pedagogic and commercial preference for some varieties, particularly as English is one of the world’s most salable commodities, but the choice of model will likely be more voluntary and controlled by market forces in EAL countries.
confidence (see, e.g., Gupta, 1994; Pakir, 1992). International intelligibility, not intelligibility to the NS, will be the competence target for EAL. Endonormative linguistic confidence may also engender reduced dependence on the received wisdom of ELT from the West. Consequently, the theory, practice, and commerce of English education in the EAL world may then depend less on the discourse of Anglo-American NS perspectives. Such self-reliant language attitudes might “liberate English for use as truly international language, a role that today is tarnished by the misuse of English to prevent the economic, socio-political and cultural advancement of those who do not possess it” (Jernudd, 1981, p. 49). Similar trends may also evolve in matters of the ethics, routines, and conventions of the dissemination of language teaching expertise through professional publications, where currently biases might exist in the elaborate rituals that decide the publishability of facts and opinions (Morgan, 1992/1993, 1996).

The politics of linguistics is such that the NSs of no language will support any move that will threaten their expert power or subvert their sense of ownership of and cultural identification with the language. In the case of English, even more powerful issues like control over the global discourse of language teaching and over a multimillion-dollar ELT enterprise are involved. Therefore, for reasons of political expediency, the distinction between native Englishes and nonnative Englishes will continue, at least given the present geopolitical climate. What is needed, however, is to liberate the discourse of English teaching from the control of NSs by separating knowledge of English from knowledge of English teaching (see Auerbach, 1993), by dissociating historical priority in the possession of a product from the inherence of automatic expertise in the acquisition and use of it (see Pennycook, 1989), and by differentiating English language competence from sociocultural excellence. The discourse of ELT today is overlaid with Anglo-American political and commercial interests, and, as Kachru (1991) writes, “In professional circles, in ESL/EFL programs, there still is the syndrome that the English language is part of the baggage of transfer of technology to the Outer Circle” (p. 195). Evolving a field of specialty like EAL may become an initial step in the demystification of this myth and in the liberation of English learners from dependence on or domination by NSs. In the case of a language like English, with a transnational profile and control of crucial domains of human activity in the world, it is unfortunate enough that knowledge becomes power, but what is worse is that, in the discourse of ELT, power is becoming knowledge.
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One source of information that should inform decisions about English for academic purposes (EAP) writing courses is students’ experiences in those courses and beyond. A survey of ESL students in the U.S. (Leki & Carson, 1994) has indicated that they experience writing differently depending on the source of information drawn on in writing a text: general world knowledge or personal experience; a source text or texts used as a springboard for ideas; or a source text (or other external reality), the content of which the student must display knowledge. This article, based on interview data, reports on how ESL students experience writing under each of these conditions in their EAP writing classes and their academic content classes across the curriculum. The findings suggest that writing classes require students to demonstrate knowledge of a source text much less frequently than other academic courses do. We argue that EAP classes that limit students to writing without source texts or to writing without responsibility for the content of source texts miss the opportunity to engage L2 writing students in the kinds of interactions with text that promote linguistic and intellectual growth.

To explain and understand any human social behavior . . . we need to know the meaning attached to it by the participants themselves. (Nielsen, 1990)

The goals of most English for academic purposes (EAP) writing classes are transcendent. That is, the usual purpose is to enable students to write better not for EAP writing classes but for academic purposes. Researchers have long noted, nevertheless, that writing classes differ considerably from other academic courses in the emphasis placed on various aspects of writing. Bridgeman and Carlson (1984) note, for
example, that writing classes emphasize linguistic and rhetorical forms more than content whereas in other courses the emphasis is reversed.

Writing topics assigned in composition courses and in other academic courses differ as well. As part of a broader study (Leki & Carson, 1994), we surveyed matriculated ESL students on the types of writing tasks they were assigned in both their ESL writing classes and their academic courses. As shown in Table 1, real and important differences exist in the types of writing that students reported doing for composition and other classes.

### TABLE 1
Types of Writing Reported From EAP Composition Courses and Academic Content Courses (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of writing</th>
<th>ESL composition</th>
<th>Academic content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write about reading</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to reading</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argue</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total personal topics</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *N* = 62. In the survey, five topic categories identified in a pilot study were listed in order to elicit topics from survey respondents. The categories were defined in the survey as follows:

1. Writing about something you’ve read
2. Responding to something you’ve read
3. Writing about something personal
4. Explaining something
5. Arguing for or against something

*In addition to the category explicitly indicating personal writing (No. 3 in the table), personal topics were listed by ESL students in four of the five ESL topic categories. For example, 90% of the Explain topics were personal. Also, most of the nonpersonal topics were written in response to reading but were not themselves text responsible.*

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR WRITING TASKS**

In the 1994 study respondents were asked to list actual writing assignments in their ESL classes and in a disciplinary course in which they were currently enrolled that required writing. Although other schemes are available for categorizing academic writing demands (see, e.g., Hale, Taylor, Bridgeman, Carson, Kroll, & Kantor, in press; Horowitz, 1986; Purves, Soter, Takala, & Vahapassi, 1984; Swales, 1990), we based our analysis of the writing topics listed by our informants on the source of the information for the text being written. The sources fell into three broad categories:
1. Information from writers’ own personal experiences (i.e., what they write draws solely on what they already know, their background knowledge). Examples of such topics were “My childhood memory” (in a philosophy class); “My trip from Kuwait to the U.S.” (in a religion class); and “Write about a wedding in Iran” (in an ESL class).

2. A source text to which writers respond. In this type of writing, writers are not responsible for explaining or demonstrating comprehension of the source text but are using it as the springboard for their writing. Some examples of this type of writing situation were “Give my opinion on working overtime (does it have good or bad results for workers?)” (in an ESL class); “We were sometimes asked to write about unusual events. I specifically remember two topics about which our opinions were requested. One [story] was about Necrophilia (loving the dead), and another was about an outlaw raping a young girl who was left at home alone. The general theme was—Who is responsible? The criminal or the society that created those criminals?” (in an ESL class); “Population, hunger, and politics. Think about how you should respond individually to the problems discussed” (in a sociology class); “State your opinion about three leaders over the period which we learned through history” (in a history class); “Is the deer hunting morally right or wrong? And why?” (in a philosophy class); “What did you like about the book you read?” (in a geology class).

3. A text (in the broadest sense of the term; see below) to which writers are exposed and required to account for in some way. In this type of writing, the writers are responsible for demonstrating an understanding of the source text. In other words, they must produce text-responsible prose based on content acquired primarily from text. Examples of topics in this category were “Lab report. Read about denaturing of DNA in an onion” (in a biology class); “Using information from the textbook and lectures, compare and contrast the goals and achievements of Quakers and Puritans, the progressive era and the New Deal, the 20s and the 50s etc., as well as any discrepancies” (in a history class); “(1) Evaluation of Marcus Garvey and his ideas from available sources. (2) Evaluation of different 18th- and 19th-century Afro-American leaders” (in an African American religion class). This category also included a very small number of topics requiring writers to apply a concept from the source text to their own experience, for example, “Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of open time systems and closed time systems. How does the open time system apply to you as a college student?” (in a psychology class).
As the topics in the third category show, we construe text in an expanded, semiotic sense to include not only books and articles but also lectures, lecture notes, films, laboratory setups, or any other meaningful external reality for which the writers are held responsible in creating their own written texts; that is, a text is any source from which writers are expected to acquire (and possibly display) knowledge in some form. For simplicity, however, we refer to all these sources as texts.

A striking feature of the data gathered in the 1994 study was the clear distinction between the sources students drew on for information for their texts in writing classes and in other classes. For students in the 1994 study, writing without a source text and writing without responsibility for the content of a source text were common in their composition classes whereas in other academic courses writing assignments were overwhelmingly text responsible. Of the writing topics assigned in EAP classes, 52% were personal in the sense that the source of information for these assignments was personal experience and knowledge. Only 7% of the writing topics assigned in other courses were primarily personal; these topics drew instead upon information students were to gather from some source text external to their personal experience and knowledge.

**HOW DO STUDENTS EXPERIENCE THE THREE TYPES OF WRITING?**

Thus, the 1994 study suggests that some ESL writing classes may require little of the type of writing that students will be expected to do in their content courses. Yet the assumption in these ESL writing classes seems to be that students can prepare to do the type of text-responsible writing required by other academic courses by producing writing based on reading for which they are not held responsible. In the study reported on here, however, we were not interested in demonstrating again that ESL classes, English classes, or writing classes differed from other disciplinary courses in their writing requirements. Rather our focus was on how students experienced writing under the three broad conditions described above. Although students are the central players in both composition and other academic courses, we know little about how they experience the differing demands these writing contexts make on their writing abilities. Presumably these abilities are the focus of their composition courses, but students write in preparation for the writing they will do beyond the composition course.

Research in areas such as academic and discipline-specific writing (e.g., Bazerman, 1988; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1991; Chiseri-Strater, 1991; Faigley & Hansen, 1985; Geisler, 1994; Herrington, 1985, 1988; McCarthy, 1987; Myers,

Chiseri-Strater (1991) reports on two native English-speaking students and their (good) experiences in writing class compared with several much less positive experiences in other disciplinary courses. But more typical is the situation Bazerman (1995) complains about in his response to the articles collected in a volume on native English speakers’ (NSs’) writing: None of the collected accounts of writing includes students or their experience writing for disciplinary courses as opposed to writing for English courses. In L2 research, few of the studies noted above deal with students’ perceptions of their writing classes and disciplinary courses. Casanave’s (1990) research focuses on how students perceive writing in their sociology program but not in writing classes; Leki (1995) and Silva (1992) also deal with student perceptions of writing, but Leki reports primarily on survival strategies, and Silva, on the experience of writing in an L2. No studies of L2 writers that we are aware of directly examine the articulation between writing courses and writing demands in other disciplinary courses as experienced by the principal players.

We concur with the position taken in feminist theory that “to explain and understand any human social behavior . . . we need to know the meaning attached to it by the participants themselves” (Nielsen, 1990, p. 7; see also Olesen, 1994, for a review of the potential for new understanding to be gained from feminist research methodology). Thus, we regard research into ESL students’ experiences as an initial step in the direction of eventually learning more about how ESL writers make the transition between ESL writing classes and other academic courses. Our research question, then, is: How do students perceive writing under the three conditions described above, that is, writing without a source text, writing with a source text as springboard only, and writing with responsibility for source text content? We are interested in their perceptions as a way of exploring the effectiveness of the typical ESL writing curriculum for postsecondary academic preparation.

METHODS

Interviews

We chose to base our study on interview data because we see research “as a social production symbolically negotiated between researcher and
Interviews are uniquely suited to this type of negotiation, that is, to eliciting phenomenological data, which “represent the world view of the participants being investigated” (p. 3). They are “open-ended, designed to explore the perspectives of the people concerned” (Hammersley, 1990, p. 31). Our sense of such phenomenological interviewing also coincides with Johnson’s (1992) description of ethnographic interviews: “What makes an interview ethnographic? The emic goals of the interview, rather than techniques, make it ethnographic” (p. 144). Our intention was to move toward developing just such an emic view of these student writers’ perspectives—an insider’s perspective—and a sense of their understanding and interpretation of their writing experiences.

Nevertheless, “even within such exploratory interviews . . . there may be some directive questions” (Hammersley, 1990, p. 31). Thus, we used an interview format between Denzin’s (1978) nonscheduled standardized interview and his nonstandardized interview. In nonscheduled standardized interviews, the same questions and probes are asked of each participant although they may arise in different orders as the direction of the conversation varies with each participant’s reactions to the questions. In nonstandardized interviews “general questions to be addressed and specific information desired by the researcher are anticipated, but may be addressed during the interview informally in whatever order or context they happen to arise” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 119). In the manner of qualitative research, the questions served as guides for what were intended to be, and were, fairly open-ended conversations; we readily pursued interesting angles not anticipated in the interview guide. Subsequent interviews reflected alterations to the interview guide suggested by these promising leads. Because the interviews were conducted during or immediately after experience with the writing contexts we were exploring, the participants appeared to have no trouble answering questions.

Finally, in consideration of our busy student informants, using interview data allowed us to inquire directly about the students’ perceptions and experiences while minimally disrupting their lives by freeing them from additional work such as keeping a journal.

Any research method has its drawbacks. For interview data, these include the problems with all self-reports (e.g., remembering incorrectly, attempting to show oneself in the best possible light, adapting answers to what one assumes the investigator wants to hear) and face-to-face interactions (e.g., the researcher’s inadvertently indicating preferred responses). We believe these problems were minimized at least partly by the fact that we had no preferred responses and were not after facts or a phantom, objective truth but our informants’ reactions, perceptions, and experiences as they themselves understood them.
To investigate how student writers experience writing under the three conditions, we conducted two sets of qualitative, in-depth interviews (see Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, pp. 76–105), one at the beginning of fall 1994 and the second during the last month of classes, with students at a large U.S. state university. The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to an hour; they were recorded and then transcribed. Because students do not typically experience these writing conditions simultaneously, the interviews were conducted at two different times in the term to give the student respondents the opportunity to experience all three types of writing contexts described above.

Phase 1

We drew our informants from the group of students who placed into English classes for nonnative English speakers (NNSs) at a large U.S. state university. Students are placed into these classes on the basis of an English placement examination required of all incoming NNSs, both graduate and undergraduate. The results of this exam either exempt students from English classes or place them into a credit-bearing pre–freshman composition class (open to both graduates and undergraduates) or special sections of freshman composition classes for undergraduate NNSs.

Part of the university’s placement procedure for new ESL students consists of a 1-hour essay assignment on a topic related to a text they have just read. Writers are free to draw as much or as little from the source text as they want. This writing task falls into the second category described above (i.e., writing from a source text but without responsibility for its content). In addition, as a part of their normal course work during the 1st week of classes, students placed into English classes produce a writing sample on a topic assigned at the time the sample is taken. That is, students do not have textual support for the sample beyond the writing prompt itself. This writing falls into the first category discussed above.

Thus, the first set of interviews at the beginning of the term was designed so that participants could describe their two recent writing experiences, writing for the university’s English placement exam and writing the sample that was part of their regular class work at the beginning of the term. In these two situations the students wrote under the first two conditions under investigation: without a source text and with a source text intended as a springboard for their writing (i.e., from which they could use the information as much or as little as they pleased and for which they would not be responsible).

All of the 61 new students who placed into ESL writing classes in fall 1994 were invited to participate in this research project. Twenty-seven
agreed, 8 undergraduate and 19 graduate students (see Table 2). The interview guide for this set of interviews appears in Appendix A.

Phase 2

To probe students’ experiences of writing under the third condition discussed above, we again surveyed all students enrolled in ESL writing classes during fall 1994 about the amount, type, and difficulty of the writing they were doing for their courses across the curriculum and asked whether they were interested in being interviewed about that writing and their writing for their current English classes. A total of 88 new and previously enrolled students were enrolled in ESL writing classes at that time, but only 78 reported being in classes other than English that required any writing. Of this group, 21 agreed to participate in this second set of interviews, 7 undergraduates and 14 graduates (see Table 3). The initial interview guide for this set of interviews appears in Appendix B.

In the second interview, we asked the participants to describe their experiences in writing for their English classes and for other classes they were then taking. We expected, as turned out to be the case, that in their English classes they were generally not held responsible for the specific content of any texts read in support of writing assignments but that in their disciplinary courses they were.

To collect information on the third type of writing condition (i.e., text-responsible writing), we had to identify a group of participants enrolled in classes across the curriculum that required writing, because

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Home country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological sciences</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical sciences</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Iran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior design</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 27 (10 females and 17 males aged 18–37).
TABLE 3
Phase 2 Participants, by Major and Home Country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Home country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological sciences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Korea 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Germany 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical sciences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chile 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cyprus 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indonesia 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Iran 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Japan 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Thailand 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Turkey 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Venezuela 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vietnam 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 21 (8 females and 13 males aged 18–37).

the 1994 survey data showed that most of the text-responsible writing was occurring in those classes. However, not all the students who participated in the first set of interviews were enrolled in such classes.

We could have limited the number of students in the second round of interviews to only those who had participated in the first round (12 students). However, examination of the interview transcripts of the additional 9 participants revealed that their contributions supported and extended the comments and perceptions of the original group, thus providing a richer, more detailed picture than we could have developed with information only from the original group. The more people we heard from, we believed, the better; and the benefits of pooling the data to produce such a richer picture outweigh any strictly methodological disadvantages.

Thus, 12 of the original 27 interviewees participated in the second round; 9 interviewees were new to the research. Because the second set of interviews took place toward the end of the term, we were able to ensure that students had already done some writing for their courses, were in the midst of other writing assignments, and would have the terms of these assignments fresh in their minds.

DATA ANALYSIS

As Goetz and LeCompte (1984) point out,

Analytic processes used in ethnography [and other types of qualitative research] differ from those used in many other research designs. Differences in the timing of analysis and its integration with other research tasks are the
characteristics that make ethnography feel most foreign to researchers from other traditions. Rather than relegating analysis to a period following data collection, ethnographers analyze data throughout the study. (p. 165)

Following data analysis procedures from ethnographic and qualitative research studies generally, we and a research assistant who had been trained to do both interviewing and data analysis repeatedly read through the available interview transcripts both during and after the transcription of the remaining taped interviews. The research question and preliminary analysis indicated two primary analytic frames: type of writing (without text support, with text support, and under text-responsible conditions) and academic level of student (graduate or undergraduate). We then read through the transcripts recursively, noting and coding both recurrent themes and comments made salient by their relevance to the research question, their vehemence, or their potential to elicit information in subsequent interviews.

This method of data analysis follows a strategy of analytic induction, which “involves scanning the data for categories of phenomena and for relationships among such categories” (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 180) and examining the data “for meaningful themes, issues, or variables, to discover how these are patterned, and to attempt to explain the patterns. Data analysis usually involves a continual process of looking for meaning by sorting reiteratively through the data” (Johnson, 1992, p. 90).

We and the research assistant analyzed all the transcripts independently. The three sets of codings were then compared. The coding categories of interest to this report appear in Appendix C. Except for the initial categories of advantages and disadvantages of writing under the three conditions described, these coding categories emerged from an examination of the data rather than being determined beforehand and imposed on the data. Categories important for writing under one condition were not always important under the others, so although we referred to the code categories throughout the returns to the data and the recursive rereadings, we discuss here only those themes that emerged as salient within the different contexts for writing.

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1 We did our initial reviews of the interview data independently but were in close communication immediately after to discuss themes that each reader perceived. We then reanalyzed the data with the pooled themes in mind. Because we reached agreement through repeated cycles of analysis and consultation, no formal numerical calculation of interrater reliability was possible, as codes continued to merge and shift until consensus was reached.
DISCUSSION

Writing Without Source Text

The students participating in the first set of interviews had just experienced writing without source texts as a part of their admissions process and placement into credit-bearing ESL writing courses. Nevertheless, writing without some sort of external source text or information source is a relatively rare situation in academic writing, probably limited to placement or proficiency exams and certain English classes.

Time Constraints

When asked to describe what writing without a source text was like for them, students reported a number of advantages and disadvantages. The greatest disadvantage, mentioned over and over again (by 19 of the 27 interviewees), was that being asked to write off the top of their heads most likely meant that they were writing with some kind of time limit. This limitation clearly weighed heavily on these students’ minds. They repeatedly said that time limits prevented them from finding ideas they felt satisfied with and accessing appropriate vocabulary to express those ideas.

1. The essays I wrote didn’t reflect my whole ideas. I must select the simple sentence, the simple ideas, . . . there is a time limit, so I must write hurry, think hurry.

2. If I have much time I can do my own way. I can think it thoroughly. . . . I know it’s not a good method to write the same words in one paragraph, so if I just know [one] word I can find in the dictionary, find another words. . . . If I have to write in a short time, I don’t have very good idea.

3. Time is the problem. Each time I write a paper in English I have to spend a lot of time to organize. So if you give me just a limited time, I cannot do very well.

Familiarity With the Topic

Besides the time issue, the crucial variables for writing without a text as support were the familiarity with the topic and, related to the time issue, the degree to which the writers were likely to have been thinking about the topic recently or to have it in the forefront of their minds.

4. They ask some question . . . unexpected, like how, what do you like to do on weekend or what are your hobbies. . . . sometimes that kind of thing is no important . . .; I think it is no important in your life. You know that thing but you don’t receive that kind of question every day.
5. There are sometimes subjects you never think to write about those. For example, they say write some about a custom or an important value. I never thought about writing about them.

6. Every day you don’t think about your favorite possessions.

**Organization**

A theme that arose repeatedly in the interview data was how to organize ideas, with some students finding it particularly difficult to organize without a source text of some kind, and others, particularly easy without a source text. Comments about ease or difficulty of organization often led to remarks about the appeal of certain writing tasks that students were able to perform with great facility: giving their opinion, comparing others’ opinions, giving pros and cons and then choosing between the two positions, giving others’ opinions and then giving their own, writing when there is no definite answer, and explaining something they know.

**Summary**

All the main disadvantages of writing with no source text seemed to revolve around deficits: lack of time, of familiarity with the topic, of information, of ideas, of writing models, or of vocabulary on the topic. On the other hand, as might be expected, if the crucial condition of familiarity with the topic was met, many students felt that writing without having to be concerned about a source text was liberating. As one student put it,

7. I feel free!

**Writing From a Source Text Without Responsibility for Content**

Referring to the second writing condition, students talked about their experiences writing from a textual source when it functioned essentially as a prompt. The interview data show that this condition is, in fact, the one under which students perceived themselves to be writing in their ESL writing classes. Even if they were using a textual source, they were never expected to learn the material in it, only to make some connection between that material and their own experiences and opinions.

Students mentioned limitations created by time constraints much less insistently as they described writing from source texts. Possibly the source text constituted a form of prewriting in this condition, and as a result students were sufficiently prompted, eliminating the need to both think
of something to say and write it down, as might be the case when students are writing without a source text.

**Advantages and Disadvantages**

The participants perceived this writing situation as very different both from writing without a source text and from writing in any course besides their ESL writing class. Again the participants identified both advantages and disadvantages in this context, so prevalent in writing classes. The advantages are perhaps predictable. Writers said they appreciated having a source text because it could serve as a general model, stimulate thinking, and supply many of the resources the students complained of lacking without source texts, such as vocabulary, sentence structures, writing style, organizational patterns, ideas, and information. As a result, students reported variously that this type of writing was easier than writing without any source text at all because it stirred strong emotional or intellectual reactions as a jumping-off point; it allowed them to write a longer text; it gave them something to analyze; it caused them to think more; and it allowed them to think less, that is, they could rely on the source text to do some of the thinking for them.

But the students also perceived the availability of a source text as creating additional burdens. The foremost consideration for working with a source text was understanding the text. However, this appeared to be more of a potential problem in disciplinary courses than in ESL writing classes, where the selection of source texts tended to be calibrated to the students’ level of reading proficiency.

**Plagiarism**

Even if the students understood the source texts, they created other restrictions. Students felt obligated to engage the ideas of the text in some way, to comment on it; they were no longer “free.” This sense of restriction was tightly bound up with a concern about plagiarism, an area of apparently great anxiety for these writers. Students mentioned that the problem with using a source text was that they regarded certain words, sentence structures, organizational patterns, or even ideas as used up once the text employed them, making them unavailable for use by the students themselves. They worried about the need to use their own (i.e., different) words when they perceived themselves as having no other words besides those used in the text. Furthermore, they worried because they had been repeatedly told in writing classes that it is important to think hard and come up with their own ideas and not just to repeat the ideas in the text.

Students perceived the task to be one of building upon the information in the source text somehow by referring to their own knowledge and
experience. In writing class, then, the source text could be a burden because students believed it required additional language and ideas and saw these two requirements as a restriction.

**Undue Influence**

The problems associated with engaging the ideas in the source texts took several forms. Some students reported that the source texts contained too many ideas or too many new ideas. This overabundance made it difficult for students to address all the ideas in the source text and, thus, to organize their own ideas and integrate the new ideas with their own.

A number of students also complained that reading a source text, particularly on a fairly unfamiliar subject, caused them to become biased or swayed in favor of the text’s point of view and to become unsure of or confused about their own opinions. Under these conditions students found it difficult to respond to teachers’ admonitions such as “I’m not interested in what the article says; I want you to give your own ideas, express your own opinions.” Thus, the source text was not only a source of ideas and language but also a hindrance or additional burden in this writing condition.

**The EAP Class as a Setting for Non-Text-Responsible Writing**

In trying to get at students’ perspectives on writing in non-text-responsible and text-responsible modes, we came to understand that the primary, almost exclusive, site for non-text-responsible writing assignments was the writing class. Because this type of writing coincided so tightly with English classes, a closer look at students’ general perceptions of these classes sheds further light on the role of non-text-responsible writing in students’ growth as academic writers. Furthermore, we find the site and the type of writing so intricately bound together that it is difficult to understand the non-text-responsible writing condition without reference to its context. The particulars of the site seem, at least arguably, to be driven by the non-text-responsible writing assigned there, and by the same token the type of writing assigned there appears to strongly affect the degree of freedom, flexibility, and general comfort possible in that environment.

The writing class these students described is a friendly place where little is at stake, the teacher is sympathetic to and knowledgeable about the writing problems of NNSs, and the classmates are all in the same boat. Nearly all the participants felt that they had improved in their
ability to write and in their confidence in themselves as writers as a result of the classes. They said they felt the classes were a valuable experience.

The writers perceived the topics they were asked to address in their writing classes as arbitrary, arbitrarily chosen, unimportant, requiring minimal intellectual engagement, and varyingly interesting depending on the interests of individual students. The students seemed to see no particular reason to write on these topics rather than on others. But these characterizations should not be construed as complaints because the students seemed to find it quite unobjectionable that the subjects they were asked to write on did not matter much. They felt that any subject matter would do because the point of this writing was to learn and practice writing, not to learn or display knowledge about the topics.

8. I thought that’s not the purpose of the thing and they don’t want that we write a big subject, a complete subject; they want just check our grammar or writing.

In the same way, according to these writers, what they said about the topic did not have to be correct or accurate; they felt quite free to fabricate content. As one put it,  

9. My principal objective in my English class is my grammar, not the idea, because sometimes the idea, . . . I made [up] the idea, maybe something is not true, but the idea is good, uh? I could write about them [topics assigned] but . . . I know it [what I write] is not true.

This is not to say that these students perceived content as unimportant to or not being valued by the writing teacher. When asked about the sense in which the content is important to the writing teacher, the students invariably said that the content—the students’ ideas—had to be clear and clearly expressed.

10. [The English teacher looks for a] meaningful paper. . . . I mean clear essay with some kind of correct grammar and to let the other person understand what you are writing for.

---

2 Harklau’s (1994) description of ESL high school students’ perceptions of their ESL pull-out classes as friendly places with little at stake mirrors those of these college students. We get a similar picture in Fu’s (1995) description of the experiences of the four Hmong high school students she observes.

3 Paul Prior, in response to a paper given by the first author in a session on EAP issues at the 29th Annual TESOL Convention, pointed out that students also admit to fabricating content for papers written in courses other than writing courses. Although we agree that students may well fabricate in those courses, we nevertheless maintain that the writing teacher and the teachers of other academic courses would view fabrication of content very differently, with writing teachers possibly being willing to accept fabrication that improves, for example, a paper’s coherence and content area teachers finding fabrication entirely unacceptable. This assertion is supported by our participants’ insistence that professors in courses other than writing classes were very much focused on accuracy of content in student writing, as discussed below.
Thus, in writing under this condition, writers must be clear but are never wrong.

In other words, the overriding concerns in these writing classes as these students perceived them were rhetorical and linguistic. The linguistic concerns centered on the correct use of grammar, punctuation, and so on. Among the rhetorical concerns were the usual: organization; use of topic sentences; attention to stylistic issues such as trying to find different words to refer to the same thing or to use long, flashy sentences or stylish turns of phrase. As one student explained,

11. An English paper is just like a green plant. But if [I] write a lab report, it [is] just like leaves outside, very dry and yellow; you don’t have to put water in there.

Again, these students did not dismiss the concerns of their writing classes. Several students asserted that they wrote “better” for their English class than for their other classes because they attended more to these types of features in their writing.

Writers also reported a great concern for the reader. Students repeatedly mentioned that they felt they needed to be very clear so that the reader could understand and would like what they said, that they had to find ways to please the audience, and that it was important to find interesting introductions and conclusions that did more than repeat the content of the writing in order to keep the audience, that is, their teacher and classmates, entertained. As one said,

12. The reader will be more seeking for like when we read a novel; we try to enjoy, novel always give you enjoyable. . . . but you don’t want to read my mathematics books and enjoy. [In writing class you have to write so you can] attract reader.

And another:

13. [You have to make papers] more appealing or more logic to the reader.

However, exactly what constituted clear and entertaining or reader-friendly writing was not always so clear for these classes. As one student asserted about writing for her English class,

14. You don’t think you have to explain a lot because you understand what you have written . . . . It’s kind of hard; I say it will be hard in our English papers because we’re sharing our papers with other international students; you may just not [think you] need to describe a lot because you think it’s obvious but it’s obvious for you because you lived that but not for other people so, sometimes you don’t know how many details you have to mention.

Pleasing readers and providing just enough information for them to understand but not so much that the readers became bored or impatient
sometimes proved baffling and mysterious. Some writers seemed to feel they were operating in the dark.

**Summary**

In writing for ESL writing classes these students seemed intensely focused on four maxims: be original, be linguistically correct, be clear, and be engaging. The content had to be intelligible and interesting. However, any content would do, and it did not necessarily have to be correct or accurate. These focuses set writing for writing classes very much apart from writing for other academic contexts, and these students generally experienced text-responsible writing as decidedly different. But they also seemed rather unperturbed that this should be the case, finding it entirely appropriate that English classes should focus on language issues and feeling pleased that at least some of what they were learning in the writing classes was proving to be useful in their other academic courses.4

**Text-Responsible Writing**

Just as writing from source texts without responsibility for demonstrating knowledge of the texts’ contents coincided with writing for writing classes, so did writing with responsibility for text content correspond to writing for other academic courses. The two experiences were described as quite distinct. As one student put it,

> 15. This is just completely different worlds, this engineering and English. The purpose here [in English class] is express yourself. You practice your writing. But in there [science class] you not just express yourself. In introduction, introduce other person’s work and combine your result with their result. Explain some phenomenon.

In describing writing under this condition, the issue of time virtually disappeared as a factor. Presumably, in writing essay or short-answer exams in which students are responsible for source text, time would be an issue, so its absence here is curious. Perhaps time was truly not a factor in this type of writing for these students because of their great familiarity with the content required for essay exams. Or perhaps other considerations engendered by their thinking about this type of writing were simply more urgent and overrode time as a factor in their discussion of other effects they experienced.

4 Interestingly, these issues were less rhetorical ones than the more micro areas of transitions, grammar, punctuation, and topic sentences.
Importance of Content

Much of what students reported about their writing in academic courses focused on the importance of content, whether from text or from lab results and experiments. Content is what counted; professors cared little about language forms.

16. They don’t pay attention to your English . . . . Everybody wants to know—are you good in physics?

To get a good grade in an undergraduate course, one student noted, she needed to

17. hold my idea, focus on the subject . . . . Grammar [is] not enough.

Content was particularly important for graduate students in experimental science because success was measured in terms of what they produced in the lab, but all students believed that their primary task as students was acquisition of content. The display of content knowledge, mainly through writing, then became a primary criterion for success in a course.

These reports highlight one of the principal distinctions between writing for ESL writing classes and writing for content courses. In writing classes, content must be clear but can never be wrong. What you write, in a sense, does not matter, but how you write matters a great deal. In content courses, on the other hand, how you write does not matter; it is what you write that counts, and you can be wrong. However, many students found this type of responsibility for content facilitating, because it freed them from the need to come up with ideas on their own as they often had to do in their ESL writing classes, which they experienced as an additional burden. Both graduates and undergraduates asserted that there was little need for invention in their writing. A graduate student emphasized,

18. I told you. You don’t invent anything when you write [for biology].

In fact, students in content courses, particularly undergraduate courses, are rarely asked to add ideas to those that are already in the text.

Source Text as Scaffold

Source texts provided more than just ideas for writing. The texts used in disciplinary courses also provided vocabulary items, sentence structures (e.g., passives in science writing), and rhetorical forms that could be utilized in the writing assignment. Text thus often became scaffolding for the subsequent assignment by freeing the writer from the need to find appropriate words or to figure out the appropriate rhetorical form.
This scaffolding from the text seemed to be especially important for undergraduate students, who were often taking courses in a discipline for the first time, were less likely than graduate students to be familiar with discipline-specific words and preferred syntactic patterns, and were less likely to be aware of different genres and rhetorical forms. So, although a source text could be a burden in an ESL writing class because it required additional ideas (experienced as a restriction), in content courses the source text constituted the ideas to be written about and so functioned as scaffolding.

Both graduate and undergraduate students, in general, liked writing from text, but there were also clear differences between the two groups. Interest in the topic was much more of an issue for undergraduates than for graduates, presumably because undergraduates must take required courses that they may not like whereas graduate students have chosen a field because they are interested in it. One undergraduate had enjoyed writing a research paper on pesticides for his ESL writing class much more than he enjoyed writing for his U.S. history class:

19. I wanted to learn more about pesticides [than] about history. Why do I care what happened to a strange country for me something like 300 years ago? I don’t care.

Because undergraduates did not necessarily have an interest in the content of the course material, the ideational function of text was more important for them than it was for graduate students. In other words, they relied a great deal on information in the source text when they had to write and were grateful for the ideas and detailed support it provided. Many undergraduates mentioned that being able to use the ideas from articles and text made writing easier:

20. If I know some about the information, I can write it easier.

Graduate students mentioned the importance of displaying source text content accurately in writing more often than the need to rely on text for ideas to write about. They often spoke of their need to use text content as a support framework for their critiques, lab experiments, journal articles, and so on; thus accurately reporting content was preeminent. In fact, one graduate student said that writing from text was similar to reporting on data in that the writer has to be more precise and careful than when writing from personal experience only. For them text content provided support for their ideas, whereas for undergraduates the text content was the idea.

**Audience**

Perceptions of audience and the audience’s needs were another reported difference between writing for ESL classes and for content
courses. Writers reported that writing for a specific audience (i.e., in a particular discipline) was easier than writing for a general audience (i.e., an ESL teacher) because they were able to assume a level of expertise on the part of the disciplinary reader. One undergraduate explained that in writing lab reports the writer knows what the reader knows, so it becomes unnecessary to explain much. In a graduate course on corrosion, another student noted,

21. This is technical. You don’t need explain something because everybody know that.

Furthermore, the writer is cast in a different relationship with the audience in disciplinary courses:

22. [In the English class] I know something and the other person doesn’t so I give an information to them through writing. But in the [microbiology] class it’s not like this. In microbiology class I have to prove that I know something.

To further ease the burden of writing for disciplinary courses, professors were described as not insistent on language-based rhetorical devices. Rather students reported using diagrams, arrows, and scientific shorthand of various kinds in their writing for content courses:

23. Even if I know the materials I have hard time in writing, so what I do is make a lot of pictures instead of words and point out something important from picture; I make some few phrase if it is important to point out.

Thus, a clear presentation of content was not always a function of language in those courses. This difference from the writing courses was a distinct advantage for these NNSs, who may not always have had the linguistic means readily at hand for signaling the types of text moves they were quite able to signal through nonlinguistic means, such as arrows or drawings.

Language Needs

Predictably, differences between graduate and undergraduate responses emerged most sharply in their descriptions of writing text-responsible prose for disciplinary courses. The main difference was in their perception of language needs and difficulties. Undergraduates, who found themselves acquiring specialized academic vocabulary and academic genres in a variety of disciplines, often found learning and using new vocabulary and genres difficult. One student mentioned the need to learn certain phrasal formulas for research papers, such as The research shows . . . . . Another student mentioned the burden of learning new vocabulary in one of her courses:
24. Sociology need me know a lot of word, so I got maybe 20 or 10 pages just new words for me.

Graduate students, on the other hand, who were immersed in their specialization, found the use of technical vocabulary and discipline-specific forms facilitating. In fact, several students noticed that it was easier for them to function linguistically in their discipline than it was in the outside world. One student noted that

25. Sometimes I think it’s a little easy [to write about science] because when I writing normal words [from daily life], I’m not familiar [with them]. But scientist words, maybe I always use them.

Another said,

26. When I’m talking to people . . . about things which are not related to my field of study, I’m trying to find words to explain myself. You know, all day long I’ve been in the department and I know the language there. And I come home and I have to speak my roommate or people from the dorm. I’m a little bit confused.

*Plagiarism*

Discipline-specific language, though, was a two-edged sword for graduate students. Much of their work, such as writing journal articles or reports of experiments, requires summarizing and paraphrasing technical information from their fields, and this task taxed their language proficiency and linguistic flexibility. One graduate talked about the difficulty of paraphrasing and summarizing:

27. If you have a . . . text . . . in perfect English, that’s exactly . . . what you should say and this is the best way. Then you have to find another way. This is funny. . . . So you have to change it and then it gets worse. Kind of sad.

Transforming text, then, to avoid plagiarism was a major issue for the graduate students. Though undergraduates mentioned it as well, they were not as concerned about plagiarism, presumably because the writing tasks that they were being asked to do did not often require the level of specificity needed by graduate students in reporting technical information.

*Linguistic and Rhetorical Issues*

Finally, although both graduate and undergraduate students reported the preeminence of content over language issues in text-responsible prose written for disciplinary courses, linguistic and rhetorical issues reemerged for graduate students in specific disciplinary contexts. Gradu-
ate students had to become quite sensitive to issues of writing in their specific disciplines. (Undergraduates were generally not asked to write disciplinary genres except for lab reports, for which the formats were well specified.) Many of the graduate student comments focused on having to figure out relevant formats for writing in various genres. Journal articles were described as relatively easy, because the form was given: introduction, literature review, results, discussion. Nevertheless, graduate students felt that part of learning the discipline was learning the forms of various types of professional writing.

In addition, these students understood that their writing needed to be in a formal style. Although they were often able to recognize and utilize relevant technical vocabulary and sentence structure, they were less confident that they would be able to distinguish between formal and informal styles. They knew, in any case, that in certain disciplinary writing circumstances, style was an important issue. A law student commented,

28. Knowing material is important, but in law, language and style is too. Sometimes [it’s] more important than material.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This research focused on freestanding EAP classes in the U.S., not on linked, adjunct, or EFL writing courses, and calls attention to the limitations of the type of EAP writing classes the students interviewed here described. In ESL writing classes of 20 years ago, students were primarily responsible for good grammar and good organization. The picture we get from these interviews is that in writing classes now students have become responsible in addition for writing to an audience and writing with the purpose of explaining clearly some (that is, any) content. That the content should be clear and interesting is perhaps an unobjectionable goal for a writing class. More potentially problematic, however, is the perception that any content will do and that the content does not have to be correct or accurate. Content appears to be “raw material on which the students are to practice” rhetorical skills (Jolliffe, 1995, p. 200; see also Kaufer & Young, 1993, for an analysis of the epistemological consequences of separating writing and content). This

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5 Linked and adjunct classes may address many of the problems we raise here. However, it should be recognized that not all English language teaching contexts lend themselves easily to linked or adjunct courses. Furthermore, we know of no research that specifically examines students’ perceptions of the differences between writing for disciplinary courses and writing done in linked, adjunct, or EFL/EAP writing classes. It would be most interesting to learn to what degree the increasing number of courses that bill themselves as more discipline related are perceived by the students enrolled in them as having content rather than strictly linguistic and rhetorical issues as their purview.
characteristic sets writing for writing classes very much apart from writing for other academic contexts. The students we interviewed appeared to perceive their EAP writing classes as helping them to develop linguistically, but it is difficult to see how they helped these ESL students produce writing based on a reality external to their own thoughts, that is, how they help students to learn to encode in their writing a reality that cannot be altered to suit linguistic skills but must be grappled with in order to explain some phenomenon. There is, in effect, no “pushed output” in classes like these (Swain, 1985).

Content and Accuracy in EAP Writing

Certainly an argument can be made that the great advantage of this type of writing class is its flexibility. Thus, its major flaw is also its major advantage: Any content can be appropriate as subject matter for writing. Perhaps an equally persuasive argument is that accuracy of content need not be an issue for writing classes because those classes need to teach the ability to recognize what would be good content. One might argue that recognizing (and inventing) rhetorically good content regardless of its accuracy means writers have learned an important principle that will allow them to know when to continue and when to stop looking for appropriate content. But Petraglia (1995) refers to such tasks as “hypothetical problem-solving” and argues that “when reasoning hypothetically, one’s emotional stake in the issue (if any such stake exists) is attenuated or sublimated in favor of ‘good reasons’” (p. 86). Nevertheless, perhaps we as writing teachers can be content with our students having no stake in their writing and only “reasoning hypothetically.”

On the other hand, perhaps writing courses should benefit NNSs more directly than in the ways that students talked about in these interviews. For years writing professionals have maintained that writing instruction must be more than grammar practice and that writing has a role to play in learning. Yet writing, though vitally linked to learning content in other courses, is not so linked in the type of writing courses described here. The students were encouraged to explore what they already knew and to communicate this to others, but there is very little indication that they actually learned through their writing, unless write-to-learn is taken very narrowly to mean only learn more about themselves.

Interface Between EAP Writing Courses and Disciplinary Writing

Should writing courses address more directly the writing tasks that confront students across the disciplines in the university, writing tasks...
that function there to extend the shared knowledge of a discipline’s “concepts and conventions” (Brannon, 1995, p. 241)? The issue of transferability is a great deal more urgent for NNSs than for NSs and takes several forms. For example, if one typical academic task is for students to show in writing what they have learned from texts (including lecture notes and lab reports), can they learn how to do this in a writing class where they only explain what they know but no one else does? Having no independent access to what the writer knows, the writing teacher is in no position to help the writer express that knowledge accurately. Conceivably in such a situation neither the writer nor the writing teacher would be able even to determine whether or not the writer’s intentions match the writer’s text.

Another issue arises when the language and preferred rhetorical moves of the writing class do not correspond to those used or needed for other disciplinary classes. Just as all language is spoken with some accent, “every text is some genre” (Russell, 1995, p. 57). In writing classes, the privileged genre is most likely to be that of the English department, often some form of essay writing. Is it necessary for NNSs, particularly graduate students, to learn the generic textual preferences of this genre privileged in writing classes in addition to the textual preferences of disciplinary courses? What is the justification for this? It can only be the belief that no matter what content students write about and what genre they practice in writing classes, they will absorb some sort of underlying academic writing skill and transfer it to their writing for other classes. The evidence from this research seems to indicate that the students agree with this belief—and that they define those transferable skills as linguistic (grammar, punctuation) and reductively rhetorical (topic sentences, organization). Again, we wonder if writing teachers can or should be satisfied with this.

The students in this research experienced writing quite differently depending on the role the source text, if there is one, was expected to play. What justification is there for asking NNSs in EAP classes to write without a source text or without responsibility for the content of a source text, writing that is typical of belletristic prose, as Benesch (1995) calls it, the genre privileged in writing classes but not produced for other academic writing contexts? Do these writing class tasks, which arguably have some value for NSs, have a value in and of themselves for NNSs? Do these writing situations prepare NNSs to write text responsibly? We raise these issues to question the validity of writing classes that do not challenge students to go beyond learning about writing or about themselves. In fact, it seems quite paradoxical that in writing classes emphasizing personal growth and experience the teacher’s evaluation is limited to the student’s written text, whereas in the disciplinary classes, where students most often need to manage and present content rather than to generate
it from within themselves and their own personal experience, the instructor looks beyond the text to evaluate the student’s knowledge, progress, and growth.⁶

**Benefits of Text-Responsible Prose**

The debate over these issues in the literature on the writing of both NSs and NNSs has centered at least in part on whether writing teachers from English departments can and should teach disciplinary formats, conventions, and approaches to writing or whether writing should be taught through the various disciplines rather than through English departments (see Spack, 1988).

We would argue that the question of teaching disciplinary forms is irrelevant; if the forms are needed, the disciplines appear to be teaching them. What is important and quite pertinent to the writing class is the relationship between a source text (in a broad sense) and a text to be produced. If the goals of the EAP writing class go beyond teaching students to write for writing classes, then source texts must be used in ways that give NNSs direct acquaintance with writing text-responsible prose. We argue with Petraglia (1995) that “reading (broadly construed) should be acknowledged as lying at the very core of developing rhetorical abilities rather than as a peripheral activity merely intended to prompt the writing in which we are ‘really’ interested” (p. 96). We further argue that springboard readings to which writers merely react in order to agree or disagree or to recount related personal experiences function to infantilize our students, denying them a stance of engagement with serious and compelling subject matter. We concur with Schenke’s (1996) comments on ESL texts and their “tired treatment of gender and ‘women’s lib’” (p. 156) as opposed to her own advanced-level writing class, which works against such effects. Morgan (1992/1993) also describes an L2 writing pedagogy that takes students seriously and requires their serious engagement with text as the class explores issues related to the Gulf War. Perhaps not all serious pedagogies need to be political, but they do need to provide for and expect fully serious adult engagement with text worth the time to explore.

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⁶Student-centered pedagogy, with its attendant focus on personal experience, has come under attack from several quarters recently. Drawing on, among others, the Australian genre researchers such as Christie (1987) and Kress (1987), Stotsky (1995) concludes with them that personal writing may work against students by denying them access to “powerful genres” (Kress, 1987, p. 43). Gore (1993) questions the idea of personal empowerment as a pedagogical goal. Pennycook (1995) has argued that a student-centered pedagogy focuses on the individual at the expense of the social, and in his review (1996) of Cope and Kalantzis’s *The Powers of Literacy* (1993) appears to look favorably on their argument that a student-centered pedagogy that depends on writing ability to emerge favors White, middle-class, and other privileged learners.
Although the results of this site-specific research are obviously not generalizable, we believe the descriptions of these writing classes as the students perceive them are not unique to this site. Hearing ESL students repeatedly describe writing classes as friendly but not intellectually challenging (see Fu, 1995; Harklau, 1994) is alarming and disheartening and calls for, we believe, deeper reflection on how we as teachers ask our students to spend their time.

We cannot claim that the absence of text-responsible writing assignments itself creates this lack of challenge or that some strictly personal writing is not sometimes intellectually and emotionally demanding. But the pedagogical implications we take from this study suggest the benefits of (a) reliance on source texts as more than springboards for personal opinions and (b) in-depth treatments of subject matter that is worth learning about and reflecting on. This second point suggests the elimination of the grab bag of supposedly high-interest readings with attendant writing assignments pulled from different topics every week or two. It suggests at a minimum some sequence of reading/writing assignments in which students build expertise in a topic area either individually or as a class.

CONCLUSION

As described by the students in this study, what is valued in writing for writing classes is different from what is valued in writing for other academic courses. Is this necessarily a bad thing? We would argue that it is. But does such a position imply that the writing done for disciplinary courses is somehow “real” writing and that writing classes must get in line with these other classes and have the single function of preparing students for those real classes? Not in the least. We argue instead that the type of writing course that requires text-responsible writing is not a service course of no value beyond preparing students for “real” academic courses. Rather, giving students direct acquaintance with text-responsible writing in writing classes transforms the class from one that is solipsistic and self-referential into one that becomes central to students’ academic and personal growth because students encounter, manage, and come to terms with new information by learning how to integrate it textually with existing knowledge schemes.

Certainly, encouraging students to bring their own knowledge, cultural backgrounds, and personal histories into their writing is important, but if we as teachers see our goal as helping students extend beyond their own individual pasts, it is equally important in terms of both linguistic and intellectual growth for NNSs to experience a deeper interaction between language; personal interests, needs, and backgrounds (i.e., what
the students themselves bring to a text); and a wider social world in the form of some kind of external textual (in the broad sense) reality that they are accountable for. It is with the sheltered support of EAP writing classes that NNSs can best struggle with accurately interpreting and representing in writing new realities and making them their own.

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**APPENDIX A**

**Phase I Interview Guide**

1. Have you ever had to write an essay as part of an English exam before? Tell me about that.
2. What kind of writing in English have you done besides for exams? Describe that. (Probe to see if there were instances of writing with and without pretext support.)
3. Tell me about writing the essay on the English placement exam (EPE). What was easy about it? What was hard?
4. Tell me about doing the writing sample in class. What was easy about that? What was hard?
5. Did you find that writing in these last two situations was different or similar? In what ways?
6. On the EPE you had to read something before writing. How did reading before writing affect your writing, if at all?
7. On the writing sample you did not have any idea what you would be writing on before you began writing. How did that affect your writing, if at all?

**APPENDIX B**

**Phase 2 Interview Guide**

1. What’s the hardest thing about studying now at this university? What problems are you having related to your studies? How are you trying to solve them?
2. Tell me about the kind of writing you are doing in your content classes or major. What is hard? (What is the hardest thing?) Describe something [hard] you did unsuccessfully. What is easy? Describe something [hard or easy] you did successfully.
3. Have you been asked to write anything in your content courses this semester that you have never done before (a research paper, a report of field work, an essay exam) and that you were not sure how to do? If so, how did you know or find out what to do? If not, how would you try to find out?
4. What do you think your teacher in your [history, biology, etc.] class is looking for in the writing you do for that class? What do you have to do to do well in writing for that class?
5. What do you do before/while/after writing for your content class or major? Think of a specific piece of writing you had to do in your content class or major. Describe how you did it. In your [history, biology, etc.] classes, is there any connection between what you read and what you are asked to write? Explain.
6. Tell me about the kind of writing your are doing in your English class. What is easy about it? What is hard?
7. What do you do before/while/after writing for your English? Think of a specific piece of writing you had to do in your English class. Describe how you did it. In your English class, is there any connection between what you read and what you are asked to write? Explain.
8. What do you think your English teacher is looking for in the writing you do for that class? That is, what do you have to do to do well in writing for your English class?
9. Do you find that writing for your English class is similar to or different from writing for your [history, geography, biology, economics, etc.] class? In what ways? Can you give a specific example of how the writing in those two situations is different/the same?
10. Can you think of a specific time when you learned something in your English class that you then used successfully in your writing for your other classes? Describe that. Does writing in the English class help you in writing in your content class or major? In what ways?
11. How do you think your English class generally did/did not contribute to your success in your content class? If it did not, what is the main value of the English class for you? If it did, do you think that is the main value of the English class for you?

APPENDIX C
Coding Categories

1. Advantages of writing under each of the three conditions

2. Disadvantages of writing under each of the three conditions

3. Atmosphere of writing environment
   A. In writing class
   B. In disciplinary courses

4. Importance of audience
   A. In writing class
   B. In disciplinary courses

5. Importance of display of writing ability (i.e., attention to rhetorical features)
   A. In writing class
   B. In disciplinary courses

6. Importance of content
   A. In writing class
   B. In disciplinary courses

7. Importance of vocabulary
   A. In writing class
   B. In disciplinary courses

8. Graduate/undergraduate differences
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This article presents four more-or-less independent reasons why TESOL educators should be cautious about adopting critical thinking pedagogies in their classrooms: (a) Critical thinking may be more on the order of a non-overt social practice than a well-defined and teachable pedagogical set of behaviors; (b) critical thinking can be and has been criticized for its exclusive and reductive character; (c) teaching thinking to nonnative speakers may be fraught with cultural problems; and, (d) once having been taught, thinking skills do not appear to transfer effectively beyond their narrow contexts of instruction. A more recently developed model of cognitive instruction, cognitive apprenticeship, is then briefly discussed as a possible alternative to more traditional thinking skills pedagogies.

This thing we call “critical thinking” or “analysis” has strong cultural components. It is more than just a set of writing and thinking techniques—it is a voice, a stance, a relationship with texts and family members, friends, teachers, the media, even the history of one’s country. This is why “critical analysis” is so hard for faculty members to talk about; because it is learned intuitively it is easy to recognize, like a face or a personality, but it is not so easily defined and is not at all simple to explain to someone who has been brought up differently. (Fox, 1994, p. 125)

One of the most widely discussed concepts in education and educational reform these days is critical thinking. As recently as the early part of this decade, the notion was still largely confined to L1 education in the U.S., especially at the primary and secondary levels. But like other educational concepts originating in L1 settings, such as process writing, schema theory, and collaborative learning, it was only a matter of time before critical thinking passed into the realm of TESOL. And—as I believe many TESOL professionals will readily acknowledge—critical thinking has now begun to make its mark, particularly in the area of L2 composition.¹

In this article I attempt a critical, if at times speculative, exploration of the notion of critical thinking. Rather than simply accepting the concept on faith and urging its application in the ESL classroom, I offer four more-or-less independent reasons why TESOL educators can profit from examining the notion cautiously and carefully. My four reasons are as follows:

1. Rather than being a well-explicated and educationally usable concept, critical thinking may be more in the nature of a social practice; that is, what we commonly refer to as critical thinking may be an organic part of the very culture that holds it up as an admirable achievement—more at the level of common sense than a rational, transparent, and—especially—teachable set of behaviors.

2. Dominant current conceptualizations of critical thinking can be and have been critiqued for their exclusive and reductive nature. Feminist critics in particular have charged that much critical thinking theory and pedagogy marginalizes alternative approaches to thought, approaches that may in fact lead to more socially desirable consequences in the long run.

3. Not only is critical thinking a culturally based concept, but many cultures endorse modes of thought and education that almost diametrically oppose it. This fact suggests that the teaching of critical thinking to international and language minority students may be much less straightforward than has been commonly assumed.

4. Quite apart from the issues noted so far, attempts by psychologists and cognitive scientists to test a crucial assumption behind critical thinking pedagogy—that thinking skills thus taught transfer beyond their narrow contexts of instruction—have led, at best, to very mixed results with L1 populations. These results raise questions as to what such instruction can be expected to accomplish in and beyond classrooms, if in fact critical thinking does exist as an explicit and teachable concept.

In exploring each of these more-or-less separate points, my primary intention is not to undermine the whole critical thinking enterprise. Rather, I am attempting, in a preliminary way, to critically interrogate the notion of critical thinking itself. In the concluding section of the paper, vanDommelen (1993), and Mohan and van Naerssen (1996). Recent textbook treatments can be found, to a variable degree, in Swales and Feak (1994) and Gardner (1996).

Closely related to the issue of the place of critical thinking in the ESL classroom is its role and function in non-ESL classes where large numbers of nonnative speakers are present. This situation has become much more common in recent years at all levels of U.S. education due to increased immigration, growing international student enrollments, and budgetary pressure to mainstream ESL students as quickly as possible (Santos, 1992; for specific examples, see Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Harklau, 1994).
I move beyond potentially problematic aspects of critical thinking, considering a modified model of cognitive learning that may offer real advantages over the so-called thinking skills pedagogies that have infiltrated L1—and increasingly L2—education in recent years.

CRITICAL THINKING AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE

By social practice, I mean the kind of behavior in which an individual is automatically immersed by virtue of being raised in a particular cultural milieu and which the individual therefore “learns through the pores.” Such behavior is almost by definition tacit—it is learned and practiced in a largely unconscious (or at least unreflective) way. The tacit or “commonsense” nature of social practices is what makes them functional in a society, allowing members to go on smoothly and efficiently in the living of everyday life. For precisely this same reason, social practices tend to resist satisfactory definition and are especially difficult for their users to describe.²

One set of social practices that has received widespread scholarly attention in recent years is that by which young children are socialized into traditional gender roles. Studies of caregiver-child interactions in the U.S., for instance, have shown that parents tended to dress boys and girls differently, talk to and about them differently (e.g., girl babies were “cute” and “sweet” whereas boy babies were “strong” and “big”), and give them different kinds of toys to play with (Block, 1983; Fagot & Leinbach, 1987; Langlois & Downs, 1980; Rheingold & Cook, 1975; Shakin, Shakin, & Sternglanz, 1985). This sort of unreflecting approach to gender socialization is a clear example of what I mean by social practice. Until, at least, it was pointed out by researchers, many parents did not even consider the powerful effects of their behavior on their children. They were following a social practice—a tacit, culturally valued approach to child rearing that existed at the level of traditional practice and common sense.

Now what evidence exists, one may fairly ask, that critical thinking is more in the nature of a social practice than a well-explicated and rational response to what its advocates describe as a national crisis in education (e.g., Bruer, 1993; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983)? I can offer two kinds of possible evidence.

² The description of social groups based on the long-term observation and involvement in the daily lives of their members by a trained outsider, or ethnographer, is one of the few ways by which social practices can be satisfactorily explicated. This is due to the phenomenon, frequently noted by anthropologists, of the “invisibility of everyday life” (Erickson, 1986, p. 121) to those fully engaged in pursuing it.
The first is that, whereas everyone seems to know what critical thinking is, very few people actually ever attempt to define it. This phenomenon is patent to anyone who has heard from parents, educators, or politicians on the topic. All the more interesting and troubling is the fact that academics, normally considered masters of precise definition, seem almost as unwilling or unable to define critical thinking. Rather, they often appear to take the concept on faith, perhaps as a sort of self-evident foundation of Western thought such as freedom of speech. And even those scholars who do recognize the concept’s serious lack of definition and have attempted to address it may be engaging more in reifying a social practice than in describing a commonly agreed-upon, explicit, and a priori understanding.3

This argument is supported by the work of a growing number of scholars (e.g., Fox, 1994; Ramanathan & Kaplan, in press; Scollon, 1991; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Wilson, 1988), some of which is reviewed in this article. Resnick (1987), for instance, in her influential review of thinking skills instruction carried out under the auspices of the National Research Council, writes,

3 According to Nickerson (1990), a widely cited author on teaching critical thinking,

We can talk of thinking skills and processes, and even of specific thinking skills and processes, but we have to recognize that our language is only marginally descriptive of that to which it refers, and we must not be surprised when the entities we identify in our models or frameworks of thinking persist in jumping out of the boxes in which we have put them. (p. 503)

With this as a salutary caution, attempts at definition include McPeck’s (1981) “reflective skepticism” as practiced in the established academic disciplines; Paul’s (1990) “disciplined thinking which exemplifies the perfections of thinking appropriate to a particular mode or domain of thinking” (p. 33); Ennis’s (1987) wide-ranging taxonomy of thinking skills, as well as his earlier “the correct assessing of statements” (1962, p. 6) and his later “reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do” (1992, p. 22); Benesch’s (1993) “a democratic learning process examining power relations and social inequities” (p. 547); and Atkinson and Kaplan’s (1994) “the ability to use the intellectual tools thought necessary to sustain a politically pluralistic, democratic society” (p. 2), including skepticism, logic, and creativity. It is clear that many if not all of these definitions are desiderative or polemical definitions, that is, what their proponents would like to see included in the discussion and teaching of critical thinking rather than what it simply or actually is.

Definitions of critical thinking are also complicated by what Johnson (1992) calls “the network problem” (p. 41), that is, the fuzzy relations among certain more or less interchangeable terms, including metacognition, higher order thinking skills, problem solving, rationality, and reasoning, that are used when talking about critical thinking.

Several readers of earlier versions of this paper mentioned critical pedagogy and critical literacy as approaches to critical thinking that differ at a basic level from the notion of critical thinking I aim to treat here. Benesch’s (1993) definition of critical thinking, given above, is in the critical pedagogy tradition—it emphasizes the concentration of critical faculties on the political inequalities that pervade Western democratic political systems and the development of solutions to these problems. My understanding, however, is that critical pedagogy has very different intellectual roots and is a minority movement at least in L1 contexts, compared with mainstream critical thinking approaches. The very appearance of the word critical in critical pedagogy, I assume, is largely coincidental, having its origins in the classic Marxist concept of critical consciousness, rather than non-Marxist traditions of Western thought and the critical traditions that accompany them.
Thinking skills resist the precise forms of definition we have come to associate with the setting of specified objectives for schooling. Nevertheless, it is relatively easy to list some key features of higher order thinking. When we do this, we become aware that, although we cannot define it exactly, we can recognize higher order thinking when it occurs. (pp. 2–3)

Likewise, Fox (1994) describes interviewing seven university professors who had extensive experience working with nonnative graduate students on their academic writing. Hoping to receive from them precise understandings of the notions of *analysis* and *analytical writing*—terms that she equates directly with critical thinking and that the professors commonly used—Fox asked them to define these terms. She reports, however, that “this question was surprisingly difficult for them to answer, despite their confidence in using these terms in the language of their assignments” (p. xviii) and despite the ease with which they were able to identify such characteristics as “good analysis” and “difficulties with analysis” in their students’ writings. Much of the rest of Fox’s book is an exploration of just why critical thinking and analysis are so hard to define and so difficult for nonnative students to learn.

Its rather slippery, non-overt, and yet self-evident nature—the fact that even though people cannot define critical thinking clearly, they can still (a) talk about it, (b) apparently understand one another when they do so, and (c) even “recognize [it] . . . when it occurs” (Resnick, 1987, p. 3)—suggests that critical thinking exists largely at the level of tacit, commonsense social practice.


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4 Fox’s (1994) *Listening to the World* is a compelling description of one teacher’s gradual realization that critical thinking, or at least its written correlate *analytical writing*, is in fact a social practice and therefore in need of extreme pedagogical care and attention if it is to be successfully taught to and learned by nonnative students. This is not an easy discovery to make, because, as stated previously, social practices are largely invisible to those engaged in them. But Fox’s role as teacher and writing consultant to a very large number of international students, combined with her experience living in several non-Western societies and her use of formal research techniques, has provided her with a commanding vantage point. Based on this perspective, Fox reaches the conclusion that the dominant communication style and world view of the U.S. university, variously known as “academic argument,” “analytical writing,” “critical thinking,” or just plain “good writing,” is based on assumptions and habits of mind that are derived from western—or more specifically U.S.—culture, and that this way of thinking and communicating is considered the most sophisticated, intelligent, and efficient by only a tiny fraction of the world’s peoples. (p. xxi)

5 Some of this literature is reviewed in Schieffelin and Ochs (1986).
glove with pedagogical approaches taken in those cultures’ schools, contributing to general educational success for the mainstream children who attend them.

Many of the modes of socialization identified in this body of research appear closely related to the notion of critical thinking as a social practice. Based on her monumental ethnography of different social groups living in the Carolina Piedmont, for instance, Heath (1983) notes how early socialization in four areas served to differentiate the middle-class children she studied from one or both of her nonmainstream groups (working-class African American and Anglo children, respectively): (a) the asking and answering of questions in general, and why and how questions in particular; (b) the classification and labeling of objects according to their abstract attributes; (c) the breakdown and step-by-step teaching and learning of complex behaviors; and (d) the overall use of language as a creative and heuristic device.

Heath found these same social practices to play crucial roles in the strikingly different success rates in school of the three groups she studied. In work expanding her research to language-minority children, Heath (1986b) describes how, directly reflecting early middle-class socialization in these behaviors,

> teachers and tests ask students to explain the meanings of words, pictures, combinations of events, and their own behaviors. It is not sufficient to say what something is; one must also learn to say what it means—how it was intended, what action will be its result, and how it is to be interpreted and valued [italics added]. (p. 168)\(^6\)

But whereas middle-class children excel as a group in meeting these demands, children from some nonmainstream backgrounds are typically confused by them, contributing substantially to the latter’s progressive failure in the classroom (see Michaels, 1981, 1986, 1991 for other examples of this phenomenon).

If critical thinking is in the nature of a social practice—and one that is highly valued in mainstream U.S. culture and schools—one should not

\(^6\) Compare Heath’s (1985) description of early middle-class socialization practices as revealed in her 1983 study:

> Before they were two years of age, mainstream children offered accounts which were attended to by adults who asked for further explanation of events children reported, commented on alternative outcomes of events, and assessed the attitudes and actions of reported actors. (p. 14)

Atkinson and Ramanathan (1995) show that similar practices are prominent even at much higher levels of schooling. In their description of pedagogical practices emphasizing critical thinking in a freshman writing program at a large U.S. university, they found that comments like the following, written by a teacher on an essay draft discussing the effectiveness of one company’s advertising, were common: “Anticipate questions and argue for why you are right. It seems that you end up simply describing the company’s goals” (p. 545).
be surprised to find it appearing in one form or another in the early socialization of mainstream children. One might also expect a society whose mainstream schools have become progressively more accessible to nonmainstream groups over the past 30 years to see itself in crisis—a crisis for which the active teaching of critical thinking skills appears to be one handy solution.

Perhaps the major problem with introducing such non-overt social practices into the classroom is that they are hard—if not impossible—to teach (Fox, 1994; Gee, 1990). Because they are not seriously theorized concepts but exist rather at the level of common sense and tacitly learned behavior, it is practically speaking beyond the capability of most teachers to teach them in more than an anecdotal and hit-or-miss way. In fact, in the major testing ground for teaching critical thinking to date—the L1 classroom—what passes as its teaching may often reduce substantially to the offering of opportunities to rehearse and perfect this particular set of social practices to students already exposed to them as part of their early socialization (Fox, 1994; Gee, 1990). Similar situations may also occur—and with similar disadvantageous consequences—in classrooms where L2 students are represented, either mixed with native speakers (e.g., Harklau, 1994) or segregated (e.g., Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995).

THE EXCLUSIVE AND REDUCTIVE NATURE OF CRITICAL THINKING

Quite apart from whether critical thinking exists as a well-defined and teachable set of behaviors, serious criticisms have been leveled at the apparently exclusive and reductive character of its dominant manifestations. For example, Walters (1994b), a philosopher, views most current versions of critical thinking as highly “logicistic” in nature—they reduce all academically useful thinking skills to informal, and to a lesser degree formal, logic (see Ramanathan & Kaplan, in press). The ideal model for a critical thinker, according to Walters (1994a), thus becomes someone like Mr. Spock of the original Star Trek series—a totally objective, rational being; Walters terms movement toward this educational ideal the “vulcanization” of critical thinking. Further, in Walters’s view, logicism is claimed by its advocates to be universal, whereas in fact it is exclusive in that it marginalizes alternative ways of knowing. Taking a similar critique directly into the political realm, Weinstein (1993) suggests that the critical thinking movement may well be part of educational reform on a conservative, upper-class model. He asks rhetorically,

Just what is critical thinking’s policy on the thinking of the urban under-class, of the disenfranchised and oppressed, of non-literate, non-technological
cultures, on the televisual thinking so many of our students understand better than we? How do “arguments” made in rap videos fare. . . ? (p. 17)

However, the most powerful critique of the exclusive and reductive nature of critical thinking comes from feminist scholars. Thus, Clinchy (1994) and Martin (1992) develop their objections in terms of the masculinist normativity of many current conceptions of critical thinking; their arguments are worth considering closely.7

Clinchy (1994), a developmental psychologist, begins by equating critical thinking with separate knowing, which she defines as detachment. The separate knower holds herself aloof from the object she is trying to analyze. She takes an impersonal stance. She follows certain rules or procedures to ensure that her judgments are unbiased. All disciplines and vocations have these impersonal procedures for analyzing things. (p. 36)

Clinchy then describes a study she undertook with colleagues (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Clinchy & Zimmerman, 1985) in which women students were asked to read and react to statements such as “As soon as someone tells me his point of view, I immediately start arguing in my head the opposite point of view.” Although the students’ responses suggested a number of different approaches to thinking, the most common was one that the researchers labeled connected knowing. In connected knowing, the knowers attempted to “get into the heads” of people they wanted to understand, trying to see through the other’s eyes—a position diametrically opposed to the separate knowing/devil’s advocate role of traditional critical thought. In this regard, as Clinchy points out, connected knowing is most centrally noncritical thinking.

Clinchy (1994) goes on to draw parallels between connected knowing and the influential ideas of Russell on studying philosophy (“the right attitude is neither reverence nor contempt” but “sympathy”; as cited in Clinchy, p. 40) and Elbow on writing. In fact, Elbow’s (1973) well-known distinction between “the doubting game” and “the believing game” seems to mirror the separate versus connected knowing dichotomy closely.

Martin (1992) investigates other types of activities in which knowers make concerted efforts to assume the viewpoints of their subjects. Cultural anthropology is one signal example, but Martin focuses more directly on the adoption by women scientists (such as the Nobel Prize winner Barbara McClintock) of a position called a feeling for the organism (Keller, 1983). The special power of this position, although by no means automatically negating rational thought, is to give access to types of knowledge that are not directly amenable to it.

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7 Belcher (in press) provides a feminist critique of written academic discourse as it relates to adult L2 writers of English.
Neither Clinchy (1994) nor Martin (1992) advocates the simple replacement of critical thinking/separate knowing with the alternative approaches to thinking they identify—approaches that they also take pains to point out are not gender-exclusive. Martin, however, implicates the distancing nature of critical thinking in ethically questionable judgments, suggesting that social actors cognitively connected to the subjects and consequences of their decisions would be more likely to select ethical alternatives. Robert Oppenheimer and Werner Von Braun, she suggests, were almost certainly premier critical thinkers in their respective cultures (see Belcher, in press).\(^8\)

**CRITICAL THINKING AND NONNATIVE THINKERS**

The possibility that critical thinking represents a set of social practices, and the idea that its dominant current conceptualizations may tend to marginalize even some members of U.S. society, suggest a further (though largely independent) question: How might individuals from cultural systems that manifestly differ from mainstream U.S. culture respond to and benefit from thinking skills instruction? Although no ready answer to this question exists at present, cross-cultural research into the early socialization and educational practices of non-European peoples is richly suggestive in this regard. In this section, I review findings from such research pointing to three areas of potential discontinuity between cultural assumptions that may underlie critical thinking and modes of thought and expression prevalent among non-Western cultural groups.\(^9\) These three areas concern (a) opposing notions of relations between the individual and the social system, (b) contrasting norms of self-expression across cultures, and (b) divergent perspectives on the use of language as a means of learning.\(^10\)

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\(^8\) Many feminist scholars have made related points about the unfortunate distancing effects of abstract, rational thought, which they usually equate with a masculinist ideology. For example, Harding (1991) identifies the modern division of labor between the sexes as a central condition for abstract thought and the valorization of abstract concepts: “Men who are relieved of the need to maintain their own bodies and the local places where they exist come to see as real only what corresponds to their abstracted world” (p. 128).

\(^9\) Although I fully support the criticism that such descriptors as *Western, Japanese,* and even *mainstream U.S.* are misleading in their suggestions of cultural homogeneity, I am not prepared to totally forgo using them in the description of social practices and cultural norms. They are therefore used here in a qualified sense, as necessary if quite imperfect descriptors for regularities that currently have no other means by which to be expressed.

\(^10\) Where I use *culture* (and its variant lexical forms) in this paper, I mean the “bodies of knowledge, structures of understanding, conceptions of the world . . . collective representations” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, p. 166) and social practices through which, by virtue of participating in, one is marked as a member of a social group, or Discourse (Gee, 1990).
Notions of the Individual

Cultures that view individuals as primary units appear to permit—and even depend on—relatively unconstrained individual activity and expression. Where such individual activity exists, individual conflict and competition seem to be inevitable. Notions of the primacy of the individual and their consequences underlie the social practice of critical thinking at a fundamental level: The very concept of critical presupposes that individual conflict and dissensus are a social reality, if not a tool for achieving socially desirable ends, while thinking—at least in a Western context—assumes the locus of thought to be within the individual.

A vast amount of cross-cultural research shows that various cultural groups assume notions of the individual that are almost diametrically opposed to Western or at least mainstream U.S. assumptions. In a discussion of Japanese approaches to politeness, for instance, Matsumoto (1988) points out how a Western view of self assumes that the basic unit of society is the individual. With such an assumption, however, it is almost impossible to understand behavior in the Japanese culture. A Japanese generally must understand where s/he stands in relation to other members of the group or society, and must acknowledge his/her dependence on the others. Acknowledgment and maintenance of the relative position of others, rather than preservation of an individual’s proper territory, governs all social interaction. (p. 405)

Research on early socialization of Japanese children indicates how they learn to think and act in this sociocultural system. Matsumori (1981, as cited in Clancy, 1986), for example, reported on the basis of an empirical study that Japanese mothers “tended to appeal to social norms while correcting misbehavior” (p. 218) in their children, whereas U.S. mothers expressed themselves personally (e.g., “I don’t like the way you’re speaking.”) while engaged in the same activity. In a particularly detailed analysis, Clancy (1986) has shown how Japanese infants are socialized into the twin normative social values of empathy and conformity. Thus, Japanese mothers train their children in empathy by constantly attributing feelings to others (and even inanimate objects) as they elicit and mold socially appropriate responses. A child pretending to cook and eat, for example, is told to share her imaginary food with a (real) adult visitor, because the latter “is hungry” (p. 232). Conformity training, on the other hand, takes place when the mother indicates that her child’s speech or actions are socially deviant. For instance, a 2-year-old who on being prompted to describe an object refuses by saying, “No!” is scolded with “There’s no one who says things like ‘No’!” (p. 237).

Without a doubt, early socialization practices like these have a
profound impact on the ways individuals define themselves in relation to their social and physical worlds. The term primary socialization was coined by anthropologists to convey the powerful influence of this intensive, highly interactive, home-based training over individuals’ lifelong thought and behavior. Crago (1992), Heath (1983), Ochs (1988), Schieffelin & Ochs (1986), and Scollon and Scollon (1981) are just a few of the many researchers who have contributed in-depth descriptions of primary socialization practices across cultures, especially as they relate to the subsequent educational experiences of children.

But such training, while particularly intensive in the early years, by no means ceases when children start to attend school. Innumerable studies of early education have revealed how strongly socialization continues in the schools and how in many cases it is patterned closely on the primary socialization practices of mainstream social groups. Thus, to follow the socialization of the Japanese child a bit farther, Carson (1992) identifies the teaching of students to “valu[e] group goals above individual interests” (p. 39) as a major aim of Japanese education and shows that actual educational practices in this system correspond closely to this ideal. In a separate study, Hamilton, Blumenfield, Akoh, and Miura (1991) compared 10 Japanese and 9 U.S. fifth-grade classrooms in terms of the relative attention paid to individual students. They found that Japanese teachers paid significantly less attention to individual students in comparison to groups, with 51% of speech directed at the whole group when in teacher-fronted mode against 22% of the U.S. teachers’ speech.

Although Japan has been especially well studied in terms of its educational beliefs and practices in recent years, research on socialization and behavior in other group-oriented societies, including work directly comparing Western and non-Western cultures (e.g., Bond, 1986; Hsu, 1981, 1985; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Muchiri, Mulamba, Myers, & Ndolo, 1995; Roland, 1988; Scollon, 1991; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Ting-Toomey, 1994) also abounds. A brief review of some of this latter research follows.

As described previously, a mainstream U.S. view of individualism seems to inhere in notions of critical thinking. Scollon and Scollon (1981) contrasted their 2-year-old daughter Rachel’s ability to separate herself from her spoken and “written” texts11—to “fictionalize herself” in those texts, as they put it—with the behavior of even much older (Native North American) Athabaskan children. At 2 years old, for example,

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11 At 2 years old, Rachel was of course too young to write. However, this did not prevent her from producing “written” texts—texts made up of crudely formed letters and imitations of connected script. She then “read” her texts orally to her parents, typically relating a fully formed and sometimes elaborate narrative.
Rachel was already describing herself in the third person when narrating her own activities and using other distancing strategies as well. Scollon and Scollon trace the development of these special abilities to the particular brand of preliteracy training Rachel was receiving as a middle-class U.S. child. The decontextualizing power of print, exhibited by Rachel in her use of third-person narratives, special reading prosody, conventional story structure, and literate performance frames, encouraged her also to take a more-or-less individualist and “objective” position in the course of her daily activities—to see herself as in some sense apart from them. This positioning was reinforced in the Scollons’ own talk to Rachel: They offered accounts of her activities that encouraged her to see herself from a distanced perspective. In contrast, older Athabaskan children related narratives that were highly contextualized in the here-and-now, in which the author was not fictionalized, and that included various other features of prototypical on-line oral narrative.

In a second study, this time of (Taiwanese) Chinese university students’ reactions to U.S.-style process writing instruction, Scollon (1991) suggested that

the writing process asks of the writer that he or she take the rhetorical position of an autonomous, rational mind, untroubled by the inconsistencies of the phenomenal world and equally untroubled by the push and pull of human arrangements. This is a persona that Western students are all too ready to adopt; to them it seems a natural intuition. (p. 11)

The naturalness/intuitiveness of this position for Western students, as I have already argued, is directly related to its role as an important social practice in their cultures—it is substantially the same position seen under development in the 2-year-old Rachel. It is also a stance that, not surprisingly, Scollon’s (1991) Chinese students found nearly impossible to comprehend, much less to write from. Such findings do not bode well for much current critical thinking instruction in the ESL classroom, or classrooms in which large numbers of nonnative speakers are present (see Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995, for an example).

Self-Expression

Very closely related to differing notions of the individual across cultures are contrasting norms of self-expression. To quote Scollon (1991) again, “the stance of self-expression . . . is so productive in North America because it is so squarely based on the Western, individualist sense of self” (p. 4). As with other displays of individuality, however, the direct expression of ego via language seems to be substantially proscribed in many cultures.

In her review of Chinese and Japanese educational practices related to
literacy, Carson (1992) cites the conclusion of Tobin, Wu, and Davidson that language “is viewed less as a tool for self-expression than as a medium for expressing group solidarity and shared social purpose” (as cited in Carson, pp. 41–42). While this comment was made specifically in the context of Japanese educational practices, it also appears to generalize fairly well to the descriptions of (PRC) Chinese education reviewed by Carson. In both Japanese and Chinese schools, memorization and choral recitation are promoted as major learning strategies in the classroom, and writing instruction focuses centrally on the memorization and use of various formulaic phrases. Not surprisingly, innovation and individual creativity in writing are strongly discouraged at this level, if not automatically ruled out of court. Even at the university level, as Scollon (1991) indicates, Chinese students write in ways that highlight their organic place in their chosen academic communities, and (what may amount to the same thing) their scholarly responsibility to pass on the knowledge they have received.

In various studies of Native North American cultures (e.g., Basso, 1972; Crago, 1992; Scollon & Scollon, 1981), scholars have shown how self-expression violates highly valued cultural norms, at least in cases where individuals are not known to each other or differ recognizably in relative social status. These norms are indicated crudely in well-known stereotypes of the “silent Indian” (Basso, 1972) and, much more convincingly, in actual exchanges like the following, which took place at a report-card meeting between an Inuk parent and a mainstream Canadian school teacher, as reported in Crago (1992):

Teacher: “Your son is talking well in class. He is speaking up a lot.”
Parent: “I am sorry.” (p. 496)

Beyond simply the expression of opinion, any form of speech seems to be a violation in such circumstances—in the case just described because the socially appropriate role of the subordinate/student is to listen, observe, and learn. In cases where unacquainted adults remain silent while in close contact, sometimes for days, linguistic “politeness” phenomena (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Scollon & Scollon, 1981) appear to be at work; speaking in such circumstances could threaten the carefully guarded independence of the potential addressee.

**Using Language to Learn**

A final area of cultural difference that may influence the teaching of critical thinking to nonnative thinkers concerns the use of language explicitly to effect thinking and learning. The notion that language—and especially written language—is a “tool for intellectual exploration, an avenue for debate and dialectic” (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995, p.
is enshrined in U.S. educational practice to the extent that it has its own terminology, for example, writing-to-learn. The connection between this notion and critical thinking is clear—one tests one’s ideas agonistically by using language, whether informally in “B.S. sessions” among peers or more formally, for example, in drafting a composition for a freshman writing class. In the same sense, argument is a major mode of discourse from the lowest to the highest levels of the academy, and verbal evidence of critical thinking is the surest sign that someone is a critical thinker or that critical thinking has taken place.

Although this area has not been researched to the extent of culturally based notions of individuality and self-expression, various studies report findings relating to its cross-cultural variability. To start simply, the very idea that one can learn about others by talking to them casually seems to be a notion that is peculiarly “American.” As mentioned previously, research on Native North Americans has shown them quite typically unwilling to converse with strangers, to the extent that individuals can have intensive and prolonged contact without ever interacting verbally (e.g., Basso, 1972). On the other hand, Native North Americans report intensively observing unknown individuals in order to learn about them. If such behavior seems extreme, consider its opposite: the “cocktail party” approach (Scollon & Scollon, 1981). The idea that one can, after spending an hour or two in a room full of (alcohol-imbibing) people, say that one has actually gotten to know some of those people even to some degree seems odd on the face of it; it might certainly seem so, at least, to members of a culture in which the assumption that one learns substantially from casual talk does not obtain (see Barnlund, 1975, for parallel comments on Japanese versus U.S. norms of verbal self-disclosure). Perhaps an even more compelling example of the extent to which U.S. mainstream culture equates verbal interaction with gaining knowledge is the job interview, wherein the decision to hire or not is substantially based on what the interviewee says.

As mentioned previously, Heath (1983; see also Heath, 1986a) ascertained that one of the main skills middle-class U.S. children bring with them to school is the ability to use language heuristically and creatively. Other subcultural groups in her study—most notably the white working-class dwellers of the mill town “Roadville”—socialized their children to use language in ways that encouraged literalness and strongly discouraged discovery and invention. The educational result of this approach was that Roadville children, although they adapted to school norms to some degree over time, were ill-equipped to engage in self-fictionalizing, as when teachers requested that they assume the role of a imaginary or historical character.

Cross-cultural studies of indigenous literacies (e.g., Besnier, 1989; Ochs, 1988; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 1993) have also revealed
that in no sense does written language necessarily serve thought-stimulating and thought-defining functions. Rather, such textual functions are found in the cultures studied primarily in domains that have been influenced by Western-style schooling.

Finally, a few studies of nonnative speakers and programs designed to teach them in U.S. schools and universities have pointed out cross-cultural discontinuities and differences in using language to learn. In an ethnographic study of Chinese immigrant teenagers in U.S. high schools, Harklau (1994) found “the most salient aspect” of her observations of these students to be “their reticence and lack of interaction with native speaking peers” (pp. 262–263). When asked to explain this lack of verbal involvement in the classroom, one of her subjects quoted a Chinese proverb and then proceeded to explain it in terms of his educational experience in Taiwan:

> “Being quiet is good and vigorously debating is silver.” Being quiet is considered polite and intelligent because only the insecure ones need to prove themselves smart by talking loud. For that reason, the school [in Taiwan] wanted the students to keep quiet in the classroom. (p. 251)

In a comparative ethnographic study of a freshman writing program and an ESL institute at a large U.S. university, Atkinson and Ramanathan (1995) found that differing emphases were placed on writing-to-learn for nonnative students in the two programs. In the freshman writing program, whose clientele was over 80% native speakers of English, writers were constantly prodded to “deepen” their thinking, to “go beyond” surface-level observations, and to be “insightful,” “original,” and “thought-provoking” in their written work. In the ESL program, on the other hand, although similar concepts were not wholly absent from instruction, the overall emphasis was on the clear written communication of ideas, in a style described in the study as “workpersonlike prose.”

**THE GENERALIZABILITY AND TRANSFERABILITY OF THINKING SKILLS**

A fourth and final issue regarding critical thinking stands somewhat apart from the first three. This issue concerns (a) whether thinking skills actually exist that are generalizable beyond their original domains of application and (b) given that they do exist, whether such skills can in fact be taught and learned so that they are usable in other settings and situations. Following VanderStoep and Seifert (1994), the first of these issues can be called “the generalizability problem,” and the second “the transfer problem” (p. 30). Although various researchers (e.g., Johnson, 1992) distinguish between these two problems, I will basically treat them together here.
Not surprisingly, much of the work testing the generalizability/transferability of learning and thinking skills has been carried out by psychologists and cognitive scientists. The consensus among these researchers seems to be that most attempts to find confirmation of the phenomenon have failed (e.g., Gick & Holyoak, 1987; Gray & Orasanu, 1987; Hill & Resnick, 1995; Resnick, 1987; VanderStoep & Seifert, 1994). In the words of Butterfield and Nelson (1991),

> The abundant literature on the transfer of instruction [including, but not limited to, instruction in thinking skills] has been reviewed from several perspectives, and the consensus is that the majority of investigations have not found flexible use of appropriate variants of taught knowledge and strategies in diverse contexts and for diverse purposes [13 citations follow]. (p. 69)

Despite such generally gloomy assessments—and there are many of them—researchers have held out at least two rays of hope. The first is that, because generality/transfer is widely acknowledged to be very difficult to measure, the problem is largely a methodological one (Cormier & Hagman, 1987; Ennis, 1992; Kennedy, Fisher, & Ennis, 1991; Perkins & Salomon, 1989). These researchers adopt the position that with the development of better measurement and evaluation instruments and better operational definitions of concepts like problem-solving task and domain of application, transfer effects will finally start to appear.

The second ray of hope held out by some researchers is that, although thinking skills do not appear to transfer generally, transfer seems to be possible under highly specific conditions, especially where initial training and later testing take place in identical or near-identical situations on highly similar tasks (Gray & Orasanu, 1987; Kennedy et al., 1991; Norris, 1992; Perkins & Salomon, 1989).

It is not my intention to critique these expert assessments—rather, I would like to make a different kind of point. Stating it in the form of a question: Do we have any business teaching academic thinking behaviors that have not been shown by the very researchers studying them to have any substantial transferability whatsoever? Perhaps the answer is yes, on the basis of one traditional perspective on education—that it is good for its own sake. This, in fact, appears to be the position implicitly taken by Resnick (1987) in her influential report. Having reviewed existing

12 A couple of observations on these assessments, however, can be made. First, the beliefs of thinking skills researchers that transfer effects can be found if training and testing conditions and tasks are made similar enough place serious limitations on claims for generalizable thinking skills. Second, it is perhaps germane to observe that the research programs of the psychologists and cognitive scientists cited here appear for the most part to be predicated on the eventual discovery of positive transfer effects. This alone could be taken as sufficient to explain the conspicuous general optimism among these researchers that such effects will eventually be found, in the face of almost 100 years of findings to the contrary.
research, Resnick advises cautious optimism about and adoption of thinking skills instruction, even though it is clear that if we were to demand solid empirical evidence supporting a particular approach to higher order skill development before implementing educational programs, we would be condemned to inaction. There is far less empirical evidence [for effective transfer] of any kind available than we might have imagined and the evidence we have is often of limited utility. (p. 34)

But if my interpretation of Resnick’s conclusion is correct—that we as educators should adopt thinking skills instruction primarily for its own sake, just as we might teach spelling rules or grammar—then why are we trying to “reform” education by introducing such innovations in the first place? In opposition to Resnick’s recommendation, I would like to suggest that the uncertain empirical status of thinking skills transferability is yet another good reason why TESOL educators should approach the critical thinking bandwagon with care and caution.

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO COGNITIVE INSTRUCTION

As one solution to the problem of teaching cognitive skills to nonmainstream—including nonnative-English-speaking—students, scholars influenced by Vygotskian learning theory and research on the social basis of cognition have developed the pedagogical model of cognitive apprenticeship (e.g., Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989; Hill & Resnick, 1995). Although this model is still new and thus remains underspecified in practice, I briefly indicate some of its potential strengths as an alternative approach to teaching thinking skills.

Cognitive apprenticeship is based on the notion that all significant human activity is highly situated in real-world contexts—and that complex cognitive skills are therefore ultimately learned in high-context, inherently motivating situations in which the skills themselves are organically bound up with the activity being learned and its community of expert users. In a sense, then, cognitive apprenticeship takes as a starting point the cultural and social-practice nature of all significant learned experience. Recent studies by anthropologists and sociologists (e.g., Lave, 1988, Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990) of nonformal learning traditions across a wide range of cultures strongly support this assumption, and cognitive apprenticeship is in part an attempt to operationalize these findings in the U.S. classroom.

In the cognitive apprenticeship model, the teacher-learner relationship is largely reconceptualized as an expert-novice (or master-apprentice) relationship, and the learner is as much socialized into a particular
worldview (operating on a particular content domain) as taught particular ways to think. Such practices are already common to some degree in the academic disciplines and professions represented in the U.S. university, although typically only where faculty and students work together intensively on a small-group or one-to-one basis (see Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1988).

Collins et al. (1989) provide guidelines for organizing instruction following the principles of cognitive apprenticeship, describing its three major instructional methods: modeling, coaching, and fading. Modeling is the early and repetitive demonstration of complex, holistic, and goal-centered activities, as situated in their actual contexts of use rather than decontextualized and broken down for ease of teaching and learning. Coaching involves the active mentoring by teachers or more experienced peers of individuals or small groups of students in their own repetitive attempts to perform these activities in real contexts. It aims to provide a supportive, nonjudgmental environment in which intensive practice, guided and shaped by real-world consequences, leads to real learning, a process convincingly advocated by Smith (1988) in his essay, “Joining the Literacy Club.” The final step, fading, concerns the gradual discontinuation of expert guidance as the student-apprentice internalizes the skills and norms of knowledgeable performance. Although none of these pedagogical methods is new or original to cognitive apprenticeship itself, their use within a framework emphasizing naturalistic and highly situated learning gives them new potential.

Two natural arenas for cognitive apprenticeship in formal school settings appear to be discipline-specific writing (see Ramanathan & Kaplan, 1996) and classrooms that emphasize the use of computer-based technologies (e.g., Collins, 1991). Other formal learning situations in which related approaches have been employed include basic reading, writing, and mathematics classes in primary and secondary schools. Hill and Resnick (1995) discuss the possibilities offered by a cognitive apprenticeship-type approach in the teaching of university-level writing. Establishing real-world contexts of writing through partnerships between schools and the business community (Williams & Colomb, 1993), engaging students in the work of college governance committees (Mansfield, 1993), encouraging internships and volunteerism, and providing consultation services for charitable organizations and small businesses have all been employed as means of realizing the model. Although various drawbacks relating to traditional constraints on educational practice, such as grading requirements and large classes, have caused some problems in these early attempts, results have been promising enough to encourage further development and experimentation.

Based as it is on pedagogical traditions shared across a wide range of cultural groups (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990) and openly
acknowledging the basic social-practice nature of all learning, cognitive apprenticeship is perhaps more appropriate as a pan-cultural model of cognitive instruction than the more culture-specific models that appear to underlie most current versions of critical thinking.

CONCLUSION

Much of what I have written here about critical thinking can be captured in an aphorism: Critical thinking is cultural thinking. Thus, I have suggested that critical thinking may well be in the nature of a social practice—discoverable if not clearly self-evident only to those brought up in a cultural milieu in which it operates, however tacitly, as a socially valued norm. Likewise, I have offered evidence that some critical thinking practices may marginalize subcultural groups, such as women, within U.S. society itself. Further, I have reviewed extensive research pointing to vastly different understandings across cultures of three notions directly implicated in critical thought: individualism, self-expression, and using language as a tool for learning. Although the claim that critical thinking is cultural thinking should not necessarily block the importation of thinking skills instruction into the L2 classroom, I believe that it should give TESOL educators pause for thought—and pause long enough to reflect carefully and critically on the notion of critical thinking.

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Controversy continues to surround the instructional role of teaching assistants at large U.S. research universities who are not native speakers of English and who received their undergraduate training outside the U.S. Interactions between these international teaching assistants (ITAs) and their undergraduate students is sometimes threatened by miscommunication. The study described in this article adapted the Questionnaire About International Teaching Assistants (QUITA) survey instrument (Fox, 1992) to collect background information about undergraduates at one midwestern university, inquiring about their experiences with ITAs and their means for dealing with ITA problems and assessing their attitudes with respect to ITAs. The study examined the relationship between an attitude scale and 11 student background characteristics (e.g., year of enrollment, academic college, age, sex, size of hometown). In addition, focus-group interviews conducted with a subset of respondents explored their experiences and opinions relating to ITAs. The article compares the findings of this study with those of earlier research, including Fox’s (1992) study, and recommends intervention strategies with undergraduates who are likely to encounter ITAs.

The practice of employing graduate students to handle aspects of the university instructional program dates back to the rise of research universities in the U.S. in the 1860s (Minkel, 1987). At most universities these graduate students, called teaching assistants or TAs, usually assist the faculty who make curricular decisions about writing the syllabus, choosing textbooks, and making up examinations. Typical TA assignments consist of serving as laboratory assistants, recitation or discussion section leaders, homework graders, help-room staff, and test proctors. In some cases TAs, particularly those who are advanced doctoral students and will soon be applying for academic positions, are given responsibility for teaching introductory courses.
For the past 15 years major U.S. research universities, especially science, mathematics, and engineering departments, have offered an increasing number of teaching assistantships to new graduate students from foreign countries who are not native speakers of American English. Both because fewer U.S. students are undertaking graduate work in science and engineering fields and because many of the foreign applicants are highly qualified in their respective fields of study, departments sometimes offer assistantships as an inducement to foreign students during the recruiting process. Holding student visas makes international students ineligible for most off-campus employment and grateful for whatever positions the university offers. Because TAs are a North American invention rarely found in higher education systems in other parts of the world (Bailey, 1984), these newcomers are frequently unaware of what to expect. Nearly everyone familiar with graduate education knows of the problems this situation presents linguistically, interculturally, and pedagogically, but solutions have been elusive (Wilson, 1991).

Now referred to as international teaching assistants (ITAs) and the focus of a TESOL interest section, these particular ESL learners are different from other international students studying ESL at U.S. institutions of higher education, who are usually intent on enhancing their own communicative competence. ITAs are studying spoken English as the direct result of demands by those who will need to communicate with them, their future U.S. undergraduate students. In many states, legislatures or governing bodies have mandated oral English language competency standards for new ITAs (Monoson & Thomas, 1993). Although most ITAs recognize the importance of communicative competence for their own academic success, the added pressure of satisfying a paying audience, often harshly critical, is a special challenge to them as well as to those charged with testing and training ITAs. Training courses for ITAs, examined in Smith, Byrd, Nelson, Barrett, and Constantinides (1992), parallel TA training for native speakers of English but differ in the emphasis placed on proficiency in American spoken English and the U.S. academic culture. Included in cultural expectations are “the attitudes of ITAs toward their students, how the ITAs handle before- and after-class time, their attitudes toward questions” (p. 41). Graham (1992) discusses how ITAs’ attitudes toward minority and women students are an important issue in the training as well.

Assumptions about the problems that arise between ITAs and the students whom they teach are normally based on hearsay evidence: complaints passed on to the university president by disgruntled parents and alumni at fund-raisers; platforms of student government office seekers who promise to “seek dismissal of all instructors who can’t speak understandable English”; native English-speaking TAs who find that, by
The Carnegie Commission’s Classification of Higher Education groups U.S. universities and colleges into 10 categories according to their missions. The categories of Research Universities I and II are composed of 125 universities that offer a full range of baccalaureate programs but are also committed to graduate education through the doctorate and give high priority to research. They annually award 50 or more doctoral degrees. Research I universities receive $40 million or more in federal support annually, whereas Research II universities receive $15.5 million–$40 million (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1994).
The University of Minnesota was among the first institutions to survey undergraduates concerning international issues such as ITAs (Berdie, Anderson, Wenberg, & Price, 1976; Matross, Paige, & Hendricks, 1982; Mestenhauser et al., 1980). Over 43% of the undergraduate respondents to the Mestenhauser survey said that an ITA had hurt course quality, whereas 9% indicated that an ITA had helped. Six months later, Matross et al. surveyed the same 404 students who had participated in the Mestenhauser study, partly to assess changes in attitudes toward foreign students before and after the Iran hostage crisis. They discovered that less than one-third of the respondents agreed that there was meaningful contact between U.S. and foreign students at the university and that less than one-sixth agreed that foreign students had contributed to their education. Although 64% reported having a foreign student as a casual friend, only 16% said that they had a foreign student as a close friend. Those who had known foreign students as friends but not as TAs had more positive attitudes than those who had both foreign friends and ITAs. Least positive toward foreign students were those who had known only ITAs. Looking at background characteristics, Matross et al. also found that female students, older students, those enrolled in graduate school, and those living off campus were more likely to have positive attitudes toward foreign students (including but not exclusively ITAs).

Several doctoral dissertations were written in the early 1980s concerning undergraduates and their relations with ITAs. Orth (1983) compared undergraduates’ evaluations of the speaking proficiency of ITAs with ESL teachers’ evaluations of the same ITAs and found drastic differences. The undergraduates rated the ITAs less on linguistic than on extralinguistic features of delivery and other nonverbal aspects of communication. In her study of classroom behavior of TAs (half non-native and half native English speakers), Bailey (1983) discovered that students who were not majoring in the same disciplines as their ITAs were significantly more critical of the nonnative speakers’ public performance in English than were the students sharing a common academic major with their TAs. However, she found that the ITAs’ individual personalities and styles of teaching contributed greatly to how they were evaluated.

In the introduction to a National Association for Foreign Student Affairs publication on ITA issues, Bailey (1984) was one of the first to make the following point about discontent: “Undergraduate students, while often having valid reasons to complain, sometimes respond to their non-native speaking TAs’ foreignness with an attitude of annoyed ethnocentrism” (p. 15).

In the process of developing a rating instrument to directly test the
language proficiency of ITAs, Hinofotis and Bailey (1981) selected 10 freshmen to rate ITAs’ videotaped 5-minute mock lectures (along with a group of trained ESL raters) and to complete a questionnaire regarding their reactions to the ITAs. These investigators found that the undergraduates complained most about language proficiency, communication of information, and delivery. Both the undergraduates and the ESL raters ranked pronunciation as the single most important failure in ITAs’ overall ability. They disagreed substantially, however, about the importance of the subcategory “ability to relate to students,” which the undergraduates ranked second but the ESL raters ranked eighth.

A number of studies have analyzed student evaluations of ITAs, usually at the end of the term (Abraham & Plakans, 1988; Briggs & Hofer, 1991; Davis, 1991). Although ITAs were generally ranked lower than native English-speaking TAs (NESTAs), the ITAs’ ratings were still in the acceptable range. Carrier et al. (1990), in a study of 1,517 undergraduates at the University of Minnesota, found that (a) freshmen were least likely to initiate contact with their ITAs whereas juniors and seniors were most likely; (b) male students were likely to have more contact with ITAs than females were; (c) students from smaller communities initiated less contact than those from larger communities did; (d) undergraduates who were not themselves native speakers of English gave higher mean ratings to ITAs and initiated contact with ITAs more frequently than native English speakers did; (e) the more contact students had previously had with nonnative speakers, the more positive the evaluation of ITAs; (f) positive ratings of the ITA increased “in an almost linear fashion” (p. 17) with expected grade point average (GPA); and (g) students who expected to receive higher grades were also most likely to initiate contact with ITAs. Jacobs and Friedman’s (1988) study at the Ohio State University also found that students who expected to receive higher grades tended to give TAs higher ratings. Halleck and Moder (1995) found in a survey of undergraduates’ experiences with ITAs at Oklahoma State University that only 32% reported the experience to have been positive.

Another branch of research has used guise procedures to determine the degree to which listeners’ evaluations are based on cultural assumptions about the ITAs rather than on linguistic information (Brown, 1992; Nelson, 1992; Rubin, 1992; Rubin & Smith, 1990). For example, in some studies subjects looked at photographs of foreign students (European and Asian) while listening to recordings of a lecture in slightly versus heavily accented speech. A number of factors other than actual speaking proficiency tended to be potent determinants of undergraduates’ comprehension and attitudes (e.g., the ITAs’ ethnicity; the topic and use of personal examples in the lecture; and the undergraduates’ sex, major, and overseas experience).
Fox (1992; also reported in Fox & Gay, 1994) investigated the perceptions of those with a vested interest in the success of ITAs at a midwestern land-grant institution, code-named Heartland University, with a large foreign graduate student enrollment and a decade of experience in screening and training ITAs following mandates from governing bodies. Primary stakeholders who responded to open-ended surveys about ITA-related difficulties included university administrators, department chairs and supervisors, ITAs, and NESTAs. Fox developed a survey instrument called the Questionnaire About International Teaching Assistants (QUITA), which yielded quantitative data concerning 540 undergraduate students’ experiences with and attitudes toward ITAs. Additional data were obtained through university demographic records and interviews with selective samples of stakeholders. The majority of undergraduates who completed the QUI TA had been in three or more classes with ITAs; only 4% had been in none. QUI TA scores reflecting students’ attitudes toward ITAs showed a nearly normal distribution around a neutral mean. Interviews revealed divergent viewpoints and concerns among stakeholders; for example, undergraduates perceived more extensive difficulties related to ITAs than did administrators or ITAs themselves.

THE CURRENT STUDY: RATIONALE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study\(^2\) reported in this article differs from previous research concerning undergraduate ITA perceptions because of the use of a large sample proportionally representative of ISU’s demographic composition, both quantitative and qualitative data-collecting methods, and assessment of the generalized attitudes of undergraduates rather than focused evaluation of the specific ITAs who were teaching the respondents at that time.

The study attempted to answer the following questions. Where do students encounter ITAs (i.e., in which academic fields and courses), and how many ITAs teach their classes and labs? When undergraduate students have difficulty with an ITA, what means do they use to remedy the problem? Do students who have had ITA problems have a more negative attitude toward ITAs generally? What is the relationship between students’ attitudes toward ITAs and their particular year of enrollment, academic college, sex, age, and other background characteristics, such as expected GPA, experience living or traveling outside the

\(^2\) For a more detailed account of the study, see Plakans (1995).
RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

Three data sources were used to explore undergraduate experiences with ITAs and the attitudes of undergraduates: university records, the QUITA survey, and focus-group interviews.

University Records

The offices of the Graduate College, Registrar, and Institutional Research at ISU provided demographic data about the undergraduate student body and graduate students on teaching assistantships. Their records specified how many credit hours TAs taught, what subjects they taught, and what complaints had been received from undergraduates about ITAs.

The QUITA

A four-page, machine-scored instrument (see the appendix) was administered to a stratified sample of the ISU undergraduate population. This instrument was an adaptation of the QUITA, developed by Fox (1992). Changes to the original QUITA were based on Fox’s experience and recommendations. Several questions that Fox reported as unproductive were eliminated, and other questions were added. The survey used in the study required about 15 minutes to complete and had three sections: (a) background information on the respondents, (b) questions on their experiences with ITAs (how many courses they had taken with TAs, whether the courses were required or elective, whether they were within or outside the respondents’ major field, problems and how they were handled), and (c) statements suggesting positive or negative attitudes toward ITAs with which respondents agreed or disagreed.

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3 In a page-long section of the original QUITA, entitled International experience, Fox asked six questions (four of which were subdivided to ask about the number, length of time, and part of the world of students’ international experiences) to determine the experiences of Heartland University undergraduates studying a foreign language, living with international roommates, hosting international visitors, traveling outside the U.S., residing outside the U.S., and having any other international experience (to be specified). She found the responses strongly skewed to the low end of the scale: Students had very little international experience of any kind. Instead of finding a strong positive correlation between international experience and the ATITA composite score, the Pearson correlation coefficient ($R = 0.28, p < .0001$) showed only weak support for this relationship (Fox & Gay, 1994). Thus the modified version of QUITA used at ISU asked only one question about students’ experiences traveling abroad (see the appendix, Question 8).
Background Information

Over a 3-week period in the middle of the fall 1993 semester, 1,819 undergraduates completed the QUITA. For cluster sampling, sections of 62 large-enrollment courses required for many degree programs were selected as naturally occurring groups. These sections, not taught by ITAs, covered communications or social science subjects, including freshman composition, library instruction, public speaking, and business and technical communication. Class time was sometimes used for group work, in-class writing, oral reports, and discussion of controversial topics. Many instructors offered 20 minutes of one of their class periods for students to answer the survey. Sections were selected to ensure that certain strata would be proportionally represented: year of enrollment (freshman, sophomore, etc.); the university’s eight academic colleges; sex; and age groups, from traditional (18- to 24-year-old) students to adults (25 years and older). The original sample was reduced to 1,751 (still more than 8% of the total undergraduate population) to balance proportions.

Experience With ITAs

Respondents were asked whether ITAs had taught their required courses and whether they had had problems with any of their ITAs. Because of the machine-scored answer sheet, respondents were asked to choose from five options the first means they would use to work out such problems: (a) ask for help from the ITA, (b) talk to the course supervisor or their academic adviser, (c) change or drop that section, (d) learn the material on their own or with classmates, or (e) seek tutoring help outside class.

Scale of Preferences

The original survey instrument used by Fox (1992) contained 37 statements reflecting positive or negative attitudes, referred to as Attitudes Toward ITAs (ATITA). Both construct and content validity had been tested (Fox & Gay, 1994) using Q sorts and discrimination ratings completed by a seven-member panel of specialists. Each statement represented one of three constructs: that students with generally positive attitudes toward ITAs would (a) have an interest in and openness toward other cultures and intercultural experiences, (b) believe ITAs could be effective instructors, and (c) recognize and accept some personal responsibility for facilitating communication between themselves and ITAs. At ISU the survey included only 21 statements to reduce the time
required to complete the survey, keep respondents from becoming inattentive, and make scoring simpler by having seven statements represent each of the three constructs. Neither the wording nor the order of items was changed. Students responded to ATITA statements (see the appendix, Items 15–35) using a 5-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to uncertain (3) to strongly agree (5). A total score for the 21 statements was calculated by reversing responses to negatively worded items and weighting each construct equally. Total raw scores could range from 21 to 105. Proportional scores were derived by dividing a respondent’s total raw score by 3, thus yielding a score of 1.00, the score that would result if an uncertain response had been given to each statement. Thus the potential range of proportional ATITA scores was from 0.33 (low/negative) to 1.67 (high/positive) with a neutral midpoint of 1.00.

Focus-Group Interviews

In focus groups organized for the week following the completion of the questionnaires, a subset of QUITA respondents clarified and elaborated on aspects of their answers. From the over 100 students who offered to participate, four groups were formed: two composed of freshmen and two of upperclassmen, each with 2–7 volunteers, for a total of 20 students.4 A set of questions guided the discussion in the groups. To start the hour-long discussions, focus-group participants were asked to recount a story (good, bad, funny, sad) about an experience they had had with an ITA. Each focus group followed a set of guidelines covering a number of topics concerned with the participants’ handling of problems with ITAs, their familiarity with the university’s ITA testing and training program, their advice to new ITAs on how to succeed, and their suggestions for program improvements. On an information sheet they recorded the total number of NESTAs and ITAs who had taught them, their ranking of the experience (on a 5-point scale), and their most serious academic problems from a list of eight possibilities (which included getting an international TA whose accent may add to the difficulty of the course).

4The use of volunteers introduced the possibility of an unrepresentative sample. Students who wanted a chance to complain may have been more willing to volunteer than those with only positive experiences with ITAs. Care was taken, however, to assemble groups composed of students who had had at least one ITA and who did not live in the same residence halls or fraternity houses but represented a variety of majors. Groups also included in-state, out-of-state, and international students. Because focus groups work best when participants are unacquainted with each other (Krueger, 1988), group members were asked at the outset if they knew each other, and they said they did not. Groups of only freshmen met separately from groups of upperclassmen to encourage freshmen to talk uninhibitedly.
RESULTS

University Records

During fall semester 1993, the total enrollment at ISU was 25,112 students. University records revealed that of the undergraduates, who made up 82% of the total student body, 76% were state residents, 18% were residents of the other 49 states, and nearly 6% were from foreign countries. Among the ISU graduate students, a much higher percentage, nearly 33%, were from foreign countries. At least 241 of the 720 TAs were ITAs (34%). TAs taught nearly 17% of the undergraduate student credit hours (SCH), the units of measure used by the Office of Institutional Research to assess how instruction is delivered. Thus, approximately 6% of the SCH (one third of all credit hours taught by TAs) were likely to be taught by ITAs. Four departments in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences employed over 30% of all TAs: chemistry, English, physics and astronomy, and mathematics. All of these departments except English had a sizable proportion of TAs who were ITAs (up to 53%). In addition, the percentage of TAs who were ITAs was high in the departments of computer science (78%), aerospace engineering and engineering mechanics (53%), and statistics (25%).

The QUITA

Background Information

QUITA respondents were divided into two groups for the analysis of background characteristics: Group 1, containing over 72% of the sample ($n = 1,268$), included students who had been taught by one or more ITAs. Group 2 students (28%, $n = 483$) had no experience with ITAs. The division provided the opportunity to see who was most likely to have ITAs and whether the experience might correlate with a less positive attitude as measured by the ATITA scale.

Table 1 summarizes six of the background characteristics. Because 95% of all respondents lived in the same region of residence (i.e., the northwest central U.S.) and were U.S. citizens, these characteristics were not particularly revealing and are not included in the table. Other characteristics not included were Questions 7 and 8 (see the appendix), which asked about students’ involvement in campus organizations and about experiences living or traveling abroad. Question 7, “Are you involved in any campus organizations or activities, such as fraternities/sororities, athletics (intercollegiate or intramural), government, publications, musical groups, honors programs, etc.”, was added to the ISU version of the QUITA. The premise was that students involved in
### TABLE 1
Characteristics of Undergraduate Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Taught by ITAs (Group 1)</th>
<th>Not taught by ITAs (Group 2)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic college</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>75.9</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Medicine</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing items</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of enrollment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st year (freshman)</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd year (sophomore)</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd year (junior)</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th year or more (senior)</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing items</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected grade point average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.67 + (A average)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.00–3.66 (B average)</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00–2.99 (C average)</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00–1.99 (D average)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1.00 (F average)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing items</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional (18–24 years)</td>
<td>1,133</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult (25 years +)</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>71.8</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hometown size (by population)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town (less than 10,000)</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small city (10,000–50,000)</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City (51,000–99,000)</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>71.0</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban (over 100,000)</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing items</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All respondents</td>
<td>1,268</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

extracurricular activities might be more accepting of ITAs. Student development research (Astin, 1977; Winston & Massaro, 1987) affirmed that participation in extracurricular activities is an important factor in satisfaction with college, personal and social development, and retention. However, this characteristic did not relate significantly to the ATITA composite score, perhaps because the kind of campus activity (not asked
for on the QUI TA) could make a difference, as Abrahamowicz (1988) pointed out. Students involved in international exchanges or environmental and social action projects, for example, might have been more likely to have a positive attitude toward ITAs than those whose activities were primarily social or athletic. Indeed, students who responded negatively to Question 8, “Have you ever traveled outside the United States?”, had significantly less positive ATITA composite scores.

**Experience With ITAs**

For Group 1, the average number of ITA-taught courses (including recitations, discussion sections, and labs) was 2.3. Typically respondents had taken these courses to meet a degree requirement, and frequently (46% of the time) they were not in the undergraduate’s major. Although a higher percentage of students in some colleges had had at least one ITA, students in the colleges of engineering and agriculture had taken significantly more courses taught by ITAs than those in any of the other colleges. Males had taken significantly more ITA-taught courses than females. Engineering students were most likely to have had ITAs in courses in their major field as well as in required courses. Not surprisingly, the number of courses with ITAs increased with the number of years the respondent had been in school. Over 20% of the seniors had had five or more courses from ITAs, yet over 57% of the freshmen already had had at least one ITA in their first semester, because they were enrolled in many of the required introductory courses with lab and recitation sections customarily staffed by TAs.

Perceived difficulties with ITAs were the focus of QUITA Questions 13 and 14. Students were asked if they had problems with any of their ITAs and the first means they would use to resolve such problems. Almost 60% of Group 1 claimed to have had a problem, great or small. Over 59% of these 757 students said they would deal with such problems, at least initially, by trying to learn the material on their own or with their classmates (see Table 2). Although fewer of the students in the other groups selected the learn-on-their-own option, it was still the most popular choice of the five possibilities.

Older students were more willing to ask for help from the ITA, however. Over a third of them said they would go to the ITA when they had a problem and needed help. Older students were also more likely to seek tutoring help and less likely to settle for learning the material on their own or with their classmates than were younger students.

Only 16% of those who had had problems with ITAs said they would ask the ITA for help. Perhaps this was because students felt the awkward situation could be further complicated by language and by the awareness that the ITA would eventually be grading them. They may also have ruled
TABLE 2
First Means Chosen for Resolving Problems With ITAs, Group 1 Students (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Students with ITA problems (n = 759)</th>
<th>Students with no ITA problems (n = 509)</th>
<th>Students over 25 years old (n = 135)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learn on own or with classmate(s)</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask for help from the ITA</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to responsible faculty</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change or drop that section</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek tutoring help</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not answer this question</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

out talking with the responsible faculty (8%) because of concern about adverse effects that complaining might have both on the ITA and themselves. As one senior in Fox’s (1992) study said, “Students get frustrated, but don’t complain . . . they don’t want to get into it, politics, hassles. Or they don’t think it will do any good. Either they’ll do something themselves or just deal with it” (p. 172).

Scale of Preference

Among all 1,751 of the QUIITA respondents, the mean score for attitudes on the 21 ATITA statements was 1.11, reflecting an attitude toward ITAs between neutral and mildly positive. Scores had a fairly normal distribution pattern, with a low of 0.43, a high of 1.67, and a standard deviation of 0.19. Among the Group 1 respondents, the total ATITA composite score was 1.09, slightly lower than that of the total sample.

The ATITA composite score for the 72% of the students who had had actual experience with ITAs (n = 1,268) was used as an interval scale to see if a significant difference in ATITA scores existed based on specific student background characteristics. (For example, did students who were juniors have more or less negative attitudes toward ITAs than those who were freshmen?) Students without ITA experience were frequently majoring in humanities or social science fields that required them to take few math or science courses. Such students have been described by Astin (1993) as being favorably disposed to interacting with people from other cultures, taking a more personal interest in learning about them, and being open to less orthodox teaching methods. ATITA means reflected a more positive attitude toward ITAs among such students in the study. He reported that students who were in physical, mathematical, and biological sciences; engineering; and practical technical fields (especially agricultural and business fields) were less open to multicultural
experimentation. Such students, however, were more likely to get ITAs as instructors because of the requirements of their majors.

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) and Scheffé, a conservative post-hoc multiple comparison procedure, were used to analyze the differences between groups. The alpha level was set at $p < .01$. Significant differences in ATITA scores were found for all of the characteristics except the involvement in campus activities (mentioned above). The difference in ATITA means between the most positive subgroup (1.29, students whose residence was outside the U.S.) and the most negative subgroup (1.01, those with the largest numbers of courses with ITAs), however, was quite small and close to the neutral mean of 1.00. The large sample size was the likely cause for statistical significance of ANOVAs, so the results should not be overinterpreted. With that caveat, the following differences were observed.

**Academic college differences.** Based on the ATITA composite score, students in agriculture had the most negative attitude toward ITAs. Business students were also significantly different from the most positive group, the students from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

**Sex difference.** Females had significantly higher ATITA mean scores. Male students had had a significantly larger number of ITAs, possibly because they were more likely to be majoring in scientific and engineering fields, where ITAs are concentrated.

**Year of enrollment.** The year of enrollment variable had a U-shaped curve based on how long the student had been studying. Why sophomores and juniors were more negative about ITAs than freshmen and seniors remains an interesting question. The classic research studies about student development, such as those by Astin (1977, 1993) and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), have examined the outcomes of a baccalaureate education rather than the year-by-year incremental maturing process. The ISU findings suggest that freshmen may have high expectations about academic life; by the 2nd and 3rd year, after encountering some of the tough, required courses with large enrollments (where ITAs are likely to be leading recitations or staffing labs and help rooms), they are disillusioned. Finally in the 4th or 5th year, when graduation is in sight, undergraduates become more empathetic toward ITAs. Several seniors in focus groups commented that if foreign TAs were given a chance, their students soon would get used to their accents and would find having an ITA not much different from having a NESTA.

**Expected differences in GPA.** The popular assumption that having ITAs is a convenient excuse for students who are doing poorly in their courses
received some support from the findings. Those who expected a C average had a significantly lower ATITA composite score (1.07) than the A or B students (1.13–1.18). Data on honors students also indicated fewer problems with ITAs and a greater willingness to see the ITA when they had problems. Nearly 61% of the students whose expected GPA was C or below claimed they would try to learn on their own or drop the course rather than seek help from the ITA, the faculty supervisor for the course, or a tutor. Would students with lower GPAs have trouble with hard subjects no matter who the instructor was? How much did the ITAs’ skill in their L2 inhibit their learning? These questions remain to be investigated in a different sort of study.

**Age differences.** Older students (25 years and older) had a more positive attitude score.

**Homogeneity factors.** As for region of residence, hometown size, U.S. citizenship, and international experience, answers on the ATITA scale showed that, indeed, those who had not traveled or lived anywhere other than their own small town or rural area in the Midwest did not feel as positive toward ITAs as students who had grown up in urban areas, had traveled outside the U.S., or called either the West or East Coast their home. Students who were noncitizens clearly had a more empathetic view of TAs from other cultures, possibly from having learned to deal with English as an international language.

These attitudinal results offer clues to student perspectives but, as mentioned earlier, means were between 1.01 and 1.29, slightly above the neutral midpoint of the scale. Summated scores were computed for each group of seven statements representing the three constructs developed by Fox (1992). Using Cronbach’s coefficient alpha, the internal reliability for Construct 1 (interest and openness to other cultures) was 0.71; for Construct 2 (ITAs can be effective instructors), 0.82; and for Construct 3 (acceptance of personal responsibility in communicating with ITAs), 0.72. The individual construct reliabilities were not as strong as those Fox (1992) had for her larger set of 37 statements. However, when the three constructs were combined, they formed a single ATITA composite mean score with internal reliability of 0.88 (compared to Fox’s 0.93).

**Focus-Group Interviews**

The format of the machine-scored QUITA made it difficult to get below the surface of problems and solutions. Focus-group interviews and complaints reported by departments hiring ITAs were more enlightening. The two most common complaints about language use were that the pronunciation of the ITA was hard to understand and that the ITA was unable to understand and answer students’ questions satisfactorily.
During focus groups, students were more likely to recount experiences with ITAs than to express attitudes. Sometimes a particular ITA was cited as “really a good teacher,” someone who “tries hard to get the message across.” One freshman admitted that she liked listening to accents, “I think they’re pretty cool if they’re not too heavy.” Some students blamed departments for ITA problems. One 5th-year senior (then undertaking his fourth major) said that he thought departments thrust ITAs into courses when they did not have enough other instructors. A sophomore claimed that some science departments favored graduate students and viewed the teaching of required undergraduate courses as a burden they reluctantly bear.

During one focus group, a junior opined that one reason ITAs might have trouble understanding their students’ questions was the informal, “shorthand” way that Americans speak English, quite different from the variant of the language ITAs learned overseas. Actually, the focus-group transcripts are filled with examples of this U.S. college student vernacular, including unfinished sentences, slang, limited academic vocabulary, imprecise questions, rising intonation at the end of statements, and the frequent use of the fillers like and you know. Oral proficiency tests for ITA screening may need to include more opportunities for the examinees to demonstrate their listening skills and ability to respond to typically informal student talk.

Nearly all of the 20 undergraduates who participated in focus groups were unfamiliar with the university’s ITA training program and unaware that the university had been systematically testing the spoken English proficiency of ITAs since 1984. On the information sheet in which group members ranked eight possible academic problems in terms of seriousness, only two participants ranked as first “getting an ITA whose accent may add to the difficulty of the course.” The other 18 students ranked other issues as most serious. “Needing to get into required courses and finding them full or not offered” was selected as first by more freshmen, whereas “Finding money to pay the rising cost of tuition” and “Having instructors who are poor teachers (disorganized, poor speakers, unfair, etc.)” were ranked first by more upperclassmen.

**COMPARISON WITH EARLIER STUDIES**

This study supported much of the research cited earlier in this article. A number of the findings of Matross et al. (1982) were confirmed: Students who had had one or more ITAs had a less positive attitude toward them than students without the experience, and females and older students had a more positive attitude than males and traditional (18- to 24-year-old) students. Students whose ITA experiences were not
in courses in their majors but in required courses were significantly more negative, as Bailey (1983) also found. As in the Carrier et al. (1990) study, the most likely students at ISU to initiate contact with the ITA were 5th-year seniors, males, older students, noncitizens, and those who expected higher GPAs.

Fox’s study (1992) at Heartland University, the investigation most like this one, found some similar results among undergraduates:

- Students at both schools were generally unaware of the testing and training of ITAs that had existed on their campuses for nearly a decade.
- Students in agriculture had the lowest ATITA composite score, indicating the most negative attitude, whereas those in liberal arts and basic sciences had the highest. Engineering students were most likely to have had the largest number of ITAs whereas those in social sciences and humanities were least likely.
- A U-shaped attitude curve for year of enrollment also appeared in Fox’s data, although the Heartland juniors were more negative than the sophomores. With only 18 freshmen in her sample, however, Fox could not test this hypothesis.
- Although GPAs were computed on a 6-point scale at Heartland (rather than the 4-point used at ISU), those in the C-average range still had a significantly lower ATITA mean composite score than those expecting A or B averages.
- Fox did not have a large enough sample of adult students to test the age hypothesis, but the difference indicated in her figures led to the seeking out of more adult students at ISU (i.e., by collecting data in some Saturday and evening sections of the library instruction course required of all students) and the finding that, indeed, older students felt more positive.
- Students at Heartland with international experiences had a more positive attitude than those without.
- The order of positive and negative rankings of the 21 ATITA statements used at both institutions was quite similar. On nearly every statement, however, the Heartland ATITA composite scores were more negative than the ISU scores were. Fox’s total ATITA composite score for all students at Heartland University, whether or not they had had ITAs, was just a little lower than ISU’s: mean, 1.02; lowest, 0.48; highest, 1.61; and standard deviation, 0.18. The comparative figures for ISU were mean, 1.11; lowest, 0.43; highest, 1.67; and standard deviation, 0.20. Heartland has nearly 10,000 more undergraduates than ISU, and the ratio of TAs to undergraduates suggests that the undergraduates at Heartland are more than twice...
as likely to have a class or lab taught by an ITA. Nearly 96% of Fox’s sample of 540 students (almost 2% of the total undergraduate student body) had had one or more courses with an ITA, and 52% of the seniors had had four or more ITA-taught courses. The average was 2.9 courses with ITAs, 55% not in students’ major fields.

INTERPRETATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The picture that emerges from the data is of undergraduate students who are trying to cope with a difficult situation: Required courses outside their majors are frequently taught by inexperienced TAs whose manner of speaking English and whose cultural and pedagogical expectations may be different from their own. When they have problems, undergraduates are reluctant to complain to those who might be able to alter the situation and instead try to learn on their own or with their classmates.

A sophomore animal science major in one focus group admitted that he had to take more responsibility for his education when he had difficulty understanding an ITA. His study groups were more productive, he was more likely to read and even reread the textbook, and he went to recitations better prepared for quizzes. “If you know that your TA can’t explain things clearly, you’ll know the material going in,” he said. (This comment, if true, represents possibly one of the positive outcomes of having an ITA.)

Students with the most negative attitudes could be profiled as traditional-aged males majoring in agriculture or business with an expected GPA in the C range who had not traveled outside the country and who lived in a rural area or small town in the north central part of the U.S. These students normally learned on their own or with classmates.

Undergraduate-ITA relations on campus might be improved by the design of programs such as the following.

• Because students are reluctant to go to departments offering the ITA-taught courses, a student advocacy center might serve a valuable function. Perhaps a student services staff member could check complaints about teaching and serve as an intermediary between the student, the ITA’s department, and the ITA testing and training program.

• A brochure distributed during the lecture session of large enrollment courses could suggest how undergraduates might improve the dialogue between themselves and their ITAs. Specific ways to phrase questions and alert ITAs when students do not understand could be offered. Such a brochure is distributed by the Graduate College at the University of Washington (Bauer, 1994).
Undergraduates can be involved in the training courses for ITAs. They can serve as conversation partners with ITAs, as is done in the program at the Ohio State University (Sarwark & vom Saal, 1989). Stoller, Hodges, and Kimbrough (1995) have analyzed the value of academic programs that pair up L2 learners and native speakers. Native speakers’ perceived benefits include the social outlet, enhanced cultural sensitivity, and awareness of L2 learners’ needs.

Undergraduates can ask questions during classroom and office hour simulations, serve as panelists during TA orientation sessions, or even play a role in the performance test panel (B. Hoekje, 1996, personal communication).

This study examined undergraduates’ attitudes toward ITAs at a large, midwestern research university. Similar studies in different regions and at different sizes and types of institutions (e.g., universities that are smaller, private, founded by religious denominations, military, urban, predominantly one sex) might provide interesting contrasts. The ISU findings strongly suggest, however, that universities still have the job of broadening insular students’ horizons and helping them to become cross-culturally aware so that more of them will agree with the following statement made by a senior political science major during a focus group:

I think we are placing too much of an emphasis on making these TAs conform to American ways. I’m not expecting an ITA to give up their culture just because they’re here. I think we have a lot to learn just having an ITA as an instructor. There isn’t much chance that you are going to go out into the business world and everyone you run into is an American. I think in a lot of cases we are being too inflexible and that bothers me. . . . Americans are just so egocentric we don’t want to allow other people to be what they are.

THE AUTHOR

Barbara S. Plakans coordinated the testing and training program for ITAs at Iowa State University for over a decade. She is currently an academic program specialist for the Spoken English Program at the Ohio State University and serves on the Educational Testing Service’s advisory committee for the Test of Spoken English and the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (TSE/SPEAK).

REFERENCES


APPENDIX

Survey Instrument

Questionnaire About International Teaching Assistants (QUITA)*

Please use the “General Purpose Answer Sheet” for your answers. You are to remain anonymous; do not fill in your name. In the rectangles to the left of the solid vertical line, fill in the following information:

I. Background Information

SEX:  M = male    F = female

GRADE or EDUC.:  Indicate your year in school:
  0 = Special student;  1 = Freshman;  2 = Sophomore;  3 = Junior;
  4 = Senior;  5 = 5th year (or more) student  6 = Graduate student

ACADEMIC COLLEGE:  Use the “IDENTIFICATION NUMBER” Column, A, 0–9. Fill in the number to indicate the college in which you are enrolled:
  0 = Agriculture  1 = Business Ad.  2 = Design  3 = Education
  4 = Engineering  5 = Home Economics  6 = LA & S  7 = Vet. Medicine
  8 = Graduate  9 = Undeclared

REGION IN WHICH YOU RESIDED during the majority of your elementary and high school years. Please refer to the map, then choose only one region and fill in the correct circle using “SPECIAL CODES,” column K:
  0. (A) New England region  5. (F) West North Central region
  1. (B) Middle Atlantic region  6. (G) West South Central region
  2. (C) South Atlantic region  7. (H) Mountain region
  3. (D) East North Central region  8. (I) Pacific region (incl. Hawaii, Alaska)
  4. (E) East South Central region  9. (J) Other (outside U.S.A.)

* From Questionnaire of Undergraduates About International Teaching Assistants, copyright November 1990 by Wanda Fox. Adapted with permission.
Now use the bubbles on the right side of the vertical line to answer the following information:

1. Your estimated cumulative grade point average (GPA) at the end of this semester:
   (A) 3.67–4.0  (B) 3.0–3.66  (C) 2.0–2.99  (D) 1.00–1.9 9  (E) Less than 1.0
2. Your age group:
   (A) 17–18 yrs.   (B) 19–20 yrs.   (C) 21–22 yrs.   (D) 23–24 yrs.   (E) 25 yrs. or older
3. Are you a U.S. citizen?   (A) Yes    (B) No
4. Your predominant ethnic/racial background:
   (A) American Indian or Alaskan Native
   (B) African American
   (C) Asian American or Pacific Islander
   (D) Hispanic or Spanish surname
   (E) Other (including European American)
5. Your current living arrangements:
   (A) Live on-campus in student housing (residence halls, married student housing)
   (B) Live near campus alone or with other students (apartment, house, fraternity/sorority)
   (C) Live at home with your parents
   (D) Live at home with your spouse/children, or nonstudents
   (E) Other arrangement, not mentioned above
6. Type of area in which you resided during the majority of your elementary and high school years (select one):
   (A) Rural area
   (B) Town of less than 10,000
   (C) Small city of less 10,000 to 50,000
   (D) City of 51,000 to 99,000
   (E) City over 100,000
7. Are you involved in any campus organizations or activities, such as fraternities/sororities, athletics (intercollegiate or intramural), government, publications, musical groups, honors programs, etc.?   (A) Yes    (B) No
8. Have you ever traveled outside the United States?   (A) Yes    (B) No

II. Experience With International Teaching Assistants (ITAs)

9. Have you ever had a course or section (discussion, recitation, lab) of a course in which the instructor was an international teaching assistant (ITA) whose first language was not English?   (A) Yes    (B) No
   If yes, please answer questions 10–14 below; if no, go on to Section III.
10. How many courses have you had in which an ITA had some teaching responsibilities?
    (A) One   (B) Two   (C) Three   (D) Four   (E) Five or more
11. How many of these courses with an ITA were in your major field(s)? Choose one:
    (A) None   (B) One   (C) Two   (D) Three   (E) Four or more
12. How many of these courses with an ITA were required for your program of study? Choose one:
    (A) None   (B) One   (C) Two   (D) Three   (E) Four or more
13. Did you have any problems with any of your ITAs?   (A) Yes    (B) No
14. If your answer to question 13 was yes, what was the first means you used to work out problems with an ITA? If you had no problems, what means of solving problems do you think you would have used first? (choose one)
   (A) Ask for help from the ITA
   (B) Talk to the course supervisor and/or academic adviser
   (C) Change/drop that section
   (D) Learn the material on my own or with classmate(s)
   (E) Seek tutoring help outside of class

III. Scale of Preferences

Please select the appropriate number in the column on the right to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Some statements are similar, but read and respond to each one as accurately as you can. Do not reflect on them; work quickly and after choosing, fill in the matching circle on the “bubble sheet.”

Use the following scale:

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>1 (A) Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>2 (B) Disagree</th>
<th>3 (C) Uncertain</th>
<th>4 (D) Agree</th>
<th>5 (E) Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. If I got an ITA with a strong foreign accent, I would try to transfer to a different section of the course.  
16. I can learn just as well from an ITA as I can from an American TA.  
17. When there are communication problems between students and ITAs, students can do very little to improve the situation.  
18. As a student, I would be willing to make adjustments in my speaking and listening styles in order to communicate better with an ITA.  
19. Having an international student as a roommate would be a very difficult situation.  
20. If I had trouble understanding an ITA, I would talk with him or her about it during office hours.  
21. Having a class with an ITA is an opportunity for developing cross-cultural communication skills.  
22. Students’ attitudes affect their ability to understand ITAs in class.  
23. On the whole, ITAs show about the same level of concern for students as do American TAs.  
24. I am interested in international news and issues.  
25. American students can help ITAs in their adjustment to the U.S. classroom.  
26. There are many ITAs who teach just as effectively as American TAs.  
27. It would be better if ITAs were not allowed to teach at this university.  
28. ITAs usually make a sincere effort to communicate effectively in the classroom.  
29. In the future I hope to travel and/or live abroad.  
30. The skills involved in intercultural communication are becoming increasingly important in today’s society.
31. Many ITAs have difficulty understanding and answering students’ questions.

32. The intercultural communication that occurs in a class with an ITA has little relationship to the “real world.”

33. If I could choose the section of a course myself, one of my main criteria would be to get into a section taught by an American TA.

34. It is not reasonable to expect students to make listening and/or speaking adjustments in order to communicate with ITAs.

35. Interacting with people of different cultural backgrounds will not be part of my planned career.

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**Errata**

In Thomas K. Ricento and Nancy H. Hornberger’s article, “Unpeeling the Onion: Language Planning and Policy and the ELT Professional” (Vol. 30, No. 3), the source for footnote 10 on page 420 is not Oda (1995) but rather a paper presented by Oda (1994) at the 28th Annual TESOL Convention in Baltimore entitled *TESOL Affiliates: Promoting English or Demoting Local Languages*. In addition, the current name of the Japanese professional English teaching organization is the Japan Association for Language Teaching not the Japanese Association of Language Teachers, as indicated on page 420.

We apologize for the errors.
THE NUMERACY HANDBOOK
A RESOURCE FOR LITERACY AND NUMERACY TEACHERS
AUTHORS: ANNABELLE LUKIN & LINDA ROSS

This new book, which is a practical guide for teachers of numeracy and literacy, due to be published in early December, considers issues in defining and teaching numeracy, looks at numeracy in the workplace, at how to design a course and a unit of work and at numeracy skills and strands. It includes suggestions for activities at three levels of difficulty. The book also includes a useful section on professional development activities for teachers of literacy and numeracy as well as a detailed section on resources currently available in this field. The focus throughout is on teaching numeracy and integrating numeracy and literacy.

The book is an essential resource for teachers of numeracy and literacy, as well as trainers in this field.

The book is divided into five sections:
Section 1 Issues in teaching numeracy
Section 2 Numeracy in the workplace
Section 3 Designing a course
Section 4 Designing a unit of work
Section 5 Numeracy strands and skills

FOCUS ON SPEAKING
AUTHORS: ANNE BURNS & HELEN JOYCE

Focus on Speaking is an introductory text on teaching speaking to adult second language learners. It examines different theoretical perspectives on spoken language and provides practical suggestions for teaching.

The eight chapters in the book cover the following aspects of spoken language:
• the ways in which people learn
• the processes of producing and negotiating
• a historical overview
• how to address students' needs and goals
• approaches to program planning
• speaking activities
• the assessment of spoken language
• questions commonly asked

This book is the second in a new series of textbooks for practising and trainee EFL/ESL and literacy teachers.

New from TESOL Publications

Technology in the Classroom
Elizabeth Hanson-Smith

This paper examines current practices in technology-enhanced schoolrooms or learning centers, benefits and liabilities of technology-mediated language learning and teaching and the as yet unrealized promise of computer-assisted language learning for the student and the teacher.

Issues and Implications of English Dialects for Teaching English as a Second Language
Carolyn Temple Adger

This paper presents some issues stemming from language variation for teaching ESL, identifies research strands relevant to program development, and describes two dialect program exemplars. It also suggests considerations for developing educational policy with respect to dialects and programmatic responses to it.
Do Reading and Interactive Vocabulary Instruction Make a Difference?
An Empirical Study

CHERYL BOYD ZIMMERMAN
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Many teachers give little or no classroom attention to vocabulary, assuming students will learn words incidentally. Although research demonstrates that vocabulary can be acquired indirectly through reading, the question remains: Does vocabulary instruction make a difference? This article reports on a pilot study of the combined effects of reading and interactive vocabulary instruction for U.S. postsecondary L2 students preparing for university entrance. A 10-week classroom-based study tested the hypothesis that L2 students exposed to a combination of regular periods of reading and interactive vocabulary instruction will show significant increases in their knowledge of the nontechnical terms that are used widely across academic fields. L2 students attending university-preparatory intensive English programs were divided into two groups: one received 3 hours a week of interactive vocabulary instruction plus an assignment to read self-selected materials; the other received the self-selected reading assignment only. The results of this study suggest that interactive vocabulary instruction accompanied by moderate amounts of self-selected and course-related reading led to gains in vocabulary knowledge; students’ perceptions of how best to learn words corroborated these results. It is argued that teachers should give consideration to the effects of combining reading and interactive vocabulary instruction.

Even by moderate estimates, a native English-speaking university freshman has been acquiring vocabulary at the rate of at least 1,000 words per year throughout childhood and knows 20,000 to 25,000 words upon college entrance (Nagy & Anderson, 1984; Nation, 1990). Moreover, native English speakers know a great deal about each word, such as its subtlety of meaning, its range of meaning, and appropriate contexts for its use. Those who begin acquiring English after childhood will thus have a great deal to learn, even if they are able to learn at the L1 rate once they begin.
Not surprisingly, therefore, vocabulary presents a serious linguistic obstacle to many nonnative English-speaking students. In Meara’s (1984) study of L2 university students, lexical errors outnumbered grammatical errors by 3:1 or 4:1. Similarly, a survey of L2 students taking university courses found that they identified vocabulary as a major factor that held them back in academic writing tasks (Leki & Carson, 1994). Laufer (1986) argues that if fluency is understood as “the ability to convey a message with ease and comprehensibility” (p. 72), then vocabulary adequacy and accuracy matter more than grammatical correctness.

Although vocabulary has attracted increased interest since the 1980s, language researchers and teachers continue to give less attention to it than to syntax and phonology, closed systems that lend themselves more easily to linguistic abstractions and generalizations (Laufer, 1986; Richards, 1976). In light of the need for information about the word-learning process, the pilot study described in this article tested the hypothesis that academically oriented L2 students who are exposed to a combination of regular periods of self-selected reading and interactive vocabulary instruction1 will significantly increase their vocabulary knowledge.

ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is based on three assumptions about the nature of the word-learning process:
1. Word learning is a complex task.
2. Some word learning occurs incidentally as a result of context-rich activities such as reading.
3. Word knowledge involves a range of skills, and word learning is facilitated by approaches that provide varied experiences (i.e., with reading, writing, speaking, and listening).

Word Learning Is a Complex Task

Word knowledge has linguistic, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic aspects. Lexical competence is far more than the ability to define a given number of words; it involves knowing a great deal about each word, including information about its general frequency of use, the syntactic and situational limitations on its use, its generalizability, its collocational probabilities, its underlying form, its derived forms, and its semantic

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1 This method consists primarily of discussion-based vocabulary activities aimed at providing practice in the range of skills included in vocabulary acquisition: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
features (Aitchison, 1987; Channell, 1981). The process by which learners acquire this information appears to take place gradually over a long period of time, is very complex, and is quite difficult to investigate. Learners develop complicated networks of associations in their L1 over many years (see Carter, 1987; Meara, 1980) and are generally thought to initially increase the size of their recognition vocabulary, then move on to issues of skillful use, including fluency of access (Nation, 1993).

Some Word Learning Occurs Incidentally Through Reading

Reading is one way that learners gain lexical knowledge. Evidence in two areas supports this assumption. The first is the enormity of the vocabulary-learning task and the apparent efficiency and speed with which it is accomplished. It is estimated that L1 vocabulary doubles in size between the third and seventh grades and that schoolchildren typically gain 1,000–3,000 words a year (McKeown & Curtis, 1987; Nagy & Herman, 1987). Such extensive gains suggest that a considerable amount of word learning takes place incidentally through exposure to new words in meaningful contexts.

The second indication of indirect learning comes from research showing vocabulary gains from reading in L1 students (Elley, 1989; Nagy & Anderson, 1984; Saragi, Nation, & Meister, 1978; Smith, 1988), L2 students of English in a foreign language context (Day, Omura, & Hiramatsu, 1991), adult ESL students (Pitts, White, & Krashen, 1989), and child ESL students (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983). Even though evidence shows that incidental vocabulary learning occurs through reading, the processes are not clearly understood (Coady, 1993; Nation & Coady, 1988).

Word Learning Involves a Range of Skills

Word knowledge includes the ability to recall meaning, infer meaning, comprehend a text, and communicate orally (Stoller & Grabe, 1993). No single approach can address all of these skills; when learners receive input about vocabulary only from reading or only from the use of lists, drills, or skill-building activities, they have not addressed the range of skills required for word use. Effective approaches to word learning should be multifaceted in what they require of the learner and rich in what they reveal about the target words (Beck & McKeown, 1985; McKeown & Curtis, 1987; Nation, 1990; Stoller & Grabe, 1993).

2 The research cited here concerns L1 vocabulary acquisition patterns during early childhood. The evidence is not sufficient to extrapolate the results to L2 adult environments.
Research into the types of situations that lead to L2 vocabulary learning has increased since the 1980s, but most of the research has investigated the effects of incidental learning of vocabulary from reading (see Krashen, 1993) and on specific types of instructional methods such as the key-word approach3 (Coady, Magoto, Hubbard, Graney, & Mokhtari, 1993; Crow & Quigley, 1985). A limited amount of classroom-based research has looked at an actual classroom vocabulary-learning environment for L1 learners (Beck, Perfetti, & McKeown, 1982) and for L2 learners (Paribakht & Wesche, 1996). The current study draws on many of these investigations, examining the effects on L2 vocabulary acquisition of an approach that combines a communicative method of vocabulary instruction with reading assignments.

METHOD

Subjects

The ESL students participating in the 10-week study attended 24–25 hours per week of skill-based instruction on two California State University campuses in programs designed to prepare students for university entrance. None of these students had attended high school in the U.S. The two programs were selected because they implement similar skill-based curricula designed to address similar student populations in preparation for admission to a California state university.

All 44 students who tested into the advanced-intermediate level (Level 5 in a six-level curriculum) participated in this study. Six students were dropped from the investigation because of incomplete data, and three (2 from Group 1 and 1 from Group 2) were excluded on the basis of unreliable responses on the checklist test (see the Materials: Checklist Test section). Of the remaining sample of 35 participants, 15 (43%) were enrolled in the English programs with the academic goal of completing a graduate degree while in the U.S., 12 (34%) intended to earn an undergraduate degree, and 8 (23%) were enrolled in the English programs for the purpose of studying English but not necessarily pursuing additional course work in the U.S. The L1 of the majority of the students (57%) was Japanese, Korean, or Mandarin. A total of nine primary languages were spoken within the sample,4 and 7 of the participants (20%) knew a third language.

3 The key-word method of word learning is a technique in which the learner creates a link between the target word form and an already well-known word. For example, the English speaker learning Japanese may remember the Japanese greeting ohayogozaimasu by associating it with the word Ohio.

4 The primary languages spoken in the sample were Arabic, Farsi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Mandarin, Thai, and Vietnamese.
The experimental group (Group 1; \( n = 18 \)) included two classes taught by the same teacher, and the control group (Group 2; \( n = 17 \)), two classes taught by two different teachers. Each of the three participating teachers had over 10 years of experience in teaching L2 university students. Participants’ scores on the grammar and reading portions of the Michigan Placement Test ranged from 51 to 78, indicating a high-intermediate level of English proficiency. To establish the similarity among the students in the two groups, I compared the participants’ scores on the grammar and reading portions of the Michigan Placement Test using analysis of variance (ANOVA). The differences between the means of Group 1 (65.72) and Group 2 (65.12) are not significant at the .05 level: \( F(1,33) = .10, p = .75 \).

**Procedure**

The participants’ 24–25 hours of skills-based English instruction per week included instruction in reading, composition, oral language, and academic skills. The only difference in the instruction of the two groups was that Group 1 received 3 hours per week of interactive vocabulary instruction. The parameters of interactive vocabulary instruction are as follows:

Each lesson should include most of the following:
1. multiple exposures to words;
2. exposures to words in meaningful contexts;
3. rich and varied information about each word;
4. establishment of ties between instructed words, student experience, and prior knowledge; and
5. active participation by students in the learning process. (adapted from Nagy & Herman, 1987, p. 33)

Interactive vocabulary activities vary in purpose. Some are designed to clarify word meaning and illustrate appropriate usage (e.g., in a unit on the history of food, a brief explanation of the target word *consume* is followed by a group discussion activity: *Under what circumstances and by whom would each of the following be consumed: three glasses of water, 5 gallons of beer, a ton of fish, a tree, oil, a book, a town?*). Other activities are designed to practice using the appropriate word form in context (e.g., students examine a graph describing U.S. sugar consumption for a given period and create sentences using information from the graph and the following forms of the word: *consume*/1910, *consumption*/1930/exceeded, *consumers*/after World War II, continued to *consume*/in 1965, *consuming*/since 1950). Final activities for each unit provide opportunities to demonstrate word knowledge in either oral or written original expression using the target words: (e.g., *What three foods do you think are the most commonly eaten throughout the world?*).
The teacher of the experimental group was advised to divide the 30 hours of class instruction as follows: 20% administrative tasks (e.g., test and quiz administration, reading record completion, homework review) and 80% small-group or pair activities. The text used in these classes, *Lexis: Academic Vocabulary Study* (Burgmeier, Eldred, & Zimmerman, 1991), concentrates primarily on high-frequency academic vocabulary, including the words tested in this study, and contains many activities suitable for group work. The experimental group covered four chapters of the text (2, 5, 6, and 7) during the study. The teacher was instructed to address individuals’ questions and misunderstandings as the need arose, avoid extensive explanations or lectures, make herself available as group activities took place, and listen to participants’ production.

The teacher who taught the experimental group received the following orientation and supervision: (a) She observed demonstrations of the materials by the authors, (b) she read and was advised to discuss and ask questions about the five parameters of interactive vocabulary instruction, and (c) I observed her teaching the materials both before and after the study began. Immediately after each observation, we discussed specific suggestions for realizing the five parameters more fully, and I confirmed that the teacher was carefully following the instructions provided.

The teachers of the control group received no special instructions beyond the request to supervise the pre- and posttests, hand out and collect the weekly reading records, and encourage students to read self-selected materials each week. Otherwise, they taught reading using a skill-based approach and gave instruction in vocabulary only as questions or confusion arose.

**Materials**

*Checklist Test*

The study measured vocabulary knowledge by means of a 50-item checklist test administered at the beginning and the end of the 10-week period. The lexical items on the test were selected from *The University Word List* (*UWL*) (Xue & Nation, 1984), a list of approximately 800 headwords and 1,400 derivatives based on the vocabulary used in 1st-year university textbooks. The *UWL* consists of nontechnical terms that are used widely across academic fields and in most kinds of technical writing. When added to the 2,000 words on *A General Service List of English Words* (West, 1953), the *UWL* accounts for 95% of the words encountered in unsimplified texts, assuming adequate background knowledge of the

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5 All instruments used in this study are available from the author: Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, California State University, Fullerton, CA 92634.
The checklist test was designed to assess levels of word knowledge. The participants indicated whether or not they knew a word on four levels: (a) “I don’t know the word”; (b) “I have seen the word before but am not sure of the meaning”; (c) “I understand the word when I see or hear it in a sentence, but I don’t know how to use it in my own speaking or writing”; and (d) “I can use the word in a sentence.” Ten percent of the 50 items in the test were English-like nonwords added to check the response bias. Those respondents who identified more than two nonwords at Level c were excluded from the study on the basis of unreliability. Scoring assigned 4 points for Answer d, 3 points for Answer c, 2 points for Answer b, and 1 point for Answer a for each of the 45 legitimate words. The checklist test has demonstrated good reliability; Cronbach’s alpha was .90 for the pretest and .94 for the posttest.

To adjust for preexisting differences between the groups, I examined the checklist pretests and posttests for Groups 1 and 2 using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), a tool that is frequently used for this purpose in quasi-experimental designs. In ANCOVA, relevant covariates are identified and the variance attributed to them is partialed out in an effort to separate the effects of instruction from the effects of other factors. In this study, the covariates identified were the checklist pretest, the total hours reported doing self-selected reading, and the total hours reported doing required reading. The checklist posttest was the dependent variable, and treatment was the independent variable.

Reading Record and Questionnaire

To investigate the effects of and attitudes toward reading as it relates to word learning, both teachers gave their groups the ungraded assignment of completing 5 hours per week of self-selected reading. At the beginning of the term, all participants received a handout explaining that self-selected reading was helpful to language learning and giving advice on locating reading materials. At the end of each week of the 10-week study, students estimated the number of hours they had spent reading required materials for class and the number spent reading for pleasure. To avoid encouraging participants to inflate the number of

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6 The nonwords, which were designed to resemble English words, followed English rules of morphology and spelling (e.g., artivious, ploated, sloist, instroition, and reveloped). The identification of a modest number of these words as familiar could be seen as reflecting knowledge of these rules.
hours they spent on reading, I instructed the three classroom teachers not to assign grades or other credit for completion of the reading record, which they distributed and collected each week.

A brief questionnaire administered at the beginning and the end of the 10 weeks of instruction requested background information and investigated students’ beliefs and perceptions about how words are best added to one’s vocabulary. Participants ranked six items “according to how helpful or effective they are” in the acquisition of new words: (a) memorizing lists of new words, (b) reading enjoyable texts of one’s own choice, (c) reading required texts from classes, (d) participating in class lessons in which the teacher provides opportunities to use new words in class, (e) studying the dictionary, and (f) studying Greek and Latin roots and affixes. The students ranked the techniques from 1 (the most effective technique) to 6 (the least effective) (adapted from Zechmeister, D’Anna, Hall, Paus, & Smith, 1993). I analyzed the rankings of effective vocabulary-learning methods by computing the means of each group for each of the six selections, with 1 being the most preferred and 6 the least preferred. I then calculated the mean rankings by totaling the ranking scores for each method and dividing by the number of respondents, placed the means in order for comparison, and used paired-group t-tests to identify significant changes.

**FINDINGS**

**Checklist Test Results**

The effect of the covariate checklist pretest on the dependent variable, the checklist posttest, was significant at the .01 level, \( F(1,30) = 23.995; p = .000 \), and the variance was adjusted for. The effect of the covariates self-selected reading, \( F(1,30) = .334; p = .568 \), and required reading, \( F(1,30) = .008; p = .929 \), were not significant, suggesting that the amount of reading did not effect the posttest results. That is, when differences in the amount of self-selected and required reading were controlled for, interactive vocabulary instruction had a significant effect on vocabulary scores.

The treatment effect was significant at the .05 level—indeed it approached the .01 level; \( F(1,30) = 5.91; p < .05 \). Group 1, the experimental group, had a higher mean score on the posttest (adjusted \( M = 161.37 \)) than Group 2, the control group (adjusted \( M = 152.90 \)). These results suggest that the two groups differed significantly in self-reported word knowledge as measured by the checklist test (see Table 1).
TABLE 1
Students’ Mean Checklist Test Scores andReported Number of Hours Spent Reading
Over a 10-Week Term (N = 35)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Group 1 (n = 18)</th>
<th>Group 2 (n = 17)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest checklist score (of 180)</td>
<td>137.28</td>
<td>138.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>15.44</td>
<td>19.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-selected reading (hours)</td>
<td>26.89</td>
<td>25.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>12.76</td>
<td>13.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required reading (hours)</td>
<td>45.89</td>
<td>30.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>27.68</td>
<td>26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest checklist score (of 180)</td>
<td>160.61</td>
<td>153.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>12.92</td>
<td>13.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted means for the three covariates are in parentheses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading Record and Questionnaire Results

As shown in Table 1, the mean number of reported hours of self-selected reading was nearly identical for the two groups, but the standard deviation was 12.76 in Group 1 (with a range of 7–52 hours) and 13.39 in Group 2 (with a range of 10–58 hours). This range reflects the reality of a voluntary assignment but makes it difficult to generalize about the actual effect of self-selected reading.

The groups’ mean rankings of the word-learning methods are shown in Table 2. Before the 10 weeks of instruction, the mean rankings of Groups 1 and 2 were identical. After the 10 weeks, neither group had changed its ranking of the two methods considered least effective—studying the dictionary and studying Greek and Latin roots and affixes—and both groups ranked memorizing lists of new words lower and required reading from classes higher. The groups differed in their assessments of class lessons where the teacher gives students chances to use new words in class activities and enjoyable reading of my own choice.

The paired t-test was used to examine the difference between the groups’ pre- and postinstruction mean rankings for each of the six methods (see Table 2). This analysis indicated a significant difference (p < .05) in Group 1’s pre- and postinstruction rankings of required reading as useful in word learning. Note that Group 1, which reported

7 The fact that the students did about 2.5 hours of self-selected reading each week rather than the assigned 5.0 hours does not invalidate the data. Rather, it reflects the normal circumstances of busy nonnative English speakers who are working toward university admission in the U.S.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word-learning method</th>
<th>Group 1 (reading &amp; vocabulary instruction; N = 18)</th>
<th>Group 2 (reading instruction only; N = 17)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preinstruction</td>
<td>Postinstruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class lessons where the teacher gives us chances to use new words in class activities</td>
<td>1.67 (1.19) 1 2.06 (1.43) 1 1.06</td>
<td>2.35 (1.32) 1 2.24 (1.25) 2 2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyable reading of my own choice</td>
<td>2.33 (1.03) 2 2.89 (1.49) 2 1.43</td>
<td>2.47 (1.55) 2 2.00 (1.23) 1 –0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorizing lists of new words</td>
<td>3.00 (1.14) 3 3.33 (1.41) 4 3.39</td>
<td>3.06 (1.52) 3 3.94 (1.39) 4 0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required reading from classes</td>
<td>3.83 (1.38) 4 3.21 (1.49) 3 1.07*</td>
<td>3.35 (1.22) 4 3.29 (1.05) 3 0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying the dictionary</td>
<td>5.00 (.69) 5 4.72 (1.27) 5 –0.86</td>
<td>4.59 (1.33) 5 4.35 (1.69) 5 –0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying Greek and Latin roots and affixes</td>
<td>5.06 (1.31) 6 5.00 (1.14) 6 0.22</td>
<td>5.18 (1.38) 6 5.18 (1.24) 6 0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.
*Note: SD are in parentheses.
*a = most valued; 6 = least valued.
doing 50% more required reading than Group 2 (see Table 1), significantly increased its ranking of required reading as a helpful method for vocabulary learning, suggesting a possible relationship between the amount read and its perceived value. This difference in reported hours of required reading may also be at least partly responsible for Group 1’s superior test results; I explore both of these relationships in the Discussion section.

Both groups raised their ranking of the importance of required reading from fourth to third after instruction. The paired $t$-test analysis of the pre- and postinstruction means for the two groups showed the increase in Group 1’s mean rank for required reading to be statistically significant—the only statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) in the pre- and postinstruction mean rankings, $t (17) = 3.39; p = .003$ (see Table 2).

The findings suggest that after engaging in both interactive vocabulary activities and self-selected reading, Group 1 ranked activities as more useful to vocabulary learning. The students in Group 2, which had no experience with interactive vocabulary instruction, favored self-selected reading but still increased their mean ranking of activities (from 2.35 to 2.24, with a score of 1 indicating highest preference). Because of the small sample size, most of the slight changes reported should be interpreted with caution; nevertheless, the tendencies observed here can be a useful starting point for further investigation.

As noted in Table 3, most students considered self-selected reading to be both helpful in the learning of new words and enjoyable, with Group 2 responding more positively than Group 1. When asked why students do not spend more time doing self-selected reading, both groups cited lack of time as the leading reason, indicating that required schoolwork was the most pressing responsibility that kept them from reading materials of their own choice. The second most frequently mentioned reason was not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Group 1 ($n = 18$)</th>
<th>Group 2 ($n = 17$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did the self-selected reading that you reported for this class help you learn new words?</td>
<td>Yes 72  No 28</td>
<td>Yes 94  No 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you enjoy the self-selected reading that you reported for this class?</td>
<td>Yes 71  No 29</td>
<td>Yes 94  No 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*17 of the 18 subjects answered this question.
having access to reading materials. Reasons other than time and access to reading materials (both of which were suggested by the questionnaire) were that students find reading in English to be difficult and that self-selected reading did not seem as valuable as other activities (e.g., required school work, TOEFL study). The findings reflect a generally positive attitude toward self-selected reading for word-learning purposes, more so by the group that did less required reading and had no vocabulary instruction.

DISCUSSION

Checklist Test Results

The results of the checklist test are consistent with the hypothesis that L2 students who have been exposed to a combination of regular periods of reading and interactive vocabulary instruction will show an increase in vocabulary knowledge. The small scale of this study, both in terms of the number of participants and the magnitude of the differences measured, requires particular caution in interpreting these findings. Nevertheless, several observations about word learning in a school setting warrant future investigation.

The Role of Context

One observation is that context, in both written text and meaningful oral activities, appears to assist the word-learning process. The words in the checklist test occur with high frequency in academic materials\(^8\) (Nation, 1990), and both groups are likely to have encountered them in natural contexts through self-selected reading, required reading, and course materials from other classes.

As expected, the group with more exposure to the target words in natural context through in-class activities performed better on the posttest. An unexpected but related factor deserves further discussion: Although both groups received the same initial instructions, the same weekly opportunity to record the amount of reading they completed, and comparable course work, the experimental group reported completing 50% more required reading than the control group. This difference is difficult to explain. Because the study was designed to account for the amounts of reading completed without interference by researchers, considerable variation should be expected and could be explained by a variety of outside factors, including the influence of teachers not directly

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\(^8\) Hwang (1989) reports that it gives an 8.5% coverage of academic texts, 3.9% coverage of newspapers, and 1.7% coverage of fiction.
involved with this study and the perceived importance of assigned materials. As mentioned, differences in the amount of required reading were controlled for with ANCOVA; furthermore, the results of the covariate analysis indicate that the amount of required reading did not affect the posttest results. This suggests that required reading alone does not explain the difference in the scores of the two groups. Nevertheless, further studies are needed to better tease apart the effects of various types of exposure to contextualized language on word learning.

Although this study did not confirm a specific role for reading in the word-learning process, it is reasonable to assume that reading provided opportunities for the students to encounter academic vocabulary in meaningful contexts. This assumption was confirmed in Parry’s (1991) case study of the word-learning strategies of academic ESL students. The student who reported reading the least also reported the most difficulty with high-frequency academic words. Parry concluded that by reading less, this student was encountering fewer new words; her unfamiliarity with the words she needed made reading slower and more painful, thus causing her to read less and perpetuate the problem.

Natural context, whether in oral interaction or reading, can disambiguate and delimit the meaning of a word; it can provide information about discourse relationships and expose learners to a word’s range of meanings. Not all contexts are high in textual support (Dubin & Olshtain, 1993), and there are cultural and linguistic barriers to guessing from context (Haynes, 1993; Parry, 1987); nevertheless, natural contexts can provide lexical information not otherwise available. Indeed, any meaningful encounter with a target word could contribute to its acquisition, “even if the information gained from that one encounter is relatively small” (Nagy & Herman, 1987, p. 32).

**The Role of Repetition**

A second observation that emerges from this study is that repeated encounters may lead to a better sense of how words are used in actual communication. Group 1 encountered each of the target words first through an article in the text, then through homework activities, and finally through communicative activities completed in pairs or small groups in class. The importance of repeated encounters has been confirmed again and again (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Nagy, Herman, & Anderson, 1985; Saragi, Nation, & Meister, 1978). When reading is a learner’s only source of meaningful encounters with new words, the learner will probably not encounter the necessary target words often enough to acquire them. This problem increases as L2 learners advance because the target words become more specialized and occur with lower frequency.
Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire data were used to investigate students’ perceptions of word learning. Perceptions are considered important to this investigation because learners’ beliefs about the benefits and practicality of the various methods are likely to influence their decisions about how to spend their time and effort on vocabulary learning (Zechmeister et al., 1993).

Students’ Ranking of Word-Learning Methods

The subjects’ low ranking of the value of studying roots and affixes may be at least partially attributed to the linguistic background of the participants: Only one student was a native speaker of a Romance language, and only three others had studied a Romance language as a second or third language.

The low ranking of the value of dictionary study may surprise those classroom teachers who consider L2 students often too dependent on bilingual dictionaries, but it concurs with the claims of researchers who suggest that students do not necessarily benefit from bilingual dictionary use. For example, Bensoussan and Laufer (1984) demonstrated that bilingual dictionary use during reading does not significantly increase reading comprehension. Word learners need to know more about a target word than the equivalent words or phrases found in bilingual dictionaries but are often linguistically unable to access the explanations available in monolingual dictionaries (Baker & Kaplan, 1994).

Both groups ranked the memorizing of lists of words third most helpful before the experiment but fourth after the 10 weeks of instruction, in favor of required reading. Students appear to place more value on encountering words in natural environments than on memorizing them. This finding may be attributed to the learners’ preference for meaningful and interesting contexts. It may also indicate that learners are aware of the multidimensionality of word meaning and do not learn the complexities (e.g., connotations, grammatical meaning, pragmatics) of new words presented in isolation.

Participants’ responses reflect either a distaste for or a distrust of drills, memorization, and rote activities; both groups placed more value on activities and reading than on the noncontextualized study skill methods proposed on the questionnaire. These findings suggest that the participants agree with Krashen’s (1985) observation that “many vocabulary teaching methods are at best boring, and are at worst painful”; however, the findings challenge his claim that “even those [activities] that seem to be fairly interesting are nowhere near as interesting as reading a good book” (p. 450). The experimental group, which was
exposed to both the experience of interactive vocabulary instruction and self-selected reading, ranked activities as more useful to the word-learning process than self-selected reading. There are many possible explanations for this. For example, although reading a good book can indeed be an engaging experience for the proficient reader, the process can be slow and painful for many L2 learners. In addition, students may respond favorably to oral activities because being more actively involved with the input increases the interest factor (Ellis, 1994).

The enormity of the word-learning task may also influence students’ perceptions of word learning. By focusing students’ attention on a limited set of words and drawing their attention to a limited set of lexical features, vocabulary instruction could make the word-learning task appear more manageable and could lead to increased motivation to learn vocabulary.

Students’ Perceptions of Reading

Students considered reading to be both enjoyable and useful for word learning and reported reading self-selected materials an average of 2.6 hours per week. That is, as a result of only minimal encouragement by the classroom teachers and the use of very little class time, students experienced an average of 26 hours of customized natural language exposure during the 10-week study. In addition, 83% of the participants reported enjoying the assignment.

In addition, although the participants claimed that the main reason students do not read is that they are too busy with schoolwork from other classes, the reason for not completing self-selected reading assignments appears to be more complex than this. Group 1, which spent 50% more time reading required materials than Group 2 did, spent the same amount of time reading self-selected materials. In other words, an increase in time spent on schoolwork did not lead to a decrease in the time available for recreational or pleasure reading (Table 1). This finding may be the result of several factors. First, although students claim to believe that self-selected reading is helpful for word learning, they may lack confidence in the benefits of reading or may not be able to recognize enough short-term progress to remain motivated to read. In addition, their enthusiasm for self-selected reading may be inhibited by the difficulty of selecting appropriate materials; of the participants, 17% reported that the main reason why students do not read nonrequired materials is the difficulty of finding good books to read. Finally, these results may indicate that many L2 readers do not possess the reading proficiency necessary to gain pleasure from reading; language difficulties can make reading a time-consuming and painful process. Perhaps so-called pleasure reading does not bring pleasure to everyone.
Students’ perceptions of how words are best learned did not change significantly over the 10-week period of this study but did concur with the conclusions of this research. That is, all pre- and postinstruction responses indicated that the participants considered class activities and reading more useful than methods that present words in isolation (i.e., the use of lists, roots and affixes, or dictionaries).

CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

On the basis of this pilot investigation, I consider the following implications relevant to the classroom.

Pay more attention to vocabulary. First, teachers need to recognize that less attention is paid to vocabulary than to the other language skills (Laufer, 1986) and that students believe more attention would be beneficial to them. Just as most teacher training programs rarely include vocabulary-teaching methods in the curriculum, many classrooms rarely address the word-learning needs of students directly. Teachers typically spend most of their classroom time on grammar, reading, and writing skills, assuming students will build their own vocabularies as they engage in other activities. If teachers cover vocabulary issues at all, it is by offering occasional definitions or assigning exercises. The results of this study suggest that L2 students want opportunities to use new words and that they need more than dictionary definitions to do so.

Choose contexts carefully. A second implication for teachers is the importance of utilizing interesting and relevant contexts when introducing and providing practice for new vocabulary. Activities and reading materials that present words in meaningful contexts may contribute to vocabulary gains and are valued highly by students. Context informs learners about the properties of a word, provides needed redundancies, and contributes to learners’ knowledge about the multifaceted nature of words. Although reading can be an effective source of interesting natural contexts for the word learner, the literate language learner needs experience with both spoken and written forms of content-rich language; these registers are essentially different in purpose, syntax, lexical selection, and so on (Biber, 1988). Discussions and oral problem-solving activities that are thematically or content based can provide information about pronunciation, chances to negotiate meaning, and paralinguistic assistance in decoding (e.g., stress, intonation, body language).

Encourage self-selection of materials. A third pedagogical implication is that students should be encouraged to adopt the habit of reading self-
selected materials, based on the evidence that incremental knowledge of words may be gained from reading, that written context provides useful lexical information that assists decoding (Huckin & Bloch, 1993; Parry, 1993), and that reading acquaints students with low-frequency words not found in spoken discourse (Paribakht & Wesche, 1996; Sutarsyah, Nation, & Kennedy, in press). As already demonstrated (Pilgreen & Krashen, 1994), students respond when instructors encourage reading, explain its benefits, and help students locate reading materials.

Choose assignments carefully. In addition, the results of this experiment suggest that teachers should select required reading assignments responsibly because students tend to place particular import on those assignments. Participants repeatedly reported that they prefer reading required materials or that they feel obliged to read them. Teachers need to make every effort to select relevant and instructive reading assignments, remembering that required reading has an elevated value to many students, whether or not the assignments are worthy of such a distinction.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to demonstrate that an approach combining reading and communicative vocabulary instruction could constructively influence the learning of nontechnical academic vocabulary. Although the instructional program referred to here as interactive vocabulary instruction appears to be effective and well received by students, I do not claim that it is the optimal program. Additional research is needed to investigate communicative instruction of various forms, particularly in regard to word learning. Most research to date has focused on methods that are not communicative. In fact, the literature seems to equate vocabulary instruction with the use of word lists, drills, and skill-building activities (Krashen, 1989). More information is needed about word learning in classroom settings that use contextualized exposure to language and communicative techniques.

Although the sample and the classroom environment in this study provided many insights into the process of word learning in a school setting, they also posed several practical limitations. First, the sample size was small, reflecting the small size of intensive English programs and the variable routes by which students may enter or exit the classes. Second, the students were only in a given level for one term and therefore could only be reached as a cohesive group for that short amount of time. Third, because ESL intensive courses are mandated, student motivation is quite variable. Some students consider language classes to be interesting and directly applicable to their goals, whereas others see them as
unnecessary obstacles. Finally, because the participants attend ESL classes for 25 hours per week, it is difficult to untangle the effects that may be due to participation in other classes, differences among teachers, and variable interaction with English speakers.

Vocabulary, according to Beck and McKeown (1985), is the “cornerstone of literacy” (p. 11). Students need a knowledge of academic vocabulary to gain access to texts and comprehend teaching. Lexical issues should indeed constitute a high priority for both teachers and researchers; vocabulary cannot be left to look after itself.

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I would like to express my gratitude to the administrators and teachers who participated in this study, especially Arline Burgmeier, Sally Gardner, and Priscilla Taylor. I am also grateful for valuable comments at varying stages of this project by James Coady, David Eskey, Robert B. Kaplan, Robin Scarcella, and the anonymous TESOL Quarterly reviewers.

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In 1990 Richards argued that there were two major approaches to teaching speaking skills, an indirect approach, “in which conversational competence is seen as the product of engaging learners in conversational interaction” (p. 76), and a direct approach, which “involves planning a conversational programme around the specific microskills, strategies, and processes that are involved in fluent conversation” (p. 77). The indirect approach, which was the typical teaching practice for communicative language teaching (CLT) in the late 1970s and the 1980s, involves setting up and managing lifelike communicative situations in the language classroom (e.g., role plays, problem-solving tasks, or information-gap activities) and leading learners to acquire communicative skills incidentally by seeking situational meaning (Schmidt, 1991). That is, learners are not specifically taught the strategies, maxims, and organizational principles that govern communicative language use but are expected to work these out for themselves through extensive communicative task engagement.

The direct approach, on the other hand, recalls the traditional methods of teaching grammar, whereby new linguistic information is passed on and practiced explicitly. Language classes following this approach adapt various features of direct grammar instruction to the teaching of conversational skills; that is, they attempt to provide focused
instruction on the main rules of conversational or discourse-level grammar (e.g., pragmatic regularities and politeness strategies, communication strategies, and various elements of conversational structure such as openings, closings, and the turn-taking system).

During the past 10 years an increasing number of publications have reported on various direct approaches to teaching communicative skills. (For a recent summary of several lines of research, see Williams, 1995.) We believe that a significant shift is taking place in language teaching methodology, comparable to the fundamental changes of the 1970s that resulted in the introduction and spread of CLT. The purpose of this article is, on the one hand, to take a closer look at the scope and importance of this shift and, on the other hand, to raise a number of questions and initiate discussion about the future of CLT.

PROBLEMS WITH CLT

L2 teaching methods and approaches tend to undergo a natural process of cyclical development: A method or approach is first proposed (often as a counterreaction to an earlier method or approach), then accepted, applied, and eventually criticized. The criticism may involve either the reform and revision or the complete rejection of the method or approach and perhaps its replacement with another. CLT is no exception to this cyclical process: After its appearance in the 1970s and spread in the 1980s, the early 1990s witnessed a growing dissatisfaction with several aspects of CLT, with some language professionals calling for certain reforms and suggesting changes (e.g., Celce-Murcia, 1991; Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1991, 1992; Kumaravadivelu, 1992, 1993; Larsen-Freeman, 1990; Legutke & Thomas, 1991; Savignon, 1990; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992; Schmidt, 1991; Widdowson, 1990). Much of the original criticism, and the consequent research that was aimed at offering improvements, was related to two main issues: (a) the linguistic content base of CLT and (b) the pedagogical treatment of linguistic forms in CLT.

THE LINGUISTIC CONTENT BASE OF CLT

The primary focus in CLT, as Savignon (1990) indicates, has been “the elaboration and implementation of programs and methodologies that promote the development of L2 functional competence through learner participation in communicative events” (p. 210). Hence the principles of CLT were fully compatible with a functional perspective on linguistics (Halliday, 1973), as translated into classroom practice by means of the notional-functional syllabuses of Wilkins (1976) and van Ek (1977) (see also Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983; van Ek & Trim, 1991). The proposed system of language functions (e.g., agreeing, inviting, explaining) and
language notions (e.g., ways of expressing location, time, degree) was undoubtedly the most elaborate content base of CLT theory, and the presentation of these functions in course books was further enhanced by a second important aspect of CLT, its sociocultural sensitivity and the explicit need to achieve a degree of appropriateness in language use (Berns, 1990). Thus, language functions were introduced in a range of contexts, with some coverage of degrees of formality and politeness as well as of cross-cultural issues.

As early as 1978, Widdowson argued that a purely functional approach to language and language use did not do justice to the “whole complex business of communication” and called for the “consideration of the nature of discourse and of the abilities that are engaged in creating it” (p. ix). He noted, however, that the “present state of knowledge about language and language learning is such that it would be irresponsible to be anything but tentative” (pp. ix–x). Indeed, in the early and mid-1970s, when the principles of CLT were being developed, theoretical and applied linguistics had not produced a clear enough description of communicative competence for methodologists to apply in tackling the complexity of communicative language use. There was no coherent and explicitly formulated pragmatic and sociolinguistic model available to draw on (see Savignon, 1983); nor had discourse analysis reached sufficient development and recognition.

The lack of firm linguistic guidelines led to a diversity of communicative approaches that shared only a very general common objective, namely, to prepare learners for real-life communication rather than emphasizing structural accuracy. In Dubin and Olshtain’s (1986) words, “as with the tale about the five blind men who touched separate parts of an elephant and so each described something else, the word ‘communicative’ has been applied so broadly that it has come to have different meanings for different people” (p. 69).

One area in particular that has featured problems caused by the lack of clear-cut content specifications in CLT is the testing of learning outcomes. Any language teaching approach must be accompanied by language tests that adequately measure the learning outcomes promoted by the particular program; otherwise the washback effect of tests drawn from other approaches or methods will undermine the program’s effectiveness. As Savignon (1990) observes, “Many a curricular innovation has been undone by failure to make corresponding changes in evaluation” (p. 211). Current communicative testing methods, she argues, fail to provide sufficient precision, which is a source of frustration for teachers:

Some teachers understandably are frustrated . . . by the seeming ambiguity in discussions of communicative competence. Negotiation of meaning is well
and good, but this view of language behavior lacks precision, does not provide a universal scale for assessment of individual learners. (p. 211)

We believe, however, that sensibly integrating recent research results from fields such as oral discourse analysis, conversation analysis, communicative competence research, interlanguage analysis, language input analysis, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, cognitive psychology, and anthropology may make it possible to outline the “whole elephant” and describe the content elements of CLT in a far more systematic way than has hitherto been the case. In a recent paper we attempted to provide such a description by outlining a pedagogically motivated framework for communicative competence that includes detailed content specifications (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, & Thurrell, 1995). Our aim was to organize the knowledge available about language use in a way that is consumable for classroom practice. We argued that although this knowledge is still fragmentary,

a great deal more of it is relevant and potentially applicable than is currently exploited in language pedagogy. Language teaching methodologists, materials writers and language testers badly need a comprehensive and accessible description of the components of communicative competence in order to have more concrete pieces of language to work with at the fine-tuning stage. (p. 29)

Our model, which we viewed as a refinement and extension of Canale and Swain’s (1980; Canale, 1983) earlier construct, divides communicative competence into five major components (discourse competence, which we considered the core, along with linguistic, actional, sociocultural, and strategic competence) and describes the language areas falling under each component. Thus, our construct was intended to serve as a fairly comprehensive checklist of language points as well as a content base in syllabus design that practitioners can refer to.

THE PEDAGOGICAL TREATMENT OF LINGUISTIC FORMS IN CLT

In an overview of the history of language teaching methodology, Celce-Murcia (1991) pointed out that during the past 50 years language teaching has followed a fluctuating pattern in terms of the emphasis placed on bottom-up linguistic skills versus top-down communication skills. CLT grew out of a dissatisfaction with earlier methods that were based on the conscious presentation of grammatical forms and structures or lexical items and did not adequately prepare learners for the effective and appropriate use of language in natural communication. However, in their zeal to give notional and social-functional aspects of
language proper consideration, many CLT proponents neglected linguistic competence and accepted the premise that linguistic form emerges on its own as a result of learners’ engaging in communicative activities.\(^1\) As Schmidt (1991) summarizes in his critique of CLT, “a general principle of CLT is that language learners gain linguistic form by seeking situational meaning, that is, the linguistic form is learned incidentally rather than as a result of focusing directly on linguistic form” (p. 1.2.2). However, this argument from CLT is not in accordance with the principles of cognitive psychology, according to Schmidt, who suggests instead that for learning to take place efficiently the learner must pay attention to the learning objective and must then practice the objective so that it changes from part of a controlled process to part of an automatic process.

Widdowson (1990) also argues that incidental, “natural” language acquisition is a “long and rather inefficient business” and that “the whole point of language pedagogy is that it is a way of short-circuiting the slow process of natural discovery and can make arrangements for learning to happen more easily and more efficiently than it does in ‘natural surroundings’” (p. 162). In the L2 literature of the past decade, different researchers applying a range of conceptual frameworks and different technical terminologies have expressed the belief that making learners aware of structural regularities and formal properties of the target language will greatly increase the rate of language attainment. For example, various types of “consciousness raising” (Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1985), “input enhancement” (Sharwood Smith, 1993), “language awareness” (for a review, see van Lier, 1996), “focus on form” (see Doughty & Williams, in press; Long & Robinson, in press; Williams, 1995) have been proposed; in addition, Lightbown, Spada, and White (1993) and Ellis (1990, 1994) discuss in detail the role of explicit instruction in second language acquisition (SLA). In her summary of the communicative teaching of grammar, Fotos (1994) describes the changing climate in the language teaching profession:

Grammar consciousness-raising tasks can therefore be recommended to the field of language teaching as useful pedagogy at a time when many teachers are seeking acceptable ways to bring formal instruction on grammar back into their communicative classrooms, and other teachers are searching for communicative activities which harmonize with the goals of more traditional educational curricula emphasizing the formal study of language properties. (p. 343)

\(^1\) Even though CLT theorists and practitioners have often argued that all direct approaches to grammar instruction are counterproductive (e.g., Krashen, 1982), some of the earliest proponents of CLT never forgot the importance of grammatical competence as part of communication (e.g., Wilkins, 1976, p. 66).
In a similar vein, there has been an increasing interest recently in investigating the conscious development of various dimensions of communicative competence, for example, discourse competence (e.g., Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, in press; Cook, 1989), strategic competence (e.g., Cohen, Weaver & Li, 1995; Dörnyei, 1995), and pragmatic competence (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, in press; Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991; Kasper, in press; see also Kasper, 1996).

One special issue in the development of communicative language skills is the question of formulaic language use. Along with a number of other researchers (e.g., Coulmas, 1981; Ellis, 1996; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Pawley & Syder, 1983), Widdowson (1989) argues that communicative competence is not a matter of knowing rules for the composition of sentences and being able to employ such rules to assemble expressions from scratch as and when occasion requires. It is much more a matter of knowing a stock of partially pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks, and a kit of rules, so to speak, and being able to apply the rules to make whatever adjustments are necessary according to contextual standards. (p. 135)

According to this view, native speakers of a language are in command of thousands of preassembled language chunks and use them as building blocks in their speech. The retrieval of these chunks is cognitively undemanding, allowing the speaker to attend to other aspects of communication and to plan larger pieces of discourse. For L2 learners, however, the lack of a repertoire of such language chunks means that they tend to put sentences together from scratch, word by word, which takes up most of their cognitive capacity and does not allow them to achieve nativelike fluency. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) discuss in detail how lexical phrases can serve as an effective basis for a new, increasingly lexis-oriented teaching approach, and, indeed, there have been indications in L2 methodology that such a development is more than a mere theoretical possibility (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 1988; Lewis, 1993).

A TURNING POINT IN CLT?

Based on the brief overview presented above, a more direct, systematic approach to teaching communicative language abilities appears to be emerging gradually along the lines of Richards’ (1990) direct approach. Such an approach requires, first, a detailed description of what communicative competence entails so that the subcomponents can be used as some kind of content base in syllabus design. Then the classroom activities can be developed for each of the selected language areas. This does not necessarily imply a return to traditional, structural syllabi.
Pedagogic tasks combined with a systematic focus on form, as outlined by Long and Crookes (1992), could well function as the primary organizational units in a direct communicative syllabus. Indeed, in their summary of the role of instruction in SLA, Spada and Lightbown (1993) also argue that research has produced increasing evidence “that form-focused instruction and corrective feedback provided within the context of communicative interaction can contribute positively to second language development in both the short and long term” (p. 205).

We must note, however, that the notion of “focus on form” has typically been understood as focus primarily on the grammatical regularities or “linguistic code features” (Long & Robinson, in press) of the L2, whereas the direct approach we have in mind would also include a focus on higher level organizational principles or rules and normative patterns or conventions governing language use beyond the sentence level (e.g., discourse rules, pragmatic awareness, strategic competence) as well as lexical formulaic phrases. A recent example of expanding the notion of focus on form is Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds’ (1995) study, which broadened the concept of input enhancement to include “not only form in the strictest sense of formal (i.e., grammatical) accuracy but also to include form-meaning associations” (p. 123), that is, lexical aspects.

Interestingly, some early CLT theorists also recognized the possibility of a more direct approach to CLT. In a summary of the key concepts of CLT, Johnson (1981), for example, concluded that “we may find a structurally-organized course whose methodology practices important aspects of the communicative skill and is thus more worthy of the title ‘communicative’” (p. 11). Similarly, Morrow (1981) stated,

The crucial feature of a communicative method will be that it operates with stretches of language above the sentence level, and operates with real language in real situations. Interestingly, this principle may lead to procedures which are themselves either synthetic or analytic. A synthetic procedure would involve students in learning forms individually and then practicing how to combine them; an analytic procedure would introduce complete interactions of texts and focus for learning purposes on the way these are constructed. . . . A communicative method is likely to make use of both. (p. 61)

In sum, we believe that CLT has arrived at a turning point: Explicit, direct elements are gaining significance in teaching communicative abilities and skills. The emerging new approach can be described as a

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2 In foreign language learning contexts where the dominant form of language attainment is instructed SLA, teachers have never really abandoned the use of direct methods in teaching grammar. However, we believe that the tendency we are describing applies even to such settings.
principled communicative approach;\(^3\) by bridging the gap between current research on aspects of communicative competence and actual communicative classroom practice, this approach has the potential to synthesize direct, knowledge-oriented and indirect, skill-oriented teaching approaches. Therefore, rather than being a complete departure from the original, indirect practice of CLT, it extends and further develops CLT methodology. According to Dörnyei and Thurrell (1994), the shift toward direct teaching may involve three main tendencies: (a) adding specific language input (formulaic language, in particular) to communicative tasks, (b) raising learners’ awareness of the organizational principles of language use within and beyond the sentence level, and (c) sequencing communicative tasks more systematically in accordance with a theory of discourse-level grammar. These issues are very much at the core of recent discussions on task-based language teaching (see Crookes & Gass, 1993a, 1993b), and, indeed, the principled communicative approach is expected to incorporate a task-based methodology.

**IS TALKING ABOUT CLT STILL RELEVANT?**

Those who have been following the literature on teaching methods for the past few years (for reviews from various perspectives, see, e.g., Brown, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 1992, 1994; Larsen-Freeman, 1991; Long, 1991) know that methods as such are losing (or have lost) their relevance to language instruction. Instead of following the current “best” method, teachers have learnt to be “cautiously eclectic in making enlightened choices of teaching practices” (Brown, 1994, p. 73). Long (1991) argues that even in courses that are intended to follow a particular method, the method disappears in the reality of the language classroom; that is, different methods overlap considerably when it comes to actual classroom practice, and long periods within classes following different methods are, in fact, indistinguishable from each other (see also Larsen-Freeman, 1991).

The question, then, is whether it makes any sense to talk about CLT at all. Kumaravadivelu (1994) argues convincingly that the development of language teaching theory has arrived at a postmethod condition, which requires a reconsideration of some of the metaphors used to describe methodological issues; in an attempt to achieve this, he introduces the concept of *macrostrategies* for L2 teaching as broad guidelines, on which teachers can generate their situation-based microstrategies. The macro-

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\(^3\) We are grateful to B. Kumaravadivelu for suggesting this term.

because it concerns direct approaches to the teaching of language issues that are beyond sentence-level grammar, and these have been typically taught in an indirect way even in foreign language learning environments.
strategies Kumaravadivelu (1992, 1993, 1994) has put forward (e.g., maximize learning opportunities, facilitate negotiated interaction, foster language awareness) are neutral to methods and provide a coherent enough framework for teachers to make it unnecessary to use higher-order terms such as CLT.

Having argued thus, we note also the other side of the coin: The language teaching profession needs certain broad guidelines to follow, and many teachers and teacher trainers now feel comfortable with the goals and terms of CLT, as Thompson (1996) affirms in a recent article:

> Whatever the situation may be as regards actual teaching practices, communicative language teaching (CLT) is well established as the dominant theoretical model in ELT. There have been recurrent attempts to take stock of CLT and to identify its characteristic features . . . and in areas such as teacher training the principles of CLT are largely treated as clearly understood and accepted. (p. 9)

This need for guiding principles is, in fact, not inconsistent with the postmethod perspective: Kumaravadivelu (1994) specifies “principled pragmatism” as a major feature of the postmethod condition, and Brown (1994) talks about the need for an “informed approach.” Therefore, the concept of CLT construed as a general approach rather than a specific teaching method might be useful in providing language practitioners with some important guidelines even at the time of the postmethod condition. CLT highlights the primary goal of language instruction, namely, to go beyond the teaching of the discrete elements, rules, and patterns of the target language and to develop the learner’s ability to take part in spontaneous and meaningful communication in different contexts, with different people, on different topics, for different purposes; that is, to develop the learner’s communicative competence. Achieving this is a real challenge, and the use of the terms *communicative language teaching* and *principled communicative approach* may serve as effective reminders of this goal to all of us.

**CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this paper was to initiate discussion about the present practice and future directions of CLT. We have offered our current thinking on these issues and discussed the emergence of a more principled communicative approach, knowing that some colleagues working in different learning and teaching contexts will have had different experiences and will disagree with our opinions and judgments. We invite responses that will challenge or extend our collective professional thinking on the topic.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The Role of Hidden Identities in the Postsecondary ESL Classroom

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The ESL classroom is composed of a mixture of people with various backgrounds and identities. This mixture of identities is a given and a large part of the identity of the ESL class itself. But besides the obvious identities—ethnic and language backgrounds, gender, teacher versus student—many identities can be or are hidden, invisible. For example, lesbian and gay students or teachers may be invisible because it is assumed that everyone is heterosexual. People of certain ethnic or religious minorities, such as Jewish or Native American students or teachers, may remain invisible as such. Other possibly hidden identities include having disabilities such as dyslexia or clinical depression; suffering from illnesses such as AIDS, diabetes, cancer, or anorexia/bulimia; coming from various class backgrounds; and living with or surviving incest, rape, or domestic violence. How might these identities and their hidden aspect affect the ESL classroom and its participants? What might ESL administrators and faculty members do in response to the identities and their ramifications in the classroom?

Teachers cannot ignore the possibility of people with hidden identities in their classrooms. Nelson (1993) says that “we need to assume that we have gay students in each of our classes” (p. 148). In addition, Dobkin and Sippy (1995) note that “1 in 4 women will be attacked by a rapist during her college career, and 1 in 7 will actually be raped” (pp. 500–501) and that “90% of college rape victims know their attackers” (p. 496). Regarding another hidden identity common at colleges, Dobkin and Sippy state that “up to 5% of U.S. college women have bulimia” (p. 285). Pretending that these conditions do not exist among ESL students (and faculty) is putting our heads in the sand; these identities exist on university campuses, and they exist among students from all over the world.

Hidden identities are not negative, in the sense of marking the person as inferior or bad, although some people may perceive them as such. In some cases, the hidden identities are even considered positive or a privilege. For example, students from very affluent backgrounds sometimes consider it prudent to conceal that background, at least partially (Vandrick, 1995). And academically “gifted” students sometimes play down their talents. In both cases students perhaps fear jealousy and negative repercussions.

Everyone clearly has multiple identities, hidden or otherwise. Any
particular identity should not be considered alone to define a person. In addition, different identities come to the forefront at different times; at times, certain identities may be largely irrelevant.

THE PRIVILEGE AND COST OF HIDING

An important feature of these identities, as opposed to racial or other ethnic or gender identities, is that they normally can be hidden. The fact that it is a person’s choice whether to reveal these identities can be a privilege, perhaps exempting people from certain kinds of attention or prejudice. It is a privilege in that there is a choice that does not generally exist for those who suffer discrimination on the basis of race, for example. But the choice may not in fact feel like one. Nelson (1993) points out, “Because of heterosexism, those of us who are involved in gay culture often feel we must hide any expression of that culture. When gay teachers walk into the office or the classroom, most of us feel compelled to hide many of our life experiences” (p. 144). And even if there is a choice, that fact can also lead to psychological problems of guilt or ambivalence. For example, gay teachers or students may feel that they should be “out” in order to be true to themselves, to provide a model for other gays, or to show pride rather than shame. But these same individuals may feel fear, knowing that there may be very real, possibly even dangerous, consequences of being out. So they are torn and expend much energy on wondering what they should do, when they should do it, and what the consequences will be. This is energy diverted from their work and studies and from moving forward with life. Or people living with abuse may know that they should report it and perhaps get help but may be afraid to speak of it because it feels shameful or disloyal to do so, because they do not know if anyone will actually help, or because discovery may cause frightening changes in their lives or may bring on even more (perhaps retaliatory) abuse. Again, this inner conflict takes up a tremendous amount of emotional energy and affects the person’s studies or teaching. People with hidden disabili-

ties (e.g., epilepsy or schizophrenia) may feel that they should educate others about the disability yet fear that they will be stigmatized, perhaps treated with exaggerated carefulness, or, worse yet, treated as mentally or even morally deficient, as Weaver (1996) describes deaf students being treated. On some level, the hidden conflicts felt by these students and perhaps teachers, along with the hidden identity itself, affect the other members of the classroom community. The reason for the effects may be mysterious to the other participants, but they will likely sense that something is hidden and is causing distress.

Besides being significant in themselves, hidden identities also serve as a kind of metaphor for all the things that are unmentioned in the
classroom and academic world: all the secrets, all the subtexts. For example, many students—and faculty members—secretly feel inadequate, as if they do not measure up. This may be especially true of those who grew up in working-class or poor families, where it was not assumed that they would automatically move into the world of higher education. These groups, as well as women, in many cases have enjoyed the support and high expectations throughout their lives that more privileged students usually have. An added dimension is the need of most young people to conform with and be accepted by their peers; students with any differences will likely try to keep them hidden. So all these hidden identities, both objective and psychological, form an iceberg below the surface in the classroom. They are the hidden context that may be much more important than the tip of the iceberg above the surface—the more obvious identities openly revealed. This huge hidden area is all the more potent because it is seldom or only superficially acknowledged.

Other secrets or subtexts may involve teachers’ and students’ attitudes toward education, toward the classroom, toward each other. Students may resent teachers’ power to grade them; teachers may resent students’ power to evaluate them or to “obstruct” the orderly process of teaching. Teachers may feel students are lazy, unprepared, even unintelligent. Students, in turn, may feel the teacher is lazy, unprepared, or wasting their time. Teachers or students may feel sexually attracted to someone else in the classroom and may feel conflict or guilt about those feelings. Or they may feel repulsed by someone in the classroom and may feel ambivalence or guilt about that, especially if the repulsion springs from such attributes as disability, race, or class.

Hidden identities exist in any classroom; they may be particularly significant in the ESL classroom, where, almost by definition, students feel that they have been judged wanting and in need of remedial work to reach the level of other students at the university. Students may even feel stupid or inferior (Peirce, 1995) or may be treated as such because of their inadequate English language skills. Faculty too often feel that they, their programs, and the whole field of ESL are treated as inferior stepchildren in academe. Students may even attempt to pass as regular students, not acknowledging to their parents or friends that they have been required to take ESL classes. Faculty may attempt to pass by emphasizing that they teach English or writing. So the individual hidden identities exist within a kind of tent of a larger hidden, or camouflaged, ESL identity.

Besides the effects of class members’ interior conflict over hiding their identities, the ESL classroom is shaped by the existence of these identities in several ways. First, students or faculty may experience a constant strain in sustaining a false identity, or passing, for which they pay a psychic price. They may worry about slipping and letting out
information unawares. This latter fear may be intensified by students’ imperfect grasp of the English language. People in this situation may also suffer psychological trauma from leading what they feel is an unauthentic life, a kind of self-betrayal (especially if they have not internalized the idea that their “problem” is not their identity but society’s response to that identity). Hidden identities may also cause a kind of muffling of discussion in the classroom, in which no one is sure whether members of the group being discussed are present and everyone is tiptoeing around the topic or, worse still, everybody blithely assumes no members of the group in question are present. Another effect may be that faculty misjudge students who are not performing well in class, not knowing the hidden context for the students’ performance. Students may also lose the opportunity to receive guidance or referral to appropriate resources.

POWER, BOUNDARIES, AND IDEOLOGIES

Much of the above relates to boundaries, power, and ideologies. What are the boundaries in the classroom? Which aspects of a person’s identity are public, and which are private? Teachers talk about making the classroom a safe place, but can it be truly so? If instructors explicitly try to make it a safe place, how can they be sure that students will preserve that safety? How does the distribution of power relate to participants’ knowledge of each others’ possibly hidden identities? For example, because instructors always have a certain power, how can students be sure that self-revelation will not somehow harm them? Students have a certain power over faculty, too, through student evaluations, word of mouth, class enrollment figures, and comments to administrators; self-revelation could thus be perilous for instructors, too, especially for those whose jobs are insecure, which is the case for many ESL instructors. And how do the ideologies and beliefs of the individuals in the classroom shape their needs to hide or reveal identities and shape their responses to the hiding or revealing of others’ identities?

ACTIVELY CREATING A SAFE CLASSROOM

I can offer no magic formula for how faculty and administrators can or should handle the existence of hidden identities and the problems that may be caused by the hidden nature of the identities or by the (potential or actual) uncovering of the hitherto hidden identities. The main point is awareness. Instructors particularly need to be aware of the possibility of the existence of various identities that are hidden. Being aware that a person with a certain identity or situation may be sitting in the classroom should increase vigilance about ignorant or derogatory remarks in class materials and discussions. Despite the difficulties mentioned above
regarding creating safe classrooms, instructors should actively attempt to create classrooms where people feel safe and feel they can be open about various aspects of their lives and identities, even if they do not choose to do so. The key word here is actively. It is not enough to avoid discriminatory materials or remarks. Instructors need to create ways to tell and show their classes their openness and understanding. If certain identities are never spoken of, it may seem to students (not only to students with that identity but also to the other students in the class) that there is something shameful about that identity, which is best left unmentioned (in the best Victorian tradition). When an instructor discusses a topic or an identity openly, it demystifies the identity; it somehow makes the identity more usual, more matter of fact. Nelson (1993) notes that “the more comfortable I have become in talking about gay issues in the classroom, the more students seem comfortable. They will discuss gay issues if it feels safe enough to do so” (p. 146). The same is true for other identity issues. In addition, instructors need to be aware that discussion of certain sensitive topics could be upsetting to certain students. Consider the case of the bulimic young woman who suddenly finds class discussion centering on eating disorders and perhaps hears classmates expressing disbelief or disgust regarding such behavior. The student will probably be unwilling to speak up and identify herself as bulimic or even to try to explain reasons for eating disorders but will likely be profoundly uncomfortable with the discussion. Instructors should definitely not avoid such discussion but should watch for signs of distress and provide channels through which students can express their feelings. Such channels could include writing in a journal or speaking to instructors after class or in their office. Faculty can also make available information about resources such as campus counseling centers, support groups, and hot lines.

The ESL classroom of all places should be a place of tolerance, humanity, and safety. Creating such an atmosphere there may have a ripple effect as students take this attitude with them into the world outside the classroom door.

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Comments on Jill Sinclair Bell’s
“The Relationship Between L1 and L2 Literacy: Some Complicating Factors”

A Reader Reacts . . .

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Jill Sinclair Bell’s fascinating description and analysis of her own experience studying Chinese literacy skills (Vol. 29, No. 4, Winter 1995) raises important issues for teaching literacy at all levels, from learning a new script to the acquisition of critical literacy skills. Her emphasis on the complicated nature of transfer and on the influence of unconscious assumptions about the meaning of literacy, how literacy should be learned, and which “qualities of self” (p. 687) are displayed in literacy is very welcome in a field where often students and teachers hope for the simple answer. In particular, these issues are of crucial importance in English for academic purposes writing classrooms where teachers need to address issues of contrastive rhetoric, help students access academic discourse communities, and provide students with meaningful feedback. My purpose here is to examine the implications of Bell’s article for this setting and to draw on other literature to find some pedagogical directions to address these issues.

One issue raised by Bell concerns how students react to feedback and measure their progress. Bell’s observation that she “did not see that [she] was developing a considerable amount of implicit knowledge” (p. 700) has close parallels with students learning academic writing. Often students and teachers find it hard to see objective evidence of progress that may nevertheless be taking place. Their ideas about what progress is may very well shape the way teachers provide feedback and students interpret it, as Bell found.

An even more important issue Bell raises is the emotional impact of acquiring a different literacy. Bell notes that she needed to develop “a new set of values” (p. 701). She does not make it clear whether she feels she would be able to slip in and out of this value set, as Shen (1989) suggests he does or whether this is a different set of values that will be incorporated permanently into her identity. However, this relationship between the individual and the new set of values is of particular importance to students who are learning the literacy of a dominant culture.
The way that values are instantiated in different literacies relates to studies of contrastive rhetoric and how they are applied in the classroom. The tendency has been to simplify the differences between two literate traditions into surface structures. Too often, a surface style of U.S. academic writing is assumed, and as Leki (1992) points out, the message that most ESL students may have been receiving is that they should “conform superficially to the norms of the target community, not to worry about questioning those norms or thinking critically about them, only to use them to the students’ own advantage” (p. 125). Leki suggests that the underlying assumption here is that “the student has the right to come away from the interaction with the target community unchanged” (p. 125). Bell’s study, together with Shen’s (1989) article, seems to imply that this is impossible. When fundamental underlying assumptions and values are involved, students will necessarily be changed by their work if they are to succeed. The question then becomes what kind of change is necessary or desirable.

The understandable resistance of some students to creating or incorporating a new set of values is seen in an example in Ferris (1995) in which one student reacted to a teacher’s written comments with “My writing style is not American and the teacher seems to like American style. It’s hard to change my style” (p. 44). One of the underlying assumptions in this student’s response is that the teacher merely likes a U.S. style—that it is a matter of personal preference, whereas for most teachers, learning the style of the culture is seen more as a matter of survival in an English-speaking academic system. As teachers, we need to be more explicit about this, by thinking about the assumptions underlying comments we make in feedback. This problem is similar to the one Bell found with feedback, when she understood the words at a surface level but missed the underlying value set that she needed to understand. She reports resenting phrases like “losing your concentration” and “lacking balance” (p. 694), not knowing where they were coming from, and was thus unable to respond to feedback that she could not make sense of. This can explain why teachers find it frustrating when students do not take apparently simple and obvious advice. Students and teachers need to understand why it may be hard for students to change their writing style and to examine together how much students’ styles need to conform.

The centrality of this issue is an important part of Rodby’s (1992) Appropriating Literacy. Bell’s use of the phrase complicating factors in her title seems to downplay the centrality of the issues she raises, although this is not borne out in her article. Rodby pointedly foregrounds the relationship of the individual to society and culture (both the native and the adopted one), clearly implying that all the factors mentioned by Bell are in fact a central part of what literacy means.
Bell concludes by emphasizing the need for teachers to be aware of the many different assumptions about literacy and learning their students may have: “Until we become aware of the unspoken assumptions we hold about literacy in English, we will be unable to introduce our students to full language literacy” (p. 702). It is this emphasis on teachers that I question, at least for the academic setting. Although it is certainly necessary for teachers to become sensitive to these assumptions for any literacy instruction, the ultimate goal must be for the students to become aware. Bell herself notes that it was because she did not realize what was involved that she was unprepared for her experience. However, her conclusion seems to imply that teachers should somehow discover and teach the assumptions underlying the literacy they are teaching, which in turn suggests that there is a universal set of mismatched assumptions between learners of various L2 backgrounds and the discourse communities they enter. The obvious difficulties in this enterprise lead me to propose instead that teachers must encourage students to examine the assumptions underlying both their native literacy and the target literacy for themselves, much as Bell did.

The question now becomes how to do this in a practical and effective way in the academic classroom. The most obvious strategy is simply for teachers to talk to their students about areas where they suspect assumptions may differ. Reid (1994) suggests discussing students’ expectations of the teacher with them, as well as asking students to write journals reflecting on their intentions, struggles, and rationales. But because the assumptions are unconscious, they can often be very difficult to uncover (as attested by Bell), and it is also difficult to know when the most important ones have been uncovered. It may also seem to require very sophisticated students, especially given the difficulties that Bell found in “asking academically unsophisticated subjects for rigorous self-analysis of learning patterns and assumptions” (p. 691). Students will clearly need some guidance in doing this, and Heath’s (1992) work suggests a possible model. Heath worked with high school students via mail, asking them to carry out ethnographic studies of language use in their communities and to analyze and write up their findings. She engaged in an active dialogue with them about their analyses, challenging them and questioning them further, which resulted eventually in sharper analyses and more academic writing. Although this kind of work takes time, a similar approach with ESL writers on the topic of their native literacies may be valuable, as not only would they gain an insight into their own assumptions, but they would also learn about the requirements of English academic discourse through the interaction.

Rodby (1992) also proposes an alternative pedagogy whereby, instead of learning to mimic or take on the rhetorical style of Western academic discourse unquestioningly, students learn to talk “to their chemistry,
business, and psychology professors about language, their expectations, literacy, and exams,” thereby becoming “better prepared to understand what [is] expected of them and to appropriate the word or to resist it, if necessary” (p. 132). Rodby takes a poststructuralist view in emphasizing the bidirectional nature of people’s relationships to structures in society; not only are people influenced by structures (in this case, academic discourse), but people also influence them: It is only by people upholding a structure that it continues to exist, but upholding it is not the only option. Individuals can also change structures, and one can see the truth of this in the historical changes that structures undergo, albeit very gradually. Thus, instead of accepting current norms of academic discourse, Rodby’s approach suggests that teachers can encourage students to negotiate and push back the boundaries. A challenge, to be sure.

Rodby’s (1992) other suggestions are less radical. A core part of her philosophy is that “the social relationships and social interactions among students and between student(s) and teacher are fundamental to the success of the class” (p. 92). Collaborative tasks, suggested as a way to facilitate this, have also been advocated by Johns (1994) and are already in wide use in ESL classrooms. Others, such as involving students in choosing reading materials, may be more difficult to apply within the practical constraints of university administration. One idea that seems worth pursuing is to discuss realistic aims: “Together with their students, composition teachers can think carefully about the notion that they can and should write their texts alone in completely native-like prose” (Rodby, p. 108). Teachers and students can examine the composing processes of professional L2 writers or of successful L2 academics within the university to gain an insight into the target behavior. In doing this, good social relationships with other university faculty are essential. The positive effect of open discussion of realistic goals was illustrated for me recently in a comment from a student on how much better she felt about writing with a teacher who did just this, even in a small way.

The key idea both of Bell and of Rodby (1992) is that “ingrained habits of making meaning . . . [need to] come under examination” (Roemer, cited in Rodby, p. 108). All the habits of mind that got in Bell’s way are candidates for frustrating students’ attempts to learn to write academic English, and teachers need to be aware of the range of habits so that they are able to encourage their students to bring them to consciousness if necessary. Once they are brought to consciousness, there is at least the possibility of dealing with them. In short, both students and teachers need to acknowledge the complexity of the task of acquiring literacy in another language and to be prepared to delve into their unconscious assumptions.

The complexity of the task is challenging to say the least. As Bateson (1972) suggests, one of the highest levels of learning is learning to
recategorize experience in a different way, to “throw . . . unexamined premises open to question and change” (p. 303). Cross-cultural situations often require that people learn at this level. Bateson also points out that attempting to learn at this level “can be dangerous, and some fall by the wayside” (p. 305). Once again we as teachers are reminded of the degree of challenge that our students are facing. This is one thing that Bell’s article highlights for us and that we and our students must not forget.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The Author Responds . . .

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I enjoyed Jo Hilder’s piece very much and agreed with most of her comments. I would like to elaborate on a few of the questions she raises. In her discussion of my comments on the emotional impact of developing a new value set, Hilder questions whether or not I could slip in and out of this new set of values. Like Shen (1989), whom she also cites, I
initially began working with a conscious decision to adopt what might be called my *Chinese persona* when attempting literacy tasks. I was of course working at a much more elementary literacy level than Shen was, so for me it was a less a matter of rejecting notions of individuality than one of moving into a more receptive mind-set. I took away from myself the need to struggle and achieve control and substituted a greater focus on the moment and a greater trust that the experience would be ultimately beneficial irrespective of the momentary outcome.

Am I able to shift into and out of this mental frame? Yes, I am. For example, I drafted this article in what is a classical Western style—a quick first draft on the computer with no attention paid to typos and little to style. I wanted to get my ideas down, and I had faith that I could come back later and fix the form. Obviously, then, my learned ability to approach Chinese literacy differently has not prevented me from still using familiar patterns of English literacy when appropriate. But nonetheless the experience of working in the Chinese way and the recognition of the learning that came through that process has had a permanent effect on my identity. As I discuss in detail in my book, *Literacy, Culture and Identity* (Bell, in press), I now know of other ways of learning, I can take pride in other kinds of achievements, and above all I work now towards a different relationship with myself. It is difficult to forget knowledge one has acquired. Each individual is the sum of his or her memories and experiences. I would claim that learners who genuinely try to develop literacy in another language will not merely develop an alternate set of values into which they can step but will be inevitably changed by the experience.

Let me explain what I mean by the word *genuinely*. It is possible to develop the ability to express meaning in print in another language without fully engaging in literacy. For example, there are currently available computer programs that teach Chinese characters through a pattern of stroke recognition. The learner types in the first couple of strokes for a character, and the computer generates the set of characters that include those strokes, from which the user selects the required one. I am sure one can generate very neat-looking Chinese text very rapidly with such a program and no doubt learn to recognize the characters, too. But has one become literate in Chinese? Obviously the answer to this question depends on an understanding of what literacy is. If one simply wants to decipher menus in Chinese restaurants, this is perhaps an efficient way to learn the characters. But if one wants to use literacy the way the Chinese people do, then such programs are probably counter-productive because they never bring a learner close to the value set that underlies culturally specific literacy.

Hilder comments that “when fundamental underlying assumptions and values are involved, students will necessarily be changed by their
work if they are to succeed. The question then becomes what kind of change is necessary or desirable.” This seems to me to be a key question to consider. To some extent, the answer to how much change is necessary may vary according to the degree to which the learner needs to operate as an equal in the target language. For older students in community classes, for example, literacy in English may be primarily used in fairly routinised ways such as accessing environmental print to find washrooms, identify bus routes, and so on. The students may not need to take on much of the dominant language value set to use text in this way. It does not take much of an increase in literate interaction, however, before an understanding of the dominant language value set becomes critical. Filling in forms for job applications, income tax, or welfare is a case in point. One may be able to read the labels on the forms, but understanding the type of information that is required and is most likely to achieve the desired result requires a considerably greater understanding of the values underlying the target literacy. For those in academic English programs who are competing with native speakers for grades or university access, there is a far greater necessity to be able to shift into the target language persona. It is difficult to imagine that students at this level could develop adequate literacy skills for their purposes without undergoing personal change in the process.

The necessity for change, then, may vary according to a learner’s situation and the degree of engagement with the literacy. The desirability, however, I think remains unchanged. Learners do not simply reject their earlier set of values and replace them with those of the dominant culture or the target language. My experience, and that of Shen (1989), suggests that instead learners acquire a more complex set of understandings and the ability to see situations and values from more than one perspective. Learners potentially discover alternate ways of approaching tasks and of understanding them. They do not create new qualities in the self as a result of what they experience. Rather they come to value existing qualities differently as a result of the new value set. Aspects of the self that may have been suppressed or neglected are allowed or even encouraged. They retell the story of their life and view others through slightly different eyes.

In the original article I touched very briefly on the fact that the research on which I was reporting was done from a narrative inquiry perspective, without attempting to explain in the limited space available what the tenets of narrative inquiry might be. (For a more detailed discussion of this issue see Bell, in press; Bruner & Weisser, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 1991; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990.) Essentially narrative work rests on the conception that people interpret their lives through culturally and personally generated stories. New experiences, especially new cultural experiences, force people to reinterrogate the
stories by which they have previously made sense of their lives and to retell the stories in new ways that accommodate the richer experience. The events people are interpreting have not changed, but the eyes through which they see those events have. The experience of learning Chinese literacy did not, for instance, suddenly allow me to develop the experience of learning holistically. Rather, the experience challenged my unconscious story that effective learning comes through analysis and synthesis. That challenge allowed me to see that I was neglecting a valid way of approaching many tasks. I had to change my story of myself to accommodate this new experience, and a change in the story inevitably changes the self also. Crites (1971) writes, “A conversion or social revolution that actually transforms consciousness requires a traumatic change in a man’s stories . . . his style must change steps, he must dance to a new rhythm” (p. 307). As Crites suggests, such change is not always easy, but it may nonetheless be desirable, suggesting as it does the development of a richer understanding.

I would argue then, in answer to Hilder, that the necessity of change may vary according to the level at which one is engaging with the target language and literacy but that the desirability of change is always constant. Like Hilder, I see this issue as absolutely central to any literacy learning. I was amused that Hilder noticed the discrepancy between the article and the title. I had in fact originally submitted the article under the title “Does L1 Literacy Necessarily Support L2 Literacy?” but had been persuaded by the reviewers to soften my claim and go with the title as published. In retrospect I wish I had negotiated a little longer around alternate titles. The issues I was trying to address are far more than mere complicating factors—I see them as enormous challenges to those of us trying to teach students from another culture.

Hilder argues very persuasively that it is not enough for the teacher to become sensitive to these issues but that the ultimate goal must be for the students to become aware of them. I see us as being in agreement here, with the difference being in the kind of students with whom we commonly work. My work has largely been with adult community students who are just beginning the study of English whereas Hilder works with those studying English for academic purposes. At the early stages, when communication between teacher and student is at the most elementary concrete level, the onus must be on the teachers to struggle to become conscious of the hidden assumptions embedded in their literacy. As students become more fluent in English, teachers can indeed expect a comparable effort from them. As Hilder suggests, Heath’s (1992) work provides one possible model for a way in which teachers might do this. I would extend her suggestions further and ask for contrasting ethnographies of both the native language and the target language use.
Whether teachers work in community programmes or universities, however, if they are to help their students ask the most fruitful questions, they need to develop their own knowledge of what is involved in English language literacy. They cannot therefore put all the onus on the students.

REFERENCES


The TESOL Quarterly publishes brief commentaries on aspects of qualitative and quantitative research. For this issue, we asked two researchers to discuss the politics of transcription in research in TESOL.

Edited by PATRICIA A. DUFF
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The Politics of Transcription

Transcribing Talk: Issues of Representation

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Anyone who transcribes is working with language in the social world, whether it is the social science researcher, the language teacher, or, in legal settings, the clerk of the court. So the politics of transcription is part of a wider concern with language ideology (Cameron, 1995; Hill, 1985; Joseph & Taylor, 1990; Silverstein, 1979; Woolard, 1993), the politics of language (Grillo, 1989; Woolard, 1989), and the political economy of language (Gal, 1989).

The broad definition of language ideology suggested by Woolard (1993) that “language ideology is a mediating link between social structures and forms of talk” (p. 235) encompasses both the relatively neutral idea of conscious beliefs about language and the critical notions of ideology as part of our “lived relations” (Althusser, 1971) within structures of dominance. So transcribed talk is rooted in the experience of particular groups (see Green, Franquiz, & Dixon, this volume, for a discussion of the interpretive problems that can arise), and these groups are, in different ways, defined by social power. For example, when a Sikh supervisor in a car assembly plant is told he has been unsuccessful at a promotion interview because of poor communication, there may well have been a clash of communicative style. But it is the manager’s beliefs about appropriate language use that determine the outcome and are part of the structuring work of institutions like factories.

If talk is a social act, then so is transcription. As transcribers fix the fleeting moment of words as marks on the page, they call up the social
roles and relations constituted in language and rely on their own social evaluations of speech in deciding how to write it. After all, transcribers bring their own language ideology to the task. In other words, all transcription is representation, and there is no natural or objective way in which talk can be written: “There is no such thing as a ‘natural’ mechanism for the representation of speech” (Atkinson, 1992, p. 23). Inevitably, the more complex the data, for example, video as opposed to audio recording, the more reduction is going on and the more decisions transcribers have to make about fixing sound and vision on the page.

Transcribers, therefore, have to use or develop a transcription system that can best represent the interactions they have recorded, and this means managing the tension between accuracy, readability, and what Mehan (1993) calls the politics of representation. In her seminal paper on transcription as theory, written now nearly 20 years ago, Ochs (1979) raises questions about these three areas. She was perhaps the first researcher to tackle explicitly the politics of transcription (e.g., challenging the orthodoxy of presenting adults’ speech on the left in adult-child interaction and so representing the adult as the powerful topic initiator). The tension between accuracy and readability on the one hand and the politics of representation on the other relates to the current debate on autonomous versus ideological forms of literacy (Street, 1984) and applied linguistics (Pennycook, 1994; Rampton, 1995).

The challenge for the transcriber is to produce transcriptions that are accurate and readable but that are also reflexive in how they make explicit to the reader the constructed nature of written talk and so the problematic nature of accuracy and readability. This is all the more important when the researcher is working alongside the researched, implicated in some aspect of their lives—for example, as their teacher, as expert witness on their behalf, or, as we were in the Industrial Language Training service, involved in trying to change the communicative environment of the workplace (Roberts, Davies, & Jupp, 1992).

The demands of linguistic corpora have produced new systems that aim to make transcriptions of discourse increasingly accurate and readable (Du Bois, 1991; Edwards, 1992; Edwards & Lampert, 1993), but the categories developed are etic (outsider) categories that raise difficult questions about the representation of linguistic and discourse variety. So, for example, Edwards (1992) is concerned about the limitations of using punctuation to convey prosodic features and is critical of the use of eye dialect (writing a nonstandard variant to read as it sounds; e.g., hwaryuhh for how are you). Her concerns are, rightly, about accuracy and inconsistency, but the discourse transcription studies do not tackle the ideological issues of representation.

The representation of linguistic varieties has been taken up by sociolinguists and ethnographers (Atkinson, 1992; Preston, 1982, 1985;
Tedlock, 1983), but none of them has focussed on the issues of interlanguage, learner varieties, or the communicative styles of those using English as an additional language. Nevertheless, Preston has been particularly concerned with the stigmatisation of minority and disadvantaged groups when nonstandard orthography and morphology are used to (mis)represent certain linguistic varieties, and he argues that only unpredictable realisations of phonemes should be shown in a form other than the standard variety of written English. But what does this mean for the transcriber of interlanguages and various learner varieties of English? At what point could one say, as Preston argues, that this is a stable variety and that the learner is using predictable features within that variety?

Atkinson (1992) and Tedlock (1983) are concerned with stigmatisation—the social evaluation that the reader makes of the informant—but also from an emic (insider) perspective, with the problems of how informants can convey their identity through the filter of transcription. How can the voices of informants be heard in the way they wish them to be heard?

In the recent ethnographic literature, this is a current theme (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). As Clifford (1986) says, “Stories are built into the representational process itself” (p. 100), so every decision about how to transcribe tells a story. The question is, whose story and for what purpose? Most transcription work in applied linguistics and second language acquisition has been concerned with the technical features of interlanguage and not with how people convey messages about their lives and identities. As Patricia Duff has suggested (personal communication, November 20, 1996), there is a dehumanisation of the messenger for the sake of analysing the medium.

In attempting to answer these questions—whose story and what purpose—the researcher is faced with ethical issues as well as issues of rigour and consistency. Tyler’s (1986) concern with the ethical character of discourse in new forms of ethnography leads him to argue for ethnographies that evoke rather than represent. He talks about the evocation of the ethos of a community, which Marcus (1986) argues can only be achieved by using experimental forms of writing that critique the realist conventions of traditional ethnography.

These issues may seem far removed from more familiar discussions about respelling or the meaning of a pause, but if transcribers have ethical concerns about how they can represent, in Bourdieu’s (1991) terms, the “whole social person” (p. 54), then perhaps they have a duty to find ways—perhaps experimental ways—for evoking some of the struggles, some of the emotional qualities of an encounter in which minority ethnic speakers are striving to be themselves in another language. And because these encounters are so frequently asymmetrical and stressful,
transcribers have the additional duty of accounting for these effects on the talk they transcribe. Some publishers’ insistence on only using the English translation and not the original transcription is one obvious way in which transcription denies the whole social person. It also makes a significant ideological statement about the power of English to represent everyone and everything.

In practical terms, managing the tension between accuracy, readability, and political issues of representation or evocation may mean some of the following:

1. Where appropriate, use standard orthography even when the speaker is using nonstandard varieties to avoid stigmatisation and to evoke the naturalness of their speech, and never use eye dialect.
2. Work as closely as possible with the informants to gain agreement on how they wish the features of their speech to be represented.
3. Think about some experimental ways in which speakers’ voices can be contextualised/evoked, but do not underestimate the value of robust design principles for maintaining consistency and accuracy.
4. Use a layered approach to transcription, offering different versions and different levels—some relatively more ethnographic, some using fine-grained widely accepted transcription systems to give different readings.
5. Be more reflexive about the whole process of transcribing.

These maxims may appear simple and naive, and certainly they contain inner contradictions that may be useful debate fodder. But they are an attempt to raise our collective consciousness about the ideological nature of any transcription. As readers, we can ask of any transcription: How did it come to be produced? Whose story is it? How much story does it tell?

As transcribers, we need to manage the tension between accuracy, readability, and representation—remembering that we are transcribing people when we transcribe talk.

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Transcribing is a tool commonly used by researchers, both those concerned with the study of language and those concerned with exploring other dimensions of everyday life through language. Underlying much of this work is the belief that it is possible to write talk down in an objective way. In this commentary, we argue that transcribing is a situated act within a study or program of research embedded in a conceptual ecology of a discipline (Green et al., 1996; Toulmin, 1990; Van Dijk, 1985a). Transcribing, therefore, is a political act that reflects a discipline’s conventions as well as a researcher’s conceptualization of a phenomenon, purposes for the research, theories guiding the data collection and analysis, and programmatic goals (Edwards, 1993; Ochs, 1979).

Our own political act in writing this article is to construct the arguments that follow by drawing on sociolinguistic perspectives informed by cultural anthropology (Green & Dixon, 1993; Green & Harker, 1988). To illustrate the importance of this argument for the TESOL audience, we discuss two key issues: transcribing as an interpretive process and as a representational process. Central to these conceptualizations is the understanding that a transcript is a text that “re”-presents an event; it is not the event itself. Following this logic, what is re-presented is data constructed by a researcher for a particular purpose, not just talk written down.

TRANSCRIBING AS AN INTERPRETIVE PROCESS

The situated nature of transcript construction is being discussed across disciplines (e.g., Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Edwards & Lampert,
Underlying these discussions is a concern for choices made in representing data. Although we agree with Edwards (1993) that choice is a central part of the political process of constructing a transcript, we see choice as also involving a series of interpretive processes.

The act of choosing a segment of life to transcribe implies decisions about the significance of the strip of talk or the speech event, which, in turn, implies that the talk or event has been interpreted from some point of view (e.g., sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, second language acquisition). Thus, choosing a unit of talk to transcribe is a political act: From whose point of view will the selection be made—the researcher’s etic perspective and goals or the emic perspective and goals of members of the group?

The act of choosing talk is also influenced by researchers’ assumptions about language, both a priori and in situ. What counts as language and what is perceived as a meaningful bit of language in situ depends on the researchers’ cultural knowledge of that language’s system and discourse practices. Such knowledge shapes researchers’ interpretations of what they hear, see, understand, and do. For example, hearing a sound as stress involves understanding how stress is signaled and understood within a particular language group. To see silence as meaningful, and not merely the absence of talk, or to see someone as taking the role of questioner involves cultural understanding of the discourse practices of a social group (Gumperz, 1982; Philips, 1983; Tannen, 1984). Thus, writing down what one hears is the result of a range of interpretive acts.

TRANSCRIBING AS A REPRESENTATIONAL PROCESS

Representing “others” is a topic of concern across disciplines (Atkinson, 1990; Cortazzi, 1993; Patai, 1993). The intersection of these discussions with the issue of transcripts as representations is captured in the following issues: what is represented in the transcript (e.g., talk, time, nonverbal actions, speaker/hearer relationships, physical orientation, multiple languages, translations); who is representing whom, in what ways, for what purpose, and with what outcome; and how analysts position themselves and their participants in their representations of form, content, and action. From this perspective, a transcript represents both the researcher(s) and the participants in particular ways. Transcripts, therefore, are partial representations, and the ways in which data are represented influence the range of meanings and interpretations possible.

The process of transcribing, however, is not an end in and of itself. Rather, a transcript is an analytic tool constructed for a particular purpose embedded in a program of research (Corsaro, 1985). Analysis of
data represented as a transcript often entails reading the transcript in the presence of audio or video data, field notes, or other forms of head notes (knowledge gained from being in the situation). Thus, a transcript is shaped by and, in turn, shapes what can be known (see Fairclough, 1993, on text construction). For example, a traditional linear transcript implies contiguity of talk in time. Constructing a transcript with multiple columns to focus on roles and relationships is both a theoretical position and a political act that breaks this convention (Ochs, 1979; Lin, 1993; Tuyay, Jennings, & Dixon, 1995). Yet, a linear transcript makes examining collaborative interactions among different language speakers or exploring which language was used for what purpose difficult because talk may overlap, events may co-occur, and interactions may be nonlinear or contiguous (e.g., Bloome & Theodorou, 1988; Floriani, 1993; Tuyay, Jennings, & Dixon, 1995). The use of a linear transcript and not a transcript that displays the complexity of relationships means that the reader must rely primarily on the narrative interpretation provided by the writer who had access to contextual information not represented in or with the transcript.

THE POLITICS OF TRANSCRIPTION: QUESTIONS FOR A TESOL AUDIENCE

The issues that our sociocultural perspective raised about transcribing as a political act are critical to a TESOL audience. The argument presented can be posed as a series of questions: Who will be involved in constructing the transcript? How will “talk” be selected, in what ways, and for what purpose? What level of contextual information will be provided, so that “readers” may “hear” or “see” the researcher’s interpretive processes? How will persons and their talk and related actions be represented in the transcript? What is invisible within the transcript that needs to be articulated in the narrative? These issues are particularly important when the transcriber is of a different language group than the speaker(s) or when more than one language is involved. For then the question is: Whose language is being represented and whose language counts, when language counts?

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Dictionaries for Language Learners

**COBUILD English Learner’s Dictionary.**

**Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture.**

**Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary.**

When I ask ESL teachers what English dictionary they use, their responses always surprise me. Answers range from “that one with the red cover” to “uhhhh, Webster’s.” Very few teachers seem to feel the need for a good ESL dictionary. For both teachers and students, a good ESL/EFL dictionary is an invaluable pedagogical tool. To prepare well, teachers need to anticipate vocabulary problems and be ready with a clear definition and example. Furthermore, besides lexical information, COBUILD English Learner’s Dictionary, Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture, and Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary include a wide range of language and cultural information. Word-for-word and dollar-for-dollar, any one of these dictionaries would be cost effective, convenient to refer to, and professionally useful.

Because of their publishers’ access to computerized frequency counts of millions of words and lexicographical experience with previous dictionaries, these three dictionaries for intermediate and advanced students of English represent a significant advance. In this review I compare them on the basis of number and selection of words, pronunciation guides, definitions and examples, and usage notes about grammar.
and sociocultural considerations. I refer to them below by the names of the publishers: Collins, Longman, and Oxford.

NUMBER AND SELECTION OF WORDS

These dictionaries represent a selection of words from three different corpuses (or corpora, in all three dictionaries). Based on “the Longman Corpus Network, an extensive resource of computerized data collected over many years” (n.p.), Longman claims 80,000 words, defined within its well-known 2,000-word Defining Vocabulary. Using the “100-million-word British National Corpus and the 40-million Oxford American English Corpus” (back cover), Oxford includes 65,000 words and restricts definitions to a 3,500-word vocabulary “chosen principally according to frequency as revealed by the corpus but also as a core vocabulary of real value to students of English” (p. vi). The 55,000 words in Collins are selected from “a study of twenty million words of text” (p. iv) in the Collins–Birmingham University International Language Database (thus COBUILD). The Collins Wordlist contains 2,326 words, based on frequency counts from the COBUILD database.

The defining vocabularies are printed in the appendix of each dictionary.

PRONUNCIATION

All three dictionaries use a modified International Phonetics Association (IPA) transcription. Longman’s is the most detailed. Oxford’s unaccountably does not indicate the syllable division of words. Collins and Longman do, but they occasionally disagree. Collins gives English dictionary, whereas Longman gives English dictionary. This difference may result from Longman’s dual purpose: “As an additional help to pronouncing the word correctly, the headword is divided into separate syllables by means of dots. These dots show where you can break a word (or ‘hyphenate’ it) at the end of a line of writing” (p. F29). All three dictionaries mark stress before the syllable to be stressed.

DEFINITIONS AND SAMPLE SENTENCES

The clarity of dictionary definitions is especially important for ESL/EFL students. Longman and Oxford use the classical wording of lexicography: for example, “recoil: (genus) to move one’s body (differentia) quickly away from someone or something with a feeling of fear, danger, etc.” Collins uses a full-sentence definition: “recoil: You say that someone recoils from something when it gives them an immediate feeling of fear, disgust, or horror.”
For many words, sample sentences are valuable in clarifying the definition and providing a meaningful context for the word. Compare the following entries for *reciprocate*:

**Collins:**
\[\text{re-cip-ro-cate} /\text{sɪprək\(\text{\textregistered}\)t\(\text{\textregistered}\)/, reciprocates, reciprocating, reciprocated. If you reciprocate someone's feelings or behaviour towards you, you have the same feelings about them or behave the same way towards them; a formal word.}
\]
EG This hostile attitude is reciprocated by potential employers...
Invitations to the home of a subordinate may be accepted, but not reciprocated.

\[\text{V + O OR V return}
\]

**Longman:**
\[\text{reciprocate /rɪˈsɪprək\(\text{\textregistered}\)t\(\text{\textregistered}\)/ v 1[T]} \text{fml to give or do something in return (for): They invited us to their party, and we reciprocated (their invitation) by inviting them to ours. I His dislike of me is entirely reciprocated. (= I dislike him too.) 2 [I] tech (of a machine part) to move backwards and forwards in a straight line, like a PISTON: a reciprocating engine }
\]
\[-\text{cation /rɪˈsɪprək\(\text{\textregistered}\)t\(\text{\textregistered}\)ʃən\(\text{\textregistered}\)/ n [U]}
\]

**Oxford:**
\[\text{reciprocate /rɪˈsɪprək\(\text{\textregistered}\)t\(\text{\textregistered}\)/ v 1 fml (a) to give and receive sth in return; to make a mutual exchange of sth: [Vn] reciprocate greetings/compliments/gifts. (b) to return a feeling, gesture, greeting, etc.: [V] He reciprocated by wishing her good luck. [Vn] His smile was not reciprocated. 2 (techn) (of parts of a machine) to move backwards and forwards in a straight line: [V] reciprocating pistons. reciprocation /rɪˈsɪprək\(\text{\textregistered}\)ʃən\(\text{\textregistered}\)/ n [U].}

1. Pronunciation: The three dictionaries place stress marks before the syllable to be stressed. Collins also marks secondary stress in this main entry. Longman and Oxford do not because “weak stresses coming after the main stress in a word can sometimes be heard but they are not marked in this dictionary” (Oxford, inside back cover).

2. Grammar: Collins uses a unique format of grammatical information in the margin. V+O means transitive; V means intransitive. The upward-pointing arrow means that *return* is a possible synonym. Longman uses the traditional T and I for transitive and intransitive verbs. Oxford uses Vn to mean V + noun or noun phrase. Collins spells out the various forms of the word, although they are regular.

3. Label: Longman and Oxford label the verbal *formal*. Collins states this within the definition.

4. Definition: Collins simplifies the lexicographical defining phrases by using a full sentence. Collins gives only one definition whereas Longman and Oxford include a second, technical meaning of the word.
5. Sample sentences: Both of Collins’s examples use passive forms of the verb whereas Longman and Oxford use both active and passive patterns. Longman adds a helpful parenthetical interpretation of the second example.

Definitions in the dictionaries seem to be clear and generally uncomplicated. The full sentences of Collins are probably easier for ESL/EFL students to understand. Longman and Oxford consistently include more meanings for words and phrases than Collins does.

IDIOMS

Idioms are a serious challenge for ESL students. For example, the literal meaning of to be in the same boat is quite different from its idiomatic meaning. To determine how well these dictionaries handle idioms, I selected 20 at random from a standard list, among them bring home the bacon, carry coals to Newcastle, when the dust settles, play second fiddle, at the drop of a hat, a hot potato, get the last laugh, rob Peter to pay Paul, a rule of thumb, back to square one, a Dutch treat, and have egg on one’s face. Of the 20, Longman defines 19; Oxford, 17; and Collins, 5. Oxford indicates idioms clearly with a black box surrounding the letters IDM.

PHRASAL VERBS

Separable and inseparable phrasal verbs are especially difficult for ESL students. All three dictionaries handle the distinctions well by using clear symbols and sample sentences. In Longman they are listed in boldface and clearly indented under the headword. Collins also uses boldface but does not indent the phrases. Oxford indicates them with a black box surrounding the letters PHR V.

USAGE NOTES

Both Longman and Oxford include usage notes intended to clarify four kinds of potential problems: (a) words that are similar in meaning but are not interchangeable (fat, chubby, stout, tubby, obese, overweight; look, gaze, stare, peer); (b) difficult or unusual points of grammar and style, such as whether a plural pronoun can be used after words like hopefully, due to, or someone (e.g., Someone left their coat behind); (c) entries that require greater detail (hire, ill, first floor/ground floor) in addition to differences between British and U.S. usage (lift/elevator, table a report) noted in the entry itself; and (d) pairs of words that users may confuse (continual/continuous, affect/effect, disinterested/uninterested, farther/further).

Collins does not include usage notes for any entries.
CULTURE NOTES

Longman is different from the other dictionaries in one important way. The corpus of this new dictionary is the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, and an additional 15,000 new words and phrases report encyclopedic information about British and U.S. culture. For example, what is an ESL/EFL student to make of these sentences from Time magazine? To build an effective missile defense, the U.S. might have to repeal Murphy’s Law. Soviet leaders love to award one another ribbons and stars and medals but never gold watches. Longman includes both Murphy’s Law and gold watch among other detailed, denotative facts as well as connotations and associations that selected words have for native speakers.

Longman includes hundreds of cultural references (Cinderella, Madison Avenue, Grinch, the pill, WYSIWYG) and literary allusions (the yellow brick road, albatross, down the rabbit hole). Popular music, television, and film stars are identified, often with photos. Some entries go beyond simple identification to include more interpretation than conventional dictionaries do (e.g., entries for John and Jackie Kennedy, Ronald and Nancy Reagan, and Dan Rather).

The lexicographical information in all three dictionaries reflects solid scholarship adapted to the needs of English language learners. In this regard they are similar enough that any one would be a valuable resource for students. The differences are more a matter of size, format, typography, illustrations, and pedagogical aids such as study pages and usage and culture notes.

No U.S. publisher has yet produced a learner’s dictionary of American English at this advanced level. Recently Heinle and Heinle published The Newbury House Dictionary of American English, but I do not review it here because it is smaller (40,000 words) and compares to Longman’s Dictionary of American English and Oxford’s Student’s Dictionary of American English, both Americanized abridgements of the dictionaries reviewed here. However, I stress that Longman and Oxford are perfectly adequate for American English. British spellings, pronunciations, and definitions are listed first, but American English differences are clearly indicated.

RICHARD YORKEY
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Recent queries on the Linguist List (Freed, 1995; Juacaba, 1996a, 1996b) and informal chats in conference corridors have both involved discussions about pragmatics textbooks, specifically for introductory, undergraduate courses for linguistics and applied linguistics majors. Although the number of textbooks has increased recently, recommending one that meets teachers’ and students’ needs for a solid introductory text better than the others do is still difficult.

There are several reasons for this state of affairs. First, because of the nature of pragmatics as a field of study, a textbook must contain examples of everyday language use to illustrate principles and types of meaning. Including these examples in a textbook, however, runs the risk that students and readers from cultural backgrounds different from the author’s will have difficulty understanding the examples. Second, different authors assume varying amounts of background knowledge in linguistics, requiring extra lessons to handle questions that can come up as a result of inadequate background knowledge of syntax or semantics.

Third, the English proficiency level of many of the students enrolled in linguistics programs who do not have English as their L1 places an extra burden on an introductory textbook. Length, writing style, and vocabulary load become important considerations. Still another problem area is the need for accuracy and balance in the scope and range in the textbook’s content and its usefulness to students and teachers (e.g., in the form of exercises and a glossary of terms, both of which make a textbook more appropriate for pedagogical purposes).

Finally, because pragmatics is a relatively new field of linguistics, it is still contested ground; there are competing theories for “doing pragmatics,” specifically concerning the interface of the field with semantics or the role of social and cultural features in relation to the analysis of more language-related devices such as deixis and anaphora. This lack of consensus may lead an author to emphasize one approach to pragmatic meaning to the exclusion of others, resulting in an overview that is not as broad as a teacher and students in an introductory course would expect.
In light of these five points, I survey three of the most recent publications that could serve as introductory textbooks for a pragmatics course at the undergraduate level.

**PRAGMATICS: AN INTRODUCTION**

Mey’s *Pragmatics: An Introduction*, a substantial 357-page text, covers a wide range of subjects within the field of pragmatics and thus is arguably appropriate as an introductory course book. It is composed of three parts.

The first, Basic Notions, is distinguished by Mey’s emphasis on taking the perspective of the users of the language, that is, on what users actually do in talk, and on avoiding analysis constrained by theoretical issues. Rather than remain within the framework of studying language as a system, Mey pushes out into the emerging paradigm of considering language in its social setting, “the world of users” (p. 30). Part II, Micropragmatics, with one chapter on reference and implicature followed by three on speech acts, clearly gives priority to speech-act theory. In these three chapters, Mey develops his argument (which is not in fact a new one) that the study of speech acts does not adequately describe or explain the way language is used in the real world of its users; factoring out “societal conditions” (p. 71) to focus exclusively on linguistic and philosophical concerns is to be rejected, in Mey’s view. Although this extensive coverage of speech acts may be useful, such attention is questionable if Mey’s book is compared with other recent work in pragmatics and discourse analysis, in which questions of reference, deixis, and anaphora appear to have priority.

Part III is an introduction to what Mey labels *macropragmatics*, an “investigation into the societal parameters of language use” (p. 82). In this section, the author moves beyond studying speech acts to conversational analysis (CA) as the main analytical perspective on everyday talk. In the first two chapters of this section (11 and 12), Mey first introduces the basic concepts and notions of CA, bringing in historical information as needed. Chapter 11 concentrates on formal devices, and chapter 12 on “content-oriented mechanisms” (p. 237), that is, the devices that produce coherence in talk, specifically adjacency pairs. Mey then takes a

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1 See, however, Yule (1996). This volume in the Oxford Introductions to Language Study series is 100 pages long, includes an eight-page glossary, and gives a solid overview of pragmatics. It would be very useful background reading for students. Note as well that the second edition of Green’s (1989) *Pragmatics and Natural Language Understanding* is due out in 1997. It requires more background knowledge of formal linguistics than the others do and devotes more time to indexicals, anaphora, reference and sense and to syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic accounts of meaning. A Japanese version of the 1989 edition is available; however, Japanese students caution that some parts are not correctly translated.
critical perspective, arguing that a rigid speech-act and adjacency-pair analysis is inadequate to explain all possible second-pair part answers to first-pair part questions. A more pragmatic view examines an utterance in context, without any a priori conceptions on what is to be an “answer.” The author then proposes the concept of pragmatic act as a more useful explanatory approach than speech act, as it incorporates the role of the social context in assigning of meaning and interpretation of human action.

The following section concerns metapragmatics, also called critical pragmatics, which involves types of constraints on language use; and finally, societal pragmatics, the label for the study of the ways in which a society may limit access to the dominant language by language users outside the societal mainstream. In these chapters, Mey covers territory he discusses in Whose Language? (1985).

Numerous examples are taken from a variety of sources, including from everyday experiences. At the end of each of the 14 chapters are suggested exercises and review questions; no answer key, however, is provided for teachers or students. The author assumes background knowledge not only in linguistics but also in sociology, social psychology, and education, although for students to do extra work in order to understand Mey’s arguments would not be too burdensome.

The main drawback to Mey’s book is the frequent use of parentheses to introduce his particular perspective on what the study of pragmatic meaning should include. Although the teacher may find the comments and asides humorous and may agree with most, even all, of Mey’s interjections, students in an introductory textbook will find it difficult to appreciate them, and many will find that such editorializing distracts them from their aim in reading the book. Further, from the perspective of learners outside university settings in North America or Europe, comments on what another author or researcher said may not be well taken, particularly when contradictory views on a subject are added with no grounds for the student to decide among the various views.

DOING PRAGMATICS

The year 1995 brought the publication of two new textbooks: Grundy’s Doing Pragmatics and Thomas’s Meaning in Interaction. An initial thumbing through produces the impression that, from a pedagogical perspective, Grundy’s text has high face validity. First, as it is only 216 pages long, it seems more palatable for an undergraduate course than Mey’s does. Second, 9 of the 11 chapters include useful tasks for the students, under the rubriques Checking Understanding and Raising Pragmatic Awareness. Furthermore, the author suggests answers and solutions, enabling students to do the tasks in a self-study approach. Third, chapter 11,
Project Work in Pragmatics, provides basic yet important information on what kinds of projects are viable as well as advice on data collection and transcription conventions. Finally, several of the chapters have a spiral approach: Grundy covers basic notions, for example, on deixis in the first part of chapter 2 and in the second half of the chapter introduces “further issues,” enabling the teacher to choose which sections the students must read and be responsible for on tests, for example. The face validity can be extended to the fact that Grundy uses a more informal tone by citing examples from his own experience using the first-person singular pronoun; this style appears to make students feel comfortable, giving the impression that the material is accessible to them.

Particularly if many of the students are nonnative speakers of English, however, Grundy’s book has its drawbacks. With few exceptions, the students I teach in an introductory course at a private university in Tokyo will have, on average, neither a TOEFL score higher than 500 nor substantial background knowledge of U.S. or British culture. Consequently, the examples, which often require a fairly developed knowledge of British culture to understand the the pragmatic meaning being illustrated, are problematic. In some cases, one of which occurs on page 4 in Checking Understanding 1, there appears to be a mistake related to the interpretation of the sequences of utterances. Neither I nor a British colleague has been able to work out Grundy’s interpretation of the example, and thus the point Grundy is trying to make is lost. This example is not the only one that is heavily culturally loaded, leaving students and perhaps the teacher with an uneasy lack of confidence in the book as a whole.

Second, in a no doubt well-intended effort to introduce basic pragmatic concepts, the explanations are not always transparent enough and not thorough enough for any but the very best students to understand. Chapter 3, Implicit Meaning, illustrates the kind of trouble that arises. It raised numerous questions from students, perhaps as a result of Grundy’s trying to do too much, to cover too many difficult but essential concepts too quickly. In addition, the Further Issues section of the chapter, rather than helping to clarify some of the earlier points in the same chapter, led to greater confusion. In fact, a careful, in-depth analysis of Grundy’s explanations confirms suspicions that he is not as in control of this subject matter as one would wish (see also Turner, 1996).

Although I hope a more careful editing job will improve Grundy’s book before it is reprinted, a third source of tension for me as a teacher is the author’s attempt to go beyond what I consider the territory of pragmatics proper while novices in pragmatics are still struggling with understanding the basic notions and concepts. For example, the section entitled the Universal Character of Politeness presents commentary students cannot begin to comprehend without a careful reading of
several journal articles. In those two pages, Grundy is writing for fellow academics; I question the value of such a section in an introductory textbook.

**MEANING IN INTERACTION: AN INTRODUCTION TO PRAGMATICS**

Although Thomas’s book assumes some knowledge of basic concepts of linguistics and does not include exercises or other pedagogically oriented features, it offers a clear, thorough, and appropriately paced introduction to the current state of affairs in pragmatics, documenting each definition and point with appropriate examples—in number, length, and relevance—from contemporary sources: the media, fiction, and everyday experiences. Further, as the title indicates, the author continually reminds the reader that both speaker and hearer have important roles to play. The first chapter introduces explanations on different types of meaning, in particular distinguishing between utterance meaning (the first level of speaker meaning) and force (the second level of speaker meaning) to suggest by the end of the chapter a working definition of pragmatics: the creation of meaning through interaction. As Thomas elaborates on her definition of pragmatics, she raises issues that have come up in the literature, finally making the point that focusing only on the speaker’s intention in utterance interpretation entirely leaves out the hearer’s aim in an interaction (see Brown, 1995). Thus, Thomas’s insistence on viewing pragmatics as essentially about contextualized meaning in interaction seems inordinately sensible.

The subsequent chapters each take up major issues in pragmatics: Speech Acts, Conversational Implicature, Approaches to Pragmatics, Pragmatics and Indirectness, Theories of Politeness, and The Construction of Meaning. Although the presence of the author is felt, unlike in Grundy’s and Mey’s books the impression is that Thomas has tried to write the book from the point of view of what students need to know and understand and in what order. She lays out the essential information as clearly, lucidly, and carefully as possible, avoiding interjecting comments of a contradictory nature. The author is clearly a teacher who has had to help students work out what exactly pragmatics is about.

When it proves necessary, Thomas includes historical background information to elucidate current problems and issues. For example, the need for a theory of politeness remains problematic, and to build her argument in support of one theory Thomas surveys the development of this subfield of pragmatics. She first outlines the areas of confusion with regard to defining politeness; according to Thomas (p. 149), the term *politeness* has been viewed as the same as or overlapping with deference, register, surface-level phenomenon, and illocutionary force; politeness
as etiquette is concerned with the underlying goals of an individual’s linguistic and nonlinguistic behavior. Thomas claims that politeness as a pragmatic phenomenon has to do with the contextualized use of a linguistic form, in which it is necessary to include the context of the utterance as well as the speaker-hearer relationship (p. 157). Thomas explains and evaluates three pragmatic approaches to politeness (those of Geoffrey Leech, Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, and Bruce Fraser) for their contributions to the field’s understanding of politeness, despite their not meeting the requirements for a theory with adequate explanatory and predictive value. Finally, Thomas introduces the notion of pragmatic scales, proposed by Spencer-Oatey (1992), as a candidate to account for cultural variation.

In the final chapter, The Construction of Meaning, Thomas returns to issues raised in chapter 1 and brings the reader up-to-date on some recent attempts to account for pragmatic meaning. Reflecting Mey’s point of view, the author advocates avoiding adherence to one approach, such as prioritizing social over cognitive factors, as the construction of meaning requires a flexible, probabilistic perspective.

CONCLUSION

As a teacher of an introductory undergraduate course in pragmatics, primarily to nonnative speakers of English, I seek a textbook that represents the field; that provides a base on which I can elaborate in lectures, handouts, and other teaching materials; and that will not be an embarrassment. Of equal importance is that the book be appropriate for the students I teach with regard to language proficiency level and format; textbooks work best when they include tasks and other features to help make the content accessible to learners. One particular requirement is that an introductory course book avoid overt efforts to convert readers to a particular point of view on pragmatics. Such attempts to limit the field for undergraduates yield a fragmentary knowledge base; they need to understand more of the territory before narrowing down their interests to one theory or approach. On the basis of the five parameters I set above and depending on the amount of real time available for an introductory course, I recommend Thomas’s contribution, with Mey’s as a strong second. Unfortunately, Grundy’s book does not fulfill its potential.

REFERENCES

Believing that the educational strengths of English language learners (ELLs) can best be identified through multiple forms of assessments, O’Malley and Valdez Pierce have created a practical guide for teachers in implementing alternative approaches to traditional forms of testing that measure discrete subject-matter or linguistic knowledge. This comprehensive book includes numerous reproducible pages ready-made for use in ESL and grade-level classrooms that are suitable for all proficiency levels. Additionally, the authors provide clear instructions for veteran or novice teachers, teacher trainers, administrators, assessment specialists, and program planners for designing and using their own alternative assessments with actual examples from the field.

The book is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 1 defines alternative assessment as any method of finding out what a student knows or can do that is intended to show growth and inform instruction and is alternative to traditional forms of testing, namely, multiple-choice tests (Stiggins, 1991). Readers are presented with a review of recent research on assessment that describes the failure of traditional tests to monitor and reflect the abilities and limitations of ELLs and the rationale for using alternative methods. Chapter 2 reviews the testing constructs of reliability and validity and gives examples of authentic assessments that reflect
instructionally relevant classroom activities. These examples include oral interviews, story retelling, projects, exhibitions, experiments, demonstrations, and portfolios. Holistic scoring rubrics for rating these tasks are also included. In chapter 3 the authors review portfolio assessment in more detail, including specific steps in portfolio design and procedures for communicating information to parents so that they understand their children’s progress.

Chapters 4–6 address the assessment of the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Chapter 7 reviews methods for measuring both subject-matter knowledge and language growth and skills for content-area teachers. The book concludes with chapter 8, which describes actual assessments from elementary and secondary ESL classrooms, and an appendix complete with sample entries from a child’s portfolio.

A comprehensive guide to authentic assessment that reflects current holistic approaches to language teaching is long overdue. This well-written, practical, teacher-friendly book is just what instructors need to help them gather information on and document students’ abilities, skills, progress, and attitudes. It is an essential resource for the library of anyone in the language teaching field.

REFERENCE


ELIZABETH VARELA

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**Collaborations: English in Our Lives (Vols. 1–5).**


Given the volatile dichotomy between the communicative and proficiency-oriented approaches to L2 teaching, it is refreshing to see a series of ESL textbooks that addresses both competencies. Aimed toward adult ESL learners in North America, primarily immigrants and refugees, this series of five textbooks presents a variety of texts and both individual and group activities utilizing the four skills.

The aims are clearly articulated in the preface to the Beginning I textbook. This series encourages learners “to develop English language and literacy skills while reflecting, as individuals and with others, on their
changing lives” (p. x). Accordingly, the chapters are sequenced around six contexts of language use related to learners’ lives, ranging from the self up to the global community. Each chapter begins with a brief passage written in standard American English by a recent immigrant to English-speaking North America. These passages are recollections of the writers’ experiences living in the target culture and generally refer explicitly to the geographical locale. After reading the passages, learners begin the exercises.

The exercises in each chapter are designed to reinforce the four skills through bottom-up and top-down processing. The first exercise in each unit is a cloze passage to complete after listening to the authentic text passage at the beginning of the chapter. Other exercises include cooperative learning tasks such as interviews and guided discussions. All the exercises address multiple intelligences by including a variety of texts, pictures, tables, and checklists. In addition, emphasis is placed on the authenticity of all text types, including maps, TV listings, and authentic photos of U.S. landmarks. Each chapter concludes with a two-part review. Looking Back allows learners to assess their own learning by completing sentences and checklists, and Learning Log is a worksheet for reviewing vocabulary learned during the unit. Overall, the diversity of exercises and the provocative layout of the textbooks reflect the engaging variety of skills necessary for this diverse group of learners.

Although the textbooks themselves contain few resources for the learner—no glossaries and no appendixes—they are well complemented by the workbooks. The format of the workbooks is commensurate with that of the textbooks and includes interesting photos, tables, and maps. Indeed, each section of workbook exercises is prefaced by a table giving the appropriate reference pages in the textbook, and an answer key is included.

Supplementary resources available to the instructor include transparencies, audio cassettes, and an assessment package. Given the lucidity of the textbooks, however, these materials are by no means the only resources that could supplement the textbooks. Considering the series’ orientation around popular U.S. culture and immigrants’ experiences, instructors and learners could easily integrate other realia into the curriculum.

On the whole, this series of textbooks is very appropriate for nonacademic ESL classes. The clear format and variety of guided exercises motivate learners, and the freedom to integrate other materials into the curriculum makes this series ideal for both the experienced and the novice ESL instructor.

THOMAS DAVIS IV
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Modern Impressions: Writing in Our Times.

Part of Heinle & Heinle’s Tapestry collection, Modern Impressions is a low-advanced (college-level) ESL writing textbook. It is remarkably inclusive, containing several dozen short, medium, and longer essays for classroom use and sections that reflect the wide variety of learning tasks that writing instructors use in class. The textbook is a combination of traditional language learning textbook, writing process handbook, revision and grammar workbook, and week-to-week syllabus.

The multidraft process of writing is the central thread that runs through the book’s seven chapters. After the first chapter, which details the importance of prewriting and of knowing one’s own preferences and skills as a writer, the second chapter engages students in practicing applications of theoretical considerations such as audience, unity, and essay organization. Numerous writing samples—by writers from a variety of cultural backgrounds—illustrate each of the concepts within the chapter.

After the third chapter’s discussion and examples of persuasive writing techniques, the textbook becomes a sequence of four writing topics, with a chapter on each: education, fatherhood, poverty, and challenges and choices. Not only does each general topic allow individuals to choose the type of text they will write, but the assignment parameters and related readings acknowledge a broad spectrum of individual student interests. Even the seemingly patriarchal chapter, Fathers: Are They Central or Peripheral?, provides options for writing a narrative/descriptive essay relying on firsthand experiences, an analytical essay in which writers can question gender and parenting roles in various cultures, or a persuasive essay that might argue, for example, that mothers may not “instinctively care better for children than fathers” (p. 77). Throughout these chapters, the stages in writing processes are emphasized through brainstorming exercises, workbook-like peer response sheets, and, at the editing/revision stage, useful lessons on grammatical and mechanical errors most common in ESL writing.

Well designed and grounded in recent ESL writing theory, this writing textbook has few weaknesses. Some might find the themes of chapters 4–7 a bit generic; others might find some of the longer essays in these chapters culture-bound in their references to Bill Cosby and The Simpsons. This problem is not significant, however, as the author makes an effort to include fragments from other cultures; for example, the chapter on fatherhood has brief texts on West African and Northern Italian traditions of fatherhood, and all of the sample texts from student writers are written from a spectrum of cultural perspectives.
Most appealing is the integrated nature of these chapters. Peer response is something to be practiced as a writing skill, for instance, and brief vocabulary reviews are contextualized to match topic-related readings. In one piece, a discussion of quotation marks follows a passage on how writers can effectively “appeal to experts” (p. 104) through paraphrase or quotation.

Modern Impressions has something for every student and encourages individual differences by emphasizing varying affective concerns in choosing topics, developing prewriting plans, and responding to peer texts. Likewise, the book contains something for every ESL writing teacher: a range of reading and prewriting assignments, an array of in-class activities, and a genuine allowance for teachers’ preferences and styles.

MARK F. SCHaub
American University in Cairo


Speaking Solutions is a listening/speaking textbook designed for intermediate to advanced ESL/EFL students. As the full title suggests, the text covers a number of skill areas, including both interactional and transactional listening and speaking skills. The philosophy that permeates Speaking Solutions is that a student-centered approach to the teaching of listening/speaking is essential. Teachers unfamiliar with student-centered learning environments may find this textbook particularly useful in that it provides a framework for cultivating such an environment.

The book is divided into eight units, with an introductory unit providing several activities that allow students to introduce themselves and get acquainted. The remaining seven units focus on macrolevels of language usage such as Interacting in Class (unit 1), Developing a Presentation (unit 5), and Taking a Stand (unit 6). Each unit is divided into five subunits that contain activities focusing on specific areas of language development, such as listening, pronunciation, and communication skills. The format is coherent and well organized, making the book user-friendly for both teacher and student.

One of the more noteworthy features of the exercises and activities in this textbook is the degree to which they encourage student interaction. This interaction ranges from having students compare their answers to a taped listening segment to having several students work together to
examine different sides of an ethical issue. Each unit also contains a section called Learning Strategies. In unit 1, this section asks students to evaluate their needs with respect to learning English and then to share them with the class. In later chapters, students examine their vocabulary-learning strategies and assess their overall progress in the class. With these activities, students develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning.

Along with encouraging student interaction, Speaking Solutions focuses on the acquisition of a number of language-related skills such as using conversation strategies and giving oral presentations. As the students progress through the book, these skills build on and complement one another. For example, in the area of oral presentations, unit 1 includes an interactive activity on brainstorming that provides students with an effective technique for generating ideas. In unit 3, specific information about how to build confidence to speak in front of a group is presented. Later in this unit students give informal presentations, and by unit 5 they are asked to make longer, more formal presentations using the skills acquired in previous units. For its fairly compact size, Speaking Solutions contains an impressive number of constructive exercises and activities that build listening/speaking skills by encouraging students to use the language as much as possible. Any teacher who has been looking for a textbook that integrates a number of different skill areas while providing a framework for developing a more student-centered class should find this textbook indispensable.

MICHAEL CRAWFORD
Ohio University

Focus on Grammar: A Basic Course for Reference and Practice.

Focus on Grammar: A Basic Course for Reference and Practice, the first text in a four-level series, is designed to teach the basics of English grammar to beginning students of English through a combination of controlled and communicative exercises. The book serves as a guide to classroom instruction and as a grammar reference source for students.

The format makes it easy for teachers and students to access the desired content areas. The book contains a table of contents, an index, appendixes, and answer keys to all of the focused practice exercises. Each Student Book is accompanied by supplemental materials. Workbooks provide students with additional practice and homework exercises. Cassettes with dialogues and other passages allow for listening
practice. The Teacher’s Manual provides teaching suggestions and diagnostic and end-of-unit tests.

A creditable feature of the book is its multidimensional approach to grammar instruction. The book introduces material to students in a four-step approach: contextualization, presentation, guided practice, and communication practice. In the first step, the target structures are reflected in the context of a dialogue or brief passage. Next, the structures are explicitly presented in grammar charts. Then the book provides several exercises for guided practice of both the form and the meaning of the structures. Activities include finding instances of the target form in a text, substituting pronouns for nouns, completing cloze passages, and conjugating verbs according to context. Some listening exercises are also included.

Finally, the book guides students in using the new forms for communicative purposes. Students are given the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions both orally and in writing. The activities ask students to describe various customs, objects, or events; compare things; play memory games; and engage in values clarification. Self-tests at the end of each unit allow students to evaluate their mastery of new forms.

The subject matter that forms the substance of the four-step approach revolves around everyday life. There is an obvious attempt to expose students to the culture of “average” Americans. Topics include family roles, clothing, food, teenagers, college life, and U.S. holidays. A weakness of the book is the lack of authentic texts. All dialogues relate to the everyday life of a created family, the Winstons. Although this provides a connecting theme, students will lack exposure to different writing styles and more challenging subject matter.

Despite this drawback, Focus on Grammar: A Basic Course for Reference and Practice is recommended for beginning-level, general-purpose ESL classes. Its innovative approach, combining opportunities for both deductive and inductive understanding of grammar with focused communicative practice, makes this text a well-rounded foundation for the study of basic English skills. In addition, its lighthearted tone and varied presentation of material will make the study of grammar pleasant, even for those students who consider it a chore.

ERIKA J. REUTZEL
The Pennsylvania State University
BOOK NOTICES

The TESOL Quarterly prints brief book notices of 100 words or less announcing books of interest to readers. Book Notices are not solicited. They are descriptive rather than evaluative. They are compiled by the Book Review Editor from selected books that publishers have sent to TESOL.

Appropriate Methodology and Social Context.

- The methodology of English language education has been developed mainly in the English-speaking countries of the West and does not always fit the needs of the rest of the world. This important and controversial book investigates this state of affairs by looking at the wider social context of what happens between teachers and students. It uses an ethnographic framework to explore the complex and diverse cultures of classrooms, student groups, and teacher communities in different countries and educational environments. It goes on to argue that these factors have to be acknowledged in the design and implementation of appropriate methodologies. Although a major concern is with classroom teaching, the methodologies for curriculum and project management and design are also addressed.

Educating Second Language Children: The Whole Child, the Whole Curriculum, the Whole Community.

- This book brings together the work of 15 elementary education experts who support an integrative approach to educating L2 children, one that goes beyond language teaching methodology to cover a wide range of issues affecting the academic and social success of language minority children. The volume deals not only with language development but with the development of the whole child; rather than focusing
on language instruction, it addresses the entire curriculum; and instead of limiting itself to classroom learning, it examines the roles of the school, family, and community.

**On Reading: A Common-Sense Look at the Nature of Language and the Science of Reading.**

In this book, Goodman uses the miscues of real readers reading real texts to inform him about how language works and what strategies developing and fluent readers use. His purpose is to examine that knowledge with teachers so they can understand more precisely what their students are learning to do and how best to help them. Goodman’s straightforward look at how reading works as a process makes this book useful for every teacher and interested parent. Its accessible writing style is designed to reach the nonspecialist who is nevertheless interested in a synthesis of research on reading with direct implications for teaching.

**Women, Men and Politeness.**

This book focuses on the specific issue of the ways in which women and men express politeness verbally. Using a range of evidence and a corpus of data collected largely from New Zealand, Janet Holmes examines the distribution and functions of a range of specific verbal politeness strategies in women’s and men’s speech and discusses the possible reasons for gender differences in this area. Data provided on interactional strategies, hedges and boosters, compliments, and apologies demonstrate ways in which women’s politeness patterns differ from men’s, and the book explores the implications of these different patterns, for women in particular, in the areas of education and professional careers.

**Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language.**

This book brings together work on critical discourse analysis written by Norman Fairclough between 1983 and 1992. The contents of the book are grouped in four sections. The first section examines the development of an analytical framework for researching language in relation to power and ideology. The second deals with the theme of discourse and contemporary social and cultural change and the use of a critical
discourse analysis framework in the study of change. Chapters in the third section mainly address discourse analysis based outside language studies, arguing for the use of textual analysis in discourse analysis as a method of social research. The final section is concerned with critical language awareness—educational applications of critical discourse analysis within language programs in schools and educational institutions.

**Second-Language Classroom Interaction: Questions and Answers in ESL Classes.**

This book analyzes teachers’ and students’ interaction in the context of 12 ESL lessons with the purpose of exploring the extent of students’ language output. Research has confirmed that teacher speech dominates the L2 classroom. While teacher talk has been investigated in numerous studies, this study addresses student talk. Questions are one means of engaging students’ attention, promoting verbal responses, and evaluating students’ progress. They facilitate interaction by establishing the topic, the speaker, and the respondent. However, as the author shows, some teacher questions encourage communication whereas others inhibit it. In this analysis of teachers’ and students’ questions and answers, the author offers a new perspective on L2 development and classroom learning in general.

**Validation in Language Testing.**

In recent years, researchers have adopted a variety of innovative techniques for developing, assessing, and validating specific tests of second or foreign language proficiency and their impact on education and society. The present volume demonstrates that many different techniques for empirical analysis and types of evidence may be used to assess and interpret the validity of diverse aspects of language tests as well as the consequences they may have for language students, educators, and society. The 12 chapters in this book were written by researchers in different parts of the world. Each was originally presented at the 14th Annual Language Testing Research Colloquium. An introductory chapter reviews theories of test validation and distinguishes how each of the 12 chapters serves as a unique case study in establishing the validity of a specific language test, its uses, or its societal impact.
This book is designed to make difficult but basic areas of English grammar more comprehensible to a wide range of people. It contains the following features: a socratic approach in which readers are encouraged to observe, think about, and draw conclusions about each grammar point covered; troubleshooters, which focus on problem points in teaching and learning; teaching tips to help the reader create a positive atmosphere in the classroom; and mind boggler, questions meant to stimulate inductive reasoning and to promote greater independence of thought concerning grammar. Appendixes offer teaching strategies that go beyond the teaching tips, and an accompanying workbook reinforces understanding of material.
EDITORIAL POLICY

The TESOL Quarterly, a professional, refereed journal, encourages submission of previously unpublished articles on topics of significance to individuals concerned with the teaching of English as a second or foreign language and of standard English as a second dialect. As a publication that represents a variety of cross-disciplinary interests, both theoretical and practical, the Quarterly invites manuscripts on a wide range of topics, especially in the following areas:

1. psychology and sociology of language learning and teaching; issues in research and research methodology
2. curriculum design and development; instructional methods, materials, and techniques
3. testing and evaluation
4. professional preparation
5. language planning
6. professional standards

Because the Quarterly is committed to publishing manuscripts that contribute to bridging theory and practice in our profession, it particularly welcomes submissions drawing on relevant research (e.g., in anthropology, applied and theoretical linguistics, communication, education, English education [including reading and writing theory], psycholinguistics, psychology, first and second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and sociology) and addressing implications and applications of this research to issues in our profession. The Quarterly prefers that all submissions be written so that their content is accessible to a broad readership, including those individuals who may not have familiarity with the subject matter addressed.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Submission Categories

The TESOL Quarterly invites submissions in five categories:

Full-length articles. Contributors are strongly encouraged to submit manuscripts of no more than 20–25 double-spaced pages. Submit three copies plus three copies of an informative abstract of not more than 200 words. To facilitate the blind review process, authors’ names should appear only on a cover sheet, not on the title page; do not use running heads. Manuscripts should be submitted to the Editor of TESOL Quarterly:

Sandra McKay
English Department
San Francisco State University
1600 Holloway Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94132 U.S.A.
The following factors are considered when evaluating the suitability of a manuscript for publication in the TESOL Quarterly:

- The manuscript appeals to the general interests of the TESOL Quarterly readership.

- The manuscript strengthens the relationship between theory and practice: Practical articles must be anchored in theory, and theoretical articles and reports of research must contain a discussion of implications or applications for practice.

- The content of the manuscript is accessible to the broad readership of the Quarterly, not only to specialists in the area addressed.

- The manuscript offers a new, original insight or interpretation and not just a restatement of others’ ideas and views.

- The manuscript makes a significant (practical, useful, plausible) contribution to the field.

- The manuscript is likely to arouse readers’ interest.

- The manuscript reflects sound scholarship and research design with appropriate, correctly interpreted references to other authors and works.

- The manuscript is well written and organized and conforms to the specifications of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (4th ed.).

Reviews. The TESOL Quarterly invites succinct, evaluative reviews of professional books, classroom texts, and other instructional resources (such as computer software, video- or audiotaped material, and tests). Reviews should provide a descriptive and evaluative summary and a brief discussion of the significance of the work in the context of current theory and practice. Submissions should generally be no longer than 500 words. Submit two copies of the review to the Review Editor:

H. Douglas Brown  
American Language Institute  
San Francisco State University  
1600 Holloway Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94132 U.S.A.

Review Articles. The TESOL Quarterly also welcomes occasional review articles, that is, comparative discussions of several publications that fall into a topical category (e.g., pronunciation, literacy training, teaching methodology). Review articles should provide a description and evaluative comparison of the materials and discuss the relative significance of the works in the context of current theory and practice. Submissions should generally be no longer than 1,500 words. Submit two copies of the review article to the Review Editor at the address given above.

Brief Reports and Summaries. The TESOL Quarterly also invites short reports on any aspect of theory and practice in our profession. We encourage manuscripts that either present preliminary findings or focus on some
aspect of a larger study. In all cases, the discussion of issues should be supported by empirical evidence, collected through qualitative or quantitative investigations. Reports or summaries should present key concepts and results in a manner that will make the research accessible to our diverse readership. Submissions to this section should be 7–10 double-spaced pages (including references and notes). Longer articles do not appear in this section and should be submitted to the Editor of the TESOL Quarterly for review. Send two copies of the manuscript to the Editors of the Brief Reports and Summaries section:

Graham Crookes and Kathryn A. Davis
Department of English as a Second Language
University of Hawaii at Manoa
1890 East-West Road
Honolulu, HI 96822 U.S.A.

The Forum. The TESOL Quarterly welcomes comments and reactions from readers regarding specific aspects or practices of our profession. Responses to published articles and reviews are also welcome; unfortunately, we are not able to publish responses to previous exchanges. Contributions to The Forum should generally be no longer than five double-spaced pages. Submit two copies to the Editor of the TESOL Quarterly at the address given above.

Brief discussions of qualitative and quantitative Research Issues and of Teaching Issues are also published in The Forum. Although these contributions are typically solicited, readers may send topic suggestions or make known their availability as contributors by writing directly to the Editors of these subsections.

Research Issues:  
Patricia A. Duff  
Department of Language Education  
University of British Columbia  
2125 Main Mall  
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CANADA  

Teaching Issues:  
Bonny Norton Peirce  
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Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z4  
CANADA

Special-Topic Issues. Typically, one issue per volume will be devoted to a special topic. Topics are approved by the Editorial Advisory Board of the Quarterly. Those wishing to suggest topics or make known their availability as guest editors should contact the Editor of the TESOL Quarterly. Issues will generally contain both invited articles designed to survey and illuminate central themes as well as articles solicited through a call for papers.

General Submission Guidelines

1. All submissions to the Quarterly should conform to the requirements of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (4th ed.), which can be obtained from the Order Department, American Psychological Association, P.O. Box 2710, Hyattsville, MD 20784-0710. The
Publication Manual is also available in many libraries and bookstores. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of references and reference citations, which must be in APA format.

2. All submissions to the TESOL Quarterly should be accompanied by a cover letter that includes a full mailing address and both a daytime and an evening telephone number. Where available, authors should include an electronic mail address and fax number.

3. Authors of full-length articles should include two copies of a very brief biographical statement (in sentence form, maximum 50 words), plus any special notations or acknowledgments that they would like to have included. Double spacing should be used throughout.

4. The TESOL Quarterly provides 25 free reprints of published full-length articles and 10 reprints of material published in the Reviews, Brief Reports and Summaries, and The Forum sections.

5. Manuscripts submitted to the TESOL Quarterly cannot be returned to authors. Authors should be sure to keep a copy for themselves.

6. It is understood that manuscripts submitted to the TESOL Quarterly have not been previously published and are not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

7. It is the responsibility of the author(s) of a manuscript submitted to the TESOL Quarterly to indicate to the Editor the existence of any work already published (or under consideration for publication elsewhere) by the author(s) that is similar in content to that of the manuscript.

8. The Editor of the TESOL Quarterly reserves the right to make editorial changes in any manuscript accepted for publication to enhance clarity or style. The author will be consulted only if the editing has been substantial.

9. The views expressed by contributors to the TESOL Quarterly do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, the Editorial Advisory Board, or TESOL. Material published in the Quarterly should not be construed to have the endorsement of TESOL.

Statistical Guidelines

Because of the educational role the Quarterly plays modeling research in the field, it is of particular concern that published research articles meet high statistical standards. In order to support this goal, the following guidelines are provided.

**Reporting the study.** Studies submitted to the Quarterly should be explained clearly and in enough detail that it would be possible to replicate the design of the study on the basis of the information provided in the article. Likewise, the study should include sufficient information to allow readers to evaluate the claims made by the author. In order to accommodate both of these requirements, authors of statistical studies should present the following.
1. A clear statement of the research questions and the hypotheses that are being examined.

2. Descriptive statistics, including the means, standard deviations, and sample sizes, necessary for the reader to correctly interpret and evaluate any inferential statistics.

3. Appropriate types of reliability and validity of any tests, ratings, questionnaires, and so on.

4. Graphs and charts that help explain the results.

5. Clear and careful descriptions of the instruments used and the types of intervention employed in the study.

6. Explicit identifications of dependent, independent, moderator, intervening, and control variables.

7. Complete source tables for statistical tests.

8. Discussions of how the assumptions underlying the research design were met, assumptions such as random selection and assignment of subjects, sufficiently large sample sizes so that the results are stable, etc.

9. Tests of the assumptions of any statistical tests, when appropriate.

10. Realistic interpretations of the statistical significance of the results keeping in mind that the meaningfulness of the results is a separate and important issue, especially for correlation.

**Conducting the analyses.** Quantitative studies submitted to the *TESOL Quarterly* should reflect a concern for controlling Type I and Type II error. Thus, studies should avoid multiple t tests, multiple ANOVAs, etc. However, in the very few instances in which multiple tests might be employed, the author should explain the effects of such use on the probability values in the results. In reporting the statistical analyses, authors should choose one significance level (usually .05) and report all results in terms of that level. Likewise, studies should report effect size through such strength of association measures as omega-squared or eta-squared along with beta (the possibility of Type II error) whenever this may be important to interpreting the significance of the results.

**Interpreting the results.** The results should be explained clearly and the implications discussed such that readers without extensive training in the use of statistics can understand them. Care should be taken in making causal inferences from statistical results, and these should be avoided with correlational studies. Results of the study should not be overinterpreted or overgeneralized. Finally, alternative explanations of the results should be discussed.

**Qualitative Research Guidelines**

To ensure that *Quarterly* articles model rigorous qualitative research, the following guidelines are provided.
Conducting the study. Studies submitted to the Quarterly should exhibit an in-depth understanding of the philosophical perspectives and research methodologies inherent in conducting qualitative research. Utilizing these perspectives and methods in the course of conducting research helps to ensure that studies are credible, valid, and dependable rather than impressionistic and superficial. Reports of qualitative research should meet the following criteria.

1. Data collection (as well as analyses and reporting) is aimed at uncovering an emic perspective. In other words, the study focuses on research participants’ perspectives and interpretations of behavior, events, and situations rather than etic (outsider-imposed) categories, models, and viewpoints.

2. Data collection strategies include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation. Researchers should conduct ongoing observations over a sufficient period of time so as to build trust with respondents, learn the culture (e.g., classroom, school, or community), and check for misinformation introduced by both the researcher and the researched. Triangulation involves the use of multiple methods and sources such as participant-observation, informal and formal interviewing, and collection of relevant or available documents.

Analyzing the data. Data analysis is also guided by the philosophy and methods underlying qualitative research studies. The researcher should engage in comprehensive data treatment in which data from all relevant sources are analyzed. In addition, many qualitative studies demand an analytic inductive approach involving a cyclical process of data collection, analysis (taking an emic perspective and utilizing the descriptive language the respondents themselves use), creation of hypotheses, and testing of hypotheses in further data collection.

Reporting the data. The researcher should generally provide “thick description” with sufficient detail to allow the reader to determine whether transfer to other situations can be considered. Reports also should include the following:

1. A description of the theoretical or conceptual framework that guides research questions and interpretations.

2. A clear statement of the research questions.

3. A description of the research site, participants, procedures for ensuring participant anonymity, and data collection strategies. A description of the roles of the researcher(s).

4. A description of a clear and salient organization of patterns found through data analysis. Reports of patterns should include representative examples not anecdotal information.

5. Interpretations that exhibit a holistic perspective in which the author traces the meaning of patterns across all the theoretically salient or
descriptively relevant micro- and macrocontexts in which they are embedded.

6. Interpretations and conclusions that provide evidence of grounded theory and discussion of how this theory relates to current research/theory in the field, including relevant citations. In other words, the article should focus on the issues or behaviors that are salient to participants and that not only reveal an in-depth understanding of the situation studied but also suggest how it connects to current related theories.
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Publishers are invited to send copies of their new materials to the TESOL Quarterly Review Editor H. Douglas Brown, San Francisco State University, at the address listed in the Information for Contributors section. Packages should be labeled REVIEW COPIES.

TESOL Quarterly readers are invited to contribute review articles and evaluative or comparative reviews for consideration for publication in the Review or Book Notices section of the Quarterly. These should be sent to the TESOL Quarterly Review Editor H. Douglas Brown, San Francisco State University, at the address listed in the Information for Contributors section.

TESOL gratefully acknowledges receipt of the following publications.


### Learner Centredness as Language Education

**Ian Tudor**

- Hardback: 48097-9, $49.95
- Paperback: 48550-6, $19.95

### From Reader to Reading Teacher

**Jo Ann Aebersold**

and **Mary Lee Field**

- Hardback: 49165-1, $47.95
- Paperback: 49887-X, $18.95

### Classroom-based Evaluation in Second Language Education

**Fred Genesee**

and **John A. Upshur**

- Hardback: 55681-8, $44.95
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- Hardback: 55423-3, $38.95
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Edited by **Hywel Coleman**

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New Ways in Content-Based Instruction
Donna M. Brinton and Peter Master, Editors

This volume speaks to a broad audience of teachers in training, practicing teachers, materials developers, program administrators, and teacher educators. It offers them activities on theme-based L2 courses, sheltered content-area courses, and adjunct arrangements at the university level; as well as contributions from educators working with younger learners in elementary, middle, or high schools. The activities are organized into five sections: Information Management, Critical Thinking, Hands-on Activities, Data Gathering, and Text Analysis and Construction.

1997, 312 pp., ISBN 0-939791-67-6. $25.95 (member $22.95)

New Ways in Teaching Adults
Marilyn Lewis, Editor

New Ways in Teaching Adults offers teachers and teacher educators a wide range of communicative activities under the rubrics: The News, Academic Material, Written Texts, Direct Teaching, Worksheets to Complete, Word Prompts, Nonverbal Stimuli, Task Instructions or Demonstrations, Other People, and Case Studies. This book brings together contributions from teachers in many countries and from classrooms where students have many different reasons for learning English.

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