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Additional Readers for Vol. 27, No. 3 (Adult Literacies) Karla Bennett, JoAnn Crandall, David Corson, Anne Fontanella, Hannah Fingeret, Donald Freeman, Shirley Brice Heath, Nancy Hornberger, Paul Jurmo, Katherine Melee, Kenneth Ryan, Hilary Stern-Sanchez, James W. Tollefson, Elizabeth Whalley, Jack Wigfield, Heide Spruck Wrigley, Isabelle Zablockie
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Editor’s Note

This is the last issue of the TESOL Quarterly to be edited at the University of Washington. I regret that it is not possible to thank all those whose commitments to scholarship have made my editorial tenure a remarkable experience. I am grateful, however, for the opportunity to thank a few. In TESOL’s Central Office, Director of Communications and Marketing Helen Kornblum has supported the journal through challenging times; Assistant Editor Marilyn Kupetz performs daily wizardry on TESOL publications—I thank her for her consummate professionalism and unending labors. At the University of Washington, I thank Editorial Assistant Maureen Phillips; I could not have had a more competent or committed associate.

The sustenance of a journal however, does not depend solely on its editorial staff. The scholars who contribute and review manuscripts shape a journal and a field. I gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the Quarterly’s editorial advisory board, additional readers, and its able section and guest editors, whose efforts have so benefited this international journal. Yet, thanks and recognition are most fundamentally due the authors, particularly junior scholars, whose work continually transforms the field.

It has been a privilege to serve as steward of this distinguished journal. It is also a relief to be passing it on! I know that Quarterly readers join me in welcoming incoming Editor Sandra McKay and in thanking her for past and future work in service of the Quarterly. We are fortunate that she has agreed to undertake this important task.

In this Issue

Articles in this issue of the TESOL Quarterly endeavor to refigure the relationship between theorists and practitioners. The lead article argues for reorienting the “dysfunctional” distinction between theory and practice. The second seeks to develop a theory-neutral framework within which teachers can theorize from practice, developing their own situation-specific classroom techniques. The third article argues for collaboration...
between teachers and researchers, and reports studies responding to classroom issues. The next shifts the focus to students, surveying their perceptions of the extent to which EAP writing instruction has met their needs. Another article critiques the authenticity of spoken language tests for international students preparing to teach in English. The last warns against paradigm shifts that can prematurely recommend classroom implementation of pedagogical theory.

- Mark Clarke argues that “the distinction between theory and practice in professional and public discourse is generally dysfunctional for teachers.” Clarke notes, in particular, the paradox by which teachers are considered less expert than builders of formal theories. Drawing on his own classroom-based research, he demonstrates the complex minute-by-minute decision making entailed in classroom instruction. Given this complexity, Clarke challenges theorists to establish the “particularizability” of their work for teachers. This goal entails a reorientation of the way research knowledge is applied by teachers. In Clarke’s phrasing, “Teachers should resist the advice of ‘experts’ except on their own terms.”

- B. Kumaravadivelu also seeks to “refigure the relationship between theorizers and teachers” and to accommodate the particularity of the teaching enterprise. In what he calls the postmethod condition, teachers have the opportunity to devise for themselves, a “systematic, coherent, and relevant alternative to method.” To facilitate this development, Kumaravadivelu presents an “interim plan” in the form of 10 macrostrategies. These are meant to constitute an open-ended, strategic framework “based on current theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical insights,” which the author sees as theory neutral (though not atheoretical). Within these broad guidelines, teachers are invited to generate their own situation-specific, need-based microstrategies (i.e., classroom techniques). In this way, Kumaravadivelu hopes that instructors will become “strategic” teachers and researchers, who theorize from practice and practice what they theorize.

- Teresa Pica argues for collaboration between teachers and researchers. She presents a compendium of research results that speak directly to 10 questions commonly arising from classroom contexts. Among the issues addressed are the role of learners’ L1 in successful L2 learning; the relative merits of different classroom practices, including comprehension-based approaches, error correction, drill and practice, explicit instruction in grammar rules; the benefits of different classroom management techniques, including pair and group work; problems in pronunciation instruction; and challenges in preventing and overcoming fossilization.

- Ilona Leki and Joan Carson surveyed students’ perceptions of the relationship between their writing instruction in ESL courses and the tasks they later encountered in courses across the disciplines. Students were pleased with their EAP writing instruction, but some “experi-
enced a jolt” as they moved to more demanding writing tasks in courses across the curriculum. Some apparently needed more speed in language processing; others desired more complex writing assignments, incorporating multiple sources. The latter response reflected a concern that EAP courses are too easy with respect to subsequent demands on students. Classroom implications are presented; additionally, the authors suggest greater consultation with ESL students and former students concerning their needs.

- Barbara Hoekje and Kimberly Linnell examine assessment instruments used to evaluate the spoken language of international teaching assistants (ITAs). Using Bachman’s framework of situational and interfunctional authenticity, they evaluate three tests: the SPEAK (Spoken Proficiency English Assessment Kit), the OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview), and their own IP (Interactive Performance) test. The authors find substantial differences in the discourse elicited by the three instruments; they note ways in which the IP test is more satisfactory within their framework and respects in which it is still lacking. They remind us that language tests are “authentic” only in relation to particular target-use contexts.

- Ron Sheen critiques the advocacy of the task-based syllabus (TBS). In the context of what he describes as a recent history of unproductive paradigm shifts, Sheen scrutinizes claims and criticisms by advocates of the task-based syllabus. He finds three strands in arguments underlying the advocacy of TBS: discrediting the relative value of conventional methods, deemphasizing the need to define the form that TBS instruction should take, and assuming that communicative interaction entailed in task work will trigger language acquisition. Sheen critiques each of these in turn, finally recommending a reorientation of task-work research.

Also in this issue:

- The Forum: Charlene Polio’s commentary on Elsa Auerbach’s *TESOL Quarterly* article, “Reexamining English Only in the ESL Classroom” is followed by the author’s response, as are Peter Robinson’s comments on Rod Ellis’s “The Structural Syllabus and Second Language Acquisition.” In the subsection Teaching Issues, Courtney Cazden and Sue Starfield discuss how theories of language and cognition can inform ESL teaching.

- Brief Reports and Summaries: In his comparison of teacher and student responses to student writing, Nat Caulk finds the two sources of comments to be complementary; Robert DeKeyser reports an exploratory study of methodology aimed at clarifying the role of explicit L2 grammar instruction.

- Reviews: William Grabe reviews resources for applied linguists and teacher educators.

- Book Notices

Sandra Silberstein
Call for Abstracts

Language Planning and Policy and the English Language Teaching Profession

The TESOL Quarterly announces a call for abstracts for a special-topic issue on language planning and policy and the English language teaching profession to appear in 1996. We are beginning work especially early to encourage international contributions. We are interested in full-length, previously unpublished articles dealing with:

1. The language planning and policy decision-making process at the national, state, or local level

2. The impact of language policy decisions on
   a. teacher training and practices
   b. curriculum design and development
   c. students and communities
   d. research directions and funding

Quantitative and qualitative studies which provide insight into the decision-making process and which document the impact of planning and policy decisions on the English language teaching profession are especially welcome.

In addition to full-length articles, we solicit short reports on recent language trends and policies from countries around the world. We also solicit brief, personal accounts on the classroom experiences of practitioners who have been affected by policy decisions at the national or local level. Contributions from all regions of the world are welcome.

At this stage, we are soliciting two-page abstracts for full-length articles and one-page abstracts for short reports or brief accounts. For all submissions, send three copies, a brief biographical statement (50 words, maximum), a full mailing address, and daytime and evening telephone numbers (along with fax and e-mail information, if available). Abstracts, mailed to one of the addresses below, should be received no later than August 31, 1994.

Thomas Ricento
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301E Anspach Hall
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The Dysfunctions of the Theory/Practice Discourse

MARK A. CLARKE

University of Colorado at Denver

The distinction between theory and practice in professional and public discourse is generally dysfunctional for teachers. There are a number of reasons for this. Because the individuals involved in developing theory are seldom full-time language teachers themselves, the theory/practice distinction creates strata of expertise in which teachers are considered less expert than theorists. The theory tends to be imported from other disciplines and is, therefore, only marginally applicable to language teaching. As in education in general, the discourse tends to be authoritarian and prescriptive. It is also general, necessarily limited in applicability to particular classrooms. Finally, the theory/practice discourse underestimates the institutional, political, and interpersonal constraints in which teachers work. This article expands each of these points in developing the argument that the distinction is unhealthy for the profession. Possible responses are explored.

In the context of public and professional debate about the quality of education, with the attendant increase of reform efforts, a number of scholars have attempted to reframe discussions so as to increase teacher control over fundamental aspects of teaching and learning. The portrayal of the teacher as reflective practitioner (see Schon, 1987, 1991), action-researcher (Nunan, 1989), or transformative intellectual in a political arena (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Shor & Freire, 1987) are representative examples of these efforts. In the field of L2 teaching, a number of scholars have asserted the importance of reconceptualizing teacher education, curriculum development, and teaching practice so that the wealth of teachers’ experience is accurately represented in professional discussions and policy development. Richards and colleagues, for example, has examined the roles and interactions of teacher, student, methods, materials, curricula, and assessment as he argues for experience-based theory building and ongoing teacher development (Richards, 1990a, 1990b; Richards & Nunan, 1989; Rich-
ards & Rodgers, 1986). Pennycook (1989, 1990) examines language teaching methods and applied linguistics, asserting that issues of power and privilege have not been adequately addressed in professional debate, with the result that classroom teachers are essentially disenfranchised. Recently, Prabhu (1990, 1992) has argued that language teaching can be improved only if we abandon the search for the best method and concentrate instead on understanding the complex interaction of curricular, interpersonal, and methodological factors in actual classroom practice. Fanselow (1987, 1988, 1992) advocates observation and self-analysis as an avenue for improving one’s teaching, implicitly endorsing professional contexts that value individual teachers’ perspectives on methods and materials.

Although the approaches vary, as do the means recommended for pursuing the various goals, common to all is the recognition that teachers constitute the fulcrum of educational reform. One effect of this work is to cast teachers as central to the field and to reframe issues according to the impact on classrooms. This article is intended as a contribution to this effort. In spite of the work of those cited above, I believe that the profession continues to cast teachers as implementers of dicta rather than as agents in the process of theory construction, curriculum planning, and policy development. As Widdowson (1990) puts it: “Language teaching is often represented as a client activity, and language teachers as consumers of findings that are retailed by research. I believe this is a misrepresentation which denies the nature of teaching as a domain of theory and research in its own right” (p. 47).

In fact, there has been a notable increase in the number of journal articles and conference presentations that focus on teacher empowerment and the increase of teacher participation in theory building, policy development, and program planning. But it is not clear that this perspective has had much impact on the daily lives of language teachers. The situation appears to be one in which reality lags behind the conceptualizations developed in professional forums or, just as likely, a situation where there is little connection between scholarly speculation and teachers’ lives.

I appeal to readers’ experiences in faculty meetings, teacher education programs, in-service workshops, and professional conventions: Have you found yourselves in situations where the virtues of particular curricula, methods, and materials are presented as stable and generalizable traits inherent in the item under discussion rather than the result of particular instances of their implementation? Any examination of curricula, methods, or materials in which these are discussed as if they existed independently of their use by teachers reveals positivistic assumptions of objectivity in which teachers are cast as subordinate to
the artifacts of schooling. To put it another way: Discussions of lan-
 guage lessons in which the individuality of teachers and the idiosyncra-
sies of each teaching/learning event are not highlighted contribute to
the diminution of teachers. And this, I believe, can be traced to societal
and professional tendencies to separate theory from practice and to
relegate teachers to the less important role of practitioner. This creates
a disabling atmosphere for teachers and an unhealthy climate for
education in general. Two points require clarification at the outset:
the definitions and uses of discourse and theory.

Discourse refers to the way language expresses understandings. The
term is used in this paper to refer to both formal and informal uses
of language that reveal the ways that theory and practice are used in
the field. Widdowson (1990) says: “Discourse . . . means a mode of
social practice, in particular how institutions establish ideologies for
the control of practice” (p. 38). Gee (1990) extends the definition to
virtually all spheres of life: “Discourses are ways of being in the world,
or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes,
social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes”
(p. 142). Professional discourse, therefore, refers to virtually all aspects
of being, behaving, thinking, and interacting as a language teacher.
It includes one’s position in society as a teacher; one’s relationships
with colleagues, students, administrators, and parents or sponsors of
students on a day-to-day basis; as well as the ways that teachers are
portrayed in the professional literature.

Regarding theory: It is important to emphasize that I am referring
to formal theory development and presentation, the conscious effort
to build and disseminate language teaching methods and models for
general use in the profession. For example, when I assert below that
teachers do not have time to develop theories, I do not mean that
teachers are atheoretical in their work. It is obvious that teachers
theorize all the time, but even in the context of program development
and collegial interaction, this is largely a personal endeavor, and al-
though this is a healthy and important aspect of the profession, it is
not generally accorded as much importance in the field as is formal
theory development.

In the following pages, I briefly summarize the nature of the theory/
practice discourse, emphasizing the disabling effects for teachers. This
is not an unbiased presentation; my position is, essentially, that what
is good for teachers is good for the profession as a whole, and my
analysis is consistently focused from the point of view of classroom
teachers. The situation is complex and, as I have already indicated, it
has received a great deal of scrutiny; I do not pretend to be presenting
an entirely original critique. However, I do attempt to highlight aspects
of problems that have received scant attention in most discussions. I conclude with speculation on the kind of work that would take us in a healthier direction.

**PROBLEMS WITH THE THEORY/PRACTICE DISCOURSE**

The principle problem is the dichotomy itself, in fact, in our societal tendency to dichotomize. In language teaching, as is the case in all of education, it is absurd to talk of theory apart from practice and vice versa, yet it is not uncommon to find, in the literature and in casual conversation, observations which indicate that the two are considered distinct endeavors: “Teachers generally have very little patience with theory,” or “In theory, one should be consistent in correcting errors but in practice it is virtually impossible to do.” I am not describing some sort of linguistic determinism, that is, that because the language permits us to separate theory and practice, we are forced to think and act in particular ways, but rather the opposite: The language reveals how deeply ingrained the problem is. The points that follow are merely variations on this theme.

*Individuals involved in theory building and research very seldom are language teachers themselves.* Theory building is a full-time job and so is teaching. Given real-life constraints, it is rare to find an individual who is both language teacher and theory builder. The majority of articles and books published on language learning and teaching are written by university faculty, most of whom are not currently teaching in the language classroom (see Swales, 1988). The issues they raise may be important for the profession but seldom do their agendas match those of classroom teachers. Take, for example, the following assertion by Krashen (1983): “Given a brief workshop or inservice, the most practical, most valuable information we can provide is a coherent view of how language is acquired, a theory of language acquisition” (p. 261).

Many language teachers would agree with Krashen on this, and they might add, “A theory of language acquisition is a good start, but we need much more than that for an adequate theory of language teaching.” But, given the hierarchical nature of the profession and the higher status of theorists, Krashen’s assertion will stand as stated, taken to mean that this is the key piece of information that teachers need to know. Classroom teachers have other concerns in addition to second language acquisition (SLA) and their perspective on the “most practical, most valuable information” can be expected to differ consid-
erably, depending on the particular teaching problem they are currently trying to solve.

The discourse becomes dysfunctional when teachers are placed in the position of taking proclamations such as the one above as received truth rather than as a proposition to be examined and rejected or modified in light of their own experiences and needs. If one accepts the contention that university faculty occupy positions of greater prestige than classroom language teachers, then the disabling nature of the discourse becomes obvious: The voices of teachers are subordinated to the voices of others who are less centrally involved in language teaching.

As a direct result, the theory/practice distinction creates strata of expertise, in which, paradoxically, teachers are seen to be less expert than theorists. Much effort is expended in getting classroom teachers to contribute to the theory/practice discourse, through participation in professional meetings or collaborative research projects or by contributing to special issues of journals or “teacher as researcher” collections, but the fact is that teachers generally do not have time for such things. They are paid to teach, and the number and diversity of the demands on their time leave little time for reflection and writing. The effect of this fact is to create a situation in which one group tends to do the teaching, while another group does the speculation about how the teaching should be done.

Swales (1988) reports that, from 1968 to 1986, the overwhelming majority of articles appearing in the *TESOL Quarterly* were written by university faculty and staff. His data do not reveal how many of these were also teaching English or another second language, but 20 years of impressions from professional conventions, journal reading, conversation, and observation lead me to speculate that very few individuals in the profession regularly teach in both types of classrooms. The constraints within which people work incline them in one direction or another, and theory building is just not a priority for classroom language teachers. And, although it is true that many university professors began their careers as language teachers, promotion and tenure considerations (the trite but true “publish or perish” dictum) make it unlikely that they will continue to teach in the language classroom. The irony is that just as one acquires a position that encourages theoretical speculation and reflective practice, one is removed from day-to-day contact with the classroom realities that would make such efforts valuable.

The result is as inevitable as it is lamentable: Individuals who spend their days teaching are viewed as less knowledgeable than individuals who have only infrequent contact with, or observational status in, classrooms. Although one can argue that a certain amount of distance
is helpful in gaining an accurate perspective of classroom dynamics, it stretches credulity to assert that the best theory building comes from individuals who are disconnected from daily contact with the schools. This is the nature of expertise, and it is characteristic, not just of the teaching profession, but broadly speaking, of all Western, modern, technologically advanced societies (Berger, Berger, & Kellner, 1973; Berger & Luckmann, 1967). We live in a time of information overload, where individuals do not expect and are not expected, to know everything that might impinge on their daily lives. The solution is to rely on experts—individuals whose business it is to explore some areas more deeply than others. However, it is also a function of the low esteem in which teachers are held in our society. It is not difficult to demonstrate that this is the case. Consider, for example, the salaries of teachers compared to other professions, and the ever-popular fad of teacher and school bashing in response to general societal problems. Teachers have become convenient scapegoats. In modern, technologically advanced societies that have a positivist philosophical bent, we have to blame someone. We cannot conceive of problems that do not have perpetrators, and the high profile that teachers have in society makes them easy targets for criticism. Teachers are seen as part of the problem, whereas university theorists are sought for solutions to the problem. A detailed development of this argument is beyond the scope of this paper. For a detailed discussion in the context of L2 teaching, see Silberstein (1991); for general discussions, see Ornstein and Erlich (1989), Watzlawick (1984), Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967), Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch (1974), Wilden (1980, 1987).

An example of the “strata of expertise” syndrome can be seen in the following quote from Krashen (1983): “When we provide theory, we provide them [teachers] with the underlying rationale for methodology in general. This permits adaptation for different situations, evaluations of new techniques and evaluation of materials” (p. 261). However well-intended, Krashen cannot avoid sounding patronizing. “We,” he says, provide “them” with theory, which they can use to develop and test methodology. “We” do the thinking; “they” do the behaving.

Until the experience of teachers is central to the process of developing and applying theory, the discourse must be viewed as dysfunctional. Richards (1987) makes essentially the same point in an examination of language teacher education:

While there has been an expansion of the theoretical concepts, research issues, and subject-matter content which constitute much of the field, few who are engaged in developing this knowledge base or research agenda would claim any direct relation between their work and the preparation of language teachers. Research or theory that deals with the nature of
second language teaching per se is scant in the professional literature. (p. 209)

He goes on to develop a framework for theory development in the service of teacher preparation which is grounded in teacher knowledge and classroom experience. It is significant that Richards' perspective is not widely shared by specialists nor reflected in many teacher education programs.

The theory of theory/practice discussions is usually imported from other disciplines. Scholars other than Richards have pointed out that we do not have a theory of L2 teaching/learning, an explicit, coherent body of knowledge that summarizes what we know about language learning and teaching. Larsen-Freeman (1990), for example, says: "The major problem, as I see it, is that over the course of its history the second language teaching field has either been without a theory or it has had its theoretical needs inappropriately met by relying on related disciplines outside itself, most notably linguistics and psychology" (p. 261). Widdowson (1990) points out that the major tenets of language teaching theory come from the fields of linguistics and language acquisition. "Linguists, at least since Chomsky (1959, 1965), if they have been concerned with language acquisition, have been concerned principally with grammatical competence: The discourse of SLA studies is generally speaking derivative from that of generative linguistics in that it focuses on grammatical competence in modular isolation from other aspects of language knowledge" (p. 45). Oller (1989), speaking of his own experience as a graduate student interested in language acquisition, puts the matter bluntly: "The focus of American linguistics, I found, with few exceptions was almost exclusively on some aspect of phonetics, phonology, or syntax, with an almost active indifference toward meaning and a near defiant obliviousness toward the world of experience" (p. ix).

And, although recent work has moved beyond the acquisition of grammatical competence, performance—the messy business of actual language use—is not accorded much attention. But performance is precisely the domain of greatest interest to language teachers, and for this reason, autonomous linguistics is of limited value. Similarly, research in language acquisition contributes only a narrow range of insights to L2 teachers, primarily because the classroom, which is the primary venue for SLA, is explicitly excluded from consideration. The majority of L2 learning occurs in instructional settings, and theoretical speculation that does not deal with this fact will be of little value, to teachers at least. It is symptomatic of the issue I am addressing that
this lack of relevance has not diminished the tendency of scholars to offer their work to teachers. For example, Ellis’s (1986) widely used textbook on SLA, written, in part, for teachers, has only one chapter on formal instruction and is keyed to the issue of “whether formal instruction makes a difference to SLA” (p. 215).

As others (see, e.g., Brown, 1987; Larsen-Freeman, 1990; Widdowson, 1990) have pointed out, several disciplines offer knowledge and intellectual traditions that may be of value to L2 teachers in their efforts to develop a theory, but none is sufficient. The discourse will be of little use, at best, and disabling, at worst, if the total experience of language learners and teachers is not included in the theory-building effort.

The theory/practice discourse tends to be general, rather than specific, limited in depth and detail. Pennycook (1990) attributes this tendency to the preference in applied linguistics to rely on a modernist perspective of language and thought, one in which generalizable, statistically significant results are valued over local and incommensurable experience. It is, however, the particulars of a situation or event that teachers must pay attention to as they decide what to do and how to do it. And it is these particulars that teachers reflect upon as they weigh the value of theory and the merits of research. Research reports and theoretical speculation, even those which focus on classroom issues, are limited in depth and detail. No matter how diligently researchers work to include all the variables that teachers deal with in a typical day, the data they collect and the conclusions they draw are, by necessity, less complex than the reality that teachers confront every day. Such speculation is, therefore, reductionistic and inaccurate. It is not surprising that proclamations of theorists can strike teachers as simplistic and irrelevant. This situation would not present problems for classroom teachers if they could go about their business without interference from others. However, politicians and policy makers regularly use such proclamations as the basis for their decision making, with little regard for teachers’ perspectives on the issues.

The theory/practice mentality of the profession creates an atmosphere which exaggerates cognitive phenomena and underestimates the institutional, political, and interpersonal constraints that teachers must deal with. The effect is to create the illusion that teaching decisions should be made exclusively on the basis of research data or that one’s theory is the primary reason why one behaves in a particular way. Such efforts tend to excise teaching from its context, as if it were a laboratory specimen, ignoring the complexity of decisions made in the classroom. Larsen-Freeman (1990) recognizes this when she explores possible
explanations for “inexplicable teacher behavior”: “For example, teachers have been criticized for being inconsistent in error correction. It may be the case, however, that a teacher willfully rejects an opportunity to correct errors on occasions when correcting them would threaten the social climate” (p. 267).

 Criticism of teachers for “inconsistent error correction” is only possible if one focuses primarily on linguistic phenomena (e.g., error correction), overlooking complex interfacational phenomena that characterize all classrooms. The correction of errors is just one of a number of factors that require attention at any particular moment in a classroom. Prabhu (1992) has identified four aspects of language lessons: They are units in a curricular sequence, an instance of a teaching method, a patterned social activity, and an encounter between human beings. The key to understanding classrooms is to recognize that all of these factors obtain all the time. An attempt to illuminate teacher or student behavior, to assess language learning, or to discern the effectiveness of materials or methods which does not simultaneously account for all four aspects of the lesson, will necessarily be flawed.

 In fact, it is possible that Prabhu’s characterization is not detailed enough to capture important variables. In a recent study of literacy instruction involving 39 elementary teachers in an urban school district (Davis, Clarke, & Rhodes, 1992), we discovered that it was impossible to classify classrooms according to instructional method without recourse to high-inference descriptors whose reliability were suspect. We settled, instead, on a typology of material used by teachers; we found that classrooms could be reliably classified along a continuum of whole text to exercise. In effect, what we discovered was that the amount of variation in classroom dynamics was so great that our sample revealed 39 distinct “methods,” one for each teacher in the study. In a related study (Clarke, 1991c), I worked with 2 of the 39 teachers to analyze videotapes of their classes. Through a process of stop-frame analysis, the teachers identified 11 constraints that impinged on their decision making to varying degrees during a typical day: personal philosophy, physical space, time, availability of resources, interpersonal and institutional factors, community considerations, assessment and curriculum requirements, and classroom routine.

 Perspectives such as these emphasize the importance of attending to the complexities of classroom reality as experienced by teachers and students. We will have much better success in understanding language instruction if we assume that teachers’ decisions and behavior meet some criteria of rationality, what Prabhu (1990) calls a sense of plausibility, than if we attempt to fit observed behavior into a preconceived theoretical mold where linguistic or other criteria predominate. To the extent that we ignore the empirical data of language classrooms,
fashioning our theory from experimental or conceptual frameworks, we contribute to the disenfranchisement of teachers in what is ostensibly a teaching profession.

IMPLICATIONS

The position I have taken in this paper constitutes a critique of the profession; the only real solution to the problems I have identified would be to turn the hierarchy on its head, putting teachers on the top and arraying others—pundits, professors, administrators, researchers, and so forth—below them. This would require a major change in our thinking and in our behavior and, however reasonable it may appear to be, I do not see this happening any time soon. However, there is hope for small actions, relatively safe agitations that disturb the status quo just enough to give teachers a measure of control over everyday situations. The following suggestions constitute a start in that direction.

Although it is helpful to examine ways that teachers can survive in the current system, it is important to realize that what is ultimately needed is a change in the system. (A detailed discussion of systems and system change is developed by Watzlawick, 1974, and Wilden, 1980, 1987. Applications to education following similar reasoning are presented in Clarke, 1989, 1990, 1991a, & 1991b; Clarke & Commins, 1993; Clarke & Silberstein, 1988.) The most direct route for accomplishing such change is to work for language policy reform. As the preceding discussion demonstrates, it is unlikely that teachers will be able to effect profound changes in the profession without encountering difficulties caused by established procedures in the status quo—curriculum and testing mandates; inflexible schedules; meager resources; and uncooperative or uninformed parents, administrators, and colleagues. We need to work for an educational policy within which teachers’ perspectives of education would be validated.

This, in essence, would require a complete reorientation of the profession, and of institutions in society that control education, to take into account the realities of teachers as decisions are made. Although a thorough discussion of this point is beyond the scope of this paper, it can be pointed out that much teaching is conducted as if there were explicit agreement among the primary participants on philosophical assumptions, procedures, materials, and so forth. As a number of scholars have pointed out, this is usually not the case. Pennycook (1989) and Tollefson (1988), for example, have presented compelling arguments that question the empirical and ideological bases of methods and programs and that call for an examination of assumptions and approaches to language instruction.
In this context, then, we would be well advised to advocate a systematic approach to education policy reform. Courson (1990), for example, describes how one might proceed with such an effort, including initial fact-finding, identification of problems, establishment of a tentative policy, refinement of the policy, and establishment of a formal language policy. Whether such a policy shift is in progress or not, teachers will find that engagement in the larger systems within which they teach is necessary if significant changes are to occur.

For example, it is unlikely that change will occur if teachers do not take an active and aggressive part in political and institutional affairs. Teachers cannot expect their agendas to be furthered by administrators or researchers, and only specific acts of agitation against the status quo will move the profession toward a more equitable distribution of influence. Some possibilities: Teachers might work to establish peer review as an important part of teaching evaluation. The goal here is to remove the presumption of a hierarchical distribution of knowledge and insight and to assert the appropriateness of peer review in performance evaluation. Fanselow (1988), for example, has developed a perspective on observation that provides a basis for personal growth and collegiality and which could serve as the basis for such procedures.

Similarly, with regard to in-service education and professional development workshops and seminars, teachers should resist the advice of “experts” except on their own terms. This might mean working to establish committees of teachers who are in charge of identifying topics of general interest to the faculty and who are empowered to set up workshops in such a way that teachers are able to interact with invited speakers in ways that lead to insightful solutions to problems that the teachers want to solve (see Clarke & Silberstein, 1988, for other ideas along this line). If the only good advice is the advice you take, then it follows that the advice giver should be someone from whom you want to hear.

As schools adapt to this sort of change, teachers need to insist on the validity of their own perceptions of L2 learning and teaching and particularly of the validity of their own experiences. Large-scale studies of L2 learning and teaching can provide important insights into the larger picture, but it is often the case that what is true for the majority of teachers or classrooms or learners is not, in fact, true for a particular instance of these. This is a fundamental epistemological error to which modernized, Western society is particularly susceptible. It is referred to as an error in logical type (see Bateson, 1972; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967; Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974), in which the observer confounds the individual with the group. Clarke and Silberstein (1988) develop the concept in an application to L2 teaching. What usually happens is that an individual reads a research report in
which particular materials or activities have been found to be reliably related to desirable outcomes. The problem, however, is that too many variables exist and they cannot be accounted for as the teacher attempts to translate research recommendations into practice. Teachers will be unhappy with the results more often than not if they attempt to organize their teaching according to what research has shown to be important for the “average” learner or group of learners. What is required is that we work for changes in perspective so that the particular experiences of individual teachers gain what Erickson (1993) has called “an irreducible centrality and dignity” (p. viii) in the discourse.

In effect, what is required is a reorientation in the profession with regard to how knowledge gained from research and theory building is to be valued and applied by teachers. Typically, this problem is understood as one of generalizability: To what extent can the findings of a study be generalized to other contexts. The criteria for generalizability include such things as sample size and selection procedures and the confidence one has in the validity and reliability of the data collection and analysis procedures.

Mishler (1990) argues that we need to establish a different approach to our work, striving not for “truth” or generalizability but “trustworthiness”—that we should ask, “Can we be certain that what we have observed, and our conclusions concerning what we have observed, fit a pattern that we can trust to occur with a degree of certainty.” In this approach, he argues,

research scientists turn out to resemble draftspersons more than logicians. Competence depends on apprenticeship training, continued practice, and experience-based, contextual knowledge of the specific methods applicable to a phenomenon of interest rather than on an abstract “logic of discovery” and application of formal “rules.” (p. 435)

For research scientists, read teachers. There is no objective truth out there, waiting to be discovered, written up and delivered to teachers by researchers and theoreticians. There is, however, one’s own experience, which is available for scrutiny and understanding and which can be used as the basis for action.

But the problem extends beyond how teachers should respond to research reports. In fact, it should be the responsibility of theorists and researchers to establish the “particularizability” of their work for teachers. The important question to ask is “To what extent can this information be made usable for particular teachers?” This may sound like semantic hair splitting, but the implications for research and theory building are profound. To take an example from the research studies mentioned earlier (Clarke, 1991 c; Davis, Clarke, & Rhodes, 1992): In examining video tapes of her own teaching, a fourth-grade bilingual
teacher attempted to identify the constraints that influenced her decision making. She examined a portion of tape where she was moving from one reading group to another. The amount of time on the tape is about 5 min, and it focuses on the decisions the teacher made in talking with three groups of children about what they had read and what they were going to read for the next session. The teacher sat down on the floor with one group, and they began discussing what they liked about the portion of *Call of the Wild* they had read for the day. They talked for a few minutes and the teacher announced that she had to meet with other groups. She started to meet with a pair of boys who were reading *Nighty Nightmare*, only to discover that one of the boys was absent; they decided to wait to discuss the book until the other boy was in class, and she moved on to a third group which was reading *Jacob Have I Loved*.

In the course of this brief period the teacher made three decisions concerning which group to talk to and how to guide the conversation. As she discussed her decisions, she mentioned, or revealed a consciousness of, 8 of the 11 constraints mentioned above: assessment (she checked on students to make sure they were working on appropriate tasks); community (she had to adjust her schedule because of absences); interpersonal (she adjusted her expectations according to the students’ desire to talk about what they had read); institutional (she had to work around the absences of children who were pulled out for special programs); routine (she collected literature logs during reading groups; this was a regular feature of the small-group meetings); resources (she recognized that the students wanted to talk to her and not the paraprofessional); self (she was struggling to meet with the groups because she believes it is important to meet with each group at least every other day); and time (she mentioned time several times as she tried to get to three groups before the bell rang).

This is merely a detailed way of saying that classroom interaction is complex and that good teaching requires the balancing of many factors, but it does establish the amount of information required if research recommendations are to meet a criterion of particularizability. That is to say, if on the basis of this research, we were to suggest that teachers adopt literature studies as part of their teaching repertoire, we would need to specify not only the steps involved in the activity but also the range of constraints that one needs to negotiate in order to make it work.

The important point here is that simple prescriptions from researchers and theorists are not sufficient. Teachers need to evaluate such recommendations in light of their own situations and to determine what exactly they will be able to use in their classrooms. In order to be able to do this, the researchers will need to provide sufficient
information—about the conditions of the classrooms studied, the characteristics of the students, institutional factors, materials and activities used, and so forth—for teachers to have a basis for choice. Requiring this level of particularizability will have two important implications for the profession.

The first implication is that the distinction between teachers and researchers will necessarily become blurred. Edelsky (1991) distinguishes “theory” from “THEORY,” arguing that the former is the tacit, largely unexamined, taken-for-granted foundation of teachers’ work, whereas the latter is the coherent, explicit beliefs formalized according to the conventions of some scientific community. She makes the point that all teachers have theories, but it is usually only the university-level researchers who have the time, motivation, and interest to formalize their perceptions of their work into THEORIES. Good teachers are scholars by definition: They pose questions, test assumptions, revise beliefs, and proceed based on what they have learned. Invoking the criterion of particularizability will have the beneficial effect of including the teacher in the analysis; that is, as readers of research recommendations and theoretical presentations, teachers will become critical consumers of concepts and suggestions, a role which automatically increases their influence in the field.

A second benefit of requiring research and theory to be particularizable is that it will almost certainly require the use of narratives. Teachers, as critical consumers, need to be able to enter into the virtual world (Bruner, 1986, 1990) created by such narratives and to decide for themselves exactly what it would take to adopt a particular recommendation. We come to understand things when we can situate them in an experience we have lived or in the virtual reality created by a narrative that makes sense for us. This might be one that we construct mentally, only half consciously, as we ponder the options open to us as individuals, or it might be one that others narrate about their own lives, or one we read or hear that is actually fiction. Research reports, theoretical speculation, and the recommendations that accompany them are usually extremely terse accounts which provide very little detail of this sort. The implication for researchers, if this approach is followed, is that both analysis and conclusions must be presented in enough detail for teachers to decide for themselves whether to follow the recommendations. It also implies that the decision to adopt particular recommendations would almost certainly entail adaptation by teachers to fit their own circumstances.

The implications for policy makers and administrators are equally daunting; they would have to make a commitment to provide the necessary resources and to change the conditions to make change feasible. For example, if teachers were to implement literature studies
as used by the teacher above, a number of items would need to be put in place before teachers could be expected to be successful with the technique. The teachers would need the services of an aide to help with the groups, and the teachers would have to be assured that they would have adequate time for the groups to meet with the teacher and aide. The books would need to be available to the students, and parents would undoubtedly need some briefing on how to facilitate the process. Teachers would need to be coached on organizing the groups, and assessment procedures would have to be developed that teachers, administrators, parents, and children would all accept.

But this would merely constitute the minimum adjustments required of the system. If teachers are to be considered reflective practitioners, they need to be given the responsibility and the discretion to do their jobs. Of primary importance is the need for the time to reflect; collaborate; observe other teachers; develop personal theories, curriculum, materials, and so forth. In addition, teachers need smaller classes, more hospitable classrooms, and the resources to experiment with and change their approach to teaching. In short, the day-to-day business of teaching must become more conducive to thoughtful work.

CONCLUSION

These are, obviously, very tentative steps toward a different way of viewing language learning and teaching. The broad outlines of the required changes are visible here, but much work is necessary before we can claim to have an action agenda. The key point, I think, is for teachers to keep their own counsel regarding what works and what does not work and to insist on an interpretation of events and ideas that includes, implicitly or explicitly, a validation of their own experiences in the classroom.

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THE DYSFUNCTIONS OF THE THEORY/PRACTICE DISCOURSE 25


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**Note**

Recent explorations in L2 pedagogy signal a shift away from the conventional concept of method toward a "postmethod condition" that can potentially refigure the relationship between theorizers and teachers by empowering teachers with knowledge, skill, and autonomy. So empowered, teachers could devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant alternative to method, one informed by principled pragmatism. The postmethod condition can also reshape the character and content of L2 teaching, teacher education, and classroom research. In practical terms, it motivates a search for an open-ended, coherent framework based on current theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical insights that will enable teachers to theorize from practice and practice what they theorize. This paper explores one such framework consisting of 10 macrostrategies, based on which teachers can design varied and situation-specific microstrategies or classroom techniques to effect desired learning outcomes. The paper maintains that the framework can be used to transform classroom practitioners into strategic teachers as well as strategic researchers.

After swearing by a succession of fashionable language teaching methods and dangling them before a bewildered flock of believers, we seem to have suddenly slipped into a period of robust reflection. In the past few years, we have seen a steady stream of evaluative thoughts on the nature and scope of method (Allwright, 1992; Brown, 1991; Freeman, 1991; Larsen-Freeman, 1990; Pennycook, 1989; Prabhu, 1990; Richards, 1989; Widdowson, 1990). We have also witnessed the emergence of alternative ideas that implicitly redefine our understanding of method (Kumaravadivelu, 1992, 1993a; Richards & Lockhart, 1994; Rivers, 1992; Stern, 1992). Not only do these studies caution us against the uncritical acceptance of untested methods, but they counsel us against the search for the best method and indeed against the very concept of method itself.
Underlying the uneasiness that permeates the current climate are two chronic ailments that have long afflicted the body politic of L2 pedagogy: The first relates to a persistent tendency that negates the very essence of intellectual inquiry; the second to a perennial confusion that conflates the distinction between clearly distinguishable entities. Lamenting these two ailments in a classic exposition on the meaning of method, Mackey (1965) observed more than a quarter century ago that “while sciences have advanced by approximations in which each new stage results from an improvement, not rejection, of what has gone before, language-teaching methods have followed the pendulum of fashion from one extreme to the other” (p. 138). He went on to point out that

any meaning of method must first distinguish between what a teacher teaches and what a book teaches. It must not confuse the text used with the teacher using it, or the method with the teaching of it. Method analysis is one thing, therefore; teaching analysis, quite another. Method analysis determines how teaching is done by the book; teaching analysis shows how much is done by the teacher. (p. 139)

The Mackey citation shows that the current bout of diagnostic analysis, like all else in L2 pedagogy, is hardly new. However, there is reason to believe that this time, the treatment maybe different. Having witnessed how methods go through endless cycles of life, death, and rebirth, we now seem to have reached a state of heightened awareness—an awareness that as long as we are caught up in the web of method, we will continue to get entangled in an unending search for an unavailable solution, an awareness that such a search drives us to continually recycle and repackage the same old ideas and an awareness that nothing short of breaking the cycle can salvage the situation. This awareness is fast creating what might be called a postmethod condition.

This paper attempts to make sense of the postmethod condition. I begin by outlining the major characteristics of the postmethod condition implicit in the current literature on L2 teaching methods. I then suggest a strategic framework of L2 teaching that is sensitive to the demands of the postmethod condition. Finally, I discuss possible uses of the framework for L2 teaching and teacher education.

THE POSTMETHOD CONDITION

The postmethod condition is a state of affairs that compels us to refigure the relationship between the theorizers and the practitioners of method. As conceptualizes of philosophical underpinnings governing language pedagogy, theorizers have traditionally occupied the
power center of language pedagogy while the practitioners of classroom teaching have been relegated to the disempowered periphery. If the conventional concept of method entitles theorizers to construct knowledge-oriented theories of pedagogy, the postmethod condition empowers practitioners to construct classroom-oriented theories of practice. If the concept of method authorizes theorizers to centralize pedagogic decision making, the postmethod condition enables practitioners to generate location-specific, classroom-oriented innovative practices.

In practical terms, the postmethod condition signifies several possibilities for redefining the relationship between the center and the periphery. First and foremost, it signifies a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method. Out of the inherent contradictions between method as conceptualized by theorists and method as actualized by practitioners has emerged a need to look beyond the notion of method itself. From the conceptualizer’s point of view, each language teaching method in its idealized version consists of a single set of theoretical principles derived from feeder disciplines and a single set of classroom procedures directed at classroom teachers. Thus, there are language-centered methods (e.g., audiolingualism) that seek to provide opportunities for learners to practice preselected, presequenced linguistic structures through form-focused exercises, assuming that a preoccupation with form will ultimately lead to L2 mastery. The teacher’s task is to introduce grammatical structures and vocabulary items one at a time and help learners practice them until they internalize the L2 system. Then, there are learner-centered methods (e.g., communicative methods) that seek to provide opportunities for learners to practice preselected, presequenced linguistic structures and communicative notions through function-focused activities, assuming that a preoccupation with form and function will ultimately lead to L2 mastery. The teacher’s task is to introduce formal and functional items one at a time and help learners practice them until they internalize the L2 system. Finally, there are learning-centered methods (e.g., “the natural approach”) that seek to provide opportunities for learners to participate in open-ended meaningful interaction through language learning tasks, assuming that a preoccupation with meaning making will ultimately lead to L2 mastery. The teacher’s responsibility is to create conditions in which learners engage in meaningful problem-posing/solving activities.

From the practitioner’s point of view, none of these methods can be realized in their purest form in the actual classroom primarily because they are not derived from classroom experience and experimentation but are artificially transplanted into the classroom and, as such, far removed from classroom reality (Nunan, 1991; Pennycook,
Furthermore, as the study conducted by Swaffar, Arens, and Morgan (1982) revealed, even syllabus designers and textbook producers do not strictly follow the underlying philosophy of a given method, and more importantly, even teachers who are trained in and claim to follow a particular method do not fully conform to its theoretical principles and classroom procedures (see also Kumara-vadivelu, 1993a). Confronted with “the complexity of language, learning, and language learners every day of their working lives in a more direct fashion than any theorist does,” teachers have developed “the conviction that no single perspective on language, no single explanation for learning, and no unitary view of the contributions of language learners will account for what they must grapple with on a daily basis” (Larsen-Freeman, 1991, p. 269). In such circumstances, it is not surprising that all attempts to devise alternative methods have proved to be an exercise in futility.

Secondly, the postmethod condition signifies teacher autonomy. The conventional concept of method “overlooks the fund of experience and tacit knowledge about teaching which the teachers already have by virtue of their lives as students” (Freeman, 1991, pp. 34–35). The postmethod condition, however, recognizes the teachers’ potential to know not only how to teach but also know how to act autonomously within the academic and administrative constraints imposed by institutions, curricula, and textbooks. It also promotes the ability of teachers to know how to develop a reflective approach to their own teaching, how to analyze and evaluate their own teaching practice, how to initiate change in their classroom, and how to monitor the effects of such changes (Richards, 1991; Wallace, 1991). In short, promoting teacher autonomy means enabling and empowering teachers to theorize from their practice and practice what they have theorized.

The third characteristic feature of the postmethod condition is principled pragmatism. Principled pragmatism is different from eclecticism which has long been advocated to overcome the limitations of any given method (see Hammerly, 1991, for a recent argument). The proponents of eclecticism aim to promote “the careful, principled combination of sound ideas from sound sources into a harmonious whole that yields the best results” (Hammerly, 1991, p. 18). In spite of such good intentions, eclecticism at the classroom level invariably degenerates into an unsystematic, unprincipled, and uncritical pedagogy because teachers with very little professional preparation to be eclectic in a principled way have little option but to randomly put together a package of techniques from various methods and label it eclectic. As Stern (1992) rightly points out, the “weakness of the eclectic position is that it offers no criteria according to which we can determine which is the best theory, nor does it provide any principles by which
to include or exclude features which form part of existing theories or practices” (p. 11).

Unlike eclecticism, which is constrained by the conventional concept of method, principled pragmatism is based on the pragmatic of pedagogy (Widdowson, 1990), in which “the relationship between theory and practice, ideas and their actualization, can only be realized within the domain of application, that is, through the immediate activity of teaching” (p. 30). Principled pragmatism thus focuses on how classroom learning can be shaped and managed by teachers as a result of informed teaching and critical appraisal. One of the ways in which teachers can follow principled pragmatism is by developing what Prabhu (1990) calls, a sense of plausibility. Teachers’ sense of plausibility is their “subjective understanding of the teaching they do. Teachers need to operate with some personal conceptualization of how their teaching leads to desired learning—with a notion of causation that has a measure of credibility for them” (p. 172). This subjective understanding may arise from their own experience as learners and teachers and through professional education and peer consultation. Because teachers’ sense of plausibility is not linked to the concept of method, an important concern is “not whether it implies a good or bad method, but more basically, whether it is active, alive, or operational enough to create a sense of involvement for both the teacher and the student” (p. 173).

The three major characteristics of the postmethod condition outlined above provide the foundation on which a pedagogic framework may be constructed. Such a framework could enable teachers to develop the knowledge, skill, attitude, and autonomy necessary to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant alternative to method that is informed by principled pragmatism. Although the purpose of such a framework is to help teachers become autonomous decision makers, it should, without denying the value of individual autonomy, provide adequate conceptual underpinnings based on current theoretical, empirical, and pedagogic insights so that their teaching act may come about in a principled fashion. In short, it should allow the possibility for activating and developing teachers’ sense of plausibility and create in them a sense of interested involvement.

Keeping such a prerequisite in mind, I present below what I call a “strategic framework for L2 teaching.” The theoretical, empirical, and pedagogic insights needed for constructing the framework are drawn from classroom-oriented research in the areas of L2 learning and teaching. The research perspective adopted here is governed by the belief that any pedagogic framework must emerge from classroom experience and experimentation and is also motivated by the fact that a solid body of classroom research findings are available for consider-
ation and application. It should, however, be recognized that the re-
search path is by no means the only path that has the potential to lead
to the construction of a pedagogic framework. There may very well
be other possibilities, all equally valid. As an anonymous reviewer
rightly pointed out, useful insights could also be drawn from the socio-
political landscape of teachers and teaching or from work in teacher
cognition in school reform, or in general education. The research-
based macrostrategic framework is thus offered not as a dogma for
uncritical acceptance but as an option for critical appraisal in light of
new and expanding experience and experimentation in L2 learning
and teaching.

A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR L2 TEACHING

The proposed strategic framework for L2 teaching consists of mac-
rostrategies and microstrategies. Macrostrategies are general plans de-ived from theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical knowledge related
to L2 learning/teaching. A macrostrategy is a broad guideline, based
on which teachers can generate their own situation-specific, need-based
microstrategies or classroom techniques. In other words, macrostrate-
gies are made operational in the classroom through microstrategies.
As I see them, macrostrategies are theory neutral as well as method
neutral. Theory neutral does not mean atheoretical; theory neutral
means that the framework is not constrained by the underlying as-
sumptions of any one specific theory of language, learning, and teach-
ing. Likewise, method neutral does not mean methodless; rather it
means that the framework is not conditioned by a single set of theoreti-
cal principles or classroom procedures associated with any one particu-
lar language teaching method.

The strategic framework comprises the following 10 macrostrate-
gies: (a) maximize learning opportunities, (b) facilitate negotiated inter-
action, (c) minimize perceptual mismatches, (d) activate intuitive heu-
ristics, (e) foster language awareness, (f) contextualized linguistic input,
(g) integrate language skills, (h) promote learner autonomy, (i) raise
cultural consciousness, and (j) ensure social relevance. These macro-
strategies are couched in imperative terms only to connote their opera-
tional character and not to convey any prescriptive quality. In what
follows, I briefly discuss each of these macrostrategies. Because I wish
to focus on macrostrategies in this paper, I have not attempted to
elaborate on microstrategies in any systematic manner. I have however,
where possible, suggested some sources that teachers can draw from
in order to design their own microstrategies.
Macrostrategy 1: Maximize Learning Opportunities

It is customary to distinguish teaching acts from learning acts, to view teaching as an activity that creates learning opportunities and learning as an activity that utilizes those opportunities. The first macrostrategy, maximize learning opportunities, however, envisages teaching as a process of creating and utilizing learning opportunities. If we, as we must, treat classroom activity as a social event jointly constructed by teachers and learners (Breen, 1985), then teachers ought to be both creators of learning opportunities and utilizers of learning opportunities created by learners.

As creators of learning opportunities, it is crucial that teachers strike a balance between their role as planners of teaching acts and their role as mediators of learning acts. The former involves a priori judgment based on, among other things, learners’ level of proficiency and general learning objectives, whereas the latter involves an ongoing assessment of how well learners cope with the developing classroom event. Creation of effective learning opportunities thus entails a willingness on the part of teachers to modify their lesson plans continuously on the basis of feedback. This can be done only if teachers treat a predetermined syllabus as a presyllabus that is to be reconstructed to meet specific learner needs, wants, and situations and treat a prescribed text as a pretext that is to be used as a springboard for launching classroom activities.

As utilizers of learning opportunities created by learners, it is critical that teachers no longer see “teachers simply as teachers, and learners simply as learners, because both are, for good or ill, managers of learning” (Allwright, 1984, p. 156). Because the production of classroom discourse is a cooperative venture, teachers cannot afford to ignore any contributory discourse from other partners jointly engaged in the process of creating and utilizing learning opportunities. In a class of learners with near-homogenous language ability, every time a learner indicates any difficulty in understanding linguistic or propositional content of the lesson, we can assume that there may be other learners who experience a similar difficulty. Therefore, not bringing a particular learner’s problem to the attention of the class indicates a failure on the part of the teacher to utilize the learning opportunity created by the learner.

Macrostrategy 2: Facilitate Negotiated Interaction

This macrostrategy refers to meaningful learner-learner, learner-teacher interaction in class. Negotiated interaction means that the learner should be actively involved in clarification, confirmation, com-
prehension checks, requests, repairing, reacting, and turn taking. It also means that the learner should be given the freedom and encouragement to initiate talk, not just react and respond to it.

Although research has not yet conclusively demonstrated any causal relationship between negotiated interaction and language development, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that L2 learners need to be provided with opportunities for negotiated interaction in order to accelerate their comprehension and production. Studies on interactional modifications that began with the solid lead given by Long (1981) and continued by Pica and her colleagues (see, e.g., Pica, 1987, 1992; Pica, Young, & Doughty, 1987) demonstrate that what enables learners to move beyond their current receptive and expressive capacities are opportunities to modify and restructure their interaction with their interlocutors until mutual comprehension is reached. These findings have been strengthened by studies on learner output (Pica, Holliday, Lewis, & Morgenthaler, 1989; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Swain, 1985) which show that production, as opposed to comprehension, may very well be the trigger that forces learners to pay attention to form, to the relationship between form and meaning, and to the overall means of communication.

Negotiated interaction can be facilitated through several microstrategies. Designing group activities is one of them. Small-group arrangements by nature produce more negotiated interaction than do teacher-fronted activities and research shows that nonnative/nonnative partners produce more frequent negotiations of meaning than do native/nonnative partners (Varonis & Gass, 1985). Asking referential questions which permit open-ended responses, rather than display questions which have predetermined answers, is another microstrategy that can generate meaningful exchanges among the participants (Brock, 1986). Yielding greater topic control to the learner is yet another microstrategy that provides an effective basis for building conversations. Learners benefit more from self-initiated and peer-initiated topics than from topics nominated by their teachers (Slimani, 1989). Yielding control over the topic is a way of tapping learners’ intrinsic motivation, of ensuring an appropriate level of linguistic input, and of stimulating extensive and complex production on the part of the learner (Ellis, 1992).

Macrostrategy 3: Minimize Perceptual Mismatches

An important factor that will determine the relative success or failure of negotiated interaction in the classroom is the perceptual match or mismatch between teacher intention and learner interpretation. What impact classroom activities will have on the learning process depends as
much on learner interpretation as on teacher intention. It is, therefore, essential to sensitize ourselves to the potential sources of mismatch between teacher intention and learner interpretation.

There are at least 10 potential sources of perceptual mismatch that we should be aware of. Each of these has been discussed in detail in Kumaravadivelu (1991); I shall, therefore, provide only a brief description here:

1. Cognitive: a source which refers to the knowledge of the world and mental processes through which learners obtain conceptual understanding of physical and natural phenomena.

2. Communicative: a source which refers to skills through which learners exchange messages, including the use of communication strategies.

3. Linguistic: a source which refers to linguistic repertoire—syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic knowledge of the target language—that is minimally required to participate in classroom activities.

4. Pedagogic: a source which refers to teacher/learner recognition of stated or unstated, short- and/or long-term objective(s) of classroom activities.

5. Strategic: a source which refers to learning strategies, that is, operations, steps, plans, and routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information.

6. Cultural: a source which refers to prior knowledge of the target cultural norms minimally required for the learner to understand classroom activities.

7. Evaluative: a source which refers to articulated or unarticulated types and modes of ongoing self-evaluation measures used by learners to monitor their classroom performance.

8. Procedural: a source which refers to stated or unstated paths chosen by the learner to achieve an immediate goal. Procedural source pertains to locally specified, currently identified, bottom-up tactics which seek a quick resolution to a specific problem at hand, whereas strategic source, mentioned earlier, pertains to broad-based, higher-level, top-down strategies which seek an overall solution to a general language learning situation.

9. Instructional: a source which refers to instructional directions given by the teacher and/or indicated by the textbook writer to help learners achieve their goal(s).

10. Attitudinal: a source which refers to participants’ attitudes toward the nature of L2 learning and teaching, the nature of the classroom culture, and the nature of participant role relationships.
We may not be able to and, in fact, do not have to identify and deal with all these sources of mismatch in real time as the classroom event unfolds. However, an awareness of these mismatches can help us effectively intervene whenever we notice or whenever learners indicate problems in carrying out a specified classroom activity.

**Macrostrategy 4: Activate Intuitive Heuristics**

From time to time, scholars have raised doubts as to whether an L2 system can be neatly analyzed and explicitly explained to learners with the view to aiding grammar construction (Krashen, 1985; Prabhu, 1987; Rutherford, 1987). They question the feasibility as well as the desirability of such an exercise. Their concern echoes the Chomskyan premise that one cannot learn the entire gamut of the grammatical structure of a language through explanation and instruction beyond the rudimentary level, for the simple reason that no one has enough explicit knowledge about the structure to provide adequate explanation and instruction. They contend that teachers can assist their learners’ adequate grammar construction best by designing classroom activities “in such a way as to give free play to those creative principles that humans bring to the process of language learning . . . [and] create a rich linguistic environment for the intuitive heuristics that the normal human being automatically possesses” (MacIntyre, 1970, p. 108). Although one can question the adequacy of an L2 teaching operation based entirely on such an assumption, one can hardly overstate the need to activate the intuitive heuristics of the learner as part of an overall teaching strategy.

One way to activate the intuitive heuristics of the learner is to provide enough textual data so that the learner can infer certain underlying grammatical rules. A good deal of grammatical information can be conveyed not directly through rules but indirectly through examples. Learners should be encouraged to find the rule-governing pattern in the examples provided. They should encounter the linguistic structure several times so that “the design of the language may be observed, and its meaning (structural, lexical, and sociocultural) inductively absorbed from its use in such varying situations” (Rivers, 1964, p. 152). Empirical studies show that self-discovery affects learners’ comprehension and retention more favorably than explicit presentation of underlying structural patterns regardless of the learners’ language ability (Shaffer, 1989).

**Macrostrategy 5: Foster Language Awareness**

The emphasis on activating the intuitive heuristics of the learner is not meant to proscribe explicit presentation of underlying structures
wherever feasible and desirable. Such a presentation has the potential to induce learning processes if it is done to foster language awareness in the learner. Language awareness (LA) as a concept combines the notions of consciousness-raising (Rutherford, 1987; Sharwood Smith, 1981) and input enhancement (Sharwood Smith, 1991). It is generally defined as a person’s sensitivity to and awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life (Hawkins, 1984; James & Garret, 1991). In the specific context of L2 learning and teaching, it refers to the deliberate attempt to draw learners’ attention to the formal properties of their L2 in order to increase the degree of explicitness required to promote L2 learning.

As Rutherford (1987) points out, fostering LA (he calls it consciousness-raising) in the learner is different from traditional notions of grammar teaching in fundamental ways. The concept of LA treats grammar as a network of systems to be interacted with rather than a body of structures to be mastered. As exemplified by grammatical exercises included in Rutherford (1987), grammar is treated as a means to L2 development, not an end. The traditional grammar teaching is teacher oriented, linear, and hierarchical; LA-based teaching is learner oriented, cyclic, and holistic. Grammar-based strategies emphasize memory, specific rules, and rule articulation; LA-based strategies emphasize understanding, general principles, and operational experience.

Recent empirical studies (Allen, Swain, Harley, & Cummins, 1990; Gass, 1991; Lightbown, 1991) suggest that LA-based strategies have greater intellectual appeal and instructional applicability than strictly grammar-based strategies. These studies show that the presence of LA-based activities can speed up the rate of learning while their absence can contribute to fossilization. Furthermore, as Sharwood Smith (1991) points out, LA (he calls it input enhancement) can be created externally by the teacher through teaching strategies and internally by the learner through learning process. LA-based strategies also help learners sensitise themselves to aspects of the L2 which would otherwise pass unnoticed and unlearn initial incorrect analyses by supplying negative evidence (Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Schmidt, 1993; White, Spada, Lightbown, & Ranta, 1991).

Macrostrategy 6: Contextualized Linguistic Input

Nearly a century ago, Sweet (1899/1964) argued that “the main foundation of the practical study of language should be connected texts” (p. 100). Prior to him, Vietor (cited in Howatt, 1984) had suggested that words should be presented in sentences, and sentences should be practiced in meaningful contexts rather than taught as iso-
lated, disconnected elements. Sweet and Vietor anticipated what we now know from psycholinguistic research: Syntax is largely a structural device that signals semantic relationships which are, in turn, governed by discoursal and pragmatic features. Sentence comprehension and production, therefore, involve rapid and simultaneous integration of syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and discourse phenomena.

Studies in L2 development show that the acquisition of syntax is constrained in part by pragmatics (Zobl, 1984), that the phonological forms L2 learners produce depend crucially on the content of discourse (Avery, Ehrlich, & Yorio, 1985), and that syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic features cannot be understood as isolated linguistic components with a unidirectional information flow (Gass, 1986). It is thus essential to bring to the learner’s attention the integrated nature of language. One way of doing this is to contextualized linguistic input so that learners can see language “as a comprehensive conglomerate, uniting all the levels of structure or rule complexes of a language, viz., the structure of words and phrases, the structure of sentences, the structure of texts and the structure of interaction” (Dirven, 1990, pp. 7-8).

From these investigations, we learn that linguistic input should be contextualized for learners to benefit from the interactive effects of various linguistic components. Introducing isolated, discrete items will result in pragmatic dissonance, depriving the learner of necessary pragmatic cues and rendering the process of meaning making harder. Contrary to the widely held view, the responsibility for contextualizing linguistic input lies more with the classroom teacher than with the syllabus designer or the textbook writer. Research reveals that regardless of what textbooks profess, it is the teacher who can succeed or fail in creating contexts that encourage meaning making in the classroom (Walz, 1989). Microstrategies that help the teacher promote syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic use of language can be derived from, among others, language learning scenarios (Di Pietro, 1987), problem-solving tasks (Brown & Palmer, 1988), simulation and gaming role plays (Crookall & Oxford, 1990), and discourse-based activities suggested in Cook (1989) and Hatch (1992).

**Macrostrategy 7: Integrate Language Skills**

The nature of L2 learning involves not merely an integration of syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic components of language but also an integration of language skills traditionally identified and sequenced as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is true that the four language skills are still widely used in isolation as the fundamental organizing principle for curricular and materials design. It is done,
however, more for logistical than for logical reasons. Our discomfort with the practice has surfaced from time to time in our attempt to group the skills in terms of active (speaking and writing) and passive (listening and reading) skills and later as productive and receptive skills. As Savignon (1990) points out, “lost in this encode/decode, message-sending representation is the collaborative nature of meaning-making” (p. 207).

Skill separation is in fact a remnant of the audiolingual era and has very little empirical or theoretical justification. It is a pedagogical artifact that has been shown to be inadequate for developing integrated functional skills (Swaffar, Arens, & Morgan, 1982; Titone, 1985). Its inadequacy arises because language skills are essentially interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Fragmenting them into manageable, atomistic items runs counter to the parallel and interactive nature of language and language behavior. Besides, the learning and use of any one skill can trigger cognitive and communicative associations with others. Reading exposure alone, for instance, may be “the primary means of developing reading comprehension, writing style, and more sophisticated vocabulary and grammar” (Krashen, 1989, p. 90). Similarly, listening activities help to make the broader connection between an integrated sociolinguistic concept of form and function and psycholinguistic processes of interpretation and expression (Rost, 1990). Furthermore, as we learn from the whole language movement, language knowledge and language ability are best developed when language is learned and used holistically (Rigg, 1991).

Classroom research indicates that learners do not focus on one skill at a time in predictable and invariant ways. An empirical look at the integration and separation of language skills in the L2 classroom (Selinker & Tomlin, 1986) shows that even if the teacher follows textbooks that seek to promote serial integration, where learners are supposed to move gradually from one language skill to another, what actually happens in the classroom is parallel integration, where learners use language skills in different combinations. Classroom activity seems to be much more complicated in terms of skill integration than envisioned by either the textbook writer or the teacher. Although more classroom-oriented research is required to determine the full impact of integration/separation of skills, all available empirical, theoretical, and pedagogical information points to the need to integrate language skills for effective language teaching.

**Macrostrategy 8: Promote Learner Autonomy**

Because language learning is largely an autonomous activity, promoting learner autonomy is vitally important. It involves helping learn-
ers learn how to learn, equipping them with the means necessary to self-direct their own learning, raising the consciousness of good language learners about the learning strategies they seem to possess intuitively, and making the strategies explicit and systematic so that they are available to improve the language learning abilities of other learners as well. In short, it involves promoting “strategic investment of learners in their own linguistic destinies” (Brown, 1991, p. 256).

A series of studies focusing on learner autonomy (Cohen, 1990; Dickinson, 1987; Ellis & Sinclair, 1989; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991; Wenden & Rubin, 1987) has provided us with useful insights into what learners know and do to regulate their learning and what teachers should know and can do to promote learner autonomy. We learn from these strategies that in addition to generic metacognitive, cognitive, social, and affective strategies that learners follow, there are many individual ways of learning a language successfully and that different learners will approach language learning differently. We learn that more effective learners use a greater variety of strategies and use them in ways appropriate to the language learning task and that less effective learners not only have fewer strategy types in their repertoire but also frequently use strategies that are inappropriate to the task.

Steps to promote learner autonomy include psychological preparation and strategic training. Owing to past experience, adult L2 learners tend to bring with them preconceived notions about what constitutes learning and what constitutes teaching and prior expectations about what constrains learner and teacher role relationships in the classroom. A primary task of the teacher wishing to promote learner autonomy is to help learners take responsibility for their learning and bring about necessary attitudinal changes in them. This psychological preparation should be combined with strategic training that helps learners understand what the learning strategies are, how to use them for accomplishing various problem-posing and problem-solving tasks, how to monitor their performance, and how to assess the outcome of their learning. Microstrategies for promoting learner autonomy can be designed from a wealth of suggestions given in, among others, Dickinson (1987), Ellis & Sinclair (1989), Oxford (1990), and Wenden (1991).

**Macrostrategy 9: Raise Cultural Consciousness**

Culture teaching has always been an integral part of L2 teaching. Traditionally, it is aimed at creating in the L2 learner an awareness of and an empathy toward the culture of the L2 community. According to a recent review by Stern (1992), culture teaching has included a
cognitive component in terms of geographical knowledge, knowledge about the contributions of the target culture to world civilization, and knowledge about differences in the way of life as well as an understanding of values and attitudes in the L2 community; an affective component in terms of interest, curiosity, and empathy; and a behavioral component in terms of learners’ ability to interpret culturally relevant behavior and to conduct themselves in culturally appropriate ways. Thus, as Stern reiterates, “one of the most important aims of culture teaching is to help the learner gain an understanding of the native speaker’s perspective” (p. 216). The teacher’s task then is to help the learner “create a network of mental associations similar to those which the items evoke in the native speaker” (p. 224).

Although such a traditional approach to culture teaching may be adequate for helping learners develop sociocultural competence, it seems to me that it can offer only a limited and limiting view of cultural consciousness. It ignores the fact that most L2 classes are not monocultural cocoons but rather multicultural mosaics in which cultural knowledge is likely to diverge based on learners’ cultural and linguistic background as well as ethnic heritage, class, age, and gender (Tannen, 1992). Such diversity is seldom explored or exploited for purposes of learning and teaching.

Raising cultural consciousness minimally requires that instead of privileging the teacher as the sole cultural informant, we treat the learner as a cultural informant as well. By treating learners as cultural informants, we can encourage them to engage in a process of participation that puts a premium on their power/knowledge. We can do so by identifying the cultural knowledge learners bring to the classroom and by using it to help them share their own individual perspectives with the teacher as well as other learners whose lives, and hence perspectives, differ from theirs (Swaffar, 1991; Walters, 1992). We can do so by taking our learners on the path of “cultural versatility” if we “structure tasks and assignments so as to . . . elicit a synthesis between the learner, the learner’s home culture, and the target cultural objective” (Robinson, 1991, p. 118). Such a multicultural approach can also dispel stereotypes that create and sustain cross-cultural misunderstandings and miscommunication. Furthermore, “by considering learners as informants, we both raise their self-esteem and provide a context in which content rather than form is the focus of instruction and interaction” (Murray, 1992, p. 260). Sources that suggest practical ideas for accessing, responding, and building on learners’ vast cultural knowledge in order to establish a common ground for integrating the target language and culture include Kramsch (1993), Murray (1992), Robinson (1991), and Scarcella (1992).
Macrostrategy 10: Ensure Social Relevance

Social relevance refers to the need for teachers to be sensitive to the societal, political, economic, and educational environment in which L2 learning/teaching takes place. Any serious attempt to understand L2 learning/teaching necessarily entails an understanding of social context as an important variable (Beebe, 1985; Berns, 1990; Breen, 1985; Kachru, 1985; Lowenberg, 1990; Wong Fillmore, 1989). L2 learning/teaching is not a discrete activity; it is deeply embedded in the larger societal context that has a profound effect on it. The social context shapes various learning/teaching issues such as the motivation for L2 learning, the functions an L2 is expected to perform at home and in the community, the availability of input to the learner, the variation in the input, and the norms of proficiency acceptable to that particular speech community. It is impossible to insulate classroom life from the dynamics of social institutions. Teaching, therefore, makes little sense if it is not informed by social relevance.

Learning purpose and language use are perhaps most crucial in determining the social relevance of an L2 program. As Berns (1990) illustrates, different social contexts contribute to the emergence of various communicative competence and functions in an L2 speech community, thereby influencing L2 learning and use in significantly different ways. In these contexts, the target language plays a role that is complementary or supplementary to the local/regional language(s). The competence and functions invariably determine the nature and quality of input that is available to the learner. Most often, learners are not exposed to the full range of their L2 in all its complexity that one would expect in a context where it is used as the primary vehicle of communication. In this international use of an L2, “the learner is not becoming an imitation native speaker, but a person who can stand between the two languages, using both when appropriate” (Cook, 1992, p. 583).

The immediate concern facing the classroom teacher is whether to pursue a realistic goal of producing competent speakers with adequate communicative ability or an unrealistic goal of producing imitation native speakers. If we believe that L2 programs “must be solidly anchored in sociopragmatics” (Valdman, 1992, p. 88) reflecting the functional use of language embedded in local communicative situations, then the goal L2 learners and teachers need to pursue in most cases “should be intelligibility and acceptability rather than native-like perfection” (Stern, 1992, p. 116). From a microstrategic point of view, such a goal should inform the teacher’s decision making in terms of appropriate instructional materials, evaluation measures, and target competence.
USES OF THE FRAMEWORK

The strategic framework outlined above is not a closed set of formulae but rather an open-ended set of options. It represents a descriptive, not a prescriptive scheme. It opposes methodological absolutes and supports strategic relativism. It is meant to be treated not as a fixed package of ready-made solutions but rather as an interim plan to be continually modified, expanded, and enriched by classroom teachers based on ongoing feedback. Through further experience and experimentation, the boundaries of the framework can be extended beyond the 10 macrostrategies identified in this paper.

Preliminary investigations (Kumaravadivelu, 1993a, 1993b) using a subset of macrostrategies indicate that the strategic framework can be used to transform classroom practitioners into strategic teachers and strategic researchers. Strategic teachers spend a considerable amount of time and effort (a) reflecting on the specific needs, wants, situations, and processes of learning and teaching; (b) stretching their knowledge, skill, and attitude to stay informed and involved; (c) exploring and extending macrostrategies to meet the challenges of changing contexts of teaching; (d) designing appropriate microstrategies to maximize learning potential in the classroom; and (e) monitoring their ability to react to myriad situations in meaningful ways.

As strategic researchers, teachers can use the framework to develop investigative capabilities required for action research focusing on classroom discourse analysis for self-observation and self-assessment. By regularly audio/videotaping their own classroom performance and by using macrostrategies as interpretive strategies, they can analyze classroom input and interaction to assess how successful they have been in facilitating negotiated interaction, in integrating language skills, in contextualizing linguistic input, and so forth. Such action research will help teachers generate empirically grounded, practice-oriented microstrategies and also enable them to develop their own practical theory of language pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

This paper began with the premise that the widespread dissatisfaction with the conventional concept of method has produced what I have called a postmethod condition. By effecting a reformulation of the terms of our debate and propelling us beyond the conventional concept of method, the postmethod condition can potentially reshape the character and content of L2 teaching, teacher education, and class-
room research. It can empower teachers with the knowledge, skill, attitude, and autonomy necessary to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant alternative to method that is informed by principled pragmatism.

In practical terms, the postmethod condition creates the need for an open-ended, coherent framework based on current theoretical, empirical, and pedagogic insights that will activate and develop teachers’ sense of plausibility and create in them a sense of interested involvement. This paper explored one such framework consisting of 10 macrostrategies, based on which teachers can design varied and situation-specific microstrategies to effect desired learning outcomes. The paper also indicated that the proposed strategic framework has the potential to transform classroom practitioners into strategic teachers and strategic researchers. Clearly, the ultimate worth of such a framework is to be found in how well it strikes a balance between giving teachers the guidance they need and want and the independence they deserve and desire.

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Many teachers believe that research on L2 learning has little to say to their everyday classroom needs and decisions. The following paper attempts to address questions about classroom life that can be illuminated by current research findings on L2 learning and teaching. Among the topics covered are the role and importance of learners’ L1 and cultural adjustment in successful L2 learning and the relative merits of a range of classroom practices, including those which emphasize learners’ comprehension over their production, provide correction of error, incorporate drill and practice, and offer instruction in grammar rules. Also addressed in light of research are the strengths and limitations of classroom management strategies for using student groups and pairs, providing teacher-directed instruction, and encouraging class participation. Problems in achieving pronunciation accuracy and in preventing and overcoming fossilization are also explored with respect to relevant research.

In today’s multilingual world, teachers and researchers are challenged in ways that both inspire our service and call forth our intellectual and emotional resources. International university-level students, adult immigrants and refugees, elementary and secondary children, and adolescents with limited L2 proficiency fill our classrooms and our lives. What we want for these students—efficient L2 learning; effective communication skills; preservation of their culture, their native language, their self-esteem—has not been easy to accomplish. Increasingly, we are becoming aware that as teachers and researchers we cannot work in isolation from each other if we are to help our students meet their needs and accomplish their goals as they take on the challenge of English language learning.

LANGUAGE TEACHERS AND RESEARCHERS: THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION

So urgent and important is the need for our collaboration that we can no longer complain as teachers that there is nothing to apply from
the research we hear or read about nor as researchers, that tests of validity and reliability take precedence over practical classroom issues and applicability. No longer are teachers neglected by research constructs that ignore the instructional process, such as, “creative construction,” “subconscious acquisition,” “innate processes,” and “the need for learner error.” A decade of research has replaced these older constructs with newer ones, such as, “comprehensible input,” (Krashen, 1983, 1985), “focus on form,” (Long, 1991) and “instruction makes a difference,” (Doughty, 1991; Long, 1983), each well within the domain of most teachers. Much of this work has been carried out by language researchers who are deeply interested in teaching practice because many of them were teachers at one time. In fact, it was their questions and concerns about classrooms that drew many researchers away from teaching and into research in the first place.

And teachers are asking questions that researchers cannot, indeed would neither dare nor choose, to ignore. In his recent survey of TESOL professionals with respect to what they would like to know from research, J. D. Brown (1992) remarked that questions pertaining to teaching dominated responses to his questionnaire. For the past several years, I, too, have been asking teachers, both in the privacy of their classrooms and in the more public domain of professional meetings, what they would like researchers to tell them. As was the case with Brown’s more formal analysis, many of the questions have focused on the language learning environment—its input and interfacational features, instructional strategies, and patterns of classroom organization. Other questions have pertained to the role of students’ L1 in their L2 learning or to the need for correction, grammar instruction, and L2 listening and production practice. Questions about the nature and control of plateaus in L2 learning, also known as fossilization, have abounded.

These and other questions, all of which have been based on classroom concerns, have provided a stimulating research agenda for me and for other researchers. And it is within this classroom-grounded perspective on research and on the basis of these and other classroom questions that the following overview has emerged. The perspective represents a reversal of an earlier sequence in applied linguistics in which researchers would generate their own questions, then carry out research in isolation and find ways to apply their findings to the classroom. Within this newer framework, researchers can view their responsibility as that of responding to teachers’ classroom concerns rather than generating questions on their own. The questions, which I have referred to elsewhere as “the ten most wanted list in language teaching,” (Pica, 1989) are listed and addressed below.
What questions concern teachers? Among those most frequently asked are versions of the following:

1. In what ways does knowing one language help or hinder the learning of a second?
2. Which is more helpful to L2 learning: comprehension or production?
3. Should students drill and practice new forms and structures?
4. How effective is group work as an aid to L2 learning?
5. What can be done to encourage participation among students who seldom ask questions or initiate interaction?
6. How much attention should be given to explicit grammar instruction?
7. To what extent does error correction assist the L2 learner?
8. How necessary to learning another language is the learner’s cultural integration?
9. Why do some students have less accurate pronunciation than others, and what can be done about this?
10. What can be done for L2 learners who seem to have reached a plateau in their learning?

How then can these questions be addressed in light of research on L2 learning? The research discussed below provides a rich, but by no means exhaustive, body of information.

QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

1. In What Ways Does Knowing One Language Help or Hinder the Learning of a Second?

L2 researchers have responded to this question in a variety of ways. At one time, they employed a system known as contrastive analysis, which focused on the forms and features of the languages learned in classrooms rather than on classroom learners themselves. It was believed that native language could predict difficulty in L2 learning and that, therefore, the work of the researcher was to compare the native language of learners with the language they wanted to acquire. Researchers made comparison inventories of the sounds, words, and structures of languages and suggested teaching decisions in accordance with similarities and differences presented in these inventories. (See
Fries, 1945; Lado, 1957.) This approach is well represented in the following quote from Lado (1957):

We will assume that the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his [her] native language will be simple for him [her], and those elements that are different will be difficult. (p. 2)

It is now widely acknowledged by both teachers and researchers that these principles of prediction cannot always be relied upon in the classroom. Some cases in point (as discussed in Zobl, 1980):

1. Even though there are similarities between both English and Spanish systems for expressing negation, they are not learned with similar ease. Native speakers of English come to learn correct patterns of Spanish negation quite quickly, whereas native speakers of Spanish require much more time to master negation in English, often using the functionally communicative, but inaccurate *I no understand*, long after their English-speaking counterparts can say *no comprendo*.

2. Quite unpredictably, English L2 learners from a Japanese L1 background make relatively rapid progress with negative structures, despite vast contrasts between English and Japanese. They move on to *don’t* + verb constructions much faster than not only Spanish speakers but also learners from other L1 groups with negation structures similar to English, for example, Russian and Italian.

3. Most learners find that internalizing the rules for using articles in another language is an arduous and protracted process. No matter how many similarities or differences between a learner’s L1 and the English system for using articles for reference, the English system has been shown to pose difficulty for its learners.

In short, countless studies and practical experiences with respect to the learning and teaching of languages have shown that predictions of contrastive analysis do not always hold. L1 and L2 differences do not necessarily imply learner difficulties, and similarities between L1 and L2 features do not guarantee that all of them will be learned with ease.

In recent years, L2 researchers have come to show that the learner’s L1 plays an important role in language learning, but it is a highly differentiated one, much more intricate than that predicted through contrastive analysis. As such, learners’ L1 can be a powerful influence on language development, but it can be suppressed, enhanced, or otherwise modified by the contributions of a broad range of linguistic, psychosocial, and cultural factors.
Thus, for example, Zobl (1980) has provided evidence that L1 plays a different role at specific stages of L2 development. As he examined negation data from ESL and EFL contexts, he noted that, cross-linguistically, all English L2 learners produced no + verb (I no see bus) at a very early stage of negation development. Those for whom negator + verb was a grammatically precise way to express negation in their L1 remained at this early stage much longer than those who expressed negation in other ways, for example, by using verb + negator. This helped to explain why native speakers of languages such as Spanish, Russian, and Italian, for whom negator + verb is a standard form in their L1, had more difficulty in mastering English negation than native Japanese speakers, who use a very different, postutterance construction, as in (I bus see no), when expressing their L1 negation.

Zobl also noted that mastery of article rules across languages was related to universal complexities of this system. This is why learners have difficulty regardless of whether their L1 employs an article system or uses another linguistic means for marking reference. He found that some learners, whose L1 does not employ an article system for reference, even added a stage in their development, first using the more explicit one to indicate specificity in contexts which required a or an.

As shown in the work of Sato (1984), certain L2 linguistic contexts are especially sensitive to influence from learners’ L1. Among these are contexts for L2 final consonant clusters such as /kt/ or /ks/. She found that if learners’ L1 had only final consonants and/or open syllables but no final consonant clusters, they would reduce the L2 cluster to a single consonant in their attempts to produce it. Thus, instead of He liked me or He likes me, a learner might say, He like me. Such an utterance could pose problems for both the listener, puzzled by the learner’s intention, as well as the teacher, concerned as to whether omission of -ed or -s endings reflected difficulties with pronunciation, with grammar, or with both. Interestingly, Sato found that learners were often able to produce L2 initial clusters in words such as skate, blow, or grow, even though these or other initial clusters were absent from their L1.

Other researchers have identified links between L1 influence and sociolinguistic variables. Dickerson (1975), for example, found that when using the L2, all learners transferred sounds from their L1. However, they did so less frequently in formal speaking situations, in which they could attend closely to their speech. Thus learners’ pronunciation sounded more English-like during the more formal task of reading words off of a list than when they engaged in conversation.

What at first blush appear to be very different patterns of sociolinguistic transfer than those identified by Dickerson are seen in research
of Beebe (1980). Here, unexpectedly, English learners who were native speakers (NSs) of Thai transferred a trilled r from their L1 in their word list reading. As Beebe speculated, trilling of r is apparently such a prestige feature of spoken Thai, that learners are more likely to transfer it to formal tasks like reading words than to informal, unmonitored conversations.

Also working from a sociolinguistic perspective, Beebe and Zuengler (1983), in looking at a variety of language learners interacting with different interlocutors, found that learners’ use of L1 versus L2 linguistic features fluctuated according to their degree of social divergence and convergence with their interlocutor. No single sociolinguistic feature could be held solely responsible for such a result, however. Rather, learners’ production varied in relation to their interlocutors’ ethnicity, gender, L1 background, expertise on a topic, and a host of situational variables.

On another front, research has borne out further complexities in L1 and L2 relationships with respect to students’ L1 literacy. As a number of researchers have found, L2 learners already literate in their L1 can transfer their L1 literacy skills to their learning of L2 literacy. This appears to be conditioned, however, by their having reached a level of L2 proficiency sufficient for coping with the cognitive demands of L2 literacy tasks. (See, e.g., Cummins, 1981; Mace-Matluck, Dominguez, Holzman, & Hoover, 1983). Such a transfer of skills seems to pertain more to reading than to writing. As other researchers have noted, skills in L2 writing do not appear to be so clearly or consistently influenced by writing skills already established in the learner’s L1. (Carson, Carrell, Silberstein, Kroll, & Kuehn, 1990).

In addition, it is becoming increasingly apparent that literacy in the L1 can enhance the learning of both reading and speaking in L2 (Robson, 1981; Weinstein-Shr, 1984). Here, however, its impact on oral language appears to be culturally based, with greater transfer to oral or written language, depending on the roles these modalities played in L1. Thus, learners from traditional oral cultures (e.g., Samoan and Tongan) were found to use complex and difficult L2 structures more frequently in oral than written English L2 compared to L2 learners from the more literate traditions of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese (Hansen-Strain, 1989).

How do these research findings respond to teachers’ concerns about the role of students’ L1 in their L2 learning? One thing they make clear is that the influence of the learner’s L1 is highly selective, far more intricate, and less readily predictable than was previously thought. Teachers need to think about not only the features of their students’ L1 but also about universal difficulties in language and language learning. Individual psychosocial and cultural features must also be taken into...
account, especially in classrooms where learners interact not just with their teachers but with a wide range of other learners as a result of participation in group work and other communication tasks. In their role in designing classroom materials and tasks and in generating expectations about student progress, L1 and L2 comparison inventories are simply not sufficient and may, in fact, be misleading with respect to the language that students are capable of producing. How important are such productions to their learning? This question is often posed in light of other questions about the role of production relative to that of comprehension in the learning process. Thus, it is to an examination of the individual and combined roles of production and comprehension in L2 learning that we next turn.

2. Which Is More Important to L2 Learning: Comprehension or Production?

As even a cursory look at classroom texts and teaching practice would reveal, teachers have felt instinctively that both comprehension and production have critical roles to play in the L2 learning process. However, with the publication of *The Natural Approach* (Krashen & Terrell, 1983), a greater emphasis has been placed on the primacy of comprehension in the classroom, and questions have arisen about students’ need to produce the language they are learning.

In advancing his case for the primacy of comprehension to L2 learning and, at times, arguing for its sufficiency in the learning process, Krashen has drawn from Corder’s (1967) distinction between L2 input to learners and their actual intake, arguing that L2 input must be comprehended if it is to become intake to assist the acquisition process. He has also identified several characteristics of input that can serve as intake for learning. It must be meaningful, slightly beyond the learner’s current level of language development, and made comprehensible to the learner.

Many researchers have not been able to agree with Krashen’s ideas about the sufficiency of comprehension to successful language acquisition. However, the overall consensus among most of them is that comprehension is a major contributor to L2 learning. They have asked how input within the learner’s environment can be made comprehensible and have designed studies to respond to this question.

For example, research by Long (1985) and others (see Blau, 1980) has shown that if linguistic adjustments such as repetitions and rephrasing are made a priori to text or lecturette input, they aid the learner’s comprehension of its content. This line of research was extended by Pica, Young, and Doughty (1987) as they addressed Long’s claim that input is made comprehensible through modified interaction. This ac-
tivity, which is also known as negotiation for meaning, is one in which learners seek clarification, confirmation, and repetition of L2 utterances they do not understand. In their research, two groups of English L2 learners were given directions for assembling a picture of an outdoor scene. The language used in the directions to one group was modified a priori in ways similar to those noted for Long and Blau, above. The language in the directions to the other group was not modified, but participants were encouraged, indeed urged, to negotiate with the direction giver when they could not understand. Better comprehension was found among the second group.

Why was there better comprehension of the unmodified direction input? Results showed that negotiation between the learners and their interlocutors led directly to modifications in the complexity and redundancy of the direction input. Direction input was thus made comprehensible without the need for a priori modification by the researcher. A further possibility posed but not tested by the researchers was that negotiation simply increased the amount of time available to the learners for processing the directions. In other words, it was not the linguistic modifications that were crucial to understanding. Rather, the stretch of time the direction giver took in modifying the directions gave learners an opportunity to process the original direction input so that they could understand it.

These research findings suggest that teaching a language should be an interactive process between teachers and students and among the students themselves. When students need to comprehend the new language, they can best do this if allowed to ask about language they do not understand rather than rely on their teacher or textbook to anticipate areas of comprehension difficulty and make simplifications a priori. What these results also suggest is that simply encouraging students to ask questions about input they do not initially understand may have positive results on their comprehension, without the need for much talk on the teacher’s part.

Research has thus shown ways in which comprehension can assist and be made to assist L2 learning. However, it has yet to determine whether comprehension is more important than production to the L2 learning process. Relevant research, initiated through the work of Swain (1985), has begun to shed light on this important question. Swain looked at Canadian immersion learners who (presumably) had extensive comprehensible input because their L2 exposure was embedded in meaningful subject matter content which they came to master as part of their academic program. She found that these learners were quite successful in their L2 learning but had reached a much higher level of receptive than expressive competence. Opportunities to hear comprehensible input appeared necessary but not sufficient for suc-
cessful L2 acquisition. In generalizing from this result, Swain argued that L2 learners can often understand the meaning of contextualized input without being able to grasp its grammatical structure, but to express themselves comprehensibly, they must provide such structure for their utterances.

For Swain, therefore, opportunities to hear comprehensible input are not sufficient to ensure successful L2 learning. Learners need opportunities to modify their interlanguage production and thereby to produce what Swain refers to as comprehensible output. Although this latter construct is not as clearly defined or researched as its counterpart, comprehensible input, Swain’s research suggests that production has an important role to play in the learning process and, along with comprehension, must be given a central place in the L2 classroom. What forms and features should characterize such production? That question is addressed immediately below and throughout this paper.

Although Swain’s claim is theoretically plausible, research by Pica (1987) suggested that learners’ production of comprehensible output was not inevitable during their conversational discourse with NSs. She found that beginning learners had limited opportunities to modify their output because when they had difficulty making their interlanguage comprehensible, their interlocutors tended to model correct versions of their interlanguage productions for them. The learners then needed only to acknowledge these models rather than attempt their own modifications toward targetlike use.

Pica found, for example, that if the learner said I many fren, the NS interlocutor would reply: You have many friends? All the learner needed to say in response was yes. This response eliminated any need to adjust interlanguage syntax and vocabulary to make a message understood. Because the NS interlocutors were teachers, it was believed that the result might have been due to their interpretation of their role in the study as that of a teacher, expected to model correct forms for the learner, rather than as a conversational partner, free to encourage a more even exchange.

In two follow-up studies (Pica, Holliday, Lewis, Berducci, & Newman, 1991; Pica, Holliday, Lewis, & Morgenthaler, 1989), teachers were excluded from the NS interlocutor selection process. Here, learners’ modification of their L2 output was found to be much more prevalent. However, this result seemed related to a host of additional factors, including the nature of the task on which the learners worked with the interlocutor, the nature of the request made by the interlocutor, and the pairing of learners with their interlocutor by gender.

Thus, with respect to the nature of the task, it was found that learners made more interlanguage adjustments on information-gap tasks in which they were required to draw a picture, then describe it so that
it could be replicated by their interlocutor. As for request type, NSs’ open-ended clarification requests such as *What did you say?* were found to be more conducive to learners’ modifications than confirmation checks such as *Did you said book?* This latter, more often than not, was responded to with a simple *yes.* Finally, for gender relationships, it was found that male learners made about the same number of adjustments to their speech whether they interacted with male or female NSs. Female learners, on the other hand, made more adjustments in their L2 production when they interacted with female NSs than males.

These results have a great deal to say to teachers, given the range of methods and procedures possible for L2 classrooms. Activities in which it is the teacher rather than the learner who holds all the information needed to carry out the activity should be balanced with those in which it is the learner who has such control. Teachers’ practice of modeling correct versions of student responses rather than giving them time to reformulate and try again, needs to be tempered by their encouragement and support of student responses and use of open-ended questions and clarification requests. Thus, the current professional climate whereby female instructors predominate in language classrooms seems to be working in learners’ favor, and there is much to be gained by further observation of English L2 learners and NS English female interlocutors to identify other ways in which their interactional styles assist the L2 learning process.

Finally, as Swain argues, learners must have opportunities to produce comprehensible output during interaction involving meaningful content. Such opportunities allow them to draw upon the lexical, phonological, and structural resources of their L1 in order to modify their interlanguage toward greater clarity and precision. Those classroom activities that focus on form and call on learners to perform in ways more relevant to the evaluation of their production skills than to the mutual and meaningful exchange of information in the classroom do not appear to be sufficient in scope for helping learners reach this goal. Because classroom drill and practice are believed to emphasize these features, we explore their contributions in the following section.

### 3. Should Students Drill and Practice New Structures?

Under the influence of the natural approach (see Krashen & Terrell, 1983) and indeed the broader spectrum of communicative approaches to language teaching, the engagement of learners in drill and practice has been on the decrease in many classrooms, particularly, but not exclusively, those in which English is learned as an L2. However, the
answer to Question 3 is not so clear-cut as popular views might suggest. Arguments both for and against drill and practice can be found on theoretical as well as empirical fronts.

Theoretical claims about L2 learning that are relevant to drill and practice have ranged from the once popular, but now largely discredited, behaviorist view that L2 learning requires formation of new habits in language production. These habits can be established by putting learners through the kinds of rote repetition and nonmeaningful production that have come to be most closely associated with the drill and practice experience. (See Fries, 1945; Lado, 1957.)

Newer, more widely accepted, views of L2 learning as a cognitive task, ones that involve both the automaticity and integration of L2 skills, acknowledge a central role for practice in bringing about these two mental processes (McLaughlin, 1987). This cognitive perspective, grounded primarily in information-processing theory, allows for a range of practice opportunities, including those that are highly meaningful in both language and content areas.

From an opposing point of view, however, comes the neurologically oriented perspective that the kinds of language presented in classroom drills are unavailable for spontaneous use beyond the classroom domain (Lamendella, 1979). Here, it is argued that such meaningless, noncontextualized language as that used in drills is processed in different areas of the brain compared to language made available through communication in meaningful contexts. Obviously, this is a theoretical claim that has been difficult to document through research.

In the midst of these competing theoretical claims are a number of studies that appear to provide at least qualified support for the contributions of drill and practice to L2 learning. Thus, in a diary study carried out during his stay as a visiting scholar in Brazil, Schmidt (Schmidt & Frota, 1986) found that drills played a role in his L2 learning of Portuguese, provided that he was attentive to the L2 feature being highlighted in the drill. Many structures drilled extensively in class were not carried over into his daily conversation. Yet he used other structures both frequently and correctly outside the classroom although they were drilled minimally. It appeared that structures which did not carry over from classroom drill were absent in the meaningful input of Schmidt’s daily environment or were present in this input but had gone unnoticed by him. Thus, drills had the potential for highlighting important structures, but Schmidt’s attention was key to their effectiveness in his learning.

From a somewhat different perspective, research which has focused on the role of imitation in L2 learning has revealed positive results for this drill-related activity. For example, in Eisenstein, Bailey, and...
Madden (1983), production tasks enabled learners to operate within the current developmental state of their own grammar, with opportunities to avoid structures and lexis not yet within their control. During imitation tasks, on the other hand, learners had to reconstruct their interlocutor’s grammar and meaning and thus produce new structures not quite within their current capacity. They seemed, in effect, to help them advance along their route of L2 learning rather than confine them within the limits of their current state of L2 development. Because imitation is such a fundamental component of drill, studies of this kind provide additional justification for the use of drill in the classroom.

Any enthusiasm about the contributions of drill and practice to L2 learning as generated by these two studies, however, needs to be tempered by consideration of the role that learners’ production of comprehensible output can play in their L2 learning. Although we have also come to acknowledge that comprehensible input is not all that is necessary for success, further direction is needed on how drill, practice, and other opportunities for learner production can enhance the learning process.

As noted above, Swain (1985) has gotten us off to a good start. Her research on Canadian immersion learners indicated that opportunities to hear comprehensible input were simply not enough to ensure their L2 mastery. They needed also to modify their own versions of L2 production (i.e., produce comprehensible output). As Swain has stressed, however, learners must have opportunities to produce comprehensible output during interaction involving meaningful content. Such opportunities allow them to draw creatively upon their lexical, phonological, and structural resources in order to modify their interlanguage toward greater clarity and precision. When classroom drill and practice ask learners to perform in ways more relevant to the evaluation of their speaking skills than to their sharing of information and when they focus on isolated structures, sentences, or sounds, they do not appear to help learners become more resourceful in the ways suggested by Swain. However, when they provide an L2 model, drill and practice may be quite helpful, not for their production value, but for their role in providing useful input. Oddly, it may very well be for their input contributions, more so than their production value, that drill and practice can serve the L2 learner in positive ways.

Thus, drill and practice, two very traditional procedures in the L2 classroom, are still worthy of both teachers’ and researchers’ consideration. In many classrooms, however, they might well be found in conjunction with distinctively different activities involving student group work and classroom discussion. It is therefore to these two areas of classroom life that our next two questions turn.
4. How Effective Is Group Work as an Aid to L2 Learning?

Teachers’ rationale for using group work is often based on practical concerns. Thus, group work is often used as a compensatory practice employed in large classrooms, or even not-so-large ones, as a way of giving learners more speaking turns than are possible during teacher-led instruction. Or it is used to provide a nonteaching context in which students can work together on L2 skills. But is it also an aid to L2 learning? Research findings provide a number of promising but qualified responses to that question.

First, it should be noted that group work has been shown to be an effective aid to communication in the classroom. This was documented more than 15 years ago in a classroom study conducted among Spanish L1 learners of English in Mexico City. (Long, Adams, McLean, & Castaños, 1976). These researchers found that group work enabled students to use language across a broader range of social and interpersonal functions than did lock-step, teacher-led classroom interaction. These findings suggested that, compared with teacher-led instruction, group work could serve as a more effective aid to L2 learning but only insofar as communication also serves a role in the learning process. Subsequent studies, therefore, have attempted to identify more direct relationships between group work and the L2 learning process itself, so that its contributions compared to teacher-led instruction could be better identified. Among the studies which have been conducted so far, results have been highly mixed and have revealed ways in which both group and teacher-led classroom formats bring their strengths and weaknesses to guiding the L2 learning process.

Perhaps the most mixed results are those which come from studies of learners’ production accuracy. These have revealed ways in which group work both limits learners’ correct production as well as supports it. Thus, in studies carried out in French immersion classrooms in Canada (Lightbown & Spada, 1990; White, 1991) as well as in Spanish and Chinese bilingual programs in the U.S. (Wong Fillmore, 1992), it has been found that students who engage in extensive interaction with their L2-speaking classroom peers and have little opportunity to interact with standard L2 speakers in their wider environment outside the classroom receive, in effect, a steady diet of interlanguage input. Such input appears to reinforce their own production errors and mis-analyses of the L2 and is thus believed responsible for the fluent but nontargetlike L2 production so often characteristic of students in immersion and bilingual programs.

Along similar lines, Chesterfield, Chesterfield, Hayes-Latimer, and Chavez (1983) addressed the influence of teachers and peers on L2
learning. Looking at bilingual preschool programs, they found that in classrooms where the majority of students were English speaking, greater proficiency in English L2 was related to peer interaction more than to interaction with teachers. In classrooms where the majority of students was Spanish speaking, greater proficiency in English L2 was related more to teacher interaction than to peer interaction. These findings seem particularly appropriate to classrooms where students are homogeneous in the L1 or share a common language other than the one they are studying.

Despite the concerns about group work and production accuracy that have been raised by research, it should be noted that another set of studies has shown that group work can also assist learners’ production, albeit in a fairly restricted way. Thus, research on university-level students of English L2 at work in small groups or pairs (see Bruton & Samuda, 1980; Gass & Varonis, 1989; Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, & Linnell, 1993) has revealed as rare learners’ incorporation of other learners’ errors into their own production. Far more prevalent have been learners’ modification and manipulation of their initial utterances into more complex forms (Pica, Lincoln-Porter, Paninos, & Linnell, 1993), self-generated adjustments toward more correct production (Bruton & Samuda, 1980), and their incorporation of each others’ correct productions (Gass & Varonis, 1989) into their own subsequent utterances.

How can these seemingly competing sets of favorable and less favorable results regarding group work be reconciled? In light of the populations studied, the differences in their ages and learning contexts, as well as the length of data collection, which was much more extensive in the “less favorable” studies, it would seem that further research is needed on this important topic. So far, however, the picture which is emerging about group work is that its effects are highly contextual. Judgments about its effectiveness cannot be reduced to a simple positive or negative outcome.

Thus, for example, group work has been shown to assist certain L2 skills more than others. In a 4 1/2-month experimental study of classrooms in Israel, those students who had participated in group work were shown to have higher overall global L2 proficiency and better L2 listening comprehension than those who had participated in teacher-led instruction. However, no significant differences were found in their development of reading proficiency (Bejarano, 1987). Further, group work has appeared to be more effective for certain learner groupings than others. Thus, Varonis and Gass (1985) found an increase in overall production and comprehensibility among group members of divergent L1 and cultural backgrounds than among those with greater convergence in these areas.
Finally, group work seems to work better with some classroom tasks than others. In a series of studies on learner groups as they worked on popular classroom tasks, Doughty and Pica (1986) and Pica and Doughty (1985) found that group work provided L2 learning opportunities as long as groups worked on information-gap tasks, which required a two-way exchange of information and participation among all group members. Discussion and opinion-giving tasks favored participation by more assertive students, often to the point of monologue, and gave little opportunity for other group members to engage in information exchange.

These various findings point to a prominent role for group work in the language classroom. What little research has been done, however, suggests that group work by no means guarantees success in L2 learning but needs to be tempered in light of social and linguistic conditions in the classroom and the tasks given to learners in their groups. The influence of these social, linguistic, and pedagogical variables, many of which are as yet unstudied, may be why teachers continue to express reservations about employing group work in their classrooms. Further research is needed in order to guide more informed decisions about the benefits of this practice to their students’ learning.

Less reluctance seems to hold for other types of communication in the classroom, however. One more widely embraced practice is the engagement of students in discussion with the teacher, often as a warm-up for more directed work on the L2. What often troubles teachers, however, is the uneven distribution of student engagement they experience. Thus, it is to questions about student participation that we now turn.

5. What Can Be Done to Encourage Participation Among Students Who Seldom Ask Questions or Initiate Interaction?

Although we would like all of our students to feel comfortable in the classroom environment and feel that they can participate freely, many refrain from doing so, often as a result of their previous classroom experience. Perhaps, then, addressing the question of how to encourage participation should wait until a prior question is answered, namely, Does participation make a difference in L2 learning? Here, too, as has been the case with our other questions, research results have been mixed and often contradictory.

Seliger (1977) found that learners who initiated and participated in interactions which required using English L2 in and out of the classroom (whom he came to identify as “High Input Generators,” or “HIGS”) made more rapid progress and fewer L1 transfer errors than
learners who interacted little ("Low Input Generators," or "LIGS"). In a much larger study of English L1 speakers learning Spanish as a foreign language, Ely (1986) found high correlations between students' classroom participation and their oral correctness. However, participation itself bore a strong correlation with students’ self-reported risk taking in language class, which, in turn, was influenced by students’ sense of comfort in so doing. Ultimately, it may be language class discomfort that plays a pivotal role in the L2 learning process by decreasing classroom participation and thereby inhibiting development of L2 proficiency.

Not all studies have shown classroom participation to be so successfully connected to L2 learning. For example, in a case study of one classroom, Allwright (1980) found that the student who made the most progress in L2 development was one who initiated and engaged in less interaction than the most interactive student in the class. The key factor to her success appeared to be her attentiveness to the classroom contributions of her teacher and classmates.

A later classroom study by Pica (1991) found support for Allwright’s results. In studying two English L2 classrooms, Pica found that as long as the students were at a level of L2 proficiency comparable to that of their classmates, they could comprehend the input of both the classmates and their teacher by interacting with them directly or by simply observing the spoken interaction generated among them. However, for less proficient learners in the same classrooms, interaction in the form of opportunities to seek clarification of message content was crucial to their comprehension. Both the Allwright and Pica findings suggested that quieter learners might benefit from the input supplied by their more interactive classmates, as long as their L2 proficiency was about the same as theirs.

In the midst of these competing findings on the need for learners to interact in order to comprehend an L2, it might be important to keep in mind that individual learners have their own ways of making the classroom an environment conducive to their L2 learning. Based on her extensive work on language learner strategies, Wenden (1986) reminds us that learners direct their own learning by diagnosing needs, defining goals, identifying facilitating tasks and strategies, setting priorities, judging progress, and changing their approach to learning, when necessary. Learners thus bring their own individual styles to the learning process. Language classroom research needs to probe more deeply into the different ways that learners find success in their language learning. This is why it is premature for teachers to turn to the results of a handful of studies on the effects of participation when making classroom decisions in this area. One area in which there is an already substantial and growing body of research, however, pertains
to the role of grammar instruction in the classroom, and it is to this domain of interest that our questions next turn.

6. How Much Attention Should Be Given to Explicit Grammar Instruction?

As noted above, the recent movement toward communicative language teaching has brought with it a decrease in explicit grammar instruction in the classroom. Much recent literature on language teaching methods as well as textbooks for learners have tended to upgrade the importance of activities for comprehensible input and meaningful L2 use and downgrade the contributions of exercises which focus on grammar rules.

Yet, for many learners, especially those for whom the classroom is a sole context for language learning, meaningful interaction and comprehensible input may not be possible. Even if such input were provided, the overall amount of input and interaction targeted to individual learners might be reduced in relation to the total number of classroom participants. This situation suggests that learners may need a more efficient means to access the grammar rules of the language they are trying to learn than through input provision and interactional experiences alone. One means to establish efficient access is to select and sequence these rules in ways that appeal to learnability and learner readiness. Research has already begun to reveal a few guiding principles for selection and sequencing decisions.

From Pienemann (1984a, 1984b), for example, we are told that there are constraints on L2 learning that affect its teachability and learnability. He has shown that word order sequences in German are acquired under two conditions: first, in an order of increasing linguistic and psycholinguistic complexity and second, with respect to learner readiness (i.e., learners must be at an appropriate developmental stage in their L2 learning). In studying this process, he found that there are four stages of word order through which learners proceed sequentially without skipping a stage.

Briefly what happens is that in Stage 1, learners observe basic SVO word order rather than the standard SOV word order of German. In the next stage, they begin to manipulate sentence elements. This results in their preposing of sentence-final elements to initial position. This second stage is followed by a third stage, in which they move elements from within a sentence to final position. In Stage 4, they are able to move elements completely within the sentence. The degree of increasing difficulty evident in these four stages of German L2 learning is illustrated in the sentences below:
Stage 1. Subject-Verb-Object word order: He must study the book tomorrow.

Stage 2. Movement of constituents from final to initial position: Tomorrow he must study the book.

Stage 3. Movement of constituents from internal to final position: Tomorrow he must the book study.

Stage 4. Movement of constituents from one to another internal position, as in the formation of questions: Tomorrow must he the book study?

The role of instruction, as Pienemann found through longitudinal research, was to accelerate the learner’s movement across the stages. Thus, learners at Stage 3 quickly moved to Stage 4 when taught its rules. However, instruction at the level of Stage 4 did not accelerate the L2 development of learners who were still at Stage 2. Stage 3 learners who were not taught Stage 4 rules directly but did experience their linguistic realizations through exposure to everyday conversational input also moved on to Stage 4. However, they did so much more slowly than the Stage 3 learners who had been given instruction.

The work of Doughty (1991) and Gass (1982) has also shown a positive effect for grammar instruction. Here, such an effect was seen when the grammatical item was related to other items along the hierarchy of difficulty such as that shown below (from most to least difficult) for relative clauses:

Object of preposition: The students with whom I studied passed the test.
Indirect object: The students to whom you gave the book are my friends.
Object relative: The students whom you saw are my friends.
Subject relative: The students who did their homework passed the test.

What both Doughty and Gass found was that the range of relative clause constructions in English could be learned faster if instruction began with the most difficult type of relative clause (object of preposition) rather than the easiest (subject). Thus, teaching the more difficult relative clause structure for object of preposition assisted the learning of less difficult structures such as subject and direct object relatives. On the other hand, teaching subject relatives assisted the learning of this structure but had no impact on the other more difficult structures in the hierarchy.

Another positive aspect of explicit grammar instruction was found for items considered “easy to learn,” that is, have a straightforward form-function relationship but are somewhat imperceptible in oral input. In comparing instructed learners of English with those who had never received classroom instruction, Pica (1985) found that for plural -s, the instructed learners were more accurate than the unin-
structed learners. These latter often used a strategy of attaching quantifiers rather than -s to their nouns, as in utterances such as three book or a few house. For progressive -ing, the results were less positive for either group in the study. The instructed learners tended to overgeneralize, producing utterances such as I liking the movie, Every day I going home for lunch, I want to seeing you. The uninstructed learners, on the other hand, often omitted -ing altogether from their verb production. For article a, both groups of learners tended to follow a similar developmental sequence. Accurate use of a first appeared in set phrases such as a little, a lot, a few. In later developmental stages, it appeared in verb and prepositional object structures, such as read a book, saw a movie, with a friend, on a chair.

Similarly, explicit grammar instruction appears to work well with those L2 grammatical features which are so close to the learners’ L1 structures and/or so rare in the L2 input that it is difficult for them to notice the difference between the two. Thus, in a series of studies, again carried out on French immersion students, it was found that French L1/English L2 learners who received focused instruction on English adverb placement and question formation achieved and sustained correct production of these structures to a greater degree than learners in classrooms in which activities were solely communicative or of the drill and practice type (Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Lightbown, Spada, & Ranta, 1991; White, 1991). This set of findings is especially interesting as it points out the need for a balance in the classroom between explicit instruction and more inductive, communicative procedures. Such an approach to methodology was shown to provide interesting and highly favorable results in Montgomery and Eisenstein (1986). There, the strongest gains in grammar learning were shown, not among learners who attended coursework in grammar instruction, but by those who participated in both a grammar-based course and a course which included L2 communication experiences ranging from classroom discussion to community trips.

Given these findings, how might researchers respond to teachers’ questions about whether or not explicit grammar instruction is necessary for their students? The effectiveness of grammar instruction appears to depend largely on selection and sequencing of grammar rules and careful assessment of learner readiness. Some items are better off not taught, while the learning of others is enhanced, indeed accelerated, through instruction. Research on grammar instruction has thus begun to explain why learners often struggle with certain structural elements and yet master other forms and features quite effectively. So far, a little bit has been uncovered about German, French, and English grammar rules, and some basic principles have been advanced regarding rule selection and sequencing for grammar instruction.
There remains an enormous amount of research to be done, however, within individual languages and across different grammatical rules and structures. Part of that work will, no doubt, involve issues regarding learner correction, and it is that line of research which will next be reviewed.

7. To What Extent Does Correction of Error Assist L2 Learning?

Two of the more recently held assumptions about L2 learning are that errors indicate learners’ hypotheses about the L2 and that overt correction cannot alter their natural path of acquisition (see, e.g., reviews of this position in Ellis, 1984). Numerous inventories of learner errors have been compiled into the now widely familiar categories of

(a) overgeneralization: *She has two childrens, He teached English, Did he teached English;*

(b) overuse: *She has one books, She liking school;*

(c) omission: *She is doctor, She has three book, He teach English;*

and (d) analogy: *We walk with the girls, We follow with the girls.* It is believed that in producing these errors, learners are experimenting with L2 rules and patterns as they perceive them and that they will work out these rules appropriately in good time.

Recently, questions have been raised about these views on learner errors. Schachter (1984), for example, has noted that lack of correction may imply to a learner that a nontargetlike utterance was accurate. Unless otherwise corrected, learners who have two ways of forming structures in their L1 may be misled to believe that these same two options exist in the L2 even though the L2 allows for one option only. Thus, the learner whose L1 allowed the same expression for greetings and partings might believe that *hello* could be used similarly for both functions in English. In the course of everyday social interaction, such a flawed hypothesis could lead to a communication breakdown between the learner and an NS interlocutor. Their ensuing repairs could lead the learner toward correct revision in subsequent speech.

More serious, however, would be the learner’s mistaken hypotheses about L2 structural features. Because such mistaken hypotheses lead to productions which, although grammatically imprecise, are communicatively functional, they can result in internalized rules within the learner’s interlanguage grammar. For example, if the L1 allowed dative formation with either prepositional phrase (PP; *gave a book to the girl*) or indirect object (IO; *gave the girl the book*), but the L2 allowed PP only, learners might assume that it was acceptable to use both PP and IO in the L2 even though they had never heard the IO structures in use. This false hypothesis would lead to ungrammatical IO productions which, although awkward sounding, could be, nonetheless, sufficiently
comprehensible to interlocutors to pass uncorrected during social discourse.

How do these theoretical claims and examples help teachers make informed decisions about correction in the classroom? This is a difficult question to answer because so far, research on the actual practice of classroom correction has shown it to be a highly diversified classroom phenomenon (see, e.g., Chaudron, 1977, 1988). Correction can be focused sometimes on meaning, other times, on structure. It can be provided differentially and unsystematically to and across students, yielding confusing and, at times, contradictory results. Fanselow (1977) found that in Spanish FL classrooms, teachers corrected students more frequently for errors in meaning than for errors in grammar. Student answers which teachers treated as errors tended to be those which did not correspond to what the teacher expected to hear from the student. Outside the classroom, the phenomenon of correction seems to be equally complex. A study by Brock, Crookes, Day, and Long (1986), for example, found that correction had no significant effect on learners during half-hour research sessions. However, when these same learners were corrected during communication games, they quickly adjusted their interlanguage accordingly.

Still, research has shown that a number of strategies seem to work quite well. Some cases in point: Chaudron (1977) found that teachers’ reduced repetitions of students’ errors, with emphasis on the error itself, were more highly associated with learners’ correct responses than were expansions or elaborations of the learners’ utterances or the isolated supplying of a correct form. In two classroom experimental studies, Tomasello and Herron (1988, 1989), found that L2 learners who were first misled to produce typical errors of overgeneralization, followed by immediate feedback on their error and instruction on its correct form, performed well on these structures in subsequent contexts. They did much better in fact than those students who had been first taught the rules and exceptions for these structures before moving on to produce them. Calling students’ attention to differences between their errors and the correct versions thereof seems critical to the success of corrective feedback in L2 learning.

Along similar lines, Schmidt and Frota (1986) found that explicit correction had a differential and inconsistent effect on Schmidt’s production of Portuguese L2. In order to benefit from corrections, Schmidt claims that he had to know he was being corrected. Hearing a corrected version immediately following what he had just said helped him “notice the gap” between his interlanguage and the target Portuguese. Informal correction in the form of his interlocutors’ confirmation checks and clarification requests to his utterances made no discernible impact on his learning.
With a somewhat different format, in research focused on communicative learning activities, Lightbown (1992) found that students whose teacher provided immediate corrective feedback on one particular error (e.g., substitution of have for be), were able to overcome the error and sustain correct production well beyond the time period of their instruction. However, those students who were corrected during audio-lingual drill and practice activities were able to self-correct but could not sustain such correction beyond their classroom experience.

Two key features of correction that combine toward its effectiveness are evident from results of this research. First, correction must bring students’ attention to their own errors, and secondly, it must do so in meaningful, communicative contexts. This combined focus on the structural and communicative properties of the L2 is somewhat reminiscent of the balance between explicit grammar instruction and classroom communication discussed in relation to Question 6 above.

What has been advanced about the role of correction in the learning process mitigates considerably the claim of Krashen that comprehensible input is all that is needed for successful second language acquisition. Yet so little is known about the nature of correction as it occurs in the classroom and its effect on the learning process. As with the current state of knowledge about the role of explicit grammar instruction in the L2 learning process, there is much to be gained by further research on correction in the classroom. Still and all, however, there is more to successful L2 learning than mastering its structure and correcting its precision, and it is to the ever-important variable of culture that we now turn.

8. How Necessary to Learning a Language Is the Learner’s Cultural Integration?

This is a question which troubles teachers, whether they work with students in classrooms far removed from the culture of the language they are learning or with students who are physically immersed in the culture but experientially and psychologically distant from it. Just because a learner lives in a country where the language under study is spoken widely in the community, does not guarantee opportunities for integration with its users. And even when there are opportunities for integration, language learning is not always guaranteed.

In support of the need for cultural integration in L2 learning, Schumann (1978) has reported on the psychosocial profile of Alberto, whose English L2 development remained virtually unchanged over 10 months of Schumann’s research and who revealed little adaptation to his U.S. urban community or integration with its speakers. Schmidt (1983), on the other hand, has reported the psychosocial profile of
Wes, whose English L2 development remained virtually unchanged over several years of Schmidt’s research, despite relatively extensive adaptation to his U.S. urban community and integration with its speakers. Meisel, Clahsen, and Pienemann (1981) have attempted to sort out these apparent contradictions in the role of cultural integration in the learning process. Their research has shown that the acquisition of German L2 word order among German L2 guest workers (as discussed above under Question 6) followed the same, invariant path based on complexity and learnability of its structural features, whereas the acquisition of inflections and functors varied across learners in correlation with aspects of their adjustment to German culture and society.

In a recent study, DeKeyser (1991) compared learners of Spanish as a foreign language whose L2 contact came from the classroom with those who also participated in a semester abroad program with opportunities for cultural as well as linguistic contact. He found that greater fluency in Spanish was displayed by this latter group. In an ongoing research project, Freed (1990) is examining the long-term effects of cultural contact after students return from a study abroad program. Both of these studies will reveal the extent to which direct exposure to speakers in the actual culture of the language studied affects proficiency and the learning process itself.

A number of researchers have reminded us that we cannot make easy generalizations about culture and what cultural integration means to learners. Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) have found that instrumentally motivated students (i.e., those who were financially compensated for L2 study) achieved similar success in L2 learning, in this case of L2 vocabulary, as students who showed a considerably more integrative perspective toward the target culture. Other research has highlighted the long-established sociolinguistic phenomenon of language choice, whereby some learners who are exposed to more than one variety of the L2 may choose higher prestige and teacher models as their target, a choice which reflects their status needs. Other learners, however, may select target models based on peers, friends, or members of their own ethnic group, this choice based on the need for solidarity with these groups. (Beebe, 1985; Goldstein, 1987). This is also evident in research by Trueba (1989) and Weinstein-Shr and Lewis (1991). Their studies of linguistic minority students have shown ways in which the values placed on L2 academic work in the family and throughout the culture can influence success in these students’ L2 language and literacy learning.

Attempting to separate the contributions of cultural integration from other factors is difficult to do in an L2 context where learners are exposed to a variety of cultural experiences at the same time they
are engaged in formal classroom study. Further, culture is itself a cultural construct, subject to varied interpretations across learners. Determining its role in L2 learning will require an understanding of the intricate and often elusive connections between both the L2 culture and those cultural values that students bring to their learning experience.

Most of the issues discussed thus far have focused on matters which seem (sometimes naively) to be within the range of work that can be carried out to assist classroom L2 learning, for example, participating in groups, receiving instruction, getting corrected. The final two questions deal with what are perhaps more stubborn and problematic areas of L2 learning, pronunciation and fossilization. Thus, we ask the following questions.

9. Why Do Some Students Have Less Accurate Pronunciation Than Others, and What Can Be Done About This?

Through an extensive review, Purcell and Suter (1980) present one of the most definitive responses to this question:

The variables which turn out to be important seem to be those which teachers have the least influence on. Native language, the most important predictor, results from historical accident. Similarly, aptitude for oral mim- icry seems beyond the control of the instructor; it is doubtful that one can make a good mimic out of a naturally poor one . . . . Length of residence in a country where the target language is spoken natively is largely beyond the instructor’s control. Finally, while strength of concern for pronunciation accuracy might be fortified by an effective teacher, this concern is often the result of personal motivations and attitudes established well before the student enters the classroom. (p. 84)

Dickerson (1975) further reminds us of the extensive range of precision possible for learners in their L2 speech sound production. In her study of Japanese L1 learners of English, she found that they did not immediately pronounce English L2 sounds correctly in all linguistic contexts. Instead, they acquired L2 variants and applied them differentially to syllable-initial and syllable-final contexts and in relation to following vowels. Gradually, they replaced nontargetlike with targetlike variants across an increasing number of contexts. Thus, for example, their accuracy in pronouncing zoo came earlier than that for please.

What these studies tell the language teacher is that achieving nativelike pronunciation is a complex process, largely related to factors beyond the learner’s and teacher’s control. Yet accurate pronunciation
is all too often viewed as a primary goal in the classroom. And a high premium is often placed on accurate pronunciation both as a gross measure of students’ progress and an indicator of proficiency in a language. Current research does not appear to validate such a view. For the time being, precise pronunciation may be an unrealistic goal for teachers to set for their students and in their teaching.

10. What Can Be Done for Language Learners Who Seem to Have Reached a Plateau in Their Learning?

Numerous and varied ideas have been advanced as to why many learners, especially adults, do not come to master the rules and features of another language. Higgs and Clifford (1982) have used the term terminal twos to describe such learners, although the learning phenomenon itself is generally referred to as fossilization. L2 researchers such as Schumann (1978) have argued that limitation of opportunities for integration with a target culture outside the classroom is what brings fossilization about. Higgs and Clifford have argued that undue emphasis on communicative activities toward building learner fluency results in learners who stabilize at a functional but grammatically inaccurate level on the Foreign Service Index of language proficiency. Hence the reference to “terminal twos.”

Some researchers have advanced learner-related explanations for fossilization. Perhaps the best known are those explanations which emanate from a neurological perspective. Thus, Long (1990) has provided evidence that there are maturational, neurological constraints on adult learners that influence their L2 learning. Arguing from a more cognitive perspective, Schmidt and Frota (1986), have reported that fossilized learners who are communicatively functional in L2 do not appear to “notice the gap” between their interlanguage and the standard L2 target. Thus, interlocutor confirmation checks and clarification requests may lead the fossilized learner to revise content, but such moves have no effect on their internalized knowledge of grammatical features.

Basing her explanation on the theories of Vygotsky, Washburn (1991) has suggested that fossilized learners may lack a “zone of proximal development” for L2. In other words, unlike learners still capable of making progress in their L2 development, fossilized learners may be unable to modify their interlanguage toward accuracy even when supplied with models for them to imitate and to guide their production.

In distinction to these learner-related explanations, other researchers have traced the roots of fossilization to language-related explanations, often in the area of grammatical morphology. Thus, even highly proficient learners of English have been shown to display a high degree...
of syntactic word-order accuracy but incomplete and variable accuracy in grammatical morphology. It appears that there are “fragile” features of language that are more difficult to learn than “resilient” features (Bardovi-Harlig & Bofman, 1989). Other problematic areas of language relate to its sociolinguistic appropriateness. Thus Swain and Lapkin (1989) found that even highly proficient French immersion students had difficulty in using appropriate pronouns in social situations, generalizing tu in contexts in which vous was socially required.

These explanations, whether drawn from the learner or the language being learned, point to the need for informed development of instructional materials and procedures for fossilized learners and for ongoing research on the impact of such instruction. As described above, Schmidt’s observations about his own language learning (Schmidt & Frota, 1986) suggest that fossilized learners do not appear to benefit from interlocutor confirmation checks and clarification requests in revising nontargetlike grammatical features. This would indicate a need for more grammar-based classroom materials. Certainly Higgs and Clifford (1982) would agree with such an orientation. So would Yorio (1985), who reported that instruction should proceed from the fossilized learner’s strength areas in spoken communication to reading and writing tasks and from contextualized materials and communicative techniques to decontextualized, grammar-oriented instruction. In one case study of instructional effects on a fossilized learner, Sotillo (1987) has found that job-related instruction, as opposed to more general language practice, has had a temporary effect on directing her student’s interlanguage toward more standard L2 use.

Responding to the needs of fossilized learners and of the teachers who work with them seems, therefore, to depend on identifying and locating appropriate materials and procedures and monitoring their impact through careful study. This need as well as those above opens a wealth of opportunities for collaborative research between language teachers and researchers and speaks to the tremendous scope and vitality of TESOL as a profession and as a field of study.

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found myself adding to the research responses. However, the questions, though ever more fully addressed, have undergone little change.

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REFERENCES


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TQ/SP-94
Students’ Perceptions of EAP Writing Instruction and Writing Needs Across the Disciplines

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University of Tennessee

JOAN G. CARSON
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As English for academic purposes (EAP) writing instructors and writing curriculum planners, we need to know the degree to which ESL writing courses have been successful in gauging and providing for ESL students’ writing needs across the university curriculum. However, making this determination is difficult because many academic writing requirements may be implicit in the curriculum of the disciplinary course and thus not amenable to ready description by the outsider. Furthermore, we also need to know how much carryover from ESL writing courses occurs with ESL students—that is, what elements of their ESL writing instruction have they found useful and available to them as students in content courses? This article reports on a survey of former ESL students now in university-level content courses that is designed to investigate students’ perceptions of the relationship between the writing instruction the students received in ESL writing classes and the actual writing tasks they found in courses across the disciplines. The results of the survey include indications of which writing skills taught in ESL writing courses students found most useful in dealing with the writing demands of other content courses. In their answers to open-ended survey questions, ESL students also described their perceptions of their ongoing writing needs beyond the ESL writing curriculum.

Writing instruction in many English for academic purposes (EAP) and first-year (“freshman”) composition classrooms in U.S. universities is based on the assumption that what is taught and learned in these classes will help ESL students function well in their writing tasks across the curriculum. As course developers for ESL students who will continue their education in English-medium institutions of higher education, we hope to predict what students will need and to
include training in those areas in our writing classes. Johns (in press) urges us to keep in mind the importance in ESL writing classes of helping students get ready for assignments in courses across the disciplines by focusing specifically on what is required in the classroom genres assigned in content courses. Yet, we often do not know just how successful we have been in determining future writing needs and preparing students to meet them or how well ESL students are able to use what they have learned from our writing classes in their writing tasks across the curriculum. Attempts to develop information on these questions have come primarily from surveys of university faculty across the curriculum and from a few ESL student surveys.

The bulk of the literature on writing needs for courses across the disciplines consists of surveys of faculty. These studies catalogue types of writing assignments (Bridgeman & Carlson, 1984; Horowitz, 1986b; Keller-Cohen & Wolfe, 1987), types of rhetorical skills required to complete the writing tasks (Horowitz, 1986a; Rose, 1983), and faculty reactions to L2 student writing (Jenkins, Jordan, & Weiland, 1993; Santos, 1988; Vann, Meyer, & Lorenz, 1984). In addition to survey research, a few recent qualitative studies have also begun exploring the question of students’ writing needs. Currie (1993) uses participant observation to determine the cognitive operations required to fulfill writing assignments in a business course. Chiseri-Strater (1991) and Walvoord and McCarthy (1990) also take us into classrooms across disciplines for detailed accounts of writing demands and attempts of native English speakers (NESs) to meet those demands.

The question of writing requirements and needs, however, must also take into account the perceptions that writing students have about those requirements and needs. For, as Horwitz (1987) reminds us, what learners believe about what they are learning and about what they need to learn strongly influences their receptiveness to learning. In this sense, what students learn in EAP writing classes is determined to a great extent by what they want to learn. Thus, in addition to surveying faculty on student writing needs, researchers have also questioned students themselves about their perceptions of such issues as the importance of error correction in English class (Leki, 1991) and past and anticipated writing needs at the university and beyond (Kroll, 1979; Ostler, 1980).

In structured interviews of 80 L2 students enrolled at five universities who had completed language courses in intensive English programs, Christison and Krahnke’s (1986) respondents identified listening and reading as the most important skill areas in their current academic work (a finding similar to that of Johns, 1981), indicating that they used writing skills only 10% of all their time spent in academic tasks. Despite these students’ report of spending only 10% of their time on writing assignments across the curriculum, the importance of
writing to achieving academic success may well be far greater than the amount of time reported devoted to writing would suggest because many courses evaluate students through some form of written text (e.g., essay exams, short-answer essays, research papers). Furthermore, university requirements implicitly support the notion that ability to write well is integral to academic success; often the single institutionally mandated course at the university, for both L2 and NES students, is a term to a year of composition. In a study of children learning English, Saville-Troike (1984) concludes that “the language skill which is most likely to develop . . . [academic] competence is writing” (p. 217). Ability to write well is necessary both to achieve academic success and to demonstrate that achievement.

According to a study of L1 writing by Marsella, Hilgers, and McLaren (1992), factors that influenced the way in which writers handled writing tasks across university disciplines included both the way the writing assignment was specified by the professor and the students’ past successes with strategies for dealing with academic writing. These factors would clearly apply to ESL students as well. However, it is possible that EAP writing class experiences maybe especially formative because for many ESL students, EAP writing classes are their first, perhaps only, experiences with certain types of writing, particularly longer texts in English. Thus, it seems vital for us to have a sense of how students’ experiences in EAP writing courses articulate with their later writing requirements.

The survey results reported here of L2 students in regular curriculum courses adds to the body of information on ESL students’ perceptions. In particular, this research focuses on how matriculated ESL students perceived the writing preparation they had received in EAP writing courses and its relationship to their performance of writing tasks in the university.

METHODS

In order to develop an appropriate survey instrument for this study, we conducted a pilot survey which was administered to 33 students at two large state universities in summer 1992. Information from these students’ responses allowed us to further refine the survey instrument. The new survey included both open-ended questions and questions with fixed alternatives generated by students’ answers to the pilot survey questions. It was then pretested for comprehensibility with a group of 18 students in early fall 1992, and final adjustments were made.¹

¹The survey instrument is available from the authors: c/o Leki, University of Tennessee, Department of English, 301 McClung Tower, Knoxville, TN 37996–04300.
All nonnative-English-speaking undergraduate students who were enrolled in core required courses at either of our two institutions were contacted by phone and screened for participation in the research using the following criteria. First, they had to have taken an EAP writing course in the U.S. either in an intensive English program or in an ESL section of first-year composition. Second, they had to be currently enrolled in a university course that required writing.

The resulting subject pool reflects the diversity of required courses across the curriculum (Table 1), the diversity of L1s represented on these two campuses, and—except in the case of first-year students—a group that is relatively balanced across the four undergraduate years (Table 2). The smaller number of first-year students can be accounted for by the fact that many first-year courses do not require students to write.

One hundred twenty-eight students agreed to participate in the survey and were sent survey forms. A week after the requested return time, we followed up with further phone calls and repeat mailings to those who had not yet responded. A total of 77 surveys were returned, a response rate of 60%. (See Babbie, 1983, for standard procedures followed in creating and administering these surveys.)

**FINDINGS**

How well did our participants feel that EAP writing classes had prepared them for the writing they were being required to do in their content course? The participants were asked to rank the preparation for writing they had received in the EAP writing course on a scale of 1 (not well at all) to 5 (very well). As Table 3 shows, 48% felt the EAP
TABLE 2
Demographic Characteristics of Subjects (N = 77)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Academic status</th>
<th>L1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Spanish 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Arabic 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chinese 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                | First year | Sophomores | Juniors | Seniors | Unknown | Vietnamese | Malay | Greek | Gujarati | Hmong | Indonesian | Russian | Turkish | Turkish | Korean | Japanese | Russian | Turkish | Turkish | Russian | Turkish | Russian | Various |
|----------------|------------|------------|---------|---------|---------|------------|-------|-------|----------|-------|------------|---------|--------|---------|--------|----------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| Female         | 11         | 22         | 21      | 21      | 21      | 14         | 8     | 7     | 7        | 4     | 4          | 3       | 3      | 3       | 2      | 2        | 2       | 2      | 2       | 2      | 1       |

The course had prepared them well or very well; 29% felt adequately prepared. 17% felt that the EAP course had prepared them either not well or not well at all.

However, among those 14 students who felt un- or underprepared, 3 blamed themselves for not having taken the EAP class seriously, and 4 others gave responses indicating that the EAP writing class did not specifically prepare them for certain technical or specialized forms of writing they were doing in their content courses, such as writing a lab report or a business letter. Taken as a whole, then, these results indicate that, by and large, these ESL students were quite satisfied with the training they received in EAP writing classes. Furthermore, they tended to rate their performance on their writing tasks across the curriculum as generally successful (Table 4), and their final grades (Table 5) in these courses support that perception.

How did survey participants perceive the relationship between success in content course writing tasks and their EAP writing preparation? When asked what they had to do to get a good grade in the course (the results are shown in Table 6), 44% of the responses had to do with controlling course content.

TABLE 3
Preparation Quality Reported for ESL Writing Courses (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not well at all</th>
<th>Not very well</th>
<th>Adequately</th>
<th>Well</th>
<th>Very well</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF WRITING INSTRUCTION 85
TABLE 4
Degree of Success Reported in Content-Course Writing Tasks (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very successful</th>
<th>Successful</th>
<th>Only a little successful</th>
<th>Not Successful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 5
Grades Earned in Content Course (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These responses included knowing the material, being able to supply relevant details in their written answers, selecting the most important material, and so forth. Next, according to 22% of the responses, professors looked for rhetorical skill—including the ability to organize writing and to write clearly. Third, 16% of the responses indicated that language proficiency (specifically grammar, wording, and using one’s own words) was important. Fourth, 14% of the responses had to do with the importance of thinking skills—the ability to think critically and analytically. The remaining category, miscellaneous, included responses about neatness and length of papers.

Given that most survey participants felt they had been relatively successful in their writing assignments and in their courses in general, we wanted to know what aspect of their EAP writing preparation they perceived to be most helpful in their content-course writing tasks. The results of this question were grouped by categories and are shown in Table 7.

The largest number of responses, 35%, had to do with what we are calling task management strategies. These strategies include managing text (e.g., brainstorming, planning, outlining, drafting, revising, proofreading), managing sources (e.g., summarizing, synthesizing, reading).

TABLE 6
Reported Requirement(s) for Good Grade on Content-Course Writing Task (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical skills</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language proficiency</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking skills</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 7
ESL Learning Considered Most Important for Success in Content-Course Writing Task (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Management Strategies</th>
<th>35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical skills</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language proficiency</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking skills</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

using quotes), and managing research (e.g., library skills, research skills). The next largest number of responses (29%) indicated the importance of rhetorical skills, including organization, transitions, coherence, conclusions, and so forth. Third, 16% of the responses indicated that language proficiency was important, specifically mentioning the importance of grammar and appropriate vocabulary. 13% of the responses had to do with thinking skills—developing and expanding ideas, arguing logically, analyzing, critiquing, and so forth.

It is interesting, too, to note the relationship between the categories indicated as requirements for a good grade and those indicated in Table 6 as being the EAP topics most important for success in content-course writing tasks. In Table 7, the task management strategies learned in the EAP class can be understood as relating most closely to issues of knowing and demonstrating content knowledge in university courses, which were ranked as most important in Table 6. Furthermore, the rank order of other areas is identical in Tables 6 and 7, with similar response percentages. Rhetorical skills were ranked second for both and language skill ranked third, with thinking skills ranking fourth. We would expect this fit between the two questions in a reliable survey instrument. Nevertheless, the correspondence between the questions is important because it gives us a clear picture of the students’ perceptions about the relationships between success in university courses and content in EAP courses. As such, it can serve as a general guide for curricula in EAP writing classes.

It is important to note, however, that these two questions are both evaluative in the sense that they ask students to make judgments about their EAP and their content courses. Because of this, they are not necessarily descriptive of what actually happens in content courses—that is, thinking skills may be ranked as the fourth most important area with respect to good grades and success in content courses, but they may also be relatively more important in the actual practice of content-course writing tasks. To find out what writers actually did, we asked them to indicate which skills they did and did not use in their
content-course writing tasks. When responses were rank ordered, a clear pattern emerged. First, the majority of students used most of the skills they learned in EAP writing classes. Even the skill used least—peer response—was mentioned almost 50% of the time. Second, the rank-ordered items divide clearly into the categories that we have already noted in Tables 6 and 7. Of the first seven items in Table 8 (i.e., those that were used the most), four—coherence, transitions, organization, exemplification—have to do with rhetorical skills.

The next four items (8-11) are all thinking skills, relating to ideational issues. Items 12–25 (with the exception of two language proficiency items) are all task management strategies, with items related to managing sources clustered from 14–17. In other words, when ranked by frequency of use, the general order of items is: rhetorical skills first, followed by thinking skills, managing sources, and finally, managing text. Language proficiency and mechanics are interspersed throughout the list. Thus, it is clear both from the perspective of content-course success and of content-course need, that ESL writers see themselves as not only successful in their content courses, but also as having learned skills in their EAP writing instruction that are useful in their content courses.

In addition to feeling that the EAP writing instruction had been beneficial, survey respondents were also able to articulate what they felt had been lacking. In open-ended questions, all participants were asked what they would like to have learned or to have learned better in the writing courses. Respondents mentioned 217 individual items they wished their EAP writing classes had covered or had better prepared them for. These items were then organized into categories which emerged from the pooled data and are displayed in Table 9. The

Table 8
Rank Order of Items Used in Content-Course Writing Tasks (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rank Order of Items Used in Content-Course Writing Tasks (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Coherence 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Transitions 94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Organization 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Punctuation 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Grammar 92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Figure out assignment 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Use examples 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Think of ideas 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Expand ideas 88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Develop ideas 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Express ideas 84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Outline 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Word choice 82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Paraphrase 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Summarize 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Synthesize 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Reading response 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Increase vocabulary 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Edit 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Draft/revise 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Timed writing 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Use library 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Connect reading to experience 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Find a topic 56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Peer review 49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 9
Skills/Strategies Respondents Wished to Have Learned or Learned Better in ESL Writing Classes (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill/Strategy</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language skills</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task management strategies</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical skills</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking skills</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (individual items)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 10
Rank Order of Most Frequently Expressed Specific Needs from ESL Writing Courses (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater challenge</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater speed</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline-specific needs</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

largest percentage of responses indicates a desire for more language skills, with the need for further task management skills a fairly close second.

Within these categories, including the “other” category (24% of responses), the most frequently mentioned individual items are displayed in Table 10.

Here respondents noted a particular need for, again, more language-related training focused especially on vocabulary and grammar.

DISCUSSION

Students’ focus on the need for more language skills maybe initially somewhat disconcerting for writing teachers who believe that language should not be the central emphasis of a writing course. What we find especially interesting about the students’ focus, however, is that, for the most part, when asked what their professors wanted from good papers, many respondents made a point of saying that their professors did not focus on sentence-level features of writing and ignored spelling or grammar errors. Only 16% mentioned language skills as important to doing well in their writing across the disciplines (cf. Table 6). In light of this perceived lack of insistence on the part of their professors for grammatical perfection, how may we understand our respondents’
interest in sentence-level concerns, particularly because their grades and their own evaluations of their writing indicate that these students are doing well in their writing across the curriculum? We see two patterns in the data which shed light on this question. First, respondents mentioned vocabulary more frequently than they did any other single feature of their writing needs (38%). However, a closer look at students’ answers to our open-ended questions has led us to conclude that the interest in vocabulary development and in grammatical accuracy (23%) is not primarily related to language conventions or writing decorum. That is, we do not think these students are interested in grammatical accuracy for its own sake, particularly given their assessment that their professors are not concerned with it. Rather, we note, as a second pattern, that the respondents also frequently brought up issues of time, expressing interest in more practice with timed writing in English class and complaining that they could do better if they could read and write faster in English (14%, Table 10). Taken in combination with the otherwise apparently disproportionate interest in language skills, the respondents’ concerns about time suggest that the desire for more vocabulary and more grammar expresses a need for more speedy processing of language. As one student says:

1. I wish I had a very good grammar foundations. So then my thought can flow like water (it will not stop). I will save a lot of time to think what grammar rule should go next (34).

This student perceives herself as being specifically slowed down by the fact that she does not have automatic control of portions of the grammar system.

The dimension of time, displayed as “greater speed” in Table 10, was tabulated on the basis of specific mention in the survey responses of the words time or speed. The figure of 14% (Table 10) of respondents specifically mentioning the need for greater speed or more time, however, underrepresents the frequency with which the respondents suggested through their answers that time was a factor in their writing needs. Thus, another student says:

2. I wish I had learned phonetics in order to reduce the use of the dictionary (39).

Although time is not specifically mentioned here, we take this students’ interest in phonetics to be a desire to eliminate the need to spend time referring to a dictionary, a factor which slows down the student’s work. And another says:

Numbers in parentheses refer to survey identification numbers. Numbers less than 100 refer to students who had taken an ESL section of first-year composition; numbers in the 200s refer to students who had taken EAP writing in an intensive program.
3. I wish I had learned more words and had increased my vocabulary significantly. Sometimes I simply run out of words necessary to express what I am actually thinking. I usually find a substitute word, but often times that word would only be semi-fitting with my thoughts.

Even here, a desire for efficiency is implicit. Although this student’s expressed dissatisfaction stems from the uncomfortable fit between his thoughts and the words he has to choose from, his search for the “substitute word” after he “run[s] out of words to express what [he is] actually thinking” takes time. The point here is that these students are successful in their writing across the curriculum. Their concerns about language are not the kinds of debilitating obsessions with correctness that the professional literature says characterize poor writers. These students’ sense that their lack of control of grammar and of vocabulary is holding them back seems entirely reasonable once we view their interest in language as an efficiency issue.

The heavy concern with language skills indicates that these students clearly regard English classes as places where they expect to learn English, and this at a time when many writing teachers are expanding the content of EAP writing courses to include critical thinking as well as a focus on the heuristic functions of writing. (See, e.g., Benesch, 1993; Gajdusek & vanDommelen, 1993; Raimes, 1991; Spack, 1993; and the introductions to current ESL writing texts, e.g., Leki, 1989; Mlynarczyk & Haber, 1991; Raimes, 1992; Smoke, 1987; Spack, 1990.) Some writing teachers even object to the term content courses because it suggests that there is somehow no content in writing courses, that writing courses are strictly skills courses. Yet ESL students persist in trying to turn us back into experts on language, hence their requests for help in increasing their vocabulary and their insistence on having all sentence-level errors pointed out to them. One student in this study expressed his frustration with the mismatch between his own and his teacher’s agenda:

4. I wanted my teachers to correct not only the organization of my writing but I also like them to correct my every grammar. How bad it was that I had a grammar teacher in ESL before. He did not correct all my mistakes because he did not want us too much disappointed by getting lots of corrections from the teacher. I told him, if he did that that will make me be confused whether I am right or wrong.

In their study of ESL students’ responses to written feedback, Radzicki and Swales (1988) identify one group of students as “resisters,” that is, ESL students who resist their English teachers’ suggestions about the content of their writing. Resisters apparently considered English teachers to be experts in language but not at all experts in content, in the ideas these students expressed, even though the major-
ity of the resisters were resisting suggestions about content in a non-
credit linguistics course, content in which trained ESL teachers might
presumably have expertise.

Although many of us explain to students that improving low-level
language skills will not make them better writers, our interpretation
of our survey results suggests that perhaps we are wrong in our as-
sumptions about why students focus on these concerns. Our students’
interest in language may not be a focus misplaced on the superficial
instead of on content; rather, their interest in language may be an
interest in efficiency and may reflect a desire to cut down on their
workload and their work time. It seems reasonable to assume that they
would like to become better at language so that they do not have to
focus finite cognitive resources on it and can focus instead on the
intellectual demands of their education.

Another group of responses in these surveys was more in line with
what EAP writing teachers seem to feel is important to cover in writing
classes. The task management strategies rubric in Table 9 includes 25
responses (12%) indicating that students would have liked their EAP
classes to prepare them, or to prepare them better, for writing which
required finding, selecting, and synthesizing sources. One student says:

5. How to pick information for others courses and use it effectively as
illustrations in my paper. Such sources include any outside information
other than the required text. In another word, how to research, and
which or what kind of material is appropriate to use and which are not
(41).

Related to the need to learn to deal with multiple sources (again
within the task management strategies rubric in Table 9), library skills
were mentioned 19 times (9%), including a wish to learn, or to learn
better, how to use the library, how to gather materials and decide
which of these would be appropriate for their topics, and how to
properly reference sources in footnotes and bibliographies.

These requests for more complex writing assignments incorporating
multiple sources anticipate responses specifically suggesting that EAP
writing classes are too easy; too superficial; not challenging, sophisti-
cated, or college-level enough—the third most frequently mentioned
complaint (18% of respondents, Table 10).

6. I wish I had a harder writing class at ESL; there were very big gap
between ESL and the freshman’s English class (27).

7. I was hardly penalized for grammatical mistakes, such as fragments
and comma-splices; one fragment (in an essay) will pull you down a
letter grade or so in English 111, 112, and 201. This is a major reason
that a “regular” English course comes as a shock for many ESL students
(232).
8. I think that the requirement is low (203).

9. ESL writing course should be dealt with the materials closed to the college level courses. It seems there is big gaps between what I did in my ESL writing class and what I have to do in the college level course (61).

10. ESL teachers should not be too friendly or leaniant with foreign students. Teachers should be strict about grammar usage and prohibit talking in their own language (250).

11. I would prefer the class to be more demanding about writing instead of being superficial (236).

One student asked for

12. real ... writing. Real college professors' interest (252).

Some of these responses, and others, suggest that a focus on more intellectually stimulating and demanding subject matter might better prepare students for their writing across the curriculum. Ten students (13%), for example, felt they would have benefited more from writing on subjects related either to their majors or to material they would study in other college courses than from writing on subjects such as traditions in their countries or differences between the U.S. and their homes.

13. If I had had my major-related subjects in ESL, the transition into the regular curriculum would have been smoother (27).

14. Writing about college/school related subjects ... Giving the student a general base for the real college writing (252).

In other responses like these, students again expressed a desire for more college-level, more sophisticated vocabulary. This interest in more challenging work may be related to the wish also expressed several times through these surveys for the EAP class to do more to build students’ confidence. That is, it may not be enough to encourage ESL students by applauding their writing on topics that are, for instance, interesting but nonacademic. Perhaps they can only build real confidence in their writing if they are challenged and succeed at writing on topics more central to their academic and intellectual lives.

Another theme in these responses was a plea for more individualized consideration both administratively and within the EAP classes. A few students mentioned their disgust at being grouped with ESL students and required to take EAP courses at all. But several students also pleaded for smaller classes so that students could receive more individual attention. One student found group work a poor substitute for conferencing with the teacher:

15. I wish I had had much more time with my teachers on one-to-one basis, since that was the only way I learned what I did (46).
In answer to the question, What did your ESL writing classes fail to prepare you for? one student says:

16. Everything. Most of the material taught in class I already know. The class fail to help me with the part I have trouble with. They didn’t find out what the problem I have in English. Instead, they just leave me hanging and give me a passing grade (207).

Finally, many of the students who mentioned a desire for building greater speed in reading and writing raised that issue in relation to writing exams and, in several cases, in relation to short-answer and multiple-choice exams. Unlike their NES counterparts who can quickly read a large number of short-answer and multiple-choice questions, several of these ESL students pointed out the disproportionate amount of time they require just to read these questions. For multiple-choice questions especially, determining the correct answers may depend on realizing a subtle (for L2 students) difference between two words. As one student says:

17. Due to the way that Multiple Questions were designed, (very close together [in meaning]) I had to do better on the essay Questions and I did. Because I could explain what I learned in the format I wanted and knew, I [made] most of my Grade by answering essay questions (8).

Other students made similar comments in relation to the requirements for doing well on a short-answer item. Being unable to retrieve exactly the right vocabulary items or to retrieve them quickly may put these students at a disadvantage. One student finds problems with short essays in general:

18. The short paper essays are my problems . . . . In a short essay, I had to use the words that should have very specific meaning. Since my word choice is limited, I have almost always hard time to find those words; therefore, my essays cannot make good arguments but rather be very simple (243).

These comments seem noteworthy because we often think in terms of preparing students for longer essay exams across the curriculum rather than for short-answer items. Yet it may be that L2 student have less trouble with longer essay exams, where they themselves control the language they will use, than with the shorter types of items more dependent on exact vocabulary and on speed.

IMPLICATIONS

As noted above, the majority of the students surveyed here felt that their training in EAP writing courses helped them accomplish their
goals in writing assignments in classes across the curriculum. But they also expressed frustrations with their EAP writing courses in specific areas. We feel it is important and appropriate to question students on their sense of what progress they make and what difficulties they encounter as they move from our writing classes to other writing demands in content courses. In fact, this type of needs assessment is appropriate for all students in any environment. However, when students' sense of their own needs and our sense as professionals of what they need do not match, we need to consider carefully the nature of this mismatch, neither jumping to the conclusion that our courses must be immediately changed to match students’ expressed desires nor simply assuming that we must convince students that we know better what will prove to be helpful to them in the development of their academic literacy. In responding to these questions, students did not hesitate to blame themselves for not taking full advantage of EAP writing classes when they took them, citing as reasons experiencing personal problems, not registering for all the classes offered, not taking the classes seriously, not taking enough interest in the classes, not spending enough time on them, having a bad attitude, being “not smart,” and even having “a slow mind.” Nevertheless, this survey shows these ESL students feeling generally successful in their writing across the curriculum, even in courses not in their majors but rather in core education courses, and yet also acutely aware of their continuing needs.

Their continuing needs, as our respondents perceive and articulate them, revolve primarily around language issues, particularly around vocabulary expansion. The claim has been made (Saville-Troike, 1984) that “vocabulary knowledge is the single most important area of second language competence” (p. 199) in relation to academic achievement. We interpret our respondents’ concern with language-related issues, as we have said, in light of the frustration students expressed (a) with the amount of time it takes them to access appropriate lexical and grammatical forms, (b) with the imprecision with which they are forced to express themselves (with words that are “only semi-fitting with my thoughts”), and (c) with the gap between the writing these L2 students are asked to do in EAP classes and the writing they are then required to do in other courses. Because the second largest category of continuing needs which our respondents identified is related to task management strategies (including, in particular, writing from reading—from multiple sources—and use of the library), we are convinced that EAP writing classes need to move away from writing tasks that require students only to tap their own opinions and experiences and toward work that encourages students to integrate those opinions and experiences with external sources of information and argument.

In our survey, 18% of unelicited respondent comments indicated
that EAP writing courses are excessively easy compared to writing required in other courses. In curious contrast, Kroll (1979) reports that in follow-up interviews she conducted with L2 students who had responded to her questionnaire on writing needs, 24 of 35 students “reported having no difficulty with courses in [their] major field and felt that the English course would lower [their] grade record and generally cause [them] a lot of mental anguish, despite the fact that [they] did not ‘really need to know English anyway’” (p. 224). This statement suggests that Kroll’s respondents experienced more difficulty with their English writing courses than with their writing in other courses. Although our respondents were overwhelmingly pleased with their EAP writing courses, some experienced a jolt as they moved to more demanding writing tasks in courses across the curriculum. We cannot make the claim that this contrast between Kroll’s findings and our own reflects a change in EAP writing class curricula, a change brought about by the conversion of many ESL writing teachers to the less punitive, more student-focused attitudes promoted by approaches to writing instruction that became widespread in the 1980s. Many other factors may account for the difference. Nevertheless, it is tempting to ascribe the change in attitude among students to the change in attitude and practice among writing teachers.

How can we account for the gap our respondents perceived between the demands of writing in their EAP classes and the demands of writing in other courses? For undergraduates, writing within the academy is a unique genre, neither the same as the kind of free-flowing personal journal writing favored (often for quite appropriate reasons) in many EAP writing classes nor the same as professional or even graduate student writing within specific disciplinary communities. Despite concerns expressed to the contrary in both the L1 and the L2 literature on initiating students into disciplinary writing, undergraduates are not expected to engage in or contribute to the ongoing professional conversation of geographers, historians, or physicists. The “discourse community” of undergraduate writers, particularly in courses outside their majors, is peculiarly short-lived and is not reproduced elsewhere. It is an educational discourse community affording these students the opportunity to sample knowledge from different disciplines, most of which will never include these students as actual members or even as apprentices.

But undergraduate students do seem to be expected to move beyond “knowledge-telling” forms of writing to “knowledge-transforming” (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), which is believed to be the type of writing that promotes learning (Cumming, in press). If knowledge transforming is the goal, it may be that we are mistaken in assuming
that practicing writing in and of itself is sufficient to prepare students for that knowledge-transforming function, just as it appears that engaging in and becoming fluent in social conversation (i.e., developing communicative competence) appears to be insufficient to promote fluent academic competence (Cummins, 1979; Saville-Troike, 1984). We would argue that topics reported by our subjects such as “Japanese tea ceremony,” “Describe the features of your house,” “American culture versus my own culture,” “A very funny story about how I met my new friends,” “Languages in Switzerland,” or even “Summarize a book we’ve read into 3 pages” (all topics listed by our respondents as assigned in their EAP writing classes) may not require knowledge transformation and therefore may do little to promote ESL students’ participation in the undergraduate academic culture. Furthermore, as Miller (1991) argues about L1 first-year composition classes, this type of assignment, typical of an approach which does not initiate students into a broader intellectual arena, encourages solipsism in students, that is, the impression that even unexamined convictions are self-evidently valid and that intellectual growth is not a goal in writing courses as it is in other courses. Furthermore, if this type of assignment is, as it appears, out of step with the type of work required in other courses in higher education, such assignments are then complicit in the continued marginalization of composition as a field and of composition teachers. Thus, although we understand and endorse the use of such activities as journal writing and the personal essay in their place, these types of writing tasks may not be enough by themselves, may not offer enough intellectual challenge to develop in ESL students the ability, and the confidence in that ability, to make success easier to come by in their academic writing tasks across the curriculum.

Contrary to the notion that writing assignments across the curriculum are vague or underspecified (e.g., Write an 8–10 page paper on the causes of the Civil War), many of these writing assignments are not open-ended but rather quite detailed in specifying purpose, form, procedures, and audience (Currie, 1993; Horowitz, 1986b; Marsella, Hilgers, & McLaren, 1992). This makes generic preparation for these tasks difficult, if not impossible, for the writing class to accomplish. By generic preparation we include both general writing on topics about which students know little and excessively specific forms of writing requiring all students, for example, to write a lab report or a business case study. What does seem reasonable for students like those responding to this survey is the following.

1. In light of the analysis mentioned earlier (Marsella, Hilgers, & McLaren, 1992) indicating that students’ handling of writing assign-
nents is largely based on previous writing experiences, it would seem useful to design writing courses that give students a variety of writing experiences, not, for example, to restrict writing to essays.

2. Considering the variety of writing tasks and topics assigned in courses across the curriculum, it would also seem reasonable to foster in our students a flexible attitude toward writing assignments (Prior, 1992), possibly by training them to analyze a variety of writing assignments and encouraging them to feel comfortable in questioning their professors about them.

3. It seems important to address ESL students’ ongoing need for efficiency in language processing, including vocabulary retrieval. We would argue that this need is not addressed by isolated work with grammar and vocabulary but rather that speed of language processing only develops through extensive and repeated acts of language processing in the service of accomplishing writing goals.

4. EAP writing course planners need to consider the intellectual challenge posed by the assignments made in the writing course. We would argue that the ability to engage intellectually demanding tasks well in an L2 develops from the engagement itself.

5. Given the importance of task management strategies to the students in our survey, it would seem imperative to link reading to writing by helping students locate, read, evaluate the pertinence of; respond to; and manipulate information from outside sources.

As researchers like Currie (1993), Chiseri-Strater (1991), and Walvoord and McCarthy (1990) make clear, professors across the curriculum do define part of their educational tasks as the initiation of students into the style of thinking and writing done by professionals in their fields. As writing teachers who are not members of these professions, we are not qualified to help students think and write like historians, engineers, or agricultural economists. As Spack (1988) argues, this kind of initiation is best left to the teachers in those fields and cannot be the job of EAP writing teachers. It is the job of EAP writing teachers, however, to look beyond EAP writing classrooms to the writing demands our students will face after they leave our classes and to consider how we might help to prepare them for those demands. It is also our job to remain aware of and to continuously consider the benefits of the variety of pedagogical models of EAP writing classrooms that provide us options to choose from. (See, e.g., Carson & Leki, 1993; Cumming, in press; Jacoby, Leech, & Holten, in press; Johns, in press; Shih, 1986.)

The extent to which the implications of this research are relevant to other contexts must be locally determined, but we urge course
developers and writing teachers to consider broadening the basis for curricular decisions beyond philosophical and/or pedagogical predilections. We feel that as EAP writing teachers and researchers, we need to be making greater efforts to consult more with ESL students and former students about their needs and about the ways in which their EAP writing training articulates with cross-curricular writing demands. Giving our students voice in this way helps to balance a top-down approach to curriculum design with information from those who are the focus of our efforts.

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REFERENCES


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Erratum

In Michael Busch’s Research Issues contribution, “Using Likert Scales in L2 Research: A Researcher Comments,” which appeared in Volume 27, Number 4, the following sentence on page 735:

In practice Likert-type scales in language learning could safely operate with a range of 59 categories (Cox, 1980).

should read:

In practice Likert-type scales in language learning could safely operate with a range of 5–9 categories (Cox, 1980).

We apologize for this error.
The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), a program of Educational Testing Service (ETS), announces its annual award of $2,500 to be given in the Spring of 1995 for doctoral dissertation research that makes a significant and original contribution to the field of second/foreign language testing.

The research must have been completed as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree or its equivalent, and the dissertation must have been accepted by the candidate's institution after December 1, 1992. Although the dissertation must be submitted in English, it may involve research related to the second/foreign language testing of any language.

Three non-ETS reviewers with expertise in second/foreign language testing will judge the submissions on the basis of scholarly or professional significance, originality and creativity, technical quality, and quality of presentation.

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The past decade has brought increased legislative pressure to assure English language “fluency” on the part of nonnative-English-speaking teaching assistants (NNS TAs). However, no consensus has been reached in second language assessment about the appropriate instruments to evaluate the spoken language proficiency of NNS TAs. We see as a major issue the fact that, as a field, we have not articulated the theoretical grounds on which to evaluate the merit of assessment instruments as they are used in NNS TA testing. In this paper, we use Bachman’s (1990, 1991) framework of language testing and, in particular, his standard of “authenticity” for language testing instruments to evaluate three instruments of spoken language assessment—the SPEAK (Spoken Proficiency English Assessment Kit) test, the OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview), and a performance test—in terms of their “authenticity” as language tests for NNS TAs. We first look at the three test instruments as contexts for language use by examining what Bachman terms their test method facets. We then examine discourse elicited by the test instruments and consider the discourse differences arising from these differences in test context. Finally, we consider the three test instruments in relation to features of language use in the target context and draw conclusions regarding the authenticity of the instruments in NNS TA evaluation.

One response to the increased numbers of international faculty and graduate teaching assistants (TAs) in U.S. universities in recent years has been a legislative focus on English language requirements for nonnative-English-speaking (NNS) instructors of undergraduate students. To date, at least 10 states have drafted or passed legislation regarding such English language proficiency requirements
(Brown, Fishman, & Jones, 1990). An example of such legislation for the state of Florida is given in the Appendix. We feel there are major problems with this legislation and similar laws, including potential equity issues for faculty and liability for universities in the absence of clear guidelines.

From a theoretical standpoint, we see most predominantly the problem of the evaluation of language proficiency itself. Despite the increased legislative pressure, no consensus has been reached in our field as to appropriate instruments to evaluate the spoken language proficiency of NNS TAs or even the terms in which this proficiency could be described. We thus find ourselves still more or less in the position described by Kaplan (1989) with regard to the testing of NNS teaching assistants, “no satisfactory instruments have yet been devised to assess the abilities of the candidates, let alone to assure that they are ‘fluent,’ whatever that means” (p. 113). We see as a major issue the fact that, as a field, we have not articulated the theoretical grounds on which to evaluate the merit of assessment instruments as they are used in NNS TA testing.

In this paper, we use Bachman’s (1990, 1991) framework of language testing and “authenticity” to evaluate three instruments of spoken language assessment—the TSE/SPEAK (Test of Spoken English/SPOken Proficiency English Assessment Kit) test, the ACTFL OPI (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Oral Proficiency Interview), and our IP (Interactive Performance) test—as assessment measures for NNS TAs. In the Bachman framework, authenticity is defined as a quality of the relationship between features of the test and features of the non-test target-use context. We conclude that, within this analytical framework, the IP test has greater authenticity than the other two tests as an instrument for assessing language for TA purposes. The argument will be sketched below. We begin by examining features of language use in target contexts—the instructional settings and instructional tasks of teaching assistants—and follow with an initial consideration of the SPEAK test, the OPI, and IP test as instruments of evaluation in NNS TA testing.

**TARGET CONTEXTS FOR USE:**
**ETHNOGRAPHIC AND DISCOURSE STUDIES OF ITS LANGUAGE USE IN INSTRUCTIONAL CONTEXTS**

In recent years, a number of ethnographic and discourse research studies have begun to identify the features of language use by TAs in instructional contexts. Rounds (1987), for example, investigated the features of communicative competence in mathematics teaching by
analyzing the discourse of effective and noneffective TAs. She found evidence that effective TA language involved elaboration of the mathematics of the classroom, including such features as (a) overtly marking the "junctures" (important decision points) of problems; (b) explicitly organizing and chunking material and marking overt transitions between topics; and (c) developing cohesion and continuity between problems and between classes by repetition and linking devices. In their observation of three native-speaker faculty members teaching mathematics, Byrd and Constantinides (1992) found that these faculty used contextualizing strategies for connections—between classes and between courses, between the discussion and the textbook, between the world of mathematics and the outside world, and so forth. They cite anecdotal evidence from other international teaching assistant (ITA) educators that less successful mathematics ITAs gave minimal narration of the problems they were covering or did not talk at all while they were solving a problem on the board.

In laboratory contexts, Myers and Douglas (1991) focus on students' use of "subtechnical" vocabulary and vocabulary of low-lexical content (e.g., stuff) as being typical of student language and particularly problematic for NNS TAs. Myers (in press) demonstrates how a science lab may lead to less shared context between students and their TA than a teacher-fronted classroom: When the TA circulates from group to group in the lab, students may not orient the TA adequately to the referent or topic under discussion; students may also speak to the TA in the same informal register they use with the other students in their lab group, leading to more difficulties in interpretation and comprehension on the part of the NNS TA. Tanner (1991) investigated the use of TA questions in the chemistry laboratory. TAs' high use of referential rather than display questions was not predicted by earlier classroom discourse studies and was related to the function of questions in the lab instructional context. Tanner also noted the absence of the three-part lesson structure found in other studies of classroom discourse (e.g., Mehan, 1979), with a structure of (a) teacher's question, (b) student's response, and (c) teacher's evaluative comment. Tanner concluded that the lack of teacher evaluative comments in the lab meant that the language in the laboratory was more like everyday conversation and concluded that the primary role of the TA within the lab was not to evaluate of students' performance but consisted of assisting students and giving help.

McChesney (1990) examined the functions of the language used in office hours by professors and teaching assistants to their students. Functions of talk in the office hour included expressing interest and encouragement, recalling what the professor said in class, providing information and advice about examinations, and influencing decision
making. Questions were used for information, clarification, comprehension, and confirmation. McChesney found that in contrast to professors and TAs, students often used indirect forms in asking questions and pointed out that such indirect speech acts might not be recognized as questions by the ITAs.

Williams (1992) and Tyler (1992) each examined the role of discourse marking in the comprehensibility of NNS TAs in the context of practice lectures during the course of TA preparation programs. Williams found that the ability to plan presentations led to an increase in overt forms of discourse marking such as statements containing speaker intention and that planned presentations as compared to unplanned presentations were judged more comprehensible by undergraduate and ESL specialist raters. In a study on the role of discourse structuring cues, Tyler examined the transcripts of two introductory lectures—one by a NNS and one by a NS TA—on topics of their specialization. The two texts were read by a NS to a group of 15 NS graduate students. For the NS text, listeners were able to identify all the points of the lecture and described the text as “well-organized” and “clear.” They described the NNS text, however, as “muddled” and “rambling” and were not able to comprehend more than three of the five main points. Tyler attributed these differences in the comprehensibility of the two texts to differences in lexical discourse markers, lexical specificity, syntax, and intonation.

In his examination of the discourse differences between the genres of the SPEAK test and classroom recitation sections, Godfrey (1992) found major differences in framing and referencing occurring on the part of TAs working in the two settings. On the SPEAK test, with its mechanical (absent) interlocutor and its minimum number of referents in the narration, for example, the degree of tracking required on the part of the NNS TA to keep referencing clear was far different than when she was covering a complex math problem for a classroom of students.

These studies have begun to document the kinds of language tasks that TAs must perform as part of their instructional responsibilities. Clearly these language tasks vary according to the varied contexts in which TAs work and the “participant structure” (Philips, 1972) of the setting: Classes and recitations are typically teacher-fronted full-group settings, whereas laboratories have the TA circulating to small groups, and office hours involve primarily one-to-one or small-group interaction. Although the contexts for target use are varied, two key features emerge:

1. The interactive nature of the target-use context. The studies described above emphasize the importance of teacher questions in
organizing classroom talk and the importance of listening comprehension (of both formal and informal registers), not only between the teacher and one student but between the teacher and multiple students, either in small groups, as in lab contexts where the TA circulates from group to group, or in the larger classroom where the TA may have responsibility for managing several groups of students.

2. The complex nature of language used in teaching, in terms of discourse structure, social roles, strategic aspects, and so forth. We believe that such complexity can best be captured by language models such as “communicative competence” (Canale & Swain, 1980) or Bachman’s (1990) “communicative language ability (CLA)” model. Examples of this complexity include the TA’s ability to chunk information, provide organizational and transitional cues, and use appropriate referencing or work within the conventions of the academic discipline, as in narrating the problem while writing it on the board.

SPOKEN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS IN NNS TA EVALUATION

To date, among standardized instruments, the TSE and its institutional version the SPEAK test, developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), has been the most widely used assessment instrument in NNS TA evaluation. Among state laws, the TSE is explicitly identified as an appropriate testing instrument in the states of Florida, Tennessee, and Texas (Brown, Fishman, & Jones, 1990). This semi-direct audiotaped test of spoken language proficiency was developed as part of the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) testing program in response to a need for an oral proficiency measure (Clark & Swinton, 1979). Because the need to assess the language abilities of NNS TAs was already apparent, a major study involving NNS TAs at nine universities was undertaken to examine the usefulness of the TSE in predicting the language communication skills of NNS instructors (Clark & Swinton, 1980). The study reported positive correlations between instructor’s TSE comprehensibility score and students’ evaluations of instructor’s “ability to handle common situations involving language skills,” such as lectures, understanding student questions, and communication during office appointments (ETS, 1990, p. 28). At the same time, however, ETS cautioned against relying solely on TSE scores in evaluating NNS instructors, warning users to “base the evaluation of an individual on all available relevant information, not
only on TSE scores” and not to “use TSE scores as the sole indicator of potential teaching or work performance” (ETS, 1990, p. 19). The TSE may be the most widely used spoken English proficiency test in the world: ETS (1990) reports more than 14,000 people taking the TSE from 1987 to 1989.

An instrument of far less importance in terms of numbers is the OPI, originally developed by the Foreign Service Institute and adapted by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the Educational Testing Service. Despite its early role in NNS TA assessment (Bailey, 1982; Stansfield & Ballard, 1984), this instrument has to date been used mostly in foreign language testing, although it has recently gained renewed exposure in NNS TA testing and ESL use generally (Hiple, Hoekje, & Maurer; Hoekje, 1990).

Yet the inadequacy of both of these instruments in NNS TA testing has been felt. The OPI has been strongly criticized as an instrument for spoken language assessment for reasons of test reliability and validity (see Valdman, 1988, especially articles by Bachman and Lantolf & Frawley). Because of the “live” format of the face-to-face interview, each test is different, leading to criticism that the reliability of the test is compromised. Van Lier (1989) has also questioned the validity of the interview format itself in eliciting talk for evaluation purposes. Validity issues have also been raised regarding the holistic model of language proficiency upon which the scale is based (Bachman, 1991). Apart from these theoretical objections, it is probably fair to say that the greatest limitation to its use in NNS TA testing has been the time-consuming nature of test administration and the training time required for testers to become certified.

The SPEAK test has also received criticism on several grounds. One continuing issue has been the face validity of the test tasks. Ponder (1991) raised the issue of the variance between the tasks of the SPEAK test and other “real-life” speaking tasks. Smith (1989) found dissatisfaction among examinees who felt that the type of topics did not adequately assess their proficiency as communicators of scientific or technical information. A second issue of concern has surrounded the means of eliciting the language data. Gokcora (1992) noted the affective issues involved in the audiotaped format of the test. Hoekje and Godfrey (1991) raised concerns about the effect of the “uncertain norms of speaking” (Wolfson, 1976) that occur in the absence of a live interlocutor. Johnson (1991) also noted the affective problems in the current method of eliciting the data: Students complained of “being tested in a tiny cubicle, having to interact with a tape recorder, not a person, and talking about unfamiliar pictures and topics” (p. 8). A final area of concern has been the rating guidelines. Ponder (1991) noted his difficulty in evaluating the status of the language produced
on the SPEAK test. Godfrey and Hoekje (1990) questioned the viability of using native speaker (NS) norms to evaluate nonnative speaker texts in the absence of concrete data on NS performance.

In large part because of a general perception of the insufficiency of these standardized tests of spoken proficiency, many programs for ITA education have moved to what is referred to as performance testing (Plakans & Abraham, 1990). In a survey of 27 ITA programs, Barnes, Finger, Hoekje, and Ruffin (1989), found that most programs described three basic testing needs—initial screening, placement, and final evaluation—and reported using a combination of both standardized language proficiency tests and performance testing as part of their program. Many programs measure language proficiency initially through a standardized test (typically, the SPEAK test) and use performance-based measures as part of the final evaluation. Performance testing in ITA education has usually involved the testing of the examinee’s spoken language skills within a (mock) teaching context. The tasks in such tests often include a presentation on a key point or term in the candidate’s academic field and a period of answering questions from the audience; the audience is usually a panel of evaluators, often including undergraduate students.

Examples of performance tests requiring the TA to make presentations include the TEACH test (Taped Evaluation of Assistants’ Classroom Handling) developed by Abraham, Klein, and Plakans (1985) and the ITA test (Smith, Meyers, & Burkhalter, 1992). Other performance tasks have included office-hour role plays (e.g., Briggs, 1991), pronunciation and explanation of key terms from the TA’s field of study (e.g., Simon, 1991), and classroom management skills (e.g., Bailey, 1985). The performance test that we will use as our source of data in this paper is the IP test, which we have developed and reported on in Hoekje and Linnell (1991, 1992), Linnell and Hoekje (1992), and Linnell, Washburn, and Hoekje (1993). This test will be described in greater detail below.

Performance tests have wide user appeal in our field. However, problems with these instruments also remain. One issue is the role of nonlinguistic aspects of communication (such as blackboard use) within the presentation. From one perspective, if teaching is the task to be evaluated, then the assessment of the candidate’s ability to marshall all communication resources in teaching—including nonlinguistic ones—may be appropriate. As noted earlier, objections have been raised with regard to evaluating these aspects of performance, however, because native speakers are rarely, if ever, similarly judged (see also Brown, Fishman, & Jones, 1990). Of more ambiguous status for evaluation is the area of discourse features of talk, such as the use of organization markers and features of coherence and cohesion, which have been
demonstrated to affect the comprehensibility of a passage (Tyler, 1992; Williams, 1992) but are typically not evaluated on such instruments as the SPEAK test.

Another issue for performance testing is the reliability of the ratings and their generalizability across institutional contexts. As Briggs (1986) noted for social science research instruments in general, there is often a trade-off between the validity and the reliability of test instruments. Finally, Bailey (1985) questioned the mock teaching aspect of the performance test task on the basis that real teaching involves much greater management of the classroom and social relationships than a mock context could ever provide.

Having presented an overview of the three types of test instruments—the standardized SPEAK test, the face-to-face oral proficiency interview, and in-house performance tests—we take the position in this paper that the particular merits or limitations of these instruments cannot be fully appreciated apart from the uses to which they are put. In particular, the quality of “authenticity” is one that derives specifically from test purpose and the relation of the test to the target-use context. The next section introduces the concept of authenticity in testing as it derives from test purpose and the relation of the test to the target context of language use.

AUTHENTICITY IN LANGUAGE TESTING

Authenticity as a concept has been a major concern in language testing over the past decade (see papers in *Language Testing*, 1985, 2[1]). As Bachman (1990) summarizes, there have been two major trends: the “real-life” approach, concerned with the extent to which test performance replicates nontest performance; and the “interfractional/ability” approach, which identifies the essential characteristics of language use in target and test settings through focusing on the interaction of language user, task, and context. The first, the “real-life” approach, has been criticized as naive because no test setting exactly resembles its real-life counterpart (Spolsky, 1985; Stevenson, 1985). For example, there are profound differences in the status relationships between speaker and listener when a lecturer presents information to undergraduates as part of a course sequence and when the lecturer presents information to a panel for certification purposes. Such differences result, minimally, in sociolinguistic and strategic language variation. To treat test and target-use setting as equivalent because of the similarity of lecture format ignores the role of context.

In the second approach, the authenticity of language tests arises from both their “situational” and their “interfractional” authenticity.
Situational authenticity refers to the relationship of features of the test method (i.e., “test method facets”) to particular features of the target-use situation. Interfractional authenticity refers to the extent to which an examinee’s language ability is engaged in the test task. Thus the emphasis in this model shifts from “attempting to sample actual instances of non-test language use to that of determining what combination of test method facets is most likely to promote an appropriate interaction of a particular group of test takers with the testing context” (Bachman, 1990, p. 317).

Bachman’s model of language testing (1990, 1991) consists of two interrelated theoretical positions—one on the nature of language ability and the second on the relation of test instruments to target contexts. Specifically, the model presented in 1991 allows judgments to be made about the degree of authenticity of the test instruments. In this model of language ability (“communicative language ability”), Bachman expands on current notions of language use such as “communicative competence” (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980) in conceptualizing language use as consisting of two interrelated components—a language “knowledge” base and a “metacognitive strategy” base. These two components are simultaneously in use and allow the speaker to assess, plan, and execute language. In the communicative language ability model, differences in language ability result from differences either in language knowledge or in metacognitive strategies. We believe that such a notion of language use is essential to properly conceptualize the communicative competence necessary for effective teaching assistants (Hoekje & Williams, 1992).

In the next sections of the paper, we will use Bachman’s model to evaluate the three types of test instruments discussed here in terms of the degree of their situational and interfractional authenticity as language tests for NNS TAs. In our analysis, we present discourse samples from these three types of tests—SPEAK Form 2, the ACTFL OPI, and the IP test. The IP test is similar to other performance tests in its requirement that candidates give a 10-min videotaped presentation on a topic in their prospective teaching fields and answer questions from a panel of evaluators. The panel comprises three ESL specialists and, in some cases, an undergraduate. Although this particular test is comparable to most other performance tests, it does have several predominant features that should be noted. First, the format of the IP test necessitates the use of certain language functions required in the instructional contexts in which ITAs work, such as the ability to paraphrase, defend an opinion, and negotiate meaning. In order to evaluate the examinee’s ability to perform these functions, panelists interrupt throughout the 10-min presentation and ask questions that elicit these particular functions. Second, the IP test attempts to simulate
the classroom situation by giving the audience some control of the topic. Panelists gain control of the topic by asking questions that require the candidate to speak extemporaneously on a related but, perhaps, unprepared topic. Finally, because we object to the evaluation of non-language aspects of teaching for NNSs when NSs are not so judged, we have designed the IP test to address only language performance, within a communicative competence framework (see Hoekje & Williams, 1992; Linnell & Hoekje, 1992). We turn now to an examination of the test instruments as contexts for language use through what Bachman terms their test method facets.

THE TESTS AS CONTEXTS FOR LANGUAGE USE: TEST METHOD FACETS

In Bachman’s (1990) framework, the phrase test method facets refers to five major dimensions of a test, namely, the testing environment (e.g., familiarity of place and equipment, time of testing); the test rubric (e.g., organization, time allocation); the input to the test taker (format and the nature of language); the nature of the expected response (format, nature of language, and restrictions on response); and the relationship between the input and the response (e.g., reciprocal or nonreciprocal).

One dimension along which the three tests analyzed here vary is facets of the test organization and language input. The SPEAK test is conducted entirely through an audiotaped medium; timing and content areas are fixed. Six discrete tasks range from sentence completion to presenting information. On the OPI, the face-to-face format provides live language input from only one interlocutor, who determines the structure of the interview. Timing and content are variable within specified guidelines. On the IP test, the test takers themselves structure the teaching task. Input during the test comes in the form of questions from several audience members to the test taker; timing is relatively fixed regardless of whether or not the speaker has finished the teaching task.

A second dimension along which the tests vary is the type of response expected from the test taker. On the SPEAK test, relatively short passages of language are expected from the test taker for a total of about 6 min of speech. In two sections, sentence-completion or single-sentence responses are sufficient. In three sections, connected discourse is expected, up to a minute in length. Although listening comprehension is never directly evaluated, a missed question on the tape cannot be replayed for the test taker, resulting in a lowered score. On the OPI, a substantial amount of discourse is expected. The test varies
from 10 to 30 min, depending on level. At the intermediate level, sentences and strings of sentences are expected; at the advanced level, paragraph organization; and at the superior level, extended discourse (Buck, 1989). Listening comprehension is not explicitly evaluated, although the interviewers’ need to modify their language in asking questions is taken into account in the rating. On the IP test, a substantial amount of discourse is expected, organized around a central lesson. Features of discourse related to the framing of information are expected, including marking of new and old information, more important and less important information, and so on. Accuracy is required to maintain comprehensibility when performing various language tasks, including defending a point. Listening comprehension is explicitly taken into account in the rating.

A third test variable is the relationship between the test input and the test taker’s response, including the adaptability and the reciprocity of the setting. On the SPEAK test, the audiotaped format precludes adaptability and reciprocity. The standardized format remains the same regardless of the nature of response by the test taker. The test taker is unable to ask for clarification of directions or further explanations of tasks; in turn, the rater cannot ask the test taker to further explain a point or a word that is unclear. On the OPI, adaptability of the test to the test taker is a key feature; lower level speakers, for example, are given lower level tasks. Reciprocity occurs to some extent; although conversational in some aspects of appearance, the OPI is a tightly structured interview with most of the control over turn taking in the hands of the interviewer. However, misunderstandings on either side can be queried or explained further. The IP test is adaptive in the sense that the test taker has major control over the topic area and the level of the presentation on the topic; however, audience members may raise different topics in questions. Unlike the SPEAK test and the OPI, the IP test allows several audience members to speak at once, requiring the examinee to negotiate turn taking among the speakers. Within the parameters of the overall length of the test, the handling of the turn taking is within the control of the examinee. Figure 1 illustrates these key features of the different test instruments.

**DISCOURSE DIFFERENCES IN TEST ELICITATION: “WILLIAM”**

The test method facets discussed above are just a few of those included in Bachman’s model, but they are sufficient to illustrate some of the key differences among the three test instruments. These test facet differences lead to major differences in the extent of interaction
FIGURE 1
Test Method Facets: The SPEAK Test, The OPI, and The IP Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SPEAK test</th>
<th>OPI</th>
<th>IP test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test organization</td>
<td>Timing and content areas are fixed.</td>
<td>Timing and content areas are variable within specified guidelines.</td>
<td>Timing is relatively fixed regardless of whether the teaching task is finished. Test taker determines the content area within specified guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input</td>
<td>Audiotaped and written language and visual stimuli.</td>
<td>Live language from one interlocutor.</td>
<td>Live language from several different audience members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected response</td>
<td>Relatively short passages of language for a total of 6 min of speech.</td>
<td>Substantial amount of discourse is expected for a total of 10–30 min, depending on the level. Listening comprehension is not explicitly evaluated.</td>
<td>Substantial amount of discourse expected for a total of 10–15 min. Discourse is organized around a central point or lesson. Listening comprehension is explicitly evaluated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship between test input and test taker’s response</td>
<td>Audiotaped format precludes adaptability and reciprocity.</td>
<td>Adaptability is a key feature of the interview. Some reciprocity; the interviewer controls most of the turn taking; miscommunication can be negotiated.</td>
<td>Adaptability and reciprocity are present; both the test taker and audience control aspects of topic and turn taking. Miscommunication can be negotiated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and the nature and amount of language produced for evaluation during the test. Excerpts 1–3 below illustrate the types of language elicited by each of the three test instruments. In all cases, the speaker is “William,” a chemistry TA from Taiwan. In each case, we have shown a sample of connected discourse: for the SPEAK test, the response to two test prompts—a narration of a picture sequence and the answer to an opinion question; for the OPI, the response to the question about issues facing Taiwanese young people; and for the IP test, for the explanation of electron orbitals.¹

¹Researchers can receive the complete texts from these three tests for this speaker by writing to the authors c/o Hoekje, Department of Humanities and Communication, Programs in English as a Second Language, Drexel University, 32nd and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia, PA 19104.
1. Excerpt From the SPEAK Test

This example is taken from Section 4, the picture narration. Before this section, the speaker has completed the warm-up questions (Section 1); an oral reading (Section 2); and sentence completion (Section 3).

a. Section 4

*Test prompt:* Now tell the story that the picture shows. Speak as accurately and in as much detail as you can. Begin the story with the words, “One day last month.” Begin now.

W = William.

W: One day last month, Mary went to the Van Pelt library and try to find . . . try . . . and tried to find a textbook written by David Latman. She tried to find the book in the author index and she find the book in the shelves. She take some notes about some content in the book and after . . . the . . . she study the books . . . she decided to . . . to borrow the book . . . back . . . to home. So she . . . she went to the . . . the library man and asked her whether she could borrow this book or not. The library man was very pleased to help her.

(Test Prompt: STOP)

The next example is from Section 6, where the speaker is asked to give his/her opinion on three topics. This is the third question in that sequence:

b. Section 6.3

*Test Prompt:* What is the best way to improve health standards throughout the world?

W = William.

W: Um. . . [a] The health standard is really based on urn the environment that where you live and the way you . . you live. [b] For example, in Europe, um, there are several health standards, um, difference different from country to countries. [c] Um I think the most important part to um to establish a standards . . . standard of health is um trying to um in try to improve the the hygiene conditions of every neighborhoods and in all around every countries. [d] And the most important part is you have to know urn there are several different conditions (Test prompt: STOP) in every country.

1Letters in brackets (e.g., [a]) indicate elements of an argument and will be referred to later in this discussion.
2. Excerpt From The ACTFL OPI 3

The next example is taken from an OPI completed with William during the same week. The excerpt occurred about 7 min into the interview; William had just finished talking about some of the adjustment problems he had faced coming from Taiwan.

I is the interviewer; W is William.

I: XXX What . . . tell me about Taiwan these days, especially the young people. What are the issues that face young people in Taiwan these days.

W: Oh, yeah. Right. [a] Um actually the whole Taiwanese society is kind of American-like. You know [b] people use the Visa card or [c] they take- they go to the McDonald’s and the most interesting part is that every McDonald’s shop in Taiwan is maybe twice or three times bigger than the McDonald’s here.

I: Uh

W: Yes. And it becomes, you know, a place for young people to go there and, you know, just chatting and eating and drink and also study.

I: Really.

W: Yes. Yes. And they provide the the popular music. The 24 hours and so and the place is neat and, you know, some people like to go there. Although our parents doesn’t so fond of that kind of place, but young people do go there.

I: Unhuh.

W: Un huh. [d] And we saw a lot of Hollywood movie. Yeah that XXX. Unhuh. [e] And but I think the major difference between American youth and the um Taiwanese young people is that we’re kind of conservative. Um, you know, we’re actually trying to pretend what we really think. It’s kind of Oriental tradition, I think, kind of conservative. But people here is kind of straightforward and also open-minded, think. So, that’s it.

I: Well, what do you mean by conservative. Maybe I have a different idea than you do. When you say young people are conservative-

W: Uh, the example here, um, maybe I shouldn’t use that word. But what I mean is um that Taiwanese young peoples are um you know. For example, in a class, nobody will you know just bombard the teacher and throw a lot of question to the teacher. And also they will, you know, wear very formal and um. Sitting everybody should participate that class and nobody could skip that class. And you couldn’t wear your slipper. And, so here I do a observation in my department. I saw a lot of student here eating the donuts and drinking the coffee and just even read a newspaper at the back row.

I: Um hum.

W: And people, you know, just in the middle of that class people just stand up and carry their bag and and just just gone.

*XXX = inaudible utterance.*
I: Right.
W: So, it's . . . I really think this this kind of freedoms. Although some people say this kind of spoiled a child but in my opinion this is what I call academic freedom, because you know maybe they already familiar with this part of the lectures but they're really interesting in the other part of that lecture . . . so they came to the to the class. But they don't have to listen what they're already familiar with. But in Taiwan, we have to suffer. You know, for examples, the teachers are repeat it again and again. We still have to listen to that, and we couldn't do our own study or even, for example, if I’m really hungry, I still have to suffer until the class is end.
I: umhum.
W: So, I think that's the major difference.
I: Unhuh. Unhuh.

3. Excerpt From IP test

The following example gives an excerpt from William’s language on the IP test. In this example, William has prepared a lesson on the octet rule in chemistry. The excerpt begins a few minutes into the presentation; William has just put on hold a question about the difference between orbit and orbital in order to move to the definition of the octet rule. The questions were asked by a panel of evaluators, who initiated requests for information, requests for restatement or clarification, and challenges.

W is William; PM is a panel member.

W: Now, I will give you the definition of the, what is the octet rule. Octet rule is actually a tendency, that atoms would like to hold eight electrons in its outermost electronic orbital-
PMs [speaking at same time]: Who? What? Who would? (W: OK) Atoms want to hold? [request for restatement]
W: Yes, they have the tendency, or you know, try to get or share, or lose, its own electrons, or to share the electrons from the other atoms to complete that orbital, to complete the outermost electronic orbital, which is called the valence orbital. [a] Now, to understand that, we have to take a look of the electronic configurations of a single atom, it’s like this . . . [points to overhead]. [b] OK. As you can see there’s a nucleus at the center and there are . . . first electronic orbital, and the second electronic orbital and the third electronic orbital. [c] Let’s imagine that the electrons are like the tenant living in the apartment building OK? [draws] such like this. There’s first floor, second floor, third floor. OK. Just imagine that every floor stands for the different electronic orbital. OK? [d] And now I’ll explain why it is called orbital instead of orbit. It's because, for example, on each floor it has different kind of room. [e] For example if I say the first floor only has one efficiency room and the second floor, it has one efficiency room and one-bedroom apartment . . . OK? . . . and third floor is
also have one efficiency room and one bedroom apartment. The room is kind of a space . . . space orientation that you could find where the electron is, in that orbital, because different kind of a floor stand for the different kind of energy. [f] But as you can see there’s a big circle there [points to diagram] so it still has many possibility that you can find the electrons in different positions.

PM: So the electrons—do the electrons actually orbit or do they just stay in one position within that orbital? [information question]

W: No . . . actually . . . it’s a kind of, how to, how you arrange the space . . . . For example, you can cut the space like a . . . [draws diagram]. If I say these areas [points]--electrons could exist in this area but in this kind of suborbital electrons won’t exist in here [points]. You can only find electrons in this kinds of shapes [points].

**DISCUSSION**

In our initial examination of the test method facets of the three instruments, we discussed a few salient features of each test. We noted that the audiotaped format of the SPEAK test results in a nonreciprocal test setting which precludes live interaction between the test giver and the test taker. The questions are prerecorded and the speaker is left to respond, as in the example cited above from the SPEAK test.

On the other hand, the OPI is a live face-to-face format allowing interaction between the interviewer and the test taker. Thus communication breakdown can be questioned and repaired, and questions of meaning can be clarified. This is illustrated in the excerpt from the OPI above when the interviewer questioned William about the meaning of the term conservative.

However, the nature of the interaction of the OPI differs markedly from that of the classroom. The classroom setting involves several participants, whereas the OPI typically involves only one interlocutor. Turn taking and topic are controlled predominantly by the interviewer in the OPI interview setting, whereas in the classroom, the instructor is primarily responsible for turn taking, topic control, and other classroom management issues. Further, the fast, idiomatic, and even non-standard language of students in a classroom or lab may differ substantially from the language of a tester in a test setting and raises different listening requirements on the part of the test taker.

On the IP test, interaction also exists in the live format between the speaker and panel of interlocutors: An audience member can question the speaker on unclear points, and the speaker can ask an audience member to rephrase a question or can negotiate with that person when some communication breakdown has occurred. Interaction is a fundamental part of this test, and different question types are encour-
aged, including challenges and interruptions, as in the IP test when several panel members interrupt William at the same time.

Unlike on the OPI, the fact that there are a number of panelists, who may speak at once requires the speaker to negotiate turn taking among them, as in most classroom settings. The IP test makes a principled effort to elicit the types of questions heard in the classroom—requests for restatement, poorly worded or vague questions, and challenges. However, the interactive setting assumed in the IP test is still a teacher-fronted classroom. Not represented in this format are lab and office-hour settings, with the different participant structures and language use that these settings involve.

Another major feature of target language use identified in the literature is discourse competence, which has been shown to play an important role in instructional language. As noted above, the SPEAK test elicits relatively short passages of speech and requires only sentence-level responses in several passages. On two of the other sections (picture narration and schedule presentation, (Sections 4 and 7), referencing requirements are minimized with short segments, limited referents, and support from pictures or written text. The only questions requiring free responses without visual prompts are those in Section 6, the opinion questions. These elicit some connected discourse around the statement and support of an opinion. For example, as Excerpt 1b shows, William made the following argument in his answer to Section 6.3, “What is the best way to improve health standards throughout the world?” His argument was as follows: (a) health standards are based on the environment and way of living; (b) health standards differ from country to country; (c) to improve health standards, improve hygiene conditions; (d) (repeat and conclude) health standards differ from place to place. He was able to use discourse markers of cohesion (e.g., for example) in giving examples and was able to highlight and emphasize the key ideas in his short answer. However, what principally distinguishes the language in this opinion section from the language elicited on the OPI and IP tests is its length and complexity. There is simply not the time to present and explore a topic in detail on the SPEAK test. Speakers may state an opinion but are not required to explain or support it as they would be in higher level OPIs. Aspects of discourse such as the organization and chunking of material and transitions between topics found by Rounds (1987), discourse structuring cues (Tyler, 1992), or the complex referencing found by Godfrey (1992) cannot be evaluated on the SPEAK test because of the relatively simple nature of the language elicited.

On the OPI, on the other hand, there is room for much more extended and complex language use, where the speaker’s discourse competence could be engaged. For example, in Excerpt 2, William
was asked to tell the interviewer about modern-day Taiwan, focusing on its young people. He began his response by stating his first major point: (a) that Taiwan was “Americanized.” He then gave two examples of this: (b) that people use Visa cards, and (c) that they go to McDonald’s. He also provided some description of the McDonald’s in Taiwan to illustrate the type of role it plays in Taiwan as a meeting place for young people. His third example of Americanization was (d) that Taiwanese see a lot of Hollywood movies. He then began his second major point: (e) though Taiwanese society seemed to be Americanized, young people were still different from Americans; they were “kind of conservative.” The interviewer went on to ask William what he meant by the term conservative.

As this example shows, William organizes his answer through an overall rhetorical structure which consists of two topic sentences or frames: Taiwanese society is American-like in some regards, and yet it is different because Taiwanese youth are more conservative. Within each of these two subsections, he provides examples and details.

The IP test also requires substantial discourse competence to organize the language of the lesson. In Excerpt 3, William is explaining the octet rule: He is able to organize the discourse using the marker OK to segment sections and to check for audience comprehension after each point. He introduces and emphasizes examples with phrases such as (a) “Now, to understand that” and (f) “as you can see.” At (c), he begins an extended and creative metaphor of the orbitals as an apartment building. At (d), he explicitly marks the transition to his next point, the reason for which the term orbital and not orbit is used. At (e), he gives an example of the general notion that each “floor” has a different kind of “room,” and again explicitly marks the introduction of the example. At (f), he again uses a metalinguistics phrase to focus the relevant information.

Sociolinguistic competence is also engaged very differently in the three tests. On the SPEAK test, with its absent interlocutor, fixed timings, and preset prompts for speaking, the “norms of speaking” (Hymes, 1974; Wolfson, 1976) are farthest from those of the target-use setting. For example, in Excerpt 1 above, the speaker had to select the length of response and level of detail, in addition to the appropriate register, in the absence of a live interlocutor. Although in this instance William finished his narration, we have heard many examples when the speaker has not and has been interrupted midsentence by the test prompt “Stop!” We have also heard speakers give short answers, pause, and then question the tape recorder tentatively, “Is it enough?” Because there is no response from the tape recorder, speakers are left to judge for themselves the sufficiency of the response. In a classroom
setting, on the other hand, the speaker has the opportunity for both verbal and nonverbal feedback from the listener.

On all three tests, the status relationship between the speaker and audience is fundamentally different in the test and target situations. On the tests, the examinee is evaluated; in the classroom, the TA has the power to evaluate the students. In addition, as noted above, the TA may play a variety of roles with respect to undergraduate students (e.g., advisor, coach) beyond that of authority figure. The extent to which the TA is able to use language to appropriately express these roles, for example through informal register and humor, cannot be evaluated on any of the tests, though this may be crucial to a TA’s ultimate success in the classroom (Bailey, 1984; Hoekje & Williams, 1992).

To summarize, the three tests show substantial differences with regard to the dimensions of language use considered in this paper. In our evaluation, the SPEAK test is lacking as an assessment measure for ITA performance because it contains few opportunities to elicit the sort of discourse competence that has been shown to be a crucial part of comprehensibility in instructional language. We echo Tyler (1992), who concluded at the end of her study on discourse marking that with reference to the SPEAK test as an evaluation instrument, “at the very least, this study points to the need to include some additional measure of appropriate discourse structuring cues as a relevant variable in assessing the English skills of potential ITAs” (p. 727). Further, the SPEAK test provides no opportunity for interaction between interlocutors so that clarification requests, negotiation for meaning, and repair of communication breakdown cannot occur on the test. From this perspective, the test cannot be made more authentic by only altering the topic to make it more field specific.

In both the elicitation of discourse and in its interactive nature, we find the OPI more closely resembles the target-use setting. However, as noted above, the interaction on the OPI still differs markedly from that of the classroom setting: The OPI occurs between only two interlocutors, and it is the interviewer who sets the topics and controls turn taking and other features of the speech event. The IP test comes closest to what Bachman (1990, 1991) and Spolsky (1985) have referred to as authenticity of task. We believe this test includes the opportunity to elicit discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence in addition to the purely grammatical skills. However, there are dimensions of these areas, such as evaluation of the speaker’s sociolinguistic appropriateness with undergraduate students, where this test also clearly falls short of the appropriate testing tasks. Obviously, the IP test is only one example of an ITA performance test. We have tried to enumerate
the ways in which it is more satisfactory within the terms of the authenticity framework than the other tests described here and have pointed out the areas in which we believe it still to be lacking.

CONCLUSION

The papers in Language Testing (1985, 2[1]) expressed the consensus in the field that statistical validity alone can no longer qualify a test as a good language test; that in some important sense, the test must be “authentic” as well as statistically viable. In this paper, we have attempted to use Bachman’s interactional/ability (I/A) approach to authenticity, using a test method facets framework of analysis. This framework does not evaluate tests on how closely they resemble real-life tasks; under such an evaluation, the IP test would be preferred because it appears to resemble the real-life task of teaching more than the other two tests. As mentioned above, this approach naively overlooks the crucial dimensions between test settings and the target-use context. We concur with this criticism and have tried to show the areas in which the IP test does vary from a real-life teaching setting.

The I/A framework has instead focused on the extent to which the test taker’s language is engaged in the testing tasks in comparison to the tasks of the target-use setting. It is through this framework that we have pursued the notion of authenticity in language testing and under which we have evaluated the three language tests described here as they are used in NNS TA testing. In this approach, the IP test is preferable because its tasks engage the speaker’s language competence in ways similar to the tasks of the target-use context. This approach relies upon the notion that a language test is not authentic or inauthentic in and of itself but only in relation to the particular target-use context for which it is used. We end with a final caution. Although it is no longer acceptable to have language tests which are statistically valid and reliable but inauthentic in their tasks, neither is it acceptable to have authentic but statistically invalid and unreliable tests. In light of the national prominence of the “ITA problem” and the extent of legislation already passed, we feel the development of evaluation instruments satisfactory on both counts should be an area of primary consideration for our field.

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Appendix

1983 Florida Legislation

Faculty members; test of spoken English

The Board of Regents shall adopt rules requiring that all faculty members in the State University System, other than those persons who teach courses that are conducted primarily in a foreign language, be proficient in the oral use of English, as determined by a satisfactory grade on the “Test of Spoken English” of the Educational Testing Service or a similar test approved by the board. (Reprinted from Brown, Fishman, & Jones, 1990, p. 45.)
A Critical Analysis of the Advocacy of the Task-Based Syllabus

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A basic premise of this article is that the frequent paradigm shifts in the field of second and foreign language teaching have not resulted in significant progress in language learning. The fault seems to lie in the overstatement of criticisms directed at existing paradigms and the failure to challenge the validity of the advantages imputed to replacements. It is suggested that a new paradigm shift is gaining momentum in the proposals for the task-based syllabus; if we wish to prevent another unproductive revolution, we must submit those proposals to critical scrutiny. Such scrutiny will reveal that the criticisms of the synthetic syllabus (i.e., of conventional methods) and of method comparison research are largely unjustified when seen in the light of largely ignored research findings. It is concluded that the priority for advocates of the task-based syllabus should lie in the necessity to demonstrate the greater effectiveness of such an approach over those of a more conventional nature.

Although periodic radical paradigm shifts in second and foreign language teaching (SFLT) methodology have focused more attention on the needs of language learners, they have not succeeded in fulfilling their promise. The frequency of such shifts, normally resulting from dissatisfaction with the existing approach, provides ample inferential evidence of this lack of success. Additionally, empirical evidence is afforded by the “diffusion of innovation” research (e.g., Adams & Chen, 1981), which finds that the majority of educational innovations result in failure. Such failure does not necessarily mean that the innovations do not have some positive effects. For example, both the audiolingual and communicative innovations have failed to fulfill their promise, but they have highlighted oral/aural skills and demonstrated effective strategies teachers can add to their pedagogical repertoires.

Should this be all that innovations ultimately offer to the field, the question arises as to the possibility of there being a less disruptive
means of doing so. These unproductive revolutions have resulted in creating an undesirable climate of uncertainty and insecurity among the primary consumers, that is, teachers and students.

Past revolutions have occurred largely when the established paradigm was criticized and advantages of the replacement were extolled. As these revolutions have failed to produce the promised progress, it would seem that this process of criticism and advocacy may be flawed. On the one hand, the criticism is often overstated and based on the assumption that there is little of value in the established paradigm; however, the past adherents of that paradigm appear reluctant to protest. On the other hand, there is a tendency to allow the new paradigm to go unchallenged in the first years of its ascendancy. This occurred in the swings to audiolingual, functional, and communicative methods. It was only after a decade or so, when the new paradigm had become the established one, that murmurs of dissent prepared the ground for yet another change of orientation.

Given this cycle, one might expect that the field had sufficiently matured to view future proposals for innovation with something of a jaundiced eye and to submit them to the closest scrutiny. Judging from the current, largely unquestioned acceptance of the advocacy of task-based syllabuses (TBS) and their increasing popularity, I would suggest that this does not appear to be the case. Proposals for TBS have now been evident for a decade or so; nevertheless, neither its criticisms of other approaches nor its basis have been challenged nor its advocates obliged to respond to criticisms which might be made of their arguments.

This article will formulate such criticisms and propose criteria to be satisfied by the research agenda of TBS proponents. In order to do so, it will examine the advocacy for TBS as contained in books and articles which have been at its cutting edge. Whilst there are different exponents of TBS, there is substantial commonality in the supporting argumentation. Where the following discussion concerns this commonality, the abbreviation TBS will be used. Where it refers to a specific exponent of TBS, this will be cited.

The underlying argument for TBS has three interdependent strands: (a) TBS discredits the relative value of conventional methods on the basis of the assumed inconclusive findings of method comparison research (MCR) and further concludes that the choice of method is unimportant because all methods produce similar outcomes. This is largely based on classroom observation which has revealed that various methods, although putatively different, share a number of common features which have become subsumed under the general term *instruction*. (b) It accepts, however, that instruction is of some value but given *a*, reemphasizes the need to define the form that instruction should
It regards as the foundation of TBS, the communicative interaction entailed in task work which, it is assumed, will provide the necessary comprehensible input (CI) to trigger acquisition and regards some unspecified form of instruction providing a focus on form (not forms) as having a supporting role.

It will be maintained here that the assumption concerning MCR is not well founded but that its critics are correct in questioning the lack of rigorous control of variables (see Long, 1984, for an account of the problems entailed in such control). However, it will be argued that this criticism is not sufficient to justify the dismissal of the differences in values among conventional methods and, therefore, to ignore the necessity of defining the form of instruction used in an approach. It will be suggested that the rigorous control of variables demanded of MCR should equally apply to the research cited in support of TBS and that those studies which do not satisfy this criterion should be regarded as providing findings of limited value. Lastly, it will be maintained that the theoretical base of TBS has not been subjected to critical analysis and that relevant research findings casting doubt on the soundness of TBS advocacy have been largely ignored.

In order to provide clarity and coherence to this critical analysis, I will discuss those issues under the rubrics of MCR, instruction, and TBS, then draw some conclusions.

**METHOD COMPARISON RESEARCH**

Two important publications dismissing the value of MCR in the TBS literature are Nunan (1991) and Long (1980). Long (1980), apparently on the basis of the five studies he cites, reaches the conclusion that “in most cases, it seemed, method A, B or C made little or no difference” (p. 1). He then proceeds, justifiably, at least in some cases, to criticize the lack of control of variables and, in particular, the failure to investigate what actually occurred in the classrooms during the studies. Nunan (1991) adopts a virtually identical stance but offers no textual support. He maintains that “little evidence has been forthcoming to support one approach or another” (p. 3).

However, Von Elek and Oscarsson (1973) cite and discuss some 22 such projects (but indicate their survey is not exhaustive), and Krashen (1982) analyzes 12 studies not included in the Von Elek and Oscarsson survey. Of the 22 studies reviewed by Von Elek and Oscarsson, only three produced no significant difference for any of the effects of the methods compared, six demonstrated significant effects on specific skills, and the rest produced significant findings in favor of a specific method. Interestingly, of these last studies, more than three quarters
found that some variant of a deductive method produced better results than an inductive method either overall or in particular skills such as reading and writing. (See Casey, 1968; Chastain & Woerdehoff, 1968; Duskova & Benes, 1968; Levin, 1972 [summarizing five studies]; McKinnon, 1965; Mueller, 1971; Scherer & Wertheimer, 1964; Smith, 1970; Sjoberg & Trope, 1969; Tucker, Lambert, & Rigault, 1969; Xiem, 1969.) Von Elek and Oscarsson (1973), in their own research (including a large-scale replication study) on explicit and implicit methods, found convincing evidence in favor of the former.

Smith (1970) is perhaps the largest scale study of those cited. Its overall findings indicated that students taught with a traditional deductive method fared considerably better than those taught with audio-lingual methods. It has been the subject of adverse comment with respect to the reliability of the findings. (See Smith, 1970, Appendices F and G, for a discussion thereof and Long, 1980.)

These findings demonstrate not only the weakness in Long’s and Nunan’s generalization concerning MCR but also cast some doubt on their conclusions concerning the concept of method. Long (1989) maintains that “methods don’t matter because they don’t exist” and criticizes the teaching profession for its concern with methods, whilst Nunan (1991) both endorses this view and legitimately questions the validity of some “right method” for all students.

Long’s position on the nonexistence of methods is largely based on the conclusion he draws from MCR and the findings of classroom-based research (see, e.g., Chaudron, 1988; Long, 1984) which has shown there to be significant variance between what actually occurs in the classroom and what is prescribed by some particular method. This variance results from the filtering of the principles of some prescribed method through teachers’ own conceptions of teaching and the constraints imposed by the necessities of classroom management and organization. These processes are assumed to result in great similarity in the actual implementation of putatively different methods (Nunan, 1991).

This overall argument is fundamentally flawed not least by the false conclusions based on MCR. One of the best examples of MCR in terms of the virtual complete control of variables is, as already mentioned, Von Elek and Oscarsson (1973). (See Diller, 1978). This study eliminated the possibility of the teachers’ intervention by the presentation of lessons on a tape recorder as did the studies reported by Levin, 1972, and Oscarsson, 1972, which provided similar findings. It is, therefore, plausible to conclude that if teachers are able to implement methods as prescribed, methods do indeed exist and do produce different learning outcomes.

The Long and Nunan argument is now only valid if it can be shown
that teachers do not do this and inevitably modify methods to render
them compatible with their own conceptions of teaching, thus eradicat-
ing fundamental methodological differentials. This is by no means
always the case. Swaffer, Arens, and Morgan (1982) infer that distinct
methodological principles are manifest in the task hierarchy teachers
use (J. Swaffar, personal communication, July 1993), and Spada (1987)
demonstrates that the teachers in her study largely respected the guid-
ing principles of the method they were using, albeit with limited modi-
fication. Moreover, all teachers of some experience have surely encoun-
tered the newly converted zealots of some method who regard as
heresy any deviation from the prescriptions of that method.

It is certainly true, nevertheless, that some teachers do modify the
methods they are supposed to be using, particularly if those methods
are contrary to their own conceptions of teaching. (See, e.g., Beretta,
1992, and Freeman & Richards, 1993.) Conversely, where methods
are compatible with those conceptions of teaching, those same teachers
would presumably implement the method as intended, providing situational
constraints allowed it.

It is, then, unjustified to assume, as do Long and Nunan, that meth-
ods do not exist because teachers do not implement them as intended.
A more judicious and more fruitful approach would be to accept the
very real existence and importance of methods to teachers and to
conduct research on the manner in which teachers modify conventional
methods and their effects on learning. This is the approach adopted
in Spada (1987) and proposed by her for future research.

To summarize this section, the dismissal of the significance of the
findings of MCR research is unjustified. As much of this research
demonstrated significant advantages for a particular method on a gen-
eral level or with respect to the teaching of specific skills, it is invalid
to consider the choice of method, or whatever one chooses to call it,
irrelevant to the teaching and learning process.

Notwithstanding this, both Long and Nunan make a valid point in
attacking some MCR studies for their failure to control all the multiple
variables involved, particularly in terms of what occurs in the class-
room. One might expect, therefore, that they would apply the same
implied criteria to their reviews of other classroom-based research and
thus satisfy the desirable criterion of rigorous and consistent evalua-
tion. This is largely not the case as will be evident in the discussion in
the two ensuing sections.

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tending to indicate that methodological differences are effaced in classroom practice
because all teachers use the same tasks and strategies. This does not fully represent the
findings for it is in the task hierarchy that the essential methodological differences remain.
INSTRUCTION

As an apparent consequence of the doubt cast on the validity of MCR findings and the subsequent rejection of the concept of method, one finds that much of the recent classroom-based research manifests a marked reluctance to specify what teaching method was used in some particular study. The blanket term instruction is used instead. This is not a progressive step. If we accept that MCR demonstrates that all methods used resulted in varying degrees of learning, which for the most part they did, then the inevitable conclusion to be drawn is that some set of pedagogical actions will be more effective in some clearly defined human and physical context than others. Now it is feasible that such a set is not necessarily always coterminous with that of any specific method involved in MCR and that it is necessary, as Swaffar, Arens, and Morgan (1982) conclude, to investigate the elements of various methods in terms of “task order and learning strategies” (p. 32) and to observe the manner in which those sets are used. However, what is important is that research focusing on the relative values of such sets, hierarchies, and strategies, whether one terms them method or something else, is a legitimate concern of those involved in SFLT. As different sets will probably produce different outcomes, it is crucial to define the nature of such sets if one is to draw reliable conclusions on the effects of classroom instruction. To use the blanket term instruction and to give weight to research findings on the results of instruction without specifying its nature will lead to ambiguity rather than enlightenment.

Such ambiguity is apparent in Long (1988), in which he demonstrates the beneficial effects of instruction because the issue concerning the form of instruction used is only addressed peripherally. This approach might be acceptable if we were, so to speak, starting from scratch and only had available to us the studies cited by Long. This is not the case. There is a vast literature testifying both implicitly and explicitly to the value of various forms of instruction, albeit mainly in EFL situations. Not least of these is MCR which demonstrated that the methods used resulted in the students’ achieving some degree of learning as is implied by Long (1980). Consequently, it is not necessary to demonstrate that instruction is beneficial, at least in EFL situations. It is true that in the case of ESL, the problem is rendered more complex by the exposure factor and in this area, Long (1983) makes a valuable contribution in demonstrating the benefits of instruction. Nevertheless, even here, where he subjects various studies to often detailed rigorous analysis,2

2It should be noted that in spite of this rigorous analysis, Long (1983) wrongly interprets Mason (1971) as maintaining there to be no beneficial effect for instruction plus exposure over exposure only. The experimental group followed an intensive English course whilst
he does not discuss the nature of the instruction involved, although his concluding remarks indicate the necessity of doing so. What is clearly needed is research into the relative beneficial effects of specific forms of instruction in specific contexts, taking into account the classroom behaviors of all concerned.

The concluding remarks of Long (1983) indicate agreement with this. Nevertheless, Long (1988) discusses studies demonstrating the effects of largely unspecified forms of instruction in very positive terms. In fact, two such studies, Pica (1983) and Lightbown, Spada, and Wallace (1980), though lacking in description of the form of instruction and classroom behaviors, are considered by Long to be major studies on the effects of instruction. Yet neither study satisfies the rigorous research design criteria demanded of the much-criticized MCR. In the case of the Pica study, two different forms of instruction are used but neither are specified, and the lack of control of variables is such that it is not possible to ascribe improvement in performance to the effects of the unspecified forms of instruction. The Lightbown, Spada, and Wallace study is a somewhat different matter. Two of the authors, themselves, consider it very minor (P. M. Lightbown, personal communication, October, 1993, and N. Spada, personal communication, November, 1993) as it constitutes a small part of a major study covered in Lightbown (1983), in which details of instruction and classroom behaviors of the 1980 study are provided. There seems then little justification for considering these two studies to be major contributions to the field whether the form of instruction is specified or not. The fact that it is not, serves to emphasize the inconsistency manifest in Long (1988), which lauds research that fails in this regard yet in its conclusion, underlines the necessity to specify the form of instruction used. As the studies Long (1988) analyzed often failed in this respect, it is surprising that this is not signaled as constituting a serious flaw mitigating the importance of the findings.

This failure is also of crucial importance because it prevents one knowing if the complete range of instructional options have been investigated. From a careful reading of Long (1988, particularly of p. 120) and the studies analyzed, it is clear that instruction is conceived as being of the type largely dependent on inductive processes triggered by exposure to the target language. This means that no account is taken of a whole range of instructional possibilities offered by a deductive approach. That is the approach which the research of Von Elek and

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the control group “followed the traditional sequence of EFL [italics added] courses consistent with their needs” (p. 200). The comparison was, therefore, between one form of instruction plus exposure and another form of instruction plus exposure. To some degree it was investigating what is recommended in this article, that is, the differential in the benefits of different types of instruction.

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Oscarsson (1973) had demonstrated to be the most effective but which Long apparently considers belongs to the set of “neanderthal teaching practices” (p. 136). Having failed to take into account the effects of such instruction, it is premature for Long (1988) to draw definitive conclusions concerning the effects of instruction on second language acquisition (SLA) processes.

What is perhaps more remarkable is the conclusion drawn in Long (1988) concerning focus on forms and echoed in Long and Crookes (1992). It is maintained that “the evidence for the positive effects of instruction does not support a return to a focus on forms in language teaching” (p. 43). Long (1988) further argues, albeit somewhat ambiguously, that such a return may be avoided by researchers’ specifying the form of instruction used in their studies. These are unjustified conclusions to draw as the one common feature of the examples of instruction discussed in Long (1988) was varying degrees of focus on forms, and where the type of instruction was specified, it was of the type related to one of the methods which Long maintains do not exist. (See, e.g., the audiolingual variation used in Felix, 1981.)

What Long and Crookes (1992) do maintain is that their conclusion supports a strategy of utilizing pedagogic tasks to present students with “target language samples . . . [as] input which they will inevitably reshape via application of general cognitive processing capacities” (p. 43). The nature of such tasks is not specified and no justification is provided for the conclusion other than frequent reference to often unspecified findings from SLA. Nor is any empirical evidence offered to demonstrate the inevitable reshaping into something resembling nativelike language use in the classroom following exposure to these pedagogic tasks.

This proposal of Long and Crookes will be discussed at greater length in the next section; however, one remark of Long (1988) is particularly pertinent here. He states that until SLA research can provide findings on the long-term effects related to the acquisition process, it would be premature to “recommend that teachers give upon conventional SL instruction” (p. 123). Yet, Long and Crookes, without reference to any such long-term research findings, recommend exactly that.

**TASK WORK**

As justification of their advocacy of TBS, Long and Porter (1985) and Nunan (1991) argue that because CI (as in Krashen’s, 1982, input hypothesis) triggers acquisition, maximum exposure to it in the classroom is to be recommended. They then endeavor to show through
research findings that such exposure will best be provided by various
types of task work. Nunan (1991) citing Long (1983) states:

The theoretical point of departure for this work has been the interpretation
by Long (1983) and others of the so-called comprehensible input hypothesis
which is based on the belief that opportunities for second language acquisi-
tion are maximized when learners are exposed to language which is just a
little beyond their current level of competence: (Krashen 1981, 1982).
The central research issue here is: what class-room tasks and patterns of
interaction provide learners with the greatest amount of comprehensible
input? (p. 50)

There is a flaw in Nunan’s view of what constitutes the central
research issue. Given the hypothetical status of the CI hypothesis, the
central issue concerns its validity. Obviously, CI is an essential element
of the acquisition process. The crucial question concerns the sufficiency
of CI alone to bring it about. Long and Porter (1985) certainly imply
that CI satisfies this criterion when they state, without qualification,
that “the more language that learners hear and understand or the more
comprehensible input they receive, the faster and better they learn” (p.
214). The reader is then referred to Krashen (1980, 1982), without
comment, from which one assumes that the authors endorse Krashen’s
position on CI and his interpretation of data. Nunan (1991) also ap-
ppears to accept the hypothesis for he makes the above statement with-
out demur.

Yet the CI hypothesis has been the subject of frequent adverse
comment in the literature (see Chaudron, 1985; Gregg, 1984; Ioup,
1984; McLaughlin, 1978; White, 1987). One of the major issues in
this controversy concerns the necessity and sufficiency of CI to bring
about acquisition and the role production plays in the process. Krashen
(1982) appears to consider that CI will result in the development of
both receptive and productive skills and continues to maintain that
position (Krashen, 1992). He does acknowledge that there is a problem
entailed in the position he takes in terms of production (Krashen,
1982). Long and Porter (1985) and Nunan (1991) also demonstrate
an awareness of the same issue and cite Swain (1985), who plausibly
maintains that learners must also be afforded practice in production
in order for acquisition to occur.

This is inadequate as an account of the available pertinent findings
on CI and, in particular, of those relevant to production. As far as I
am aware, no research findings demonstrate that exposure to CI alone
in the formal language classroom is sufficient to bring about substantial
levels of acquisition, whether the learners are involved with production
also cites Pavesi’s (1984) findings as inferential evidence that instruction
may be more effective than exposure alone to CI. These findings indicate that naturalistic acquirers were outperformed by instructed school students who had appreciably fewer hours of exposure than the former group. It should be noted that Long (1988) points out that there were a number of uncontrolled variables which render the findings no more than suggestive.

There is, however, an abundance of pertinent findings on this issue provided by the results of immersion and bilingual programs in North America, particularly by those of the French Immersion (FI) Program in Canada. The reports on the latter (see, e.g., Lapkin & Swain, 1983, among many others) provide ample evidence of the positive effects on receptive skills of thousands of hours of CI to which FI students have been exposed although, clearly, one cannot necessarily extrapolate to the formal language classroom with its severely limited exposure time.

The findings on the effect on productive skills presents something of a different picture. Adiv (1980), Hammerly (1989a, 1989b, 1989c), Pawley (1985), Pellerin and Hammerly (1986), and Spilka (1976) have reported extensively on the high degree of error rate in production by FI students. It is true that the research in some of these studies is not always as rigorous as it might be. Those by Hammerly and Pellerin and Hammerly, for example, are deficient in terms of the sampling of the students. Nevertheless, the weight of the evidence simply cannot be ignored and is also confirmed by Harley and Swain (1984), avid supporters of FI, who point out that “productive use of the second language still differs considerably in grammatical and lexical ways from native speakers.” Furthermore, research findings of a similar nature from other programs are reported in Cohen (1974, 1976).

In response to this differential in receptive and productive abilities, second language educators (e.g., Allen, Swain, Harley, & Cummins, 1990) closely involved with FI have reached the conclusion that one should support the dominantly experiential aspect (i.e., exposure to CI) with an analytical component (i.e., some form of instruction).

Such findings and conclusions are relevant for those advocating an experiential approach to language such as that involved in TBS. If thousands of hours in immersion programs of CI do not enable students to produce acceptably accurate language, one can be but extremely skeptical of the effects on production of the CI provided by TBS in formal language classrooms with maximum potential exposure in typical 6-year high school courses of fewer than 1,000 hours. Because the failure of CI to promote accurate productive skills is directly relevant to task work, the implications of the FI findings need to be addressed; they have so far received scant attention from TBS advocates, however.
As a rebuttal of this point, it might be argued that the findings on FI are not relevant to TBS because FI constitutes a content-based approach in which the subject matter is taught in appropriately adjusted language and in which task work is not a central planning tool. However, the two share an important premise. TBS is based on the assumption that providing maximum exposure to CI is necessary. Given the nature of the formal language classroom with its tendency to rely on teacher-fronted activities, it is proposed that greater exposure can be achieved by exploiting the interaction entailed in the dominant role given to task work. As such, task work is purely a means to an end, which is to provide maximum exposure to CI. FI has the same end but achieves it somewhat differently. The exposure is provided ideally by the teacher’s modified language and the intake entailed in the constant negotiating process in student-teacher and student-student exchanges. I use the word *ideally* here because reservations have been raised concerning the appropriateness of the CI provided by the teaching in some immersion programs (see Allen, Swain, Harley, & Cummins, 1990, for a discussion of this issue.) Notwithstanding this, it is clear that FI and TBS are intended as two different means of reaching the same end. In fact, it is evident in Larsen-Freeman and Long (1992) and Long and Crookes (1992) that FI and other content-based ESL programs are considered to embody the principles of TBS and to be very effective means of exposing learners to CI, a position which renders somewhat puzzling the failure to address the relevance of findings on FI for TBS on the part of these advocates.

What is perhaps more puzzling in terms of the failure of Long and Porter (1985) and Nunan (1981) to appeal to research findings on exposure to CI in the classroom is the omission of any reference to a major attempt at the implementation of a task-work syllabus/curriculum, that is, the Communicational Teaching Project, better known as the Bangalore Project (a 5-year project involving secondary schools in South India). Long and Crookes (1992) do devote two pages to this project. Although they refer to criticisms of the project and respond to minor ones related to task work, they do not address the crucial issue of the effect of task work on productive language referred to in Beretta (1989).

The project has been the subject of numerous international publications dating from 1982 (see Beretta, 1989, 1992; Beretta & Davies, 1985; Brumfitt, 1984; Greenwood, 1985; Prabhu, 1982) and was regarded by Brumfitt (1984) as “an important project because it focuses on a central concern in contemporary discussion of syllabuses” (p. 234; i.e., learning language by using it). Much of the comment has been critical, particularly by Beretta (see, e.g, 1989), in which one of his findings concerned the effects on productive skills of the task work.

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It constitutes inferential corroborative evidence of the failure of exposure to CI to enable students to develop accuracy in speaking. One of his conclusions underlines the fact that although the initial aims of the project entailed encouraging the development of both receptive and productive skills, in the period after 1982, “task types calling for production were phased out and only those that stressed reception were retained” (p. 301). Moreover, of particular relevance to the focus on meaning of task work, Beretta (1989) makes the following perceptive remark:

Thus, an important message of this study is that teachers who are involved in content-based curricula and who are interested in changing correction habits might wish to consider whether they are prepared to engage only in tasks that inhibit learner production in order to ensure that form does not become a focus. (p. 301)

Advocates of TBS must address this important issue. Notwithstanding the weaknesses in the program in terms of its failure to provide reliable findings, it affords those interested in task work an opportunity to examine the results of a large-scale attempt at an actual implementation of a TBS, albeit of a different nature to those discussed here. As such, the project is as worthy of attention as the wide array of quasi-experimental studies on variables related to the interaction involved in task work, which have been the focus of those advocating TBS.

In fact, given the apparent lack of concern with findings derived from programs based on substantial exposure to CI, it would appear that the demonstration of the validity of the CI hypothesis as a basis for teaching and learning has a low priority. Nor, would it appear, is importance given to demonstrating that task work as a central planning tool actually results in learning. As Nunan says (1991), “The central research issue here is: what classroom tasks and patterns of interaction provide learners with the greatest amount of comprehensible input” (p. 50). However, this should be of secondary importance because the “central research issue” must concern the efficacy of task work as a central planning tool in actually producing learning of both receptive and productive skills.

Let us set aside for the moment the apparent lack of concern with this crucial question and examine how the central issue as seen by Nunan is addressed. It is largely achieved by marshaling evidence from studies on interaction in group work. Given space limitations, I will only look at three such studies referred to by both Long and Porter (1985) and by Nunan (1991). They are Pica and Doughty (1985), who in their study, found that levels of accuracy were no different between teacher-fronted and small-group discussions and Bruton and Samuda (1980) and Porter (1983), who found that participants in interactions
picked up few errors from each other. Initially, I will concentrate on Long and Porter’s review of these studies and then address any differences in Nunan’s treatment. The findings of Pica and Doughty (1985) were based on a comparison of three examples each of the two types of discussion. They fail to give an account of all the relevant human and environmental variables involved and, therefore, given the extremely small sample, produce findings of very limited external validity. Nonetheless, Long and Porter (1985) conclude that these findings should “allay the fears that lower quality is the price to be paid for higher quality of practice” (p. 22). The findings of such small-scale research by no means justifies such a sweeping conclusion. Yet, it is established as an additional element in the advocacy of TBS in spite of the caution Long and Porter advise in terms of viewing group work as a panacea.

The findings (i.e., the picking up of few errors) of Bruton and Samuda (1980) and Porter (1983) provoke queries concerning the research design of these studies. In order to justify such a conclusion, it is not adequate to simply describe the errors produced during task work and then test the participants to verify that they have or have not produced any of the errors. What is involved is much more complex. Minimally, it would first entail providing an account of the interlanguage of each participant in order to be sure of covering the domain related to the errors which may be produced in the spontaneous interactions of the group work and the state of the interlanguage following it. Neither Bruton and Samuda (1980) nor Porter (1983) take this into account and with good reason for, as far as I know, a complete interlanguage has not yet been described. Nevertheless, the failure to take full account of the participants’ interlanguage before and after the task work casts a degree of doubt onto the findings to which Long and Porter make no reference.

There are also two inferential contradictions in the conclusions of Long and Porter on the “picking up of errors” by other students, one related to CI and the other to the view of Long and Crookes (1992) with respect to interlanguage development. If we take at face value the findings on the picking up of errors, ignoring for the moment the major objection discussed above, what can we conclude as to what students actually do pick up during task work? None of the studies cited in Long and Porter concerns itself with this issue. However, if the conclusion concerning the picking up of errors is valid, another plausible conclusion is that task work results in the picking up of very little—erroneous or otherwise. There is, of course, another interpretation. One could propose that acquirers have some filter which enables them to recognize errors and therefore not to acquire them. (See Schachter, Tyson, & Diffley, 1976, for a discussion of such a possibility.)
Because Long and Porter do not discuss the inferential contradiction, they do not address such related questions. As to the second contradiction, Long and Crookes (1992) maintain that studies in interlanguage development demonstrate that various language elements are not acquired one at a time but are integrated by degrees into the whole interlanguage system. Assuming they are correct, even if exposure to errors has no immediate manifest effect on production, this does not necessarily eliminate the possibility of there being some longer-term effect. It is, therefore, premature to draw the conclusion of Long and Porter on the picking up of errors. It might be maintained in defense of these scholars and with some validity that they cannot be expected to take into account the more recent SLA findings cited in Long and Crookes. However, this argument is a two-edged sword for it also emphasizes the need for extreme caution in drawing conclusions based on the current state of our, as yet, imperfect knowledge of SLA processes, caution noticeably absent in the conclusion drawn by Long and Porter.

Nunan (1991), unlike Long and Porter, gives but cursory treatment to these studies, offering no comment on the quality of the research involved and apparently accepting at face value their findings. So much so, in fact, that he considers that such studies as these “provide a powerful rationale for the use of interactive group work in the classroom” (p. 51). Of course, such studies only provide for this rationale if the CI hypothesis is sustainable and if the findings of the studies are reliable. Nunan does, nevertheless, add a caveat. In the spirit of rigorous research criteria, he adds that “it remains to be seen whether the results hold up in genuine language classrooms, that is, classrooms constituted for the purposes of learning, not research” (p. 51). But as it remains to be seen if the findings are reliable, is it not precipitate to make the “powerful rationale” statement? Would it not be wiser to await replication studies (as did Von Elek and Oscarsson, 1973, for example, in the field of the much-maligned MCR) before leaping to this premature conclusion?

The failure of Long and Porter, and Nunan to provide any critical evaluation of the three studies, and the not necessarily reliable findings they cite, clearly constitute a weakness, the implications of which are further exacerbated by the implicit inconsistency evident when one takes into account the rigorous demands made of MCR. It would certainly be acceptable to treat the findings on task work as interesting indicators for future research orientation. It does not further the research agenda to cite them without qualification and without suggesting the necessity for multiple replication studies as is proposed by Beretta (1991), Lightbown (1984a), Ochsner (1979), and Santos (1989) with respect to SLA/SFLT research in general. (However, see Reid,
1990, and Lightbown, 1984b, for a discussion of the problems involved in such replication.)

In their advocacy of TBS, Long and Crookes (1992) base their proposals on inferential evidence alone, providing no empirical evidence to demonstrate that TBS can actually achieve its putative “considerable potential” (p. 27) in the formal language classroom. Their focus, however, is somewhat different from those already discussed. They have two purposes: first, to demonstrate the inadequacy of synthetic syllabuses (i.e., those characterized by the teaching of rules and structures as separate entities) and the greater potential of TBS in general and second, to argue for the superiority of their task-based language teaching (TBLT) to other TBS approaches.

In order to achieve their first purpose, they appeal to research findings in SLA and in doing so apparently assume that scholars have reached some major consensus on the fundamental nature of language learning. At various points throughout the paper, the authors refer to research findings on language learning to support their positions, without, however, citing pertinent references (see pp. 27, 30, 31, 33). This might be acceptable had such findings reached axiomatic status. That they have not is made abundantly clear on a general level throughout Lightbown (1984b) and more specifically when she points out in relation to universal patterns of development that for every study supporting them “there are other studies which provide counter-evidence” (p. 248). Ellis (1985) also emphasizes the lack of consensus. In discussing fundamental differences in research findings he states: “Until some means of reconciling these differences can be agreed upon, it must be acknowledged that, despite our increasing knowledge of what takes place in SLA, we are not yet able to produce a description that is both generalizable and reliable” (p. 286). Long and Crookes clearly disagree for at various points in their paper they use unspecified SLA research findings to support specific proposals for TBS.

Ironically, on several occasions when they do cite support from the work of other scholars, close examination of that work reveals positions contrary to those taken by Long and Crookes. They mention Ellis (1985) as if he provides unequivocal support, which, as the above citation demonstrates, he clearly does not. Similarly, they cite Spolsky (1989), who discusses the many conditions for language learning. Certainly, Long and Crookes could have found examples of the proposed conditions to support their arguments. (See Spolsky’s Conditions 10 [p. 17] and 27 [p. 20]). Equally one can find conditions which support a synthetic syllabus (see Conditions 11 [p. 17], 14, and 16 [p. 18]) which the authors reject as a viable syllabus option. It would have been helpful had the authors specified which parts of Ellis and Spolsky supported their arguments. They also justifiably appeal to the work of Meisel,
Clahsen, and Pienemann (1981) to support their position on fixed developmental sequences. However, they fail to point out that Pienemann (1989), in reporting on his research, makes it clear that his position may not be compatible with that of Long and Crookes in terms of the language learning process for he speaks of it in terms of the accumulation of rules and of interlanguage as being “the sum of all the rules the learner has acquired so far” (p. 54) (see below).

I am not suggesting here that one should only cite other scholars if all of their work is compatible with the position advocated. I am criticizing the practice of citing such work without indicating that there are sections which may offer counter-evidence to the positions adopted.

Where Long and Crookes do manifest some specificity is in demonstrating the flaws in synthetic syllabuses. They characterize them as assuming an “ability to learn a language in parts (e.g., structures and functions) which are independent of one another, and also to integrate, or synthesize, the pieces when the time comes to use them [italics added] for communicative purposes” (p. 28). This is untrue. Synthetic syllabuses regard the parts as ultimately interdependent. Although a part might be isolated for teaching purposes, it is often initially presented in context, and subsequent practice entails its combination with other parts. Furthermore, such syllabuses assume that a part is eventually integrated into the interlanguage system. For Long and Crookes to portray such syllabuses as being based on the assumption that the parts remain isolated and are only combined for performance purposes ignores reality. One would expect that such a serious claim would be supported by citations from the literature. It is not.

Continuing their attack on synthetic syllabuses, Long and Crookes maintain that they “are flawed because they assume a model of language acquisition unsupported by research findings on language learning” (pp. 30–31). There are serious problems with this affirmation. It falsely assumes that research on language learning has already provided all the knowledge we need in order to justify the inclusion or exclusion of putative language learning processes as viable options. This is not true. Despite the substantial amount of SLA research of recent years, we have only begun to scratch the surface of the daunting complexities of the language learning processes. It is, therefore, unwise and premature to make definitive statements about such processes. It is unwise to do so on a general level in any field concerned with human behavior for obvious reasons. This is specifically the case in SLA/SFLT research because it is undeniable that many students who have done all their formal classroom learning with synthetic syllabuses have become successful language learners. In fact, perhaps some of the most successful language learners in the world are produced in European countries
such as Denmark, Holland, and Germany where deductive approaches (i.e., the most synthetic of synthetic syllabuses) still characterize mainstream teaching of English as they have done for decades (Fisiak, 1981; D. Nehls, personal communication, January, 1993). Yet, Long and Crookes maintain that research shows (once again without specification) that “people do not learn isolated items in the L2 one at a time in additive, linear fashion, but as parts of complex mappings of groups of form-function relationships” (p. 31) and that, therefore, synthetic syllabuses are not effective.

Now it is feasible that Long and Crookes are justified in taking this position and that the success of learners from synthetic syllabuses can be ascribed not to that syllabus but to those powerful mental processes which enable learners, as Long and Crookes maintain, to analyze language into the appropriate parts of complex mappings of groups of form-function relationships and then resynthesize them for communicative use. In other words, it might be maintained that the learners achieve success in spite of the synthetic syllabus. If this is the case, it is incumbent upon those who reject such syllabuses to demonstrate this before rejecting them purely on the basis of inferential evidence derived from frequently unspecified SLA findings.

Should they choose to base their case on such a position, they will need to reconcile it with Long (1988), in which conclusions are drawn on the positive effects of instruction based on studies in which it is not always possible to ascribe the positive effect to instruction alone. (See, e.g., comments above on Pica, 1983). They will also need to take into account all relevant SLA findings including those not compatible with their recommendations for TBS. They fail, for example, to discuss research which indicates that learners may be unable to analyze the formal aspect of language while focusing on meaning (VanPatten, 1988, 1990), a factor which may go some way in accounting for exposure to CI in immersion programs not producing equal effects on receptive and productive abilities.

After dismissing synthetic syllabuses as viable options, Long and Crookes go on to discuss various choices in terms of types of TBS. They advocate TBLT as the preferred option and provide a detailed description. Essentially, such a syllabus is based on target and pedagogic tasks. The selection of target tasks derives from an identification of real-world needs such as buying a train ticket, renting an apartment . . . taking lecture notes, and so forth (p. 44). Such tasks are subsequently classified in terms of task types relevant to the needs of specific groups of learners. Pedagogic tasks forming the basis of classroom activities are then derived from these task types.

Given space limitations, I will make only two comments: one of a
general nature related to TBS as a whole but specifically to the TBLT approach in relation to focus on form (see Long & Crookes, 1992) and the other related solely to TBLT.

As implied above, in advocating the analytic-type syllabus (i.e., TBS types) Long and Crookes ascribe to students the same powerful acquisitional capacity possessed by children acquiring an L1. They assume, therefore, that the students have the capacity to subconsciously analyze discourse into the constituent parts of their interlanguage system and then use them appropriately both receptively and productively. They offer no empirical evidence in support of such a claim in terms of formal classroom learning. Nor do they consider the contrary findings on production provided by the FI program and in discussing the Bangalore Project, are concerned only with dealing with those aspects which support their position. It is true they cite Beretta (1989) but conspicuously fail to discuss the relevant conclusions he reaches concerning productive skills (see above). It is true that an important feature of TBLT is the set of pedagogic tasks which provide for a focus on form (not forms), presumably to promote accuracy in production. Unfortunately, it is not possible to discuss such tasks in any substantive manner for the authors provide neither concrete examples nor findings on their effectiveness in the normal language classroom, where the authors have presumably used them with verifiable success before advocating their use to the teaching public.

The TBLT approach requires that tasks should be immediately applicable in the world outside the classroom. Such a constraint limits its application to second language learning situations and thus eliminates the whole world of EFL where in most cases, students will only, if ever, use the language skills entailed in a task at a much later time. In fact, in most EFL classrooms it would be extremely difficult to arrive at a valid needs analysis which would allow for the specifying of tasks as foreseen by Long and Crookes. In the first place, the needs will be largely dictated by examination content, and second, it would be extremely difficult to define the tasks that will be general to all students after they leave school, particularly as many will have no immediate need to use that language they have spent the previous years learning.

The appeal of TBS options partly results from their immediate applicability combined with their exploiting of the assumed natural dispositions of students to learn languages in spite of the marked lack of supportive evidence in favor of this disposition derived from real teaching situations. As such, TBS represents the natural extension of the liberal ethos which has permeated the approach to teaching in recent decades, particularly in the field of ESL. This approach is apparently based on the premise that providing one organizes teaching activities and materials suitable to students (e.g., presenting them with
appropriate comprehensible input), learning will take place naturally. This takes the onus of explicit learning away from the student and puts it on natural acquisition processes. Thus, one now finds little mention in the literature of perhaps the most crucial variable controlling success or failure in language learning—the individual effort of all students to apply themselves to the difficult task of learning another language. It is true that there is a small number of gifted learners who are able to absorb the language simply by being exposed to CI. (See Stevick’s, 1992, report on one such learner, and Selinker’s, 1972, assumption that 5% of learners reactivate their first language acquisition device.) Unfortunately, most of us are not gifted in this sense and must compensate with a great deal of hard work in order to achieve success.

EFL teaching has not been affected to the same degree by this liberal ethos perhaps because students learning foreign languages as in the case of Europe, for example, are doing so usually for reasons other than the immediate oral application outside the classroom or at the end of the course. Their needs, including the passing of examinations, tend to require a more academic approach to the learning of languages in which the ability to read and write is valued at least as highly as the ability to speak.

Rehearsing tasks which will be faced in the near future or immediately outside of class would appear to further limit the options for the use of TBLT to English for specific purposes and to survival English situations in which one needs to carry out the tasks of everyday life. If it is this very small subset of students which Long and Crookes is targeting, their proposal does not constitute a major issue. After all, task work is certainly a useful pedagogical tool in all teaching contexts, and its extensive use in these two particular situations is quite legitimate. On the other hand, if the two authors are indeed implying the suitability of TBLT for a far more general set of students, this should be made explicit. If this is the case, they need to reconcile their proposals with the very limited generalizability of their application. They may achieve this by subjecting their program to the “rigorous controlled evaluation” (p. 47) which they regard as essential, in which case it would be wise to await the results of such an evaluation before recommending their proposals to practicing teachers.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the above discussion, I have argued that the syndrome of SFLT, often described with the tired cliché of the swing of the pendulum, is undesirable for in addition to its failing to provide the promised
progress, it also creates a climate of uncertainty and insecurity among teachers and students. It is, therefore, in the interests of the field to arrest this cycle of continual paradigm shifts. I have suggested that this can be achieved by subjecting to the closest scrutiny the advocacy of some new paradigm before it results in another revolution.

The current new paradigm is that represented by proposals for TBS, crucial elements of which are the dismissal of the findings of MCR as being inconclusive, the potential reification of some as yet unspecified form of instruction, and the basing of its legitimacy on the assumed validity of the CI hypothesis and SLA research findings.

I have argued that MCR provides support for the view that choice of method or some well-defined set of pedagogical activities in specified contexts is of direct relevance to learning. Because reaching conclusions on the effects of unspecified forms of instruction will lead to ambiguity rather than enlightenment, it is necessary to specify the form of instruction involved in research if the findings of that research are to make a contribution to the field of inquiry. Moreover, given this necessity, the theoretical nature of TBS and the counterevidence to the CI hypothesis, it is premature to advocate the general implementation in the educational system of TBS options.

I will conclude with a query and recommendation concerning the orientation of the current research on task work which Long and Porter (1985) and Nunan (1991), and Long and Crookes (1992), among many others, appear to strongly endorse. Ultimately, the principal concern in all the classroom-based research is to discover the optimal conditions which will result in acquisition/learning because, as Chaudron (1988) points out, “the ultimate objective of classroom research is to identify those characteristics of classrooms which lead to efficient learning of the instructional content” (p. 1). Therefore, if researchers focus on some particular classroom activity, the priority is to endeavor to demonstrate that such an activity may lead to this desired end and that it is superior to alternatives. As far as TBS is concerned, researchers have not addressed this question in any serious manner, apparently preferring to investigate a range of variables related to types of interaction. We, thus, do not actually know if TBS achieves its aims though relevant findings already discussed would not leave one sanguine in this regard. The scholars concerned here, however, have endorsed and advocated a TBS research approach which does not address this issue and supported their argument by unquestioning appeal to research findings which, if subjected to rigorous evaluation, would reveal weaknesses which cast doubt on their reliability.

I would suggest a reorientation of task-work research in order that it focus on two fundamental questions: (a) Does task work result in actual acquisition/learning and, if so, does it have an equal effect on
receptive and productive skills? (See VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993, for research of this type.) (b) What is the role and nature of instruction in TBS? Until these issues have been addressed, I would consider it preferable to limit TBS research to the specialist circles mentioned by Long and Crookes (1992) and to carry it out in the spirit of “the stimulation of rational inquiry and not for the purpose of pushing premature decisions about how to teach languages [italics added]” (p. 27) as Rutherford and Sharwood Smith (1988) propose in relation to work on consciousness-raising.

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Dan Douglas and Carol Chapelle, Editors

The 14 papers in this anthology comprise studies that explore approaches to determining the validity of language tests and report on attempts to develop new tests of communicative language ability.

Part I includes studies that explore a variety of approaches to producing validity evidence for language tests. Lyle F. Bachman, Fred Davidson, and John Foulkes report on a large-scale study investigating the comparability of two widely used tests. J. Charles Alderson addresses problems of content analysis for test validity. Thom Hudson as well as Kyle Perkins and Sheila Brutten examine validity issues of reading tests at the item level. The three final papers in Part I report on research in which validity is studied by manipulating facets of tests of writing (Mary Spaan), summarizing (Andrew Cohen), and reading (Grant Henning, Michael Anbar, Carl E. Helm, and Sean J. D’Arcy).

The papers in Part II report research on attempts to develop new tests of communicative language ability. James Dean Brown and Elana Shohamy respectively describe the interdependence of testing and teaching programs. J. Charles Alderson as well as D. E. Ingram and Elaine Wylie report new developments in the British testing service examinations. The final two papers describe research and development in English for specific purposes testing in reading (Caroline Clapham) and speaking (Dan Douglas and Larry Selinker).

As a complement to an advanced graduate-level course in testing, this book offers testing specialists and applied linguists thoughtful explorations of theoretically significant research directions in language testing.

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Comments on Elsa Roberts Auerbach’s “Reexamining English Only in the ESL Classroom”

A Reader Reacts . . .

CHARLENE POLIO

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In her article “Reexamining English Only in the ESL Classroom” (Vol. 27, No. 1, Spring 1993), Elsa Auerbach suggests that ESL professionals take another look at advocating English-only policies in ESL classrooms. She makes several thought-provoking comments, yet I feel that her point is overstated. There are many situations to which her arguments do not apply, and I fear the article’s being used to support the use of students’ L1s in more contexts than appropriate. Were she to be more specific about what she means by “use” of English in ESL classes, she could actually strengthen her arguments for setting aside an English-only policy in certain settings. Furthermore, I take exception to what she claims to be the reasons behind various forms of English-only policies in the ESL classroom.

Auerbach states that she gave a survey at a statewide TESOL meeting asking, “Do you believe that ESL students should be allowed to use their L1 in the ESL classroom?” (p. 14). This question is essentially unanswerable without more information and thus the results uninterpretable. What is meant by “use,” “allowed,” and most important, “ESL”?

When talking about “use,” we need to be explicit with regard to activity, purpose, mode, and group configuration. Auerbach cites an interesting study that shows that allowing students to write drafts in their L1 does not harm the quality of their final paper written in the L2. If we see writing as a thinking process, we can argue that the use of the L2 may hinder that process. However, she later gives a list based
on an article by Piasecka (1988, cited in Auerbach) of occasions when practitioners find it “useful” to use the L1:

negotiation of syllabus and the lesson; record-keeping; classroom management; scene setting; language analysis; presentation of rules governing grammar, phonology, morphology, and spelling; discussion of cross-cultural issues; instructions or prompts; explanations of error; and assessment of comprehension. (p. 21)

There is little left to do in the L2, if all of the above may be done in the L1. Furthermore, it could be that teachers find it “useful” to speak the L1 because they have not been trained in ways to make the L2 comprehensible. Auerbach, in discussing various studies of classrooms, does not mention precisely what is going on in those classrooms. It could be that the teachers do not know how to modify and contextualized the L2. (Or, to take the issue a step further, students’ frustrations could be related to inappropriate teaching methods and have no relation to language choice at all.)

Second, what is meant by “allowed?” Auerbach cites, at the beginning of her article, a case in which a student was suspended for speaking Spanish. This is obviously an extreme situation. If a teacher says he or she does not “allow” the L1, it does not necessarily mean that the teacher makes a student leave the room for uttering a word of his or her L1; it could simply imply that the teacher gently reminds students, “This is an English class.” Sometimes an extreme directive is in order. In a study of university foreign language classes (Duff & Polio, 1990), it was found that when teachers (all native speakers of the students’ L1) were instructed not to use the students’ L1 (in this case, English) by departmental policy, they generally spoke more of the target language than teachers who were simply “encouraged” not to use English. Nevertheless, students were never penalized or fined by the teachers for speaking English.

And most important, by “ESL,” does Auerbach mean only second language settings or also foreign language settings? The (often convincing) research she cites is from second language settings with children or adult immigrants, many of whom have limited education or L1 literacy skills. Later in the article, when she makes a point about using aides who share the students’ cultural background and L1, she explicitly says that she is speaking of only ESL, and not EFL, situations. This leads me to believe that for the other points throughout her article, she is referring to English teaching in general.

I believe that it is of vital importance not to generalize her arguments to FL settings where input in the L2 is already limited. (See Duff &
Polio, 1990, for a more thorough discussion of this issue.) In fact, I would go so far as to argue that by not using the L2 exclusively in the FL classroom, teachers are actually holding students back and, in some cases, perpetuating existing power relationships as Auerbach claims may be done in English-only settings. For example, in Duff and Polio (1990), we found that the amount of L2 spoken by FL teachers, teaching 13 different FLs, varied from 10% to 100%. Some of the teachers made interesting comments as to why they used so much English (the students’ L1). One teacher claimed that because the language he taught was so different from English, students would be confused if he used only the L2, unlike a French class where, in his opinion, it might be easier to use the L2. Another teacher claimed that she learned English in an English-only classroom (i.e., an ESL class) and that although one can learn quickly this way, it does create a certain amount of pressure for the student. She claimed that in an FL setting, students do not need to learn the L2 so quickly. These teachers were, in effect, telling the students, “This language is too hard for you. It is too different from your L1 and you will never learn it.” Or even, “Your learning this language is not a necessity and therefore it does not deserve our best effort.”

I do not believe that the teachers in the above study were actually being malicious (although one former FL teacher once told me, with a chuckle, that when he taught his language at a U.S. university, he was pleased that he had a chance to practice so much English), nor were they motivated by political ideology. Similarly, I feel somewhat disturbed by Auerbach’s inclusion of a “language loyalty oath” (p. 12) which has no relation whatsoever (among the ESL teachers I know) to classroom practices. She says that her paper is not an attack on those who advocate the monolingual use of English, but rather an invitation to reexamine these practices “in light of their often invisible ideological roots” (p. 12). I maintain that these roots are not political in nature but rather based on second language acquisition (SLA) theory, be it accepted or discredited. For example, despite Krashen’s widely contested views on SLA, the natural approach (which seems to tolerate very limited use of the L1 by students not yet ready to produce the L2) is clearly based on assumptions of how L2s are learned, as are many other methods. Auerbach’s only reference to SLA theory is the following:

These findings concerning the use of the L1 are congruent with current theories of second language acquisition. They show that its use reduces anxiety and enhances the affective environment for learning, takes into account sociocultural factors, facilitates incorporation of learners’ life experiences, and allows for learner-centered curriculum development. (p. 20)
The above comments are not referenced and the role of the affective factors is still not conclusive. (See Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, for discussion.) Furthermore, one need not use the L1 to create a classroom with a positive affective environment.

Auerbach goes on to say:

Most importantly, it [the L1] allows for language to be used as a meaning-making tool and for language learning to be used as a means of communicating ideas rather than an end in itself. (p. 20)

Using the L1 as a “meaning-making tool” is not in accord with theories of SLA which advocate negotiation and modified input in the L2. Most researchers simply assume such negotiation is in the L2, while Ellis (1984), Chaudron (1988), and Wong Fillmore (1985), for example, explicitly say that it is essential. These claims are certainly the basis of many classroom practices, even though there could be more empirical evidence on differences in acquisition related specifically to varying amounts of L1/L2 exposure.

Finally, returning to a more political framework, it is possible to teach language to empower students using only the L2. Peirce (1989), in her discussion of a “pedagogy of possibility” in South Africa, outlines a curriculum that she claims does not perpetuate existing power relationships and which, in my opinion, can be implemented completely in English. Empowering students is not so much an issue of what language is spoken but of what is done with the language and the extent to which students’ ideas are encouraged and valued. Furthermore, although most ESL professionals I know value maintenance of the students’ L1s, such maintenance does not guarantee empowerment either.

Auerbach’s article is a useful tool for encouraging thoughtful debate among ESL professionals, and I would not hesitate to have graduate students read her article for class discussion. It forced me to examine more closely my beliefs about not using the students’ L1 in the classroom. However, I hope that this article is not used as an excuse for ESL teachers to simply switch over to the students’ L1 when they sense miscomprehension or to ignore SLA research in favor of politically motivated practices.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Patsy Duff and Sue Gass for their helpful comments on this commentary.
REFERENCES


The Author Responds . . .

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I share Polio’s concern that my article not be used as “an excuse for ESL teachers to simply switch over to the students’ LI” and hope that it was not seen as a justification for doing so. My intent was certainly not to substitute the indiscriminate use of the LI for the exclusive use of the L2 in ESL classrooms. I absolutely agree with Polio’s contention that context counts: It is key in determining when LI use is and isn’t productive. Rather than promoting uncritical acceptance of L1 use in L2 instruction, I was trying to address two realities that ESL teachers face: an externally imposed institutional pressure to use only English in ESL instruction and an internalized assumption that they are not “good” teachers if they don’t. It is this axiomatic insistence on the exclusive use of English in all contexts that I hoped to challenge in the article. The fact that I was not sufficiently explicit about the issue of context is certainly a weakness of the article, and I welcome this chance to clarify my position. I also fully agree that, in itself, use of the LI is not necessarily empowering and that pedagogical approach must be taken into account as well. Despite these points of agreement, however, there are several substantive differences which I’d like to explore further.

First, Polio wonders whether I am talking only about ESL or also about EFL settings. As the abstract states, the primary focus of the article is ESL education in the U.S.; I assumed (perhaps incorrectly) that my explicit mention of EFL at one point indicated that use of the term ESL elsewhere was a conscious choice. Indeed, the bulk of the evidence I cite pertains to the language education of immigrants and
refugees in English-speaking countries. However, I do feel that the axiomatic acceptance of English only should be questioned wherever it appears. Unlike Polio, I do not feel that it is always imperative to use English exclusively in EFL contexts. In addition, I do not feel that use of the L1 per se perpetuates existing power relations. Rather, I would argue that under certain circumstances, for limited purposes, and with particular groups, using the L1 may enhance L2 acquisition even in EFL settings. If, for example, using the L1 to give directions would enable learners to participate in L2 activities that would otherwise be inaccessible, I see no reason to preclude its use. I would argue that minimizing L1 use in EFL settings is a reasonable goal but that excluding it on principle is not. In any situation, ESL or EFL, teachers need to make conscious choices based on critical inquiry and reflection, rather than taking for granted that “one size fits all.”

This brings me to a second point of divergence with Polio—her stance toward teachers. Polio argues that teachers may utilize the L1 because they don’t know how to make L2 input comprehensible, they are not familiar with appropriate methodologies, or they underestimate learners’ capacities to learn the target language. She seems to feel that teachers cannot be trusted to incorporate the L1 selectively, and it is their lack of skill or trust in the learners which leads them to accept L1 use. My own sense is that teachers are caught in a bind, often feeling, on the one hand, that they shouldn’t use the L1 and, on the other, that it is expedient in facilitating some classroom interactions. I would argue that teachers need to be liberated from prescriptions and treated as the experts of their own contexts, capable of investigating and making conscious choices about what does and doesn’t work. Once they let go of the feeling that they should be insisting on English only, they may discover new processes and resources which actually enhance their teaching. Rather than fearing teachers’ abuse of L1 use, we should trust their capacity to integrate it selectively, based on critical analysis of their own contexts.

A third point of contention concerns the role of second language acquisition (SLA) research in justifying English only in the classroom. Polio argues that I overemphasize the ideological roots of this practice (using exaggerated examples like that of the loyalty oath) and underemphasize its theoretical basis. Further, she claims that SLA research indicates that negotiation of meaning must be in the L2 for learning to take place; the implication seems to be that I am ignoring research evidence which supports the English-only stance. Regarding the roots of English only, this practice certainly precedes the literature to which she refers; I tried to contextualized the practice historically, for example, by including the loyalty oath, not to imply that it is indicative of current ideology, but to show that there are historical antecedents of which we
are largely unaware. Regarding support for L2 only in SLA research, I am not convinced that this research yields conclusive and unequivocal evidence for always excluding the L1. Here, I think, Polio makes the very mistake that she takes me to task for—disregarding context. My reading of the research suggests, as I said, that, in fact, L2 acquisition is enhanced by support for the L1 under certain circumstances; there is ample evidence (some of which is cited in my article) that this is the case for minority language learners in an English-dominant country. Concerned that I may have misread the literature, however, I did contact Craig Chaudron, one of the authors Polio cited as having explicitly claimed that meaning negotiation must be in the L2. In his response, Chaudron (personal communication, 1993) says:

It remains still to be shown exactly how much and in which circumstances L1 is preferable to L2, but there is no doubt that an English-only (L2) environment for language minority learners is detrimental to many aspects of their learning and affective/social relationships with the L2 community. On the other hand, in a foreign language (or a majority-language second language, such as French in Canada) environment, there may not need to be such an amount of L1 support provided. . . .

I can’t find where I have stated it “explicitly” that negotiation for meaning/interaction is “essential” in the L2, but if I did so state, or imply, it was solely in the understanding that some of the most effective L2 experiences for learners will take place during such moments, so that it is best not to miss the chance by allowing too much meaning negotiation to take place in the L1.

Chaudron goes on to say that “some L1 may be very efficiently used to serve L2 learning purposes,” but that moments when the L1 is used should be used to “generate, at a later moment, attention to L2 production.” I certainly would agree that L1 use should serve the purpose of enhanced L2 acquisition.

Finally, like Polio, I want to end with the issue of politics and power. I absolutely agree that the maintenance of the students’ L1 is no guarantee of empowerment and that, regardless of which language is used, students’ ideas must be valued. I would go further to say that this valuing of learners’ ideas should include valuing their ideas about language learning. Just as teachers should be trusted to make informed pedagogical decisions, students should be invited into the conversation: Issuing directives (either to students or to teachers) instead of encouraging dialogue can only be disempowering. Certainly the dialogue should include findings from SLA research as well as teachers’ informed perspectives; but through negotiation around the issue of language use itself, participants (both teachers and students) may arrive
at guidelines which, in fact, enhance the learning environment and make L2 instruction more effective.

I want to end with a lengthy excerpt from an account by a teacher (E. Propp, personal communication, 1993) who was skeptical when she first heard my perspective on L1 use in ESL classes at a conference. In it, she talks about the impact of letting go of the English-only rule in her class. I think her story is testimony to the potential of this approach; it may relieve fears that either teachers or students will abuse the practice of selectively using the L1 in ESL classes.

As I settled back in my chair to listen to Auerbach's speech, I felt uncomfortable. Here she was extolling the virtues of bilingual teachers and here I was, an ESL teacher committed to my profession . . . . I felt attacked, but as I continued to listen, I did agree with one of her basic premises, namely, that it is extremely important to recognize that respect for a learner's language has strong political, social, and affective implications.

The following Monday, I went back to my workplace ESL class. The majority of students in this high-beginner, low-intermediate class were Cape Verdeans who spoke Creole and Portuguese. Despite my English-only request, Creole was often spoken in class, and I never felt completely in harmony with the group.

After a short reading and discussion period in English, I told the class that their written response to the readings and discussion could be in any language that they wished. I also said that they could use more than one language in their story. Suddenly everyone became very busy and excited. . . . Everyone was talking and helping each other. The vibes were great.

The first story which was read aloud was in Portuguese. When they realized that I didn't understand what the writer had written, they fell over each other in their eagerness to tell me the gist of the story. The author of the story, who is also the class leader, then decided that he wanted an English translation. During the break, I xeroxed the Portuguese so that everyone had a copy, and the whole class proceeded to translate it into English. I wrote their translation on the blackboard and everyone left with a Portuguese and English version of the story. It was our best class ever. This procedure was repeated several times.

For the next couple of classes, a lot of Creole and Portuguese were spoken. The dynamics of the class changed completely. I was no longer "The Teacher" because they were teaching me Creole and Portuguese while I was teaching them English. As their English improved, they relied less and less on their mother tongues and after a few minutes of Creole, someone would say, "Speak English. This is our English class."

Class sessions have evolved into a unique form of contrastive analysis. If a new vocabulary word bears any resemblance to a Portuguese or Creole word, the student will point this out to me, will then write the word on the blackboard and explain the similarities and differences.

Has my classroom changed since Auerbach's speech to which my initial reactions were rather mixed? Definitely. It's become a much more demo-
Comments on Rod Ellis’s “The Structural Syllabus and Second Language Acquisition”

Implicit Knowledge, Second Language Learning, and Syllabus Construction

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In his TESOL Quarterly article (Vol. 27, No. 1, Spring 1993), Rod Ellis attempts to make a case for the role of a structural syllabus as a means to promote “gradual mastery” of implicit second language knowledge. Ellis proposes a two-dimensional model of skill learning which is similar to the analysis control model proposed by Bialystok (1982). However, the invocation of a distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge to replace one of Bialystok’s constructs, the dimension of analysis, leads to confusion and theoretical incoherence because it is not clear how Ellis’s definitions of implicit and explicit knowledge relate to similar distinctions in cognitive psychology and L2 research (e.g., Hulstijn, 1990; Logan, 1988; McLaughlin, 1987; Reber, 1989; Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977). No empirical evidence from this research is adduced to support assertions Ellis makes about implicit knowledge which are fundamental to his proposals for pedagogy. In particular, it is unclear how Ellis motivates claims about the nature of the interface between implicit and explicit knowledge, and the form of implicit knowledge.

In his model of second language acquisition processes, Ellis replaces Bialystok’s (1982) +/- analyzed distinction with a distinction between two types of knowledge, explicit and implicit. For Bialystok, this dimension represents a continuum of analysis, with early language being toward the unanalyzed end of the scale and analyzed language characterizing the later, more developed system. For Ellis this is a dichotomy between interfaced, but distinct implicit and explicit “types” of knowledge. Bialystok’s dimension of control is referred to as the “declarative” to “procedural” (Anderson, 1983) dimension by Ellis. Language development is characterized as the process whereby explicit declarative
knowledge becomes implicit procedural knowledge. Ellis adopts a "weak interface" position, allowing some seepage of explicit knowledge into implicit knowledge, but rejects the "strong interface" position, which claims all explicit declarative knowledge can be directly converted into implicit procedural knowledge through practice. The role of the structural syllabus is to identify items which are candidates for the transition, and the role of methodology is to ensure that learners explicitly notice them or notice the gap between their current representations and these features. This is necessary for the conversion of explicit into implicit knowledge.

The problems with Ellis’s position stem largely from his basic assertion that an agreed-upon distinction between explicit and implicit knowledge exists and is “common in cognitive psychology” (p. 93), a claim he attributes to Bialystok (1981). It is true that a number of distinctions are made between forms of representation in cognitive psychology that bear some resemblance to the distinction Ellis invokes. These are familiar, for example, from the work of Reber (1989, with respect to differences in the knowledge bases established through learning under implicit and explicit conditions); Logan (1988, with respect to the relative contributions of consciously accessed rule-based knowledge and nonconscious access to memory-based knowledge during the development of automaticity); and in an L2 context, from the work of Krashen (1985, with respect to the knowledge bases developed by acquisition processes and learning processes); Shiffrin & Schneider (1977); and McLaughlin (1987, with respect to the knowledge base that forms the basis of controlled processing and the knowledge base that is drawn on in automatic processing). However, the apparent similarity of these distinctions does not support the generalization that a single agreed-upon distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge exists and is common in cognitive psychology. Ellis avoids discussion of the extent to which his implicit/explicit distinction relates to similar distinctions made elsewhere. If he had attempted to do this, he would have found that it is no easy matter to establish a consensus for the implicit/explicit knowledge distinction in empirical work which he could use to license the working definition he needs for the purposes of theory construction. For example, in the area of implicit learning, Reber (1989, 1993) has proposed that the knowledge bases established by learning under implicit and explicit conditions are noninterfaced and that the former is always more complex, more abstract, and develops in advance of the latter. How does this relate to Ellis’s claim that explicit knowledge can feed into and cause reorganization of implicit knowledge? It would seem, from Reber’s account, that the reverse process, were it possible, would be more likely. Recent L2 research
have modified the paradigm established by Reber for the purposes of research on natural and semiartificial examples of an L2 by L2 learners (e.g., Doughty, 1991; N. Ellis, 1993; Hulstijn, 1990), but Ellis nowhere makes reference to this work or its findings. At the very least, it must be admitted that the theoretical distinction that forms the crux of his proposals for pedagogy is undermotivated by available evidence of empirical research into implicit learning and the nature of implicit knowledge.

Consequently, it is unclear how to justify the assertion that implicit knowledge consists of formulaic and rule-based knowledge (p. 93). How does this relate to Logan’s (1988) distinction between the knowledge base drawn on in automatic behavior (memory for instances or chunks) and that drawn on in nonautomatic behavior (rule-based representations), which associates the two forms of knowledge with different phases of automaticity? Krashen (1985) is clear about his position that formulaic knowledge can play no role in the development of the acquired system and the differentiation of its knowledge base. Reber (1989, 1993) also maintains that the knowledge base established under implicit learning conditions is “abstract” and independent of the influence of memory for specific exemplars or chunks. The current debate on this issue (see Servan-Schreiber & Anderson, 1990; Vokey & Brooks, 1992) cannot, without risk of misrepresenting the nature of the available evidence, be reduced to a simple assertion that implicit knowledge is both abstract and formulaic.

The notion of the interface between implicit and explicit knowledge, however, is the most problematic aspect of Ellis’s model. Precisely what evidence is there for the claim, fundamental to the proposals Ellis makes, that explicit knowledge can “feed directly into” (p. 98) implicit knowledge, a phrase borrowed from Bialystok (1979)? There is certainly no precedent for this in the work of Reber (1989), as I have claimed above, and although Mathews et al. (1989) suggest that under certain task conditions and by learning certain types of grammars, a mutually beneficial sequential relation between implicit and explicit modes of learning can be inferred, this does not mean that the knowledge bases of these separate activities are interfaced. It is true that

Implicit learning is the process whereby implicit L2 knowledge is acquired and, as such, is the basis for valid inferences about representation of implicit knowledge. It is true that some claim implicit knowledge preexists the learning process, as is argued, for example, by Chomsky (1986) and others who claim that genetically determined configurations of possible languages interact with, and so predate in some way, contact with the data of experience. If such knowledge remains available to second language learning adults, it could also be claimed to be a form of implicit knowledge that preexists the learning process (Robinson, 1994), though the issue of its availability is a matter of debate (see Bley-Vroman, 1989; White, 1989).
structured presentation of material under implicit learning conditions has been shown to facilitate induction of the underlying rule system more effectively than random exposure (Reber, 1989; N. Ellis, 1993), but this is separate from the claim that explicit knowledge can feed into implicit knowledge. Ellis asserts, without ever explaining in terms of his constructs, that developmental data is evidence for the fact that explicit knowledge, at particular developmentally sensitive points, can trigger restructuring or stagewise leaps in the complexity of the learner’s implicit system. This is, in fact, the essence of Ellis’s claim—there is development or restructuring which may be triggered by explicit instruction or focus on forms. As such, his proposals need not invoke the distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge, which, I have argued, is insufficiently motivated.

There are problems with this reduced position, as Ellis acknowledges, and I will briefly mention three. Sequencing a syllabus by structure implies assumptions about the order of learning, but (a) we have insufficient developmental evidence to motivate decisions about all possible structures; (b) there are variations in rate of progress through those developmental sequences that are assumed to be known, so groups of students cannot be treated homogeneously over time; and (c) the precise point of learner development is difficult to identify from production data because there is “trailing” (recapitulation of developmental stages prior to the current one) and “scouting” (initial excursions into a new developmental stage before the wholesale shift is made) (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). In fact, these considerations make decisions about sequencing structures impossible to resolve. As Ellis admits, a linear syllabus in which structural items are presented one by one, according to some notion of learnability, is inadequate, particularly given point b above. A spiral syllabus, in which items are recycled more than once “is still a hit-or-miss affair” (p. 103) because it is impossible to motivate a decision about what structures to present and when.

In summary, proposals for pedagogy based on distinctions between implicit and explicit knowledge and which aim to specify the pedagogic conditions whereby one can be converted into the other should be motivated by empirical research into the process that has taken place in cognitive psychology and that is currently underway by L2 researchers. Ellis fails to do this. In fact, proposals for pedagogy based on the empirical research that exists in the area are probably premature. More studies are needed which examine the acquisition of natural L2s under different experimental conditions (as in, e.g., Doughty, 1991; N. Ellis, 1993; Hulstijn, 1990). Important questions such research could address are the extent to which changes in learning are consequent upon manipulations of assumed variables like degree of attention and
intention (Curran & Keele, 1993; Schmidt, 1992). Other questions are prompted by the issue of learnability. What can be learned given particular specifications of implicit and explicit conditions? Are the conditions differentially sensitive to the degree of complexity of the stimulus domain, with more complex structures being learned faster, more robustly, and in a manner that permits of greater generalization to similar structures, under implicit but not explicit conditions, as Reber (1989) has suggested? Is the notion of complexity to be motivated in terms of Universal Grammar (Sharwood Smith, 1991; White, 1989) or in terms of processing models supported by developmental evidence (Pienemann, Johnston, & Brindley, 1988)? Is learning under implicit and explicit task conditions differentially sensitive to individual differences in cognitive capacities, with learning under implicit conditions unaffected by such differences, in contrast to learning under explicit conditions (Reber, 1993)? However, before we can specify a clear role for implicit learning, or knowledge, in syllabus design, either structurally organized or task based, it will be necessary to investigate such matters thoroughly and with a clear idea of the relationship of the constructs we are using to those used elsewhere in cognitive psychology.

REFERENCES


I would like to consider four issues which Peter Robinson raises in his critique of my article:

1. The status of the implicit/explicit knowledge distinction
2. The nature of implicit knowledge
3. The relationship between explicit and implicit knowledge
4. The relationship between theory, research, and language pedagogy.

THE STATUS OF THE IMPLICIT/EXPLICIT KNOWLEDGE DISTINCTION

It is not entirely clear to me whether Robinson is objecting to the distinction between explicit and implicit knowledge or merely to my presentation of it. It is certainly misleading to state that “Ellis replaces Bialystok’s (1982) +/- analyzed distinction with a distinction between two types of knowledge, explicit and implicit.” In fact, Bialystok began by using the explicit/implicit distinction (see Bialystok, 1978, 1981) and later abandoned this in favor of +/- analyzed (see Bialystok, 1982). In drawing on Bialystok’s work, I have opted for the earlier distinction because I find it clearer and better suited to the purpose of constructing a theory of second language acquisition (SLA). Whereas the later distinction allows only for the development of unanalyzed knowledge into analyzed, which restricts its relevance to SLA (a point Robinson acknowledges), the earlier distinction permits a two-way interface, with explicit knowledge converting into implicit as well as implicit into explicit.

The distinction between explicit/implicit knowledge did not originate with Bialystok, of course, although she was one of the first to apply it to SLA. It is common in cognitive psychology and epistemology (see Bialystok, 1981, and Robinson’s own helpful list of recent references from cognitive psychology). However, as Robinson rightly points out, the distinction is not uncontroversial. To sort out some of the problems, it is useful to distinguish explicit/implicit knowledge and explicit/implicit learning. Robinson tends to blur the two. The former is much less controversial than the latter if only because it does not necessitate any reference to “conscious” and “subconscious” learning processes; the distinction between explicit and implicit knowledge can be operationalized in terms of whether the learner is aware of what s/he knows and can verbalize it. In my discussion of the explicit/implicit distinction, I have taken care to consider only knowledge in order to head-off some of the criticisms that have been leveled at the distinction when it is applied to learning (see McLaughlin, 1990).

In short, Robinson’s claim that my “invocation of a distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge to replace one of Bialystok’s constructs, the dimension of analysis, leads to confusion and theoretical incoherence” is a reflection of his own ignorance of Bialystok’s early work (his confusion) and a failure to recognize the importance of distinguishing knowledge and learning in discussions of the explicit/implicit distinction (his theoretical incoherence).
Robinson is also critical of my claim that implicit knowledge consists of formulaic and rule-based knowledge, although, again, his criticisms become confused because he fails to make a clear distinction between knowledge and learning. However, I accept that I am obligated to justify the claim and to relate it to discussions of implicit knowledge in the literature.

The main point of contention appears to lie in whether formulas (i.e., ready-made chunks of language) should be considered to be part of implicit knowledge. My decision to include formulas within implicit knowledge was motivated by my general characterization of implicit knowledge as knowledge that is intuitive and unanalyzed and explicit knowledge as knowledge of which the holder is aware and which, as a consequence, is analyzed. To quote from N. Ellis (1993):

Some things we just can do, like our native language (L1), riding a bike, or dreaming. We have little insight into the nature of the processing involved: like swallows fly, we just do them. Other of our abilities depend on our knowing how to do them, like speaking pig Latin, multiplication, or cooking from a recipe. (p. 290)

Now, it seems obvious that formulaic chunks like I don’t know or Can I have a _____? constitute the kind of knowledge involved in “things we can just do” rather than the kind of knowledge involved in abilities like multiplication. Bialystok and Sharwood Smith (1985) reach a similar conclusion, treating formulaic chunks as part of the unanalyzed knowledge system. To claim that formulaic knowledge is part of implicit knowledge is not so controversial.

The question arises as to whether implicit knowledge is to be characterized entirely as formulaic in nature or whether it can also take some other form. I have chosen to argue that implicit L2 knowledge can also be abstract and rule based—a position that accords with that found in early interlanguage theory and which currently informs SLA research in the field of Universal Grammar. I am aware, however, that this claim is controversial and that certain cognitive theories (e.g., parallel distributed processing; see Rumelhart & McClelland, 1986) challenge the assumption that implicit linguistic knowledge is rule based.

The claim, then, that implicit knowledge is both formulaic and abstract/rule based has considerable pedigree, although, like many theoretical issues in our field, it is not universally accepted. Now, Robinson’s objections to this characterization of implicit knowledge appear to rest on the fact that I have not specified the nature of the relationship
between formulaic knowledge and abstract/rule-based knowledge. He argues that I am obligated to discuss this in terms of distinctions proposed by Logan and Reber. In fact, I took a conscious decision not to enter into any discussion of the relationship between formulaic and rule-based knowledge, not because I do not consider this important—it clearly is—but because I wished to maintain a focus on the primary explicit/implicit distinction. In a single paper, it is simply not possible to deal fully with every issue raised by a theory.

In my view, the relationship between formulaic and rule-based knowledge needs to be considered in a further elucidation of implicit knowledge and how this develops. There are, in fact, a number of possible positions regarding this relationship. One is that formulaic knowledge and rule-based knowledge are distinct and that the former plays no part in the development of the latter (see Krashen & Scarcella, 1978). Another is that formulaic knowledge is gradually unpacked and fed into the developing rule system (see Wong Fillmore, 1976). These and other positions are reviewed in R. Ellis (1994).

To sum up, I have argued that the claim that implicit knowledge consists of formulaic chunks and abstract/rule-based representations is fully warranted by the existing literature. I have acknowledged, however, the need for a full discussion of the relationship between these two types of implicit knowledge.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT KNOWLEDGE

The main focus of my original article was the relationship between explicit and implicit knowledge. Unfortunately, Robinson misrepresents my position. He characterizes my position on L2 development as “the process whereby explicit declarative knowledge becomes implicit procedural knowledge.” While the theory I have proposed does allow for such an interface, providing certain stringent conditions are met, it also advances a number of other hypotheses regarding the role of explicit knowledge in the development of implicit knowledge. These hypotheses are clearly stated on page 98 of the original article and are reiterated in summary form here:

1. Explicit knowledge can be used to monitor output, which, in turn, serves as a source of input.
2. Explicit knowledge can help learners notice features in the input and understand the meanings they realize.
3. Explicit knowledge can help learners compare their existing representation of a grammatical feature with that actually observed in the input.

Robinson ignores these hypotheses, preferring instead to consider only the claim that implicit and explicit knowledge can interface.

In fact, though, my proposals for a structural syllabus rest on the hypotheses which Robinson fails to consider, not on the interface claim. Indeed, as Robinson points out, I advance a number of reasons why the interface claim cannot serve as a basis for teaching implicit knowledge. I then go on to suggest that a structural syllabus might prove useful in two other ways, both related to the idea of consciousness-raising: (a) helping learners notice and comprehend grammatical features in the input and (b) helping learners develop explicit knowledge of a grammatical feature (which, indirectly, may facilitate the subsequent acquisition of implicit knowledge). It is these proposals that lie at the center of my article and which I had hoped to see discussed. Robinson’s failure to consider them leads me to conclude that he has missed the main point of the article—that a structural syllabus should not be used to teach deplorable implicit knowledge but might serve as a means for contributing, partially and indirectly, to its acquisition.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEORY, RESEARCH, AND LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

Finally, I would like to challenge Robinson’s implicit view of the relationship between theory, research, and language pedagogy. Robinson argues that proposals for pedagogy based on distinctions between implicit and explicit knowledge and which aim to specify the pedagogic conditions whereby one can be converted into the other should be motivated by empirical research into the process that has taken place in cognitive psychology . . . . In fact, proposals for pedagogy based on the empirical research that exists in the area are probably premature.

The underlying assumption appears to be this: Researchers do research, and only when they have arrived at sufficiently robust conclusions (i.e., a theory), can proposals for pedagogy be advanced. However, this is an assumption that many would not agree with; it is based on a particular conception of teaching and teacher development, one that Freeman and Richards (1993), following Zahorik (1986), characterize as “scientifically based.” An alternative conception is to view teaching as an “art/craft.” Whereas a scientifically based conception of
teaching emphasizes the importance of basing pedagogic proposals on the results of empirical research, an art/craft conception emphasizes the importance of teachers exploring and evaluating their own teaching through innovation and self-observation. Now, Robinson’s view that pedagogic proposals should await definitive research is compatible with a scientifically based conception of teaching but not with an art/craft view. Indeed, in an art/craft view, theory or research findings, no matter how definitive, do not provide a warrant for pedagogic practice. At best, they can only provide the teacher with ideas which have to be tried out in actual classroom contexts.

My own preference is for an art/craft view of teaching. In such a view, the relationship between theory, research, and pedagogy is somewhat different from that assumed by Robinson. Theory and research serve as one (but not the only) source of information and ideas on which teachers can draw in making decisions about what and how to teach. These decisions must then be examined in the course of actual teaching by teachers themselves. One way in which this can take place is through action research (see Nunan, 1990). In such a conception, it is not necessary to wait until researchers have definitive results or until a theory is widely accepted. Teachers, on the basis of their own intuition and experience, may choose to select ideas promulgated by theorists and experiment with them in their classrooms. The results of their experiments will determine the status of the proposals. The results may also contribute to the development of the theory because teaching can inform research just as research informs teaching. Perhaps Robinson needs to give fuller thought to the relationship between theory, research, and pedagogy.

Although I see every need to subject a theory to empirical testing, I see no need to wait until hypotheses are “motivated by empirical research” (as it is not clear to me what this means) before teachers are allowed to consider them. I therefore reject Robinson’s criticism. I would also point out that my own views on the relationship between theory, research, and pedagogy were stated in the original article—albeit briefly—in the final paragraph. However, Robinson does not appear to have considered my view of the relationship between research/theory and teacher education.

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THE FORUM 171


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**Teaching Issues**

The *TESOL Quarterly* publishes brief commentaries on aspects of English language teaching. For this issue, we asked two educators to discuss how theories of language and cognition can inform ESL teaching.

**Edited by BONNY NORTON PEIRCE**

*University of the Witwatersrand/
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education*

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**Language, Cognition, and ESL Literacy**

**Vygotsky and ESL Literacy Teaching**

**COURTNEY B. CAZDEN**

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- In her book *Appropriating Literacy: Writing and Reading in English as a Second Language,* Rodby (1992) develops a “framework for ESL literacy...
through the language theory of M. M. Bakhtin and Lev Vygotsky” (p. xvi). In the midst of my own exploration of the implications of these Soviet scholars for literacy teaching, I spent 4 weeks in South Africa, working in one independent black secondary school and two racially mixed universities with students and staff who were almost all speakers of English as a second or third language. I’ll use examples from South Africa for three different ideas from Vygotsky, especially from *Thought and Language* (1962, hereafter *TL*), the last being closest to Rodby’s.¹

One idea in *TL* is the internalization of socially acquired language into “inner speech.” Internalization occurs through a series of transformations during which inner speech acquires its special characteristics, especially “the preponderance of the sense of a word over its meaning” (p. 146). Where meaning is precise, definable in a dictionary, and stable across contexts of use, sense is dynamic and fluid, varying from one individual to another depending on connotations accruing from previous experience with the word and shifting within a single individual from one context of occurrence to another. Then, through further transformations, inner speech becomes the still more inward thought.

When we consider the outward journey, from thought through inner speech to writing, we have to start even further inside, with the affective, volitional tendencies and desires that activate and motivate these inner processes. Then, because thought occurs in simultaneous, whole images that do not necessarily coincide with units of language, it must be partitioned, recreated and completed as it is transformed into words. In Vygotsky’s lyrical metaphor for the whole sequence, affect is “the wind that puts into motion the cloud that gushes a shower of words” (combining *TL*, p. 150, and other translations). Writing requires the transcription, and usually the revision, of inner speech, that “shower of words,” for some purpose and audience.

In Johannesburg, the pass rate for secondary school students at the Educational Programmes Centre (EPC) on the national school-leaving “matric” exam rose to 76% in 1991 and 96% in 1992 (100 passes out of 104 students). Last year, EPC students received more than 30 “distinctions” in English. According to EPC Director Bernadette Mosala (1992b) writing has been a key factor in EPC’S success. As she explained:

> The only thing [different in the last two years] was the students were redirected through writing. We were brought up to believe, and honestly believe, that writing is not our turf at all . . . . We are of the oral tradition and I believe firmly that thousands of kids that fail the 12th grade fail not

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¹Cazden (in press) is a longer analysis of three “readings” of Vygotsky by writing educators, without the South African examples included here.
because they haven’t put in sufficient work to enable them to pass; they fail because writing is not in their culture, as they are not able to write as lucidly as they want.

Whatever the mix of English and African languages in these students’ social and mental worlds, they engage in intensive oral discussions and extensive writing—in English—throughout the EPC curriculum: about novels and poems, about problem solving in math, about their reality and their dreams. Through many, varied writing experiences, EPC students become able to write what they know on the matric exam; and they come to believe in themselves as writers and learners.

A second idea from Vygotsky is the concept of instruction as “scaffolded assistance.” Any person’s experience with the external world is mediated not only by symbolic systems but also by other persons. Vygotsky has given the name “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) to the difference between what a person can do alone and what he or she can do with assistance. The metaphorical term scaffold has become a common name for forms of assistance in the learner’s ZPD. Because scaffolds are literally temporary, adjustable frameworks for construction in progress, their metaphorical sense retains the important Vygotskian meaning of an ever-shifting ZPD.

In her booklet *The Battered Setwork Book: Teaching the Novel*, Mosala (1992) has many suggestions for creating such scaffolds for students from oral and/or non-English traditions who have to be “seduced” into entering some of the fat novels they are expected to read. For example:

1. Introduce the book with a brief summary of the plot and main characters.
2. Ask students to flip through the book, read one paragraph and try to relate it to the summary.
3. Ask each student to pick one character and flip through the book again, note what “their” character is doing and hypothesize a relation to the summary.
4. Have the class read the first and last paragraphs in the book and relate them to all of the above.

What is important, Mosala explains (personal communication, September 1992), is that the students gain, right at the beginning, an understanding of, and interest in, the whole story line as they skim through the book several times in these ways.

The third idea, integrates Vygotsky and Bakhtin (1981), Vygotsky’s

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Clay and Caxden (1992) analyze in Vygotskian terms a beginning literacy program for 6 year olds. The teacher’s introduction to a new book is similar to Mosala’s in ways appropriate for much younger children.
contemporary until Vygotsky’s death in the 1930s. It adds to the first two the dimension of variations in language use and social power. In Rodby’s (1992) words:

Many writers attribute social meanings to ESL reading and writing. They embrace or oppose and resist it on the basis of the social meanings they associate with ESL literacy practices, meanings derived from the social interactions which the literacy mediates. (p. 61)

Students’ responses to ESL may thus include resistance as well as internalization.

In South Africa, controversies over the social meanings of ESL literacy are extreme—argued by writers, students and faculty, and educational policy makers. Is English, like Afrikaans, stigmatized as the language of the oppressor or can it be a neutral lingua franca in a nonracist South Africa? (Rodby includes contrasting answers by African writers to this question). Is the problem English as a language or is it particular discourse purposes and patterns, which can be refashioned into “people’s English” (Peirce, 1989)?

South Africa is extreme in this respect, but it is not unique. Because language differences are expressions of, and factors in, differences in social power, ESL teachers are by definition engaged in work that requires political awareness as well as technical competence. Or, to put it another way, ESL teachers’ technical competence should include what is often called critical literacy—the ability to analyze how English is being used in our students’ worlds. How we understand such differences in English language use and discuss them openly with our students may affect the direction and strength of their “wind that puts into motion the cloud that gushes a shower of words.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I am grateful to the Department of Applied English Language Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand for discussion of these ideas and to the Spencer Foundation for support of both time and travel.

THE AUTHOR

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Cazden (1992a) gives additional examples of expressed ambivalence, even resistance, toward the English being used and taught.
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Cummins, EAP, and Academic Literacy

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The Academic Support Programme (ASP) of the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS), Johannesburg, was started in 1980 to assist black ESL students from the segregated schools of the Department of Education and Training (DET) who were entering a historically white, English-medium university. Schooling in the DET has been systematically structured to underequip black students for higher education. As one student commented, “I was taught not to be critical” (Selikow, 1991, p. 7). Many mainstream faculty tend to view these students as having language problems while some appear to believe that the students are cognitively unable to cope with university study. The three most frequently posed questions to staff of the ASP can be summed up as follows (see also Yeld, 1990):

1. Why do “foreign” language speakers of English (e.g., Germans) require little or no academic support and frequently do better aca-
demically than DET students, even though their English may be poorer?
2. Do DET students have linguistic or conceptual problems?
3. Why are DET students often able to communicate their understanding of an argument orally but are less able to do so in written discourse?

Initial responses to these questions led to programmes which followed a fairly traditional EAP/ESP model. These were based on what could be termed the Widdowsonian view that foreign language students entering an English-medium university will translate into English the conceptual and procedural knowledge in the content areas already acquired in the L1 (Widdowson, 1979). However, this model did not adequately meet our students’ learning needs. Ironically, it reinforced certain perceptions of student deficits.

It was Cummins’ (1984) work on the role of language in academic achievement which helped ASP practitioners understand why the traditional EAP model could not work in the South African context and which provided the theoretical bases for the integrated approach to academic literacy now adopted and outlined below. Cummins’ framework enabled us to arrive at a clearer understanding of the interplay between language and cognition and why it is that students from the DET are underprepared for university study. Typical academic literacy tasks such as writing an essay or reading a textbook are characterised by Cummins as context reduced and cognitively demanding. Of equal importance is the construct of a common underlying proficiency which allows transfer of academic literacy and conceptual knowledge from the L1 to L2 and facilitates the acquisition of L2 literacy.

In the DET schools, however, academic literacy is barely acquired in the L1, for it ceases to be a medium of instruction after the fourth year, with insufficient time having been allowed for the acquisition of context-reduced, cognitively-demanding skills. English then becomes the medium of instruction, requiring academic literacy acquisition via the L2. Content materials are, however, frequently too difficult for pupils to process given their limited English proficiency, so rote learning tends to predominate (Macdonald, 1990). Within this educational system, relevant conceptual knowledge and the text-based skills identified by Cummins as vital to academic literacy are, in many instances, only partially acquired.

The response to the first question posed above regarding the differential academic achievement of foreign language students versus DET students entering WITS is, then, that the former have acquired both literacy skills and a degree of conceptual knowledge in the L1. Needing to learn the surface features of English, they are largely able to transfer
existing academic literacy into English. They are the students profiled in the Widdowsonian (1979) view of EAP. DET students, however, are not simply in need of “an alternative way of expressing knowledge” (p. 28) they already have. While needing language development, they also require substantial assistance in their content areas, which traditional EAP teachers are unable to provide. To the question, then, of whether DET students are experiencing linguistic or conceptual difficulties, the response would seem to be that these two dimensions are inextricably linked. The question concerning DET students’ differing oral and written proficiencies can also be understood in terms of Cummins’ constructs; while students may be orally fluent in the more context-embedded aspects of proficiency, they are not sufficiently proficient in the context-reduced skills which successful academic study demands. Clearly, DET students following a traditional EAP programme could come to be characterised as lacking conceptual and linguistic abilities, whereas the “problem” would lie in the nature of the intervention.

Cummins’ theories helped in developing the integrated model of ASP and reconceptualizing the role of the ESL teacher. As each discipline appears to have specific conceptual networks which underpin its organisation of knowledge and ways of thinking and talking about it, only initiated members of the discourse community are able to teach what it means to “be critical” within a discipline’s epistemic and heuristic frames. Reading and writing skills are not easily acquired in isolation from these larger structures. By integrating language and learning skills with students’ content courses, the cognitive demands on the students are initially lessened as the academic skills are highly contextualised. In the WITS model, ASP students enroll in several mainstream courses but attend at least one additional weekly subject-based tutorial per course. These are taught by a subject specialist, appointed on a full-time basis by the ASP and the relevant department. The ASP curriculum is content-driven—the mainstream course determines the skills and processes taught and the conceptual focus. There is no separate language syllabus.

This is where the key shift in the role of the ESL teacher arises. The ESL teacher is no longer in the classroom attempting to teach language to students who demand content and for whom language support as defined in the EAP model is not helpful. S/he interacts with the ASP subject-specialist instructor, highlighting language and learning issues to facilitate instructor integration of skill with content. In addition to its 30 subject-specialist instructors, the ASP has a team of 5 ESL specialists. The latter now work in collaborative roles: auditing subject classes, examining students’ readings and essay assignments, and with subject instructors, designing appropriate learning interven-
tions. They also act as consultants to mainstream staff wishing to redevelop their curricula. We have found that this is the way the ESL teacher’s expertise can best be used.

Although the integrated model has resulted in improved student performance and is positively rated by students, it remains “adjunct” and can be viewed as protecting the mainstream from change. Informed by Cummins’ theories of cognition, language, and educational development (Cummins, 1986), we are moving to a situation in which the ASP can now ask of the mainstream:

1. How can we (collectively) best teach academic literacy?
2. How can we restructure our curricula to meet the learning needs of the majority of students?
3. What forms of staff development are most appropriate for a post-apartheid university?

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Comparing Teacher and Student Responses to Written Work

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In the past 2 decades, ESL writing instructors have become interested in the process approach to writing, which they borrowed from their colleagues in L1 writing. The process approach argues that writers create and change their ideas as they write and that writing is recursive: When and how often writers rework things depends on their personal writing style as well as the writing task and context. Early proponents of the process approach asserted that the most important task of writing instructors was helping students develop the skills needed to come up with ideas, explore and refine their writing. In practice, this meant working on prewriting, drafting, and analyzing and rewriting techniques, including peer response (where students read and comment on each other’s papers.)

In the mid-1980s, the process approach came under attack from professionals who claimed that due to the emphasis laid on the students’ discovery of their personal ideas and the neglect of the “sociocultural context” (Silva, 1990), it did not prepare students for academic work. Critics responded by offering English for academic purposes (EAP) courses which aimed to give students skills in “finding out what is expected and trying to approximate it” (Silva, 1990, p. 17) and content-based ESL courses focusing on reporting and commenting on academic material rather than personal discovery (Raimes, 1991). However, this was not a rejection of the ideas of the process approach but a shift in focus, and process writing techniques are used by most writing instructors and EAP textbooks (e.g., Brookes & Grundy, 1990; Leki, 1989; & Reid, 1985).

Although there has been a significant amount of research on the processes individual writers go through (for summary, see Krapels, 1990),
an important but neglected area of study concerns what goes on between students in process approach exercises, especially in peer response activities. Writing instructors must also understand this to judge if these activities are helpful in developing students’ writing processes. Some work has already been done: Mittan (1989) spelled out the reasons for using peer response; Allaei and Connor (1990) discussed the problems that can arise from using peer response in classes with students from a variety of cultural backgrounds; Keh (1990) compared the advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback, teacher-student conferences, and written comments; Mangelsdorf (1992) reported on students’ attitudes toward peer response; and Nelson and Murphy (1992) investigated how the social behavior of the students toward one another can affect the quality of peer review sessions and explored what factors make students more open to accepting suggestions from their peers (Nelson & Murphy, 1993).

However, there remains a need for studies on the quality or content of L2 peer response; this information is vital for accessing the efficacy of peer response in writing instruction. The study described below, which I conducted as both teacher and researcher, is an attempt to fill this gap.

THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to deepen our understanding of what happens in peer response activities as well as to provide specific information for writing instructors on which to base decisions. To do this, two questions were posed. The first question was, Do students give good advice to their peers? I looked at the quality of the peer responses in comparison with teacher comments and assessed whether peer responses approached the quality and range of typical comments by teachers, which would make teacher comments unnecessary, or whether students only made suggestions the teacher considered unimportant or misleading, which would call into question the use of peer responses. The second question was, What are the differences between teacher and student comments, and why do these differences exist? Here I examined the functions teacher and student comments served in the writing classroom.

The Writing Class

The participants, 18–25 years of age and ranging from intermediate to advanced proficiency (meaning an approximate Foreign Service Institute [FSI] rating of 2– to 3+), were either studying English or studying to be English teachers. They were enrolled in one of three sections of a semester-long writing course (1½ hr/wk) at a large metropolitan university in Germany. The main aim of the course was to enable students to write well-organized, focused essays. As the instructor, I taught the class using a process approach, which I have used for this and other writing classes since 1990. Among other activities, students wrote three essays during the semester, rewriting each once. They distributed copies of their first drafts to other members of their writing group and for homework, wrote
comments on the other students’ drafts, guided by a set of questions I provided. I also wrote comments on each first draft. The students received the comments on their papers the next week, had 10–15 min to read through them and question me or student commenters, then used the comments to rewrite their papers for the next class. Each student also wrote a self-analysis of her/his paper, guided by a set of questions I had given them.

**Procedure**

Thirty papers, 15 from the second assignment and 15 from the third, were randomly selected from three different writing classes which had a total of 43 students. Photocopies were made of the papers, their peer responses, my comments, and each student’s self-analysis. Photocopies from two of the papers were unreadable because of the type of pen used and were dropped from the study. Because the papers were randomly selected for both the second and the third assignments, there were three pairs of papers with the same author, meaning that in the end there were 28 papers by 25 different authors in the study. Not all papers had the same number of peer responses due to absences the day the papers were handed out or the day the comments were due or because of students dropping the class late in the semester. Three papers had four peer responses, 10 papers had three peer responses, 8 papers had two peer responses, and 7 papers had only one peer response each.

**Data Analysis**

First, the students’ and my suggestions for improving each paper were coded into summarized “points.” My comments on and the peer responses to each paper were compared to see what percentage of my points were mentioned in at least one of the peer responses. Each student’s self-analysis was also coded and compared with my comments on her/his paper to see whether students could anticipate weaknesses in their own papers. Then, as the teacher, I coded each suggestion made by students as a valid or invalid suggestion. Finally, the peer responses were examined to see (a) how many points or suggestions they made which I considered valid, but I had not included in my comments; (b) how many peer responses contained points that I did not consider valid; and (c) how many peer responses contained no suggestions for improving the paper.

Second, comments were divided into six categories—form: suggestions to change introductions, conclusions, and paragraphs so they would be closer to typical English form (e.g., making the general point clear in the introduction, not bringing up new arguments in the conclusion, etc.); reorganization: suggestions to change the order of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs for reasons not due to form; more information: suggestions to write more detailed information about one aspect of the paper; write less: suggestions to write less information about one aspect of the paper; clarity: statements that the meaning of a particular sentence, point,
or paragraph is unclear to the reader and suggesting it be made clearer; and style: suggestions that the style of a particular sentence or passage is not the most effective for that particular writing task. The percentage of my comments and student comments in each category were then compared. Finally, the comments were examined more closely to discern the differences in substance and style between my comments and those of the students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Do students give good advice to their peers?

The peer responses clearly did provide students with information helpful for rewriting their papers; 89% of students (25 out of 28) made suggestions I considered valid. Furthermore, 60% of the students brought up valid suggestions which I had not mentioned in my comments, for instance, “Besides this, if I were the intended audience I would wish to hear a little more about the difficulties which are connected with the rebuilding of this church and about its former meaning in Dresden”; “Maybe she could have explained the importance of the reconstruction more in detail, what she feels when something is rebuild what used to be a memorial”; or “Besides I want to know if the reconstruction of the ‘Frauenkirche’ has been started yet.” Students also got very little bad advice from other students; only 6% of the peer responses contained advice that I did not agree with, for example, “Why don’t you combine your 2nd+3rd+4th+5th+6th paragraphs? They are all about improving the situation.”

Although the peer responses did give students good advice, they did not substitute for my comments. Only 19% of my suggestions were mentioned in the peer responses of papers with only one peer response, 22% for papers with two peer responses, and 40% for papers which had three peer responses. Eighty-seven percent of my suggestions were mentioned by at least one student for papers which had four peer responses, but there were only three papers in this group, so this is probably not typical. This is further supported by the data on the students’ self-analyses; only 16% of students were able to anticipate at least one of my suggestions on their own papers.

What are the differences between student and teacher comments?

My comments tended to be general and were often aimed at the whole piece of writing, rather than one part. The students’ comments, on the other hand, tended to be very specific and rarely contained suggestions for the whole piece of writing. For a fictitious job application letter I wrote,
You might have more success convincing them to hire you if you explain why you are good for them, rather than why they are good for you . . . . Also, arguing that you are the right person for the job might be more convincing than simply telling stories about yourself. Perhaps you can use your stories to support your arguments.

Students tended to write comments such as “Have you taught [only] English and German or Mathematics as well?” and “Your sentence—If you ask you will get the answer—really confused me as I didn’t know what to ask. . . . Perhaps it’s more understandable if you explain the situation first.”

Even when a student and I made the same comment, as the teacher, I phrased it as generalizable advice. Where a student said, “Divide this paragraph into one about your education and one about your experience,” I wrote, “Your third paragraph seems to have more than one point. Perhaps you should divide it.” For another paper a student wrote, “I’d like to hear more about your former activities and personal details,” whereas I wrote, “I would suggest more explanation about why you are the best. Perhaps you could add a few sentences beginning I can, I have, I am.”

Upon reflection, I felt that I had tried to be general and had avoided making the types of specific suggestions that the students made, even though I had agreed with them, because I did not want to interfere with the content of students’ papers. Instead, I wanted the students to concentrate on what they wanted to say, not on what they thought I wanted them to say. I felt that if I made specific suggestions, some students would follow them without thinking about whether they agreed or not. In my opinion, wording comments more generally also forced the students to think and to understand the comment. The student may know that the third paragraph should be divided but not know where or why and must discover this for her/himself. Even when I made a specific suggestion such as “Add a few sentences beginning with I can,” the student is still forced to consider how to end the sentences and where to put them. The students, on the other hand, did not appear afraid to suggest specific changes. Moreover, they acted more like normal readers, reacting to the part they were reading at the moment, instead of behaving like writing evaluators. This might also have been a result of their lack of experience writing essays in English.

The students and I generally commented on the same types of things. I wrote a greater percentage of my comments on problems with form (8% more often than students) and clarity (7% more). One reason for this could be my desire to avoid commenting on the content, and both these categories represent comments made about how something was said, not what was said. I also focused on form because this was an EAP class, and as the teacher, I felt that it was important to guide the students toward writing in a rhetorical form more acceptable to academic readers, for example, “You seem to have a lot of tiny paragraphs about the furniture you would order. Why not combine them?” The reason I focused more on clarity than did the students might be because I commented on potential
problems with clarity even when I thought I understood what the writer was trying to communicate, and the students did not. For example, “Your introductory sentences are good, but a bit vague. Smoking is a signal for insecurity could mean a lot of different things. Maybe starting off by saying, Smoking shows... would help you make your idea clearer.”

The students made more suggestions concerning what should be added (+3%) or removed (+7%) from the essay, for example, “Don’t repeat about burning your hands in the 4th paragraph” or “Leave out facts as your birthplace, your unemployment because you have to add to an application a curriculum vitae including all the necessary dates.” This is likely because these elements are more tangible, do not require composition skills, and are easier for people who are novice writers in English.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING**

Although the peer responders in this study did not usually make the same types of comments as the teacher, they made many suggestions the teacher did not make but considered valuable. In this case, the two kinds of responses seem complementary rather than redundant. Furthermore, because student responses were not written by an authority figure, they may have provided students with specific feedback without giving them the feeling that they are obliged to take the suggestion. In this study, they provided the student writer with feedback from people who reacted like real readers, rather than global writing assessors.

A further advantage of peer responses was that even when students made the same point as the teacher, they phrased it differently or from a different perspective, giving the writer different ways to think about the suggestion. For example, one student paragraph began:

> Before I tell my opinion I would like to give some background information from the historical point of view. Upon a plaque in front of the ruin stands that this church was built by George Bähr in the period from 1726 till 1743...

I commented, “Are you sure the information in your second paragraph is necessary? How does it show that rebuilding the ‘Frauenkirche’ is a good idea?” A student wrote, “It is a bit confusing, because at the beginning of the second paragraph it seems as if you want to withhold your opinion from us.”

Teacher and student responses give students alternative ways to think about and understand the problem, which may make it easier for students to understand the point. Because students are sometimes confused by teachers’ comments (Zamel, 1985), multiple comments may help give the student a fuller understanding of the suggestion.

A final point is that the quality of the feedback students in this study received rose with the number of students giving feedback to each student. Therefore, writing instructors using peer response activities might want
to make sure that each student receives comments from more than two peers.

CONCLUSION

This case study of teacher and peer responses to student writing suggests that each serves important and complementary functions in developing writing abilities. The study also indicates the need for research within specific writing classrooms that attempts to determine how well process writing activities fulfill the functions they are theoretically supposed to fill. I would suggest that the unstated attitudes and roles of both teachers and students which underlie how they act in different activities and how these change over time warrant special attention.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Implicit and Explicit Learning of L2 Grammar: A Pilot Study

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This is a report of an exploratory study under laboratory conditions aimed at clarifying the role of explicit teaching of different kinds of rules. The report presents the motivation for and the methodology and results of this limited pilot study with 6 students in the hope that it will stimulate other researchers to think about experimental ways of untangling the various factors involved in the controversial issue of the usefulness of teaching and learning rules in an L2.

BACKGROUND

The teaching of rules has been a controversial issue for a number of reasons, one of the most important of which is probably the fact that so many different variables tend to be confounded in pedagogical discussions: the role of instruction in general (e.g., Krashen, 1982; Long, 1988; and especially the June 1993 theme issue of Studies in Second Language Acquisition), focus on form (Long, 1991), input enhancement (White, Spada, Lightbown, & Ranta, 1991), analytical versus experiential learning (Stern, 1992), inductive versus deductive learning (Shaffer, 1989), implicit versus explicit learning (Levin, 1969; Scott, 1989).

The last two pairs of terms are particularly problematic. Deductive means that the rules are given before any examples are seen; inductive means that rules are inferred from examples presented (first). Implicit means that no rules are formulated; explicit means rules are formulated (either by the teacher or the student, either before or after examples/practice). Thus, whereas the two dichotomies are clearly independent in principle, they tend to coincide in practice (deductive and explicit vs. inductive and implicit) because explicit learning is almost always the result of deductive teaching, given that encouraging students to formulate their own explicit rules by inducing them from a set of examples seldom works well (Ausubel, 1963; Carroll, 1964; pace Shaffer, 1989; cf. also Fotos & Ellis, 1991) and

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is probably not a very common practice. Further obscuring the issue is the fact that different rules may be more or less amenable to (different kinds of) teaching (e.g., Krashen, 1982) and that different learners are more or less susceptible to (different kinds of) teaching (e.g., Krashen, 1981; Skehan, 1989).

Applied linguistics is not the only field to study implicit learning of various rules and categories; a large and growing body of literature exists in cognitive psychology. Research has shown that people can acquire complex knowledge about the trajectory of a character moving around a screen (Lewicki, Hill, & Bizot, 1988) or the properties relating input to output of a production process (Berry & Broadbent, 1984) without being consciously aware of the nature of this knowledge. More closely related to applied linguistics concerns is the research paradigm started by Reber (e.g., 1976), involving the implicit learning of artificial grammars, that is, formal systems generating letter strings. Reber (1976) showed that such grammars are best learned by implicit induction. When the structural regularities were made salient by grouping similar strings together, however, explicit induction was better (Reber, Kassin, Lewis, & Cantor, 1980, Experiment 1). Mathews et al. (1989) as well as Reber et al. (1980, Experiment 2) showed that a combination of implicit and explicit learning may yield the best results. Others, most notably Dulany, Carlson, & Downey (1984, 1985) and Perruchet and Pacteau (1990, 1991), have argued that no implicit grammar learning takes place in these experiments, only conscious learning of fragments of strings.

None of this research in cognitive psychology is directly applicable to second language acquisition (SLA), among other reasons because there is no meaning involved in the learning of letter strings generated by an artificial grammar. This literature provides a starting point, however, for laboratory-type SLA research, with more clearly defined variables and less risk of confounding than is the case in classroom studies.

Therefore, I decided to design a highly controlled experiment to look at the acquisition of a real L2 (involving meaning) under inductive-implicit, inductive-explicit, and deductive-explicit conditions. Inductive here means that the learner infers the rules of grammar (implicitly or explicitly) through exposure to picture/sentence pairs. I also decided to look at different types of rules: categorical rules (i.e., rules that always apply when their structural description is met) versus prototypical rules (i.e., rules whose likelihood of application depends on the similarity of a base form to a prototype). Rumelhart (1989) has argued that implicit learning mechanisms (as implemented in a connectionist model) are particularly efficient for such similarity-based generalizations.

The best known example of a linguistic prototype is probably the irregular past tense in English. Clusters of past tense forms such as ran, sang, shrunk or dug, spun, strung form a prototype in the sense that, although there is no rule—that is, no general, mechanical way to determine whether a verb will show a regular present/past alternation of the type link/linked or an irregular one such as run/ran or dig/dug—those past tense forms are not merely exceptions either. The likelihood of a specific type of alterna-
tion depends on (a) the final consonant, (b) the initial consonant(s), and (c) the vowel of the stem, in that order. A *string/strung* type alternation, for instance, is most likely when (a) the final consonant is velar, (b) the initial consonant is /s/ (beginning a cluster), and (c) the vowel in between is /ə/; but none of these characteristics is absolutely necessary (Bybee & Moder, 1983).

**METHOD**

**Overview**

In order to avoid confounding of the categorical/prototypical distinction with other variables such as lexical frequency or semantic fields and in order to make sure that the meanings of the relevant lexical and grammatical morphemes could easily be presented pictorially, it was necessary to use a specially created miniature linguistic system. This system, however, was designed to be equivalent to (part of) a natural language, unlike the artificial grammars used by cognitive psychologists. For the pilot study reported here, I had to limit the number of conditions to two: inductive-implicit and deductive-explicit; these are the two with clear relevance to language teaching issues, given what was said above about inductive-explicit learning. (It should be noted that although the inductive/deductive character of the treatment is guaranteed by the design, implicit learning cannot be guaranteed. Whether learning in the inductive-implicit condition is really implicit is an empirical question. Therefore, *unguided induction* may be a better term for the first of the two treatments. The term *implicit induction* is used here, however, because the bare term *induction*, as was argued above, has acquired the meaning of explicit induction in the field of applied linguistics, a learning strategy I have discouraged as much as possible by the experimental set-up [speed and randomness of presentation]).

**Hypotheses**

The hypotheses motivating the study were the following:
1. Prototypes are harder to learn than categorical rules.
2. Explicit (and deductive) learning is better than implicit for simple categorical rules (cf. Krashen, 1982; Reber et al., 1980).
3. Implicit learning is equally good as or even better than explicit (and deductive) learning for prototypes (cf. Rumelhart, 1989).

**Creating the Language**

Implexan, the linguistic system designed for this experiment, is an agglutinative SVO language with number (categorical) and case (prototypical) marking on the noun, and number (prototypical) and gender (categorical) marking on the verb. Nouns and verbs can be 0, 1, 2, or 3 steps (phonemes) removed from the core prototype. For prototypical rules, words belonging to these four classes have, respectively, a 100%, 80%,
60%, or 0% likelihood (reflected in both type and token frequency) of receiving the allomorph that goes with the core prototype rather than the other allomorph. There are close to 100 words in the lexicon.

Stimuli

The stimulus sentences had to meet the following criteria:
1. Every noun and verb had to be used with the same frequency (3).
2. Plural marking on the verb needed to be equally frequent as feminine marking on the verb (to allow for comparison of prototypical versus categorical rule learning).
3. For the same reason, plural marking on the noun needed to be equally frequent as direct object marking on the noun.
4. For the prototypical rules, the allomorph that goes with the core prototype had to be equally frequent as the other allomorph (at both the type and the token level).
5. At least part of the nouns and verbs had to alternate between singular and plural, nominative and accusative, masculine and feminine.
6. A (large) number of nouns and verbs could never be used in the training sentences with (some of) the morphemes in question, in order to allow for posttesting of productive rule use.
7. All sentences had to be easy to represent pictorially.

Meeting all these requirements led to a set of 124 sentences, which besides the structures of interest described above, also contained two forms of the copula, half a dozen adjectives, a few nouns in the locative case, and a few proper names (never used in a syntactic position requiring inflection). Most sentences refer to people performing certain actions with certain objects. Color photographs representing these 124 sentences were taken and digitized for use on a Macintosh computer.

Subjects

The subjects were 6 paid undergraduates, 3 for the implicit and 3 for the explicit condition; the two groups were balanced in FL learning experience.

Procedure

All subjects participated in 20 learning sessions of about 25 min each (two consecutive sessions twice a week). In each session, they saw every picture with its corresponding sentence on a computer screen for about 4s. The order of the pictures was randomized differently for every session.

The explicit subjects were presented with the grammar rules of Implexan before the 1st, 3rd, and 10th sessions. The implicit subjects received no explanation of grammar; nor was it ever mentioned to them that the sentences they saw had grammar rules underlying them.

All subjects were occasionally tested (for 20 sentences out of 124) with a judgment test (classifying sentences as correct or incorrect by clicking
yes/no) at random times during each learning session; this was done in order to make sure that subjects would attend to the picture/sentence combination at all times. These test sentences never contained any grammar errors, only errors of vocabulary; the subjects were not told, however, only to expect vocabulary errors. All subjects were administered both a judgment and a production test of the same 44 sentences about 2 weeks after the last learning session; at the same time they were also asked to retrospect for about 10 min about their learning experience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis, that prototypes are harder to learn than categorical rules, received limited support, in the sense that this was the case for two of the (explicit) subjects in the final production test. For all other subjects, there was no difference between prototypical and categorical (largely because both had been learned very poorly); prototypical rules were never learned better than categorical rules.

The second hypothesis, that explicit learning is better than implicit learning for categorical rules, was borne out in the sense that all 3 subjects in the explicit group learned categorical rules to some extent, whereas none of the implicit group subjects did. The comments the subjects made during the retrospection session confirm that their performance on the production test was directly determined by how well they had learned explicitly (parts of) the grammar presented to them.

The third hypothesis, that implicit learning is at least equally as good as explicit for prototypical rules was borne out, but only in the trivial sense that all subjects performed poorly on prototypes. The explicit subjects supplied morphemes more frequently but had not learned the allomorph involved in the prototypical rules any more than the implicit subjects. Pending further results that can avoid this floor effect, no conclusions can be drawn concerning the third hypothesis.

The results of the judgment testing during the learning sessions show that the difference in instructional set did not affect recognition. All subjects learned at more or less the same rate and leveled off once a certain degree of boredom set in. Given the time pressure in this judgment test, a certain number of performance errors should also be expected; subjects often seemed to regret an answer just after having pushed the button.

The results of the final judgment test, which went beyond mere recognition because the majority of sentences were new and is about as close as one can come to a test of linguistic competence (vs. the more monitored knowledge that was undoubtedly assessed by the production test), did not yield any difference between the two groups either; in fact, both groups performed at chance level. It may be, therefore, that no implicit learning of linguistic competence took place, although it could also be argued that the subjects, having been used to detecting vocabulary errors in the judgment tests during the learning sessions, were biased against detecting grammar errors in the final judgment test.
Although the primary goal of this pilot study with a very limited number of subjects was not to test hypotheses but rather to try out the methodology, the results are encouraging in their support for the first two hypotheses. No conclusion could be drawn regarding the third hypothesis, due to a floor effect. I anticipate conducting a full-scale study with more subjects, in which feedback will be given during the learning sessions to increase the overall level of performance, and explicit knowledge of grammar will be tested formally for the explicit group. Two symmetrical versions of Impexan will be used to counterbalance any possible effect of semantics or similarities with other languages on ease of learning prototypical versus categorical rules. We also hope to add sound and to test for interaction of the implicit/explicit condition with individual differences in the sense of (different components of) language learning aptitude.

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REVIEWS

The TESOL Quarterly welcomes evaluative reviews of publications relevant to TESOL professionals. In addition to textbooks and reference materials, these include computer and video software, testing instruments, and other forms of nonprint materials.

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Resources for Applied Linguists and Teacher Educators

Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (2nd ed.).

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language.

The Linguistics Encyclopedia.

International Encyclopedia of Linguistics (4 Vol.).

The professional demands on applied linguists and teacher educators have grown considerably in the past 15 years. Although it may be true that hindsight makes the past seem simpler than it was, it nevertheless appears to be the case that issues and concerns raised in language learning and teacher education have become quite complex of late. It seems that our work in the past focused primarily on methods of instruction, textbooks, syllabus sequencing, teaching techniques, and teacher preparation, and our linguistic preparation consisted of a few
basic courses in descriptive and transformational-generative (TG) linguistics.

We now also focus on learners’ needs, affective aspects of learning, the development of curricula suited to specific situations, the integration of language skills, the role of content in language learning, the teacher as researcher, insights from increasingly abstract formal second language acquisition (SLA) research, the influence of sociolinguistic findings on discourse interaction and learning, the role of language in classroom contexts, insights from educational learning theory, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and many more factors. Linguistic training has also become more complex: Theories competing with TG have emerged, as have newer theories of phonology and the lexicon. Important current research from psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology also needs to be addressed, and the same demands obtain for sociolinguistics and language uses in various contexts.

A similar situation exists for practicing applied linguists whose interests extend beyond language teaching and teacher preparation. As applied linguists gain insights from other fields of linguistics and related disciplines, it becomes more difficult to maintain a firm grasp on this increasingly large knowledge base. In formal linguistics, theories have become increasingly abstract, and the range of competing theories is expanding. At the same time, functional and descriptive research in linguistics is gaining in importance. In language testing, the topics and related research have also taken on greater sophistication. In language uses in nonteaching contexts, one can no longer read one or two books on a topic such as language and the law and feel that the topic has been adequately covered. Language policy and planning research continues to expand, particularly in terms of studies on language maintenance and shift, and the various types of bilingual programs which are intended to provide greater access to academic success. The list could go on. The point to be made in both cases is that our fields, whether we see ourselves as applied linguists or as teacher educators, are in need of informational compendia and research resources which can genuinely assist us in our increasingly challenging efforts.

This review examines four such resources for applied linguists and teacher educators. Each has a distinct format, and each has specific strengths and weaknesses, depending, in part, on the needs of the user. For example, a teacher educator who is not concerned with formal linguistic influences will not have much need for a set of explanations detailing historical and currently competing linguistic theories. Nor will a language testing specialist necessarily need extensive information on language contact phenomena, historical linguistics, or language typology. Nevertheless, applied linguistics and teacher education are
both defined strongly by their interdisciplinart studies and resource collections. This makes it difficult to keep abreast of the wealth of new developments that characterizes our disciplines. Thus, there has emerged a genuine need for well-designed and informative resources on language and linguistics.

The four reviewed here address three distinct audiences and serve different purposes. The audiences range from students in teacher preparation and applied linguistics programs, to practicing teachers, to practicing applied linguists and teacher educators. These resources can also be useful to professionals in other disciplines, depending on their needs and interests. The purposes for these resources also vary. One resource is genuinely a dictionary; and whereas a number of the entries add information beyond a simple definition, its strength is in its broad coverage rather than in detailed explanations. All of the other three are encyclopedias, though each is distinct: One is quite personal, constituting the view of one linguist, and is organized topically; the second is alphabetically organized and emphasizes linguistic theories and traditional linguistic subfields; the third provides comprehensive coverage of applied linguistics, though not language teaching. Each will be discussed in turn, with final comparative comments to follow.

The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics is the only resource of the four reviewed here which treats language teaching issues as extensively as it does language and linguistics studies. It provides 2,000 entries in a true dictionary format, covering teaching methods, linguistic theories, linguistic terminology, topics in second language acquisition, testing and statistics terminology, approaches to discourse analysis, and learning theories. On the back cover, the publisher asserts that it is the “definitive new resource for students.” Although I cannot attest to the definitiveness, I can say that it is an important and useful resource for students. I know of no other dictionary that offers students of our disciplines a comparable range of coverage. A survey of entries quickly reveals this range. In the area of language teaching, one can find definitions for bilingual education, CALL, CALP/BICS, comprehension approach, cooperative learning, dictocomp, EFL/ESL, FLES, humanistic approach, LEP, microteaching, needs analysis, preservice education, reflective teaching, situational approach, values clarification, and whole language approach.

For linguistic theories, one finds definitions for a variety of terms covering government-binding (GB) theory (e.g., binding, case theory, theta theory) and functional systemic theories (e.g., field, tenor, mode, rank, ideational function, textual function). It also generally covers grammatical theories and terminology from linguistics up until the 1980s. One
can find definitions for *case theory*, *generative semantics*, *tagmemics*, and *structural linguistics*, as well as such standard TG terms such as *base component*, *deep structure*, and *competence*. There are few, if any, entries which cover linguistic theory from the 1980s to the present apart from GB theory. For example, there is no mention of relational grammar, lexical-functional grammar, generalized phrase structure grammar, categorical grammar, functional unification grammar, or cognitive grammar. Nor is there mention of current phonological theory such as autosegmental phonology, metrical phonology, or natural phonology, and the entry for generative phonology is not current. The same can be said for current approaches to morphology and semantic theory. From the standpoint of presenting terms which students might encounter and just need to identify, this is perhaps the dictionary’s greatest weakness.

In most other respects, the coverage of terms that students might encounter on a need-to-know basis is excellent. For example, useful testing and statistical terminology include *ANCOVA*, *backwash effect*, *cloze procedure*, *dependent variable*, *factor analysis*, *halo effect*, *implicational scaling*, *normal distribution*, *regression analysis*, and *z score*. Applied linguistics concerns that are defined include *bilingual education*, *black English*, *communicative competence*, *discourse analysis*, *ethnomethodology*, *guided interviews*, *genre*, *language planning*, *lingua franca*, *national language*, *process-product research*, *social context*, *speech pathology*, *text linguistics*, *turn taking*. Learning theory is also fairly well represented with such terms as *associative learning*, *automatic processing*, *Bloom’s taxonomy*, *cognitive psychology*, *dyslexia*, *field dependence*, *language dominance*, *learning strategy*, *mastery learning*, *reading*, *schema*, *SQ3R*.

All of the entries are easy to read, and most provide sufficient information to identify the concept being defined. The strengths are that it covers a wide range of topics, going beyond most basic coursework, and that it is sufficiently inexpensive that students could be expected to buy it. As a dictionary, however, its entries are limited, thus the need for encyclopedias. Because of the standard dictionary layout, I doubt that many students will want to spend hours browsing through it. And perhaps this is a criterion for distinguishing a good dictionary from a good encyclopedia.

In considering its use, the dictionary needs to be seen primarily as a supporting resource, one which should be combined with a basic text and teacher lectures. In fact, in contexts such as TESL graduate programs, for which a number of contemporary textbooks and good library resources are available, it is not clear what role such a dictionary would play. Good introductory texts in a number of courses would, in combination, provide much the same definitional information, though not in a single volume.
There are three contexts in which the dictionary would be invaluable. The first is when students are practicing teachers who are taking in-service classes or returning to school for a few refresher courses. These students will not be exposed to a full set of current courses, nor will they likely be interested in straying too far from their primary purposes and interests. For such students, the dictionary would define many terms that might be introduced in passing and offer basic information that might satisfy such students. A second situation would involve students in TEFL preparation programs which do not have extensive contemporary text resources for courses and which are not likely to have extensive current library holdings. Students in these programs would at least be exposed to basic concepts and terms which are likely to be mentioned. A third potential use is with undergraduate students who are taking an introduction to linguistics or an undergraduate ESL course as part of their education requirements. These students, while education majors, usually receive relatively little information on language and linguistic topics; at least this is true in the U.S.

*The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* presents a personal perspective. Although it has a distinguished board of editorial advisors, it is authored solely by David Crystal. The back cover describes it as the “most exciting, readable, and comprehensive book on language ever written.” That’s quite a strong claim, but the book is impressive. Of the four resources being reviewed, it is the one book that someone could sit down and read for long periods of time. It certainly is the strongest of the four resources in terms of supporting visual displays and interesting asides. As Crystal notes in the preface, he wanted to “convey something of the fascination and value of linguistic research, which has led to innumerable general findings about language structure, development and use, and which has prompted so many important applications in relation to the problems of the individual and society” (p. vii). At the same time, he clearly states that his encyclopedia is not an introductory textbook: It does not delve into many linguistic theories and gives few technical details. As a result, the book is appropriate for just about anyone who has an interest in language.

With its many graphics, the layout is pleasing for the reader. It is also the only resource of the four that is not organized alphabetically. Instead, it follows a path that covers the following: general concerns about language and its use in society, language study as a linguistic discipline, linguistic attributes in both the spoken and written modes, language acquisition, and the variety of language forms and uses in the world. In the process, a huge assortment of interesting and informative topics are covered. It is hard to read this book and not turn the page to see what is next in store for the reader. In spite of the somewhat
idiosyncratic sequence of the topics, the book is quite easy to use as a reference. The index is thorough; the table of contents provides titles for the many subsections; and useful back matter includes a glossary of terms, a listing of symbols and abbreviations, a useful, if not complete, table of the world’s languages, further readings for each section, and a reasonable list of references. With this set of informational resources, just about any topic or theme touched on in the book can be quickly located.

A strong feature of this encyclopedia is its inviting writing style. The topical descriptions are uniformly well written and reader friendly. On a more specific level, a number of topics and issues are treated especially well. The discussion of general language issues—the functions of language, the prescriptive tradition, the equality of languages, popular ideas about language, and language and thought—are all well presented. This information constitutes an essential introduction for nonspecialists; more important, the topical discussions are sufficiently well balanced that one would have no qualms about a student or layperson appropriating these positions. Other special features include strong sections on creole languages, written language, languages of the world, the linguistic use of sound and comparative phonology, dialect variation, stylistic, early L1 development, language handicaps, and the history of linguistics. The weakest areas of the book, though by no means poorly done, are discussions of later language learning, the development of reading and writing abilities, language uses in professional contexts, and bilingualism and second language teaching. In the latter cases, the discussions are somewhat predictable and dated (even recognizing the 1987 publication date).

Overall, this encyclopedia is one of the most engaging books on language that I have encountered. Whereas it is not well used as a basic text, I recommend it as supplementary reading for all applied linguists, teacher educators, language teachers, and students. Any student or teacher who has read this book, and thought about the contents, would likely be a better teacher for the experience. That is more than can be said for many books in our field. Because it also is an excellent resource to supplement topics and issues raised in coursework, it is well placed on library reserve for introductory courses.

Routledge’s The Linguistics Encyclopedia is quite different from the Cambridge encyclopedia, presenting a standard range of topics for a linguistics reference work. This is not an encyclopedia for students or for practicing teachers. It is, however, a useful resource for applied linguists and, to a lesser extent, for teacher educators. The encyclopedia is designed primarily for linguists and applied linguists who need to have some knowledge about topics which are not central to their
own area of specialization. The entries go into much greater detail than either of the above reference books, and in some cases, well beyond the depth of the larger Oxford encyclopedia. The book is accurately described on the back jacket cover, which lists its main areas of coverage as the

analysis of the physical and mental processes connected with language, its social and cultural role and the contribution its study can make to related disciplines and professions . . . . and it provides a comprehensive survey of the diverse approaches to language description, analysis and interpretation.

In addition, it devotes attention to psycholinguistics, applied linguistics, and artificial intelligence.

Its main emphasis is the formal linguistic sciences. A good example of its depth is its well-developed synopses of many syntactic/semantic approaches. Entries include: augmented transition network grammar, behavioral linguistics, case grammar, categorical grammar, finite-state grammar, formal semantics, functional unification grammar, functional grammar, generative grammar, generative semantics, glossmatics, interpretive semantics, language typology, language universals, lexical-functional grammar, Montague grammar, Port-Royal grammar, (post)-Bloomfieldian structural grammar, scale and category grammar, stratificational syntax, structuralist linguistics, systemic grammar, tagmemics, traditional grammar, transformational-generative grammar.

One might well ask if there are any theories of the 20th century that are not discussed. Unfortunately, there are some omissions, four of which are puzzling. There are no discussions of cognitive grammar, relational grammar, GB theory, and descriptive grammar; the latter two are serious oversights. Most formal approaches to SLA make use of, or reference to, GB theory; its absence in this volume proves a drawback for applied linguists. Perhaps more serious is the omission of current descriptive grammar. With so much recent emphasis on the Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) reference grammar and related descriptive research over the past 20 years, it is surprising that this body of work is generally ignored. This oversight is a serious one for applied linguists and teacher educators because this approach has particular relevance for our profession. Despite these omissions, the overviews of grammatical approaches included in this volume are well presented. A careful reading of these sections would give any practicing applied linguist a strong sense of syntactic theory in the 20th century.

Apart from the coverage of the linguistic sciences, the volume provides good coverage of such areas as corpora studies, critical linguistics (critical discourse analysis), creoles and pidgins, historical linguistics, lan-
guage surveys, lexicography, psycholinguistics, and TEFL. These entries provide nice overview sketches. However, other entries of interest to applied linguists are unusually limited in scope for an encyclopedia; some read like a summary from an introductory textbook, others only cover one or two aspects of a particular topic. This latter problem is exemplified in discussions of discourse and conversational analysis, text linguistics, genre, and stylistic. It is puzzling how entries on discourse analysis and text linguistics could manage to avoid discussion of Bonnie Meyer, Walter Kintsch, Teun van Dijk, Bruce Britton, John Bransford, Jean Mandler, Arthur Graesser, Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and many other researchers.

A more serious limitation of this volume is its almost complete disregard for sociolinguistics. In its one-page entry, it directs readers to various related entries such as language and gender, critical linguistics, diglossia, field methods, language and education, language surveys, dialectology, creoles and pidgins, and bilingualism (but not even discourse analysis and conversational analysis). The entry for sociolinguistics does point out that sociolinguistics is about language variation and its patterning in social contexts, but that is all it says. There is virtually no discussion in the encyclopedia of variation studies, language and social identity, language and power, communicative competence, language contact phenomena such as code switching, or language use in professional contexts.

Additional absences can be noted which suggest the limitations of this encyclopedia. Within the area of applied sociolinguistics, there is no discussion of language policy and planning, language maintenance, language death, language attitudes, or official/standard languages. Within the area of applied linguistics, there is no discussion of SLA, language assessment, literacy, translation/interpretation, or speech pathology/therapy.

Given the above limitations, this encyclopedia has a fairly restricted audience. It is not particularly useful to applied linguistics students, practicing language teachers, or teacher educators. However, for practicing applied linguists with an interest in formal linguistics, it is a very useful resource. The coverage and discussion of topics in formal linguistics is excellent. For most other professionals in applied linguistics and teacher education roles, this encyclopedia would be useful in a library for occasional reference.

Oxford’s International Encyclopedia of Linguistics not only follows a progression from small to large size (and small to large price), it also deserves the final place as a genuine achievement in information collection and dissemination. Comprising four volumes, an estimated 1,000 major entries, and some 1,800 pages, it is what an encyclopedia
is meant to be. The editorial board is a virtual who’s who of practicing linguists, psycholinguists, and sociolinguists, along with a representative group of applied linguists. The coverage is extensive and current (cf. the many historical descriptions in the Routledge encyclopedia). The format, though conventional, is appealing, and the layout invites the reader to browse. As is the case with the Cambridge encyclopedia, it is difficult to resist seeing what will appear on the next page.

The stated purpose of the encyclopedia is “to provide a comprehensive source of up-to-date information on all branches of linguistics, aimed primarily at an audience of students and professional scholars in linguistics and adjacent fields” (p. ix). It further highlights interrelations among linguistics and interdisciplinary connections among linguistic branches and related fields.

The encyclopedia is organized alphabetically, though a number of major topics are followed immediately by subsection entries to provide a more coherent overall account. For example, the entry for applied linguistics covers 14 pages and includes subsections on the history of the field, language planning, minorities and applied linguistics, and applied pragmatic. Similarly, sociolinguistics covers 13 pages and includes subsections on interfactional sociolinguistics, language planning, minorities and sociolinguistics, quantitative sociolinguistics, and socio-historical linguistics.

There are a number of other important format and layout features. Each entry includes extensive cross-referencing to other entries by capitalizing key terms within it. There are many useful graphs, tables, and illustrations throughout the encyclopedia that assist the reader. The classifications and descriptions of languages, language families, and language areas combine information from major typology resources of the past 2 decades, making it the most authoritative taxonomy currently available. The end matter is very useful: It consists of an extensive 75-page glossary by David Crystal (combining his work on the Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics (1985, Blackwell) and his Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language); a full directory of contributors; synoptic outlines of topics covered, languages of the world, and language families/areas; and a comprehensive 103-page index with more than 25,000 entries. The end matter alone comprises 210 pages.

Although there are countless specific entries that could be commented on, two in particular stand out. The entry for natural language processing extends over 20 pages and is an informative survey of issues and problems in natural language processing. Perhaps most impressive of the entries is that for history of linguistics. In all, it covers 35 pages and addresses the following topics: ancient India, ancient Greece and Rome, the early Middle Ages, medieval scholastic grammar, the Renaissance, 17th- and 18th-century Europe, comparative-historical linguistics.
tics, early structuralism, the Prague school, the London school, and American structuralism. Anyone wondering if linguistics began with Chomsky will be quickly corrected with this thorough and informative survey, being a historical research monograph in its own right.

There is one legitimate criticism which can be leveled at this encyclopedia. With so many authors contributing to the volumes, it is not possible to have every contributor write to the same audience. A few of the entries are written in a somewhat cryptic manner, and they assume a certain amount of expert knowledge to be useful. Editor in Chief William Bright, acknowledges as much indirectly in his introduction; he admits that some of the entries would have been more accessible with greater exemplification and explanation. Of course, the problems of compression with encyclopedia entries (a potentially interesting genre in its own right) sometimes makes it difficult to find the right balance (assumed knowledge vs. the need to explain) when writing for such a wide audience.

The Oxford encyclopedia is a resource that will benefit all practicing applied linguists. I suspect that many teacher educators who do not particularly identify with applied linguistics would also find the encyclopedia fascinating. There are many entries which would also be useful for graduate students—for example, history of linguistics—who would gain considerably from access to this resource. This encyclopedia, however, is not one which students and even many professionals can afford to purchase. This is unfortunate because all applied linguists and teacher educators should have ready access to it. One obvious solution is to be sure that the nearest academic library has a set. A better solution would be to pressure Oxford into producing a more affordable paperback set.

Each of the four resources reviewed here is valuable, though each has a different emphasis and distinct primary audience. Of the four, the Cambridge and the Oxford encyclopedias are the two most important for applied linguists and teacher educators. The Longman dictionary may be the most useful for students, particularly students with less access to other current resources. All four belong in a reference library and would be welcome in a personal resource library if they are seen as affordable.

For my own part, I would like to see the Cambridge encyclopedia in every personal library. In it, students and teachers encounter balanced, carefully presented, interesting information about language. The Routledge encyclopedia is somewhat specialized for applied linguists and teacher educators. For those with an interest in generative linguistic theories, this is the best resource of the four reviewed. In other respects, the encyclopedia is wanting, and access to it in a library would
be sufficient for most. The Oxford encyclopedia should also be in every applied linguist’s personal library, but not at current prices. The Longman dictionary is for students and less linguistically sophisticated teachers. Perhaps Longman should consider, at some point, turning the dictionary into an encyclopedia for applied linguists and language teachers. That would certainly round out the resource needs of our profession.

REFERENCE


WILLIAM GRABE
Northern Arizona University
The first book of a new series by the author of *Comparing English and Spanish: Patterns in Phonology and Orthography*. Presents and explains over 500 common lexical errors typical of Spanish-speaking students. Also includes exercises, word origins, cartoons, bilingual proverbs, and indexes. Suitable for high school, college, and adult ESL classes. 260 pp.

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BOOK NOTICES

The TESOL Quarterly welcomes short evaluative reviews of print and nonprint publications relevant to TESOL professionals. Book notices may not exceed 500 words and must contain some discussion of the significance of the work in the context of current theory and practice in TESOL.


Were there a TESOL pantheon, Mary Ashworth would find a high place therein. The breadth and timeliness of her efforts are vividly commemorated in this volume, which includes 11 papers by British, Canadian, and U.S. leaders in TESL research and practice; personal commentaries from Ashworth’s students and colleagues; a final statement from her on effective teaching; and her complete bibliography. Merely scanning the scope of topics and contributors deepens appreciation for the range of Ashworth’s work; her energy and commitment to students, teachers, and good language instruction; her grasp of the multifarious, interconnected aspects of policy and practice; and the continuing relevance of her work to the scholars, administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the several publics who together constitute the language teaching enterprise of the 1990s.

The four papers on policy development treat matters of mainstreaming ESL students (Handscombe), teaching heritage languages (Cummins), British language in education policy (Martin-Jones), and university-level ESL policies in the U.S. (Celce-Murcia). Together, they demonstrate that forging appropriate institutional responses to language diversity are common concerns in all the countries discussed, though the nature of the responses, the key participants, the resource levels, and the strength of commitment to quality programs vary greatly in each case, partly because of differing educational philosophies and structures, partly because of differing political climates.

Three papers on research and teacher preparation issues provide some theoretical criteria for defining quality language instruction (Strevens), examining the research findings that shape methodology (Swain & Cumming), and constructing a content-based curriculum to incorporate those insights into public school instruction (Early, Mohan, & Hooper). Most refreshing here is the evidence of genuine collaboration between researchers and teachers that has helped to establish successful instructional programs informed by theory yet practical and well accepted in their various educational settings.

Four papers focus more closely on the implementation of specific language programs for different communities of language learners, from young children learning English in the U.S. school system (Wong Fillmore...
Enright) to children from Canadian native communities (Faries) to students from racial, ethnic, or linguistic minority communities in Great Britain (Bourne). These papers show that wherever innovative language programs have been proposed, they are only as effective as the mutual collaboration and acceptance established between professional educators and the school communities they serve. Lacking the link to real contexts of language use outside the school, even programs that are academically sound will have limited impact on language development. Moreover, unless instructional programs in ESL and in English draw on the experiences, including prejudice and discrimination, faced by language minority communities, they will be irrelevant for students making their way through the schools of the 1990s. In her epilogue on good teaching, Ashworth does not shy away from the implications of the range of papers: To meet the pedagogical challenge of these demanding times, ESL teachers need to work more and go “beyond methodology” (Ashworth, 1985), but (she predicts) their professional standing and personal satisfaction will be much enhanced by striving to teach well in the dynamic social environment of today’s language classrooms. We have Ashworth to thank for raising the language consciousness of political leaders; educating many teachers, teacher educators, and scholars; and demonstrating a career of engagement with the many kinds of students and virtually every aspect of L2 instruction reflected in this lively and readable book.

REFERENCE


MARY McGROARTY
Northern Arizona University

Approaches to Research in Second Language Learning,

A welcome addition to the growing number of research methods books for students in applied linguistics and second language acquisition (SLA) is Approaches to Research in Second Language Learning, which provides a straightforward and readable overview of six major approaches to L2 research. The author assumes no formal background in statistics or testing because the text is not a “how-to” book on conducting or evaluating statistical research. Although this may limit its usefulness in some contexts, it accomplishes well its stated purpose—to help readers “understand, critically evaluate, benefit from, and contribute to the research endeavor” (p. 3).

The book consists of two parts. The first, Contexts for L2 Research, provides an overview of L2 research; contextual influences on research (e.g., SLA theory, interdisciplinary links); as well as recent conceptual,
methodological, and technological developments that impact L2 research. Here and throughout the book, Johnson promotes a balanced and unbiased view of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, topics, and concerns (e.g., the ordering of the remaining chapters ensures that approaches representing both paradigms are given equal attention).

The second part of the book covers six “prominent” approaches to L2 research: correlational; case-study; survey; ethnographic; experimental; and multisite, multimethod, large-scale research. Each of these chapters follows a similar format. First, the approach is defined and illustrated with summaries of actual studies that employed the approach. Following a discussion of issues and considerations which arise in using the approach, a list of evaluative criteria for studies adopting the approach is presented and is applied to an extended summary of a study using the approach.

This formula works very well: Readers are introduced to the issues and considerations in using these approaches, they are given an easy-to-use question/answer format of evaluative criteria which is easily transferable to other studies, and they are provided with extensive citations of published and unpublished research which employ the various approaches and investigate various topics. A few minor problems also present themselves. The inclusion of reliability and validity issues in just the correlational and experimental approach chapters may lead readers to believe that they are only relevant concerns in quantitative approaches. Also, the Pearson correlations used in the sample study of correlation chapter were perhaps not an appropriate statistical choice given the description of the data. Because Johnson’s evaluation scheme does not deal with choice of statistical procedure, the naive reader may be left with the impression that Pearson correlations are appropriate for any type of data when relationships among variables are explored. It is also unfortunate that no reader activities were included, such as practice problems or discussion questions, which would monitor comprehension and encourage application of the material.

The last chapter returns to teachers and research and emphasizes again the role that teachers have in reading and applying research as well as in conducting research in their own classes. Johnson concludes by stressing the need for flexibility in choosing methods for answering research questions and by advocating the use of more qualitative methods in research on language learning. Despite any shortcomings, Approaches to Research in Second Language Learning is an excellent choice for a research methods or SLA course and is a user-friendly desk reference as well.

ANNE LAZARATON
The Pennsylvania State University


The MA Program in TESOL and Teaching Foreign Languages at the Monterey Institute of International Studies includes a required course in

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educational research methods, which focuses on the experimental paradigm and quantitative analyses. (Alternative approaches to research and the use of qualitative analyses are covered in other courses.) Since 1981, when the program was founded, my colleagues and I who have taught this course have sought appropriate texts. So far, we have used Tuckman (1978), Hatch and Farhady (1982), Brown (1988), and Hatch and Lazarton (1991). Having taught the course over a dozen times myself, I have utilized each of these as primary texts for the students, and several others as resources. My favorite reference texts have included Jaeger (1983), Shavelson (1981), Nunan (1992), and Woods, Fletcher, and Hughes (1986).

The broad goals of the course are that the MA candidates will become not only competent and confident consumers of research information (because so much of what they must read utilizes experimental research designs and inferential statistics) but will also be capable of planning and conducting their own studies. Although the Brown (1988) text (which I use in addition) is ideal for accomplishing the former goal, it is (by intent) less suitable in terms of the latter.

The first task in teaching such a course is one that will be familiar to any junior high school teacher: convincing the (largely language-oriented, humanistic) students that (a) they can learn this statistical material, (b) it will be useful to them, and (c) they will have fun learning it. I begin to do this by developing a familiar metaphor—that of entering a foreign culture and learning a new language. The metaphor fits well. Research, as a culture, has its own vocabulary, its own syntactic (ordering) rules, its sociocultural value system, and of course, its own symbol system.

I have provided this information about the course and the students to give a context for my comments about the Hatch and Lazaraton text, which is a substantial update of the older Hatch and Farhady book (1982). When the “new improved model” first appeared, I was delighted to see it because it provided the most comprehensive treatment of the topic to date with examples specifically relevant to our field. Indeed, this is one of the volume’s many strengths—that the illustrations reinforce the concepts the MA candidates are studying in their other coursework. It also includes citations of a number of recent text-based studies which were not part of the older Hatch and Farhady volume. The range of topics is quite broad, including an expanded treatment of analysis of variance, more thorough coverage of nonparametric statistics, and careful discussions of the assumptions underlying the procedures (again, relative to the Hatch and Farhady text).

There are problems with the book, however, that should be considered before using it with a class, and certainly before attempting to master the subject matter on one’s own, without benefit of instruction. My students have found some of the explanations confusing (e.g., the comparison of repeated-measures, between-groups and split-plot designs, which occurs relatively early in the text). In addition, not all of the sample problems have keys, and those that are keyed sometimes contain errors, which can be frustrating for learners struggling with material which they are less
than thrilled about studying anyway. Likewise there are mathematical inaccuracies in some of the formulas and the sample data tables located throughout the text, which has been a source of some consternation to those students who were making a serious effort to discover the logical patterns underlying the statistics. These infelicities could easily be addressed in a second edition.

The standard statistical tables are printed in the appendices, but some of them are in less than optimal form for this population of students. For example, the tables for t-tests (p. 595) and Pearson product-moment correlation (p. 604) are both set up to test two-tailed hypotheses, leaving the user to reconstruct the column headings for the one-tailed tests. Although the conventions of the tables and the decision to omit the one-tailed column headings is explained earlier in the text, this formatting decision puts an added burden on readers who are unfamiliar with statistical reasoning.

My solution to these difficulties has been to work all the practice problems before assigning them to the students and to check the math in the sample tables. The formulas should also be checked for consistency because a missing set of parentheses or brackets can change the mathematical outcome entirely.

In returning to the culture and language learning metaphor introduced above, I try to get the MA candidates to view the Hatch and Lazaraton text as a reference grammar (not a bible)—as one tool out of many to help them with the new language they are learning. It is one of the most comprehensive treatments available of statistical procedures illustrated with applied linguistics examples. The Research Manual is, thus, a valuable addition to the expanding library of research methodology texts in our field.

REFERENCES


KATHLEEN M. BAILEY
Monterey Institute of International Studies

BOOK NOTICES
Language learning and teaching have, in recent years, witnessed a strengthening of research orientation, a resurgence of competing research paradigms, and a renewed interest among education professionals in action research. This has posed challenges to those who want to develop their own research agenda as well as improve their critical and analytical skills to read and evaluate research reports in an informed and knowledgeable way. David Nunan’s book represents an attempt to help cope with those challenges.

The 10-chapter volume provides an up-to-date, lucid account of various language research methods by combining a presentation of their nature and characteristics with a rich exemplification of the procedures for conducting them. Specifically, Chapter 1 gives an overview of research methods and traditions in language learning and teaching. The following eight chapters feature a discussion of a rich variety of research methods including experimental research (Chapter 2), ethnographic research (Chapter 3), case studies (Chapter 4), action research, that is, classroom observation and research (Chapter 5), introspective methods (Chapter 6), elicitation techniques (Chapter 7), interactive analysis (Chapter 8), and program evaluation (Chapter 9). The concluding Chapter 10 highlights important procedures to be followed in planning, implementing, and evaluating a research project. Taken together, the book presents a fairly comprehensive, yet not overwhelming, and very practical introduction to language research.

This book is highly accessible to beginning readers in two senses. First, it is audience oriented. Ideas are clearly organized and presented with few technical terms that are all highlighted and defined in the Glossary at the end of the book. Key concepts are well explicated. Each chapter begins with a statement of objectives and a set of questions to be addressed subsequently and ends with a summary. The Questions and Tasks section that follows helps readers review important points in the chapter. The Further Reading section at the end of each chapter allows interested readers to pursue the topic in greater depth. Second, procedures for conducting various types of research are outlined and exemplified in each chapter. These research samples afford readers the opportunity to reflect upon key issues and to become familiar with the steps for conducting different kinds of research.

Throughout the chapters, Nunan makes a serious attempt to present an unbiased view of competing research paradigms and a wide range of research methods. Along the way, he broaches some important yet commonly neglected issues in research design. The discussion of construct validity (p. 15) is a case in point; here the author emphasizes the need for consistency between descriptive and operational definitions of constructs. As a whole, the book allows readers to have a rudimentary appreciation of the basic principles of research design, to be able to critique
relevant research literature, and most importantly, to conduct their own research. As Nunan himself notes, “practitioners, rather than being consumers of other people’s research, should adopt a research orientation to their classroom” (p. xii).

I have one reservation about the work. The space devoted to the discussion of quantitative and qualitative inquiries is disproportionate. It might be desirable to expand the experimental design chapter, where the author could have included various kinds of preexperimental, experimental, and quasi-experimental designs, appropriate analytical (i.e., statistical) techniques, possible threats to reliability and validity of each design, as well as ways to avoid them.

Overall, the book is a good and practical introduction to the what and how of language research. Classroom teachers, language students, and beginning researchers will undoubtedly find it useful.

ZHIHUI FANG
Louisiana State University


This comprehensive introduction to research in language learning and teaching offers a refreshing European perspective on the field of applied linguistics by two of its most eminent representatives. Written for researchers and teachers, its clear and well-crafted style makes it accessible to the nonspecialist as well. Section 1 explores the object and methods of inquiry of the German Sprachlehr- und lernforschung— instructed language acquisition. Section 2 determines its scope and relevance to language teaching. Sections 3–5 survey the current state of our knowledge about first and second language acquisition (SLA), individual differences, interlanguage, classroom interaction, and the various SLA hypotheses and theories. Finally Section 6 examines various curricular decisions based on various notions of language and language learning. The book ends with a set of 15 statements that usefully capture the essential notions that teachers can derive from current research in applied linguistics.

To a U.S. reader, accustomed to a greater separation of learning and teaching, one of the great strengths of this volume is its integrated perspective on SLA in instructional settings. Chapter 1, for example, gives a well-balanced view of the year-long debate between the two German branches of SLA research, language teaching and learning (Sprachlehrforschung), and second language acquisition (Zweitsprachenerwerbsforschung). It resolutely defines the former as an empirically based, learner-centered, interdisciplinary field whose focus is instructed L2 learning. Section 2 examines the historical and political dimensions of language instruction; it offers fascinating insights into the relationship of language, power, and identity in the foreign language policies of the Third Reich and of present-day
Europe. Chapter 12 synthesizes previous pioneering work by the two authors on the analysis of learner language in classroom settings.

Like the work of H. H. Stern and Peter Strevens, to whom this volume is dedicated, this lucid and intelligently argued book offers L2 researchers and practitioners a thorough grasp of the major issues in the field. The fact that culture is not one of them, is less an omission on the part of the authors than an indication that applied linguistics still has difficulty defining the place of culture in language learning and teaching.

CLAIRE KRAMSCH
University of California, Berkeley


Balancing the competing components of an international teaching assistant (ITA) preparation course isn’t an easy task. Typically, such courses must cover teaching skills, language skills, and cross-cultural information in a one-term class of a few hours a week. Communicate is a welcome addition to the available textbooks for ITA education as it is designed with this dilemma in mind. Each of the text’s 10 units integrates work on all the needed areas.

Each unit is developed around a teaching task common to ITA positions, hence unit titles such as “Introducing a Syllabus,” “Explaining a Visual,” “Defining a Term,” “Teaching a Process,” “Fielding Questions,” and “Leading a Discussion.” The content of each unit is then divided into two areas: Teaching Skills, which also includes work on the functional language needed to carry out the skills; and Language Skills and Cultural Awareness, which includes practice in pronunciation (focusing on suprasegmentals) and grammar as well as a needs assessment of a particular area of university culture (through which ITAs can draw their own conclusions about cultural issues). The authors advise that the book “can be used most effectively” in conjunction with videotaping of microteaching sessions and postvideotaping “one-on-one tutorials between instructors and ITAs” (pp. x—xi). Because many ITA courses make extensive use of videotaping, it is helpful that the text is designed with this important course component in mind.

One of my first reactions to the book was to wish it had been available when I first started teaching ITA preparation courses. It is ideal for those just beginning to develop an ITA course or program, containing sample syllabi for a 10-week quarter, a 16-week semester, and a 4-week intensive course. In the appendices, the authors provide feedback forms for every type of presentation covered in the text, as well as The ITA Test, which can be used as the course exit examination. Particularly impressive is the appendix of field-specific materials from 15 academic fields, including visuals, comprehensive lists of terms, reading passages, topics of general
interest, questions, and problems. With the growing emphasis on the use of field-specific materials in ITA education, this appendix provides a wonderful resource for the instructor. The book also contains a topical bibliography for ITA preparation. In short, in one text, the authors have presented virtually everything necessary for a successful ITA training course.

Ironically, its abundance of good materials has posed the only problem I’ve confronted in using the text. I teach an ITA preparation course developed before the book’s publication and have tried to incorporate materials from the text into the existing course. However, the book contains so many useful materials which I have wanted to incorporate into the syllabus that the ITAs occasionally feel overwhelmed and plead for more time to practice and absorb each new point. Although a textbook can hardly be faulted for having too many good materials, it is true that some of the materials—for example, the many useful exercises in the “Fielding Questions” unit—are somewhat difficult to use successfully (or use only partially) if time is limited because they are designed to be worked through step-by-step.

However, this is a minor complaint when compared to the many outstanding features of the text. Communicate is an excellent book and a very valuable contribution to ITA education, both for those just developing a course or program and for those who want to improve an existing one.

NANCY MARWIN
University of Oregon

Challenges: A Process Approach to Academic English.
H. Douglas Brown, Deborah S. Cohen, and Jennifer O’Day.

Challenges is a content-based text which presents reading and writing as interactive thinking processes. The book has 10 units, each composed of three lessons centered around a social and cultural topic, including the workplace, population concerns, sports and recreation, ecology, children and the family, laughter and stress, astronomy, and business and management practices. The authors’ aim is to suggest that thinking about and discussing these topics will empower students to “become equipped to be shapers of tomorrow’s world” (p. viii).

In each unit, two reading selections help focus the student on particular aspects of the topic. These are usually short pieces from such sources as National Geographic, Science, U.S. News and World Report, Ladies Home Journal as well as from books and journal articles. During each lesson, the authors try to anticipate students’ vocabulary and background information needs. Students are also provided with suggestions on how to share ideas, using interpretation strategies for vocabulary and ideas and suggestions for thinking, discussing, and writing.

One lesson in each unit assists students in developing their individual
composing processes, providing a variety of excellent strategies and techniques for every part of the composing process. None of these lessons overloads the student, but each builds on previous ones and introduces new strategies so that the student’s writing process develops throughout the 10 units, thus providing a more thorough examination of writing than many other L1 or L2 textbooks. Special attention is given to understanding audience and purpose in the composition process and their importance in reading and producing texts.

As the students are exposed to various types of writing (e.g., memos, letters, journals, essays, articles, several writing genres [e.g., creative writing], and informal and formal treatments of academic prose), they become aware of the importance of being both reader and writer and what this relationship means to the composing process.

Within each unit, two or three writing prompts guide the students’ compositions, usually involving one possibility for creative writing (e.g., a story created anticipating future challenges from current trends) and another based on personal experiences or opinions. Others throughout the book call for additional skills such as interpretation of charts or applications from the students’ field of study.

These writing prompts, however, can be a disappointment as they fail, for the most part, as indicators of the type of writing students can most likely expect in their academic careers. Teachers using this book may want to supplement these with others of their own creation.

The book, however, is overall an excellent resource, especially in integrating reading, thinking, and writing. Particularly masterful are the sections asking students to make inferences from what they read in order to understand information not directly stated in the text.

PAUL BALTES
Brigham Young University

Can We Talk? A Multiskills Approach to Communication.

Can We Talk? is a text which provides a framework for directed communication while also prompting practice of other skills. Although the level of structures used is high-beginning to intermediate, the adult themes and the variety of exercises make it appropriate for a range of competence levels.

Each chapter has a progression of activities and exercises from simple to more difficult, beginning with three motivating questions and an intriguing picture to stimulate the students’ interest. After completing the vocabulary section, students are directed to discuss their ideas and responses to thought-provoking questions or mysteries involving such controversial and/or contemporary topics as bribery, gambling, arson, bombs, and burglary in a section entitled Let’s Talk About It. The remainder of
the chapter includes a writing section and a more lengthy reading section with comprehension questions. Students must employ their reasoning skills as well as their language skills. In the introduction to the teacher, the authors state that the sequence of each chapter offers exposure to “new vocabulary through tasks which require mere recognition or manipulation of the material before students are guided to produce the language. Later, reading and writing activities reinforce this sequence” (p. xi).

In addition to its entertaining selection of topics, Can We Talk? is a visually attractive book with interesting drawings which supply more content, especially for the lower level student. Several of its features make it appealing to both teachers and students. It has a very useful contents page listing unit title, topics, functions, and structures. In addition, there are alphabetical indices of topics, grammatical structures, and language functions.

One drawback of the text is its lack of answers to the mysteries presented. There is an answer key for the exercises, but not for the mysteries. The To the Teacher section, while quite comprehensive, does not indicate the existence of a teacher’s guide. Therefore, teachers must solve the mysteries themselves.

Because the focus is on meaningful interaction, and because many of the activities involve pair or group work, using this text should result in a student-centered classroom. The format of the book makes it appropriate for use in a multilevel classroom or an ABE (adult basic education) class, or to supplement or enliven a grammar or speaking/listening class.

MARY NELL SORENSEN  
University of Washington


■ Applied English Grammar is intended for advanced ESL students who must improve their English grammar skills before entering an academic degree program in the U.S. Because the main goal of the text is to prepare students for college composition courses, the text emphasizes developing students’ ability to edit their own written work.

In the instructor’s preface, Byrd and Benson envision a course built around this text that would encourage students to analyze their skills themselves and record their progress in a “grammar notebook.” Specific suggestions for the content of the grammar notebook are offered in the preface, and the text’s final section, the “grammar journal,” also contains activities designed for use with the student’s notebook.

Instructors not interested in the notebook approach could still benefit from the text’s exhaustive coverage of English grammar. The text lays a foundation for English grammar in six lengthy chapters. Each of the remaining 10 chapters offers discussion and practice of a different special topic; these chapters are designed for use as needed, after the needs of

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a particular class have emerged. Grammar rules are presented deductively; however, an instructor could easily provide inductive practice in class before introducing students to rules in the text.

The text is attractively laid out with many helpful charts. A special unit, “Editing Written English,” presents editing as a three-stage process and offers sample essays, written by ESL students, on which students may practice their editing skills. Appendices include lists of irregular verbs and other forms requiring memorization.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the text is its careful attention to what Larsen-Freeman (1991) identifies as the essential language dimensions to be considered in grammar teaching: form, meaning, and pragmatic. Benson and Byrd thoroughly explore all three dimensions (e.g., in their discussion of different social uses of modal verbs).

The text would benefit from providing more actual writing practice as well as exposure to a variety of authentic texts: Exercises in the text usually require students to write only a collection of sentences or to fill in the blank with the correct form, and readings, although selected with attention to cultural diversity, are adapted from encyclopedias or government documents.

As a college composition instructor, although my old-fashioned grammarian’s heart warms to 16 chapters’ worth of grammar rules and terminology, I doubt that ESL students really need such intense grammar preparation in order to compete successfully with native speakers in most college composition courses. If time is limited and the goal is to prepare students for their first composition course with native speakers, I would recommend a less analytic, more use-oriented approach to grammar teaching than the one offered in this text. However, instructors not using the text for a course would do well to make it part of their collection; it could certainly improve a native speaker’s understanding of English grammar.

REFERENCE


SANDRA M. FENNELL
The Pennsylvania State University
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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 which 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:

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Sandra McKay
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1600 Holloway Avenue
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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

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Contributors include Anderson, Brock, Cameron, Diaz-Rico, Gebhard, Larsen-Freeman, Poole, Richards, Tsui, Van Deusen-Scholl, Wong ... and many more.

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State of the Art
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Celebrating 25 Years
of the Discipline

Sandra Silberstein, Editor

Taken together, the contributions to this anthology comprise a portrait of TESOL—profession and association—as it enters its intellectual and institutional maturity. Each chapter explores a unique set of links between theory and practice, documenting the diversity and integrity of the language teaching enterprise.

As both a synthesis and a vision of the future, State of the Art TESOL Essays serves as the foundation volume to survey and methods courses as well as to classes focusing on materials development and teacher preparation.

As befits a volume intended to be both retrospective and prospective, Overview articles compose the first of its four sections. Mary Ashworth and H. Douglas Brown examine the field as it is and as it might be, addressing fundamental issues of what it means to be language educators in a global society.

The second section, Perspectives on the Field, observes the profession through a variety of lenses. Educators such as David Nunan, Pat Rigg, Christian Faltis, Ann Johns, and Diane Larsen-Freeman discuss communicative, whole language, and ESP approaches as well as perspectives on second language acquisition research and testing.

In the Skill Areas and Beyond, readers will find state-of-the-art discussion of research and practice during the past quarter century. Although they do not necessarily endorse a “skills approach” to language teaching, the authors (e.g., Ann Raimes, Marianne Celce-Murcia, Joan Morley, and William Grabe) share the view that much can be learned about specific elements of language and language use.

James Alatis and Robert Kaplan look historically at the TESOL association, exploring its relationship to the field of applied linguistics and its growth from a learned society to a professional organization.